

Droving in the Upper Burdekin, 1863; The Diary of John Fenwick.

by

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The number of manuscripts by early pioneers of Queensland is very small and it has been the editorial policy of this Journal to reprint interesting manuscripts when they come to hand. With the diary of John Fenwick, reprinted here, a major problem arose in the difficulty to locate the original manuscript. The copy reprinted is in the possession of the Geelong Historical Society and a reprint is held by the Queensland State Archives. The Historical Society obtained the typescript from the ruins of the house of John J. Cary, a local historian in Geelong who died about 1950. During his lifetime he collected a variety of unusual historical materials, most relating to Tasmania. His house was left derelict after his death but through the efforts of R. H. Holden, research officer with the Geelong Historical Society, some valuable material was saved, including the Fenwick diary. I am greatly indebted to R. H. Holden and P. L. Brown, President of the Geelong Historical Society, for their help and permission to use the diary.

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John Fenwick was born in Newcastle, England, in September 1823¹. Little is known of his early life except that he went to work in a large corn warehouse. At the age of twenty-six he married Ella Lourie Wright. His agricultural interests and the many stories of easy fortunes to be made in Australia led him to emigrate to Melbourne in 1854. One year later he was still in Melbourne trying to get on his feet. But he was looking keenly at the gold rushes nearby and hoping soon to participate in that bonanza. He wrote to a friend, C. Niemeitz, of Geelong:

Hurrah for the Diggings! If I was "out" just now, I should certainly try the mines for a spell at least. I do not hear the dreadful tales which were so oft repeated in England, even from unfortunate diggers. There are diggings [*sic*], about the same distance from M[elbourne], as yours from G[eelong]. I wish very much for a trip to some of them but gelt is not to be thrown away until I can rake up a little.²

There is no evidence on whether Fenwick went to the gold-fields or, if he did, whether he succeeded there. Presumably he did not make a fortune from gold but he was slowly



John Fenwick in masonic regalia. (From *The jubilee review of English masonry in Queensland*. Brisbane, Fowler and White, 1909.)

establishing himself and keeping an eye open for any new opportunity of self-advancement. His death certificate discloses that he spent eight years in New South Wales before moving north; it makes no reference to his Victorian interlude. Since his residence in Victoria is well-established but there is no evidence of his having spent any considerable time in New South Wales it seems likely that the death certificate evidence is inaccurate.

In the late 1850s and early 1860s Queensland was opening up and seemed most tantalizing with offers of a bright and expansive future. Northern Queensland was just being explored. George Dalrymple made an exploratory survey in 1859-60 of the Burdekin area and wrote glowing reports of good pastoral and agricultural lands in the area³. Dalrymple was subsequently recompensed by the appointment of Commissioner for Crown Lands in this area (the Kennedy District) with authority to receive applications for pastoral runs from the beginning of 1861. The Kennedy District covered an extensive area, almost one-thirteenth of the whole area of Queensland. A rush set in immediately for land in the new district with speculators and genuine graziers from the south — Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne — eager to make a quick success. One of these new-comers was John Fenwick.

The centre for the area was Port Denison. A favourable harbour there had been discovered in October 1859 by Captain H. Sinclair, of the Schooner "Santa Barbara". In April 1861 the town site of Bowen was proclaimed on the shores of the bay. Development quickly followed. In May 1862 its population was 120; by October 1865 it had reached 1192⁴. A permanent jetty for the port was begun in 1864; and in the same year a newspaper, *The Port Denison Times*, began printing. The port was not, in fact, ideally chosen since it was south of the Burdekin whereas most of the settlement was to the north. Nevertheless, for some years Port Denison was the main inlet for those supplies necessary in opening up the Kennedy District, as well as being the outlet for wool, tallow, hides and sheepskins,

the primary produce of the area, destined for the southern markets.

Fenwick came to Bowen in 1863 and applied for a number of pastoral leases in the Kennedy District. Already the more obvious areas had been selected; the river blocks went very quickly. And Fenwick had to look to the Upper Burdekin reaches, in particular the Basalt River. During 1863 he applied for four blocks — Nulla Nulla No. 2, Nulla Nulla No. 3, Tallegulla No. 1 (which was divided into two), and Tallegulla No. 3. The applications were made in conjunction with Moses Angel James of Bowen who had earlier taken up Nulla Nulla No. 1⁵. Nothing is known of James but such an arrangement between a local resident and an outsider was quite common. Frequently, such arrangements were made to keep out other interested parties and to snap up the best areas early. The Unoccupied Crown Lands Occupation Act of 1860 did not provide any checks against "map graziers" where a grazier, upon a report of fertile country, would take a grazing licence immediately on a likely area without first inspecting it⁶. Fenwick does not seem a party to such practice — or, if he was, he was not in receipt of very reliable information since the areas he took up were not of obvious, immediate value or desirability. It is difficult to know whether James was an active partner or not; his name appeared in the Lease Registers after Fenwick's was removed but this does not present a clear case one way or the other as to how active a partner James was. James also leased a number of other runs where Fenwick was not a partner.

Nulla Nulla No. 2 consisted of fifty-one square miles (four of which were "not available" being unsuitable for pastoral purposes); Nulla Nulla No. 3 totalled forty-eight square miles (of which twenty-three were "not available"). Tallegulla Nos. 1 and 2 added up to seventy-five square miles with forty unavailable for pastoral purposes, and Tallegulla No. 3 came to forty-two square miles of which only two were unavailable. These properties ran on their southern boundary onto rocky, basalt walls set with dense scrub and granite ranges which were thickly timbered and grew only poor grass. All these areas lapsed and were transferred to G. Cann, J. F. Maguire and J. R. Ricards in 1866.

The diary of John Fenwick is of interest because it is one of the few records of settlement in the Burdekin area on the eve of its opening-up. Needless to say, most of the pioneers did not think of leaving reports of their experiences for future readers. Fenwick's diary covers sixteen days — 10-25 November 1863 — with a short postscript for Christmas Day, 1863, and 2 January 1864. It is useful as a record of the rapid spread of settlement in the Burdekin region within three years of the area being opened up for pastoral purposes; it is also of value in its description of the difficulties of early life in the area. The Fenwick-James properties were 259 miles by the usual track from Bowen, the distance itself being evidence of how speedily the area was snapped up by graziers.

