Whitsunday Family History Group Inc "BRANCHING OUT" Nov/Dec 2024

Proserpine Community Centre

Email:

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS

President	Leah Davis	0438 451 880
Vice-President	Barbara Uhe	0466 982 072
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Minute Secretary	Barbara Uhe	0466 982 072
Treasurer	Howard Barnett	07 4947 1623
Librarian	Linda Thorogood	07 4945 4995
Journal Editor	Leah Davis	0438 451 880

36 Gardenia Street, Proserpine Old 4800

LIBRARY HOURS

Thursday and Saturday 10.00 am to 2.00 pm & Tuesday 4.00 pm to 7.00 pm

MEETINGS

Discussion group at WFHG Library at Proserpine Community Centre, 2nd Saturday each month at 9.30 am

MEMBERSHIP FEES – per year

Joining Fee \$10, plus Basic Fee \$40 single, \$70 family. Upgrade to Gold \$35 for unlimited use of library and all printouts. Basic members to pay 50¢ per hour for use of library & 20¢ for A4 printouts and copies.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. To foster and promote the study, practice and preservation of genealogy, heraldry, topography, history, biography, heredity and of family and local history and allied subjects.
- 2. To foster a spirit of friendliness and co-operation and to give assistance to members through mutual sharing of information and techniques.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Here we are at the end of 2024 already, with the long hot summer ahead of us. We have already had some thunderstorms, which don't seem to have made it much cooler.

I just hope we have some nice weather for Christmas Day, is that too much to ask?

Members can take advantage of our air-conditioned library and spend some time researching, or read some of the many magazines we receive each month. There is also lots of other reading material available. You never know what you will uncover, even in some old books and files. Something might spark your memory or curiosity.

Members enjoyed a get together for Christmas lunch last Thursday at the Vintage Café. We had a lovely lunch and of course a chat, while the rain poured down outside.

There will not be a discussion group in January. The Library will be closed over the Christmas Break. Last day will be 21^{st} Dec and reopen on 4^{th} Jan.

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy and Safe New Year.

Leah Davis, President

PROSERPINE

An Historical Review and Current Development

Compiled by T.H. FARR
Issued by Proserpine Shire Council
July, 1967

Continued from July

Sugar Growing

An unsuccessful attempt to establish a plantation sugar mill at Banana Pocket was made about 1885, and a few years later another move to build a mill at Glen Isla also failed. Settlers who had attempted to grow sugar remained in the district and attempted to make a living from maize and fruit growing. A few settlers got together and formed a Progress Association to agitate for a sugar mill. The first meeting was held at the home of Jas. Morrison. Petitions and overtures to the Government for a mill were repulsed, each Government official report was the same – "not enough area for a mill; the few settlers could carry on with the corn and pumpkins."

In 1893, the Queensland Government passed the Sugar Workers Guarantee Act, which provided for the establishment of central mills which were to be financed by a government first mortgage on the mill itself and on the lands of the cane farmers supplying it with cane. Proserpine was chosen as a site for a central mill.

Authority for construction was to be granted in any district where sufficient cane was available for profitable working. If, through inefficient management, substantial losses were met on any central mill built under the Act, the Government was empowered to take over the running; otherwise management was invested in a committee of directors elected by the growers. After principal and interest had been met on the debentures, the mill would be handed over to growers as a co-operative venture. Two years later, an amendment provided for the government to issue debentures itself instead of merely guaranteeing debentures held by private capitalists. Nearly all the new central mills were thus financed directly by The Treasury.

With the encouragement given by this Act, people began to clear land for sugar-growing in the Proserpine area. The first of the sugar farmers was H.W. Holmes (1892) and he was followed by John Phaff (early 1893), R.R. Sexton (later 1893), George and Gideon Pott and John Brown (late 1893), Luxmore Bros, H.C. Sterry, Surry, Houston (early 1894) and many others in quick succession.

When it was evident that a mill would come, then the rush of 1894-95 set in. Geo and Gideon Pott secured several tons of sugar cane plants from Mackay by ship. They had 40 acres under cane when the mill crushed. The town was surveyed and town freeholds were sold at from £5 to £7 per acre.

