

THE JOHN PORTER FAMILY IN AUSTRALIA

FRED PORTER
37 MACADAMIA DRIVE
MALENY

Introduction:

From time to time various members of family, including Uncle Charles and Aunt Edna (Tot) announced their intention of writing a short history of our branch of the Porter family in Australia for future reference, but did not get around to doing it. As I believe I am the last surviving link with the older generation I will set out what information is known to me. I cannot guarantee that all particulars pertaining to English ancestry are correct, but think they are so.

John Porter and Family:

The history starts with the arrival of John Porter in Melbourne, Victoria, late in 1860 or early 1861. No doubt I could have had day and date for many things had I shown interest in the subject. My earliest recollections of Grandad John Porter are of an old gentleman with a long white beard, explaining the meaning of newspaper cartoons concerning the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. He lived on a small farm at East Milton on the town outskirts, whereas we lived on a selection he had taken up some five or six miles to the North-West, at a locality called Little Forest, and the farm itself became known as the "Duck Hole". I have to rely on over-heard conversations of my parents and Uncle Charles (who lived with us), Steve Guthrie Snr. (a brother-in-law of John Porter) and other relatives, plus information received in 1955 from Alice Jean Browne-Browne of Liverpool, England, who claimed to be a distant relation or connection of the Porters, and was a playmate of the Porter girls at Mill Street, Liverpool. Her daughter, Muriel Maddocks also sent to me after her mother's death a list of entries evidently taken from a Bible or Church Register which indicate that the widow Susannah Laurence married John Morgan on 24/12/1799. Susannah Laurence had a daughter Elizabeth born 10/7/1798. Then followed a list of Morgan children so that it appears likely that Elizabeth was raised by John Morgan as one of his family. I conclude Elizabeth was the mother of John and Thomas Porter as he many times claimed that his Mother's surname was Laurence, and the name Elizabeth appears frequently in the family names. John Porter was born about 1835. A Morgan girl (Alice) was grandmother of Alice Jean Browne-Browne.

The Porters were builders by trade and according to Alice Jean Browne, John Porter came out to Australia to assist John Morgan (Junior, I presume) to build Geelong Lighthouse (near Melbourne); at that time he would have been about 25 years of age. On arrival at Melbourne, he learned that gold had been found at Lambing Flat, now the town of Young, in south-western N.S.W. (in June 1860). Shops were closed and ship crews had deserted, everybody was off to the diggings, so John Porter joined this mob.

I have no idea how long he stayed there, but like thousands more his work went unrewarded. With his dwindling capital (said to have been £20.0.0. on arrival), he purchased a horse, saddle and bridle and set off across country for Sydney several hundred miles away (I presume he had walked from Melbourne to Lambing Flat).

The trip to Sydney was accomplished without serious incident, except that he got lost in the foothills of the Blue Mountains and spent the night with a couple of friendly bushmen who rode several miles with him next morning to put him on the right road to Sydney, and mentioned casually at parting that he had not seen any suspicious characters. From police on the road he learned that bushrangers were operating in the district. I have now forgotten their names.

He could not find work in Sydney, so made his way down the coast and settled at Milton where he resumed his trade of builder and prospered. In the late 60's he married a young Irish girl, Mary Guthrie. They had 13 children in all and 12 survived. Much of the information in the following tables was supplied by Henry Porter, son of Harry Porter (No. 12).

Mary Guthrie had two (2) sisters, Elizabeth (Mrs. J. Burns) and Anne (Mrs. W. Madden), also three (3) brothers, Steve Guthrie (Senr.) of Milton and our neighbour for many years, William a bachelor and I have heard of an older brother, Austin. This family had migrated from Ireland, County Clare. Years later John Porter lost a lot of money on the construction of the Milton School of Arts. Exceedingly wet weather prevented the horses and drays from bringing in the stone. He quit the building industry and retired to his little farm and selection. We only know of John and brother Thomas (founder of Funeral Directors Firm of Thomas Porter and Sons, Liverpool) but there may have been other family members as I am told that grandfather John Porter had mentioned a sister.

John Porter and his wife Mary, together with some descendents, are buried in the cemetery at Molli-Mook, located between Narrawallee Creek and Ulladulla to the east of Milton. I have not seen the site. Mother's parents Charles Henry Higgins and his wife are buried on the property at Cockwhy. It was later abandoned and overrun with blackberries, so the actual site is not now known.

John Porter's eldest son, also named John, was a roamer who left Milton when about 18 or 19 years of age and rarely returned. He worked on stations when not following his real passion, prospecting for gold. Eventually he made good with the discovery of a rich field near Dunolly or Tarnagulla, Victoria on the day Poseidon won the Melbourne Cup in 1906; I think the name Poseidon was applied to the field. John Porter sent for his younger brother Charles to work with him and guard against claim jumpers. Charles spent some 18 months on this field. The largest nugget found and named Poseidon weighed 969 ozs. (but not found by Uncle Jack). It was only 20 inches underground and 2 feet from a fence post. A similar size nugget recently located by metal detector only 10 inches underground is I believe in the same area.

Alice (No.2). Was deaf, died of pneumonia in early 1900's.

Thomas (No. 3). My father, discussed later.

Mary (No. 5). Married George Halliday and lived in Sydney.

Elizabeth (No. 6). Married William Kenna, a schoolteacher; lived many years at Bowral and then North Sydney. Their two sons Jack and Charles each held University Degrees and probably daughter Edna.

Katherine (No. 7). Nurse, trained at Sydney Royal under the name of Laurence (her grandmother's maiden name) as there was another Nurse Porter enrolled for training ahead of her. I do not know but presume she reverted to her correct name later. She was 2nd in command of her Hospital Unit in Egypt and France in World War I. Returned from the war but fell victim to pneumonic 'flu which swept the world causing millions of deaths. She died in Sydney soon after the war (1918?). She was posthumously awarded the George Medal (Royal Red Cross Medal?).

