

INNISFAIL

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The history of the founding and settlement of the Innisfail district had its genesis in the discovery of Mourilyan Harbour and the Johnstone River, under the tragic circumstances surrounding the wreck of the brig "Maria" on Bramble Reef. Cardwell was then the farthest north of the white settlements till Somerset was reached. Till that time the coast from Cardwell to the Endeavour River had offered no promise of harbours for the ships of early navigators. The dense scrub and mangroves, crocodile infested tidal estuaries and inlets, and the ferocity of the natives to shipwrecked crews, together with the absence of anything offering a reward for enterprising settlers, were all factors that contributed to deter any attempt to explore the coastal lands.

Kennedy in 1848, and Hann in 1872, each had experienced a set-back by the jungle belt, which so far held its secret of potential wealth.

The older charts did show Mourilyan Harbour as Shoal Haven, and the mouth of the Johnstone as Shoal Rivulet. It is clear that the boats of H.M.S. surveying ships had already noted these as safe anchorages and watering places for small ships. But locked up by its mountain chain and jungle from approach from the interior, and offering no temptation from the sea-coast, it was not until the search for survivors from the wreck of the "Maria" brought about the examination, and the naming of Mourilyan Harbour by Capt. John Moresby of H.M.S. "Basilisk" and also the entrance to the Johnstone as Gladys Inlet.

But the actual settlement of coastal lands in the rain-forest belt began in 1873 with the founding of the port of Cooktown. Cairns, in 1876, and Port Douglas, in 1877, were each established to serve the needs of the interior.

First in the order of discovery, the Johnstone River was the last to be settled. This was only after the liberalising of the land laws making large holdings available, together with a boom in sugar-growing.

In December, 1879, T. H. Fitzgerald, acting for Fitzgerald and Co., made a visit to the north, and inspected the land at Mossman and Daintree and the

Cairns and Johnstone areas for sugar-growing. He is credited with having directed Thomas Swallow to Cairns, and also on his advice and co-operation in sending James Tyson to the Tully.⁽¹⁾

The Wreck of the brig "Maria"

The story of the expedition to New Guinea, which left Sydney in the brig "Maria" on the 25th January 1872, has already been fully dealt with in the Society's publication.⁽²⁾ Early on Tuesday morning, 27th February 1872, the vessel came to grief on Bramble Reef, some thirty miles from Cardwell, and of the seventy-five souls on board only forty were saved. First to get away were the captain and six men in the ship's boat, two other boats were safely launched and took twenty-eight men with the first mate in charge. But with an instinct of self-preservation the boats got away, and the remaining passengers and crew built two rafts, the larger one picked up twelve men and the smaller one thirteen. Twelve men went down with the brig, and four more were washed off the larger raft. Of the ship's three boats, one with the captain and six men landed at Tam O'Shanter Point, but only four men escaped the natives and found their way to Cardwell. The other two boats in charge of Sonnichsen, the mate, with twenty-eight passengers, made Ramsay Bay on Hinchinbrook Island, and then after five days found their way to the south around the island, and then through the Channel to Cardwell.

Of the men saved eight were rescued by the "Basilisk" where the large raft landed, four men of the captain's boat found their way to Cardwell, and twenty-eight in the other two boats.

As there are no less than four authentic narratives, all the details have been preserved.⁽³⁾ But the real historical significance following the disaster was the knowledge gained of the coast in the search for survivors of the wreck.

First in the search, the s.s. "Tinonee," then in Cardwell, was commissioned by the police magistrate, Mr. B. G. Sheridan, but after visiting the wreck, and making a perfunctory search as far as Double Point, left for the South on her usual run.

(1) Q. Geo. Soc. jnl. vol. XLIX, p. 68.

(2) His. Soc. Q., vol. I, p. 166 et seq.

(3) Gowlland, Votes & Proc. N.S.W. 1872, vol. II, 1383 (Nautical Magazine, 1872, p. 809 seq. Ingham, His. Soc. Q. vol. I Moresby, Two Admirals.