By 1894, preparations for erection of the mill were in progress, and settlers were proceeding with clearing and planting. Big horse teams hauled the heavy machinery which was brought by steamer to the old wharf up the Proserpine River. Timber for the new tram lines and bridges was also hauled.

The coming of the sugar mill at Proserpine was largely due to the generosity of the grazier G.A. Waite, who offered 3,000 acres as pledge for the sugar works and chaired the meeting which requested government assistance.

The mill was ready for the 1897 harvest, and thirty-eight growers made use of it. In the early days of the mill, supplies were drawn from Glen Isla and Waterson River area, then later from Cannon Valley, Preston and Strathdickie. Quite a large tonnage was grown on the hillsides of Mt Julian, but later these areas went out of production because costs of harvesting and cultivating were too high.

Many farmers grubbed, ploughed and planted their land by hand, made mistakes through ignorance, learned the hard way how to set their cane plants or yoke a plough-team, and worried whether the local storekeeper would extend their credit for an extra £5 or £10. With all these difficulties solved, there would still be the unpredictability of seasons to consider. The northern coast was visited by cyclones in 1911 and 1913, drought in 1914-15, floods in 1917, and in 1918 the grandfather of all cyclones flattened houses and took lives from Innisfail to Proserpine. Through all these setbacks, despite fluctuations and uncertainties,

the sugar industry continued to grow. In 1906, North Queensland had grown 964,056 tons of cane on 57,954 acres; in 1917, a record-breaking year, where there were 1,843,331 ton from 78,013 acres.

Ailsa Reinke has given some further information from the July section 'Town of Proserpine'

'Preston erected a barber shop'. It was actually Mr George Archer from Preston who erected this shop.

George Henry Robert Archer migrated to Western Australia from England about 1889 as manager of Singer Sewing Machine Co, then to Victoria, then to Proserpine in 1895. He took up land at Preston, naming his property 'Lyndhurst' growing sugar cane. He was involved with local matters, being one of seven committee members of the first Central Sugar Mill Progress Ass. He also represented Proserpine on the Wangaratta Shire Council before it separated from Bowen to become Proserpine Shire, and also served on Bowen Harbour Board. After leaving the farm he went to Mackay to train as a barber. In 1902 he returned to Proserpine and erected a shop on an allotment in the centre of town which he bought from John Capp. Here he ran a barber and fancy goods shop, also selling fruit, was a tobacconist and bookseller. George was also a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Master of the Masonic Lodge. When the first Masonic Temple was built, he, being Wor Master and Robert Blair laid the foundation stone. In 1927 Georhe Archer sold his business and Mercery Shop to Faust Bros, retiring to Bowen, then to Brisbane. His son, George Jnr had Archer's Soft Drink Factory in Proserpine, then in Bowen for some time.

This shop operated as a menswear shop for many years, managed by Mr Jack Maltby for Faust Bros, and later as a toy and book shop managed by Mr Frank Price. Eventually the old wooden was pulled down and the new arcade built. The old shop would have been on the arcade site, between the real estate office and the baker's shop.

LETHEBROOK HISTORY

Jack Smith leased the late Ben Toll's property from 1910 to 1913. Ben had been murdered, it is said by aborigines. Jack was a Victorian who had come north to work on Lochinvar Station near Collinsville and was a "top rifle shot". He became legendary for attempting to take a herd of 120 wild pigs from Goorganga Station to a butcher in Mackay. While, after ten days on the road some pigs escaped it was an epic trip.

After Chinese banana growers leased land at Lethebrook (then known as Banana Pocket for obvious reasons) from E.G. Lascelles of Goorganga Station, and were wiped out by the 1918 cyclone, Jack took over this land to grow corn and tobacco. He was the first settler since Ben Toll, and married Grace Redman, member of another early "Pocket" family. They had six children, Pat, Terry, Eve, Kit, Dick and Al. He, with others sent the first sugar cane to the Proserpine Mill from this area in 1923. Jack eventually had three farms. Jack and Lascelles were partners in banana growing. He advocated for a school. The first one opened on a small block on Jack's land known as "The Garden". It was 16 ft x 10 ft, opening on 29th May 1922 as a Provisional School. Three of the Smith children were among the first pupils. Wally Winton later had Jack's farm.