Charles (No. 8). Formed a partnership with my father, Thomas, in 1910 and lived with us at Forbes, NSW and at Maleny, Qld. Shifted onto 49 acres next to "Wongabel" in 1917. Married Betty Blacklaw in 1929; Blacklaws were share-farming for the partnership on a property at Witta (78V), later Clive's farm; Betty had worked in Maleny. They lived on the farm for a period before shifting to Cherry St., Maleny where they lived the rest of their lives. Details of the partnerships' properties are provided later. Charles also had a partnership with "Cook" Porter. At his death Charles owned approximately 10 farms plus houses and shops in Maleny.

William (No. 9). He spent his working life as a tenant farmer and was quite successful but fell victim to cancer in early middle age as did his brother Jack of Poseidon fame.

Annie (No. 10). Lived in Sydney after her marriage but returned with her husband Charles Stephens to live in Milton many years later.

Edna (No. 11). Never married. She was in same class as myself until she was 17 years of age; there were several other girls of similar age there too, no work was available so they continued studies. In later years she was a Dressmaker and Manager of a small store.

Harry (No. 12). I suppose his correct name was "Henry" as he was mostly known as Hen Porter at school. He inherited the Duck-hole farm, added 50 acres from the adjoining farm Woodlands. He later sold and bought better land elsewhere in the Milton area.

Stephen (No. 13). He came to Maleny in 1916 and joined in with brothers Thomas and Charles who helped him with a leased farm (Quince lease). After a short period, he purchased a farm diagonally across the road (marked 3,1 and 4,1 of 1283) in partnership with Charles. An auctioneering business was acquired in 1919 from Peter Moody. His wife died following surgery, he then put his age down and joined the Army in World War II. He perished miserably as a P.O.W. at Shimo Sonkurai, Thailand on September 16, 1943. See book "One Man's War" by Stan Arneil. For some unknown reason he acquired the nickname of "Cook" when a small boy and the name stuck to him. His share in properties and the auctioneering business were left to Uncle Charles. It is worth noting that Cook and his wife took in Bill Boxsell from 8 years old (when his parents died) to when he was old enough to leave home. Bill became a well known auctioneer based in Kenilworth; in the 1960's he added the auctioneering business in Maleny to his other business.

JOHN AND MARY PORTER AND FAMILY

BORN

DIED

MARRIED

BORN

DIED

JOHN PORTER about 1835 1928 (93 years) Mary Guthrie 1870 1853 (?) September 12, 1936
(83 years)

CHILDREN :

1. John (Jack) November 17, 1870 m. Later in life
2. Alice April 17, 1872 never married
3. Thomas July 7, 1874 April 14, 1946 Esther Marion Higgins
(m. May 1, 1895) March 1872 June 15, 1957
4. William 1876 died in infancy
5. Mary October 17, 1877 George Halliday
6. Elizabeth May 17, 1880 Will Kenna
7. Katherine December 17, 1882 never married
8. Charles May 31, 1885 March 24, 1974 Betty Blacklaw
(m. 1929)
9. William June 26, 1887 Gertrude Turnbull
10. Annie June 21, 1889 Charles Stephens
11. Edna February 6, 1891 never married
12. Harry May 19, 1893 Connie Phillips
13. Stephen "Cook" August 19, 1895 Stella Mabel Cork

FAMILY OF JOHN AND MARY PORTER - FURTHER DETAILS:

1. John Porter - married late in life, no family, saw wedding photos, no further information.
2. Alice Porter - never married; deaf.
3. Thomas and Esther Porter - 11 children:

Frederick b. July 7, 1895; m. Hilda Mear - details below.

Doris Eva b. March 27, 1897; never married, deaf;
d. April 13, 1972.

John b. October 14, 1898; m. Annie Elizabeth Humphries -
3 children d. October 5, 1962.

Desmond m. Betty Moy - 3 sons, Stephen, Michael and
Anthony (Tony) (Des - b. 1923, d. 1982).

Patricia m. Jack Thompson - 7 children, Francis, John,
Karen, Gary, Janice, Christine and Laurence. (Patricia
b. 1925, d. 1974).

June m. David Moffat - 2 sons, David and Kevin.

Hilda May, b. September 21, 1900; m. James Grigor -
3 children: d. April 5, 1979.

Iris m. Alan Box - 2 children, James (Jim) and Jane.

Janine m. Peter Stephenson - 4 sons, David, Andrew,
Mark and James.

John m. Irma Kwakkernaat - 4 children, Katherine,
Elizabeth, James and Judith.

Ruby Frances, b. September 19, 1902; never married;
d. August 21, 1934.

Leonard Thomas, b. January 9, 1905; m. Gladys Cork -
1 child; d. November 8, 1982.

Ian Leonard m. Pam Williams - 1 son, Craig and 1 daughter
Melissa.

Laurence Edward b. October 16, 1907; m. Iris Butler -
3 children; d. December 1, 1970.

Maureen m. Fred Beutner - 2 children, Anna and Karl.

Lorraine m. Reggie Kenny - 2 children, Grahame and Patrick.

Raymond - not married.

Family of John and Mary Porter Cont'd :

Clarice Mary b. January 22, 1910; m. Guy Cuthbertson -
3 children.

Julie m. Lester Geritz - 3 children, David, Michael
and Julie

Wendy m. C. R. Hanfling - 4 children, Karryn, Ronald,
Brian and Neil.

Donald m. Margaret Jarred - 3 children, Kaye,
Raymond and Kenneth.

Charles Henry b. January 1, 1912; m. Emily Sebbens -
4 children.

Irene m. Bill Millar from Otorohongo, N.Z. -
2 children, Christine and Stephen.

Heather m. Alan Hewson - 2 children, John and David.

Stephen m. Patricia Johnson - 3 children, Darren, Jenny
and Angela.

Dianne m. Graeme Dobson - 1 child, David.

