

THE BURKITT FAMILY IN QUEENSLAND, 1861-1981

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I must preface my paper by explaining that today History is being looked at from two main viewpoints. The first is the conventional view of History; through anecdotal material, great men and women and great events. The second, which is becoming more prominent, is thematic in approach; it looks at History as: a class struggle, or economically conditioned, or geographically inspired, or due to the vested interests of certain groups, and so on. The main viewpoint used here is number one, the conventional view with perhaps more than just pure description, thus the study reflects the ups and downs of social history as it influences the lives of a family.

THANKS: Thanks must be accorded to Mr and Mrs Fred Burkitt for the amount of family memorabilia that has been provided for use in compiling this paper.

Verification of events, dates, places and people shows how these were faithfully recorded in the documents made available, and thereby easily referenced to other historical data. Thanks are also due to the State Archives for research assistance, likewise to John Oxley Library and the Fryer Library (University of Queensland).

This is an excursion in Queensland social history through biography. The Burkitt history concerns those coastal towns along the eastern seaboard from the southern border to Cape York.

The family played a part in the developing life of such towns as Brisbane, Ipswich (Warwick too), Maryborough, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Broadsound (St. Lawrence), Bowen-Mackay and north to Cooktown. The biographical material given in this paper relates to various members and relatives of the Burkitts, of whom there are now six generations associated with Queensland. However our study is mainly concerned with the first three generations and the early life of the Colony of Queensland. The human members in this study are



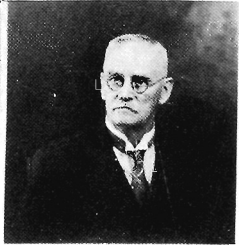
**Alexander Sheafe
Burkitt**



**Alexander Horace
Burkitt**



Horace Burkitt



**Basil Horace
Burkitt**

Alexander H. Burkitt, his son Horace and his grandson Basil H. Burkitt. The Christian name Horace is borne by all three of them, so for this study they will be distinguished as Alexander, Horace and Basil. It was Horace, Alexander's son, who first came out to Australia; he was followed some years later by his father and other members of the family. It was 1852 when Horace disembarked at Port Phillip, Victoria, but within eighteen months of the founding of Queensland he was a resident of that Colony. The family numbers grew as Queensland progressed towards Statehood and membership in the Australian Commonwealth.

The story of the lives of the Burkitts in this period makes for fascinating reading, for here we find a family whose interest in the public weal was shown by the manner of their living. Just as our own ancestors got on with the job of living, so did they with perhaps this exception: the Burkitts kept good records of their movements, both on the voyage out and on their journeyings and living places in Australia and in Queensland. The early arrivals are the link figures who bring the past forward to the present where we all can see it. The English background of the Australian Burkitts helps us to understand their service to the people of Queensland. The genealogy of the Burkitts has been traced back a long way, it has Plantagenet links as well as probable links with John O'Gaunt, possibly through the Nevills. We note the marriage certificate of 1683 A.D. concerning the wedding of Thomas Burkitt and Sara Nevill, the grandparents of Alexander Horace Burkitt.

ALEXANDER HORACE BURKITT F.S.A., J.P. (1807-1875)

Alexander H. Burkitt came to Australia in 1855 following his 16 year-old son Horace who had arrived in 1852. As Alexander was the senior member of the family we begin our study with him. He was born on 19 September 1807 at his father's residence and place of business, 29 Fleet Street, London, opposite the Church of St. Dunstan's

in the West; he was christened in that church on 16 October the same year. (The present St. Dunstan's Church dates from 1831, partly rebuilt from a church that escaped the Great Fire of London in 1666, octagonal in shape with an altar in a recess at the north end; it also contains a memorial window to Izaak Walton-Compleat Angler, overseer of the poor, sidesman and vestry man.) Alexander was the sixth of that name, all his five brothers having predeceased him; he was described as a slight fair child, somewhat delicate.

