

## AUSTRALIAN SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS EMPLOYED IN THE MARBURG AREA



Marburg Sugar Mill started by Thomas Lorimer Smith.  
Source: Picture Ipswich, Ipswich City Council.



## WOODLANDS, MARBURG

Historic Woodlands is located on Seminary Road, Marburg.

'The first owner of the estate was Charles Smith who was born in England and came to Australia in 1864. The family lived in Ipswich for two years, then came to the Marburg area. Charles acquired his first sawmill at Sandy Creek about 1865 then five years later, he acquired several thousand acres stretching from Marburg to Glamorganvale.



The mill was moved to Woodlands about 1877 and was equipped with machinery considered extremely advanced for its time. The mill burned down in 1880 but was immediately rebuilt. The mill site included a number of outbuildings and cottages for workmen and was like a small township.

The Smiths planned a mansion for the hilltop overlooking the mill. Charles Smith died before this could be done, but the project was carried on by his son Thomas Lorimer Smith who had been works manager for some years.

As the timber resources were used up, 'T.L.' decided to plant sugar cane. The first crushing season was 1883 and produced sugar which was considered of top quality. The plantation employed white men as supervisors and about 100 South Sea Islanders in the growing season'<sup>1</sup>.

'At its height 120 men were employed at Woodlands. Not all were Kanakas. Much white labour was available, but labourers were brought from the Pacific Islands because it was difficult to get the hard work done by whites. When white labour was used the cost to cut the cane alone was 6/- per ton. A year's wage for the Islanders was £15. In the field, in the late 1880s, there were 12 islanders to each white man. At the mill they worked at the carriers and at the clarifiers. White labourers in general were considered incompetent. They couldn't even hoe. They were lazy, discontented, not willing to work and some were likely to get drunk on pay day, according to Proprietor Smith.

It is reported in Smith's evidence to the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, March 1886, that the white labourers who were available for work at the plantation at that time were in the habit of saying "It is only a kanaka's job, and I will see you damned before I do it. Do it yourself". This referred to cutting cane, loading and working about the mill.

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<sup>1</sup> Expanded Ipswich Heritage Study 1997, Buchanan.

None of the Islanders working at Woodlands were brought to Marburg. They were time-expired boys – that is, they had willingly stayed in Queensland after fulfilling their original contract. This did not mean that they were completely content. The records show that they appeared in the Marburg Court House on the charge of absconding. People with European names also appeared on a similar charge.<sup>2</sup>

### **SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS AT WOODLANDS, MARBURG**

‘Thomas Lorimer Smith decided to plant sugar on his Marburg property and he also contracted other local farmers to grow for him. In 1882, he built a modern steam-operated sugar mill. The plantation employed 60-70 men including South Sea Islanders (known then as Kanakas) who laboured in the field and lived in huts on the western side of the property.



T L Smith, from an 1880s portrait  
Source: Moreton Shire Queensland: Discovery & Settlement. Joan Starr, 1988

South Sea Island or ‘Kanakan’ labour had been stopped after Federation (1901) and white growers were being paid a government bonus in compensation<sup>3</sup>.

‘In 1886 Thomas Lorimer Smith built a rum distillery and the following year produced 270 tons of cane and 1300 gallons of rum. The estate employed Kanaka labour, with about four Kanakas to each European worker. When in March 1889, Thomas appeared before a Royal Commission set up to inquire into the state of the sugar industry in Queensland he employed 36 Kanakas.

On Friday 15, 1889 at a hearing at Rosewood Scrub, he told the Commission that he had been growing sugar cane for about seven or eight years, on his Woodlands plantation. The property then covered about 1200 acres, of which 250 acres were under sugar cane. In a fair season he expected to get about 25 to 30 tons per acre from that land<sup>4</sup>. He claimed to have invested £20-25,000 in the sugar mill, distillery, planting, fencing, and tramway.

The Travelling Correspondent for the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin wrote an article titled “Sugar Industry, North’s great problem, Sugar Agreement which appeared in the newspaper on Saturday, 26 August 1922. He wrote: “Rather more years ago now than I care remember, when only a cub reporter on the Ipswich papers, I used to do a good deal of country work. Very frequently I had to visit Marburg, or Townshend as it is now called. There was a big plantation there owned by Mr. L.L. Smith, which was known as Woodlands. You went up a long and gentle ascent from the little church at Minden, with smiling farms on either side. Gaining the height you dropped suddenly,

<sup>2</sup> The Centenary of Marburg School 1879-1979

<sup>3</sup> Ipswich in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Celebrating 100 years as a city 1904-2004. Robyn Buchanan, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Moreton Shire Queensland: Discovery & Settlement. Joan Starr, 1988.

