Lost Coach Routes of the Brisbane River Valley

Elizabeth DeLacy, 2014
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*Oft when the camps were dreaming  
And fires began to pale,  
Through rugged ranges gleaming  
Swept on the Royal Mail.*

From *The Roaring Days* by Henry Lawson
MY GRANNY’S WHALEBONE

This research owes much to my Granny McCowan who has no known association with the Brisbane Valley or with coaches although she may have been a daredevil in a sulky if family history is to be believed. Her connection with the story of coach routes in the Brisbane Valley may be tenuous but nevertheless significant, coming, of all things, from a discussion of corsets at the turn of the century. Granny had a great store of words to live by, like “Lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine”, and “Ladies set fashion, they don’t follow it”. Well-meaned advice, perhaps, but not always immediately relevant to a granddaughter in the turbulent 60’s. But she also told me stories, many of which, sadly, I have now forgotten.

She told me one about life in the colonies (Maryborough district) at the turn of the century which was rather like life in the islands, and where corsets were made of fine linen and whalebone, “not the hot rubber things that women wear nowadays”. This lead naturally to a discussion of household management in general, and the unforgettable line from Granny that, “Singhalese women were better in the house than either the Kanaka or the Aboriginal women”. Now I had the advantage of a reasonably good secondary and by that time tertiary education, and I had read about the infamous blackbirding that supplied labour for the cane farms of the district. Nowhere had I read about imported workers from Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and for the first time I tripled the memory of the family matriarch by now closed with her passing. But not my interest in the past, for Granny had sown her seeds with care.

Decades later I was browsing in a second hand book shop and noticed the lurid cover of a book by E. W. Docker (1981), “The Blackbirders: A brutal story of the Kanaka slave-trade”. I had an old dictionary of Granny’s that had belonged to her father’s bookkeeper who, I thought, had been a Kanaka, inscribed A. Wade in copper plate handwriting. I hoped to put him into context, and I bought the book. It was all pretty blood curdling stuff and I was ready to abandon it when I was drawn to the phrase, “the Battle of the Burnett”. Granny’s old bailiwick; so I read on.

“Frederick Nott of Bundaberg negotiated to import five hundred labourers direct from Ceylon. They were to be paid 20 pounds a year with rations, the terms to be five years. It was an attractive proposition .... The south Indian Tamils were reputed to be the most docile, most amenable labour force in the world. But the Tamils were not available for export to Australia... Nott had to be satisfied with local Singhalese and not plantation labourers at that, but blacksmiths, carpenters, cooks, barbers, house servants, some elderly, one ‘quite decrepit’, all unemployed townsmen fleeing from a period of depression

Evidently, the coolie was seen to pose some sort of threat that the Kanaka did not ... They were British subjects with recognizable legal and constitutional rights that could not be trifled with. ... The Anti-Coolie League was weak in Mackay ... But at Bundaberg the League was all ready for them. Fifty-strong, it set out for Burnett Heads with the intention of loudly
opposing any landing. However, the planters ... were already aboard the Devonshire warning the Cingalese what to expect. When the Leaguers were almost upon them ... the Cingalese drew knives as though prepared to sell their lives dearly ... The demonstrators ... had not bargained on a fight. Finally ... they withdrew. The “Battle of the Burnett”, as it was derisively called, had thus ended in the rout of the Leaguers.” (pp 164-166)

I had learned two salutary lessons. The first is that you cannot apologize for doubting the integrity of an oral historian once she is dead, and the second is that I should not have presumed to judge Granny’s oral history in the absence of a proper search for supporting evidence. Thus chastened, I might have been researching fine linen corsets with whalebone. But Fate would have it otherwise.

I have had the great good fortune to meet several living legends in my lifetime. One was Ian Hinkfuss, nuclear physicist at Lucas Heights who left on principle, retrained, and was Acting Professor of Philosophy, University of Queensland, when I first met him. His influence in the peace movement was well deserved and constant until his death, and I regret on behalf of the next generation that, “I shall not look upon his like again”.

Jules Guerrasimoff, grandfather of Rugby Union in Australia, must also get a guernsey if you will excuse the pun. He was the most gentlemanly Rugger Bugger a woman could meet, although the same courtesies were seldom extended to his opposition on the field. Stories about him are legion and almost all of them actionable, so I will let his playing record and the baggiest football shorts in Rugby Union history record him for posterity.

Rex Newsome, PhD. earned his place in this august company the hard way. He was born with cerebral palsy, left for dead at birth, and without any formal education until he was 18, he lead by example with a long career as an academic in the Psychology Department, University of Queensland. He was appointed to the position by Professor Don McElwain whose status as a scholar and a gentleman is also legendary.

Judith Wright was already very deaf and well published when she began her fight for the environment decades before it became a cause célèbre. Working with even the smallest groups of like-minded people amongst the students and staff at UQ, she radiated the force of her vision. May the force remain with her poetry forever.

But I had retired from such illustrious company; retired to Ivory Creek with a koala as landlord, possums as tenants and crows as share-farmers. And in need of all the help I could get. Enter Ted Bennett, advisor, mentor, good neighbour and story teller extraordinaire. Granny had done her work too well and for the first six months or so I swallowed every tale he chose to concoct. He even told me he’d lost his driver’s license for drink-driving when in fact his new prescription glasses were not ready in time for its renewal! Eventually even gullible bunnies from town can pick the difference between a real story and a tall one, and I began to learn the real history of the district. And a fascinating history it was. One
story came back again and again to haunt me. He could show me the remains of the old coach route from Esk, and I never doubted for a moment that this was true. And not to appear completely ignorant, I went to search the records for Ted’s coach.

Conventional wisdom in the Toogoolawah district suggested a Cobb & Co. coach, but a visit to the Cobb & Co. Museum in Toowoomba indicated that this was unlikely. Their coaches seldom provided a passenger service without a lucrative mail service as well, and the staff had thoroughly researched the successful Cobb & Co. mail tenders. The towns and properties of the Brisbane Valley were not included. They had, however, suggested a very valuable line of research and much of the detail in the following pages has come from Conveyance of Mail tenders listed in the Qld. Government Gazette held in the State Library of Queensland. The incentive for this study, however, came initially from Ted Bennett’s love of the district and its stories and the wealth of detail he shared so freely. The simple search for Ted’s elusive coach soon grew like Topsy to include all the coach routes in the Brisbane River Valley, and I am very pleased to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to a very good neighbour and a legend in his own lifetime.

For any author this would be a surfeit of riches, but God moves in mysterious ways, and there was one more legend I had to meet. I could claim that this grew out of dedicated research, but in fact it was a happy coincidence. As a relative newcomer and an innocent bystander on the fringes of heritage trails meetings at Esk, I could not miss the authority with which the Mayor of Nanango, Reg McCallum, spoke on the district’s history. He had the advantage of being the longest serving mayor in Australasia at the time and had created much of the history he was now retelling. Nor was he reluctant to trade on his expertise to deliver a ‘tall tale’ on occasion to cap any of Ted Bennett’s stories. Very much later, when he began to tell stories about his family, who had been publicans amongst other things, I thought I detected a ‘send-up’ and probed mercilessly. But the stories just got worse and worse until they were so improbable that I was certain some healthy scepticism and a little homework would explode these myths. Instead I found solid support for the McCallum mail contracts, the McCallum pubs and best of all the McCallum mail coaches in the Brisbane Valley. I had stumbled on existing members of a serious coaching family in the district who were both entertaining and articulate and more than willing to share their improbable stories.

When Fate deals such cards there is no choice but to play your hand. The Lost Coach Routes of the Brisbane Valley are on the table. Place your bets, ladies and gentlemen.
Early Transport in the Brisbane River Valley

"Through stringy-bark and blue-gum, and box and pine we go –
A hundred miles shall see tonight the lights of Cobb and Co."

The Lights of Cobb and Co.,
by Henry Lawson

Public Transport
The popularity of Henry Lawson’s poetry has persuaded generations of Australians that Cobb and Co. was the universal coach service in Australia before Federation. The facts were rather different. Cobb & Co. certainly competed with existing local coach services on those runs that were very profitable, especially where they carried prospectors out to the diggings and gold on the return journey. There was no such incentive in the Brisbane River Valley, whose settlers hauled timber with bullock teams and moved cattle on horseback.

There are no records of any kind to support the persistent oral history that Cobb & Co. coaches provided either a passenger or a mail service between Ipswich and Nanango along the Brisbane Valley. Instead there are many newspaper reports that they did not. Cobb & Co. neither tendered for, nor won, a single mail contract for the district, and complete records of the mail contracts from statehood (1859) until Federation have been scrutinised with care.

According to Deborah Tranter, Archivist of the Cobb and Co. Museum, Toowoomba, “The mail subsidies were important as they provided a regular income for the coach proprietor at a time when passenger travel was most unpredictable”.

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It is true that the first Cobb & Co. route established in Queensland ran from Brisbane to Ipswich, but it did not continue into the Brisbane River Valley and went instead from Bigge’s Camp (Grandchester) to Toowoomba, with the railway providing the link between Ipswich and Bigge’s Camp. This service was established by Hiram Barnes in 1865 with the following preliminary advertisement. “Cobb & Co’s Telegraph Line of Royal Mail Coaches will commence to run for Ipswich and Toowoomba on Monday 1st day of January 1866. Booking Office:- Younge’s Royal Hotel North Brisbane and Nolan’s Royal Mail Hotel South Brisbane. Further particulars in a future advertisement.”

This service was short-lived, for the railway delivered the first train passengers to Toowoomba on 12 April, 1867, “marking the end of horse-drawn coach services on the Ipswich-Toowoomba route”. At no stage did this route include the Brisbane River Valley (see Cobb & Co. routes in S.E. Qld.)

However, Cobb & Co. did continue to provide a passenger service from Brisbane to Ipswich until 12 June, 1875 before a train line was established over this difficult country. There were three changing stations for Cobb & Co along the route. The first change of horses was at Oxley Creek, eight miles from the old Post Office in Queen Street towards North Quay. (The “new” post office had been built on the site of the women’s gaol in 1872 but this was not used to reckon distances already established in relation to the old central point of the ‘city’.). The second change was at Goodna, seven miles further on and the last was at the Ipswich terminus; a journey of 24 miles in total. Passengers travelling from Brisbane to Nanango before 1875 may well have commenced their journey with Cobb & Co. Beyond Ipswich they were dependent on local expertise and coaches built on a British rather than an American design.

By and large, the development of a railway service to any district spelled the end of profitable coach travel, by taking the lucrative mail contracts away from private contractors. Cobb & Co responded to the new rail link between Ipswich and Toowoomba by taking over other established coach routes out of Ipswich and Brisbane, initially south to Warwick, Stanthorpe, Tenterfield and Armidale and to Gympie after the discovery of gold there in 1867. Because of the popularity of ‘Cobb’s Coaches’ and the reliability of their service, it was not a difficult task to outst local competition. But the steam train was paramount, and as the railway line snaked slowly across the state, Cobb & Co., along with local coach services, “was again forced to retreat ahead of the train”. (Tranter, 1990, p 33)

2 Brisbane Courier, 29/12/1865, p1
Contrasted with established districts like Warwick and the mushrooming gold fields of Gympie, there were few established towns in the Brisbane River Valley for coaches to service before 1880. In their stead entire self-sufficient villages had been built within the large pastoral holdings that made up most of the Brisbane River Valley. In 1862 the Government Gazette (p552) lists just seven families or companies leasing all the runs in the settled district of Moreton. They include James Ivory at Eskdale, Gilchrist, Watt & Co. at Grantham, A.H. Richardson at Rosewood, Forbes & England at Tarampa, the North family at Wivenhoe, Fairney Lawn & North Brook, the Bigges family at Mt. Brisbane & Mt. Esk and D. & J. McConnel at Cressbrook.

In 1846, however, Baker recorded (see below) that the Archers were at Durundur, the Mackenzies at Kilcoy Station and the Balfours at Colinton. The McConnels had established Cressbrook, Graham & Ivory were at Eskdale, Gideon and Walter Scott were on Mt Esk, the Bigges were on Mt. Brisbane, Ferritur & Uhr were still managing Wivenhoe (or River Station) and the North family had Fairney Law.
The ‘roads’ are shown by a dotted line from Brisbane and Ipswich, and the coast line and the Brisbane River from which the Valley took its name are shown in blue.

Transport of people and goods to these properties was the responsibility of the land-owner, and there are several quite detailed accounts of these early journeys.

Private transport
One of the earliest accounts of a lady being transported into the Brisbane River Valley comes from Mary McConnel, wife of David McConnel of Cressbrook Station in a privately published manuscript, “Queensland Reminiscences 1840-1879: Memories of Days Long Gone By” by the Wife of an Australian Pioneer, published privately in London in 1905 and held at John Oxley Library. Mary McConnel was 81 when this was written and there may be some inconsistencies introduced with the passage of time.

“We had brought out with us a heavy four-wheeled phaeton which we had used during the few months that we lived in Nottinghamshire, and we travelled in that. It seated four. My husband and I sat in front and Hannah (our maid), with the smallest amount of luggage we could possibly do with, sat behind. The groom led spare horses, carrying saddlebags filled with clothing. As there were neither roads nor bridges, we had some rough experiences. To save the phaeton’s springs, they were bound up with green hide, the untanned hide of a bullock cut up in strips, not very elegant in appearance, but answering our purpose well.”
She describes her departure from their family home called variously Bulimba House or Toogoolawah in Brisbane.

“The Kangaroo Point is on the south side of the river there were only a few gullies to cross...although the distance to Ipswich was only 25 miles it took two days to cover it, and we had to stop when there was a stopping place. Half way there was a small township called Woogaroo (Goodna), now the site of an enormous lunatic asylum (Wolston Park Hospital Complex). The place is beautifully situated on the Brisbane River. A pretty cottage in this early township was the home of Dr. Stephen Simpson, the first Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Moreton Bay district. He was a man past middle life and a widower, a doctor of medicine, who had travelled much. We greatly enjoyed his interesting accounts of his travels. This was my first experience of bush hospitality; his hearty welcome was delightful. We were made most comfortable; his arrangements were simple but with an air of refinement.

From there it was an easy journey to Ipswich - Limestone as it was then called. Being the head of navigation, it was a busy little town. Goods came up from Brisbane by river and the streets were lined with long teams of bullocks and drays that brought wool, tallow and hides from the interior. They were loaded with necessary goods for the stations; flour, tea and sugar as well as all the contents of a bush store. The inn we stayed at was a rough little place and very rowdy.

We started early next day on our way and a rough way it was over miles of black soil. We followed the bullock driver’s track; it was a feat of dexterity to keep clear of the ruts made by the great wheels of the heavily-laden drays. What impossible looking gullies we crossed with their steep and often slippery banks!...Then we came to wattle-tree (Mimosa) country, poor soil but so pretty .....Now we had rough driving of another kind, for we had to keep zig-zagging to avoid fallen trees. Fortunately there was little fencing in those days, so we had a wide space to choose from. After this we had a few, a very few miles of pretty country and better roads, but soon there was a sad change, when we reached what was called in irony “Bullock’s Delight”. It was a terrible piece of country. Of course we all got out and walked but even that was difficult on the hilly, broken country devastated by floods with deep, dry water courses everywhere. I think there were quite two miles of this. Then we came to the top of the “Big Hill” which we had been climbing all through the “Bullock’s Delight”. It was easy going down the hill. Then we came to the “Flats”; pretty country and easily got over; but it had been a long weary day and it was quite late when we arrived at Wivenhoe Inn....(Wivenhoe Hotel, publican Thomas Birch 1864-65, Government Gazette, 1864, p 1072)
We were off early next morning, a long journey was before us, nowhere that we could stay the night til we reached Cressbrook; there was still descent to be made which was steep and rough. Gradually the road improved and in about an hour we were at the bottom of the hill...We stopped at the house of Major and Mrs. North for lunch. The major had lost a good deal of money by standing as security for a member of his family. He honourably paid his debt and came to Australia trying to retrieve his fortune. Their cottage was bark, with an earthen floor which was very uneven.