It is recorded that he had the smallpox by inoculation in February 1808 and also had chickenpox in September 1811. His first formal schooling began at the age of six years as a pupil of the Reverend Mr Pell, a Unitarian Minister in Woodbridge. During his childhood days in Fleet Street his father's place of business was attended by many notable people. His manufacturing business arose out of his father's interest in chemistry, and was associated with chemist items and food preparations. We note Lord Byron's use of some of his products, "I want some of Burkitt's soda powder." This was the period when the poet was working on the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, and hoping to sell *Newstead*, both of which events were successfully concluded. Alexander recalled in later years that Byron and also Howard the Quaker (an inventor of fulminating mercury) were among visitors to the establishment. He and his brothers used to experiment with his father's laboratory, dissolving acid and soda in phials and letting the corks fly at various objects and persons. Alexander had as an uncle one William Kinnaird, Apothecary and Thames River Police Magistrate. He sometimes accompanied his uncle on boat journeys along the Thames. He recalled seeing pirates hanging in chains below Blackwall – remember these were the days when convict transports were still leaving for Botany Bay. The Moreton Bay Convict Settlement itself was still some ten to fifteen years ahead in the future.

By 1813 the Burkitt family had moved to Woodbridge, living in Stove Street. The Woodbridge property speculation on which his father had pinned such hopes proved to be a failure however, and then the family moved to Vauxhall. Here Alexander went to Manor House School at Camberwell, an establishment kept by Mr. Fennell. While at Manor House Alexander made the acquaintance of a fellow pupil who is now remembered as part of the history of Queensland: Alfred Lutwyche, "a clever studious boy" who became the first Queensland judge; he was the resident judge at Moreton Bay when Queensland became a Colony and thereby its only judge at the time. The Manor House School was considered by both Alexander and Justice Lutwyche to be "a brutal establishment". Holidays for Alexander were usually

spent at his grandmother's, though on occasions he helped out in packing some of the items manufactured in his father's business. He recalled how in 1819 he helped pack Burkitt's "Extract of Malt and Hops" for use by the Parry Polar Expedition. The Burkitt boys had as one of their tasks the marking of the boxes of extract with the name of the ship, *Hecla*. (Sir William Parry, 1790-1855, sought the North-west Passage in 1819; his ship the *Hecla* travelled via Lancaster Sound to Melville Island and came close to finding it, but was unsuccessful on this occasion as were all his other voyages.)

Attracted to the art of drawing, around the age of 13 Alexander found it to be one of the great pleasures of his life. His first sketch from nature was made in 1825, when he was 18. The quality of the drawing bespeaks either of instant talent or earlier lessons. There is evidence hinting at sketches made some four years before this date. The sketch is of the barn-like St. John the Divine Church at Patching, a twin village with Clapham in Sussex. For 300 years Patching and Clapham, until 1800 A.D., were part of a huge estate which extended from Poling near Lyminster to Shoreham, and which belonged to the well-known Sussex family, Shelley. Percy Bysshe Shelley the poet was a member of this family. They lived at Michelgrove to the north-west of Patching. The house no longer exists. Alexander experimented with water colours, oils, etching on copper plate, glyphography (an electro-type process giving raised copy of engraved plate for use in letterpress printing) and lithography, and he even tried wood-carving.

The family by 1831 had moved to Brighton in Sussex where his grandmother lived. Again he helped in his father's business but when time permitted he led an outdoor life on the beaches and on the downs. He knew of smuggling adventures and encounters between smugglers and revenue men in their cutters. His son Horace treasured as a boy a carved ship from this period, a beautiful model of a "Chasse Maree". In 1827 at the age of 19 he was made an appointed clerk in the Bank of England, London, lodging at Mrs Pratt's near Monument Yard. This enabled him to see something of London life (as a "teenager") and indulge his love of the arts, of music and of drama by attending at such places as Drury Lane and the Haymarket Theatre. Around this time he became acquainted with George Cruikshank (1792-1878), who was a satirical draughtsman; his best-known illustrations were to be produced around 1830-40 when he illustrated "Oliver Twist" by Charles Dickens. In later life Cruikshank became an ardent teetotaler and on one occasion urged Alexander Burkitt to join the movement. During this London sojourn Alexander met with Philip Tomlins who had fought with the British Legion in Spain during the Carlist Civil War. Acquaintance with Tomlins was renewed again later in Melbourne, in September 1856; by this time Tomlins had a family and was earning

seven hundred pounds (\$1400) a year in the Tasmanian Attorney General's office.

It also appears that during this London period Alexander became interested in antiquarian studies and, with his cousin William Kinnaird Jnr he entered yet another field of activity. William Kinnaird Jnr, a dilettante, spent most of his life collecting many beautiful objects of art from France, Italy and Greece, where he subsequently spent most of his time. A well-known numismatist, he later gave Alexander some coins and several sulphur replicas of other coins he had unearthed in Greece.

