

**Notes written in 1988, by Lionel James Norvill, [b 02.07.1909], original in his own handwriting.**

George Norvill and his wife Mary Ann Tutton arrived in Australia on "Herald of the Morning" 23.06.1858. From Western Super Mare, Somerset Shire, England, under contract to work for William H. Warland, Blandford. George soon took up a block of land of his own on Warlands Creek about 3 miles from Blandford about 1865.

He then started a butcher's run by killing a beast and carting it in a horse and dray around Blandford and Murrurundi cutting off a joint or what ever portion the towns folk needed. Mary Anne died in 1870, children of the marriage were Hannah Maria and David Charles.

### **BLANDFORD**

George then married Jane Eliza McGivney in 1874. They lived then in Blandford on the corner of the New England Highway and Hayles Street.

They then had a butcher's shop and residence on blocks 74-75. The next reference is of a butcher's shop near the corner of Victoria Street and the New England Highway, Murrurundi near Budden's Blacksmith shop, Buddens shop was there in my time. It was on the block where the new section of Murrurundi Shire Chambers now stands opposite the White Heart Hotel.

In my time the Norvill family owned the corner from Victoria Street along Mayne Street to the service station. There was Norvill's Butcher's Shop, Bob Stuart - Sadler, Baker's shop and Fox Bros. Bill and Lewis had the hardware and groceries.

### **NORVILL PARTNERSHIP AND BUTCHERS SHOP.**

There was a Norvill partnership James Walter, Henry G.E. and John Lawrence but I am not sure to what extent Jim was involved. The shop was on the opposite side of Mayne Street where the Peel Cunningham County Council have their workshop, next door to the Fire Brigade and White Hart Hotel.

They did carry positive lines of stock on "ROCKLEY" Warrah Ridge but had some cash crops. They ran Border Leicester sheep and old ewes and wethers that could be put through the butcher's shop in Murrurundi - also cattle.

### **"ROCKLEY"**

When my father, Henry Norvill [b03.12.1878] married Ethel Cora Fishburn, [b 07.08.1878 d 06:1959] 06.02.1907, they went to live on "ROCKLEY" on the far western end of the property near Round Island. They did not stay there long but moved into Murrurundi and when I was born 2.7.1909. We were living in a cottage on block 12 Wade Subdivision at the far end of Wades Lane.

The butcher shop partnership was in full swing then. John Lawrence lived in Blandford next door to where Myrtle lives now. The slaughter yards and piggery were down on Warlands Creek behind the house. Jack must have looked after that end and Harry looking after the business in Mayne Street, they were using stock fattened on "ROCKLEY". Earnest Stewart would drive them in by road as motor transport was not heard of at that time.

## **BUTCHERY**

The system of making their sausages was unique. There was a big round iron drum with cog wheels underneath an iron rod with a universal joint that went into the shop and drove the mincing machine. The machine had a cylinder and sausage skins were attached to the cylinder and the mince pumped through to fill the skins.

The power to drive the system was a horse harnessed to a pole and the old horse would walk round in circles and drive the system. The trouble was when they rode the old horse out for orders he wouldn't walk straight but walked sideways.

We were still living in the house in Wades Lane but my father then bought the house next door to the shop from Mr Galaway about 1915. He was the Warrah Shire Engineer and died about that time. His grave is just inside the gate into the old Haydonton Cemetery.

## **"ROCKLEY" WARRAH RIDGE**

The Norvill family Partnership purchased portion of the William Nowland property in 1902. Known as "ROCKLEY" on the Warrah Ridge road 13 miles from Quirindi an area of 2,214 acres I rood. It was held by the partnership until I believe 1924 when Harry took over as sole owner. Harry then held "ROCKLEY" until 1928. It was then sold to B. B. Haydon and Sons for 5 pounds 12 shillings and sixpence per acre, possession given April 1928. [For location refer to Upper Mooki H.C. Carter MBE Map page 13.] For particulars refer top Norvill folder.

"ROCKLEY" was a good property, it had fat lambs, some wheat and other crops. But in those days of horse drawn ploughs and vehicles it was hard work and time consuming. Horses had to be fed morning and night, hay made to feed them and the area of land ploughed in a day was small. A crop of wheat 5 bags once every 3 years was considered reasonable and there was never any grass for stock.