crossed a small creek, and then ascended the hill to Kuchheim. From Kuchheim you looked across hundreds of acres of wavering cane. Speaking from memory, I think there were over 2000 acres in the estate and there was also a small sugar mill. It was worked by kanakas, and many a time and often I have seen the islanders' trading along the road from Walloon to Woodlands plantation. On one occasion I saw a red-headed kanaka among the boys – the only one I have ever seen with Titian hair. That night, bursting with excitement, I proudly announced the fact to the assembled staff. The senior arose in his wrath. "Saw a red-headed kanaka and you?" he said: 'anyone would have thought you had seen Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth or Madame Tussand's Waxworks judging from the noise you are making.'" I collapsed, but my turn came next morning, for I had secured in journalistic parlance, a "scoop." A farmer run amok, carved up his wife and daughter, and then cut his own throat. I got the story practically first-hand. Next morning the senior expressed surprise that I should have been so full of the red-headed kanaka and saw nothing about the tragedy, he made caustic remarks about "news value" and the relative value of various items".



A portion of a photograph taken from Woodlands looking towards Two Tree Hill. Two South Sea Islander huts can be seen in the foreground with a brush fence. Source: Picture Ipswich, Rosewood Scrub Historical Society image.

### **LECTURE AT THE MARBURG SCHOOL OF ARTS**

The Brisbane Courier, Thursday 12 November 1885 page3

On Saturday evening Professor Armand lectured in the School of Arts, at Marburg, on "Mesmerism, or Animal Magnetism." Considerable amusement was caused by the antics cut by half-a-dozen kanakas while under mesmeric influence. On Monday evening the Marburg School of Arts Committee held their first conversazione, at which the Professor was a guest. The greater portion of the time was occupied with dancing, interspersed with vocal selections by various ladies and gentlemen. A very pleasant night's recreation was enjoyed.

**ABSCONDING ISLANDERS AT MARBURG**  
**The Brisbane Courier, Saturday 28 June 1890**

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

At the Police Court on Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> June, before Messrs. C. G. E. Wiese and F.W. Linning, the nine South Sea Islanders, named Ponghour, One Wood, Matchagora, Sooly, Tawin, Bislaing, Moose, Saraquo, and Tabin, appeared on remand from Ipswich, charged with deserting from the hired service of Mr. T.L. Smith, of Woodlands Sugar Plantation. Constable Fergusson deposed to the arrest of Ponghour on warrant on the 24<sup>th</sup> instant.

Thomas Loimer Smith, sugar planter, deposed that the nine defendants now before the court had been in his employment under written agreements registered in the Pacific Islanders' Labour Office. They were engaged to work as labourers for the time specified in the different agreements. On the 21<sup>st</sup> instant witness went to the huts occupied by the defendants, and found that they had absconded. The defendants never told witness of their intention to go away, but some of the boys came to him on the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup> instant and said that they had no bread for tea. Witness had always supplied the boys with rations as required by agreement. On the 19<sup>th</sup> instant he gave out a 200lb. bag of flour, and this should have lasted the twenty-seven boys four and a-half days. On the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup> he gave out another 200lb. bag for use on the 24<sup>th</sup> June, but on the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup> he went to defendants' huts, and asked them why they were not going to work. They replied that they had no bread for breakfast. Witness went to the cook and asked him why he had baked no bread for breakfast. He answered that the boys had told him not to bake any more, as they were all going away. Witness instructed the cook to bake some at once and take it to those boys who had not absconded, and who were then working in the field. He then laid an information against the defendant Ponghour, and also against the other eight defendants who had run away.

By the Bench: Witness kept a cook to prepare the food for the boys. He is a Pacific Islander also. He always gave the rations into the cook's charge. The defendants had never complained to him about anything but the bread not being sufficient.

Ponghour, being invited to make a statement, said that he went to work on Monday morning after breakfast. When he went home for dinner there was neither bread nor meat. The cook told him that there was no flour to bake bread, and that the master said he could have none until night. He lay on his bed until the overseer went and wanted him to go to work. He went out without any dinner. The master replied that if the flour was finished he might clear out. He went back to work again, and afterwards, when he went home, he found no supper ready, and the cook told him that there was no bread or rations. The boys all said then that they wanted to run away. He never told the cook not to bake bread. The other boys told him. They always got plenty of meat and sugar. One Wood and Matchagora corroborated the statement just given, and the latter added that the master had stated that there was plenty of flour in the hut. Lots of the boys had told the cook not to bake. None of the boys who told the cook were present. They got plenty of sugar and tobacco, but the sugar was bad. They got lots of other rations.