A FREEMAN OF LONDON

When the annual Bank Holidays came around Alexander spent some time at Brighton exploring the antiquities of the Sussex countryside. However, lest we think of him as having become a literary and academic recluse, we should note that on several occasions during such holidays he rode to hounds, for fox-hunting was still a sport in Sussex. On 10 January 1833 he took up his Freedom of the City of London as a member of the Honourable Company of Ironmongers, he being a citizen by birth. (The Ironmongers' Company was one of the twelve most important Guilds known as the Great Companies. By 1961 there were some 80 such livery companies still extant in London).

It would appear that during this time he went up to Sudbury in Suffolk to visit his cousins Edward and John Burkitt. John Burkitt of Sudbury was a childless widower who, like Alexander, also was interested in ancient lore, music and painting, as well as the history of the Burkitt family. The latter interest had manifested itself in the collecting of Burkitt memorabilia. He subsequently bequeathed a lot of this material to Alexander and so it passed down to the Australian Burkitts. It is John Burkitt's collection of pictures, documents and other items which highlight the Burkitt background today. Through staying with his cousins Alexander became a welcome and regular visitor to the Goldsmiths of Sudbury, manufacturers like the Sudbury Burkitts. William Goldsmith, a son, was apprenticed to John Burkitt and succeeded him in his business of printer and publisher.

Miss Jane Goldsmith, sister to William, became friendly with Alexander H., and they were married on 17 December 1833 in St. Peter's Church, Sudbury. After a honeymoon at Hennington they returned to London, renting a small house, No. 6 Holland Street, Clapham Rise. Horace Burkitt was born in this house on 2 March 1836.

On the death of John Burkitt, Alexander received a legacy which was invested in property when a number of workmen's cottages were built, around 1843. At that time he also built a house on leasehold land

at Clapham Rise, a property afterwards known as Chesterfield Lodge. In all these changing circumstances Alexander still continued with his various outside interests. Antiquarian matters claimed most of his attention, so much so that he linked up with the newly formed British Archaeological Association, becoming a member of the Council. The association held a congress in September 1844 at Canterbury. The whole Burkitt family went, travelling by steamer from London Bridge to Margate and then by road transport. They travelled via Richborough where they paused for the sketching of some Roman ruins, and then on to Dover and Canterbury. At congress time some days were spent on the estate of the Marquis of Conynham where they opened ancient barrows.

The year 1847 was one of much unrest in Europe, famine occurred in Ireland and there was a prevalence of cholera in England. This was also the time of the Chartist agitation, a reform movement that led to a threat against the established society. The Bank of England was sand-bagged, and supplied with artillery by the British Government. Alexander H. Burkitt, as a Bank employee, was sworn in as a special constable along with such as Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. (A nephew of Napoleon the First, Louis had a chequered career. His father, also Louis, was the King of Holland. Louis Jnr tried to assume power in France in 1836 but was arrested and transported to French America, and subsequently he settled in England. Then in 1848 he came to elected power in France and set up the second Empire as Napoleon III, 1852-1870). These events, both at home and abroad, affected property and businesses everywhere in England; and the Burkitt investments were no exception. By 1849 the properties had become an expensive burden and even the Clapham Rise house had to be vacated. Mrs A.H. Burkitt, Jane, with their four children went to live in Paris where they remained until 1851. Back in England, Alexander, still in the employ of the Bank, also spent much time in delivering lectures on art and antiquarian subjects as well as writing articles for *The Athenaeum*, *The Antiquarian* and other journals. These additional literary activities helped to supplement the family income.

THE FAMILY MIGRATES

The returning family in 1851 first found apartments in Vauxhall Bridge Road, London and subsequently moved to a house at 165 Cambridge Street, Pimlico. The following year Horace, the 16 year-old son, migrated to Australia (on 26 July 1852). The financial matters that were causing the family so much concern began to affect seriously the health of some of the members. The health of Jane Burkitt herself began to fail and after a long illness she died at Dagnall Park, Surrey on 4 July 1854 and was buried in Norwood Cemetery. During the time

following her death the whole family situation was considered and after a conference it was decided to migrate to Australia as Horace had done. Some family possessions were left behind including "The Fleetwood Cabinet"; but more about that later. It was December when the family came aboard the *Ivanhoe* of 1034 tons register and 1400 tons burthen, Alexander Cameron commander.

