

Chapter 11 --Attraction of the Liverpool Plains

(1831 – 1832)

Sir Thomas Mitchell launched out from ‘ Wallamoul’ near Tamworth on the Peel River in December of 1831 to explore the Narrabri area of the Liverpool Plains. Wallamoul or Wollomal was from Mitchell’s understanding, part of the furthest white settlement in that corner of the Colony.

On 14 February 1832, Mitchell came across a lagoon, which he described as ‘ this fine piece of water’ . Initially called Snodgrass Lagoon, it was part of what became known as ‘ Lower Water’ or Waterloo Creek³⁹⁶. Squatters followed in his trail, over the next few years, to grab their share of grazing land. David junior and his sons, James and John, joined the rush, and Waterloo Creek eventually formed part of the Brown’ s ‘ Millie’ property. Mitchell himself encountered land hungry souls that had gone before him and were well established in places he was ‘ exploring’ , such as the Peel River.

The Move to Jerry’ s Plains

On 21 August 1832, David junior, declaring himself a resident of Jerry’ s Plains, applied for a license to sell liquor at his inn. David’ s memorial (drafted for him by a public notary) for a licence states that he:

‘has recently retired to his estate at Jerry’ s Plains, where he has fitted up most excellent paddocks contiguous to the river and rendered his establishment for Public accommodation in the highest degree eligible being adjacent to the highway... ..’

While David here is saying that he has moved, he is just as likely to have still been in the process of arranging for his family to move.

David probably, here and in other situations, had used his carpentry skills personally or to direct others to construct two buildings, a house and an Inn. Seventeen years later the inn was rebuilt as a more substantial stone construction.

David’ s ‘ estate at Jerry’ s Plains’ had clearly been in preparation for some time. In addition to his ‘ Public accommodation’ built on Portion 29, ‘ The Green Gate Inn’ , he also arranged the construction of a house, to accommodate his growing family. The inn was initially built of timber – It appears that some years later the inn was rebuilt of quarried stone, possibly using the skills of the convict labourers who had been assigned to him. It is highly possible that David was already selling liquor at his premises. Many an establishment in those early years sold liquor without a licence – This situation altered as the enforcement of licensing laws was increased. In September 1838, the Quasi-rent for David’ s Jerry’s Plains grant was gazetted as £1-2-6 sterling per annum, back dated to 1 January 1831.³⁹⁷

The chosen name of his establishment, ‘ The Green Gate’ , is worth some speculation. About the time the Brown family arrived in the colony, there was an inn located in ‘ The Rocks’ area of Sydney Cove, called the ‘ The Green Gate’ Inn. The name may well have commemorated recollections of their accommodation in the first few days in the colony, or a place to visit for refreshment when commuting to and from Eastern Farms.

David submitted his memorial to the Colonial Secretary with a covering note in his own handwriting. He signed with much more experience and confidence than was evident the day of his marriage:



³⁹⁶ Sir Thomas Livingston Mitchell and His World 1792-1855, p230.

³⁹⁷ NSW Government Gazette 5 Sep 1838 p701.

David's claim of relocation to Jerry's Plains is consistent with a letter by one of David's daughter-in-laws, who stated in 1914 that: 'The Browns had a grant of 100 acres of land at Caddie Creek near Windsor where they lived until 1832.'³⁹⁸



Back and End view of David Brown's 'Robin Hood Inn' at Jerry's Plains, built c1846. The original 'Green Gate' was of timber construction adjacent to what had been the 'High Road' running to the south of David's property. The present highway bisects David's original land and runs east-west on the low ground that was to the north of David's inn. Pier at left is in fact one of several chimneys. Photo taken in 1977 by Valma Gee. By February 1981 there was no trace of it, the stone of which was constructed having been sold.

The grants at Jerry's Plains stated size were nominal, and more generous than the official 150 acres. The actual area of land David and his family had acquired courtesy of the Government was 182 acres for Lot 29, and 185 acres for Lot 28.³⁹⁹ But this was still not enough.

The Sydney Herald announced in one of its advertisements on 27 October 1832:

Hunter's River

The Inhabitants of the district of Hunters River, are hereby informed, that the Scots Church, now erecting at Maitland, will be opened for Divine Service on Sunday, the 11th of November next, the Rev. Dr. Lang, and Rev. W. Pinkerton. Divine Service will commence at 11 o'clock A.M....⁴⁰⁰

It seems likely that David and family began probing northwest beyond the 19 counties boundary, and agisting their cattle at temporary stations about 1832–3. If so, the family's move to Jerry's Plains would have become a pressing matter, to enable convenient 'central' control of their westward expansion and the maintenance of the Cattai property. It is known from David's son, John, that he (John) joined his father and older members of the family from 1836 onwards, in the management of cattle on runs and stations.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ Mitchell Library Doc 2197. Letter by Emily J Brown to genealogist G. R. Nichols of dated 19 January 1914. Emily was daughter-in-law to David Brown junior.

