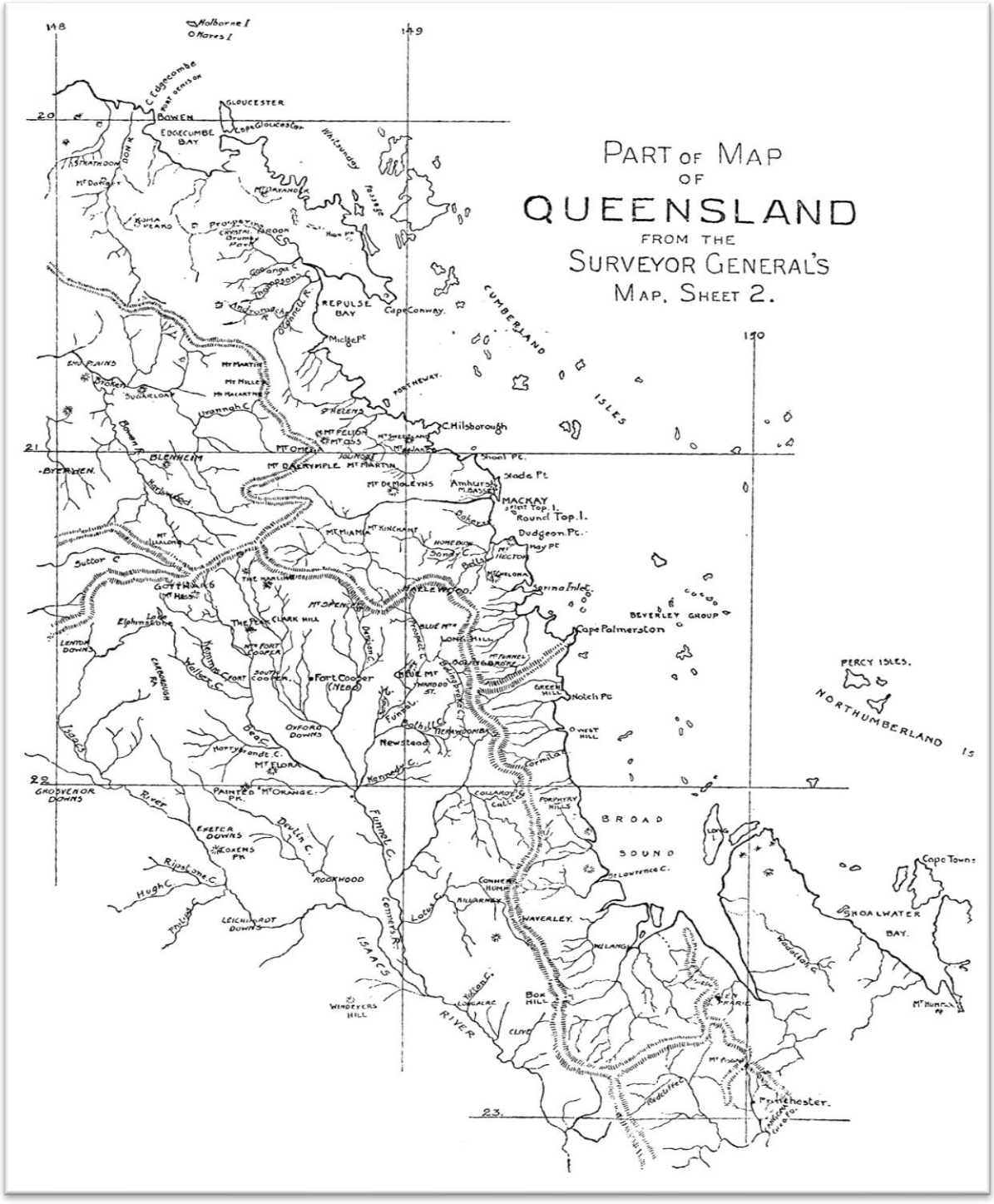
2. The Promised Land



Map 2.1: The Promised Land: A 1900s map showing the area of coast and hinterland surrounding Mackay from Broadsound and Shoalwater Bay in the south, to Cape Gloucester at the Whitsunday Passage in the north, and inland to the headwaters of the Suttor and Isaac rivers.
Source: Roth 1908, Map 4, 72.

The New Promised Land: Today's Coal Country

Nebo is in the Leichhardt Land District. Mackay is in the South Kennedy Land District. The land over the ranges at the western end of the Pioneer Valley is part of a vast well-watered inland plain. The nineteenth century economy of the Mackay–Nebo district began with cattle, sugar, gold, and copper. More recently, mining the huge Bowen basin coal reserves west of the ranges has altered everything. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Mackay related closely to its hinterland, a connection which declined during the first half of the twentieth century, then was built up again through coal into the twenty-first century.

The western towns of Nebo, Clermont, and Emerald began as small urban settlements related to pastoralism and mining. Nebo began in the early 1860s. It was predominantly a pastoral town, although there were mining ventures nearby onwards from the 1870s. The road north from Rockhampton came via Broadsound and Collaroy, crossing Nebo Creek, a pleasant permanent running stream with an abundance of grass around it. The creek became a favourite camping spot for the travelling public, and teamsters and drovers moving stock to the tributaries of the Isaac and Suttor rivers, and further north to the Bowen district. The first permanent building was the Fort Cooper Hotel in 1862, which remains on the same site. The population, never large, dropped in the late 1860s as stations replaced sheep with cattle, which did not need shepherds to take care of them, nor itinerant shearers. The town almost emptied in the 1880s when a goldrush took place at nearby Mt Britton.

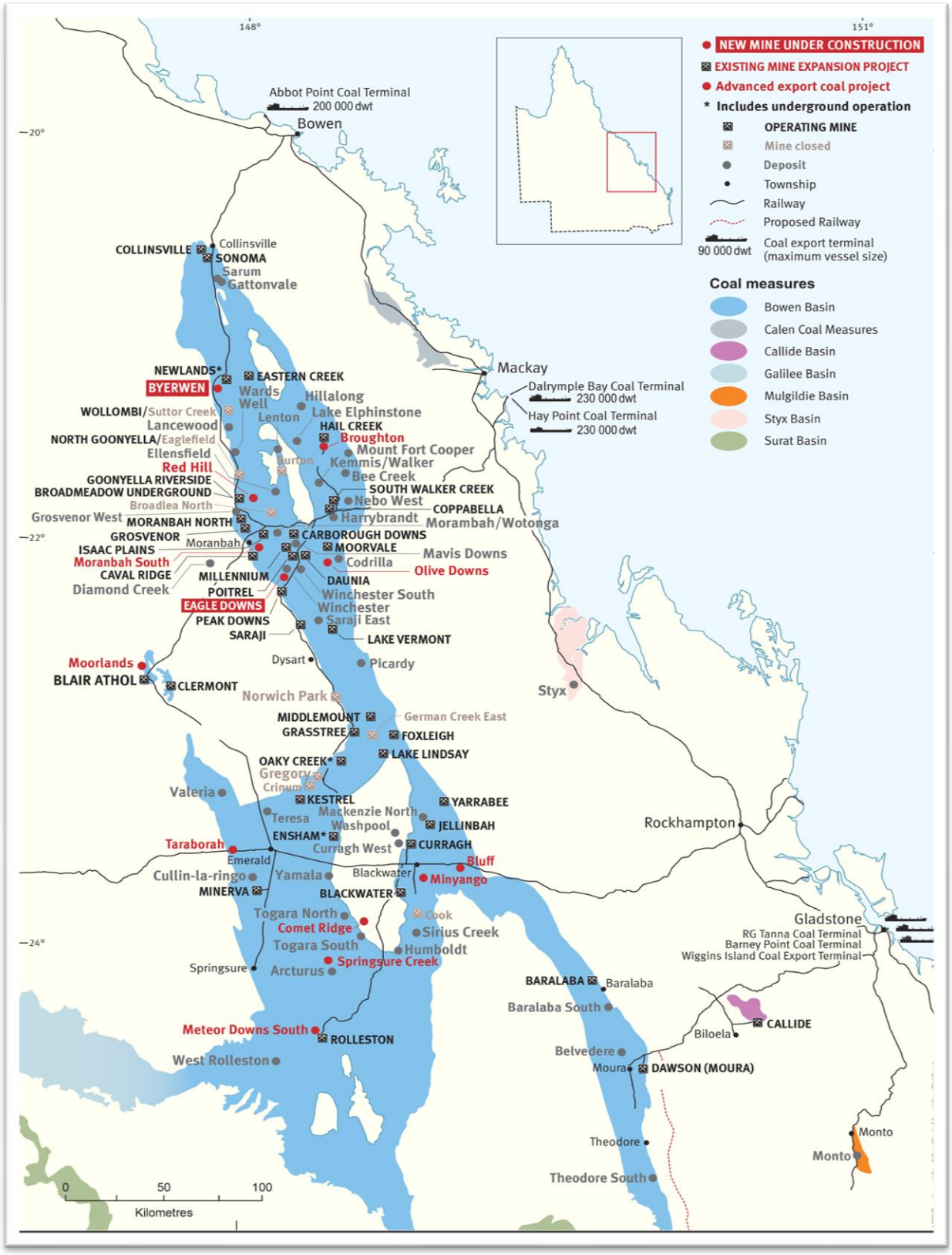
I first visited Clermont and Nebo back in the 1970s. At Nebo, I stayed on the Dalrymple family's pastoral property not far outside the town. I had been asked to hunt for records to take back to James Cook University for their library's archives. The Town Clerk readily identified some large old leather-bound volumes that the Shire was willing to donate. I arrived back at the university with my trophies, which were presented to the library. The records were fascinating; they were the registers kept by the first Police Magistrates, covering the 1860s to the 1880s. However, once the Queensland State Archives realized that the registers had found their way to a university library, the long arm of state legislation controlling government records reached out and they were whisked off to the Archives in Brisbane.

My 1970s memory is of a dusty drab place made of wood and galvanised corrugated iron, with the main street dominated by the now heritage-listed two-level Nebo Hotel, its verandas partly open in classic Queensland style. Nebo is on plains beyond the coastal mountains, a compact small town with streets named after pioneer settlers and financiers (Kemmis, Bovey etc.), and a racecourse. Today, the town is home to 850 people and the Peak Downs Highway runs along the edge of the built-up area.

The town of Clermont in the Peak Downs district 197 kilometres south-east of Nebo began in 1861. The Archer brothers of Gracemere selected pastoral runs at Peak Downs in the 1850s, which they did not develop, and passed to Gordon Sandeman, a Brisbane merchant and later politician. Clermont became a pastoral and then gold and copper mining town, initially attracting 10,000 miners to its mineral fields. It was sustained for decades by the Blair Athol coal-mine, which closed in 2012, and now by the Glencore mine which opened in 2010, as well as by agriculture. Today, its population is just over 2,000. Emerald, 300 kilometres from the coast and 290 kilometres south of Nebo, is on the Nogoa River. It began in 1879 as a service centre for surrounding pastoralism and copper-mining. The present-day population is 13,500, with the town servicing coalmining, cotton, and fruit production.

Plate 2.1: Fort Cooper Hotel, in Nebo, now known as Nebo Hotel. The first rough hotel began in 1862 on the banks of Nebo Creek, with a license granted early the next year. After the town area was surveyed in 1865 5the settlement grew up around the hotel. This photograph is of the second hotel on the site, constructed in 1886. The town was called Fort Cooper (as was the nearby pastoral station), although the local people had begun to call it Nebo after the local creek. The town's name officially changed in 1923. The present hotel is an extension of the 1886 structure. Source: State Library of Queensland.

Since the 1970s, open cut mining has developed the huge coking coal reserves throughout the Bowen and Galilee Basins area. New ports were constructed: at Hay Point and Dalrymple Bay, 40 kilometres south of Mackay—the largest coal-loading facility in the world—and at Abbot Point, 30 kilometres north of Bowen, which the Adani (now Bravus) company from India hopes to use as its port. Several new towns were developed to service the mines. Moranbah (population 9,000), established in 1969, 100 kilometres south of Nebo, is the largest of these new inland urban centres, followed by Dysart (population 2,990) and Middlemount (population 1,900). Cattle is no longer king and there are open-cut coal mines throughout the area (Map 2.2). The city of Mackay, 93 kilometres by road from Nebo, has become the coastal dormitory home for many of the mining families, just as in the 1860s and 1870s the town became the port for supplies and wool exports from west of the range, and a coastal refuge for inland settlers. What the future holds for the region, given the world-wide move away from coal-powered energy, is not entirely clear.



Map 2.2: The new promised land: Bowen Basin towns and coal mines, 2017.
Source: Courtesy of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, Queensland Government. www.dnrm.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/238079/coal-mines-advanced-projects.pdf.

Possessing Land

This chapter covers much the same region as the Bowen Basin towns and coal mines, a similar area to the outline of First Nations lands and peoples in Chapter 1. Acquiring land provides a useful focal point for understanding pastoral, agricultural and mining settlements in the Mackay district and its extensive hinterland, establishing the new system of land ownership and the colonial economy. It also helps to explain why the Aboriginal custodians were dispossessed. Having never lived on any Queensland land block larger than a suburban quarter-acre, it is difficult for me to come to terms with pastoral land leases covering up to 200 square miles, and other huge freehold blocks of agricultural and pastoral land. Over the last 40 years, Australians have become used to the past and present traditional custodians of the land being acknowledged at public events. I often wonder if the etiquette of the acknowledgement has any real meaning to the audiences. It should, as we are guests on the lands of others.

