7. Sugaropolis

Plate 7.1: Pioneer and River plantations tramway, 1880, crossing Fursden Creek. The locomotive, the first in the district, was built by Victoria Foundry in Mackay. Percy Creese, the plantation manager and nephew of John Spiller, is standing on the front of the engine. Two South Sea Islanders are sitting on the bridge. The locomotive was christened 'Emma Ruth' after Spiller's wife. It was soon replaced by a more substantial locomotive (Plate 8.17).
Source: Clive Moore Collection.

Sugar Plantations in the Pioneer Valley

Today's Pioneer Valley remains the largest district in Australia's thriving sugar industry, bringing 1.5 billion dollars into the economy each year. Four mills—Farleigh, Marian, Racecourse, and Plane Creek—crush the entire district crop, where once there were 35 (Table 7.1, excluding Proserpine). The Pioneer Valley presents a vista of kilometre after kilometre of flat green and brown symmetrical patterns. In the growing season, brown rectangles striped with furrows carry on as far as the eye can see, blending into green blocks as the cane grows, the pattern broken only by natural features such as creeks, the Pioneer River, occasional hills, and small towns. Cane totally dominates the flat land, although at the edges of the valley it is gradually overshadowed by the brown and grey of the higher untamed areas. Within this colourful picture is another pattern, the imposed logistics of roads, railways, and houses, with glistening galvanised ripple iron roofs on the houses and sheds, softened by the dark green of mango and other fruit trees, stately hoop pines, fig, and other shade trees. On the edges of the valley floor the hills become more numerous, feeding into the surrounding mountain ranges. The visual pattern partly relates to topography but includes elements dating back to the shapes of the first land selections and subsequent surveying onwards from the 1860s, as well as the need for road and rail links between early settlements, and more recently by the needs of modern mechanical farming.

It is easy to eulogise the beauty of the verdant green fields of cane, forgetting the

ecological imperialism which enabled it all. The original rich flora and fauna were stripped out to accommodate fields of sugarcane. Over the final 40 years of the nineteenth century, the Indigenous population was severely diminished, and a subservient immigrant Melanesian labour force was introduced to remove the original vegetation and replace it with sugarcane. During the twentieth century, European labour predominated, and labour needs were reduced by mechanisation onwards from the 1920s, except in the cutting season. Factories were built in the fields which polluted the air and the waterways. Fertiliser was used, which has affected the creeks and rivers and eventually even the Great Barrier Reef off-shore. Annual firing of the fields during several decades of the twentieth century destroyed most of the remaining wildlife.

Land on the south side of the river consists of undulating plains of dark alluvial soil, generally light and with a sandy subsoil, which allows easy natural drainage. The Northside (as it is usually written) of the river is more irregular and hillier, alluvial deposits are smaller with more clay mixed in the soil. Originally there was a large amount of 'devil-devil' country, where the soil became clayey and formed small mounds—low hillocks 20 centimetres to 1.5 metres in diameter. Settlers found the ground rough and uneven to ride over, not helped by it being covered by blady grass (*Imperata cylindrica*), often over one metre high and in some places so thick and high as to make it hard for a horse to push through. The Northside had a great deal of hill land of granite and sandstone origin, with a volcanic overlay which created quite fertile areas, the soil declining in fertility as it was washed down to the flats. Initially the scrub-covered hills were not cultivated, then it became clear that ratoon cane did well there as it never became water-logged. Miclere, The Cedars, Inverness, Richmond, and other surrounding plantations were all established on hill land.

During the nineteenth century, the Mackay district gloried in the name 'Sugaropolis'. While the plantations have passed into history, their names often remain as regional and suburban locations, such as Alexandra, Beaconsfield, Conningsby, Dumbleton, Farleigh, Habana, Homebush, Marian, Pleystowe, Richmond, and Te Kowai. The plantation era at Mackay between the 1860s and the 1900s was the closest equivalent that Australia ever developed to the plantation societies of the Caribbean and the southern states of the US. Yet, it was fleeting, dominant only for 20 to 30 years, replaced by mills owned co-operatively by the local farmers, and with a transition from 'coloured' to White labour.

Table 7.1: Plantation and farmers' co-operative mills built in the Mackay district, in order of their first year of operation, 1868–1906. The number codes 1 to 30 appear on the maps for 1869 (Map 4.3), 1877 (Map 7.2) and 1883 (Map 7.3), indicating the positions of the plantations. The definition of a plantation used here is a parcel of sugarcane land with its own mill that crushed for more than three seasons. This excludes some of the primitive short-lived mills and other quite large single-owner areas of cane, which are called estates. The mills listed as 31 to 36 were built onwards from 1888 as farmers co-operative mills, along with Pleystowe (3) and Marian (26) which were converted from plantation to co-operative mills. Farleigh (23) also began as a plantation and transitioned to co-operative status (Map 10.2). Today's surviving mills (23, 26, 32, 33) are now all owned by large international companies. Proserpine (34) is included in the list, although it is really beyond the Pioneer district.

1. Pioneer (1868–82)
2. Alexandra (1868–84)
3. Pleystowe (1869–1888 and 1895–2009)
4. Cassada (1870–1886)
5. Meadowlands (1870–1914)
6. Branscombe (1871–84)
7. Barrie (1872–86)
8. Lorne (1872–87)
9. Miclere (originally Dulverton) (1872–83)

10. Nebia (1872–86)
11. Foulden (1872–87)
12. The Cedars (1873–86)
13. Dumbleton (1873–87)
14. Inverness (1873–84)
15. River Estate (1873–91)
16. Balmoral (1873–80)
17. Te Kowai (1874–95)
18. Richmond (1874–95)
19. Palms Estate (1881–1924)
20. Beaconsfield (1882–87)
21. Conningsby (1882–87)
22. Victoria (1882–87)
23. Farleigh (1883–1900 and 1905–)
24. Habana (1883–1901)
25. Homebush (1883–1921)
26. Marian (1883–91 and 95–)
27. Mount Pleasant (1883–1901)
28. Nindaroo (1883–1901)
29. Palymra (1883–1907)
30. Ashburton (1883–95)
31. North Eton (1888–1988)
32. Racecourse (1889–)
33. Plane Creek (1896–)
34. Proserpine (1897–)
35. Cattle Creek (1906–1990)

Plantation Society

European settlement in North Queensland created a fascinating and unique society in the tropics. Today in the coastal sugar towns, Europeans from the British Isles, Teutonic areas, Scandinavia, and the Mediterranean, mix with the small remaining Aboriginal population, Torres Strait Islanders, South Sea Islanders, and a variety of Asian peoples, many of whom are descendants of those who arrived in the nineteenth century. Their forebears established a sugar monoculture modelled on the plantation mode of production used in overseas cane-growing areas. The European colonists had connections to other colonial societies, including other sugarcane-growing regions some of which had used chattel slavery. From the 1860s to the 1880s, the bulk of the cane-growing and processing was carried out in single units which combined the cultivation with sugar manufacturing. The agricultural side of the operation required a large, cheap, and tractable labour force. Although it seems strange to us today, nineteenth century Europeans believed that their race would degenerate if they laboured hard in the tropical heat and humidity. They considered that this type of labour was best provided by non-Europeans, whom they deemed racially and intellectually inferior, but physically better adapted for the task.

Without extensive research in British county and parish archives, and in other British colonial societies, particularly in India and the Caribbean, it is difficult to gauge the exact pedigrees of Mackay's plantation owners. Status is not always easy to interpret from scraps of records. A 'farmer' in English parish records could own the local manor house or be from more humble origins. A church appointment could be a sinecure or a working parish position, and just because they came from Jamaica does not necessarily make immigrants the descendants of wealthy slave plantation owners. Nevertheless, common characteristics emerge. The plantation owners were all males, except for A.H. Lloyd's wife at Dumbleton, where part of the land was in her name. Of 65 surnames of owners, partners, or shareholders in Mackay's plantations, just over half are known to have resided for some period on their

plantations. The resident owners were almost all born in the British Isles and predominantly came from middle class landed, merchant and industrial backgrounds. A few of them were from the gentry and minor aristocracy. Their fathers' professions are listed as landowners, farmers, clergymen, civil servants, officers in the armed forces, bankers, merchants, manufacturers, and the occasional gentleman, or squire in a manor house. Although a few came from Scotland and Ireland, most were from southern and midland English counties and appear to have had both urban and rural connections. Some were university-educated and most had good private school educations. One of the owners was a baronet and another a baron (after he owned the plantation), several were extremely well-connected, their families married into the aristocracy, and many had access to members of the British Parliament and to senior public servants.

The owners of the pastoral stations and plantations formed a powerful male clique—the ruling class of colonial society in the region. They owned the largest blocks of land in the valley, directed commodity production, and controlled the legal system, politics and society. Several of the Mackay plantation and estate owners had Caribbean plantation connections: John Ewan Davidson of Alexandra plantation and the Melbourne–Mackay Sugar Co.; Francis T. Amhurst of Foulden plantation; Edward M. Long of Branscombe, River Estate, and Habana plantations; Maurice H. Black of The Cedars; the Macdonald brothers of Inverness plantation; the Donaldson brothers at Cassada plantation; Hugh McCready of Palymra plantation; Andrew Cumming of Richmond plantation, and Charles F.N. Armstrong, manager of Marian plantation. In the 1870s, Alexander R. Macdonald migrated from Trinidad with his brother Donald, founding Inverness plantation. Alexander became a Government Agent on labour trade vessels between 1877 and 1881, and Inspector of Pacific Islanders at Mackay from mid-1881 to 1888. All are discussed in this and later chapters.

There were other connections with overseas sugar-growing or other plantation crop areas, through managers, engineers, sugar boilers (technical staff), overseers, farmers and labourers. Edward Denman of Etowrie estate, came to Mackay via the Caribbean. He became manager of several district plantations. Mauritius in the Indian Ocean provided two of Mackay's most competent mill managers, J.L. Duval and Daniel Dupont. Some of the other sugar boilers, engineers, managers, and estate owners had connections with Demerara on the north coast of South America, Java in the Dutch East Indies, and with CSR plantations in Fiji. Alexander R. MacKenzie, the construction engineer and co-proprietor of Marian mill in the Pioneer Valley with Malcolm Donald McEachran, had six years coffee planting experience in Wayanad, south-west India, then became a sugar planter for three years on the lower Herbert River in North Queensland, before moving to Mackay in 1880.

These connections were maintained to some extent when plantation owners visited other colonies, and through visits to and from relatives from these areas. Mackay's sugar producers read overseas sugar literature and contributed articles themselves. Allusions are often made to the planter's spacious homes and gentlemanly way of life, as if they had established rural manorial dynasties served by coloured labour. Their support for the separation movement, which sought to make North Queensland a separate colony is usually depicted in this light. The ruling class of the Mackay district certainly graded itself socially by pedigree, wealth, and education. While the way of life on the sugar plantations was unlike social patterns elsewhere in Australia, it lasted for only a few decades before being swept away by the needs of efficient agriculture and capitalism, and the dictates of a federated Australia.

Inter-marriage and business and personal relationships further united these families. They had firm notions of gender, class, and racial hierarchies, in part transplanted from the British Isles, but allowing for the contingencies of frontier life. Titled British aristocrats usually took social precedence over the many wealthy landowners with good connections.

The district needed no bunyip aristocracy when it had a resident earl and a baronet, and heirs-apparent to British titles. A decade after he left the district, in 1898 Hon. Henry Finch-Hatton inherited the title of 13th Earl of Winchilsea and 8th Earl of Nottingham. In the 1870s, young Lord Henry Phipps, the son of the 1st Marquis of Normanby and brother of the 2nd Marquis, investigated buying pastoral property from the Martins at Hamilton and Hopetoun. The Macartney family were 1850s–60s settlers featured in Chapters 2 and 3. John Barrington Macartney, who began as a partner in the St Helens leases in 1863, in 1867 succeeded to the baronetage of Lish in County Armagh, Ireland. He spent the rest of his life in the district.

The most senior resident aristocrat was George F.A. Seymour, Earl of Yarmouth and later the 7th Marquess of Hertford. Born in 1871, Seymour arrived at Mackay in the late 1890s and owned a mixed farm on the Northside. I was first alerted to his presence by Eva Black in the 1970s, then in her 90s, a niece of pastoralist, planter, and politician Maurice Hume Black. She remembered dancing with Seymour when she was a teenager. In her innocent spinsterish way, she told me that he was sent to the colonies for 'the good of his health and his country', the standard phrase used to describe 'remittance men' banished by their families. She also said that he was a 'gay young man fond of fancy dancing' and entertained local audiences on stage dressed as a butterfly with sparkling wings. Eva Black never knew how right she was. Today, he could have led the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras procession. He did not leave a good reputation behind him, particularly after he wrote a deprecatory reminiscence about the district for the London *Leader* in 1902. Mackay society was not impressed, despite his rank.

The district was peppered with sons, cousins, brothers and scions of the British nobility, and armorial families were commonplace. John Ewan Davidson of Alexandra plantation was the nephew of the 8th Baron Davidson of Tulloch Castle in Scotland. Frank Amhurst's brother William A.T. Amherst (*sic*.), elevated to the peerage as the 1st Baron Amherst of Hackney in 1892, inherited his brother's plantation and maintained his Foulden plantation connection with the district through his uncle baronet Sir John B. Lawes of Farleigh plantation. The Rawson and the Atherton families, early pastoralists with later sugar interests, were of ancient pedigree, as were the Paget brothers of Nindaroo plantation, and the Long brothers of Branscombe, River and Habana plantations. On his distaff side Graham A. Turnor of Bolingbroke station and The Ridges was related to the Finch-Hattons and was equally well-connected on his father's side.

Alongside this elite were large groups who had little control over their lives. The owners of the capital and the land thought themselves superior to their landless workers, and the European males felt superior to females of all classes. The European women were seldom independent and were subservient in status to their menfolk. Little evidence has survived of the lives of women at Mackay in the nineteenth century. There are few extant diaries or letters. There is no evidence that women's personal finances were invested in plantations, although there is some limited evidence of women owning rural and urban land at Mackay. They probably were involved financially in the plantations, allowing their husbands and sons to administer their money. The elite had substantial but never grand homes, with their women usually confined to the refined domestic sphere. The smaller landowners initially had little power over production, although in the final decades of the century they were in the vanguard of the movement to establish farmer-supplied central mills. Women in this group worked hard physically and often ran the properties if their husbands were away, ill, or deceased. The European labourers, ploughmen etc. who worked for the above groups had little say over their wages or conditions of employment. This group formed the nucleus of the trade union movement and the Labor Party onwards from the 1890s.

Race added an additional tier in the hierarchy. Europeans in colonial Queensland inherited racism as an underlying doctrine of British colonialism, focused further on the

survival of the fittest through the deterministic theory of Social Darwinism late in the century. A section of Chapter 2 attempts to understand the European mindset which relegated Aboriginal Australians and the immigrant Melanesian labourers to the bottom of a human scale and placed Asians not far behind. Melanesians were brought to Queensland for their labour, some of them illegally, although the majority made conscious decisions to enlist. Their motivations in accepting the inducements of the recruiters were deeply involved with their own exchange cycles and the reciprocal relationships between their ancestors, themselves, and the natural world (see Chapter 9). They did not perceive European society as superior, yet the Europeans regarded them as landless, savage pagan Black men and women belonging to the lowest levels of society. There was also a variety of Asian groups working around Mackay: Malays, Javanese, Chinese, Singhalese (Sri Lankans), Indians, and Japanese. Despite the high civilisations from which they came, they too were regarded as inferior.