Fenwick set out from Bowen on 10 November 1863 with cattle and horses; his destination was Nulla Nulla which he operated mainly as a sheep station. He took the usual route near the coast; an alternative was inland to Strathdon station and then on to the headwaters of the Bogie River. The coastal route skirted Mt. Little and Mt. Roundback, on the north-west side of which was "Powell's station". This was twenty miles from Bowen. Charles Powell had taken up Salisbury Plains in 1861 — a good run of land of about 100 square miles, lying between Abbott Bay and the Mount Abbot Range and embracing the whole watershed of the Elliot River⁷.

The journey continued across the sandy Elliot River and through dense scrub lying between Mt. Abbot and the coast at Cape Upstart. The next important stop on the track was Inkerman station. This was run by John Graham Macdonald who had applied in 1862 for ninety square miles fronting the



A typical selector's dwelling in the Upper Burdekin in the 1860s.

(Daintree Collection by courtesy of Oxley Memorial Library.)

Burdekin River. Macdonald, born in Victoria, was a well-known figure in the region as a result of his explorations in 1860 and 1861—in the Burdekin and in the north-west towards the Gulf of Carpentaria. At this point Fenwick had travelled about seventy miles from Bowen.

About ten miles further along was "Cassady's sheep station". This was the last station before the first crossing of the Burdekin. The Cassady brothers had been members of Dalrymple's exploratory party from Rockhampton in 1861. But this lease was held by Charles, a brother of the explorers. His run, known as Leichhardt Downs, was about 100 square miles and, unlike most of the other graziers, who ran cattle, Charles Cassady ran sheep. In 1865 Cassady transferred the lease to Macdonald. The "wretched public house" referred to by Fenwick seems to have been run by a Mr Hamilton.

Just after crossing the Burdekin, Fenwick ran into John Moore Dillon. He had been in northern Queensland since 1861 applying for various leases but seemed to do no good; some of the applications were not proceeded with, some were cancelled, others were forfeited because the licence fees were not paid. Previously he had served with the New South Wales

Government—first in 1836, and then, in 1839, he had been appointed Crown Solicitor for criminal business⁸. This office he held until 1860 when it was abolished; he received a pension and went north.

By the ninth day Fenwick had reached the Houghton River. This was a distance of about 110 miles from Bowen. On this river was another public house, the Cardington Hotel, run by R. H. Willis. The droving journey then proceeded over the Fanning Range and the Fanning River to Burdekin Downs. This was another well-established station run by a well-established family. Edward Cunningham and his brother, Michael Wickham, applied for this lease in 1861; it totalled seventy-five square miles fronting the Burdekin and Clifton Rivers. They also took other leases. Edward was a Victorian who in 1861 led an expedition into the Upper Burdekin reaches, as far as the Basalt and Clarke Rivers, looking for good land⁹.

Fenwick made a second crossing of the Burdekin and moved on to "O.K.'s swamp". "O.K." was Cornelius Joseph O'Kelly who along with William Reeve leased a number of runs on the west bank of the Burdekin. The main ones were Reedy Lake on Fletcher's Creek and Eumara, each only twenty-five square miles. They were leased in 1863, but one year later

they were registered in another's name. At this point Fenwick had less than one hundred miles to reach home; he had travelled about 166 miles from Bowen. The next part of the journey was faster. He passed "A's out stations". Christopher Allingham applied for Hillgrove on the Burdekin in 1861. He, and his cousin, John, took up a number of other leases in the area. By this stage they were one of the well-known families. Christopher was born in Ireland and emigrated to the Armidale area¹⁰. In 1851 he was exploring in the north as far as the Burdekin. Then in 1859, along with John and another cousin, he drove 1500 sheep and 2000 cattle to the Burdekin. When they reached Port Denison in 1861 they joined up with four other new settlers, including Edward Cunningham, to reconnoitre the reaches of the Burdekin. That was when he chose Hillgrove.

"The Bluff" referred to the Red Bluff lease of Joseph Hann. He was born in England and moved to Victoria about 1851¹¹. Eleven years later he applied for Burdekin country, taking up seventy-five square miles on the Basalt River. Adjoining this run and also on the Basalt River was Chance Hays leased by James Gibson in 1863. It comprised about fifty square miles. The final stop for Fenwick was home — Nulla Nulla — almost 260 miles from Bowen.

Like many of the early settlers in the area Fenwick does not seem to have had much luck or financial success. Early in 1864 he returned to Brisbane and took up business there. His abandonment of the Burdekin area does not seem due to drought or unfavourable weather conditions. 1863 did not present unusual climatic difficulties for graziers. Although 1862 had been a very dry year, 1863 was quite good, perhaps a little too wet, especially in the early months¹². But Fenwick's failure was not exceptional; many of the early graziers gave up quickly, mainly for financial reasons¹³. Also, labour costs were high; Aborigines presented a problem; and there was the general problem of acclimatization. At first, sheep were most commonly run; climate and pastures showed the unsuitability of sheep in many areas and a gradual switch to cattle was made. Such problems of adaptation could be expected in the early settlement of any new area. But the final blow for the Burdekin area came with the depression in 1866. This brought about a significant reconstructing of ownership and operations in the area.

In Brisbane Fenwick took advantage of his practical knowledge of the pastoral industry. At first he went into business with his brother as a hide and skin dealer¹⁴. Later in 1864 he set himself up as the firm of John Fenwick & Co., commission merchants, land and squatters' agents. He handled property and stock sales; he dealt in wool, tallow, and hides and also arranged some insurance business. A handbill advertising the firm is reproduced. The firm changed partners a number of times and seems to have been quite successful. In 1900 he retired and took a trip home to England. On 14 July 1900 he died in Brisbane, leaving no issue. At his death he was living with his sister, I. M. Fenwick.

During his Brisbane years he had been very active in various social and municipal developments. He was a prominent member of early Brisbane freemasonry being Secretary of the District Grand Lodge in Queensland from 1868 until his death. He encouraged musical developments in Brisbane and helped found the Orpheus Glee Club. Perhaps his greatest contribution was his initiative along with two other persons in establishing the Queensland National Association at Bowen Park. Fenwick became the first secretary of the Association. He was also a foundation member of the Queensland Chamber of Commerce.