The chapter explains the way in which pastoral land was explored and owned in the colonies of New South Wales and Queensland in the 1850s and 1860s, providing an overview of the settlement patterns on the vast plains west of the Pioneer Valley, from Broadsound to the Isaac River in the south, to the headwaters of the Broken, Bowen and Burdekin rivers in the north. Settlement patterns within the adjoining coastal Pioneer Valley will be the basis of subsequent chapters. This chapter argues that the colonial settlement of the Pioneer Valley was part of the extension of the northern pastoral frontier. Because of the eventual dominance of agriculture in the valley, the region is often treated as a separate development, when in fact it began as part of the pastoral frontier. The chapter channels the history of the region towards our objective—the Pioneer Valley and the surrounding coast.

The natural borders were mountain ranges, plains, rivers and creeks, billabongs, lagoons, and lakes. Pastoralists moved along the coast, then inland from Broadsound to the Bowen Hinterland, searching for their own special pockets of unclaimed land. The Pioneer Valley was in the middle and underwent a coastal extension of pastoralism. Some of the frontier pastoralists from the inland region later moved to the coastal valley, transferring their business interests to the sugar plantations, and to commerce in the town, or retired there. The colonists claimed ownership and mapped the land, ignoring its Aboriginal inhabitants except when they came into violent contact with them, or needed their labour. A decade or so after first arrival, the setters ‘let back in’ the First Nations Australians in limited numbers, mainly as workers on the pastoral stations. The land leases were like pieces in a valuable jigsaw, or perhaps giant pieces in a property chess game. The most successful and skilful players survived and did well, although others perished along the way from misadventure, or lack of finances and business acumen.

The beginnings of the pastoral property divisions west of the Clarke and Connors ranges at the end of the Pioneer Valley provided most of the place names used in the present-day and is an indication of the complexity of both individual relationships and settlement patterns.

Characteristics of Pastoral Settlement

When exploration and pastoral settlement began, Queensland had not yet separated from New South Wales. During the 1850s, pioneer pastoralists were moving into the rich pastoral country over the ranges from the fertile Pioneer Valley. They came first as explorers then returned with flocks of sheep and herds of cattle to run on the new pastures, forming hinterland pastoral properties, also known as leases, stations, or runs. The Pioneer Valley remained ‘undiscovered’ until 1860.

For orientation, let us begin with seven guiding characteristics which emerge from the

descriptions below and in the following chapters. First, in Australia we are inclined to navigate from the coastal ports that became the capital cities. Instead, forget the coastal cities, colonial borders, and sub-regions. Think instead of a vast inland corridor of plains stretching from Victoria to North Queensland on the western side of the forested mainly low ranges close to the east coast. We call them the Great Dividing Range, which sounds grand, and parts of it are high. The adjoining coastal ranges at the back of the Pioneer Valley are among the highest in Queensland. Never a total barrier, part of the tale told here is about finding passages through the ranges to the coast. This inland corridor became pastoral properties, which were both businesses and family units, and usually dependent on borrowed finances. The corridor first extended over the Blue Mountains onto the plains west of Sydney and into the rural areas of what became Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania. The next stage was that year-by-year the Australian east coast frontier moved south to north. Once the Northern Districts of New South Wales (i.e., Queensland) began to be opened for settlement in the 1840s, colonists spread north from the Darling Downs and just beyond Brisbane, inland and up the coast. The frontier corridor often ran ahead of government control, hence the well-known term—a squatter, meaning a pastoralist who moved onto Crown land beyond government authority and squatted there with no legal rights. The word evolved and was eventually used colloquially to describe all pastoralists. Not all the land was good for pastoralism. The land close to the Great Dividing Range and other coastal ranges was often too rugged to use fully, and brigalow scrub areas (Acacia shrubs or trees) in central Queensland regrew quickly when cut down, not 'tamed' until after World War II. Nevertheless, there was enough good pastoral land to make the inland plains a boom area for pastoralism.

Second, these stocked and unstocked 1840s to 1860s pastoral leases changed hands frequently. There was provision under an 1847 Order-in-Council for pastoralists to claim pre-emptive rights to sections of their leases, usually around the head stations and along rivers and creeks—a process called 'peacocking'. The ability to freehold land within leases was included in Land Acts until the late 1890s. The 1850s land selection under New South Wales legislation was more liberal than the land laws which evolved in Queensland. Some 'run hunters' or 'run jobbers' applied for as many as 20 large leases, intending not to stock but to sell most of their land. In mid-1859, Queensland was separated from New South Wales, although earlier land leases and their conditions continued to be honoured. Even after the 1860s, Queensland Land Acts—much tighter pieces of legislation than the New South Wales Robertson Land Acts of 1861—'run hunters' were able to take advantage of loopholes in the Queensland Acts. They relied on the 90-day grace period before having to pay the initial licence fees, and the nine months allowed for stocking; as well as the notorious backlogs in the Lands Department, which could not cope with the flood of applications. 'Run hunters' had a year to transfer their unstocked runs. They carried out risky exploration trips, made rough surveys and location maps (often with only vague descriptions of boundaries), filed applications, and paid licence fees. Some 'run hunters' are also remembered as explorers, which they were, but the drive to set off into the 'unknown' was usually motivated by the hope of making profits, not altruism.

Larger-scale operators obtained and traded leases. 'Run hunters' were speculators—frontier entrepreneurs—whom if operating today would be regarded as crafty businessmen on the edge of the law. They knew the land laws well and hoped to be able to sell their initial leases, keeping the best land and using the profits to create pastoral stations and make their fortunes. Not all succeeded. In the Pioneer Valley all the original 1860 lease applications failed. In 1862, the Government published a list of forfeited pastoral leases in the Leichhardt and Kennedy districts; the number of failures was substantial. As settlement progressed to the north and west, the number or runs abandoned in various land districts increased between

1866 and 1870: 78 in North Kennedy, 97 in South Kennedy, 159 in Burke, and 30 in Cook.[1]

The initial outlay necessary to commence exploration and then register leases was substantial, which led to many failures. Most of the Leichhardt and Kennedy land was held by men from wealthy families in Victoria, New South Wales, southern Queensland, or the British Isles. They also needed the support of 'sleeping partners', banks, and financial houses. Wool was the most certain bet for financiers. If a colonist invested £20,000 (now around $2,013,000) of their own or their family's money into a pastoral station, it seems to have been easy enough to get a loan of another £40,000 at an acceptable rate of interest. However, the days of the poor stockman on a property, who would ask to be paid in cattle or sheep, so as to begin his own herd and move north to find new land, were largely over.

Third, Queensland pastoral settlement did not radiate out from established ports, as had occurred from Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Launceston, and Adelaide. Queensland is unique among the eastern Australia mainland States for not being focused on its capital city, which is too far south to be useful in that way. Queensland developed a series of almost equidistant regional ports from which economic development radiated. It is arguable that this is still what makes Queensland different from the rest of Australia. Neither was there a unifying railway system and once they began, railways were government-owned, not like the private companies which built railways in the US. The gauge was narrow—3 feet 6 inches (1.067 metres). The first line joined Brisbane to Toowoomba on the Darling Downs in 1867. The nineteenth century network that developed was a series of isolated lines joining inland areas to major ports—Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Townsville, with smaller lines down the Pioneer Valley at Mackay, and from Cairns to Forsayth. The coastal line from Brisbane via Rockhampton was connected to Mackay in 1921, and the link to Townsville was completed in 1923. The only exception to the lines linking to east coast ports was the Normanton to Croydon line which always remained isolated. The colony and state's geography, early settlement patterns, and its transport systems, have shaped its history and culture.

The distances were great, and the northern pastoralists needed close-by ports. In January 1854, the first pastoralists arrived at the Fitzroy River, near the site of present-day Rockhampton. In the same year, the New South Wales Government opened the Port Curtis and Leichhardt Land Districts, with Rockhampton added as a settlement and port of entry onwards from 1858. At the end of the 1850s and into the 1860s, Broadsound, a shallow bay 50 kilometres long and 20 kilometres wide, midway between Rockhampton and what became Mackay, was the most northerly port. Named in 1770 by James Cook, the bay is dominated by extensive mudflats and mangroves. In 1862, St Lawrence, near Waverley station at Broadsound, became an official port of entry and a Customs clearance base, although it was too far away to be central to the new pastoral region around Nebo. Today, Shoalwater Bay on the other side of the peninsula is used for military exercises, and St Lawrence survives as a small quaint relic of the past. Neither was Bowen to the north, begun in 1861 with an excellent harbour, close enough to Nebo or Mount Britton (a late 1870s pastoral lease and an 1880s gold-mining area) to be a successful port. Mackay, begun in 1862, was more suited to the task, even though there was no harbour. Its 'port' consisted of a silted river mouth with wharves along the southern bank, shipping out wool produced over the ranges and importing supplies for pastoral properties, and more briefly for gold, silver, and copper mining in the hinterland. Then came sugar from the canefields in the Pioneer Valley and its surrounds.

Fourth, the frontiersmen were mainly fit young men, either Australian-born or from the British Isles, many from Scotland or Ireland, with a few from what became Germany. The masculinity of this frontier is part of the 'Australian Legend', and by the 1880s the rugged 'bushman' symbolised the emerging national culture. Many of the entrepreneurs in the 'Promised Land' were remarkable bushmen, capable of long treks under difficult conditions. They amply fulfilled the Australian Legend's image of masculinity.

An elitist apprenticeship system developed, whereby 'new chums'—young gentlemen—were trained to run pastoral properties. They had to provide their own 'kit', were housed and fed by the station owner, but went unpaid for the first two years while they were trained in all aspects of practical pastoral work and management. After hours, they were treated as gentlemen, but during working hours they were no different from employees. The process was exploitive, although some of them were more trouble than they were worth, and not all pastoralists were willing to take on the new chums. Lesser pastoral employees were a mixed bag: immigrants from Britain and Europe were not used to pastoral life on the edge of a tropical frontier. A good example is Abijah Goode, a Belgium-born silk-spinner from Coventry in England, who found himself out of work. In 1863, he migrated to Queensland with his wife and children. His first employment was on Avon Downs station south of Nebo, then at North and South Fort Cooper stations. The family later purchased a small piece of land just outside Nebo, where they established an orchard and a vineyard. Although he never became a proficient horse-rider (and occasionally walked to Mackay), Goode had European construction skills. He built a cellar for his wine and hand dug and lined his own well. Luckily, there were also large numbers of settlers from rural areas in southern colonies who were better adapted to life in the bush.

To succeed, the first settlers had to be capable of long arduous journeys through the bush with a few companions in often dangerous circumstances. They faced starvation, diseases, riding accidents, and the constant presence of Indigenous Australians who were at first puzzled and then increasingly hostile to the foreign incursion onto their lands. The names of these male adventurers usually appear first as managers, sometimes sequentially at several different neighbouring locations, while they gained experience as new chums and progressed towards controlling their own pastoral leases. It was a testosterone-rich environment, a factor which shaped their attitudes to First Nations people. They did not have to justify their aggressive and often murderous behaviour to far away colonial authorities, or to their womenfolk, who might have advised a more conciliatory approach to co-existence. There were so few European women on the early 1860s northern pastoral frontier that we can name most of them individually—Mary Atherton, Alice Bell, Catherine Buchanan, Elizabeth Cook, Emma Goode, Elizabeth Hann, Rachael and Annie Henning, Rosina Hess, Anne Macartney, and Mary Ready come immediately to mind. As European women began to live permanently on pastoral stations, the homesteads were upgraded and under their influence vegetable and fruit gardens were planted. We can also presume that they helped moderate some of the aggressive behaviour from their menfolk, although if incidents took place away from the main homestead, the women never really knew what occurred. Nevertheless, the houses were fortified, and, if a homestead was attacked, women helped with the defences. Guns were always kept close by. Most of the women out on the edge of colonial expansion were First Nations Australians. Some of the pastoralists, their shepherds and other station hands had relationships with these Indigenous women.

Plate 2.2: The living room of the first pastoral homestead built by the Rawson brothers at Shamrock Vale (The Hollow) in the Pioneer Valley in the 1860s. The rack of guns on the wall is a feature of the room. The brother entering is saying 'Is it 'eight bells' yet?' (a nautical term meaning to mark the end of a watch, or colloquially 'time for a drink'). His brother at the mantlepiece says 'Oh, we made it so an hour ago!'.
Source: Painting by Charles Rawson, State Library of Queensland.

Fifth, there was a new element in the environment—tens of thousands of hooved livestock which had a quite different effect on the land to that of the soft foot pads of the indigenous animals. Generally, sheep and cattle were not mixed on one pastoral property, yet in Central Queensland most of the pastoral stations were first stocked with sheep, then a combination of sheep and cattle, eventually replaced by a predominance of cattle. Cattlemen and shepherds were often quite different types of colonists, which makes the mingling of the introduced animals unusual, although it also occurred in some other areas of Australia. On the northern leases they were feeling their way to decide what was best for the new area. Sheep and cattle were driven over long distances to stock pastoral leases, moved from station to station when flocks and herds were sold, or as a ruse to fulfill stocking requirements.

There was no fencing in the early years and all stock were allowed to roam, although sheep were watched, controlled, and moved more than cattle. They were all based close to water sources. Sheep caused the earliest change to the environment. Their hooves compacted light soils and over quite short periods the types of dominant grasses changed. Sheep hooves were sharp, cutting the grass right down into the roots, a much lower level than with cattle, and sheep also ate grasses down lower. Pastures covered by sheep were slower to recover, and sheep needed to be moved regularly to new areas. Over thousands of years, Indigenous Australians had carefully created and managed open plain areas. The new livestock reduced the size and fertility of Aboriginal pastures and crop lands. Where once root crops were easily obtained from the loose soils, the compacting limited the Indigenous food supply. Wild animals were also reduced in number, removing a major First Nations' food supply.

