

## THE QUEENSLAND NATIVE MOUNTED POLICE

[By SERGEANT A. WHITTINGTON]

(Read at a meeting of the Society on 23 July 1964.)

WHEN the history of Queensland is told there must always be a place reserved in such chronicles to record the story of Queensland's Native Mounted Police Force.

This is the Centenary Year of the Police Force of Queensland, and throughout the State there have been celebrations to commemorate the birth and subsequent growth of the Force. A special history of the Force has been produced and publicity has been given through several media to record highlights of the activities of our Police Force during the past 100 years.

With all such celebrations and publicity there has not been told the story of the Native Police Force. Tonight, with your indulgence, I will endeavour to tell something of the origin, growth, and working conditions of this Force.

In telling such a story it is essential that some prominence be given to the exploits of certain personalities. The names which will be mentioned do not, by any manner of means, cover the entire personnel who could be considered but are intended to create a picture of the working conditions of the Force at the particular time as well as of the class of person entrusted with the carrying out of the many duties with which the Force was entrusted.

### NATIVE POLICE ESTABLISHED

In the early days of Australia, when the Moreton Bay Settlement was in its infancy, the Police system of the Colony was vastly different from that which has since evolved.

While Captain Wickham was the Police Magistrate for the Moreton Bay Settlement — as Queensland was then known — the settlers of the Condamine and Burnett Districts found it necessary, in 1848, for a Native Mounted Police Force to be established and for this purpose they subscribed money for the protection of their herds and flocks, their property and, in fact, their very lives.

This Force was recruited by, and was under the control of, Mr. Frederick ("Filibuster") Walker who established his headquarters at Callandoon.

The Native Police were recruited from the southern tribes and were foreign to the local tribes; they regarded all other blacks as their enemies.

It was *not* a Government institution—it was run by the squatters. The Government of New South Wales had nothing whatever to do with it. They may have sanctioned it—but that is as far as they went.

Walker had as his second in command Lieutenant Richard Purves Marshall.

### WALKER MADE COUNTRY SAFE

Walker and his Force soon established themselves. He tamed the natives, saved the whites, and made the country comparatively safe. He was, in fact, so successful that the squatters soon came to consider that the upkeep of the Native Corps was a needless expense. They could, they said, look after themselves.

Walker had been severely criticised for intemperate habits and neglect of duty, and, in 1855, he was relieved of his post as Commandant. His second in command—Richard Purves Marshall—became the new Commandant. Walker eventually transferred to the regular Police Force and during his later service he achieved some fame as an explorer.

Soon afterwards the squatters discontinued their financial support of the Native Police Force and the corps was disbanded.

It did not take the natives long to realise that the protection had been withdrawn and they commenced to raid and kill without much hindrance.

On 3 December 1853, Tom Dowse and his family—the first settlers at Sandgate—were attacked by blacks. They escaped with their lives but this episode led to the eventual establishment of a Native Police Camp there with Lieutenant Wheeler in charge.

In 1854, W. Young, owner of Mt. Larcom Station in the Port Curtis District, returned home from a journey to Gladstone to find that five of his employees had been murdered. This massacre took place on Christmas Day.

### PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Discontent with the behaviour of the Native Mounted Police had led to an inquiry by a Parliamentary Select Committee—appointed in November, 1856—to inquire “into the present state of the Native Police Force employed in the Colony.”

Among the witnesses examined were R. P. Marshall, who had succeeded Walker as Commandant of the Native

Mounted Police and who had held office from January 1855 to July of that same year. He had resigned because the New South Wales Government had intimated that they intended to reduce the strength of the Force to a level considered by him to be unworkable; and Captain McLerie, Inspector-General of Police for the Colony of New South Wales, took over control of the Force.

The recommendations of the Committee included the appointment of an officer to take charge of the troopers operating in the Northern Districts and that this Northern Force should not be less than 120 men strong. As a result, Mr. Edric Norfolk Vaux Morisset was gazetted Commandant in May, 1857.

In 1862 he was succeeded by Mr. John O'Connell Bligh—a direct descendant of Captain Bligh of "Bounty" fame.