His diary is no literary masterpiece but it is a pleasant, readable account of life in early, outback Queensland. Like most Englishmen, Fenwick could not avoid mentioning the mosquitoes, the snakes, the crocodiles; he admired the "native companions"; he was wary of the blacks. He made use of current Australian slang, although he normally put such words in quotes, presumably to show the language was not fully acceptable. Words like "billy", "spell" (for rest), "grub", "feed" are used in their regular context.

Fenwick refers to some pictures of bush life in Queensland in the *Illustrated News*. This is a short article which appeared in the *Illustrated London News* of 8 August 1863. The article and illustrations are reproduced.

Obvious spelling mistakes have been corrected and some punctuation has been supplied for readability but sentence structure and grammar have not been altered.

REFERENCES

1. A short obituary of Fenwick appears in *The Queenslander*, 21 July 1900.
2. (Copy) Fenwick to Niemeitz, 2 April 1855, papers of Fenwick & Co. held by Elder Smith Goldsbrough Mort Limited (Brisbane).
3. Jean Farnfield.— *Frontiersman; A Biography of George Elphinstone Dalrymple*. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1968. pp. 13-17; G. C. Bolton.— *A Thousand Miles Away; A History of North Queensland to 1920*. Brisbane, The Jacaranda Press in Association with The Australian National University, 1963. pp. 18-19.
4. *Ibid.* p. 28.
5. The land descriptions and information concerning the land transfers are found in CLO/N 18, f. 531; N 19, ff. 693, 739, 740; and N 20, f. 14, Queensland State Archives.
6. Bolton.— *op. cit.* p. 19.
7. Descriptions of the runs are found in Q.S.A. CLO/N 17 — N 20; distances are set out in *Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1864*. Brisbane, T. Pugh, 1864. p. 222.
8. *New South Wales Votes and Proceedings, 1859-60, Vol. I.* p. 1249. Moore Dillon made a report to Governor Bowen on the Nogoia River massacre of 1861.
9. Jane Black.— *North Queensland Pioneers*. Charters Towers, C.W.A.Q., n.d. p. 23.
10. D. Pike, ed.— *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 3, 1851-1890, A-C*. Melbourne University Press.
11. Black.— *op. cit.* p. 55.
12. Compare the rainfall figures for 1862 and 1863 in *Pugh's Queensland Almanac, 1864*.
13. Bolton.— *op. cit.* pp. 35-39.
14. Information supplied by Elder Smith Goldsbrough Mort Limited (Brisbane).

Diary of a Journey from Port Denison to the Basalt River (Queensland) with Cattle. 1863.

Tuesday. 10th Nov. Took delivery of the cattle and horses and started them on the way whilst I returned to Port 5 miles, to settle up etc. Noon — began to rain in torrents and before half an hour there were 3 inches water on the ground. Wet all afternoon, and I had no idea of leaving a good bed to camp out, so resolved to start early next morning, wet or dry and overtake the cattle at Powell's Station 20 miles on. I had sent them on the coast "road" — it is called "road" because there is no track, as Dundreary would say. However, Tooth, the Super, is a good bushman, and this route through

the bush saves some 25 miles on that via the Bogie, as we went last year by the road. The weather cleared up in the evening and next day I started after breakfast with a better heart, a clear sky and a temperature enough to stew me.

Wed. 11th Nov. I managed to hit Powell's station at the N. West Side of Mount Roundback, pretty well without either losing myself or any other accident; the cattle were camped a mile further, and the Super was waiting for me. P's manager soon had some tea and beef on the table and even a sup rum to boot, after which he accompanied us some 4 miles further

BRISBANE, 5th December, 1864.

Sir,

We beg to inform you that we have established ourselves here as
COMMISSION MERCHANTS, LAND AND SQUATTERS' AGENTS.

From Mr. FENWICK'S long practical experience in Victoria and Queensland, we may safely assure those who may entrust their Business to us, that it will be properly and satisfactorily conducted.

As we intend to devote a considerable portion of our attention to the **SALE & PURCHASE** of every description of **STOCK AND PASTORAL PROPERTY**, it will be to the advantage of those having Stock, or Country, stocked or unstocked, to dispose of, to furnish us with the necessary particulars to effect a sale, and for this end, they may rely on our best exertions as well in Queensland as through our connections in New South Wales and Victoria.

STOCK, &c., consigned to us, whether for Auction or private sale, will have our careful attention from arrival, and the Proceeds promptly remitted.

Liberal **ADVANCES** will be made on Wool, Tallow, Hides, &c., forwarded to us, or for shipment to our friends in Sydney or London.

As Agents of The **AUSTRALASIAN INSURANCE COMPANY**, we are enabled to take Marine Risks of all kinds at the lowest current rates.

Hoping to be favored with your commands,

We are, Sir,

Your most obedient Servants,

JOHN FENWICK & Co.

where we were to camp for the night, at the last water for some distance. We accordingly lighted our fire, made preparations for supper, and during the boiling of the "Billy" (a tin pan) enjoyed a good wash, in spite of the mosquitoes. It was New Moon, and the weather looked fine and settled, to my great relief, for I was apprehensive of the rainy season having commenced earlier than last year, and thus detaining us on the wrong side the Burdekin. Fitz when busy with the Tea Billy on a log was surprised by seeing a snake rise up between the pan and his face. The impulse to strike out with the knife in his hand was quicker than any thought of the risk in doing so, but by good luck he hit it near the neck, and the next blow its head was off. It was one of the most deadly kind. We had to sleep on the ground anyhow in spite of snakes. Then the cattle have to be brought in and "camped" in a body, and watched all night, by turns, the watcher going round the camp from time to time; a horse too is kept saddled to be ready in case of the cattle rushing away; the other horses are hobbled and turned out to graze. It was a splendid starlight night, with a fine cool sea breeze. I rolled up in my blanket — head and all, to protect me from mosquitoes, and was soon sound asleep — for 3 hours. The balance was broken and unsatisfactory. Once I was disturbed by the watchman driving off about a dozen of Powell's cattle which he saw were coming into our mob. By 4 a.m. on *Thursday 12th Nov.*, all hands were getting breakfast ready and by sunrise the Super. was mounted and letting the cattle quickly graze on our course, whilst the others saddled and packed the horses. In a couple of miles we overtook him; the cattle were spread out over a fine large plain as level as a bowling green, and on counting same he found himself 12 short. He then recollected those which had been driven off, which must have been our own! So now he is off scouring the bush in search. On my way from Camp, I too had a narrow escape from a snake. I was going on at a good jog thro' a belt of small trees, many of which i.e. the branches brushed my face in passing. I was just going to shut my eyes to pass one of these branches, I had scarcely time to throw myself flat on the horse's back and pull the right rein hard round in the act, the horse by the sudden jerk sprang aside; half a second more and my face would have come in contact with another of those deadly black snakes. In an hour Tooth returned with the lost cattle and we were once more on our route. About 10 a.m. we came to the Elliott, a very deep sandy Creek and being fortunate enough to find a small waterhole, we stopped for dinner — tea, beef (salt) and damper, and after a 3 or 4 hours "spell" started again. About 4 reached the margin of the great scrub*. It is 15 miles long and varies from 2 to 5 or 6 miles in width — it is only passable in some places, but by an accident in mistaking Mount Abbot for Upstart, we steered to the South, and so by sheer good luck got into Powell's cutting thro' it and before sundown were camped at Powell's out station, and the cattle yarded.