They arrived at Melbourne on 7 March 1855. Alexander brought with him the family papers and memorabilia. He also kept a day-to-day diary on the voyage and illustrated it with paintings and sketches. The family tried several avenues of employment, farming unsuccessfully, then gold fossicking again unsuccessfully. Horace, by now an established telegraph operator at Kyneton, invited the family to stay with him until they got settled. Alexander H. Burkitt, now at 48 and with his health improving, also sought employment and found it. He was appointed an assistant to the Williamstown Observatory in 1862. In 1863 he travelled around Victoria's colonial countryside visiting Ballarat, Hamilton, Mannon Falls, Coleraine, Penola, Cameron Station, Mosquito Plains, Inveress and Mount Gambier in South Australia. The drawings he made so long ago now grace the shire offices and local museums in many of the places he visited.

We find him in 1864 occupying the position of resident secretary at St. Arnaud silver mine, Victoria while by this time most of his children had moved north to Queensland. Walter and Arthur, two other sons, both served in the Queensland colonial public service. In this same year he decided he too would move up to the new Colony and on 14 August he left Melbourne for Sydney en route to Queensland, embarking on the *City of Adelaide* of 834 tons (built in Sydney in 1864, subsequently a hulk and then broken up in 1915). He spent some days in Sydney visiting Botany Bay and Manly and doing sketches of the local scenery. Then he took ship again, this time on the *Clarence*, 223 tons, as far as Grafton. (The *Clarence* a paddle steamer from Sydney, on 30 June 1872 ran ashore in a fog and was wrecked on Diamond Head.) He left Grafton on the S.S. *Urara* of 241 tons (later wrecked in fine weather on the Clarence River Bar) and disembarked at The Elbow, some miles downstream from Grafton.

Alexander H. at 57, then set out to walk to Tenterfield where he was to meet his son Arthur who would look after him until Horace came for him. After walking and carrying his goods some twelve miles he came to Robertsons' Traveller's Rest, where he stayed a few days. Then he began walking again and sleeping out in the bush. He met up with some horsemen who were headed for Tenterfield; they loaned him a horse by which he was able to accompany them on the rest of the journey. The party arrived at Tenterfield on 8 September. His son Arthur who was by now a telegraph operator there, met him and

brought him to his home where Alexander stayed until March 1865, then a journey was made to Warwick where he was met by Horace who had travelled up by buggy from Ipswich where he had a dental practice. The trip down from Warwick to Ipswich was made probably through Spicer's Gap, and Alexander took advantage, when they had gone some miles beyond the Gap, to paint a sketch of the landscape through which they had passed. When we consider this journey made by Alexander from The Elbow through to Tenterfield and beyond, we note how the resoluteness and determination that had characterised his earlier actions were still present. I do not think he was foolhardy in his resolve to walk to Tenterfield if necessary; he was used to walking as an antiquarian doing fieldwork in England, and he believed he could give a good account of himself if required. Remember "Thunderbolt" Frederick Ward, the last bushranger, was operating some miles south around Manilla, and though the possibility of attack seemed remote it was not altogether out of the question.

And so Alexander and Horace arrived in Ipswich. While living there Alexander became secretary of the West Moreton Agricultural Society. Already a Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians, he was also a member of various other scientific and art societies. Around this time he was sworn in as a Justice of the Peace by Justice Lutwyche, his old school friend. He assisted with the publication of a small paper after the style of London *Punch* at the School of Arts in Ipswich. He contributed much to the general social and educational life of Ipswich; but at age 64 with failing eye-sight he retired to live with his son-in-law at Cleveland. In 1873 the housekeeper there, Mrs Power, inadvertently set fire to herself and Alexander went to her aid. The exertion was too much for him as he felt something break inside. Mrs Power died later in the week in a Brisbane hospital, and the following week Alexander Burkitt himself died. He was buried in Cleveland Cemetery. But the pioneering continued. Horace his son, the second generation Australian, was convinced in 1865 that dentistry was not for him and he opted to join the Queensland Public Service.