Rabbits were in plague proportions and each property carried millions of them. The grass did not get a chance to grow. I left school about 1924 and went out there to work. Tractors were just coming into their own then.

## **"ROCKLEY" CROPS**

My father purchased a Fordson Tractor, a very primitive type. Steel wheels with iron grips on the wheels to stop slipping. The motor would be cranked by hand to start and on a cold morning it was hard work. Fuel used was benzene to warm up and then changed over to power kerosene. All fuel would be in 4-gallon cans to a wooden case.

We were living in Murrurundi at the time and going back and forth to "ROCKLEY". So an old T model ford utility was purchased to get away from driving a horse and sulky or riding the horse; much faster. But one had to be a mechanic to handle the motor-cars those days because they were not like the cars of today.

## **SHEARING MACHINES**

Blade shears were used up to this point when a little Wolsley portable two stand shearing machine was in stalled. [Wolsley Engine] The engine was on a wooden platform on four wheels with a water tank for cooling and the overhead gear was attached to the top of the water tank, quite a good little efficient piece of machinery.

We could shear a little with the blades but we learned to shear properly with the Wolsley plant. There were three of us. My brother Jack, cousin Martin and I. It was a struggle because we were not strong enough to get the big old Border Leicester ewes down. Hold them and shear them. So two would get the sheep and hold it down while the third man got the wool off.

The hand pieces those times were not as good as they are today: much the same but had a little screw on the chicken fork to adjust the rock to enable the cutter to be adjusted to work on the comb properly.

It was hard to get the right rock, and some shearers would be shearing with the screw driver in their mouths so it would be handy to move the rock screw. Most hand pieces ran very hot so a bucket of water was kept handy to put the hand piece in and cool it off. I have seen some very big water blisters on shearers thumbs from over hot machinery, they would get too hot to hold in your hand.

### **FINISH OF PARTNERSHIP**

The partnership appears to be dissolved about 1924. The butchers shop was taken over by Patrick Francis O'Brien. "ROCKLEY" was then owned by H.G.E. Norvill. sole owner. John Lawrence had 900 acres on Warlands Creek and received 300 pounds for his half share in "Paradise" property from H.G.E. Norvill. James Walter had a property of his own at Wallabadah known as "Sarsfield" on the head of Quirindi Creek. He also had a farm on the Wallabadah to Quirindi road and lived behind the Marshall McMahan Hotel in Wallabadah. John Lawrence bought 900 acres in the Harben Vale Subdivision taking his holding to 1,800 acres.

### **"ROCK DHU" CATTLE**

In 1929 I went with my father to the Broad Crossing on Timor Station to buy cattle from Mr. J.H. White, the owner of the station. 22 head of heifers on the point of calving, eligible but not entered in the stud book. Beautiful cattle. There was a conflict of price, J.H. said he wanted 8 guineas per head as they were stud cattle. My father claimed they were offered to him for 8 pounds. I do not know the price finally agreed on. They were bought and taken to "ROCK DHU" 2 died leaving 20 head.

When H.G.E. Norvill property was split up in 1945 on my return from army service of 1,731 days. Jack Norvill took "PARADISE" portion. I, Lionel Norvill taking "ROCK DHU". The cattle were about equally divided between the two properties.

As there was a drought on. I had 80 head on "ROCK DHU" but when I handed over "ROCK DHU" to Peter Norvill there was 1000 head of cattle all from the original 22 head. All pure Timor blood because only Timor bulls were used then. Mr Reg White was the owner of Timor Stud in the drought years. J.H White had died.

"ROCK DHU" sheep flock was started when Harry Norvill purchased ewes from Mr. Dangar of "Turee Station" near Cassilis in 1941. Peppin blood and joined to "Yarrowin" rams. I was in the middle East at the time but was informed by letter on the split of Harry Norvill's two properties "PARADISE" and "ROCK DHU".

