

# THE OLD WOOLPACK INN

## EARLY SETTLEMENT NEAR SPICER'S GAP.

### RESTING PLACE OF SEVERAL UNKNOWN PIONEERS.

"Alphen—once the Woolpack Inn—1830-1860," is a neatly painted notice on a tree near the entrance to the scrub at Spicer's Gap, at a point nearly three miles from the foot of the range. Harry Alphen was the discoverer of the pass in 1828, and the Woolpack Inn became a well-known hostelry and mail stage. Nearby is another sign pointing—"To the grave 150 yards away." There, amidst scenes of rare natural beauty and mountain grandeur, was a settlement that had its beginning almost 30 years before the establishment of Queensland as a separate colony, and in that little cemetery overgrown with stringybarks and tallow-woods lies the dust of at least 12 of the colony's earliest pioneers, whose names for the most part are unknown.

Thanks, however, to a few Ipswich enthusiasts—lovers of Nature and of the historic associations of the place, a fine stone cairn, 12ft. high, was, in recent years, erected to the memory of the pioneers whose remains lie buried there. Some interesting details have been collected regarding that early settlement, and places of interest have been indicated for the guidance and the information of visitors.

To mark that old burial-place with a memorial was a gracious tribute to those pioneers, and a real service to the State. Some day, one may hope, a grateful nation will preserve that hallowed spot and have it alienated, enclosed, and dedicated to the memory of the men who helped to lay the foundations of the Queensland State that was to be.

#### HARRY ALPHEN'S DISCOVERY.

When Alan Cunningham, the explorer-botanist, discovered the Darling Downs, subsequently coming to Brisbane from Sydney, he set out to discover the pass which his men had seen from the western side. He pitched camp at the foot of the Gap, at a spot where a sawmill was built later. The remains of that mill still may be seen not far from Mr. M. Johnston's present residence. Four days were spent searching for the pass, which eventually was gained on the afternoon of August 25, 1828. Among that band of searchers was Harry Alphen, who previously had been a stockman in the employ of Patrick Leslie, the first pastoralist on the Downs. Alphen returned with the news that he had discovered a comparatively easy pass between Spicer's Peak and Mt. Mitchell.

On account of the steep escarpment near its summit, Cunningham's Gap was found impracticable for traffic (Cunningham had to have his bullock dray pulled up the cliff with ropes), therefore attention was given to the pass discovered by Alphen. Very

soon a comparatively good road was constructed through Spicer's Pass, and Alphen, evidently a man of foresight, saw possibilities in the establishment of a public house at that ideal place, situated at a convenient stage of an important overland route. Alphen's hostel was soon followed by a blacksmith's shop and baker's ovens.

It is interesting to recall that the late Mr. Johnston, the father of Mrs. C. Cunningham, of Woodend-road, Ipswich, carried on a blacksmithy business there for a number of years, before he came to Dugandan where he was the first settler to follow the taking up of the Dugandan cattle station. In fact, the Johnstons lived for four years in the building which was formerly the Woolpack Inn, and at the time Mr. Johnston left the settlement several families—the Clintons, the Humbers and a Mr. Behrendorf—who was the last of the inn-keepers—were still domiciled on the range.

#### INTERESTING RELICS.

When Mr. Percy Smith, of Harrisville, returned from the War, he started fruit-farming on the range, and his selection embraced the site of the old inn, some remnants of which remained. Mr. Smith erected a comfortable home there, and the fruit farm is now in charge of Mr. and Mrs. Adams, who let rooms at a moderate rental to Gap lovers. Some interesting souvenirs of the old inn have been picked up by Mr. Adams, while working on his farm. One is portion of a dinner bell, evidently used at the inn, and another apparently is part of a tankard from which wayfarers supped the goodly brew, for on it is embossed the words—"Success to the Bullock-drivers." Token coins bearing the name of Hanks, Sydney, Australian tea merchants, and scraps of articles from the old inn have been unearthed from time to time.

Not far away from the site of the

inn a butcher's gallows stands, surrounded closely by large trees which have undoubtedly grown to their great height since the gallows fell into desuetude. The old road is there, but now overgrown with big timber. Indeed, most of the tall trees in the neighbourhood have grown to their great height since the days of settlement.

Remarkable evidence of the durable qualities of Queensland timbers is afforded by the soundness of some posts, which were taken out of the ground by Mr. Smith at a spot where the stables of the old inn were situated. The probability is that those posts were placed in the ground 100 years ago, and when unearthed they were as sound and as solid as could be. Samples of that timber may be seen at Mr. Adams' little guest house.