The Banana Pocket School changed the name to Lethebrook in 1948, though the district name was changed in 1924 to save confusion with the town of Banana. Old timers still call this district "The Pocket".

The Lethebrook School closed down on June 12th 1964. For 17 years after, Jim Cowan had a bus to take Lethebrook school children to Proserpine State School. Herb Winton bought the old school building and land, and this was passed on to his son Walter.

Banana Pocket Butchering Co, was one of Jack Smith's enterprises, operated from 1920s to early 1930s. He procured meat from Goorganga Station. The killing yards were down the road past the old hall to Tomahawk Joe's place near Jack's farm, not far from where Albert and Eric Hansen's farm was. Resident Jim Taylor recalls buying meat for 3d per lb. Jim also recalled Jack bringing a beast back from Goorganga. No bridges then, so he had to go through a crossing at Thompson's Creek, and a crocodile almost took the beast. Ned Lascelles put out a bait to catch the reptile. It turned to be an old warrior with no teeth and one paw missing.

Jack, a truly civic-minded man became Chairman of Proserpine Shire from 1937-1940.

EARLY PIONEERS

Next district pioneers were – John Williams and wife, Ethel (nee Batten), who was the first white woman settler here, Frank and William Batten, Simmons and the Redmans, C Webber, Dave Thomas, George Greenwood and partners J North and J Stew.

The WILLIAMS Family

John Williams and Ethel Mary Batten were married in Charters Towers. They had eleven children. Norman 1908-1966, Eleanor (Nellie) 1911-1926, Josephine May 1913-1991, Frederick John 1915-1958, Francis Joseph 1917-2017, William Thomas (Bolga) 1920-2003, Ethel Maud 1921-2015, Victor Leslie 1923-2007, Evelene Mary (Peggy) 1925-2005, Molly 1927-2004, Noel 1930-1982.

Submitted by Leah Davis (Williams)

In 1946 Batten and Williams sold their farm to Fred and Joe Williams, and the Battens left the district. W Pidgeon also left the district after selling their farm to AE Smith. In 1949 FH 'Beau' Smith sold his farm to Ernie Crossley, and went to live in Proserpine. He was secretary of the Lethebrook Farmer's Committee for 25 years, and was also a long standing member of the school committee

Charles WEBBER

Charlie Webber took up land from Mr Lascelles in 1923. He was a returned soldier. The farm was the one that Albert Hansen's step-father Mr Dunlop had later, and Albert and Eric took over when Dunlops went to El Arish. He married in 1925, son Les was born in 1927. He was agent for cane beetles. The family left and went to live at Evelyn Central on the Atherton Tableland in 1931.

The BELL Family

Harry Bell and family came to Proserpine from Innisfail in 1918. In Innisfail Harry was a nightsoil man, and used to go collecting fees from households for this. He

remembered salesmen for Goldenia Tea, tea salesmen for Edwards & Co, Ashley & Dawson, also linen salesmen. The family lived firstly in Ann Street in Proserpine, then the Showgrounds. In 1923 they moved to Lethebrook (Banana Pocket). Harry and his wife had six children, Margaret (known as Hettie) – married Henry Briskey, Doug married May Stafford, Ada married Albert Denkewitz, Zena married Herb Staniland, Maud married James Short, and Ross who never married. (These names not necessarily given names, but what they were known by). Bells were neighbours to the Comptons

COMPTON Family

John Compton moved to Lethebrook (Banana Pocket) in June 1923, building a home and pioneering on his block. He and wife Sarah had five children – Robert, Alex, Percy, Edna and Leila.

DENKEWITZ Family

Mr Denkewitz senior was a casings butcher before he arrived at Lethebrook with his family on 27th September 1923. He bought Mill Manager, Murray Gibson's farm which in later years was bought by Hugh Magee. Cane was then hauled by horses. Denkewitz sons were Herman, Albert, Fred and Ron.

