

## 1.0 THE "NEW" PORT ALBERT.

### 1.1 Mackenzie MacLeod's droving from Hinnomunjie... Mr. McMillan's Run at Bushy Park

#### *...Droving...*

" Mackenzie.! Mackenzie MacLeod!!

I quickly looked towards the big man who had called out. He looked like a granite outcrop sitting on his large roan mare, about 10 yards away.

It was George Day, Mr. Crooke's Superintendent.

"Aye Mr. Day," I answered, at the same time kneeling my small horse to move up closer to him.

"You see down there," he gestured with an expansive arm wave, and large fist holding his stock whip, downwards off the track, into the thickly wooded hillside.

"Aye, those 4 mares and foals." I could just see them in the thickly wooded small valley. They were about 800 yards away in direct distance across the tops of the trees, but it was a long way down the steep hillside and up the other side. They had left the track we were on, to go down the steep thickly treed hillside to the small creek way below us. They had crossed the creek and were slowly picking their way up through the trees, on the other side of the creek and moving up and away from this large mob of cattle, and bullock drawn wagons on the rough track. They were heading away from us.

Our droving party of 8 men, with two bullock teams and drays with supplies, had left Mr. Crooke's Squatters Run of 36,000 acres in the southern Monaro high plains. The Run called Hinnomunjie, is between Benambra and Omeo. We were droving 500 head of shorthorn cattle, with 10 spare remount horses, because horses tended to lose shoes or get lame easily. And 4 thoroughbred horses with foals, as well as 4 cattle dogs.



*Mustering at Hinnomunjie*

We were to drive the cattle to a Squatters Run at Rosedale, to fatten up, after the drive and rest while Mr. Crooke's shipping agent had organised a buyer for the cattle.

The cattle would then be driven down to Port Albert, and be loaded on a ship, and delivered to wherever Mr. Crooke could get a good price. Probably in Hobart or Launceston, maybe even Melbourne



*On the way to Rosedale from Hiinomunjie*

"They are some of Mr. Crooke's prize horse breeding stock . I want you to get them, but its getting late in the day and I must push this mob on to the small flats around the corner, about 2 miles away, so that the cattle can eat. You will have to camp overnight with the horses and join us late tomorrow near the base of that third ridge to the south east about ten miles away at the river Tambo crossing." I wasn't worried about the responsibility of looking after the horses or being on my own. I grew up tending livestock, and had been down this track to Rosedale before. Besides every evening Mr. Day drew a mud map on the ground, with a big stick, so that everyone in the party knew where we had come from, where we were, and where we were going.

We had been travelling for about 12 days over about 70 miles. Past Strathalbyn, Omeo, Tongio Mungie, Tongio Gap, Doctors Flat, Numbla Munjie and Ensay.

Sometimes the track was easy and the cattle moved on quite quickly, other days the cattle just wanted to slowly graze, so progress was slow.

" If we don't arrive at The Tambo crossing by tomorrow evening, I want you to move on to Bushy Park, Mr. McMillan's property near Stratford, and give him the letters in the satchel from Mr. Crooke. Then follow his directions to meet us at the Curlewiss brothers property at Rosedale."

I nodded to Mr. Day, to say that I understood.

"You are a good stockman, so keep your head! If you get lost, head south along the Tambo river until you can see the Gippsland Lakes and strike a track that runs east to west, and crosses first over the Nicholson and then the Mitchell rivers.. You will then be able to locate Angus's property, by following the next one the Avon river, up towards the north staying on the east bank side. Got that?."



**Tough country drive stock through.**

"Go and see Archie the cook get a sack with two legs of dried mutton, a skin of water, a lump of bread and two lead ropes, and a remount horse. Don't forget to take your axe! And watch out for snakes on the rocks near the water!!"

With that he kicked his horse forward, and started cracking his whip at some cattle, at the same time calling out instructions to several of the drovers.



