

# **“Through a Glass Darkly” Photographers and their role in the Moreton Bay Region before 1860**

**by Rod Fisher**

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In the history of Queensland, 1859-60 forms a great divide. Separated at last from the rest of New South Wales, Queenslanders expected great progress under their own colonial legislature and local government; from the 1860s, bursts of immigration, investment and expansion subsequently affirmed their optimism. For scholars, the separation of pre-1860 records in Sydney archives from the rest in Queensland has imposed a similar division on historical writing; at best, the earlier phase is treated as a prelude to later development.<sup>1</sup> In the popular imagination, this was the era of aboriginals, explorers, convicts, squatters and pioneers – rather romantic stuff compared with the hard history of later years. Altogether one might be forgiven for thinking of the period before 1860 as a prehistory of Queensland.

This historic division is reinforced visually: pre-separation buildings, furnishings and costumes are rarities in Queensland, and lesser relics are treated like curios. The rather scarce pictorial material largely comprises static views by government draftsmen and impressionistic sketches by budding artists.<sup>2</sup> As far as photographs are concerned, the camera might well have not been in use before Separation; for, by and large, local photographic collections date from the 1860s.

## **PHOTOGRAPHIC ADVENTURERS**

Having accepted this view of Queensland’s “prehistory”, imagine my consternation of finding that no less than thirteen photographers

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were hawking their expertise around the Moreton Bay District before 1860. If newspaper advertising is a fair indication of commercial activity in photography, few of these men were long established at Moreton Bay. Only four may be identified as local residents; the other nine came in search of livelihood, worked and soon departed, taking in Brisbane as an outpost of Sydney, sometimes including a stint at Ipswich and a trip through the Downs.

Of the nine itinerants, John Watson is well-known since he ran a busy Brisbane studio from 1862. As advertised then, he had first visited "six years ago" – actually in 1855, when he opened a branch for Thomas Glaister, the premier photographer in Sydney. However, Watson disappeared by 1856, back to Sydney possibly, until reopening the Queen Street studio in his own right.

John Wheeler also operated a Brisbane studio during the latter half of 1855. He had previously been a principal of J. Wheeler & Co. and then Freeman Brothers & Wheeler in Sydney (1853-54), and returned there from Brisbane early in 1856.

At Brisbane in late 1856, D. Smith seems to have run into hard times; he soon moved from central premises with regular hours in Queen Street to sharing a bootmaker's cottage in Ann Street and offering sittings at private residences, before vanishing from the commercial columns altogether. Though he might have been a Brisbane resident his form of advertisement suggests otherwise.

Whereas the first itinerant photographers seem to have limited themselves to Brisbane Town, their successors broadened their horizons to Ipswich, the Darling Downs and then the north. James Elsbee passed through Brisbane in 1857 to spend almost four months at Ipswich, then headed for Drayton, Warwick and Dalby, with the intention of returning to Ipswich for two or three weeks, before departing for Brisbane. Whether he even reached Drayton has yet to be discovered.

After a brief spell in Brisbane late in 1857, E.T. Brissenden left for Sydney via Ipswich, where he remained for several months in mid-1858, and then various stations on the Downs and Warwick. His Ipswich studio was taken over by an assistant, John (or T.) Bowdich, who was probably chasing business on the Downs before his death at Meringandan, north of Toowoomba, very early in May 1859, aged only 26.<sup>3</sup>

Robert McClelland also visited the Downs when he journeyed from Armidale and Tenterfield to Warwick and Drayton during the early months of 1859. He might have continued on to Ipswich and Brisbane, but without remaining long since he forwarded display photographs to Brisbane from Sydney in June. By September he was back working in Brisbane, until early in 1860 when he went to Ipswich before departing for Sydney.

In late 1859 McClelland's Brisbane competitor was a Mr. Insley (probably Lawson), whose family business in Sydney seems to have continued operating under another Insley (possibly Henry).<sup>4</sup> Like McClelland, Insley visited Ipswich in 1860 and migrated northwards later in the decade. Both were southern photographers with an eye to the main chance. Their arrival late in 1859, when Separation festivities were imminent was hardly coincidental. Moreover, McClelland worked hard at fostering a market for multiple views, while Insley peddled portraiture, and his dressmaker wife provided customers with ball and wedding outfits complete with flowers for the hair "in the newest French style".

Unlike photographers who largely confined themselves to portraiture, McClelland as well as Wheeler and Brissenden also took scenes of various kinds. However, the major landscapist, who arrived in mid-1857 after "travelling through the principal capitals of the western hemisphere", was William True Bennett (a fitting name for a cameraman). With his sights set upon scenes for the *Illustrated London News* and the London International Exhibition, he claimed to be taking portraits for a very restricted time; but he was kept busy in South and then North Brisbane, interspersed with visits to the Darling Downs, Ipswich and the north, for twenty months before departing for Sydney in early 1859.

Whereas these professionals were continually on the move, Alfred Hazelton and George Miles Challinor were resident in Ipswich. Hazelton may be identified as the teacher at the Anglican church school in Nicholas Street from 1850-51, who taught young Thomas Mathewson, the later Queensland photographer:

This church [built 1850] was used as a day school during the week. Mr Mathewson attended this school for a few months in 1854. The teacher's name was Hazelton.<sup>5</sup>

The latter's developing interest was indicated in May 1855 by the opening of a "Grand Cosmorama View of the Great Exhibition of London 1851" at Mr. Hazelton's at the back of the School House. Having received his photographic equipment from England by December, Hazelton announced his intention of taking portraits. This enterprise apparently lapsed by mid-1856, followed by the birth of a son, while Hazelton remained throughout at the schoolhouse.