#### STRENGTH OF FORCE DECREASED

I have referred to the resignation of R. P. Marshall in July 1855 because of the suggestion made by the Government that the strength of his Force be reduced. The Government did carry out this intention and the strength of the Native Police Force was decreased from 136 to 72 and the control of the Force was placed under the Inspector-General of Police, Sydney. The Force continued to function—but in an unsatisfactory manner.

Recruits were being obtained from among the local tribes and many of these recruits deserted after a short period with the Force and became spies for their tribes.

#### THE FRASER MASSACRE

On 27 October 1857 the Fraser family who were then leasing Hornet Bank Station were attacked, at night, by blacks and nearly every member of the family was massacred. (The story of this attack was vividly told in a paper presented by Mr. Arthur Laurie which was read at a meeting of the Society on 25 July 1957.) A survivor of the killings—Sylvester (a boy)—carried the news of the tragedy to the Black Police at Eurombah Station and a punitive expedition of Native Police and white settlers under the command of Lieutenant Powell pursued and attacked the blacks whenever and wherever they could be found.

Seven months after the Hornet Bank massacre—on 16 April 1858—two shepherds were killed by blacks on Eurombah Station. This attack, only 12 miles away from the previous one, showed that the aboriginals must be considered as hostile.

### ANOTHER COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

The Government appointed another Committee of Inquiry in June, 1858, for the purpose of inquiring into the Dawson River murders. Recommendations coming from this inquiry included an increase in the strength of the Native Police Force; all recruits to be obtained from the South—no less than 600 miles away from local centres; increase of trooper's pay from 5d. to 8d. per day; patrols to be carried out with a strong hand; and all future outrages upon life and property to be punished with necessary severity.

The inquiry also revealed that Captain Walker (ex-Commandant of the Native Mounted Police) had recruited a local Black Police Squad which was being paid and maintained by the local squatters.

The New South Wales Government was not prepared to spend any more than was barely necessary in police protection and in providing any further amenities for a territory that they were shortly to lose. (This was the period shortly before Separation.)

### SLAUGHTER AT CULLIN-LA-RINGO

On 17 October 1861, at Cullin-la-Ringo on the Nogoa River, 19 people—men, women, and children—were slaughtered on a bright, sunny afternoon. The Station had been established about two weeks earlier by Horatio Spencer Wills. There were 10,000 sheep and 24 people on the holding.

Wills had adopted the policy of making friends with the natives and had stored all firearms in his own tent. Early in the afternoon of that fateful day a group of about 60 blacks appeared at the Camp. They all appeared friendly—at least they gave no indication of any hostile intention. Suddenly, and without any apparent warning, the natives attacked. One of Wills' employees, who had been resting some few hundred yards away from the Camp, under the shade of a tree, saw the beginning of the attack. He bolted into the nearby scrub and made his way to Rainworth Station, about 30 miles away.

Gregor, the owner of Rainworth, organised a party of his employees and set out for Cullin-la-Ringo, arriving there at night. Next morning this party found 19 bodies—including that of H. S. Wills. Gregor and his party buried the bodies and then set out after the blacks and caught up with them 25 miles away. In the ensuing fight most of the natives got away.

The Commandant of the Native Mounted Police in charge of the Fort at Old Rainworth, Springsure District, at this time was G. P. M. Murray—widely known as "Black" Murray.

Murray and his Native Police arrived on 26 October and they shot a large number of aboriginals and recovered fire-arms and other property which had been stolen by the murderers.

With the natural evolution of things the Queensland Police Force—as distinct from the Native Mounted Police—was fast becoming an established force.

### CERTAIN PRIVILEGES

The Native Mounted Police had certain privileges. Its officers could, and frequently did, transfer to the Queensland Police Force without loss of rank. But there was no reciprocal arrangement, for no officer of the Queensland Police Force could transfer to the Native Mounted Police. Its officers were chosen from men whose qualifications were supposed to be education, breeding, knowledge of drill and firearms, and ability to handle natives. Those were the written demands. The unwritten ones included the right to die unhonoured and unmourned, to ride in constant danger, and to suffer privation and hardship.

Officers when appointed commenced as Cadets under a Sub-Inspector.

For instance, Frederick Charles Urquhart—who later rose to become Queensland's fourth Commissioner of Police—was among the last batch of Cadets to be accepted into the Corps. He served under Sub-Inspector Lamond at Carl Creek on the Gregory.

