**Essays on Mount Crosby - Double Crossing**

I enjoy the study of placenames and have a wish to save them from disappearance, because within them are links to the earliest times, and many are curious or amusing.

It was partly for the preservation of placenames that Rob Swenson started writing articles called "In the Beginning" for the Community Chronicle a few decades ago, which in turn inspired me to do the same. Rob's columns introduced local placenames to newcomers so the names could be part of their conversations, and so be kept alive.

Many local placenames are worthy of mention. I like Ugly Gully because it feels good to say and it's curiously wrong, isn't it. There’s Melon Hut Hill on Allawah Road that seems self-explanatory; but which came first, the hill or its namesake creek? There are certainly stories in Mans Head Corner and Fairy Bower, Stanton Cross and Bluestone Creek, Barnes Hill, The Cutting, Fig Tree Island, Holts Falls and 42 Mile Camp. How many have heard of O'Briens Ridge or Razorback, Noogoora or Red Cliff Reach?

These and many others have our story embedded within them. A personal favourite of mine, now almost forgotten, is “the double crossing” (no pun originally intended). This was an early ford of the river near today’s Allawah that became locally famous for an accidental drowning in May of 1864. Robert Bland and George Colledge, our earliest settlers, were themselves involved in trying to rescue an unknown man who Bland had earlier directed to the double crossing. Both Colledge and Bland later heard the man’s cries for help, but arrived at the river only in time to urge that he “make for a tree on the bank” before he sank beneath the water, leaving nothing to be found but an old cabbage tree hat with a looking-glass attached to its crown.

A couple of days later Bland assisted the police to drag the man’s body from the water and it was taken to the “dead house” at the new Ipswich Hospital. The man’s name was a mystery to all, so the *Queensland Times* published a description of the man and his hat in the hope that he might be identified. From this we know the man spoke with an Irish accent and had first been to our district in 1856; that he was five feet seven inches tall and was neither very stout nor very slight; that he had brown hair with a few grey patches and he owned an unusual hat. Strange isn’t it, how even with these scant details, we know more about this fellow than most of the pioneers who stayed for years, but his name is still a mystery to us all.

Col Hester