

Trials and Tribulations
of a
Danish Migrant
in
Queensland
1900-1950



By
Christen Peter Christensen
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This life story was written by Christen Peter Christensen during 1956. The manuscript was typed in 1957-58, and copies were reproduced for limited publication – principally circulation within the family.

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Christen Peter Christen died 25 February 1975. His property was willed equally to his stepdaughter Marion Violet Fardon, and daughters Joan Glenva Christensen and Thelma Mary Kwok. Marion died on 30 April 2000, leaving her interest in this publication to her sisters, Joan and Thelma.

For this revised edition, the original and subsequent edition (1996) has been reformatted by Joan Christensen, for limited publication, principally to family and friends.

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70 Lansdowne Street, Newmarket, Q4051, Australia

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Email: chris182@bigpond.net.au

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This is a story of an old New Australian - one who did not make a fortune or accomplish the things he set out to do. The original idea, of course, was to make a lot of money and return home to assist Father and Mother in their struggle of rearing a very large family. This story of my experiences in Australia may somewhat explain why that plan miscarried. The sugar plum welcome that migrants are met with these days was not thought of in the days when I arrived in Brisbane - that is in 1900. But I will begin at the beginning, and to do that I will have to go back to my very first birthday.

Chapter 2 - My Home in Denmark

At the time of my birth, my parents were still living at their first home at a place named Ajstrup Hede in Vendsyssel, north of Limfjorden, Denmark, on the outskirts of Vildmosen (The Wild Bog). Hans Andersen describes this country very nicely in his story of The Marsh King's Daughter, and there was still a great bog there when I was a child. A lot of it has been reclaimed for agriculture since then. As I remember it, it was one big stretch of meadows and bogs. A berry like a strawberry grew there and we kids and the shepherds around would go and pick baskets full. The haul depended a lot on one's ability in jumping from sod to sod between bogs. This of course was during the summer months - during the winter it was a waste of ice and snow. But I am getting ahead of my story. First I want to tell you that at my christening I was named Christen Peter Christensen. The first was my grandfather's name, and from that also I have my surname. It happened like this. At the time of my parents' birth it was the custom of the child to take his or her father's first name and "son" (sen) or "daughter" (datter) was added to it. My father was named Christensen after his father. About that period it became compulsory for the child to take the father's surname, and so our family all became Christensen. The first born boy was often called after the family home. My father's home was named Glindvad and he was always known as Peter Glindvad. My mother was Johanna Nielsdatter.

My father was trained as a miller. In those days this meant using a windmill, and the miller ground all the grain for the farmers in the near district. These mills were quite close together - I can remember three in a twelve mile radius. They were like the mills you see in pictures of Holland. There were also some driven by water, and some mills had saw benches and cut timber. While I was still very young my father rented one of these windmills, it was called Nørre Mølle. We had some land with it and kept two cows and a

number of pigs. Pigs were our main source of income. As the method of paying for the grinding of grain, the farmers would let Father take a measure of grain out of every bag he was going to grind. It was a standard measure and had to be officially stamped by the local authority.

I don't remember a great deal about our sojourn at that mill. But two incidents stay in my memory. I suppose they were the sort of thing that could happen to any boy of three or four. I remember I wanted to go fishing, but my mother would not let me have a real fish hook. I was not defeated, I bent an ordinary pin, tied it on to a piece of string and cheerfully went fishing in a wheel rut that happened to be full of water. Needless to say I did not catch anything! When I was called in for the evening meal, I took the pin off the string and put it on the table. I wanted to keep my eye on it so that no one could take my fish hook away. Mother cut bread and cheese for all of us - big slices of brown rye bread. I put mine on the table (we did not use plates), and I must have put it on top of my home made fish hook. When my bread and cheese was eaten, so was the pin! I don't remember that there was much consternation, but they did take me to a doctor. What he said or gave me to take I don't remember, but I always had an escort whenever I performed the natural functions after that, and eventually the pin came to light again unharmed.

The other incident occurred because of my wandering nature, I suppose. Some days I would wander out in the neighbouring fields and join up with the boys shepherding our neighbours' cows. Out on the heaths there grew heather and moss and the boys would build fires with dried heather and cow dung and any sticks of wood handy. In those fires they would roast potatoes bandicooted from nearby fields.

As the cattle moved along the field the fire was left behind. One day they told me to move it along so they could make another fire further on. This was an order from a big boy to a very small boy, so had to be obeyed. I had no experience in moving fires, and I wasn't sure how to go about it. However I soon had a bright idea of how to overcome the difficulty. I had on one of my father's felt hats. I took it off and decided that it would hold nearly all the fire, so I proceeded to put the fire in the hat. I did not get very far before the hat was empty and had no crown at all. I was crestfallen - no hat, no fire - so I went home. "I had lost the hat and could not remember where." I don't think anyone ever found the hat.

Chapter 3 - School days

When I was five we moved to another mill about two miles away. It was named Kalum mill. That's where I started my schooling. Children generally started school at seven years of age. Before they would take you at school you had to be able to read and write your alphabet, know simple arithmetic and be able to recite the Lord's Prayer. That was always your first test. Any child who did not know the Lord's Prayer by heart would have to learn it before he was taught any other lessons. Religion in schools was compulsory and was always part of one's homework. I didn't have much schooling, but by the time I left school at the age of thirteen I had learned all the Old and New Testaments.

At my first school I teamed up with the schoolmaster's son. At lunchtime we would run out for a few minutes and then come back and sit and eat our lunch. While we were outside we generally had a drink of water at the pump. A pannikin was provided to drink from, and all the boys would drink from this. My new friend didn't think that it was very hygienic for all of us to drink from the same cup. He said he would let me into a secret - to avoid putting your mouth to the same place on the pannikin as everyone else, after filling it you took it in your hand, or both hands were best, and drank from next to the handle. He said no one ever thought of drinking there. I did not pass on the secret, but I think I was the umpteenth whom he had let into that particular secret!

I only attended that school one summer and two winters. The second summer I was nine and had to go to work. So at the age of nine I got my first job. It was on a fairly large farm. I was engaged for six months, from first May to first November. My wage for the six months was 10 Kroner (in English money at that time about 12/-), and of course my keep.

The farm had twenty-five cows, six heifers, some calves, one bull and about eight horses. One boy aged about twelve and myself aged nine were charged with looking after the lot of them. That may not sound so hard from the Australian way of grazing them. But in Denmark all the cows were stabled every night and taken out on leads and tethered in the field to graze. They were milked three times a day - the girls on the place did the milking - but we had to take them from the stalls to the field and back again. We would lead them out of the stalls, couple all the cows together four abreast,

six deep, then lead them altogether to the field where they would be staked out at the right distance to allow them to graze on whatever crop was there at the time. We did the same with the rest of the stock, including the horses. During the morning all of the cows would have to be moved a little bit at a time, at least three times. The idea was to give them just enough to eat at the time, and not let them trample any of it.

We would couple them all up again at midday and take them to the stables for milking. Then after lunch the same process again, staking them out, moving them and bringing them back again for milking in the evening. While the girls were milking, we had to bring the horses in for water and take them back again, staked out the same as the cows. So this was my work for six months. About November all the stock were stabled and not let out until the following spring. It was a hard life for a little boy I suppose, but I think I liked it. I did four summers like that until I left school.

I was ten years of age when my father gave up the mill and bought a farm. When moving to the farm we had completed a circle with our places of abode, with the biggest town of this district, Brønderslev, in the centre, and we were now living only a couple of miles from my birthplace. It was from here that we used to explore and pick berries on Vildmosen. It was also from here that I had most of my schooling. It was a big school of 300 pupils, five or six teachers, and five classes. I did not reach the fifth class as I left school when only thirteen years old. Another year and I would have completed fifth class.

The four winters I was at that school were the happiest of my childhood days. I got on well at that school. Perhaps I became noticeable first for my ability to run and dodge in a game called "last caught". In this game all the boys could take part if they wanted to, but the numbers would fall off after some had been caught. There were two bases, one at each end of the playing field, something like seventy-five yards apart. Five or six boys would be selected as catchers to start with. The other boys had to run from base to base without being caught. Those caught could become catchers, so that at the end of the game there might be thirty or forty catchers and only two or three left uncaught. I was nearly always the last to be caught.

In class at reading lessons I was often selected to read to the rest of the class. That meant sitting up at the teacher's desk, facing the class.

My memory goes back also to our snow fights. They were always at the end of the school day. There were two factions at our school. In school hours we would play our games together, and be the best of friends, but as soon as school was out we would start a snow fight. There were two exits from the school, one to the east and one to the west, and the fights were East versus West. The fight was supposed to be won by the side in possession of the school grounds, but it did not always work out that way. Sometimes we would be chased down the town's only street, and then it became a real fight, resorting at times to sticks. My fleetness of foot saved me many a whack of a fair-sized waddy!

Chapter 4 - Manhood

The year I left school Father had exchanged his farm for a larger one and that year I worked at home. It was also my confirmation year. The rule in our Church was confirmation at the age of fourteen. It also meant getting into long trousers for the boys, and the girls then wore long skirts - now we were considered young men and women.

It was this year that I first began to notice what a wonderful woman my mother was. The family by then had grown to nine children, five girls and four boys. My older sister and one brother had gone to work for neighbouring farmers. That left seven of us at home, and I was the eldest of the seven.

On this farm we had ten milking cows, two horses and six sheep and some fowls. As well as cooking our meals Mother would milk the cows (at least seven were always in milk), three times a day, get the younger children off to school, mend our clothes, darn and knit all our stockings from the wool which she had shorn from our sheep and carded and spun herself. In the summer months she would set up her loom and weave all the cloth we needed for clothing and bed covers. The bed covers were a kind of sack filled with feathers, or rather feather down, obtained from our own poultry killed for winter rations. You may wonder what the menfolk did! We had to do all the field work, tilling the land, sowing the seed, threshing the crops, feeding cows, horses and sheep. So the work was distributed, but I think now that Mother took the heaviest share. She was always cheerful. In the winter evenings we would gather around the room heater and she would tell the loveliest stories. She had a great store of folklore and folk song, and she had a beautiful voice.

The following year when I was fifteen I took a job on a farm in the district. My

wages were 150 kroner (about 9 Pounds Sterling) and my keep for the full year. I now had to do a man's work, but I was strong and rather proud of the fact that I was able to keep up with the older men in most of the jobs. The summer months were occupied with ploughing the land, carting and spreading fertilizer, planting the crops, including potatoes and turnips, and digging peat for the fires during the year. In that part of the country, peat was practically the only fuel used.

After taking in the crops, we would, in the winter months, do the threshing and cut chaff for stock feed, and feed and water all the stock which had been stabled for the winter. The long winter evenings were mostly taken up with entertainment. We would play cards or blind man's buff or similar games. The girls would take part if they had finished their knitting or spinning. Sometimes we would help them with that work. At that time I could knit, use the spinning wheel fairly well, and darn my own stockings.

Chapter 5 - The Decision to Emigrate

I stayed two years working at that farm, and it turned out to be my last job in Denmark. It was in the last few months of my second year there that I got the idea of going to Australia.

The Queensland Government (this was in 1900, before Federation) wanted migrants, and had agents posted in Denmark and Norway distributing literature. My brother Niels, who was two years older than I, got some of these brochures and became interested. He gave them to me to read also. In these papers it stated that the Queensland Government would give free passage to anyone desirous of migrating to Queensland. There were attractive pictures of farm life and landscapes and a list of wages that could be earned - a vision of a land flowing with milk and honey, and my brother and I both fell for it. We found later to our sorrow that the wages listed were certainly not those generally paid for labour.

Once my brother and I decided that we would emigrate to Queensland, we started making our preparations. I got in touch with the agent and he forwarded all particulars and forms to be filled in. It was not until then that I discovered that there were some catches in this so-called free passage. First I had to send the sum of 2 Pounds or 40 Kroner to London. That was to pay for equipment needed on landing in Queensland and consisted as far as I can remember of two blankets, one fibre mattress, two tin plates, knife. fork and

spoon, and I think there were also pillows. At that time Queensland employers did not provide accommodation as we were used to in Denmark - a worker had to supply his own eating utensils and bedding.

We also had to pay our own fare to England - that was another 2 Pounds. That made 4 Pounds in all or 80 Danish Kroner I had to find. I did not feel very happy about this as my year's wages at that time were only 180 Kroner. As this was the end of the year, I had naturally spent some of my wages and also given my father some of it. However I sent the 40 Kroner to London - I gave it to our local postman to send for me. I had very little left to buy extra clothes with. Under the regulations set out by the Queensland Government we had to have a certain amount of clothes. A list was supplied, the most important item being two wool flannel shirts. Few workers wear these in Queensland these days, but at that period they were worn by all outdoor workers.

My employment contract terminated on the last day of October and a week or so later my brother and I had to sail for England. We both stayed at home preparing for the journey. Mother tried hard to put me off going. I remember one argument she put forward was that I would get burnt by the hot sun and lose my rosy cheeks and good complexion. But it was to no avail, I would not turn back at that stage. As Neils and I were travelling together we only needed one box for our clothing. We bought a box that a neighbour had brought back from America. It was a beautiful box with a double lid and a false bottom, and all bound with imitation silver decorations.

My eldest sister Karen was also at home during that last week. She was going to a job in København the day after we were to leave. So we had a real send-off party with all the family there. I have just counted up the family - there were Father and Mother and ten healthy children, all in one little house. But no one was sad - we sang songs and Mother told stories our last night at home. The next day we had to catch a train for our shipping port, Esbjerg, on the west coast of Denmark. Father and Mother saw us off on the train with the hope that we would some day return. I also hoped so, but I never saw them again. We had promised to return after five years, but we did not keep that promise. I did not want to go home unless I could return better off financially than when I left.

We had an uneventful journey by train and boat to England. We landed at

Southampton and went by train to London. We put up at the Seamen's Institute and that was where I had the first misfortune which marred our trip. There were about fifty migrants from Denmark and Norway. We had to be checked and issued with our steamer tickets. Each person was called before the official and asked questions before they were given their tickets. It came my turn -

"Did you send 40 Kroner for your kit as specified?"

"Yes"

"Have you got the receipt for the 40 Kroner?"

"No"

"You cannot get your steamer ticket until you produce your receipt or pay the 40 Kroner."

I did not have another 40 Kroner, but my brother Niels came to the rescue and paid it for me. That left us both broke for the whole trip of six weeks. I think we had fourpence when we landed in Queensland.

As we had no money we could not go ashore anywhere on our trip out. Otherwise we had a good trip. We would play games and do physical exercises. The food was quite good, but strange to us. Our dining room was in the same hold as where we had to sleep. It was a hold below the deck and could be covered up in bad weather, but in good weather they would remove the hatches and the first and second class passengers would come and stand over us and watch us eating. We used to say they came to watch the animals feeding! Their dining room was on deck level as they were paying passengers and so got better treatment than we were entitled to.

It was an uneventful voyage. We came via the Suez Canal and also came ashore at Fremantle where I think some of our migrants absconded. They were, of course, under contract to come to Queensland, but no one seemed to bother about them - there was no check made to see if everyone got aboard before we left. We landed in Sydney and had to change ships there for Brisbane. We came up to Brisbane in a ship called the "Adelaide". The ship we had come from England in was the "Ortovia", an Orient liner of 10,000 tons.

Chapter 6 - Arrival in Queensland

We sailed up the Brisbane River on a lovely sunny day and the river scenery looked very beautiful to us. It was Christmas Eve, 1900. There was a lot of

speculation on how we would be received. One optimistic Dane said that someone was sure to provide a big Christmas tree with candles and decorations and a star. He was to be disappointed. We landed at the Adelaide St. wharf just above the Customs House and were taken over to the Immigration Depot at Kangaroo Point. It is still there and still used for migrants. Our supper that night, Christmas Eve, was bread and butter and tea. We already had a feeling that we had been hoaxed a little, and that night put a damper on me at least. It happened that a Dane who had come out in an earlier ship came to the window of the dormitory where we were bedded down on the floor. He said he was hungry and broke, and they would not let him back in to the Depot, for once you left you were out for good. They only got you your first job, and after that you were on your own.

This chap had been sent to Bundaberg for the sugar season, had a job while the season lasted, and then was paid off in the slack season. There was no work for a white man - the Kanakas were still there then. So he had done what hundreds of others had to do when out of work, pack his swag and walk. He had walked all the way from Bundaberg - about 200 miles - without hitting a job. We had some tucker left over from our first meal and were able to hand him some food through the window. He camped somewhere in the grounds for the night, and I didn't see him again.

Next morning for breakfast we had porridge and some kind of meat, and for dinner, my first Christmas dinner in Queensland, there was some boiled fresh meat and a thin soup with potatoes floating in it. It tasted good to me however, as I was young and had a healthy appetite.

No doubt the newspapers had published our arrival as a few people came over looking for labour. They all wanted men who could milk. I had never milked a cow as that had always been done by the girls at home. However Niels had learned how to milk at the Agricultural School, so he soon got a job. There were not many jobs offering, and I had been there two weeks and still had no work, nor had I any money. I could not even pay for a ferry across the river, and if I wanted to see the town I used to walk around by Victoria Bridge. One morning they again called for a man who could milk. I was tired of hanging around, so I went up to the office. An elderly lady was sitting in the office. She spoke to me through an interpreter and asked "Can you milk?". I said "Yes" - the only word I knew in English. So I was engaged and had a job. The wage was 10/- per week and keep. I thought of the 2 or 3 Pounds

that the booklets had told us about when we first decided to come here!

Chapter 7 - My First Job

The job was at Pimpama, south of Brisbane, on a fairly large dairy belonging to the Proud family. The next morning I was given a bucket and with signs told to sit down and milk a cow. There were four or five persons milking. The cows were bailed up about twelve in a row, so we would start at one end, and when a person finished a cow he could move down below the last milker and so on. I was struggling with my cow trying to get the milk to flow, but it would not come. The others would walk by me, look at me strangely and then go on. They got right round the shed, and a new lot of cows was being bailed up and I was still at my first cow. Mrs. Proud then came and said something - I did not understand what she said, but at last I gathered that she wanted to milk my cow, so I got out of the way. I found another and kept trying, but I didn't finish any cow that morning. By this time Mrs. Proud had no doubt realised that she had been sold a pup, and that all Danes were not milkers, as I think she had supposed they were. A chap working there was a Norwegian and she got him to question me, but he had been away from Norway for many years and he could not understand me, nor I him. So I was left alone, and in a few days I was as good a milker as any of them.