Lamond, in his turn, had learned his job under Sub-Inspector Harvey Fitzgerald—who was later to become Inspector in Charge of Townsville Police about 1896.

### OFFICER RODE BEHIND

Officers of the Native Mounted Police, who were specially recruited, did not lead their troops into action—but rode behind them. Some people insisted that this was due to a fear of treachery, but the version which was more widely accepted was that, as the natives were naturally possessed of superior bushcraft skills, the officer would be unwise to precede the troopers and thus prevent them from scanning the terrain before any sign could be read. It would be equally obvious that the passage of the officer would simply add to the sign to be interpreted.

The highest rank that any native could attain in the Force was that of Corporal. The uniform they wore consisted of black peaked cap; green shirt; and trousers with red stripes.

### THIRD COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

In 1861 the new Government of Queensland appointed a Committee of Inquiry into the condition of the blacks and their treatment by the squatters. The Committee sat from 3 May to 8 July 1861, with R. R. McKenzie, Esq. (later to be Premier of the State) as Chairman. The Committee announced that evidence proved that change in the Police by substituting white troopers for natives would destroy efficiency; that under Commandant E. N. V. Morisset—its present Commandant—the destruction of life and property had diminished; that any attempt to disband the Native Police would have disastrous results; that troopers for the Force should be recruited away from the locality of their operations; and that the murder of the white woman—Fanny Briggs—by Black Police at Rockhampton was individual and the Force as a whole was not to blame.

### PERSONNEL OF FORCE

In 1863 the Native Police Headquarters were situated about 14 miles from Rockhampton. The Commandant was John O'Connell Bligh. The personnel of the Force then was:  
Headquarters: Commandant John O'Connell Bligh.

Cadets: W. Sharp, A. Beaver, W. Richardson, H. Ramsay, J. B. Nutting.

1st Division (Port Curtis and Leichhardt): Lieutenant Commanding: G. P. M. Murray.

2nd Lieutenants: R. R. Morriset, W. Cave, R. C. G. Johnson, W. H. Bayley.

1 Sergeant-Major; 6 Camp Sergeants; 63 Troopers.

2nd Division (Nogoa): 1 Lieutenant Commanding; 1 2nd Lieutenant; 1 Camp Sergeant; 18 Troopers.

3rd Division (Maranoa): Lieutenant Commanding: F. W. Carr. 2nd Lieutenants: W. Moorhead, J. Marlow. 2 Camp Sergeants; 36 Troopers.

4th Division (Moreton Bay): 2nd Lieutenant Commanding: Frederick Wheeler; 1 Camp Sergeant, 8 Troopers.

5th Division (the Kennedy): Lieutenant Commanding: Walter Powell. 2nd Lieutenant: T. S. Williams. Cadet: G. F. Price. 3 Camp Sergeants; 20 Troopers.

6th Division (Wide Bay): Cadet in Charge: J. D. Harris. 9 Troopers.

In addition, there was the Maranoa Patrol; the Commanding Officer being W. S. E. M. Charters who had three troopers at his disposal.

As a point of comparison the Police Force of Brisbane at

this time consisted of Police Magistrate William Anthony Brown; Chief Constable William Apjohn; and 29 Constables.

In January of 1864 "*The Police Act of 1863*" became effective and Mr. David Thomson Seymour became Acting Commissioner of the Queensland Police Force and accepted the responsibility for the superintendence of the Police Force of the whole Colony, including the Native Police Force. He became Queensland's first Commissioner of Police on 1 July 1864.

There were at that time 14 detachments of Native Police—numbering 137 persons in all—stationed at various places throughout the State.

### NATIVE POLICE CENTRES

To give some idea of the distances covered by these detachments and the areas for which they were responsible, I have taken from the reports submitted by the Select Committee formed to inquire into the management and working of the Police Force, which was appointed on 6 May 1869, a list of the localities at which Native Police were stationed:

As at 1 May of that year Native Police were attached to Burketown, Barcoo River (Tambo), Blackall, Belyando River, Bloomsbury, Charleville, Curriwillinghami, Dalrymple, Gympie, Goochie, Isaacs River, Lynd River and Cardwell, Mackenzie Crossing, Maranoa, Maryborough, Nanango, St. George, Springsure, Surat, Suttor River, St. Lawrence, Yo Yo Creek, Humpybong. The total strength of all personnel was 114 men.

