

# Information Sheet 2

## EMPLOYERS OF SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS IN IPSWICH

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Employers of South Sea Islanders
- South Sea Islanders in Ipswich
- Ipswich Punch Magazine

J.P. Sunderland of Sydney wrote a letter to the Editor of The Sydney Morning Herald which was published in that paper on page 3 on Monday 28 September 1868. Titled "Polynesian Labour in Queensland", this article included impressions produced by interviews with Polynesian labourers in the Brisbane and Ipswich areas.

Particularly relevant to Ipswich he wrote "The Mare men, in the neighbourhood of Ipswich, declare that they were told on board ship before they left the islands, that they were to have plenty of food and clothing, but when they arrived in Moreton Bay then they were informed that they were engaged for three years. This was a deception; and had they understood that they were to be thirty-six moons in Queensland, they would never have left home".

At the time this document was written it was not established when South Sea Islanders were first transported to Ipswich to work for local businesses.

The Brisbane Courier of 5 September 1868 included a report on Polynesian labourers in Queensland. This census showed that a total of 53 Polynesians were working for 9 employers in the Ipswich District, 7 were employed in Pastoral work and 46 in Agricultural work.

A number of early Ipswich settlers used South Sea Island labourers to work on their property's including:

- Joshua Peter Bell
- George Challinor
- William Dance
- J.A. Jackes
- James Ivory
- J & G Harris
- Mr Lindsay
- John Smith
- Thomas Lorimer Smith



### Joshua Bell

In August 1926, Redgum (Tom Barker) wrote an article on the early recollections of Mr and Mrs Thomas Follett. Both worked for Joshua Peter Bell, Mr Follett - ploughing, preparing the land for crops, cotton picking, and bringing the cotton in at the end of the day. They recalled that Mr Bell's cotton fields stretched right to Limestone (Ipswich). His cotton ginnery was located at Raceview, where the cotton was taken, ginned, and packed into bales.

### George Challinor

On page three of The Brisbane Courier, dated Wednesday 2 February 1870 the following appeared: "At Yamahanto, the property of Mr. G. Challinor, there are this season about 80 acres of cotton, the whole of which looks remarkably well. About 30 acres of this is pruned. It is ripening fast, there being about half a bale already picked. Great care has evidently been bestowed upon this crop, which looks very healthy indeed, and is remarkably clean.

Mr. Challinor has tried three methods of planting. About four acres of seed cotton has been planted with bone dust, salt, and guano, which certainly, as far as appearance goes, promises to be the best of the lot. It is very heavily podded, the pods being very plump and firm, while the plants have a particular freshness of color and are very full of leaf. A second method adopted has been to sow the seed with rotten cotton seed for manure; the remainder has been planted in the ordinary way. A small portion of the pruned seems to have

missed here, though not so much as in some other places. Ninety-day corn is sown wherever vacancies occur in the cotton. There are about ten acres of excellent maize on this farm, which is rapidly coming to maturity. The land here, as on most of the farms in the neighbourhood, is a black loamy soil, which is easy to work after the first ploughing, and appears to be well adapted for the culture of cotton.

Scarcely any caterpillars have yet made their appearance either here or on any of the farms in this district. The greatest nuisance is the pig-weed, which is very difficult of eradication, and spreads in the most marvellous manner if not looked after with great care. The labor employed on the farm consists of two white men and four Polynesians, the latter being found very serviceable".

### William Dance

"In early December 1884, as an 18 year old, he set sail for Queensland to start his adult life in a new country. It's possible he was following in the footsteps of his older brother George, (no record of George's arrival in Queensland has yet been found). After a short stay in Brisbane, William set out for Toowoomba, to gain experience in agriculture, Australian style. Within two years however, he had bought land in the Marburg district, an area west of Brisbane, settled mainly by farmers of German stock".

"Early in his farming days, Bill Dance made use of "kanakas", Pacific Islanders enticed to Queensland as cheap labour by recruiters of somewhat dubious repute, known as

blackbirders". This practice was discontinued in the early 1900s by the newly-created Commonwealth of Australia, which tried to ensure the young nation was peopled almost solely by white British stock".