I received the Turee ewes as part of my sheep division plus some of the wethers and weaners. Due to the drought conditions I then had 1500 sheep and 80 head of cattle on "ROCK DHU" but when I handed over to Peter on the 1.1.77 there were 2500 sheep and 1000 cattle. When I took over the Turee ewes and Yarrowin rams in 1945 I was not satisfied with the breeding and

made a change over of to “Guisley” rams. “Guisley” rams are “Haddon Rig” blood and “Guisley” rams have been used ever since. I believe “ROCK DHU” shored 7700 sheep this year with a price of 2050 cents/ kg for their top line wool. [1988]

On the sale of “ROCKLEY”, Warrah Ridge, H.G. Norvill purchased “ROCK DHU” on Warlands Creek from [J.P.] John Patrick Carey. A property of 1,782 acres 1 rood for around 4 pounds per acre, 6,939 pounds, 8 shillings, and 10 pence. (Cheque book butt possessed by Peter Norvill at 2007) . The contract was signed on the 22/2/1928 but possession was not given for a few weeks due to the death of Jack John Lawrence Norvill H. G.’s brother.

“ROCK DHU”, purely a grazing property was in a run down state, fences were all fallen down and not one gate on the whole place, all slip rails and it was infested with rabbits. Buildings were one cottage that had never known a coat of paint and an out of order blade shearing shed.

### **SHANAHANS - HIBBS BROS**

About 2 years after the purchase of “ROCK DHU” an additional 400 acres known as Shanahans was bought from the Hibb’s brothers. Harry and Dick. I do not know the price. A nice handy acquisition building the place up to 2,182 acres 1 rood.

Rabbit proof netting was in full swing by now and the boundary was completely netted and subdivided into two sections about equal areas. The fencing was done by Joe Adams, Frank Yates and some other helpers. I think this block was a Shanahan selection and there are still signs of where the old home was.

### **BARSHAM CSL LEASE**

Barsham Subdivision about April -19/3/1949 Closer Settlement Lease No 222 was taken over by L.J. Norvill an area of 1,771 acres 3 roods 2 perches the area was later adjusted. Purchase price about 4 pounds 5 shillings per acre. [ Refer to Norvill folder for further details] This addition of 1771 acres joining the western side of “Rock Dhu” and taking in Warlands Creek was a nice addition and brought “Rock Dhu’s” area up to 3953 acres.

Once again this country was in a run down state, heavily timbered in parts and infested with rabbits and blackberries but well worth having it as it joined the other country. A part of this land was David Charles Norvill (married Minnie Hibbs, sister of Dick, Harry and Ben).

### **“ROCK DHU” RABBITS**

A programme of rabbit eradication was started as soon as we had possession, in fact Jack Duncan was erecting a rabbit proof fence between the Barsham and Carey blocks. The price of a good fence at that time was about 200 pounds per mile and all wood, as iron posts were not in use then. The whole boundary was netted by then and subdivided into 4 netted blocks. In the winter of 1928 rabbit skins were making 5 shillings a pound and good boardy buck skins went to around 5 to the pound. Good money then as rabbits were plentiful.

We set about 60 steel traps a night, go round them just after dark with a lantern and again at day break, the nights catch would be about 1 per trap. Rabbiting in summer was different. We would dig up the black thistle roots, wash them, add a little sugar then lace with strychnine, let soak for awhile then go out with a mattock. One would dig clod holes and one would put 2 small pieces of thistle root per clod. Or we would use quince jam in the same fashion. The jam was always available in 5lb tins.

You had to be out at daylight on the trail or the crows and wedge tail eagles would tear the skins to pieces. About 100 per night could be taken this way but the price of skins was no good in summer.

**Note:**

[David C. Norvill was an excellent timber man and built his own house here.] He also built a hut on White's Creek for William Greer on what is now J. Wright's place "ALLOMBIE"

Rabbits were in such plague proportions that something had to be done. So the Sipple Bros. Jack, Bill and Arthur took a contract to clean up "ROCK DHU" at 1 shilling per acre, not much money and they did no good. We finally had to go in and give them a hand to finish the job.

We always made a point of keeping "ROCK DHU" free of rabbits from then until myxomatosis came in and did the job for us. Rabbiting was a huge job and every second young chap working in the bush did nothing else for a living.