Incidental to our main story I mention the fact that Mr. D. T. Seymour served as Commissioner of Police from 1864 to 1895—a total of 31 years. That period of service by far eclipses the duration of service of any of his successors.

### CHANGING CONDITIONS

As the settlers pushed further and further out into the previously unsettled areas and small townships grew, the Police Force adapted itself to meet the changing conditions. More and more European police officers were required to establish Police Stations and ensure the maintenance of law and order in the newly settled areas. Side by side with the growth of the "regular" Police Force there was a gradual decline of the strength of the Native Police Force and its detachments.

Native Mounted Police performed their duty in areas apart from the capital city and the main settlements. One of the

rare occasions on which a detachment of Native Mounted Police was detailed for duty in Brisbane was in connection with the visit, in February, 1868, of the Duke of Edinburgh. The detachment selected for escort duty consisted of Captain Henry Brown as Commanding Officer; Sub-Inspector W. R. O. Hill as Second in Command; and 12 troopers—mostly corporals—who were selected from the various Native Police detachments scattered throughout the State.

#### EXPLOITS OF WENTWORTH D'ARCY UHR

Some of the incidents in the record of Wentworth D'Arcy Uhr, Sub-Inspector of the Native Mounted Police, may serve to illustrate the type of work performed and the capabilities of such officers.

Uhr started from Rockhampton for the Gulf of Carpentaria on 22 December 1865, accompanied by William Landsborough and five native troopers. They travelled as far as Bowen Downs where Landsborough left the party on 5 March 1866, with the stated intention of finding a shorter route to Burketown.

Uhr and his party pressed on and arrived at Burketown on 11 April, after a ride of about 1,000 miles. Landsborough did not arrive until some days later.

The Police Camp was established about 15 miles up-river from Burketown at Hope Reach.

#### FEVER AT BURKETOWN

On 10 May, Uhr went into Burketown and found that almost the entire population had contracted fever and that many were dying. His own troopers had become afflicted on 7 May.

He secured a small boat and with the help of a man named Nelstron he took some sick people to Sweer's Island. They were Messrs. Blakeney, Thompson, Ellis, Hardie, Davis, two black troopers, Mrs. Blakeney and child, and the wife of one of the troopers.

Uhr returned to Burketown on 7 June and returned to his camp next day. There he found that his best trooper, Thomas Curtis, had died only two hours previously and that all the remaining troopers were helpless with fever. He secured medicines in Burketown and on 11 June he moved the camp to Beames Brook Station where he could get help if he fell ill himself.

#### UHR TAKES A LONG TRAIL

On 29 July 1866, Uhr started out from Burketown in pursuit of two horse thieves and arrested one of them on



13 September. In the process he recovered ten horses which had been stolen. On this occasion he took one of the troopers with him, but, as he had difficulty in securing horses for the two of them, he finally decided that the trooper should return to Burketown while he pursued his quarry alone. He rode from the Gulf of Carpentaria to the New South Wales border and, as I have mentioned, he arrested one of the thieves near the New South Wales border on 13 September. Taking his prisoner with him, he continued in pursuit of the other wanted man and travelled as far as the Castlereagh River. He got to within one day's ride of his quarry when his horse knocked up. Being worried over the possibility of losing the prisoner he already had he headed for Fort Bourke, on the Darling, and on arrival there he handed the prisoner over to Inspector Zouch on 26 September. The prisoner was subsequently remanded to Queensland and Uhr had to escort him.

On 23 October he handed the prisoner over to Sub-Inspector Morisset at Northampton Downs, on the Barcoo, and then rode back along the long trail to Carpentaria.

He arrived in Burketown on 19 November and reported to the Police Magistrate (Mr. William Landsborough). He had ridden some 2,000 miles in three months.

Four days after his return he went to Sweer's Island and after exploring Bentinck Island returned to Burketown on 13 December.