**Thats it!. Crack the stock whip and shout ! Sting them if you have too.**

I passed his instructions on to Archie my grown up cousin.

My family and small clan came from Scotland, to live in the Picton, Campbell Town and Argyle country in Goulburn areas, south of the Macarthur's sheep empire of Cowpastures now called Camden. I had been allowed to be with Archie as he explored and worked in various places in this land.

"Here you are young fellow. Now you take care or your Mother will skelp me if harm comes to you. By the way I have given you some extra's and with 2 shoulders of lamb and the 2 legs, you won't

starve. If the sheep population of this country is about 4 million, a bit of extra sheep meat won't be missed."

With that he gave me a play full smack around the ears, and a dig in the ribs.

I got the gear. Draped my sleeping canvass in front of my saddle, hung my supply sacks over the back of the remount. Wrapped the leather cords of the very important satchel to Mr. Macmillan around my waist, and slowly nudged my horse downwards of the track, tugging at the halter of the remount.

It was best to give my horse its head and lean backwards over its rump, with my feet in the stirrups nearly as high as its cheeks. Slowly we jolted, slipped and slid downwards. Sometimes my legs brushed or were bumped heavily into tress and branches. Aaarg!, I can still remember the pain. The remount occasionally twisted the halter around a tree or pulled back as we were going forward, and that was usually painful with a lot of effort to sort out.

The small group of horses were watching my downward, then upward progress suspiciously, so I started to hum a tuneless ditty, and didn't eyeball them, pretending to ignore them. Slowly I reached the leader, and whilst my horse panted a bit, I gently rubbed the neck of the mare and quietly slipped the lead rope over its neck .Gotcha!

### *..Mr. McMillan's Run at Bushy Park*

From this point in time the nightmare began, until I reached Mr. McMillan's Run at Bushy Park. I was constantly cajoling, pulling, pushing, tying them up and untying them. Tending the horses feet, finding water and finding fodder to let them graze.

For 2 years I had been used to the high plains, with occasional snow gums, flat low bushes, flattish land, sometimes covered in snow, in spring covered in wild flowers. Here I was in nearly impenetrable hills and valleys, covered with wooly butt and mountain ash, trying to get a small mob of horses to follow me.

There was no point in scaring them or hurting them by using my stock whip, even if I could have found space to swing it. I couldn't put a halter around a foals neck and pull it along so that the others would follow. I had to get the boss mare to follow my horse's.

I did have a small sack of dried pumpkin seeds, so I held a small handful in my palm, and gave it to the mare who greedily gobbled them. I then let it smell the sack, and slowly tied the sack to the front of my saddle. The mare kept on trying to get at the seeds, so I gently kneed my horse forward, pulling the remount, with the boss mare trying to nose the seed sack.

We all slowly moved forward in a bit of a line. I occasionally gave the boss mare just a few seeds to keep it interested, and as a reward. I started to get anxious, it was new moon time, so my campsite had to be set up very quickly before it became so dark that I would not be able to see.

The cattle mob did not arrive at the Tambo Crossing the following afternoon, so the next morning I decided to push on to Bushy Park. At least the famous McMillan track was marked even though it was a bit rough in places.

Finally I was able to look down to the south from the last high ridge, and saw the blue of the ocean and lakes. Now it was only a matter of turning westward and safely crossing 2 rivers and finding the Avon river. Luckily I passed quite a few of the entrances of Runs where logs had been cut, and stacked to mark how to get to the homesteads.

I had some difficulty at every river I had to cross, persuading the horses to ford and swim. But by tying some up on one side, and towing the boss mare over to the other, it worked. The boss mare's foal even swam with its mother. That helped steady the others.



**Mr .McMillans station, Bushy Park.**

Finally we arrived at Mr. McMillan's.

I reported to the overseer, told him the situation, gave him Mr. Crooke's letters, and followed his instructions where to put the horses and where I was to await orders from Mr. McMillan.