### J & G Harris

The Harris brothers immigrated from London in 1833. In 1860, George Harris married Jane Thorn, daughter of George Thorn and the Harris brothers set up a cotton gin. Four years later, the brothers built a two-storey brick store in Bell Street. It had a slate roof and the exterior walls were decorated with ornamental mouldings.

The two main entrances had keystones with heads sculptured into the sandstone.

George Harris became bankrupt in the 1870s and the Ipswich Middle School used the store building until 1877. The building was later demolished; however, the keystones from the building were saved by A.E. (Bertie) Roberts and were eventually presented to Ipswich Central School as a gift for their 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



*J & G Harris store on the corner of Bell & Bremer Streets, Ipswich.  
Source: Picture Ipswich*

James Ivory of Bundamba noted in his diary on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1871 that "Undoey rather surly, said before Jones he did not care if he was sent to Jail, he hinted that he wishes a tea pot & white sugar & 3 fingers of my best Tobacco. This was in answer to my charging him & the Kanakas of not working properly & up to their agreement. I also told him before Jones that none of these were to go to Ipswich without my authority or I would have to send a constable after them for going away. He said if Kanaka lazy send him away. I said I was Master & that they must work properly or I could give them less food. Undoey told me himself that he had 2 glasses grog at Ipswich.

The Kanaka at Harris' is I believe the origin of all this bother, as

they were as happy as Princes, singing & leaping about & as merry as could be before they went to Ipswich & saw him getting logs ready for foundation of Centrifugal".

The Courier Mail reported on an inquiry touching the death of a South Sea Islander named Stammid on 1 May 1872. "From the report of the evidence in the Queensland Times it appears that some islanders belonging to Messrs J. & G. Harris occupy a house in East-street, Ipswich, and on Saturday night and Sunday last they and a few fellow-countrymen were enjoying themselves at this house after the fashion of white labourers - namely, by hard drinking. The deceased, who had been in the colony for six years, and was in a delicate state of health from a

sprain of the back through carrying a bag of flour at Maryborough some time ago, got drunk, and died on the spot. Dr. Dorsey found no external marks of violence on the body, and thought it probably that death was caused merely by the man getting drunk in his weak state of health, but could not say positively until he had made a post-mortem examination. The Police Magistrate directed such an examination to be made, and the inquiry was adjourned to hear the doctor's further testimony. On the 3 May the Brisbane Courier reported that "The Bench gave a verdict that deceased died from injuries received on the head either by a blow or fall, but weather accidentally or otherwise there is no evidence to show".

**An inquiry touching the death of a South Sea Islander named Stammid, was held by the Police Magistrate of Ipswich on Tuesday last. From the report of the evidence in the Queensland Times it appears that some islanders belonging to Messrs. J. and G. Harris occupy a house in East-street, Ipswich, and on Saturday night and Sunday last they and a few fellow-countrymen were enjoying themselves at this house after the fashion of white laborers—namely, by hard drinking. The deceased, who had been in the colony for six years, and was in a delicate state of health from a sprain of the back through carrying a bag of flour at Maryborough some time ago, got drunk, and died on the spot. Dr. Dorsey found no external marks of violence on the body, and thought it probable that death was caused merely by the man getting drunk in his weak state of health, but could not say positively until he had made a post-mortem examination. The Police Magistrate directed such an examination to be made, and the inquiry was adjourned to hear the doctor's further testimony.**

## IPSWICH PUNCH

The "Ipswich Punch" Magazine dated 1 April 1871 contained a sketch about South Sea Islanders .

The heading of the caption reads: Slavery (?) in Queensland.

The text for the image on the left reads: As represented by certain philanthropists of the Mrs Jellyby type in London. The text for the image on the right hand side reads: As seen in Ipswich, Queensland.

"Ipswich Punch was a humorous magazine based on the famous British "Punch". It was entirely hand-written and hand-illustrated, and there was just one copy of each edition, kept on a table in the library reading room. The authors produced it for fun, but it has survived as an important historical record which offers a vivid glimpse of Ipswich life in the 1860s".

(Source: <http://qtproject.ipswich.qld.gov.au/history>)