HORACE BURKITT (1836-1919)

When he emigrated alone to Australia in 1852 at the age of 16 Horace had travelled in the S.S. *Arundel*. His first work in Australia ranged from painting a verandah through looking after passengers' luggage to driving a dray. However it was not very long before he

found clerical employment, when he became an office boy and general clerk with Dobson and Gill. Later he became a shipping clerk to the Harbour Master, Melbourne, and was assigned by transfer to undertake further duties at Geelong. In 1857 he joined the staff of the telegraph station back in Melbourne. The Melbourne period was mainly a training time and soon he was sent to Kyneton with the title of station master. The following year he was transferred from Kyneton to open a new telegraph station at Portland, near Mount Gambier and the Victorian/South Australian border. The family from England had joined him at Kyneton and now accompanied him to Portland. Like his father, Horace was interested in history, ancient items and art; he and his father sometimes sketched and painted things together. In 1861 he was promoted to Beechworth to replace a Mr Austin who, due to ill-health, had transferred to Queensland.

He had kept in touch with Mr Austin and felt on the information received that Queensland was where he should be. So he resigned from the Telegraph Service and made his way north. He came to Rockhampton in 1862 intending to set up a commission agency; however he met up with one of the Andersons from Portland who had also decided to settle in Queensland. The two decided to combine their resources and go to the newly discovered Mackay River area. They landed at the Mackay River settlement in November 1862. Their coming brought the total European population to nine. H. Ling Roth notes: "Anderson, Burkitt, Tom Mathews, Dominic Negretti, Bolger and others arrived in 1862, Anderson and Burkitt erected a store where J.P. Kemp afterwards had his bookselling and stationers store." J.H. Williams in the Mackay Historical Association Bulletin No. 2 of 1979 notes: "Horace Burkitt and T.A. Anderson [the] Mackay Store beside the Prince of Wales Hotel." The Jubilee Book, 1912, Mackay mentions "The Mackay Store, a slab building about 14 (fourteen) by 10 (ten) feet." The Mackay "River" Store was situated in a frontier settlement, a newly opened port for the colony, and because incidents were likely to arise the two partners cleared the adjoining scrub near their tents to guard against any surprise attacks. However nothing of this nature seems to have affected them, though an intending merchant who came shortly before them had been speared. They had been operating their business for some months when Horace received word of a family dispute in England that required a member of the Burkitt family from Australia be in attendance. The matter came to a court case and concerned the Fleetwood Cabinet that Alexander had left behind. This cabinet had been a gift from Oliver Cromwell, the Protector, to his daughter Bridget on the occasion of her marriage to General Charles Fleetwood in 1652. This cabinet had been passed to Alexander Horace Burkitt under the will of John Burkitt. The cabinet had been left in the care of Alexander's sister when he came out to Australia, however she

died and left everything to her husband and the cabinet was included in the estate. Horace, being the member of the family best suited by circumstances to travel, went to England to represent the Australian Burkitts at the hearing. He sold his share of the Mackay store to his partner T.A. Anderson and began preparations for the voyage. The ship *Marion Remy* (Captain McEwen) carried him from Mackay to Rockhampton where he caught another ship that took him on to Melbourne. At Melbourne he embarked on the *Yorkshire* arriving in England on 1 November 1863. The court case was not resolved to the satisfaction of the Australian Burkitts – the Fleetwood Cabinet now resides in the Dublin Museum. . . Cromwell's gift in an Irish museum!

However the trip to England was of great personal satisfaction to Horace, for while in England he proposed marriage to his cousin Sara Maria Goldsmith, daughter of William Goldsmith of Sudbury, and was accepted. Then also while in England he took the opportunity to study dentistry at the Dental School of the National University of London, where he completed the course. In 1865 he returned to Queensland with his wife and child, a daughter; he was now a fully qualified dentist so he set up a practice in Ipswich. However, he found Ipswich could not support him full-time so he supplemented his income by assisting at Taylor's pharmacy in the town. A review of the situation made him decide to give up dentistry and rejoin the public service. He was accepted in 1865 by the Queensland Colonial Customs Department and appointed to Broadsound (St. Lawrence). It is of passing interest that he sold his dental equipment to Messrs. Moses Ward of Brisbane.