After dinner we hurried away, we had to reach Cressbrook if possible before dark......About eight miles from the head station my husband stopped and bade me “Welcome to Cressbrook”; it was the boundary between that and the next station, Mt. Brisbane....

The crossing of Cressbrook creek was beautiful ... but the banks were steep and the crossing difficult. Two and a half miles further on we came to a chain of lagoons.... Here we were met by the super Alpin Cameron, a big burly Scotsman, who gave us a hearty welcome. It cheered me to see a pretty, neat cottage and a well stocked garden with a grapevine. Just in front of the house was a bunya tree planted by my husband in 1843. It is now a giant, called grandfather’s tree. All had been done, in and around the house, to make it a home for gentlefolk. I felt rested, glad and thankful, for after the experience of the last two days I did not know what to expect.”

Another and later account of private travel to supply provisions for the settlers around the Moore district in the 1880’s comes from a privately published manuscript, “Williams of Stonehouse: History of a Pioneering Family in the Brisbane Valley”. This was edited in 1993 by Jan Sked, so that the language is very much more modern than that of Mary McConnel. Stonehouse remains a remarkable example of stonemasonry that served as a coach stop on the Esk-Nanango run from 1884. It was built by Charles and Robert Williams and is the subject of a well known bush ballad of the times.

THE BRISBANE LADIES or THE DROVER
by Saul Mendelsohn

Farewell and adieu to you Brisbane ladies
Farewell and adieu to the girls of Toowong
We’ve sold all our cattle and cannot now linger
But we hope we shall see you again before long

Chorus:
For we rant and we roar like true Queensland drovers
We rant and we roar as onward we push,
Until we return to the ‘old cattle station’,
What joy and delight is a life in the bush.

The first camp we make, is called the Good Luck,
Caboolture and Kilcoy, then Colinton Hut,
We pull up at Stonehouse, Bob Williams paddock.
And early next morning we cross the Blackbutt.
On, on! Past Taromeo and Yarraman Creek boys!
It’s there we’ll make a fine camp for the day,
Where the water and grass are both plenty and good boys.
The life of a drover is merry and gay.

Next night through Nanango, that jolly Old Township,
‘Good day to you, lads’, with a hearty shake hands;
‘Come on this is my shout!’ ‘Well, here’s to our next trip.
And we hope you’ll come back, boys, tonight to our dance’.

Oh the girls look so pretty; the sight is entrancing,
Bewitching and graceful they join in the fun,
The waltz, the polka, first step and all other dancing,
To the old concertina of Jack Smith the Don.

Though far I have travelled through Russia and Finns-land
Have met the famed damsels of Poland and Spain
More lovely and fair are the darlings of Queensland
You may search the wide world for their equals in vain.

Now fill up your glasses and drink to our lasses;
Come sing the loud chorus, sing farewell to all
Until we return to the ‘old cattle station’
Will always be pleased to give you a call.

Later versions of this song are less flattering to Nanango, where Mendelsohn had business interests, and it scans rather better after its popularity ensured its constant repetition throughout Queensland

By all accounts, Robert Williams and his second wife, Kate, were bon vivants, hosting a convivial establishment at Stonehouse and telling a good story. Sked (1993) portrays Robert and Stonehouse as follows:

“Purchasing Trips to Ipswich
Situated many miles from a store, Stonehouse, like many others in isolated situations, was required to maintain its own supplies of essential foodstuffs, and later to supply others individual families before stores were opened in Moore. In order to do this, Robert (Williams) undertook a number of trips each year to Ipswich, using either a horse drawn dray or small wagon.

These purchasing trips did not always pass without incident. They were rather lonely affairs, but there was the odd fellow traveller or two, and there were some overnight stops, such as at Cressbrook Station and Bellevue Station. He would also spend the night at Ned MacDonald’s Royal Hotel at Esk, both travelling to and from Ipswich, or even Brisbane. He and Ned had
much to discuss, in relation to the coaching, and of course Robert enjoyed a good tale and was not at a loss to tell many of his own.

Robert’s Diamonds
There is no doubt that Robert stayed with brother George (at Almondsbury House) on his visits to Ipswich. Mrs. Sydney May (Nellie), one of George’s daughters, was to recall, many years later, that as a child, she used to watch fascinated as Uncle Bob’s diamond ring flashed brilliantly on his little finger, while they were having dinner. It was one of several Robert had acquired during his sojourn in South Africa.

A Sticky Accident
On one of Robert’s journeys to Ipswich (which he later recalled with some relish) he had travelled several miles out of that city on his way home with a load of groceries containing, amongst other things, some 7 lb. tins of treacle. One must remember that at this time roads were almost non-existent, in some cases just two wheel tracks through long grass.

In this instance, while proceeding through long grass, an unseen log caused the dray to almost capsize. The result was a sticky mess of flour and sugar and treacle all mixed up with the long grass. Another man may have acted differently to Robert. He saw a lot of humour in the accident, even though it meant a return to Ipswich for more supplies, before eventually returning to Catherine” (his second wife, ‘Stonehouse Kate’, previously the widow Johnstone) “and Stonehouse”. (p38)

In spite of the parlous state of the roads, Robert Williams’ relative isolation did not protect him from the intrusion of officialdom.

“A Near Disaster
Periodically, Robert had employed aborigines on the property, working at such things as ringbarking, fencing, mustering the cattle and horses. Stonehouse Hotel had been duly licensed in 1880, but there was no record of the license after 1883. It was not renewed after an incident which almost cost Robert (Williams) his life

A group of aborigines was camped on the property near the Hotel, probably on the banks of the creek. Some of them had come to the house, when a rumpus erupted among them and before long one of the men attacked a lubra with an axe. Robert intervened and the axe-swinging gent made Bob the target, aiming the axe at his head. As the axe came down another native grabbed it and deflected it away from Robert, and the axe-man was subdued by members of his own group. So much for domestic disputes, even in 1883.
Stonehouse Loses its Licence
The indigenous people often traded artefacts, cod fish, eels, etc. for items of food and clothing. Perhaps some traveller had exchanged a bottle of rum for some of their offerings, because it had been the rum that had caused the fracas. There was no way that rum had come from the Stonehouse bar. Nevertheless, the incident had occurred on or near Licenced Premises and the result was the cancellation of the Licence.” (p37)

Perhaps Stonehouse could no longer offer alcohol to coach passengers, but it continued to serve as the most important change station for the horses before they climbed the Blackbut range.

The most accessible report of private transport through the Brisbane River Valley comes with the reporting of Premier McIlwraith’s journey from Ipswich to Maryborough in the Queensland Times, (17/3/83).

“From our own correspondent. Esk, Thursday, March 15. “Sir Thomas M’Ilwraith, accompanied by Mr. P. O’Sullivan, M.L.A. left Ipswich at 9 o’clock this morning by Markwell’s four-horse coach. Mr. Alexander Raff was also a passenger, on his way to Colinton Station. The Hon. P. Perkins, driven in a buggy by Mr. R.J. Smith, Land Commissioner, left Ipswich at the same time, the Minister for lands intending to inquire into certain departmental matters respecting reserves and closure of roads in the Esk district. ....... The Ministerial party reached Esk at a quarter to 4 o’clock this afternoon and were met at the hotel (i.e. Ned McDonald’s Royal Hotel, left) by the members of the Divisional Board and a number of residents who received them with cheers.”

This is followed by a second article in the same paper five days later

“(By the Courier’s Special Reporter) FROM ESK TO COLINTON. Sir Thomas M’Ilwraith left Esk in continuation of his journey towards Maryborough, on Friday morning, intending to go as far as Colinton, twenty five miles further on that day. Mr. Perkins returned the same morning to Brisbane. The Premier travelled by a special coach with three horses belonging to Mr. M’Donald, of Esk, and was accompanied by Mr. Alexander Raff, one of the owners of Colinton, Mr. O’ Sullivan and Mr. G. M. Challinor, clerk and inspector for the Esk Divisional Board - a gentleman whose knowledge of the district is very extensive......Sir Thomas M’Ilwraith got away from Esk at 8 o’clock in the morning, a number of the people in the town assembling at M’Donald’s hotel and giving him a farewell cheer as he drove off.

The country beyond Esk is very different from that driven through the greater part of
yesterday, the change being decidedly for the better. Six miles out, Gallanani Creek, a small watercourse, is crossed. Six or eight miles from Esk, after travelling through selected pastoral land, with no signs, however, of habitation, we come to the southern boundary of the celebrated Cressbrook Station, and a few miles further on Cressbrook Creek is reached.

The road between Gallanani and Cressbrook Creeks runs through pretty, gently undulating country with a dark, rich looking soil apparently suitable for anything. The latter creek is rather a bad place to cross, the approaches being steep, and, when in flood, must be difficult to get over. On the right, Mt Beppo is seen as a conspicuous object in the scene and, afterwards, in the same direction, Mt. Brisbane and the ranges, which continue for a long distance up the west bank of the Brisbane. Immediately after crossing Cressbrook Creek the party turned off the road, and as they drove up to the head station, all were struck with the beauty of the scene which presented itself.

After a most enjoyable stay at Cressbrook, lasting from 10 in the morning till 1 p.m., the party made a start for Colinton Station, twelve miles further up the river. The country traversed beyond this is first rate grazing land, but the soil is not so rich as that between Esk and Cressbrook, being of a light loamy description. About seven miles from Cressbrook, Ivory’s Creek is crossed at a spot where Maronghi Creek junctions with it, the two forming a wide bed and the crossing being severe. The “divide” between Cressbrook and Ivory’s Creek is ridgy, and is rough on the horses. The road passes through what is known as Balfour’s Gap, and the ascent, although greatly improved by the Divisional Board, is long and steep. After crossing Ivory’s Creek, the road runs along the west bank of the Brisbane, over small but sharp ridges and gullies, the country to the right and left being hilly and picturesque. On approaching Colinton head station - which was reached at 3 p.m.- travellers have to go right into the bed of the river in order to get over Emu Creek which is too deep to cross higher up.....
The development of the mail coach service

Mail deliveries to these pastoral leases were the responsibility of the N.S.W. government before Separation, and the Queensland government after 1859. In the early years, mail for the Brisbane River Valley was necessarily delivered by horse or packhorse once a week, because there were no roads to carry other forms of transport. The early mail contractors from Ipswich to Nanango were Jacob Goode (1856), Peter Gentle (1859), Thomas Birch (1866), Patrick McCallum (1868), and Hiram Wakefield (1870) who should not be confused with Hiram Barnes of Cobb & Co. fame. Jacob Goode simply delivered between “Ipswich and Burnett Inn”, otherwise known as Goode’s Inn, and presumably to all stops in between (see previous map) although the names of these station stops appear to have been unknown to the distant N.S.W. government of the day. By 28 October, 1859 Peter Gentle was travelling to and from North Brisbane to Nenango (sic!) (Burnet Inn), where North Brisbane can be translated as Ipswich in the route details of the mail contract. After separation the following year, the route from Ipswich to Nanango was specified as passing Wivenhoe, Cressbrook, Colinton & Taromeo stations and/or going via Brisbane & Durunder to Colinton Station “if required” (1865).

By 1863 the roads in the Brisbane River Valley were the subject of considerable loan monies from the fledgling colony. The following is an extract from the Supplement to the Government Gazette of Saturday 17th October, 1863.

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<tr>
<td>For Road to the Burnett via Durundur, including bridge across North Pine and Invert across South Burnett</td>
<td>£2900 0 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>For cutting at Balfour’s Range en route to Nanango</td>
<td>£750 0 0</td>
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The Balfour Range was named after the Balfour brothers who selected Colinton Station, and has since been renamed Blackbutt Range. This cutting proved providential for the only bushranger to operate within the Brisbane River Valley. This was the Wild Scotsman, James McPherson originally from Cressbrook Station, who held up a fellow Scot, the mailman
Patrick McCallum, no less than three times. His is an interesting story of man’s humanity to man when the McConnel and Somerset families sought the Wild Scotsman’s release from gaol and provided him with a job as head stockman on Mt. Marlow Station with H.P. Somerset as manager.  

In 1868 Patrick McCallum won two mail contracts: between Ipswich & Nanango and between Gayndah & Nanango. It seems certain that his brother Alex helped out on the Ipswich-Nanango route, with a story of the dangers faced by these lone mailmen reprinted from the Brisbane Courier, 11 August, 1869.

“Alexander McCallum, the Nanango and Ipswich mailman, states that when coming from the former place on Sunday afternoon with the mail, he observed a diamond snake in the road between Mt. Brisbane and Wivenhoe, and before he could pull up the mare he was riding stepped upon it and was bitten on the fetlock. He dismounted to kill the reptile, which turned upon him and bit his legging, leaving the impression of its fangs. When killed it was found to be 9 feet 6 inches (290 cms). The mare dropped dead about five minutes after being bitten”.

It is reasonable to assume that there was a pack horse to ensure that the mail, and the mailman, could still get through.

Ten years later (1879) Ed. McDonald, licensee of the Royal Hotel, Esk, was still delivering mail from Esk to Nanango by horse according to the terms of Mail Contract No. 87 which he held until 1884. He was, therefore, an experienced driver for the Premier on his trip to Colinton station in 1883. There are no records of the successful mail tender in 1885.

However, there is a report from the Brisbane Courier, Friday, August 1, 1884 that reads as follows:

“NANANGO (FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT) July 27. The first bi-weekly coach arrived here, via Esk, with the mails on Thursday. This will be a great boon, and credit is due to the Postal Department for their promptness in establishing this service twice a week.”

There is nothing to support the assertion that this was Ed McDonald’s coach, although it is more than probable that it was because the next contract for 1887 was won by Ed. McDonald for delivery of mail from Esk to Nanango by coach for the following 2 years. He enjoyed a monopoly on this run until 1892, when it was taken over by Alex McCallum who still offered a Royal Mail coach service from Kannangur (now Yimbin) to Nanango until 1910. The golden era of Royal Mail coach services beyond Esk and into the Brisbane River Valley had begun.

The development of passenger coach services went hand in hand with closer settlement following the required breaking up of the large pastoral leases. But successful settlement also

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4 Patrick Hubert McCarthy (1975), The Wild Scotsman, a biography of James McPherson Hawthorn Press, Melbourne
provided the impetus for railway services that proved the death knell for the coach. As trains moved significant numbers of people beyond the larger regional settlements, there was an expectation that some of these passengers would need to move “farther out” beyond the rail terminus. Wealthier families like the McConnel’s of Cressbrook had sulkies, buggies and phaetons and established settlers, like Robert Williams of Stonehouse had wagons or drays. Teamsters’ bullock wagons carried building materials and produce and those who could afford it rode a horse. Others simply walked. But land resettlement and prosperity brought buyers, entrepreneurs, professional people, bankers and larrikins with an eye to the main chance, and they all appreciated the relative comfort of coach travel.

The railway line crept slowly out of Ipswich and up the Brisbane River Valley towards the Blackbutt ranges. The section between Wulkuraka and Lowood was opened on 16 June, 1884. Two years later the train reached Esk (9 August, 1886). A passenger service to Newton (renamed Ottaba) and Cressbrook (renamed Toogoolawah) was established by February, 1904 and extended to Moorabool, (renamed Kannangur and then Yimbun) by 1 September, 1904. It was not until 8 May, 1911 that there was a rail link through Linville to Benarkin and two years later the train terminus was Yarraman (1 May, 1913).