Although it continued into the early twentieth century, the plantation era peaked in 1883–84. Two decades later, the ownership of the capital and resources of the district had radically altered. Colonial class movements took place, even though pockets of resistance clung to the old order through into the twentieth century. Trade unions and farmers' associations provided unity missing earlier.

Sugarcane in the 1860s

Earlier chapters provide an outline of the 1850s and 1860s pastoral and mining developments which were the precursors to the sugar industry in the Pioneer Valley and along the surrounding coast. Pastoralism dominated the district in the 1860s, except in areas excised from the Cape Palmerston and Balnagowan leases to provide urban and surrounding agricultural land for Mackay. Before sugarcane became a monoculture, settlers experimented with a variety of crops: arrowroot, cotton, maize, sweet and English potatoes, wheat, barley, oats, rice, coffee, and tobacco. Of these crops, the only ones to survive were those that could serve the sugar industry, as foods for the labourers on plantations—sweet and English potatoes, fruit, and vegetables. Grain crops continued to be grown as green fodder and hay for cattle, bullocks, and horses associated with the plantations. In the long term it was sugarcane (*Saccharum offcinarum*) rather than sheep or cattle that shaped the economy and appearance of the valley.

Plate 7.2: John Spiller, pioneer sugarcane grower in the Pioneer Valley.
Plate 7.3: Henry Brandon, Australian Joint Stock Company (AJS) Bank manager and partner of John Spiller.
Source: (7.2) Roth 1908, 60; (7.3) State Library of Queensland.

Plate 7.4: John Spiller's first Pioneer plantation house with its thatched roof. The photograph dates from between 1875 and 1878. John Spiller is seated in the middle. His partner and bank manager Henry Brandon has his arm on the chair of Mrs Frank Smith. Brandon's wife Georgina is seated to his right. Frank Smith, a solicitor, is on the far left holding his hat. Percy Creese (nephew of John Spiller) is standing next to Spiller in front of the post, and Spiller's wife Emma Ruth is seated in front of Percy Creese. George Smith, a shipping agent, and his wife are at the far right.
Source: Roth 1908, 61; and State Library of Queensland.

In an overview of a century and a half the question of who planted the first sugarcane is trivial, yet it still occasionally arouses local passions. John Spiller (1832–1920) usually gets the credit, based on his own claim made in 1877 to have planted his first cane on the first day of June 1865, supported by eye-witness accounts from that year.

History has it that Spiller first went to Surabaya in central Java in 1863 to learn about cane-growing, where he purchased 3,000 cane plants, which seem to have been of the Ribbon variety. As the cane plants had started to wither and decay by the time he returned to Australia, he left them with Louis Hope at Ormiston plantation at Cleveland, Brisbane, who nursed them back to health and returned half the plants to Spiller. Spiller applied for land on the Northside in his and his brother-in-law and first partner John Creese's names. With his farming background, Spiller recognised the potential of the rich alluvial plains along the river. He selected two separate blocks, one on the south bank of the river (which became Branscombe (originally Branscomb) plantation) and the other on the Northside, 2,414 acres (977 ha) developed as Pioneer and (later) Ashburton plantations. Ken Manning's research suggests that Spiller arrived at Mackay in May 1865, built a thatched-roof house, and planted his first cane with the help of Donald Beaton and Jack Seaton, the latter a teenager he had brought with him from Java. He settled down to wait for his small crop to mature, also planting cotton and maize, the profits from which sustained him until he had a substantial cane crop. As the land was applied for under the 1864 Sugar and Coffee Regulations, to have qualified, a section of the Branscombe land must have been cultivated as well.

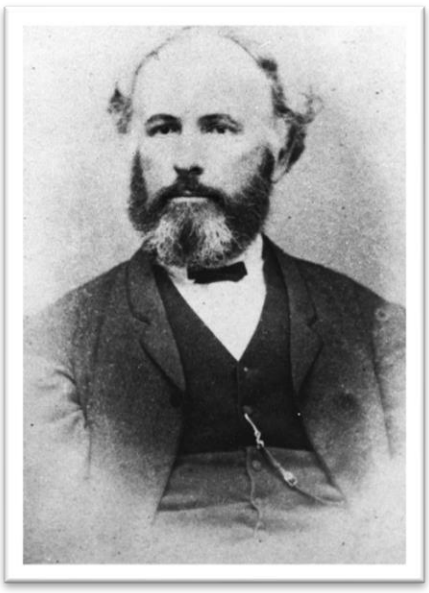
Spiller's parents were Robert Spiller and Ann Griffin. His father was a middle level

rural landowner and employer. The 1851 census in England credits Robert Spiller with owning 320 acres (129 ha) of land, and employing 12 labourers, and nine lime burners manufacturing quicklime in kilns, which was used in mortar for house building. While not poor, he would not have been able to offer his eldest son any substantial financial assistance.

It was probably Creese while in Gympie who suggested to Spiller that they try their luck in the new town of Mackay further north. Both were from Devonshire in England, where Creese was born in 1819, and Spiller in 1832. Creese arrived in Australia in 1856. A butcher, he plied his trade on the Ballarat and Gympie goldfields, and married Susan Dunning from Ballarat. Spiller arrived in Ballarat two years later and married Susan's sister Emma Ruth in 1862. Creese and his family did not move to Pioneer plantation until 1869, the partnership lasting until the late 1870s. Then the Creese family moved to the Ravenswood and Rochford goldfields inland from Townsville, although by the early 1880s Crees was manager for Spiller and Brandon on their new Pioneer estate at the Burdekin.

Initially, Spiller had little capital, crushing his first cane in a primitive wooden-rollered mill with upright rollers worked by horses. It was more of a home-made experiment than a technical masterpiece, although it produced nearly half a ton of sugar. Some sources say that the first cane was crushed in November 1867, with the help of a Mr Booth from Java. However, John Kerr located *Mackay Mercury* sources that confirm the first crushing occurred early in 1868. Spiller was one of the settlers who brought the first Melanesian indentured labourers to Mackay in May 1867.

Spiller's first mill was supplemented in 1869 by another horse-drawn iron mill borrowed from Cassada, the owners having purchased a replacement steam-driven mill. In 1868, Spiller proposed building a mill, but was unable to raise enough capital. In 1869, he produced only eight tons of sugar, had around 145 acres of cane planted, and added another 74 acres. By 1870, he had 220 acres of cane. He probably forded the river and crushed his cane at Pleystowe mill on the south side of the river. Later, similarly, he hauled molasses across the river to the distillery at Te Kowai. Spiller sold his Branscombe land to finance his own steam-powered mill, which first crushed in October 1871. With this advance, Spiller joined Davidson and Fitzgerald in the big league.



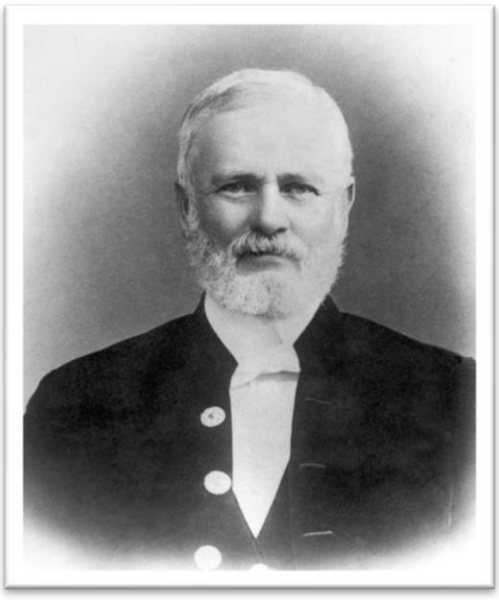


Plate 7.5: Thomas Henry Fitzgerald
Plate 7.6: John Ewan Davidson
Source: (7.9) State Library of Queensland; (7.10) Wikipaedia Commons.

Thomas Henry Fitzgerald, born in Carrickmacross, County Monaghan, Ireland, in 1824, arrived at Mackay in mid-1863. An engineer, he was also familiar with surveying and architecture. Fitzgerald lived in New Zealand for 20 years before moving to Queensland in 1862. He sat on the Provincial Council in Wellington in 1857–58 and then in Hawkes's Bay in 1859–61 and was the Member for Hawke's Bay in the House of Representatives for a few months in 1860. While based in Wellington he married Jessie Wilson, born in Ayrshire in Scotland in 1832. After short periods in Melbourne and Sydney, he moved to Brisbane in 1862, where he explored the possibilities of cane-growing. While he was based in Rockhampton as a Government surveyor in 1863, one of Fitzgerald's jobs was to survey a route over the Eton Range on the road to Nebo, plus the sites for Nebo, Eton and Mackay, and the surrounding land at the mouth of the river, which was set aside for future agricultural selections. He recognized the potential of the district for growing sugarcane.

In a series of clever moves, during 1865 Fitzgerald gained control of most of what became the central plantation land, and in February 1867 entered a partnership with Davidson who had the finances to develop Alexandra, the first plantation and mill. Impressed by the rich alluvial soil along the river, Fitzgerald obtained cane plants from Spiller and planted half an acre, on what is now the corner of Wood and River streets in Mackay. Initially inhibited by the ethics of his position, he did not apply for any of the first batches of agricultural land, which he must have regretted. He made up for lost time when he acquired land in 1865 under the 1864 Sugar and Coffee Regulations. Fitzgerald used his family and friends as 'dummy' applicants and soon controlled over 4,000 acres (1,619 ha) along the river, which became Meadowlands, Palms Estate, and Te Kowai plantations, and Peri estate next to Te Kowai. The Palms land was in Fitzgerald's name, Te Kowai was in the name of a Mackay businessman Anderson Thomas Alexander, and Thomas Dixon, an early Postmaster, took up land for Fitzgerald along Bakers Creek. In the name of his wife Jesse, Fitzgerald also controlled a square mile block on the Northside opposite Pleystowe, as well as the Foulden land, which was in the name of Robert Wilson, his brother-in-law in New Zealand. This seems to be the land that partners John Ewan Davidson and Fitzgerald transferred to Frank Amhurst in November 1870 to begin Foulden plantation.

The central land of Alexandra plantation (named for the Princess of Wales), was owned initially by Thomas Dixon in 1865, then Dixon and Fitzgerald, and from early 1867 Fitzgerald and John E. Davidson, trading as Davidson & Co. Some references locate the land between the river and Nebo Road, although the original land was sections 39, 40 and 41 of County Greenmount, which backed onto Bakers Creek.[1] Other land was added to Alexandra in subsequent years. Davidson became manager of Alexandra. In June 1867, Fitzgerald became the Member for Rockhampton, then switched to the Kennedy electorate until June 1869. When the Government fell in 1868, Fitzgerald was invited to form the next Government. He failed, joining Lilley's Liberal Ministry as Treasurer, then resigned his ministry in January 1869 and his seat in June the same year. Meanwhile, the machinery for the mill arrived between March and August 1868 and crushing began on 15 September, producing 230 tons of sugar. The mill, said to be the most technically advanced in the colony, only had one set of rollers and the sugar was boiled in open pans.

Plate 7.7: The first buildings on Alexandra plantation in the late 1860s.
Source: Roth 1908, 47.

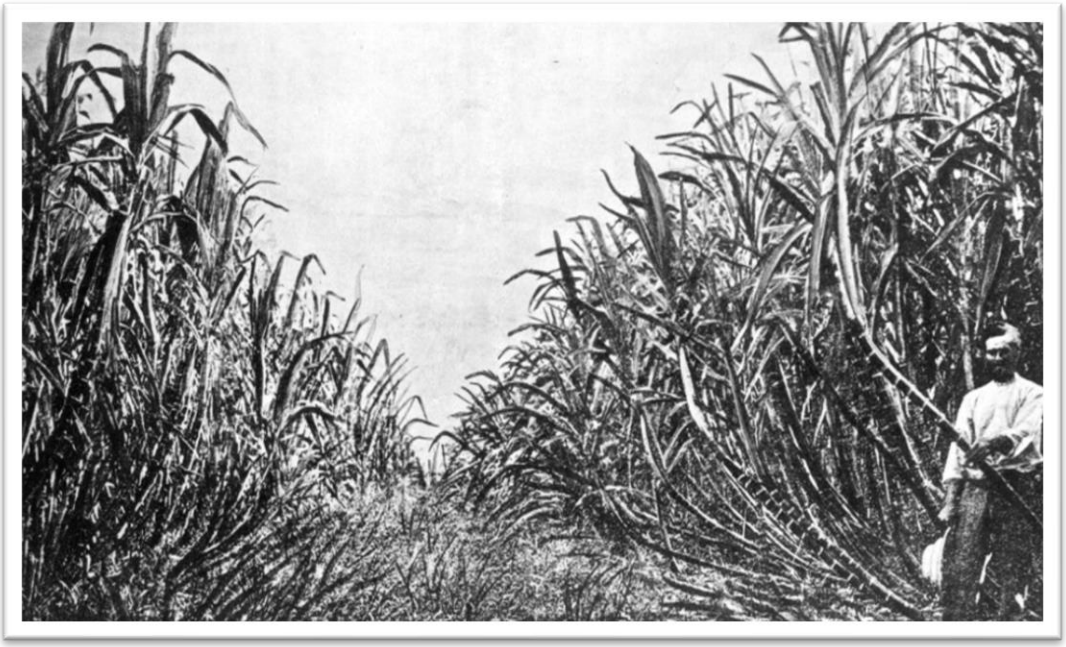


Plate 7.8: Cane on Alexandra plantation in the late 1860s. The species of cane commonly grown was Bourbon, at least up until the 'rust' out-break in the mid-1870s caused diversification in the types of cane planted.
Source: Daintree 1872, 24.