The voyage from Brisbane northwards to Broadsound was not without incident. The travelling party consisted of Horace, Sara and baby Edie; for the first part of the journey they sailed in the S.S. *Clarence*, possibly the same ship on which his father had travelled when going from Sydney to Grafton in the previous year (1864). The *Clarence* took them as far as Rockhampton, where they found the rest of the journey would have to be overland. They set out in a hired wagon and made Marlborough on the first night, camping alongside a creek. Next night they spent alongside Tooloombah Creek. Then early in the morning they set out again and by lunchtime had reached Willangi Station. The manager, Mr Williams, was kindness itself and showed the very weary travellers a short-cut to St. Lawrence. Though Horace had had experience in the colonial public service in Victoria, this was the first time he would experience such service in the newly separated Colony of Queensland, a service that was to span over thirty years. During his public service period in the Broadsound region he occupied the positions of District Registrar, Land Commissioner and Land Agent, and Clerk of Petty Sessions, all at St. Lawrence; and Postmaster. He acquitted all these positions well during the ten years he spent in the district. The family numbers increased during this period

for Agnes, Isabel, Blanche and Basil were all born there. While Sara was on a visit to Brisbane Alexander Louis was born; he was not a robust child and when he was five years old died suddenly when the family was holidaying at Burnett Heads.

TRANSFER TO BUNDABERG

The memories of Broadsound days were always pleasant for the Burkitt family, and when the time came to leave the people there it was with much regret. Horace had received notice of transfer to Bundaberg and he was to take up appointment in April 1875. The family made its way to Rockhampton en route to Bundaberg, but the flooded Fitzroy River delayed travel, and in Rockhampton Sara gave birth to Jane Theresa. The journey to Bundaberg was safely concluded, and so began a further ten-year span of service to a rural pioneer community. The family lived in a residence on the high bank of the Burnett River looking down the Town Reach towards the Millaquin sugar mill. The residence today is not as they knew it, for the site was taken over by the Burnett Club, where many of Queensland's notables have entertained inter-State and overseas visitors.

The seasons of 1875-1876 were bad for the developing cane industry; even the Steuart brothers who in 1866 had set up Woondooma, the place that later became Bundaberg, were victims of a failed cane. The Steuart brothers on their 320-acre coffee and sugar cane plantation along with two-thirds of the other planters were affected to the extent that they were ruined. The cane variety Bourbon failed all over the colony in that season, but for Bundaberg it was devastating. A sugar mill had been built for the first time and now there was no cane to crush. John and Robert Cron were erecting the great Millaquin sugar refinery. This refinery was fed by pipes running out into the Woongarra Scrub for the conveying of the cane juice crushed by the small mills. This was a time when the "Labour Question" was exercising the minds of many in the colony: should kanaka labour continue to be used in the sugar industry? This would lead to the Polynesian Labourers Amendment Act of 1895, but that was in the future. Horace, occupying in Bundaberg the positions of Magistrate and Sub-collector of Customs, and also holding until 1880 the office of Clerk of Petty Sessions, found that he was in the centre of many of the activities associated with the cane industry and the every-day life of the community.

In 1883 he received news that his brother-in-law, Henry St. George Caulfeild (note the spelling) along with Sara's sister Janie and their two boys James and Toby were coming to settle in Bundaberg, leaving their home in Ceylon. In 1881-1882 Horace had corresponded with Henry Caulfeild when he was in Ceylon particularly in regard to possible labour groups coming to work on the Bundaberg cane farms.

The Indian Government was averse to Tamil labourers going to Australia, so Horace suggested that inquiries be made to see if the Sinhalese of Ceylon would be suitable. Henry St. George Caulfeild sounded out the Ceylonese authorities who expressed some interest, and finally in the latter months of 1882 the ship *Devonshire* from Bombay brought Sinhalese to both Bundaberg and Mackay. The venture was not the success it was hoped to be. Some of the Sinhalese took up holdings of their own, others after a time returned to Ceylon and some drifted over the border into New South Wales. Though the venture had not been successful as planned, it did help to turn the thoughts of the Caulfeilds towards Queensland and so in 1883 Henry St. George Caulfeild and family arrived in Bundaberg where he began a career in the Queensland public service. The Caulfeild family was of noble birth and Henry St. George Caulfeild's son Toby later became Viscount Charlemont. Henry St. George was a typical English gentleman whom I recall meeting several times in the late 1940's when he was over ninety years of age.

