

PIONEER FAMILIES OF COOROY AND DISTRICT

SIVYER

‘Devon Park’ was the chosen name of the Sivyer selection, Portion 1657, at Tinbeerwah. It is derived from Devon, in England where Mrs. Harriett Sivyer was born.

Spencer Sivyer, with his wife Harriett and family, came to the Cooroy district, as an employee of the Queensland Railway. His occupation was ‘Inspector of Bridge Timbers as used in the building of Railway Bridges.’

He was born in England and arrived at Sydney, Australia on 1 April 1839, on the ship ‘Argyle’, along with his parents, James and Sarah, brothers, Fredrick and Stephen, and sisters, Elizabeth and Harriet.

Spencer’s early years were spent in Sydney. In 1851, he married Elizabeth Hogg-Bathgate, at Redfern, Sydney. They, with their family, later moved to Maryborough where Spencer commenced employment with the Railway Department. Their son, Archie, was born at Maryborough in 1873. Elizabeth died at Maryborough in 1880.

The eldest son, James Spencer Sivyer, at 20 years of age, went to Gympie in the gold rush era to work in the gold mines. The second child, Martha Elizabeth is the ancestor of the Pickering, Lister, Campbell and North families of the Pomona and Cootharaba districts. Emmeline became a Mrs Hurley and moved away from the area. Albert went to Brisbane to work. He married and remained there. His descendants are the owners of Sivyer Holden. Archie, after he left the farm at Tinbeerwah, went to Mt Perry and later took up property in the Mackay area, where he and his family became successful sugar cane farmers.

In 1881, Spencer married Harriett Coram, a girl from Devon, England, who had arrived in Maryborough on the ship ‘Earl Derby’. His first family, now grown into adulthood, except Archie, had left home to make their own way in life. They lived in and around the Gympie and Pomona districts, with the exception of Archie and his brother Albert. Harriet reared Archie along with her own children.

Spencer is shown in the Railway Archives as an overseer and later as an Inspector of Bridge Timbers. He worked in various places between Bundaberg and Maryborough, namely the Mt Perry line and as far down as the Mary Valley.

As the railway line was being built north from Brisbane, he moved with it from Nambour to Nandroya, which is approximately 3km south of Cooroy. There was a railway gate-house at Nandroya, at the crossing that was built at that point for the teamsters to cross the line. In 1891, when the rail link between Cooran and Cooroy was nearing completion, Spencer selected 155 acres, Portion 1657 on the Six Mile Creek at Tinbeerwah. He intended to create a farm for his family and to retire there. He did not move his family there until 1892.

The property of 155 acres was bounded by the Six Mile Creek, Sivyer's Road, through to the Gumboil Road; thence following the Gumboil Road south, crossing the creek on the southern side, until the boundary met up with the Walters's property and the Gumboil Road. The boundary then went east until it met up with the current Tewanin Road at its junction with Dath Henderson Road. Five acres was resumed for a road, later to be named Sivyer's Road. Part of the property is now submerged under the eastern end of the Lake McDonald Dam. The purchase price was £19/7/6, (\$38.75) which was rather high in those days. The Deed of Grant for the property, Portion 1657, was granted to Spencer Sivyer in 1897.

At that time the family of Spencer and Harriett were Eva, Edgar, Walford (Wally), Stanley and Ida. The two youngest, Gertrude and Percy, were born at the Tinbeerwah property.

The Sivyer family resided at Tinbeerwah for a short time before the Railway Department offered Spencer employment in the Brisbane area. The elder children were of school age and requiring education, so he accepted and moved to Brisbane in 1897, to live in the suburb of Corinda. The family returned to Tinbeerwah in 1902. Once the selection was cleared, dairying commenced.

Meanwhile Wally (Walford Arnold) Sivyer went to Fraser Island to work with the teamsters in timber-getting. He had the misfortune to suffer an injury to his foot, as the result of a wagon wheel passing over it. So, nursing the broken foot, he returned to Tinbeerwah in 1902, a little later than the rest of the family. He later worked in timber at Cooroy for Dath Henderson & Company.

Stanley, who was born at Pimpama, in April 1888, was by this time 14 years of age. He worked on the farm and also in the timber industry for the Dath Henderson firm.

Percy and Gerty went to school by horse and sulky to Tewanin. Then, for a short time, they went by horse and sulky into Coorov to catch a train to Eumundi to attend school. It is thought that they caught what was referred to as the cream train to travel back to Cooroy in the afternoon. They then harnessed the horse and sulky in the railway yard to drive back out to the farm.

Stanley related that when he first went to Tinbeerwah, a foreigner was living in a bark hut about 400 yards to the east of their home. Ron Sivyer describes the position thus: "it would be roughly somewhere near what was known as Fenwick's, later Hooper's, house. There is no sign of that house now. It was built by the Fenwicks.