I got on fairly well there with the boys. There were two other boys employed and a son of the family who was about my own age. We three employees slept in a hut some distance from the homestead. After a week or so, after I had settled in, they produced the boxing gloves and I had my first experience of boxing. The elder of the two boys, aged about 18, my own age, but taller and heavier than I, did not always give me a fair go, and would belt into me if he got me at a disadvantage. One night after I had had a bit of a rough time, and I think a black eye and a very swollen face, Mrs. Proud wandered over while the boxing was in progress. She saw how I was getting done over and soon put an end to that - she took possession of the gloves and did not hand them back for some weeks. When she did, I have no doubt that a promise was given not to repeat the rough stuff. However, before I left that place I had learnt how to hold my own with any of them.

On Sundays we would go fishing or shooting. The shooting was sometimes after ducks on the big mangrove swamp near the homestead, or native bear in the gumtrees in the bush. Sometimes we would shoot as many as four or six bears in a morning. I did not own a gun, but I was allowed a shot now and

again and sometimes brought down the duck I was aiming at. Moonlight nights we would go possum shooting and bring back five or six possums. I think the youngest son of the family used to skin them. There was a small demand for possum skins then - the Boer War contingent from Queensland used to wear a possum fur around their hats. The fishing was mostly in Pimpama Creek where the schools of mullet came up. Whenever we heard that a school had come up the creek, we would get in the dinghy with a hurricane lantern and row up stream after the school. They were easy to locate for they would be jumping and we could hear the noise. We would row quietly and get right on top of them, then pull the lantern from cover and hold it up high. The fish would start jumping at the light. Some would jump right over the boat, but a lot would land in the boat and that was, of course, where we wanted them. We often got as many as twenty-five large mullet in one night.

I had now improved my English enough to make myself understood. I was beginning to think that I would be many years making a fortune at 10/- per week, so I plucked up courage and asked Mrs. Proud for a rise. But she said "No". She said that she knew I was now a fairly fast milker, but the other boys were quite satisfied to work for 10/- per week, so she couldn't give me any more. Thinking it over I could see she was right, but I thought that after all I didn't have to stay if I didn't want to. So I gave her a week's notice and left my first Queensland job after six months.

Chapter 8 - Looking for Work

I packed up my few belongings and someone gave me a lesson in how to roll a swag which was the standard way of carrying one's belongings in those days. I got my swag rolled fairly near standard size, and caught a train for Brisbane. I was now on my own. I found a boarding house in Albert Street, just below the Elizabeth Street corner. The tariff was fifteen shillings per week paid in advance. That included bed and three good meals per day, bed made up every day and reasonably clean. I think my whole fortune at that time was about five golden sovereigns. I calculated that the money would last me six weeks, and surely I would find a job by then. The procedure of getting a job was to go to one or more of the various labour agents, of whom there were quite a few operating in Brisbane - some were honest, others just "takes".

Two labour agents stand out in my memory. One was Mrs. Harrison who had

rooms in the old Town Hall, the other was a Mrs. Gardener in a little house in either Adelaide Street or Ann Street, just down from George Street. There was a little bridge over a kind of drain or gully before entering her house.

To get a job cost at least five shillings which had to be paid before one's name would be put down. Then came days of waiting. I would do the rounds of the agents every day to see what they had on the blackboard which was always outside their office. If you were registered with an agent you, of course, got preference. Sometimes the employer would be there in person to look you over. There were plenty for them to choose from - dozens of men were out of work.

Now I was lucky, - or was I? A lady had come down from Gladstone on a return first class ticket. The idea was, as she did not intend to travel back, that she would give the ticket to a man she had promised her brother she would send back. He wanted a man to milk cows. So when I went one morning to Mrs. Harrison's, the lady was there to look me over. Well, I had a nice enough appearance at that time - a big shock of fair curly hair, and an open face already well sunburnt from my stay in Queensland. I must have appealed to her anyway, as she said I would do.

Chapter 9 - A Job in Gladstone

So I gathered up my belongings and again rolled my swag and boarded the train at Central Railway station. When the porter came to check the tickets, he took my ticket and looked hard at me. He wanted to know how I got the ticket, as it was first class and I was sitting in a second class carriage. I had quite some trouble explaining, for my English was still very limited. So I showed him the letter that the agent had given me for my future employer, and he was satisfied. I had no idea how far it was to Gladstone, or how long it would take to get there. I soon found that sitting straight up on a railway carriage seat was very tiring. The second class carriages were like the ones we now have on suburban lines. There was only one first class carriage at the end of the train. After a few hours travelling, I changed into a first class compartment at one of the stops, and finished my journey in more comfort.

Speaking of stops - at that time there were no lavatories on long distance trains, so at some stops such as Landsborough and Gympie, they would stop for about ten or twenty minutes. The conveniences were very crude and limited, and one had to wait one's turn for some time. When time was up and

the train ready to start, they would ring a bell, the train would blow a whistle, and then it was a case of "coming, ready or not". Some were still not properly dressed when the train started and they had to get in.

I landed in Gladstone tired and hungry, as I had not had time for a meal on the trip. A man met me at the station to take me out to the farm five miles from Gladstone. It was a dairy farm supplying Gladstone with milk. It was nearly evening by the time we got there and they gave me a meal. My swag was still in the cart, so I went and got it. I spotted the boss coming over towards me, so I asked where my room was. He looked at me in surprise, and then said, "Oh, you mean where to sleep?". I said "Yes". He said "Come with me and I will find you a place." He took me over to an old iron shed. One part of it was a sort of room without a door. He looked in, then said, "The other man sleeps there, and there won't be room for both of you, so you had better bunk down there." Here he pointed to a place with a lean-to roof, no walls, and a cart backed in under it. He said "You will be quite comfortable under the cart."

Now I understood why I had to pay 2 Pounds in London for blankets and mattress. It was to provide for one's own lodging at places like this. However I slept all right under this cart, that is for the little time one was allowed to sleep on this farm. That night I had been given my meal in the kitchen. The family and the other man had theirs in the dining room. My tea consisted of bread and butter and two hard boiled eggs. However, the bread and butter was unlimited, and the tea was brewed in a billy can, so there was enough of it, too.

I was wakened the next morning at one o'clock. The boss explained he had to get the milk to Gladstone well before six in the morning. The cows were put in a big paddock during the day, and brought in to a small paddock nearer the house late each afternoon. They were only milked once a day, - that is at one o'clock in the morning. All the calves were reared, so the calves were also brought in each afternoon and put in pens adjoining the cow bails. As all the milk was sent to town for sale, there was none separated on the farm. So the way they fed the calves was to let them suck on the teats for a while after the cow was bailed, then take them back to the pen, and proceed to milk the cows. As the cows were running in a big paddock during the day, sometimes we missed two or three when we herded them in the afternoon, but we always had the same amount of milk for town - sometimes the milk looked a

bit blue, but they just had to take it.

I did not stay very long at that place. As I mentioned before, where I had to sleep was no bed of roses. A few ants and some mosquitoes had to be accommodated as bedmates. And the meals never varied much - two boiled eggs for breakfast, three for dinner, and sometimes four for tea. Hen eggs were varied occasionally with duck eggs, but a meat meal was rare. All in all it was a dreary place to work, and by now I was also a little homesick. We had believed that Australia was a land of fruit and flowers. There were some fruit trees at Pimpama, my former place of employment, but not so here. Apart from the gum trees, the country was barren, or looked so to my eyes at the time. I missed the cultivated fields, the green meadows, and most of all, the flowers, the daisies, buttercups, bluebells and other wild flowers so prolific in Denmark in the summer. It was also rather lonesome as my English was still very limited, and anyway, there was no one to talk to.

So once again I gave notice, got my pay and left for Gladstone. I went in with the milk cart one morning, and got lodgings at a boarding house. I spent two days in Gladstone. It was, at that time, only a small town, really just one street, though with quite a few hotels. It was, at that time, the terminus of the main railway from Brisbane. The line to Rockhampton had not yet been completed, although they were working on it at the time, and I think it was opened the following year.

I took the train again for Brisbane. Again the same dreary journey - this time second class. I don't remember anything about that journey - probably went to sleep, and woke up in Brisbane - most likely I had a lot of sleep to catch up on. In Brisbane, the same boarding house, the same routine for getting a job, and my finances still at a low level.

Chapter 10 - A Job in Harrisville

Luckily I got a job before I went broke. This time it was at Harrisville, a little town on the Ipswich-Boonah line, a different sort of countryside. My job was, of course, to milk cows. This was a big farm, about 1280 acres, with a large homestead. Half of it was used for crops such as oats, corn and lucerne for market; the other half was for dairying only. The farm was called Trelawney. The land was all black soil, and very fertile. The owner, a Mr. Charles Seeley, had made a small fortune out of it, mainly from his cheese making plant. He had a good name in Brisbane and elsewhere, particularly for his

Trelawney Stilton cheese. A couple of years before I went up there, he had given up cheese-making, and built a condensing factory, and was now producing condensed milk instead of cheese.

There were a lot of men employed there - some on the farm, some in the factory, and six or eight of us in the milking shed. He processed only his own milk. We were milking somewhere near one hundred cows. After a few weeks in the milking shed, I started thinking about a rise in wages. They were then 15/- per week. It was not very hard work - we did little else other than milking the cows twice a day, though of course, it was every day the same, no Sundays, no holidays.

Mr. Seeley would drive up every morning with his little grey horse and sulky to the dairy and the factory. So one morning, I went out to him and asked if I could have a rise in wages. He said the same as Mrs. Proud had said a few months earlier. The other men worked for 15/- and he could get any number to work for that wage. However he said that he needed another man at the factory, and if I went over there I could get 1 Pound per week. That, of course, included keep.

All the men from the factory and dairy ate at the same table. The food was reasonably good, depending on the cook. Each man was rationed and the standard ration per week was 12lb meat, 10lb flour, 2lb sugar, 1/2lb tea, 1/4lb rice. Pepper, curry and salt were also provided. I can't remember if potatoes were included, but any other extras we had to buy ourselves. I remember best the 7lb tins of jam costing 1/6d. The cook used to bake bread, mostly damper. The cooking facilities were just an open fire place with a colonial oven - that is an oven set in bricks, which would be heated by putting fire underneath and on top. For pots and pans there were simply two iron bars to set them on, but a good cook could produce beautiful meals from this arrangement.

I started work at the condensed milk factory - the first work I had done away from farming. It was a busy place. The tins for the milk were made there, and the cases all had to be made, and nailed also. My first task was to take delivery of the milk, put it through the cooler, and generally get it ready for processing. The process of making the condensed milk was really very simple. It was first heated, then taken in a condenser, that is a vacuum vat with a goose neck. The milk is kept boiling in the vat, and the water content

leaves it through the goose neck as steam. A flow of cold water is forced through, and takes the steam with it. When the water content is reduced to a certain degree, sugar is added and thoroughly mixed. The mixture is then withdrawn, put in cooling vats, and next morning is ready for tinning, labelling and packing in cases. After a month or so of looking after the milk, and washing up, I was asked by Mr. Seeley if I thought I could work the machinery in the tin making room. I would get 25/- per week if I could do this job. Of course I said yes, I could do anything that was promotion.

It was a bit strange at first, but I soon learned to work all the machines. It was quite a big job for one man, as I had to make all the tins that were required for the output of the factory. I got on well with this job, and became fast and skilled at the work. But a long spell of dry weather was in the offing - the 1902-03 drought, when many farmers and graziers were ruined. We noticed it gradually here in the factory. The milk supply was going down and down, and there was less work for us to do. Men were put off, or if they left they were not replaced. I was now the leading hand, and was not yet 21 years old.

I remember that well, because that year Mr. Seeley was a candidate for Parliament, and did not have time to look after the general run of work in the factory, so he came into the workshop and told me that I had to look after things, and see that the work went on. Mr. Seeley came in one morning at the end of his election campaign and said, "Now don't forget to vote for me to-morrow". I said, "Sorry Mr. Seeley, but I am not yet 21." He looked surprised, and said, "Hell, I thought you were at least twenty-five." I probably looked it as I had been doing a man's work for at least five years then.

That year saw the end of Mr. Seeley's activities in the district. He had mortgaged everything during the drought, and after the sale of his milk had fallen, the mortgages were foreclosed and he had to sell everything, and subsequently left the district. The Nestle Company bought the factory after it had been idle for some months, and built it up again into production. I went back to work for them, but they would not give me the jobs I was used to. They put on local girls at 15/- per week. I was paid 25/- per week, but had to pay board of 10/- out of it, so I was back to my milking wage.

I had now worked in the Harrisville district for nearly five years. I had mastered English fairly well, mainly through reading. I would read book after

book, sometimes all night, and mostly by slush lamp or candle. For recreation at Harrisville there were plenty of dances. If there were none on in the town itself, a farmer, Mr. Woodward, with four daughters, would put on a dance of a Saturday night, and we often danced till dawn on Sunday morning.

I was also a member of the local football team. I had gone to look on one Saturday, and they were a man short and asked would I care to play. I did, and after that played in every game for four seasons. We played teams from Boonah, Kalbar, Peak Crossing and from Ipswich. We, of course, had to travel on horseback to these matches - 16 miles to Boonah, 20 miles to Ipswich. Those men who could get away in time for the train and could afford the fare would travel by train. Many times at Ipswich we would see our mates on to the train at Ipswich railway station, then mount our horses and beat the train to Harrisville, and meet them on the platform there. Then we would have singing at the hotel around the piano till 11 o'clock and then go on to a dance if there was one. At that time it was usual to have music and singing in hotel parlours, and very fine evenings they were.

About the time that I was feeling dissatisfied with my new status at the factory, and with my financial position, I met a chap who had previously worked at the milk factory and who had been up North. He had walked there, that is as far north as Bundaberg. He was a real dinkum swagman, carrying all his belongings on his back, one of those independent natures who would not be bound down by anybody, never staying long at a job, sleeping under the stars and just walking from place to place. He was a good worker and could turn his hand to many things, including butchering. He once gave us a demonstration of killing a sheep. Someone bet him that he could not kill and dress a sheep in the time he'd boasted of. The bet was made. We put the sheep in the pen near the gallows where he had to hang it up. He was ready and we had the stopwatch on him from the start. He caught the sheep, cut it's throat open, practically pulled the skin off, took the innards out, removed the legs from the knees, and hung the sheep up all ready for cooking - all inside three minutes. He won the bet.

Chapter 11 - North to the Cane fields

It was he who gave me the idea of going North to the cane fields. I wanted to get away from Harrisville as I was no longer so happy in the job there. I decided to go to Mackay. This, in 1905, meant a sea trip as the railway only went as far as Rockhampton. I landed in Mackay some weeks before the

cutting season started, so had to stay at a boarding house for a few weeks before I could get a job.

This was the year that most of the Kanakas were sent back to the Islands. Ships were in the port to take them back. I saw them board the tenders that would take them out to the ships anchored at Tabletop. Some of them looked happy, others did not want to go. Quite a few of the children looked like half-castes. The business people of Mackay were at the wharf with all kinds of finery and imitation jewellery to exchange for any money they had. Numbers of confidence men were also in evidence, including a lady who was selling them tickets to Heaven for the sum of 1 Pound, and a lot of them were happy to pay it.

The sugar fields were not the bonanza then that they are to-day. Some of the mills retained Kanakas for labour, notably the Palms sugar mill. They, of course, could not then collect the bonus that the Commonwealth Government was paying to cane growers who employed only white labour. The bonus was about 10/- per ton of cane delivered to the mills. The price paid for cutting the cane was from 3/- for plant cane to 4/6d for ratoon cane, all loaded on trucks at the rail siding, ready for delivery to mills. None of the cane was burnt at that time, and all the cane was of the light variety. A heavy cane called Badilla was just finding favour about then. It was a good man who could cut and load five tons of cane per day, so you can see that there was no great fortune to be made out of cane cutting at this time. I always seemed to be in the right place at the wrong time - years afterwards, the cane prices for cutting had more than trebled, and most cane was burned before cutting. A man could cut twice as much burnt cane as cane with the thrash still on it. So comparison of cutting rates to-day with those of fifty or more years ago is not valid. Of course, now the machines have moved in and all the cane is mechanically loaded, and much of it is also mechanically cut.

Chapter 12 - A Bicycle Trip

After my second season in Mackay, I had taken a trip back to Brisbane for a holiday, and also took the opportunity to look up my old friends in Harrisville. I had brought a bicycle down with me, and I rode up to Harrisville on it from Brisbane, and worked for a short time at the milk factory there. I decided to go back to Mackay for another cutting season. I went down to Brisbane, bought my ticket for Mackay on a ship due to sail that day. I took all my gear down to the wharf, and was then told that the sailing had been delayed until

the next day. Walking back up to town from the wharf I met my brother whom I had not seen or heard of for about two years. He had just come down from Charleville that morning. Such is coincidence - had my boat sailed on time, all his life would have been changed, for he intended to go to Sydney, and probably go home from there. After talking that day, I persuaded him that Mackay was a better prospect than Sydney. As we both had bicycles, we thought of doing the trip on them, but decided that to ride from Brisbane to Mackay was a bit far, and in any case we did not have enough time, as we wanted to get to Mackay for the opening of the cane season. I got a refund on my ship ticket, and we took the train to Rockhampton and decided to ride our bicycles from there.

After a couple of days in Rockhampton, we set out one Sunday morning. Our first stop for dinner was at a one-pub place called Yaamba. Being Sunday, the bar was closed, but we could get a meal in the dining room. The girl asked which we would have, meat or goat? We said meat, but she came back and said that the meat was off, so we had goat. There was nothing wrong with goat meat, it was really much the same as mutton. It reminded me of the girl in a boarding-house in Brisbane who had asked - "What will you have, steak or meat?"

There was no rail link between Rockhampton and Mackay. A horse coach used to run carrying passengers and mail. After we left Yaamba, the road was not much more than a track with two wheel ruts. We aimed to make Maryborough that evening. Some time during the afternoon we came to a little wayside pub and had a drink there. We only had one drink, but after travelling eight or ten miles more I became sick, and reached everything up, goat and all. I laid down by the roadside for a while, but as we wanted to reach the township that night I finally made an effort and started off again, though I could not travel very fast. My brother went ahead to book the hotel before dark, and I kept pedalling on and managed to reach the town late that night, still feeling a little sick.