Christian Retchlag, called by Mr. Smith, stated that he was a butcher residing at Marburg. On Saturday Inst, the 21<sup>st</sup> June, he supplied the kanakas in Mr. Smith's employment with 100lb. beef; on Tuesday last with 70lb., which is an average of 3lb. daily, and he had also supplied 70lb. that day.

The bench after consultation asked the boys whether they would go back to work at once, and an affirmative reply being given, they inflicted a nominal fine of 1s. each, or in default six hours in the cells. The fines were paid. The bench then explained the terms of their agreements to the boys, which they seemed to understand. The bench also suggested that the rations should be given out daily to the boys instead of in a lump weekly. The court then closed.

### **ROYAL COMMISSION INTO THE SUGAR INDUSTRY**

The Royal Commission into the Sugar Industry which mentions Woodlands was held in 1889.

#### **Civil Service Inquiry. The Charges Against Mitchell. Report of the Board**

Brisbane Courier, 11 November 1892 pages 5 & 6

'At the meeting of the Executive Council held yesterday the recommendation of the Civil Service Board that Mr. William Mitchell, a clerk in the immigration Department, should be called upon to resign was approved. This recommendation was the result of an inquiry held by the board into certain charges preferred against Mitchell. These charges were: - Falsifying agreements; conniving with the labour agent Glennon to deceive certain Pacific Islanders and Mr. T.L. Smith, for whom they were engaged; and with working in the interests of Glennon instead of in the interests of the department and the islanders.

From the evidence and documents submitted to the board it appeared that William Glennon is an agent for obtaining Pacific Islanders for planters, and that early in August last he contracted with Mr. Thos. L. Smith, of Woodlands, Marburg, to procure for him a supply of 'time-expired' islanders on an eighteen months' agreement, the total cost to the employer for wages, commission, &c., to be £28 per head for the term, Glennon to receive as remuneration whatever the wages averaged under that amount. That is to say, if he procured islanders at the rate of £18 each for the term, he was to receive £10 for each islander to cover his commission and all attendant expenses. The natural result of this mode of remuneration, the board point out, is to induce the agent in his own interest to engage islanders at the lowest possible wage, occasionally it was to be feared to the extent of taking unfair advantage of them. In the early part of September last Glennon, it appeared from the evidence, engaged for Smith under the abovementioned agreement twenty-three islanders at the following rates: - 1 at £25 for the eighteen months, 3 at £22 10s for the same period, 16 at £18, and 3 women at £9 each for the term, Glennon subsequently receiving from Smith the sum of £208 10s. to cover commission and expenses. On the arrival of the islanders at the plantation they were questioned by Smith as to their agreements, when they stated that they had signed for a period of eighteen months and at £27 for the term, being at the rate of £18 for the twelve months. A few days afterwards Glennon arrived with the agreements, when Smith noticed that the wages were entered therein as £18 for the term of eighteen months, and not for the year, as claimed by the islanders. He also found that Glennon had bound him to supply clothing, which he stated he had not undertaken to do. Smith did not at this interview with Glennon make any reference to the discrepancy as to wages, but called upon him to get the stipulation as to clothing erased from the agreements, and afterwards refused to pay the commission till this was effected. On his return to Brisbane Glennon saw the Immigration Agent and suggested to him that the condition to supply clothing should be struck out. Mr. Galloway, however, emphatically refused to assent to this situation, and of this Smith was in due course informed by Glennon. Of the twenty-three islanders sent to Woodlands eighteen had come to Brisbane from Cairns with the intention of returning to their islands, their passages having been paid to Brisbane by Messrs. Swallow Bros., their late employers. Four others also came from

Cairns, and these four were the only islanders of the twenty-three who appeared from the evidence to have been brought to Brisbane at Glennon's expense, although he informed Smith that he reckoned the cost of the coastal fares of the islanders engaged for him at £120. In a letter from Mr. Mitchell to Smith dated 6<sup>th</sup> September, marked "private and confidential," that officer stated, "Mr. Glennon brought them all" – i.e., the islanders – "from Cairns." He further, in that letter, advised Smith that Glennon was 'going to have to sent' the islanders to Maryborough, as Cran and Co.'s order was first on hand, but that he had persuaded Glennon to give Smith the first chance, as he was a friend of his. The impropriety of an officer of the Government interposing to the prejudice of the one employer of islanders in order to favour another employer the board consider needs no comment.