The large raft landed on the coast north of the Shoal Rivulet (now Gladys Inlet) at midnight on the 29th February. The first party of eight survivors on the larger raft were discovered and rescued by the "Basilisk" on the 12th March. Captain Moresby had calculated the current and drift from the wreck and proceeded to Cooper's Point and sent out boats north and south to examine the coast. In the meantime the ship's boats had discovered the remains of the smaller raft on the beach six miles to the south, but the survivors had attempted to walk to Cardwell and were all murdered by the blacks. They were separated from the first party by a large river, named by Captain Moresby the Gladys, but now known as the Johnstone. The name Gladys Inlet is still retained for the estuary.

It was while conducting this search that Captain Moresby and Lieut. Mourilyan in the ship's galley passed through two headlands into a land-locked harbour. The harbour was examined and the "Basilisk" brought into it, and being the first ship to enter Mourilyan Harbour it was so named after Lieut. Mourilyan, and the river entering it after the Captain. (4)

Thomas Ingham, one of the party on the larger raft, described how some of the survivors struggled southwards till they reached the north side of the Gladys Inlet, and tried to find a crossing, going up as far as where Innisfail now stands, but dared not go further for fear of missing rescue parties from the sea. (5)

Meantime, when the news reached Sydney, official steps were taken for the rescue of survivors, and on the 10th March the steamer "Governor Blackall," in charge of Lieut. Gowlland, R.N., at that time chief of the Australian Naval Survey, left Sydney. At the time this arrangement was made the presence of H.M.S. "Basilisk" at Cardwell was not known, but on the 16th March the "Governor Blackall" arrived and found the "Basilisk" at anchor. Mr. Ingham and his seven fellow survivors were taken on board the "Governor Blackall." An investigation of the whole coast line to Point Cooper was made by three armed boats manned by sailors, volunteers, and native police under Sub-Inspector Johnstone. This went on for four days, the

(4) Q. His. Soc. Jnl. Vol. I p. 168.

(5) Q. His. Soc. Jnl. Vol. I p. 177.

ship shifting her anchorage to keep in touch with the shore parties. Lieut. Gowlland's report with appendices and a map⁽⁶⁾ minutely described his investigations and the results, not the least interesting to us to-day being the map, a copy of which is made available to-night.⁽¹⁵⁾

In 1872, Cardwell was the farthest north of the coastal settlements, and the coastline had been carefully surveyed, but beyond this nothing had been considered necessary. A glance, for instance, at the map, at Shoal Haven (now Mourilyan Harbour), would leave one much in doubt as to what is actual knowledge or mere assumption. There is no indication of the land-locked sheet of water. Further north, Shoal Rivulet, later Gladys Inlet, and now the Johnstone River, had apparently been mapped to a point below the Junction, but at that time was described in the sailing directions as a sluggish stream 100 to 160 yards wide.

Dalrymple's North-East Exploration, 1873

The full account of this trip⁽⁷⁾ not only deals with the reason for its despatch along the North-east coast from Cardwell to the Endeavour River, but also describes details and naming of the principal rivers and mountains along the coast. It is an epitome of the beginnings of such places as Cooktown, Cairns, and Port Douglas. But the present intention being to deal with the historical events which preceded the settlement on the Johnstone River, it is only necessary to review his account of Mourilyan Harbour and the river which Dalrymple considered should be named the Johnstone, though he alludes apologetically to the previous naming by Captain Moresby of the Gladys.⁽⁸⁾

While at anchor at Dunk Island he gained an addition to his party when Mr. P. H. Nind in his own boat and a party of four men arrived on the 29th September. Mr. Nind was in quest of sugar land.⁽⁹⁾ He accompanied Dalrymple in a careful investigation of Mourilyan Harbour and the ascent of the Moresby River.⁽¹⁰⁾ Dalrymple then ascended the river hitherto known as Shoal Rivulet and the Gladys Inlet, ascending both the

(6) N.S.W. Votes & Proc. (1874), p. 1386.

(15) NOTE.—Lt. Gowlland was accidentally drowned in Sydney Harbour some five months after his report was made to the N.S.W. Govt.

