

MR. GEORGE WOOD, J. P.**BOULLA.**

To write the history of Mr. George Wood, formerly Shire Clerk of the Council of the Shire of Boullia, is to practically write the history of Boullia, the little township in the far west of Queensland and only about 120 miles from the border fence of the Northern Territory, for he has completed his 50 years' residence there, and before he arrived there was very little of Boullia in existence.

Mr. Wood familiarly and even affectionately widely known as "Woodie" was born at Home Farm, Clapton, Northamptonshire, England, his father being a gentleman farmer and a breeder of stud stock. "Woodie" came to Australia when he was about 21 years old, and made the passage in a sailing ship in 76 days which was a fairly fast run for a sailing ship in those days. During the voyage, as some of the sheep on board were dying, he was called upon by the captain to shear them, and was handed a pair of tinsmen's snips for the job. Fortunately, Woodie had some hand shears in his box so was able to make a decent job of the shearing.

Mr. Wood intended to go on the land or to join his brother who had interests in Fiji. The Fiji project falling through he went to Baroona Downs, Victoria, belonging to the Russell family, friends of the Woods one of whom also had an interest in Portland Downs, Queensland, and he stayed there for a few months. One of the partners in Portland Downs asked him to go there as jackeroo, but told him to wait at Rockhampton for a month and take a number of kanakas out west to different stations. He said there would be a man with him who had been to Portland, and he gave Woodie particulars of the track, the different stages and mileages. Unfortunately, the man, on account of sore eyes, had to leave Woodie soon after leaving the Dawson river, and he had to take the kanakas on alone. He had hard work to get them along, and as there were nearly a hundred in the mob, Mr. Wood had no light task. Scurvy broke out among the kanakas, and being a new chum Woodie did not know anything about hospitals or where they were situated. However, someone had told him that vinegar was a good thing, and he got them all right again excepting one who was too far gone and ultimately died

was too far gone and ultimately died on the road. The last of the mob were delivered at Portland and Wellshot stations.

Mr. Wood stayed at Portland Downs as overseer for about five years and then took a job on Bowen Downs as boss of the wash pool. The method then was to dip the sheep in water for a few minutes and then put them into a sweating shed and afterwards under the spots when the dirt would come out very freely, and the fleece after shearing was as white as possible. At that time white men could not stand the cold, and the work was generally done by Chinese and blacks, with frequent changes.

About this time Mr Wood took a party of kanakas whose term of service had expired back to Rockhampton. He then went to Sydney where he met his brother who told him he had a line of tweed suitings at a very low price. Mr. Wood thought there was money in these and he decided to buy a quantity and to go hawking. He went back to Rockhampton, bought more goods, and a dray and horses, and gradually worked his way towards Boullia. He arrived in Boullia in 1882 the year of the "big comet" as he describes it. Boullia then consisted of the Royal Hotel and a smaller hotel with the thatched roof, but the venture was a financial loss. About this time he went back to Portland collected his horses and started back for Boullia. Mr. Wm. Dalrymple, one of the owners of Portland, who was in Winton, travelled with Woodie as far as Cork and then on to Old Angle, now Waranda. On this trip Mr. Wood brought with him as passenger the first single white girl to arrive in Boullia.

After giving up his interests in the hotel, Woodie started breeding horses and he bought a butchering business in Boullia and kept it going for some years. Later he secured the mail contract between Winton and Boullia which he ran for some years. Drought conditions prevailed towards the end of his contract and he had to buy horses in Winton to finish his last fortnight. This was before parcel post days and he got £599 for running the mail only. For a while the trip was done in six days but afterwards it was altered to four days and Woodie had to pay as high as £900 a year in wages to drivers and grooms at mail changes. Cobb and Co. then got the contract and lost thirty head of horses during the first fortnight owing to the drought. The

thirty head of horses during the first fortnight owing to the drought. The first driver for Cobbs was Alf Dale who was a first class man and a very careful driver.

Mr. Wood then contracted to take the late Clement Wragg, the Government Meteorologist, from Boulia to Urandangie, Camooweal and on to Cloncurry. Of course they travelled by buggy, and Woodie tells some amusing incidents that occurred on the trip. Mr. Wood also ran the Royal Hotel,

Boulia, for about a year. He was appointed Clerk to the old Boulia Divisional Board early in 1897, and when that Board was merged into the Boulia Shire Council he continued as Shire Clerk and held that position for about 35 years, until the 31st December, 1931 when he retired as he said he was getting too old for the job. When dealing with Mr. Wood's resignation the Chairman, Cr. Scholefield, paid a very high tribute to Mr. Wood's services as shire clerk and referred to the great esteem in which he was held not only in the Boulia district but throughout Queensland, because every one knew and loved "Woodie".

One of Mr. Wood's hobbies is photography in which he was fairly successful. He acquired one of the best collections of aboriginal photographs in Queensland. His series of photographs is well known throughout the State, and even now he receives numerous requests for copies. Sir William MacGregor, a former Governor of Queensland, when on a visit to Boulia, complimented Mr. Wood on his fine collection of aboriginal photographs and said it was one of the best he had seen.

On numerous occasions when there has been no doctor in Boulia Mr. Wood has been consulted on all manner of ailments and he has had no hesitation in prescribing treatment. He has also when occasion required assisted at post mortems and operations, and was not too bad at setting broken limbs. He claims to have an infallible cure for "barco rot."

Mr. Wood delights in "havig" reports: indeed those who know him well are very careful when talking to him not to say "why" or "how", because they know that Woodie will have some ridiculous answer to give. He is an adept at card tricks and is a great lover of card games. He now spends his time in looking after his two little dogs which are almost as well known as Woodie himself, and in dabbling in his favorite hobbies of photography and gardening. He has many visits from old friends and he delights in recounting past experiences and like the old soldier, fighting many battles o'er again.

On the 27th July next, the Shire Council is giving a special social and dance in Mr. Wood's honor and to celebrate his more than 50 years' residence in Boulia, and during the evening an enlarged photograph of Mr. Wood hung in the Shire Hall is to be unveiled. Efforts are being made to make this function widely known all over Queensland, and it is expected there will be a kind of "back to Boulia" festivity on the occasion mentioned.

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