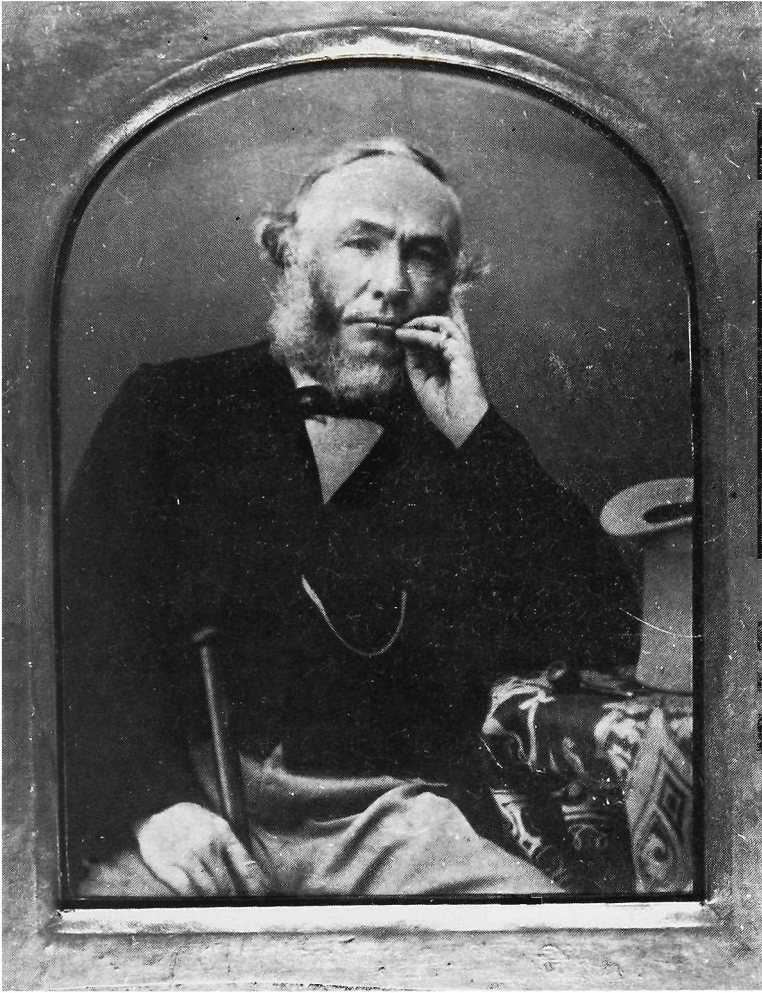
George Miles (or Mills) Challinor was only sixteen on arrival at Moreton Bay with Dr. J.D. Lang's "Fortitude" immigrants in 1849.<sup>6</sup> The family, including his mother, Mary, aged forty and his sister, Emily, aged thirteen, settled at Ipswich, as did Dr. Henry Challinor, the ship's surgeon-superintendent, aged about thirty-five. The Challinors were particularly remembered by Mathewson in later years, who belies the common assumption that George was the well-known doctor's son:

A cousin of the Doctor's (Mr George Challinor) acted as Dispenser in 1854; a few years later he took up photography and had a very fine studio built at the rear of the brick building [Dr. Challinor's surgery, consulting room and dwelling] where he photographed many notables. He afterwards went into cotton growing on Warrill Creek, and finally became Clerk for the Esk Shire Council.<sup>7</sup>

Since Challinor remained in business from 1857 until at least 1864, whereas other photographers came and went, he qualifies as the first established and longest serving professional in Ipswich and the whole district.

The two remaining photographers were inhabitants of Brisbane. Henry Goodes, who addressed his "friends" as potential customers in November 1856, did not continue advertising but still resided in South Brisbane when Bennett commenced business there in the following June. Though this suggests that Goodes discontinued commercial activity at that time, he evidently worked at Sydney in the early 1860s.

As a resident of Brisbane but a frequent visitor to Ipswich, Silvester Diggles might seem the odd man out. Having arrived at Sydney from Liverpool in 1853 with his first wife and three children under fourteen, Diggles aged thirty-six took charge of W.I. Johnston's piano-tuning business. After sounding out his prospects at Ipswich and Brisbane late in 1854, and delighting the inhabitants with his piano-playing, he returned with his family early in the following year, and settled in Brisbane for the rest of his life (d. 1880). Advertising under the heading of "THE FINE ARTS", Diggles announced his presence in Brisbane "for the purpose of teaching the PIANO FORTE, SINGING AND DRAWING in a variety of styles", to "undertake the Tuning, Regulating &c of Piano Fortes in the district" as well as "Organs, Harmoniums, Flutinas, &c", and also to "Take Miniatures by the photographic process, and in other and more Artistic styles". It is not certain that Diggles actually began commercial photography before July 1855, by which time he had completed arrangements for taking "photographic likenesses" by certain processes. Nor is it clear whether he continued this work in Brisbane and during quarterly piano-tuning excursions to Ipswich after August. Such income-earning advertisements appear no more, while his musical and scientific activities continue to pepper the pages of the Moreton Bay press. Perhaps there was no further need to advertise his skill, but more likely photography was dropped from his repertoire. Whatever the outcome, Silvester Diggles deserves recognition as the first identifiable photographer in the district as well as its first known resident artist and musician, with a passion for natural history. Brisbane's "man for all seasons" indeed.<sup>8</sup>



*Silvester Diggles in later life*

By courtesy of Dr. E.N. Marks

These activities of both the itinerant and the resident photographers before Separation reflect the difficulty of earning a stable income from so specialist an occupation as photography in such a sparsely settled and under-developed region as Moreton Bay. Even in Sydney, with its concentrated population and wealth, very few photographers remained sedentary or in business for long in the 1850s.