Plate 7.9: Alexandra plantation mill, early 1870s.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

Plate 7.10: Alexandra plantation mill, about 1879.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

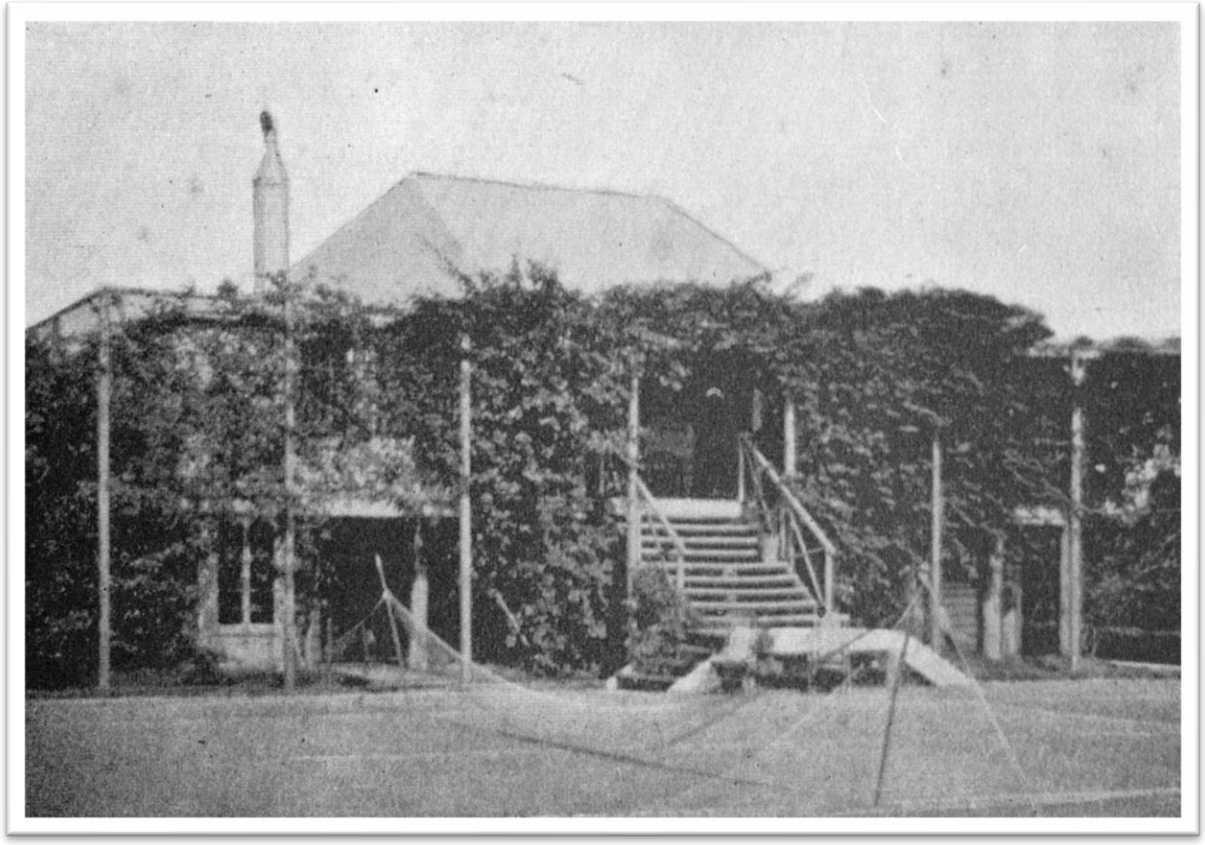


Plate 7.11: John Ewan Davidson's second Alexandra plantation house.
Source: Roth 1908, 63, Fig. 31.

After his 1867–69 parliamentary career, Fitzgerald entered into another milling venture, Meadowlands plantation. Not part of Fitzgerald's original land grab, Meadowlands combined freehold farming blocks purchased by several individuals at government land auctions. Fitzgerald also purchased mill machinery that came from E.D. Thomas and Davidson's Bellenden Plains plantation, north of Rockingham Bay (now Cardwell), which had never been installed, and erected it at Meadowlands. That Davidson was willing to part with it, probably indicates it was not as sophisticated as his Alexandra mill.

Meadowlands plantation first crushed in November 1870. There, Fitzgerald was in partnership with Charles J. King, a Mackay solicitor, the youngest son of Rev. Walter King, Archdeacon of Rochester, and Edward R. Kennedy—the latter the author of *Four Years in Queensland*, published in 1870. The relationship (if any) between C.J. King and G.H.M. King (later of Branscombe) is unclear: C.J. King died in October 1872 aged 28 years. He may have been a cousin. Kennedy moved on, leaving Fitzgerald in sole control, but Meadowlands was foreclosed on by the AJS Bank in 1876 after the 'rust' (or 'red rot') epidemic, and at much the same time G.H.M. King purchased Branscombe plantation.

In 1872, Fitzgerald began to clear and drain the Peri land, which he had purchased from Ryan & Co., and where his nephew John F.W. FitzGerald (*sic*) took over management the next year. Peri remained an estate, never proceeding to a mill after it was caught up in the rust disease in the canes in early 1870s, which peaked in 1875–76. Fitzgerald returned to Parliament as the Member for Bowen between November 1873 and May 1875, when he became insolvent and had to resign. His final plantation and mill, Te Kowai (named after his estate in New Zealand), first crushed in 1874. He had held the Te Kowai land since 1865, waiting his chance to develop it. At Te Kowai, Fitzgerald went into partnership with Andrew Throckmorton Ball, an early pastoralist.

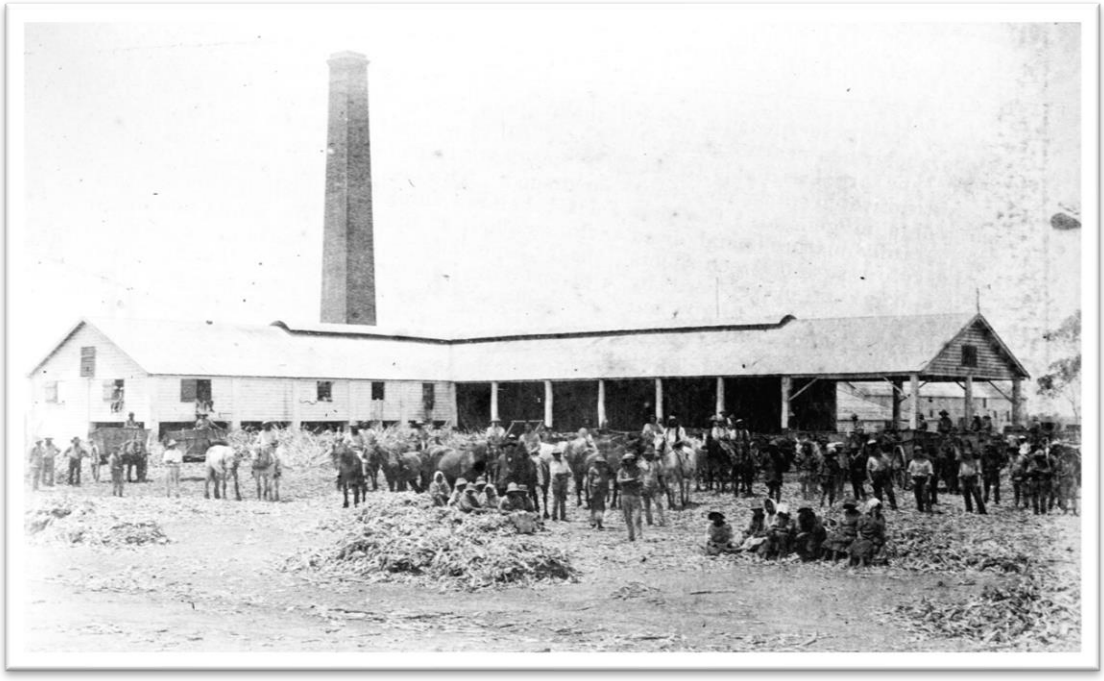


Plate 7.12: Te Kowai plantation mill, *ca.* 1870s, with one chimney.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

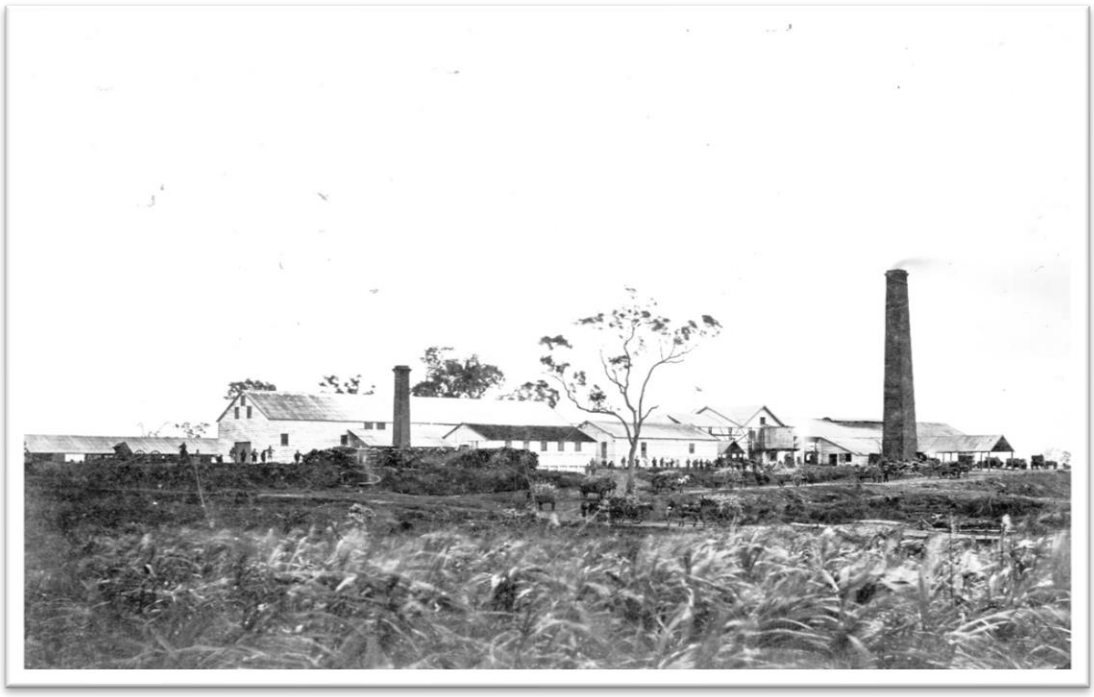


Plate 7.13: Te Kowai plantation mill fully developed, *ca.* 1890s.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

Fitzgerald was ruined by the rust outbreak in the cane. The Irishman left the district in mid-1876, moving to Brisbane where he became a surveyor again and was involved in surveying in pastoral areas and on the Johnstone River, where once more he became a founder of the sugar industry.

Davidson survived, having been careful to limit his involvement with Fitzgerald to Alexandra plantation, and then buying out his insolvent partner. Historian Emma Christopher describes Davidson 'clinging' to Alexandra while Fitzgerald went under. This contradicts the truth of the wealth he had to back him. John Ewan Davidson was born in Westminster, London in 1841, a son of Henry Davidson and Caroline née Blake who had a townhouse in Cavendish Square. He was a scion of the Davidsons of Tulloch castle in Dingwall, north of Inverness in the Scottish Highlands, the home of the Barons Davidson. Much of the family money seems to have been made through West Indies plantations and slavery, and trade with London. He was educated at Harrow (an extremely exclusive school), and the University of Oxford, where he played first class cricket in 1864 for the Marylebone Cricket Club at Lords. His father was the main partner in the Davidsons' London-based business Davidsons, Graham & Co., later styled Davidson, Barkly and Co., when joined by Hugh and Aeneas Barkly. The company specialised in West Indies sugar plantations, trading in slaves and sugar.

Davidson's great-grandfather and grandfather had been wealthy British Caribbean planters and slave-owners. Recent research by Emma Christopher described his grandfather as enormously wealthy. His father and uncles were some of the largest recipients of slave compensation money after manumission. Henry Davidson rode the crashing slave wave, purchasing extra plantations in the 1810s and 1820s in expectation of a larger compensation payment. In 1834, his enslaved workforce numbered 4,000 men, women, and children, for whose freedom he and his partner received a £166,612 (today about $30 million) payout from the British Government. John E. Davidson's uncle Duncan inherited the title of 8th Baron Davidson, £30,000, Tulloch Castle, and all the entailed family property in Scotland.

Plate 7.14: Tulloch Castle, Scotland, the home of the Barons Davidson. The castle, parts of which date back to the sixteenth century, passed to Henry Davidson, 6th baron of Tulloch, in the eighteenth century. John Ewan Davidson was the nephew of Duncan Davidson, the 8th Baron Davidson. The castle was damaged by fire in 1845 and extended in 1891.
Source: Wikipedia Commons.

John E. Davidson was Henry Davidson's only son and presumably shared in the inheritance, although his father did not die until the 1880s. There is no acknowledgement in Mackay history that the main investor in the district's sugar industry had connections with slavery, although there is limited evidence that his father helped with funds. Like others who

had similar origins, he kept very quiet about it. Christopher's research, which has uncovered the link, also notes that several other leading Queensland planters had links to West Indies plantations, which are mentioned later in this chapter and in more detail in Chapter 8.

Davidson arrived in Australia in 1865. He travelled there via the British West Indies, visiting his father's Highbury sugar plantation in Berbice, inherited from his own father, along with other property and money. Henry Davidson consolidated this wealth in the 1810s and 1820s, when he became a pioneer sugar plantation owner in British Guiana on the northern coast of South America. Here he used liberated Africans as labour, and pioneered use of Indian indentured labourers.

Hon. Louis Hope, son of the Earl of Hopetoun and the founder of the Queensland sugar industry, also had West Indian plantation connections through his grandfather and brother. Davidson arrived in Queensland with a letter of introduction to Hope and visited him at Ormiston plantation on Cleveland Bay near Brisbane. Davidson passed through Mackay in August 1865 on his way further north. He visited Fitzgerald's vast acreage of what became plantation land, rode out to Greenmount and St Helens stations, deciding to head further north, perhaps because the best Mackay land close to the river and town had already been selected. His first attempt at cane-growing was at Bellenden plantation near Cardwell in 1866, where he selected two square miles on the Murray River. After less than a year, his partner E.D. Thomas called it quits and left. Davidson was lonely and faced opposition from local Aboriginal groups. He recorded participating in punitive raids by the Native Police. The area was too isolated, and Davidson was flooded out, his attempt to begin a plantation a failure. Wisely, he cut his losses and sailed for Mackay.

Fitzgerald had land but little capital. Davidson had family capital but no land. He teamed up with Fitzgerald, taking a half share in what became Alexandra plantation, which they expanded by buying surrounding smaller pieces of land in a chain bordered on the south by Bakers Creek and extending towards the Pioneer River. The plantation initially produced cotton and sugar. Alexandra, the first steam-powered mill in the northern sugar industry, also had a rum distillery. Eventually Alexandra covered 1,277 acres (517 ha).

Other mills were established soon afterwards. Hewitt and Romilly's Pleystowe first crushed in 1869, and Fitzgerald's Meadowlands mill began operations the next year. Marten and the Long brothers began Branscombe in 1871, on land on the southern riverbank that Spiller had sold to help finance his Pioneer plantation. Cassada, a smaller mill, began in 1870. Once these first five mills began to crush, agriculturalists with small holdings had a chance to plant and sell sugarcane. Many switched from maize to cane. The cane acreage expanded, and a sugar boom began, although it was short-lived when, in the mid-1870s, a rust disease partially destroyed the new-found agricultural staple.