(7) Q. Votes & Proc., vol. II, p. 631.

(8) Q. Votes & Proc., 1874, par. 82 & 83 of report.

(9) Q. Votes & Proc., 1874, par. 19.

(10) Q. Votes & Proc. (1874), par. 59.

North and South Branches to the limit of tidal water. Mr. Nind formed a camp at the Junction. ⁽¹¹⁾

Dalrymple and party left the Johnstone River on the 11th October bound northward to Trinity Inlet. Mr. Nind and party arrived at Cardwell on the 14th, on his return to Brisbane. In November he was returned to Parliament for the new electorate of Logan. ⁽¹⁾ His trip to the Johnstone after a stay of only two weeks proved negative, and he only made history in the naming of Nind's Creek and the Junction.

The report of Mr. Dalrymple, supplemented by that of the Government Botanist, Walter Hill, made special mention of the area and richness of the Johnstone lands, which they had viewed from the Basilisk Range, but it was not till the year 1878 that the first intrusion of white men is definitely recorded. ⁽¹²⁾

The Cedar-cutters

In the latter part of 1873, Mr. Nind nearly qualified as the first settler, but beyond forming a camp at the Junction, where he remained for two weeks, nothing of permanent nature was accomplished. He was seeking sugar land, but on his return to Cardwell mentioned the rich stores of timber. There is an account of cedar-getters on the river in 1874. ⁽¹³⁾ But a reference to the Govt. Gazette discloses no issue of timber licenses for that district until 1877, though it is possible that jurisdiction could not be enforced at the earlier stages either from Cooktown or Cardwell, which were the only settlements until Cairns was founded in 1876. But in any case, it is certain that the timber-getters were the pioneers of the Daintree, Mossman, and the Johnstone.

The exceptions were the Barron and the Mulgrave, which offered no access until after Cairns was founded, and the first cedar and pine was exploited in 1877 by using the Cairns Inlet and the Barron River for rafting purposes. John Graham sent a party of seven from the Daintree to the Johnstone to prospect for cedar. After an adventurous trip they returned with a negative report. No mention is made by them of any timber-getters' camps on the river. But during the year 1878 a list of timber licences issued at Cairns includes, inter alia, the names of Thos. Mazlin, Henry

(11) Q. Votes & Proc. (1874), par. 63, 99, 106, 107, 112.

(12) Q. His. Soc. Jnl., Vol. III, 199-201.

(13) C. & C. Magazine, Jan. 1934, p. 49.

Scheu, John Graham, Archibald Forsythe, and James Arbouin.

In the year 1878, G. Scheu, as agent for Archie Forsythe, made a trip through the coast lands from the Mulgrave River to Liverpool Creek. At the latter place he located 200,000 feet of cedar. No mention is made of the Johnstone. He probably kept a course nearer to the mountains, by-passing the cedar-getters' camps, if any, on the Johnstone. But in August 1878 it was announced that the "Jessie Kelly" took the first shipment, 400,000 feet of cedar from the Johnstone.⁽¹⁴⁾ As was the case elsewhere a few years would be sufficient to work out the easily accessible stands of timber from the river valley.

First Settlement, 1880

Dalrymple's report on the rich lands of the Johnstone did not appear till 1874, a fresh sugar boom began in 1877, and in 1879 interest was aroused in the possibilities of the rain forest belt. T. H. Fitzgerald, who had made his first venture in sugar in the late sixties at Mackay with indifferent success, gave up sugar growing there to practise his profession as a surveyor. In 1879 he endeavoured to persuade the Government to survey and throw open blocks on the northern coast for selection. The Government intimated that the expense of surveys did not seem justified, and eventually agreed to Fitzgerald's suggestion that surveys should be made after settlement. Acting on this, Fitzgerald made a trip to examine the coastal estuaries from Cooktown to Cardwell, influenced by the reports of Dalrymple and Walter Hill. It is said the applications for eight selections of 1,280 acres each were lodged with the Land Commissioner at Port Douglas, the nearest Lands Office to the district, Cairns then being in the doldrums.