The horse-stealer, in the meantime, had been escorted 400 miles to Rockhampton by Sub-Inspector Morisset and sent around to Sweer's Island in *H.M.S. Salamander*.

On 18 December 1866, Uhr arrested a man for murder and he was sent to Sweer's Island for safe keeping. A few weeks later this man and the horse-thief made good their escape by boat.

#### A LONG PURSUIT

Uhr remained in Burketown for a few days and then, without advertising his intention, slipped quietly out of the settlement in pursuit of the escapees. He kept away from the regular trails and made as little contact with settlers as possible. Four hundred and twenty miles from Burketown he arrested his men at gun-point. He had covered the distance in six days.

Uhr was a first-class horseman and a diligent police officer, although he was considered by many of his colleagues as something of a hot-head and hard to get along with.

#### NATIVE TROOPERS JOIN IN NED KELLY HUNT

In 1880 the assistance of Queensland Native Police was

sought by the Government of New South Wales and, as a result, Sub-Inspector O'Connor, with five native troopers, travelled from Queensland to assist in the tracking down of "Ned" Kelly and his gang.

#### SUB-INSPECTOR KAYE KILLED

On 14 September 1881, Sub-Inspector Henry P. Kaye—who was in charge of the Native Mounted Police at Woolgar Police Station—was killed in the execution of his duty when he was speared by blacks only a few miles from Woolgar.

His body was buried on what is now "Middle Park" Station property, situated about 90 miles due north of Richmond.

The grave is near the station homestead and a headstone has been erected over the grave.

On 12 September, Sub-Inspector Kaye, accompanied by Mr. P. E. Smith, had been following some blacks' tracks to within 12 miles of the Woolgar. The blacks they were following had nearly killed two of Mr. Smith's stockmen as well as doing a considerable amount of mischief amongst his cattle.

On 13 September, Sub-Inspector Kaye camped, together with Sub-Inspector W. Nichols, about two miles above the Woolgar Reefs and on 14 September the party met and had a parley with a small group of blacks who were camped near the Chinese Gardens close to the township. Mr. Kaye did everything he could to assure the blacks of peaceful intentions and gave them many assurances that there would be no violence. He had so far succeeded that he was able to get the blacks to accompany his party back to the police camp. His idea, as later described by his companions, was to get as many of the blacks as he could there, and then shepherd them away from the field as quietly as possible.

When the party had travelled about a quarter of a mile towards the camp, Mr. Nichols proposed to Mr. Kaye that he should go on ahead and send back three troopers. Kaye, however, suggested that as Mr. Nichols was riding the better horse he should ride ahead. Accordingly Nichols went ahead of the others and on reaching camp instructed three troopers to return to Mr. Kaye. As soon as these troopers came in sight of the natives Kaye and his party were attacked. The party had only travelled about a quarter of a mile from the spot where Mr. Nichols had left them.

Mr. P. E. Smith, who was with Sub-Inspector Kaye, had a very narrow escape—as did the trooper who was in their company.

After the attack the aboriginals scattered to the hills.

Sub-Inspector Nichols, when he returned to the Police

Camp to send the three troopers to Mr. Kaye, had given his horse to Trooper Sandy and had, himself, remained in camp. About a quarter of an hour after he had dispatched the troopers this man returned to tell the Sub-Inspector that Mr. Kaye had been killed.

Mr. Nichols immediately turned out all available troopers and went to the scene of the attack. Mr. P. C. Smith was there with the body.

As I have mentioned, when Mr. Nichols had left Mr. Kaye the Sub-Inspector was accompanied only by Mr. Smith and one trooper, Trooper Sambo.

### THE ATTACK DESCRIBED

Pierce Eglesfield Smith, a grazier from Savannah Station, giving his description of the moments just before the attack said that the gins went ahead and the males dropped back until they were some distance behind their women. Mr. Kaye, the trooper, and Mr. Smith were riding behind these again and were only a few yards apart when suddenly the blacks turned and threw their spears. Spears narrowly missed Smith and the trooper. When he was able to look, after dodging spears that had been thrown at him, Smith saw Mr. Kaye falling from his horse. A spear was embedded in his chest.