Davidson survived the mid-1870s rust outbreak in the cane, a testament to the wealth and business skills that always cushioned his plantations. He married Amy Constance Ashdown in Sydney in 1878, and they had two sons and four daughters. The family remained in Mackay until 1900, and Davidson shifted his residence from Alexandra to a riverside mansion more central to the operation. Conservative, he was a classic British gentleman (with a London and Scottish tinge) who always advocated 'total institution' plantations in West Indies style as the only way to proceed, with a subservient cheap workforce controlled by planters. Davidson served as chairman of the Pioneer Divisional Board for many years, and of the Mackay Planters' Association in 1878–83. In 1884, a *Sydney Morning Herald* 'special correspondent' stayed with the Davidsons at Alexandra:

> One remembers three and four course dinners, every virtue of cut glass, silent service and excellent cookery, to say nothing of the inimitable wines, cigars and stories in the verandah lounge chairs, with a westering moon sinking to rest, and possibly the chanting

> or monotonous sing-song of South Sea Islanders away in the "native" quarters.
>
> And then Davidson would say to one or two of his favoured guests "Come along to my telescope." He had quite a good instrument, of which he was justifiably proud. At that time there was no better in Queensland, or, probably, in Australia.[2]

In 1865, the Pioneer Valley boasted 12 acres of cane. Ten years later there were 3,000 acres, and by 1885, the peak year of the early sugar boom, the area under cane had quadrupled to almost 12,000 acres (4,856 ha), about one-third of the total crop in the colony. Late in the 1860s, the initial pastoral leases were subdivided by the Government to allow expansion of the sugar industry and to make space for the development of Mackay. Although the first commercial sugarcane was planted on the Northside, most of the early plantations were established along the Pioneer's southern bank and nearby creeks and lagoons, with easy access to the port.

Roads, Bridges, Tramways and Railways

The first road down the valley from the port was the track to Nebo, which went via Walkerston and Eton. The second road west led to The Hollow and Hamilton stations up the valley. On the Northside of the river a road wound through the hills at Miclere, then north to Jolimount and St Helens stations. Closer to Mackay, another road reached out across an established river ford at Foulden, then to the small village of Hill End (Glenella) and the Northside plantations and estates. Two bridges were constructed over the coastal end of the Pioneer River, at the hospital in 1876–77 and at Sydney Street in 1886–89. Others were built over creeks: Fursden Creek (1875), Bakers Creek (1882), Sandy Creek (1888), Barnes Creek (1889), and Alligator Creek (1898). Other bridges followed: over the upper Pioneer at Pleystowe (Balnagowan) in 1888, Marian in 1890, and Mirani in 1922, improving access and enabling cane to be grown further away from mills, enabling the spread of agriculture through the Northside and into the low hills north of the river, south to Homebush, and west up the valley. A network of minor roads and tracks linked the sugar properties, and as a cane field is no great impediment to a traveller on foot or on a horse, much of any journey could be cross-country. The roads were for the drays that hauled the sugar packages to the port and took supplies back to the plantations, and further west to the pastoral properties. The only useful navigable waterway was the Pioneer River, which could be used only in its lower reaches. Regular ferry services took passengers and goods across and down the river. The early lack of bridges was a difficult problem when transporting the tons of machinery contained in even the smallest mills.

Early residents on the Northside had to ford the river at low tide, and used barges, punts, and boats to ferry their produce to Mackay. One shallow area was opposite Foulden plantation, a little upriver from the hospital. Even so, before a bridge was constructed, a significant number of settlers (at least 30) were drowned while attempting to cross the river. These deaths, including prominent citizens such as Charles Walker of Dumbleton, John Paget (whose brothers later established Nindaroo), and Louis Ross, a partner in Balnagowan, led to agitation in the early 1870s for a bridge, which was supported by parliamentarians T.H. Fitzgerald, and F.T. Amhurst, who succeeded is getting money allocated. In 1877, the 1,342 feet (409 m) wooden Hospital Bridge, with extra decking over low ground, was completed at a cost of £15,710 (today $2,601,338).

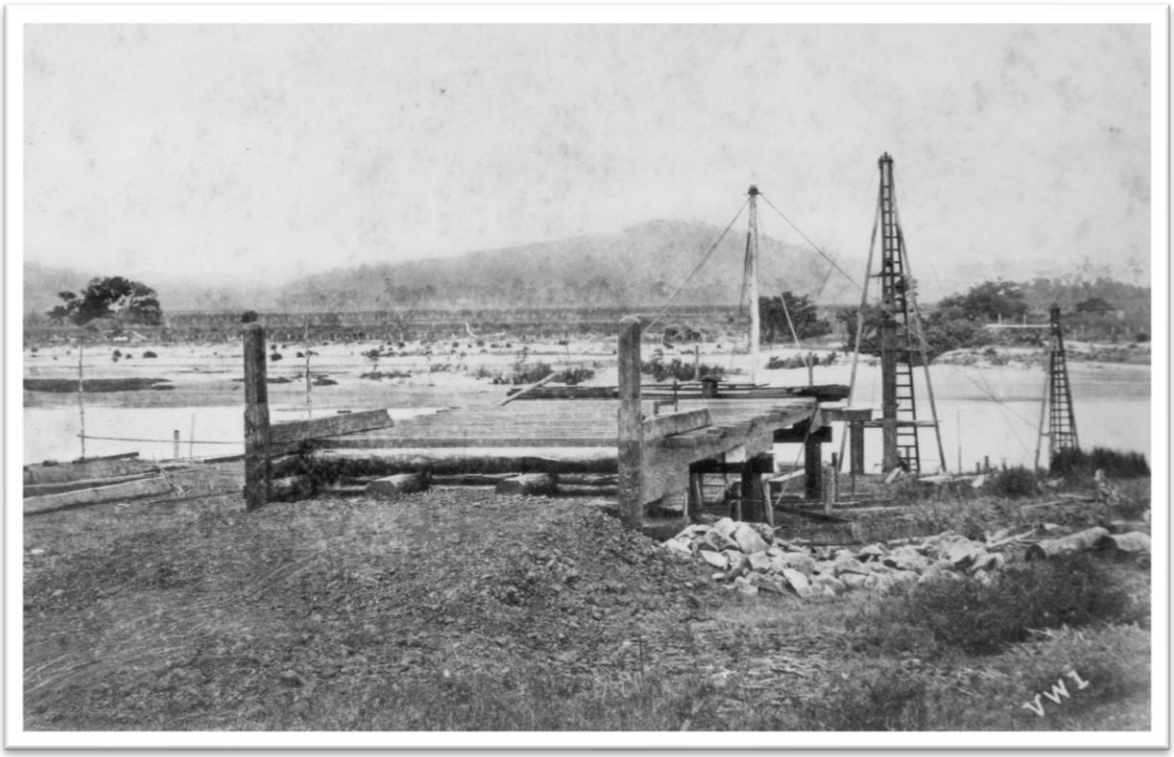


Plate 7.15: Building the Hospital Bridge in 1876.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

The next transport innovation was the arrival of steam railways. The first plantations had tramways added to them. Spiller built a horse-drawn tramway at Pioneer in 1879, and M.H. Black did the same at The Cedars the next year. The first tramway locomotive used at Mackay was built locally at Robertson's Foundry in May 1880, for Spiller's Pioneer and River Estate mills. Throughout the 1880s, other planters followed his lead. A three feet six inches (1,067 mm) gauge government railway was built up the valley in 1885, initially from Mackay to Eton with a branch line to Mirani, supplementing the various mill tramways which had begun to snake around the district, although they used a smaller two feet (609.6 mm) track gauge. In the 1890s, by which time sugarcane was cultivated along the Queensland coast from Brisbane to Mossman in the far north, no other area was as important as Mackay to the colony's sugar production.

Plate 7.16: The 1880 opening ceremony of the Pioneer Plantation railway. The mill is in the background and the locomotive on its way to River Estate.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

Sugarcane in the 1870s

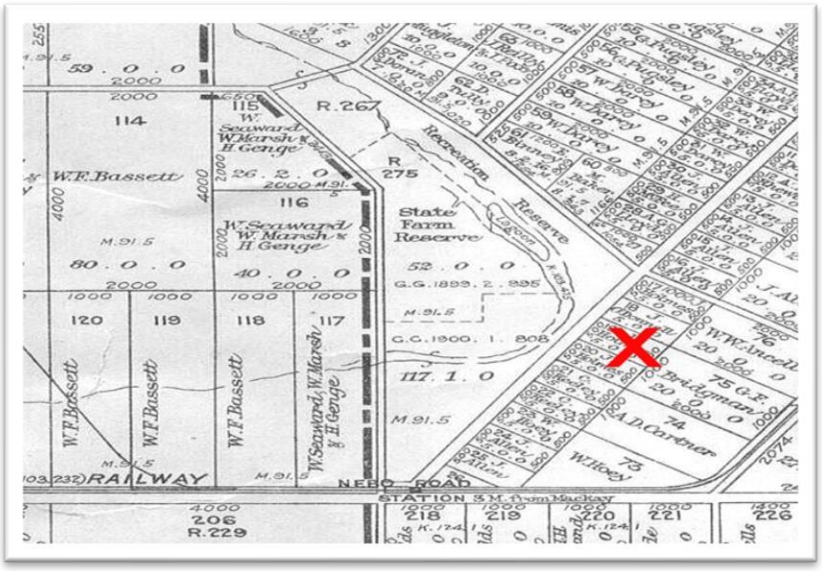
The definition of a sugar plantation adopted here is a parcel of land growing its own sugarcane and having its own mill crushing over three or more consecutive seasons, which excludes some of the smaller short-lived mills. For instance, it excludes James Robb's small horse-powered mill used to crush his few acres of cane at The Lagoons on Nebo Road in 1871. There were others in this category which, although interesting historically, are of no importance in the long term. I have used 'estate' to distinguish large cane-holdings which never had mills. Hence, Edward Denman's Etowrie, Henry John Jane's Glendaragh, and Joseph Costello's Millicent, were always estates, although other estates such as Miclere did become plantations with a mill. (River Estate and Palms Estate confound my definition, as they maintained 'Estate' in their titles, even though they were large plantations with mills.) Photographs of mills look deceptively similar: collections of large, galvanised ripple iron sheds with high brick chimneys. A closer look shows that some were small, and most show signs of multiple additions as the milling apparatus grew in complexity.

Once the sugar industry was established, it was clear that the pastoral leases which covered the valley floor had to be reduced in size. Balnagowan to the north, and Greenmount and the consolidated Cape Palmerston–Homebush lands on the south side impeded the extension of the early sugar fields. In the late 1860s and early 1870s these leases were all considerably truncated, and land reallocated for agriculture. Other factors also limited and shaped the spread of the cane land. The 1864 Sugar and Coffee Regulations and the 1868 *Lands Act* governed the selection of caneland, which had to be limited to within 16 kilometres of the coast or any navigable stream**.** This meant that the Pioneer River, which is tidal as far up as Dumbleton, was claimed to be navigable 15 kilometres upstream, which became the central focus for the valley's early caneland. The rich alluvial soil was perfect for sugarcane, the rainfall was adequate, and the growers and millers used the river for transport and as a water supply. The mills needed water to operate; wells were not always available, and the best sources of water were the river, adjacent creeks, and lagoons.

The first plantations were along the river, although until it was bridged in 1877 it presented a barrier to plantation development on the Northside. Mackay was on the southern side, as were all the early plantations, other than Pioneer. The next seven plantations were all along the south bank of the river or adjacent creeks: Pleystowe (1869) and Branscombe (1871) were along the riverbank; Alexandra (1868), Cassada (1870), and Lorne (1872) were on Bakers Creek, with Cassada backing on to Walkerston township; Meadowlands (1870) was beside The Lagoons along Nebo Road, extending through to the river adjacent to the Hospital Reserve. Barrie (1872) was situated on Sandy Creek. Because of Fitzgerald's dummied control of the best land on the southern side, Spiller and Creese at Pioneer opted for similar land opposite on the Northside, despite the inconvenience. Pioneer was joined by Nebia and Foulden in 1872, and Dumbleton, The Cedars, River Estate, and Inverness in 1873. Dumbleton had a small amount of cane crushed at Pioneer in 1871. The *Mackay Mercury* of 21 September 1872 mentioned that the Dumbleton machinery had just arrived. John Kerr concluded it was assembled late in 1872. Dumbleton was certainly the first mill in the district to crush in the 1873 season. The Northside proprietors realised that it would only be a few years until a bridge was built, and the high prices for sugar were enough to make even the most cautious agriculturalists turn a hand to cane-growing. Balmoral (1873) was built not far from the front of Meadowlands and opposite The Lagoons recreation reserve, occupying land on the site of what became the Sugar Research Institute (1953–2005) and down to Webberley Street. Photographs of these early mills provide a good indication of how primitive they were.

Plate 7.17: Small Cassada plantation mill operated from 1870 until 1886. There are at least eight Islander women in the photograph, which is unusual. Note that the women appear to be only wearing skirts, with no tops. The men are not wearing shirts. This photograph is probably more realistic than the fully clothed Islander photographs from this era.
Source: Courtesy of Glen Hall, www.mackayhistory.org/research/sugar_mills/cassada.html.

Plate 7.18: Mr and Mrs Donaldson, Cassada Mill.
Source: State Library of Queensland.



Map 7.1: Balmoral plantation was on the eastern side of Nebo Road, opposite The Lagoons recreation reserve, marked by the red X. The mill crushed between 1873 and 1880. Today this is an inner suburban area. Back in the 1870s the area had been divided into small selections. The original mill site was small, then additional land was acquired, in total about 175 acres (73 ha).
Source: Courtesy of Glen Hall, mackayhistory.org/research/sugar_mills/balmoral.htmlt.

Plate 7.19: Meadowlands plantation mill, probably in the 1870s.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

Plate 7.20: The Cedars plantation mill (1873–86) in the hill country on the Northside of Pioneer River, *ca.* 1878.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

Plate 7.21: The mill and houses on Dumbleton plantation on the north bank of the Pioneer River in the 1870s. The original land was 747 acres (302 ha) selected by Alfred H. Lloyd in 1865, with maize his primary crop. He went into partnership with Charles Walker, their sugar mill crushing between 1873 and 1887. Both ex-pastoralists, they expanded their landholding to over 1,000 acres, with the extra land in the name of Lloyd's wife, all of which was subdivided into farms in the late 1880s.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

The next extension of the caneland was to the fertile low hills a few kilometres north of the river. Balnagowan station partly blocked any further expansion to the west, and the lower reaches of the river were already encircled by plantations. The first plantations to be established under what was named the hill system of cultivation were Dulverton-Miclere (1872) and The Cedars (1873). Maurice H. Black of The Cedars plantation had West Indian plantation connections through his wife Maria Frederica Davies, a niece of statesman George Canning.

Inverness plantation was established in 1873 and crushed until 1884. Adjoining The Cedars, it was on flatter land well away from the river. The Macdonald brothers of Inverness plantation arrived via Trinidad. However, Inverness was primitive and used open pan boiling, not vacuum pans (Plate 8.3). The process was to boil the sugar liquid in an open pan until it reached a certain density, then to transfer the contents to a copper pan, where it was boiled faster to cause granulation. It was an unscientific process achieved mainly by the sugar boiler testing the sugar density. Especially in the first few years, exceptional crops were obtained from these low hills. The Macdonalds' neighbour Andrew Cumming of Richmond plantation was from St Vincents in the West Indies, where he had owned a plantation. In 1874, cane on Richmond was reported to be 20 feet (6 m) high.