Queensland passed a *Marsupial Act* in 1877 to encourage entrapment and destruction of marsupials, to remove competition for the fodder with introduced stock. Pastoralists used strychnine to poison dingoes, as these carnivores feasted on sheep, much more easily than they could kill cattle. All of this upset what had been a well-balanced environment.

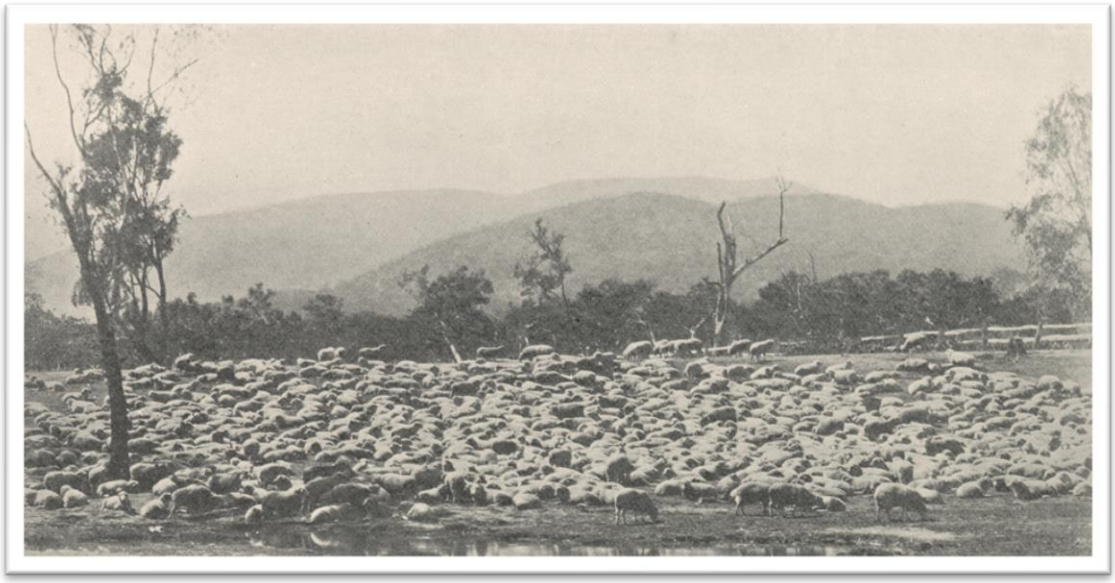


Plate 2.3: Resting a herd of sheep on a Queensland pastoral station.
Source: De Stagé 1901, 77.

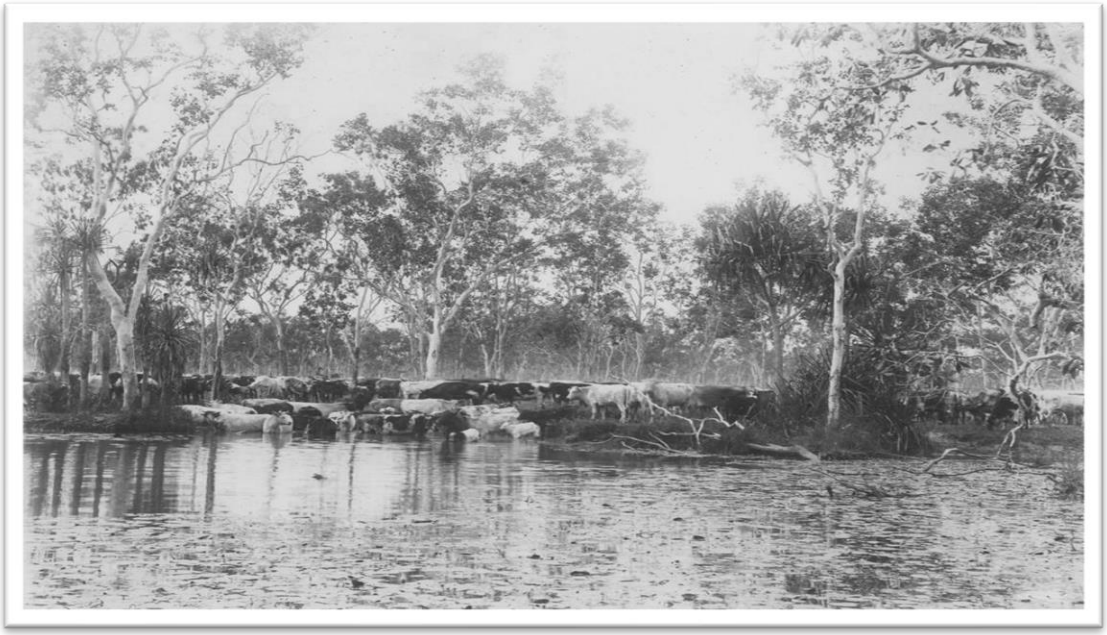


Plate 2.4: Cattle drinking during mustering on Woodstock Station, 40 kilometres from Townsville.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

Sixth, pastoralists and their European workers had to decide the nature of their relationships with the First Nations Australians whose land they had claimed. The colonists had been brought up at the end of an era of 'Great Chain of Being' beliefs, around since Medieval times, which placed God at the top and accepted European superiority over the other races of the world. Australia's First Nations people were thought to be near the bottom

of the human racial ladder. Historians Raymond Evans, Henry Reynolds, Paul Turnbull, Ray Kerkhove, Timothy Bottoms, Russell McGregor, and David Marr have helped us comprehend the ways in which Queensland settlers understood First Nations Australians. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the consensus view in British medical and scientific circles was that variations in living creatures resulted from a central force sustaining life, and the effects of external environmental conditions such as climate and diet. This view began to be challenged, and by the 1840s the explanation of human variation drew on ideas from France on the gradual transmutation of organisms independent of their environment. The argument did not support a single human species and suggested that head shape and skin colour were innate features. The term 'race'—previously used as an equivalent term to 'tribe' and 'nation'—now became a description of an immutable biological difference. Accepting Indigenous racial extinction became a staple of popular beliefs, and settler experiences with First Nations Australians made them feel that Indigenous peoples were unable to adapt to 'civilised' ways, which only confirmed these beliefs. Aboriginal Australians were depicted as a lower form of human life, in part explaining why colonists willingly destroyed them. At the same time, the setters knew that in the bush environment they were inferior to the Indigenous people of the land. Even in the 1860s and 1870s, there was some acknowledgement that there were 'clever men among Indigenous Australians, against the oft-repeated assertions of ethnologists as to their low position among the human races':

> The aborigines value not the nick-nacks and contrivances of the white man, yet are very much amused when the utility of such tools is explained to them. The forest is the home of the native, and there the white man often feels his own inferiority. In the wilds of Australia the blackfellows' power of climbing easily, puts him in possession of a meal under circumstances in which a white man must starve. As a hunter the black man is perfection itself.[2]

In North America, the Indigenous people took to introduced horses, amassing large herds, becoming mounted warriors, which increased their ability to attack settlers. This did not occur in Australia, except where First Nations people worked on pastoral stations, where they became excellent horsemen. In the 1850s and 1860s, when the American frontier sprawled over the inland plains, there were theories that the Indigenous people there were the descendants of Rousseau's 'Noble Savages'. No one thought of First Nations Australians in this way.

The arrival of the pastoralists in Queensland preceded Charles Darwin's contributions to the science of evolution, first his *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, followed by *The Descent of Man* in 1871. After Darwin, intellectuals moved to seeing all humans as part of one species, and that a process of evolution was taking place, which made some parts of the species likely to triumph over others. However, it was several decades before these ideas percolated down through the population; and for many they remained unknown or little understood. Some of the actions of these frontiersmen seem horrific to us, callous and cruel beyond modern understanding. We need to view their behaviour within the influence of nineteenth century racial views, and the many who still believed in a biblical account of creation. Neither should we expect that, any more than with people today, that there was one current view and a clear understanding of racial categories. Many colonists were illiterate or semi-literate and held garbled views that were more influenced by their ideas from a Christian upbringing, than by medical science.

First Nations Australians had highly structured rules governing hosts and visitors. The European intruders were not aware of the Aboriginal concept of 'balanced reciprocity'. On

the one hand, settlers gave presents of material culture items from industrial Europe, without realising that the gifts required reciprocity, and on the other hand, they helped themselves when fishing, hunting, and gathering on Aboriginal land, without first asking permission. Add to this that there were few fixed European rules of behaviour out on the frontier, except loyalty between White men when danger loomed. There was little understanding of First Nations' relationships with land, although some pastoralists, such as the Martins at Hamilton and Hopetoun, and the Mt Spencer proprietors, understood the need to burn grass to maintain open pastures. Alongside this was also a contrary dependence on Aboriginal companions and labour, while treating them with condescension. Explorers and pastoral managers always travelled with Aboriginal assistants, and used them as integral labour on pastoral stations, but seldom named or acknowledged them in their writing. Without Aboriginal guides and companions, colonists could never have succeeded. Aboriginal stockmen travelling with expeditions were able to locate water and to negotiate with local First Nations groups, even when they had no language links. Initially, local First Nations people viewed small expeditions as curiosities, not threats. There are examples of them going out of their way to assist the strangers who had entered their nations. Small parties of Europeans, hundreds of kilometres away from any assistance from other colonists, were always very wary of Aboriginal groups that they met, and often were totally at their mercy.

The huge herds of sheep and cattle which followed, driven north to stock new areas, were of a higher order of magnitude than the small exploration parties. Wherever they settled, colonists faced opposition from Aboriginal groups and were harsh in their responses. They were not about to lose their significant financial investments without a fight.

Aboriginal Australians working on pastoral stations are discussed further in Chapter 6. Too much emphasis is sometimes placed on Aboriginal Australians failing to make a positive response to frontier life. It is also important to keep in mind that once pastoral stations became established, Indigenous stockmen and domestic servants were the majority population on the stations. This is not to suggest that they were well paid or treated as equals, but that, as Henry Reynolds suggested in his *Black Pioneers*, on remote stations before World War I there were probably in the vicinity of five Aboriginal workers to every one European. However much we view them as co-opted into the colonial system, either as a survival mechanism or from a genuine desire to join and explore the new economic and social system, they were in effect Black colonists.

Seventh, and this is often overlooked, settling and stocking pastoral properties, even on the margins of the colony, was an expensive business. The most apposite words in this chapter are 'Crown' and 'lease'. Australia had all been declared to be Crown land, then the Government established liberal size pastoral land leases, although Queensland regulations were always strict in relation to stocking, which had to be fulfilled within 12 months. Large leases were still expensive, although, when compared with freehold, they were cheap to obtain and maintain. The downside was that the Government could resume or truncate leases. Freeholding could be accomplished to a limited extent through a process called pre-emptive purchase, which usually only included the homestead and the most fertile and best-watered sections of the leases. Nevertheless, the chance to freehold the best 10 percent of a lease was well worth the financial cost, particularly as Crown leases could be truncated on 12 months' notice and were usually never safe for more than 10 or 15 years. In the early years, the most valuable commodity was the stock. Much of the remainder of the chapter explores the land, stock, and finances of the pastoralists.

Pastoral Finances

Too often, what has been written about nineteenth century pastoral and agricultural expansion

fails to consider how much capital was needed and from whence it came. It is as if pastoralists were all self-financed men of great personal wealth, which was seldom the case. Often, they used family or borrowed money, not their own, but nevertheless they all had access in some way to large sums of money, which indicates that they were middle to upper class. The funds necessary to mount an initial expedition were considerable, as were the costs of obtaining stock and driving them long distances to new pastoral leases. The lowest cost to lease and stock an 1860s pastoral property was around £3,000 (about $328,000 today), although many new pastoralists used stock from another family property, which was either provided free or at bargain rates. Rachel Henning, the sister of an early pastoralist, was probably close to the truth when she estimated that a pastoralist beginning on the Queensland frontier in the 1860s needed no less that £8,000 to £10,000 (today $918,000 to $1,480,000). Another estimate suggested £11,000 was needed for stock and sundry items. As well, there was likely to be no income in the first two to three years, during which there were costs: the lease and rental fees for the land, buildings, wages and rations, and the cost of stock. This was a make-or-break time, and some aspiring pastoralists went under. In the Pioneer Valley in 1862–63 John Mackay cut it too fine, and his backer became insolvent. He had to pay off his workers, sell his stock, and walk away.

It is difficult to calculate a standard return for the investment as there are many variables: terrain, seasons, droughts, diseases, cyclones, floods, and general weather conditions, availability of permanent water, the quality and type of feed, the quality and price of the stock, and the cost of getting them to and from the station. Pastoralists had to juggle the proportions of horses, bulls and mickies (uncastrated young male cattle), bullocks or steers (gelded male cattle), oxen (bullocks over three years old), breeding cows, rams and ewes, and the survival rates of calves and lambs. Sheep are easier to herd than cattle, although not as easy to move over long distances, and they always needed more attention. Without fences on early properties, large numbers of shepherds had to be employed to keep sheep safe and shearing with hand shears—usually done by itinerant teams—was arduous work. Cattle had greater mobility, which gave them an advantage over the vast distances in the Queensland outback. Herds of 1,000 to 2,000 were usual, although Nat Buchanan, regarded as the greatest drover, amongst other long droving trips, in 1881 moved 20,000 cattle 3,200 kilometres from St George to the Daly River.