Albert married Ada Bell in 1937. He lived in Maloney's Road, which was then a bush track. He got bogged in clay soil. He filled in ruts with 7 tons of stone in one year to make it trafficable. A lot of mosquitoes in Andromache River. He was first to wear shorts – ripped them off at the knees.

LONGLAND and **TAYLOR** Families

The Longland and Taylor families came by rail to Proserpine in 1927, then to Lethebrook. They brought two houses in sections on a railway truck, also furniture, bikes, with springcarts hooked behind carriages. They went through 15 tunnels. Emily Longland married Daly Thomas, son of Dave, Edna Longland married Herbie Winton. Mrs Longland adopted Isobel, as Mrs Taylor had died. She married Clarrie Fardell.

Lou Stafford was a single man – returned soldier from World War I – had the farm behind John Compton, Jack Muller later bought this c1928-1931, then Bill Ironside who sold to Mark Ruge in 1935. Bill Ironside then bought the Eldorado Theatre in Proserpine. Mark Ruge eventually bought the original Compton farm c1950, then having two farms.

Fred Greenwood and family were over from Bells.

LASCELLES

Mr Edward George Lascelles, member of English nobility, bought Goorganga Station c1907. He and his wife were very generous, community minded people. After cessation of World War I he purchased 2000 acres of land lying between his property, Thompsons Creek and the O'Connell River for soldier settlement, charging 12 pounds

for returned men, and 15 pounds to others. The second school and residence at Lethebrook was built on land donated by the Lascelles family. Some Sundays Mrs Lascelles picked up Banana Pocket children, some being Smiths, Bells and Longlands (sent up a car for them) took them in to Church and gave them lunch at Goorganga Station. Other Sundays she would bring a portable organ to the hall (firstly the old tobacco shed) then Jack Muller built a new hall opening on 9th May 1925, so Sunday School was then held there. Their son, Evelyn Herbert, known as "Evie" served at Gallipoli, in France and in the Light Horse in World War I. He was also a prominent citizen, and would speak to school children before Anzac Day each year.

Ben Collis was a single farmer – had a fine singing voice and sang at many functions, and was a member of musical societies in Proserpine.

Tom Mann was in partnership in a farm with Phillip Powell, c1939 he sold to Vickers & Sons. Tom was a returned soldier. Harry Jarman worked the farm for him.

Mr Lever, New South Wales Bank manager, had land (farm?), also Rupert Beck. Harry Hall, also McCormacks had farms.

After World War II an honour board was unveiled at the Lethebrook Hall on Saturday October 5^{th} , 1947.

Those Lethebrook people who served are as follows:-

J Amos, W Aitkenhead, Miss H Bell, J Benson, A Chauntler, A Campell, A Casey, C Fardell, L Dennis, E Hansen, M Hansen, W Johnston, AM Johnston, FC Hiscox, G Lascelles, J Lewis, E Quod, A Rowe, H Rowe, RJ Smith, P Small, R Shaw, Miss P Thomas, T Vickers, F Williams, N Williams, W Williams, V Williams.

Of these RJ Smith, M Johnston and F Small made the supreme sacrifice.

E Rowe and G Thomas were awarded the Military Medal.

Submitted by Ailsa Reinke

The Old Fashioned Way – Write a Letter

Submitted by Eileen Cameron

Years ago, back in 1997, my contact with people was by hand with carbon copies of my letters. I was looking for information for my Great Great Grandfather John Davies, a blacksmith. Born 8th February 1845, St George the Martyn Southwark England, and died 19th March 1915, at the Benevolent Asylum Dunwich, Queensland.

Back on 12th September, 1997 I wrote a letter to the Researcher of North Stradbroke Island Museum Assn Inc. as I had found out from his Death Certificate he passed away there. Meanwhile, I had already discovered as he was from Townsville. There is a double grave with his name plus his wife Harriet Davies on the headstone – but found out he was never buried there - first the information (which sometimes isn't correct) had his date of death correct but

the year was wrong, had 1914 where it should have been 1915, puzzle corrected. It was back in the days where you put \$5.00 in the envelope plus a self-addressed envelope . I received some helpful information from the Museum, but also asked me at the time if I could spare \$90.00 towards putting a plaque in John Davies memory – so I asked a couple of family connections here, but weren't interested, so nothing was done.