### THE EARLY PROCESSES

Though most early photographers were young and mobile, they were hardly rank amateurs, despite distance from overseas centres and the pace of technical change. During these years, daguerreotypes

on sensitized silvered copper plates (not glass) were proffered at Moreton Bay, using improved equipment to produce good quality portraits – small or large, plain or hand-coloured, cased or framed. Despite claims like Wheeler’s that “a sitting of a few seconds only, is necessary, and that in a light which can be born without effort or pain”, most daguerrotype sitters had to be braced and clamped into place for much longer exposures, even on a good day. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, “Thirty seconds for a portrait may be taken as an average, in diffused day light”.<sup>9</sup> Another technical hitch was that only one daguerreotype could be produced per exposure; and even then the image often had to be tilted for clarity.

By the mid-1850s two negative/positive processes which led the way to solving these problems had been introduced in New South Wales: a dry process was used to print direct contact positives on salted paper (“calotype” or “talbotype”) from a negative of sensitized paper (1850); a “wet plate” process used collodion solution to produce a negative on glass from which direct contact positives might be printed on paper (1854). This opened the path for “cartes-de-visite” (1859), those small albumen prints pasted onto cards, which were most popular in the 1860s and 1870s, and to the ultimate preponderance of paper prints over other media.

In the mid-1850s, however, the daguerreotype still held sway. The process had been brought to such a standard that the public generally preferred a handsomely encased image, with brass mount and glass protective cover, which could be presented to the sitter in around twenty minutes. At this stage collodion processing was quite new and cumbersome, even for professionals, especially those on the move.<sup>10</sup> As a result the first Moreton Bay photographers of 1855 and 1856 advertised daguerreotypes, though Diggles was ahead of the field in also offering “the Collodiotype process” as early as July 1855.

During the later 1850s the trend was clearly towards collodion processing. Professionals were mastering the trickier wet plate photography and cutting the average exposure time to around ten seconds in a good light, while the speedier process, superior image and cheaper cost became self-evident to the public. What seems crucial in this changeover is that the same camera could produce a collodion negative on thin glass which, when backed with blacking of some kind, looked like a positive (“ambrotype”) and could be as decoratively encased as a daguerreotype (1855 in N.S.W.). The collodion process could also be used to provide what looked like a positive image on a small dark-coated metal plate called a “tintype” or “melainotype” (1858), though this medium was not popular until the 1870s.

At this transitional stage from daguerreotype to negative/positive processing, the second batch of photographers began work at Moreton Bay from 1857 to 1859. Though most were masters of both processes,

those who really affected public taste, highlighting the newer processes in their publicity, were Bennett and Brissenden. On setting up his South Brisbane studio in 1857 Bennett promptly advertised his versatility in “either the Glass, Paper, Plate or Improved System Process”. A year later he made a quick trip to Sydney, returning rather characteristically with “Something New! THE MELAINO-TYPE! or Photograph upon Iron Tablets – the first introduced successfully in the Colonies”.

Though Brissenden did not have quite the same flair for exaggeration, his North Brisbane gallery exhibited “quantities in all the various styles”, including talbotypes and collodiotypes on paper. Brissenden’s Ipswich advertisement was particularly explicit:

Stereoscopic, or Solid Daguerreotype, representing the figure as possessing all the solidity of statuary  
Crayon Daguerreotypes; these can be seen in any light.  
Illuminated Daguerreotypes, magic or coloured backgrounds, &c, &c.  
Collodiotypes, or Glass Pictures, taken in a superb style, with all the delicacy of the Daguerreotype.  
Also, the various Paper Processes at present known and most approved.

As indicated by this advertisement, stereo photographs were also provided, whereby a three-dimensional effect could be obtained from two identical exposures when looked at through a stereo viewer.

In touch with these technical developments in the colonies and overseas, the practitioners of 1857 to 1858 offered the locals a smorgasbord of photographic delights. Of the major processes, the collodion was highly recommended, especially in its ambrotype form, by photographers and pressmen alike.

By late 1859 collodion processing had become so widespread that McClelland and Insley from Sydney had less need to trumpet their techniques abroad and to prove their versatility. Insley was content merely to advertise “his superior style of likeness”, while McClelland simply offered to supply his “by any process now in use in the Colonies”. Ambrotypes (on glass) were apparently the principal medium for portraits until after cartes-de-visite were introduced to Brisbane in 1862. Yet Bennett and Brissenden offered paper prints to the public as early as 1857 to 1858, McClelland was producing what he called talbotypes on ten by twelve inch paper in 1859, and Challinor was exhibiting on paper in 1861-62. Tintypes could be procured from Bennett in 1858, and pannotypes (on black leather) from Insley (in Sydney at least) in the same year or from Challinor by 1861. As Brissenden stated in 1957:

The Collodiotype is now brought to the highest perfection, and can be applied to slate, wood, or in fact to any substance on which a Shadow can be cast.

In the following year he also pointed out that “fac-similes can be produced to any extent at much less expense than the original” from that one original, whatever its type or form. by the late 1850s the photographers at Moreton Bay employed most of the means and media available anywhere in the world.

These men were well-qualified practitioners, not fly-by-night operators. Of the residents, Diggles and Hazelton were family men with another occupation, and Challinor was well settled at Ipswich as dispenser of medicines. Insley, who stayed for three years until 1862, and McClelland were joined by their wives. In the later years there was even time for an itinerant photographer to be accepted by the local community. At the end of his Toowoomba visit in 1858, Bennett was publicly entertained by some of the inhabitants. Back in Brisbane he was the starter at the annual South Brisbane Boxing Day races. The final clue to his frenetic activity was revealed only days later:

On the 29th December, at the Catholic Church, Ipswich, by Father McGinty, Wm. True Bennett, of Michigan, U.S. to Mary Teresa Greenwood, of Moreton Bay.