³⁹⁹ NSW Dept of Lands. Parish of Wambo Hunter District Map 1903 No 10901801

⁴⁰⁰ Sydney Herald. p3, Monday 29 October 1832.

⁴⁰¹ On runs squatters often posted a man or two with a heard of animals remote from the main encampment. These outposts became known as stations and have passed into current usage as the name for a grazing property. A run may have had several 'stations'.

It is evident that about the time of the family's arrival on the Hunter that conditions for their neighbours were far from ideal:

'The greatest proportion of wheat on the Hunter has been destroyed by soot and rust'
26 November 1832⁴⁰²

In the Supreme Court,

Sheriff's Office, 8th December 1832. Carter v. Duff concerning Portion 27 originally granted to Thomas Browns:

On Thursday, the 27th instant, at one o'clock, in George Street, opposite Pollack's London Tavern, Sydney, the Sheriff will cause to be sold, all the right, title, interest, and estate of the defendant in and to all piece or parcel of land, ?nte, laying and being at Jerry's Plains, containing one hundred and fifty acres, more or less; Bounded on the East by Dent's land; and on the West by David Brown's Farm; North by river frontage, and South by Government land; 20 acres of paddocks, 13 acres of wheat; and 3 quarters of an acre of barley; unless the execution be previously satisfied.⁴⁰³

In March of 1833, the headquarters of the Hunter River division of the Mounted Police was transferred to Jerry's Plains from Maitland. This made it more central to the spread of settlement in the Hunter, and its spilling over into the Liverpool Plains.

During 1833, criminal activity in the bush became especially bad:

'Robbers went in and out of the camp of unfettered road gangs at will by night and could take to the bush with ease. Some of the worst bushrangers on the Hunter had escaped from the iron gangs at Newcastle.

This was to be the pattern for years to come. Great gangs appeared in turn, each to run a spectacular course and each to be eventually broken up; but for each notorious band of desperate horsemen a hundred unnamed runaways furtively scrounged in the bush or boldly levied toll on the roads. Singly, in couples, or in small gangs they snatched a shepherd's rations, killed a sheep for mutton, stole a horse or a musket, robbed a farm or a dray, rifled pack-horse mail bags, bailed up a traveler for his money and watch, his pistols and his coat. Bushrangers eminent in their profession were always superbly mounted, and a coveted horse which did not fall into their possession was always well guarded. Many rangers of the bush were cattle duffers, and a few committed murder. Certain runaways lived with Myall Blacks for years, fomenting and participating in forays of cattle spearing and in murders of white shepherd and hut keepers.⁴⁰⁴

Relocation

In August of 1833, the Australian Agricultural Company (AAC) were given generous grants of pastoral land: 'the western part of the original Port Stephens Estate (464,640 acres), the Liverpool Plains/Warrarah (249,000 acres) and Peel River/ Goonoo (213,000 acres)'. In the process, they added considerable momentum to colonial expansion to the north and north-west. They also caused the displacement of twenty-three squatters who had been established in those locations for some years. Being squatters, they of course had no official endorsement such as a grant to justify their continuing in occupation. Following is the list of the squatters and their holdings as recorded on behalf of AAC in April 1832⁴⁰⁵:

⁴⁰² SH, 26 November 1832, Domestic Intelligence.

⁴⁰³ SH, 17 December 1832, Advertisements

⁴⁰⁴ Dawn in the Valley, p305.

⁴⁰⁵ Sir William Edward Parry's journal of April 1832. Parry inspected the area on behalf of the AACo.

Head of Cattle	Station	Belonging to	Residence
About 1,200	Mookie	Mr Robertson Mr Burns	Sydney (Watchmaker) Richmond
500	Kilcoobil	John Blaxland, Esq	Newington, Parramatta
About 700	Murilloo	- Fitzgera ld Esq Wm Lawson Esq	Windsor Veteran Hall, Parramatta
2,000	Yarramanbah	Mr Otto Baldwin William Osborn Jno Upton Geo Yeoman Esq } Richd Yeoman Esq } Patrick Campbell	Patrick' s Plains Liverpool Plains Richmond Maitland Maitland
1,600	Boorambill	Josh Onus } Robt Williams }	Richmond
1,200	Warrah	Thos Parnell Phillip Thorley Wm Nowlan	Richmond Richmond Patrick' s Plains
1,000	Phillip' s Creek	Major Druitt	Mr Druitt, near Parramatta
<i>8,200 cattle on the Liverpool Plains</i>			
1,100	Kewerhindi	Mr Geo Loder Mr Andrew Loder	Windsor Hunter River
1,200	Wollomal	Mr Brown W Dangar Esq	Wollombi Brook, Darlington, Hunter River Patrick' s Plains
1,300	Wollomal or Waldoo	- Cory Esq - Warland Esq	Paterson' s River Page' s River
<i>3,600 cattle on the Peel River</i>			

