

## CARDWELL, A GATEWAY TO THE WEST

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(Written for The Historical Society of Queensland  
Inc. on February 24, 1949)

When Captain Cook sailed the east coast of Australia in 1770, the history of Cardwell had its beginning. But many years passed before the tide of settlement compelled men to seek further knowledge of that part of the coast.

The "Endeavour" anchored at Palm Islands on Thursday, 7th June, 1770, and leaving that day the highest land in sight was named Point Hillock, and passing Cape Sandwich, it was found the land trended west and north forming a fine large bay, which Cook named Rockingham Bay, and after passing a number of small islands, he anchored at the north boundary of the bay at an island to which he gave the name of Dunk Island.

A reference to Cook's chart shows the small islands as the Family Group. Rockingham Bay took its name from a well-known statesman of that time, Charles Watson Wentworth, Marquis of Rockingham. When passing the group he noticed another island, but it was left to P. P. King to name this in 1819, Goold Island. Cape Sandwich was named after the Earl of Sandwich, who was one of the Lords of the Admiralty and a patron of the expedition, but the name is more usually associated with an invention of his of a delicacy now well-known at picnics and counter lunches. His son was Viscount Hinchinbroke, the name King made good use of in 1819. George M. Dunk was the family name of the Earl of Halifax.

Cook sailed to the north, and those waters saw little of navigators until the trooper transport schooner, H.M.S. "Kangaroo", called at the bay in 1815, and found the natives friendly. The vessel was on its way to Ceylon with troops, and it, too, passed on to the north, incidentally naming Snapper Island off the mouth of the Daintree River.

Phillip Parker King in the "Mermaid" made a short stay in Rockingham Bay on his arrival on the 19th June, 1819. He named Goold Island and Mount Hin-

chinbrook, with a note that the latter might prove to be an island. Two young men, Allan Cunningham and Mr. Bedwell, both field naturalists, landed on an islet to the west of Goold Island and held friendly intercourse with the natives. King describes in humorous vein a meeting with the natives and decking their bodies with articles from slop chest, caps, shirts, and stockings, all of which were soon afterwards discarded by the natives. Passing to the north he named Bellen-den-Ker, which had been passed by Cook in the night.

The next recorded trip to Rockingham Bay is that of the surveying ship, H.M.S. "Beagle", Capt. J. Lort Stokes, R.N., in 1839. But Ling Roth ("History of the Port of Mackay"), much of whose work was prepared in the British Museum, remarks that a number of vessels used the Inner passage of the Barrier Reef, first made known by Flinders, such as the "Cyclops" in 1812. Many of these left records in the naming of reefs and islands and records of wrecks. Lort Stokes left no fresh details to be added to the knowledge already gained of Rockingham Bay, but one passage of his account in the Voyage of the Beagle is worth quoting:—"It is the general opinion of every voyager who has sailed along the coast of Halifax Bay that it is the most interesting of the north-east side of the continent. . . . We have every reason to believe that the discovery of fertile and therefore valuable land will one day reward the labours of the explorer." Stokes passed Dunk Island bound northwards on July 1, 1839, at 6 p.m.

The survey of the coast was continued by Captain Blackwood in the "Fly", an account of which was written by J. Beete Jukes, the naturalist on that expedition. Rockingham Bay was visited, when a fortnight was spent in surveying from May 19th to June 1st, 1843. Hinchinbrook was proved to be an island, when the passage was explored and charted, thus confirming Capt. P. P. King's previous assumption. A river of considerable size in the north-west part of the bay was explored by Captain Blackwood, while two others were traced by Mr. Ince and Mr. Beete Jukes, both of which proved to be very winding and ended without assuming any feature of importance. At Goold Island, already recognised as a watering place for ships, the natives proved very numerous and unfriendly, encounters took place both at Goold Island and on the mainland. The

hostility was said to be aggravated by the crew of the "Will o' the Wisp", a cutter sent to the Palm Islands from Sydney to search for sandalwood. On the 20th June while the "Fly" was at Fitzroy Island, the "Will o' the Wisp" reported a conflict with the natives of Palm Islands nearly ending in tragedy.