In good conditions, cattle could be driven an average of 24 kilometres a day, with a rest during the hottest hours. It was standard to use a team of about eight men as drovers (plus their dogs) to control a herd of up to a few thousand cattle, rotating each man through the positions: two riders on ‘points’, two ‘swings’, two ‘flanks’, and two ‘drags’ at the back, the latter not a favoured position as the herd kicked up clouds of dust. There were other downsides. If drays accompanied the herds and flocks, bullock teams and extra staff were needed. Cattle could easily stampede if spooked, and a night watch had to be kept, preventing rushes, which also served to keep First Nations people away. A stampede through a drovers’ night camp could easily lead to deaths. It was also difficult to get the animals across rivers and creeks, particularly in the wet seasons

Once on the station, if the area included hilly or scrubby country, some of the stock could be missed in a muster. The longer they escaped muster, the wilder and more cunning the cattle became. Fencing began about five to ten years after selection of a property, although in some areas it was much slower, and was often only partial, mainly near the homesteads or outstations. Erecting fences was an expensive and laborious process. It was more sensible at first to concentrate on building up herds and flocks. Taking all outside influences into consideration, colonist raising cattle did not receive a return on stock until they had bred sufficient numbers of new cattle for on-selling. Some cattlemen only dealt with turnover cattle—i.e. they purchased bargains, then fattened them for resale. A positive

financial return from the homebred stock could take between three or four years or more, depending on whether the grazier retained the females for herd increases, and how quickly the male portion (bullocks and steers) matured to a marketable size.

In the 1880s, local pastoralist Harold Finch-Hatton attempted to calculate the comparative profits between sheep and cattle properties. He concluded that cattle-production was four or five times less profitable than sheep-production but required less capital and was a lower risk. A cattle station could pay its way right from the beginning, whereas a sheep station required a heavy financial outlay even before stocking. Finch-Hatton, presumably based on his own Mt Spencer property, calculated that a station with 5,000 head of cattle on unimproved country capable of carrying 10,000 cattle would cost around £20,000 (today $2,773,000) to establish, at £5 to £6 a head. For around £400, a pastoralist could erect a weaning paddock, a horse yard, an extra homestead paddock, basic comfortable houses for himself and his men, plus out-buildings. The timber was all sawn on the property. Another £150 would obtain sufficient horses, and, presuming the squatters intended to work on the property themselves (often there were two or three brothers or cousins), the minimum extra staffing needed was two stockmen at £75 each a year, and one Aboriginal stockman at £26 a year, plus another £100 a year for rations. The minimum annual staff cost was £826, which could double with extra employees. At the end of five years, the cattle herd, even accounting for deaths, should have increased to 10,000 and all necessary infrastructure improvements should have been made. If the herd stabilized at 10,000, annually there should have been around an extra 800 fat cattle worth £6 to £4 each, and 1,700 store cattle available to sell at £2 10s. to £1 10s.—a boiling-down works basic price. This would allow £1,700 to go towards future working expenses, with a profit balance of £4,050. Over five years, the original £20,000 of capital should have increased to £40,000, with a profit return of £6,500 to £4,000 (today $109,000 to $67,000). This could be used for pre-emptive land purchases, thus safeguarding the runs against selectors, and increasing the selling value.

Pastoral leases, although not necessarily licences to make money, could be very profitable investments. If funds were low, cattle stations could be run at a basic maintenance level, whereas sheep stations could not. Shearing was always labour intensive, herds had to be guarded, and fencing was needed. It is easy enough to understand the more lucrative market for wool, which dominated the Australian economy onwards from the 1820s and well into the first half of the twentieth century. Wool was clearly the most profitable pastoral commodity, although fleeces were then smaller than they are today, and there was no mechanical shearing. The pastoral industry was the backbone of the colonial economy, and most of the early Central Queensland pastoral stations were initially stocked with sheep. The advantage of sheep was that wool was a valuable commodity—as good as cash in the bank. It could be stored and was easy to transport. Sheep and lambs supplemented diets, and slaughtering these smaller animals was less wasteful than slaughtering a bullock or cow. There were also disadvantages. The price of wool declined in the 1860s, making sheep a more marginal investment, until recovery in the mid-1870s. Spear-grass, when ripe and seeding, ruined the fleeces, the barbs working their way through the skins of sheep, ultimately causing death. In some areas sheep died from eating poisonous bushes. Sheep also suffered from lung worm and liver fluke, and the wet conditions on the coast caused footrot.

When the change-over to cattle began it was from necessity, not choice. Cattle survived best in the north of the colony and on the coast. They could be on-sold to aspiring pastoralists looking for herds to stock new leases. However, the size of herds and flocks outran the size of the market for meat. Because there was no refrigeration, any stock killed had to be eaten quickly, or the meat needed to be preserved in brine. Until populations were larger, which created local markets, and refrigeration began to be used onwards from the 1890s, cattle were not a good return for the investment. The wasteful but sometimes

necessary solution was sending old stock to the boiling-down works to be rendered into tallow—fat used for soap and candle-making—and other by-products. When stock prices were low in the 1860s, out of desperation many squatters sent their older animals to boiling-down works. Even in the 1880s, when the price of cattle on southern markets had increased, and there were goldfields and sugar plantation markets, sending stock to boiling-down works continued.

The key thing in the early success of boiling-down works was the relatively high price of tallow, with cattle hides and other sheep and cattle by-products as extras. Sometimes it remained the best option. Boiling-down works began to process sheep after a severe price slump for wool in the 1840s. As the century progressed, they existed on the edge of towns such as Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville, Burketown, St Lawrence, and Mackay, and some pastoral stations began their own small plants. The processing was primitive, requiring small Cornish steam boilers for heating, and large open boiling pans. It was a very odorous operation. Other portions of the carcases were sold at butcheries, either attached to the boiling-down works or operating separately. Canning meat was another solution, begun in the 1840s and well-established by the 1870s. The more sophisticated plants could process 80 bullocks and 1,800 sheep a day. Although prices changed over decades, the basement price for cattle was about £1 10s. a head, and sheep sold at about 7s. a head, already shorn. Cattle hides could also be processed, made into useful floor mats, and leather for harnesses and saddles, ties for roofs on outstation huts, and plated ropes. Leftovers from the carcasses were sold to fatten pigs or just thrown away.

Cattle could also become diseased. They suffered from tick fever and contagious bovine pleuropneumonia—the latter inadvertently introduced from Britain into Victoria in 1858. The disease spread along the overland stock routes into New South Wales and Queensland. During long droughts in 1884–86 and 1895–1903 stock was not fit enough to be driven over long distances, which restricted the market, and pleuropneumonia was always a risk when overlanding on stock routes. A cattle property could be wiped out by the disease. In 1898, at Bloomsbury north of Mackay, Dyson Lacy lost almost his entire herd this way.

There were always other factors to consider. The numbers and quality of European and Indigenous staff was a constant issue. Living in isolation in poor working conditions, sometimes in constant fear of Aboriginal attacks, was hardly ideal. There were often severe labour shortages, although some stockmen worked on the same stations for many years. Pastoralists had to pay good wages (at least to the European labourers) and often they had to keep more labour on their books than they wanted, taking into consideration the need to be defensive against possible attacks. The station employees were always under observation by First Nations Australians. If they gauged that attack would be easy, due to low staffing, it was dangerous for all station workers. Nevertheless, the number of employees was often low. My estimate of staffing on Mt Spencer, and Hamilton and Hopetoun stations at the western end of the Pioneer Valley suggests that about ten was average, half Europeans and half Indigenous.

Indigenous stockmen were used onwards from the 1860s, which was a means of reducing costs. They were poorly paid, or paid in rations, or not paid at all, but allowed the ‘privilege’ of returning to their own country. Pastoral stations were on the land of local Indigenous groups, who could extract a heavy price by taking and deliberately maiming the animals, and through warfare. Having local Aboriginal staff reduced the chance of trouble and provided a cheap workforce.

There is a large difference between folk memory of who owned the various pastoral leases, and the Government archival records, which show majority ownership by financial companies. In their reminiscences, pastoralists say they owned properties, when the official registers record a different pattern, and we know they held leases on Crown land, with small areas turned into freehold. The modern-day simile is suburban house or business ownership.

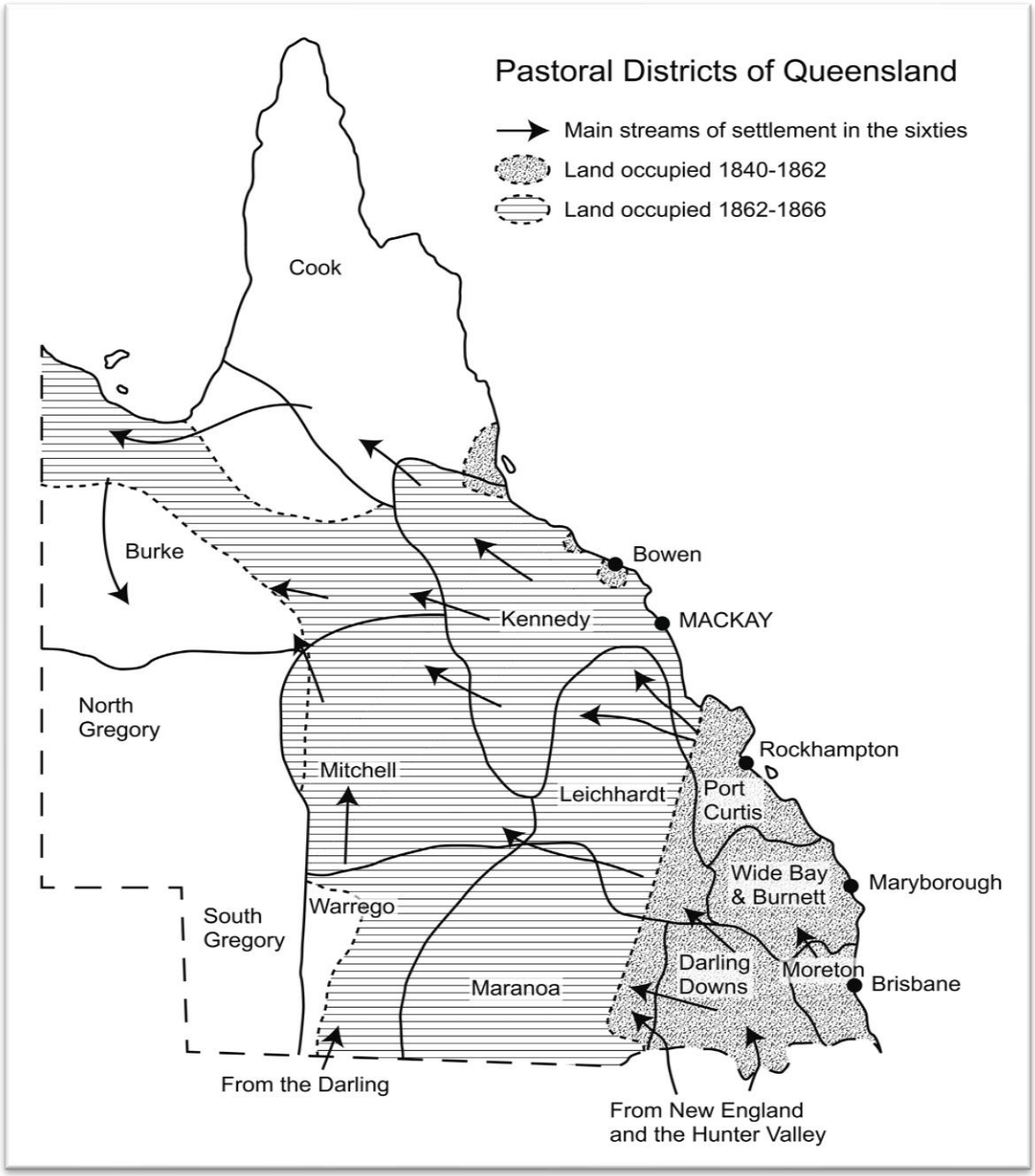
We are inclined to say it is our house or business, when in fact legally the premises is mortgaged to a bank or similar financial institution. The early pastoral settlers had to have access to enough finances to sustain their ambitions. To raise the large amounts needed, they formed partnerships with each other and with financiers. They were frontier entrepreneurs, willing to take risks for the chance of riches, and they needed to find financiers willing to 'stump up' cash or provide guarantees. This pastoral expansion took place after the 1850s goldrushes in the south which had attracted 700,000 new settlers, raising the Australian immigrant population to over one million. With this new vibrancy came expanded financial connections.

British investment companies provided some of the necessary capital. It also came from private colonial sources, particularly from Victoria. The Scottish Australian Investment Co., founded in 1840, operated in Queensland from 1860 to 1890. Another firm which also invested Scottish capital in Australian pastoralism was the North British Australasian Loan and Investment Co., founded in Aberdeen in 1839. The Australian Agricultural Co., established in 1824 by an Act of the British Parliament, for the purpose of improving fine wool production, along with tobacco, flax and other export crops, diversified into coal and finally cattle. The Scottish Australian Co. was the most successful, with over 400 co-partners, mainly small-scale investors from north-east Scotland and London. During its first 20 years, the company concentrated on loans tied to mortgages on freehold land, not pastoral lease land. However, by the mid-1850s the original concept had been abandoned and the company began investing in coalmining around Newcastle in New South Wales, and in the expanding Queensland pastoral industry. The Scottish Australian Co. was not impressed by the Kennedy District and chose instead to invest in the rolling downs land further west of the Great Dividing Range. One of their 1860s investments was in the huge Bowen Downs station in the neighbouring Mitchell District.

Banks and other financial houses could (and did) go broke, or at least could call in loans or in other ways exert their authority as mortgagees. The bottom line is that pastoral stations were businesses and loans had to be repaid or refinanced. While ultimately profitable businesses, stations had to be well managed to return a profit and repay loans. Several of the early Mackay district pastoral stations failed—for instance Mt Spencer, Jolimont, St Helens, and Bloomsbury—although these all staggered on for three decades. Reducing the size of leases to accommodate urban and agricultural growth caused the demise of other coastal stations; Balnagowan is a good example. Having British rural gentry origins—which was true of some pastoralists—was not necessarily a suitable qualification for managing an isolated sheep or cattle property, although often they employed experienced managers, some of whom received a share in the property or herd along with their wages.