Then come June 2024, the week before the local Show Whitsunday , via Ailsa at the Proserpine Museum - received a call from a Suzie Davies of Townsville – not knowing she had any Davies connections in Proserpine area before. As she and two other sisters had decided to do some Davies research, as one of the sisters who lives in Brisbane had found out the same information on John Davies at Dunwich. So they decided to visit the Proserpine Museum and in their collection was my original letter and the reply they sent to me all of those years ago, the girls were given a copy of my correspondence.

I gave permission for the museum to give Suzie my email address and contact was made. The following week Suzie and her two sisters from Brisbane were here in Proserpine catching up with me, I took them to the local Cemetery plus a short trip up Kelsey Creek way, plus took the girls for a drive down to Cannonvale/Airlie Beach and Shute Harbour area. They had a couple of days here before moving onto Bowen for more research.

My Great Grandfather John Edward William Davies and the girls Grandfather Elgin John Davies were children of John and Harriet Davies. I remembered receiving a certificate from the North Stradbroke Island Historical Museum but couldn't remember where I had placed it, then just lately, bingo I came across the certificate so I have posted a copy to Suzie.

So the old fashioned way of letter writing can still be of help even today.

Eileen Cameron

PROSERPINE GUARDIAN - ON THIS DAY - 1958

Thursday, April 3 - Devastating Cyclone: A devastating cyclone struck the Proserpine district with lightening suddenness on Tuesday. The first warning came at 5 pm and by 11 pm it had left behind a trail of destruction. Jetties at Cannonvale and South Molle were destroyed completely, launches wrecked, bathing enclosures damaged, crops flattened and Dough Robinson's two storey Main St building was smashed when a brick wall fell on it.

Traffic Cut: Heavy rain from the cyclone cut road and rail traffic, while the telephone service to Bowen also was out. Eight inches of rain fell in 24 hours in Proserpine, while Conway recorded over 11 inches.

Friday, April 11 - **To Re-erect Jetty:** The Abell Point Jetty, destroyed in last week's cyclone is to be re-erected immediately. The rebuilding has been authorized by the chief engineer of the Department of Harbours & Marine, Mr F.C. Fison, who inspected the jetty this week. Cost of the construction of the jetty in 1948 was £6,000 and £4,000 has been made available for its reconstruction. The Shire

Clerk, Mr T.H. Farr, says work on the jetty will begin on Monday, if piles can be secured. An order has been placed with Mr Alex Fox, for either ti-tree or mountain bloodwood for piles.

Bowen Damage: Last week's cyclone severely damaged Bowen and, on a suggestion by Mr R.G. McDowell, Proserpine police organized a number of local tradesmen to go to Bowen and help with repairs. A relief train was organized, with a radio call for volunteers, together with notices flashed on picture screens. This resulted in 150 men turning up at the railway station on Good Friday and loading 250 tons of essential material for the repair of homes.

Train Stranded: The southbound Sunlander was stranded at Longford Creek on Monday, when its diesel engine ran out of fuel. A following cattle train towed the engine into Proserpine where it was refueled by Mr Bert Lee from the local Shell Company. After receiving 176 gallons of diesoline, it returned to Longford Creek to pick up its train. It had been intended to refuel the engine at Mackay.

Friday, May 14 - Islands Festival: Commencing on Monday at Hayman Island, and ending at South Molle the following Sunday, will be the Whitsunday Islands Festival. The Festival will open with the unveiling at Cid Harbour on Monday of the plaque to Capt Cook by Mr E.A. Ferguson, Director of the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau, and conclude with the crowning of the Coral Queen at South Molle on Sunday, by the Minister for Education, Mr Pizzey.

Drome Road: The attention of the Proserpine Shire Council is to be drawn to the state of the gravel road, from the turn-off from the Mackay road to the aerodrome and to the narrow nature of the two grids.