Friday 13th Nov. We were all astir for an early start, but alas, 3 of the horses were missing. So after an unsuccessful search till 9 o'clock, we decided *that* to be a dies non. Meanwhile were not idle, until Tooth found their tracks in one of the densest portions of the scrub. How they had wriggled thro' is a mystery to me — so after a weeks galloping in half a day Tooth set off to our dinner camp of yesterday to wait the runaways coming to water in the evening. About 3 p.m. one of the Stockmen (Powell's) came in with the intelligence that there were 3 horses heading East some 4 miles back. I got a horse, and taking Fitz with me soon came upon the

*(The Great Scrub which I noted is a very dense jungle, closely packed Myall, Sandalwood, etc. etc. and other trees, the lower strata climbers, thorny shrubs etc etc and it is a sort of impenetrable forest, and these scrubs are a great harbor for Blacks, who can crawl in and about where no white man could.)

stragglers and if they did not go back to camp quicker than they left it, it is a pity! They had not a chance of wandering that night, and as next morning we were under way very early, by sunrise.

Saturday 14th Nov. All we had to do today was to give Cape Upstart and the Coast with its boggy Saltpans on the right, and Stokes Range on the left, each a wide berth and look out to hit a water hole for a dinner camp and ditto for night. We were fortunate in doing both, but at the former we had much bother for several of the horses would not be caught, and running away with their packs etc, and as they also chose to prance and roll, we had some detention in hunting for several things which they had rolled off. The country all day looked beautiful and altho' the sun was very hot, a fine sea breeze, with the excitement of riding, driving and whip cracking made the whole very enjoyable. Having found some small holes (pools) about 5 o'clock which had not yet subsided from the last rain, we camped. A beautiful spot it was — near an open Sandal Wood Scrub, like a tastefully arranged shrubbery, but no one camps really comfortably on the coast road; there are too many natives in the neighbourhood.

Sunday 15th Nov. No Sunday for us, must travel on as usual and no more work than if we camped for the day — passed over a trail of about 3 miles of (in wet weather) perfectly flat salt bog and saw a great number of "Native Companions". They are a very tall bird, with slender legs, some 3 feet long; also hundreds of ducks, etc. etc. By 11 we came upon a fine deep lagoon or rather a series of them, of many miles; so camped, had tea and tried to get a comfortable rest during the height of the day and push on to Inkermann Station by Sundown. The heat was unbearable, and if you add to it, the annoyance of thousands of mosquitoes and March flies, you may justly conclude we had little real rest. Before reaching the station however, poor Fitz was twice bucked off what we thought one of the quietest of the horses. After that Tooth "put him thro'" for I believe the devil could not buck him off if he had a bridle on him. It was a bad day's work for "Ginger" for Tooth rode him all the balance of the journey, "to quiet him"! Once at Inkermann, I had milk in my tea and a comfortable bed, i.e. a blue shirt for a pillow, and my blanket spread on a table!

Monday 16th Nov. Stayed to breakfast and overtook the cattle some 3 miles on, after getting well wet with a shower — weather looking very heavy as if setting in for rain. This made us again very anxious to get across the Burdekin for much of the rain seemed to come from the West; consequently the floods might come down and stop us before we had much rain at this end. What a dirty puddle hole we had to make our Tea from at our mid-day camp! But there was no help for it — no more water for 8 or 9 miles — a clay hole in a brickfield is transparent to it. After leaving this "Camp" the feed (grass) became gradually worse and worse, so I determined to push on the cattle and cross the Burdekin that night. Meanwhile I rode off ahead to make a call at Cassady's Sheep Station; there was no station or inhabitants there when we went up in January, neither was there a wretched public house, as there is now, close to the crossing place where you can get vile spirits at 1/- per nobbler ($\frac{1}{2}$ glass), Ale and porter 5/- per bottle! Stare — do! Old Mrs. Cassady had a bowl of Tea before me almost as soon as I got in, and disregarding her pressing invitations to stay all night, went on and crossed the river. On reaching the other side found Mr. Moore Dillon, an Ex-Crown Solicitor for New So. Wales. He will travel on till he finds country! Had another Tea with him and then found my own camp. The tent was rigged tonight as it was raining. Cattle, however, remained steady until an hour before dawn, and before Tooth could saddle up and turn them, they had gone a couple of miles up the river. The rain pattered on thro' the tent, but I slept on.