#### SITE OF THE GRAVES.

A few chains below Alphen, as the little settlement is now known—along a low ridge that runs into a stony gully, all hidden by thick timber, is the last resting place of those old pioneers. A few years ago all that remained of that little bush burying-ground was five roughly-squared posts, leaning at a perilous angle, and almost burnt off at the base by bush fires. Those posts, it is believed, enclosed the grave of "Mother" Collins, who fell from a loaded wool dray, while it was descending a steep incline, now known as Mother Collins's Pinch, which is about a mile and a half from the foot of the range.

Twelve or thirteen graves were counted in that little cemetery, most of them being clearly indicated by stones.

During the Christmas holidays of 1932 a little band of Ipswich people, whose desire is that their names be not mentioned, erected a cairn of stone and concrete. It is five feet

square at the base, and a tablet bears the inscription—

This Cairn is raised  
To the Memory  
Of the unknown pioneers  
Who sleep here  
"Till the day break  
And the Shadows flee Away."

Who and what were the people whose dust lies buried there? History is practically silent. It is almost certain, however, that one grave is that of Mrs. Collins; another is that of a man named Cox, one time of Roma. It is said that a jockey was killed near Alphen and that his body was buried there. Then again a drover named Hudson was found dead near "The Springs," half a mile from the top of the range, and it is believed that he was interred there. Probably the tiny grave beside that of Mrs. Collins was that of her infant child, who was killed with its mother when they were pitched off the wool dray. Others, however, deny that Mrs. Collins had a child.

Mr. Greig, of Corinda, who is a

uns had a child.

Mr. Greig, of Corinda, who is a frequent visitor to the Gap and its delectable haunts, and who has spent much time in delving into incidents associated with the history of the locality, induced the Registrar of Deaths, in Brisbane, to make a thorough search of past records, to discover, if possible, the names of the dozen or so people who were buried in that little cemetery, but to no avail. Mr. Greig was informed that the burials were made before 1859, the year of Queensland's separation from New South Wales, and that a record most probably would be filed at Newcastle (N.S.W.).

#### THE BUSH INN.

Writing of inns and hostels—there were no fewer than three—The Woolpack Inn, to which reference has been made; Jubb's Inn, which almost certainly was located on the western side of the range about a mile or so from Devil's Elbow—at the summit of Spicer's Gap—and The Bush Inn, at the foot of the range. Those who have made an earnest inquiry into the history of this locality say that the Woolpack Inn frequently has been confused with Jubb's Inn, which was pulled down in 1860.

The Bush Inn, at the foot of the range, is better known. It was kept by Perryman, then Dix, and then Mercer.

Mr. R. E. Dix had been a mate on the vessel "Royal Sovereign," which was wrecked in the South Passage (between Moreton and Stradbroke Islands), in March, 1847. Dix was one of the few survivors. A stewardess also survived, and she and Dix married. Taking leave of the sea they established themselves at the Bush Inn. They were succeeded by Mr. Mercer, whose child, Sarah, aged 4 years, fell a victim to diphtheria or inflammatory croup, as it was then called. The child's body was not taken up the range to Alphen, but was buried beside the Warrill Creek. A stone was placed at the head of the grave, but in the course of time fell, and was covered with soil. About three years ago, Trooper-leader Len. Johns, of the Ipswich Boy Scouts, with his brothers, Arthur and Steve (both Scouts), took mattock, bar, and shovel, and located the headstone, which was found in two pieces. They wired it together, and after the stone was scrubbed the inscription was readily deciphered. It read—

Sarah Campbell Mercer,  
Born April 1, 1851; died February  
8, 1855.

"Why do we mourn departing  
friends,

Or shake at death's alarms?  
'Tis but the voice that Jesus sends,  
To call us to His arms."

A pathetic link with the past thus was saved by the action of those young Scouts, who backed the stone

with a 10 x 4 bridge-decking plank, sunk deeply in the ground.

Later the old Bush Inn was the residence of old "Andy" Anderson and his wife. The fine old cedar

residence of old "ADY" ANDERSON and his wife. The fine old cedar building was dismantled and carted away about 25 years ago, but the position is well marked to-day by the stately bamboos, and some remnants of the old buildings.

A new highway has been gazetted through Cunningham's Gap, and some people have expressed regret that the new road will not be through Spicer's on account of its scenic charms and its rare attractions for tourists. The new road will, however, bring this historic region within a comparatively short run of Brisbane and Warwick.

#### ASCENT OF THE RANGE.

When one leaves the site of the old Bush Inn and immediately begins the ascent of the range, the road will be found fairly easy. Indeed, a good trafficable road to Spicer's Gap is likely to be maintained by the Boonah Council, some of whose members have, from time to time, referred in the most laudatory terms to the scenic grandeur of the Spicer's Gap route. At any rate, the very least of gravel is there in abundance for road maintenance purposes.