When these professionals moved out into the countryside, the quantity of equipment and the need for remuneration ensured that they journeyed rather slowly. Elsbee stayed over two months in Ipswich, Bennett spent only a little less time on visits to the Downs and the north, Brissenden and Bowdich had more than eight months between them at Ipswich, Brissenden spent another six months around the Downs, and McClelland took several months to progress from Armidale to Drayton during his first visit.

In Brisbane and Ipswich, however, the aspiring “photographic artist” might afford more established and commodious quarters, even on a temporary basis. There seems to have been very little to remark about the earliest photographic premises, which were centrally situated in houses and stores. Most of the itinerant photographers, however, preferred business quarters, or at least a studio name.

Once again it was Bennett and Brissenden who introduced Brisbane to more sophisticated ways in 1857. Bennett commenced business at the South Brisbane residence of Henry Goodes, and rapidly “erected a splendid sky light Gallery” in Stanley Street strategically opposite the major wharves for ferry, river and coastal traffic. This might have been at Goodes’ residence, but was more likely above Peterson’s Store, which was Bennett’s address on his return from the Downs in October 1857. When Brissenden arrived late in the year, he likewise set up his Brisbane Photographic Gallery in the place of an earlier photographer – at Rosetta’s Albert Street Store in North Brisbane where Wheeler had his sky light gallery in



1855. In the new year he shifted to George Street premises (opposite the Immigration Depot), which he “had built, and fitted up as a show and reception room, and enlarged operating rooms, where he has the newest and most complete apparatus in the colonies”, now called the Excelsior Photographic Gallery, as Glaister’s in Sydney had been. After Brissenden’s departure in March 1858 and Bennett’s return from yet another tour in July, the latter secured these premises, known in town as the “Photographic Gallery”, for his final stint in Brisbane.

Though inconceivable that none of these practitioners photographed their own premises, the earliest known view is of “Thomas Ham & Co. Engraving, Lithographic and Portrait Rooms”, complete with skylight, window display and showcase, which was specially built in George Street by early 1862 for the proud proprietor, Thomas Ham, and his photographer, William Knight, newcomers from Melbourne.<sup>11</sup>

Altogether the evidence shows that the early photographers were pioneering a new profession at Moreton Bay, even though somewhat fitfully. No one advertised at Brisbane before Diggles in early 1855, nor from January to September 1856, December 1856 to May 1857, or February to August 1859. The itinerant photographers appeared towards the end of each year from 1855 to 1859, thereby coinciding with the wool season when everyone came to town for business, legal affairs and pleasure. Even then, Bennett took the opportunity to visit elsewhere when Brissenden arrived late in 1857, but returned invigorated for the following season on his own. Only when demographic and economic conditions improved during later times could a greater degree of continuity be secured by professionals who did not have the wanderlust already. Nevertheless the district of Moreton Bay was becoming quite well served on a casual and seasonal basis.

Commenting on developments by September 1855, the go-ahead *Courier* noted that:

It has often been a source of regret in this district that no means existed whereby those who were unable to proceed to Sydney for the purpose, could procure portraits of friends or relations, to preserve their memory after death or separation. Several persons have lately attempted to supply this deficiency.<sup>12</sup>


Five years later, at least thirteen professionals had opened studios in the two major towns, six of whom trekked to outlying centres and stations, to serve a populace of less than 30,000 persons (6,000 in Brisbane). As there was no real shortage of supply, perhaps there was some shortage of demand.

### ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS

Though the *Courier* welcomed Diggles with open arms, not one of the six photographers of 1855 and 1856 advertised or remained in

business for long. After three months in Brisbane, Wheeler only succeeded in drumming up trade late in 1855 by announcing that his rooms would finally close in a week's time (a publicity trick used by most itinerants). Three weeks later he expressed pleasure at "the increase of business during the last week of his intended stay", postponing his final closing for another fortnight. Customers and cash were rather thin on the ground at Moreton Bay, which lay under a cloud of economic gloom, and daguerreotypes were hardly cheap or appealing enough for popular consumption especially once the novelty wore off.

Despite continuing stagnation, the photographic scene changed remarkably from mid-1857 as the district anticipated Separation. Elsbee from Victoria was warmly welcomed at Ipswich and eagerly awaited at Drayton. His departure from the former place was delayed after "a tolerably long successful sojourn" because "numbers of persons who wished to have their portraits taken kept him fully employed", observed the *North Australian*.



**PHOTOGRAPHY.**

**MR. INSLEY,**  
 THE oldest established PHOTOGRAPHER in these colonies, (formerly next to the General Post Office, Sydney,) would announce that he is now ready—at the house next Mr. Pauley's, Cabinet-maker, George-street, Brisbane,—to take his superior style of

**LIKENESSES,**  
 colored, or enamelled, in morocco cases, from 5s. to £5, according to size or quality of cases or frame.  
 CAMERAS for sale, &c., Instructions given gratis to purchasers of Stock.

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**DRESSMAKING! DRESSMAKING!!**

**MRS. INSLEY**  
 WOULD ANNOUNCE TO THE LADIES OF BRISBANE THAT SHE HAS received per Telegraph a case of the Newest French style of BALL and WEDDING DRESSES, and also a large assortment of FRENCH FLOWERS for the hair, and decorating dresses. Boys' and girls' CRINOLINE HATS of the newest style. Fancy goods, &c.  
 NEXT TO MR. PAULEY'S  
 CABINET MAKER, George-street Brisbane.

