

Working the Capes: The Irish Cattle Economy of the Lower South West of Western Australia, 1829-1918

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Citation for this paper:

Gil Hardwick, *Working the Capes: The Irish Cattle Economy of the Lower South West of Western Australia, 1829-1918*,
Hard Copy, [http://gilhardwick.com.au/Working the Capes.pdf](http://gilhardwick.com.au/Working%20the%20Capes.pdf), February 2002

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PROLOGUE

This article is not quite so definite as I would like it to be. It seeks to document further aspects of the Irish and Scottish contribution to the very early days of settlement in Australia in the light of diaries, reminiscences and other new material becoming available from deceased estates. The Duracks and Costellos over east, renowned for their heroic cattle drive during the late 1860s through to the 1880s, from NSW up into the Overflow country of western Queensland before going on ahead to establish Argyle Station in the East Kimberley, began making their fortune as Irish cow cookies scattered among the big squatters and mustering wild bush cattle from the hills around Goulburn.¹

In the extreme South West of Western Australia on the other hand, where cattle were bred before being driven north into the Gascoyne and Pilbara during the early 1860s by pioneer droving expeditions like the Clarkson brothers, there was no such competition for land. Despite the WA Pastoral Leasehold Act of 1851, from the foundation of the colony cattle were run in free range mobs over the whole region by predominantly Irish extended family networks. It was their canny livestock husbandry that established the dominant pattern of landuse in this part of the country, yet at once separated brothers from sisters and created a new legend in itself.

INTRODUCTION

Governor James Stirling, the founder of the Swan River Colony, was always clear that he viewed most of the English emigrants as unsuited to the task of pioneering. The original English establishments escorted by him to Flinders Bay per *Emily Taylor* in 1830 were soon in the minority in determining what sort of society was to develop in the region. In preparation for his return to naval service in 1838 he appointed John Scott, another Lanarkshire Scot who had himself arrived with his family per *Eliza* in 1831, to manage his Leschenault holdings.² In the same year Thomas Little, a well-to-do Irish Catholic gentleman, arrived per *Gaillaidon* from India to oversee Charles Prinsep's neighbouring Belvedere estate on the coastal strip adjoining Leschenault Inlet.

These men were joined in 1842 by William Jenkin Roberts per *Diadem* from Truro, Cornwall, who secured a lease from Stirling of that part of his further estates at Minnipup known as the "ribbon grant" immediately south of the inlet.³ In 1844 more people arrived from Ireland to take up land in the same area, including Jack Maguire with his wife and children per *Trusty* from Co. Limerick, and his 10 year-old brother James.⁴ Captain John Molloy, Resident Magistrate and HM Collector of Customs moreover, had himself been fostered as a child to the Molloyes of Millicent, Co. Kildare, Ireland. Molloy subsequently married a daughter of David Kennedy of Ayrshire, Scotland, himself married among the Grahams of Netherby, Co. Cumberland.⁵

Beyond those first years there was no turning back. The 21st Regiment sent in 1833 to replace the 63rd Regiment before transferring to Calcutta comprised 50% Irish and 22% Scots among the foot soldiers and non-commissioned officers.⁶ In 1853 among large numbers of young women from English and Scottish poor-houses, over 500 Irish women orphaned by the Great Famine of 1847 were shipped here to provide brides for the colony. For the most part they married respectably among single men who had arrived earlier seeking their fortune and young men born in the colony.⁷ Around 60% of the Enrolled Pensioner Guard arriving later to oversee the convicts were also Irish veterans pressed into service during Napoleonic Wars and subsequent British actions in Ireland and other parts of the expanding empire.⁸

The difficulty encountered in these parts therefore was not squatters with whom they had to contend for land but another quite unexpected factor inherent in the natural environment which forced the pattern of settlement into their hands. The lower south west coast of Western Australia is dominated by the Darling Range on the one hand and the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge forming the Cape region on the other; both aligned north-south and connected in a roughly east-west direction by the Whicher and Blackwood Escarpments forming the rich Margaret and Blackwood River valleys. The Swan Coastal Plain between the Darling Range and the coast curves in a westerly direction around Geographe Bay; bounded to the south by the Whicher Escarpment. The coastal plain itself is comprised almost entirely of dune sand overlain in parts by loamy sediment washed down from the higher country.