The most practical cane growers and millers in the 1870s and 1880s were the men who came via overseas sugar-producing areas, but few were complete novices. William Hyne

of Balmoral and Meadowlands plantations was a graduate of the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester, Gloucestershire, England. Hyne began Balmoral with Frank Bridgeman, then in 1878 after Fitzgerald's insolvency they purchased the 2,000-acre Meadowlands plantation. David Jack at Barrie had received formal agricultural training in Scotland. Many had begun as pastoralists, although this was no guarantee of abilities as agriculturalists, and those trained under European conditions would have had to adapt to tropical agriculture. Others gained their training as managers and overseers on plantations or estates at Mackay and in other Queensland sugar-growing districts. Only a minority of the plantation owners and managers arrived at Mackay with no prior agricultural experience, or practical experience on the Australian frontier. Nevertheless, even the most skilled 1870s agriculturalists were ill-equipped to deal with diseases in the cane.

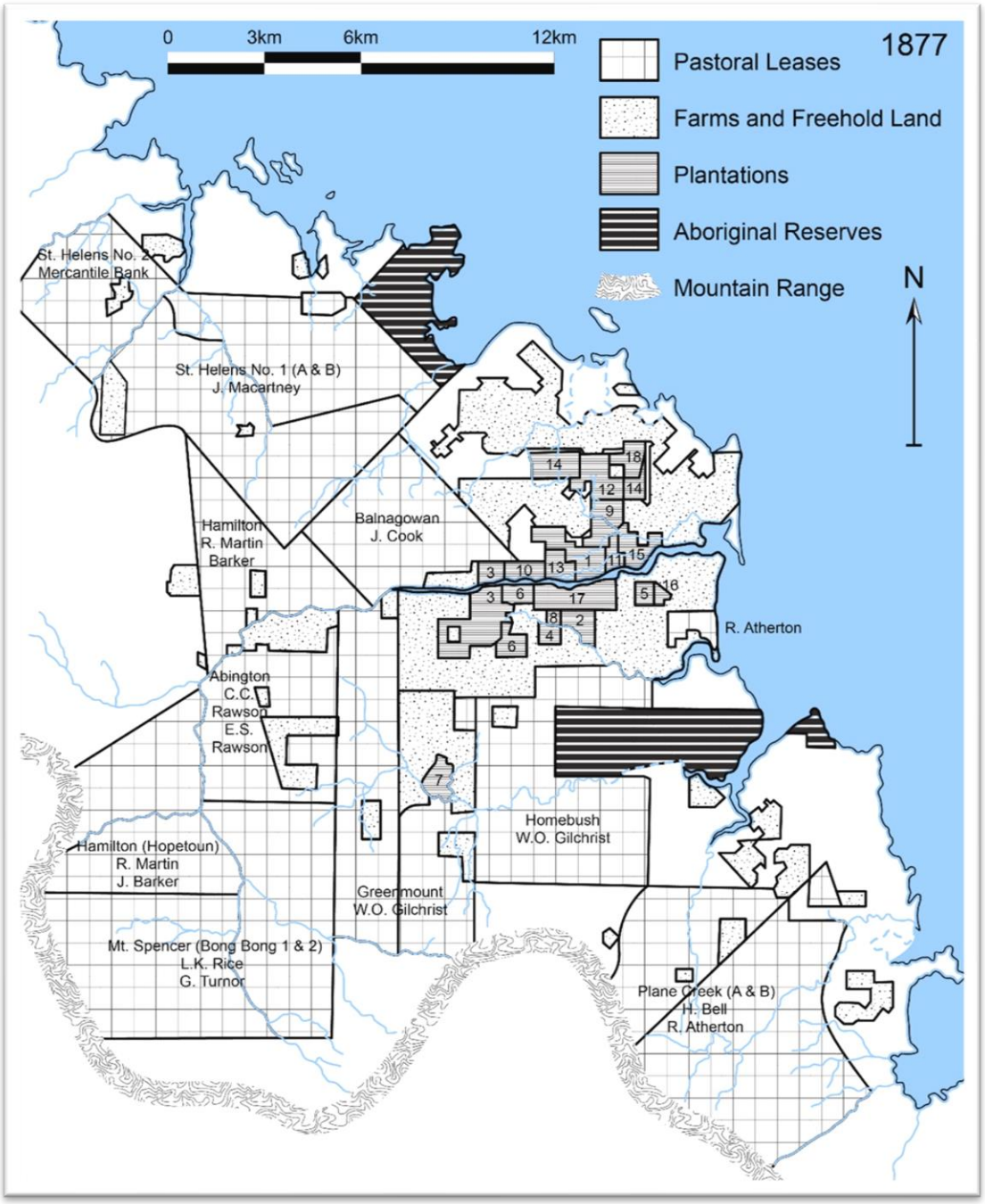
Rust in the Cane

In 1875, the district had 5,000 acres (2,023 ha) of cane under cultivation and 17 major mills were ready to crush. There were at least 18 varieties grown in the district, although the main variety then grown in Queensland was Bourbon, which was also grown in the West Indies and Mauritius under the name Otaheite. It grew with numerous canestalks, varying from 5 to 25 in a stool, with an average thickness of 1.5 inches (3.8 cm), to a height of 11 feet (3.5 metres) from the ground and in many cases up to 14 feet (4.26 metres) in length. In the middle of the year a fungus commonly called 'rust' (*Glomerella tucumanensis* (Speg) Arx and E.Mull), and white mites (acari), spread through Queensland's canes, devastating the Pioneer Valley crop and that in other areas of the colony.

Plate 7.22: A crop of Badila sugarcane at Mackay in 1883.
Source: Henry Brandon Collection, State Library of Queensland.

With the help of Peter Griggs' history of the Australian sugar industry, Ken Manning's history of Farleigh mill, and contemporary reports, I have attempted to piece together what occurred. The first symptoms were often leaves turning yellow, and red streaks in the actual cane, which worked their way down to the roots, causing the whole plant to wither and die. Some types of cane were more prone to the disease than others; only two, Bourbon and Small Ribbon were badly affected. Several things occurred together. During the first half of 1875, the rainfall was more than twice the average, and the planters and farmers were looking forward to a good crop. It was common to regrow cane from the same stock three or four times before it was totally replaced, a practice called ratooning. This probably exacerbated the situation. Evidence suggests that the rust had been present much longer and it is likely that the fungus and the mite were imported with the first cane-cuttings brought to Australia, although conditions were not right for its spread until the 1870s. The first signs of the disease were noticed in 1870 and it gradually worsened, then took off in 1875, through a combination of ratooning and constantly damp soil from excessive rain. Many of the plantation owners did not realise that soils could become depleted or too soggy, or that cane could become diseased. There were many experiments to rid the cane of the rust disease, although the most basic change was that the Bourbon variety, which had by far the best yields, was no longer grown. The Black Java variety became the new favourite: it was smaller but had a good sugar content. The Ribbon variety, which had the highest sugar content, also remained in vogue.

The result was that the small mills were too inefficient to survive. Several of the plantation owners became insolvent or were bankrupted. Fitzgerald owed almost £64,000 (today $8.87 million) to his creditors, mainly the AJS Bank and William Sloan & Co. He and his partner Andrew T. Ball lost Te Kowai. Fitzgerald also lost his share of Alexandra and Meadowlands. Donald and Alexander Macdonald at Inverness, the three Robinson brothers at Lorne, and R.J. Cran, manager of Foulden, all became insolvent, and Charles Fitzsimmons of Nebia, was £8,000 in debt when he died in 1876. Ball and Fitzsimmons were pastoralists turned unsuccessful planters. The Melbourne company William Sloan & Co., the major financiers of the 1870s Mackay plantations, gained control of Te Kowai, Lorne, Nebia, Dumbleton, Barrie, and The Cedars. Sugar production halved in 1875 and 1876 while growers were busy replanting hardier varieties. Town businesses suffered, and casual labour fled to the goldfields as a better option. By 1877, 13 of the 18 plantations had experienced a change of ownership: 10 plantations were now controlled by banks or financiers; two had a modification in their residential partners; and one had a new resident owner. Just as the pastoral stations were largely funded by banks and finance companies, the same applied to the plantations. The planters had borrowed money to establish their mills, leaving their finances precarious if anything went wrong. William Sloan & Co., with William H. Paxton as its first Mackay manager (1874–76), and the AJS Bank, became the major mortgagors at Mackay. For some planters the loss was permanent, while others, for instance David Jack at Barrie, and Maurice H. Black at The Cedars, eventually managed to discharge their debts. What occurred was a centralisation of plantation ownership and a phase of amalgamations which continued for the next decade. One lesson learnt was to pay more attention to cultivation techniques, which was coincidental with improvements in milling techniques.



Map 7.2: Agriculture shared the valley floor with pastoralism in 1877. Substantial areas had been reserved for use by the Aboriginal inhabitants. The numbers refer to the main plantations, listed in Table 5.1.
Source: Cartography by Vincent Verheyen. Clive Moore Collection.

Amhurst of Foulden and Lawes of Farleigh

This chapter and the next follow the same pattern as in the pastoral chapters, providing vignette studies of various plantations and the origins of their owners. Alexandra and Pioneer began the chapter. Now we move to Foulden and Farleigh plantations. Francis Tyssen Amhurst (1843–81) and his cousin Bertram Mitford Pocklington (1836–1919) owned Foulden plantation on the Northside. Pocklington was the son of Rev. Roger Pocklington and Ann Amelia Campbell. The partnership began in 1870 with Pocklington visiting Mackay in

1871, although he seems not to have returned, either remaining a silent partner or withdrawing entirely. The origin of the Pocklington investment money is unclear. When Rev. Pocklington died in 1880, his estate was valued at only £3,000.

Francis (Frank) Amhurst was the youngest of the four children of William George Daniel (1801–55) and Mary, eldest daughter of Andrew Fountaine of Norfolk Hall, Norfolk. His father was from the main line of descent of the old Kentish family of Amherst and had inherited the Tyssen property in Hackney, through his mother. The family name became Tyssen-Daniel, Tyssen-Amhurst, and then Tyssen-Amherst in 1877. Frank Amhurst had the Tyssen as part of his name but seems never have used a hyphen. His brother William inherited the considerable family estates in Norfolk and Hackney.

The Tyssen-Amherst family had a connection with the West Indies dating back to the seventeenth century, when Francis Tyssen from Flushing in Holland owned plantations in Antigua, one of which was Bridge plantation. He also purchased an estate in Hackney, which his son expanded, purchasing all three manors in the Hackney parish in 1697–99. In the next generation, one son inherited the Hackney estate. The other inherited the Antiguan plantations, in 1712 marrying an heiress from neighbouring Beauvoir plantation. The next generation purchased Foulden Hall estate in Norfolk. This heir never married, although it was said that he had four different mistresses and eight acknowledged illegitimate children. He left most of his property in trust for two sons, both of whom remained childless, and a daughter Mary, who married Captain John Amherst of Rochester in Kent. They had one child, Amelia Amherst. In 1794, she married William George Daniel (later Tyssen-Daniel). When Amelia's uncles died early in the nineteenth century the couple inherited several country houses and much of the Tyssen's Hackney estate. They had six children, the oldest son being William George Tyssen-Daniel, father of Frank Amhurst of Foulden plantation.

Frank Amhurst's father was High Sheriff of Norfolk, a title also later held by his brother William Amhurst Tyssen-Amherst, a Conservative Member of Parliament (1880–92), and then as first Baron Amherst of Hackney he became a Member of the House of Lords (1892–1909). William married Margaret Susan Mitford in 1856, the only child of Admiral Robert Mitford. Baron Amherst was also Deputy Lieutenant of Middlesex. A famous Egyptologist and co-translator and editor of the first English edition of the diaries from the Mendaña expedition to the Solomon Islands and the Ellice Islands (Tuvalu) in 1568, his fortune was dissipated by a crooked lawyer. In 1881, William inherited his brother's share in Foulden plantation, which he passed to his uncle John (later Sir John) Bennet Lawes (1814–1900). The Tyssen-Amherst homes were Old Foulden Hall (Plate 7.23) and Didlington Hall (Plate 7.24) in Norfolk.

Plate 7.23: Old Foulden Hall, the main home of the Tyssen-Amherst family since the eighteenth century. It has Elizabethan origins, with Victorian additions. Francis (Frank) Tyssen Amhurst was born there. The house was sold in the 1840s and the family moved to and expanded Didlington Hall.
Source: Courtesy of landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2014/05/122-tyssen-amherst-later-cecil-of.html.

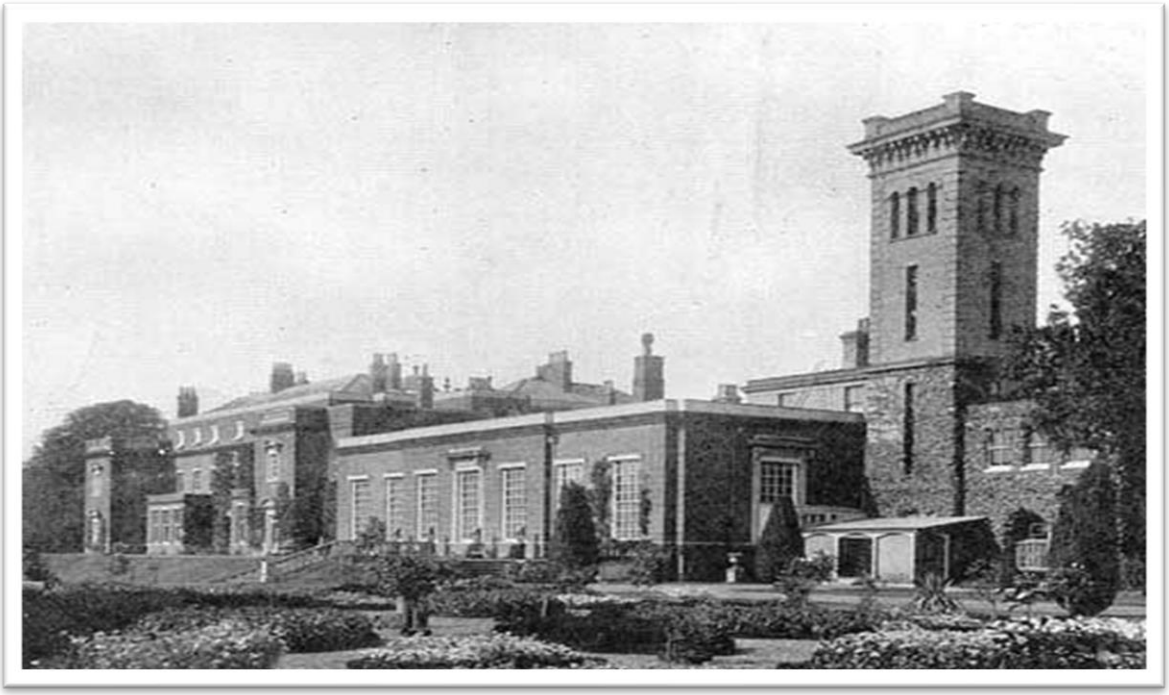


Plate 7.24: Didlington Hall, purchased by William George Tyssen-Amherst in the early 1850s. Renovations continued over two generations. Most of the house has now been demolished.
Source: Courtesy of Lost Heritage, www.lostheritage.org.uk/houses/lh_norfolk_didlingtonhall.html.