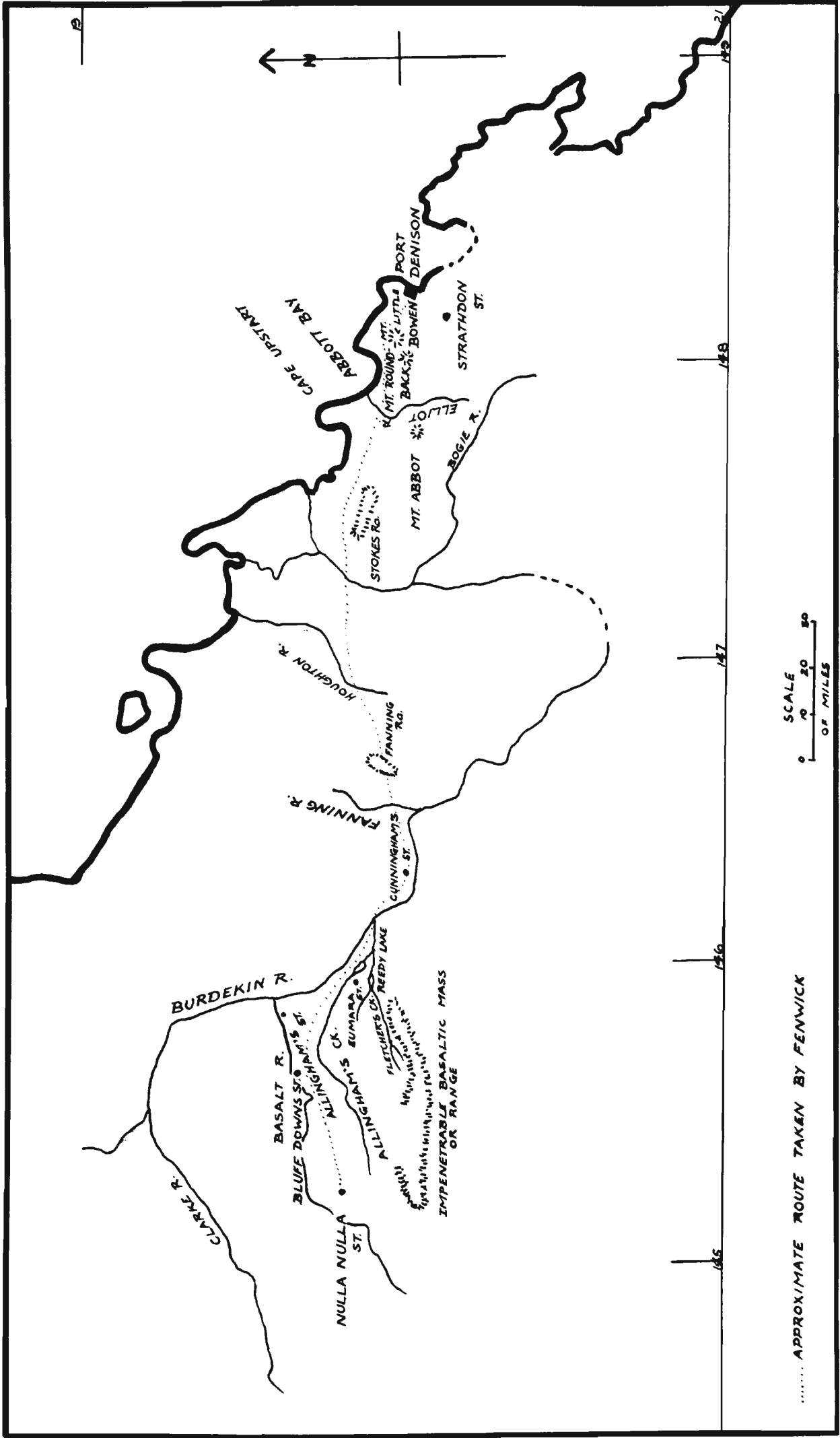
Tuesday 17th Nov. The fire was rained out, and we had some difficulty in getting a blaze to boil our Billies. Now, I must see whether it is all right with the drays (i.e. our Wool drays, which had brought down the wool and had to return with supplies). They passed down to the landing more than a week ago. Consequently they ought to be up again by this time. The Hotel keeper, says, they will be up today, consequently I am sure to meet them 6 or 7 miles down, or surely at the Camping place 12 miles down. I can then camp with them and regain the cattle the following night. I took only one horse, no swag or grub, but as it looked promising for more rain I strapped a new waterproof cape on my saddle. I jogged on along the solitary track for miles — still no sign of the drays; then it came down a deluge of rain, but my cape was no protection for me. Then I came on tracks of working bullocks; now I felt sure of catching them at the 12 mile camp, I got there in time, and found 2 drays — but *not* ours. However I knew the men and so hobbled the horse and sat down under the dray to enjoy a pot of Tea and a bit of pretty soft damper; altho' as wet as if I had been immersed it was by no means cold, quite the reverse. So after an hour's rest I set off again, assured that our drays were some 15 miles lower down still. I was wet thro' and dry again twice before getting to them. However, I was not comfortable, so getting a pair of moleskins and a shirt from Bill, I went down to the river to get a good wash before putting them on, being duly cautioned not to go

into the water for fear of the crocodiles, which are numerous and large. I saw the skins of two, 16 feet long in port, which were caught here. In spite of crocodiles and millions of mosquitoes I had my bath, but to get dry was out of the question; the perspiration kept me wetter than the river, for it is a genuinely tropical country is the lower or mouth of the Burdekin. I was not sorry to turn in as soon as possible after sundown, for I did not feel quite the thing, and the blanket I borrowed was very thin, affording no protection against the horrid mosquitoes. Under these circumstances, anything like a refreshing sleep was out of the question, and when I turned up at dawn, I had the symptoms of a bad bronchial cold.

Wednesday 18th Nov. and to add to my troubles I could not find a trace of my horse until I had wandered about the bush for nearly two hours; the long grass had wet me up to the middle. I had no appetite for breakfast and so borrowing another pair of pants and leaving my own, I set off again to overtake the cattle. The ground was soft with the rains, and slippery, and having got a slight wetting soon after starting I did not want another, which I very nearly had. I had got thro' 15 miles with sundry distant grumblings in my rear. At last came one peal so loud and near that I looked up and if I ever saw a black sky — it was then at my back — so I put Grisly into a gallop hoping thereby to keep ahead of the storm until I overtook the other drays, which I found had started on that morning, I knew they would camp in a storm and I would



First sketch of *Illustrated London News*, 8 August 1863 — Mustering cattle.



Map of driving route taken by Fenwick in the Burdekin region.