It was quickly noticed by the big estate managers that livestock were sickening on available pasture along the coast while cattle straying up into the hills thrived. The problem was diagnosed as a "coastal disease" which we now know to be due to deficiency of the trace elements selenium, copper and cobalt in the sandy dune soil. This combined with the problem of Aboriginal burning off remnant coastal grasses over summer soon resolved the families to move their horses and cattle in mobs up onto the Darling Range and the Blackwood Plateau to summer over, and bring them down again onto the coast before they became crippled in the boggy river valleys during winter.

Long before the country was surveyed and opened up officially under English law, and before the timber industry began in earnest, mobs were running south from the Swan River into the Murray, Preston, Collie, Margaret and Blackwood River Valleys according to Gaelic traditional practice.⁹ From the mid-late 1830s large numbers of Irish and Scottish families were sending their younger sons up into the surrounding hill country to keep the mobs in order.

The boys started work from the time they were big enough to catch a horse and ride it at six years of age, their day beginning before sunrise and ending well after dark if the cattle had wandered or anything else had gone wrong.¹⁰ The pattern became so well established that by 1906 it was considered commonplace.¹¹ Because of its substantial importance it was soon officially accepted as the foundation of the colonial economy until the mining boom of the 1890s, and the South West regional economy through the 1920s and 1930s well into the reconstruction period following the 2nd World War.¹²

THE PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT

Landholding and settlement in the South West thus quickly devolved into a pattern of small freehold home farms of about ten acres each along the coastal fringe. There the womenfolk mainly ran dairies, made butter and cheese, grew potatoes, swede turnips and vegetables, and managed general farm business. These home farms became linked to huge pastoral leases of 40-60,000 acres and more up in the ranges, from which the men practiced a form of seasonal transhumance with their livestock.¹³

Such use of crown reserves for grazing, while practical from a farming point of view, was deemed illegal by the government which quickly began to legislate for land to be made available for grazing on a more formal basis. Initially, in 1843 "Temporary Occupation Leases for Depasturing on Crown Lands" were authorised. The temporary arrangements were

regularised in 1847 by issuing licences to depasture livestock; rents calculated at £10 for 4,000 acres, £20 for 20,000 acres, and so on in decreasing proportion.

New regulations proclaimed in 1851 thus allowed for Class A leases to become established within three miles of settlement, and Class B leases beyond that, with further provision for tillage leases under the same classifications. This system brought widespread objection as favouring the big landholders already favoured by proximity to their existing grants. It was quickly modified to allow for review of Class A leases every twelve months and Class B leases every eight years, with an option to purchase unimproved portions "at the general minimum price for the time being"; unused portions reverting to the crown.¹⁴

While formal pastoral leases were held in the names of individuals in order to comply with the legislation cattle were actually let loose to range over the often indifferent, unfenced country to find grazing where they could. Diary entries from the period show that virtually every beast was known individually by their owner;¹⁵ each mob they belonged to held together by a lead cow wearing a bell forged from an old saw blade. Each bell was set to a different pitch so the mob could be identified by the sound it made as the cattle moved about in the forest.¹⁶ Often a small mob would wander away and finally join up with another herd up to 60 miles away, while the stockmen at that end would know from their bell whose cattle they were and simply let the owners know they were there next time they saw them.¹⁷

PEOPLE INVOLVED

The main leaseholder on the Margaret River at that time was Robert Lockhart, step-son of another Scotsman Gavin Forrest, one of the Australind settlers who arrived per *Trusty* in 1842. Running cattle with Lockhart was his brother-in-law Daniel McGregor who had himself arrived in 1831 with his step-father John Scott, manager of Governor Stirling's Leschenault estate. It should be noted here also that two of McGregor's step-brothers, John Jnr and Robert Scott, both married daughters of Stirling's Minnipur estate manager William Jenkin Roberts, being Catherine and Jane respectively. It is fairly easy to see from these examples how the arrangements among such families for running their cattle together were panning out.

