

CHAPTER 6

The dream that failed – the rise and fall of the Valley of Lagoons

Three weeks before the separation of Queensland from New South Wales the government in Sydney threw open the lands of the Kennedy Pastoral District for selection, but early in 1860 the Queensland Executive Council decided to annul the decision and wait for the yet-to-be constituted Queensland Parliament to debate the vexed issue of land tenure and formulate a policy that would best suit the aspirations of the majority of its electors. The Aborigines who lived in the area under discussion would have been aware of what was going on in other parts of Australia so they must have realised there was a strong likelihood that the gubbas would soon be moving into their territory. Governor Bowen certainly knew what they could expect. In a superbly crafted letter he sent to the Duke of Newcastle a few months after arriving in Brisbane he drew the Secretary of State's attention to a phenomenon that was to have profound consequences for the Aborigines of the Upper Burdekin Valley. There was, he wrote:

...something almost sublime in the steady, silent flow of pastoral occupation over north-eastern Australia. It resembles the rise of the tide or some other operation of nature, rather than the work of man. Although it is difficult to ascertain exactly what progress may have been made at the end of each month, still, at the close of every year, we find that the margin of Christianity and civilisation has been pushed forward by some 200 miles. (320km)¹

Bowen's imagery is very apt and what he calls 'Christianity' did indeed push forward at an astonishing rate. When the letter was written Queensland's most northerly grazing property was in the Marlborough district, some 100km north of Rockhampton. But in the decade that followed three ports (Bowen, Cardwell and Townsville) were created within the tropics and the graziers pushed as far north as Mt Surprise, which lies immediately to the south-west of the Tablelands.

The story of how the Upper Burdekin Valley was wrested from the control of the nomads whose ancestors had first come into the area when mammoths and sabre-toothed tigers were a common sight in much of Europe merits a whole book rather than the two measly chapters I've allotted to it. All I can do is select a few individuals and describe what happened to them as they set about the daunting task of transforming a hostile wilderness into one of Australia's most important beef-producing regions. In this chapter I'll concentrate on the Valley of Lagoons grazing property partly because of its importance in the overall scheme of things but, more importantly, I've unearthed some previously unpublished information about its first European occupants and in the process have become exceedingly fond of the place – just as Leichhardt did, under very different circumstances, a century-and-a-half earlier.

In the only other chapter in this section I've been equally selective. I've picked out two people who took up land in another part of the North Kennedy Pastoral District in the 1860s and will describe what happened to them. They were Richard Daintree and William Hann and when they arrived they expected to make a good living from raising sheep and cattle in what appeared to be excellent grazing country. As things turned out, neither did as well as they'd anticipated from their pastoral pursuits but they did contribute in other ways to the economic development of the area.

From the outset the Queensland Government was anxious for the occupation of the Kennedy Pastoral District to commence as soon as possible. It would inevitably boost government revenue and there was always a chance that once the area had been settled by graziers, valuable mineral deposits might be

¹ Letter from George Ferguson Bowen to the Duke of Newcastle 4.12.60

discovered. As luck would have it, this is precisely what happened. A Land Act was hurriedly cobbled together and under its terms would-be graziers were granted 14-year leases on the blocks of land they applied for. To deter speculators there was a stipulation that they had to stock their runs within a year of a licence being granted. The government also decided to appoint a Commissioner for Crown Lands to oversee the occupation of the Kennedy District and the person chosen was Dalrymple. The appointment, which was to take effect on 1 August 1860, wasn't welcomed in all quarters. The recently installed Chief Commissioner for Crown Lands, our old friend A. C. Gregory, let it be known that he'd rather have seen a qualified surveyor given the job but his protests were to no avail.

In November Governor Bowen, acting on the advice of the Executive Council, announced that Dalrymple had been asked to establish a point of entry to the Kennedy District at Port Denison. The plan was for him to lead a party of settlers and Native Military Police overland from Rockhampton and at the same time a couple of ships would carry a large quantity of stores – along with an assortment of government officials, women and children – to the site of the new settlement. The Governor also decreed that pastoral leases for the area would be available for tender on 1 January 1861 and the process got under way within minutes of the start of the New Year. Details of what actually happened are sketchy but Dalrymple is said to have hosted a Hogmanay party somewhere in Brisbane and as soon as the clock struck twelve he started accepting applications for licences. Ernest Henry and Philip Sellheim were present and acquired Mt McConnell and Strathmore stations respectively.

Bowen hoped Dalrymple would be able to begin his latest adventure at the beginning of February 1861. This, as somebody should have pointed out, is generally the height of the wet season. Fortunately for Dalrymple, the detachment of Native Police that was to accompany him wasn't ready in time and the expedition didn't get underway until 25 February.

The group of hardy individuals accompanying Dalrymple called themselves the 'Kennedy Men' and they expected to reach Port Denison in mid-March but it soon became apparent it was going to take a lot longer. The wet season was still in full

swing, with much of the ground boggy and several rivers in flood.

Dalrymple had long since grown accustomed to camping out in all weathers but the fact that he and his colleagues were making such slow progress was worrying him. Before setting out from Rockhampton he'd assured the captains of the two support vessels – the schooner *Jennie Dove* and the *Santa Barbara* – that he'd make every attempt to time his arrival to coincide with theirs. If, however, he didn't show up on time they were to anchor beside Stone Island and establish a camp there rather than on the mainland. The more Dalrymple fell behind schedule the more anxious he became that the people on the support ships would grow tired of waiting and transfer to the mainland. If this were to occur the Aborigines might launch an attack, the consequences of which could have been catastrophic. But he needn't have worried: the captain of the *Santa Barbara* was Sinclair. He knew what to expect as a result of his history-making voyage two years earlier and his counterpart on the *Jennie Dove*, Captain McDermott, was happy to abide by Dalrymple's wishes. Their patience was rewarded on 10 April when the Kennedy Men at last came into view. The following day Dalrymple held a ceremony to mark the establishment of the new settlement, henceforth to be known as Bowen, and he spent the next few months making it habitable.

The people who'd come to Port Denison to take up land in the Burdekin Valley were itching to head into the bush straight away but several were scared of being attacked by Aborigines and remained in Bowen. One of the first groups to venture inland was made up of Christopher Allingham, Edward Cunningham, Michael Miles, Philip Somer and William Stenhouse. They explored a large tract of country fronting the Burdekin and upon their return to Bowen on 29 June they applied for land in the places that had taken their fancy. Allingham ended up with Hillgrove, Cunningham with Burdekin Downs and Stenhouse with Fanning Downs. By the middle of the following year Dalrymple had received no fewer than 454 lease applications and a significant percentage of the people who'd been granted them had already started to stock their properties and construct rudimentary dwellings.

Dalrymple's office was a tent – albeit a large one – next to the sea. Besides allocating land to would-be pastoralists he also helped run the port and frequently acted as a magistrate. His job also involved a lot of travelling: in the 12 months following his arrival at Port Denison he visited all parts of his vast domain, trying to ensure that the stipulations of the Land Act were being adhered to.

Nowadays most of the graziers in the Burdekin Valley keep only cattle but a significant number of the first Europeans to move into the area also had sheep. The opening up of the Kennedy District coincided with a period of high wool prices. They began to rise at the start of the American Civil War in 1861 and stayed high until the conflict ended in April 1865. There seemed to be no reason why sheep shouldn't thrive in the inland areas of the Kennedy District so many of the area's pioneers decided to pin their hopes on wool rather than beef.

Anyone wishing to acquire land for pastoral purposes in the area under Dalrymple's jurisdiction had to follow a simple procedure. First, they had to decide which part of the Kennedy District they wished to take up. Some did so from afar, with only a couple of crudely drawn maps and the recommendations of other people to go by, but it was more common for prospective run-holders to inspect the country in person prior to committing themselves. The next stage was to go to Bowen and present themselves to Dalrymple. He'd hand them an application form on which they'd give details of the land they were after. The size of each run was restricted to a maximum of 100 square miles, with a minimum of 25 square miles, but there was no restriction on the number of runs that could be applied for.

Once the application form had been filled in Dalrymple had to reproduce the information and send it to Brisbane where it would be scrutinised by the Chief Commissioner for Crown Lands, A. C. Gregory. Dalrymple, meanwhile, would inspect the area being applied for and, if everything was in order, a one-year pastoral licence would be issued. More than 450 applications had been received by the middle of 1862 and 144 processed. Nevertheless, Gregory was highly critical of Dalrymple's performance and it's not hard to see why. Gregory was a surveyor and expected to be furnished with the sort of information that only

somebody from his profession could provide but neither Dalrymple nor any of his staff were qualified surveyors. When the settlement at Port Denison was first established the Queensland Government had sent a surveyor named Clarendon Stuart to lay out a town site but as soon as this had been done he was summoned back to Brisbane. If he'd been allowed to remain he could have made sure Gregory was provided with the information he needed, rather than the vaguely worded documents Dalrymple was sending him. To make matters worse, Dalrymple had so many other duties to perform that lease applications weren't being processed as quickly as they should have been and the infrequency of shipping services between Bowen and Brisbane meant that it took forever and a day for them to reach Gregory after they'd finally left his desk.

By the middle of 1862 Dalrymple had yet another duty to attend to. The first of the one-year licences had started to expire and it was up to him to decide whether the holders could be granted a 14-year lease. To qualify they were required to stock their runs with at least 25 sheep or five head of cattle or horses per square mile. Checking that the requirements had been met was a full time job in itself and necessitated Dalrymple being away from the office for weeks at a time. Needless to say, whenever he returned to Bowen there'd be a mountain of paperwork requiring his attention.

In March 1862 Dalrymple went to Brisbane on official business and while there he had a check up. He'd been suffering from periodic bouts of fever and these were starting to undermine his health. What he needed was a prolonged rest and he ended up spending six months away from Bowen, dividing his time between Brisbane and Rockhampton.

Dalrymple's visit to Brisbane coincided with a government enquiry into the way the European takeover of areas such as the Kennedy District was being handled. The team conducting the investigation was keen to hear what he had to say about the practical difficulties of working within the framework of the existing legislation so he was invited to attend one of its first sessions. Gregory was also consulted, just as he had been two years earlier when the initial Land Bill was being drafted. On that occasion his dissenting views had been noted but not acted upon. Since then, however, many influential people had come round to his way

of thinking and this time he succeeded in having several of his ideas written into the statute book. The *Unoccupied Lands Act*, which received Royal Assent in July 1862, called for several of the land commissioners – among them Dalrymple – to be dismissed and replaced by registered surveyors. The government also realised the Kennedy District was far too big so it was divided in two. The new commissioner in the South Kennedy District, an experienced surveyor named Henry Scott, wasn't felt to be up to scratch and was replaced in the middle of 1864. As for Dalrymple, there was some talk of him continuing to participate in Bowen's civic affairs but he didn't relish the thought of playing second fiddle to a mere surveyor. Besides, he had bigger fish to fry.