In the early 1860s, wool prices were as high as they had been in the first pastoral boom of the 1830s. This occurred because of the hiatus in American cotton supplies to British industry, caused by the Civil War, as well as the enlarged Australian settler population after the 1850s goldrushes, the consequent market created for beef and mutton, and the increase in supplies of finance. Melbourne and Sydney became the financial capitals of Australia, and other funding companies and banks operated from there, channelling diverse sources of British capital into investments in Queensland. British immigrants also brought family money with them to invest.

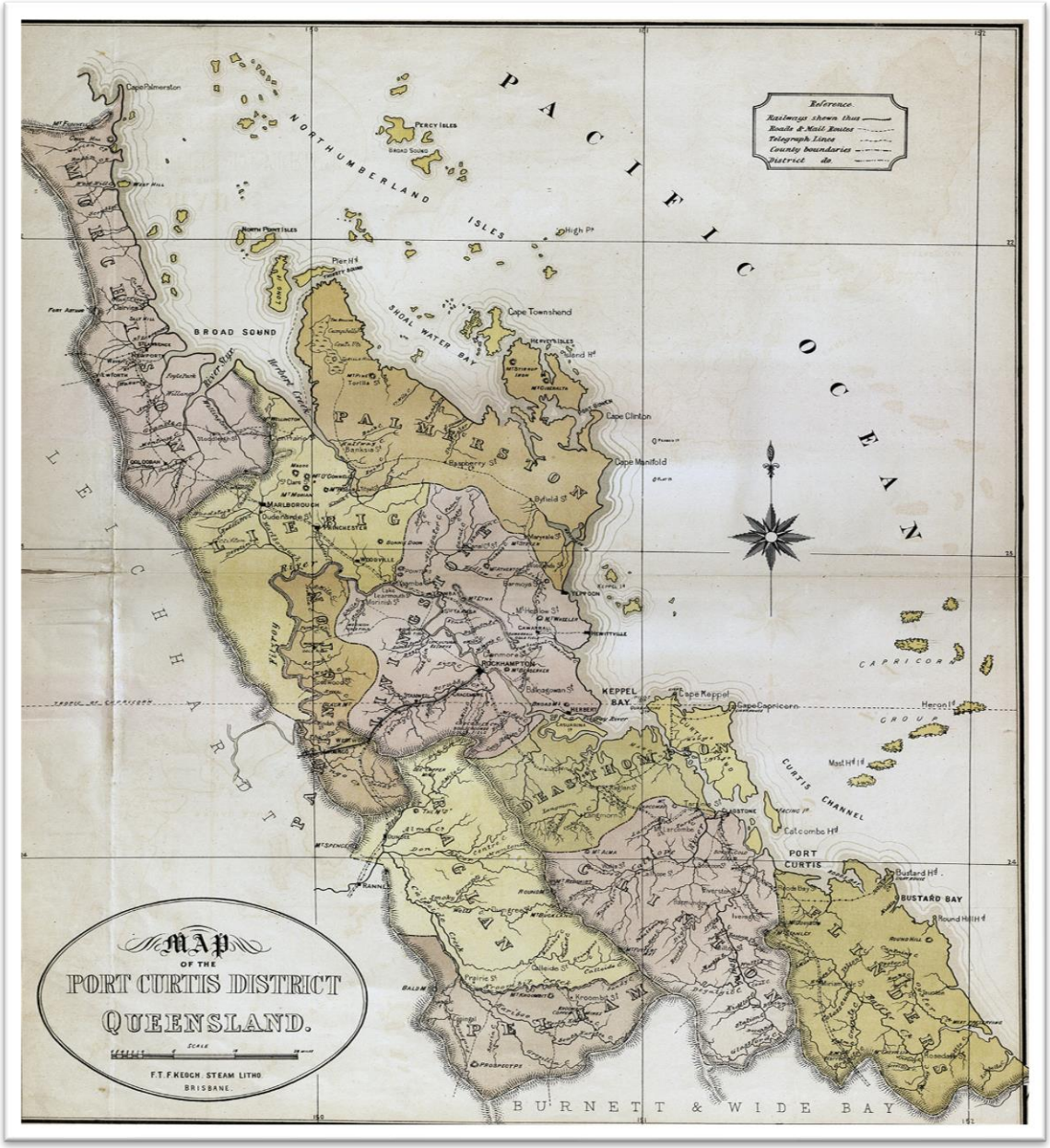
In 1866, the Queensland economy suffered after a bank crash in London when Overend, Gurney and Co., which handled many colonial loans, went bust. Queenslanders had relied on the London capital market, and Australian banks were affected. Business in the colony was at a standstill until about 1868, with economic recovery delayed until 1870.



Map 2.3: The opening of Land Districts in Queensland, 1840s to 1860s.
Source: Cartography by Vincent Verheyen. Clive Moore Collection.

The Inspiration

Early settlement beyond Moreton Bay (Brisbane) leaked north, inland from the New England district onto the Darling Downs. Transportation of convicts to the east coast of Australia ended in 1840, then two years later the New South Wales Government ceased sending convicts to Moreton Bay. The port was opened, allowing access to the Downs pastoralists. Pastoralism spread inland through what became the Maryborough, Bundaberg, and Gladstone hinterlands, before the ports existed. Gladstone, an 1847–48 convict settlement re-settled by pastoralists in 1853, had an excellent harbour which became the main port from which early Central Queensland pastoral expansion occurred. For a short while it was to be the capital of a new colony.



Map 2.4: The coastal Port Curtis Land District was opened in 1854. It stretched north to Cape Palmerston, 85 kilometres from Mackay. The Leichhardt Land District (Map 2.5) is inland, and the South Kennedy Land District (Map 4.1) is to the north.
Source: Hiscocks 1878.

North-eastern overland exploration expeditions began in the 1840s and 1850s. In 1845–46 Ludwig Leichhardt travelled from the Darling Downs and up the west side of the coastal ranges, through what became Queensland, continuing to Port Essington (Darwin). His trip took him along the Isaac and Suttor rivers, inland past the back of the Pioneer Valley, on to the Burdekin and Clarke rivers, and several others feeding into the Gulf of Carpentaria. Another Leichhardt-led expedition set off north in 1846–47 but was aborted. Aware of Edmund Kennedy's 1847–48 inland river-tracing expedition, Leichhardt set out again, and disappeared. Several years later, after explorations in Western Australia, in 1855 Augustus Gregory and a party including his brother Francis T. (Frank) Gregory, and natural scientists, sailed north to explore rivers in what is now the Northern Territory, returning overland to Brisbane via the Flinders, Burdekin, Suttor, Fitzroy and Burnett rivers. Their first

reconnection with colonists was at Conner and Fitz's station on the Dawson River. As with Leichhardt, their track led them inland past the high mountains sheltering the Pioneer Valley. Augustus Gregory set out again in 1858, searching for the lost Leichhardt expedition, mapping the southeast boundary of what became Queensland, before retreating to South Australia. The rudiments of north-eastern geography were beginning to be revealed.

The east coast Port Curtis and Leichhardt land districts were proclaimed open for settlement while still part of New South Wales. The Port Curtis Land District extended north to Cape Palmerston, bordering the Leichhardt Land District which extended as far north as the Denman Range beyond Nebo and Lake Elphinstone (Maps 2.4–5). In 1853–54, when the Archer brothers located and stocked Gracemere on the Fitzroy River, near what is now Rockhampton, it was the most northerly pastoral lease in Australia. The brothers ran cattle and sheep on Gracemere, which they had driven up from their Eidsvold and Coonambula pastoral stations in the Burnett region. They used their own ketch on the Fitzroy to bring in supplies and take out wool. This led to Rockhampton, 40 kilometres upstream from the mouth of the Fitzroy, being first settled in 1856.

Also in that year, the Elliott brothers took up land at Canoona, 59 kilometres north of what became Rockhampton. Settlement sped up after a brief goldrush at Canoona in August 1858. Rockhampton became a port of entry in October 1858, with its first land sales in Sydney that year, and was proclaimed a town in December. The Archers also provisioned some of the prospectors to search further afield, which led to the gold and copper finds at Mount Morgan, Copperfield, and Clermont. Gold was also discovered at Peak Downs in 1861.

Other early pastoralists were part of this northerly inland migration. Richard (Honest Dick) Spencer joined the Archers' initial exploration party. They travelled north as far as what they named Mt Spencer, north-east of Nebo and not far from the wall of the Pioneer Valley. Spencer later took up a land lease close by, called The Retreat (the name was later changed to Mt Spencer). In 1856, Dan Conner and Henry Bates Fitz (his partner from Pilton station on the Darling Downs) began moves to purchase the lease of Rio station on the Dawson River from the Haughton brothers. Evidence is divided; one source says the sale was never completed and another suggests that Conner had begun stocking the lease. He was certainly there in November 1856 when the Gregory brothers' expedition passed by. In the same year, William Landsborough, brother of James Landsborough of Raglan station near Gladstone, tendered for the Fort Cooper leases, named after baronet Sir Daniel Cooper, first Speaker of the New South Wales Parliament. Fort Cooper's head station was 20 kilometres away from what became the town of Fort Cooper (Nebo). Conner and Fitz moved north from the Dawson area, in 1857 speculatively selecting Princhester, followed by Willangie, Marlborough, and Collaroy, all north of Rockhampton. William Tucker of the Sydney firm Tucker and Co. purchased Marlborough, where Biddulph Henning became manager. Van Wessen purchased Princhester, and Conner and Fitz sold Willangie to William, August, and George Hurst, stepsons of Fitz. Conner and Fitz kept only Collaroy station on plainland, which was not stocked until 1859. (The area is over the mountains from modern Carmila.) Conner gave his name to Connor's (*sic*.) Range, part of the south-western wall of the Pioneer Valley, inland opposite present-day Clairview on the coast. The McCrossin-Mackay expedition passed by Collaroy station in July 1860 when returning from their 'discovery' of the Pioneer Valley. The proximity of Collaroy and the opening of the Blue Mountain runs soon after, makes the 1860 Pioneer Valley expedition less of an isolated triumph of exploration.

In the same year, John A. Macartney settled Waverley, on fine coastal plains not far from present-day St Lawrence on Broadsound, and Andrew Throckmorton Ball stocked the Blue Mountain runs in the headwaters of Funnell Creek, which became Wandoo,

Bolingbroke, Colston Park, Blue Mountain and Haslewood stations, north of Collaroy and just south of the Pioneer Valley. A.T. Ball made his home at Haslewood, named after his grandfather. These pastoral names all have later connections with Mackay. The convoluted pastoral settlement pattern established provides context for the McCrossin–Mackay expedition which entered the Pioneer Valley in 1860. In essence this was a coastal extension of exploration and pastoral settlement moving north from Broadsound and out to Fort Cooper. The McCrossin–Mackay expedition approached from inland, although it would not have been long before the coastal frontier was pushed further north to 'discover' the valley. Collaroy is only 120 kilometres from today's Sarina and 100 kilometres from Fort Cooper/Nebo.

1850s Run Hunters, Tenders and 'Squattages'

One way to focus on the early history of settlement on the land between Broadsound, Nebo and Bowen is to concentrate on the exploits of five individuals: Peter Fitzallan Macdonald, William H. Gaden, John Arthur Macartney, William Landsborough, and George Dalrymple. They manipulated pastoral leases in the Port Curtis, Leichhardt and South and North Kennedy land districts, and interacted with each other. Macartney and Dalrymple had a direct impact on settlement in the Pioneer Valley during the first half of the 1860s. They also exemplify the links between Victorian capital and marriage into established pastoral families, which continued as pastoralism moved further north.

By the time the first settlers were camped on the site of Mackay in late 1862, the country over the ranges to the south, north, and west had been taken up and some of it stocked for several years. There was a chain of pastoral leases from Rockhampton to Port Denison (Bowen), the first port for the Kennedy District. This section of the chapter illustrates many of the themes mentioned at the start. They were all 'run hunters' or 'run jobbers' to some degree—mainly young speculators who searched out possible land tenders and leases for others, and surveyed leases which had already been marked out in rudimentary ways. These were also called 'squattages'. There were two types of 'run hunters'. First, those who located land and tendered for it before the separation of Queensland from New South Wales in June 1859, or applied for leases in the new colony, relying on having a year to stock the land, during which time they could sell the application (which was in theory illegal without prior stocking). They could make thousands of pounds if they held several blocks of land, sold them and put the profits into one substantial property which they worked for themselves. Second, there were also 'wholesale run-hunters' who moved ahead of declared land districts, pegging out claims ready for later 'openings'. The McCrossin–Mackay party which entered the Pioneer Valley in 1860 were a bit of both: they were not wealthy, and they moved ahead of the legal land frontier.

Peter Fitzallan Macdonald

One of 12 children, Peter Fitzallan Macdonald (1830–1919) was born in Sydney to the daughter of a prosperous ex-convict and a Scottish emancipist farmer father. Macdonald arrived in Gladstone in 1857, moving to Rockhampton soon after, when there were only three buildings in the village. His younger brother John Graham Macdonald was also an early Queensland explorer and pastoralist, and a sometime partner of Sir John Robertson and Robert Towns in Sydney. Between the 1870s and the 1900s, J.G. Macdonald was a Gold Commissioner, Mining Warden, Lands Commissioner, and Police Magistrate, in several places including Bowen, Townsville, and Brisbane. Peter Macdonald travelled west collecting pastoral leases along the Mackenzie, Isaacs, Conner and Nogoa rivers to sell at a

profit, then settled at Yaamba station on the Fitzroy River, close to Rockhampton. Yaamba was situated on a ford across the river, although floods made crossings impossible, except by boat.