Their neighbours included the Welshman Bill "Skipper" Ellis who operated the coastal trading vessel *Henry & Mary* from Vasse up and down the coast, George Cross and Bill Moriarty, each with farms around Flinders Bay. The latter two were themselves Irish, both their families soon to be related by marriage in the next generation to that of Peter "The Devil" Brennan from Ireland per *Diadem* in 1842, while Skipper Ellis himself had married Margaret Cassidy from Co. Wicklow, Ireland. George Cross was married to Rebecca Emily Pettit herself born in the colony but whose family had arrived per *Gilmore* in December, 1829.

Later again Stewart Keenan, from Co. Derry per *West Australian* with his family, established himself on the flats above Eagle Bay before taking up a 4,000 acre Margaret River lease in partnership with James Forrest, only son of Gavin Forrest and Robert Lockhart's step-brother. Keenan's wife Isabella Gamble was a cousin of the Bovells of Co. Antrim, Ireland, who had come out with them in 1859 and set up as publicans at the Ship Inn in Busselton. Many of the extended families similarly situated on the Blackwood around Nannup and Bridgetown would also summer their cattle on the Margaret under the same arrangement, and in the big, general roundup twice a year the whole lot would be mustered, drafted and branded. The tradition continued in the region until the late 1970s when remaining crown reserve lands were incorporated into National Parks and set aside as "no go" areas for cattle.¹⁸

During those early years the settlers and the local Aboriginal people began seriously to interfere with each other through the fact that the latter had traditionally wintered over in that same hill country. During the season they called *Makuru* they sheltered there from the fierce winter storms coming up off the southern ocean. When spring or *Kambarang* came, they moved down onto the coastal wetlands to feast on estuarine fish, eggs and waterbirds flocking there during the nesting season. It was at that same time of year that the cattle were being moved up onto the scarp to summer over after grazing during winter around those same coastal wetlands.

Conversely, in late summer and autumn of each year, the Aboriginal population would assemble in large numbers around freshwater springs along the coast; fattening up on sea salmon caught in their salt-water traps. There they would hold their corroborees before retiring up onto the escarpment for winter where again the mobs of cattle had been grazing. This was the season the people called *Bunuru* when the region suffered from hot northerly winds and shortage of fresh water.¹⁹

The Aboriginal people of the South West referred to themselves collectively as *Yung-ar*²¹ (today *Nyungar*, or *Nyoongah*), which typical of Aboriginal thinking translates as "people" in the sense of kinfolk occupying the particular landscape. Their social order based on extended family networks is strikingly similar to the clannishness exhibited by the Scots and Irish arriving to live among them.²² The most significant influence wrought on their common interest beyond continuing preference for marriage among their own did not arise therefore from any substantial incompatibility. As the new generation in either part were born and raised together they quickly learned each other's language and picked up each other's skills.

The imported cattle spoiling the rivers, springs and waterholes in the district on the one hand, and an understandable Aboriginal propensity to take food where they found it on the other, during the period 1834-42 in particular official and semi-

official sanctions led to widespread violence bringing massive social disruption and loss of culture due to the specific culling of the local warriors and senior male elders.²⁰

By the time of the pastoral leasehold legislation in 1851, as the first generation in the colony came of age both groups were adhering to much the same pattern of seasonal transhumance. Essentially, all the women were raising families; dairying, gardening and managing their domestic affairs, while the men engaged in wider commerce and young men and boys were off into the forest on horseback tending cattle.²³ The fundamental difficulty arose due to further conflict resulting from inroads progressively made into their newly won domain by the English establishment, by then in control of the colonial administration through preferential nomination to the Legislative Council.

FEUDING ON THE MARGARET

Real trouble came when Alfred Bussell, the youngest of the Bussell brothers who had come out with the Molloy and Turner establishments per *Warrior* in 1830, then found himself ostracised by his family for marrying beneath his station to a Scottish girl whose family had been servants in Molloy's household. He developed a plan to restore his standing by establishing an estate of his own at the mouth of the Margaret River about 50 miles to the south west of their main settlement on Geographe Bay. In doing so he then stirred up a feud with his neighbours by raising objections to their cattle straying into his herd, accusing them of squatting on his run.

