

THE JUBILEE TREE

(Special for the "News" and "Herald" by G. Westacott.)

Yesterday was a day for walking. The overnight rain had laid the dust and brought the first hint of winter to the air. And that was how I came to the banyan fig tree at the far end of Victoria Park, bearing the brass-plated inscription:

This tree was planted by
THOMAS KELLY, ESQ.,
Mayor of Rockhampton,
On the 21st of June, 1887.
In the presence of a large concourse
of people,
To commemorate
Her Majesty's Jubilee Year.

THIS plate is not historically correct, as regards "the large concourse of people!" but since it had to be prepared in advance by the engraver such a slip can perhaps be overlooked.

It is true that a large concourse of Rockhampton people did turn out to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee on June 21, 1887. But the main celebration took place at the Show Grounds, whence the Mayor and councillors, clergymen, friendly societies, school children, the more opulent citizenry in buggies or on horseback, and the proletariat afoot, marched from the Post Office at 10 in the morning to the strains of Bickle's Town Band and Piper John Anderson of the 5th Volunteers: where Mrs John Ferguson, Mrs William Pattison, and Miss Higson distributed to the school children between 2000 and 3000 medals of bronze dipped in gold, bearing on the one side the Rockhampton coat of arms (with alligator rampant), and on the other the head of Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria; and where Mr W. H. Risien, Rockhampton's oldest citizen, gallantly escorted to the grandstand a lady who had been present at the Jubilee services of King George the Fourth.

The attendance at the Show Grounds, in the estimate of the "Bulletin" reporter, exceeded 5000 persons. It would have been still larger but for the defection at the last moment of the Protestant Alliance Society

for the defection at the last moment of the Protestant Alliance Society, which took umbrage at having been drawn to march after the Hibernians, and went over lock, stock, and barrel to the celebrations that were being conducted on the other side of the river by the Mayor and Councillors of the Borough of North Rockhampton.

For it was a great day at North

Rockhampton also, notwithstanding that the procession—headed by the councillors and Good Templars Lodge—which marched from the State School for the Pasturage Reserve could not hire either band nor piper, and there were no bronze medals dipped in gold for distribution. But there were compensations, notable amongst which was a full grown ox roasted whole, to be eaten and washed down by a liberal supply of McLaughlin's beer, drawn from the barrel.

The roasted ox was drawn up on a lorry in front of the dais. In the words of the reporter: "It presented a sight that was hardly calculated to improve one's epicurean taste or excite an appetite. But the ox had been cooked to be eaten, and eaten it was. Many hands make light work and a roasted ox can give more work than one carver can perform. Under the slashes of the keen-edged knives the charred outside began to disappear, and toothsome, juicy-looking slices of meat rained hard on to the dishes held up to receive them. It was indeed a sight not often seen. Round the trolley there were some 50 or 60 men, women, and children, holding huge slices of bread to the carvers, anxious to receive a slab of ox. On the tables were large tins of dry Coleman's mustard, and which scattered over the beef, with a modicum of pepper and salt, helped to make it savoury. The aldermen were not slow to set an example; whilst the demands made upon the barrels of beer were vigorous and Mr McLaughlin's brew was much appreciated."

The good news apparently got round for the reporter chronicles:

for the reporter chronicles: "Crowds of people could be seen streaming across the Fitzroy Bridge and as they came up fresh attacks were made on the carcase. The 'undercuts' were in great demand."

They must have been good trenchermen in the eighties, for the faithful reporter records that the aldermen later adjourned to the Council Chambers for a cold collation, and that the wife of the headmaster had the lady teachers to lunch with her.

It was a day of excitement in other ways. The schoolmaster's son explored too closely the heels of a horse and was rewarded with a kick in the stomach which necessitated his hurried return home. But he was a valiant lad, for later in the day he was borne in a hammock back to the scene of the festivities—not too late,

it is to be hoped, for his share of the ox, which, incidentally, was picked to the bones later by a number of kanakas who likewise had turned up to demonstrate their loyalty to their adopted Queen.