Fitzgerald, however, returned to Brisbane in the "Egmont" in December 1879, succeeded in forming a company, and with a party fully equipped left for the Johnstone in the s.s. "Corea" on the 17th April 1880. The ship anchored near the mouth of the Johnstone on the evening of the 22nd, the party landed on the 23rd and camped at Flying Fish Point, then usually known as Sea Point.

(14) *Courier*, 24/8/78.

This marked the beginning of the history of the settlement. The early history is the history of T. H. Fitzgerald and his sons, of Kevin O'Doherty, of Fitzgerald and Ryan of the Castlemaine Brewery of Melbourne, and of George Wilkie Gray. Of Bishop O'Quinn and the Sisters of Mercy, and of Miss F. H. O'Reilly. Also of H. G. Scheu and J. N. L. Stamp and many other pioneers whose descendants are still to be found in the district. That self-contained community is to-day a magnificent testimony to the faith of its founders.

Innisfail

With the landing at Flying Fish Point of the party led by T. H. Fitzgerald from the s.s. "Corea" on the 23rd April 1880 the practical work of the settlement began. Sub-Inspector Johnstone, after whom the river had been named by Dalrymple in 1873, met the party in the Government steam launch "Sabina." Stores and equipment, including two boats for river work, were landed. A site was cleared there, and the first cane planted on the 15th June. There is a tradition that some of this cane came from Bellenden Plains on the Murray River.

But the conditions of tenure compelled attention to the land selected, and as men and cane plants and material came to hand, first the Innisfail Estate, four miles up the river, followed by part of the present site of the town, then Sundown and East Innisfail (Innis-hoven), were partly cleared and planted. Surveys were made of eight blocks for Fitzgerald and Co., respectively in the names of T. H. Fitzgerald, senr., T. H. Fitzgerald, jnr., J. F. and J. B. Fitzgerald, and including E. Potter, M. Carney, E. Whitty, and K. Reardon, Sisters of Mercy. The official surveys were not completed until 22nd March 1882. Four of the nuns were financed by Bishop O'Quinn, the remainder by Miss F. H. O'Reilly, whose name also appeared on the map. She was in residence with the Sisters of Mercy at All Hallows, and in time the proceeds of this land investment were dedicated to the building of All Hallows, and assisted in the founding of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital at Brisbane.

Fever was prevalent at first, about the middle of December 1880. T. H. Fitzgerald, father and son, were among the first affected and were taken out to catch the next steamer to Brisbane. .

When the census was taken, April 1881, the population was 165. At Sea Point, T. H. Fitzgerald, senior and junior, one man and three kanakas; on Innisfail Estate, were James McDonald, his wife and family, John F. Fitzgerald, about twelve whites and forty-nine kanakas; Junction Point (the town site), Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy, K. I. O'Doherty, jnr., Mr. and Mrs. Price and five children and six kanakas; camped here were Fitzgerald's survey party, with J. B. Fitzgerald, three assistants and six kanakas.

At Stamp's and Scheu's selections (now Stockton) were J. N. L. Stamp and H. Svendsen and two kanakas, Mr. and Mrs. H. G. Scheu, J. Peterson, Connor, and two kanakas. At Stapleton's (later Gulland's) were Mr. Poole and twelve kanakas.

Early in 1881, H. G. Scheu was engaged by T. H. Fitzgerald to open a track to Mourilyan Harbour. At the time there was some doubt of the Johnstone being suitable for navigation. The site of the township at the Junction was reserved in 1881 by Mr. R. T. Hartley, Crown Lands Commissioner at Cairns, the land was resumed from Fitzgerald and Co., and another block granted in compensation. The first hotel was erected by James McDonald, a member of the first landing party, and was known as the Royal Exchange and conducted by J. Bourke for many years.

In June 1881, the schooner "Io" arrived with seventy-four additional kanakas for Fitzgerald and Co. Work on the Innisfail Sugar Mill was commenced on the 5th August, crushing started on the 9th November and ended on the 9th January 1882, 40 tons of sugar the total production.