Second sketch of *Illustrated London News* — Running in a mob of horses.

thus get shelter. Kept Grisly going for 5 miles and by that time he and I were in a good lather, for it was seething hot; however we reached the drays. The road took a turn to the West—the storm kept its course and we missed it. I was going on then, but they would have me stay to have a pot of Tea first—after which I jogged on to the crossing and gave “Grisly” a spell. The Cattle will be now 25 miles ahead, (I thought—but they turned out to be then 28 miles) and I have neither Blanket nor grub. I forgot to say that before I reached our drays my cape was in a dozen pieces—the heat had melted all the seams! I must push on till I overtake Mr. Dillon who would only be 12 or 15 miles ahead with his sheep; they only travel 6 or 7 miles a day. I pulled him after sundown—thoroughly worn out and unwell. However the old gent was very kind—he made me very comfortable and having had a comfortable rest and sleep I was much better. Next day, Thursday, 19th November, started in good heart, hoping to pull the cattle before 3 o’clock. By half past 10 I had reached the 2nd Crossing of the Houghton 16 miles and found Tooth had camped there last night, and made an early start. Here there is a sort of public house going up, so I camped and in due time had some dinner and a bottle of ale. The heat was intense and even when I left at 3 o’clock, it was

over powering. I had not gone one mile till thunder in my rear warned me to look out; however, it was no use my galloping now—there is no shelter and the cattle by this time are 12 miles ahead. When I reached the camping place, I found there a lot of sheep going up country. Cattle had been obliged to go on to the next water, 5 miles on—could not camp there with the sheep. I made myself known to the person in Charge who turned out to be a gentleman. He too, made me very comfortable for the night; so I was again in luck and truly thankful I was, I assure you. You may travel here for days and not meet a single soul.

Friday 20th Nov. Got an early start and after crossing the Fanning Range (Mountains) came on our camp fire and the old tea leaves, still wet—kept on the track in good heart, for I was sure of coming up to the Cattle before they camped for dinner. A stern chase is a long chase, and it is really surprising how difficult I found it to overtake the mob. However, I did at last hear the sharp crack of the stock whips and presently came in sight of the drivers. They were wondering how I happened to be so long detained, whilst I felt some slight annoyance inwardly at their pushing on in my absence. The distance between the different watering places was a sufficient excuse. There is a large Sandy Creek about 2 miles before

the Fanning River; we camped there, for dinner, spending the few hours partly in hooking a few of the Fish, and partly in unsatisfactory slumbers under the shadiest of the trees in the bed of the Creek. We had a long rest here, for the Fanning was only 2 miles ahead and there was no more water that I knew of, for 15 miles after that. So our plan was to go on to the Fanning—water the Cattle there; get our suppers—then push on by moonlight for 5 or 6 miles—camp, and making an early start next day we could reach Water and get a late breakfast. We accordingly got to the Fanning, bathed, made “Johnny Cakes” on the ashes, supped, and started on a lovely evening after Sundown. There was one very large heavy cumulous cloud on our left (S) beautifully illumined by the sun, long after he had ceased to afford us lower vapors any light. One could not help watching this majestic looking cloud—it was so beautiful; by and by as the sun’s influence weakened, we could see that constant flashings inside lit it up and showed from time to time in contrast to the external sun, tints, depths, perfect abysses of cloud; faint distant thunder quickly increased to sharp peals; almost quicker began the air to darken as the erst clear sky began to be covered by a dark flying scud, tearing madly across the face of the moon—almost at right angles, to the thunder storm. We guessed we had come about 4 miles and hastily decided to camp whilst it was yet light enough—the difficulty was to find a space sufficiently clear of tall trees, on account of falling branches and lightning for we were in a dense iron bark forest and the upper limbs are usually very rotten. We did the best we could, made a pile of the saddles etc—another got wood—another made a fire—large one you may be sure, and in a very few minutes we had equal to a load of wood in a blaze. The tent was hung up between two trees, but not yet fixed, when down came the rain; the first dark was a thorough drench—and it was not much better in the tent for the weight of the shower came through in spray, quite as wetting but more tedious. No lack of light now—for there was not an instant when the world seemed not in a blaze, and the deafening rattle of heavens artillery above seemed more like the destruction of Worlds. The horses stood still and did not graze, only looking the pictures of dejection. The cattle clustered up in a heap and I, in about 5 minutes, was sitting up to the ankles in water. My blanket round my shoulders and my head on my knees—yet—in spite of my uncomfortable—on my “hunkers” in a pool of water and the rain coming through overhead; in spite of Tooth’s yarns about former hurricanes on former expeditions, I went sound asleep for more than 2 hours. The Storm was spent, the water was draining away from beneath, and in a short time I was able to lay my blanket on the ground and sleep again. Tooth started off with the Cattle as soon as he could see to drive, *Saturday 21st Nov.*—and after packing up our soaked things started after. There was plenty of water now, we could breakfast when we chose, and after going a few miles had a short halt, while we had a pot of Tea. One tree we passed, close to our last night’s camp, splintered to matches by the lightning. I put a piece in my pocket as a remedy for toothache (Tooth says it is infallible). Proceeding over creeks and gullies innumerable, now running, we mounted a steep rocky granite ridge, on the summit and scattered in groups on huge boulders many tons weight, each, from which a splendid view of the country may be had. Once over this we come into a wide sandy creek, and here we camp for dinner and Tooth shoes one of the horses. It is intensely hot and shows signs of another storm tonight. Onward—first, over broken scrubby country, then over beautifully undulating rises—flanked by richly grassed slopes, so patched with patches of shrubs, art could scarcely make the landscape more artistic. The sun is shining bright and hot—scorching hot. The Thunder is growling behind us. I ride on ahead, find a good spot to camp, now come the horses. The tent is up, fire lighted, storm coming up, Cunningham’s station

is only 2 miles off. I’ll go there tonight—“You’re too late,” says Tooth. Never mind, I’ll make Grisly go for once and I did make him pace down the Burdekin. Hut in sight—very heavy wetting drops and now I am at the door. Quick, come in—must hobble Grisly first. There now, five minutes more—all fair—storm slowed off in another direction. So much the better for Tooth & Co. passed a chatty evening with Cunningham and slept on the floor, or a hide I mean.

Sunday 22 Nov. Remained with C. till after dinner, $\frac{1}{2}$ past one, meantime had a good chat and a refreshing swim on the Burdekin. I’ll easily catch the cattle ere they camp for the night. The weather looked more settled today tho’ the heat was not one jot abated. It must needs be hot for the sun is vertical with us now; he has to go $3\frac{1}{2}$ degrees further south to the Tropic of Capricorn and then he returns and goes North to warm up you cold blooded people of England next June. I had now almost become accustomed to solitary travelling, but in the Bush *it is* solitary. There is no one to meet—no house to pass, not even in sight; generally you are perhaps 20 to 40 miles from another human being (white); as to the Blacks one cannot tell how near they may be—an odd spear may at any unsuspecting moment be whizzed into one’s vitals—or a Boomerang or stone Tomahawk urged at one’s head. I heard at C’s that they had been showing up in large numbers at O’K’s and very impudent. I hope they were driven off with Military Honors! A gentle jog brought me to the crossing place of the Upper Burdekin, an hour before sundown—I could see the cattle on the other side. They went up about a mile and camped. I had the tent pitched and feeling out of sorts and tired I turned in, and before 7 o’clock was sound asleep.