With reference to the matter of clothing, Mitchell, in a second letter to Smith dated the 10<sup>th</sup> September, also marked "Private and confidential," writes as follows:- "Re clothing, the prevailing practice in the Bundaberg district is not to give clothing, whether stipulated or otherwise. You can use your own discretion when islanders are paid their six months' wages. If you are called upon to give an equivalent well and good, but I do not think so." Mitchell was then about leaving the office on a fortnight's leave, and in a postscript to his letter requests Smith if he wants any further information to write to him in a fortnight's time, addressed to his private residence at Sherwood. In addition to its being a grave offense for any officer to write private and confidential letters upon, public matters without the sanction of the head of his department the information as to clothing conveyed to Smith in this instance is considered by the board to be in direct opposition to instruction contained in an official letter in Mitchell's writing addressed to the inspector at Bundaberg, dated the 14<sup>th</sup> July last, and signed by Mr. Galloway, and Mitchell's action in the opinion of the board conclusively shewed that in this instance, at any rate, he was working in the interests of Glennon and the employer instead of in the interests of the department and the islanders. About a fortnight after the islanders were engaged – namely, on the 19<sup>th</sup> September – Smith intimated to Glennon that the "boys" had refused to work on account of the rate of wages, and requested him to send an inspector up to the plantation at once to arrange matters. In reply Glennon instructed Smith to send the ringleader, one Maroo, to Brisbane. This was done; and a few days afterwards Glennon advised Smith by telegram and letter that he had brought Maroo before the Immigration Agent, and that everything was satisfactorily settled excepting the clothing, "which must be given, or an equivalent." On Maroo's return to the plantation the islanders resumed work, apparently satisfied.

It was elicited in the evidence taken by the board that on Maroo's arrival in Brisbane from Marburg he was paid a sum of money by Glennon to induce him (it was assumed) to "square" the other islanders, and that although the islanders had returned to work they were still dissatisfied. In reply to this Glennon stated that he had from the first promised Maroo individually £26 as wages for the eighteen months, and a bonus of £10 on getting the islanders to sign; that he had previously paid him a portion only of that bonus, and that the sum paid to Maroo on his return to Brisbane was given to him in fulfilment of the arrangement referred to, adding that it is his invariable practice to pay a bonus to the "touts" who procure islanders for him.

With respect to the charge of falsifying certain of the agreements it appeared that these documents were prepared in the department in triplicate, those in Brisbane being filled in by Mitchell, who took charge of them after they had been signed by the inspector. The copies were not always prepared at the same time as the original, the duplicates and triplicates being either signed by the head of the department in an incomplete state when the original was signed, or subsequently after having been filled in. In many of these agreements, the board state in their

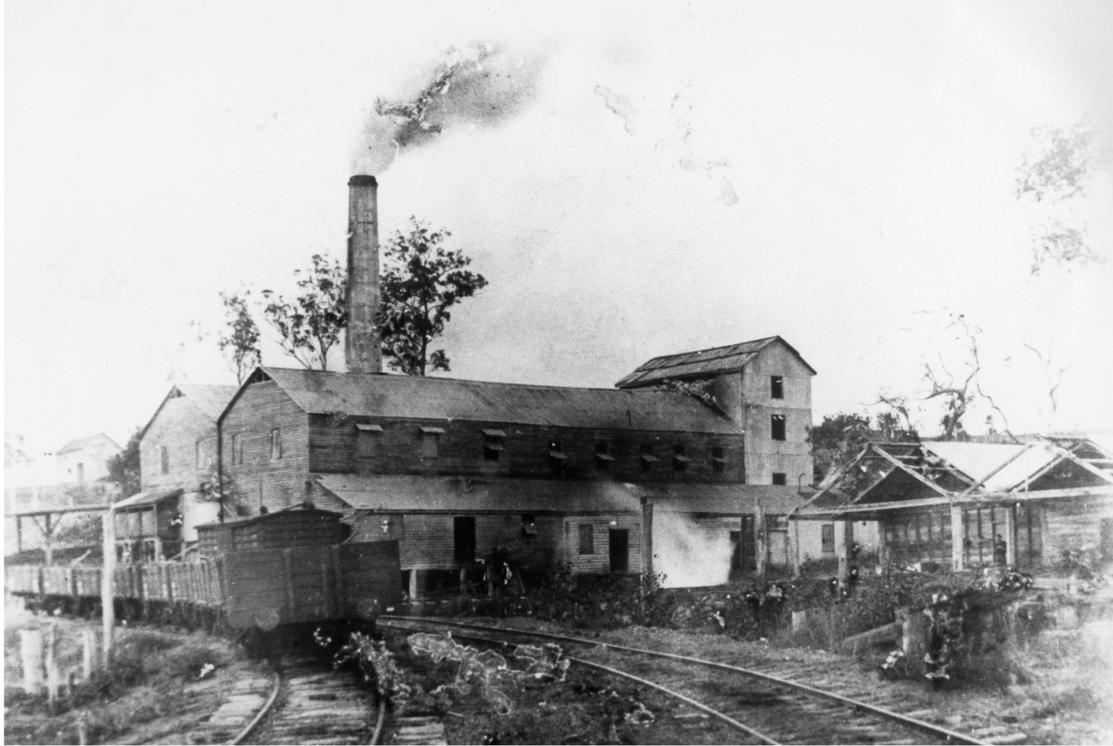
report, important alterations had been made, but few of which have been initialled by the certifying officer. In consequence of this omission it was impossible for them to say with certainty whether any particular alteration had been made before or after the agreement was signed. In the case of the Marburg (Smith's) agreements, for instance, it was believed by Mr. Galloway that the word "term" which had been substituted for "annum" had been inserted after signature, thereby reducing the islanders' wages by one-third. In the agreements also of other islanders engaged by Glennon for planters at Maryborough and Bundaberg the rates of wages had been altered by Mitchell, and in most instances by erasure by knife. In these latter cases it was contended that the alterations must have been made after the signature was affixed, the head of the department averring that he would not have passed agreements containing alterations in the rate of wages made in that way. In explanation of the unusual number of erasures in the agreements of islanders engaged by Glennon it was stated by him and Mitchell that on several occasions where "boys" had been brought to the depot to complete their agreements. Mr. Galloway had been absent, and probably on the following day the islanders had refused to sign at the rates previously agreed on, which refusal had necessitated alterations; or they had, perhaps in the meantime received a further advance from Glennon, which not having been made in the presence of an inspector could not be recognised by the department, and consequently the sum in the wages column had been altered that being the only way in which the agency could recover from the planter the advance made by him.