WHAT ABOUT THE TREE ?

But this is getting away from Mayor Tom Kelly's Jubilee Tree. Mayor Kelly did not plant the banyan fig in Victoria Park in the presence of a large concourse of people. He planted it during the afternoon in the presence of several ladies and the aldermen of the day, who included Stewart Hartley, Sidney Williams, T. K. Higson, I. Williamson, and H. C. Bream. The planting was carried out under the direction of then Gardens Curator, Mr J. S. Edgar. The banyan tree had been chosen, the Curator remarked, because it was symbolical of the British Empire by reason of the arms (roots) which it threw out and which remained wherever they struck.

In this present year of King George's Jubilee 48 years have gone by since Mayor Kelly's Jubilee Tree was planted in honour of his illustrious grandmother. Curator Edgar spoke truth about the throwing out of arms which take root. So many have been thrown out that the original trunk is almost obscured. But it is there, nevertheless, and you can easily locate it by reason of the hieroglyphics carved upon it, appar-

ently as soon as it was large enough to receive them.

For the thought that strikes one first upon viewing the Jubilee tree is that successive generations of Rockhampton lovers seem to have made it their trysting place, and recorded the fact by carving their joint initials on the bark. For it is a characteristic possessed by the banyan fig that it lends itself particularly to this romantic enterprise.

It is noticeable that most of the inscriptions bear a pre-war date. This should not be taken as implying that the youth of today is less impressionable or less devoted to its Own True Love, than were those at the beginning of the century. But rather is it due to the circumstance that in earlier times part of the equipment of every well-found young man who went a-wooing was a two-bladed pocket knife with toothpick and corkscrew attachment. It is a custom that has died out, more's the pity, and the carving of initials on tree trunks has become more or less a lost art since 1912.

Many of the inscriptions on the Jubilee tree are enclosed within a heart, signifying to all whom it might concern that at the time the pocket knife did its work there were at least two hearts that beat as one. One bolder lover has recorded in more emphatic terms his sentiments in the words "I love her. I love her." The lady's name appears to be Beatrice. An ardent youth,

Perhaps it is just as well the banyan tree is the deep-rooted vegetable it is. Dug up and produced in the court of matrimonial jurisdiction it would carry the day in many a breach of promise case.

ROCKHAMPTON IN 1887

What manner of town was Rockhampton in the year of the Queen's Jubilee in 1887, and where now are the people who took part in that ceremony ?

Thomas Kelly was Mayor of the city and was surrounded by a numerous brood. The name has no significance in the Rockhampton of today.

John Ferguson, just become a millionaire out of Mt Morgan, was the senior member of Parliament. The

honore out of Mt Morgan, was the senior member of Parliament. The name is not heard today, but old John, who was a building contractor before he became a mining magnate, left a monument in the shape of the most ornate private residence ever built in this city; it is now the Mater Hospital. William Pattison was perhaps the richest man in Rockhampton in 1887 and certainly the most powerful. That same day his eldest son James ("Battler") rode his own horse, Ormond, in the Jubilee Hurdle Race at the Jockey Club's races, and at night time the whole town turned out to witness the fireworks display that lasted from 7 till 9 at the Pattison private home (now Tannachy Hospital). With the departure of J. G. Pattison recently for Brisbane the last Pattison link with Rockhampton has been severed.

Harry Johnson was proprietor of the Bellmore Hotel (now Williams' Ltd ironmongery store) and served a daily lunch for one and sixpence that never has been equalled before or since.

The "Bulletin" of the day was filled with the land sale advertisements of George Silas Curtis.

The Halls and the Darcys were still living in Rockhampton, and Mrs Hall gave £10 for warm clothing for the old men of the benevolent home in honour of the Queen's Jubilee. Mrs Kelly, wife of the Mayor, contributing a like amount for the ladies of the home.

There were no cars or aeroplanes then, but a coach ran daily to Mt

Morgan, and twice a week to Emu Park. Three vessels were tied up at the town wharves on Jubilee Day.