From the time he moved to Ellensbrook in 1857, and especially after moving in 1865 into his newly completed residence Wallcliffe House near the mouth of the Margaret River, as a pastoralist Alfred Bussell was on his own in the district and had to rely on Aboriginal stockmen to do his mustering. Three of his brothers had died by then and his brother-in-law Thomas Turner, who had moved from Augusta up to Quindalup in 1846, had already sold up and moved to Victoria. Another leaseholder again who might have supported him was Alfred Richardson-Bunbury who followed his brother William out in 1855, but he too had died leaving neither heir nor successor.

It was not until 1864 that the surveyor Robert Quin was finally sent into the Sussex District to attempt a rough estimate of the pastoral leasehold boundaries, although the dispute itself was not finally settled until another surveying contractor Thomas Campbell Carey (from Ireland per *Robert Morrison* in 1862; later first Mayor of Bunbury) arrived in 1869 to fine the boundaries²⁴ and allow Bussell his way. Robert Lockhart, obviously fed up with the whole business, had already contracted John Maxwell to fence his place off and be done with it.

The basic problem of course was that none of the pastoral leasehold boundaries anywhere in the colony had been surveyed; the pattern of landuse having been subject throughout the period to a defacto Gaelic landuse tradition based on extended family networks. It is intriguing that after more than a generation had passed Bussell made such a loud song and dance about someone else's cattle being mixed with his mob²⁵, and that the feud blew into open conflict only a few years before he entered the Legislative Council as one of Governor Weld's nominees - just about the time he was busy establishing his reputation among Perth business circles. To properly identify other people involved in these developments it is thus necessary to pick up the threads of business interests establishing themselves in the colony.

In 1860 while Bussell was still on the Ellensbrook station, a group of Perth businessmen comprising Frank Gregory, Thomas Brown, William Turner, and Walter Padbury²⁶ announced their intention to equip and provision an exploration of the Nichol Bay hinterland inshore from the Dampier Archipelago in the North West. Included in the party setting out in May 1861 was his wife Ellen Bussell's half brother-in-law James Turner of Augusta, by then an accomplished shipwright and surveyor in his own right, and her future son-in-law Johnnie Brockman's brother Edward.

They were first cousins of William Richardson-Bunbury's brother-in-law through marriage into Captain Molloy's family, William Locke Brockman, whose younger brother Robert James Brockman had arrived separately per *Egyptian* in 1831. Robert Brockman originally leased land at Northam before progressively moving north with his family into the Moore River and then Greenough Districts, establishing pastoral runs there before moving back to Australind to live. That branch of the Brockman family thus gained for themselves valuable experience running stock in that sort of country, the sons earning considerable respect in pastoral circles.

INTO THE NORTH WEST

Padbury had chartered two vessels carrying livestock to locate safe anchorage off the mouth of the Harding River in the North West of the colony; discovered and named by the Gregory Expedition. Having done so he appointed Charlie Nairn as his manager who successfully drove the stock overland from there to the De Grey River. In August of that same year another cargo of 350 sheep, 26 head of cattle and nine horses had been sent by John Wellard to land on the new harbour, and they were driven up the Harding River to a new station he established there.

Another Irishman Timothy Hooley drove the first overland mob of around 2,000 sheep directly from Geraldton in order to mark the route and after three weeks arrived on the Fortesque River with a loss of only eight sheep. Other droving outfits led soon after by Donald Norman MacLeod, of that MacLeod of the MacLeod of Skye, (born in Victoria in 1848 and travelled to the Swan River running cattle) and John Hancock himself emigrating with his family per *Warrior* in 1830. Hancock, who

thus also knew the Bussell family well, met with heavy losses through grazing on poison weed traversing the Gascoyne. An alternate route was not found until the Clarkson party skirted the area in 1874.

That legendary drive came about when in 1873 a young drover and livestock dealer from the Toodyay area by the name of Henry James Clarkson was commissioned by Walter Padbury to take a mob of cattle into the North West on behalf of J. McKenzie Grant, his brother-in-law Alexander Anderson, and Charles Harper who had in 1864 explored the Eastern Districts with Clarkson and Lionel Lukin. Harper later became a Member of the Legislative Council himself, and Speaker in 1903.