Then commenced a rush for sugar lands, with the result a further 84,000 acres were selected. Four main interests were involved—at Innisfail, Fitzgerald and Co.; Innishowen, Queensland Sugar Co., O'Doherty and Gulland; Mourilyan Sugar Co., Ryan, Smellie, and Wilkie Gray; and the C.S.R. Co., E. B. Forrest and others.

Innisfail suffered severe loss in the 1886 flood, the mill never recovered and came into the hands of Miss F. H. O'Reilly as mortgagee. Inneshowen carried on for some years, but depression years caused it to close. Sugar prices fell abruptly and kanaka legislation had its effect here as elsewhere in North Queensland.

In May 1882, Inspector Douglas made a trip from Herberton to Mourilyan Harbour to open a track to the interior to make it possible to obtain cattle for the meat supply of the settlement. The trip was a failure.

In July and August of the same year, Captain Pennefather of the Q.S.S. "Pearl" made a survey of Mourilyan Harbour. In the succeeding year, the Mourilyan Sugar Co. commenced the first section of a tramway to the Harbour. At the end of 1883, J. D. Johnston (contractor for the erection of the Cardwell Jetty, and in later years at Mango Park, Mossman) cleared 80 acres at the landing. In 1884, Captain Collin of the "Enterprise" spent some time at the Harbour blasting away rocks midway in the channel.

The earliest sugar-planters were T. A. Ryan, H. M. Stapleton, and also John McDonnell at Ramornie on the junction of Stewart Creek, now Mena Creek, and the South Johnstone River, with W. H. and A. E. Miskin up the creek on blocks adjoining.

Among the notable pioneers of the early period, the following deserve a tribute of respect:

Daniel Dupont of "Cessford," manager for Fitzgerald and Co., who sold out to his partner and bailiff Peter Forbes; later "Cessford" became the property of George Ker.

Charles Edgar Adams, manager of the C.S.R. Co. mill at Goondi, in later years prominent in sugar circles at the Mulgrave.

Robert Russell Smellie, of Mourilyan Mill, who had 850 acres under cultivation in 1889, had made a reputation in the study of juice extraction, sugar chemistry and manufacture in the years 1881-89.

F. E. Nash, manager of Mourilyan Mill, was ably seconded by the technical work of R. R. Smellie. He was chairman of the Divisional Board in 1883 and 1885, and an important member of the community.

A. Owen Jones, manager of the Queensland Sugar Co. Estate at Inneshowen. He took a prominent part in local Government and district development, was clerk to the Divisional Board for many years.

William P. Canny, manager of the Inneshowen Sugar Mill. Was also chairman of the Divisional Board in 1887-1888.

James O'Halloran, manager of the Innisfail Plantation for Miss O'Rielly 1884-1889.

John McDonnell, Under Secretary P.M.G. Department and Lt.-Col. of the Volunteers, was a worthy pioneer. His efforts were negated by difficulties of management. His property at South Johnstone was sold to Frank Sugden.

Martin O'Donohue, Land Agent and Crown Lands Ranger. A descendant is Norman Mighell, C.B.E., Agent-General in London.

Major R. F. Lewis, first Police Magistrate, a veteran of the Indian Mutiny, appointed in 1885, left Innisfail on 5th August for Aramac, and subsequently appointed Governor of the Brisbane Gaol. He was succeeded by William Sarsfield Walsh from Cardwell.

James T. Proctor, in charge of Captain Seymour's property, "Esmeralda," which was freeholded in 1885.

Henry Gottlieb Scheu was a selector on the South Johnstone, but had had previously a chequered career, dating back to the Victorian goldfields and later at the Palmer. He acted as agent for James Forsythe when cedar-getting was at its peak. He also opened in June 1883 the first track for horses and cattle from Cardwell. In the days when the boat mail was running between Cardwell and the Johnstone, he loaded the boat on the return trip with pumpkins and maize for Cardwell. He was a member of the first Divisional Board at the Johnstone, with his neighbour, J. N. L. Stamp; both had much to do with every activity of that early settlement. Later both he and Stamp moved to the Cardwell district. In 1885 he erected the telegraph line, Cardwell-Geraldton, using his new track, which after crossing the Cardwell-Tully plain and the Walter Hill range, ran up into higher ground between the South and North Maria Creeks, then followed the cap of the Basilisk Range to the South Johnstone opposite John McDonnell's.

