

Fragments of North Queensland History.

(For C. & C's Magazine.)

(By W. J. Doherty.)

PIONEERING MOVEMENTS.

WHEN the Colony of Queensland was established, seventy four years ago, the new Governor, Sir George Bowen, became very active in promoting settlement. He was a man of vision, and at once realised the strategic importance of Cape York locality and of the North Queensland coast. It was on his initiative that G. E. Dalrymple and Henry Stone were sent up to inspect the new discovery known as Port Denison. It was in 1862 that the Governor himself took a trip up the coast in the H.M.S. Pioneer. Rounding Cape York, he visited the "Post Office" on Booby Island. This was a primitive structure, developed by the crews of passing ships. The letter box contained documents of information interesting to mariners, and there was a depository for stores. In an informal way, provisions were left for the use of shipwrecked sailors. This arrangement proved to be useful until raids were made by aboriginals from the Prince of Wales Island. Sir George Bowen's proposal was to establish a permanent settlement on Albany Island, and this led to the formation of Somerset in 1863. A change was made to Thursday Island in 1876, and H. M. Chester was installed as P.M. in the following year.

OUT ON THE GEORGINA.

At the end of the year 1861, William Landsborough discovered the Georgina River and Barkly Tableland; but the river, he named the Herbert. A few miles south of the site of Camooweal he met with hostile blacks, and decided that discretion was preferable to valour. Landsborough had a keen eye for pastoral country, and his reports attracted much attention. In conjunction with the rolling downs, Lakes Mary and Frances looked well on paper. It appears, however, that the first proper exploration of the Barkly Tableland was carried out by the famous drover, Nat Buchanan. With a small party, he left Rocklands station on October 10th, 1877, and in four days he struck the creek which has since borne his name. Afterwards several lakes were met with. For 35 miles there was a dry stretch, but the party was led to water by a number of aboriginals. The Overland Telegraph Line was reached to the south of Powell Creek. At that time there was a pastoral land boom and the Barkly Tableland was thrown open for settlement. With only the guide of the map, speculators rushed for blocks with the hope that they would make money by sales. Three years were allowed for stocking. In this way most of the country was taken up which is now occupied by Brunette, Alexandria, Alroy and Avon Downs. The only permanent surface water is Corella Lake. The rest of the marshy lakes dry up rapidly after

the wet season. The country is thinly forested with coolabahs, and also produces lignum and bluebush.

ROCKLANDS.

According to an account written by George Sutherland, in 1913, it was his father, John Sutherland, who took up Rocklands station, near Camooweal, in 1864. Eight thousand sheep were purchased near Rockhampton, and the droving trip of about thirteen hundred miles occupied seven months. The route lay along the Suttor River and thence along the Burdekin. Afterwards the Flinders River was taken as a guide. The Gregory River was reached and great delight was taken in this fine perennial stream of water. A big natural spring was found at the head of the O'Shanassy. Landsborough's charts were carefully consulted, and there was a dry stage before arriving at Mary Lake. Those were the great days of pioneering. The stock market was active as cattle and sheep were necessary to secure large areas of country. Apparently very little thought was given to future operations; although the Gulf people vaguely expected that trade would be opened up with Batavia and the East. But in the far back country, when a pioneer settled, he was settled indeed. Wool was low in price and there was no market for bullocks. "The settlers stuck to their guns and to their hardships, till fate compelled them to abandon their holdings and drove their stock back hundreds of miles, perhaps to where they started from. An exodus took place from the Georgina, and the country was returned to the blackfellows. Many of the Gulf runs followed suit."

TOWNSVILLE SHOW.

In the last number of Cummins & Campbell's Magazine it was pointed out that the first Townsville Show was held in the year 1880, and consequently the next Show will be the 55th. Old records indicate that in 1876 a meeting was convened by William Hann to form a Show Association. This meeting was duly held in the Queen's Hotel, and a provisional committee was appointed to draw up and submit rules governing the North Queensland Pastoral and Agricultural Association. A. F. B. Chubb was appointed Honorary Secretary. Some of the leading spirits in the movement were L. F. Sachs, S. F. Walker, A. E. Bundock, W. Robertson and P. F. Hanran. It appears, however, that the business was shelved. At that time the population of Townsville was unsettled by gold-mining operations in various parts of the North. The progress of Cooktown must have proved disturbing, and it must have been difficult for some