

# The Old Pioneering Days

## 30.- The White Brothers of Burrangong

### Hundred-Year Chain

BY WONGA

**M**R. JAMES WHITE, who originally came from England to New South Wales in the year 1812, first entered upon farming activities, on the then known reaches of the Hawkesbury River, with only a measure of success.

Finally, in a big flood, he was swept away with all the products of his farm, on top of a stack of hay himself, and was so disgusted with the result of this venture that on reaching a bank he turned his back on the locality, and walked down to Sydney.

For some time then he carried on a slaughtering proposition in the little town of Sydney, his yards having a frontage to the track which is the present George Street, and his residence being in the present King Street.

James did not readily accommodate himself to this life in town, and, itching to commence grazing, he pack-horsed out in 1826 towards the Lachlan River, tentatively explored in 1812 by John Oxley, the Surveyor-General. Guided by Cobborn, a chief of one of the Lachlan tribes of aborigines, White decided to make a venture on this country with Burrowmunditroy as a centre, and returned to Sydney to complete his arrangements for its occupation.

#### **Beyond the Edge**

This country at the time was slightly beyond the nineteen counties

slightly beyond the nineteen counties—denominated The Limit of Location—within which pastoral settlement was permitted under the then primitive regulations controlling land settlement in the new colony, but the limit that was soon extended to include this, and similar, areas held in the meantime under licence from the Colonial Treasurer.

On returning from Sydney to occupy this country, James White adopted the usual custom of taking with him, as a peace offering, a crescent-shaped brass plate and neck-chain, on which Cobborn Jackies' name, and title as head of the tribe were engraved. With the assistance of Cobborn's men, James soon dis-

covered a more suitable site for a permanent homestead on Sandy Creek, known to the blacks as Burrangong, and a five mile track was soon cut to it.

### **Bush Tragedy**

As James was a bachelor, and remained unmarried, he induced his married brother John in 1829 to join him, after the latter had disposed of some merchandise that, as a business venture, he had brought out with him to Sydney from England. John was never quite suited to this pastoral work, which he did not greatly like, and devoted much of his time to the immediate surroundings of the homestead, being particularly successful with the fruit, vegetable, and flower gardens. He never learnt to ride, and in 1834, in an attempt to walk to Marengo from Burrangong, he got bushed, and his remains on being discovered disclosed that he had perished from hunger and exposure.

John's elder daughter, born at Burrangong homestead on May 4, 1830, and claimed to be the first white child born in the district, grew up to be a fine bush-woman, lending very material aid to the menfolk in the working of the station. She first married the station overseer, Dennis Regan, and subsequently Thomas Musgrave. This lady now lives at

Musgrave. This lady now lives at Auburn, and is to-day perhaps the most outstanding example of a virile descendant of that staunch, sturdy, and self-reliant race of men and women who first ventured upon pastoral activities in this part of the Lachlan district.

In 1926, when 96 years of age, Mrs. Sarah Musgrave published her booklet of reminiscences, which is regarded as valuable historical text, and is rich in incidents of bygone days. John's next daughter married Dennis Regan's brother William, who managed James White's outstation, Cooraberrima, on the Bland, the property being subsequently acquired by Mr. Regan himself. This daughter died recently at Barmedman at the round old age of 97, being attended by her elder sister, Mrs. Musgrave, who, after this distressing bereavement, returned in haste, and unaccompanied on the long journey to her Auburn home, to dispense comfort in the last moments to her own daughter, Mrs. Jones, whose death so soon followed that of Mrs. Regan.

### **Ups and Downs**

James White suffered many vicissitudes in his grazing activities, such as scab amongst the first flock of sheep he introduced, and was forced to destroy. He also suffered from droughts, bushfires, periodic ravages upon his herd by nomadic tribes of aboriginals, and perhaps somewhat severely from losses of stock from his unfenced holding, when the Burringong diggings broke out on his Lambing Flats in the early sixties, and attracted many undesirable rascals, including the lawless Frank Gardner, who initiated gang-bush-ranging on this and adjoining gold-fields.

The primitive homestead that had satisfied James White's requirements as a bachelor was materially enlarged and improved on the arrival of John and his wife, and this lady installed many internal home comforts, makeshift furnishings and domestic conveniences that remain in our memories as golden tributes to the noble

veniences that remain in our memories as golden tributes to the noble qualities of such help-mates as these pioneer squatters had, and remind us of that realistic pen-picture of Kenneth Mackay's, where—in his "Bush Idyl," he says:—

"And weary with the dull dead rules  
of bush,  
The squatter came to taste the joys  
of home,  
And listening to his gentle lady's  
voice,  
Call back the ghosts of long forgotten  
years."

From the year 1830 James White's district attracted many similar pastoral pioneers, whom I hope to deal with in groups at later dates, pointing out what circumstances led to the conversion of the area, radiating from Burrangong, from a primarily pastoral country to one of a combined grazing, agricultural, and fruit growing activity.

### **Nation Builders**

These White brothers, and their subsequent pastoral neighbors, are among the strongest link in the golden chain of development that has been forged link by link during the past 106 years to connect up the southern and western parts of the State.

At the instance of a descendant, Mr. Fred Regan, well known in wool circles, a movement was initiated some years ago to perpetuate at Young the memory of James and John White, and recently—during the municipal jubilee celebrations—an imposing memorial was unveiled by John's elder daughter, Mrs. Sarah Musgrave, who—though approaching 103 years of age—retains a remarkable vigor of mind and body.

It is well that we should cherish memories of such great pioneers as these and remember alone those great qualities of mind and bodily vigor they possessed, forgetting the little that should be forgotten.