Before Federation the train line had only reached Esk in the Brisbane Valley, and passengers still relied on coaches to carry them over the dangerous Blackbutt range to Nanango. Who would find the expense of maintaining a passenger coach for an unpredictable and somewhat motley crew a worthwhile investment in the Brisbane River Valley? In the first instance it was likely to be the local mail contractor who had won his contract for a one to three year term, knowing that priority would be given to a coach service! Secondly it was the kind of service that hoteliers or inn keepers would provide for their patrons to encourage their continued patronage. In the case of the Brisbane River Valley both functions were sometimes served simultaneously.

In 1882 the Government Gazette records Joseph Christey, of Ipswich, as having won the mail contract to deliver mail and parcels by coach three times a week in the lower part of the valley between Ipswich and Esk via Fernvale, Wivenhoe and Bellevue for three years from 1883-1885. There were certainly private coaches running this route, the Premier having travelled in Benjamin Markwell’s four horse coach to Esk in 1883. But Christie’s coach appears to be the first record of coach travel between Ipswich and Esk with a mail contract. His initiative
was to be short lived because the railway arrived at Esk on 9th August, 1886, carrying with it all future mail contracts to the town. Only mail contracts beyond Esk in the Brisbane River Valley were now available for private tender.

Little is known of Joseph Christey, and between 1829 and 1889 there is no official record of a birth, death or marriage of someone of that name. There is, however, one record of the birth of a boy, Sidney Harold Christopher Christy, (22/02/1888), born to a Joseph Christy and Johannah Bourke who died ten weeks later on 8 May, 1888. There is no record of his burial in the Esk cemetery. There is just the possibility that this may have been the son of the first Royal Mail coachman to Esk from 1883-1885, whose name disappears from official records after this time.

With the railway carrying both passengers and mail from Ipswich to Esk by 1886, there was no longer a need for Markwell’s coach that the Premier had used three years earlier. The Queensland reports from Fernvale that, “On the opening of the Esk Railway, Mr. Markwell’s coach must, of course, travel elsewhere. A petition has been sent to the Postmaster General, asking for a mail coach from Mount Brisbane to Fernvale.” Sometime later the same paper reports that, “A new coach is going to run between Fernvale and Mount Brisbane, to meet the midday trains.” Perhaps Markwell’s coach did adopt the proposed route, and it may even have carried the mail from the midday trains, but the contractor who formally won that mail contract in 1887 was J. Cronin of Fernvale, and the contract was for delivery by horse.

It is also possible that Benjamin Markwell moved out of the coach business altogether, because, by 1889 he is recorded in the Queensland Post Office Directory as “hotelkeeper, Esk”. His publican’s license was granted in that year for the Commercial Hotel, Esk, and he remained in that role from 1889 – 1894. He went in to liquidation in 1891 and was still delivering the mail when he died on 14 September 1921. His wife Frances wrote the following letter to the Postmaster General after Benjamin Markwell’s death.

“Esk, Sept. 20 1921 To the Deputy Postmaster General, Dear Sir, I wish to advise you of the death of my husband Benjamin Markwell which took place on Sept. 14 at Ingarfall Private Hospital, Brisbane. I trust you will allow me to continue on the Mail Service “No 574” for the next few months when I trust my son will be fortunate enough to get the new tender. Sincerely Yours, Frances Mary Markwell.”

Mail service No 574 delivered mail between Esk & Kilcoy via Murrumba, Coal Creek, Crossdale, Mt. Brisbane, Brown & Broad’s Sawmill, Mt. Byron, Brown & Broad’s Sawmill & Hazledean and had been delivered by sulky by Alex McCallum for the last time in 1913. After this time Harry Bailes delivered the mail by motor vehicle until Benjamin Markwell won the contract for that mail run that he was fulfilling at his death.

5 Queensland, 12/6/1886, p
6 Queensland, 27/11/1886, p
7 Brisbane Courier, 6/7/1891, p4
One year after Ed McDonald had driven Premier McIlwraith in his “special coach” to Colinton and one year after Joseph Christey had introduced a Royal Mail coach to deliver mail between Ipswich and Esk, Ed McDonald provided a Royal Mail service between Esk and the northern part of the Brisbane River Valley, delivering to Nanango in 1884. Public transportation along the whole of the Brisbane River Valley was now a reality.
THE COACHING FAMILIES

There were at least four families that provided coach services through the Brisbane River Valley before Federation, and their names were Christy, Markwell, McDonald & McCallum. This chapter documents what records are left of their contribution to the development of the Brisbane River Valley.

Joseph Christy has already been mentioned as the successful mail contractor for the delivery of mail by Coach from Ipswich to Esk via Fernvale, Wivenhoe and Bellevue from 1883-86. His was the last mail coach service to Esk before the trains arrived in 1886, and Christy’s coach provided passengers with a choice of travelling with the Royal Mail or by Markwell’s passenger coach from Ipswich. Benjamin Markwell’s coach will be discussed later in the chapter. During the three years of Christy’s mail contract, the Wulkuraka to Lowood section of the railway line was opened on 16 June, 1884 and construction on the Lowood to Esk line was completed on 9 August, 1886. After this time, the mail was carried by the railways and mail coaches used to transport passengers and mail from Ipswich to Esk were moved elsewhere.

Some passenger coaches probably remained for a short while after the rail line went through, but, without the lucrative mail contracts or the lion’s share of the passenger service, the business became uneconomic so that when H. E. Flowers came to Toogoolawah for the first time in 1906 as an assistant to the Manager of the National Bank there, the only public transport available to him was the train.8

There is another passing reference to a Christy in the district who, with Jack Milner, hauled bricks made at Dinmore from Esk by dray, possibly to build the bread oven at Caboonbah, the home of Katharine & Henry Plantagenet Somerset. This homestead was completed in 1889. Unfortunately this reference is undated but it was recorded that Christy’s partner, Mr. John (Jack) Milner, was working as a bullock driver at Ivory’s Creek in the 1880s and that he later owned a dairy farm at Lower Cressbrook.9 His daughter married one of Ned McDonald’s mail coach drivers. Joseph Christie leaves no other record in the district. There is a record of a son Sidney Harold Christopher Christie being born to a Joseph and Johannah Christie on 22 February, 1888 who died on 8 May of the same year. Neither he nor any other member of the Christie family is recorded in the cemeteries in the Esk Shire, and Joseph Christie disappears from recorded history in the district with his last mail coach run to Esk in 1886.

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9 Queensland Times, 18/7/1971
While Joseph Christie was transporting Her Majesty’s mail by coach from Ipswich to Esk, Benjamin Markwell was carrying more august passengers. On Thursday March 15, 1883 his “four horse coach” carried the Premier of Queensland, Sir Thomas McIwraith, together with Mr. P. O’Sullivan, MLA and Mr. George Raff of Colinton station from Ipswich to Esk on the Premier’s tour of inspection. It seems that this coach service was a well established one at that time and certainly continued until June 1886 where it was reported that, “On the opening of the Esk Railway, Mr. Markwell’s coach must, of course, travel elsewhere”. The source of this report was Fernvale and it was followed by a later report that, “A new coach is going to run between Fernvale and Mount Brisbane to meet the midday trains”. The centrality of Fernvale to these reports suggests that Markwell’s coach service served the Brisbane River Valley from there. By 1887 the mail contract for Fernvale and Mount Brisbane via Wivenhoe, Dundas and Deep Creek was awarded to J. Cronin for delivery by horse, so that either the coach route had already been discontinued or had proven unprofitable without the mail contract. There is no further record of Benjamin Markwell as a coach owner or driver at that time.

Unlike Joseph Christy, however, he does not disappear from the Brisbane River Valley. In 1884 it had been reported that “Mr. M’Donald is getting an addition made to his (Esk) hotel and Mr. Thomas Webb of Ipswich is erecting a new one”. This new hotel in Esk was the Commercial Hotel. It was finished in 1885 and first licensed in the same year to its owner, Thomas Webb, who held the license until 1888. Its second licensee was Benjamin Markwell who is recorded as a hotel keeper, Esk, in the Qld. Post Office Directories of 1889 and 1890 and held the licence until 1894. At the turn of the last century, “Mr Ben Markwell, who previously had kept a hotel, then lived in the cottage subsequently owned by Mr. W.H. Tapsall, and now the property of the Esk Co-Operative Dairy Association.” By 1910 Ben Markwell was driving a cream wagon to the Esk Co-operative Butter Factory on a regular basis, along with Harry Williams, John Perkins, Stewart Markwell, Lois Lorensen and George Crosby. It is likely that Stewart Markwell is Benjamin Markwell’s youngest son, Claude Stuart, born to Benjamin and Frances Mary Thorn on 2 May 1885. They had four children, three boys and a girl, but only Claude Stuart and Samuel John (born 30 April, 1884) survived. Claude was killed in action at Villers Brettonieux in 1918.

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10 Brisbane Courier, 17/3/1883, p6
11 Queensland, 12/6/1886, p928
12 Queensland, 27/11/1886, p 847
13 Queensland Times, 4/12/1884, p5
14 Stanley Bulletin 26/11/1948
Benjamin Markwell’s wife used Thorn as her family name on her marriage certificate but Smith on the birth certificates of all of her children. Thorn or Thorne is a famous name in the hotel industry in Queensland with George Thorn as the first licensee of the first hotel in Ipswich (Palais Royal) which he ran from 1843 to 1844 and then as the Queen’s Arms until 1847. Frances Markwell was the widow of Charles Thorn whom she had married in 1867 and the mother of his four children on her marriage to Benjamin Markwell. One of her children, Ronald Charles Simon Thorn, later became the first proprietor of the Moorabool Hotel at Yimbun outside Toogoolawah that was the railway terminus for the Brisbane Valley branch line for many years. Its second proprietor, Alex McCallum had mail contracts from the rail terminus to Nanango until the line reached Linville in 1913.

The very early hotels around Esk in the Brisbane River Valley deserve some mention because they served as welcome breaks for coach travellers and bullock drivers alike after weary hours on makeshift roads. The first hotel was the Glen Rock and licensed from 1872 to 1882. It was described in the Register of Hoteliers as located on “Sandy Creek (Gallinani), Mt. Esk-Cressbrook/Burnett Roads”, and seems to have vanished without trace. It may have been the “accommodation house” noted by Surveyor Stringfellow in his “Report on Roads: Ipswich to Nanango” prepared for Charles Tiffin Esq., Superintendent of Roads & Buildings, Brisbane on 22 March, 1870. This building was situated on the Ipswich side of Sandy Creek 15 miles from Cressbrook and on the other side of the creek from the turnoff to Mount Esk station which was 6 miles distant. Before the coming of the railway most of the buildings in the developing township of Esk were situated on the Ipswich side of Sandy Creek, “where (later) the post office, police station, School of Arts, Queensland National Bank, McDonald’s Hotel, Thompson and Francis’s and J.M. Chaillé’s store, McFarlane’s bakery, a butchery, Edwin Broad’s smithy and other buildings were situated.”

The second licensed premises at Esk was the previously mentioned Ed McDonald’s Royal Hotel (East side Sandy Creek), first licensed in 1876 and the original passenger terminal of the first royal mail coach to Nanango in 1884. In 1878 another hotel was established on “Brisbane River at Sandy Creek, 3 mls on Wivenhoe Road” called the Travellers’ Rest or the Travellers’ Home. The license for this hotel lapsed in 1884 and a new license was issued to Ben Slack for the Wivenhoe Inn in 1885. Two of the licensees of the Travellers’ Rest were Elizabeth and Adam Hay and the second licensee of the Wivenhoe Hotel was Jas Hay. It is at least worth hypothesising that the two names refer to the same premises. This is supported by a report of Mary McConnel, chatelaine of Cressbrook Station, who recalled staying at “Wivenhoe Inn” on her way to Cressbrook homestead for the first time probably in the very late 1840s although there is no official record of such an hotel until 1885.

15 J Stringfellow, March 22, 1890, “Surveyor’s Report on Roads: Ipswich to Nanango and on to Jondaryan”. State Archives: WOR/A22, 461/70
16 Stanley Bulletin, 26/11/1948
17 Mary McConnel. “Queensland Reminiscences 1840-1879: Memories of Days Long Gone By”, John
It is a pity that the licensees of the Wivenhoe Inn cannot easily be identified, because Mary McConnel made the judgement that, “The man and his wife who kept the Wivenhoe Inn seemed quite respectable”.\textsuperscript{18} She also provided a fairly comprehensive description of this hotel. There was a private and a public dining room, incompletely separated from each other by a wooden partition only 6 feet high. The walls of the bedrooms were no higher and it was therefore a noisy place at night. It was frequented by bullock drivers, had a thatched roof and kept a good table so that the McConnels were served, “our supper of a fine ham, new-laid eggs, good bread and delicious butter.”\textsuperscript{19} At least between 1883 and 1886 the Wivenhoe Inn also provided a rest for the coach horses on Joseph Christy’s Ipswich to Esk mail run.

\textbf{Ned McDonald & the Royal Hotel}

But it is to the Royal Hotel, Esk that we must return to take up the history of coaching families in the Brisbane Valley before Federation. This hotel was licensed in 1876 to Edward (Ned) McDonald and remained so until his death in 1899 with the exception of 1888, when the license was transferred to John Fitzgerald. Ned McDonald had married Catherine Kavanagh on 13 December, 1865 and was at that time working on Cressbrook Station.\textsuperscript{20} Both Catherine and Ned had been born in Wexford, Ireland, and they were both 27 at the time of their marriage. The year after their marriage their son, Richard, was born (19/9/1866) and

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Oxley Library
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\textsuperscript{18} Mary McConnel. “Queensland Reminiscences 1840-1879: Memories of Days Long Gone By”, John
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid
two years later a daughter, Mary Bridget (23/8/1868) A second daughter Elizabeth was born in 1872 and a second son, Edward John Joseph was born on 21 November, 1875. Edward died eight months later (4/8/1876). In May of that same year Ned McDonald became the owner and licensee of the Royal Hotel, competing with the Glen Rock for the teamsters' custom.

Ned McDonald’s license was advertised in the Government Gazette, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Treasury</th>
<th>Queensland, 8th June, 1876</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is hereby notified for general information, that Licenses from the Treasury have been issued to the undermentioned persons during the month of May, 1876</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James R. Dickson, Colonial Treasurer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Spirit Dealers (to 30 June, 1876)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDonald</td>
<td>Ed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the same year Ned is recorded as holding the license for the Sportsman’s Arms Hotel, Ipswich. The previous licensee of this hotel had been a John McDonald who had held the license from 1868 to 1876, and Ned had at least four brothers in Queensland: John, Charles, Mark and William. John McDonald died on 21 November, 1877 by which time the license for the Sportsman’s Arms Hotel had been transferred to George Thain. It is likely that Ned McDonald responded to a cry for help from a sick brother in Ipswich while the Royal Hotel was being built at Esk.

According to Ruth Kerr (1988), the description of the Royal Hotel that Ned McDonald built on Sandy Creek was, “forty eight feet by twenty eight feet, well built with large bar with billiard and bagatelle tables, dining and parlour rooms and six bedrooms.” In 1901, when probate was granted on his will, fittings in the Hotel were valued at £13/3/6 and in the Billiard Room at £82/10/0. His furniture was valued at £287/2/6.

Ned McDonald proved a popular and genial host, according to Robert Williams, owner and licensee of Stonehouse from 1880 to 1883, the next stop for mail coaches after Cressbrook Station on the way to Nanango. As one of his responsibilities as a publican, Ned gave his time to public and community service. For example, the Queensland Times, 3/7/1877 carried an advertisement that a public meeting was to be held at the Royal Hotel, Esk on 7 July to petition the government to survey for a railway to the township. This was achieved in just nine years at the enormous cost of £100,129/17/2, giving some idea of the anticipated economic benefits to Queensland of a rail line into the Brisbane River Valley.

It is always in a publican’s best interest to encourage community involvement, and a year after taking out his license Edward McDonald took a leaf out of his opposition’s notebook with his support of the Mount Esk Cricket Club. It was reported that, “The Mount Esk cricketers organised a cricket match at Esk on Easter Monday 1877. They retired to Mrs. Moor’s Glen Rock Hotel for refreshments and an all-night ball. The next month Edward McDonald of the Royal Hotel sponsored a game between Esk and All-Comers.”

