**Essays on Mount Crosby - Leftwich's Curio 1898**

You might recall mention of the fine young scholar Harold Thompson, who lived at the top of the Works Hill and was three times Dux of the Ipswich Grammar School (1901-1903). Well, a charming story has emerged about an interesting curio, let's say a freak of nature, held by Harold's family that had five minutes of fame in 1898 and even now, doubtless lost, has a wonderful power I wish to describe for you.

Harold's mother, Harriet Thompson (nee Leftwitch) emigrated to Australia with her family sometime about 1856. It was at this time that her father, Richard Leftwitch, had a load of wood delivered to his hotel at South Head, and with the load arrived a piece of honeysuckle wood that took Richard's attention for it bore a remarkable likeness to the human body, having two hands, two legs, a body, and neck (and a statuesque appearance reminiscent of a roman figure, or to the younger set perhaps more like a rag doll ninja).

Richard preserved the curio and kept it in his hotel for many years, saying it was worth £50 per annum to his business, such was the demand to see it. He was more than once offered £20 for it, but resisted all attempts to induce him to part with his treasure.

By 1898, the curio was housed at the Mount Crosby home of his daughter Harriet, and it was there that a photographer from IXL Studios in Ipswich saw it, photographed it, and had the idea to raise money for charity by putting it on display at his premises. And so it was, that between 10am and 9:30pm on Saturday 9 July, 1898, as advertised in the newspaper, you could have seen the curio and bought a photograph of it - proceeds to the Ipswich Hospital Fund.

But what of its wonderful power? Well, there are places you can see the things your forebears saw (like a building or a railway bridge or grave) and there is satisfaction in knowing you stand seeing what they saw. There are fewer things in this world that can make you feel the way they felt. But the curio can; the feeling that you want to see the curio and be surprised by its remarkable likeliness is the same today as it was then. Go to the photo - and be mindful that your thoughts are the same as Richard Leftwitch's and those who stopped at IXL Studios and Harriet Thompson's house all those years ago.

Col Hester