In November 1858, Marlborough was the starting point for a small expedition to the west, by P.F. Macdonald, John Cameron MacDonald (*sic*., unrelated), and a man named Buckle, ending up at what is now Springsure. J.C. MacDonald had selected land there while travelling with Landsborough in early 1858. He did not have the finances to develop the leases and had offered them to P.F. Macdonald (*sic*.) in partnership, an offer the latter refused. Macdonald then selected Fernlees and other runs near Springsure, one of which was Cullin-la-ringo (meaning 'sought and found'). He sold this valuable but still unstocked lease to Horatio Wills for £2,100 (about $179,000 today), an indication of the value of these new areas. Cullin-la-ringo became infamous because of 19 deaths in a massacre there by Aboriginal people in 1861, mainly members of the Wills family. Macdonald took part in attacks to avenge the Wills family.

Also in 1861, he married Julia Ayrey, the daughter of a wealthy pastoralist from Victoria's Western District. Macdonald's obituary notes that he took up leases with J.A. Macartney, J.B. Macartney, Robert Graham, and Thomas Vicary, afterwards disposing of the leases advantageously. In the pre-Queensland years, land could be taken up without stocking or even viewing it. Between 1873 and 1878, P.F. Macdonald was elected to the Queensland Parliament. His various investments sustained him when he lost 90 percent of his stock in the 1895–1903 Federation Drought. Macdonald's obituary also noted many encounters with 'treacherous natives'.

William H. Gaden

The next area to be opened was the land around Broadsound. In 1856, another 'run hunter', John Peter Campbell, selected a huge area on Waverley Plains at Broadsound. In the same year, Gympie pastoralist William H. Gaden, along with European and Aboriginal companions, explored the area that became Marlborough station and the port of St Lawrence. Heading for the Isaac River, it took them two weeks to cross the ranges, finding a way through the Collaroy Range from Broadsound towards Lotus Creek and Peak Downs. (The route to Peak Downs remained via Marlborough and St Lawrence for some time.) They proceeded north-west to Fort Cooper where they found trees marked by Landsborough, continued to Lake Elphinstone, and located the Isaac River at what became Burton Downs, west of Fort Cooper station. Moving north they came to the Bowen River, which they named the Bonar, and finally reached the mouth of the Burdekin in 1857. They then backtracked through constant rain and floods, over the Collaroy Range to Canoona and Gracemere stations. Several months later, Gaden and a new party (Joseph Walker, Marmaduke Ramsay and two Aboriginal guides) set out again, following Marlborough Creek to its junction with the Fitzroy River, the area managed by Biddulph Henning between 1858 and 1862. This time Gaden proceeded from Connors Range to what became Fort Cooper, Burton Downs and Eaglefield (Dabin) stations. They rode north to the Bonar/Bowen River, then returned south to Collaroy, and Princhester where Dan Conner had arrived with sheep to stock Collaroy. Gaden's attempts to register pastoral leases were rebuffed in Sydney because the separation of Queensland was close. Eventually he was able to sell his Inkerman and Balaclava leases to Sydney businessman Robert Towns, subject to Queensland Government approval. Disappointment followed, when Commissioner of Lands George Dalrymple awarded the leases to another party and Gaden's explorations came to nothing, although by 1858 Ramsay and Gaden owned Canoona station.

John Arthur Macartney

The most important early settler at Broadsound was John Arthur Macartney, born on 5 April 1834 at 'Creagh Glebe' his family's Georgian home between Baltimore and Skibbereen in West Cork, Ireland. He also had unclear financial links to his stepcousins John Barrington Macartney and William George Macartney and their acquisition of Jolimont, St Helens and Bloomsbury stations, which feature in Chapters 3 and 4.

Over generations, the Macartney family held the office of Sovereigns of Belfast, the title of the Chief Magistrates of the city. His paternal grandfather baronet Sir John Macartney (1747–1812) married twice, first to Anne Scriven, a descendant of the Barclays of Urie in Scotland (with a several hundred years pedigree) and in 1794 to Catherine, daughter of Rt. Hon. Walter Hussey de Burgh (1742–83), Chief Baron of the Irish Exchequer. Hussey Burgh Macartney (1799–1894), the only son from the second marriage, was the father of John Arthur Macartney, who was educated at Lucan School, and privately under the Rev. Dr Dan Flynn in Dublin. J.A. Macartney arrived in Melbourne as a 14-year-old with his father and mother Jane (née Hardman). The Rev. Macartney accompanied Anglican Bishop Perry to establish the See of Melbourne. He became archdeacon, then dean of Melbourne until 1863, followed by vicar-general of the diocese, a position he held until 1877. Except for the bishop, in the 1850s and 1860s Macartney was the leading Church of England official in Victoria.

After this high Anglican upbringing, John A. Macartney experimented with pastoral life, for a time living with his cousins the Greens of Woodlands, about 24 kilometres outside of Melbourne, then accompanied them to another family pastoral property, Glenwillan in the Wimmera district, where he continued his education under a private tutor. His cousin Rawdon Green later became a pastoralist at Peak Downs and in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Macartney briefly took up law, entering the office of Charles Sladen, attorney in Geelong. He found law uncongenial and after 12 months chose instead to live in several pastoral areas, then in December 1851 tried his luck as a goldminer. In 1852, he took up a position as associate to a new judge, Redmond Barry. Sladen, by then knighted and Attorney-General, coached him for the job with Barry. Eighteen months on, he had found law interesting but still not on a par with pastoralism, particularly when his father purchased Wandiligong, a station on the Owens and Buckland rivers, and then another, Warronly near Wangaratta. It was here that he entertained Edward Graves Mayne, a solicitor based in Beechworth, who became his financial partner until 1884, and other notables such as explorer Robert O'Hara Burke, and Cuthbert Featherstonhaugh, who, in 1863 at 26 years of age, purchased Burton Downs station (between present-day Nebo and Moranbah), before moving to the Riverina three years later.

Like many other Victorians from well-to-do families, he decided to try his luck in Queensland. Twenty-four years old, Macartney arrived in Brisbane in October 1857, carrying a letter of introduction from Sir Francis Murray, Speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly. It is worth pursuing Macartney in detail, as he exemplifies pastoralists during these years, and he had Mackay district family connections. Macartney had Victorian pastoral experience, but not enough money to purchase an established property on the Darling Downs. He was an excellent bushman—one of the best horsemen on the northern frontier—and arrived on the cusp of Queensland's separation from New South Wales. When his future main base at Waverley was secure, as so many had done before him, he set out to explore and improve his financial position by trading in land leases. He was young, adventurous, and curious, ready for almost anything.

When he first arrived in Brisbane, after purchasing a couple of horses, Macartney set off by steamer to Ipswich, with the intention of obtaining land on the Darling Downs. It was

not as easy as it had seemed from Victoria, as the best land in what is now southern Queensland was all under lease. He headed to the Wienholt brothers' Maryvale and Fassifern stations, and to Pilton station. The brothers were the sons of a wealthy London merchant. Advised to inspect unoccupied Pike Creek station near Stanthorpe, it did not meet his requirements. Next, he went to Drayton, then the biggest town on the Darling Downs, and inspected unoccupied Yuleba station. On the Downs he met William and Sylvester Fraser who were out avenging the 27 October 1857 murders of their family at Hornet Bank. Their carnage became legendary, and Macartney was soon to have his own involvement with First Nations people. Next, he travelled north towards the Dawson River. He spent Christmas Day at Port Curtis (later Gladstone) with the Government Resident, Captain Maurice O'Connell, who owned the nearby Riverston pastoral lease. Macartney went on his way via Mt Larcombe (also Larcom) and the Landsborough brothers' new Raglan station, finally reaching the Archer brothers' Gracemere station on the Fitzroy River just before the end of 1857. His connections show his elite status.

Early the next year, Macartney joined George and John Murray, and Dan Conner, to ride to what became Rockhampton, and to Canoona station just north of there. John P. Campbell was visiting—mentioned above as a speculator in pastoral land—who had taken up several northern Port Curtis District leases in 1855. Three of these were the neighbouring Waverley, Tooloombah, and Toorilla runs on the outer edge of the Port Curtis Land District and as yet unsettled. Together with two Aboriginal stockmen, they rode to Broadsound to inspect the properties. Campbell kept Toorilla, selling Waverley at Broadsound to Macartney. Soon afterwards, he sold neighbouring Tooloombah to the Hon. John Douglas (a grandson of the Marquis of Queensbury), then a New South Wales politician, and later Queensland Premier (1877–79). Douglas resigned his NSW post and moved to Tooloombah in 1861. He had a manager who ran the property, Douglas and his wife preferring life in Rockhampton, albeit small. A year later they moved to Brisbane, then he contested and won the Port Curtis seat in 1863. In financial difficulties, the 1866 Queensland financial crash was his undoing as the next year he was forced to transfer Tooloombah to Gilchrist Watt & Co. of Sydney, and in 1872 became insolvent.

In 1858, J.B. Macartney was visited by his stepcousins, brothers John B. and William G. Macartney, along with Robert William Graham, all from Victoria and on the hunt for properties of their own. J.A. and J.B. Macartney, and Graham, with one Aboriginal employee, went south to purchase 3,000 head of sheep from Rawbelle station on the Nogo River in the Monto district at 7s. to 10s. a head. They drove them north to Canoona. Waverly had no facilities, so for a consideration (erecting huts and yards) the owners, Ramsay and Gaden, allowed them to rest the sheep there. As mentioned above, while they were away, gold had been found at Canoona. Although the goldrush petered out, the hopeful diggers provided the initial population to establish Rockhampton. J.A. Macartney invested in town allotments which soon proved to be valuable. In December, he purchased Glenmore station on the north bank of the Fitzroy, close to Rockhampton, as a more convenient holding area for his and J.B. Macartney's sheep. He kept the property for about two years until Waverley was well-established.

In late 1858, half a year before separation of the new colony, J.B. Macartney, along with the Macartney brothers, and Robert William Graham made several short exploration trips. Early the next year, J.A. Macartney set off for three weeks with Peter F. Macdonald from Yaamba and an Aboriginal employee to explore land around the Mackenzie, Isaac, and Conner rivers, up to the northern end of the Leichhardt District, returning via Fitz and Conner's outpost at Collaroy. Following the established run-hunting tradition, in partnership with Macdonald, along with his friends Thomas Vicary and Robert Graham, J.A. Macartney took up several pastoral leases there. This is probably the trip on which Macartney located

and tendered for the Huntley, Wolfang and Cheesborough leases at Peak Downs, the ownership of which was later contested by R. Ker, to whom Macartney paid £800 to withdraw his parallel claim. After resting at Waverley, early in 1859 Macartney set off with Dan Conner, two other men, Driscoll and Fuller, and a couple of Aboriginal guides, to try to find a suitable dray route over the mountains between Waverly and Fitz and Conner's isolated Collaroy lease to the north. This eluded them, although a suitable passage across the mountains was located by Christopher and John Allingham in mid-1860 while driving sheep north, not long after the Dalrymple expedition (see below).

Plate 2.5: John Arthur Macartney (1834–1917) in middle age.
Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Arthur_Macartney

Macartney visited his father in Victoria later in 1859, riding overland from Sydney to Melbourne. Returning north to stock Waverley, Macartney set out again in 1860 (by which time Queensland had been proclaimed a separate colony) with Graham and an Aboriginal employee to inspect his Wolfang, Huntley and Cheesborough leases at Peak Downs, which soon after he sold to Oscar de Satgé. Macartney also went north as far as Mt McConnel (next to the Burdekin), then took up Avon Downs and a neighbouring lease (both inland from present-day Moranbah), which he later sold to Ker and Clark, along with his Glenmore lease.

Macartney's first *bona fide* pastoralist neighbour was Biddulph Henning, manager of Marlborough station, who in 1862 moved north to the Exmore lease (between the Bowen and Broken rivers in the South Kennedy District). Macartney first stocked Waverley in early 1860, with 250 cattle purchased from the Archers at Gracemere, driving them north with his newly purchased equipment, including two prefabricated American 'diggers' cottages' on bullock drays. He installed Henry Bridson as manager, then left for Gayndah in March to purchase another 1,150 cattle. At about this time, his partner Mayne arrived from Melbourne to inspect Waverley. Macartney was the first to take a small boat into shallow Broadsound and to St Lawrence Creek to deliver cargo for Waverley homestead, just 6.4 kilometres away, rather than have a long trip by dray to Rockhampton and back. The next year he married Anne Flora Wallace-Dunlop, which was probably arranged when he was in Victoria in 1859.

Her father was Alexander F.C. Wallace-Dunlop, a pastoralist at Hexham Park station in Western Victoria near Mortlake, and a nominated member of the Legislative Council from 1851 until his death in June 1852. The Macartneys had four sons and four daughters.

When he died in 1917, Macartney had held 25 pastoral properties in Queensland and four in the Northern Territory, as well as other grazing land in Queensland. Immensely wealthy, he lost everything in the 1895–1903 Federation Drought and began again when he was in his sixties. He seems to have been fonder of long-distance riding and his contracts to deliver the mail, than running his pastoral properties. He thought nothing of once a month riding 200 kilometres to Rockhampton to pick up his own mail, answer it, discharge his various business needs with storekeepers, and return home the next day. Never recovering his wealth, Macartney ended his days at Ormiston House on the shore of Moreton Bay, an ex-sugar plantation on 81 hectares with extensive views of the bay—a comfortable final home. However, without his presence, his stepcousins and Robert Graham would probably never have been able to establish themselves at St Helens north of Mackay, which is outlined in Chapter 4.