In July 1883, the town site was surveyed and officially named Geraldton, and on the 15th October the first land sale was held. Of the seventy-five lots offered, seventy were sold, the five unsold being in a swamp. Of these only four were valued for improvements, respectively at £20, £30, £650, and £200; the last two were contiguous, the hotel site. The highest price paid was £63, being the lot at the corner of Grace and Edith Streets, later the canegrowers' office. The sale realised £2,095.

Some idea of the town is given by J. G. Eastwood at the end of 1884 ("More About Cairns—A Varied Life"). It consisted of one side of what is now known as the Esplanade, the only buildings outside this area being a pub on the high ground opposite the landing ground, with the police quarters at the back.

District Tramways

With the rapid settlement of the district, by small holders, many of them Italians, the mill tramway systems extended, and sugar farmers and timber men were placed in direct communication with the town. Sawmills operated both at Geraldton and at the source of log supplies, such as Waugh's Pocket, Liverpool Creek and other places. Japoon and Silkwood became important suppliers of cane to the mills as well as timber for local use and export. In the days of the banana industry a tramline connected Old Silkwood to Cowley Jetty on Liverpool Creek.

A Projected Railway

Geographically speaking Geraldton was not much more than fifty miles in a straight line from the newly established tin-mining town of Herberton, and access to the interior was desired by its people for many reasons, either by road or railway.

It was in January 1882 that the building of the railway was first mentioned at Herberton, and a Railway League was formed there. On the 7th February Port Douglas formed its railway league, closely followed by Cairns. In March, Christie Palmerston was commissioned by Mr. Macrossan, Minister for Works and Mines, to search for a route from Herberton to the coast. This engaged his attention from the 6th April to 1st August, when he was recalled while inspecting the Mulgrave Valley. Part of the time, from the 8th May to the 10th June, he had to camp at Smithfield, sick in his tent. Geraldton had made representations to be included in this itinerary but failed.

But, when Palmerston had made his report on the possible routes on the Mossman, Mowbray, Barron, and Mulgrave valleys, he was requisitioned by Mr. H. M. Stapleton, chairman of the Johnstone Divisional Board, to find a track to Herberton for a consideration that never materialised. Palmerston started on the 31st October and returned on the 31st December, only to find that no payment was forthcoming except a cheque

for £20 which was dishonoured. His diary discloses he purposely suppressed the distances and directions of his journey. His exploit following on Douglas's failure earlier in the same year, established that a practicable track was possible. To Christie belongs the honour of piercing the jungle successfully. G. E. Phillips, C.E., did the rest later on in 1898.

In May 1883, Mr. G. Monk, railway surveyor, commenced the trial surveys at Cairns, sending F. Grayson, accompanied by Christie Palmerston, to Port Douglas. In January 1884, Mr. Monk made the trip from Herberton to Mourilyan Harbour with surveyor Stewart, and Christie Palmerston as guide; a trial survey was commenced from Herberton on this route, but abandoned in February. Rival ports contended for the railway, but Cairns won the battle.

Gold

While the battle for a railway was in progress, a gold discovery was reported in November 1884, in a creek on the North Johnstone less than twenty miles up the river. The alluvial was soon worked out with the assistance of the Chinese who soon outnumbered the whites. It was only a poor find. On the 23rd February 1885 gold was discovered near Bartle Frere, but gave poor returns in exchange for much hardship in the rough country covered with jungle. Later discoveries at the Beatrice, Jordan Creek, Towalla, and the Russell, from which the Chinese were excluded, were not sensational and did not add much to Geraldton's prosperity.