More noteworthy was the arrival of Bennett in June followed by Brissenden in September. Their improved processes and equipment combined with professional expertise, attractive studios and aggressive marketing to lure sitters after the daguerreotype drought. In July 1858, the *Darling Downs Gazette* reported that Brissenden “has been very successful in Brisbane and Ipswich”, and that “his well-earned fame has already reached the Downs”, where he spent the next six months at work.

For Brissenden’s rival at Brisbane, William Bennett, brisk business caused his visit to be extended several times, from the initial few days to twenty months around the region. In August the *Courier* explained that:

Since his announcement of his departure his rooms have been crowded with visitors, and in consideration of his being unable to take the likenesses of all who have desired them, he has signified his intention of visiting us for a few days on his return from Warwick.

The other major factor in photographic success from 1857 onwards was the decreasing cost of portraiture. In the early Sydney days of daguerreotype the starting price was a guinea without a case, which put portraits well beyond the reach of working classes. By 1859 the starting price was down to five shillings including the case – a seventy-five percent reduction in five years. As the *Free Press* remarked, these rates were “so moderate as to place a picture within reach of all.” Falling prices, greater competition, better presentation and improved processing made photographs more popular. Immigration, periodic prosperity and cheap processing made cartes-de-visite the rage of succeeding years, at around twelve shillings per dozen.

### PORTRAITURE

As the *Courier* stated in 1855, the principal purpose of obtaining photographs was to perpetuate the memory of loved friends and relatives (without mentioning oneself) after death or separation – two of the stark facts of early colonial life. Admittedly Elsebee stressed separation in life somewhat more than in death, but Goodes particularly appealed to “Mothers, Fathers, Sisters, Brothers, Lovers and friends – to *all* – secure to yourselves while yet you may, a faultless likeness of those who are near and dear to you”, while Smith waxed poetically and profitably morbid:

When children dear are gambolling near, with hearts and  
faces light,  
And friends we love around us move in life’s unmix’d delight,  
We soon forget that Time will yet take one by one from  
view,  
That soon or late ’twill be our fate to bid the last adieu!

Then let us, while we've Fortune's smile, to Smith's at once  
 repair,  
 The Artist will, with magic skill, Daguerrotype us there,  
 Then form and face Time can't efface, but with our friends  
 they'll stay,  
 Smile on them still, and help to fill our places when away!

All agreed that the function of photography was to reproduce the most exact likeness of the subject. Single portraits were most common during the daguerreotype era, especially of males. Nevertheless technical developments meant that groups of people could be taken by the Moreton Bay photographers, and particularly the family in some meaningful pose. As early as 1853 in Sydney, Wheeler & Co. pronounced the suitability of the daguerreotype for family groups – “a whole family from the first bud of infancy to its more mature branches”. A year later the company displayed various stereoscopes preparatory to the Paris Exhibition of 1855, including three figures playing cards.<sup>13</sup> In Brisbane, Smith specifically advertised for groups in 1856, as did Bennett in the following year, though not until his return from Sydney in July did Bennett make this a feature of his publicity:

Mr. B. would call particular attention to his GROUPS of families and children. Having received a double acting quick lens from Heydon, New York, he is enabled to take groups with the same facility as single pictures.

Children must have been a trial to photographers and parents alike, because of the time factor and the need for clamps; but they were a prime source of business judging by the continuous solicitations of cameramen. As a result children were preferred during the brighter morning hours. Like Bennett, Brissenden offered quick photography, though his claim to take “Instantaneous pictures” of moving objects and children is quite extraordinary.<sup>14</sup> To be taken “instantaneously” generally meant straightaway, followed by the exposure time of more than the advertised “few seconds only” and then the waiting period for the finished product. “Miniatures” were provided for rings, brooches, breastpins, lockets and cases; larger photographs were cased or framed; the size, material and style of presentation naturally reflected the purpose and purse of the purchaser.

Though much of the early work might seem fragile, obscure or jaded to modern eyes, contemporaries were happy enough to undergo this ordeal once and sometimes again. Over twenty-five years, various Archer brothers, who gathered together occasionally from their stations in eastern Australia, were photographed for their Scottish family in Norway, the first being at Sydney in 1843 and the last at Brisbane in 1867.<sup>15</sup> Speaking of the earliest portraits, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was especially scathing of the “cadaverous,

unearthly appearance” which “this disagreeable operation” of “decapitation” gave to the sitter.<sup>16</sup>

From that primitive stage onwards such progress was made in photography that the Moreton Bay press became almost lyrical. As a result the inhabitants of town and country were urged to take advantage of the visiting cameramen, who clearly stole the limelight from their local counterparts. But whether the photographers themselves found satisfaction in dealing with a stream of curious visitors and difficult offspring remains to be seen; most of them, from Diggles on, had interests beyond mere portraiture.

### DIVERSIFICATION

As Wheeler & Co. were developing the outdoor side of their Sydney business from 1853, it is hardly surprising that Wheeler arrived in Brisbane to photograph the local scenery. In October 1855 the *Courier* drew attention to the fact that “a daguerreotype view of South Brisbane from the north side, with H.M. ‘Torch’ lying alongside the wharf, has been executed by Mr. Wheeler, daguerreotype artist of this Town”. This was apparently a first for Brisbane, since the view was specially exhibited in Queen Street. Seven days later, Wheeler’s advertisement offered “views in Sydney, North and South Brisbane, and other parts of the Colony”.