Educated at Eton College, with an Oxford degree from Christchurch College, Frank

Amhurst reached Australia in 1869 and arrived in Mackay the next year. With financial backing from the Tyssen-Amherst family, he assembled one square mile of land with a river frontage, made up of three blocks running northward to James Wales' Corvoy estate. The Foulden land was first purchased in 1865 by Michael Bryson, a Rockhampton merchant, then transferred to Robert Wilson (T.H. Fitzgerald's brother-in-law in New Zealand), then to T.H. Fitzgerald, followed by J.E. Davidson and Fitzgerald, and finally to Amhurst in November 1870. Amhurst also owned a neighbouring area known as Fursden, which he incorporated into Foulden. Positioned between Spiller's Pioneer plantation, and River Estate plantation, Foulden plantation was named after the family estate in Norfolk, England. Foulden mill began operations in 1872. Amhurst also purchased the core land of what became Farleigh plantation in 1873, from Eliza, the widow of Emilius Hilfling. Robert Walker was Foulden's manager, then James W. Cran, with Walker back again in 1879. Right from the beginning, Foulden mill used a vacuum pan process, then only in use at Meadowlands mill, and a charcoal filter process, which enabled rust-damaged cane to be processed. The year Amhurst died (1881), the Foulden mill doubled its vacuum pan capacity and was experimenting with third 'boilings', which turned the 'residuum', usually only good to make rum, into golden syrup.

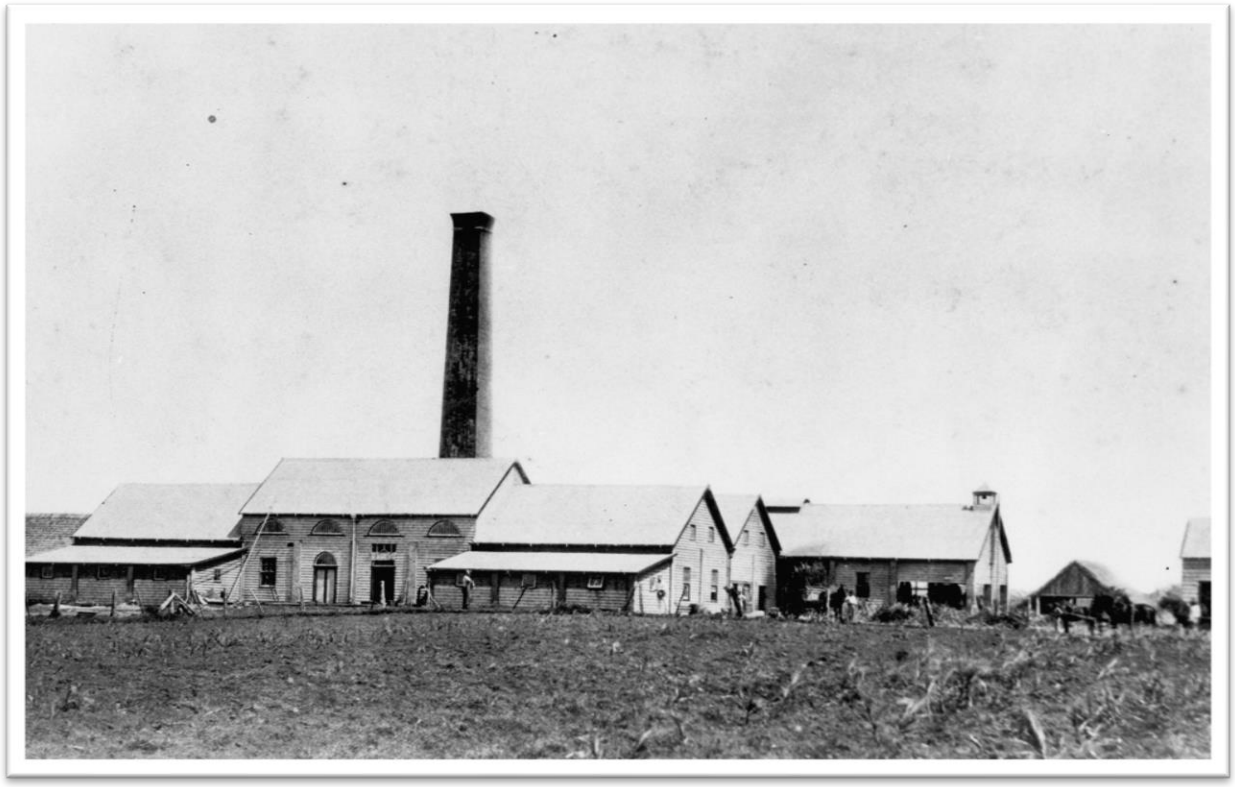


Plate 7.25: Foulden Plantation mill (1872–87) originally owned by Francis T. Amhurst and Bertram Mitford Pocklington. When first built it was the largest mill in the district.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

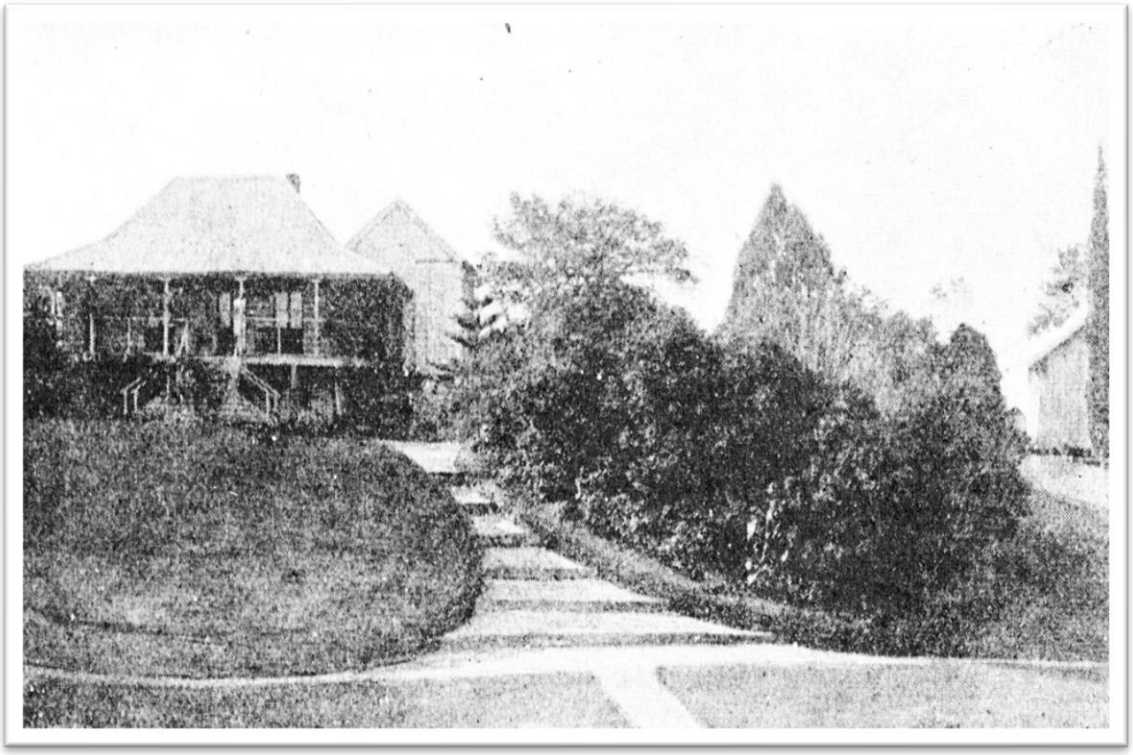


Plate 7.26: Francis T. Amhurst's Foulden plantation house built in about 1875. The photograph is from 1881. He shared his house with mill manager Robert Walker, and Henry Ling Roth, the secretary of the Mackay Planters' Association and author in 1908 of the first book on the Mackay district.
Source: Roth 1908 Fig. 36, 66.

Plate 7.27: Francis Tyssen (Frank) Amhurst, owner of Foulden plantation.
Plate 7.28: Edward M. Long, part-owner of Branscombe and River Estate plantations, and Robert Walker, manager of Foulden plantation, in the 1870s, and of Farleigh plantation in the early 1880s. Walker died in 1885.
Source: (7.27) Wikipedia Commons; (7.28) Mackay City Council Archives, 1976.

A diffident well-educated young aristocrat, Amhurst replaced Fitzgerald as the parliamentary member for Bowen and Mackay, then for Mackay alone, serving in 1875–77 and 1878–81. In 1872 and 1873 he toyed with two other agricultural investments, one on the O'Connell River north of William Macartney's St Helens Nos. 3 and 4 leases (Bloomsbury), and the development of what became Farleigh plantation.

Unwell for several years, suffering from fevers, he died on his way back to England on 3 January 1881. Foulden plantation was then acquired by his wealthy uncle John B. Lawes, a fertiliser manufacturer, the leading English agriculturalist, and founder of Rothamsted Agriculture Experiment Station. Lawes was married to the Amhurst brothers' maternal aunt Caroline Fountaine, and he had been experimenting with agriculture since the 1830s, beginning the St Albans Rothamsted experimental farm in 1843. It was generally believed that Lawes had invested in Foulden all along. The next year, after he acquired Foulden, Lawes purchased more land which was amalgamated into his Farleigh plantation, including Miclere plantation, and Lloyd and Walker's neighbouring Norbrook estate.

Michael Carroll began Miclere plantation in October 1869, with a land selection of his own, extended in 1871 by three blocks selected by John Emmanuel Paine—about half a square mile—bordering the eastern side of Miclere. Paine had called his land Dulverton and had opened a small steam mill there. Norbrook, Lloyd and Walker's estate, separate from their Dumbleton plantation, was to the north of Miclere; Norbrook cane was crushed at Dulverton-Miclere. Carroll installed a small steam powered mill, for two years crushing his and Paine's cane. Then he purchased Dulverton in late 1873, in partnership with John S. Avery. On the toss of a coin with Lloyd and Walker of Dumbleton, the name was changed to Miclere to make the two plantation names distinct. The Carroll and Avery partnership lasted until the late 1870s, with Avery as manager. Carroll died in 1881. Robert Walker, manager of Farleigh, purchased Miclere for John Lawes, for the land, not the mill, the machinery from which was immediately offered for sale.

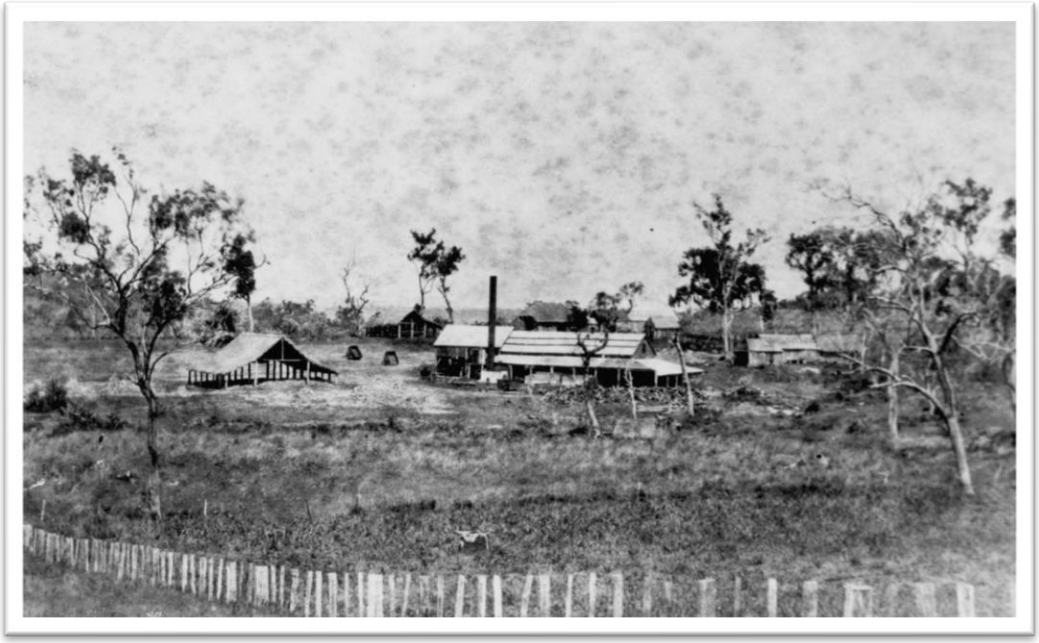


Plate 7.29: Miclere (Dulverton) plantation on the Northside crushed between 1872 and 1881. Always small and primitive, it was the first mill to be erected in the Northside hill country.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

Lawes was elevated to the baronetcy of Rothamsted in 1882. The Foulden–Miclere–Farleigh land gave him 2,500 acres on which to experiment with tropical agriculture. Initially, he provided £60,000, exclusive of the land, and by 1888 he had invested £151,700 (today $22,436,235). Farleigh mill alone cost him around £30,000. The company bought old rails from River Estate to extend the Farleigh tramline, experimented with irrigation and manure in the fields, and in 1893 purchased Ashburton plantation.

At first there were three mills operating: Ashburton mill, the new mill at Farleigh, and for a while the Foulden mill continued to crush. As well, in 1893, while new farmers' mills were opening under the *Sugar Works Guarantee Act*, Farleigh extended its rail network as far as The Leap, encouraging farmers there to grow cane. Described as a plantation of the 'West Indian model', Lawes seems never to have visited the plantation, employing managers, mainly Frederick W. Bolton onwards from 1885, a relative through marriage. Lawes was innovative and always willing to back his experiments with more cash. There were then three powerful crushing units in the district: Davidson was managing director of the 8,000-acre Melbourne-Mackay Sugar Co. with its large Palms Estate mill and several smaller mills; CSR at Homebush had assembled 16,000 acres (6,475 ha) and constructed a large mill; and at Farleigh–Foulden J.B. Lawes controlled 4,200 acres and three mills.

Federation and the White Australia Policy, which brought an end to Islander labour, caused Farleigh to close between 1900 and 1905. In 1897, Lawes, by now 83, converted Farleigh into a proprietary company, presumably as a hedge against death duties, although by the time he died in 1900 the mill had closed. White labour was too expensive, and many farmers ceased growing cane, as without Farleigh there was no mill on the Northside. A Bundaberg syndicate bought Farleigh in 1902, subdividing 3,000 acres into 50 acre leased farms. The mill crushed again in 1905 and has operated ever since, although the syndicate left in 1926 and the farmers took over as Australia's first sugar co-operative, registered under the *Primary Producers' Co-operative Associations Act* of 1923.