The venture that occupied much of Dalrymple's time for the next few years was one that also involved the Premier of Queensland, the Right Honourable Robert George Wyndham Herbert. The two men were unlike in temperament and outlook but were both bachelors of approximately the same age and came from the upper echelons of British society. They also shared a belief that they were living in a part of the world where it was possible to make large sums of money and in 1862 (if not sooner) they thought they'd hit upon something that would earn them a fortune.

Queensland's first Premier was born on 12 June 1831 in the fashionable English seaside resort of Brighton. When he was still a toddler his father Algernon – a successful barrister and noted antiquarian – inherited a magnificent house called Caldrees Manor. Situated approximately 10km south of Cambridge, it lay at the heart of the village of Ickleton and Herbert spent most of his life there. Besides being financially secure, Herbert's parents were also well connected. His father was the fifth son of the First Earl of Carnarvon and through him Herbert was able to establish a network of contacts that was to stand him in good stead when the time came for him to make his own way in the world.

The Herberts were very ambitious for their only son and saw to it he received the finest education that money could buy. A series of tutors gave him a good grounding in the 3Rs and Classics in the comfort of his own home. Then, at the age of 13, he was packed off to Eton where he brought great honour to his family by winning the prestigious Newcastle

Medal – an annual prize awarded to the school's outstanding Classics student (other notable winners include the prominent Conservative politician, Lord Hailsham and Monsignor Knox). In 1850 Herbert won a scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford, and four years later became a Fellow of All Souls College – an honour reserved for a select group of the very ablest Oxford graduates.

Unlike several of his contemporaries at Oxford Herbert didn't have a personal fortune behind him and this meant he needed a career. For a time he seemed set to follow in his father's footsteps and become a barrister – he entered the Inner Temple in London in 1854 and was called to the Bar on 30 April 1858 – but by then he'd decided that the legal profession wasn't for him. What he hankered after was either a career in the civil service or politics (or a combination of the two) and in July 1859 he received an offer that seemed tailor-made for him: the newly-appointed Governor of Queensland, George Ferguson Bowen, needed a Private Secretary and Herbert was asked if he'd be interested in helping him create an administrative structure to enable the new colony to thrive.

Nobody knows for certain what prompted Bowen to choose Herbert. The most likely explanation is that William Ewart Gladstone put his name forward and Bowen, who'd known Gladstone for several years, trusted his judgement. Gladstone had once worked alongside Herbert and evidently held him in high regard. When Herbert had first come to London Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer and he took him on as his Private Secretary. As things turned out, the appointment only lasted a few weeks. The Aberdeen Government, of which Gladstone was a member, fell from office in February 1855 so Herbert had to seek alternative employment but Gladstone – destined to become one of Britain's greatest prime ministers and have a town in Queensland named after him – continued to take an interest in his young protégé and his influence could have been crucial in Bowen's decision to give Herbert first refusal on the Queensland appointment. Another less likely possibility is that Herbert's second cousin and good friend, the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, pulled a few strings on his behalf.

In deciding whether to go to Queensland, Herbert had to consider the feelings of his friend and

partner, John Bramston. He was the son of an MP and had spent part of his childhood living near Ickleton. Like Herbert, he'd gone to Balliol and was a Fellow of All Souls and when Herbert moved to London they set up house together. Neither relished the thought of being parted for any length of time but Herbert was extremely reluctant to turn down an offer which seemed likely to provide him with a stepping stone to bigger and better things. Fortunately, a solution was found: Bramston agreed to accompany Herbert to the other side of the world and Bowen found him a job on his staff.

Herbert's official title when the appointment took effect was 'Colonial Secretary' but this was only meant to be a temporary arrangement. Once an elected government had been installed he'd simply be Bowen's Private Secretary. Nobody thought for a moment that he'd try to enter Parliament but at the first election he stood for the seat of Leichhardt and was duly elected. In addition, he was also made Premier – a position he retained for the next six years.

When Herbert stepped off the ship that had brought him from Britain Dalrymple was in the Burdekin Valley but by April 1860 his expedition was over and he was back in Brisbane, so the two men must have become acquainted at around this time.

Dalrymple had gone to North Queensland with the intention of verifying whether or not Leichhardt's assessment of the Valley of Lagoons' potential as a grazing property was merited. Having ascertained it was he was determined to acquire the place for himself. Being a Land Commissioner meant he had to tread carefully because he was forbidden by law to grant leases to himself, yet this is what he appears to have done and at the same time enlisted Herbert as a 'sleeping partner'.

In August 1862 Herbert set sail for England and didn't return until early the following year. While away he contacted a wealthy aristocrat named Arthur Jervoise Scott and persuaded him to invest a considerable sum in the Valley of Lagoons. Herbert and Scott had been at Eton together and were both Fellows of All Souls. According to Geoffrey Bolton, it was in the common room at All Souls that Scott committed himself to joining Herbert in Queensland and attempt to do in the Burdekin Valley what the Leslies had already done on the Darling Downs. Arthur Scott's next oldest

brother, Walter, was at a loose end at the time so he decided to throw in his lot with Arthur and Herbert and another brother, Charles, joined them in Queensland a couple of years later.

Arthur Scott was 30 years old when he arrived in Australia. His father, James Winter Scott, had married Lucy Jervoise in 1828 and he was the first of their eight children. The family home, Rotherfield Park, is situated in rural Hampshire, midway between Alton and Winchester, close to the village of Chawton where Jane Austen spent much of her life. She died 16 years before Arthur was born but could well have known his parents – she'd certainly have been aware of their existence – and there's some evidence to suggest she had Rotherfield in mind when she wrote *Mansfield Park*. James and Lucy's descendants still live at Rotherfield and their great grandson, Colonel Sir James Walter Jervoise Scott, was a truly great man. He had a distinguished military career and was a prominent figure in what is generally referred to as 'The Establishment'. In days gone by people from his strata of society were expected to abide by the code of 'noblesse oblige', which involved looking after the interests of the local people and working for the general good of the kingdom. Many fell short of what was expected but not Colonel Scott; he was a mighty man and despite having a punishing schedule of commitments he managed to find time to help me piece together the story of his family's involvement in the Valley of Lagoons.

Besides being wealthy the Scott brothers were also well educated. They'd all attended Eton and obtained firsts at Oxford (Arthur at Christ Church, Walter and Charles at Merton). The most academically-gifted was Walter. At Eton he carried off the Newcastle Medal and was also an accomplished linguist. According to Colonel Scott's mother, however, he was a man of few words, so whenever he mastered a new language family members would joke among themselves that he'd learned a new language in which to remain silent.

As soon as his Oxford days were over Walter embarked upon a lengthy tour of continental Europe. During his travels he met a woman he hoped would become his life-long partner but his parents didn't approve of her. Colonel Scott's mother, who told me about this, was under the impression that she was either a widow or a



Rotherfield Park in Hampshire, the Scott family home

divorcee and this is why they rejected her. Be that as it may, it wasn't in Walter's nature to go against his parents' wishes so he ended the relationship and spent the next couple of years working in Mauritius as Secretary to the Governor.

Herbert couldn't have asked for better business partners than the Scotts. It was mainly their money that underpinned the whole venture. Despite living in the lap of luxury in one of the loveliest parts of the British Isles they were happy to undertake a long and potentially dangerous sea voyage and build a new life in a part of the world that had been the exclusive preserve of the nomads whose way of life had so enchanted Leichhardt two decades earlier.

Like Dalrymple and Herbert the Scotts hoped to reap a rich financial reward from their involvement in the Valley of Lagoons. They believed that establishing a grazing property in an area that seemed ideally suited for the purpose and running it on sound business lines would make them even richer than they already were. There were, however, other considerations. Arthur and Walter saw it as an opportunity to explore a part of the world most of their peers wouldn't even have heard of and Arthur also hoped living in the tropics would improve his

health. Ever since childhood he'd suffered from asthma. At Rotherfield he had a special place in the garden where he could breathe more easily and he'd sit there for hours reading and gazing out over the rolling Hampshire countryside but whenever he was elsewhere he was liable to an attack. The change of climate appears to have done him a power of good. That, at least, is the impression Herbert gives in a letter written a few months after the Scotts arrived in Queensland...

Arthur Scott is staying here. He is generally well, far stronger than he has been for years. Hard work, or late hours occasionally bring on an attack of difficult breathing, but he has done wonders exploring near the Valley of Lagoons and Rockingham Bay.²

The Scotts were so anxious to begin their new life in Queensland that they left England ahead of Herbert and by the time he arrived back in Brisbane they'd already purchased 25,000 sheep on the Darling Downs and Walter was in the process of taking them to the Burdekin Valley. Early in

² Letter from Herbert to his mother 16.8.63

1863 a company known as ‘Scott Bros. Dalrymple and Co.’ came into being and it would appear that the four partners each put in £5,000. Because Dalrymple had been in Queensland for several years and had previous experience of overseeing grazing properties, he became the managing partner.

The owners of the Valley of Lagoons had purchased such a large number of sheep that the only practical way of transporting them into the tropics was to bring them overland. They could have paid a team of outside contractors to do this but Walter preferred to take charge of the operation and this occupied him for at least six months. He was an avid writer and would have almost certainly kept a detailed account of his 2,000km journey. Had it survived, historians would have a much clearer picture of the route he took and the difficulties he encountered but there’s no sign of such a document anywhere. We can only assume it was burned, along with his diaries and personal papers, in the 1960s when the manager of the Valley of Lagoons, in an appalling act of vandalism reminiscent of the worst excesses of Mao Zedong’s Red Guards, tossed them onto a bonfire! Fortunately, many letters Herbert wrote to members of his family still exist and from these we’re able to glimpse of what was happening to the Scotts’ sheep as they inched their way north.

Until September Walter appears to have been making steady progress, encountering few major problems. In a letter written a month or so after arriving back from Britain, Herbert told his mother that the sheep had *travelled 300 miles in excellent condition*.³ Four months later the animals were still well short of their destination but were in fine shape and constituted *by far the best flock in the North*.⁴ Moreover, if he and his partners had sold them immediately they’d have probably made a profit of between £2,000 and £3,000.