In early 1874 Henry Clarkson with his older brother William, two half-brothers Jesse and John Hammond, Valentine Hester brother-in-law of William Hall from Gregory's 1861 Expedition, and John Hancock, purchased mobs of cattle around the Albany and Kendenup areas along the south coast and drove them overland west to Augusta where they swam them across the Blackwood before turning north onto the Margaret. They stayed there for two months buying more cattle from Alfred Bussell and other landholders including the Bunbury butcher Ned Higgins and William Hall's brother Henry at Mandurah, and recruiting extra hands to accompany the mob north.

The final plant thus also included Eugene Locke from Wonnerup with his 14 year-old kid-brother Justice; Ellen Bussell's half-brother William Bryan; John Henry Knapton, whose father George had done all the fine carpentry work at Wallcliffe House and was at that time leasing dairy cattle at Ellensbrook; Thomas Scott, a grandson of Captain Molloy's valet Elijah Dawson, who later married Ellen Bussell's foster-sister Mary Anne Adams following her husband's death from pneumonia in 1875; 16 year-old Edward Brady who was still living with his parents Michael and Sarah Brady on their farm at Augusta when the mob came through, and joined them there; and three local Aboriginal stockmen off the Wallcliffe station.

They left the Margaret on 1 July 1874 with a mob of 970 head of cattle and 113 horses, and after buying more stock again at Greenough reached the Murchison in December. Soon after, however, news came back that the Clarkson brothers had died there while reconnoitring ahead of the mob towards the Gascoyne for water, As it turned out was William killed by Aborigines and Henry of thirst turning back from looking for his brother after they had separated. In the summer heat Bryan, Hester and Knapton also failed to find them, and rode 300 miles south to Geraldton to report the men missing.

A police party led by Inspector Lawrence and including their brothers Edward and Joseph Clarkson finally located the bodies and took them back to Geraldton for burial. Padbury quickly sought a new leader to round up the mob and move them the rest of the way north. Johnnie Brockman, now married to Alfred's eldest daughter Fanny, applied for the job and obtained it provided he was able to start at once. Brockman was then managing the Yoganup timber mill at Lockeville for the Ballarat syndicate, but left immediately to take with him his own brother William and Ellen Bussell and William Bryan's nephew Robert John Heppingstone along with more Aboriginal stockmen from Wonnerup; the mob of cattle under his direction finally reaching Nichol Bay in August 1875.²⁷

WORKING THE HOME FARM

Back home in the south west forest nothing so heroic can be imagined. The ordinary day-to-day work was divided up clearly between the sexes; as mentioned above the womenfolk running the farm and maintaining their families' domestic affairs while the boys were off tending the mobs of cattle in the bush. It was a time-consuming business as the animals wandered from place to place and the boys spent nearly all of their time in the saddle, so it was the women who did all the work. Bella Keenan, writing down reminiscences of her childhood in 1955,²⁸ is worth quoting here at length:

"The writer of this Booklet now 81 years old never went to school in her life; never saw a School until she took her own children to school 1923 she never saw a Shop or a post office until 20 years all the schooling I got was my mother & Sister Lizzie taught me my A.B.C. & my first Book after that I had to read the other school Books & when I came to a spell I didn't Know I wrote on my slate & asked what it meant & Kept on writing until I got to know it . . . we made up our minds that we were all going to learn to Read & Write & all other things that were useful. We could make Bread. Butter Cakes & we could milk handle cows handle horses Ride. Hunt cattle & horses. we could do garden work., plant potatoes clear land grub trees do fiscing anything on a farm. We never learned to Dance until we were 22 or 24 years old.