Bernard Aubrey b. September 5, 1914; d. November 30, 1914

Clive Milton b. November 26, 1915; Thelma Ford - 4 children;
d. January 20, 1980.

Valmai m. Max Graham - 1 son, Shayne and 1 daughter,
April.

Thomas m. Judy Herron - 1 daughter, Suzanne and 1 son,
Michael.

Bernard m. Helen Johnston - 4 children, Michelle,
Daniel, Sharon and Annette.

Vince died November 11, 1975.

4. William Porter - died in infancy.

5. Mary and George Halliday - 4 children.

John

William m. Ida Smart - 3 children, Raymond, Judy and
Margaret.

Mary

Alice

Family of John and Mary Porter Cont'd:

6. Elizabeth and Will Kenna - 3 children
 John (Jack) - never married
 Edna - never married
 Charles m. Gabriel Gould - 3 children, Christopher,
 Rosemary and Jonathan.
7. Katherine - never married; died after World War I (1918?).
8. Charles and Betty Porter - 4 children
 Jean m. Robert Harwood, 3 children, Sally, Andrew, Mark.
 Barbara m. Richard Dean, 4 children, Jane, Michael,
 Stephen and Elizabeth.
 Elizabeth m. Brian King, 4 children, Anne-Marie,
 Christopher, Damien and Caroline.
 Christine - not married.
9. William and Gertrude Porter - 3 children
 Marjorie
 Mary m. Harry Newson, 2 children, Barbara and Noel.
 Gordon m. Rae Hodgkiss, 3 children, Helen, David and
 Robert.
10. Annie and Charles Stephens - 2 children.
 Jean m. Thomas ?, no family.
 Charles m. June Kirkwood, 4 children, Ashley, Adrian (dec.)
 Tony (dec.) and Paul.
11. Edna - never married
12. Harry and Connie Porter - 4 children
 Reg m. Betty Stephens, 1 child, Stephen.
 Katherine m. Gordon Rixon, 5 children, Christine, Kathleen,
 Coral, Anthony, Elizabeth.
 Clare m. Ken Hegarty, 3 children, Katherine, Kenneth and
 Stephen.
 Henry m. Roslyn Kelly, 3 children, Joanne, Denise and Lesa.
13. Stephen and Stella Porter - no children.

FREDERICK PORTER MARRIED HILDA MEAR - FAMILY DETAILS :

Frederick Porter b. July 7, 1895)
 Hilda Mear b. November 20, 1897) m. February 5, 1921, 4 children.

1. Kathleen Clare m. James Arthur Wilson, July 21, 1945; 2 children.

Bruce m. Janice Liddell, September 6, 1969, 3 children,
 Ian, Mark and Rowena.

Neil m. Rita Dynan, May 15, 1971, 2 children, Craig and
 Tracy.

2. Phyllis Mabel m. Raymond Williamson, August 15, 1953; 3 children,

Alan

Shauna m. Chris McEwen, January 1983.

Glen

3. James Frederick m. Daphne Lillian Staib, October 20, 1951;
 2 children. Jim b. January 17, 1927; d. December 17, 1980.

Gary m. Lee-Anne Higgins, December 29, 1978; 3 children,
 Daniel, Jessica and Jennah.

Deborah m. Peter Friend, January 29, 1983.

4. Harold William m. Aileen Rae Browne, January 2, 1960. 1 child,

Sandra.

I will now return to Thomas Porter No. 3 (my father). He was a lightly built man whom his father thought was too frail for hard work so apprenticed him to the printing trade which he promptly abandoned on completion and took over the farm.

He was a good foot-runner (the ruling passion at that time) but not quite good enough to reach the top. He married Esther Higgins and they had 11 children, 10 survived. Mother was a most self-effacing person; I know little of her background. Her parents had a selection, called "Avondale", in the district known as Cockwhy and situated between Lake Tabourie and Bateman's Bay. Her father, Charles Henry Higgins in earlier life had been a carrier between Araluen and Braidwood to the coastal towns of Bateman's Bay, Moruya and Pambula, etc. in the gold digging days.

Mother said Grandma Higgins' maiden name was Bourke and that she came from Cork in Southern Ireland. She had lost her parents in the 1845-1848 Potato Famine when she was 12 years old. Friends sent her out to two Aunts living in Sydney but I do not know how she came to be in Braidwood where she met and married Henry Higgins (possibly in domestic service). I might mention here that few Irish settlers, either free men or convicts, had any worthwhile education and most only learned to read and write when their families were old enough to teach their parents. Grandma said she had seen Frank Gardner (the bushranger) as a youth and Henry Higgins was held up on several occasions by the Clarke gang of local bushrangers. Frank Gardner was a son of a Clarke girl.

Mother had two sisters; Mary, Mrs. Ryan of Bateman's Bay and Sydney and Frances, Mrs. Marshall of Sydney. There were five brothers; John, Thomas, Harry, Robert and Richard.

My parents lived at the Duck Hole farm and I can remember the schoolmaster (Mr. Merton) taking me on the front of his saddle to half-time Little Forest School when I was only $4\frac{1}{2}$ years old to keep up the necessary minimum attendance number (9). The school itself was on a clearing of maybe two acres at the junction of two roads, surrounded by forest with a permanent colony of koalas; while the One Mile forest between Guthrie's selection and school simply teemed with wildlife, birds, wallabies big and small, possums, squirrels, lyre birds, bower birds, the striking gorgeous black cockatoos, Gang-Gangs, parrots and pigeons. In 1905 we were burnt out by bushfire and Father did not return to farming, but continued to live in the house and took contracts for fencing and clearing, anything, including roadwork.

In early 1910, J.B. Reymond & Sons of Forbes, N.S.W. advertised for a family to operate their large dairy; father and Uncle Charles teamed up to apply and were accepted. The work involved not only the dairy but making farm butter, packing and selling to shops and some private customers, cream (but not milk). Irrigation was necessary and constant in a 14 inch rainfall area.