Shortly after Herbert wrote these words, however, Walter began to run into serious difficulties. Several horses went lame; a dray containing most of his possessions was destroyed in a bush fire; and, worst of all, he appeared likely to lose a large proportion of the sheep due to lack of feed and logistical

problems. Had this happened the consequences would have been disastrous because the sheep were meant to provide the Valley of Lagoons with its main source of income. Herbert gave a brief outline of the crisis facing Walter in a letter to his younger sister in mid-October:

*Walter Scott has been at some trouble with the sheep. It had been arranged that they should stop for lambing and shearing at a station 60 miles from Port Denison, but arriving there it was found there was not grass enough, and they had to push on to Port Denison, and found no preparations for shearing. And no yards etc. put up... I fear our wool will not be washed properly and that we shall loose an immense number of lambs.*⁵

The pioneer graziers who came to the Upper Burdekin in the early 1860s faced all manner of hardships, one of the most serious of which was isolation. The nearest port, Bowen, was approximately 500km away, which in itself was a major drawback, but during the wet season the Burdekin was prone to flood and whenever this happened most of the North Kennedy Pastoral District was cut off. It was an intolerable situation and one which Arthur Scott and Dalrymple were determined to do something about. In April 1863 they began an expedition that took them to the upper reaches of the Burdekin and the mountains behind where Ingham now stands. For Arthur it was an opportunity to see the Valley of Lagoons for the first time but the main aim was to find a more suitable outlet to the sea for his property and those of his neighbours.

The Valley of Lagoons lies approximately 120km west of Rockingham Bay and all the indications were that a port could be established there. The previous year Governor Bowen had visited the area on his way back to Brisbane from a trip to Cape York. The commander of the vessel on which he travelled, Commodore Burnett, had identified two places close to the shore where the water was deep enough to accommodate all but the largest ocean-going ships. Before a port could be developed, however, a way would have to be found through the towering mountain range that lies between the bay and the headwaters of the Burdekin. Fifteen years earlier Edmund Kennedy had almost come to grief as he tried to clamber to the top and since then

3 Letter from Herbert to his mother 18.5.63

4 Letter from Herbert to his mother 15.9.63

5 Letter from Herbert to his sister, Jenny 18.10.63

no European had tried to emulate him. However, Arthur and Dalrymple were confident they could locate a gap through which a road could be built and on 15 April 1863 they set out from Bowen to do just that.

For somebody used to all the comforts the Victorian era could provide and who, because of his asthma, wouldn't have been able to do much hard manual work, Arthur Scott took to the rigours of outback life with surprising ease. The expedition to and from the mountains behind Rockingham Bay took three months and for much of the time he and his companions had to endure prolonged periods of heavy rain. As one would expect of a Fellow of All Souls, Arthur felt duty-bound to keep a log of his travels and he used this as the basis of a report, a copy of which he presented to Governor Bowen. This was subsequently dispatched to the Duke of Newcastle and today provides an invaluable source of reference for historians.

The seven-man team that Arthur and Dalrymple had selected to go with them to Rockingham Bay included Richard Haughton, who'd been with Dalrymple on his 1859 expedition, and a Bunya Mountain Aborigine named Bobby. Three days into their journey they were given a graphic illustration of what they could expect if they had to continue to rely on Bowen as their sole link to the outside world. Arriving at the Burdekin on 18 April, they discovered it was in flood and were forced to wait on its southern bank for three weeks while the water level dropped sufficiently to allow them to cross. Once they'd done this they made good progress and reached the Valley of Lagoons on 24 May.

Two days earlier another group had arrived at the Valley of Lagoons with a sizeable number of cattle and set up camp next to a chain of lagoons named Pelican Lakes. Unfortunately, Arthur doesn't tell us where the animals came from or who was in charge of the droving team that brought them there. Could it have been Mrs Dawson's *bête noir*, Henry Stone? He's known to have begun working for the Scotts at around this time and he certainly hadn't come up from Bowen with Arthur and Dalrymple (although he may have accompanied them on one leg of their next expedition). Another possibility is that Stone was helping Walter with the sheep. In one of the letters home Herbert says that for much of the time Walter had *only one able hand with him*⁶.

He doesn't say who but he may have been referring to Stone.

Once they'd counted their cattle and figured out which part of their vast domain to keep them on, Arthur and Dalrymple rode over to Mt Lang – a volcanic cone about 50km north-west of Pelican Lakes – to see if they could spot a way through the coastal range from its summit. On what must have been a clear day they had a magnificent view over the surrounding countryside and thought they detected a gap in the mountains due east of where they were standing.

On 4 June the expedition left the Valley of Lagoons and started to follow the Burdekin upstream. It was pouring with rain and there was to be no let-up until the middle of the month. The weather and resulting swarms of mosquitoes weren't the only hardships facing the group. Much of this part of the Burdekin Valley has been covered by a succession of volcanic lava flows, some a mere 20,000 years old. There hadn't been sufficient time for the lava to decompose to the same extent that it has done in other formerly volcanically-active parts of Australia, like the Darling Downs and Atherton Tableland. In several places the horses found themselves having to pick their way around jagged boulders and crevasses and this eventually took its toll.

When Leichhardt had passed through this part of the Burdekin Valley he'd been full of admiration for the way of life of the Aborigines. Arthur evidently had a healthy respect for them too. The day after he and his companions left Pelican Lakes they came across a group of Aborigines gathering lotus bulbs around the edge of a large lagoon, which he named Lake Lucy after his mother. He later passed through several of their camps and discovered that, in addition to lotus bulbs, they ate ducks, fish, geese, kangaroos, possums and a rich selection of vegetables. A diet as varied as this would have been the envy of 60 percent of Arthur's countrymen, so it's little wonder he thought this particular group of Aborigines lived *uncommonly well*⁷.

On 8 June the explorers arrived at the confluence of the Burdekin and a sizeable tributary now known

6 Ibid

7 Scott, A.J. *An Expedition from Port Denison to Rockingham Bay During the Months of April, May, June of 1863*, p. 8



The Valley of the Lagoons Station

as Back Burdekin River. They decided to leave the main river and head up the tributary. To do this, they'd first have to cross to the right bank of the Burdekin. Given the boggy ground and the fact that the river was in flood meant this would be hazardous, but somebody called Williams found a suitable crossing place and they reached the other side the following afternoon.

Over the next few days Arthur and his companions could hear a roaring noise in the distance. Some of the group believed it was caused by waves breaking in the Pacific Ocean but Arthur thought it was more likely to be coming from a huge waterfall. During this leg of their journey they were, at one time or another, between 15 and 20km away from Herkes Falls, Flaggy Creek Falls and Wallaman Falls (which are Australia's highest). But these are situated on relatively minor tributaries of the Herbert and it's hard to imagine any of them creating sufficient noise to carry to any of the places through which the expedition passed. The Herbert River Falls, on the other hand, are located in the lower reaches of a river that discharges an enormous quantity of water into the sea, especially in times of flood. They were at least 30km away but it's possible the noise they generated echoed down the Herbert Gorge and was audible to Arthur and his mates as they passed from

the headwaters of the Burdekin into the catchment area of the Herbert.

On 13 June the explorers hauled themselves onto an elevated part of the coastal range. They were rewarded with an uninterrupted view of the Pacific Ocean and this inspired Dalrymple to name this stretch of the Eastern Highlands the Seaview Range. The vantage point also gave them an excellent view over the valley of the large river that was soon to bear the name of Queensland's first premier, and Arthur thought this was *no doubt the river on which is situated the large waterfall*⁸. Looking in the opposite direction, he and his mates could see the country over which they'd been travelling for the past week. It was gently undulating and this led them to conclude that it would be relatively easy to build a road between Pelican Lakes and the Seaview Range, but finding a route to the floor of the Herbert Valley was bound to be difficult. They made a number of attempts to find a way down the face of the range but these all failed so they decided to head back to Pelican Lakes before their rations gave out.

⁸ Ibid, p. 13

The expedition arrived back at Pelican Lakes shortly before dusk on 19 June and that night everyone was able to sleep in a bark hut that had been erected while they were away. Arthur was obviously disappointed at not finding a way through to Rockingham Bay but, as he explained in his report, the expedition hadn't been a complete failure:

*We have ascertained the existence of a low gap in the coast range, with an easy ascent and descent, the only obstacle being the jungle; and the expense of forming a road through that need not be very heavy. The swamps of the flat country near the coast may perhaps stop traffic during the wet season; but I have little doubt that a sound road will be got at any rate during the dry season.*⁹

A few weeks after the expedition Arthur went to stay with Herbert. The latter was still very optimistic about the Valley of Lagoons' future. In a letter to his mother he said that *the run by all accounts, is magnificent. It is all very rich pastoral country.*¹⁰

By October, however, Herbert had become less sanguine. As we saw earlier, Walter had suffered a number of setbacks on his way north and Herbert was also beginning to have doubts about Dalrymple's commitment and reliability as managing partner of the Valley of Lagoons. In a letter to his sister he complained that instead of overseeing the running of the property, he was *idling his time in Rockhampton.*¹¹

In the same month Herbert wrote these unflattering words, Dalrymple was given a civic reception in Bowen. A large crowd was on hand to witness the Mayor present him with a silver teapot, a sugar basin and other gifts, and thank him for the pivotal role he'd played in establishing the now-flourishing port of Bowen. After the ceremony Dalrymple caught the next available ship to Rockhampton and while there became involved in an unsavoury incident that made him look extremely foolish.

During previous visits to Rockhampton Dalrymple had become friendly with a well-to-do businessman named Albrecht Feez. He was also on excellent

terms with Mrs Feez and this led certain individuals – including, it would seem, the Chief Constable of Rockhampton, Sub-Inspector Forgan – to speculate openly that they were having an affair. When Dalrymple became aware of Forgan's suspicions he wrote to the local Police Magistrate, John Jardine, demanding he take action but Jardine was reluctant to become involved. He probably thought it unlikely that Dalrymple would pursue the matter but he was wrong.

On 12 November 1863 Mr Feez attacked a JP named A. F. Wood with a horsewhip after Wood had let it be known that his sympathies lay with Forgan. Then, later the same day, Dalrymple and Jardine had a set-to in the town centre. What began as a heated argument developed into something more serious when Dalrymple struck Jardine with the handle of his stock whip and ended up spending the night in police custody.

The following day Feez and Dalrymple appeared before magistrates. The former got off with a £50 fine but Dalrymple was ordered to attend the next sitting of the Assize Court the following April. Facing a possible jail sentence and/or a hefty fine and having made a spectacle of himself, Dalrymple left Rockhampton and headed north determined to redeem his reputation in the eyes of his business partners and the hundreds of people who still had faith in him.