William Landsborough

William Landsborough (1825–86), an Ayrshire Scot, and like Macartney the son of a clergyman, was another important explorer and pastoralist. He migrated to New South Wales in 1841 where his brothers had two pastoral stations in the New England district.

Landsborough was crucial to 1850s and 1860s central Queensland pastoral developments. After a spell on the Bathurst goldfield, he followed his brothers north to Monduran station on the Kolan River west of Bundaberg. By then an excellent bushman, Landsborough became well known for his annual dry season explorations after the shearing was over. A successful pastoralist and ‘run hunter’, each year during the second half of the 1850s he travelled with small parties, which always included Aboriginal assistants. Landsborough’s travels are difficult to follow as he never kept detailed diaries and was only interested in noting the areas of the various runs he pegged. His 1856 party travelled north from Gladstone to Gracemere and Waverley. They crossed over Connors Range to Fitz and Conner’s unstocked outpost at Collaroy, then the most northerly settlement on the east coast. Next, they explored inland and north from Broadsound, as far as Mts Fort Cooper, Pisgah and Nebo in the north of the Leichhardt District, taking up leases over the Fort Cooper and Oxford Downs pastoral country. Landsborough kept most of his Fort Cooper leases, although he sold Oxford Downs to James William ‘Greenhide’ Stuart in 1859.

Landsborough and his party were the first Europeans to see the ranges to the east and north of Nebo Creek and the plains around Fort Cooper, which were his ‘promised land’. He scattered the area with biblical names, naming Pisgah Range north of Nebo after mountains mentioned in the Bible (Numbers 21:20, 23:14, and Deuteronomy 3:27), east of the Jordan River and north-east of the Dead Sea. Mt Nebo is the highest point in Landsborough’s Pisgah Range, named after the Babylonian–Assyrian god of vegetation, Nabo (Nebo in Hebrew). Pisgah was in the land of Moab, in the territory of Reuben, immediately opposite Jericho, where Balak offered up sacrifices, and from which Moses first viewed the promised Holy Land. Mt Britton, later a goldmining area to the north, was named after James Britton, a member of this expedition. Fort Cooper North station was founded on Fort Cooper Creek, then a short time later the camp was shifted about 13 kilometres west to a lagoon near Bee Creek, and a few years later was shifted again, 3.2 kilometres further up Bee Creek, where it remained.

In 1857, Landsborough explored around what became Rockhampton and up the coast to Broadsound, applying for land that became Glenprairie station. The next year he explored

west to the Comet and Nogoa rivers. His 1859 expedition included Andrew Diehm, James W. Stuart, Glen Walker (a New South Wales pastoralist connected to the Sydney company How, Walker & Co.), Irishman and excellent bushman Nat Buchanan, and two Aboriginal guides. Many of his companions had later links with the Mackay district. The expedition, intending to proceed north across the Burdekin River, was overtaken by wet weather in the Bowen River valley, and altered course westward, passing through 110 kilometres of spinifex country called Suttor's scrub, then crossed the dividing range and moved west, investigating the tributaries of the Fitzroy and the Belyando rivers. During this 17-week trip they reached the Torrens River, searching for but failing to find any sign of the lost Leichhardt expedition. The party reached the Burdekin, claimed leases over a huge area around Bowen Downs and Mt Cornish, although they were unable to stock the area until 1863, when Robert Moorhead of the Scottish Australian Co. provided the finances. Also in 1859, Landsborough rode west from Rockhampton with Ned Buchanan. In their search for new pastures, they located Aramac Creek, Thomson River, and followed the Gregory and Herbert rivers to their sources.

In 1861, Landsborough teamed up with Buchanan, Edward Brooking Cornish, Glen Walker, and Moorhead and Young, Sydney-based pastoral financiers, to begin the Landsborough River Co. Landsborough had selected several leases in the northern part of Leichhardt District. The company stocked Bowen Downs in the Mitchell District on these western 'Plains of Promise' (around modern-day Muttaburra and Aramac) at the head of the Thomson River. Bowen Downs, 113 kilometres long and quite broad, became the largest pastoral property in Queensland. To raise capital, Landsborough sold all his pastoral leases other than Glenprarie and mortgaged his share of Bowen Downs to the Scottish Australian Co., continuing to hold a quarter share. Buchanan became the first manager of Bowen Downs for the Landsborough River Co. In 1864, Buchanan was part of a rush to claim land in the Gulf of Carpentaria. He walked off Bowen Downs in 1867, defeated by drought, surrendering his share to the Scottish Australian Co.

Plate 2.6: William Landsborough (1824–86).

Plate 2.7: George Dalrymple (1826–76).

Source: (2.6–7) State Library of Queensland.

As mentioned above, Landsborough had led an 1861 Victorian Government-sponsored expedition to search for Leichhardt. The next year, he was nominated for life to the Queensland Legislative Council (twice) but resigned (the position carried no salary) and became Police Magistrate and Commissioner for Lands in Carpentaria, based in Burketown. Dismissed in 1870, in 1877 he was given £2,000 by the Queensland Government as a reward for his explorations and settled on a property near Caloundra. He died in 1886 after a fall from his horse.

George Dalrymple

The other significant explorer, 'run hunter', mobile public servant and later politician was another Scot. George Augustus Frederick Elphinstone Dalrymple, from Aberdeenshire, founded Port Denison (Bowen) in 1861, and Cardwell in 1864. Born in 1826, he was the tenth son of a baronet who was also a lieutenant-colonel. The downside was that he had to make his own way in the world and could expect little financial support. He arrived in southern Queensland sometime between 1856 and 1858, via Ceylon where one of his brothers had a coffee plantation. Having failed to find suitable land on the Darling Downs, entrepreneurial Dalrymple hatched a plan, based on Leichhardt's travels, to expand northern pastoral settlement through an expedition to the headwaters of the Burdekin River. Setting out from Canning Downs near Warwick, and reaching Princhester station by August 1859, his party continued to what became Bowen. Dalrymple's expedition was funded by a Sydney syndicate of businessmen and included around 20 prospective pastoralists. These were the first 'Kennedy men': Edward Cunningham, Frederick Bode, Michael Miles, brothers James and Charles Cassady, J.G. Macdonald (brother of P.D. Macdonald), Philip Sellheim, Charles W. Toussaint, Ernest Henry, Joseph Hann and his sons William and Frank, and cousins John and Christopher Allingham. Christopher Allingham had already explored around the Burdekin in 1851–52.

Before they left, Dalrymple had promised them large areas on the Burdekin, even though they all knew it was a chancy exercise. Dalrymple had already been warned that the plan to open the Kennedy District might be stalled by the new Queensland Government. Like Landsborough, Dalrymple did not keep a diary and most of what we know of the trip comes from letters written by Ernest Henry, the second in command. The expedition seems to have reached Connors River on 29 August, then was slowed by thick brigalow scrub before locating Funnel and Denison creeks, moving north to the junction of Nebo and Denison creeks. After this, they continued north to the Burdekin.

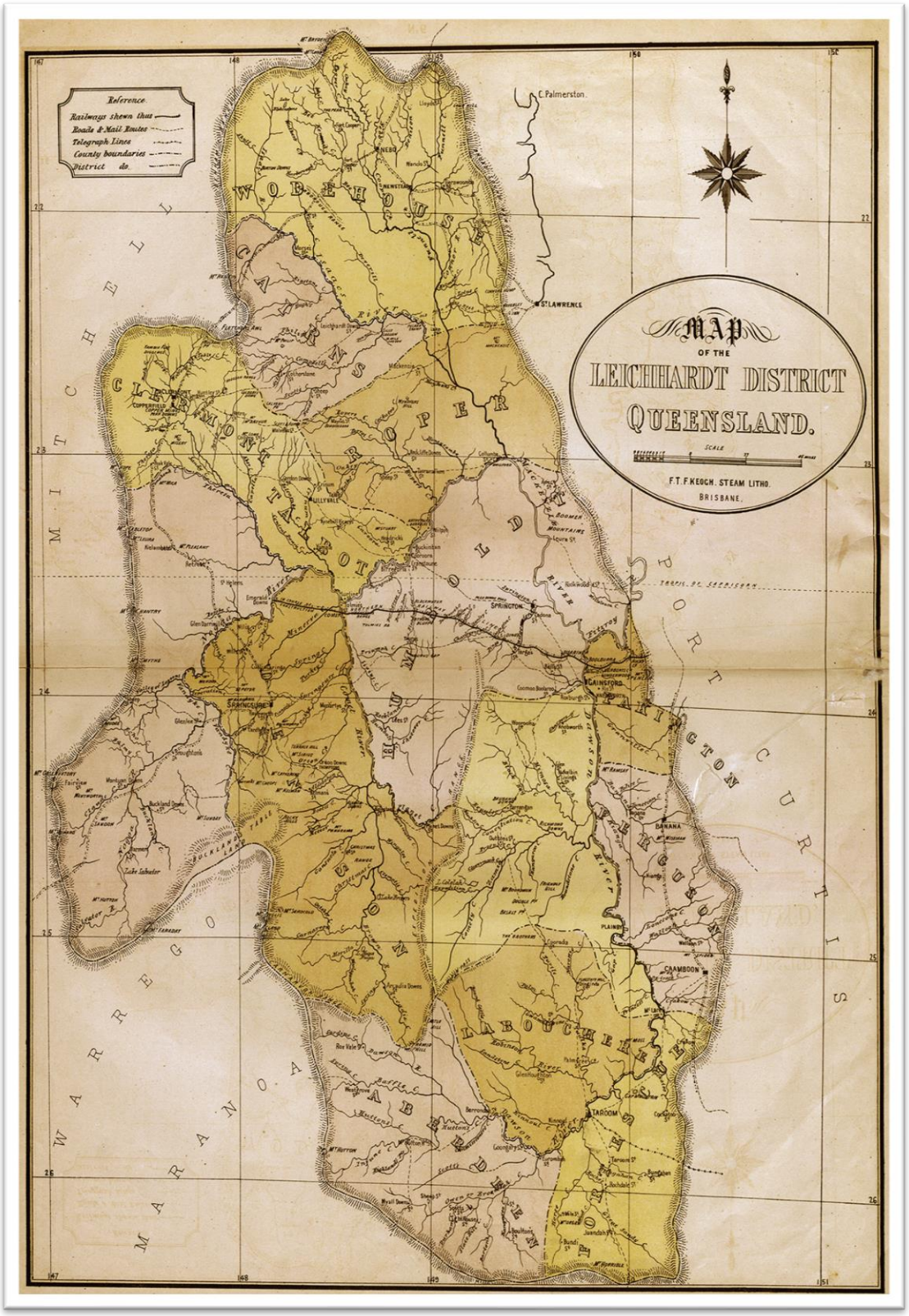
Port Denison was discovered by Captain H. Sinclair and James Gordon on the *Santa Barbara* in October 1859. They were lured by the New South Wales Government offering a large reward for discovery of a new port north of Port Curtis (Gladstone). Unfortunately, once Queensland was separated from the original southern colony, neither government was willing to pay the reward. When Dalrymple's party arrived at Port Denison (later Bowen), further exploration of the upper Burdekin began, each squatter selecting river frontage land. Soon after, huge numbers of stock began to be moved north through the Leichhardt and Kennedy districts. Dalrymple's expedition was supposed to be an attempt to ensure a more controlled process, rather than a reoccurrence of the land grabs which had occurred further south. While more organised, it was still similar.

Dalrymple's compensation was his appointments as Commissioner of Lands and the first Magistrate in the Kennedy District, during which time he helped to establish Bowen as a future port for the hinterland. How much he benefitted financially from assisting pastoralists will never be known. The 1860 Land Act gave each Commissioner of Lands the power to grant licences for runs in their districts, which was to Dalrymple's advantage. In April 1861,

he took up his appointment at what became Bowen, having separately despatched a naval contingent by sea. Despite its excellent harbour and its position above flood height, Bowen failed to prosper, its growth stymied by the establishment of Mackay in 1862 and Townsville in 1864.

The first arrivals set out to inspect their new acquisitions, managing to get hold of the most fertile land, taking up far more than they could stock, which enabled them to trade leases to those who followed behind. By mid-1861, almost all the Kennedy District was under claims. More potential pastoralists arrived, and 454 leases had been approved by mid-1862, covering 31,500 square miles. A stock trail was opened from Bowen to new stations hundreds of kilometres inland. One clue to assessing Dalrymple is that in the next year he fell out with Augustus C. Gregory, then the surveyor-general, the most powerful public servant in the new colony. In 1862, several land commissioners, including Dalrymple, were replaced by professional surveyors. Dalrymple left the public service and in 1863, along with several influential partners, including one 'sleeping partner', Premier Robert Herbert, set up the Valley of Lagoons lease on the upper Burdekin River. In 1864, Dalrymple helped establish Cardwell on Rockingham Bay as a port for stations north of Bowen.

Next, he sold his pastoral interests and went into politics as the first Member for Kennedy in the Legislative Assembly (1865–67), serving as Colonial Secretary for a short time in 1866. In poor health, during 1867–69 he returned to Britain, then reappeared as a partner in Oxford Downs station on the Upper Burdekin. This venture failed and, insolvent, he became Assistant Gold Commissioner on the Gilbert diggings, carried out more explorations, and was appointed in charge of Somerset in 1874. Almost immediately, he suffered a stroke and returned to Scotland, then Sussex, where he died in 1876. During his years as Commissioner of Lands, he was responsible for assessing the first land leases in the Pioneer Valley and seems to have had some unclear early involvement with the Macartney's St Helens leases.