Cairns and Cardwell

In 1884 a pack-track was opened to the Lower Russell, making a through connection with Cairns. In 1885 the telegraph line was completed to Cardwell, and a telegraph office opened at Geraldton on the 2nd April 1885.

The Banana Industry

Following the set-back to the sugar industry in 1884 and the decline of the alluvial gold-mining on the Palmer, the Chinese appeared on the coastal lands in force. Particularly at Cairns and Geraldton. Holders of blocks of land on the Johnstone, and later at Liverpool and Maria Creeks, and the Tully leased their lands and the banana industry flourished from 1882 onwards, the peak years were from 1905 to 1910.

In those days, Ah Chong, See Poy, and Tam Sie at Geraldton; Ah Lum at Liverpool and Maria Creeks; and Kwong Yuen Chong at Townsville were the key men financing their countrymen and controlling the disposal of the bananas in the Southern markets. Small steamers called regularly and took their loading from banana-laden junks and sampans, as well as from the wharves and jetties.

This industry, combined with exports of maize, continued for many years, but declined in the early years of this century as the delta lands worked out and the prosperity of the sugar industry increased. The days of the pigtails, pagoda-like cane hats, blue umbrellas and hurricane lamps are now but a memory.

Newspapers

The first newspaper, the "Geraldton Courier," J. S. Gibb, editor, made its appearance on the 17th June 1885, but its history must have been short, its fate is unknown.

In the succeeding years of the growing pains of the new settlement newspapers came and went.

In 1889 the "Geraldton Independent" came into being, with Patrick Shannon in control; after three years it ceased under that name for some legal reason, but continued as "The Free Press." In 1890 a stormy petrel of journalism, E. C. M. Draper, left Cairns, and when in Geraldton was persuaded by Chas. Nolan to found the "Advocate." This commenced a continual press war with Shannon, until the "Free Press" failed.

In 1895, E. C. M. Draper left Geraldton to join the "Morning Post" at Cairns; whether the "Advocate" handed over or not is not clear, but the "Geraldton World" with Horace Wellington Harris as editor began its career. It only lasted for two years. Harris came from Croydon.

Then came the "Mirror," which only existed for a term as a political paper in the interests of Tom Foley, who was in the minority at the election in 1902, when Sir Alfred Cowley was returned and held the seat until he was defeated by William Lennon in 1907. After the election the "Mirror" closed down and the plant returned to its owner, T. Dempsey, manager of Innisfail Plantation.

Then came the sale of the plant of the "Geraldton World" and its purchase by C. W. McGowan. "The (New) Geraldton World" was published for a time in

the labour interests, but financial difficulties and some internal strife caused its demise.

But though the "World" had succumbed, another paper arose from its ashes. Mr. H. Alston, of Ingham, bought the plant and resurrected the title of the "Geraldton Advocate." Mr. James Luney became editor, but after a short period Mr. Alston disposed of the plant to Mr. McGowan.

Under changed political control, a new paper appeared, "The Geraldton Sentinel." The proprietors were C. W. and J. McGowan, sons of the owner, first edited by Frank Leighton, followed in turn by Dick Kelly and J. McGowan. The policy of the paper was mainly political, and espoused the cause of William Lennon, who defeated Sir Alfred Cowley in 1907.

Meanwhile the sale of the only newspaper by Mr. Alston led to considerable dissatisfaction, and it was during the political fight between Cowley and Lennon that a movement led by C. E. Jodrell, J. H. Payne, C. L. Gill, W. Molle, and others brought about the founding of the "Johnstone River Advocate." The "Sentinel" carried on till 1909, when it was sold outright to Eugene McKenna, who carried on with the publication, re-named "The Democrat."

The "Johnstone River Advocate" under able management progressed, and with the tide of prosperity carried on with success. During twenty-nine years it never missed an issue. In 1921 it came into the possession of P. J. Leahy, then into the hands of Mrs. Groom, widow of the Hon. H. L. Groom, M.L.C., and under the capable management of Mr. George Groom in 1928.