We started again the next morning early. Our next stop was West Hill, just a mail stop for the coach. We stayed at a boarding house there. Next day our road passed through forest, and there were numerous creeks, most of them with running water which we had to wade across. We made St. Lawrence - then called Broudsound - on our third day. It had been the port of the west before it silted up, but now no ships could land there in the shallow water, and it was a run down sort of a place with only one hotel. Next day we set out on

the last lap of the trip for Mackay. A few miles from Sandy Creek sugar mill I broke one pedal of my bike, and this slowed us down considerably as I didn't make much progress with only one pedal. We camped that night on the bank of Sandy Creek and left the next morning for Mackay. The last ten miles to Mackay I pushed along on one pedal.

My brother and I worked together that year in the sugar fields. The next year I made up my mind to go out West. I had heard a lot about the west, about station life, goldmines, etc. My brother did not want to come with me, so we parted in Mackay and I did not see him again for more than twenty years.

Chapter 13 - Out West

A mate, Dick Arps, and I got ready to travel. We each had two horses, one to ride and the other for a pack horse, to carry all our blankets, cooking utensils and food. There is now a highway on this route, but at that time from the Eungella range there was only a track. Our first camp was Eton, away from the township, the next over the range at Nebo where we camped on the creek. We would let the horses out to feed each evening after putting on them hobbles and bells, the first to stop them from travelling far, the bells to locate them easily. The next stop was at Oxford Downs, a cattle station. We were travelling at something like twenty miles a day, depending on the availability of feed and water for the horses.

Grovely Downs, another cattle station, was our next stop. Here they employed aboriginal stockmen, and as we came near the station that afternoon we saw the aboriginal children swimming in the big water hole near the homestead. The stockmen came over to our camp that evening for a yarn, and to cadge some tobacco which Dick, being a smoker, was able to let them have. The next morning we got fresh rations from the station and set out again.

All the stations would sell flour, meat and sugar, so we had no trouble getting supplies on our trip. We saw quite a few wallabies and kangaroos as we travelled, and possums were numerous at night. We camped a couple of nights to spell the horses before we approached Logan Downs. From their boundary gates we could see miles ahead right to the Logan Downs homestead, across what appeared to be a plain but is really a kind of rolling downs. It was a large sheep station shearing about 100,000 sheep at that time. Although it was dry it still looked beautiful to us after the dry forest

country we had come through. We only camped there one night. Station managers did not mind you travelling through their properties, but liked to see you keep moving. Next we rode through Kilcummin station, another sheep property which ran some cattle also. Most of these properties were served for water by windmills, so of course we had to make for a windmill whenever we camped to allow the horses to drink. Leaving Kilcummin behind, and before we came off the run, we passed over a number of quartz ridges in the midst of which there was the Alexandria gold field. Then to the Miclere, which I believe is still producing gold; the Springs Hotel, a roadside place; and from there to Clermont, our first town after leaving Mackay.

Here we found out that there was a drought on and were told that it was not safe to travel further west as water was scarce and poison weed plentiful along the route to Aramac. The week that we arrived in Clermont they were putting men on to complete the railway from Clermont to Blair Athol, the coal mine. They were rushing to finish it on account of a coal strike down south, in Newcastle I think. All the earthwork had been done earlier and then left until the rush set in. So we both found it easy to get jobs. I got a job in the plate laying gang, and Dick went working in a mill, cutting sleepers for the line. I had to camp out of course, as the work was going away from the town. I worked with the gang laying rails right up to the mouth of the mine tunnel, which became at one time the biggest open cut mine in Australia. Before the rails were laid very little coal had been mined as it had to be hauled to the railhead at Clermont, twelve miles away, by horse teams. One entered the mine by a long sloping tunnel at that time and not very much of the coal had been removed from the coal face at the bottom of the tunnel.

During this time I had been suffering from a severe bout of dysentery, my first real sickness. I kept on working, thinking that it would soon pass over. One Saturday morning I rode into Clermont with a mate, just for the ride. We called at the pub, but I did not feel like drinking and just sat on a stool in the bar. My mate decided I looked pretty sick, and when I said that I didn't feel too good, he took me up to the hospital to see the doctor. The doctor examined me and asked a few questions. Then he told me that I would have to stay at the hospital, since most men in my condition would have been dead by now. I stayed, since I didn't feel like dying just then. I was put to bed, the first bed I'd slept in for many weeks. I must have been delirious the first couple of days as I don't remember much about them. I would come to and find the nurse trying to get me back to bed, though I had no memory of

having left it. I was fed on boiled milk mostly.

I was in hospital for a couple of weeks. At the end of that time I was not really well, but wanted to be on my way and they let me leave. I had to walk to the township, a little over half a mile. I had to rest three times on the way. I had not had any solid food at the hospital, but that evening I ate a good meal - and twenty-four hours later had the dysentery back again. I did not return to the hospital however, instead I caught my horses, put up my pack, and made for the bush. I had a good rifle and thought I might put in a few weeks kangaroo shooting. I had heard that there were a few kangaroos on country between Huntley and Catherstone stations. That would take me towards the coast again.

I said goodbye to my mate Dick Arps. He still wanted to go west towards his home country. I just wanted a spell somewhere. So I left Clermont, and travelling east I passed through Huntley station property, all black soil downs, running mostly sheep. Many years later it was to become the Peak Downs project, growing sorghum for the British Food Corporation. After some miles of travelling through this downs country I came again to timber. There was no stock in this part, and the grass was waist high, mostly spear grass. It was probably unoccupied Government land. I pitched my tent on the first waterhole I came across, on the banks of a small creek, and only a little distance from the mailman's track. I camped there nearly a week looking for kangaroos, but apparently they didn't like long grass, particularly spear grass.

The mailman came by, going to Clermont and I asked him to bring me fresh rations and ammunition for my rifle. A mile or so from where I camped was a flat top mountain almost on the edge of the plain. Several times when hunting near there I had the idea that I would like to climb up to the top of it. So while I was waiting for the mailman to return I set out for the top. I don't know what height it was, but it looked a fair height and one could see it for a long distance before coming to it. It sloped fairly steeply, but I was able to ride my horse right up to the edge of the table top. Close up it appeared a straight wall, thirty or forty feet in most places, with an overhanging top. I hunted around for nearly an hour before I found a place where the top was not hanging over and water had eroded the walls a little, just enough for a foothold. I tied my horse a little distance from the wall to use him as a marker to show me where I had got up. I managed the climb to the top all right. It was perfectly flat, an area of probably about eighty acres. There was a small

stream of water and the only living thing I saw, apart from birds flying over, was a large goanna, the largest I have ever seen. He was of the black or grey variety, not the yellow tree goanna. He was between six and eight feet long, as thick in the body as my thigh, and his head and jaws were in proportion. He did not move at my approach and I did not bother him as I had no weapon for defence should he not like me. I didn't know whether anyone else had ever been up on that mountain. However I was satisfied with my climb - it was a beautiful view towards Clermont across those Downs with their sheep and cattle, and the peaks of the mountains from which Peak Downs gets its name, in the distance.

When I returned to the camp I found that the mailman had been by and left my supplies. I waited till he came back again from St. Lawrence to get him to give me some idea of what lay ahead. He said that the track was good and that the next stop for water would be Catherstone station.

Chapter 14 - Floods

Next day I started off towards the coast. I was thinking that I would head back to Mackay in slow stages, but it didn't work out that way. I made Catherstone that evening, after travelling the best part of twenty miles. I called at the homestead for meat and they told me they were killing that evening and would be cutting up the beast next morning and I would be able to get meat then. I did so, but by the time I had got my meat and had breakfast, the best part of the morning had gone. I reckoned I could still make the twenty-five miles to my next stop, so off I went.

The weather was nice to start with, but after I had travelled about ten miles rain was threatening and it broke about one o'clock. It rained heavily, the road got slippery and the going was slow. I had to keep going as I could not camp in open country. I had not gone through any fences and could not risk letting my horses go in case they made back along the road and I could have to walk miles to catch them. So I kept riding through the heavy rain. I did not know how far it was to the old abandoned station I was aiming for that evening, so I made up my mind to camp just through the first gate I came to. Just before dark, I came to a gate and went through. It was on a bit of a rise and the ground was sandy, so I pulled in on the inside of the fence, took all the gear off the horses, hobbled them and put the bells on. It was still teeming rain and a fire was out of the question. I stood the two saddles on their ends, pulled the tent over them, crawled in and lay there wet and

hungry. I managed to sleep a little however.

In the morning, the rain had eased a bit but everything was soaked. It was ten o'clock before I got a fire going. There was, of course, no dry wood, but sandalwood will burn wet or green, once it gets started, on account of its oil content. I baked a pancake, made some tea and thoroughly enjoyed the hot meal. I caught the horses, packed up once again and started on my way. I had not travelled more than half a mile on to the lap of the ridge, when I was surprised to see the old homestead that I should have made the night before. I had camped in the heavy rain on wet ground, not knowing that I was really camped in what was the station horse paddock. As I pulled the horses in at the steps of the house, three or four people came out to greet me. I explained all about myself and where I was going. They said I had better unpack and come in for dinner, that I wouldn't be able to travel any further for a few days, as the Isaacs River was running a banker and was now up to twenty miles wide in places. So I let my horses go in the same paddock as they had been in during the night. During dinner I was told that this property was the old Leichhardt Downs station, but had been abandoned during a big drought and the land forfeited to the Crown.

They explained to me why they were there. A grazing firm, Jowett & Co., from Victoria had taken up a big grazing lease on the other side of Bombardy station, about ten miles from there. The company had bought the buildings of Leichhardt Downs and the men were engaged in pulling them down and re-erecting them on the new property called Batheaston. One of the men was Mr. Jack Dunn, the future manager of Batheaston, and two were carpenters employed by him, Jack Roxburg and Ally Weller, both from Capella. Another chap was along as cook and there was one rouse about. The mailman had been expected back from Clermont that evening, but was delayed at Catherstone that night. He was bringing rations for them, and they were a bit anxious about his arrival, however he turned up that next evening. Of course he could not go on either, as the river was up and the weather was still threatening. In fact it rained for another three days, so there were seven of us isolated there, nothing much to read and little to do. Jack Baron, the mailman, had some loose change, I think about five pounds in silver, that he was bringing out for the Bombardy people and I had a few pounds in change, also. For about four days we played cards for money. Sometimes one man, if he had a run of luck, would have it all, and to keep the game going he would lend it out and lose it again. After the second day I pulled out of the

game - I could not afford to lose all my money, and after all I was the stranger. But the manager and the mailman kept playing to the bitter end. The mailman ended up with all the cash, and the manager owed him some hundreds of pounds in promises. As the money in hand did not belong to any of them (it still had to be delivered to Bombardy Station) they solved the problem by playing double or quits until neither owed anything. The main thing was that we had filled in the time. On the fourth day the mailman left, swimming the river at Bombardy, delivering the money and the mail and setting off back to Clermont for next week's mail. After a week the river went down enough to cross. In the meantime Mr. Dunn offered me a job there and I accepted. So I helped to build the new homestead on Batheaston. I stayed on there for a while - I was still suffering from the dysentery and it seemed to be getting worse. I had dropped in weight from eleven and a half stone to nine stone, and was feeling sorry for myself - particularly on Sundays when the cook would make a hot brownie for afternoon tea and I had to refuse because my stomach would not take anything with currants in it. Ally Weller said he thought he had some medicine somewhere, and finally located a bottle with about two doses in it. I took one dose there and then, and one dose going to bed that night. It certainly worked. The dysentery stopped, I started to put on weight, could eat any time of the day and after a month I weighed nearly twelve stone.

We were getting on with the building, and with a couple of other men who had been engaged were building stockyards. Then the shock came. Jowett's travelling inspector came on the job, and after a day or so nosing around, must have found things unsatisfactory, for he stopped all work, gave the manager notice, and the rest of us were paid off.

Chapter 15 - Odd Jobs and Gold mining

I gave up the idea of going on to Mackay and went back to Clermont with the other men. I found Clermont busy. There was plenty of work as the coal mines had started at Blair Athol and employed a number of men, and houses were also being built for the miners. I didn't fancy a mining job as I disliked being shut in small spaces. My first job was erecting a "whip", an arrangement for lifting water from a shallow well with a horse gear. The horse goes round and round harnessed to the end of a pole, the length of which depends on the depth of water. A rope is attached to the other end of the pole and rises up to a pulley hanging directly over the well. Then a bucket is attached to the end of the rope, the bucket having a valve in the

bottom, so that when it reaches the water, the valve opens and the bucket fills without tipping. When pulled up clear of the water the valve closes. The pole is centred on a pivot, the horse one end and the rope the other end, so that when the rope end is furthest from the well, the bucket is up and the horse can pass underneath the rope, and when the rope end is nearest the well, the bucket is down being filled. In this way, a horse can lift hundreds of gallons an hour.

Next I worked with a fencing contractor, erecting twenty miles of dog proof fence on Logan Downs station. From there I went back to Clermont. A prospecting syndicate was looking for two men to prospect for them, to locate lead or gold. George Croydon and I took it on. We worked nearly twelve months, but found nothing worthwhile. We would sink holes in likely spots, but we were limited by the terms of our contract to a radius of fifteen miles from town. We nearly always got a few specks, but nothing in payable quantities. Gold was only worth four pounds, two shillings and sixpence per ounce then - many of our finds would probably have been payable on today's prices. The last hold we sank was a foolhardy stunt. It was untried ground near what was called the Long Waterhole. We reckoned it should be deep. We had the windlass, but only short hemp ropes, so we bought 150 feet of wire rope. We only worked a small hole, four feet by two feet. The first twenty feet was easy sinking through a kind of clay formation, then we hit shale and it was shale the rest of the way, except for a couple of small seams of coal and a few seams of gravelly matter. George kept saying, "We will hit something yet." The wonder is that something didn't hit us, as we kept sinking without timbering, and we were also using gelignite for blasting when it was hard. A few times our fuse was too short. We would light it and call out to the one on top to wind away. As the hole was getting deeper, it took longer to get up and the explosion would occur before the fuse setter had reached the top. So he would get a few bits of stone hitting his rear as he was sitting in the sling or standing on the bucket. We were nearly to the end of our 150 feet of rope before we gave up.

A couple of weeks after we had abandoned it, I went back after some rain to see if it had fallen in at all, but it was just as we had left it. However the bottom was filled with water, and with the sun overhead it looked like a mirror down that 140 feet. We'd thought we could sink a straight hole, but when I looked down, the outline of the water showed that the hole had corkscrewed, and the bottom was looking the opposite way to the top.

Chapter 16 - Kangaroo Shooting

I met Dick Trivett a couple of weeks later, and he wanted a mate to go kangaroo shooting. We could also do some work for Mr. Hook at Moray Downs. Dick had a buck board and two horses, and I had three horses. We set off on the 110 mile trip to Moray Downs from Clermont. Our first stop was Seventeen Mile well, for water. It had a dead wallaby in it, but one could not be choosy as it was the only water available. We had, of course, to fit our day's travelling according to where there was water.

Our next day's journey was quite short - to the thirty-three mile. It had a history. A couple of years before, a police constable and his horse were both shot dead there, on the bank of a little creek - the horse's skeleton was still there in the fork of a small tree. The constable had been out to the fifty-four mile to bury a swagman who had died under a tree. The murder remained a mystery as it was never found out who had done it.

We made Moray Downs on the fifth day. It was a fairly large cattle station, which had been recently bought by the Hook family from the Maitland district of New South Wales. We worked there for a while putting up a horse yard for Mr. George Hook who was managing the station at that time. Then we went on to Bullwalla Station, a big cattle run which belonged to Mr. Murray Prior. There was a manager, five or six jackeroos from prominent New South Wales families, there for the experience, and some aboriginal and half-caste stockmen. It was on this property that we intended to shoot kangaroos. The day we got to the station the manager and all the stockmen were out mustering at what they called the forty-mile. We had to see the manager before we could do any shooting, so set out to look for him. We found them camping on a creek, busy mustering and drafting cattle. The manager readily gave us permission to shoot there, so we made camp and prepared for our hunt.

We were getting a few skins but not enough, so I said that I would do some exploring and look for better country. I set off one morning, saying that I would strike across country in as straight a line as possible for at least ten miles, then work back to the creek we were camping on and follow it along back to the camp - making a triangular trip in all. I did not know however that three or four miles below our camp the creek ran out on a flat and there was no channel. When I was heading back to find the creek and follow it up to

our camp, I got lost because there was no creek to follow. I kept riding till dark. It was strange country, and the timber all looked alike. When I was convinced that I was really lost, I fired a few shots thinking my mate might answer with another shot, but there was no response. Then I left the reins loose, thinking the mare might take me in the right direction, but by watching the stars I discovered that she was just travelling in circles. So I staked the horse out so that she could not get away, and lay down on the bare ground to sleep. Fortunately it was not too cold. In the morning, with the sun up, I could tell the direction in which the camp ought to be. After travelling an hour or so I came upon the creek, but found that I was on the opposite side from which I had left the camp, although I had not crossed a creek anywhere. I was puzzled for quite a while, for I did not know whether I was above or below the camp. So I fired the rifle again. This time there was a response and I was able to find my way back safely to the camp a mile away, and on the other side of the creek.

I had seen dozens of kangaroos on my journey, and quite a few plain turkeys, so we moved camp into that area. One incident here stands out in my memory. The technique for shooting kangaroos was first to find them feeding, mostly in the morning or late evening, then to keep down wind, and get as close as possible. Then I would take shelter near a tree where I couldn't be seen. If there were five or six in the mob, we would usually get the lot if they couldn't locate where the trouble was coming from. We'd shoot the doe first and, if he didn't spot you, the buck would stay, he might even come closer. That is what happened this time. There were three does and one big buck. They were pretty close so I could not miss and I shot the does first, and then looked for the big buck, but he had disappeared. I was leaning over, peering round the other side of the tree, when I felt something warm on my neck. Looking around quickly I saw him - there was the biggest kangaroo I had ever seen standing right over me. I was down on my knees and could not get up or I would have risen right into his arms. I swung the rifle round, put it right up against his body and fired. I think the noise as well as the bullet frightened him, for he just turned and hopped away. By the time I had reloaded and somewhat recovered from the shock, he had disappeared. I found him a couple of days later, dead.