We stayed for three years and made very useful money, our first real break, then decided to come to Queensland where so many of our friends and acquaintances had settled, and arrived here, Maleny, in 1913.

Father and Uncle Chas. leased Mr. Clam Thow's farm "Majubah Hill" at Howells Knob (now owned by Mr. A. Heading) and used most of their capital stocking it. We then arranged to work Mr. James Cork's second farm on a share basis, but before doing so had to build new bails, yards, etc., so it was 1914 before we settled in at Wootha leaving Uncle Chas. and my brother Jack at Howells Knob.

In 1915 the partnership took over a sub-lease of a farm "Morven" (more recently owned by Alf. and later Kevin Plucknett) and installed their uncle Bill Madden as share farmer. They also leased a block of grass available for growing young stock. In 1916 Uncle Stephen (Cook) joined his brothers, Charles and Thomas (my father).

In September 1916 we took over "Wongabel", the home farm, on lease for five years with the option to purchase from Walter Cabbage, a school mate of Father. The farm at Witta, known as "Sunnyside" had also been purchased. (Sunnyside was approx. 500 acres, much more than shown on the map; not sure where it extended). Bill Madden transferred there after completion of the Gardner lease. In 1917 we took over the Dixon Clearing on Witta Road (now owned by Douglas Blacklaw) with 10 years to run. (This lease became my start in life). Also in 1917, the partnership purchased 49 acres across the road from "Wongabel". Uncle Charles shifted there from "Majubah Hill".

In approximately 1918, the partnership bought the Lowe block (104V). Three teams removed the pine timber for twelve months before "Cook" Porter and I fell the scrub on the bottom half of the block. In 1920, the partnership took over the lease of a property from George Quince and put "Cook" Porter on to share-farm it. He was soon followed by my brother Len. Also in 1920 the partnership bought 70.5 acres (marked Sub 1 Resub 9) from George Lindsay Cork, and put my brother Jack on to share-farm.

In 1938, the partnership bought Boxsell's farm which I had previously owned. My brother Laurie started share-farming it. Because of the complications involving family members, the partnership between my father and Charles was dissolved in 1940 (after 30 years). My father retained "Wongabel", a property at Witta (78V) and half of the Lowe block (104v (1)).

Father passed away at "Wongabel" in 1946 aged 71. In his will, he left "Wongabel" to my brothers Charles and Clive, the Witta property to the rest of the family, and 104V(1) (80 acres) to Laurie. All brothers and sisters were to contribute to the maintenance of our deaf and dumb sister, Doris; Charles and Clive were to provide for our mother. Subsequently Charles bought Clive's share of "Wongabel", enabling Clive to buy the Witta property from the other family members.

My mother continued to live at "Wongabel" until she died in 1957, aged 85.

My life after leaving home: In 1920 I left home to live on my block (the Dixon lease) which was owned by Mrs. Jessup (a Dixon girl). After my marriage to Hilda Mear in 1921 I sought an option to buy at the termination of the lease, but was informed this land would not be for sale. Some time later I was persuaded to buy Ted Jones' farm "Carinya" at Wootha (on a small deposit) as a safeguard while we continued to live on and farm the Dixon lease (Hilda had previously lived at "Carinya" with her parents, who leased the property). Indifferent share farmers and the cost of maintenance and clearing made it a losing proposition in the worsening economic conditions which continued and increased until 1940.

The Dixon family had made it known that the holders of the lease would have the first option to buy. Some time in 1926 Alex Boxsell told me he would not exercise his right so I paid a deposit to hold it and took over at 1st January, 1927 (Our son, Jim, was born two weeks later).

We tried hard to work out of debt and could not sell the farm at Wootha so were forced to sell Boxsells at a modest profit (none if you value work done on it) and then purchased James' property (part of Walker Estate). This farm had good improvements and a good Jersey herd, half of which were registered pure breds. However, three dry years in which the water supply ran very low plus a plague of white grubs (in the pasture) left me floundering again. To be frank I was under-capitalised. By the end of 1939, World War II had arrived, depression was lifting and I was able to sell both properties, though prices remained weak.

At this stage I was under considerable pressure to go to Dalby to grow wheat and still don't know whether or not I should have done so, but on advice from Steve (Cook) Porter opted for Conondale, where we prospered and built "Westwood" Jersey Stud. Probably our greatest help came from improved milking machines and breeding cows with more tolerance to machine milking, thus obviating the need for a team of hand milkers, mostly the farmer's wife and children.

My brothers and sisters : In 1915, Jack was left with Uncle Charles to run "Majubah Hill", while the rest of the family shifted to Wootha. Jack quarrelled with Uncle Charles and left for the South Coast district; several months later he enlisted for Army Service in World War I at just under 16 years old. He was invalided home from Egypt, discharged and went to the Atherton Tableland before rejoining the family unit at Maleny. About 1920 the partnership purchased a 70.5 acre farm and put Jack on to share-farm. Jack later bought the farm and lived there for the rest of his life.

Len and I also left home in about 1920, leaving the three younger brothers to take over helping at "Wongabel". Len took over from Cook Porter as share-farmer on the Quince lease. He finished the lease then bought the farm and stayed there until retirement. He and Gladys retired to Redcliffe and the farm is now owned by their son, Ian.

Laurie went on to Boxell's farm in 1938, after the partnership bought it. He lived there for the rest of his life.

Charles built his own house on "Wongabel" and later acquired this property, as described earlier. "Wongabel" is now run by Charles' son Stephen.

Clive married and they lived with our parents at "Wongabel". He bought the Witta property (78V) after father's death and lived there until he died in 1980 (Clive probably owned about 115 acres, more than shown on the map).