With a view to taking the evidence of the islanders as to the exact terms of their agreements with Glennon the board, accompanied by Messrs. Galloway and Mitchell visited Smith's plantation on the 31<sup>st</sup> October, and made a searching inquiry into the alleged alterations in the stipulated rates of wages. The whole of the islanders examined by the board, with the exception of one from Swallow's plantation and the four who were brought from Cairns, by Glennon, and who admitted that the sum of £4 10s. each was owing by them to him for their passage from Cairns, acknowledged that the agreements were correct. They stated that they had agreed to serve Smith for eighteen months for the sum of £18 for the term, and said they had arranged together to "lie" to Smith in order to get the same wages as Maroo, who had signed for £26 for the term.

With regard to the complaints of the four islanders whose passages were paid by Glennon, and to the altered agreements complained of at Maryborough and Bundaberg, it appeared to the board impossible, for the reasons hereinbefore given with respect to agreements, to arrive at any definite conclusion as to whether they are bona fide or not. There was certainly, in connection with these numerous alterations and the inducements to fraud which the present system of remunerating agents suggests, sufficient to give occasion for very grave suspicion.

In conclusion, whilst hesitating to say that any of the agreements have been falsified, the board were clearly of opinion that Mr. William Mitchell had been guilty of working in the interests of Glennon instead of in the interests of the department and the islanders, which must be regarded as a very grave offence in an officer in his position, and they therefore felt constrained to recommend his enforced resignation from the public service. The recommendation, as stated above, has been endorsed by the Government".

Thomas Lorimer Smith sold the mill to the Marburg Sugar Company in 1906. After World War I the mill was closed and the plant moved to Bingera near Bundaberg.



Marburg Sugar Mill 1913. At the time the mill was owned by W.A. and D.L. Gibson, of Bingera Plantation, Bundaberg.  
Source: Moreton Shire Queensland: Discovery and Settlement. Joan Starr. 1988

### **ADDRESS BY REV CHRISTENSEN AT MARBURG, 1891**

The Brisbane Courier, Wednesday 7 October 1891 page 6

A correspondent writing from Marburg states that an address was given on Friday evening last at the School of Arts by the Rev. C. Christensen, of the Danish Church, Maryborough, on the South Sea Island Mission. There was a very large attendance, nearly all religious denominations being represented. The lecturer fortunately found that there were three or four kanakas present, who up to two or three months since had been scholars in the classes conducted by himself and his wife in Maryborough. He was therefore enabled to illustrate the result of the training and religious instruction imparted to these blacks. Mr. F.A. Muller presided. The address was opened with a few earnest remarks with regard to mission work generally and his own in particular, and a short reference to the convictions which had led him to take up mission work. The lecturer then proceeded to catechise his former pupils in order to illustrate the work being done by the mission. The audience was agreeably surprised at the answers made by the kanakas. Several of the hymns which they had been taught were sung at intervals during the address, Mr. Christensen accompanying their voices with his violin. The lecturer next spoke of the many difficulties he had had to encounter in starting the mission, how these had been overcome, and how he had won over both employers and employed to his side. He had now about 250 attending the mission schools in Maryborough and neighbourhood, which consisted of six classes taken by his wife and himself. In these classes the kanakas were taught to spell and read, and the simple truths of Christianity were also imparted. The great want at present was money to carry on the work, and he had undertaken to make a tour of various parts of the colony to endeavour to enlist the sympathies of the public. He further stated that any of those present who felt desirous of assisting the work might take subscription lists, and forward all money to the hon. Treasurer. Mr. G. Stupart, Maryborough. At the close of the address a hymn was sung by the kanakas, and one of them afterwards prayed. Mr Christensen intends to deliver lectures in Brisbane this week.