Chapter 17 - Picnic Races

After a few months shooting we found that we were not making very much out of it. Kangaroo skins were only worth about three shillings each at that

time. One evening I came back from hunting and found my tent and blankets were just a charred mess - they had caught alight from sparks from our morning fire, apparently. It was mid-winter and very cold, and I had to make do with a couple of bags to keep the worst of the cold off me. I could not get more blankets for a fortnight, as the mailman only came through once a week and I had to go to the station to meet him, give him the order and wait a week for him to come back. I borrowed a couple more bags from the station to tide me over. Dick had gone on to another property at this time and was not with me. I went back to my old camp after I had got new blankets and Dick told me that the manager of the station, Mr. George Butler wanted us to build a frame for a marquee, as they were going to have picnic races soon. So I struck camp and went in with Dick to find out what it was all about. I saw the manager and he handed me a plan for a frame about 20 x 30 x 8 feet. They intended to erect a canvas marquee over this frame. We had to cut and dress all the frame timber out of the scrub and lay the floor boards. These they would bring from Bowen, a hundred miles away. The floor would be dressed pine, so that it would make a good dance floor. The Picnic Races were to be held on part of Elgin Downs station on Mistake Creek, about ten miles from any habitation. All those coming to the Races would camp in tents or sleep in the open.

We had less than three weeks to do the job, but we got the frame up. The timber from Bowen was coming by horse team and was a little late. Some of the people had already arrived for the Races when the timber arrived. We put it down in two days, and were rather proud of the result as we worked only with adze, axe and saw. The canvas covering fitted beautifully. People were now arriving from everywhere, all by buggy or horseback and from as far away as Pentland, Charters Towers, Avon Downs and even Townsville. The Races lasted a week, some races each day and dances each night to the music of concertina, violin or accordion. Musicians were plentiful, but ladies were scarce, particularly single girls. Everybody enjoyed themselves. One man acted as bookmaker at the races each day and ran a show at night. A large number of aboriginals with their families were present, stockmen from the various stations around. They did not join in the dances at night, but seemed to find their own amusement in their own camp. After the Races everybody wended their way home again, some of them with well over a hundred miles to go. But they thought it well worth it.

It was then my job to pull up the floor and remove the marquee. The

floorboards were taken to Bullawalla for safekeeping, and the frame was also left there for the next time.

As it turned out I was involved with the dance floor again the following year. I had joined forces with two other men who were working on Moray Downs, and we contracted to build a cattle dip for Mr. Hook. It all had to be built with bush material, no cement being available. It was a big job. We had to split and dress all the slabs used. The dip was to be some sixty feet long, four feet wide and fifteen feet deep in the centre. When the cattle were pushed in, they would go right under, swim for a few feet and then walk up the other side. We excavated the hole with pick and shovel, six feet wide, then slabbed up a foot from each side and filled the space between with wet clay and puddled so that the bottom would be closed up the same way. When finished, the dip held water as well as any concrete job today does.

When we had finished the dip I took on the job of going out to the racecourse and cutting the grass. They hoped to lay the dance floor again, but there was a hitch. Bullawalla had been sold, and Mr. Butler, who had been the manager there, had retired. The new owner was not cooperative, and the floor boards were still stored under the house there. Everyone was in a quandary. A family from Pentland way, who always used to stay at the station when travelling to the races in Mr. Butler's time, had not even been invited in when they came through this time. They told us about this when they arrived at the camping grounds, and we became very doubtful as to whether we would be given the floor boards.

Mr. Hook came to me and asked if I would go to Bullawalla and see if I could get the boards. They gave me Daly's horses and dray, and warned me that I might meet with some hostility. I got to the homestead in the early evening and saw the owner. I told him why I was there and gave him the history of the timber. He didn't say Yes or No - and he didn't ask me if I was hungry, either. I had plenty of food, so I didn't worry and camped near the dray for the night.

The next morning I was up before daylight, and had nearly all the timber loaded before the manager was up and about. He didn't stop me finishing the loading, but he told me off properly for backing the dray in on the antbed path - he said I was breaking it up. Anyhow, I had the timber, so did not worry what he called me. I got back to camp with the timber by lunchtime that day, and they gave me a good cheer when I arrived - and a fiver besides.

I started to put the floor down straight away, and, with plenty of help, had it down ready for dancing the next evening. My mate of the year before, Dick Trivett, did the catering that year. I don't know how much money he got for it. He got on the rum the last day of the races, and some thief took his cash box, and he lost all his takings. I don't think he ever got any of it back. I saw him in Clermont a couple of weeks later and he was broke and had also lost his buck board and horses, as the publican had taken them for a debt which he owed.

I helped to take up the floor again and this time it was taken to Mt. Douglas.

Chapter 18 - Mt. Douglas Station

I had worked on Mt. Douglas during the year between the two Picnic Races. I had been in the commission agent's office in Clermont one morning while I was having a few weeks spell in the town. The commission agent, Mr. Casey, asked me if I would like a job building a drafting yard at Mt. Douglas station. I said I would if I could get one or two men to go with me. I knew there were two young fellows in town who had come over from Mackay and were wanting jobs. I found them and they agreed to come with me. They had their own horses and we set out.

The first two days travelling was dry, but the following day it got cloudy and when we camped that night, as it looked like rain, we pitched the tent and built our bunks up off the ground. It proved a wise move, as a storm broke during the night and the rain came down in torrents. Some time early in the morning, while it was still dark, I woke up feeling very uncomfortable. I put my hand over the side of the bunk and felt water. I woke my mates and we found the water was nearly knee deep. Fortunately we had left the cart with our provisions further up the rise, and we found it was still on dry ground. We moved all our loose gear, took our blankets and sheltered up on the rise until daybreak, by which time the rain had stopped. The storm was only local, but the creek had risen quickly, and had overflowed a good twenty yards. It receded quickly however, and by the time we had had breakfast the water had left our tent.

We got to Mt. Douglas without further incident, and fixed up the contract to build the drafting yard on a run about ten miles from the homestead, on the other side of the Suttor River where it joins up with the Belyando River. It was a big job and we were there for some months.

During this time I injured my hand - jarred it. It started swelling in the centre of the palm of my hand, then extended down to my fingertips, to the back of my hand and was working up my arm. I walked about for a whole night with the pain of it. I tried to lance it the next morning, but with no effect.

We were, of course, a hundred and twenty miles from any doctor, so I caught my horse and rode in to the station homestead. Mr. Daly's two sisters lived with him there. I showed my hand to the sisters, and the elder said that I must get it opened at once. I had already tried, but she made a better job of it. She cut a deep hole in the palm of my hand, and squeezed a lot of matter out. The next day the skin on my hand was two sizes too big. I stayed at the homestead for a week during which time Miss Daly bathed and dressed my hand twice a day. I was very grateful for all she did for me. As soon as my hand was better I was able to get back to work.

We still had a great deal of work to do. After I had been back with them about a fortnight it began to rain, and rained for days. Our meat supply was getting low, both rivers were running bankers, and they were between us and the station. However we had a rifle and plenty of ammunition, so we went duck shooting. After three or four days, the ducks cleared out to safer regions. Then we shot cockatoos, quite good eating. However after a week, even the cockatoos had cleared out, and the river was still up. Then we got on to crows, all right to eat if one is hungry enough. But crows are cunning - you can shoot one, but are lucky to get a second. Carrying the rifle, looking for something to shoot, I saw one of those long, hairy-necked cranes. I shot him and carried him back to the camp. We cooked the bird, but couldn't eat it - tasted just like rotten fish. As we were getting desperate for food I said that I would get back to the station somehow, and get some meat. I saddled the mare and set out for the river. I found the river still a banker, and knew I would have to swim the mare across.

I took off my boots and most of my clothes, tied them to the saddle, then set the mare for the river. It looked about thirty yards wide, but the water was hardly moving. As it was only half a mile to where it joined up with the Belyando, and the Belyando water was stronger, this slowed the current down. I got the mare in after some trouble, and getting eaten by thousands of mosquitoes. The mare did not like it much, and before we got half way across, we had a bit of a struggle and she turned around and headed back for where we started. I managed to get her going again, and this time kept a

good hold of her head while I floated alongside. My idea of swimming with a horse was to leave the saddle as soon as the horse started swimming, and not to remount until it touched bottom again.

After getting over that stream I discovered that I was on an island and had another branch of the river to cross. The mare was good this time, and went in without any trouble. The homestead was on the opposite side of the Belyando River, but one of the married brothers had build a house on this side, and it was from him I hoped to get some meat. Unfortunately, they were nearly as badly off as we were. He had only the remains of a goat that they had killed. There was no more than three pounds in the piece I carried back, not much reward for swimming two streams and travelling ten miles. We had a look at the Belyando there, but it was running far too strongly to put a horse in, and a lot of floating timber was coming down. So I had to go back to camp with just the one piece of meat. However Mr. Daly came with me going back, and showed me a place where I had only one stream to swim. I got back to camp none the worse for my day's experiences. We had another week on rice and damper before the river was low enough to get to the main homestead for meat.

Chapter 19 - Clermont

In between jobs on the stations, I usually stopped in Clermont for a short time. I remember being there one year when they held the Clermont Show. The programme was set for two or three days, but it rained on the first day and all the rivers and creeks were up and running bankers. It took three weeks to get through the Show programme in the end. The Show committee didn't mind, nor did the people, since they couldn't get back to their homes anyway. I won a trotting race with one of my horses, and also took part in the wrestling contest. I didn't win that, but I did take one fall out of the chap who did win, which none of the other contestants managed to do, so I reckoned I was at least second best.

The recreation in Clermont was mostly card-playing, both night and day, drinking of course, and dances every Saturday night. There were two places for dancing - the Town Hall and the Workers' Hall, which had been put up by the miners a few years previously. These were at opposite ends of the town. I remember once there was a dance in each of them on the same night. One was organised by the upper-crust, the other the usual Saturday night hop. I went to the dance at the Workers' Hall, where most of my acquaintances

were. After an hour or so there, someone suggested going on to the Town Hall dance. It was there I saw the best piece of snobbery ever. There were two entrances to the Town Hall, but only one hall. We found that the entrance fee at the end door was 2/-, and at the side door 4/-. Everyone was in the same room, and danced to the same music, but a little more than halfway down the hall from the stage where the musicians sat was a piece of blue tape stretched right across the room. The idea was that the toffs danced at one end, and the also-rans at the other. As we came in at the lower end we were of course amongst the also-rans. We didn't like this set-up at all, and decided to put an end to it. The girls with us were willing to play along. As soon as they put on a schottische, we "let her rip". We all put the pace on and went for the tape, up among the "uppers". I don't think anyone noticed it until the music stopped, and by that time quite a number of the "uppers" were at the wrong end, and the tape was all in pieces, so nothing was done about it. I was at a Town Hall ball once after that, but there was no tape.

The old town of Clermont was built on the lower side of a big lagoon. There were four hotels and a few shops on one side of the main street, a chemist shop and two grocers on the other, and a number of private dwellings near the railway station. Nearly half-way up the rise from the lagoon was another hotel and one shop. That was how it looked when I left there in 1913. A big flood in 1917 washed away practically the whole of that part of Clermont built on the lower side of the lagoon, and over 90 people were drowned. They were all people I had known, and many of them good friends of mine. I think that knowing they were no longer there was mostly the reason I did not go back when I returned from the war in 1919.

Chapter 20 - Brisbane and Enlistment

It was 1913 when I left Clermont to come to Brisbane. I had saved something over a hundred pounds, the most money I had ever had at any one time. I thought of starting some kind of business. I did buy a mixed business in Logan Road, South Brisbane, but it was a failure. No one seemed to have much money, with wages still only eight shillings per day for a six day week. To do business I had to give credit and often didn't get paid at all. So I sold the shop and bought a horse and tip-dray.

There was a fair amount of work in Brisbane just then. Excavations were being made where the Tivoli Theatre in Albert Street later stood, at the site of the Taxation Building in Elizabeth Street and at the corner of Queen and Creek Streets. Contractors would cart the excavated soil away for one

shilling per load at the loading end, and we would get one shilling or one and sixpence for it as filling at the place where we tipped it. Most of it went over the south side on the flat land along Montague Road. We could earn about fourteen shillings a day, but of course had to pay for horse feed out of that. I also worked for a time with the horse and dray on the duplication of the railway from Petrie to Caboolture, but only got twelve shillings per day there.

Some time after the war broke out, I was working with my dray for the Commonwealth, when they were building barracks at Enoggera Military Camp. I had a good deal of contact with the soldiers in the camp there, and when my job on the barracks was finished, I also enlisted. That was in October, 1915, when the troops on the Peninsular were getting a bad time from the Turks, and thousands of men all over Australia were rushing to enlist. Enlisting was simple and quick. There were about twenty-five men there the day I enlisted, and we were examined by a doctor who asked a few questions, then we lined up two deep to take the oath of allegiance, and that was that.

I was sent to the Exhibition grounds to report to the C.O. there. The recruits were allotted a place to sleep. My first night was in a bower shed, with just brush overhead, and it rained that night, so we all got wet. Next morning they shifted us over to what was then called Petty's Paddock, that is the other side of the street from the main pavilion. We bunked down in what had been the sheep and pig pens - our bed was the floor, with blankets and groundsheet.

On our first payday there, while we were sitting about on the parade ground, I got involved in a fight with a chap who styled himself King Alfred. He and his mates had some grog, and they were throwing their weight about and picking on some of the men and boys who were camping with me. Of course I took their part, and I found myself facing this King Alfred. We had a couple of good rounds, and I think I was winning when one of his mates swung a "hay maker" from behind me, caught me on the ear and swung me right around. I managed to stay on my feet to meet the King when he came at me again, and I was just bashing his ribs when the M.P. came in and stopped the show. They took us both over and locked us in the horse stalls on the other side. I had only been there about an hour when an officer came and let me out, and probably the other fellow too. The next day my team wanted me to go and look him up, but I said "Let sleeping dogs lie." Anyway we were told later that the King was in hospital, no doubt with some ribs broken.

I must mention a beautiful bit of organisation that I saw in that camp. For some reason or other, camp leave had been stopped and the men resented this. So they organised a sit down strike. There were five thousand men on the Exhibition side and one thousand on our side of the road, and we all had to parade on the one ground at the nine o'clock parade. The word was passed around when the strike was to be. This morning after all the units had marched onto the ground, and were in their appropriate places waiting for the O.C. to come on parade, they were all standing at ease then the O.C. came on. The Orderly Officer called "Attention", and on that word every private on that parade sat down. The N.C.O. and the officers ran everywhere. The O.C. came down the line and picked on one man and ordered him to stand up, but he stuck to his mates and stopped down. He then called for a deputation to meet him. Some of the leaders went out and conferred with him. Then the O.C. announced that their leave would be restored, and all the men stood up again.

After being in that camp a couple of months, and beginning to feel stale, I got the opportunity to join up with the Artillery and I was transferred to that unit. After some months' training in Brisbane, we were sent to Sydney. There we were formed up as a complete unit, as the 9th Brigade under the command of Colonel O'Mahoney. We embarked from Sydney as the 9th Artillery Brigade, 3rd Division, on the S.S."Argyleshire". There were two thousand troops on that ship, and we took eleven weeks on the trip to England, sailing around the Cape. We lay in Capetown Harbour for eleven days, awaiting other ships, as we had to sail in a convoy with a cruiser as an escort. There was danger of submarines all the rest of the way. We had a good trip sailing up the West coast of Africa, calling only at Dakar. We landed in England at Southampton in beautiful summer weather, and went by train on to Lark Hill, Salisbury Plains, where we had to do more training before going to France. We were split up into sections and sent to different places. Some stayed at Lark Hill, one lot went to Winchester, and my particular section was sent to a little village named Codford where we had to join up with a British Battery.

Perhaps our time there gave the gunners good experience, but for the drivers, of which I was one, it was just a very nice holiday. Our daily programme consisted of parade about six o'clock, one hour at the stables watching the Tommys grooming our horses, breakfast at eight o'clock, parade again about 9.30, and then a very nice morning's ride on the Downs,

exercising the horses. We would return about 11, and hand the horses over to the Tommys for grooming. The afternoon saw a repeat performance, and by five in the afternoon we were free to do what we liked and go where we liked. I spent most afternoons at the little village of Codford. I had made friends with a Mr. Ingram and his family. He was the saddler in the village. I spent many evenings with him and his wife and two daughters. Sometimes we would go walking in the beautiful twilight hours. Right up until midnight one could still see miles ahead - hills and dales, winding roads, little thatched cottages, meadows and the smell of new mown hay. It reminded me so much of my homeland, I think I was a little homesick.

We all returned eventually to Lark Hill to form a complete Brigade, and spent a couple of weeks manouvring around Stonehenge. I walked in among those big stones many times. They were practically unguarded at that time, although I believe there was a caretaker there, but we saw little of him.

Chapter 21 - France

The week before Christmas, 1916, we got our marching orders for France. Every driver had been given the care of his own two horses. They, with gun wagon and all the equipment, were shipped on board the same ship we sailed on. We sailed from Southampton to Boulogne. It was a rough passage and we travelled in the hold with all the hatches shut down and no lights as the submarines were about just then. We got safely to Boulogne and travelled by road to our destination near the front line. We could hear the sound of the guns, and see the shells bursting long before we got to camp. We had travelled the last of the journey by night, and got to camp just before daylight. There was a foot of snow on the ground, and the weather was cold.

After unharnessing, the horses were tied on a line and fed. The horses were nearly always tied in the open even in the worst of snowstorms, and only covered with rugs. The camp was near two villages named Stragele and Easbrook. After a couple of weeks there we were ordered down to the Somme where we were to join up with another Australian Battery, near Albert. There were still a few civilians in Albert, though it was battered about. It was a long trip down there, and we were handicapped all the way by somebody's incompetence or ignorance. The very first afternoon after travelling only a few kilometres, the horses started to skid and slip all over the place. Sometimes a whole team of six horses were down at once. It delayed us so much that instead of making camp that evening, it was nearly the next morning before we got to our billets. Then we could not stay there as the Unit

behind us would want the billets that night.

We realised that it was folly to try to travel on under these conditions, but no one seemed to have a solution. That was when my experience in my native land came in handy. I saw that the only solution was frost nails, but where to get them? Someone remembered seeing a blacksmith's shop somewhere, so we set out and found it and the frost nails, but no blacksmith. I had seen them put in at home, so I said I thought I could do it. Naturally I did our team first. There was really not much to it. All one had to do was to draw two nails from each of the horse's shoes and put the frost nails in their place. Care had to be taken to see that the nail came out right, and that the new nail didn't drive up the horse's foot and lame him. All horseshoe nails have one straight side and the other side is levelled to the outside point. By putting the nail in with the straight side outwards the point will always work outwards, and so cannot drive up the horse's foot. We did most of the horses. Some of them only got nails in their front shoes, as we did not have enough. Our supply wagon had the same trouble as we had with the result that after the first day we had few rations and no horse feed, but we overcame that with a little bit of thieving as we travelled along. As a straw stack came in view, the Gunners would leave the wagons or guns they were travelling on, pull out one or two sheaves and put them on the wagons.