"The Democrat," successor to the "Sentinel," was published through the turbulent years of World War I by Mr. McKenna, who twice stood in opposition to F. W. Bamford for the Herbert seat without success. The cyclone of 1918 so damaged the building and plant that publication ceased. Mr. McKenna through failing health left the district.

The "Johnstone River Advocate" was now in possession of the field, until in 1929 another labour paper appeared under the title of the "Democrat." This paper carried on till April 1930, when the building was totally destroyed by fire.

Two other publications followed. "The Northern Sportsman," issued by the Johnstone River Advocate office, was not a financial success and was closed after

a year, 1927-8. The "Northern Leader" was built up from the salvaged plant of the "Democrat," first issued 27th August 1932 until September 1935, when it was then incorporated with the "Johnstone River Advocate."

The Divisional Board

The first proclamation appeared in the Government Gazette of 29th October 1881, defining the boundaries of the Johnstone Division. These boundaries were altered subsequently as the geographical features came to be better known and understood.

In the Government Gazette of the 21st January 1882 is the announcement of the first members appointed: H. M. Stapleton, J. H. Fitzgerald, Leopold Stamp, Kevin O'Doherty, J. B. Fitzgerald, and Henry Scheu. Later in the Gazette of the 25th October, Louis Daniel Dupont is appointed in lieu of J. B. Fitzgerald resigned. The following year (7/4/83) saw the names of Alfred E. Miskin, Arthur Owen Jones, and Francis Nash added to make nine members. On the 7th August 1883, Charles Edgar Adams is appointed, in place of H. M. Stapleton.

On the 31st December 1885, the area was proclaimed in three subdivisions, three members to each division.

The first meeting was held on the 31st May 1882, and H. M. Stapleton was elected chairman. This position was held in succeeding years by F. E. Nash, St. George Browne, F. E. Nash, Chas. Nolan, W. P. Canny 1887-8, R. Levinge, Chas. Nolan 1890-91, C. E. Forster, T. Dempsey, C. E. Forster, J. W. Robertson 1895-6, C. E. Forster 1897-99, H. L. Gill 1901.

The Native Police

The work of patrolling outlying settlements had from the first been entrusted to Lieutenants in charge of mounted native troopers. Early in the seventies the title was changed to Sub-inspector in the Police Force. It was in 1870 that Sub-inspector Johnstone took control of the police patrol in the Cardwell and Cashmere area. His first station was at Cashmere, but he took over the station at the Lower Herbert in 1872. His district embraced the coast line from Cardwell to the Endeavour River and inland to the Valley of Lagoons. His name is prominent in all the events leading to the settlement of Cooktown, Cairns, and lastly Geraldton.

In 1879 a small patrol steamer the "Sabina" was under his charge. On his transfer to Winton as Police Magistrate there, Sub-inspector Douglas took over the coast patrol, and in 1882 moved his inland station to Mourilyan Harbour. The "Sabina" was replaced by the "Vigilant" until the march of events rendered native patrols unnecessary, and he took the "Vigilant" back to Brisbane. The constable in charge at Cardwell, and the police at Cairns and Cooktown became responsible for all patrols.

A brief summary of the rapid development since 1891 (when the population was stated as 700 whites and 500 Chinese) to the present day covers the opening of the Atherton (1907) and Evelyn (1908) table-lands the establishment of the South Johnstone Central Sugar Mill, the through connection by railway to Cairns and the South on the 10th December 1924, the opening of the Palmerston Highway to Ravenshoe, and the growth of the town of Geraldton—re-named Innisfail on the 20th August 1910.

L'Envoi

Such is the story of early Innisfail incompletely told. To-day the town and district has a population of over 10,000, its Shire Hall, public buildings, and business activity are sure indications of its prosperity. Its tourist attractions range from its sea-going pleasure boats to the reef and islands—its beaches at Flying Fish Point and Etty Bay—to Paronella Park at the Mena Falls—and the scenic Palmerston Highway. The story of the past presents an epic of a district gradually developed into a self-contained and self-supporting community, which within a period of little more than seventy years prides itself on a production of over £2,000,000 annually.