Even though he'd only been in Australia for a maximum of seven years, Dalrymple was a skilled bushman and had a proven track record as an explorer. The failure of his most recent expedition was a blot on his reputation but he was confident that if he were to return to the mountains behind Rockingham Bay he'd be able to locate a gap large enough to put a road through. His optimism was shared by Arthur, and they spent the latter part of 1863 and the first couple of weeks of 1864 preparing for another expedition. Once it was under way Dalrymple assumed the role of leader but it was Arthur who orchestrated the operation. He was largely responsible for procuring the food and equipment, and also played an important role in recruiting people with the expertise that would be needed if the expedition were to be a success. In addition, it was his money that financed the venture... although he was hopeful that Herbert

⁹ Ibid, p. 20

¹⁰ Letter from Herbert to his mother 16.8.63

¹¹ Letter from Herbert to his sister, Jenny 18.10.63

would see to it that the Queensland taxpayers ended up footing a sizeable proportion of the bill.

The first time Dalrymple and Arthur had tried to find a route for the all-important road they'd started inland and worked their way towards the coast. This time they decided to do things the other way round. After sailing from Bowen to Rockingham Bay they'd proceed overland to the foot of the Seaview Range then, all being well, they'd find a way to the top. The expedition differed from the previous one in another significant way: one of its main aims was to establish a permanent presence at Rockingham Bay. As soon as it arrived the party would split into two groups – with one staying put and building a port facility, the other heading inland to hack a path through to Pelican Lakes.

Arthur chartered the schooner *Policeman* and it conveyed the 20-strong party, along with a small mountain of supplies, from Bowen to Rockingham Bay. The voyage lasted six days and the vessel reached its destination on 22 January 1864. This stretch of the coast had been surveyed a year earlier by the Hydrographer to the Admiralty, Captain Richards RN, and he'd recommended a place at the northern end of the Hinchinbrook Channel as the best site for a port. Dalrymple and his colleagues went there initially but they later found a better spot a little over a kilometre away.

The contingent responsible for creating the new settlement contained a bevy of government officials, including the Commissioner for Crown Lands in the North Kennedy Pastoral District, William Alcock Tully. He was a surveyor and responsible for producing a town survey. An officer of the Queensland Police Force, Lieutenant Marlow, and three Aboriginal troopers were on hand to provide protection but Arthur and Dalrymple were hopeful there'd be no need to gun down any Aborigines. Previous outbreaks of violence had often been caused by the inability of Europeans and Indigenous Australians to communicate and to avoid any misunderstandings James Morrill had been brought along as an interpreter. He'd spent 17 years living with Aborigines in the Cleveland Bay area and this had given him an excellent insight into their culture. It was also hoped he'd understand the the Rockingham Bay Aborigines' language.

Governor Bowen wanted Arthur and Dalrymple to succeed in providing the North Kennedy Pastoral District with a more convenient outlet to sea. Unlike his colleague, Premier Herbert, he'd no financial stake in the expedition's outcome but he wanted to see more Europeans move into the tropics and this would be much easier if a port could be established north of the Burdekin. Bowen (who'd studied Classics at Oxford) had visited Rockingham Bay in 1862 and compared the site of the proposed port with Thermopylae in Central Greece. Anybody familiar with the geography of both places would admit that the comparison is an apt one. Bowen had the privilege of naming the new settlement and decided to call it Cardwell after the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Viscount Edward Cardwell.

Tully set to work to create a street pattern and peg out allotments on which the settlers could start building homes and business premises. He did an excellent job and later had Australia's wettest town named in his honour. Dalrymple, meanwhile, was making daily forays into the bush to see if he could find a way through the mountain range immediately to the south of Cardwell. Now known as the Cardwell Range, it isn't as high as the Seaview Range but was still a major obstacle and he had the added disadvantage of being subjected to prolonged periods of torrential rain.

By mid-February Dalrymple had come to the conclusion that the best course of action would be to head for a gap between two of the Cardwell Range's main peaks – Mount Arthur Scott and Mount Leach – then press on to the Valley of Lagoons. He left Cardwell on the 15th, accompanied by his Aboriginal companion Cockey, Trooper Norman of the Native Mounted Police, and Messrs Ewart and Farquarson. Very little is known of these people, apart from the fact that Cockey was from Stradbroke Island and Farquarson came from the same part of Scotland as Dalrymple (Invercauld to be precise).

Several days after leaving Cardwell Dalrymple led his colleagues through the gap – which subsequently became known as Dalrymple's Gap – then proceeded to cut a path down to the large river he and Arthur had seen from the top of the Seaview Range six months earlier. At the time it didn't have a name and this put Dalrymple in the enviable position of being able to immortalise anyone he wished by attaching their name to one of

the North's most important geographical features. Calling it after himself, or even a close relative, would have left him open to charges of vanity so he decided to name it after Herbert (although, if he'd been privy to some of the remarks the Premier had been making about him in letters home he'd undoubtedly have chosen someone else!)

There'd been a lot of rain in the Herbert's catchment area during the preceding weeks and the river was in flood when Dalrymple and Co. reached it. But it was imperative for them to get to the far bank quickly. During the crossing Cockey and Dalrymple's horses were both knocked off balance and the riders had to swim for their lives. Soon after Dalrymple found himself facing a threat of a different kind, as he explains in his report.

*I was also in a position of considerable danger from a tribe of wild blacks, while left alone, with my arms and ammunition wet, on the far side, whilst Cockey was bringing the others across.*¹²

Once they were over the Herbert the explorers had the relatively easy task of wending their way to the foot of the Seaview Range – though the next leg of the journey would be anything but straightforward. Somehow they were going to have to haul themselves and their horses to the summit of a precipitous mountain slope. Every member of the party was aware that if they failed the expedition would have been a waste of time and Cardwell would have to be abandoned.

To begin with the situation appeared hopeless but, after three unsuccessful attempts to find a route to the top, Dalrymple came across *a good spur descending from the range into the Vale of Herbert, suitable for a dray road, about 20 miles in a WNW direction from the gap in the Rockingham Bay range*¹³ (i.e. the Cardwell Range). As well as having a relatively gentle gradient the spur also had *a line of perfectly open, bald, grassy summits for about two miles*¹⁴ and this made the ascent a lot easier.

It would have been helpful if Dalrymple had included a detailed account of how he and his colleagues scaled the range in his official report but he chose not to. Consequently, we can only guess how long it took (probably no more than a day) and when precisely it occurred (it must have been on or around 27 February). He does, however, tell us that he arrived at the Valley of Lagoons on 1 March and was obviously very impressed by what he saw. As he approached the homestead he came across *herds of short-horned cattle... lying in groups on the woodland ridges, or browsing over the rich pastures with the quiet laziness, sure evidence of their thriving condition.*¹⁵ He also makes it clear that a great deal of building had taken place since his last visit. On a hill overlooking Pelican Lakes he saw *a paddock fence encircling, and the cottage and buildings crowning a commanding ridge,*¹⁶ all of which suggests that at least some of the Scotts' money was being put to good use.

The explorers had a week's rest at the Valley of Lagoons then on 8 March they began the return leg of their journey. The outward leg had taken them across two mountain ranges, one of Australia's largest rivers and several patches of swamp, and the fact they'd completed it in a little over two weeks was a remarkable achievement. But the challenge they now faced was even more daunting. They had to prove a dray road could be built between the Valley of Lagoons and the coast, and in order to do so Dalrymple decided to take three bullock drays with him and manhandle them all the way to Cardwell. He realised that building a road capable of accommodating them would involve an enormous amount of work and it would have been unrealistic to rely solely on his original party. This led him to call for volunteers from among the station workers at the Valley of Lagoons and 16 agreed to join him. Unfortunately, he doesn't let us know who they were and I was hoping to use his report to verify whether or not Henry Stone had been one of the participants. He was almost certainly on the Scotts' payroll by this time and I'd always been under the impression that he'd figured in Dalrymple's return journey from the Valley of Lagoons to Cardwell. He may well have done but in the absence of any hard evidence it's impossible to say one way or the other.

12 *Report of Mr George Elphinstone Dalrymple on his Journey from Rockingham Bay to the Valley of Lagoons*, Journal of the Royal Geographical Society 1865 Vol 35, p 207

13 Ibid, p. 208

14 Ibid

15 Ibid p 209

16 Ibid

Constructing a road, even a makeshift one, capable of enabling three wheeled vehicles to cross some of the most rugged terrain in Australia must have involved a certain amount of technical expertise and it's doubtful that Dalrymple would have been able to supervise such a complex operation. Perhaps there was somebody else in the group who was an experienced road builder. If so, it would have been he who chose the route down the range and supervised the construction of the road surface. But the only first-hand account we have is Dalrymple's report and it says absolutely nothing about how the road was built.

Besides commandeering 61 working bullocks to pull the drays, Dalrymple also selected 63 of the Valley of Lagoons' fat bullocks for the return trip to Rockingham Bay. Some were eaten on the way and the rest ended up in Cardwell.

On reaching the crest of the Seaview Range on 15 March, Dalrymple set up a base camp. It functioned for the three weeks it took to complete the road down the face of the mountainside. When he and his colleagues reached the Herbert it was still in flood -- in fact it was running at a higher level than it had been when they were there in February. By this stage they were almost out of food (apart from beef) and were desperate to let their colleagues in Cardwell know what was going on, so there was no question of waiting for the waters to subside. Dalrymple explains what happened next in his report:

*... the passage of the river was at length effected by swimming the bullocks and horses, and dragging the drays over with a rope. Two drays were rolled over by the force of the current, and six of the party who could not swim, and who had gone on them, had a narrow escape from being washed away. The rest of us rode across stripped, driving the spare horses, bullocks and fat cattle before us.*¹⁷

When he and his pals were in the vicinity of the Cardwell Range Dalrymple decided to take five members of his party and 26 bullocks to Cardwell,

and leave the rest of the group to continue working on the road. He completed the journey on 24 April and told the local people that not only was a road to the interior a theoretical possibility, but he'd actually built one to within 20km of Cardwell. They were overjoyed and when he asked for volunteers to help finish the last section 26 agreed to lend a hand. The road was quickly completed and this enabled the drays and remaining bullocks to be brought to Cardwell. Soon after each of the drays was loaded with two tons of freight and sent back to the Valley of Lagoons.

Over the next few months the Queensland Government spent a considerable amount upgrading the road and Cardwell seemed set to become one of Australia's most important ports. In a letter to the Duke of Newcastle Governor Bowen pointed out that its harbour was *one of the best on the eastern coast of Australia*,¹⁸ and this, along with its central location and the abundant resources of its hinterland, meant it would be a prime candidate to become the capital of North Queensland if, as appeared likely, Queensland were to be split in two.