It was on the 29th April, 1848, that H.M.S. "Rattlesnake" left Sydney on its second voyage to the Queensland coast, on this occasion with the barque "Tam O' Shanter" (Captain Merionberg) carrying the Kennedy expedition to Rockingham Bay. The "Rattlesnake", Capt. Owen Stanley, passed outside Palm Islands on the 21st May, rounded Cape Sandwich, entered Rockingham Bay and anchored on the N.W. side of Gould Island, where lay the "Tam O' Shanter". On board the "Rattlesnake" was John McGillivray, a botanist (acting for the Earl of Derby). He had three years previously visited the coast in the "Bramble". His book "Voyage of the Rattlesnake" was written with the permission of the commander.

On the 23rd May the ships moved to an anchorage under the westernmost of the Family Group, and for the two following days were landing Mr. Kennedy's party. On the 24th May (Queen's Birthday) the landing proceeded under a royal salute from the guns of the "Rattlesnake". On the 26th May, Captain Stanley moved to anchor at the lee of Dunk Island from whence soundings were made, but the only contribution to the Admiralty chart was the naming of Kennedy Bay and Tam O' Shanter Point, and a reference by McGillivray to the Mackay River, which, however, he switched to the river now known as the Hull.

On June 6 Lieut. Simpson, who had been assisting Kennedy with the ship's boats in crossing a river, was recalled, and the "Rattlesnake" left for the Barnard Islands.

Interesting light is thrown on the work of the Admiralty in surveys in a despatch to Governor Sir George Bowen outlining the work so far accomplished up to the time of Separation. Inter alia, it authorised the Governor of the new Colony to direct Admiralty surveys of new ports as settlement advanced. The first work done in this direction as by H.M.S. "Pioneer", just transferred from the Hong Kong station. Sir George Bowen, accompanied by Edward Pitt, private secretary, and Walter Hill, botanist, made a trip to

Cape York in September, 1862, and a site was selected for a Government Station at Albany Passage to be named Somerset.

On the return journey a careful examination was made of the Endeavour River and Rockingham Bay; both of these places had already been surveyed and charted by previous navigators. A site for a town was selected at Rockingham Bay, and Mounts Bowen and Pitt named.

Sir George Bowen again exercised discretionary power with reference to opening new ports, when in September, 1863, Captain Richards of H.M.S. "Hecate" was despatched to survey Rockingham Bay and to report on a suitable site for a township and port. The result coincided with the finding of the "Pioneer", and prompt action followed in the despatch of a fully equipped party from Port Denison to found the new settlement. Later Commander Sir George Nares of H.M.S. "Salamander" made some further corrections in 1866, of little historical importance, except that the name Mackay River (now Tully) is shown in its proper place and the Hull, not named though partially explored.

### **Inland Exploration and Settlement**

The rapid development of the pastoral lands, ever spreading northwards along the Isaacs and McKenzie Rivers and to the Burdekin waters, following for the most part the route of the Leichhardt and Port Essington expedition, gradually lengthened the lines of communication by land.

Following the settlement of Gracemere by the Archers, Rockhampton was founded in 1855, Bowen in 1859, and Mackay in the same year, each intended to serve the needs of the squatters in providing access to the sea. Soon the needs of Mackay became restricted to the coastal area, as was the case with other seaports it had to overcome the difficulty of access to the interior. For the purposes of this paper, chief interest surrounds the establishment of the Valley of Lagoons holding on the Burdekin River. Discovered and named by Leichhardt, it was not till an expedition led by G. E. Dalrymple ascended the river in 1860 that this country was taken up in the name of the Scott Bros. This embraced all that tract of country which afterwards became several stations, namely, Wairuna, Gunna-

warra, Cashmere, Lake Lucy, and part of Greenvale. However, it was not till 1863 that sheep were taken there by Mr. Henry Stone, though it is probable that Mr. Adam Davidson and Mrs. Davidson arrived there much earlier with cattle to stock and hold the country.