By 1857, technical advance brought greater diversification in subject matter coupled with broader geographical horizons. Elsbee listed “Miniatures, Landscapes, and subjects of every description”, including “Home Stations, Landscapes, Horses and Stock of every description”, though Drayton residents were primarily interested in obtaining a full length daguerreotype of James Taylor, Esq., J.P. to place over the bench of their courthouse. Shortly after his arrival in November, Brissenden began “gradually accumulating at his studio facsimiles of all the well known characters about Brisbane”, so that by April his specimens included Mr. J.C. Pearce (the entrepreneur), Mr. Brown (either A.W. the police magistrate or E.C. “the people’s auctioneer”), Dean Rigney (the Catholic priest), Miska Hauser (the visiting Hungarian violinist) and the redoubtable Dr. J.D. Lang. At Drayton in July, Brissenden’s “celebrities” of the district included Messrs Pearce, Cobham, Kennedy and Joseph King, as well as a certain unnamed person:

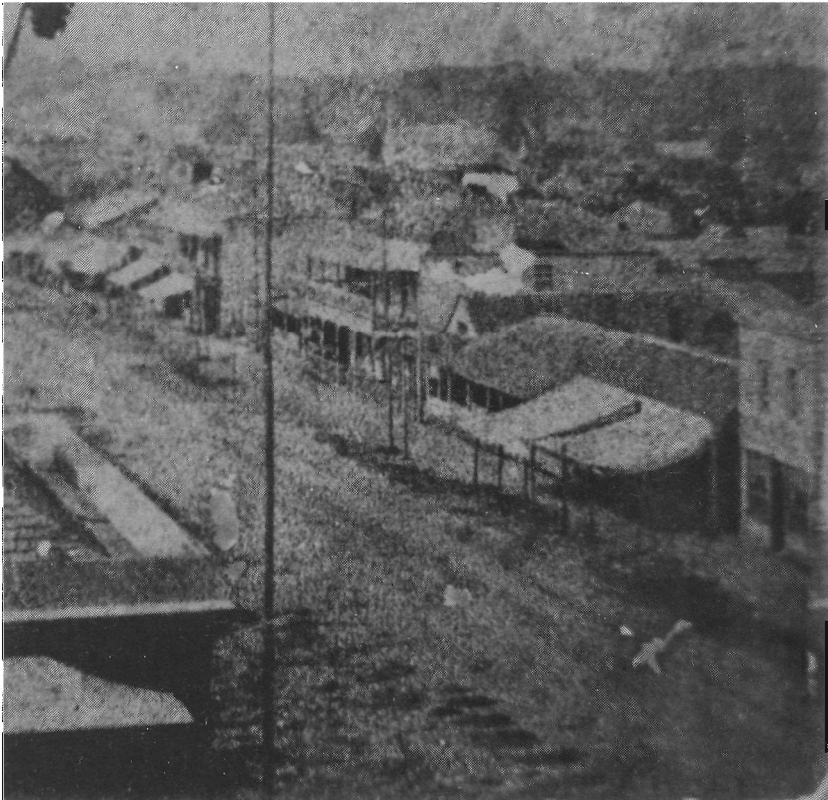
The portrait of one of the Ipswich ‘exquisites’ – the pet of the petticoats – is also a good one, and recalls to mind what one could imagine to be the style, attitude, and costume of Beau Brummel, but lacking that aristocratic look and hauteur, for which that elegant coxcomb was so remarkable.

But Brissenden also took “views of buildings, County Seats, Statuary, Paintings, Pictures of all kinds, Medallions, &c.”, as well as the animal kingdom. At Ipswich the *North Australian* recorded that:

We have seen several portraits of horses taken by this gentleman, in which he has been eminently successful: Blue Bonnett, Volunteer, and Mr. Haly's Euclid, are among the subjects which have stood to him. We recommend to our friends who wish to preserve the features of their equine favourites, or their own, to seek the assistance of Mr. Brissenden ...

Whereas these practitioners advertised a wide variety of subjects, McClelland took up where Wheeler had left off by specializing in scenic photography. By mid-1859 he had completed a tour from Sydney through the northern districts and back. "Some fine photographs of scenes" were put on show, evidently for sale, at the premises of Queen Street's chemist-dentist, Thomas, S. Warry. One of these caught the eye of the *Courier* reporter:

To our taste the view of Drayton is the most pleasing, on account of the half-cleared land, and the distant bush brought out so well, contrasting with the village looking houses and primitive style of inns.



*Queen Street east, Brisbane, from Albert Street, c. 1859 R.H.S.Q. Collection*

To keep the pot boiling, McClelland forwarded "a splendid photograph of St. Mark's, Darlinghurst, Sydney" by July. Two months later he appeared in person "for but a limited stay in Brisbane", opened his gallery in Queen Street and immediately advertised "eight separate Stereoscopes of Sydney supplied at 24s. per dozen, or 2s. 6d. each". "Landscapes, Views of Stores, &c." would be taken at shortest notice, as well as "Gentlemen's residences" on twelve by ten inch paper. More significantly, McClelland had just completed "a set of views of Brisbane, mounted on cloth, three feet long at 40s. each". This was probably his "complete photographic panorama of the city of Brisbane", which had already been noticed by the press as ready for distribution:

The views are in Talbotype, and may be multiplied to an indefinite extent, so that Brisbane residents may now favor their friends at home with a view of the capital of our new colony ...

Other talbotype (or albumen print?) views by McClelland in late 1859 included Dr. George Fullerton's "Adderton", William Duncan's "Dara", Kingsford's Drapery and Queen Street itself. As portraiture and not topography was Insley's specialty, McClelland evidently had the Brisbane scene to himself.