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, 1892

The Brisbane Courier, Saturday 12 November 1892 page 4

It is to be regretted that, just as the senselessness of the hue and cry against the black labour traffic had become generally acknowledged, and the missionaries themselves (Dr. Paton perhaps excepted) had very much moderated their tone under our representations, a shady transaction connected with the Islanders' Immigration Department should have compelled inquiry by the Civil Service Board. Very recently our Chief Secretary answered to admirable purpose a communication from the directors of the London Missionary Society. In the same issue in which the board's report appears we have a telegram from Victoria announcing that Mr. McDonald, son of the late Rev. Dr. McDonald, of Melbourne, and now missionary in the New Hebrides, does not entertain the strong objections taken by some of the other missionaries to the kanaka traffic. He does not think, indeed, that the kanakas' visit to Queensland does them any good; but he makes the valuable admission that there can be no complaint on the score of the manner in which they are recruited, or their treatment during their term of service. It is important to notice that the disclosures made in the inquiry just held do not affect either of these admissions. The kanakas involved in the transactions under inquiry were "time expired," and the inquiry concerns offers that were made to them as an alternative to returning to their islands. Of course it is alike undesirable and impossible that time expired kanakas should be forced to leave the colony. The bargain made with them contracts to return them at the end of three years' service; but it necessarily lies with themselves whether they will then take advantage of the provision thus made or engage for further work which will delay their departure. The fact that a considerable proportion elect so to engage may be noted in passing as a cogent refutation of the charges of maltreatment on the plantations. But it appears that this practice has given rise to an abuse which, whether kanakas or planters or both are to be regarded as its victims, is most undesirable in connection with a form of labour which will always be bitterly opposed and against which arguments are eagerly sought. Into the business of finding black labour for employers the middleman or agent has thrust himself, and in a specially offensive form. On the one hand he bargains with the employer to supply him with the labour of so many kanakas for a certain period for a stipulated sum, while on the other hand he bargains with the kanakas for a wage which enables him to put a broad margin of profit into his own pocket. Not only so but he introduces a sub-contractor or second middleman in the shape of a boss kanaka, who for a consideration hunts up the desired number of his countrymen and brings them to the agents' terms. Thus in the case under inquiry Mr. T.L. Smith, planter, of Woodlands, Marburg, had agreed with one Glennon to pay him an overall sum of £26 for the term proposed, and in addition a sum of £10 as a stimulus to induce him to get the required number of islanders to "sign the agreement." Other twenty-two islanders were engaged, three at £22 10s. each for the eighteen months, sixteen at £18, and three women at £9. thus while Glennon received or was to receive from Smith a sum of £644, he expended or was to expend only £418 10s., of which £10 went as bonus to Maroo, leaving a profit to himself of £225 10s., out of which he had to pay the passages of four islanders from Cairns, and possibly other expenses. There are no doubt those who would defend this transaction as legitimate business; but most people will be of opinion that the less we have of such business, especially in connection with black labour, the better it will be for the colony. Did the disclosures stop here there were call enough for such departmental action as would arrest a system whose natural result is chicanery and fraud.

In fact it is at this point that the chicanery begins; and our sense of wrong and of disgrace is not lessened by the circumstance that it is difficult to sheet home the responsibility or even to say in