Mrs. Mary Moore was the licensee of the Glen Rock hotel for only the one year of 1877 after her husband had been licensee from 1874 to 1877, and she is recorded as transferring her license to Jas. Geo. Percy during that year. It seems likely that she was a widow, having the license transferred to her name on the death of her husband, and continuing in one of the few businesses women were legally able to conduct until she could find a suitable buyer. Women could legally own both hotels and butcher shops, (although they were not able to work in the latter for many years), perhaps because they were considered ‘essential services’ whose continuity was essential to the wellbeing of the community.

On 8 June, 1878 the new Manchester Unity Lodge of Oddfellows was formed at McDonald’s Hotel. Eighteen members were initiated in September, but Ed. McDonald was not among their number, perhaps because he was a Roman Catholic. The luncheon provided for their invited guest, Brother E.H. Blunt from Ipswich was provided by G.D. Peters at the Esk Hotel and not the Royal. In fact, G.D. Peters was recorded as the licensee of the Glen Rock hotel in 1878, and it seems likely that the colloquial name for Ned McDonald’s opposition at that time was the Esk Hotel. George Peters, publican, was also a foundation member of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Esk.

In 1878, just eighteen months after becoming an hotel keeper, Ned McDonald had won a two year mail contact to deliver mail by horse to Mt. Esk and Deep Creek via Mt. Brisbane and the following year he won mail contract 87 to deliver mail by horse for two years between Esk and Nanango via Cressbrook, Colinton and Taromeo. McDonald held this contract for a staggering 15 years until 1893 and it was this mail service that was the first one to be served by a mail coach right through the Brisbane River Valley. This coach service provided a link with the already established rail service to Esk and ensured public transport through the whole of the Brisbane River Valley, from Esk to Nanango and from there to the Darling Downs.

During the Christmas break of 1878, or perhaps as a celebration of the New Year, McDonald served as Treasurer for a Mount Esk Race Meeting reported by the Ipswich Observer, 1879. The most anticipated contest of the day was between W. Thorn’s black horse “Flemington” and R. North’s horse “Spondulex”, who was beaten by the black on all three occasions they

met. In dreadful conditions and on a very heavy track, Flemington carrying 7 stone 6lbs and the “Spon” carrying 8 stone 10lbs raced for a mile and a quarter, two miles and then one mile in the same afternoon.

This race meeting recalls a stanza from Banjo Patterson’s poem “Pardon, the Son of Reprieve”:

“Your five furlong vermin that scamper half a mile with their featherweight up,
Wouldn’t earn very much of their damper in a race like the President’s Cup.
Five miles in five heats, Ay my sonny, the horses in those days were stout,
They had to run well to earn money. I don’t see such horses about.”

The purse of 12 sovereigns for the principal race of the day was won by W. Thorn, but the canny publican of the Royal Hotel may have received a generous share of this. The Ipswich Observer finishes the report as follows: “The catering portion of the day’s proceedings was entrusted to Mr. Edward M’Donald, of the Royal Hotel, and at his house the settling was held, everything being carried off with the greatest possible éclat. A grand dinner and ball wound up the evening very pleasantly and the Mount Esk sportsmen felt highly satisfied with their success.”

There are few photos of McDonald’s Royal Hotel, and it was “burned to the ground” at 2:30 a.m. on Friday, 16 March, 1917. The only photo held in the John Oxley Library shows a long, low unprepossessing building with two sets of two steps onto a mostly open verandah screened from the sun by matchstick blinds. The stumps are wooden and capped and there are boards along the edge of the hotel between the ground and the verandah floor. Where the verandah is open, the rooms open on to it with French doors. Where the verandah is railed it has a sturdy painted wooden railing with a gate above the stairs. The pitch of the roof is low and it is made of corrugated iron. Ruth Kerr’s description of the hotel had suggested a building “forty eight feet by twenty eight feet.”

From the photo, the outside weatherboards of the hotel appear to be between 9 and 12 inches wide and laid horizontally without any apparent external bracing. The foreground is dirt and fairly wide, and there is no sign of Glen Esk in the background, as there should be because the hotel was facing the road in its present position. The Presbyterian Church and the residence on either side of the hotel site also face the highway. Other photos show that this is a photo of the front of the hotel and the wide expanse of dirt road in front of the verandah was certainly wide enough to turn the mail coaches there if necessary.

There are three unidentified people in this photo of the Royal Hotel; an older man in a suit

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25 Ipswich Observer, 4/1/1879
26 Queensland Times, 19/3/1917, p3
and a much younger and more fashionable one in knee boots, waistcoat and watch chain as well as a buxom woman with a smooth oval face in a dark dress and a long white apron. The swashbuckling young man on the right with what looks like a long white scarf around his neck and tucked into his waistcoat could also be one of Ned McDonald’s coach drivers. Records are available for Tommy Tudor and Willie Gillespie.

Ned McDonald’s Coach Drivers
According to George Launder, long time Toogoolawah Station Master, Tommy Tudor was the first of Ned’s coach drivers and his is an interesting story. His birth was not registered in Australia but he was thought to have been born about 1861. He would then have been a young man of 16 when he joined Ernest Favenc in his explorations of the possibility of a Railway from Queensland to Darwin in the Northern territory (1877-79). Favenc was a German educated English immigrant who worked as a journalist. He had acquired his bush skills working on Northern Queensland properties and was chosen to lead the expedition for this reason.

Favenc published several historical texts about early explorers and their explorations but he is best known for his works of fiction set in the Australian wilderness. They were popular in their day and are now so politically incorrect as to be funny – including details of a lost civilization of “the bloodthirsty Warlattas” and the haunt of the Jinkarras who were indigenous tribes with lots of hair and TAILS. At least we can be certain that Tommy Tudor would have entertained his passengers sitting beside the driver from Esk to Nanango and probably justified the increased price of the ticket.

Tom Tudor was back in Queensland by 1883 when he married Maria Clara Downes in August of that year. Little is known about either of them except that Tudor is likely to have started driving for Ned McDonald about 1884 and that his selection of 160 acres at Biarra outside Esk was conditionally approved in 1886. Sadly his wife became unwell and was reported as dying in the arms of Mrs. Markwell, Esk in March, 1888. They had no children. George Launder suggested that it was at this point that Willie Gillespie took over the reins. Tom Tudor did not stray far from the Brisbane Valley and he remarried in June 1910. His second wife was Marie Cesarine Paroz and in August 1913 his application for 90 acres of farm land at Nanango was accepted. His second wife died in 1932 and is buried in the Nanango cemetery. Tom Tudor died in 1941.

Fortunately Tom left some of the more lurid stories of his coaching days and several have also been reported by the newspapers of the day.

"We had more rain in those days than we get now”, said Mr Tudor, "and we were often held

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28 Queensland Times 13/7/1950, p2
29 Queenslander, 10/4/1886, p593
30 Queensland Times, 10/3/1888, p3
31 Maryborough Chronicle, 25/8/1913, p5
up by flooded rivers and creeks. I was taking a party to the Brisbane Exhibition on one occasion when we encountered a flooded creek between Colinton and Stonehouse. The waters were tearing down Wallaby Creek, and the coach and all concerned were washed into the torrent. A lad named Wagner who, I understand, was an orphan boy, was drowned. His body was recovered by the police and buried at Colinton Station. Three of my four horses were drowned and other property lost. Yes, floods were a worry in those old coaching days - flooding waters and bogs."

The Rockhampton Morning Bulletin32 (15/8/1887) recorded Tom Tudor’s story at the time.

Another of his stories involves a compensation claim. Mr Tudor remembers a day when the coach was upset on the Blackbutt Range, a man's leg being broken. The fact that the accident cost him 50 pounds as compensation to the injured man had fixed it in his mind. "That was a dear trip over a slippery road", he said.

This was recorded thus in the Queensland Times (1888).33

“LOCAL AND GENERAL NEWS. As M'Donald's mail-coach was on its way from Nanango to Esk, on the 1st instant, it capsized near the Stony Pinch, a few miles above Stone House, and between that place and Taromeo. The driver, Tom Tudor, and the black boy who travels with him escaped unhurt. There were two passengers in the vehicle, and one of them, Mr. Richard Graham, of the Star Hotel, Nanango, got off with a few bruises and scratches, but the other, a middle-aged man, named M'Donald, who has been prospecting at the Seven-mile, near Nanango, for a Brisbane syndicate had his right thigh broken. Neither coach nor harness was damaged to any extent, and things were soon righted in readiness for the resumption of the trip, but M'Donald declined to take the coach again. A spring-cart, however, was sent from Mr. R. Williams's, of Stone House, for him, and in it he was taken to Esk. Thence he was taken by train to Brisbane, where, we understand, he has a brother residing."

Apparently broken legs were a commonplace coaching accident for passengers, and a similar story was recorded in the Newcastle Morning Herald34 in 1893 when the mail contract had been won by Alex McCallum. “COACH ACCIDENT. A telegram from Nanango states that the mail coach to Esk yesterday was smashed to pieces through the horse bolting down a range. Mr. Zieman, a commercial traveller, had a leg broken, and was otherwise injured.”

Tom Tudor may have continued to drive for Ned McDonald until 1890 because it is not until 1891 that we hear of Mr. Gillespie as the Esk-Nanango coach driver. And again there was an accident. “MOUNT BEPPO (FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.).....The coach from Esk to Nanango very nearly went over Cressbrook Creek Bridge. Through a Salvation Army Redcoat sitting upon the sleepers, the off-side leader shied and capsized the whole turnout, the driver (Gillespie) landing upon his feet, reins in hand. No harm was done to the passengers, though the roof of the coach was smashed up.”35

Although Willie Gillespie could only have driven the Royal Mail from 1889 at the earliest until the end of 1892, he was described as a careful driver and was obliged to move “farther out” when Ned McDonald did not tender for the mail run to Nanango because the Queensland Treasury was effectively empty. He was native born and his early life is better documented that Tom Tudor’s.

32 Rockhampton Morning Bulletin, 15/8/1887, p5
33 Queensland Times, 10/5/1888, p5
34 Newcastle Morning Herald, 13/11/1893, p5
35 Queensland Times, 22/10/1891, p
William Gillespie was born in 1867, the second son of Joseph and Sarah Gillespie who were living at Cressbrook Station when their eldest son, James, was born in 1865. Joseph was established as a storekeeper in Nanango by 1870 when he was forced into bankruptcy in that year and seems to have moved to Yarraman Creek where his younger children are listed on potential scholars at the new school there. William Gillespie may well have been working back in the Cressbrook area where he met and married the daughter of a carrier there (Mary Ann Milner) in 1890. But he was living in Nanango when he drove for Ned McDonald until 1892 after which he became a “Cobb’s Coach” man. He drove for Cobb & Co. between Hughendon and Winton in 1893 as well as Isisford and Ilfracombe and lost his first daughter to typhoid in July 1893 while he was first living in Hughendon.

William’s wife (Mary Eliza) became the licensee of the Ilfracombe Hotel in 1897 that was burned, rebuilt and relocated while serving as the headquarters of the Progress Association and the Amateur Turf Club. William continued driving coaches for Cobb & Co. until 1913 although he was also driving for Ellis Sutton at the same time and it was in his employ that he drove the first motor mail lorry in Queensland. He left Cobb & Co. to establish his own carrier business in 1912/13 which he operated until the death of his wife in 1939, after which he left Ilfracombe where he had lived for 44 years to stay with his daughter in Brisbane.

By any standards William Gillespie’s story was a success story. He was called “Wizard” (i.e. Wizard of the West) because of his ability to handle horses. He found the resources to send his daughter Ivy to the Maryborough Girls Grammar School with a scholarship, and was so excited that the family gave a dance in the local hall to honour the occasion. History is silent on their responses to her passing the Junior exams and the Senior exams with an extended scholarship and her appointment to the staff of the Maryborough Girls Grammar School. William Gillespie became a Justice of the Peace, a starter at the racecourse and generally

36 Queenslander, 12/9/1897, p1272
37 Longreach Leader, 3/10/1930, p25; Queenslander, 30/5/1935, p18;
38 Western Champion (Barcaldine) 13/7/10, p10
39 Capricornian, 3/3/1927, p50
Ilfracolme’s representative in the region. He was also playing as a forward in a ‘friendly’ game between local rugby league officials and a local B-grade team in 1936 aged 69 under the pseudonym “Midnight Express”.40 He won fourth prize in the Golden Casket41 in 1937 and lived a full life until his death in 1953 aged 86. His obituary “mourn(s) the passing of a ‘grand old man’”.42

The Royal Hotel again

There is a persistent oral history that Ned McDonald’s Royal hotel was not, in fact, “burned to the ground”, and that the private residence now located next to the original hotel residence is half of the hotel that was saved from the fire. There is another story that what was left of the burned building was transferred to another site near the Commercial Hotel. No evidence has been found to date to verify either of these stories.

This photo of the Royal Hotel described previously is dated about 1899. Several momentous things happened to the McDonald family in 1899. On 16 September, Ned McDonald died at Esk, of nephritis & pneumonia. Less than two months later (6 November) Ned’s widow also died at Esk, but this is not a photo of a family in mourning. It would be tempting to identify the subjects in the photo as Ned McDonald and two of his unmarried children, Richard and Mary or Elizabeth in 1899, but Richard had pre-deceased his parents and his death was registered in 1895. He had died of an epileptic fit at 26. If it is a family photo including Richard it was taken before that time.

The Royal hotel was sold on Ned’s death to M. Callaghan who became its licensee from 1901-1905. He still owned the premises at the time of the fire, premises that “were insured for between £600 and £700”.43 Luckily the publican’s residence built beside the Royal Hotel was not burned with the hotel, and remains today with little structural changes. It was photographed in 1974 from the existing Esk-Nanango Road with Glen Esk in the background. It shows a four roomed cottage with a steeply pitched roof surrounded on three sides with what are now enclosed verandahs but which were once open. Like the hotel it is low set and built of the same wide weatherboards that appear on the hotel photograph, but there is significant external bracing of this timber that can be inside the verandah, just like the Pioneer Hotel, Linville.

There is a main door leading on to a passage that bisects the house with two bedrooms on the left hand side and a large lounge room and smaller dining room on the other side. There is no evidence of an original kitchen, although later owners have enclosed one end of the verandah off the dining room for this purpose. There is still evidence of a very large fireplace that

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40 Longreach Leader, 15/8/1936, p18
41 Longreach Leader, 24/4/1937, p14
42 Longreach Leader, 18/12/1953, p8
43 Queensland Times, 19/3/1917, p3
served the lounge room and has since been dismantled. All the rooms lead onto the verandahs through French doors as shown in the hotel photo. It was in this building that the settling for the Mount Esk Races took place in early January, 1879; a building that was 138 years old in 2014.

A panorama of Esk township, taken about 1909 from Glen Esk, shows both the Royal Hotel and the residence beside it joined by what appears to be a covered way, along which, perhaps, food was delivered to the residence from the hotel kitchen, explaining why there is no old kitchen in the original building. The buildings are very close together and there is a brick construction with a chimney clearly shown behind the residence. Some of the bricks from this structure are still visible today and its floor space was no more than 2 square yards. The back view of the hotel is obliterated by trees and out-buildings, but the whole structure appears to be a little longer than the church next to it. There are at least two building blocks between the hotel and the church and no clear evidence of stables or coach houses although the railway was the most popular means of transport to and from Esk after 1886 and these buildings may have been demolished. There is still clear evidence of the foundations of a bricked room, thought to be the hotel cellar, in the grounds of the allotment next to the hotel residence. Bottles, burned glass, crockery and harness buckles have all been recovered from the grounds.