Jetty Repairs: One span of the jetty at Abell Point has been completed and work has begun on the second. Work is slow as the piles are being driven into rock formation. The job is expected to be completed in about another four weeks, at a cost of £3,000.

Friday, May 30 - No Major Problem: According to the Surveyor-General for Queensland, Mr J. Harvey, and the Main Roads engineer from Mackay, Mr N. Ullman, a road from Airlie Beach to Shute Harbour would present no major problem. These two men, accompanied by a local party, walked the route last weekend, being met at the harbour by Mr Geo Stoneham. Mr Harvey was interested in a possible demand for allotments at Shute Harbour, but was told this is impossible as the area is a National Park Reserve.

Friday, June 6 - Bulk Handling: Proserpine cane farmers were told at their annual mill meeting last Saturday that the estimated cost of installing a bulk handling plant at the sugar mill is £50,000. When announcing this the mill manager, Mr R. Gibson, said a comparison between sending bagged sugar to Bowen and bulk sugar to Mackay worked out at 7/- per ton in favour of Mackay. A motion to borrow £50,000 for this purpose was carried.

Friday, June 13 - Bulk Loading: With the advent on bulk loading, storage of sugar at the mill should no longer be a problem. The Railway Department has given an assurance that special trains will be run to transport sugar daily to Mackay.

Sign On: The sign on of cane cutters for the season was conducted this week. On Thursday morning cutters signed on at Yalbaroo and at Bloomsbury that afternoon.

The whole of Friday was taken up with sign ons at the Diggers Hall in Proserpine. Labour offering for the crushing was sufficient with 250 cane cutters being signed on over the two days.

Friday, June 20 - Shute Road Approved: State Cabinet has approved in principle the opening of a new seven mile road, from Cannonvale to Shute Harbour. This road would result in Shute Harbour becoming the access port for the Whitsunday Islands, with the jetty at Cannonvale more or less filling a secondary role. Estimated cost of the project, including the road and a new jetty, has been set at £150,000. The Shire Chairman, Cr J.M. Barry, says he is not aware to what extent the Council will be called upon to co-operate, but every effort will be made to assist the Government to the full extent of Council finance.

Mill Milestone: A milestone in mill history was reached this week with the bulk handling of sugar, direct from the mill to the bulk terminal at Mackay. The 500 ton bulk bin at the mill can handle slightly over 24 hours output of sugar. Crushing began on Wednesday and up to 8 am daily. Today 3,003 tons had been handled.

Thursday, June 26 - **Shute Track:** The latest proposal in connection with the development of Shute Harbour is the contruction of s jeep track from near Airlie to the harbour site. Its probable cost would be about £2,000, split three ways: 25% to the Shire Council, 25% to the Barrier Reef Island Association and the remaining 50% to the Department of Public Works. Later steps are to be taken for a full road, at a cost of about £150,000.

Shute Blocks: The Lands Minister, Mr A.G. Muller, has advised the Shire Council that when a road is through to Shute Harbour, it is proposed to annex small blocks from the National Park for farming purposes, if the living area warrants it. The sale of this land, plus building sites at the harbour, would help defray the cost of building the road.

Gulf Contract: Messrs J.P. Muller, Gordon Muller, Graham McBride and Bert Rasmussen left by car this week for Burketown, where Mr Muller has accepted a building contract. They expect to be away for about three months.

Friday, July 11 - 200 ft Jetty: A £35,000 jetty, 200 feet long is planned by the State Government for the proposed new tourist jetty at Shute Harbour. It will be big enough to carry a tourist bus, with water at its berth being 16ft, enough for a 2,500 ton ship. State Cabinet also has approved a 7 mile road from Airlie to Shute Harbour, which will replace Cannonvale as an access point for the Whitsunday Islands.

Friday, July 18 - Shute Survey: A survey line is being pegged from Airlie Beach to Shute Harbour. When this is determined and approved by the Surveyor General's Department, the Shire Council will call tenders for the construction of a track. A deputy for the Department has arrived and presently is accommodated at Airlie, with a view to speeding up the work.