Arthur Scott also had high hopes for the town that he'd been largely instrumental in creating.

*Large ships can lie at anchor about a mile off, while vessels of light draught can come close in. The rise and fall is at least 12 feet at spring tides, and the bottom being of soft clay, any vessel can lie within a few yards of the shore without the slightest danger. The bay is perfectly sheltered by Hinchinbrook and Goold Islands, from the prevailing winds from the south-east, while Dunk Island, the Family Group islets, and numerous shoals, prevent any great sea from the north-east... Altogether I believe that this will prove to be the best harbour in Queensland.*¹⁹

Alas, it wasn't to be. The much-vaunted road through Dalrymple's Gap and over the Seaview Range was difficult to negotiate even during the dry months and was unusable for much of the wet season. In 1866 the port of Townsville was established and it quickly became the outlet for most of the grazing properties in the North and South Kennedy pastoral districts. For the next 130 years Cardwell became a backwater but at the time of writing (2012) a large-scale tourist

17 Ibid p 210

18 Letter from Governor Bowen to the Duke of Newcastle, published in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society 1865, Vol 35, p 192.

19 Scott, A.J. *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol 35, p 194.



Cardwell Jetty (courtesy Cairns Historical Society)

development is being constructed on the town's southern outskirts and this will doubtless alter its character dramatically.

The fact that the port of Cardwell and the road connecting it to the inland sheep and cattle stations didn't live up to the expectations of the likes of Arthur Scott and Bowen didn't have an adverse effect on Dalrymple's reputation as an explorer. The Royal Geographical Society published his account of the 1864 expedition and soon after made him a Fellow. As managing partner of the Valley of Lagoons he'd have been expected to return to station duties once the road had become usable and his report completed. But late in 1864 he received a petition – signed by 55 people, including the Mayor of Bowen – urging him to stand for the newly-created seat of Kennedy in the forthcoming Legislative Assembly election. The prospect of entering the political arena evidently held more appeal than spending the next few years on an outback grazing property so he extricated himself from the company he'd formed with the Scotts and announced his candidature. The election took place in March 1865 and he won with ease. For the next couple of years he championed the interests of the northern squatters and seemed set for a long and distinguished career in politics. In 1867, however,

he became so ill that his doctor advised him to return to Britain for treatment. He arrived back in Australia early in 1869 and became a partner in a grazing property in the Upper Burdekin but within a year he'd been declared insolvent. The Queensland Government came to the rescue by sending him to the Gilbert River Goldfield as Assistant Gold Commissioner. The salary was nothing to write home about but at least it was a job and administering a bleak and dangerous area was something he felt able to cope with.

Dalrymple began work on the Gilbert on October 1871 but a few months later the Queensland Government asked him to scour the mountains behind Rockingham Bay for a better route for the almost completed Cardwell–Burketown overland telegraph and the road linking the Valley of Lagoons with the coast. He did what was required but in the process fell ill again and this prompted him to travel to Brisbane to seek further treatment. While there he tried to get a transfer to Stanthorpe, on the Granite Belt, on health grounds but the request was turned down so he was forced to return to the Gilbert.

At the beginning September 1873 Dalrymple received the news that he'd been chosen to lead a government-funded expedition to explore the coast between Cardwell and the Endeavour River. As

we'll see in Chapter Nine, it was a great success and marked a glittering finale to his career as an explorer ... although if the authorities had been aware of the state of his health they'd have put someone else in charge. He was ill when the expedition began and in November, while in the Mulgrave Valley, he almost died. Eventually, he made it back to Brisbane and spent the first few months of 1874 recuperating.

As soon as he'd perked up Dalrymple was appointed to the position of Officer-in-Charge at Somerset, a tiny settlement on the northern tip of Cape York. Established 11 years earlier in the expectation of one day rivalling Singapore, it had struggled from the outset and unless drastic measures were undertaken quickly it faced the prospect of being abandoned. Dalrymple left Brisbane for Somerset on 20 May 1874 on board the *Jeddah* but a couple of months later his health collapsed once more and this caused him to return to Brisbane. He didn't appear to be getting better so he sailed to Britain hoping against hope that the cool climate might cure him, and if it didn't he'd at least die in the presence of family members. After visiting Logie House Dalrymple moved down to St Leonards-on-Sea in Sussex to be with his widowed sister, Henrietta*, and it was there that he died, in January 1876. He was buried in the nearby Hastings municipal cemetery, in what for many years was an unmarked grave, but a century after his death the Dalrymple Shire Council paid for a headstone. It might have been more appropriate if his remains had been shipped to Queensland and taken to somewhere like Bowen or Cardwell but this would have been costly and doubtless involve an enormous amount of red tape.

When Dalrymple sold his share in the Valley of Lagoons the company he'd help set up changed its name to 'Scott Bros. and Co.' In 1864 another brother, Charles, arrived in Australia and invested £5,000 in the venture. Two brothers-in-law, Sir Charles Hayes Miller and Captain Richard Spicer, also contributed large sums, although they stayed in England. Some of this extra money was used to acquire a huge tract of land in the Herbert Valley and a property called Herbert Vale came into being.

A large homestead was erected close to the river and Henry Stone put in charge.

In the middle of 1864 Arthur returned to England to raise somewhere in the region of £25,000 to help fund Herbert Vale, as well as going towards paying for the maintenance of what he and his partners already held. During his stay he contacted a number of well-to-do people and tried to talk them into investing in Scott Bros and Co. He also hoped to persuade a number of young aristocrats to come to Queensland and serve what amounted to an apprenticeship at the Valley of Lagoons before taking up properties of their own.

Arthur succeeded in raising some money – although not nearly as much as he'd wished – and signed up a couple of recruits for what become known as the 'New Chum Scheme'. He may have attracted several more had it not been for some injudicious remarks on the part of his brother, Charles. Charles was unhappy in Queensland and his letters home painted a gloomy picture, both of outback life and the viability of the Upper Burdekin grazing properties. Arthur clearly felt that he was undermining his negotiating position and in a letter dated 18 February 1865 he gave him a good ticking off.

I have heard that you have been writing some letters home which would have the effect of preventing men going to Queensland... You have no idea how a letter gets about and what harm or good you may do us by the tenor of your epistles. You know the way to make a fortune is to find a want and supply it. Now the great want of the Upper Classes is how to dispose of its sons without a great outlay of capital. This is the want which Queensland is adapted to meet but if you write letters home crabbing the life and prospects of squatting you deter any more men than you know of from embarking in it.²⁰

In the same letter Arthur predicted that within six years Scott Bros and Co.'s North Queensland properties would be providing an annual income of £30,000, and concludes by advising Charles *to write cheery letters and then I am sure you will be able to come home an independent man.*²¹

* Her husband, Thomas Leslie, had died in 1862.

²⁰ Letter from Arthur to Charles Scott 18.2.65

²¹ Ibid

By the time Charles returned home three years later it had become clear that all he and his brothers could expect from their North Queensland grazing property was a never-ending struggle against seemingly insurmountable odds, including a debt problem that threatened to bring financial ruin on the whole family. Charles became a clergyman and spent more than a decade as minister at St John's Episcopalian Church in Forres – a small town on the north-east coast of Scotland, not far from Inverness and approximately 100km from where Dalrymple grew up. In 1874 he married an American named Ruth Caldwell but they didn't have any children and the marriage appears not to have lasted. He later returned to Rotherfield and became vicar at the Scotts' local church in the village of East Tisted. He died on 10 May 1899 and was buried in his own churchyard.

Arthur returned to Queensland either in late 1865 or early the following year but he didn't stay long. He came back to England sometime in the late 60s and in 1875 married into one of Britain's most illustrious families. His wife, Lady Mary Wellesley, was a sister of the Third and Fourth Dukes of Wellington and a granddaughter of the celebrated First Duke who, after giving Napoleon his comeuppance at the Battle of Waterloo, had gone on to become prime minister. He was particularly fond of Lady Mary and they appear together in a painting entitled 'Arthur First Duke of Wellington and His Grandchildren'. It shows him sitting in his favorite chair in the library at the family's country seat, Stratfield Saye, looking dotingly at four of his grandchildren (the future Third and Fourth Dukes, Lady Mary and her sister Victoria). The artist, Robert Thorburn, started the painting in the last year of the First Duke's life (he died on 14 September 1852) but by the time it was completed he was dead.

After inheriting Rotherfield in 1873 Arthur devoted much of his time to running the estate. The Valley of Lagoons can't have entirely depleted the family finances because he embarked upon an extensive building program that altered the character of Rotherfield. His additions are easily identifiable because they have the letters AJS prominently emblazoned upon them.

Arthur was a keen sailor and whenever possible would go to Cowes on the Isle of Wight, where he owned a yacht and belonged to the Royal Yacht

Squadron. On one of his trips he got to know Alfred Lord Tennyson, the Poet Laureate, who lived on the island.

Following Walter's death in 1890 the Valley of Lagoons was put on the market. Five years later a buyer still hadn't been found and this prompted Arthur and his wife to sail to Australia in the hope of effecting a sale. But while their ship was approaching Aden tragedy struck – Arthur died and was buried at sea. In 1896 the Scotts finally sold the Valley of Lagoons but, according to Colonel Scott, the family were still paying off the debts Arthur had incurred in developing the property when the youngest of the brothers, Archibald, died in 1924.

The person who'd enticed the Scotts out to Queensland in the first place, R. G. W. Herbert, left Queensland for good in 1867. After a two-year stint in the Board of Trade he switched to the Colonial Office and in 1871 became Permanent Under Secretary of State for the Colonies. This was an extremely important position and he held it for 21 years. During these years he was forced to live in London but he'd return to his home in Ickleton at every opportunity and became a much-respected number of the community.

In October 1989 I decided to visit Ickleton to see if the house where he'd lived still stood. I made my way to the centre of the village and was just about to ask a passer-by to direct me to Caldrees Manor when I noticed a name plaque on a nearby wall that made this unnecessary. Unfortunately, the wall was so high that it hid most of the house and I was unable to take a photograph. I did try to obtain permission to go into the back garden and get a shot of the rear of the house but when I approached the front entrance I found my way barred by two ferocious dogs.

From Caldrees Manor I headed to St Mary Magdalene's Parish Church in the hope of finding some mention of Herbert. When I got inside the church I was greeted by an elderly gentleman named Leslie Lilley. He was the church organist and when I told him why I'd come to Ickleton a broad smile appeared on his face.