Hilda and Clarice both lived at home until they married. Hilda married Jim Grigor and lived on a farm for a short period before shifting into Maleny, (cnr. Miva and Myrtle Sts.). Clarice married Guy Cuthbertson. Guy worked in shops in Maleny and was an officer in the RAAF during World War II (P.O.W. in Italy). After the war, Uncle Charles took him on as a partner (and auctioneer) in the auctioneering business. Guy and Clarice operated and lived in the cafe (now rebuilt) next to the main hall in Maleny. They retired to Redcliffe.

Doris lived at "Wongabel" until mother's death in 1957. She then lived with family members until they assisted her to buy a house at 26 Cedar St. Maleny, where she lived until her death.

Ruby was badly burnt when a child. She did domestic work in Brisbane and for the family. She died of cancer at the age of 31.

1918-1919 drought: The 1918 season was very dry and 1919 much worse, the greatest drought Maleny has known. The Obi-Obi was dry, except for a large water-hole just below present dam site (then Gibson's land). At "Wongabel" the only available water was obtained from several springs which had to be cleared and deepened constantly. The drought broke in the last week of 1919 with three days of cyclonic wind and pouring rain. Cattle were poor and literally froze to death; they stood in creeks, gullies and water courses until they dropped as the running water was warmer than the wind and rain. We hunted them out but they immediately returned. We got our two work horses and slide and transferred them one at a time into bails, barn, several small sheds, and even under the tank stand at the house. They were so frozen we just rolled them off at shelter and thus saved many. I think our total loss on all farms was 65 head of grown cattle. Of course, we had already lost some from weakness and in bogs, etc. and at the Coast where we had sent dry stock. One farmer lost 105 head from a herd of 110 after having spent £2000 on drought fodder. George Quince on the property later purchased lost heavily in stock from the cyclone. I recall that the little creek running through the farm was lined on both sides by dead cows after the rain cleared.

A curious feature of the latter months of this drought were the extremely heavy dews experienced. Every morning at sunrise you would feel sure rain must have fallen overnight, the fog was so dense and the place was so wet. I believe there is a simple scientific explanation but it was none-the-less remarkable and must have contributed to keeping plant life in existence.

Another observation worthy of note is that while cattle starved, horses thrived as they pawed and bashed up paspalum root clumps to eat; apparently they were very nutritious.

Pasture grasses: No story of Maleny development is complete without reference to the part played by pasture grasses. In conversation with Francis Dunlop Snr. (one of the real pioneers) he told me he had cleared and planted some five acres with sugar cane as "bullock fodder" at the top of Bunya Street. That must have been the very first cultivation on the Range. Later Buffalo Couch grass was used. It does produce seed but is difficult to collect. The grass is of indifferent quality and was propagated by root segments.

Paspalum arrived about 1903 and Rhodes grass soon after. Both were free seeders and easily propagated, but paspalum later lost favour when invaded by a fungus called "Ergot" in the seed heads which sickened both horses and cattle. It was later overwhelmed by kikuyu, which was introduced in early 1920's per medium of root cuttings. In a short period it became acclimatized, seeded freely and was spread by ingestion by farm animals.

Kikuyu is a prolific grower but needs considerable management by heavy grazing or frequent cut back and fertilizing, otherwise it becomes coarse and fibrous and loses nutrition value. On the other hand its prolific growth can be a danger in the hot steamy wet months as the source of Nitric poisoning of cattle.

Explanation of Clearing Leases: T.C. Dixon of Brisbane, Boot & Shoe Manufacturers, had many years before taken up some 2,000 acres of scrub land extending from Maleny township and bounded by Obi Obi Creek on the south side as far as Aplins and to Collards corner on Witta Road on the north side, to exploit timber resources (mainly cedar). Later he had the area surveyed into blocks for 20 year clearing leases. Terms:- five (5) years free, balance of term 5/- (five shillings) per acre per annum; applicants to fell scrub and grass the land, all improvements, buildings, fencing, etc. to revert to the owners at the end of term. In effect the land was divided among members of the Dixon family and offered for sale in 1927 - 1928 at £40. per acre.

The Bush Fire 1st January, 1905.

New Years Day, 1905. Location: The "Duck Hole" farm was John Porter's selection near Milton, N.S.W. The Duck Hole itself was situated at the south-eastern end of the block, was roughly circular and at that time about 120 yards across, an ideal swimming pool for all ages because at the top end there was flat shelving rock running out into the pool for at least 30 yards where it was only waist deep for an adult, but then deepened rapidly to 10 feet. To us, as children, it was a young lake; we even had a raft to explore and fish. The raft was a single cedar flitch about eight (8) x two (2) x three (3) inch thick which had been washed down from the mountains in flood debris and impounded by father. We treasured it until lost in the same way as we gained it. The pool was surrounded by water gums, wattles, myrtles with a clump of large cedars on the south side. Our cottage was on a small knoll on north side overlooking the pool about 100 yards distant, with cow bails, yards, harness and store shed same distance to the west.

The weather had been dry for months, everything and everywhere was tinder dry and in addition a terrific heat-wave. It was reported as being 112° (fahrenheit) in Milton township that day. Father and Uncle Charles went through the motions of milking the cows, which then wandered off up the creek in the direction of Guthrie's selection. At least they would have good water to drink. After breakfast, father said he would ride over to a land-holder on Milton-Nowra road to try and get a job and Uncle Charles went on some mission of his own but I cannot remember now what it was. Father said he would be back for lunch and I was dispatched to the Guthrie home with a message for Steve Guthrie that a promised job for him and father on the following day had been deferred. Mother insisted that I should not stay, but should return immediately. On arrival there, nobody was at home but I could see the whole family about a quarter of a mile away at the south west corner of their block. I went there and found that they were patrolling their boundary on the edge of bush land and keeping a fire at bay. It was then about 11 o'clock, very hot but only a slight breeze.