some cases who is in fault. On arriving at the plantation the islanders represented to Smith that they were to receive the sums mentioned for the year's labour, and not for the term of eighteen months. This representation they afterwards characterised in answer to the board's inquiries as a lie concocted to get as big wages as Maroo had got. If this is true they were not imposed upon; and Glennon may get the benefit of their evidence. But the complications are difficult to unravel. In the agreements the word "term" was written over an erasure, and Mr. Galloway, of the Immigration Board, believes that the word appearing when the official signature was appended was "annum." Inconsistently, too, with his bargain with Mr. Smith, the agent Glennon had bound him in the agreements to supply clothing. Here the unpleasant thing is that Mitchell writes a "private and confidential" letter to smooth the difficulty by informing Mr. Smith that "the prevailing practice in the Bundaberg district is not to give clothing whether stipulated or otherwise," and this in direct opposition to instructions contained in an official letter of previous date in his own handwriting. Anybody can see that Mr. Glennon or Mr. Mitchell is the smallest part of the concernment here. The department will not do justice to the colony if it does not at once exert itself to put a stop to such a practice or to clear us from its reproach. Then there are the conflicting representation as to the expense of the carriage of the islanders, in which the agent, if not his friend in the Immigration Office, is saying the thing that is not. The board, while "hesitating to believe" that the Immigration clerk has been guilty of falsifying agreements or conniving with the agent to deceive, are clearly of opinion that he has been "working in the interests of Glennon instead of in the interests of the department and the islanders." We have no desire to go beyond this finding, which has already led to Mitchell's dismissal. But we are bound to point out that much greater wrongs than are involved in such a finding have certainly been committed in this case, whoever may be the responsible party; and the interests of the colony demand that they should be vigorously protested against and made impossible in time to come.

### **BREACH OF THE PACIFIC ISLANDERS ACT, 1901**

On 27 December 1901 the Brisbane Courier column about events in Ipswich included a short article about Julius A. Muche being summoned for a breach of the Pacific Islanders Act. The defendant was convicted and fined £2 with 5s. 4d costs of court, 5s. witness's expenses, and 5s coach fare at the Marburg Police Court.

### **THE SUGAR INDUSTRY**

Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton), Saturday 26 August 1922 page 11

Extract from an article titled: SUGAR INDUSTRY, North's great Problem, Sugar Agreement by their Travelling Correspondent.

Some yeas ago a very prominent English journalist visited Australia. To be meticulously correct, he landed in Sydney and spent most of his time there. Within a comparatively short period he had settled to his own satisfaction at least all the problems of Australia. If he were to come in Australia to-day there is not the slightest shadow of doubt that he would deal with what is probably the most vital problem of the North – the renewal, or otherwise of the sugar agreement. I have spent a month in North Queensland and covered a fair amount of ground and I have seen a portion of the canefields in the Ayre home Hill, Bowen, Proserpine and Mackay districts. I have also seen what the sugar industry means to those districts. Further, I have discussed with quite a number the industry in its varying phases. To be fully seized of the vast importance of the industry one should, of course, have visited the whole of the areas devoted to sugar, but that would mean a lot of [word illegible]. Still from what I have seen I have gained a very fair idea of what the sugar

industry is to North Queensland particularly, and to Queensland and Australia generally. And yet it is with a good deal of confidence that I am putting down my views and impressions, for the subject is one of such vast importance and has so many phases. On the occasion of this, my first, visit to North Queensland I was not seeing cane grown for the first time. *Rather more years ago now than I care remember, when only a cub reporter on the Ipswich papers, I used to do a good deal of country work. Very frequently I had to visit Marburg, or Townshend as it is now called. There was a big plantation there owned by Mr. L.L. Smith, which was known as Woodlands. You went up a long and gentle ascent from the little church at Minden, with smiling farms on either side. Gaining the height you dropped suddenly, crossed a small creek, and then ascended the hill to Kuchheim. From Kuchheim you looked across hundreds of acres of wavering cane. Speaking from memory, I think there were over 2000 acres in the estate and there was also a small sugar mill. It was worked by kanakas, and many a time and often I have seen the islanders' trading along the road from Walloon to woodlands plantation. On one occasion I saw a red-headed kanaka among the boys – the only one I have ever seen with Titian hair. That night, bursting with excitement, I proudly announced the fact to the assembled staff. The senior arose in his wrath. "Saw a red-headed kanaka and you?" he said: 'anyone would have thought you had seen Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth or Madame Tussand's Waxworks judging from the noise you are making.' I collapsed, but my turn came next morning, for I had secured in journalistic parlance, a "scoop." A farmer run amok, carved up his wife and daughter, and then cut his own throat. I got the story practically first-hand. Next morning the senior expressed surprise that I should have been so full of the red-headed kanaka and saw nothing about the tragedy, he made caustic remarks about "news value" and the relative value of various items.* However, this is somewhat of a digression.