Plate 7.30: Sir John Lawes' Farleigh plantation mill first crushed in 1883. Its lands were an amalgamation of those from Foulden and Miclere, plus the Farleigh land that had belonged to F.T. Amhurst, which was developed into a plantation and mill by his uncle Sir John Lawes. This photograph is from the late 1880s. The mill began with a single set of 5 feet six inches (167.7 cm) rollers. A pipeline linked Farleigh mill to a well built for the old Foulden mill, and a Cuban water tower (in the right of the photograph) was used for cooling. Tramways were installed onwards from 1888. Complete maceration of the cane was used at Farleigh, and golden syrup was manufactured at the mill. River Estate, and Ashburton (including Pioneer) plantation were added later.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

Political Influence

Mackay's plantation owners and managers used their political influence. At a local level, it was worth being involved in the Pioneer Division and later (onwards from 1903) the Pioneer Shire Council, and the Mackay Municipal Council. The positions carried no salary, but meant being part of planning for future roads, bridges, and facilities such as wharves and the hospital. Northside pastoralists, planters, and farmers were very interested in having a bridge across the river, which was achieved in 1877. Of the 48 members of the Pioneer Divisional Board who served terms during the nineteenth century, 14 were plantation owners. Four of the eight chairmen during the nineteenth century were plantation owners or managers, and another three were cane farmers (Table 13.3). The majority of the Divisional Board's members during the same years were planters, cane estate owners, plantation managers, pastoralists, and major shareholders, or officials, of the post-1880s farmer-supplied central mills.

The lowest court was operated by the Magistrate and Justices of the Peace. Out of 42 Justices of the Peace in the Pioneer region in 1883, 40 have been identified: 12 owned, had financial interests in, or managed plantations; 12 owned pastoral properties; three were bank managers; three were government officials; and 12 were Mackay businessmen.

Being a Member of Parliament was not lucrative in itself; in early decades there were no paid positions unless the Member held ministerial office. Conditions improved in 1886 when politicians began receiving repayment of expenses, and onwards from 1889 they all received salaries. Parliament was the institution which guided the development of the colony, and, as with participation local government, being privy to confidential planning information had its advantages, as did being able to participate in formative debates. During the nineteenth century the local parliamentarians were almost always planters, in one case a leading pastoralist and town businessman, and in the early twentieth century representatives of the canegrowers. The only exception was a proprietor of the *Mackay Mercury*. The Mackay district planters and pastoralists in the Queensland Legislative Assembly were: Charles Fitzsimmons (1860–68), T.H. Fitzgerald (1867–75), F.T. Amhurst (1875–77; 1878–81), M.H. Black (1881–93), D.H. Dalrymple (1888–1904), and W.T. Paget (1901–15). John Macfarlane, Member for Leichhardt and Rockhampton (1877–80) was a partner in the St Helens pastoral leases with the Macartney brothers and Robert Graham. Francis R. Murphy, a shareholder in Pleystowe from 1882 until the 1890s, was the Member for Barcoo (1885–92) (Table 13.1).

Other local planters and pastoralists were Members of the Queensland Legislative Council or of other colonial parliaments. Pastoralist H.B. Fitz (Legislative Council, 1860–76) had local pastoral and sugar investments. Brisbane-based George Raff (Legislative Council, 1860–70) owned Inverness plantation from 1877 until about 1883. William Houston Long of River Estate plantation was also a member of the Legislative Council (1873–78). George Fairbairn, another of the 1892 Pleystowe shareholders, 30 years earlier had been a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria (1864–66). Sir James Lorimer and William Robertson also had shares in Pleystowe; both were long-serving Members of the Victorian Parliament. Sir Edward W. Knox, the controlling force behind CSR's Homebush plantation, was a Member of the New South Wales Legislative Council for 14 of the years he had milling interests at Mackay.

There were also innumerable connections to chambers of commerce and gentlemen's clubs. John Blyth, a Pleystowe shareholder, was president of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce during the 1880s. And the Mackay Planters' Association in the 1870s and 1880s had a membership just as powerful as a small London or Melbourne club.

Mackay's elite had a wide circle of political contacts in Queensland, other Australian

colonies, and in Britain. As mentioned earlier, Francis Amhurst's brother William became a baron. Their uncle Sir John Bennett Lawes was the leading British agriculturalist. Maurice Hume Black had useful family connections in London and was related to Adam Black, the Edinburgh publisher who was an important supporter of Prime Minister Gladstone. His mother was a niece of Joseph 'Orator' Hume, the radical reformer, and his wife's mother was a half-sister of George Canning, Tory politician and Prime Minister in 1827. M.H. Black's wife Euphemia was born in Jamaica. In the 1870s, Black played a prominent role in moves for North Queensland to separate from the southern part of the colony, and in 1887, while the local parliamentary representative, he was sent to London by the North Queensland separationists to plead their case. In 1893–94, he was appointed as Queensland's Special Agent in London. Onwards from the early 1870s, brothers Francis L. Gladstone and Douglas Gladstone said to be grandsons of William E. Gladstone (Britain's long-serving Prime Minister for four terms between 1868 and 1894), had agricultural selections near Blacks Beach. In the late 1870s and early 1880s, Hon. Harold Finch-Hatton, mentioned in Chapter 4, was a partner with his brother in Mt Spencer station, and both appear in an 1883 list of Justices of the Peace. Harold returned to England in 1883 and stood unsuccessfully for the House of Commons in 1885, 1886 and 1892. Finally elected in 1895 as a Conservative, he served until 1898. As mentioned earlier, his brother Henry became an Earl and a Member of the House of Lords from 1898 to 1927. Hon. Harold was chairman of the London Committee of the North Queensland Separation League and always acted as a loyal watchdog for North Queensland's interests in Britain. Charles Rawson of The Hollow retired to London in the 1880s and was also an ardent representative of the separationists.

If they thought their interests were compromised, Mackay's planters wrote to or sought an interview with senior members of the governments in Queensland and Britain. John E. Davidson travelled frequently, visiting other sugar-growing regions overseas, particularly in the Caribbean and Mauritius, and, aside from time spent in Australia's southern colonies, went to England in 1871, 1877–78, 1882, 1884–85, and 1895. He used these trips to lobby for the interests of the industry, and of course himself and the Melbourne–Mackay Sugar Co. When writing failed to have an effect, they resorted to a physical presence. In 1885, when the Queensland Government threatened to repeal the *Indian Migration Act* of 1882, Davidson, then in London, went with Sir John Lawes to protest to Lord Derby, Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The 1880s Boom Years

We can track the plantations through newspaper reports, and photographs of their mills, tramways, and houses. Over the decades these became much larger and more sophisticated. By 1880, the industry had recovered from the rust slump. The increases in acreage, mill numbers and size were dramatic; some of the new mills were huge by nineteenth century standards. Pastoral properties were again reduced, pushed to the fringes, with canefields dominating the Pioneer Valley floor. Between 1881 and 1883, eleven new mills were established. In 1884, the peak year of the sugar boom, £2,000,000 (today around $105 billion) was invested in the 30 plantations in the Pioneer Valley, one-third of the total funds invested in Queensland's sugar industry.

Marian plantation was begun by Malcolm Donald McEachran and partners in 1883, on substantial acreage adjoining the Rawson's property The Hollow. The land seems to have been pre-emptive purchases originally applied for in 1876 when part of The Hollow and passed to W.O. Gilchrist as 1,952 acres (790 ha) of agricultural and 1st and 2nd class grazing land, then to McEachran in mid-1883. Mackay businessman George Smith and Dr Robert McBurney and others also had a financial interest in the plantation. They reused the Balmoral

mill, which had closed in 1880. The Marian mill buildings were erected by a Melbourne builder, David Mitchell, who brought his daughter Helen Porter (Nellie) Mitchell (1861–1931) with him to Mackay. In December 1882, she married Charles Nisbett Frederick Armstrong (1858–1948), the youngest son of baronet Sir Andrew Armstrong, and the first manager at Marian. Armstrong did not get on well with the other senior staff and resigned, trying his luck on the goldfields, while his young wife and their son stayed with the Rawsons at The Hollow. Remembered at Mackay for her soprano voice and piano playing, she returned to Melbourne in 1884, then moved to London and Paris where her career began. She became the renowned operatic diva Dame Nellie Melba.

Dame Nellie is really the only success story to come out of Marian plantation. Marian grew none of its own cane and relied on cane from surrounding small farms. With only one set of rollers, and open pan boiling, the mill was inefficient. Onwards from 1886, Marian had a siding connecting it to the new government railway, although this was not enough to save it from closure in 1891. It was resurrected and refurbished in 1895 as a farmer's central mill.

The biggest of the new mills were Palms and Homebush. Palms Estate mill was built by the Melbourne–Mackay Sugar Co. in 1881. The company began in March 1880 with a total capital of £500,000 (today $66,800,000), constructed Palms and ran the other company plantations and estates. Davidson was managing director on £1,500 (today $315,000) a year, plus his share of the profits. Homebush mill was built by the Victoria Sugar Co., a subsidiary of the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. The company purchased 16,000 acres (6,475 ha) south of Mackay, 10,000 acres of the land in one chain between Sandy and Bakers creeks. With its 5,000-ton production capacity, Homebush out-classed Palms by 3,000 tons and made the older mills look extremely primitive.

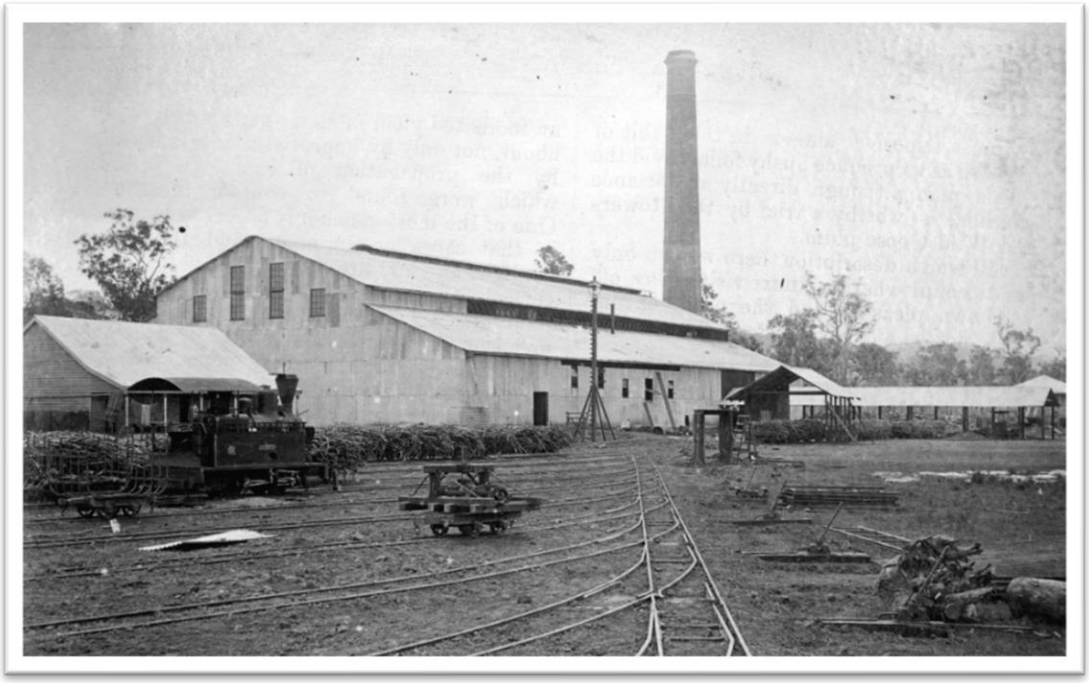


Plate 7.31: Homebush mill, *ca.* 1883, showing tram tracks and a locomotive.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

Plate 7.32: Homebush manager's house, 1883.

Plate 7.33: Homebush overseers' quarters, 1883.

Plate 7.34: Homebush mill's sawmill, 1883.

Plate 7.35: Homebush cane siding, 1883.

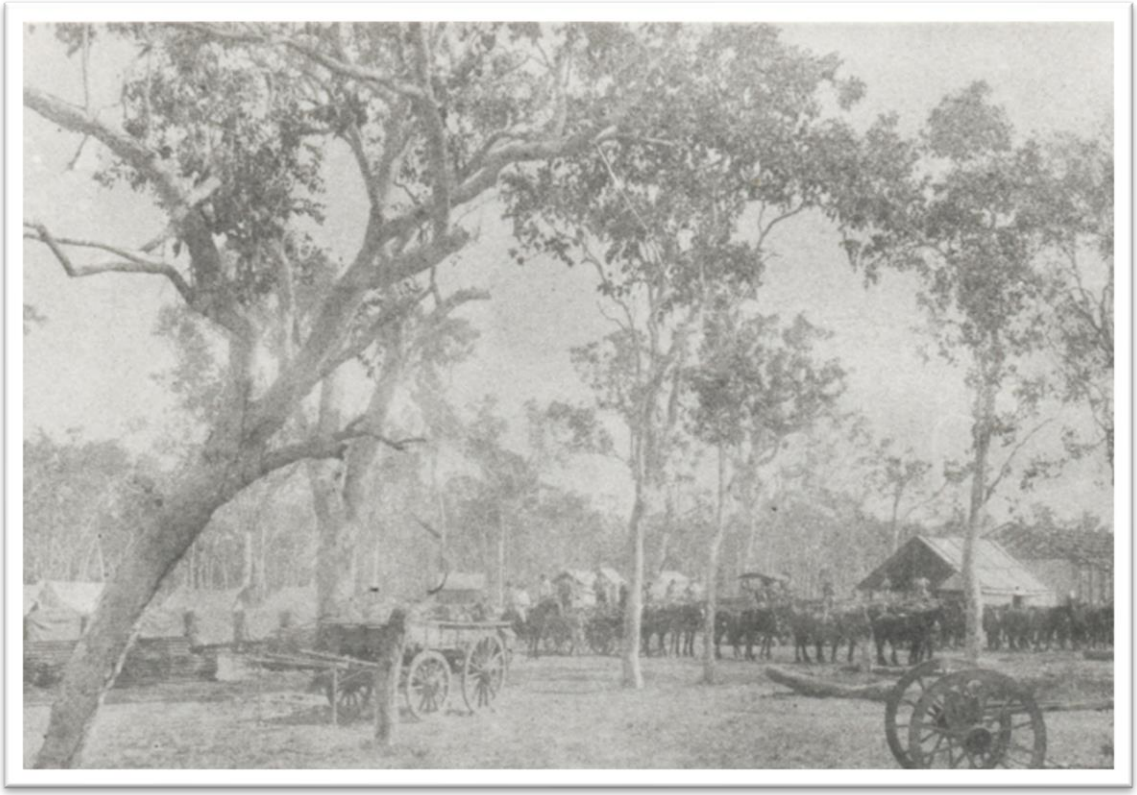


Plate 7.36: Homebush horse teams, 1883.