Horace Burkitt in Bundaberg built a swimming enclosure at the foot of the high bank of the river near the property, and here the younger members of the family learned to swim. The children were growing up fast. Basil the oldest son was now eight, and as a boy took every opportunity to travel on the Burnett River boats. At this time the Mount Perry to Bundaberg rail link was being established, and the rails came direct from England to Bundaberg where they were offloaded and put on barges which were then towed up the river to various staging points. Basil used to travel up and back with the ship towing the barges and also dined at the captain's table. He used to relate to his own children later how the Chinese cook would lower a dilly net over the side with an ox-head or similar bait, then at about each hour haul it in and get several prawns as a result. These graced the captain's table. But when people were told about it by Basil they thought he was imagining things. However, 1950 showed that the king prawns of Bundaberg were not only a reality but also a commercial proposition.

The term of service for Horace in Bundaberg came to a close when he received notice of transfer to Cooktown. There he was to renew acquaintance with Captain John Mackay, the discoverer of the Mackay Pioneer River who was now Harbour Master at Cooktown. Horace held many offices under the Crown while in Cooktown, including amongst others: – Sheep Inspector for the Pastoral District of Cook, i.e. Cape York; Maritime Magistrate; Sub-collector of Customs; Inspector of Distilleries and Excise; Shipping Inspector; and Inspector of Fisheries. For all of these duties he received a remuneration valued at six hundred pounds a year, which included the value of quarters and light.

Captain John Mackay between 1893 and 1899 tried to find Captain Cook's cannon jettisoned in 1770 and wanted Horace to help him, but pressure of work prevented it. Cooktown in the period 1885-1895 when Horace was there was a large town, having 63 hotels and/or drinking inns and a population of over 40,000. The Palmer River gold-fields were still producing and still attracting attention. Cooktown was a busy port, the gunboats from France, Japan, Germany and Britain all using it as a refuelling depot. The coal for bunkering was shipped to the town from Newcastle (N.S.W.).

Horace Burkitt recalled how on one occasion he apprehended some pirates in Cooktown Harbour. It was Christmas Eve when a schooner entered the Endeavour River, its description matching that of a suspected pirate vessel. A watch was kept by Horace and when he saw the skipper and mate row ashore he gathered some staff, armed them, and then made an inspection of the ship and its log. This confirmed his suspicions, and leaving a guard on board he returned to the shore to apprehend the captain and mate who were celebrating in one of the hotels. The two were later convicted of piracy and murder on the high seas, and both were hanged. It reminds us of the youth of his father Alexander and the pirates hanging beside the Thames in England.

Horace found time to do sketching as had his father, and this time Sara his wife joined him, sketches of some of the cottages around Cooktown attesting to their talent. There are two places in Queensland bearing the name of Burkitt – Burkitt Isle in the Claremont group off Princess Charlotte Bay, Cape York, and Burkitt Roads in Broadsound just off from St. Lawrence.

Horace in 1895 was transferred to Mackay for one final year of public service. After twelve months at Mackay, he superannuated on 16 gold sovereigns a year. He retired to Brisbane where he built a house at Oxley, "Birkenhead". The house no longer exists, but one of the bricks used in its construction and bearing the initials "HB & SM 1896" is still in the possession of the family. Horace lived for another 23 years and spent much of his retirement gathering together family papers and memorabilia and writing up the history of the Burkitts as he knew it. He also recorded his impression of his arrival in Brisbane in 1861 and what the town looked like as well as writing about his first experiences at the Mackay River settlement. Sara Maria Burkitt (nee Goldsmith) died on 18 August 1916 and Horace followed her in August 1919 at the age of 83.

BASIL HORACE BURKITT (1872-1939)

The Burkitt family moved from Broadsound to Bundaberg when their eldest son Basil was three. Basil's first schooling was at the old Central School in Bundaberg on the corner of Maryborough and Bourbong Streets. The school was later moved to Crofton Street. Buss

Park now occupies the former site of Central School. Basil was not long in transferring to the North Bundaberg School, and he travelled there each day by ferry on a crossing parallel to that of the present traffic bridge. The ferry cutting scars on the river bank are still observable. The sons of the Bundaberg postmaster, Mr Smith, were his playmates with Alf Smith as a particular friend. They loved boats and ships they went horse-riding together and one of their favourite spots was the yellow water holes near Elliott Crossing where they tried out circus tricks. In 1885, when Horace his father was transferred to Cooktown and the family had to leave Bundaberg, the children's education was by governesses. However in January 1887 Basil and his father left Cooktown as passengers on the *Fitzroy* (Captain Maeburn), for Basil was to be a student at the Brisbane Grammar School. He also attended for a while at the Normal School (Kerr's Private School) and at Herman Schmidt's Boarding School.