The boom in Mt Morgan shares, that was to bring ruin to so many people then occupying comfortable positions in Rockhampton, had not yet started, and the "Bulletin" noted that the shares were quoted at £3/17/- (buyers).

It was a cool June day when Mayor Kelly planted the Queen's Jubilee Tree. The thermometer had been down to 30 for several nights.

There were no pullover jumpers and cardigans and fur coats to keep out the cold, but the ladies and gentlemen who attended the celebrations were warmly clad and fashion-

gentlemen who attended the celebrations were warmly clad and fashionably dressed for all that.

Mrs W. Purcell announced in the "Bulletin" that she had received by steamer specially for the Jubilee "a consignment of hats, bonnets, flowers, and feathers, and a large assortment of ladies' and children's underwear specially suitable for the season."

Stewart's Criterion House likewise proclaimed the instant arrival of fashionable warm jackets, mantles, and alsters in ribbed diagonal and beaver cloths.

Other clothing firms emphasised the warmth and durability of the Crown moleskin trouser.

Incidentally, Stewarts led the way in the city illuminations at night, 18 inch gas jets setting out the lettering of "God bless our gracious Queen; long may she reign." The Q.N. Bank, in the view of the trained observers of the day, ran Stewarts close in this connection, with Lucas' well in the running.

The health of Rockhampton seems to have been well looked after in the year of the Queen's Jubilee in 1887, judging by the patent medicine advertisements in the "Bulletin." Holloway's Pills were advertised as The World's Friend. Dr Kell's Kidney and Liver Bitters were "never known to fail." A cure of everything from Pimples to Scrofula was guaranteed by Cuticura Resolvent, the New Blood Purifier. American Hop Bitters and Keating's Worm Tablets had their merits.

Rockhampton in that year was a city with claims to culture, also; Grattan Riggs was playing "Con the Shaughran," "Arran Na Pogue," and "The Shadows of a Great City."

Miss Lauderdale announced that she was prepared to receive pupils for drawing and painting, also for Chrysoleum, Cleophas, Lustrolem, Oriental China Terra Cotta Satin and Mirror Painting.

In matters spiritual the city seems to have been well looked after. Clergymen who officiated at the Jubilee in one capacity or another included Father McDonough and the Revs. Hartley, Powell, Johnson, John Adamson, I'Evson, Dr Hay, Holmes, Poole, Castlehow, Ruddock, and Mossop.

A SERIOUS OMISSION.

Although the children of 1887 re-

Although the children of 1887 received Jubilee medals at the Show Grounds and mugs of tea and roast beef at North Rockhampton, they were let down badly in one respect.

"In the excitement of the Jubilee," says the "Bulletin," "the contemplated presentation of Jubilee New Testaments to the school children of Rockhampton and district has been lost sight of." A bad break this.

All was not jollity, of course, and a discordant note was bound to creep in.

For it was advertised that all debts due to Peter Peterson, of the Moon-gan Hotel, and to Daniel Morgan, of the Razorback Hotel, must be paid before the end of the month under penalty of having the same placed in the hands of their respective solicitors.

And as if to serve as a reminder that there were workaday times ahead tenders were invited from the char-ladies of Rockhampton for the cleaning of the new Court House "at per annum."

There were homes too in which other things than the honouring of the Jubilee of a distant Queen were paramount. The births, marriages, and deaths column recorded that in the height of the Jubilee festivities a son was born to Dr and Mrs Cripps, of Kent Street. With characteristic impartiality the stork also visited South Street to effect delivery of a son to Mrs Hogan, wife of Mr M. Hogan, of Comet, Central Railway Line.

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And that was the Jubilee of 1887. Fifteen, or 20 years from now at

most, the youngest of those who participated in the Jubilee of 1887 will be no more. But Thomas Kelly's banyan fig will be there, and so will the river that flows hard by. And they both will be there maybe when the last English King is forgotten, and the famed "traveller from New Zealand stands upon the broken arch of London Bridge"