Exactly a mile from the foot of the range there is a deviation to the right, and one comes to what is known as "Dick Burnett's Runaway." The name commemorates the discomfiture of one Dick Burnett, who had the mortification of witnessing his bullock team, with loaded waggon, bolting down the steep declivity. Fortunately or miraculously, history relates that the unwonted spectacle was not attended with tragic results. Indeed, not a bullock was injured.

The track continues through a forest of bloodwood and ironbark for half a mile farther to Mother Collins's Pinch, to which reference has already been made. About seven years ago a new track constructed by a band of energetic workmen, under Mr. J. Greisbach, robbed the dreaded pinch of its terrors. The same thoughtful people who erected the cairn at the little cemetery also placed on the roadside, at Mother Collins's Pinch, a board giving the name of the pinch, its distance from the foot and its height above sea level. Similar boards also have been placed at Alphen, Moss's Well, and at other noteworthy places on the range, and signs have been erected directing attention to places where water may be obtained.

#### PLUNGED OVER CLIFF.

Nearly half-way up the range one comes to "Mother Campbell's Pinch." The name recalls the fact that there a Mrs. Campbell also fell from a dray. She, however, was more fortunate than Mrs. Collins, as she escaped with only a broken leg. Half-a-mile farther on brings one to the Gorge. Formerly, the road ran along the edge of this steep gorge, into which a Hupmobile car once plunged, while its owner was repairing a puncture. Efforts to raise the car were unsuccessful, but the engine was salvaged, and afterwards it ran for some time in "Cardie"—a traffic bus owned by the Pioneer Bus Company, Ipswich. The name, "Buckley's Downfall," commemorates the incident

Ipswich. The name, "Buckley's Downfall," commemorates the incident and will prevent its fading into oblivion.

Another half-mile's climb leads to the short but steep "Blue Pinch" or "Andesite Pinch," as geologists call it, because of the fine specimens of Andesite rock found there.

About 200 yards farther, a Mr. Smith's settlement is reached, and the site of the old Woolpack Inn. The road then enters the scrub.

#### WAS CONVICT LABOUR USED?

A well-constructed road built 50 years ago replaced the boggy track that formerly led over the range. In fact, old Mr. Anderson, of "The Foot," used to relate that a gang of fourteen men worked there for eight years, and "that the amount of money spent on the road would have put a railway over it."

It is thought that convict labour was at one time engaged on road construction on the range, and greater credence was given to that idea when, about six years ago, an Ipswich resident who still frequents the locality picked up an old rusty set of links that were pronounced to be part of a set of leg-irons.

The journey through the scrub is one of entrancing beauty. There are huge trees on each side, garlanded and festooned with native creepers and crowded with orchids, making a delightful avenue. One may hear the raucous screech of the cockatoos, the deep crack of the stock-whip bird, and the musical tinkle of the bell-birds—

... Softer than slumber, and  
sweeter than singing,  
The notes of the Bell-birds are run-  
ning and ringing."

Wild strawberries grow in profusion on either side of the road, and the dreaded "Gympie Gympie," or broadleaf nettle is there ready to arrest the heedless trespasser. After half a mile of such changing and kaleidoscopic scenes of beauty, one comes to the peaceful and secluded Moss's Well, "Hudson's Luck," or "The Springs," where, through summer and winter, drought or flood time, almost ice-cold water filters out from the mountainside—a heaven-sent refreshment for the wayfarer.

#### MAGNIFICENT PANORAMA.

Though the visitor may be prone to linger at the Springs, he would miss a great deal were he not to continue until the road doubles back sharply to the right on its way to Warwick—32 miles away. The traveller should there turn to the left along the fence. A few yards onward will bring him to the Governor's Rock, 2380ft. above sea level. From that rock there is a magnificent panorama that is worth going miles to see. The name recalls Queensland's first Governor, Sir George Bowen, who regularly paid visits to that delectable spot.

On one side of the gap towers the castle-like Mt. Mitchell, 4080ft., and on the other the steep, rock-faced Spicer's Peak, 4150ft. Mt. Mitchell bears the name of the great explorer Thos. Mitchell, while Spicer's Peak

erase the name of the great explorer Thos. Mitchell, while Spicer's Peak preserves for all time the name of the humble convict overseer, Peter Spicer, who discovered the mountain, while looking for convicts who had escaped from the penal settlement at Moreton Bay.

Mention should be made of what is now a well-known land mark—Wearne's hut—at Clumber. The late Mr. Wearne, who was Principal of the Ipswich Technical College, was a regular visitor to the Gap. He was one who found it a place of intense scientific interest from a geological point of view, and who was never weary of proclaiming the natural charms and the scenic grandeur of it all.