**Essays on Mount Crosby - The Devins**

At Colledges Crossing Reserve, there is a little way that goes under the name of Devin Drive. It recalls the Devin family, who lived in the loop of the river across from Allawah and shared that reach with the families Armstrong, Duncan, McDougall and Marstaeller.

The first Australian Devins were Patrick and Elizabeth (nee Tuite) who were married at Tullyallen, County Louth, Ireland, in 1864 and later travelled to Australia on the sailing packet Bayswater. They were responding to a personal need and to the Queensland Government's promotion of itself to potential migrants. Little doubt they were also encouraged by the installation of Bishop Quinn of Dublin as the head of the Catholic Church in the new colony. For his part, Bishop Quinn established the short lived Queensland Immigration Society (1862-64) in response to favourable migration legislation drafted in the new Queensland Government (which resulted in the arrival of about 6,000 Irish migrants).

In December 1865, Patrick Devin paid sixty pounds for a Queensland Government Land Order and in October of the next year purchased 52 acres at Mount Crosby for £52 (ahem, sounds a little arbitrary to me). In 1872, Patrick selected another nearby portion and entered into long discussions about conditions of the selection until eventually purchasing it in April of 1889. Out of this bureaucratic conversation came the famous words often quoted to describe the poorness of Mount Crosby soil, "I did not cultivate any of this land, it would not grow an eschalot".

Patrick and Eliza had five children, James, Mary, John (known as Long Jack - believe me, he was tall), Catherine (Kate) and Elizabeth. They lived in a house made of pit sawn and adzed hardwood with pine panelling, described in Devin's "proof of fulfilment of conditions of selection" in 1872 as being "8ft by 12ft on ten acres ringbarked and cleared and with 43 chains of two rail split fence". The house was later improved and, in the recollections of Maggie McDougall, was a comfortable place with some fine furniture and wall adornments (presumed to be from Ireland).

It is said, and it seems probable, that Patrick Devin was the first farmer on the Brisbane River to grow cotton in response to government incentives to offset shortages caused by the American Civil War. Patrick and his family also grew cabbages at the riverbank and planted out a substantial orchard, largely of citrus trees. It is a little shocking to know that when the time of two generations had passed, and Kate remained unmarried and alone, the citrus orchard was torn down to discourage the worrying actions of thieves.

Eventually, the house was pulled down too (in 1949), but not before giving up some little secrets in the way of letters addressed to Patrick Devin - Cullen Farm - Australia; some packets of dried shamrocks, and a small packet of Irish soil.

Col Hester