We got to our destination and found our billets at a farm. The house was still occupied by the farmer. The Officers were billeted in the house, and the rank and file were out in the barn. There was a little straw to camp on, but our covering was only our three blankets, all we were allowed to carry. I always had one hidden under the saddle blanket as an extra. This was our first contact with front line troops. The first morning, everything was strange to us. The strangest sight of all was to see men sitting out in the middle of the dung heap. It was the highest point in the yard. The house and outhouses of French farms were generally built to form the outside of a square, and the dung heap was in the middle of this square. It puzzled me for a while what they were doing there. Most of them had their tunics and shirts off, and then we discovered that they were delousing themselves. We thought this was a terrible thing, and that they must be terribly careless fellows to allow themselves to get lousy - but after a few weeks we were doing it also.

Once in the front line, we seldom got our clothes off. I went as long as two weeks without taking my boots or clothes off at all to sleep. All our work was

done at night as we could not take the horse teams up in the daytime. If we did, the bombers were likely to come over and smash us up. Going up at night was all right while the ground was frosted and hard, but once the thaw set in, it was all mud and slush. We would get back to the lines covered with mud, and just scrape it off, turn in and sleep like logs. When the warmer weather came, we could at least take our boots off. During the winter they would freeze so hard overnight that one could not get them on again in the morning, so it was better not to take them off at all.

All that year 1916-1917, the war was just a stalemate, and there was little movement. Our unit had one big move when we were sent up to the coast of Belgium. Our guns were in action at a place called Newport. Our camp was at Bray Dunes right on the seafront, and from there we used to visit Dunkirk. That was a walled town, and they would close the gates at 10p.m., so we had to be sure to be out by then. There were scores of estamines there where you could buy wine, beer or coffee, and even dance.

Our next move was to Arras, but we had been there no more than twenty-four hours when we got hurried orders to go north again. The Germans had broken through on a sector occupied by the Portugese, and we had to go up to reinforce and try to stop the advance. When we got close to where the Germans had broken through, we met the civilian population evacuating Robeck, a village we had spent a few weeks in some time before. They were carrying everything, some in carts, others with wheelbarrows, - girls, young boys, old men and women, - almost made one cry to see it. However we did not get much time, for orders came to strip for action, then advance at a trot, and shortly after that at a gallop. We galloped right through the village, right into position for the guns, and started firing immediately. It appears that the Germans had not only smashed the Portugese, but a Scots Regiment, the 51st, had also been cut to pieces. After pulling in the guns and wagons, we got orders to stand to. That meant to be ready to pull guns and wagons out at a minute's notice. We were some distance away from the guns. A number of German shells were coming over, mostly of the whiz bang variety. A small shell would make a hole in the ground, about a foot deep and about three feet across. The ground was soft and wet in places, and some of the shells hitting the soft ground would not explode. We three drivers were sitting on the ground holding our horses when one of these shells came and hit the ground no more than three feet from any one of us. It buried itself in that soft ground and did not explode, luckily for us - if it had, I would not be sitting over

forty years later writing this.

In the early morning we got orders to move quickly, as German infantry were coming over, and looked like overrunning us. We got our guns out on the left flank, but the guns on the right were not so lucky. They had some men wounded and had to leave two guns in enemy hands. Two days later with a counter attack, they were recovered.

Chapter 22 - The Little Mutiny

In August, 1918, came the breakthrough of the German lines and the big advance by all the Allied Forces. I don't recall all the actions we took part in. Somewhere about this time, an incident occurred that is worth recording - I called it our little mutiny.

It happened like this. Our guns were in action, just across on the hillside from us, with just the valley between. The wagons and horse lines were on our side of the valley. One of the drivers of the Right Section had been charged with being late on duty, and the O.C. sentenced him to number one field punishment. That meant he would be tied with his hands behind his back to a gun wheel, and be unable to move, and an armed guard would be placed over him. He was also within range of enemy gun fire. Well, his Section Drivers didn't like this, and they thought the punishment was far too severe. They approached us, the Drivers from the Left Section, and asked us if we would fall into line with anything they could do to relieve the situation. We said we would. So a plan was made that we should all march up together to where the man, Kilner, was tied up and cut him free.

Everybody seemed enthusiastic about doing this, and we all gathered together, about twenty or so men and started up the slope. It was a distance of about seventy-five yards. I'd turned up with the rest and started up the hill. A little over halfway up it suddenly seemed terribly quiet, and I looked around. Bill Green and I were from ten to twenty yards in front of anybody else, with the organisers of the scheme furthest back of all. Bill sang out to the laggards to come on and they gradually closed up. Bill and I were first up however. The guard was armed, but it was obvious he was uncertain what to do, so he did nothing. We crowded around the prisoner, but we could not untie the rope, so I produced my jackknife and cut it. The sergeant came running over and tried to stop us. We told him why we had done it, and said that if he was tied up again, we would cut him loose again. He ordered two of

the guards to tie him up again, but they refused, so he put them under arrest. Now there were three men under arrest. The man wasn't tied up again, the three of them were put in the guard tent.

At two o'clock, after lunch, we had to go on parade for duty of the afternoon. But we had two men under arrest, so we reckoned we should get them out of it. So when the whistle went, we all sat down in a bunch, and only the N.C.O. fell in. The officer came on parade and blew the whistle again, but no one moved. He sent the sergeant over, yelling at us a couple of times, but we sat fast. Next time the sergeant came over, he said that the Major wanted one man from each subsection (there were six, A,B,C,D,E,and F) to come over and state our case. No one moved for a while. It seemed fair enough to me, so I was the first to stand up, Bill Green did also, and then the others followed. We marched over and fell in, in our order - that made me as C section, third in the line. But for some reason the O.C. Major Campbell, ignored the others and addressed himself to me. He asked what it was all about, and called me by name.

I hadn't thought to be the spokesman, but I just stated the facts. I said that we considered that Kilner had been too severely punished, and also that before we would go on duty he must release the other two men who had been arrested. He said, "That is your opinion, is it? Well I am a lawyer, and I should know what I am about. But if you all come on duty, I will have the two men brought before me at once, but Kilner will stay under arrest." I agreed to this, and none of the others objected, so we carried on with our work.

The climax came the next morning. It appeared that the C.O. of the Brigade, a Brigadier, had witnessed all the proceedings from his headquarters a short distance away. He had instituted inquiries and got to the bottom of the affair. The result was that next morning Major Campbell came on parade without his Sam Brown, and apologised for all the happenings of the previous day. The two guards were exonerated of blame, and Kilner's sentence was reduced to two day's C.B. which was really nothing.

So ended that little escapade. Had it happened in the British Army, we would probably all have been shot. The Australian Army could have given us twelve months in clink. I can't remember the Brigadier who put Campbell in his place, but whoever he was, he is always No.1 with me. I have no proof of this, but I think the Major Campbell was the man leading the New Guard at

the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. In any case there were no more severe sentences from the Major after that.

Chapter 23 - Under Fire

The Allied Armies continued to advance as the Germans drew back. The Americans had come into the picture by this time. I think they were nearly all Infantry men, with little, if any, Artillery. At any rate, as they relieved our Infantry in the front line, we, as Artillery, had to cover and support them. But they did not have the experience that our troops had, and so they were careless in mopping up - that is, to make sure that they did not bypass any enemy pockets, and so get caught in the rear by them. I think that is what happened in the instance of which I am about to tell.

We, as an Artillery Unit, had advanced a fair distance, two or three kilometres, that morning. We waited in a valley with the rise of the hill as cover, evidently for orders from the front line observers to give our Captain a position to take up. Some time about midday, we advanced over the hill through a little village, and just on the outskirts of that village the guns were put into position, six of them. The ammunition carrying wagons were drawn up close by, and all the Drivers were told to take the horses into the village where the horse lines had been made ready for them. Now, nearly every village in France has a village pump for water. We, of course, had to water our horses before feeding them. There were some of the Drivers at the pump, watering their horses still with harness on, and not giving the horses much chance of getting a good drink. The lines were a hundred yards or so further on. Clark, who was our lead Driver, said, "What will we do? Give them a drink now, or lead them back after we unharness?" I said we should take them up, take the harness off, and come back and give them a good drink. So we went on. We had just got to the lines and tied up and got the harness off, when an explosive shell came over from the German guns and landed in the midst of the men and horses at the pump. Several men and horses were wounded, one man had his head completely severed from his body. That was the beginning.

The Germans continued their gunfire. It was a four-gun battery firing, so four shells fell at a time, with about half-minute intervals. After their first shells, the ones that hit the pump, they extended their range, and the shells came directly over us, but exploded about 50 yards away. When the first shell burst, the Drivers, or most of us, ducked into a trench that was handy. There

were six or eight of us in this trench. At that time our horses did not seem to be in danger as the shells were going over. But, after a couple of rounds of gunfire, they dropped their range about 20 yards at a time, a couple of rounds on each range, so it was obvious that all the horses would get hit if not shifted. An officer or sergeant somewhere in the village sang out, "Get all horses off the line". I was first out of the trench, Driver Clark came with me, and we started untying the horses. Some of the Drivers on other lines just grabbed a couple of horses and got clear. Alec and I untied every horse that was on our lines, eighteen or twenty horses, and chased them out into the open. Shells were raining down. We would duck when we heard the shell coming. They just gave enough time to drop flat on the spot. Some of the horses were hit. Alec was covered with blood from one of them hit on the nose with a piece of shell. I think he got a fright from that, as he disappeared somewhere down the trench again. In the meantime, Bombardier Morgan came from somewhere, and he and I were the last two men to leave after we had got all the horses able to walk out of the line of gunfire. We then went up to where the men had taken shelter, but they had only a half dozen horses there, all the other horses were running loose out in the open. I asked someone to give me a horse, and I would bring in all the loose horses.

The Officer's Groom lent me his horse, but no one had a saddle handy. I said "Never mind, I can do this bareback". So off I went, rounding up horses. A few shells were still coming over, but I was getting the horses together. Three or four had strayed right up to where a Tommy Battery was in action, and had been caught by a couple of the English Gunners. Anyway, I wanted those horses too, so I galloped up and said "Let them go and I will take them with me". I think they thought I was a little cracked, but their Officer said to let me have them, and they let them go. I brought all the horses back to where the Drivers were still sheltering. The Bombardier, Morgan, and I then walked back to the lines as the gunfire had ceased and viewed the damage. A Sergeant and an Officer were there also. The Sergeant (Roderick) said, "You're a bit late coming after the damage has been done". I said, "You're wrong, we were here whilst it was being done. Have a look at our lines." There were no dead horses on our line. There were twelve to fifteen dead horses on A and B lines, and some on E and F. We were C and D. Our lines were clear. Some of D horses were wounded or killed at the pump however, and it was a D section Driver who was killed.

Now all the remaining horses, and the men, were shifted up to the shelter of a

clump of timber, and horse lines made there. Our guns remained where they were, more or less compulsorily, as there were no teams to shift them. A couple of them were hit during the evening, as the Germans kept up their fire, some gas shells among them. The next morning, after a restless night, as we did not know what would happen next, we were brought on parade, and the Lieutenant called for volunteers to drive down to pick up as much gear as possible.

Clark and I were the first to step out and I think we got two more. The reason that so few wanted to go was that the village was full of mustard gas. Anyhow we got the service wagon and two horses. I was the Driver. It was not very far, less than one kilometre. On account of the presence of gas, we had to be careful. I drove into the lines where Morgan and I had been the last to leave, and what a shambles! The harness that had been placed in heaps behind each team was literally cut to pieces. The dead horses on the other lines were, of course, still there, but our task was to collect the harness, without which no team could function. We loaded up without any trouble. Any gas present was lying low and did not hurt us. But just how Morgan and I had been missed, and not hit by the hundreds of pieces of shell that cut that harness to bits, I don't know. Morgan did get hit on the instep without drawing blood, it just created a swelling - his boot saved his foot.

Chapter 24 - The Medal

That afternoon, I was called in to the Orderly Room where the Captain and two other Officers were sitting at a table. They did seem unusually friendly, and I was wondering what it was all about. Lieutenant Barraclough said "It seems that you were the only man much in evidence during the shambles yesterday, and we want to congratulate you on your courageous behaviour. We would like you to tell us of anyone else that you noticed doing his job." I said "Alec Clarke was with me nearly the whole of the time." They said "Alec is one of your team, and we don't want it to look like favouritism to the one team. What about someone from A or B section?" I said, "Just count their dead horses still on the lines." They asked "Then have you anyone else in mind?" I said, "Yes, Bombardier Morgan. He was the last man with me when we had cleared the lines." They then thanked me very much and I was dismissed.

A week later I was granted fourteen days leave in England, so I was not present on the Parade when orders were read, and the announcement made

that Bombardier Morgan and No. 21325 Driver C.P. Christensen had been given the Military Medal for bravery in the field.

I was, of course, in England spending my money and having a fairly good time. Walking into Horseferry Road Military Depot, I met Charles Davis, just come over on leave from our Unit. Of course, we had a yarn about one thing and another. Then he said, "I notice you are not wearing it." I said, "Wearing what?" He said, "Why, don't you know, you and Morgan both were presented with the Military Medal. Yours should have been the D.C.M., but I believe, as there were only so many medals to be allotted, someone else got the D.C.M., and yours had to be the M.M. They thought this was more appropriate as you were a Driver. Very few Drivers would get the opportunity even to get that." I was, of course, very pleased. I had never thought it possible for me to win anything.

Chapter 25 - The Armistice

My leave was up on the 10th November, 1918, and I had to report at Folkestone that day for return to the battle area. On 11th November, we were to board ship to France. The ship was to sail at 10a.m. that day. There were Armistice rumours even then. We were taken down to the ship, and about half of the men had boarded when we were stopped, and they were taken off again. We were told an Armistice had been signed, and we might not have to go back. Most of us took it in silence - we were used to shocks. Others went wild with excitement. But the quiet ones took the next order best when it was given half an hour later - that we had to board ship and return to France. We were shipped to Bologne from where we had to take a train to the nearest railhead of our Unit. My Unit had moved a couple of times since I had left them, and I was not at all sure where to find them. However, at Amiens, we passed a train coming down with men on leave. A couple from my Unit were with them. They told me where they had left the Unit, but they thought they would be moving again to another camp, but did not know where. We got to the railhead and there tried to find out where the Unit was.

There was a Headquarters there, but they could not give us any precise idea where to find them. Consequently I walked about from place to place for two days before I located them.

We spent all that winter in France, just eating and loafing. We still had horses to look after, and that helped to kill time.

Chapter 26 - The Black 'Flu

A couple of weeks after returning from England, bringing the horses in one afternoon, one horse bit me on the cheek. I don't know if that was the cause - but I went to bed in good health that evening, woke up during the night feeling sick, and when morning came I was really in a bad way. I did not get up for breakfast, and when the Orderly Sergeant came around for sick parade, I told him I was sick. He grinned and said, "You sick? - something new!", and he did not even take my name. He thought I was just kidding. I had not been on a sick parade all the time we had been either in England or France.

No one came near me. As there was no work to do, no one worried. But I was worried, for I could hardly move. So sometime during the morning, I spotted the Sergeant and called him over. I told him that I was really sick, and would he send down the Medical Orderly. The Orderly came, took my temperature - 105 degrees - gave me two aspirins, and hurried away. Five minutes later the doctor was there and asked me how long I had been sick. I told him. He then said, "Get this man to hospital at once."

Well, I was bad - I could only move my arms, and my eyes wanted to close all the time. I put my hands up and kept my eyes open with my fingers. The aspirins that I had taken helped me a little. I was well covered with blankets, and was now perspiring freely. When the ambulance men came sometime during the afternoon, they told me to get up and get dressed. I didn't think I could, but anyway I did not try. I simply said, "No, I am not going to be uncovered." It was cold outside and I was wet with perspiration. I thought, "If I get cold, I am gone where there is no return." So they rolled me in the blankets onto the stretcher, and took me to the clearing station. There was a long line of stretchers, thirty or forty, on the ground waiting to be taken in - all victims of the Black 'Flu epidemic raging at the time, killing thousands. It was then I was glad that my bearers were either tired or plain lazy, for instead of taking me down to the end of the queue, they put me down right at the top and almost in the doorway of the marquee where all the patients had to enter. There was snow on the ground, and I was pleased when I was taken in immediately and put to bed. Some of the men on the stretchers outside died where they lay. It could easily have happened to me. I seemed to lead a charmed life during my Army career.

As my temperature was high, I was kept at that clearing station until my temperature came down. I was fed at first with a mixture, mostly brandy I think, and was very weak when I was eventually put on the train for a hospital in Rouen, France.

The train journey to Rouen was long and tedious, lying in a bunk and not able to get up or help oneself. With this sickness one was very weak and not able to stand up without support. I was in Rouen Military Hospital for about four weeks. I was transferred to convalescence on Christmas Eve. That was - out of a bed to sleep on the floor! Such a nice change! I was supposed to be well after a couple of weeks in the convalescent camp, but I was not really well till two years after. The sickness seemed to do lots of things to me not apparent to anyone. For a time I forgot all about my family in Denmark - that accounts for not trying to go to Denmark after I got back to England. I also had a secret fear of losing my mates, or being alone among strangers. I was also weaker physically. I had lost a good deal of my physical powers, such as lifting or carrying anything. I got back to the Unit, as far as anyone knew, in good health. I knew, of course, I was not, but said nothing about it.

During that winter we moved out of France into Belgium, up as far as Charleroi, a nice little town. It was very busy, considering that it had been occupied by the Germans only a few months before, and they were supposed to have been short of everything. When we came into this town, the shops were crammed with all kind of goods.

Shortly after moving there, we got rid of all our horses. They were classed in three classes - A, B, and C. The C class horse was sold to the Belgians; the B class to the French; and the A class were sent to Britain. I went down to Le Havre with two lots. With one of these lots was a horse that I had been given charge of in England three years before. I had seen him through all our campaigns. He was wounded once, but I persuaded the vet not to send him away, as it was only a piece of shell through the top part of his neck.

Chapter 27 - England and Home to Australia

It was April, 1919 before we got back to England. We had one month there doing nothing, just waiting for a boat. The sickness I had had six months before was still affecting me. For instance, I could not concentrate on reading a book, and as I mentioned before, could not clearly concentrate on anything, otherwise I might have applied for leave to go to Denmark. I found

out after we had embarked for Australia, that I could have gone there in civilian clothes. I had also completely forgotten the Danish language; that may have been a contributing factor in not applying to go over. I really don't know, even now.