*We made all our own clothes everything. Even the sheets & pillow towels table cloths patchwork quilts & helped father with the hay & chaff cutting & the cleaning of the wheat to send away for flour picked up all of the potatoes & graded them for sale often when Rain came early & the swamp got very wet we would go in Bare footed up to our Knees some places to dig & gather the potatoes out we worked as men & good men father would rather have one of his girls to help him than two of the Boys they Boys were stronger but didn't like work . . . used to cut of now & again for a few months . . . & come home at Xmas time Bringing some friend with them for Xmas and a whole lot of Dirty Cloths for washing & mending which was usually my job."*²⁹

Such a constant workload was not restricted to the Keenan girls, but was the lot of women living on farms generally throughout the region.³⁰ In addition to the daily chores, when the family built their new house "Glenbourne" at Ellensbrook

on the Margaret and found the ground too rocky for gardening and too steep to get a wagon near, "for many months the girls carried soil [up from the brook] in milk pans, as much as they could manage at a trip, and after what seemed an eternity covered the rocks around the house."³¹

As can be seen the basis of the home farm micro-economy was gardening, potatoes and dairying, growing wheat and growing fodder for livestock. The mainstay of the dairying enterprise was not milk production but butter. Extra work involved more than simply milking cows but heating the milk itself in shallow pans then leaving them to cool on racks so the cream would rise to the surface to be skimmed off and churned. Part of the problem in the early days was that ants would climb up the racks and get into the milk. The women soon learned to build racks in shallow water along the creeks with a suspended floor to keep their feet dry while they handled the milk pans and skimmed off the cream.³² The butter was then salted and packed in kegs to be stored in any cool place they could find until sold; in shady gullies, in springs, under waterfalls, or in shallow caves along the limestone ridges and breakaways throughout the landscape.

The really heavy work was done by bullocks. Although these animals were slower than horses they were easier to handle in rough country and worked at a more steady pace requiring far less in the way of feed supplement. Where the forest understorey was good bullocks could be simply let out to graze where horses needed to be fed extra chaff and oats to get the same work out of them. In the forest bullocks could "weave round obstacles and work in awkward places" on soft ground less sure underfoot, where horses tended to become excited requiring "a much straighter line to work in".

The main breeds used to produce working bullocks were Shorthorn and Hereford; individual animals being selected for conformation and size while still quite young. Fully grown bullocks were obviously quite a different animal from those cattle bred and raised for beef since being all bone and sinew and far too tough to be eaten. It was quite common on farms for the children to take such calves and start breaking them in using small sized gear as a way of earning extra income. From these farm poddies experienced teamsters would later select particular animals for training as units in a team which would be contracted to a range of work pulling logs out of the forest for the timber industry as well as farm work and general cartage around the district.³³

KEEPING AN EYE ON THE BANK ACCOUNT

Bella Keenan described her brothers always out hunting cattle on horseback as "flash", and she was not the only one. The reason the young men and boys were allowed to be so apparently lazy was simply that in those days of promissory notes, little cash money and no banks, the mobs of cattle were regarded as their family's bank account. Whereas the work on the home farm fed the family and paid the bills, the work the men were actually doing running cattle in the forest and bringing them into market from time to time was to manage their family's savings.³⁴ It is no accident that the mobs were run by men related to one another by kinship and marriage, or that there were such strict rules and deeply held conventions throughout the district underwriting such a striking subculture among the men.

The job carried a great deal of prestige³⁵ though their antics were often frowned up. Men would frequently go out to work everyday in fresh trousers and a clean shirt; wearing spurs and with their gear all clean and in good repair. Men too lazy to patch their own bridles or keep their saddles in top condition, indifferent to how long their clothes had gone unwashed or unable to handle their grog, were systematically ridiculed. They and Aboriginal people in particular would persistently have the mickey taken out of them by the others.³⁶ Indeed anyone at all around the home farm would be tricked and teased constantly by the stockmen and it was for this reason as much as any that attempts to formally educate them failed.

Generally speaking men's education had little to do with learning to read and write but was gained from unrelenting peer pressure and from sitting listening to yarns and tall stories around the cattle camps at night. In this respect they differed little from men in cattle camps all over Australia; in particular those spending long years living and working among Aboriginal stockmen and their more traditional kinsmen.³⁷ Even today a clear difference can be noticed in the manner of speaking between elderly men and women in the district descended from those early families and raised in the bush themselves before a uniform standard of education became generally available during the post-WW2 reconstruction.