Four years after the Mount Esk races in 1879 described previously, the district was experiencing drought, but the licensee of the Royal Hotel appeared to be prospering. In 1882 he is listed among, “Selectors in the Parish of Esk (who) included G.H. Wilson, J. Beer, E. McDonald, W. Daniels, P. Lawlor, R. Price, J. Henderson, G. Smith Snr. and Jnr, R. McGrory, T. Peters, J. Clifford and H. McKay.” A cadastral map of the parishes of Esk and Cressbrook used by the Railway Department to indicate where the railway line would run from Esk to its terminus at Yimbun shows E. McDonald owning 162 acres of land outside Esk parallel to the old road to Ipswich and backing on to early subdivisions of the Bigge properties. It is actually subdivision 13 with Francis Bigge’s 3568 acres on one side, T. Nicholson’s 703 acres on the other and four subdivisions apparently bought back by F.E. Bigge from his original property between McDonald and Esk Creek.

By 1904, McDonald is still shown as owning 100 acres of land a mile before the railway
station at Ottaba, although he had been dead for 5 years. This either represents part of his unsold estate or is copied from an earlier map. There is another adjoining property of 160 acres owned by R.?B McDonald. The middle initial in this title is difficult to read because the railway line winds through both properties and the proposed track obliterates the initial. This could have been property held in joint names for his son Richard who had probably died in 1894 and his unmarried daughter Mary Bridget. On the other side of the old road from this McDonald property, in the parish of Biarra, is a large property of one square mile owned by Alfred Percy McCorry which backs onto Cavanagh property, not owned by Daniel Cavanagh who was Catherine McDonald’s father or her mother Elizabeth, but by T.M. and W.J. Cavanagh. Next to that again was 160 acres owned in 1904 by B. Markwell one time coach owner/driver, publican and cream carrier who ceased to be the licensee of the Commercial Hotel, Esk in 1895.

Returning to 1883, however, the Premier of Queensland, Sir Thomas McIlwraith undertook a tour of inspection from Ipswich to Maryborough via Esk, Cressbrook and Colinton Station in that year. He had been driven from Ipswich to the Royal Hotel in Esk by Benjamin Markwell’s four horse coach, but this means of conveyance had clearly not been able to take him further. McIlwraith was then driven from Esk to Colinton Station, in the company of Mr. Alexander Raff, one of the owners of Colinton, Mr. O’Sullivan, M.L.A. and Mr. G.M. Challinor, clerk and inspector of the Esk Divisional Board, “by a special coach with three horses belonging to Mr. M’Donald, of Esk.” This “special” coach becomes important in the history of coach travel in the Brisbane River Valley, because it suggests the kind of transport that was best fitted to the harsh conditions. Further descriptions of the style of coaches used on the Brisbane River Valley routes will be the subject of a later chapter.

Ned McDonald had already held the mail contract from Esk to Nanango (Mail route 87) for at least 4 years when he took the Premier to Colinton Station in ‘McDonald’s coach’ in 1883. He had won this contract in 1879 to deliver mail by horse for 2 years and again in 1881 for 3 years. There is no record in the Government Gazette of his winning the contract again in 1884 although he certainly must have done so because the Brisbane Courier, 1884 reports that, “The first bi-weekly coach arrived here, via Esk, with the mails on Thursday. This will be a great boon, and credit is due to the Postal Department for their promptness in establishing this service twice a week.”

By 1887 McDonald was again recorded as delivering mail to Nanango by coach for 2 years, and in 1889 he won this contract again for 3 years. On this occasion the route is a little more specific than formerly, going from Esk to Nanango via Junction Mt. Beppo Road & Cressbrook, Colinton, Stonehouse and Taromeo. Before the railway station defined the town of

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44 Queensland Times, 20/3/1883, p3
45 Brisbane Courier, 1/8/1884, p6
Toogoolawah in 1904, the communities to be served with mail in this district revolved around Cressbrook Station and the German settlements at Mt. Beppo.

Cressbrook Station was as big as a small village and had been gazetted as a Court of Petty Sessions as early as 1847, along with the ‘districts’ of Moreton Bay, Ipswich and Darling Downs. Its need for a reliable mail service was obvious, and Cressbrook had received mail by pack horse before Separation from “John Edwards, known as “Buuraba Johnny” on behalf of the contractor Jacob Goode (of Goode’s Inn, Nanango) in 1856/9, and afterwards from Peter Gentle, 1859/62, John Birch, 1866/7 and Patrick McCallum 1868/70.

By 1889, however, Mt Beppo was so populous that it was necessary to shift the “postbox” from Cressbrook homestead to the junction of Cressbrook and Mt. Beppo Road to accommodate the German settlers.

It is notable that the township of Biarra had already been surveyed at “Cressbrook Gates” in 1884 but was never mentioned in the mail run that included both Cressbrook and Mt. Beppo. And yet some members of the district must have believed in the site because J.H. McConnel, eldest son of D.C. McConnel built an undenominational church there for residents in 1887. This was called Biarra Church, in the Main Street of Biarra township, but J.H. McConnel was forced to move it closer to his Condensed Milk Factory when that industry finally determined the site of the developing township of Toogoolawah. Biarra Church was moved to the site of the Toogoolawah Apostolic Church of Queensland where it was known as the Union Church, serving Protestant denominations of all kinds until they each built their own churches. It was leased to the Apostolic Church in 1929.

The 1880’s must have been boom times for Ed. McDonald. He had entertained the Premier of the State at his Royal Hotel in 1883, extended the hotel in 1884, and won the first mail contract to deliver mail by coach to Nanango in the same year. He was also a selector of a large parcel of land, and he had seen the demise of two opposition hotels (The Esk Hotel, 1880-1881 and Glen Rocks 1872-1882). It is true that the new Commercial Hotel, licensed in 1885, may have competed for trade, but Ed McDonald was not so concerned about this that he did not have the time to help form a Rifle Club with P. Clifford and J. Lackey in 1888, who “provid(ed) the range in the hills on the western side of the town”. By 1890 the Post Office Directory, Country Directory, for Esk lists McDonald as both an hotelier and a butcher.

46 J.J.Knight (1895), “In the Early Days: History and Incidents of Pioneer Queensland”, Sapsford & Co. (late W.& S.), Brisbane
47 Queensland Times, 13/7/1950, p2
“ESK.
A small township 67 miles West of Brisbane. Population 185 (census 1886)
POLICE MAGISTRATE - W. Yaldwn (visiting)
CLERK OF PETTY SESSIONS (acting) - P. Carroll
LICENSENG BENCH - Thom. Pryde, Chairman
POST AND TELEGRAPH MASTER - Bart. J. Clune
POLICE - Constables P. Carroll and T.J. Sullivan
STATE SCHOOL - Teacher - Charles Clarson. Average attendance 58
POUNDKEEPER - E. Broad
SCHOOL OF Arts - Secretary - S. Marquis
SOCIETIES - Oddfellows; YMC Society; Freemasons (St. Johns)

TRADES AND PROFESSIONS
AGENTS - (Insurance) - S. Mendelsohn, New Zealand Co., Fire and Marine:
Thompson and Francis, Colonial Mutual Fire
AUCTIONEERS - S. Mendelsohn, Thompson and Francis
BAKER - J.P. McFarlane
BANK - Queensland National - Manager - T.C. Davy
BLACKSMITH - P. Lawlor, Anderson Bros. E. Broad
BUTCHERS - E. McDonald, J. Peters
CARPENTER - H. Day
DRESSMAKER - Miss McCoys
FRUITERER - S. Marshal
GROCERS - Chaille Bros., P. Clifford, S. Mendelsohn, Thomas and Francis
HOTELS - E. McDonald, Royal; B. Markwell, Commercial
MEDICAL PRACTITIONER - C. Mitchell Aird, M.B.
PAINTER AND GLAZIER - S. Taylor
PRODUCE MERCHANT - S. Mendelsohn
SADDLER - C. Wallace
SAW MILLS - Blank Bros.
STOCK AND STATION AGENTS - Thompson and Francis

The town of Esk now stands on the Toogoolawah side of Sandy Creek, but in the early days, “its chief business area then was on the Ipswich side of Sandy Creek, where the post office, police station, School of Arts, Queensland National Bank, McDonald’s Hotel, Thompson and Francis’s and J.M. Chaille’s stores, McFarlane’s bakery, a butchery, Edwin Broad’s smithy and other buildings were situated.”

The Royal Hotel then served the business centre of Esk, with the Commercial Hotel on the other side of Sandy Creek and closer to the railway station.

In 1884, it had been reported in the Queensland Times that the Divisional Board was “sinking a town well upon the opposite side of the creek”. The railway station was also located there in 1886 together with the Commercial Hotel in 1885, and the boom years for Ned McDonald and the Royal Hotel were almost over.

He was not to go, however, without a last hurray. In 1890, McDonald was involved in another sports’ day after Christmas where he was no longer the Treasurer of the Turf Club but a racehorse owner and a successful one at that. The racecourse was also on the Toogoolawah

49 Stanley Bulletin, 26/11/1948
50 Queensland Times, 4/12/1884, p5
side of the creek, and the licensee who served the thirsty throng was Mr. Markwell of the Commercial Hotel. “There were sports at the racecourse on Saturday 27th (1890) consisting of five horse races and two foot races. Mr M’Donald’s Rosehill carried off two and Mr. R. M’Gory of Sunnyside took one race with Rainbow. W. Winwood’s horse Navigator also won a race. The foot races were won by Allen and James M’Lean. There were a good many people on the course, considering the sports were got up within a few days of the 27th. Mr. Chas. Baisden sold all his fruit and soft drinks and Mr. Markwell did a little brisk trade. Mr. T. Burman was the main spirit in getting up the sports.”

If the Royal Hotel was losing business, McDonald’s mail coach was a winner. The first driver on the Esk-Nanango mail coach run in 1884 was Ned McDonald himself and it seems likely that he also drove the Premier to Colinton Station in 1883. Later Tom Tudor drove for McDonald, and Tudor is shown on a cadastral map of 1904 as owning a 160 acre property almost at the old the Yimbun Railway Station. Tudor seems to have been a dashing driver although not a very lucky one if reports of the day are to be believed. His stories about drowning an orphan coach boy when Wallaby Creek was in flood and a compensation claim from a passenger with a broken leg have been documented elsewhere.

His replacement was the “steady driver” William Gillespie who drove for Cobb & Co. after Ned McDonald. But one of his accidents becomes historically interesting. In October 1891 a Salvation Army Redcoat who was sitting on the sleepers of the Cressbrook Creek bridge frightened the horses and the coach capsized. Pugh’s Almanac for 1910 lists four churches in Toogoolawah at that time; the Church of England, the Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and Salvation Army churches, the last of which seems to have had at least some followers in the district since 1891 and ‘frightened the horses’ of the Royal Mail in that year.

The archivist for the Salvation Army noted that General William Booth visited Australia in 1891 and was in Brisbane from 2 to 5 October, in Ipswich on 7 and Toowoomba on 8 October of that year. The “Redcoat” on the bridge may have been returning from a visit to one of these venues; and he was so named because his uniform at that time was a long sleeved guernsey made of fine red woolen material with the Salvation Army crest embroidered on the front of its crew neck. David Rose McConnel, from Cressbrook Station, also conducted Salvation Army services in the district.

The last coach service from Esk to Nanango run by Ned McDonald was in 1892. In the same year Alex McCallum won the contract for Mail Service 87, delivering mail from Esk to Nanango by Buggy or Coach for three years beginning in 1893. This signalled the end of one coaching dynasty and the beginning of another.

It is uncertain whether Ned McDonald tendered for the royal mail coach run to Nanango in 1893. It was a time of economic upheaval, bank closures and political scandals, one solution for which was the imposition of the first postage tax on newspapers in 1892 that reduced sales in country areas and thereby reduced the weight of cartage of mail to those areas and the contract price paid to the carriers. Ned McDonald remained in the district until 1899 as ‘mine host’ of the Royal Hotel, a role he had played for 23 years. But his service to the life of the Esk community was not yet over, and in March 1897 he was elected as a Councillor for Division 3, Esk Divisional Board; a position he was to hold until his death in 1899. His dual roles of licensee and mailman for his constituents for a quarter of a century would have fitted him well for the task. His lifelong interest in horse racing could only have helped!

After Ned McDonald’s death, the Royal Hotel was sold to Michael Callighan in 1901 who remained its owner and licensee from 1901 to 1905. In 1906 Michael Callighan became the licensee of the Grand Hotel, Esk and new licensees appeared each year thereafter for the

51 The Logan Witness (Notes from Esk), 2/1/1891
Royal Hotel. By the time the Royal Hotel was gutted by fire on 16 March 1917, the Queensland Times reported that “The premises were occupied by Mr. A. M’Neven and owned by Mr. M. Callaghan, of this town”. The paper goes on to say that, “The premises were insured for between £600 or £700”. By 1917 there were four other hotels in Esk: the Commercial Hotel, the Central Hotel renamed the Club Hotel, The Grand Hotel and the Metropole Hotel. This last hotel was architecturally very impressive, and all of them were closer to the Railway Station than the Royal. Perhaps the newspaper report of its insurance value may not have been quite coincidental.

Ned McDonald died at Esk on 16 September, 1899 and was buried at Ipswich the following day. He was 57 years old and had been married for 34 years. His widow Catherine died soon after of cirrhosis of the liver on 6 November, 1899. Their death certificates record that they had lost three male children, Richard and Edward John Joseph, whose births were recorded and another who may have been stillborn. Both Ned’s daughters were unmarried at the time of his death. Elizabeth (known as Lizzie Catherine) married Harold Sidney MacPherson on 13 February, 1901 and moved to Brisbane. They had two children, a son Harold Edward who survived and a daughter born in 1904 who died with her mother in the same year. His eldest daughter, Mary Bridget McDonald, died a spinster on 6 June 1906. Ned McDonald left a personal estate of £1,370/12/10 that did not include the sale of the hotel or property and the executor of his estate was J.H. McConnel. Ned McDonald and his family are all buried in the Roman Catholic section of the Ipswich Cemetery.

By the time of his death, Ned McDonald had provided accommodation, conviviality and community leadership to the town of Esk for 23 years, as well as transport and a reliable mail service by horse and coach to the northern parts of the Brisbane River Valley for 17 years. A measure of his significance to the development of the Brisbane River Valley can be seen by the prestige of those who attended his funeral: Lars Andersen, famous sawmiller in South East Queensland, came out of retirement to be his undertaker, Government Surveyor R.S. Stringfellow was the formal witness to his burial and J.H. McConnel of Cressbrook Station was the executor of his estate. By Federation the name of the McDonald coaching family had disappeared from the Esk district.

And this seems an extraordinary oversight because Ned McDonald owned nearly two thirds of the property upon which the town of Esk was built. On 29 August 1873, eight years after his marriage, Edward McDonald paid £65 for the purchase of 200 acres of Crown Land in the County of Cavendish, Parish of Esk (Certificate of Title No. 49643). Twelve years later he sold the first residential blocks to five buyers on the same day, one of whom was his mail coach driver, Thomas Tudor. From then until Ned McDonald’s death the amendments to his title deed for this parcel of land read like a Who’s Who of Esk before Federation. Both J. H. McConnel and his wife Mary bought an acre of land in 1885 and 1886 respectively, one parcel to house the new St. Agnes Church of England. Richard Price also bought 2 acres in 1885 and George Thorn a single block in the same year. William Royston Butler bought three acres in 1886, two of the Bowmans from Mt. Brisbane bought an allotment each in 1886 and both Gens and Lars Andersen bought 3 acres in 1886 and 1888. Philip Vernon, licensee of the Central Hotel bought “1 rood 9 2/10 perches” in 1886, Edwin Broad, Blacksmith & wheelwright bought his 2 acres in 1889 and the 20 acres that made up the Esk Sale Yards was sold from Ned McDonald’s original deed on 16 October 1890. John Morris Gorrie needed two acres in 1894 although J.T. Milner (Mrs. Gillespie’s brother) settled for a single residential block of a rood in the same year. August Blank bought a residential block in 1898.