In dealing with the sugar industry it is interesting to recall that the first successful attempt to grow sugarcane and to manufacture sugar in Australia was made in 1823 by a Mr. Scott, at Port Macquarie, who followed up his experiments by producing seventy tons of sugar in 1827. In 1847 the sugarcane was grown in what are now the Botanic Gardens in Brisbane, then included in Moreton Bay which was part of New South Wales. In 1862 there years after separation, a Mr. Buhot manufactured sugar in the infant state of Queensland. The sugar industry, however, is inseparably connected with the Hon. Louis Hope, a member of the Hopetown family, who planted twenty acres of cane at Cleveland, now one of the favourite watering resorts of Brisbane. From this beginning the industry was under the system of the owner cultivating the cane with black labour and manufacturing the sugar in his own mill. Inside two decades 43,000 acres were under cane and "blackbirding," otherwise the recruiting of kanakas, was a thriving industry. About 1883 or 1884 it was felt that the plantation system, whereby an owner grew and manufactured his own sugar, was wrong in commercial principle. The Government of the day advanced money on loan for the erection of tow mills at Mackay, practically upon the co-operative principle, for, although there was no obstacle to outsiders, the great majority were growers. As this experiment proved successful the Sugar Works Guarantee Act came into operation in 1893. This Act provided for guarantee loans for the erection of co-operative sugar mills, the guarantee being a mortgage upon the lands of the shareholders and upon the mill. Under this and succeeding acts, having similar objects, advances have been made to nineteen mills and to tramway companies in connection with mills. The total amount advanced is about £1600,000, of which about one-third has been repaid. In all there are in Queensland at the present time thirty-six sugar mills and refineries in operation. Up till the time of federation black labour was allowed in connection with the sugar industry, but in the years just prior to federation, when what are now the states were known as colonies, the conditions in regard to the employment of Kanakas were stringent. Briefly, these conditions provided that the owner of the farm or plantation engaged his men, who were brought from the islands under the strictest Government supervision, for a fixed period and had to pay for

their return home at the end thereof. He had also to find clothes, food according to scale, and medical attendance, for the proper performance of which there was supervision by Government inspectors, who also saw to it that the regulation scale of wages was paid. The Kanaka could only labour in the canefields and devote his labour to the cane. Thus he was debarred from ploughing, driving horses, milking cows, &c. Thought the slogan of a White Australia is now our national sentiment its origin was really due to another reason than that of racial feeling and objection to the Kanaka. The owners of the plantations were really feudal lords. Not a few of them, to use the expressive Australian language, "made it a welter," and paid very low prices for cane grown by the white farmers. Instances have been known where they paid as low as 5s. or 6s. per ton for cane, which was worth up to 13s. and 14s. per ton. On my present visit to the North I have met several who helped to pioneer the sugar industry in various districts, and I have seen prosperous towns where, not so many years ago there was dense jungle. I have listened to graphic recitals of the grim struggle for existence for many years; of the toils and privations and of the never-ending effort to keep body and soul together, ever hoping for the dawn of better days, which eventually came. All honour to those men and women who fought such a glorious fight. Some, disheartened by the terrific odds, faded out; but others, with the tenacity of the Briton, hung on and are now in comfortable circumstances. But they have hardly earned every penny they now possess. When Sir. S.W. Griffith really took the matter in hand and the Government advanced money for the erection of co-operative mills operated by white labour, a marked change took place, though it took some years to eliminate the sugar area of the Kanakas. The big companies cut up their estates into small farms and sold them to white farmers. This was the turning point from black to white labour and was the beginning of the upward move which has placed the industry in the position it now occupies. This move reached its apex in 1913 in the Sugar Cultivation Act of 1913, under which persons not of European origin could engage in the sugar industry unless they held permits or passed the education test.

In 1901, when federation became an accomplished fact, the Federal Government instituted the bounty system for all cane grown by white labour. The position of the industry was as follows: - there were fifty-two sugar mills in operation. The area under cane was 78,160 acres, which produced 1,180,091 tons of cane. At 10s. per ton – a fair price in those days – this was worth £596,645 to the growers. From this cane 120,858 tons of sugar was manufactured. At that time there were more than 9000 Kanakas. Now but a moiety of those who settled in the state, remain. In 1906 the area under cane had reached 98,194 acres, which grew 1,728,780 tons of cane from which 184,377 tons of sugar were produced. Of this area 67,785 acres was under purely white control and the Commonwealth paid to these growers £372,038. In 1911 there were 4238 cane farmers. The area crushed was 95,766 acres for 1,534,451 tons of cane, producing 173,296 tons of sugar. The white-grown cane had reached 94.42 per cent of the whole area crushed, and the Commonwealth bonus amounted to £498,868. the value of the cane crushed in that year was £1,107,451, so that the amount paid to the farmers for their cane was equivalent to a little over 14s. 5d. per ton.

With the abolition of coloured labour and the improvement in the conditions of those engaged in the industry, there has been a great influx of canecutters from the southern centres, just as there is in the shearing industry. They cut cane on contract and made good money. Some went into the industry and are now settled in various parts of the north. They have had no cause to regret having left New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania to become residents of this state.