At one stage during the 1880s Stewart Keenan got it into his head that his sons should learn to read and write as the girls had done. With the school opened up at the new M.C. Davies timber town at Karridale he decided that they should set up a camp in the bush outside the town where they could sleep while they attended school during the week, and come back up to the Margaret on weekends. The story goes like this:

"For some time this arrangement was adhered to and when questioned as to their progress the boys indicated they were getting on well, or what ever phrase came into their heads at the time. Apparently no details were sought and none volunteered. However, cheats and liars are always found out in the end and one fateful day Alf Knapton happened to call at Glenbourne. Stewart proudly told him that the boys were camped out at Karridale 'gettin' some larnin'. Alf told Stewart that although the boys were camped at Karridale they had never been to school. Their days had been occupied riding in the bush, cattle hunting or just lying in the camp. Stewart was furious and jumped up and down in the spot with rage. 'That's the end o' their larnin' he roared,

*"I've two minds to take to 'em with the bullock whip. They can come home and work like men."*³⁸

Further up the Blackwood on their "Tanjanerup" property near Nannup, the somewhat more prosperous family of John Higgins determined to employ a tutor of their own to ensure that their nine sons attained at least a modicum of respectability. One particular day the parents arrived home to find the boys gone and an odd moaning sound emanating from the kitchen. When they checked they found no-one there until somebody decided to lift the cloth and look under the kitchen table. There they found the tutor spread-eagled; tied hand and foot to each leg of the table.

The straw that broke the camel's back occurred when the tutor was enticed out onto a limb over the river to rescue the youngest son pretending that he was stuck out there too frightened to move. Just as the tutor reached the boy he jumped laughing into the water while his older brothers chopped through the limb and gave the poor man a ducking. Those same boys were known to ride their horses into the local hotel during a spree and shoot the bottles off the top shelf, then return the next day to pay for the damage.³⁹

Their chronically rebellious attitude overall cannot be dismissed as a simple lack of couth, however, but a genuinely abiding disregard for established authority and an assertion of political independence typical of Irish history. The community as a whole typically recounted stories and sang songs of sadness and oppression they had brought with them from Ireland.

When in 1868 the transported Fenian John Boyle O'Reilly made his escape from Australind with the aid of young James Maguire and Father Patrick McCabe of Dardanup, one Henry Hathaway of New Bedford, Massachusetts, and a Captain Gifford of the American whaler *Gazelle*, the news spread through the South West via the cattle camps like wildfire. When again in 1876 another six Fenians⁴⁰ were rescued by Captain Anthony in the whaling ship *Catalpa* sent by O'Reilly and his colleagues to pick them up 'The Song Of the Catalpa' was composed to commemorate the event.⁴¹ While embarrassed local authorities ordered a short jail sentence for anyone heard singing it in public the boys spread it too around the cattle camps where it became established in local folklore.⁴²

It was from their ranks that such larrikin regiments as the Bushman's Rifles and then the Australian Light Horse were formed; many of them paying the supreme sacrifice at Gallipoli, and in France and Belgium during the Great War - General Chauvel's famous "horsemen of the Australian Bush."⁴³ In Western Australia the original regiment formed was the 25th Light Horse, although when war came most of the men ended up in the infantry because no mounted troops had been requested from the West and in their enthusiasm they left in droves to join up any way they could.⁴⁴