52 Queensland Times, 19/3/1917, p3
and James Mapor Chaille bought 2 acres from Ned McDonald on 12 September 1899, just four days before his death. Probate on Ned’s will was granted on 27 February 1901 and C. Clifford, C. Findlay, J. Conroy, W. Armstrong, T.C. Pryde, J.T. Milner, E. Broad, W. Aitcheson and T. Webb bought land from the estate in that year. The last sale recorded on this deed is to George Falconer on 9 May 1902.

Ned McDonald’s only memorial in Esk as an hotelier, mail contractor, councillor and real estate entrepreneur lies in the names of three Esk streets that commemorate his children: Richard Street, Mary Street and Elizabeth Street.

### Certificate of Title No. 49643 Purchase of 200 acres of Crown Land

In the County of Cavendish, Parish of Esk

by Edward McDonald on 29 August 1873; Price £65

### Buyers on that deed to 1902

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Purchase</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Byrne, Joseph</td>
<td>23 July 1855</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacKay, Bernard</td>
<td>27 July 1855</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg, James</td>
<td>27 July 1855</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small, Alexander</td>
<td>27 July 1855</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tudor, Thomas</td>
<td>27 July 1855</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Price, Richard</td>
<td>8 Aug. 1855</td>
<td>2 acres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thorn, George</td>
<td>10 Aug. 1855</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Francis, John Hopperton</td>
<td>24 Aug. 1855</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longden, William James</td>
<td>26 Aug. 1855</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>McConnell, James Henry</td>
<td>3 Sept. 1855</td>
<td>1 acre</td>
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<tr>
<td>McNiven, Michael James</td>
<td>7 Oct. 1855</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Butler, Jane</td>
<td>15 Oct. 1855</td>
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<td>Butler, William</td>
<td>15 Oct. 1855</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thorn, William E.</td>
<td>1 Nov. 1856</td>
<td>1 acre</td>
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<td>Langton, Charles Stowen</td>
<td>27 Jan. 1856</td>
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<td>Tudor, Thomas</td>
<td>4 Feb. 1856</td>
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<td>Vances, Philip</td>
<td>11 Feb. 1856</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milner, Francis E.</td>
<td>24 Feb. 1856</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anderson, Jane C.</td>
<td>2 Mar. 1856</td>
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<tr>
<td>Markwell, Benjamin</td>
<td>5 Mar. 1856</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bowman, Frederick J.</td>
<td>5 Mar. 1856</td>
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Record of death of Catherine McDonald on 6 November 1899

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clifford, Cornwall</td>
<td>23 Mar. 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findlay, Charles</td>
<td>25 Mar. 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conroy, John</td>
<td>25 Mar. 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong, William</td>
<td>29 Mar. 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford, Thomas Campbell</td>
<td>29 Mar. 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milner, John Thomas</td>
<td>9 Apr. 1903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brodie, Edward</td>
<td>15 May 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aitcheson, William</td>
<td>23 June 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webb, Thomas</td>
<td>10 Sept. 1901</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Falconer, George 9 May 1902

A regular house block appeared to be approximately 1 rood with the larger ones being less than 2 roods like Philip Venner's 1/2 rood 9 and 2/10 perches where the original Club Hotel stood before its removal. In cases where the purchase was larger than this, the approximate size is indicated (e.g. 3 - 5 roods or 3 standard house blocks in this development).

James Ivory, who did the survey, seems to have been somewhat inaccurate and the original 200 acres was amended to 197 acres 3 roods 3 perches with the following description:

"Commening at the South East Corner of Portion 65 and bounded thence on the northly that portion bearing 269 degrees 4 minutes twenty seven chains and 70 links on the West by portion one hundred and thirty six bearing 179 degrees 27 minutes 42 chains and 4 links on the south by a road bearing 315 degrees 31 minutes fifty chains and seventy four and a half links 512 degrees 25 minutes eleven chains and seventy one links, 319 degrees 5 minutes thirty two chains and twenty eight links and 7/10 of a link to the point of commencement as shown on plan of survey, deposited in the Surveyor General's Office."
As Ned McDonald’s influence was waning, the McCallum’s influence
was waxing strong. Alex McCallum won the coach mail contract from
Esk to Nanango for 1893 and was to retain the coach service to
Nanango until Federation and beyond. Alex McCallum’s background
makes fascinating reading. I am indebted to retired Councillors Reg
and Bruce McCallum from Nanango and Esk Shires for their
generosity in sharing it with me and to Keith McCallum for his
meticulous family records.

Alex McCallum was the fourth son of Daniel and Bridget McCallum
nee Kelly alias Walsh, who were married on 6 April 1840 “with
consent of the Governor” in the Parish of Eldon, County of Gloucester,
NSW. The surname recorded is McAllam, but both the married couple
and their witnesses (John & Catherine Calligan) signed with a cross, so
the spelling was probably a phonetic approximation by a recording clerk. He is recorded
elsewhere as Daniel McCallum and Macullum.

Daniel was a British subject, born in Glasgow in 1805 and described as being 5 feet 3½
inches tall with a ruddy, freckled complexion, brown hair, and hazel eyes with a long
horizontal scar on his left eye. He was a house carpenter and had been convicted of “Stealing
in a Dwelling house”, i.e. stealing two silk handkerchiefs from a woman working in an inn,
although there is serious doubt about the validity of the charge. It well may have happened
through drunken high spirits but it is known that Daniel was a tradesman with money in his
pocket at the time, for he had paid for a jug while at the inn. Whatever the real facts of
the matter may be, he was tried on Christmas Eve, 1828, found guilty and sentenced to life
imprisonment which was commuted to transportation to Moreton Bay. He sailed on the John
(2), leaving Sheerness on 27 May 1829 and arrived in Sydney, together with another 187 male
convicts on 13 September 1829.

His future wife, Bridget Kelly alias Walsh, was also transported for “Stealing in a Dwelling
house” and was 20 years old at the time. She had worked as a washerwoman in County
Armagh and had been tried there on 22 July 1833. She was sentenced to 7 years gaol and had
had no previous convictions. She was described as 5 feet 1½ inches tall, with a ruddy,
freckled complexion, brown hair and grey eyes. She also had a scar on the back of her left
little finger. She arrived on the Andromeda II (3) on 17 September 1834 after leaving Cork
on 25 May of the same year. It is perhaps not surprising, with ruddy complexions on both
sides, that their son, Alex McCallum, was later photographed on a splendid new coach of the
Cobb design built for his Gympie run, with a huge red beard and red hair.

It appears that the couple had at least eight live children, but the documentation is sketchy.
There are certainly baptismal records for Michael, Daniel, Alexander, Robert and Elizabeth
Ann who were all baptised into the Roman Catholic faith like their mother in 1848 in the
County of Cumberland, NSW. There are records in the Qld. Register of Births for five of the
children. Michael McCallum had been registered in 1840, Daniel in 1841 and Robert in 1845.
Alexander, who later won the coach mail contract from Esk to Nanango, was registered in
1843 and his sister Elizabeth Annie in 1848. Her father is recorded on this baptismal register
as George Chapman but this is likely to be another clerical error. Patrick, the eldest son, was
born in Maitland in 1838 while his parents were awaiting the governor’s consent to marry and
Michael had been born to this couple just a month after their marriage.

The Pre-separation Register developed by the Nanango Shire for its bi-centennial history lists
several other children of Daniel and Bridget McCallum including Bruce, John and Matilda
Bridget Janet Harriet. Bruce was the name Daniel Junior was known by, John was born in
1853 and Bridget Matilda in 1857. There is no record of John in Nanango after 1859, but his grandson Keith traced him to Victoria. Bruce had died alone on the bank of the Dan River near Eversham Station, Aramac, where he and his brother John were shearing on 9 June, 1892. There was an inquiry into his death but there were no suspicious circumstances. He died a bachelor.

By an extraordinary coincidence, in 1897 another Bruce McCallum of Nanango won mail contract 47 to deliver mail by horse between Gin Gin and Mulangool for the next two years on the route that served my own grandfather’s property of Mt. Wallaby taken up in 1891. This property was not mentioned by name for delivery, and presumably Grandfather collected his mail from Gaeta where he frequently dined until he was an old man. Mail contract 47 was won in 1899 by William Shean of Gin Gin, when Mt. Wallaby was identified for the first time as a specific postal address.

The remaining seven children of Daniel & Bridget McCallum all married: Elizabeth Annie to Peter Storck on 12/5/1866, then Patrick to Mary Ann Sullivan (widow) nee McLean on 28/1/1869, followed by Alexander to Betsy Yates on 20/9/1870, Michael to Ellen Kendricks on 18/6/1876, Matilda to James Hughes on 11/7/1876, John to Elizabeth Reid, on 16/11/1880 at Darlington Point, NSW and Robert to Mary Ann Richardson on 19/6/1884. Elizabeth Annie needed her father’s permission to marry because she was under 21 at the time and Daniel McCallum died in the same year as her marriage, on 9 November, 1866. He had been pardoned on 13 January, 1847, nineteen years after his original sentence and he died at Redbank at 60 years of age, exiled permanently from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, but a free man in Australia. His widow Bridget survived for another twenty five years, dying at Goodna on 26th November, 1891 aged 78.

Two of their sons, Patrick and Alex, are recorded as mail contractors serving Nanango and its surrounding districts for many years but again the record of mail contracts was unreliable for almost 10 years before and after separation in 1859 and there was no report to Parliament on our postal services in the first decade of Queensland’s history. The first formal record in the Government Gazette of any member of the McCallum family winning a mail contract was in 1866 when Patrick McCallum won the Gayndah to Nanango run. However, the History of Nanango Shire suggests that, “Alex McCallum had run the mail between Nanango and Gayndah from February to December 1861 before his brother Pat took over.” There was a complaint about Alex’s performance and he was eventually charged with negligence. This story is a ‘comedy of errors’ probably typical of the precarious lives of the pioneers.

In the beginning of November, 1861, Charles Mason, the Manager of Barambah Station had entrusted a letter to Alex McCallum addressed to C.H. Buzacott of the Maryborough Chronicle. Enclosed was a £1 note to pay a bill, and the change from this money was to be returned in the new Queensland postage stamps issued for the first time in 1861.

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Mason waited for three weeks for a reply before contacting Buzacott again to discover that the original letter had never been delivered. The following year Amos Walters found a mail bag at Goode’s Inn, which served as Post Office for Nanango, containing both newspapers and letters, one of which was Charles Mason’s. The acting Postmaster, William Williams, charged Alex McCallum with “negligently losing one letter, the property of the Post Master General and wilfully secreting one letter, the property of the Post Master General”.

The case against Alex McCallum was heard before Magistrate Haynes and George Clapperton, J.P. and he was found guilty of the first and lesser charge only. He was fined £15. He is not recorded as winning another mail contract until 1871, although his transgression could not have affected his reputation in the district for long because he was reported to be head stockman for George Clapperton J.P. at Tarong in 1865. George Clapperton seems to have had a reputation for tempering justice with mercy. In 1863, Constable Connington of Nanango was brought before him charged with being “dissipated beyond extremes” during the Christmas holidays, but the case was dismissed on the grounds that the behaviour was excusable at the festive season.

In the meantime Alex’s older brother Patrick McCallum continued to deliver mail by horse between Gayndah and Nanango and in late 1865 he had the misfortune to be held up by James McPherson, otherwise known as the Wild Scotsman and one of the few bushrangers to operate in Queensland. On this first occasion Pat McCallum lost both the mail bags and his horse. On 15 December they met again and McPherson stole the mail and new saddle. On the last occasion early in 1866, McPherson took his horse again. Each time the horses and saddle were returned but McPherson is reported to have told the “mailman on Gayndah-Banana route” whom he robbed on 19 December, “that he did not like McCallum during their two meetings because the latter had a determined look in his eye”.

From 1866 to 1874 and then again between 1876 and 1880 Patrick McCallum continued to deliver mail between Gayndah and Nanango. He also won the

54 Judith Grimes (1988), Pioneering into the Future; History of the Nanango Shire, Maryborough Q, Wise Owl Research, p403
55 Maryborough Chronical, 8/1/1863, p2
56 P.H. McCarthy (1975), The Wild Scotsman: a biography of James McPherson, the Queensland bushranger; Melbourne, The Hawthorn Press, p42
contract to deliver mail between Ipswich and Nanango from 1868 to 1870 although it is clear from the following report in the Courier Mail taken from the Queensland Times that it was his brother Alex who was doing the job in 1869.

“Alexander McCallum, the Nanango and Ipswich mailman, states that when coming from the former place on Sunday afternoon with the mail he observed a diamond snake in the road between Mt. Brisbane and Wivenhoe, and before he could pull up the mare he was riding stepped upon it and was bitten on the fetlock. He dismounted to kill the reptile, which turned upon him and bit his legging, leaving the impression of its fangs. When killed it was found to be 9 feet 6 inches. The mare dropped dead about five minutes after being bitten”.\(^{57}\) Patrick McCallum was the successful mail contractor between Jondaryan and Nanango from 1870 to 1874 and again from 1876 to 1878. Most of these mail contracts were completed before Ed. McDonald of the Royal Hotel, Esk, had applied for his first contract in 1878 and there is no doubt that the McCallum family were experienced mailmen.

The complete list of contracts won by Pat McCallum and recorded in the Government Gazette until his death is as follows;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Details</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gayndah &amp; Nanango</td>
<td>1866, 1868, 1870, 1872, 1876, 1878, 1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipswich &amp; Nanango</td>
<td>1868, 1876, 1878, 1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jondaryan &amp; Nanango</td>
<td>1870, 1872, 1876, 1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanango to Kingaroy</td>
<td>1889-1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanango to Kilkivan</td>
<td>1889-1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeview &amp; Gayndah</td>
<td>1889-1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanango &amp; Boote</td>
<td>1891-1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanango to Nanango</td>
<td>1895, 1910-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanango to Glen Elgin</td>
<td>1918 by Buggy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Patrick McCallum died at Glen Elgin on 15\(^{th}\) July, 1919 having given not less than 58 years of his life to the delivery of the Royal Mail

It is clear from newspaper reports of the day that these records are not complete, and there is a break in his mail contracts between 1878/82 and 1889 that might be accounted for by Patrick McCallum’s purchase of “Glen Elgin” in 1884 and the necessary work in establishing the property. Perhaps the best summary of Pat McCallum’s contribution to the Royal Mail in the Nanango district can be borrowed from P.H. McCarthy’s “Wild Scotsman”.\(^{58}\)

“Patrick McCallum .. was possibly the longest serving mail contractor in Australia at the time of his death at Glen Elgin, via Nanango, on 15 July, 1919…In the early 1860s he won the Brisbane-Gayndah mail contract at the princely sum of £200…Pat McCallum became a legend in his own life time. His feats at keeping the mails on time would almost rival those of the Pony Express, but to him they were a routine event which warranted small mention.”

Pat McCallum, and later his children, delivered mail by horse at least until Federation. He is reported to have carried the official proclamation declaring the naming of the colony of Queensland in 1859 and served as one of the first members of the Baramba Divisional Board

\(^{57}\) Queensland Times, 10/8/1869, p2
\(^{58}\) P.H. McCarthy (1975), The Wild Scotsman: a biography of James McPherson, the Queensland bushranger; Melbourne, The Hawthorn Press, pp 93/94
and as Shire Chairman for some time. He married a widow, Mary Ann Sullivan nee McLean on 28/1/1869 and had six children, Wallace Patrick (12/12/1870), Archibald John (27/11/1876), Jessie Elizabeth (18/3/1878), Colin Alexander (1/8/1879), Nigel Robert (3/10/1881) and Stuart Douglas Beach (23/11/1885). His children are reported to have ridden with the mail as soon as they could read an address on an envelope, and Pioneering into the Future, the history of the Nanango Shire, is full of horror stories about the exploits of these children, and Archie in particular. Patrick’s youngest son Stuart Beach inherited Glen Elgin, married Ethel Ann Scott and had two children, Connie and Reg. At the time of writing, Reg McCallum still lives on Glen Elgin and has finally retired from his mayoral duties that occupied his time from 1976 to 2008.