"You're in luck, young fellow. I've lived in Ickleton all my life and my father knew Mr Herbert very well. I was raised on stories about him and you can

take it from me that I know more about Mr Herbert than anyone else in these parts.”

“It seems the gods have smiled upon me kindly for once. My main purpose in coming to Ickleton was to take a photo of Herbert’s old house but, because of the wall that surrounds it, I’d need to hire a helicopter to get a decent one and my budget won’t stretch to that. Suddenly, though, things have started to look up. By the way, this is a beautiful church and I’m sure you’re proud to be associated with it.”

“I am indeed. Members of my family have been coming here for over two hundred years and the church is a major part of my life.”

“Did Herbert used to come here much?”

“Regularly. He also gave a lot of money to the church and this made him very popular. If you turn around you’ll get some indication of what I mean. Look up there,” he said, pointing to the rear wall. “That’s a memorial plaque erected to him after his death and paid for by his fellow parishioners.”

“That’s just the sort of thing I was hoping to find. Thanks a lot. I’m only sorry I didn’t bring my telephoto lens with me but I should be able to get a reasonable shot with what I’ve got.”

After I’d finished photographing the plaque, Leslie had another treat in store. “I knew you’d be interested in that but what I’m about to show you will amaze you and if I hadn’t been here you wouldn’t have had a hope of finding it.”

“How intriguing!”

Leslie led me to the other end of the church. When he reached the second row of pews he sat down and proudly announced, “This is where Mr Herbert used to sit – right next to the gangway.”

“How do you know?”

“My father told me and that alone would be enough to satisfy me but if you want confirmation cast your eyes upon this.”

Leslie leaned forward and pulled out a book from a wooden chest attached to the back of the pew in front. “This is Mr Herbert’s prayer book and, if you



Ickleton, with St Mary Magdalene Church in the background

don't believe me, take a look at the front. You'll see a crest bearing his name. There you are!"

"Very impressive."

"And take a look at who owned this one," said Leslie, passing me another prayer book.

"Algernon Herbert," I gulped. "The father of our first premier. This is mind-boggling but don't you ever worry about their being stolen? They must be valuable collectors' items. Maybe they'd be better off in a museum."

"I certainly wouldn't like to see that happen. People round here are pretty honest and don't forget they've been here for something like a hundred years. My feeling is they'll still be here at the tail end of the next century."

"I hope you're right. Another thing. Do you know where Herbert is buried?"

"Just a few yards from where we're standing."

"In the churchyard?"

"Yes, we do have a cemetery in Ickleton, but Mr Herbert is buried right here. So too are his father and one of his sisters. Come outside and I'll show you their graves."

Herbert's grave was marked by a simple headstone and was in a deplorable state. It was overgrown with weeds and the epitaph was barely decipherable.

"This isn't what I'd have expected for somebody as distinguished as Herbert. After what he did for Queensland he deserves better than this," I said.

"I couldn't agree more. The trouble is Mr Herbert never married and neither did his sister, Jane. There was another sister though. Her name was Elizabeth and she did marry. Her husband was a vicar called Lewis and they had a daughter who married a chap called Beddows. He had an estate in Shropshire. He and his wife used to spend their summers there but each autumn they'd turn up in Ickleton and stay at the Caldrees until the following spring. Apart from that, the family has pretty well died out so there's nobody around today to look after the graves. When the Caldrees was eventually sold the money went to a family called Munday. They lived in South Africa. I believe that one of our vicars contacted them a few years ago to see if they'd pay to have the family graves renovated but nothing came of it."

"That's a shame. Look, I might be able to do something in Queensland. Maybe the *Herbert River Express* in Ingham would consider mounting an appeal."

"Is that some sort of train?"

"No, it's a newspaper. I'll also contact my local state MP. The town where I live has no direct connection with Herbert but Queensland will only ever have one first premier and his final resting place is marked by a grubby headstone. It's not right."

"I wish you luck. I can only hope that the present Queensland authorities are as generous as Mr Herbert always was. He was very good to his domestic staff – he had about six maids, I believe, and several gardeners – and to anybody in genuine need. He left instructions that if anybody ever turned up at the kitchen saying they couldn't afford the price of a meal, they were to be given some rice, lentils or peas. The staff also used to hand over cough mixture to anyone with a cold."

"Didn't people tend to take advantage of his generosity?"

"Maybe one or two did but in a village like ours everybody knows everyone else's business so any fraudsters would soon be found out. Mr Herbert also felt duty-bound to provide work for the villagers. Later on I'll take you past a long wall that he had built. I don't think it was really needed: it was simply a way of enabling a few out-of-work men to earn enough money to feed their families. While he was at the Caldrees he had a fishpond and an aviary put in the back garden, and they were still there when I was young. The birds in the aviary were from many different countries – including, I believe, Australia – and my school friends and I loved looking at them. As I said before, Mr Herbert gave a lot of money to the local church and he was gracious enough to build a reading room that anybody in the village could use."

"Thanks for all that. I'd always regarded him as a rather austere, pompous sort of chap. But that's obviously not how he came across to your father."

"Not at all and, as you know, he was very good to the Bowen children."

"You mean the children of Governor Bowen."

"Why, of course."

“Oh, no! Why didn’t I bring a cassette recorder with me?”

“Mr Herbert was especially kind to George Bowen – that’s Governor Bowen’s only son. While his father was away in places like Victoria and Hong Kong his four sisters were educated by governesses but George was sent to Eton. He obviously couldn’t join the rest of the family during school holidays so he’d come to Ickleton and stay with Mr Herbert at the Caldrees.”

“I never knew any of this.”

“Well I can assure you it’s correct. My father knew Herbert and Bowen, and I knew Bowen’s son myself.”

“How? Wasn’t he before your time?”

“Not at all. He ended up living here for over 40 years and I got to know him quite well. When Herbert died he left the contents of the Caldrees to Governor Bowen’s son and he liked the village so much he ended up staying here for the rest of his life. I’ll take you to his house later on. It’s called The Grange. He did move to another place during the last war but he died after living there for only a few months.”

“So George Junior died in Ickleton too. Is he here in the churchyard?”

“No, he’s buried in the village cemetery alongside his wife, who was a cousin of Neville Chamberlain. One of his sisters is buried next to them. Her name was Zoe and she was born in Queensland.”

Before heading back to London Leslie gave me a tour of the village and when the time came for us to part I promised to see what I could do about having Herbert’s grave cleaned up. Three months later I made an appointment to see my local MLA, Clem Campbell. He said he’d contact the newly elected premier, Wayne Goss, and tell him about the shameful state of his illustrious predecessor’s grave. I heard nothing for several months but shortly before I left Bundaberg to return to the UK I received a letter from the Premier’s Department informing me that cabinet had decided to pay for a new headstone for Herbert. In May the following year I attended the rededication ceremony. Leslie Lilley was there and was thrilled to bits that our chance encounter two years earlier had had such a positive outcome. As soon as the ceremony was over I had to return to London but I paid another visit to Ickleton on 29 February 1992. This time I brought a cassette recorder and taped Leslie’s recollections

of Governor Bowen’s son and his Herbert-related stories. During the course of our conversation Leslie dropped another bombshell.

“One thing I forgot to mention on our two previous meetings is that Governor Bowen’s granddaughter is still alive and she’d be a goldmine of information. Depending on the year of his death she might even remember him. She was only young when Herbert died in 1905, which is a shame because she was his goddaughter. Herbert was also godfather to her father, which is a bit unusual.”

“Leslie, you never cease to amaze me. This lady must be well in her nineties.”

“About 92, I believe.”

“Where does she live?”

“Forest Row in Sussex. I’ll give you her address and phone number before you head off. She’s in excellent health and there’s nothing wrong with her mind. If you’re interested she could probably tell you about her mother’s cousin, Neville Chamberlain.”

“I’m much more interested in Governor Bowen. By the way, what’s this lady’s name?”

“Roma, Roma Browne.”

“Well, I’ll be blowed. She was obviously named after her paternal grandfather’s wife. Her name was Roma and, like her husband, she’s got a town in Queensland named after her.”

I rang Mrs Browne the following day and went to see her two weeks later. As it turned out, she couldn’t tell me any first-hand stories of her grandfather because he’d died shortly before she was born, but she was able to repeat some of her father’s recollections and fill me in on what became of Governor Bowen’s daughters. Roma also inspired me to visit the part of Donegal where her grandfather grew up, and see for myself the house where he spent his childhood and the church in which his father preached for more than 40 years. I returned to Forest Row in August 1992 and presented her with a set of photos of her grandfather’s boyhood haunts. We also had another long conversation about her family but she was adamant she wouldn’t let me tape what she said so I had to make do with written notes.

It’s not clear whether Herbert managed to offload his shares in Scott Bros and Co. but, even if he didn’t, his involvement in the Valley of Lagoons

had no major bearing on the future course of his life. Like Arthur and Charles Scott, he returned to the land of his birth and more or less picked up where he'd left off prior to his stint Down Under. Dalrymple's miscalculation of the Valley of Lagoons' economic potential must have cost him an arm and a leg. However, his colourful exploits in the Upper Burdekin undoubtedly helped get his political career off to a flying start.

The only one of the partners whose life would never be the same again was Walter Scott. If he'd stayed in England he'd have doubtless bought himself a comfortable house in a fashionable part of London and embarked upon a career worthy of his considerable talents. He'd also probably have married and raised a family. As it was, he spent the rest of his days in a part of the world that had little in the way of creature comforts, vainly trying to extricate the family from the mess his older brother had got them into.

Once he'd completed the long overland sheep drive from the Darling Downs, Walter's daily schedule consisted of mundane tasks aimed at turning the Valley of Lagoons into a going concern. For a time his efforts appeared likely to succeed. The sheep quickly adapted to their new environment, wool prices were relatively high and, despite having to pay astronomical prices for every item and meeting the wage bill of the 30-strong workforce, Scott Bros and Co. actually made a small operating profit in its first year of operation. But after that it was downhill all the way.

Like most graziers in the North Kennedy Pastoral District the Scotts were convinced the future lay in sheep but it quickly became apparent they'd made a serious error of judgement. As soon as the sheep had eaten the original grass cover there was an invasion of spear grass which ruined their fleeces and caused them to die. Nobody could have foreseen this but most of the Scotts' neighbours cut their losses and switched to cattle. When he became aware of what was going on Herbert urged the Scotts to do the same. In a letter written to Walter in October 1865, he had this to say:

I do wish you would just look at the results of sheep-keeping since we have been at it. I don't think that we can possibly lose less than £3,000 or £4,000 a year by it as long as we keep it on. Whereas cattle are now becoming a splendid property... Only consider what an improved state of things would arise at the Valley and Vale if you substituted cattle for sheep. You would get rid of some 30 men who don't leave much change out of £3,000 a year. The sheep would sell well if driven far enough, and cattle bought with their proceeds would hold the country and by sales of fat stock turn in some thousands a year...