"If one stood at the stone in the Tinbeerwah Park and looked a little bit north of northeast, and up about 100 yards, that is approximately where that hut would have been. The man used to sit there and play his button accordion. When the Sivyers came back to live there permanently, the man was gone. The Fenwick family was the next to live on that property."

Some years passed and Wally Sivyer decided to move into the timber industry in a fairly big way. He bought a horse team and he and Stanley entered the industry as timber cutters. Upon Wally's marriage to Ruby Dunbar in 1911, he moved into

Cooroy to live, and operated his team from there. His home was situated on the right-hand side of the road, if facing south, between the overhead rail bridge and the Cooroy Golf Club House. Ruby's brother, Vere Dunbar, was one of the early ambulance bearers in Cooroy.

The brothers, Wally and Stanley cut and hauled pine logs from the flat country west of Cooroy, as well as other places in the district. Wally later disposed of the horse team in preference to a bullock team, because, as he stated, the horses required a 3 am rise every day to feed them, whereas the bullocks would feed and chew their cud during the day.

Wally had another property on the Gumboil Road at Tinbeerwah, that he had purchased for the hardwood timber that grew there. There was no pine growing on that block. Wally, Stanley and Wally's brother-in-law, Vere Dunbar, established a small saw-mill on the home property in the early to mid 1920s. The location of the mill would be due west of the stone that commemorates the site of the Tinbeerwah School. The mill area is now under the water of Lake McDonald.

Ron Sivyver, Stanley's son, remembers the wagon days and the bullocks being yoked in the early morning. "I do not remember the mill operating, but have clear memories of the sawdust heaps and the old boiler that was there for many years".

By the time the mill began operation, Wally had purchased the main portion of the farm from his widowed mother and Stanley had another section of the farm. After the mill closed, Wally continued working with the teams from the home farm until approximately 1933 or 1934, when he sold the teams and commenced dairying. He also became a very successful pig farmer. He bred many champion pigs with which he won many prizes, including Queensland Championship, on a number of occasions at the Brisbane Royal National Exhibition.

Stanley developed his portion into a small-crop farm which he combined with the job of cutting railway sleepers. Ron said, "As a boy I can remember that we dug all the trees out and burnt them, and whatever else you have to do to clear the land". Crops such as corn, watermelons, beans and pineapples, etc. were grown.

In the early years of World War II, about 1941, Wally sold his portion and moved his pig industry to Biloela. Stanley sold his portion in 1953 and retired to live in Cooroy.

Spencer died in 1914 at the age of 81 years and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Cooroy Cemetery. His wife, Harriet, passed away in 1934 and is buried along side her husband, also in an unmarked grave. The Noosa Shire Council's burial register records the location of the graves.

Spencer's and Harriett's family grew up at Tinbeerwah. The eldest, Eva became Mrs George Cartwright of Gympie. Eva is buried in the Gympie Cemetery.

Edgar Hubert, a tailer-out at Fenwick Brothers' Sawmill in Cooroy, was accidentally killed in 1922, when a flitch became caught on the saw, was flung forward and hit him in the chest. As no doctor was available at short notice, Councillor Charles Crank, as a

JP, was called upon to pronounce life extinct. There is no record of 'Ned' being buried in the Cooroy Cemetery, yet the Coroner's report clearly states that he was buried at Cooroy. He left a widow and one daughter, May.

Next was Wally, (Walford Arnold) Sivyver, who married Ruby Dunbar. They had no family. He died in 1967 and is buried in the Aspley Cemetery.

Stanley married a Finnish girl by the name of Ellen Marie Ronlund. The Ronlunds were also early selectors in the area. A road that connected the old Tewanin Road to the current Tewanin Road accessed their property. The road was there in the 1930s and used to come out onto the Tewanin Road at what was called the black bridge or via Walter's property, where the Gumboil Road used to connect to the Tewanin Road. This road turned off just on the Cooroy side of the present brickworks and went through there. It is now under the water of the dam, but was on the western side of what was then known as Fred Walter's farm.

Stanley and Ellen raised five sons on their portion of 1657. On retirement, they moved into Cooroy to live in the house that was always termed as the Ambulance house. It is the big house on the corner, between the ambulance station and the lane-way. Ron relates, "My father proudly told me one day that he had cut the timber for the floors out on the piccabeen swamp flats. That's on the way to Tewanin, about two miles out of Cooroy, where he had fallen all the timber for the ambulance house." It was originally the home of the Webster family. Mr. Webster was the ambulance bearer at the time.

Mervyn, the eldest son of Stanley and Ellen, on leaving school, went scrub-felling and later became a painter and sign-writer. He served five years in the armed forces during World War II and after that he worked at his trade on the Gold Coast. He was also in the real estate business. He now lives at Gilston, Nerang.

Maurice, the second son, started an apprenticeship with Dave Boyce of Cooroy Motors as a mechanic, but after a motor car accident he was forced to give that up. He became an office worker and he later purchased an undertaking business in Casino, New South Wales. He is now retired and living at Caloundra.