We had a few days leave before embarking, during which I visited my Cadford friends to bid them goodbye, and had a few days in London. Our homeward trip was more pleasant than our trip over had been; not so crowded, and no fear of submarines. We again sailed around the Cape and had a few days at Capetown this time ashore - a city of two languages printed on everything, and blacks and whites clearly divided. No black travelled with whites or ate at the same places. Some of our men, meeting with nice dark-skinned girls and wanting to take them to dinner or entertainment, were refused admittance. It is still the same in South Africa today.

Our trip home was uneventful. We landed in Sydney and had to take the train to Brisbane. There were 900 Queenslanders on three trains that came up at the same time. Our reception in Brisbane was nothing to skite about. I had wired some friends, and they met me at Central. Most of the other men had done the same. Central Station was crowded when our train arrived. My friends were there to meet me and I was to go to them for the night. But first we had to go to the Army Depot at Kangaroo Point for checking. A clerk was sitting at a table to take our names as we passed in, and asked among other questions if we had any disabilities from the War. I said "No", my first mistake. Had I said yes, I probably would have drawn a pension for at least twelve months. Had I been examined, any doctor would have known that I was not all right, however I was anxious to get out of the Army, hence my "No"

Someone made a speech of welcome, a weak cup of tea, and then we were told you can get your discharge at the Victoria Barracks the next day. Then you were finished with the Army, and could go your way and were pretty well thrown on your own resources.

There was very little work offering at that time, and many returned men soon found themselves in poor straits, particularly married men with families - for once they got discharged and paid off, the family allowance also stopped. Men with some firms, and public servants, had the advantage. Their jobs had been kept open for them, and they simply stepped in where they had left off

when enlisting. The Queensland Government gave every returned man a free First Class railway ticket, current for three months to anywhere in Queensland, signed by Mr. Jack Fihelly who was the Minister for Railways at that time. I never used mine. I was tired of travelling, and just wanted to rest.

I had been thinking a good deal of what I would do when I got back, and was thinking seriously of either buying a cab or starting a carrying business. But my finances were limited, only 200Pounds I had saved including my deferred pay, and there was not any scope for either. I did buy a dray and horses and started in partnership with a friend in a sawmill venture at Camp Mountain near Samford, but it turned out a failure after a few months. We found that a timber company had bought up all the standing timber in the near district. At that time, all timber had to be hauled by either horse teams or bullock teams, so I had to give it up. I then got the idea of taking up land.

Chapter 28 - Cecil Plains

The Government had resumed a lot of land and was cutting it up for Soldier Settlement. The Commonwealth Government was urging the soldiers to go on the land. Mr. Billy Hughes, as Prime Minister, came to Brisbane about that time, and his urging was "Go on the land and PRODUCE, PRODUCE, PRODUCE." I fell for it and started looking for land. but hundreds of others were doing the same. All blocks of land had to be balloted for. I took part in, I think, four ballots without getting anything. I was told that blocks of land were open at Cecil Plains without ballots, but I was working for the Railways with my dray, and earning fair wages, so I didn't feel like leaving it just on spec. My friend, Billy Park, said he also wanted land, so he and his friend Drayton would go up and inspect it. They did that and came back and said they were satisfied with it, and had each selected a block. So I did likewise.

I left my job, put my horses and gear on the train, and set out for my new venture. Drayton had gone up a couple of days ahead and was to meet me at Oakey. Park was not ready, but would come up after a week or so.

Coming to Cecil Plains that first time is hard to forget, and I was disappointed. As we were approaching that open plain that was to be my future home, Drayton said, "I will show you where your land is, for we can see it from the train." Coming to a siding. at that time called Twentysix and a half mile, later Norwin, he said, "Over there, to the right of that clump of timber." Well, all I could see was black earth. There was not a blade of grass on any

of that part of the plain. We got to the terminus by eight o'clock that evening. There were no houses at that time in what now is a fair sized town, only a railway station house. We pitched tent that night in the dark, and, of course, camped on the ground, at the old station homestead, a little way from the station. The Overseer of the Settlement lived there, and the next morning we went down to see him to get the hang of things. We found out where to get timber for fencing and various matters relating to financial help from the Government.

The position was as follows. The land was perpetual lease, the yearly rent on my block was Eighty Pounds, paid in advance. The Commonwealth Government would lend the settler Seven Hundred and Fifty Pounds. With that, the settler was supposed to be able to start producing. Now, my land was 14 miles from any timber. That meant we had to cut and split post and slabs there, cart them to the railhead, load them on trucks, and the train would take them to our nearest siding. Drayton and I split enough posts and rails, and put them on trucks, to fence our land, also slabs enough for two wells. Park did not come to Cecil Plains. After reaching Oakey, he had changed his mind about the Plains, and had bought a ready-made Dairy at Maclagan.

Drayton was a good enough mate to work with. We planned to work, and help one another, until we got all the improvements ready to produce. But he was a married man with four children, and he had to pay rent for a house for them in Oakey, so he was inclined to lean on me a little, financially, with the result that my resources ran out quicker than they otherwise would have. We had been camped on the Condamine River while getting the timber. After loading the timber, we packed up and moved up to our blocks of land. Drayton had no horses, so my team and dray had to carry all our gear. We had a fairly heavy load for two horses to pull, and it was 14 miles to our destination. I had in mind somewhere where I wanted to build my house, but sometimes little things get in the way. This time it was rain. A heavy fall of rain, just as we came on to my block - and when wet, that black soil sticks - we kept going until the horses could pull us no further, and that was where I eventually built the house I lived in for nearly fifteen years.

There was neither wood nor water on the block. We had brought wood, but we had to carry water from the nearest windmill, nearly half a mile away. After rigging camp, we got settled down a bit after a couple of days. We had

carted some of the timber onto the land, and we decided to sink a well. We would sink my well first, and then Drayton's. We did not have the necessary gear, so Drayton said he would go to Oakey and bring it out, as he also wanted to get some horses and a cart. He could then bring it out in his cart.

Well, Drayton brought, among other things, a windlass. A chap in Oakey had given it to him. Another case of anything you get for nothing is hardly ever any good. I had asked him to get the blacksmith to make one. I often wished he had.

Now we had a windlass, we could start sinking the well. We rigged the windlass. I didn't like it much, but Drayton said it was quite okay, and had been used before for well sinking. We had worked on the well for about a week, and were down about 50 feet. We had been taking turns in working below. One would work in the forenoon, and the other in the afternoon. We would sink about 6 to 8 feet per day.

It came on to rain, and rained for nearly a week, and we could not work on the well. We were camped in a tent that Drayton had got from the Soldiers Association. A couple of days after the rain stopped, we thought we might be able to work on the well again. Everything seemed in order, and we started again that morning. It was my turn to work below. I didn't have a long shift, two or three hours maybe. Drayton was hauling up the dirt, and letting down the slabs for me to put in. Drayton hauled me up for lunch, a good pull, well over fifty feet now. We had lunch, and then it was Drayton's turn to go below. I was hauling up the soil and letting down slabs, and I had noticed nothing wrong.

Somewhere around four o'clock, Drayton called out and said he would come up. He always came up standing with one foot in the bucket. So, when he called, "Ready", I started to wind him up. He was a heavy man, around 12 stone. and no easy load to wind. I was pulling him up slowly, and he was within reach of the top of the well - another foot and he would have grasped the side of the top slab - then it happened without any warning. The windlass drum started to turn in reverse - slow at first, but soon gaining speed, and Drayton disappeared from my view. The drum was spinning on one pin; the handle in my hand had come right out by now, and there was nothing holding one end of the drum. I was quick to see that the drum might fall out, so I threw away the handle and grasped the drum, so preventing it from falling

down the well. If it had, it would have killed him outright. When the drum stopped spinning, I still had it in my hand, but all the rope had run off and fallen down the well.

For two or three minutes there was no sound from below, and I was almost frightened to call out. Anyhow, I did call out, "Are you all right?" After my second call, Drayton answered and said, "I think I have broken both legs." I said, "Can you stand up?" He said, "No, but I would like a drink of water." It was then I realised what a spot I was in - the windlass broken, the rope down the well, no other people nearer than three miles, and it was late in the evening. First, I had to think how to get the rope up. I then remembered that there was a coil of plain wire at the camp. It was about 75 yards to the tent, and I ran up and got the hundredweight of wire and ran back with it to the well. I uncoiled enough wire to reach the bottom, and tied a billy full of water to the end to lower it down the well. I again called out to Drayton, and said, "I am lowering you some water on the wire. Can you tie the rope to it so that I can pull it up?" He said, "I think I can do that." And he did, so I got the rope up.

I now examined the windlass, and for a time I did not think I would be able to get him up with it. The iron pin that fixed the handle on was a piece of iron about 8 inches long and 1 inch square, tapered down and driven in to the end of the windlass barrel, which was wood, into a square hole, and the handle fitted over the protruding end which was also square. What had happened and caused the accident, was that during the wet weather the wood end had swollen, and when it dried out the pin came loose, letting go the barrel. Well, I drove the pin back and put the windlass back again. I asked Drayton if he could tie himself on the rope. He said he could, and did so. I started to wind him up. I think I got him six or eight feet off the bottom when I could feel that the pin was going to slip again. So I had to let him back. I called out to him that I could have to do something else to the windlass or it would again let him down. I had a drill at the camp. I took the handle up and bored a hole through that piece of inch iron, put it back in the barrel and then bored a hole in the wood and slipped a three inch nail down through the hole I had bored in the iron rod. Well, now I reckoned that the windlass was pretty safe, and I again started winding him up.

This time, the windlass held, and I got him up to the top. He was sitting in a sling with his feet dangling, and it was obvious that he could not help himself

much. I had to hold the windlass with one hand, and try to pull him over to the edge with the other. With a big effort I succeeded, but I had never been more scared in my life before. Had I slipped at all, he would have gone to the bottom again and been killed, for sure.

Well, I had him up. Now, I had to get him to the tent. The only way was to carry him. Having to get his 12 stone onto my back was a problem. He could only sit up. I got down on my hands and knees, he put his arms around my neck, and I had to rise with him on my back. I did it, and carried him that 75 yards to the tent. I put him on the bed, and then removed his boots. He said that one foot was feeling a bit sore, but there was no blood on that one, though it looked a bit blue. When I took the boot off the other foot, he said that he could feel nothing. It was bleeding a bit. I pulled off his sock and looked. I could have turned that foot right around, and he felt nothing. That ankle was just pulp. The leg bone had been driven right through the foot. That was the foot he had been standing on in the bucket, and it had taken the full impact.

Well, now I could see that this was a job for a doctor, and as soon as possible. It was three miles to the railway siding, and I could not be sure that there would be anyone there. On the other hand, there was a telephone at a hut about four miles away. By now it was well after sundown. We had two saddle horses, but they were in a 640 acre paddock, and I could not be sure if I could catch one of them. Anyhow, we decided that I should try to catch a horse; if not, I would have to walk to that phone. I took a bridle on the off chance of catching a horse, but it was just about dark, and I did not succeed in catching one. So I set off cross country for that phone. It was now pitch black. The plain was wet and there was a lot of water lying about. I could only see one light, and I thought perhaps that would be the hut where the phone was.

I kept that light in view, for it was my only guide of direction. After walking well over two miles, I came to the creek called The Branch. It is a branch of the Condamine River. It was in full flood, a banker. I could see the water, and the outline of the opposite bank. Well, I had to get across, and the only way was to swim. I took off my boots only, tied them around my neck, and went in with the rest of my clothes on. It was only a short swim, maybe fifteen or twenty yards. I got over, of course wet through, and it was winter, and cold. The light was nearer now and I thought I would only have to go there and ring someone at Cecil Plains and they would get a doctor. But it

turned out a lot harder than that.

I got to the house where the light was, and found it was not the hut. It was Joe Higgins' farmhouse, and he was just on the point of going to bed. Another five minutes, and there would have been no light. Now he told me that the hut was another mile further down. I asked him about a horse, but he said his horses were cut off from the house by flood water. So I set off again for that phone. Now I had a track to follow, so I could not go wrong.

I got to the hut. It would be about 9 o'clock then. I had been walking about three hours to get there. The men were in bed. When I told them my troubles, they were very helpful. They got on the phone, but it was one of those district phones - when you ring one, you ring the lot. There were about six farms connected, but only one answered, and he was no help, as he also was surrounded by water, and could not get out. All the others had put the silencers on their phones so they would not hear if anyone rang, so I could raise no one else. The only thing to do was to go on to Cecil Plains, but it was nearly ten miles away, and I was on foot and the ground was wet. I arranged with the two men there, Guy Williams and his mate, to try to get across and stay with Drayton. There was a bridge across The Branch close to the hut, and they could follow an old station fence all the way to within half a mile of the tent, when they should be able to see the light in the tent. I had lit the hurricane lantern before I left.

It would be about two miles to the railway station at Nangwee, where there was a station house, and I thought they might be on the phone to Cecil Plains, so I set out for there. I had to recross The Branch, but this time by bridge. There was now a little moonlight, and I could see to walk pretty well, also see the line of timber on The Branch on my left, and a clump of timber on my right. If I steered a middle course between them, I would be right for the station. The station was, of course, in darkness, also the house which was occupied by a linesman and his wife who looked after the station. I woke them up and explained why I was there. It was now nearly midnight. They said they had no phone. It was still six miles to Cecil Plains, so I asked the linesman for the loan of his trolley.

He did not have time to reply before his wife said, "No, he can't lend it to anyone." I said, "Oh, but I must have it." Dan (that was the linesman's name") still had said nothing, but he reached out one hand in the darkness

and squeezed a key into my hand. I was quick to take the hint, said "Goodnight", and ran downstairs. I knew where the trolley was parked, just on the side of the line. The key fitted the lock and I unlocked the chain and then set off for Cecil Plains.

It was just on 1a.m. when I woke up the station mistress. I knew them well as we had done a good deal of work in the station yard before we moved down to the block. The station mistress was at once anxious to help me and came over to the office to try to ring up someone at Oakey. Fortunately there was someone at the Oakey office, and they put her on to the Doctor at once. But he was not very helpful. He said he could not come out, but advised us to ring the Toowoomba Ambulance. We did, and they said they could only get as far as Oakey, as the Plains were too wet and boggy to travel by car. I asked how could I get him to Oakey, and after some thought, or advice from someone, he said that there was a special train to Oakey in the morning to bring people in to meet the Prince of Wales in Toowoomba that day. If I could get him on that, they would send an ambulance man out in that train, and he would bring a stretcher with him. I said that I would try and do my best.

There was no point in seeing anyone else at Cecil Plains, so I set off again on my borrowed trolley to Nangwee, and then a long walk in front of me, somewhere around six or seven miles across country. It was still dark, but I could see the big clump of timber and I knew that I had to pass it pretty close. By the time I got past the clump, daylight was breaking. I was pretty well done in, but kept at it. Somewhere around six in the morning, I got to the tent. Guy Williams and his mate were there, and was I glad. They had kept Drayton company and made him some tea and something to eat. He was in fairly good spirits and didn't seem to suffer much pain.

Now I told them what we had to do, and we set about doing it. I had a four wheeled wagon, and I suggested we put Drayton on it and I would yoke up two horses. We had some trouble catching the horses, but got them hitched up and lifted Drayton on the wagon, bed and all, and started off. But, no luck - the black soil will stick to anything when wet. We had only gone a few hundred yards when the wheels were blocked with soil and just would not turn. The two horses could not pull it. There were two more horses down the paddock. Between the three of us, we managed to catch them too. Now we had four horses, but we only got another mile and they gave it up too. The

wagon was just one piece of mud with Drayton in the middle. By this time, the train had come out and was on its way to the Plains. We were a mile and a quarter off the railway, with a stretch of black muddy plain between. There was no sign of the ambulance man, so we lifted our patient, bed and all, off the wagon and started to carry him. But he was heavy, and there were only three of us. It was soon apparent that we could not carry him far, so I said that I would run up to the station and see if the ambulance man was there, so that I could get his stretcher. I ran that mile in a short time, though the mud was not easy. The ambulance man was there at Mr. Thompson's house near the station. I told him our trouble. He did not seem anxious to venture out in that black mud - I have no doubt it was all over me. So I grabbed the stretcher he was holding, and saying there was no time to waste, as the train would be back soon, I got back to the patient as quickly as I was able. We transferred him to the ambulance stretcher and could carry him fairly easily, though there were still only three of us, as the ambulance man had not followed me down.

We still had half a mile to go when the train hove in sight, but now the ambulance man had at last made up his mind to help, and he came to meet us. The train pulled in, and I was in a stew wondering if they would wait. But I was soon relieved, for, as soon as the guard was told by Mrs. Thompson of our trouble, the whole train crew and some of the passengers came to meet us, and we got our patient onto the train. He would be in Toowoomba by 11 o'clock that day. I walked back to the camp, a tired man. I think I collapsed and slept for nearly eighteen hours. I would have got back to camp by 10 o'clock, and it was dark when I woke, hungry and miserable.

I was now alone in camp, and had the work of two men in front of me. I did not despair long though, there was too much work to do. Now I had to get someone else to finish the well. I soon got two men, and they had only to work two days and up came the water. Had that windlass worked for another two days, there would have been no accident, and probably my whole life would have been changed.

Chapter 29 - A Farmer's Life

I had now a five-horse team. Some of the horses were Drayton's, and I had to set to work to shift all the timber we had lying at the railway. It took me something like 8 or 10 weeks to shift it all. There was timber for Drayton's well, fence posts to fence in his land, and timber to build his house and

milking yards. This was all done, of course, without pay. I also had a similar lot of timber to shift for myself. I had to build milking yards before I could think of starting to milk cows. It was now nearly six months since we came up to take up this land, and I had not yet had any returns from it.

The money lent by the Government, Seven Hundred and Fifty Pounds, from which I was supposed to build a house, fence the land, put on water and windmill, build milking yards, and buy cows, was used up. We had been granted sustenance pay for about four months; I think it was Two Pounds, Ten Shillings per week. I had bought some cows, but my finance was at rock bottom and I had not yet got a windmill on the place to pump the water for any stock I might get.

