**Essays on Mount Crosby -How the Shepherds Worked**

A long time before anyone thought of naming Mount Crosby, there were the sheep runs, Cabbage Tree and Waverly, extending down from Wivenhoe towards here. Although the squatter’s leases at Cabbage Tree and Waverly were officially taken up around 1860, the fact that "squatter" John Uhr was speared at the Cabbage Tree Ranges in 1845 makes it quite certain that sheep and shepherds were in the district for a long time before that.

It is possible to piece together an understanding of what happened to the pastoralists' runs after 1860 (some homework for us perhaps), but what happened before that, and we know something was happening, is more mysterious and the records to draw on are fewer. That shouldn't stop us wondering how a squatter and his shepherds went about their business, and if we allow our thoughts to be guided by what certainly happened in other sheep districts, we can get some idea (which is better perhaps than to have no idea).

The squatter having selected his run, had two big problems to contend with: the total absence of fences meant one’s sheep had to be tended closely to prevent them wandering off; and then there was the chance that a dingo or someone else might enjoy your sheep before you did.

A squatter would typically address these problems by locating his house and sheds at the centre of the run (with adequate stores and equipment). You can tell already the great advantage of having money to set up these arrangements quickly. At different parts of the run, usually near water (say near Cabbage Tree Creek), the squatter would establish shepherds' huts which might house two shepherds and a watchman. At each hut was a set of hurdles to be set up as sheep-folds at night. Every morning at sunrise, the shepherd would set out the flock, keeping within certain limits pointed out to him by the squatter as the extent of his run. At sunset, the shepherd would see his sheep safely back into the fold, after which the responsibility for the sheep would pass to the watchman, who would now spend the night alongside the folds in a roughly fashioned “watch-box”. The watchman would generally tie up several of his own dogs near to the folds to warn of dingoes or strangers.

At daybreak, the watchman would hand responsibility back to the shepherd, and so that process would be repeated every day of those men’s lives. At regular intervals the sheep would be counted out of the folds by the squatter, who would ride from his house for that purpose at an early hour. If any stock were unaccounted for, the value of these might be deducted from the shepherd's wages, if he was so lucky as to be getting paid a wage.

Shepherds were familiar figures in all sheep districts in the early days, but their solitary and risky livelihood declined with the business (which probably was a good thing, since there don’t appear to be to many romantic tales about the life of a lonely shepherd in Queensland).

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