

SID JARVIS'S FRASER ISLAND 1918 - 1929

Sidney Jarvis worked bullock teams on Fraser Island from 1918 to 1929. In 1974 he recalled his memories of those days in this statement that was given to the Fraser Island Environmental Inquiry.

I was born at Granville, a suburb of Maryborough on 13th March, 1898. I attended the Granville State School with two of the Owens.

The Owens were an Aboriginal family and Henry, who later became known as Jo or Banjo, was one of the brothers, and Maidie was his sister. She was Mrs. Ross. The Owens family has been associated with Fraser Island for up to 75 years.

My own father started punting timber from Fraser Island around about 1908 or 1910. He used to punt timber for Edward Armitage.

Mr. Armitage had a little steamer called the "GERALDINE." He used to tow a barge and a pontoon. The pontoon was very flat, like a ferry punt. They used to put the logs into the barge and they used to tow it up the river, four or five times a month.

Sometimes they did five trips a month. He would take one trip to Harts and one trip to Hynes. These two sawmills used to take most of the timber off Fraser Island as far as I can remember. Although at one stage Sims did get a bit, but nothing compared with the other two.

I used to travel with my father on the punt, but from 1916 to the latter part of 1918, I started working on Fraser Island with bullocks and I worked there for approximately 11 years. I only took my bullocks off Fraser Island in 1929, because they started to talk about trucks. I was always interested in cattle and horses, not trucks.

My uncle drove the locomotive for Wilson Harts and Hynes and his son worked on the loco for some time, then he bought bullock teams and pulled timber at Woongoolbver to a tramline too. My brother also worked in the timber on Fraser Island. As young men we used to camp at a place known as Louisa's Camp. It was a couple of miles further out from where, the water was. Louisa's Camp is roughly where you describe the Eastern Break as being now. Our camp was right amongst the timber - the big blackbutt timber, and just on the eastern edge of rainforest. We named it the Louisa's Camp after missionary girl who came there to see old Nugget.

Old Nugget was an Aboriginal who must have been over 80. He never had a tooth in his head, and his hair was as grey a badger. We all used to go and sit and listen for about hour. I didn't stop for long because we had to be out early in the morning. Lousia came there and used to cook and talk to them. I don't know if she was any relation to the Ross's, but they seemed to be related the half-casts. But she was a good person. She told my brother and I that because we were baching she would cook a pudding for us if we wanted it. We us give her the eggs and the rice and stuff and she'd bake custard rice pudding for us.

There were three Aboriginals that I was associated during my teamster days. One was old Nugget. There another one known as Teddy Brown, and of course there was old Roger Bennett. He worked for the Wilchefsksis and the Berthelsens at Deep Creek and Yankee Jack.

The timber we hauled was mainly blackbutt and tallowwood. We didn't cut any satinay in those days, or any box. There was very little pine out in my day, except for Cypress pine, which was taken down to the Bluff. The Forestry never let anyone cut kauri until the war started, this last war, and then they started pulling some. A little of the satinay or turpentine was used for piles. I myself, hauled piles for the Granville Bridge. The scrub that is now known as Pile Valley, at the head of Woongoolbver Creek we used to, refer as the "Turpentine Patch".

I can remember one area of Blackbutt scrub which was burnt when a young fire got through there, and the young blackbutt regenerated as thick as anywhere on the island. I don't know how the fire was started. It certainly wasn't lit by anyone, because the Forestry was very, very strict about lighting fires.

With our bullock teams, we used to let them turn out to graze from Louisa's Camp and they'd run down toward the beach. There were no paddocks. Before daylight we would be up with our horses to go to muster our bullocks. We'd strike a match to see which track the bullocks had walked out on towards the beach it wasn't daylight. Then we would yoke up our teams and actually haul in two loads a day. Sometimes we only got one if it took us too long to muster the bullocks. We would let them go towards five o'clock in the afternoon. They were long days.



A bullock team at work on Fraser Island C 1920

I became very familiar with the land between Louisa Camp and the beach, and later when we finished carrying timber from Louisa Camp we established a camp at Garry's for a while. We were usually able to get in two loads, because they were fairly short hauls. We were living in amongst the timber we were cutting.