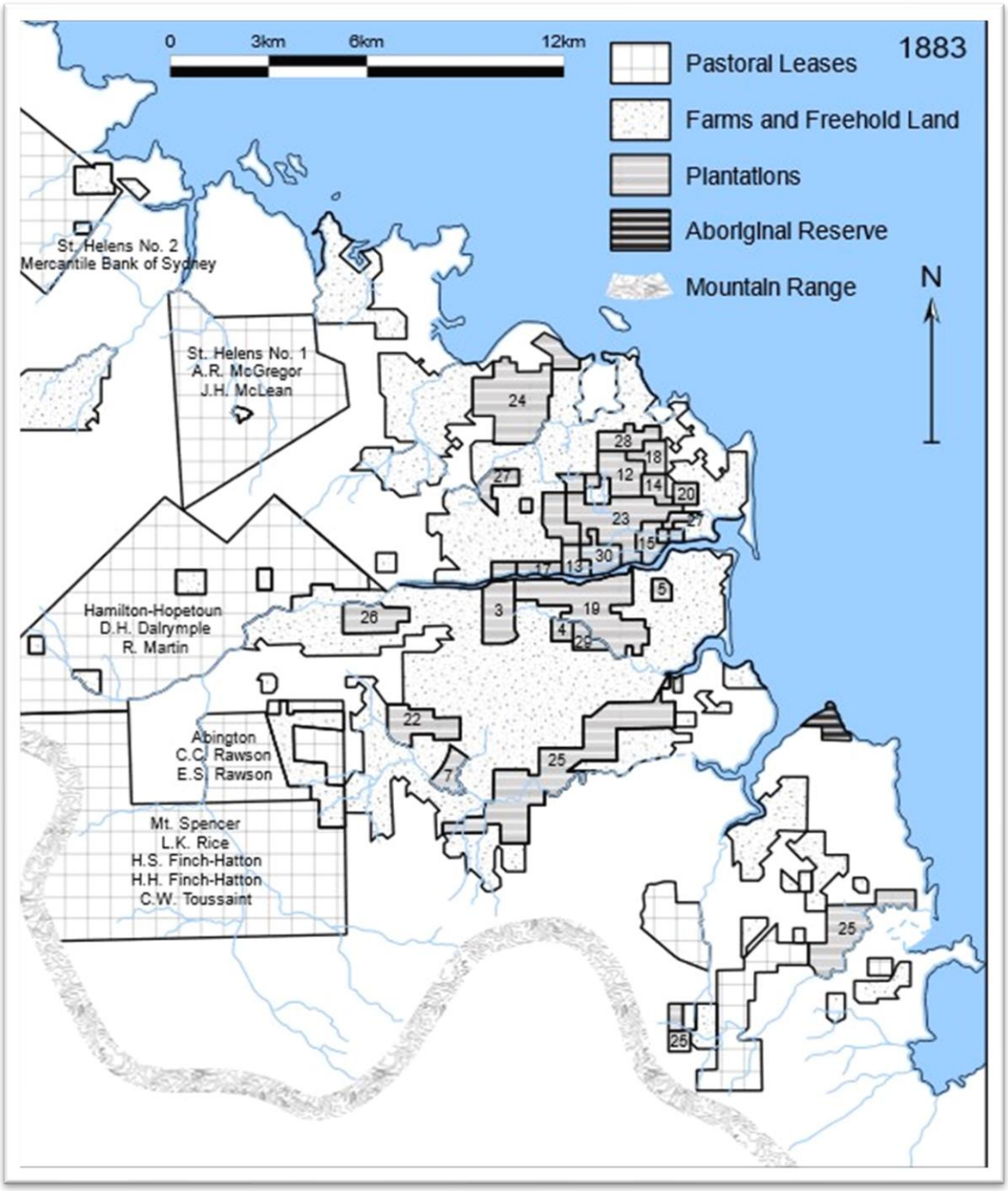
Plate 7.37: Laying portable tramways to transport cut cane from a Homebush field, 1883.
Plate 7.38: Loading cane onto wagons at Homebush, 1883.
Source of Plates 31–38: Colonial Sugar Refining Company, Sydney, 1979, CSR 142/3649, pp 68, 69, 64, 62, 63, 62.

Plate 7.39: Palms Estate plantation mill, the centre of the Melbourne–Mackay Co. operations.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

The obvious confidence displayed by the Homebush, Palms Estate, and Farleigh investments, and buoyant sugar prices, was followed by 11 more mills established in quick succession. Palms Estate was followed by Beaconsfield and Conningsby on the Northside, and Victoria out near Barrie at Eton (all in 1882). Eight mills began in 1883: Farleigh; Marian, 24 kilometres up the Pioneer Valley; Mount Pleasant bordering River Estate; Nindaroo, just north of The Cedars, and Richmond nearby; Palymra on Bakers Creek near Alexandra; and Ashburton, built in 1883 in the hills of the original Pioneer plantation. Marian was another plantation with West Indian connections. Charles F.N. Armstrong, manager there in the early 1880s, was the youngest son of baronet Sir Andrew Armstrong of Gallen Priory, King's County, Ireland. He was the grandson of George Alexander Fullerton, who inherited his great-uncle's estates in Jamaica and received compensation from the British Government for the ex-slaves who had worked there.

The first plantations in the 1860s required only small capital investments—much less than for pastoral properties—coupled with a resilient pioneer spirit on the part of the local owners. By the 1880s, large amounts of money from southern and overseas capitalists were invested in Mackay's plantations. The owners and managers now required business acumen, not pioneer zeal. The economy of the Mackay district was tied to capitalist enterprises elsewhere, and to fluctuating world sugar prices. Mackay's resident planters wielded economic, social, and economic power within their local domain, but they were insignificant forces on a wider stage. This becomes clear in relation to changing sugar technology and the

wider economic and political decisions which forced change on the Queensland sugar industry in the late nineteenth century.



Map 7.3: Agriculture and pastoralism around Mackay and the Pioneer Valley in 1883. Although reduced in size, the pastoral properties still existed in the west of the valley, with the coastal end totally dominated by sugarcane. Thirty mills were established between 1868 and 1883. The earlier Aboriginal Reserve areas had been reduced to a small size. The number code is explained in Table 7.1.
Source: Cartography by Vincent Verheyen. Clive Moore Collection.

Just as the boom reached its height, calamity struck in the shape of decreasing world sugar prices. The 1883 price was not equalled again for another three decades. Even though Queensland's sugar industry was over-capitalised, not all the technology was up to date. The industry had been profitable only because of the high prices. It was also labour intensive,

depending on cheap non-European labour, predominantly from the nearby Pacific Islands. Right from the 1860s, there were small cane farms close to the plantations, but when the time came to get their cane crushed the farmers were totally controlled by the whims of the plantation owners. They were also just as dependent on imported Melanesian labour as the planters. For instance, in 1888, Robert N. Bridgeman sold his 1,742-acre (705 ha) selection to CSR. The industry was in the doldrums, Bridgeman was in debt for £7,000, and without Islander labour could see no future, other than to sell to the company, taking up a job with them as an assistant manager. Table 7.1 shows the number of 1870s mills which ceased operating in the mid-1880s. CSR and the Melbourne–Mackay Sugar Co. were large enough to ride out and profit from depressed conditions. However, in 1888 the Melbourne–Mackay Sugar Co. made a loss of £16,583 from its £300,000 investment. With the low price for sugar and uncertainty over the future of Islander labour, managing director J.E. Davidson was despondent about the future of the industry.

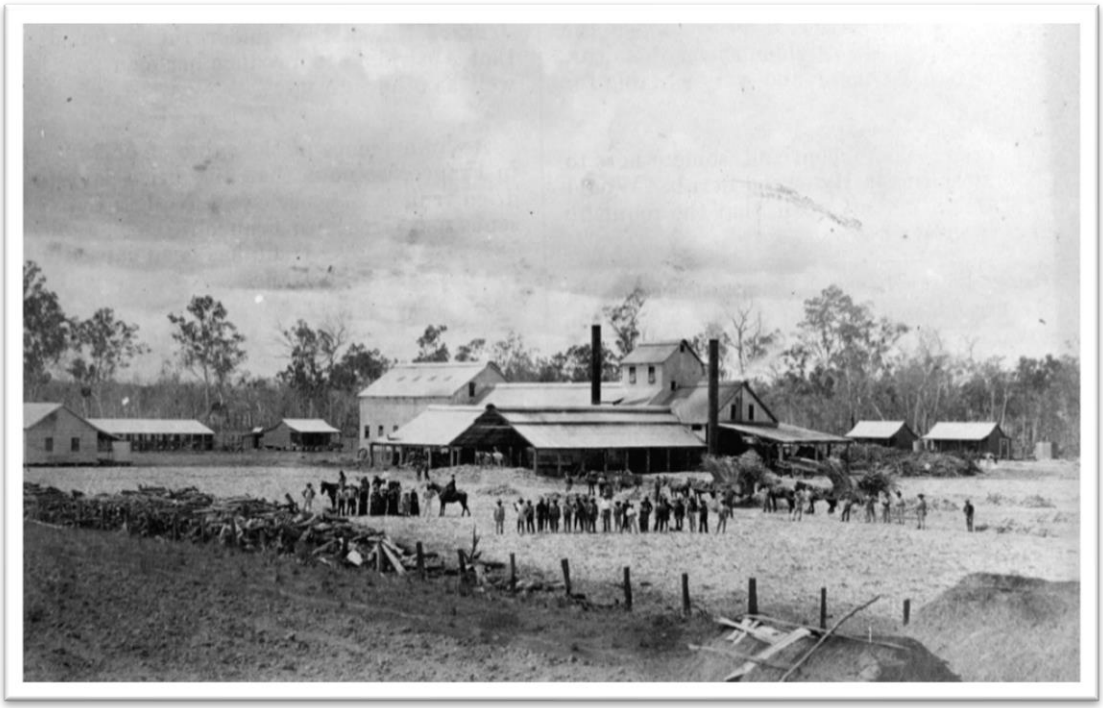


Plate 7.40: Victoria plantation mill near Eton, 1880. Just as it began, North Eton central mill was established, which took away its local growers.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

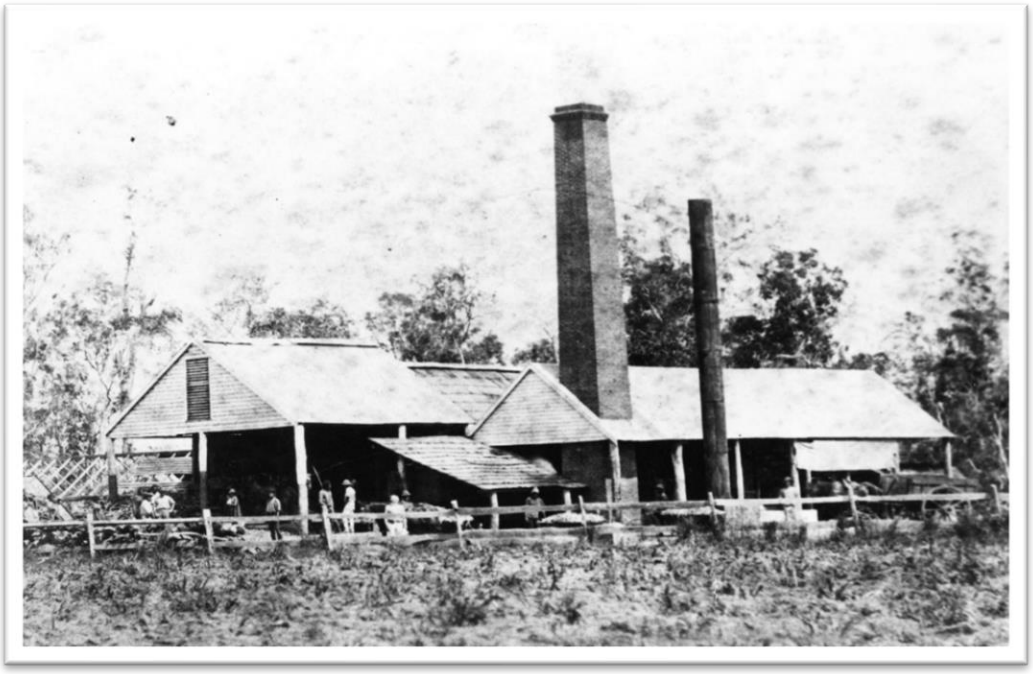


Plate 7.41: Barrie plantation, begun by David Jack close by Sandy Creek near Eton. It was the first mill to be built away from the river flats. It operated between 1872 and 1886. Barrie failed after Victoria plantation mill and North Eton central mill began crushing.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

Plate 7.42: Barrie plantation house.
Source: State Library of Queensland.

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The reform needed was simple and in line with general Queensland Government policy. Financing the building of farmer-supplied large central mills encouraged 'yeoman' farmer migrants—small scale agriculturalists. The Government plan onwards from the mid-1880s was to encourage central milling co-operatives, then slowly to phase out importing Pacific

Islander labourers, switching to White labour. The first two government-financed mills, North Eton and Racecourse, were built in the Pioneer Valley in 1888–89, and then in 1893 Queensland introduced the *Sugar Works Guarantee Act*, again providing finances for farmer-oriented central milling ventures, which led to a total restructure of the industry. We have become so used to this style of milling—separated from cultivation and labour—that it is hard to realise how radical a move this was. However, the Government was aware of similar trends overseas, and it made sense to adopt them in Queensland. New growers' mills were built, and several plantation milling companies were re-formed to accommodate small growers. In 1900, the sugar produced in the Pioneer Valley was coming equally from farmer-supplied central mills and plantation mills. By 1920, there were only eight mills operating, then when two of the large 1880s plantation mills closed (Homebush in 1921 and Palms Estate in 1924), only six remained. Cane assignments—government control of cane acreage—were expanded substantially in the late 1940s and in the 1960s, causing the mills to increase their crushing capacities.

After a further series of amalgamations in the 1980s and 1990s, today there are only three mills in the Pioneer Valley (Farleigh, Marian, and Racecourse, the latter with a refinery), along with Plane Creek mill and a bioethanol distillery at nearby Sarina. Pleystowe no longer operates as a mill, its plant and equipment integrated into other Mackay Sugar group mills, the site still providing several centralised services for the other mills. The closest other sugar mill is at Proserpine, 125 km north of Mackay, beyond the immediate district. The industry has always been based around factories that dominate the fields of sugarcane, attempting to extract the maximum sugar content at the minimum cost. Today's sugar industry exists in an economic environment controlled by huge international companies, and is regulated by state and federal governments. The natural environment has been altered to suit the needs of the crop.

The next chapter continues themes raised in this chapter, such as improvements in the milling process, and the activities of these frontier entrepreneurs as they availed themselves of a range of business activities. The final section of Chapter 8 is an echo of the discussion of the domestic lives of the valley pastoralists in Chapter 4. The concentration in Chapter 8 is on the Long, Marten and King families of Branscombe, River Estate and Habana plantations, who together carry us from 1870 to the 1900s.

Bibliography

The bibliographies for all chapters are in a separate file. Detailed references for much of this chapter can be found in Moore 1981, Chapter 4.

Endnotes

[1] *Mackay Mercury* 4 March 1905; Map of portions 39 to 91 of the Parish of Greenmount, an 1870 survey of Alexandra, provided to me by John Cook, Brisbane, 8 June 1979.

[2] A Sugar Pioneer: Veteran Mackay Farmer's Death in U.K. [John Ewan Davidson] *Northern Herald* 26 December 1923, 25.