Later on, the two brothers Walter and Arthur Scott made their residence at the place, and spent a considerable sum of money importing high class stock, horses, cattle, and sheep.

From the very first it was apparent that the proximity of the coast line offered some hope of obviating the long land journey to Bowen, then the nearest port. Thus we find that Mr. W. J. Scott, in a paper read before the Royal Geographical Society in London at the ninth meeting of the third session on the 11th April, 1864, describes an expedition made by a party from "Port Denison to Rockingham Bay", the object being to ascertain approach to the coast by the shortest possible route. This was in 1863. He quoted the following from a despatch from Governor Bowen to the Duke of Newcastle, then Secretary of State for the Colonies:—"Examined the coast on return from Cape York in the H.M.S. "Pioneer", Commodore Burnett, R.N. A ship will be sent to Rockingham Bay, probably in 1864, to meet a land party."

Scott, however, seems to have acted independently, his party left Bowen and followed up the Burdekin to the Valley of Lagoons, and then passed through Lake Lucy to ascend the Seaview Range. Here he was blocked by the scrub, after looking down on the valley of the Herbert, the future Vale of Herbert station, and an intervening coast range. Further traverses were made in the country around Mount Lang, the result seemed sufficient for him at the time, as he quoted the distances: Valley of Lagoons to Port Denison, 300 miles; same to Rockingham Bay, 75 miles.

In the latter part of the year 1863, Governor requested Captain Richards, of H.M.S. "Hecate", to examine Rockingham Bay more fully, and in September the "Hecate" passed and named Cape Richards and Point Hecate and entered and named Port Hinchinbrook. After examination of the coast, and a short trip up the Mackay River (now Tully) for some miles, the Captain confirmed the opinion as to the site of the town formed by Commodore Burnett in the previous year. Governor Bowen and Commodore Burnett had

ascended the Murray River (then un-named) for some miles in 1862; the nature of the country on these rivers was therefore well-known, and Captain Richards was emphatic in recommending Port Hinchinbrook in preference to Kennedy Bay.

This then heralded the genesis of Port Hinchinbrook and the town of Cardwell.

### Settlement of Cardwell and Search for a Road

At Bowen, Port Denison, on the 12th January, 1864, the schooner "Policeman" (master and owner, Walter Powell) specially chartered to convey the official expedition to open up the new settlement at Cardwell shipped live stock, stores and material and prepared for sea.

The party was led by G. E. Dalrymple, and comprised W. A. Tully, Crown Lands Commissioner; Arthur J. Scott, Valley of Lagoons; George M. Farquharson (of Invercauld, Aberdeenshire); Lt. Marlow, Q'land Native Police, and three troopers; P. V. Sellheim, squatter; John Dallachy, botanist (sent to join the expedition by Dr. von Mueller of Melbourne); James Morrill (17 years with the aborigines), as interpreter; J. Morrissey, hotelkeeper; Muller, market gardener; T. F. Milne, storekeeper; Wilhelm Peters, carpenter; H. Ewart, Walter Butler, E. Kerr, bushmen, and others.

Dalrymple's official report<sup>(1)</sup> to Governor Bowen is available, also A. J. Scott's account<sup>(2)</sup> and James Morrill's diary<sup>(3)</sup>, which all vary in detail. The difficulty of condensing separate accounts of a well-organized Government to found this new settlement, provides no light task. Two vessels over-crowded with passengers; with 12 horses, 12 sheep, 2 goats, and some fowls, together with stores and building material and camp impedimenta; mishaps both by sea and land; brushes with the natives; and traversing virgin country to search for tracks to the interior make interesting reading, but must be sacrificed for the sake of brevity.