Map 2.5: Leichhardt Land District, opened for settlement in 1854. It extended north inland to opposite Cape Palmerston, 90 kilometres south of Mackay. Port Curtis Land District (Map 2.4) is on the coastal side and South Kennedy Land District (Map 4.1) adjoins to the north.
Source: Hiscocks 1878.

The Hinterland of the Pioneer Valley: Fort Cooper, Nebo, Mt Britton, and Eungella
The chapter began with coal and ends with gold, silver, lead, and copper mining, filling in details about Nebo and the rise and decline of Mt Britton. The main road in West Mackay is still called Nebo Road—the road to Nebo. It joins the Peak Downs Highway, which passes down the Pioneer Valley through Walkerston and Eton, with an exit through a low section of the ranges and on to Nebo, ending in Clermont. This highway ties modern Mackay to its hinterland to the west and south.

Plate 2.8: Sheep on Collaroy station in the nineteenth century.
Source: De Stagé 1901, 99.

Fort Cooper/Nebo became the first town in this inland region, and a base for the Queensland Native Mounted Police, a unit of which operated from there onwards from 1862, discussed further in Chapter 6. Fort Cooper station and then Nebo became a stopping place on the inland road between Bowen and Broadsound, and soon was also the junction of the road to Mackay. The Post Office on Fort Cooper station was moved to the town in January 1864, and the town was surveyed in the same year. A Police Magistrate was based there from 1866, operating a Court of Petty Sessions, augmented by a Small Debts Court the next year. The overland telegraph reached Fort Cooper/Nebo in 1865, and a permanent police station opened there two years later. There was a general store, a hotel, a provisional school, and a blacksmith and wheelwright shop. The town's geographic position allowed it to survive as a regional service town positioned on a rural crossroads. The early 1860s dray track north, which became the main communication route for mail and supplies, ran from Yaamba through Canoona, Marlborough, Waverley and St Lawrence, Collaroy, Tierawoomba, and Fort Cooper/Nebo. Once St Lawrence became a port, the track went from there to Clermont and Peak Downs and on to Fort Cooper (Map 2.1). The overland telegraph route came north via Peak Downs, the route now followed by the Peak Downs Highway. The track continued to Exmoor in the north of the Leichhardt District, and Strathmore on the Bowen River in the

South Kennedy District. The final section went east from Strathmore to Eton Vale on the Bogie River and on to Port Denison/Bowen. Traffic to the west forked off at Fort Cooper, Exmore, and Strathmore stations, where the tracks headed further inland to Bowen Downs. Traffic to Mackay forked east at Fort Cooper/Nebo. In 1862, Dick Spencer of The Retreat station, plus William (Billy) Coakley and James Ready teamed up to find a way over the Eton Range to Greenmount and what became Mackay. The gap they chose through the mountains is still in use today as the connecting highway.

Another area was far less accessible—the high ranges and tableland between Nebo and the western end of the Pioneer Valley, which began to be developed in the 1870s and 1880s. There were several pastoral runs on Eungella Plateau. Blenheim, on a tributary of the Bowen River 29 kilometres west of Dalrymple Heights, was originally taken up by Biddulph Henning in the 1860s, along with Exmore further north between Bowen River and the headwaters of the Broken River, over the mountains from coastal St Helens No. 1 run. In 1876, William Barker applied for several pastoral leases (four Yungella (now Eungella) leases, six Urannah leases, and another at Mount Cawte), all on the plateau and each averaging 25 square miles. This huge pastoral area was bounded by Broken River and Hazlewood and Urannah creeks. It was 1880 before the Barkers' heavily forested pastoral leases were granted. After Barker died, in 1887 the leases passed to his brother Henry Barker, and Elizabeth Barker. At about the same time Plevna, south of Crediton, was begun by the Clarks.

In the early 1870s, small copper mines were begun at Mt Flora and Mt Orange between Funnell and Devlin creeks, just south of Oxford Downs, with another copper mine near Mt Hess north-west of Fort Cooper/Nebo. Mt Britton rose and declined in the 1880s after gold was discovered there at Oaky Creek in 1881, 35 kilometres from Nebo. Originally called the Nebo goldfield, this became the town and goldfield of Mt Britton. A few nuggets as large as 80 ounces (2.2 kg) were found, and 2,000 miners flocked to the new field, although initial high hopes for a mining bonanza faded. For a short time, Mt Britton was an alluvial field with some reefing, producing an estimated 15,000 ounces of gold. The aristocratic Finch-Hatton brothers had several claims there, the main one called the 'Little Wanderer', which, for a while, when crushed, yielded 7 ounces (198 g) to the ton. There were several hotels, commercial and government buildings, a Chinese community, and a town doctor, a school, post office, public hall, and Good Templars Lodge. By 1888, the area was 'duffered out' (meaning it had run out of gold). The main mining company closed in 1890, and in the next year only one hotel remained. By 1908, the town was almost deserted.

Gold bearing ore was discovered at Eungella in 1889, which led to the establishment of Crediton, the township for this new goldfield. During the initial rush, Crediton had a population of 400, served by five hotels. Tracks up the range were constructed during the late 1880s, from just east of Netherdale at the end of the Pioneer Valley. Between 1903 and 1913, the Department of Public Lands built the Range Road to Eungella, a major engineering feat, which during the twentieth century was proudly known as the steepest main road in the Southern Hemisphere (ignoring any competition in South America or southern Africa). The goldfield at Eungella had declined by 1905, but not before the nearby Mt Barker area was involved in silver and lead mining onwards from 1891 (continuing until 1910). Copper was also mined at Mt Spencer between 1877 and 1908. Once the Range Road was open, access to the plateau became easier and timber was cut and brought down to the coast, although the largest logs were still sent down a water-assisted 'timber chute' to the valley below, and then transported by bullock drays to the mills. During the 1880s–90s most able-bodied men at Nebo left to go mining, supplemented by others from Cooktown, Charters Towers, Clermont, and Mackay.

Eungella, with its steep road and beautiful surrounds, became a logging, dairy and

tourist area, reached via Mackay and the Pioneer Valley. The Chalet Hotel built in 1933, has unsurpassed views down the valley. After initial exploitation of its timber, the plateau became a dairy area, its tourist potential augmented by the construction of 8.48 square kilometre Eungella Dam in 1969, which met the requirements of a thermal power station at Collinsville and the water needs of the coal towns Collinsville and Scottsville in the Bowen Basin.

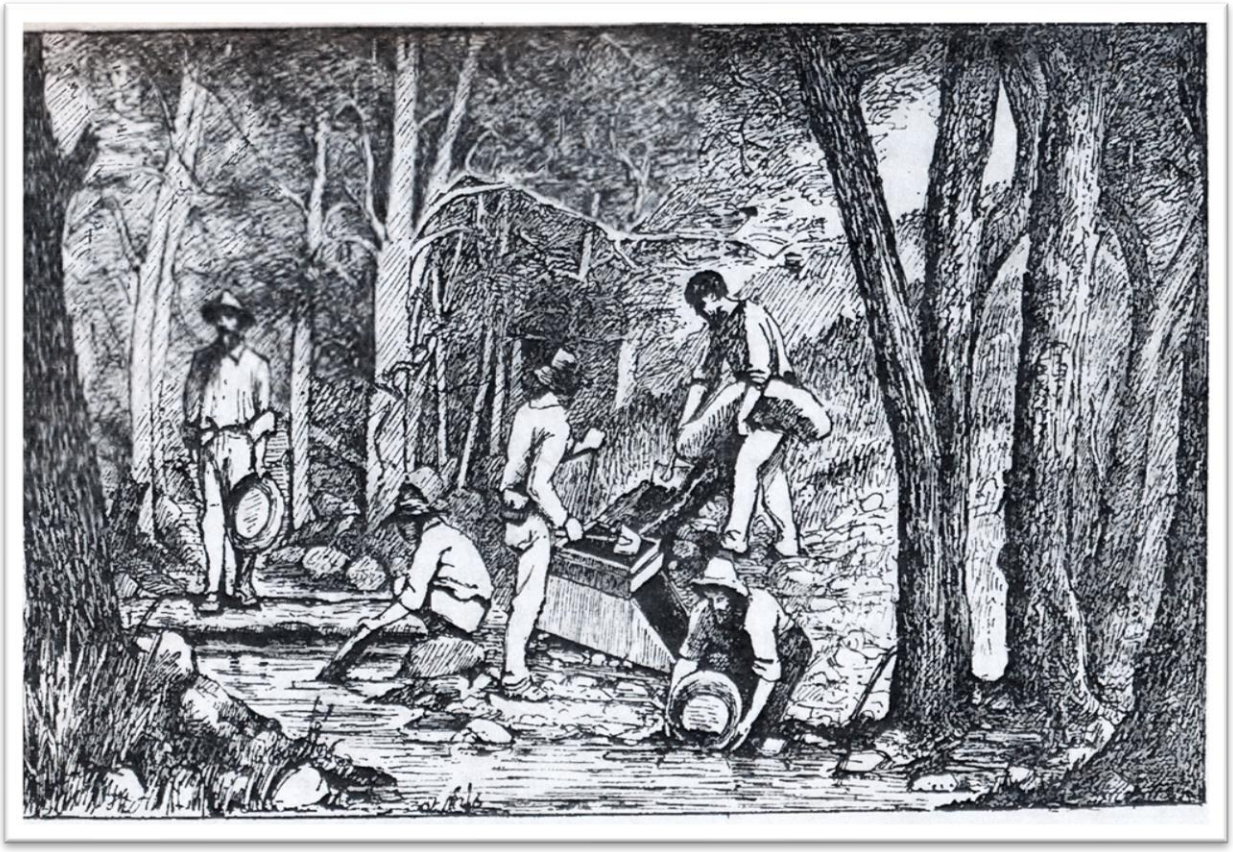


Plate 2.9: Searching for gold at Mount Britton, 1880s.
Source: Finch-Hatton 1886, 66.

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This chapter, and the next three, position the move into the Pioneer River Valley as part of a much larger pastoral expansion during the 1850s and 1860s. The Port Curtis and Leichhardt districts were like a passage north with a side exit into the Pioneer Valley, as well as into other areas of the South Kennedy District over the range to the west. The first explorers to enter the valley were the party led by John McCrossin and John Mackay in 1860, then John Mackay returned with stock in 1861. The Mackay and Nebo townships began in 1862.

One man who later became well known at Mackay was Andrew Diehm, who moved to Fort Cooper station in 1862, when it was owned by Glen Walker, brother of John Walker, later of Homebush in the Pioneer Valley. Nat Buchanan was in charge, assisted by Rankin and Diehm. In the same year, Arthur Kemmis, Frank Bridgman, and Albert Brown arrived at Fort Cooper from New South Wales with 30,000 sheep. Soon after, Diehm made his first trip down to Mackay, bringing wool from Skull Creek station on the Isaac River in late 1862. Wool was also despatched to Mackay from Collaroy station in the same year. At that stage there was yet no settlement on the site that is now the city of Mackay. The only European structures in the valley were slab huts at Greenmount, John Mackay's incipient pastoral station. Diehm described bullock tracks along the route to what became Mackay, made by

Dick Spencer's teams, driven by James Ready, when they picked up supplies for Spencer's new The Retreat station.

These early settlers often made arduous journeys driving stock and thought little of lengthy rides for other purposes—to pick up rations and the mail, to visit neighbours, or to seek medical care. For example, when J.A. Macartney's 63-year-old clerical father visited him in July 1862, they rode another 70 kilometres to Collaroy station to visit Dan Conner. The mail runs were also long-distance trips: initially, the mail for Fort Cooper came via Rockhampton, 354 kilometres south. Andrew Diehm mentioned undertaking this arduous journey on two occasions. Diehm also claimed to have been the first person to take cattle over the Collaroy Track, and in these early years he also took a mob of 3,000 cattle, which had been spelled at Fort Cooper for seven months, up to Bowen Downs, then being formed. In 1862, Diehm again went west and helped to form Beaufort station near Belyando, the property of Arthur (later Sir Arthur) Palmer, who held various portfolios in the Queensland Government between 1867 and 1881, including long periods as Colonial Secretary and Premier. The human and stock movements were continuous, and, given the difficulties in the 1860s, almost inconceivable today.

The web of pastoral stations and pioneer colonists was enormously complex, almost impossible to untangle as we are never quite certain who funded what, and often legal and financial changes took some years to accomplish. Herds and flocks were moved about to fulfill stocking requirements under the Lands Acts. The names of the same individuals crop up in the historical record time and again as they tried to make their fortunes. These men were extremely mobile, and as the lease owners and managers they manipulated and manoeuvred. They ran sheep and cattle, experimenting with both, and in the 1860s and 1870s some of their names appear as owners of sugar plantations in the Pioneer Valley. They were frontier entrepreneurs, willing to try their hand at almost anything.

The first dray loads of wool from the Fort Cooper district were sent to Bowen for shipment, and until the end of 1862 supplies for all of the western pastoral stations were usually landed at Bowen or Waverley/St Lawrence at Broadsound and carried inland. In August that year, John Mackay and Dick Spencer passed by Tongwarry near Fort Cooper, the new headquarters for the Native Mounted Police. Frank Bridgman was there, and John Mackay, on his way south after failing to establish Greenmount station, told him that there was a new much nearer place. This of course was what became the port and town of Mackay. The next chapter describes the first cycle of land ownership in the valley and its surrounds, and the arrival of a new group of pastoralists. A primitive town surrounded by long grass developed on the muddy banks of the Pioneer.

Figure 2.10: Drays like this one, drawn by bullocks, carried supplies from Mackay to the pastoral stations in the valley and over the ranges, returning laden with bales of wool.
Source: De Stagé 1901, 109.

Bibliography

The bibliographies for all chapters are in a separate file.

Endnotes

[1] May 1984, 125.
[2] Bancroft 1879, 10, 15.