If these itinerant photographers may be classified basically as portraitists, townscapists and landscapists, Bennett not only straddles all fields but also emerges as the late nineteenth century equivalent of the *Time-Life* photo journalist. Having travelled widely overseas, he arrived at Brisbane in June 1857 specifically "to take a number of views of the scenery, and likenesses of the aborigines for the London Exhibition". To this end he also toured the Downs, but returned to South Brisbane by the end of the year "for the purpose of completing his collection of views, &c., of North and South Brisbane",

one of which is the 'birds-eye-view' from the rocks towards Kangaroo Point of North Brisbane; and another from the Windmill Hill of North, and South Brisbane.

These, together with some Aboriginal groups, were intended for the *Illustrated London News*, probably as part of a feature with engravings on the separating colony.

Bennett was not the first of the Moreton Bay men to try this newspaper medium. In November 1857 the *Free Press* noted that Diggles had already forwarded "a series of pencil drawings representing different portions of the town of Brisbane" with the captain of the *Gazebound* in June, together with "a lengthy description of the territory of Moreton Bay, written by a gentleman connected with the press of the district" (probably editor Theophilus Pugh himself).

Back on the Downs by the end of 1857, Bennett took "some very pretty sketches of the landscapes in and about Toowoomba", and

travelled to Gayndah, Wide Bay and Port Curtis in 1858 “for the purpose of completing his collection of stereoscopic views of the interior of Northern Australia”, as well as the usual “pictures of stations, landscapes, houses, likenesses, families, children, &c.” That Bennett’s portfolio for England had actually been started at Brisbane, despite his heavy load as a portraitist, is attested by the *Courier* in November 1857:

We have been shown two really fine stereoscopic views of Brisbane, taken by Mr. Bennett; one a general view of Brisbane taken from the Windmill Hill – the other a view from South Brisbane, of the town of North Brisbane, including the Ferry, Chapel, &c., on the banks of the river.

As late as September 1858 he had still not completed the overseas assignment, but in the local context Bennett seems most important. For the next eighty years or so the three most popular panoramas for photographers and public alike were Brisbane from Windmill Hill, Kangaroo Point from the Bowen Terrace/New Farm cliffs and, to a lesser extent, North Brisbane from the southbank – until the first was largely blotted out by high-rise development, the second by Story Bridge and the third by Riverside Expressway. Furthermore, Bennett was becoming something of a hero of the press, since his images of Brisbane and the Moreton Bay district were to be diffused throughout the world by means of the *London News* and the International Exhibition. Moreover, both of these outlets were to feature Brisbane Aborigines. Some earlier photographer such as Wheeler might have stolen a march on Bennett; but he is the first professional known to have tackled these subjects specifically and comprehensively as a package for more than local consumption.

### EXHIBITIONS

Whether any part of Bennett’s early Australian portfolio was ever completed, dispatched and published remains unknown. A search through the illustrated London and Australian newspapers has revealed no engravings based on his photographs, nor anything of Brisbane scenery before the Windmill Hill panoramas of 1862 and 1866. Perhaps his photographs suffered the same fate as Diggles’ drawings, which had not surfaced at London a full year after dispatch. Nor do the several catalogues of the London Exhibition in 1862 make any mention of Bennett, though he possibly exhibited under the banner of the London Stereoscopic Company since stereoviews were one of his specialties.<sup>17</sup> The discovery of Bennett’s works in any local or overseas context might prove him to be more than an accomplished braggart.

Until then the laurel for depicting the brand new British colony to overseas viewers should be awarded either to McClelland for his panorama of Brisbane or better still to one of the resident pro-



fessionals. A number of photographs at the London Exhibition of 1862 had been shown in the previous year at the first Queensland Exhibition. As nicely reported in the *Courier*:

Passing over the plum wine, the pebbles, the stockwhip handles, the mussel shells, the aboriginal implements, the stuffed parrots, the model ships, the tin picture frames and converted tallow lamps, we come to some very superior photographs ... Some of the likenesses on paper are of a very superior description and will compare favourably with the works of the English photographers, the Australian sun and sky giving them an advantage over established artists at home.<sup>18</sup>

One exhibitor at Brisbane was Joseph Warrin Wilder, “photographer of Ipswich” who displayed “7 photographic likenesses” and “4 photographic views of Ipswich and its environs”. The other was George Miles Challinor, whose current address was George Street, North Brisbane. He displayed some “Views of Brisbane, Aborigines, &c.” and “4 Photographic views of the city of Brisbane and its environs”.<sup>19</sup> Both Wilder and Challinor received honourable mentions at London in 1862, while several southern exhibitors including Richard Daintree of Victoria were awarded medals.<sup>20</sup>

That Challinor “photographed many notables” during preceding years at Ipswich is vouched for by Thomas Mathewson; but his other photographic interests are indicated by an advertisement in Pugh’s *Almanac* for 1859. One of his photographs had been described in some detail, by the Ipswich correspondent to the *Courier* in May 1858:

On Tuesday a number of blacks were assembled in the Courtyard to receive their blankets. As a somewhat novel circumstance in connection with this occurrence it may be mentioned, that a photographic sketch was taken of the scene by Mr. G. Challinor. The picture is very distinct, and takes in much of the surrounding scenery.

Challinor was by no means the first photographer to treat Aborigines as *exotica* for people overseas, as this genre dated from the late 1840s and ran throughout the century at least. Nevertheless Challinor, and also Bennett, became interested in photographing Aborigines when this was just becoming fashionable throughout the colonies. Challinor, then, is significant as the first practitioner known to have dealt with this subject locally and to have disseminated these images and others of the newest colony overseas from about 1858 onwards. Moreover, the Ipswich blanket distribution day photograph, the first of its kind known for Moreton Bay, illustrates that it was possible by May 1858 for local practitioners to take *groups* of people with scenery *outdoors*.