The "Policeman" cleared the Port Denison Heads on the 15th January with the cutter "Heather Belle" in tow, called at Cape Cleveland on the 18th for grass and water, landing at a spot previously visited by Dalrymple in 1860, and on the 19th passed Palm Islands

(1) Daily Guardian, 6-8-1864. (2) Daily Guardian, 1-4-1864. (3) Port Denison Times, 26-3-1864; 2-4-1864.

and at 5.30 p.m. anchored in Port Hinchinbrook inside Hecate Point. Next morning a landing was made on the beach at the place marked on Captain Richards' chart as the site for the township; but it was considered advisable to make a particular examination of the entire shores of the port before making a final decision.

On the 22nd a choice was made, the "Policeman" was run on to the beach, resting in soft mud, and horses, sheep, goats and fowls, tools and stores were landed, a section cleared for camps, black police scouted the bush for natives, and guards posted. The next few days were spent by Dalrymple in attempts to cross the Cardwell Range, on the 23rd the cutter "Anna Maides" arrived from Bowen, with Adolphus Matthews, and four men, who were also slabcutters, and immediately commenced operations. A further survey of the beach was made, and on the 26th tents were struck and the camp moved a mile further south to what is the present site, being higher ground and better drained.

Commissioner Tully surveyed a portion of the town, a work completed by Surveyor McHarg. An iron store and huts were soon erected.

The search for a road still continued. On the 28th January the wet season set in and with rain every day continued till the 17th March. The "Policeman" cleared for Bowen on the 8th. Dalrymple, Marlow, and others made repeated attacks on the problem of the range, but it was not till the 13th that a black's track took them to a pass ten miles south of the township. On the 16th a strong party started for the Valley of Lagoons. It was during one of the exploring trips that Dalrymple sighted a fine river which he named the Herbert, after the Colonial Secretary, and expressed a definite opinion that this would prove to be the Separation Creek of Leichhardt.

The party passed through the southern gap, ascended the Herbert, crossed the Seaview Range to Lake Lucy and the Burdekin, and reached the Valley of Lagoons on the 1st March.

With the addition to the party of others from the Valley, they left again for Cardwell on the 8th March, twelve men, four blackboys, with three bullock drays, sixty-one working bullocks, sixty-three fat cattle for the settlement, and eighteen horses. Arrived at the top of the Seaview Range on the 15th, but were flood-

bound at the Herbert for three weeks; then crossed the river with difficulty, and following the river down eighteen miles entered a peculiar low gorge between Mount Leech and Mount Arthur Scott, which required some road making.

Mr. Dalrymple, with Farquharson, Waldron, Norris, Cocky (his Stradbroke Island native), and Norman, abo., took twenty-six fat cattle, cut a bridle track through the scrub, and arrived at the settlement on Sunday, 24th April, to the delight of the inhabitants, who had been ignorant of his movements for ten weeks and were short of fresh beef. The drays were reloaded and despatched to the Valley.

This road was used during the latter part of 1864 and part of 1865, but presented enormous difficulties for teams. The carriage to the Valley was £26 per ton. In 1869 the opening of the Gilbert and Western Creek rushes brought a number of vessels to Cardwell with over 40 tons of goods, and the road became useful to miners, gold escort, teams with light loads, travellers to and from the cattle stations, and the mailmen. In 1873, at the first outbreak of the Palmer a number of miners disembarked at Cardwell (then the most northern settlement), to take the overland route to the new field.

But with the establishment, first of Townsville in 1865, and later, Cooktown in 1873, the road became obsolete. The mailman's track to the west was used for many years after serving Kirrama, Vale of Herbert, Valley of Lagoons, Cashmere, and to the Lynd, but was only a bridle track.

Bowen and Cardwell alike were eclipsed and have never recovered. The ranges which baffled Kennedy with his drays practically remained unconquered. Many bridle tracks, suitable for the mailman and the overland telegraph line, were opened, but the gateway to the west so much desired never reached fulfilment.



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