But it was Patrick’s younger brother Alex who was the first in the family to deliver mail by coach. Alex did not continue to live in Nanango, as Patrick had done, but moved where his work took him. The Electoral Roll for the District of Stanley lists an Alexander McCallum (No. 559) as entitled to vote for members of the Legislative Assembly in 1876 as a salaried employee at Durundur, and he held a mail contract that included Durundur in the same year, although he gave his home address for this contract as Caboolture. He is first recorded as a mail contractor living in Costin Street, Brisbane in The Post Office Directory in 1883/4. However, it is clear from the Government Gazette that he had spent 20 years with Her Majesty’s Mail before that time. A summary of the reported horse mail contracts that Alex McCallum had won before delivering mail by coach is as follows. This does not include his abortive and ‘negligent’ ride in 1861:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horse Mail Contracts won by Alexander McCallum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caboolture &amp; Jimna (via Durundur &amp; Kilcoy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane, Caboolture &amp; Jimna (via Durundur &amp; Kilcoy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caboolture &amp; Black Snake (via Durundur &amp; Kilcoy, Monsildale, Foxlowe, Jimna Post Office, Jabber &amp; Manumbar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane &amp; Tewantin via Cootheraba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gympie &amp; Tewantin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gympie &amp; Boonara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gympie &amp; Kilkivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliot &amp; Neureum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gympie &amp; Neureum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caboolture &amp; Baramba via Durundur, Geddes, Humberstone, Kilcoy, Monsildale, Foxlowe, Jimna, Jabber, Manumbar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiaro &amp; Teebar via Glenbar, Gigoomgan returning via Tbean mine, Clifton &amp; Ellerslie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanango &amp; Gympie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanango &amp; Kingaroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodford &amp; Melli Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gayndah &amp; Nanango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanango &amp; Kingaroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melli Creek &amp; Campbellville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilcoy &amp; Baramba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy’s Pinch &amp; Mt Mee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Shamrock &amp; Paradise diggings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeLaney’s Creek &amp; Mt. Mee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esk &amp; Glen Maurie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esk &amp; Colinton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esk &amp; Colinton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is an enviable record conveying mail by horse, and probably matched only by his older brother in the Brisbane River Valley. But it was Alex McCallum’s use of coaches on the mail runs through the Brisbane River Valley that is the primary focus of this chapter, and he has an enviable record in this regard as well. The full list of Alex McCallum’s contracts to deliver mail by coach or buggy in Queensland is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mail Coach Contracts won by Alex McCallum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane to Gympie (Buggy to Mooloolah horse to Gympie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Coach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caboolture &amp; Baramba (horse &amp; Coach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryborough &amp; Gayndah (Coach) (McCallum &amp; Murdock)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caboolture &amp; Maroochy (Buggy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gympie &amp; Maroochy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caboolture &amp; Kilcoy (Coach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esk &amp; Nanango (Buggy or Coach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woowoonga &amp; Gayndah (Buggy or Coach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woowoonga &amp; Paradise (Coach or Buchboard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woody Point Jetty &amp; Woody Point Post Office (horse or cart)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esk &amp; Hopetown (Coach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jondaryan &amp; Nanango (Buggy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanangur &amp; Nanango (Coach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esk &amp; Kilcoy (Buggy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Alex died in a Brisbane Hospital on 12 May 1913, he had been involved in the delivery of mail for 42 years since 1861, until his son took over in 1903. But he was better known in his later years as the licensee of the Moorabool Hotel (Kannangur then Yimbun), the first licensed premises in the Toogoolawah district built at the terminus of the railway, and licensed in 1905.

The first license issued to Alex McCallum for that year was for an hotel called the Royal Mail and a license was also granted to Elizabeth McCallum in the same year for the Moorabool Hotel. There is no further record of Alex McCallum applying for an hotel license until 1911.


When Alex McCallum took over the Esk to Nanango mail coach run from Ned McDonald in 1893 the drivers on that run were either Alex McCallum Jnr or John Williams, although

these drivers have been variously described as Alex, Wally and Archie McCallum. A 1950 newspaper report suggests that, “His (Alex McCallum Snr) first driver was John Williams…Mr. Williams was succeeded in 1903 by Alex McCallum jun. and Archie his brother who drove the coach until the railway was opened to Yarraman.” Unfortunately this statement must be inaccurate because Alex McCallum’s brother was Walter (Wally) and it was Alec’s cousin, second son of Patrick McCallum, who was Archie.

There is no mention of Archie McCallum as a coach driver in George Lauder’s article in the Stanley Bulletin (1948). Lauder is unequivocal that, “the drivers were John Williams and Alex McCallum jun.” Lauder served as first Station Master to Toogoolawah Railway Station and lived all his life after 1904 in the district. He would certainly have known all the McCallum family and would be unlikely to confuse their names.

Horace Flowers, on the other hand, who only lived in Toogoolawah from 1906-1908 describes, “old man McCallum, host of the Kannungur (sic!) Hotel at the terminus of the railway line (four miles north of Toogoolawah), from which hostelry the Nanango coach set out twice weekly. That Nanango coach was driven by the two McCallum boys alternatively, Archie and Wally, who handled the ribbons equally as well as any Cobb and Co. coach-driver.” It needs to be remembered that this address was presented 50 years after Flowers left Toogoolawah, and it may be that he confused the name of Pat McCallum’s tear-away son Archie with Alex. McCallum’s eldest son Alex Jnr. Certainly by 1909 Archie McCallum had settled at Bull Camp near Nanango.

Perhaps being influenced by Horace Flowers report, or the 1950 newspaper report, the Williams family recalled “the younger McCallum took over the mail contract from his father in 1903 and operated the run until the railway reached Yarraman in 1913. The coach driver at this time was Archie McCallum.”

However, there are no stories of Archie McCallum’s exploits as a coach driver, which is unbelievable in light of the horror stories associated with his schooling. While Pat McCallum was delivering mail, his sons, Archie, Cobby and Beach in particular were truanting from school to run in Snippy’s mob of brumbies. They wore spurs to school that damaged the long suffering school master in his attempts to discipline them. Archie also entertained the pupils with impromptu concertina concerts. Archie and Beach ‘batched’ together while attending school and as soon as they were able to read reliably they delivered mail themselves. It is

published privately, p38
60 Queensland Times, 13/7/1950, p2
61 Stanley Bulletin, 26/11/1948
63 Tony Matthews (1997), Landscapes of Change-A history of the South Burnett; Wondai, Qld: Published by participating members of the South Burnett Local Government Association - the Cherbourg Community Council, and the Shire Councils of Kilkivan, Murgon, Wondai and Kingaroy,
inconceivable that Archie McCallum could have changed so much that there are no stories of his exploits as the coach driver on the Esk-Nanango run. On the balance of probabilities the drivers on the Esk-Nanango run were John Williams and Alex McCallum Jnr.

The stories about the young Alex McCallum as driver on the Esk-Nanango run, however, are legion. Some may well be apocryphal but many are supported by newspaper reports of the day. One story about the hazards of coach travel involved the birth of a baby boy on the coach journey from Esk to Nanango. This must have occurred before 1904 after which passengers travelled from Esk to Toogoolawah by rail. With a full complement of passengers, one of the ladies went into labour, with the coach driver, Alex McCallum Jnr., acting as mid-wife behind a convenient gum tree. The coach is reported to have arrived in Nanango with an extra male passenger.65

The Blackbutt range was a continual problem for coach travel and was overcome in part by attaching a log to the back of the coach to slow the descent. After many weeks there would be a huge pile of logs at the bottom of the steepest places on the route, and it would be necessary to arrange for them all to be hauled to the top for later use. Alex McCallum Jnr. was also noted for telling a good story and could entertain his passengers all the way to Nanango.

Apart from the public records of his mail contracts and his association with the Moorabool Hotel, there is little material available about Alex McCallum snr. There is a report of the coach that McCallum & Murdock had built for the Gympie mail run on the section between Brisbane and Caboolture and it sounds both splendid and expensive. “Mr. M’Callum has put on the road between Caboolture and Brisbane a fine twenty-two passenger coach, brilliant with scarlet and gold, comfortable cushioned seats inside, the box seat with an upper tier behind and in front. The whole turn-out is a very creditable one and when bowling along the road behind a spanning four-in-hand team presents a very imposing appearance.” 66 There is a photo of this coach with Alex McCallum on the far left hand side of the driver’s seat. This is a Cobb style coach and very different from the wagonette style coach that served the Esk-Nanango route and the Brisbane River Valley in general.

An advertisement for McCallum’s Royal Mail Coach from Brisbane to Gympie appears in the Moreton Mail, Saturday, March 20, 1886.

65 Judith Grimes (1988), Pioneering into the Future; History of the Nanango Shire, Maryborough Q, Wise Owl Research, p40
66 The Moreton Mail, Saturday 20/2/1886 (Vol. 1, No. 7), “M’Callum’s Coach”
There is also a photo available of McCallum’s Esk-Nanango coach in 1912 which is not nearly so impressive, but which apparently did a good job under difficult conditions for 20 years to renew the mail contract regularly.

McCallum coach on the Esk-Nanango run, 1912

On the Brisbane-Gympie run in 1886 and again on the Maryborough-Gayndah run, Alex McCallum had Murdock as a partner, and this was a pattern that continued until 1903, when Alex jnr. took over the mail run from Esk to Nanango. This may have been a way for Alex snr. to inject some additional cash into the enterprise, or he could have acted as a ‘sleeping partner’ with a long record of reliable mail delivery to boost the chances of newcomers. It is also possible that his sons may not have wanted to pursue mail contracts that had been Alex and Pat’s life, and the aging Alex McCallum needed young blood to serve his own dreams. In 1897 Alex had Marianne O’Shea as a partner in one contract and O’Shea and Hugh William McPherson in another.

In 1901 his partner in the mail coach contract from Esk to Nanango was John Williams of Ivory Creek, Cressbrook who had won mail contract 111 to deliver mail by horse between Mc Connel’s Cressbrook Station and Ivory’s Creek from 1891 until 1900. John Williams also kept a receiving office at Ivory’s Creek and, if Toogoolawah’s first station master is to be believed, he drove McCallum’s coaches to Nanango from 1893. His last mail contract was with Alex McCallum in 1901.

He later married the second government funded teacher at the Ivory’s Creek Provisional School, Miss Ada Hoy, who was appointed in 1901, which may have accounted for his lack of enthusiasm for the gypsy life of a coach driver after his marriage in 1903. Their son, Mr. Lester Williams, was a long time Esk Shire Councillor and one time Shire Chairman. Mr. John Williams was the secretary of the Ivory’s Creek School committee when it closed in 1916 and made strenuous attempts to have it re-opened.
Perhaps one of the reasons that Alex jnr. was reluctant to join his father’s mail empire was that the railways were taking the lion’s share of the business and government subsidies for the mail service were being reduced. According to the History of the Nanango Shire, Alex McCallum had earned £190 per annum for delivery of the mail between Esk & Nanango and £215 for delivery of mail and parcels before 1902. Between 1902 and 1904 these prices had dropped to £75 per annum. The contracted rates recorded in the Government Gazette suggest that mail subsidies had been falling significantly throughout the whole life of the coach run. In 1888 Ed. McDonald earned £300/annum for a bi-weekly coach service for 2 years, but this had dropped to £245/annum for the next three year contract from 1890-2. Alex McCallum is recorded as winning a three year contract to deliver mail three times a week between Esk & Nanango from 1893 to 1895 for only £215/annum. For the next three years (1893-5) the delivery reverted to a bi-weekly service but the subsidy was only £150 and from 1899-1901 the same service attracted only £75/annum.

This subsidy was augmented by passenger fares which, in 1900, were £1/0/0 for a single trip and £1/15/0 for a return ticket. A box seat with the driver cost an extra 2/6d and passenger luggage was limited to 14 lbs with a penalty of 2d per lb being charged for excess luggage. And for this it was necessary to deliver a reliable service, leaving Esk at 5 a.m. on Sundays and Thursdays for the 12 hour trip to Nanango, and leaving Nanango at 6 a.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays for the 11 hour trip down the Blackbutt range to Esk.

After February 1904, passengers and mail would have come on from Esk by train to Toogoolawah, and to Moorabool, 4.44 miles further onwards after 1 September of that year. In 1904 there were no hotels in Toogoolawah or Moorabool for passengers to stay before their early start to Nanango, and the only other accommodation that has been mentioned to date is “Teske’s Boarding House” on the site of the present Toogoolawah Hotel, (previously Commercial Hotel). The need to

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68 Ibid, p74
accommodate coach passengers must have been a pressing one and the prospects of building an hotel at the terminus a good business venture. It is true that this land at Moorabool had been described by H.P. Somerset as “a swampy hollow” but this did not stop R.C.S. Thorn from applying for a certificate to build in July, 1904 and a publican’s license for the premises in September. R.C.S. Thorn was the grandson of George Thorn, first publican in Ipswich with Palais Royal and son of Mrs. Benjamin Markwell of Esk. He had married Alex McCallum’s daughter Ann Rebecca Jeanett on 12 February, 1896. His license for the Moorabool Hotel was transferred in December, 1904 to his mother-in-law Elizabeth (Betsy) McCallum, a license she was to hold until 1911. Her husband, Alex McCallum is recorded in John Oxley Library as becoming the licensee of the “Royal Mail”, location unspecified, in 1905 but there is no further record of this hotel or his involvement with it, and it is clear that Alex & Betsy McCallum jointly managed the Moorabool Hotel, first hotel in the Toogoolawah district. The township of Moorabool was obliged to change its name to Kannangur and finally Yimbun because of confusion with postal addresses elsewhere and Horace Flowers had previously referred to “old man McCallum, host of the Kannangur Hotel”. By 1906 R.C.S.Thorn had built a second hotel, The Club Hotel, in the region and he became the licensee of this hotel, the first one built in the township of Toogoolawah. He held this license until 1908 and had previously been licensee of the Railway Hotel, Laidley before Federation.

In 1911 the license for the Moorabool Hotel was transferred to R. McConkey and recorded in the Government Gazette, 18 February, 1911, (p 938). He may have traded for a short time while preparations were underway to move the hotel further along the railway line. Local history has it that the intention was to take the hotel over the Blackbutt Range to Benarkin to join the new railway terminus that opened there on 8 May, 1911, but the Range defeated the bullock teams and it was relocated to LInville instead. In 1911 Alex McCallum is recorded as the licensee of the Club Hotel, Linville and he remained there with his wife and son Wally until his death on 12 May, 1913.

69 Queensland Times, 6/8/1904, p12
70 Queensland Times, 9/7/1904, p2
71 Queensland Times, 24/9/1904, p2
72 Queensland Times, 13/12/1904, p3
74 Qld. Government Gazette 1911, p938
In fact, the transfer of the license for the Moorabool hotel to the Club Hotel in Linville was done scrupulously according to Hoyle and its story is reported in a local newspaper\textsuperscript{75} in May 1910. At an earlier meeting of the Esk Shire Council an additional name had been put on the roll (presumably this was Alex McCallum who had bought the land on which the hotel was to be relocated so he had become a rate payer in the district.) A provisional certificate to erect a hotel at Linville had already been given by the Licensing Bench. There had clearly been a move against his establishment amongst the prohibitionists in the district who had influence over the local councillors who were, at that time, Cr. Handley (Chair), W.R., Butler. T. Conroy, E.F. Lord, J. Poole, F. Seib, A. Smith, F. Thompson, and W.A. Wilson Only four men were entitled to voice an opinion in a public option poll about a Council motion “that no new [hotel] licenses be granted”. This poll was taken, with all due ceremony, on Saturday 7 May and all four of the Linville landholders voted against the motion. Linville had a second hotel, the mail was now delivered by train to the Linville Railway Station and thence to Nanango by McCallum’s Royal Mail Coach now stationed at the foot of the Blackbutt Range. The staging stop at Stonehouse was no longer required.