END NOTES

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- ¹⁵ ELiza Keenan, diary of 1878
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- ¹⁸ Bill Ipsen, *Follow That Bell!*, Augusta, WA: self-published, 2000, Preface
- ¹⁹ Peter Bindon, 'Nyungah Seasonality', *Landscape*, Spring 1992
- ²⁰ Silvia J. Hallam, *Fire and Hearth: A Study of Aboriginal Usage and European Usurpation in South-Western Australia*, Canberra: Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies, 1979; Neville Green, *Broken Spears: Aborigines and Europeans in the South West of Australia*, Perth: Focus Educational Services, 1984, Appendix One; Kimberley, *History of Western Australia*, p.87; Hasluck, *Portrait*, Appendix F, p.270
- ²¹ George Fletcher Moore, *A Descriptive Vocabulary of The Language in Common Use Amongst the Aborigines of Western Australia*, Perth: Advocate-General of Western Australia, n.d., p.84
- ²² C. Thomas Cairney, *Clans and Families of Ireland and Scotland: An Ethnography of the Gael, A.D. 500-1750*, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 1989, Introduction & Chapter One.
- ²³ Ray Keenan, *The Keenans of Glenone*, Perenjori: unpublished manuscript, 1994, passim; Isabella Keenan, *My Childhood Memories*, unpublished reminiscences of 1955 in the possession of Keith McLeod, Margaret River, WA, green book, passim
- ²⁴ Kevin J. Lynn, *Thirteen Decades: A Short History of the Augusta-Margaret River District, 1830-1960*, Unpublished Manuscript, Claremont Teachers College, 1960, Battye Library PR1418, p.55
- ²⁵ In those days of bush justice poddy-dodging (claiming unbranded calves as your own), smuggling and sly grog were rife anyway. If a man came out of a tight situation with no more than ruffled feathers that was usually the end of the matter. Beyond that his word would generally be accepted; if neighbours suspected anything they would simply keep their own eye on things in preference to confronting him and stirring up trouble.
- ²⁶ Padbury, like Sir Sydney Kidman in South Australia, had made his early money operating a slaughterhouse.
- ²⁷ Ian Heppingstone, 'Pioneer Droving in the North West', *Early Days* (Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society), Vol.8, Part 2, Perth, 1978, passim
- ²⁸ Bella Keenan was the third daughter of Stewart and Isabella Keenan; born Boxing Day, 1874, and married 1913 to Jim Hennessy. She was a very tough old lady, known even among the Keenans as tough. She died in 1967 after being hit by a car in Victoria Park, Perth. (Keith McLeod, personal communication, September, 2001)
- ²⁹ Bella Keenan, *Childhood Memories*, p.1
- ³⁰ Francis Terry, *They Came To The Margaret*, self-published, 1978, passim; Muir & Muir, *Forrest Family*, pp.22-23

- 31 Ray Keenan, *Keenans of Glenone*, p. 12
- 32 Ray Keenan, *ibid.*, p.40
- 33 T.W. Doyle, 'Bullock Teams and Their Drovers In the South West', *Early Days* (Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society), Vol.8, Part 1, Perth, 1977, p.63
- 34 The Gaelic words *táin*, translating literally as cattle-raid, herd wealth, and *creach*, or loot, plunder, spoils, also prey, accurately describe their attitude toward the mobs of cattle running in the forest; deriving from the ancient propensity for raiding and cattle rustling in Ireland and along the Scottish Borders where these people originated, and where before the shiring of Ireland under the English plantations wealth was reckoned in cattle not land (Foster, *Modern Ireland*, Ch.1).
- 35 The romantic notion of the cowboy applies here, also Gaelic *buachaill* = boy, boyfriend; *buachaill bó* = cowboy (*Collins Pocket Irish Dictionary*, p.395)
- 36 Ray Keenan, *Keenans of Glenone*, *passim*
- 37 Bill Harney, *Tales From the Aborigines*, Sydney: Seal Books, 1959:1995, Author's Note and Introduction.
- 38 Ray Keenan, *Keenans of Glenone*, p.32
- 39 Tom Higgins, interview
- 40 Altogether seven rescued out of the total of 62 Fenians transported to Western Australia per Hougoumont in 1867.
- 41 According to Foster (*Modern Ireland*, pp.42-3), throughout Irish history such recounting of historical events in poetry, songs and stories "did the duty of political manifestos" against usurping of traditional lands, exploiting of traditional landuse patterns and oppression of people by foreigners generally, not just the English.
- 42 Ray Keenan, *Keenans of Glenone*, pp.22-24
- 43 Lieut.-General Sir Harry Chauvel, Introduction, in A.C.N. Olden, *Westralian Cavalry in the War: 10th Light Horse AIF*, Melbourne: Alexander McCubbin, 1921:2001
- 44 Olden, *ibid.*, p. 13