The eviction of those squatters fuelled resentment against the new, well connected, free settlers who received priority on land grants and lavish endowments with broad acres.⁴⁰⁶ Philip Thorley and the Loder brothers were among those who were affected.⁴⁰⁷ The Loder brothers then took up land further west, closer to the Gwydyr, and where the Browns established Millie Run. On Waterloo Creek

Of note amongst the 23 dispossessed is 'Wollomal'. The 'Mr Brown listed as having ownership was encountered by the explorer, Sir Thomas Mitchell in December 1831. He is Joseph Brown, born at

⁴⁰⁶ 'The expedient use of Crown land, which was allowed to grow to staggering proportions in the time of the popular Macquarie, was discouraged by his successors but the practice of squatting in remote areas continued to be widespread, causing continuous serious trouble in the widening areas of settlement. Those who had been here for a long time in the Colony, and those who had qualified more recently in the regular way as prisoners of the Crown, believed like Macquarie that New South Wales was a convict colony, established for their benefit and the land was theirs by right. The old free colonists were tolerated but resentment grew against the new free settlers, who came without the justification of a penal sentence but received priority on land grants and lavish endowments with broad acres. The first confrontation on the Hunter between Hawkesbury men and the new order of settlers was at Patrick's Plains, and this district was to become the centre of a partisan brawl which convulsed the colony in the time of Sir Richard Bourke.

Class antipathy of the free - and the freed, and collision of the old and the new colonists, produced a yeast that would ferment a bitter brew. Some declined to drink the cup, but all were involved in the end.' Dawn in the Valley. p34.

⁴⁰⁷ Waterloo Creek, p91.

Wilberforce on 18 December 1805 or 1806 to a David Brown and Eleanor Fleming. Joseph is listed as a resident of Darlington in the 1832 Post Office directory, and owned a 293 acre property was called "Greenluk" on the east side of Wollombi Brook where it enters the Hunter.⁴⁰⁸

On 5 August 1833, Richard Alcorn of Fal Brook purchased 150 acres (61 hectares) of land at Jerry's Plains for £100 from John Jenkins Peacock. The land, Portion 27 in the Parish of Wambo, had been originally granted to Thomas Brown. Thomas sold his grant to John Duff, son of Peter Duff (I) some years earlier. Due to a legal dispute between John Duff and an insolvent William Carter, the land had been offered for auction by the NSW Sheriff in December 1832. Carter had lost two properties as a result of the 1830 depression.⁴⁰⁹ John Peacock bought the property at the auction and soon after offered it for resale.⁴¹⁰ Which is when Alcorn acquired it, but he was to wait some years before taking up residence there.

If David hadn't moved all of his family from Cattai to the Jerry's Plains property, he was not far off doing so. . In 1833, Thomas was 16 years old, James 14, John 12, Mary 10, Catherine 7, David (III), into his fifth year, and George 2. It was David (III) who recollected in later years that he had moved from 'Caddai' when he was five, i.e. after 3 November 1833.⁴¹¹ Thomas and James would have already made excursions to Jerry's Plains with their father previously. The care of the Cattai property was left to members of wider family and others they could depend upon, such as David and George Humphries.

David senior, describing himself as "David Brown the Elder" and giving his address as 'Now at Hunter River' signed a petition dated 22 August 1833, against the Summary Punishments Act. His son David Brown 'the Younger' also signed.⁴¹² David senior then 83 years old, probably relocated with his son and family to Jerry's Plains property, from at least 21 August 1832. On that date, the younger David applied, as a resident of Jerry's Plains, for a license to sell liquor at his public house, 'The Green Gate.'

The petition that both father and son signed concerned the punishment of assigned convicts. It complained that '*... the intent of the punishment which the magistrates are authorised to award, and the instrument by which a portion of punishment is inflicted is so inefficacious, that the authority of the master is nominal, and the power of the magistrate derided.*' Clearly the control of convict labour was a great concern to them.

For the Browns, like many other settlers in remote areas of the colony, and attempting to expand their operations further afield, convict labour played an important part in their lives. This was especially the case beyond the 19 Counties.

⁴⁰⁸ On page 86 of "A Million Wild Acres" by Eric Rolls there is the following. "Joseph Brown, 21 year old son of David, an ex-convict Hawkesbury settler who had recently died, drove hundreds of cattle to the Peel River, and took up Wollomal on both sides of the river, a few kilometres upstream from Tamworth. Unlike most squatters he lived there with his stockmen." There appears to be no date for this event but it looks like about 1830 from other entries.

⁴⁰⁹ Piercefield and Martindale properties.

⁴¹⁰ Alcorns – Their Fathers were Convicts. Philip Booker

⁴¹¹ An obituary of David Brown III, born 1828, from the Maitland Mercury, has him recalling his move to Jerry's Plain at the age of 5 ie in 1833/1834, his birth date being 3 November 1828.

⁴¹² Encl. To R. Burkes dispatch No 126 of 14 December 1834. Dep for Gov. NSW Enclosure 1832-33 p.1454.