If my interest in our escaping insolvency was limited to the £5,000 I have invested, I would not bother you so much... but when we go insolvent Drury will grasp my half of Herston and all my other little investments and I shall lose another £5,000 without it doing any good. Pardon me therefore if I am urgent in imploring you no longer to engage in those playful woolly animals which are costing us much of our own and other people's money.²²

Walter agreed with Herbert. The stumbling block was Arthur. Despite the fact that an overwhelming majority of the other graziers in the Upper Burdekin felt there was no future in sheep, Arthur insisted on persevering. He let his wishes on these and other matters be known in a series of letters written in the comfort of his study at Rotherfield. These still exist and make fascinating reading but they must have been a source of considerable irritation to Walter. Over the years he was bombarded with advice on how he should be running the property and by early 1873 he'd had enough. Normally the most mild-mannered of men, he'd become so angered by Arthur's endless pontificating, that he felt obliged to pen these stinging words:

As to your experiment of keeping as many sheep "as one man can look after, say 1500, to see if the grass-seed cannot be dodged &c, &c" I absolutely refuse, in your interest, to be in any way accessory to a single sheep remaining on this Station; it is perfect madness. As to one man looking after a flock of sheep, by which I suppose you mean that the expense of the sheep would be confined to one man's wages and rations, I will ask you where, apart from Wyandotte, 40 or

²² Letter from Herbert to Walter Scott 31.10.65

²³ Letter from Walter to Arthur Scott 20.1.73

50 miles distant, is there any country apparently fit for sheep? Who is to count the man's sheep, who take his rations, who see that the Blacks do not get him and his sheep, who shift his sheep and hurdles, or put up fresh yards when his own run is bare, or in the dry season? As to "dodging the spear-grass by feeding the horses and cattle in it before it seeds" you will perhaps think less of your scheme when I tell you that the spear-grass forms its flower and seed in a stem in about ten days time, and that no animal whatever will look at it, much less feed it down, as soon as the bud forms... Besides, even if there were no spear-grass on the run, sheep would never thrive on the other grasses, they want short pasture, with plenty of variety of herbage; not grasses that grow a foot or more in a month, as these do here in the wet season. If you would only propose anything in any way practicable, I would gladly carry it out as well as I could. But unfortunately all your theories are directly opposed to the experience of everybody in this part of Australia. I can't alter the climate or the soil, or I would gladly do so, I can assure you.²³



Henry Stone, Walter Scott, Edwin Whitfield and an Aboriginal boy (probably Alick Stone – who worked for Stone)

By this stage there were only about 6,000 sheep left at the Valley of Lagoons, down from a maximum of 30,000. Some had been sold but many more had died in a series of unfortunate mishaps. The previous October 1,100 pregnant ewes had perished during a sudden cold snap. They'd only recently been shorn and were in poor condition following a severe drought. The dry conditions were also responsible for a bush fire that engulfed another 500 sheep and a similar number were lost after straying into the scrub and being set upon by dingoes.

In September 1873 news reached Walter that gold had been discovered on the Palmer River and a major rush was about to begin. When he and his brother first came to the Valley of Lagoons a decade earlier there was no local market for mutton or beef. However, starting in the late 1860s, a number of gold-mining towns, notably Ravenswood and Charters Towers, had been established, creating a significant demand they were only too willing to satisfy. The sudden appearance of thousands more diggers in Far North Queensland would inevitably boost meat prices and provide a major outlet for their livestock. Walter soon offloaded what was left of the sheep to the butchers of Maytown and

Palmerville and over the following years sold a large number of bullocks in the same area.

For the Valley of Lagoons to function effectively the Scotts needed a stable and competent workforce but while they were getting established there was an acute labour shortage throughout North Queensland which persisted for several years. On the whole, their managerial staff – notably, Duncan McAuslan, Philip Sellheim and Henry Stone – served them well but they weren't so lucky with their stockmen. In the days when the Valley of Lagoons was primarily a sheep station the Scotts also required a handful of shepherds but they had great difficulty in attracting suitable applicants. Shepherds were expected to look after as many as 2,000 sheep, often in isolated parts of the property, and this left them highly vulnerable. By the mid-1860s there were several bands of dispossessed Aborigines roaming the area and they frequently attacked Europeans. Scores of Aborigines died in these clashes and there were several European fatalities too – including an employee of the Scotts named Jacob Brun. Besides having to be permanently on guard against a surprise attack

the shepherds used to go for long periods without encountering any other humans, causing many to become alcoholics or go mad.

Arthur tried to alleviate the labour shortage and at the same time bring a much-needed injection of capital into Scott Bros and Co. by creating what he called the 'New Chum Scheme'. The intention was for participants to invest at least £2,000 and spend a couple of years working alongside the Scotts to acquire the skills and knowledge they'd need to go out on their own but the scheme appears to have had a zero percent success rate. A number of young aristocrats, among them Julius Tottenham and Edward Galbraith Henry Percy, did come to the Valley of Lagoons but none was able to adapt to outback life. Percy, for instance, soon came to grief. Despite having an impeccable pedigree (his great-uncle was the Fifth Duke of Northumberland) he was an objectionable individual and the Scotts sacked him. He subsequently drifted down to the coast and by August 1874 was virtually destitute. In the late 1870s Arthur was forced to agree that Walter had been right all along and he abandoned the New Chum Scheme. Early in 1866 Arthur pinned his hopes on obtaining Chinese workers but, like many of his pet projects, this proved impractical.

We get a glimpse of the sort of man-management problems facing the Scotts in a letter written by Charles to Walter in 1865.

Sherly has been disgrated and is now a stockman at 70 a year under Stone. His treatment of the horses seems to have been very disgraceful... Salton has his conge for the 1st Novr. He was drunk all the time he was in the port, tried to fire Leefe's house, fired his revolver through the doors etc. Brought out of town with him two kegs of rum and some brandy in bottles; was drunk all the way up to the Valley. Made Murray's troopers drunk at the Herbert, lost four horses on the way, only one of which has been recovered. This makes his departure a very simple matter, and I only regret he has a horse given him. I expect Frank and Woodman will be the next to go. Frank is altogether too bumptious, and I think lazy too.²⁴

With employees like these it's not surprising that Scott Bros and Co. wasn't a thriving concern! Incidentally, Charles wrote this letter at Glendhu.

Initially a mere out-station it replaced Pelican Lakes as the main homestead sometime in the mid-1860s, but by the time Mulligan paid a fleeting visit to Glendhu in 1882 it lay in ruins and Walter was running the property from Pelican Lakes.

During his 1863 expedition Arthur had been fortunate enough to catch a tantalising glimpse of the life-style of the Aborigines who'd lived in the Upper Burdekin Valley for countless generations and it's obvious from the tone of his report that he was fascinated by them. Over the next few years they were systematically driven from their land but, even though the odds were heavily stacked against them, they mounted guerrilla raids against the unwanted outsiders and helped themselves to their livestock. Like the other graziers in the area the Scotts fought back... although, as early as March 1866, Arthur was urging Walter to adopt a more conciliatory policy towards them.

I am rather sorry about those blacks; I think the time has now come to try and be friendly with them, we are strong enough now to defend ourself and they would do a lot of work in washing. After all they had one dressing from Lee and I think that ought to have been enough. Certainly the best way will be to bring in some gins and boys and we shall soon make the others understand what we want. I am convinced that with our scrub and lava it is far more dangerous to keep them out than to let them in.²⁵

Walter certainly wasn't brutal and appears to have made a conscious effort to befriend the Aborigines living on his property. He did, however, have a low opinion of them as this extract from a letter to his mother clearly shows:

I am sure they have not as keen senses as humans higher in the scale of humanity. 'Like beasts, with lower pleasure; like beasts, with lower pains'. They have not the slightest sense of gratitude, in any kind of way; far less than a dog, or horse. Of course they know where they are well-treated, and well-fed. I believe fish, even, learn that.²⁶

²⁴ Letter from Charles Scott to Walter Scott 26.9.65

²⁵ Letter from Arthur to Walter Scott 21.3.66

²⁶ Letter from Walter Scott to his mother, 29.5.72

When Walter came to Queensland in 1862 he wouldn't have thought for a minute that he'd be gone for more than a quarter of a century. Four years later he appeared likely to return home with Herbert – that, at any rate, is what Herbert told his sister Jane in a letter written three months before his date of departure – but when he finally set out for England on 20 August 1866 Walter wasn't with him. He did allow himself a lengthy break from station duties in 1868 but there's no surviving record of where he went or what he did. Over the years he must have been sorely tempted to quit the Valley of Lagoons. At the beginning of 1873, for example, it's clear he was just about at the end of his tether.

I do not myself see any other prospect of saving any part of what has been spent, and am quite prepared to have to begin the world afresh in a year or two. All I hope is that the collapse, that I feel is inevitable unless some very decided measures are at once taken, may come upon me... before I am altogether too old and played out to make a living at something or other.²⁷

But Walter never quite managed to summon up the necessary resolve to 'begin the world afresh'. He opted to remain in Queensland and gradually grew accustomed to a way of life radically different from the one he'd been used to in England. His days were taken up with a variety of administrative and supervisory duties but he also spent a lot of time working alongside the stockmen on manual tasks. His living quarters at Pelican Lakes didn't differ much from those of his hired hands either. For many years he lived in a simple hut but eventually built himself something more spacious and comfortable.

Every so often Walter would ride down to Cardwell, where he had business interests and served as a JP and councillor. Occasionally he'd venture further afield. In 1874, for example, he and James Thorn rode all the way to the Palmer River and back, blazing a trail as they went; then in 1888 he took time off to visit his family and friends in England. By this stage he really was "too old and played out to make a living at something or other" in the land of his birth so there was no question of remaining there. He began the first leg of his return journey

at the end of 1889 and saw in the New Year on the island of Madeira. He left his ship when it reached South Africa and spent almost a month sightseeing, before taking another vessel to Sydney.