Monday 23 Nov. Our stage today must be 10 miles, without water, and so we had not to camp for dinner; in fact we were at our goal (O. K’s Swamp) by 10 o’clock. I should have gone ahead now, as I know my wife will make sure of my being at home on the 25th, my birthday. I was not yet able, I feel too much “used up”—so after a pot of tea I rigged the tent to keep the sun off and *went to sleep* again. Got up all right, decided at once to start after sun down, travel all night, camp at the Bluff, on the Basalt River (32 miles), get to Gibson’s next night 28 more, and home 18 more next morning. 6.50 p.m. I started; the moon seemed to give less light than usual, the shadows were long and very deep, the track lay through many patches of scrub. O K’s station is within 4 miles of this and consequently the Blacks cannot be very far off. My revolver is ready of course—but Grisly will not stand fire, so I might as well be unarmed. I don’t look at my watch so long as I can possibly help it and when I do, find it is only 8 o’clock—not yet 5 miles; how long the road seems, jog, jog, jog, wearily along; oh! dear, it is only 10 o’clock and 12 miles; I feel sleepy, on, on, on, cross the Creek, a camping place—no fire—no one there, across a long plain, where I made the *first* track with the wagon in February—on, on, cross creek again, on, on, on, on, on, what a long way tis to the third crossing.*

Ah, here it is, no! only a branch—12 o’clock, find myself nodding. Well, I cannot get to the Bluff that’s clear; however, I keep on—*on* the Horse, and *on* the track, and wake up within 100 Yards of the Shepherd’s Hut of one of the “A’s” out stations. I don’t want the shepherds so I tumble off; what a row the dogs are making so I sing out “All right” I am going to camp out here. In 5 minutes more I am rolled in my blanket on the stony ground and Grisly’s bell is tinkle tinkle tinkling me to sleep. 1.30 a.m. *Tuesday Nov. 24* I am saddled up and off before Mr. Shepherd turns out, *his* master is many miles off!

*[At this point Fenwick drew a rough map of the final leg of the journey. This has not been reproduced because the map is not clear and adds nothing to the diary.]



Third sketch of *Illustrated London News* — Getting the wool to market.

2 miles — cross creek again, last time, 3 miles plain, 3 miles forest, 2 more mixed, and I am *on* our own river. But still far from home. Grisly is again free and I am at breakfast, part of a Johnny cake and tea, my blanket forming my shade. A station is across the river, in sight, but we do not *eat there!*. So I lie on my back, and think, think, for hours and then I think of Grisly, and he is gone! I follow his tracks and find him past the station, a little after noon. I start — hungry — but refuse to stay to dinner at the Station (a pack of unprincipled scoundrels.) and after a ride over plains and through forests I am at G's (28 miles by half past 7 p.m.). Heaven knows how many pints of tea I imbibed, I did not count them — but turned in thereafter and slept soundly.

Wednesday 25th Nov. Bathed in the creek, started — no missing the station this time, loaded myself with "Tomatoes" at the Old Camp, and before NOON, Grisly and J.F. were at home! Equal to 80 Miles, between Monday night and Wednesday morning; *at a walk*. Of course, I was expected and gladly welcomed. But for my anxiety on Ella's account, I should have been satisfied to cross Australia with a mob of cattle; as it was I enjoyed the journey very much.

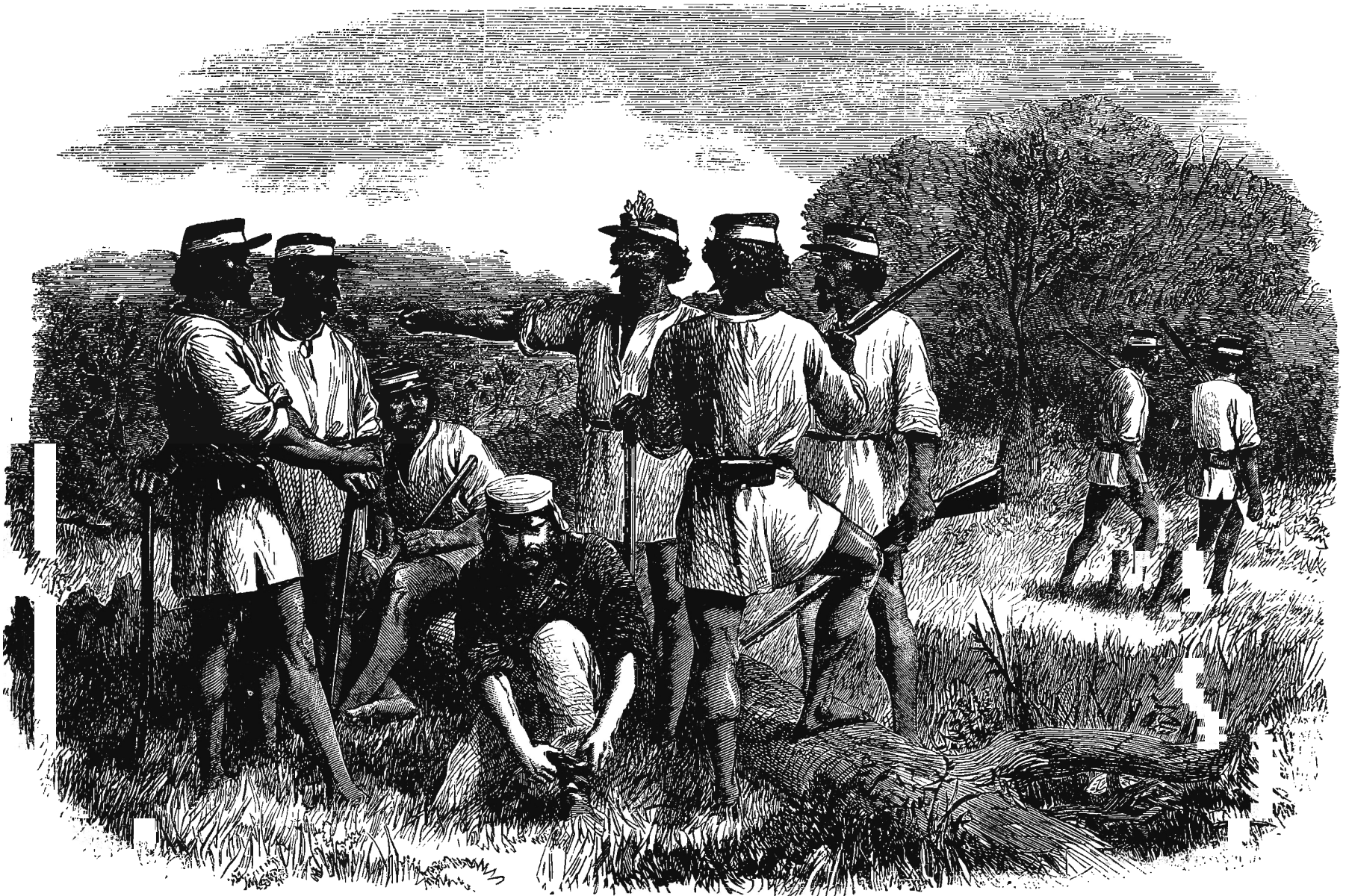
Xmas Eve 63. Slutch, slutch, slutch; why, Nelly here is some one on horseback tonight. In comes a drowned rat, with letters, and amongst them your Sept. letter. It has rained now for 5 days and nights and the country is like a sheet of water. I have not got the papers yet and so cannot read the