About this time, a windfall came to the rescue. The Commonwealth Government had at last made up its mind to pay soldiers a gratuity of one shilling for every day they had been overseas - could you imagine such generosity!! Anyhow, it came at an opportune time, my share was a sum of Eighty Four Pounds. Now I could buy more cows if I could get someone to take the Gratuity Bond as payment, for I could not change it into cash myself - for according to the powers that be, it would not do to trust a soldier with that much money. However I managed to exchange this bond for eight milking cows. And so I started producing. Butter at this time was still at wartime prices, as the British Government was yet buying all Australian butter at a guaranteed price. The farmer was paid Two Shillings and Sixpence per pound butterfat at the factory. A good price, and things looked good. There was plenty of feed on the Plains that year.

The Plains were a picture that summer, and for the next fourteen years I was there I never saw them again like it. There was little grass, it had been killed by the drought just past, but the herbage - of wild geraniums and crowsfoot and bluebells - was a sight to see. The blue and yellow flowers by the millions, and the mirages when horses and cattle seemed to be away up in the sky, 20 or 30 feet up. And once I saw the Condamine River plainly ten miles away, reflected on the skyline as a background to the stretch of blue and yellow of the flowery plain in front.

Well, now I had started producing, and I hoped my troubles would be over. I had a house built, but I did not yet have a windmill. My loan money had dried up more quickly than I had anticipated. The officer in charge of the

Settlement just told me that there was no more money in my account, and that anything I wanted now would have to come out of my own financial account, if any. I never received a financial statement or account of money spent from that Seven Hundred and Fifty Pounds, and I am still of the opinion that I was swindled out of some of it. A couple of years later, an investigator was sent up to examine accounts of the Settlement, and a large deficit was discovered. The officer in charge of the Settlement was charged and found guilty of embezzlement, and served two years gaol. I don't know if the Government made up the deficiencies. I certainly got nothing, and no account sheet was ever given to me.

About February, 1921, I was milking about 20 cows, and most of them were paid for. My first cheque for January was about Twenty Pounds for the month. My cheque for February was Forty Pounds. Those two cheques just paid for the erection of the windmill and tank and troughing. So now I thought I was set. Butter was still 2/6d. per pound. But my troubles were only starting.

The British buying contract had ended, and they dumped millions of pounds of butter on the market, with the result that our prices dropped to zero - from 2/6d. to 6d. per pound. That was barely enough to pay for tucker, much less rents and other overhead expenses. I, as a single man and no one depending on me, could still carry on, but a number of settlers with families had to throw it in and had to leave the Settlement.

Prices improved a little after a year or so. I was struggling along, milking 24 cows twice a day, and ploughing some land ready for wheat, without any help; also taking cream to the station three times a week. There was only a train out from Oakey three times a week to bring our groceries, and we would get meat and bread once a week only.

It was now 1922, and I was getting a little ahead of things. I was, at this time, persuaded to put in milking machines (a great mistake). That summer the cows had been milking well and there seemed to be no risk in getting the machines on time payment. As it happened, it was the beginning of one of the severest droughts known. That winter, I prepared 150 acres of land for wheat. No rain fell all the winter. My cows were still in good condition; I had a herd, in all, of about 110 head counting heifers and some steers and calves. There were about 50 milking cows. It soon became obvious that I

would have to shift my stock. A number of the settlers had already shifted theirs. Some had Government assistance. There was a bit of hole and corner about that. It was left to the officer in charge of the settlement to see who got this assistance. I, for one, was not told of it. I acted on my own initiative.

A 2000 acre block of prickly pear land was open for selection on Dunmore Station resumption on the Weir River, on a particular day and time, at the Lands Office in Toowoomba. There was no train in on that day. So I set out to ride the 30 miles to Oakey, and take the train from there to Toowoomba to get in in time for the ballot, if any, by 10a.m. I got there a few minutes after 10a.m. and inquired after the land. The agent said there were no other inquiries, and I could select the land straight away. He was writing out the papers for me to sign, when two other men came in and wanted to select the same land. They tried to put up an argument that they were entitled to a ballot, but the agent said No, they should have had their claims in before 10a.m. that day to have a claim. I got the land, but I had never seen it as I had jumped at it as soon as I read the advertisement for selection.

I came home hoping I had done the right thing. I now had to go out and look at it, and see if I could shift my cattle out there. It soon got around that I had this land, and two or three of my neighbours lost no time in asking could they get their cattle out there too. I had to go out to investigate. It was 35 miles away, a long trip.

I went out there with horse and cart, not knowing what I would find, and only a map to find it from. Anyhow I found that the land had no grass, but plenty of prickly pear, and no visible water. It had a frontage to the Weir River of two miles. I was disappointed, I had hoped for some grass there, and I was not too sure of water. I spent that day probing the river. I had seen sandy rivers before, and I knew that one could often find water in the sand. And that's just what I did find. Plenty of water - only about four feet of sand and easily six feet of water. I had the water problem solved. I went back the next day, doing the trip back in the one day. I had made some inquiries and was told that cattle would live for months on pear alone, so I decided to shift all my cattle out. I could have kept them another month on the Plains, but two of my neighbours who wanted to come with me had cattle on the point of starvation, Drayton being one of them.

Drayton had come back to his farm after twelve months in hospital. And he could walk, thanks to one of the most skilful bone setting operations of all time by Doctor Connolly of Toowoomba Hospital. The ankles that had been smashed to pulp were now set, and healed. They were stiff, and he had to walk on his toes, but they were just as strong as ever before.

Well, Drayton and Thompson decided to shift their cattle out there along with mine. I was the only one who paid a man to help us, however it needed four men. One man to drive the cart with supplies, and the other three to drive the cattle, as we had to drive them through timber most of the way.

After leaving Drayton's place with the cattle, our first watering place was the Condamine River at Cecil Plains. After that I hoped to water at a Mr. Gallagher's place, about four miles further on, where we would camp for the night. We got there late in the evening that first day. Mr. Gallagher had a dam and windmill, the dam nearly full of water; but he said No, when I asked could we water our cattle there. We would have well over twenty miles to travel from there, and without water. Anyhow, we made the Station the next night, and I got all the cattle in the Station Paddock and nearly bought a fight over it. This paddock had been resumed and selected by one of the settlers on the Plains. I had some of his cattle with mine that he had asked me to take out. I had his permission to put the cattle in, but the former owner was still using it, and queried my right to put the cattle in. However I bluffed him by standing firm, but took them out the next day to take them down another mile to where my own land was situated.

As soon as we got there the cattle started to stray, looking for water. We set to and cut timber, sank a hole and timbered out hollow logs and made a trough so the cattle could drink. We had water ready for them to drink that first day. We mustered as many as we could find the next day to give them water. Some of them were already eating the pear, so would not need water.

This was in May 1923 that we bought the cattle out there. I camped there most of the time up to September. A few had died by then, but I still had the bulk of them alive. A big thunderstorm fell in September, the first rain for more than twelve months. It set the river running, and that was the ruin of me. A lot of the cows came down to the riverbed to drink. A lot of them had not had a drink for weeks, but after they had their drink down at the river, they were too weak to get up again, and they would lie down, never to get up

again. I tried to lift many of them, but to no avail. I shot 12 cows one morning alone, to put them out of their misery. Whenever I went out to look, I could find more dead cattle than live ones.

After a week or so, I did not see many of them, just a few that I had been feeding with hay bought from Brisbane, and incidentally on credit through the Government, that is, the Agricultural Department would pay if I didn't. I was milking a few, just to keep them in milk. About November a storm passed over our part of the Plains and I went back sometime after to see if any feed was growing. It looked as if it would be all right to bring some cattle back, so Drayton and I went out to muster. A man named Robinson, who had taken cows out also on the chance that they would live, came with us and rode over an area of thousands of acres. I got together 11 of my cows, Drayton got one of his, and I think Robinson only got two. It took us two days to bring them back as they were weak. Part of the plain looked green, and I again started milking. Some weeks later I again went out to muster. All I got was eleven young heifers that had strayed 20 miles onto another station property and had been brought in with their cattle, and they advised me to come and get them.

I was now broke - only a handful of cows and in debt. The milking machines I had to send back, at a heavy loss as I could not keep up the payments. The 150 acres of wheat land that I had planted before taking the cows out on the pear country in May, was a total failure. Still I had just enough cows milking to pay my tucker every week. That was the end of 1923.

1924 was a good year. I had only a little stock, and so had plenty of feed for them. I also built up two big stacks of fodder as a reserve for drought, for I had in mind not to be caught again without feed for my cows. But how wrong I was. I also had some wheat that year, and by 1925 had built up a milking herd of 30 cows. 1926 was another dry year, but I was not particularly worried, for I reckoned I had plenty of feed in my two stacks of Sudan grass hay. But 1925 was the year of one of the worst mice plagues of all time. Mice in millions swept over the Plains, eating everything that was for them eatable. They were like ants into everything; had to strain the cream in the cream cans to get them out where they had fallen in when it was standing with the lid partly off. They would run on the rafters of the roof, and then jump or fall in the can. They would be in one's bed, one could pick them out of one's hair. They'd eat into a quilt or get under it for warmth - it was winter

time. Down in the shed I had some fodder stored, and it was literally alive with mice. My cat got tired of them. I lifted him up one morning from where he had been sleeping, and underneath him were mice - if there was one there was fifty - they had got there for warmth. I never saw any young ones. If ever there were any, I think they were probably eaten by the other mice.

This plaque lasted about a month, but they had destroyed much fodder, including my two stacks of Sudan grass. Outwardly they looked alright, but in 1926 when the drought again set in and I had no grass, I started to feed off the stacks. I found that it was literally chewed to chaff inside the stack, and loaded with mouse dirt. The cows would not eat it. There would have been 300 tons of fodder in the two stacks - enough to feed the cows for some months. It was now useless. I was now again faced with the problem of saving my cows. I also had eight horses, so I again decided to take them out to the pear country in the hope that they would survive.

Drayton again came with me with some of his cows, but this time I did not stay with them. I just turned them adrift in the hope of mustering them later when rain came. I also left six of the horses there. I came back to the Plains and now had to plan how to live, as there was nothing on the farm. A friend, Billy Park, (the same that had really been responsible for me going up on the Plains, but did not go himself) - while I had been working like a slave for these five or six years, he had prospered on the farm that he had bought instead of coming onto the bare plain. He had been dairying without droughts and had taken up a second farm. He also had bought a sawmill plant engine and saw bench. He wrote to me asking would I care to come up and work that plant. He said there was plenty of timber handy, and a few farmers wanting new houses built. I could see nothing better, so I went up and took over the sawmill on shares with Park.

I cut a lot of timber the next few months, but after a while I had trouble selling. The slump was setting in all over Queensland. At the end of 1926, the drought had broken, but I thought I had better stick to the mill for a while. So I got Drayton to go out and muster for my cows. I only got about five back of the 40 odd that I had taken out, and only three of the horses. But the sawmill was also failing. I could sell no timber. We had thousands of feet of timber, some of it hoop pine. I wrote Brisbane timber firms, offering to put it on rail, the pine at 25/- per hundred and the hardwood at their own price. They simply said, we have millions of feet of timber in our own yards, and we just

don't want it.

I gave up the sawmill, my second failure in that field. This is, it seems, a story of failures. I could never get to do the right thing at the right time. I went back to the farm late in 1926. There was still a drought in the Goondiwindi district, and the station owners from there were around the Plains, looking for agistment for their sheep. I took a thousand onto my place. The pay was not really good - only Twenty-five Pounds per month per thousand, but I did not have much choice, as I did not have money to buy stock with. I also had to make my place sheep proof - that meant buying some wire and some extra fencing.

On my second payment of Twenty five Pounds, I thought I would take a few days holiday in Brisbane. I'd not really had a spell for six years. But I found Brisbane tame, and was really sorry that I had come. But I said, I will stay for a few days. I thought it may do me good, as I was really worked out. A couple of nights after arriving in Brisbane, I went to the Royal Theatre for a night's entertainment. The performance had started, and I was shown to my seat in the dark. Only one seat empty in that row, and I saw down there. At the interval, the chap next to me put his hand on my shoulder and said, "How are you, Chris?" Surprised, I looked, and who was it? but a chap that had been working for me for twelve months after he had come out from England, his first job, contracted to stay the twelve months. His name was Pat Gormley. The strange part was that I should sit down by his side, the only seat vacant among hundreds of others occupied.

The next day, he looked me up, and said, "What about coming down to the car sales, it's good fun just to look on." Well, I went with him. The sales were in George Street, and cars were selling cheap, almost given away. They were, of course, all used cars. A T-model Ford came up for sale, and I thought it would be fun just to bid once. It started at Ten Pounds, and at One Pound bids went up to fourteen. So now I thought I will give it a lift, and I said "Fifteen Pounds", and it was knocked down to me for that Fifteen Pounds, a surprise. Now I had a car, but knew nothing about driving it. But Pat was a driver, so he said, "I will drive it out to where you are staying for you." Well, I paid for it, nearly all the money I had. Pat drove it out. He had a licence, and the car was registered for another nine months, so that was all right. The next day I persuaded Pat to come with me, and drive it up home. Except for having to get one new tyre, that car took us the 150 miles without much

trouble. The only trouble we had was getting up the Toowoomba Range, the old road. Our petrol got a bit low, and it would not feed properly going uphill. But we solved that problem by going up in reverse. That Fifteen Pound car ran in all sorts of weather and on all sorts of roads for four years. It gave up then because I had not the money to pay for rejuvenation at the time.

That wheat season, 1927, I worked during harvesting for Walter Peet. He had a big crop of wheat that year. With that money I earned sewing and stacking bags of wheat for him I managed to get a few cows again. Also got hold of an old tractor, and got some land ready for planting wheat the next season. One of Drayton's girls, Sarah, would come over after school and milk the cows for me, so I could go on ploughing. I was, of course, still single and had to do my own cooking, and was working flat out all the time. I had now got my milking herd up to twenty cows. I also had some sheep on agistment, and I thought I might again get ahead.

A neighbour, Mr. Hall, had been down to Brisbane and he had bought a utility truck and had it delivered at his place by the people who had sold it to him. But Mrs. Hall did not like it, she wanted a car. As Mr. Hall could not drive, he asked me would I come with him to Brisbane and drive the car down for him. And that is how I came to go to Brisbane the second time. We drove down without any incidents, and he got another car sent up.

I had been thinking for some time of getting a housekeeper, so while I was in Brisbane, I took the opportunity of looking around for someone who would come up. I did get in touch with a lady who said she might come up, but would like to think it over for a week or so. We left it at that. After I got back to the farm I wrote her and asked whether she had made up her mind. In reply, she said she would come up if there were facilities for her two children to go to school, and if I didn't mind her bringing them up with her, as she was a widow. I had not mentioned the school in our conversation in Brisbane. So when I told her to bring the children, and the school was on the farm she came up at once. As we got on well together, the children liked their school, and the prospects on the farm seemed reasonable, after she had been housekeeping for six months, we were married. We drove the fifty miles to Toowoomba one day, got married the next day, and drove the fifty miles home the same day. The two children, Marion and Kenneth, of course, were with us. Now we were one family. Marion would help me to milk. Kenneth was still a bit young to do much. They both did well at school.

There was not much social life on the Plains at that time, maybe a dance a couple of times a year. Wherever there was a little room, they would run a dance to get funds for the school. We were also members of the Bridge Club, and would meet at each of the members' homes in turn and play cards. A sociable evening, in general, once a month. And so the time went. The following year after we were married, Joan was born, a strong healthy baby. I had always loved children, and I was proud of this little girl. She, of course, got great attention from Marion, her older sister, and in no time she seemed to walk and talk. She would say nursery rhymes before she was two years old, and started school at three years; could read and write sentences when four, and we were all very proud of our little Joady.

I had hoped that now I had got my farm into production again, that I would get ahead of my debts. But it was not to be. The year 1932 was again disastrous. The rain kept off, wheat I had planted did not grow, grass was getting short, the cows were getting poorer, and some of them were weak. It was obvious that, if I didn't want to lose the lot, I would have to shift them. The Lands Department had taken the Pear country off me, because they said I had not fulfilled conditions, that is, cleared the pear off it, so I had to forfeit. There again, how unlucky could I be? Less than two years after, the cactoblastis insects had cleared all the pear everywhere. So now I had no land to shift my cattle onto.

Billy Park offered me a paddock up his way if I could bring them up there. He thought they might live there till the drought broke. It was a shift of fifty miles, and very little grass on the roads, but I took it on - nothing else to do. We started them on the road. We had about 35 cows, 12 or 15 heifers, and some calves, some 60 head altogether. The utility was out of order then, and no money for repairs. So it was a case of using cart and horse to carry our gear. Kenneth came with me, and I had another boy working then. That made three of us. We had a hard trip. A few cows died before we got them up to the paddock. I think I was there about four months. Some of the cows did not survive. I think I got back to the Plains after rain had brought on some feed with about 25 cows and some of the young stock. But I had not been able to keep them milking, and so now most of them were dry, and so, of course, giving no returns. It meant going further into debt, but I struggled on hoping for the best. I managed to get some wheat planted and most of looked good. I estimated to harvest about 600 bags - that money would pull me through. But it was not to be. The crop looked ready to harvest. We

took the harvester down to the field one afternoon, did a couple of rounds and got 60 bags. But it did not seem to be threshing too well, so I thought I would leave it for a couple of days longer to ripen more. But I never got to harvest that wheat. It came on to rain the next day, and it rained for nearly all of the next three weeks. When it stopped all my wheat was ruined - another setback!!

The Bank had been pressing me for payments for arrears, and when they found that my wheat had spoiled, they got tough. I stalled them off for a while with promises to pay some from my cream returns, and they left me alone for six months.

About that time Thelma was born and Mother had been in hospital for over three months before. Thelma was a fine healthy baby, and reminded me of my little sisters with her fair hair and blue eyes. Marion, Kenneth and I had been carrying on by ourselves, and had Joan also home with us.

To make matters worse, the price of butter had dropped, and we were only getting 7d. per pound for butterfat delivered at the factory, an impossible price. We had difficulty paying for necessities, much less paying debts. Now the Bank threatened to close on the mortgage. We owed a total of One Thousand, One Hundred and Fifty Pounds, but assets were worth much more than that. Still, they told me to sell, or they would. I got a promise from them that they would not sell for less than One Thousand, Four Hundred Pounds, but they did not keep that promise.

They put it up for auction at Oakey, but did not get a bid. There was no one there that cared to rob a soldier of his home. But the Agricultural Bank had no such scruples. All they were concerned with was to square accounts. Just a month after the auction was held, they informed me that they had sold the farm privately for One Thousand, One Hundred and Fifty Pounds, the exact sum owing. As far as they were concerned, we could starve. However, I had no intention of doing anything of the kind. I quickly sold off anything on the place that was surplus, and managed to get together One Hundred Pounds, including a cheque that the residents and neighbours presented us with when they gave us a send-off party. At least 40 people were present at that party to bid us farewell, and wish us well.