The fire had come from the mountain country at the back. I played around with the Guthrie children for a short time when quite suddenly the wind freshened and was soon almost a gale. We watched fascinated as the fire reached a large dead iron-bark tree just outside the Guthrie boundary and in a matter of minutes sparks and pieces of burning bark were flying and landing hundreds of yards away in the dry grass land. We retreated to the Guthrie home on the flank of the fire and all hands began racing to the creek for water. I told the children I was going home and crossed the creek and mounted a small ridge where the Guthrie dairy stood and found myself gazing on a most awesome sight. The whole valley in the direction of our home was a sea of fire. While wondering what to do, Steve Guthrie having been told by his children of my intention, came racing up and gently forbade me to go further, no road, only a bridle track between the two properties, I would not have made it home.

Mother's Version: She was resting and talking with father's younger brother, Harry, 11 years old, who had walked out from Milton to spend the day and no doubt a swim. She prepared lunch and made tea in a big family teapot, when she noticed the darkening sky. It was only a matter of minutes when sparks were flying by in the wind. A big dry tree stump some short distance from the house suddenly burst into flames. The bark roof of the harness room was now seen to be burning. Mother put Harry up with an axe to cut away the poles holding the roof but he was overcome by heat and smoke and had to abandon the shed and its contents as they had no water there. They retreated to the house and found the paling fence and outside toilet were on fire. The house tank was empty and the only water available was a half milk-can drawn from the creek.

When the house wall caught alight it was put out with the pot of tea. Grabbing a couple of buckets she and Harry took the children (4) to the Duck Hole and she told him to mind them and keep them there while she dipped up buckets of water and returned to the house. This was repeated several times and the house was saved. The children were soon joined by "Nancy", a crossbred cow and something of a favourite with the kids. She stayed with them all afternoon and was the only milking cow to survive. Father tried to return the way he had gone out, through slip rails in the north-east corner of the block, through Kendall's farm, but was beaten back at the slip rails by the oncoming fire, but managed to remove rails thereby saving some stock. He then made a circuitous trip of several miles to reach home. The fury of the fire had passed but Mother was still on the job. It was then nearly three o'clock, she crumpled and was put to bed. Her feet were a mass of blisters and her shin split open after falling on a sharp rock while carrying water up the creek bank.

At the Guthrie end we were able to save the house because the fire had to burn back against the wind. Around 4.30p.m. a horseman appeared on the ridge previously mentioned and hailed, asking if I was there, and on being advised said stay until tomorrow, all are safe at home, and Father disappeared into the smoke again. A very sombre lad returned home next morning, passing three dead cows on the way. They had been overtaken by the fire. The bulk of the herd actually reached and passed the home area and were found piled up against the boundary fence.

Despite mother's efforts the house was saved only because it had an iron roof. The other buildings had bark roofs, the walls were of sawn hardwood planks erected perpendicularly and with cover strips over the joins, and the inside walls heavily papered. Nine days after the fire Leonard Thomas Porter was born some weeks prematurely.

The "Kendall" property mentioned in the description of fire was named "Kermington" and was the birthplace of the well-known Australian poet Henry Kendall; a plaque has been erected there to his memory. In later years this property was owned by Harry Porter.

In lighter vein, some earlier adventures.

Do rams have a sense of humour ?

Little Forest School is closed and I go to Milton School, five miles by road, somewhat less by cutting across farm paddocks. "Woodlands" is a large farm and I usually passed behind home buildings situated more or less in the centre, but one afternoon decided on a change of route that would pass in front of house and hence through Latta's bush for a little exploration; might see some wildlife, wallabies, birds, etc. I found myself in the sheep paddock and right in the middle the flock were grazing and looked up in surprise, but one old ram did more than that. He charged and I fled and took refuge on a large tree stump about table height. He circled around the stump but could not reach me, so retired about 10 paces and pretended to graze, but every time I tried to leave he chased me back again. I was rescued just before sundown when the farmer sent his dog to round up the sheep and from some distance he called out cheerfully, "Having a bit of a game eh?". I am sure he did not realise my plight. Arriving home near dark, mother said "You're very late, must have dawdled on the way".

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The second incident (also a ram) concerns brother Leonard. He is loaned out to Uncle Steve (Cook), when Uncle takes over the Quince Farm at Maleny. Included in the deal was a small flock of sheep and, of course, a large ram. While Uncle turned separator handle after milking each morning, it was Len's job to round up the calves for their morning meal of separated milk, but the ram waylaid him and knocked him over. He complained to Uncle who laughed and said "Ho-ho-ho You're a big boy now, you don't want to let a silly old ram bluff you, take a stick and show him who is boss!". Next morning while Uncle is turning the separator to the strains of "So Long Letty", a small terrified boy dashes through doorway and ducks into a corner. The charging ram cannot stop in time and cannons into Uncle's stern, knocking him over and scattering buckets and tins in all directions. Uncle grabs a handy stick and the fight began. Len said it was a great fight. Uncle said afterwards that he had won. Incidentally, the ram easily beat the Jersey bull in a fight some time later.

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I break a record, or at least I think I did, for a Long Jump.

My first job on leaving school was on a large farm "Boolgatta Estate" hand milking 150 cows and employing two families to assist owner. I was an extra rouse-about doing small jobs in addition to milking and in this capacity I was sent to bring in Dolly and her calf. Now, Dolly was a very big Ayrshire-Shorthorn cross cow and as events proved a cross-tempered one too. Better take a whip, she might be a bit cranky I was told.

"Boolgatta" was a prime farm with 600 acres of reclaimed swamp with main drain (the creek) and cross drains leading into it and one of these figure in my story. In full view from milking yards, some 400 yards distant I approached Dolly and calf, both appeared to be asleep, but when I was about 10 yards away Dolly awoke, jumped up, gave a huge snort and charged. The ten yards start was just enough to win the race to the ditch with Dolly snorting and bellowing right on my heels. I cleared the ditch with a mighty leap and dived through a plain wire fence. Dolly glared at me across the ditch and then trotted back to her calf, while I sneaked home to a hilarious welcome. Next day three horsemen with whips set out to do battle with Dolly, but she bowed gracefully to superior force and trotted home as quietly as Mary's pet lamb. The things some cows will do for a laugh (and some people too).