**ROCKLEY - RABBITS**

Dogs for chasing rabbits were then known as kangaroo dogs, today they would be called tin hare dogs. We would spend the holidays chasing rabbits and cutting them out of hollow logs with an axe. [George and Jack, brothers, George's sons were Tom and Joe, he also reared Paddy and Ray] The Adams boy's. George Adams family all served their apprenticeship out there. Tom, Ray and Paddy all went out there for awhile when they began their working life.

John Lawrence Norvill was a keen racing man and I remember him sending a horse out there to grow and fill out. It was a big horse called "Trillate" later to become known as "Too Late" because it did not win races.

**ROCKLEY**

In those days it was impossible to drive a horse and sulky 13 miles into Quirindi to church so the parson would come out for a service on the place once a month. Everyone would attend but they could not get the rector on his way quickly enough, out would come a pack of cards and in the later life a bottle of port. When I first went out there, there were emu's and plane turkey's running wild on "ROCKLEY" and you could hear curlew's calling at night but there are none there now.

**JACK ADAMS**

Jack Adams married Isabella Norvill and as far back as I can remember they lived at "ROCKLEY". Jack was Overseer Manager. We were only very young and liked to go out there for school holidays. Jack and Bella had no family of their own. There was no through road then from Quirindi to the Warrah Subdivision.

As motor-cars were more or less unknown to the average family H. G. E. would harness the old horse up to the sulky and away we would go to "ROCKLEY" for the holidays. Through Willow Tree down what was known as the black lane to cut out going into Quirindi, then turn left for another 12 miles.

Rabbits were in the plague proportions. They always carried dogs for chasing rabbits. The Adams must have spent a lot of years out there and when the place was sold they were old and went to live on a farm owned by Jim Norvill near Wallabadah. They spent the remainder of their lives there and are both buried in the Wallabadah Cemetery.

## **JOE ADAMS**

Joe Adams was the son of George Adams of "ROCKLEY", Warrah Ridge. Joe was an outstanding worker on a fence and he would get 4 pounds per week. But wages were higher by then and he was only fencing on the Shanahan block for Hibbs Bros.

## **JACK DUNCAN**

Jack Duncan was also an outstanding workman on a fence and would get 1 pound a day in wages, that was way over the wage for other fencers. He would work a month straight then harness the old grey horse to his buck board and off to town to pay all accounts and then get drunk.

When the money ran out he would go back with a demijohn of wine and two bottles of Loundes rum which would make him sick, but he would sober up and go on for another month.

## **O'BRIEN**

Someone has fully restored the old O'Brien home. It is a brick residence, the last one on the left hand side of the New England Highway travelling east and is using it as an Inn and Restaurant.

Mrs Jones has opened up an antique craft shop in the old O'Brien butchers shop that kept the O'Brien family for years, it has also been restored. On the opposite side of the highway there stood the old stone building. It was very old and built of local sandstone, two storey high with an arched carriage way, and entrance for coach and horse to pass through. It housed four families for years.

There is a beautiful brick residence next door to the butchers shop. The residence next door to the butchers shop is where the sale yards stood and weekly stock sales held. The O'Briens were a well known and respected family in the district. P. F. O'Brien had a butchering business and also owned several small properties. George, a cousin owned the News Agency and power house. The power house was the first electric power in Murrurundi.

## **STAN SWANSON**

Stan was the son of Peter Swanson. Peter was a migrant from Sweden and they lived by the railway line near Blandford Railway Station. They also had a block of land at the lower end. Stan was 10 years older than I was and when shearing machinery was installed at "ROCKLEY", Stan always came out for the general shearing. He was a good man and could shear 120-30 sheep a day. When "ROCKLEY" was sold he still came to "ROCK DHU", then to Martin in Blandford and then to "PARADISE". This arrangement went on for probably 30 years. He would come every year and bring someone with him. Shearing was worth about 30 shillings per 100 sheep at that time.

## **FRANK LANSDOWN**

The Lansdown's were railway people and arrived in Murrurundi when it was a railway town about the 1920's. The father worked in the super office. They left and went to live in Goulburn so I corresponded with Frank.

In April 1928, during the change over, Frank arrived at "ROCK DHU" having borrowed a horse from P. F. O'Brien. He stayed on here living with us and camping around the various jobs that we were doing at that time. He played a fair game of football in the front row and I was in the second row. We played in most of the weekend competition games during the winter.