During school vacation periods Basil spent a lot of time with the Honeyman family, his relatives at Cleveland. Vacations there meant boating and spearing stingrays and shovel-nosed sharks on the mudflats at low tide. We recall that this was the house where his grandfather Alexander had been living until his tragic death in 1875.

Basil decided that he would like to take up dentistry (as his father had done before him). The profession in those days in Queensland involved an apprenticeship, and so an approach was made to the Brisbane firm of Eden and Hughes. There were no immediate vacancies and Basil was asked to wait. The waiting time was spent in Cooktown, a paradise in those days for a young outdoors type aged 16 especially one full of life, with swimming, sailing, fishing and shooting. He often provided game for the family table. On some of shooting trips he was accompanied by an Aboriginal friend; he had acquired several Aboriginal dialects and expressed admiration of the Aborigines in their environment. In 1889 Basil received notice of his apprenticeship, a witness to the signature of his father on the document was one John Mackay. From March 1889 for three years Basil pursued his apprenticeship and qualified in 1892; but as he was under 21 he had no legal right to engage in private practice. However he obtained a position on the staff of the Brisbane Hospital under the direction of Dr E. Sandford Jackson, where he was able to maintain his dental skills at least.

During his dental studies he had continued with his sporting interests, becoming a member of the Toowong Rowing Club. He also competed in club swimming and in cross-country paperchases, a popular pastime of those days. The Brisbane General Hospital was approached in 1892 for help in providing a dentist for Bundaberg, then a city without such a health service. The name of Basil H. Burkitt was put before them with the proviso that as he was under 21 he could not

practise without a guarantor. Dr. T.H. May in Bundaberg offered his services as a guarantor, and so while still under legal age Basil became the first resident dentist in Bundaberg. He thus began an association with the city that was to span 16 years until he retired in 1938. He first practised in rooms behind Dr May's surgery. During his life in Bundaberg Basil maintained his sporting interests, he took up bicycle-riding (solid tyres) and won many bicycle events. He linked up with the Bundaberg Rifle Club and was a member of the team that won the State championship shoot in Brisbane. His mate was Fred Castle, a nephew of Justice Avery, and there was much joy when Basil proposed to Fred's sister Florence Harriet. The couple were married in Bundaberg on 31 December 1896. Basil in his dental practice entered into a partnership in 1910 with Mr Krieger and their dental surgery was situated in Krieger's Building, sometimes known as Krieger and Burkitt's. With the advent of World War One and the anti-German sentiment, Krieger bowed out of the partnership and Basil Burkitt continued on alone.

The family lived in a flat in Krieger's Building. Family outings were made pleasant with the purchase of an old skiff which was converted to a launch and used on the Burnett River. Basil joined the growing band of boat owners establishing a jetty and sheds at what became known as Skyringville. The present Burnett Heads new port with its stone wall now bars the passage from the Burnett River to Skyringville. The Burkitt family in Bundaberg numbered five by this time, the three children being Linda Isabel, Louisa Maud and a son Fredric Miles. Basil purchased one of the seaside allotments at Bargara and built a beach-house there in 1917. The coming of the motor car in 1919 meant that the family could be at Bargara permanently and travel into Bundaberg. Basil's son Fredric graduated in dentistry from the University of Sydney in 1930 after pre-University schooling at The Southport School. Fred joined his father in partnership, looking after outside interests in Biggenden. This practice became full-time in 1936, and when Basil retired in 1938 he went to live with Fred and Ivy Burkitt in that town. Basil Horace Burkitt died on 24 November 1939 and was buried in Degilbo Cemetery. The funeral service was conducted by the Reverend Jim Caulfeild, a cousin.

And so at this point we bring to a close this chapter on the lives of the Australian Burkitts, who were supported in all their trials and tribulations by their wives and children. The history of a country like Australia is the story of its pioneers in all aspects of human endeavour. So whilst we usually consider Australian pioneers as being of a rural character we should not forget those who worked to establish towns and cities, whether they were in a private capacity or in government service. They too were pioneers on the far frontiers opening up our beginnings.