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Another good athletic performance

On the second day after arrival in Maleny, I set out to explore the gorge at the back of Thow's farm with brother Jack and sisters Hilda and Ruby. We made our way through dense jungle to a waterfall which could be heard from some distance. We then proceeded downstream (it is really the head waters of Elaman Creek) until we found some huge cedar flitches, which had been sawn and abandoned years before, probably been hard to get out. While examining one flitch resting on two rocks but too far apart for a direct jump, I stepped down into a clump of wild ginger or similar plant and landed in a great writhing mass of snake and when I reached bottom realised I was standing on the biggest snake I have ever seen. By the time my reflexes were working his head was about 10 feet away and he was looking back at me over his shoulder, that is if snakes have a shoulder. His body was as thick as a man's upper leg and he must have been at least 17 feet long. I don't know what height I leapt, but it was quite some time before I came down. Anyhow, I know who got the biggest fright. I later saw the skin of one shot in this locality and it measured 17 feet 4 inches long, and an even bigger one of 18 feet 9 inches was killed there, so it is claimed.

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SUMMARY

- 1860 (approx.) John Porter came to Australia.
- 1870 John Porter married Mary Guthrie, after settling at Milton N.S.W.; worked as a builder before settling on a farm.
- 1874 Thomas (Tom) Porter was born.
- ? Tom Porter finished a printing trade apprenticeship and returned home to take over the farm.
- 1895 (May 1) Tom Porter married Esther Higgins.
- 1910 Tom formed a partnership with his brother Charles and shifted to a farm at Forbes.
- 1913 The partnership shifted to Maleny and leased "Majubah Hill", Howell's Knob.
- 1914 Tom and family shifted to James Cork's farm Wootha.
- 1915 Partnership took over the sub-lease of "Morven".
- 1916 Tom and family shifted to "Wongabel"; partnership took a lease with option to buy. Partnership also purchased "Sunnyside".
- Stephen (Cook) Porter joined his brothers in Maleny; he later formed a partnership with Charles to buy an auctioneering business (1919) and farms.
- 1917 Partnership took over the lease on Dixon clearing.
- Partnership bought 49 acres next to "Wongabel"; Charles shifted to it.
- 1918 Partnership bought the Lowe block.
- 1920 Partnership took over the lease of a property from George Quince (Sub 5 of 1283); Cook Porter share-farmed it; became Len's farm.
- Partnership bought 70.5 acres and put Jack on to share-farm; became his farm.
- 1930 - Tom was a director of the Maleny Co-operative
1934 Dairy Assn. (butter factory) (9.1.30 - 1.2.34).
- 1938 Partnership bought Boxsell's farm (owned by me 1927-1934) and put Laurie on to share-farm; became his farm.

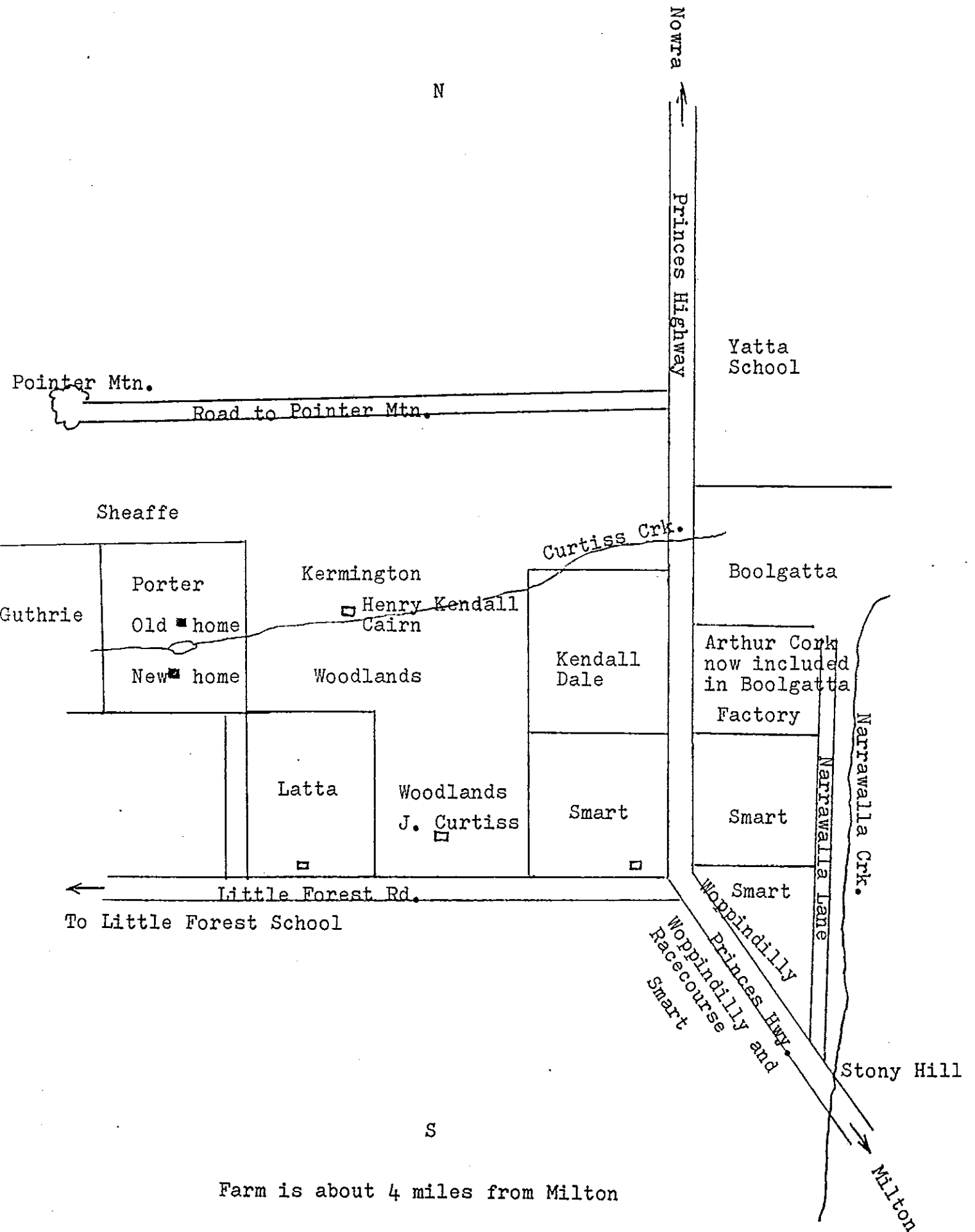
Summary Cont'd:

- 1940 Partnership of Tom and Charles dissolved. Tom retained "Wongabel", another property that became Clive Porters (Witta) and half of the Lowe block.
- 1946 Tom died at "Wongabel"; "Wongabel" farmed by his son Charles and later Charles' son, Stephen.
- 1957 Esther died at "Wongabel".
- ooooOoooo
- 1895 I (Fred) was born at Milton. Shifted about with the family as per summary above.
- 1920 I left home to live on the Dixon lease.
- 1921 Married.
- 1922 - 23 We purchased "Carinya" (41V) Wootha; continued to live on the Dixon lease.
- 1927 We purchased Boxsell's farm (Sub 7, 1283) and shifted to it (retaining "Carinya").
- 1934 Sold Boxsell's farm and purchased James' property.
- 1939 Sold James' property and "Carinya" and bought 140V at Conondale, to establish "Westwood" Jersey stud. Later, bought Fritz farm (117V and 209); later still Sub 1 of 107660 was added.
- 6.11.44 - Maleny Co-operative Dairy Assn., Board of Directors;
20.9.67 Chairman 24.9.58 - 20.9.67.
- 1955 - 61 Landsborough Shire Councillor.
- 1964 - 67 Landsborough Shire Councillor.
- 1950 - 69 Jersey Society (Vice President 1960 - 1964, President 1964 - 1969).
- 1958 - 67 Cold Stores Board (three terms). Co-op Dairy Companies Assn. (one term). Advisory Committee of P.D.S. (two terms). (Nomination and election to these last three came from being on the Board of the Maleny Co-op Dairy Assn.)
- 1960 Retired from Conondale to Maleny.

Note: I have added extra detail to the story written by Pop (Fred Porter). If there are errors or you have extra information, please contact me at 8b Curzon St., Toowoomba or Mrs. K.C. Wilson, 8 Stephen St., Buderim.

Bruce Wilson
January 1986.

Sketch - Not to Scale



Farm is about 4 miles from Milton

Places mentioned in the John Porter Story.

Our former home, Forbes
Front view.

The river is now much closer
to house than in our time.

Our former home, Forbes
Back view.

See old irrigation drain in foreground

"Duck hole" at Milton (Little
Forest) taken from near new
house on flat, looking down-
stream towards Kendall Property.
Latta's bush on right. Our old
home site (not in photo) is on
left across Duck hole. Creek
crossing is in front of willow
tree. Foreground is site of the
big cedar tree & potato patch.

Site of old Porter home at East
Milton. Coral tree planted by late
Stephen Porter.



HOW MALENY TOWNSHIP AND DISTRICT GOT ITS NAME

Some little time after my arrival here in early 1913, I was riding into town and caught up with Mr. John Grigor Senior, one of the real pioneer settlers of Maleny, at the Reeseville turn-off and we continued together to the town.

In the course of discussion I asked Mr. Grigor if he knew the origin of Maleny and he said "Yes, it is named after a place in Scotland" and continued....."when the surveyor (he named him but I have since forgotten the name) surveyed a large portion of the district and was filling in his maps and charts he said he wished to include a suggested name for the area". One of his assistants was a young migrant from Scotland who said it resembled his home place, so Maleny was written in but I think a mistake was made in the spelling.

In 1954 Hilda and I made a trip to United Kingdom and motored to southern Scotland and stayed two days in Edinburgh and several more in the surrounding countryside. I made enquiries about Maleny at Guest Houses and Hotels but nobody recognised any such place.

The very first day after returning home I was having a short rest after lunch on a day-bed on the verandah of our home at Conondale and idly picked up a magazine lying on the bed. To my utter astonishment the cover feature was a picture of a ruined castle on the top half of the page and a printed story concerning it on the lower half. The caption was "MALLENY HOUSE". I had just settled down to read particulars when the boys, Jim and Harry called on me to come and assist with some task so I placed the magazine under the pillow intending to read it next day. The womenfolk decided to have a real spring cleaning and the magazine with Malleny House vanished forever, but I had read sufficient to learn that the advertisers were featuring a series of bygone homes, one each month. There was no town, only a small district which took its name from the old House, and that it was situated seventeena. (17) miles from Edinburgh.

Some eleven (11) years later (about 1965) my sister Hilda and her husband, Jim Grigor, made a trip overseas and whilst on a bus trip from Edinburgh to Isle of Skye passed through the little village of Malleny, just a few homes, and for good measure noticed a butcher's shop with the Proprietor's name of J.A. Grigor. The Grigor Family of Maleny are of Scottish descent.

Perhaps the Scottish pronunciation of Malleny is somewhat different from the locally accepted terminology, hence the failure to recognise my query on the place name.

I believe the magazine article was an advertisement for a Wine Firm, or it may have been for Whisky. I cannot recall the name of the magazine.

I am putting this on record because I have heard two other stories concerning the name Maleny: I also while my memory is sound as at 1/7/85 J. Porter