He must have been with us until around 1935 when he married Anne Dalkin from Fairy Meadow on the south coast. Her father was a deputy in one of the coal mines. Frank had to leave us then to get better pay and went to work for a Mr. Rankin at "Tribella" Spring Ridge. We were all getting 6 pounds a month and full keep at home and had various other jobs. Frank went about 1950 to live in Katherine, Northern Territory. They lived on in Katherine until their death. Anne died some years ago and Frank died in 1988 and they are both buried in Katherine.

### **SPRING CART**

Before motor cars became as popular and plentiful as they are today, the local Store, Joe Dooley and Co., would send a man around on a push bike, house to house, for orders. Those orders would then be packaged up and loaded into a spring cart, horse drawn and taken around town to the various homes. The spring cart now on "ROCK DHU" is the one bought from Joe Dooley and Co., when the change over from horse drawn vehicles to motor vehicles was made. It has been in our possession I would say for at least 50 years.

There was a spring dray at "PARADISE" that came with us from "ROCKLEY", unfortunately it was burnt some years ago.

### **"ROCK DHU" BOTTOM NEW SHEARING SHED**

By the late 1940's "ROCK DHU" was shearing 4000 sheep and at one time 5000, so something had to be done for shearing them.

As we did not have the money or time, the work had to be done in stages. I saw an ad in the paper "builders wanting work", so I answered the add. Three men turned up to build the back or grating portion, and the only name I can remember was a Mr. Bates from Singleton. They were good honest men and knew their work. They stayed a month and finished the work portion and although I tried to get them to stay they left. I have never seen or heard of them since. This would be about 1948. The second part or wool room was added years later (1965).

The Fishburns, Andrew and John handled some of the work. And Ray Shoobert later on finished the job. Tom Mullins and one other stranger that I did not know the name of worked on it at one time. The yards were built in much the same manner. The work being done mainly by Ben Shanahan and Ernie Shanahan and with help at times from other men.

### **HUTS**

In 1928 the original house was standing just above the top shearing shed. It was not in a satisfactory position so we moved it to where it now stands, doing the work ourselves but rebuilding only two rooms with verandah back and front. This was done about 1938 just before World War II. Then two more rooms were built onto the front verandah just after the War about 1948. The work being done by Ernie Finch and Tom Mullins. Another two rooms were attached to this about 1952. The work being done by Andrew and John Fishburn with other casual labour. The shearer's kitchen was built five years later, by Ray Shoobert. All the shed and huts would have been built in bits and pieces.

## **TELEPHONE**

The telephone was finally put up as far as Jim Haydon's on Warlands Creek in 1951. It was then extended up to N. Hibbs some years later, about 1967. All costs and labour were supplied by the property owners who became subscribers. It remained a private line until June 1979 when the old line was replaced by solar powered radio telephones.

## **LIONEL'S DEATH**

Lionel died Murrurundi's Wilson Memorial Hospital 11.30 pm, Friday 5th January, 1996, aged 86 and a half years and is buried in the Lawn Cemetery.

He had been ill for some time. There was a swelling in his stomach that slowly increased in size. A tumor or cancerous growth. He would have known at his age there was little point in having it removed. The ordeal of such, for what little extra life he would have gained, wasn't worth it. (I doubt he ever discussed this matter with anyone).

As the growth expanded it choked his digestive system to the extent he could not eat. I guess he eventually starved to death.

He had remained at the 134 Mayne Street residence until his fifth last day of life, when he was taken to hospital by ambulance.

### **After-note by PHN:**

Our bigger problems on the land did not stem from drought, fire or flood but from shearers and shearing.

In the 1950's and 60's Lionel had to deal with numerous official visits from the DLI (Department of Labour and Industry) following complaints made by various disgruntled shearers or shed workers, with regard to the shearers' accommodation on Rock Dhu.

What Lionel detested most was not the visit, nor the complaint, but rather it was that the official could not visit the property without being accompanied by a member of the local police force.

It was in part, the implication Lionel might act violently toward the DLI official, but even more so that the official was so gutless as to see the need for protection