Earlier in the chapter I made the point that most of Walter's personal papers were destroyed in the 1960s but his diary for 1890 somehow found its way back to Rotherfield and it contains a number of interesting entries, including this one:

March 21. Sydney. Was examined, Dr Graham, who reports like the rest, heart disease.²⁸

Walter arrived back at the Valley of Lagoons in April and quickly settled into a routine, which included writing a brief summary of each day's events in his diary. When he sat down to do this on the evening of 28 June he couldn't have helped but notice that it was the anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne. Exactly 24 years later another royal figure, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was destined to take centre stage in an event of major historical significance on this particular day, but nothing out of the ordinary occurred at the Valley of Lagoons on 28 June 1890 – at least not during the daytime. The weather was fine and most of the station workers were away at a picnic race meeting. Walter devoted much of the day to fixing the stockyard and took delivery of ten bags of charcoal. He spent part of the evening writing letters to R. Gladstone, W. Lowe, Arthur and his mother. He must have dined alone, as he often did, and then went to bed to sleep alone, which he always did.

The following day's diary entry is in someone else's handwriting (probably that of his brother, Archie). It says:

Dear Walter was found dead in his bed on Sunday morning 29th June having died peacefully from failure of the heart.²⁹

He was buried on top of a small hill close to the homestead at Pelican Lakes and an enormous headstone was sent out from Rotherfield. Unfortunately, it was too heavy to transport inland so it was erected in the grounds of the Cardwell Parish Church which Walter had helped establish and where he frequently worshipped. A smaller headstone came out later and was placed over his grave.

The first person to be aware of Walter's death was Henry Stone. He called in at Pelican Lakes on the

²⁷ Letter from Walter to Arthur 20.1.73

²⁸ Walter Scott's 1890 Diary

²⁹ Ibid



The grave of Walter Jervoise Scott

morning of 29 June and found him dead in bed. For most of the previous 25 years Stone had lived in the Lower Herbert district but he was a frequent visitor to the Upper Burdekin and retained an interest in the grazing industry there. He no longer worked for the Scotts but appears to have remained on good terms with them even though he'd once been suspected of stealing cattle from them. Mrs Fardon had in her possession an atlas that Charles Scott sent to Stone at the end of the 19th century and he'd hardly have been sending him presents if he or any other member of his family bore him a grudge.

Between 1865 and 1869 Stone oversaw operations at the Vale of Herbert but the property was losing money so the Scotts decided to scale down the operation and Stone's job disappeared. They were later called upon to forfeit much of the Vale of Herbert so the land could be used for growing

sugar. Very little was spent on maintaining the homestead but the Scotts still owned it in the early 1880s and it was just about habitable. We know this because the explorer and naturalist, Carl Lumholtz, was based there for almost a year, starting in August 1882, while he travelled around the district collecting material for his book *Amongst Cannibals*. He was very grateful to Walter for allowing him to camp there but didn't think much of his caretaker, Mr Walters. According to Lumholtz, he was a *peevish, conceited old man, who spent most of his time sleeping in a sort of cot which he had placed on the verandah*.³⁰ The Vale of Herbert homestead continued to deteriorate slowly until 1894 when it was swept away in a devastating flood.

Stone, meanwhile, had taken up a block of land alongside Trebonne Creek (a tributary of the Herbert) and called it Stone Hut. Besides stocking it with cattle (many of which bore an uncanny resemblance to some of the Scotts' missing animals!) he and his business partner Duncan McAuslan managed to finance the construction of a large dwelling and series of sturdy fences and stockyards. Back in his native Scotland McAuslan had been a thatcher and he showed he'd lost none of his touch by putting a magnificent thatched roof on top of the Stone Hut homestead. During the early 1880s the same two men ran Wairuna Station – a grazing property that lies immediately north of the Valley of Lagoons. Records show that Stone held the lease in 1880 and 81 but MacAuslan appears to have been in charge of operations there. It was certainly he who gave it its name. He'd lived beside the Wairuna River in New Zealand before coming to Queensland and had met his wife there.

Stone remained a bachelor until well into his 40s but in 1884 he married the elder of MacAuslan's two daughters, Anna Maria, and they spent the next twenty years living at The Grange – a splendid 'Old Queenslander' located just west of Ingham. McAuslan never lived to witness the spectacle of his friend and business partner walking down the aisle with one of his daughters because he'd died a year earlier of heart failure. Anna must have thought long and hard before agreeing to marry someone 30 years her senior but Stone was able to offer her financial security, social status and an extended honeymoon in the British Isles so she can hardly be accused of throwing her life away on a worthless nobody.

³⁰ Lumholtz, C. *Among Cannibals* p. 86



Henry Stone, Newman, Rimstarelt and Duncan McAuslan outside the Stone Hut bachelor's quarters c1873 (courtesy Cairns Historical Society)

Like many of the prominent North Queensland pioneers, Stone felt duty-bound to play an active role in community affairs. He served on the Herbert River Divisional Board for 17 years (including eight as chairman); was president of the local jockey club, pastoral and agricultural association, and School of Arts; was a governor at the Herbert River Hospital; sat on the school committee (even though he and Anna had no children of their own) and was a JP for 49 years.

The Stones were very keen to have a family and Anna became pregnant on several occasions but they remained childless. Anna did, however, have six nephews and nieces and she and her husband were very fond of them. As we'll see in Volume Three, Anna's sister, Mary Hull, was a remarkable woman and the two had always been close. At the beginning of the 20th century a block of land next to the Hulls' Cressbrook property came onto the market and the Stones bought it. They moved there in 1904 and called it Montacute.

The original Montacute is situated in the part of the world where Stone grew up. It's the name of a village, next to which is a stately home called Montacute House. For many years it was the country residence of the Phelps family but is now

run by the National Trust. When I began delving into Stone's affairs I thought he probably chose this particular name for his property on the Evelyn Tableland to remind himself of visits to Montacute when he was young. But I did think there may have been a link with Captain Langdon RN. His father was the vicar at Montacute Parish Church for many years and Captain Langdon was the legal guardian of Stone's brother, Frederick.

In October 1989 I travelled to Montacute with my parents to see if I could resolve the matter. While we were ambling round Montacute House my father came across a copy of the 1841 Census for the residence. Heading the list was a 55-year old woman named Elizabeth Stone. She was the cook/housekeeper for the Phelps family, which meant that – besides providing meals for the Phelps family and their guests – she was expected to help maintain discipline among the domestic staff. Until the First World War, when this way of life came to a virtual end, the leading aristocratic families were desperate to have a top-notch cook/housekeeper. Mrs Stone must have been highly competent and well thought of otherwise she couldn't have had such an important job. And the fact that her name heads

the list is no accident: it's a reflection of her status amongst the domestic staff at Montacute.

Because Stone's mother was named Elizabeth and the woman mentioned in the 1841 Census was about the same age, I concluded they must have been one and the same, and that I now had an explanation as to why he'd chosen the name 'Montacute' for the patch of scrub he and his wife moved to in 1904. I included this assertion in the first version of this book but I soon discovered I'd made a mistake. The woman who'd been the cook/housekeeper at Montacute House in 1841 wasn't Stone's mother after all and I never did discover why the 'Old Possum' opted for the name of this particular boyhood haunt, rather than Cerne Abbas (where he'd been born) or Sherborne (where he went to school). In the first edition of Volume One of *Up the Palmerston* I adopted a rather sniffy attitude towards Geoffrey Bolton for confusing Henry Stone with Robert Phippen Stone. But I did pretty much the same thing with the two Elizabeth Stones and this gave fellow historians an opportunity to get stuck into me!

Winnie Dawson, whom I interviewed in July 1973, was the oldest of the Hull children and she got to know Stone very well. Following the death of his wife in 1913 he moved in with the Hulls and remained with them for the rest of his life. Winnie had the greatest respect for Anna but didn't think much of Stone. In her opinion he was a 'lazy old possum' who was forever making his wife and the Hull children carry out errands for him. The thing that annoyed Winnie most was that she and Anna were frequently asked to read him extracts from *Hansard*. According to Winnie, he did this because he was too lazy to read for himself. This, however, is incorrect. By the time Stone moved to the Evelyn Scrub his vision was poor and for the last few years of his life he was completely blind. It was this, rather than laziness, that prompted him to rely on other people to keep him in touch with what was going on in the world.

I learned a great deal more about Stone in a lengthy conversation I had with the youngest of the Hull children, Edith Fardon, in January 1989, including the fact that he was a registered opium addict. Every so often she'd pick up his prescription in Herberton and help him to administer the drug. Unfortunately,

I didn't think to ask her if the opium came in a bottle or whether he smoked it, like the Chinese.

Mrs Fardon was very fond of her Uncle Henry. He was always kind and generous to her and she certainly didn't regard him as lazy. When he lived at Montacute he used to spend much of his time in a forge he built next to the house, making wind vanes and a variety of other useful articles. He spent a lot of time in his bedroom (where he kept a bottle of whisky and a slab of blue vein cheese) and had his own armchair in the living room. He'd wile away the hours by playing records and listening to people reading to him and if any of the neighbours' children called round he'd give them liquorice.

The Hull children were all exceedingly fond of Anna Stone. Mrs Fardon remembers her making candles and cheese and tending a vegetable plot beside the house. She was also very good at embroidery and was a talented artist. When Mrs Fardon was young Anna made her a scrapbook containing all manner of items designed to enchant a child, including paper figures that stood up whenever the page was opened. Anna was also responsible for bringing water to the house from a creek some distance away. She'd carry it in tins that dangled from either end of a wooden pole balanced across her shoulders. When she died, on 12 July 1913, she was buried on her sister's property, Cressbrook.

The Stones must have been fairly well off. They were able to afford a lengthy honeymoon in the British Isles and while they were away they purchased large quantities of lace in Ireland as well as crockery and silverware.

When Stone finally died in 1919 he was buried alongside his wife. He'd outlived all the other major participants in the Valley of Lagoons saga by many a long year, including Dalrymple who'd died more than 40 years earlier. Stone was obviously proud of his links with the illustrious explorer, because on his headstone is the inscription 'Pioneer of North Queensland with Dalrymple'. The two men are thought to have met in Brisbane in 1861 and we know that Stone was a member of the colonising party that went to Port Denison on the *Jennie Dove* and founded Bowen. He was also a paid employee of Scott Dalrymple and Co. at the Valley of Lagoons, though he didn't take part in any of Dalrymple's expeditions prior to 1864 and it's doubtful he participated in the establishment

of Cardwell. He is, however, accredited with having been the first non-Aborigine to set eyes on the Wallaman Falls (although nobody today seems able to say precisely when, and under what circumstances, this occurred) and clearly played an important role in the development of the Lower Herbert district. Winnie Dawson didn't think much of him and he could well have been less than honest in his dealings with the Scotts. However, based on what Tom Gennings and Mrs Fardon told me and the small amount of available documentary evidence he appears to have been an industrious, high-minded individual who made a significant contribution to the European settlement of Far North Queensland.