The grave of the late Sub-Inspector, who was about 38 years of age, is marked by a tombstone on which appears the following epitaph:

“Sacred to the Memory of Henry P. Kaye, late Sub-Inspector of Native Mounted Police, eldest son of the Late Sir John Kaye of the Indian Officers and of Lady Kaye his wife, who was murdered by aboriginals at the Woolgar while in the execution of his duties on the 14th September, 1881.

This Tablet is erected in affectionate remembrance by his Mother.”

### WAR WITH THE KALKADOONS

On the night of 24 January 1883, Sub-Inspector Marcus de la Poer Beresford, a member of an aristocratic English family, with four native troopers, was camped in the Mackinlay Range, near Farley Station. The party was attacked by a group of blacks. Sub-Inspector Beresford suffered severe head injuries and was speared through the thigh.

From information gleaned from various descriptions of the occurrence, it would appear that when the affray took place, Sub-Inspector Beresford and the native troopers were attacked simultaneously. One of the troopers, who was speared and

held by a native, succeeded in getting his rifle. He shot one of the attackers who was near him, and the remainder took to their heels. It would appear that this action saved the lives of the four troopers, who were all wounded.

This trooper then rode to Cloncurry with the grim news.

The police party had been conducting a search for aboriginals who had previously murdered a man named Butcher and, on the night on which Sub-Inspector Beresford met his death, had camped in the vicinity of the aboriginals' camp. These natives had then awaited an opportunity to attack the police camp without warning.

In March, 1884, Inspector Frederick Charles Urquhart was put in charge of a punitive expedition against the Kalkadoons. He established an outpost on Corella Creek.

### MURDER AT CARLTON HILLS

The Kalkadoons soon after raided Carlton Hills Run, 60 miles from Corella Creek, and murdered J. W. Powell. Powell's black boy, who had been badly speared, brought the news to the police camp at Corella Creek. Urquhart and his troopers, accompanied by Alexander Kennedy, a partner of the murdered man, tracked down the Kalkadoons and found them in a gorge feasting on cattle they had stolen from Carlton Hills. Urquhart and his party attacked and a severe battle ensued.

The Kalkadoons were, however, by no means subdued. Soon afterwards, at a lonely outpost on Granada Station, they raided and burnt the camp and killed the Chinese shepherd.

Urquhart, with Hopkins, the owner, and a strong force of Native Police, tracked the Kalkadoons to Prospector's Creek, some 60 miles north-west of Cloncurry.

In one of the few recorded pitched battles between whites and aborigines, the Kalkadoons fought to the bitter end. Most of their warriors were wiped out in repeated charges against the rifles of the firmly established police force.

### POLICE SYSTEM INVESTIGATED

In October, 1896, the Home Secretary of the day, Sir Horace Tozer, K.C.M.G., instructed the Commissioner of Police to visit Cape York Peninsula in person and there to make a thorough investigation into the working of the Native Police and to make inquiries aimed at the establishment of a better police system for the great tract of country concerned.

Mr. Archibald Meston, journalist and authority on the aborigines, had previously been commissioned by the Queens-

land Government in 1894 to prepare a scheme for the protection and improvement in the condition of the Queensland aborigines.

Among the many recommendations put forward by Meston was the abolition of the Native Police and their replacement by white police assisted by unarmed trackers.

#### CAPTURE OF JIMMY AND JOE GOVERNOR

In 1900, when seven white people were murdered by the notorious half-caste outlaws, Jimmy and Joe Governor, who with another aboriginal, Jacky Underwood, had terrorised the Breealong and Gulgong Districts of New South Wales, Sub-Inspector Galbraith, in whose district the Gatton tragedy took place, was sent with six Queensland trackers to assist in the capture of the outlaws. So admirably did they perform their duties that the Premier of New South Wales wrote a special letter of commendation concerning them to the Premier of Queensland.

When Mr. W. E. Parry-Okeden succeeded Mr. D. T. Seymour as Commissioner of Police in 1895, the Native Mounted Police was already a diminishing Force. Plans were eventually completed for the disbanding of the Corps. Officers who wished to remain in the Police Service were absorbed into the regular Force and troopers who wished to remain were retained in employment as trackers.

The disbandment of the Native Mounted Police Force was completed in 1900 and, with their going, "Finis" was written to one of the most unique chapters in our State's history.