Altogether the early photographers at Moreton Bay were quite eclectic in subject matter and versatile in technique: adults, children and infants of both races, singly and in groups; paintings, medallions, statues and pictures of various kinds; houses, stores, stations and inns throughout the district; landscapes and townscapes which caught the eye; favourite beasts, and hounds no doubt; in single or multiple copy on metal, glass, paper and probably leather. Those possibilities, needs and interests combined in the late 1850s to make photography an important social and cultural phenomenon at Moreton Bay.

Nevertheless these thirteen professionals are likely to have been not the only photographers in the district. Pictures were no doubt taken by amateurs, visitors and photographic assistants. Like the Archers, inhabitants throughout the colony were photographed by Sydney firms. When all of these are added together, it becomes obvious that thousands of photographs on a great variety of subjects were produced relating to the Moreton Bay region before 1860.



*Downs Inn, Drayton, c. 1857*

By courtesy of John Oxley Library

## THE SURVIVORS

Despite the productivity of early photographers, searching through the visual sources for Queensland yields a mere handful of photographs with any claim to prehistory, none of these being an original.<sup>21</sup>

Various reasons may be given for the high mortality rate of early photographs. A large proportion were sent overseas, others migrated with their purchasers and photographers, others were damaged or destroyed. Yet so many were taken that more must remain to be found. Only a protracted, painstaking and persistent search is likely to prove this assumption to be true or false.

At the same time the exciting possibility that someone was taking photographs at Moreton Bay before Diggles need not be discounted. After all, Daguerre's process was put on the market in 1839, and the first Australian photographer commenced business in Sydney in 1842. By 1855 daguerreans had set up shop in every capital city and visited many regional towns. That some pioneer was active in Brisbane before that date is suggested by the *Courier's* comment in late 1854 that Diggles' photographic miniatures would pay well "as no opportunity has been for a long time afforded here for such a purpose".<sup>22</sup> That this was George Baron Chapman, the first Australian professional is suggested by his advertisement in 1846, that "having completed his collections of all parts of the interior, he is prepared to embellish his portraits with the scenery from any part of N.S.W. the sitter may prefer".<sup>23</sup>

Whatever the circumstances in this case, Moreton Bay photographs were taken in abundance from at least 1855 to 1859, and have yet to be found. We may yet discover that the great divide of 1859/60 is simply a mirage. Until then, we can but see "through a glass, darkly".

## FOOTNOTES

Further detail, including research sources, will be found in my "Aspects of Early Photography in the Moreton Bay Region", Brisbane History Group Papers, No. 3 (1985), and in Alan Davies & Peter Stanbury, *The Mechanical Eye in Australia: Photography 1841-1900* (Melbourne, O.U.P., 1985). Only significant details and quotations are noted separately below. Other information was kindly supplied by Robert Longhurst (John Oxley Library), Sandy Barrie (Ranald Simmonds Studio), Alan Davies (Macleay Museum, Sydney) and Godfrey Rubens (London).

1. See Ross Fitzgerald, *From the Dreaming to 1915: A History of Queensland* (Brisbane: Queensland University Press, 1982); W. Ross Johnston, *The Call of the Land: A History of Queensland to the Present Day* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1982)
2. See Susanna Evans, *Historic Brisbane and its Early Artists* (Brisbane: Boolarong Publications, 1982); John G. Steele, *Conrad Martens in Queensland* (Brisbane: Queensland University Press, 1978).

3. The *North Australian* and the *Darling Downs Gazette* advertised for T. Bowdich, whereas the Drayton correspondent to the *Courier* referred to "John Bowdich the photographic artist". They were evidently the same person.
4. Information from Sandy Barrie, who is collecting data and equipment relating to Queensland photographers.
5. Mathewson's reminiscences formed the basis of a paper published as "Ipswich in the Eighteen Fifties", *R.H.S.Q. Journal* VI, No. 2 (1959-60), pp. 435-53.
6. E.V. Stevens, notes in *R.H.S.Q.* vertical file (shipping section), largely published as "Fortitude Immigrants, January 1849", *R.H.S.Q. Journal* IV, No. 1 (1948), pp. 20-26.
7. That Mathewson was correct and not other sources including the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* is verified by the membership records of the Ipswich Congregational Church, which were kindly checked by Viva Cribb.
8. For Diggles' significance, see the *A.D.B.* and the fuller paper by Elizabeth N. Marks, "Silvester Diggles: A Queensland Naturalist One Hundred Years Ago", *The Queensland Naturalist*, 17 (1963), pp. 15-25.
9. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September 1855, p. 2.
10. See the excellent article on the state of photographic play, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 February 1856, p. 4.
11. See *The Mechanical Eye* (1985), p. 46. The John Oxley Library holds a print of Ham's studio c. 1862.
12. *Courier*, 1 September 1855, p. 2.
13. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 September 1853, p. 9, and 1 December 1854, p. 8.
14. *North Australian*, 23 March 1858, p. 2.
15. Archer family correspondence, 11 April 1847, John Oxley Library Ms. OM 80-10. See B.H.G. Papers No. 3 (1985) for detail.
16. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 May 1846, p. 2.
17. By 1858, The London Stereoscopic Company stocked 100,000 different scenes from photographs all over the world. See *Sun Pictures of Victoria*, comp. Dianne Reilly & Jennifer Carew (Melbourne: Library Council of Victoria, 1983), p. 11.
18. *Courier*, 7 November 1861, p. 2.
19. *Courier*, 14 November 1861, p. 4; *Queensland Guardian*, 30 October 1861, p. 3.
20. International Exhibition of 1862, *Reports of the Jurors*, (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1863), pp. 14 & 16.
21. The problem of locating early photographs is discussed in the B.H.G. Papers, No. 3 (1985).
22. *Courier*, 9 December 1854, p. 2.
23. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 December 1846, p. 1.