The next was Ken, who after leaving school worked in the Cooroy district and then on properties in the Longreach district, until he joined the A.I.F in 1941. After his return from the war, he grew bananas and then worked for the City Electric Light Co (now Energex). He lives in retirement at Clontarf.

Ron was born at Cooroy on 17 February 1926. He worked on farms and at sleeper cutting until joining the AIF in 1945, at the age of 19 years. After the war ended, he married Elizabeth Helen Lettman of Cooroy and moved to Lismore, NSW. They returned to Cooroy in 1948 and moved to Brisbane in 1950. He later joined Queensland Forestry as Communications Officer, until 1986 when he retired. Ron and Betty now live in Brisbane.

Neville, the youngest, remained in Cooroy where he lived in the old home until 1987. He worked for a short time in the Doonan area with John Harth and also worked at the

Cooroy Sawmill. He joined The City Electric Light Co, retiring as senior clerk in 1987. He then sold the home in Cooroy, which had been his parents' house and moved to Coraki in NSW, from where his wife, Jean, had come.

Many Cooroy people remember Neville as a piano accordian player at the local dances. He was a gifted musician who played by ear, never having studied music. Members of his mother's family, the Finnish Ronlunds, were violinists. Neville's grandfather, Ronlund, had made violins out of local timbers and these had taken prizes in the Sydney Royal Show. While they were never violinists of any note, they were all musical. Stanley used to play the button accordion for the square dance calling. Ron's grand-daughter, (name?) has shown quite a remarkable ability in the music world and is currently studying at the Conservatorium.

The next born after Stanley was Ida. She married Walter Fenwick, one of the brothers who established Fenwicks' sawmill at Cooroy, where he worked for many years. Ida is buried in the Cooroy Cemetery.

After Ida came Percy. He didn't marry and lived on the farm until his mother died. He worked at scrub felling and he later worked with Wally on the home farm and also with Stanley on his farm. He felled a patch of scrub in the Doonan area for Johnny Harth in his later years. Percy is buried in the War Cemetery at Lutwyche (World War I).

The youngest was Gertrude or Gerty, who became Mrs. Bill Wall. They farmed at Cooroy Mountain, and later in the Yurol area. Bill Wall died very early and Gerty lived on until over 80 years of age. After retirement, she lived at Scarborough. She is buried in the Redcliffe Cemetery.

The Sivyer's neighbours on the northern side were Colletts. Gordon Collett selected the property before World War II. Originally he had land out along the Tewanin Road. In 1914, he gave a piece of this land for the Tinbeerwah provisional school. The provisional school had operated from 1914 to 1916. When Gordon's brother, Ben returned from active duty in World War II, he sold this land to Ben. This was the farm on the Gumboil Road and on our northern and western boundary.

On the eastern side, across what is now Sivyers Road, was Hooper's residence and the Tinbeerwah School. The Government had purchased a piece of the Hooper's property for the school. This school was opened in 1916 and closed in 1963. The school records show that the purchase of the piece of land from the Fenwicks was in progress when they sold the farm to Hoopers.

Along the Gumboil Road, was the farm of the Reids, who had bought it from the Fogg family. This land was originally selected by Martins. Then coming back on the western side towards Cooroy, you came to the Billy Walters junction, between Billy Walter's and Fred Walter's farms. The southern boundary was actually the Six Mile Creek and portion of Bill Walter's property. Bill Walter's farm was between the Tewanin Road and the Six Mile.

An interesting point in the Tinbeerwah history was the existence of a trotting track on

the southern bank of the Six Mile Creek, in Walter's paddock. It was built by Percy King for the purpose of training horses as trotters.

With the sale of 'Devonshire' in 1953, Portion 1657 finally passed out of the ownership of the Sivyer family after 57 years.

THE RONLUND FAMILY

Axel Ronlund, with his family, arrived from Finland in 1900, when Ellen Marie was 6 years of age. They went to Image Flat, Nambour, where a group of Finns had formed a communal settlement. This is recorded in the Finnish Archives in Finland as a 'Utopian Society'. They had tried to grow sugar cane, but the project was a failure. They came to the Tinbeerwah district in 1911 or 1912.

The Ronlund family did not stay all that many years on the property, Portion 99, west of Fred Walter's selection. It was known as Clayfield. They did not have a Deed of Grant for the property, since it was a Government lease.

Their mother died in 1912, so Ellen reared the younger children. When she married in 1917, she took the youngest child with her. He was then possibly 10 years of age.

The Ronlunds left Cooroy in the 1920s. They moved to the Cooran Tableland and they eventually went to North Queensland to grow cane. None of them actually stayed around the Cooroy area.

Dick Ronlund was a great axeman. Arthur Ronlund served in World War I and in 1922 he joined the Queensland Police. He retired medically unfit in the early 1930s and lived in Blakesley Street, Tewantin, next door to Henry.Duke.

Thanks to Ron Sivyer for an interview
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