The following year is one I want to forget. We came to Brisbane. The

Depression was at it's worst. No work anywhere - could not get a job unless one was working on relief, three days per week 14/- per day, 42/- for six people to live and pay rent. Fortunately for me, I only worked one week for that. I got one extra day because I was handier with a special tool than the other workmen. So now I was on 56/- per week, a magnificent sum. I felt as if I now had hit rock bottom. After 34 years of ups and downs, it looked as if I was down for good this time. But my health was good, and I could do a better day's work than most, so after two months of this short pay, I got onto a full time job.

I was still pining for the land. Always felt out of it in town. After a few years, I managed to put a deposit on a piece of land. I have now pioneered it, and have made it my home. Some day I hope to see my family in Denmark. One brother and sister I have never seen - they were born after we sailed - they made up the even numbers of 6 boys and 6 girls in the family, of which there are still 9 living. And I think that any one of those that stayed at home is in a better position that I am today, after my 56 years of trying to make that elusive fortune.

Christen Peter Christensen
Lacey Road, Aspley.
1956

Epilogue

NOTE: The *italicised* comments in parentheses [], were written by Joan Glenva Christensen in December 1996.

[At the time the above account of his life was written, my father had not seen Denmark or his family since he and his brother left in 1900. There had, however, been written contact. First, after losing contact before and during the First World War, the Danish family contacted a Danish Lutheran pastor who had been in Australia, and was visiting Denmark. He made enquiries on his return, and contact was made with Niels in North Queensland, and with Christen through him. Again during the Second World War, contact was lost, but re-established by Aunt Petra writing to Niels' address (he had died during the 1930s, and the family had moved, but the letter came into the hands of his daughter Alice Shorey who was able to get it translated.)

We have a copy of the first letter that my father wrote to his brother Johannes after contact was made. This is shown below.]

Letter from Christen Christensen to Johannes Christensen, Sæby:

Brisbane General Post Office
December 29th 1934

Kære Broder,

I find it hard to write words that will express my feelings in writing this letter to you. It would have given me much more pleasure if I could have been able to express myself in our mother tongue, or shall I say, det gamle Danske sprog, but I find that difficult as I have not spoken our language for over thirty years now. I can assure you that the letters and photos that I received from you and our sisters were the best Julgave that I could possibly have received.

I am so glad that you are all doing well. It has worried me a good deal for years, and I have wondered how you all were. I will not here try to express

my feelings when I learned of our Fader and Moder's deaths. It had always been my hope to see them again, but destiny willed otherwise.

Now perhaps you would like to learn something of myself. I am afraid that my memory is not just what it was but I will try to give you a rough outline of my life here.

My experiences have been many and varied. I spent my first years in a dairying district, some of the time just milking cows, and I think I was three years in a condensed milk factory. But I never got much money for this work. I then went to Mackay, a sugar district, where sugar is grown extensively. Here I made some money, but was dissatisfied and wanted to travel further. It was when leaving Mackay that I lost trace of Neils for many years. His address is still the same as when he last wrote to you, that is, Carbeen, via Cairns, North Queensland.

I then got saddle horses and pack horses and started to travel overland in to central Queensland. But the inland country was dry and we were soon in difficulties. Myself and a mate arrived in Clermont for Christmas 1909. I stayed there some years doing many classes of work, including gold digging, kangaroo shooting, and railway work.

About 1913, I came to Brisbane and started shopkeeping, but it was not a success. I sold out of the shop and went on Railway construction work with a horse and dray. I carried on there until 1915 when I entered the army as a *soldat* going to France.

We sailed for France on the 11th May 1916. We were 11 weeks going over, calling in at Cape Town, South Africa, on our way over. I was some months training in England. I cannot now explain why I did not write to you at home then. But it was made very difficult to send letters to foreign countries during that time.

We left England for France during Christmas week 1916, landing in France before the New Year. I was there then over two years, only on short leave twice to England. Our unit, the 12th Artillery Brigade took part in nearly all the important battles until the finish. I came through without a scratch and was

not one day sick.

I had the good fortune of winning the Military Medal before the Armistice. But my luck did not hold. I fell sick after the Armistice, and while still in France, with pneumonic influenza. I got through after 5 weeks in a Military Hospital in Rouen, France. But it left me weakened for months, also affected my memory somewhat and I am not now the strong man that I was. Why did I not try to go over to you all while I was in England I cannot say, but I blame my past sickness.

After returning here I took up farming. It was hard work and I tried to make good, but the elements beat me at the finish. I was farming for the last fourteen years, but through droughts, floods, and to cap it all, in the last two years, low prices for everything, I had to sell out and I am now in Brisbane working.

I got married six years ago. I married a widow with two children. Their names are Marion and Kenneth. My own two children are both girls, their names are Joan Glenva, and Thelma Mary. They are both bonny girls and I think resemble our family. If I can get a photo of them I will enclose one. We will get our photograph taken all together very soon and I will send you all one.

I am enclosing a photo of myself taken while on active service in France. It is not a very good looking one, but considering I had not had a wash for some days and just had to scrape the mud off to look clean, it is not too bad.

I will write you again soon, so will close now with best wishes for a very prosperous New Year to yourself, your wife and children.

From your Brother, Brother-in-law and Uncle

Chris X X X X

[Now a close contact was established, with many of the family writing and sending Danish newspapers and magazines, so that my father could refresh hi memory of the language.

In 1959, Dad sailed to Bremerhaven, and then travelled to Denmark by train, to spend Christmas with his family. He stayed until August, 1960.

The following are his impressions of Denmark written at that time.]

The Return to Denmark

After fifty-nine years of ups and downs in Queensland, Australia, it felt good to be returning on holiday to my birthplace – Denmark, the land of my birth, of my school days, and adolescence, where I would see again the places which had always remained in my memory and made me sometimes a little homesick for this far off land.

The sea-trip over was pleasant and uneventful. The places en route seemed little changed, with the exception of the Suez Canal. Where, fifty-nine years ago I had seen just great stretches of sand on either side, there was now, on the African side, a series of gardens and villas and a good bitumen road with heavy traffic, running all the way to Port Said.

I landed at Bremerhaven and travelled to Denmark by train. Travelling from Hamburg, I was impressed by the beautiful green fields and the turnip crops in the field and the harvest which had been piled into long stacks, later to be covered by soil to protect them from frost.

Over the border into Denmark, the outlook from the train was similar. But here was really Home!! The friendliness of the officials and of everybody I met was, as I remembered from my childhood days, typically Danish.

What I saw now was much in contrast to the Denmark I had left in 1900 - the absence of horses, the well-cultivated fields, and most of all to see cattle grazing at that time of the year, nearly mid-November. In Vendsyssel at least, cattle were always stabled before November, and I remember frost and snow falls earlier in the winter.

On my arrival in Aalborg I was overwhelmed and deeply gratified by the welcome I received from my family, many of whom I had never seen before. Some of my sisters and brothers and many of their children were on the platform to greet me. When I had left our home at Nørre Mølle in Tolstrup, to sail for Australia, we were a family of ten children. Two more children were born after I left and now the direct descendants of my father and mother number one hundred and thirty.

I had been to Aalborg before I sailed for Australia, and it was quite a small town then. I was surprised at the modern buildings, streets and shops. This

town and others I have seen since in Denmark are I would say, at least ten years ahead of Brisbane. And this is taking account of transport, streets and roads, and particularly sewerage. Every house here seems to be sewerred, which is unfortunately not the case in Brisbane. A tour of sightseeing in Aalborg is really delightful – to see the beautiful parks and gardens, and the masses of flowers in window boxes and the crowded flower shops.

A trip by car to the places I remembered best in Vendsyssel was an experience not easily forgotten. We travelled by well-made bitumen roads where in my memory there had been sand and loose gravel roads with deep wheel ruts. Where there had been uncultivated hills of heather there was now well-grown pine forest. There are many of these pine plantations which are of great value to a country like Denmark where no natural pine forest survived.

We travelled through the oldest and largest pine and birch forests in Vendsyssel, if not the whole of Denmark, on our way to Hjulskov. Here I had worked for two years just before I sailed for Australia. Outwardly these old farm buildings had not altered much – there was the same living house, stables and barn. But inside, the changes of over half a century were apparent. Firstly I saw the milking cows in excellent condition and stabled now for the winter. There were modern milking machines, up-to-date feeding methods were used, and the stables were spotlessly clean. Entering the building, which in my day had been the sleeping quarters for the men, I found that they were now used for housing the farm pigs. There were many of them, all in good condition, looking clean and well-fed. The barn was filled with all the crops harvested during the summer, and these would be used for feeding the stock during the winter months.

The greatest changes I noticed were inside the farmhouse. Here prosperity was evident. Where I remembered a stone floor, a long pine table and a grandfather clock, were now modern comfortable furniture, polished floors and good rugs. Seeing the bedrooms with their polished bedsteads standing out from the walls, I remembered the old bedsteads set against the walls and filled with straw. Now, of course, there are spring mattresses.

I had this opportunity to look closely over a typical Danish farm by the kind offices of Kristian Hjulskov. He showed me, a complete stranger to him, typical Danish friendliness and hospitality.

Another great difference in farm life here, over the sixty year span, is the absence of hired help on the farms. In my time there was, on this particular farm, besides the owner, two men, on boy, and two or three adult girls. Now only one man was employed. No doubt up-to-date machinery and high wages account for this change.

The home life and social conditions have also altered greatly. Good conditions of employment, particularly for girls, in the city, attract the young people away from the country. The advent of radio and television has its usual effect, as in Australia, of keeping people at home and providing ready made entertainment, so that the happy social evenings of my youth in the country are almost things of the past.

We drove on to Jerslev, a town that I had known well, as we lived on a farm nearby for some years. This place had grown from a small village to a fair-sized and obviously prosperous town. The old windmills had gone, giving place to houses, both here and at nearby Klæstrup.

At Brønderslev, the changes were even more marked. In this town I had spent my school days – here I had played and fought in unforgettable snow battles. Part of Brønderslev is not very old, being almost all built after the railway came to Vendsyssel. The old part of Brønderslev has not changed so much. It is on what was called the Kongevej and is now just a suburb of the city of Brønderslev. In 1900 there were not many shops there. I can only remember a few, one of which was Herriksen's, and there was a baker and a butcher. A small factory, just on the outskirts of town when I knew it, is now a large concern and an important factor in the economy of the city. I could also remember a tannery and a rope factory. A lot of rope was used in the old days, as all the animals on the farms had to be tethered out on the field. The way they made rope in those days was with a spinning wheel, the men walking backwards and playing out the hemp that was carried around their waists. It was twisted into thread as they played out the hemp in a long line. Now machines do the work formerly done by hand.

We continued on to Talstrup and Kalum, where in both places my father had operated windmills. Now these mills have gone, in the interests of progress, but to the detriment of a picturesque landscape. I feel it a pity that some of these mills have not been preserved, for their beauty, and to show succeeding generations the ingenuity of their forefathers. These mills were

powerful pieces of machinery with a high horsepower pull. They could operate four or five grinders when there was enough wind, and could grind meal to the finest of flour. Here all the farmers of the district would take the grain for grinding and get their grain back in any meal form required. Money was not used for payment. The miller simply and honestly took as much grain from each bag as he was entitled to for work well done. Later farmers began to grind their own meal with small mills built on top of barns, and then the big mills had to close down.

Further north we came to the little town of Emb, which I could remember at the end of the last century as just a railway siding that could be seen from Kalum across the meadows and peat flats. It is now a very prosperous little town.

The town of Vraa had also grown from my memory of it. I remembered it best as the site of the Agricultural School for young men of the district. I believe the school is still there.

We travelled west along a good bitumen road to Løkken on the West Coast. Here is one of the finest beaches I have ever seen. In a warmer climate it would be worth millions as a tourist resort. Here a surprising number of summer houses (blockus) are built, being occupied only in the summer months. These are wooden houses of just two or three rooms.

From Løkken we set off again for Aalborg. On the way I saw many farms where in my youth had been the Vildmose. This was a succession of meadows and bogs, almost impassible. Hay was harvested there, and peat was dug for fuel. The bogs and meadows were a paradise for wildlife in the shape of foxes, hare, wild ducks and other birds. Two or three sorts of wild berries had also grown there including a kind of strawberry. Now the land had been reclaimed and prosperous looking farms dotted the landscape.

We went back to Aalborg through Nørre Sundby on the north side of Limfjorden. This is a twin town of Aalborg. It is growing rapidly, with many factories, and shipping is important in its economy. It is also a residential centre for many people who work in Aalborg. Two modern rail and traffic bridges connect the two cities. A tunnel under Limfjorden is being surveyed at present, and would be a wonderful step towards future development.

The comfort and prosperity of this country is evident everywhere. I have had

the opportunity of visiting many homes as a guest and whether it is the dinner table or the coffee board, it is always laden with the best of foods and I have had to take great care not to overeat. The hospitality of the Danes is overwhelming and they are always helpful and friendly.

The living conditions on the whole seem to me to be above the average Australian standard. Taxes are, I think, a little higher, caused by a complicated system of taxation where the community tax seems to overlap the state tax and so two authorities collect the same type of taxes, making for a higher Government overhead expenditure. Unemployment is only a very small percentage – it is down to the unemployables, or those who won't work anyway.

The liquor laws are vastly different from the Australian ones. Most liquor is dearer, but one can buy it in any grocer or tobacconist shop to take away, and one can be served with drinks anywhere that meals are served. Drunkenness is not evident at all here, much in contrast to what can be seen any evening in Brisbane where beer swills still go on. The tax on wine and spirits seems very high here. A bottle of wine that would cost six or seven shillings in Brisbane is fifteen kroner here, nearly double the price. A fair amount of wine is drunk here, also pilsener and other types of beer, though their alcoholic content is much lower than the Australian counterpart.

The old custom of ringing the church bells at sunrise and sundown is still practised in Denmark. Another typically Danish custom is to light candles on the table when there are guests for meals. Also no one would rise from a table without saying "Tak for mad" – Thanks for the meal. Birthdays are always celebrated with great enthusiasm. With such a large family, I am averaging more than a fair share of birthday parties and can vouch for the excellence of the celebrations.

Christen Peter Christensen
Aalborg, Denmark
1960

Appendix

Christen (or Kren, as his family in Denmark called him) made three more trips to Denmark.

- In 1966 from March to November, with his daughter Joan. They took some rooms at Grundvigsvej in Vejgård, Aalborg, because it was too long to stay with relatives. They did a car (VW) camping trip around Europe – Germany, Belgium, Holland, France (visiting Johannes' son Gudmund and Søs Christensen in Paris where he worked with NATO), Spain, Switzerland (staying with Joan's dear friend Ugo Bondolfi), Austria, Germany. Joan flew home via UK and USA; Christen stayed on for a few more weeks and then came home by ship.
- In 1970, for six weeks for Christmas. The English Club in Brisbane had negotiated cheap return flights. While Dad had promised to return for his 90th birthday, we weren't sure he'd make it, so Thelma and Joan bought him a ticket for a Christmas trip.
- In 1973, for six weeks from late January to early March, for his 90th birthday on 3 February 1973, with Joan and Thelma. The birthday party was held in Sæby, and catered for by his brother Johannes' son Jens and his wife Ella, and we stayed with them at Pension Ahoj. It was a wonderful party. Though Dad had a bad cold, and by that time needed two walking sticks for his arthritis, he was up and dancing. Thelma could only stay two weeks. Christen and Joan stayed on, borrowing Dyveke's apartment in Skørping, while she moved in with her mother, Christen's sister Sofie Nørgaard, who with another daughter, Hannefie, lived nearby. Before we left for home, we held a wonderful party, to say Thank You to Dyveke. It was amazing how many people could be fitted into that little apartment – Christen, Joan, the Nørgaards – Sofie, Dyveke, Hannefie, Irene, Iris, Hother, Glindvad – and Johannes' daughter Søs and Aksel Schou.

Christen had, following his wife's death in 1948, moved out to the cottage he had built on his land at Lacey Road, Aspley (now Carseldine), while his

daughters stayed with their half-sister Marion and her husband Malcolm Fardon. He lived there by himself (or with people he was helping like the Leavitts who lived there while he was overseas and stayed on for a little too long afterwards; and the Larsens – while Werner was in Chermiside TB Hospital for nearly a year Nancy and the boys had their caravan on the land at Aspley – they had met on the ship to Australia in 1960). In October 1972, after an illness (which turned out to be slowly progressing prostate cancer) Christen moved in to Lansdowne Street, Newmarket, to a house that his daughter Joan had recently bought, and to which she also moved in October 1972. (Her M.Pol.Econ. thesis was completed in early May 1973, in competition with hospital visiting, moving herself and her father into this house, supervising house renovations – the thesis covered with dust sheets among the carpentry – the trip to Denmark, and going to work each day!!!)

In 1974, two of Christen's sisters, Petra Berthelsen (aged 83 years) and Ella Bonderup (aged 73 years), accompanied by cousin Svend Jensen's wife Aase, came out to Australia to visit their brother. He had been quite ill not long before they came – but recovered remarkably. During their stay, from April to June, we made several three-day trips – to the Northern Rivers, Natural Arch, etc.; and up to the Darling Downs, to see where he had had his farm. Lots of people dropped in to visit while they were here. And we had many pleasant evenings playing cards. Dad had a large tin of 1c and 2c pieces which he would divide up each evening, and then we played poker or blackjack. He managed to win a lot of it back most evenings.

Christen's health deteriorated towards the end of 1974. He was cheered by a visit in late 1974 by Werner and Nancy Larsen from South Mission Beach, North Queensland (the family whom he had met on the ship in 1960, and who had lived in the caravan at his place while Werner's lung disease was treated). It was necessary to have a "granny-sitter" each day for Dad, while Joan went to work, and Blue Nurses a couple of times a week, from November 1974. In February 1975, Joan took a month's leave to spend more time with him.

Christen collapsed at home on the morning of 25 February 1975, and died about 7pm that evening in Royal Brisbane Hospital. It was too short notice for Thelma to fly up (she had flown up the previous year when he was critically ill), but Joan was with him as he died.

His family here are glad that young 17 year old Dane migrated to Australia.

God rest your soul, Christen Peter Christensen.



Christen and Niels from about 1905 - 1907, so they are early to mid-20s in age.