Associations doings, they'll come by and by. I am glad you all keep in pretty good health. Mother's eyesight is a very sad affair, and in spite of the inconvenience she suffers, I hope she bears it with due resignation. You surely never dreamt for a moment that I doubted a warm welcome. I would be too glad to risk it if I had the chance — but the *fortune* is not made yet. When it is in a fair way then I must make a trip to Old England for the "Old folks' at home's" sake. As to our produce, etc did you see some pictures of Bush life in Queensland, in the *Illustrated News*? The Bullock dray going into a gully, mustering cattle, running in Horses etc. that is our way of sending produce to port and the views were pretty correct. My black boy gave me the slip in Rockhampton, so that is ended! But don't you talk of brother Black, you would change your note if you were here.

Jan 2nd 1864. Our Messenger is getting ready to start for port. Yesterday, New Year's day was the first fineish day for 12 days. 12 days incessant rain — in civilization you don't realize the horrors of it. *Everything* is wet inside and out, and what does not get soaked gets mouldy, ach! The difficulty is to keep the fire on; the rain above may be kept out, but the wet rises from below. I'll give you an idea of an outside Squatters life in a New Country some day, but not now, wait till we are thro' it. Our nearest approach to an Xmas Dinner was a bit of boiled Salt beef, which we could not eat after all; but tea will always slip down.

I have more letters to write yet, and must bring this weary long letter as you will have called it to a finish. I hope tho the diary will interest you, tho long as it appears to write it is much abbreviated. I had a letter too from J. Trotter, full of NC News. Do not use that sticky stuff to close your letters, the damp opens them, (if not an envelope use a wafer).

I shall be down in Port, before many weeks are over, if flooded rivers will let me, but I am not going to swim my horse. Ella sends her best love to you all, and wishes you a Happy New Year. So do I. God bless and protect you all — is the sincere prayer of your affectionate son
JOHN FENWICK.



Fourth sketch of *Illustrated London News* — Native Police.

Bush Life in Queensland.

(From a Correspondent.)

MUSTERING day is one of the most important on a cattle station. Every spare hand, white or black, that can sit a horse is mounted and sent out on the "run;" and neighbours, on their best nags, gather from far and near to lend their aid. After getting fairly off, the party scatters in different directions, so that every portion of the run may be visited, and the cattle swept into a common centre, called the "main camp."

To this point a well-broken herd will run on hearing the crack of the stockwhip, which, wielded by a stalwart and practised arm, makes a report like that of a pistol. When the whole party has reached the camp, each one driving before

him his quota of cattle (by which time a thousand or more may be collected), the whole mass is started for home, and this is sometimes a very difficult operation, as the animals will often cling tenaciously to the camp, especially on a hot day. After a great hubbub of dogs barking, horses galloping, and men shouting and cracking their stockwhips, the mass moves — at first slowly and reluctantly, but gradually the pace quickens until it ends in a downright rush, the young strong cattle leading off, and leaving their weaker brethren so far in the rear that a "mob" will often extend to a mile or two in length, when the flanks must be well attended to to prevent straggling.

The column, properly directed, is made to enter the stockyard, as shown in my first sketch. If the herd is large, and a good haul is not made on the first day, the process must be repeated until all the outlying parts of the run are cleared and the whole of the occupants brought in.

My next sketch shows the mode of running in a "mob" of horses from the bush. Old brood mares and broken horses are generally very tractable, and run home at once when started; but when there is a large proportion of young, unbroken stock it is often difficult to make them go the right way, and some very serious "rough-riding" may be the consequence.

My third sketch shows some of the difficulties the squatter has to contend with in getting his wool to market and his supplies back. One of the drags, laden with ten bales, each containing about 500 lb. of wool, has accomplished the feat of descending the steep bank of a "gully," or creek, and is slowly creeping up the opposite side, the oxen goaded to exertion by the constant application of the drivers' heavy two-

handed whip, accompanied by language of which the less is said the better.

The second drag is descending; the wheel is locked, and the "polers" are made to hold back, no easy matter in such a place. Most bush roads in Australia are quite unfit for draught horses. The slow, but powerful, hardy, and patient ox is the only animal that can be relied on, and sometimes it is necessary to put two or three teams together to clear the impediments.

The sketch of native police in fighting costume, shows them stripped for action and ready to beat up the quarters of some hostile tribe, who have been committing depredations in the thick "scrub," in the background, where horses cannot be used. All natives have great difficulty in reconciling themselves to the restraint of clothing; so that, when active service is the word, those most advanced in civilisation will strip themselves of everything superfluous.

Illustrated London News, XLIII (1863), 8 August 1863. p. 146.