There were some areas of special significance to the Aboriginals, which Nugget used to tell me about. Nugget told me a lot about Wabby Lake where there used to be a big hill and a lot of wong shells. He told me that one day a pretty girl died there and he said that he had given this girl water and wongs but she still died. She had louse. The Aboriginals reckoned that there was a devil-devil there. They didn't like it at all. They said that the lakes were supposed to be very deep and they never went near Wabby Lake much. There was a big camping area near the beach, just south of the Wabby Lakes area, and then at Eurong there was a pretty big place there, and that's where the Aboriginals used to ride old Aldridge's horses. They used to break the horses in. There must still be some old posts there yet. The Aboriginals used to say they had plenty of busters there.



A working bullock team on Fraser Island

It was at Eurong that old Nugget had a hut. He used to camp there. Sometimes he would stay at the camp at Eurong and sometimes he would come back to camp at Louisa's with us.

There is a big midden near Poyungan Rocks. It was an area where the Aboriginals used to out fishing. The two blackfellas who used to work with us, Teddy Brown and Nugget used to go out naked at times on the rocks and they would fish there with a line a cord line. They would fill their mouths with wongs and go out and just stand on the rocks and when a big wave came, they would fish there and then come up again. When they caught hold of an oyster fish, they called them the "bowey," they used to run up the beach with it, get it off the rocks pulling it all the way. They used to keep the wongs for belt, in their mouths, as they stood on the rocks.

Once when we were mustering our bullocks, Nugget pointed out to me a large clearing on the ground. He said it was a "christening ring," and the site is just north of Grouyeah Creek. It was flat country and it's in a little bit. That's where Nugget said the christening ring was. I suppose it's about a hundred yards in diameter. They christened the kiddies there, and they got their names. If there was a girl and two boys were after her those two boys would have fight and the one that won, he got the girl and those two, the girl and the boy cleared off. They might have gone somewhere up

North, or come into the "inside" somewhere. They were married. That's how Nugget said that it was done. The only other really sacred area that Nugget told me about, where wouldn't take us to. That was Wabby Lakes. I don't recall Nugget saying anything about burial grounds. I never thought to ask him about that.

Just south of the christening ring at Grouyeah Creek, was where the swamps used to start. Then there was a very' deep creek that used to come down from up near Lake Boemingen, and it joined onto the swamp. There was a crossing there, and that's where the freshwater fish were. They were about a foot long and you could see them in the clear water and white sand. The rest of it was all weed and grass and you couldn't see anything. We never bothered to catch the fish - we never had much time for fishing.:

I can remember a number of incidents', including the rescue of a barge, "THE WAVE." by old Charlie Mathieson. He salvaged the engine from it twice, and sold it twice. I can also recall, very vividly, the rescue of the survivors of the "DORRIGO" by the "MORURYA." I can recall too, some of the early history, regarding the demise of the McKenzies sawmill on Fraser Island. Of course there was a yarn that these mills in Maryborough didn't help the operation survive, but I wouldn't know about that yarn. The trouble arose with the wharf labourers who had to go down to load the timber, and I think that's what broke it, because they'd all require houses and other facilities and amenities.

It was a hard life working with the bullocks. We had to take two loads a day. We tried to gets couple of logs each day. We would stay over on the island for shout a month and your worked six days a weak. We worked' Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday ass rule, if we could and if it wasn't wet, then on Thursday we'd give the bullocks a spell, then we'd yoke up another lot on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. We would always try and get them into a gully near the camp at night, ready for the next day, to keep them together, and to make sure they didn't clear off. It was a hard life for a married man, but you never had much time to think about women. By the time you go and get bullocks, yoke up 20 or 22 bullocks, go into the scrub and gets load of timber, bring them In and unload them, and unyoke them and get your tea, there'd be not much time for anything but thinking shout the next day.



FIDO publishes Backgrounders distributed with MOONBI Newsletters to assist in fostering a wider understanding of Fraser Island's special values that warrant its World Heritage status and to enhance appreciation of Fraser Island's heritage values.