The license for the Club Hotel was transferred to his wife Betsy on Alex McCallum’s death who then transferred it to W. Ollenburg, a record of this transfer appearing in the Government Gazette, 1914\textsuperscript{76} together with the transfer of a billiard license.\textsuperscript{77} Both the Linville Hotel and the Club Hotel were licensed before 30 June 1911, although the wording of the local option motion that no NEW licenses be granted suggests that Alex & Betsy McCallum’s Club Hotel was the second hotel in Linville. The Club Hotel changed its name in the 1960’s to the Pioneer Hotel and later to the Linville Hotel and remains as the only hotel in Linville today.

There is both an oral and a published history that suggests that this hotel was moved four times and served as the “wet kitchen” for the railway line into the Brisbane River Valley. It has been fairly easy to identify four possible names for what appears to be the same building (Moorabool, Kannangur, Club & Pioneer), but evidence of its constant removal is not yet forthcoming. Pursuit of authors who have reproduced this oral history without evidence to support it has proved fruitless, and Railway records have made no mention of it. There is no doubt, however, that Alex McCallum was the licensee of the Club Hotel, Linville and the mail contractor for the Esk-Nanango mail run when he died in 1913, and the building now called the Linville Hotel stands today as a monument to the last of the coaching families in the Brisbane River Valley and with that we must be content.

\textsuperscript{75} Queensland Times, 11/5/1910, p4
\textsuperscript{76} Qld. Government Gazette, 10 January, 1914, p134
\textsuperscript{77} Qld. Government Gazette, 10 January, 1914, p135
COACHES IN THE BRISBANE RIVER VALLEY

The style of coach that served the Brisbane River Valley was determined both by custom and the harsh road conditions, and pictures of the day show a British designed wagonette as the vehicle of choice throughout the valley.

This coach was reportedly designed by Prince Albert, Queen Victoria’s consort, in the 1840’s and it had several design features that ensured its popularity. According to Badger, the body of the coach was straight sided and mounted on full elliptical springs front and back. It was a light and roomy coach which could seat six passengers behind the driver and in Australia was provided with both a fixed hood and oil-cloth side curtains which could roll up or down in response to the weather conditions. Passengers entered from the rear by a set of steps that encouraged children to hitch a ride behind unseen by the driver in front. This coach had large wheels and a well sprung undercarriage that made it fairly comfortable over what constituted rough terrain in Britain. The “windows” were an attractive feature of the wagonette in the hot conditions of the Brisbane River Valley, making travel much cooler than in the more prestigious closed vehicles.

However, the wagonette shared the same design problems as other British vehicles on the rough Australian roads for which they were not designed. In the first place the traditional wheel and wooden axle design was often troublesome. If the wheels of the coach were not greased frequently, the friction of the wheel against the axle would start a fire. Furthermore,

78 Ian Badger (1977), Australian Horse-drawn Vehicles, Rigby Ltd. Brisbane; p50
there was only one lynch pin to hold the wheel on the axle, and if this was sheared off by the constant obstacles on bush roads, the wheel would come off with fatal results when travelling at speed. This does not appear to have been the problem on the Blackbutt Range where there is no report of a second coach being called to take passengers forward to their destination after a coach ‘was all smashed up’. In the southern states of Australia, at least, Royal Mail coaches were required to be fitted with a patent axle where the nave of the wheel was bolted to a rotating collar on the axle and oil reservoirs provided continuous lubrication.79

A second problem with British coach designs in Australian conditions was that the elliptical springs supporting the body were prone to failure under such harsh road conditions, attributable, according to Badger, to “the admittedly inadequate metallurgical knowledge of nineteenth century spring-smiths”.80 These springs had become a common feature of British coaches from the end of the seventeenth century, but an earlier tradition of suspending the body of the carriage on leather straps had persisted in Europe. These straps or thoroughbraces were made of ox-hide and hitched to the upright standards of the undercarriage, causing the body of the coach to rock rather than jerk when the roads were rough. D.C. McConnel probably borrowed from this European tradition when his wife noted that the springs of their four-wheeled phaeton were bound up with green hide on their first journey to Cressbrook station without benefit of either roads or bridges.81

Cobb & Co. coaches built in America, which were originally designed as the Concord coach, certainly borrowed from the same European tradition.

“...The body of the (cobb) coach was mounted on a cradle which was then suspended on the two thoroughbraces” (consisting) “of strips of leather (up to 13 strips) sewn together...when a leather thoroughbrace worked loose, it could be tightened using a turnbuckle”.82 Because of this design feature Cobb coaches were never delayed by broken springs, making them a reliable mail coach and a comfortable passenger coach. They were also cheaper than their

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79 I. Badger (1977), Australian Horse-drawn Vehicles. Rigby Ltd. Brisbane, p38
80 I. Badger (1977), Australian Horse-drawn Vehicles. Rigby Ltd. Brisbane, p30
81 M. McConnel (1905), “Queensland Reminiscences 1840-1879: Memories of Days Long Gone By” by the wife of an Australian pioneer, published privately in London; John Oxley Library, Brisbane
82 D. Tranter, (1990), Cobb & Co. Coaching in Queensland, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum
British competition because so many parts of the Cobb coaches were machine made. In the Brisbane River Valley and surrounding districts, however, the mail coaches were all wagonettes.

A copy of a catalogue item from F. Lassettet & Co. Ltd., Cheapside, Sydney and reproduced in Ian Badger’s “Australian Horse-drawn Vehicles” describes a “handy four-passenger wagonette No. 5” as having, “bright English concord side springs, 1½ x 6 or 1¾ x 5 plate, with elliptic back spring; half patent steel axles, 1¼ hickory sarven patent or wood hub; wheels 3ft 8 ins and 4ft 2 ins round edge tyres; hickory pole or shafts; brake; lamp irons; trimmed in best imitation leather, black, claret or green; painted to match”. This outfit cost £38/10/- and was popular with large middle class families of the day. For £42/10/- the vehicle would be trimmed with solid leather “and highest grade materials and finish throughout”. Additions included, “lamps from 10/- per pair extra” and “hood fitted complete, 75/- extra”. All up this would have cost £46/15/- and was certainly less expensive than the six passenger wagonette that delivered mail from Esk to Nanango from 1884 to Federation and beyond.

It is interesting that the undated advertisement for the small wagonette described above

83 I. Badger (1977), Australian Horse-drawn Vehicles. Rigby Ltd. Brisbane, p61
includes several adaptations of the traditional wagonette to better serve the Australian conditions. It has both the traditional elliptic back springs and the concord side springs that made the Cobb coaches so serviceable. It also provides a choice of the traditional wooden hub that tended to ignite or the sarven patent hub which was made of cast iron. The existing newspaper report of premier McIlwraith’s journey through the Brisbane River Valley to Maryborough in 1883 does not explain why his transport to Colinton station was described as “a special coach with three horses belonging to Mr. M’Donald, of Esk.” 84 It may have referred to the differences between Benjamin Markwell’s traditional heavier and certainly enclosed four horse passenger coach that brought the premier from Ipswich to Esk and the lighter wagonette style that took him to Colinton. Alternatively the reference, for a reading public well informed about popular coach travel of the day, could have been to such modifications for the harsh conditions as described in the advertisement above.

Sadly the only black and white photo of a three horse Esk-Nanango mail coach held at the John Oxley library is very indistinct, although it shows the wagonette style clearly. There are three horses in harness, a grey at the front and two blacks or bays behind standing so closely together that it looks like one horse with five legs. The driver appears to have a moustache and is wearing a hat and coat, although there is no break in his shirtfront to suggest a tie. He may be wearing a long white scarf instead.

Support for the suggestion of a scarf is drawn from another photo of three people standing at the back of McDonald’s Royal Hotel. One of these men has either a white scarf tucked into his waistcoat or a serviette tied around his neck. There is no way of verifying the date of the photo now. If it was actually taken before the end of 1892 when Ned McDonald lost the coach run, the younger man with so much white showing on his shirt front may have been McDonald’s coach driver, characterized by a flowing white scarf for added effect.

There is no doubt that the McCallum mail coaches that replaced McDonald’s also had their own signature tune. George Launder, the first Station Master at Toogoolawah, reports that McCallum’s coaches left Esk on Sunday mornings, and “when the coach left, the driver signalled his departure with a bugle.” 85 The authenticity of this statement depends on “particulars kindly supplied to me by Mrs. Nicholson, and Messrs W.Y. McCallum, Frank McNamara and C.H. Langton of Toogoolawah” 86 because by the time George Launder had arrived in the district, the trains took passengers beyond Esk to his stations at Toogoolawah & Yimbun and the train and not the coach serviced Esk.

Returning to the photo of McDonald’s three horse coach, there is a male passenger sitting next to the driver in a suit and tie but apparently without a hat, and he is quite bald. Beside him again, and at the end of the driver’s seat, is another man in suit and tie and hat with boots that may be traditional elastic sides. Behind them, and in the shadow of the canopy is a woman passenger with a circle of light hair or an old man with uncharacteristically long hair. On the side of the coach can be seen Esk-Nanango very clearly and under the driver’s seat is the sign “royal mail, licensed”. But the owner’s name is obscured somewhat by a wheel. On balance, the last three letters of the owner’s name look more like “ald” than “lum”, so this is

84 Queensland Times, 20/3/1883, p3
85 Stanley Bulletin, 26/11/1948, “In the days of Esk when the coach bugle sounded” by George Launder
86 Ibid
certainly a photo of a three horse mail coach belonging to Ned McDonald taken between 1883/4 and 1892.

The two back wheels of this coach are larger than the front ones, the ‘windows’ are rolled up and strapped near the roof, which has an extension or canopy to cover the driver’s seat. There is no sign of either mail bags or passenger luggage. There is a foot board for driver and passengers below which there is carried rolled canvas that looks like additional canvas ‘windows’. The coach is stationary on a clearly identifiable dirt road with a marker post prominent near the leader horse. There is clear space in the foreground and thick forest growth beside the road with a particular kind of tree in the upper right of the picture. Similar trees are currently growing beside the old sandy creek crossing at Esk. There also appears to be a line across the tree tops attached to nothing in sight suggesting that this photo was probably taken near a settled area with a telegraph.

The coach horses are not lean, with hairy fetlocks and apparently stronger hind quarters than forequarters. The grey leader is quite ugly with a roman nose and skew neck, meagre mane and a forelock either cut or bunched under the harness. The bridle has an additional diagonal strap from the bit across the nose and the leader is wearing blinkers. Clearly this horse was chosen for competence and not beauty. The bay or black behind has better conformation all round with a big white blaze, arched neck and a flowing mane.

The horses are so evenly matched for size that the back horse on the driver’s side is almost completely obscured by the horse on the passenger side except for legs and hoofs, one of which is white. All the horses appear to be shod. The coach driver carries no whip and, not surprisingly, the coach and the harness as pictured are in good order.

The photo of the McCallum coach from approximately 1912 was first published in Pioneering into the Future: a History of the Nanango Shire 87 and appears to be a smaller wagonette than McDonald’s, perhaps because the trains were carrying passengers as far as Benarkin by 8 May 1911, to Gilla by 19 December, 1912 and on to Yarraman by 1 May 1913.88

The fixed roof covers the driver and passengers on the driver’s seat but there is no additional awning over the driver as there was with McDonald’s coach. There are additional supports for an extension to the roof, folded down for the photo, if more passengers are carried. The sign “Esk & Nanango” is painted clearly on the side of the roof and not the side of the coach as previously. There is a foot board but no roll of canvas below it. An attachment at the back which could be steps is clear but there is no apparent doorway into the wagonette from behind.

87 Judith Grimes (1988), Pioneering into the Future; History of the Nanango Shire, Maryborough Q, Wise Owl Research, p82
88 Ibid, p81
Once again there are three horses in harness, one in front and two behind. The attachment of the leader is very similar to the previous photo. There are five people much more clearly displayed than in McDonald’s coach photo. These include the driver and a passenger in the front seat, both wearing hats. The driver is somewhat obscured but the passenger has the same high forehead, chin and ears as a photo of Alex McCallum published in Pioneering into the Future: a History of the Nanango Shire. Here Alex is photographed with a moustache and the coach passenger is clean shaven in a sombre dark suit and a small brimmed hat. He may be wearing a bow tie with a shirt and a modern turned down collar and white cuffs are showing beneath his coat sleeves. The expression is one of interest but a trifle forced. The rest of the larrikins surrounding this coach must be younger members of the McCallum family or reluctant passengers who may prefer to remain nameless in that company.

It may not be a coincidence that the man standing on the far left of this photo of McCallum’s coach after it had crossed the Blackbutt Range also has a waistcoat that is carefully buttoned, a handlebar moustache and a similar hat to the man in the far left of the previous photo.

And in the last photo of the McCallum coach coming up the Blackbutt Range from Linville, the driver clearly has an open waistcoat and no coat, but again three horses with two in the lead and one behind, reversing the original configuration used by Ned McDonald to take Premier McIlwraith from Esk to Colinton.

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89 Judith Grimes (1988), Pioneering into the Future; History of the Nanango Shire, Maryborough Q, Wise Owl Research, p82
Conventional wisdom suggests that the settlers determined the routes for the bullock wagons and drays through the Brisbane Valley and before 1870 that is almost certainly so. However, by 1870 Government Surveyor Stringfellow had marked out and published a ‘new’ road from Ipswich to Nanango and beyond and this represented the road taken by Ned McDonald’s mail coach in 1884. The relevant part of this map has been reproduced below in sepia with the dotted ‘road’ marked with small green stars. The detour to Mt. Brisbane was included in his original map.
This map has been reproduced in diagrammatic form with less detail, and it represents the coach route and the major stops of the Royal Mail after the rail line reached Esk (for which read Mt. Esk on the original Stringfellow map) on 9 August 1886. It does not represent the route Alex McCallum’s coaches took over the Blackbutt Range after he moved to Linville and the mail was delivered to Linville Railway Station.

There may be just one more story about the development of the coach route through the Brisbane River Valley. We know that Ned McDonald worked at Cressbrook Station before buying his own land in 1874 at 21 years of age and establishing the Royal Hotel at Esk several years later. We also know that the McConnel family of Cressbrook have been willing to lend support to most ventures that would benefit the district. It is not beyond the bounds of probability that Ned McDonald was ‘lent’ to the Stringfellow survey team as it worked around the Cressbrook area before 1870 when Ned would have been a young man of 17. There are, of course, many ways for Ned McDonald and Surveyor Stringfellow to have met but it has been established that they were friends because Government Surveyor R.S. Stringfellow was the witness to Ned’s burial on his death certificate.

An intriguing coincidence, perhaps, but it is worthwhile noting that the coaching families that served the settlers so reliably under such impossible conditions in the new colony of Queensland were a close-knit and elite group with an enviable network of powerful friends and considerable influence in the State’s development. For many decades the mail contractors were the eyes and the ears of the community and the repository of its corporate memory. Their stories were quickly overwritten by the stories of war and the stories of rail and they are now only a forgotten memory in the development of Queensland. We owed these intrepid men a more fitting epitaph.
Burnett Inn, Nanango was known as Goode’s Inn after its original proprietor and operated as a Post Office from 1850. It was the final destination for all passengers and mail from the Royal Mail coaches in the Brisbane River Valley and was the scene of Alex McCallum's lost mail bag. It was run by Mary Bright (see photo below) from 1869 until 1904 and the building was demolished in 1918.