

DIVERSITY OF THE IPSWICH POPULATION

From the very earliest days, the people who came to live in Ipswich came from a variety of different places. The majority were British (including England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland) or German. However there were people from surprising places eg. Mauritius.

Many people paid their own passage to Queensland, but from the 1850s, many people were brought to Queensland as immigrants, with their passage (fare) paid by the government.

The immigrants experienced a long and difficult sea voyage. The accommodation on the immigrant ships was dark and often damp, with as many as 500 people crowded below decks for all cooking, eating and sleeping.

Sanitary arrangements were primitive and during gales, the ship's hatches were closed and passengers were forced to stay below decks for days on end.

When disease such as typhoid broke out, it spread throughout the ship and there were many deaths eg. in 1862, 431 people sailed on the ship 'Erin-go-Brach' from Ireland to Brisbane and 52 died of typhoid, mainly children.

In 1864, an immigration depot was built at North Ipswich between the Bremer River and The Terrace. This provided somewhere for new immigrants to stay before they gained employment.

The arrivals were reported in 'The Queensland Times' eg. in September 1866, 54 British migrants and 26 German migrants arrived in Ipswich. Most were single men and single women, with a few married couples.

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Mauritius

Mr and Mrs Vanzeur were well-known early residents. Mr Vanzeur came from the island of Mauritius and worked as a shepherd for George Thorn. Mrs Vanzeur was brought to this area by Gordon Sanderman and also worked as a shepherd. The couple later ran a ferry across to North Ipswich before the bridge was built, then went farming on the banks of the Brisbane River. When they became old, they retired and lived in a cottage at Brassall.

'Black' Neale also came from Mauritius and had been captain of a sailing ship. He settled at West Ipswich in the 1840s with his two daughters and arranged for a timber house to be built. In 1843, the building was moved into Bell St and became 'The Red Cow' Inn (the 'Caledonian' is now on this site).



England

In very early Ipswich, most residents still thought of Britain as 'home'.

Christmas was particularly a time of fond memories of England and all the traditions were kept up here in spite of the hot weather, for example roast chicken and hot puddings, fake snow on Christmas trees. Ipswich had a St George Society (St George who slew the dragon was the patron saint of England). The society held dinners and other functions and in 1905, held a parade to celebrate the centenary of Trafalgar Day, the anniversary of the famous naval victory.

Ireland

Ipswich had a large Irish community and the St Patrick's Day parade on March 17 was once a major event in Ipswich. Many shops closed and the parade was long and colourful, usually ending up with a sports day.

Scotland

Scottish people also remained attached to their homeland. A Caledonian Society was formed in Ipswich and began holding annual gatherings in the 1870s with sports such as tossing the caber. The Ipswich Thistle Pipe Band is still a familiar sight in parades in the city.

Wales

Ipswich had a distinct Welsh community for many years and there is still a United Welsh Church at Blackstone and a St David's Society (St David is the patron saint of Wales).

There were a few Welsh people among the early arrivals in Ipswich. One of the best known was Lewis Thomas who arrived in 1859 and, after working for a short time on railway construction, went into partnership in a coal mine. He later bought out his partner and in 1866, began to mine the rich Aberdare seam of coal at Blackstone. A Welsh community began to establish itself in the 1880s when a group of young men arrived from Wales and started to work for Lewis Thomas.

The community started a Welsh Church and choirs such as the Cambrian Choir, which is still in existence. The first Welsh singing competition (the eisteddfod) was held in the Welsh Church on New Year's Day 1887. A junior eisteddfod is still held in Ipswich every year.

Blackstone School opened in 1887. The Welsh people had requested a headmaster who could speak both Welsh and English but the Minister for Public Instruction refused the request.

A school inspector was later to comment on the difficulties experienced by the children who often spoke English at school and Welsh at home.

Germany

Many German families settled in the country areas around Ipswich and many small country towns received names with German origin eg. Marburg. In early copies of 'The Queensland Times', there are a few advertisements written in German addressed to these new migrants.

The German settlers were often poor at first and were very hard working. They kept up many German customs such as traditional German weddings. The German immigrants were regarded suspiciously when war broke out. In Boonah, local people became angry in 1916 when a German boy was given a job at the Post Office. In 1916, nearby towns with German names - Minden, Hessenberg and Kirchheim were changed to Frenchton, Haigslea and Ingolby. Some of these names were changed back after the war. One of the best-known German immigrants in this area was Jacob Born who worked for Cribb and Foote.

China



* Chinese food once was viewed with great suspicion. In this 1865 cartoon, the Chinese are asking to buy the shopkeeper's coat to eat.

Ipswich had a small Chinese population. The first Chinese came to this area because there was an acute labour shortage on the large properties on the Darling Downs.

In 1848, 56 Chinese were brought to Brisbane and could be hired through agents for the cost of their passage plus six pounds a year, two suits of clothing and their keep for five years.

The 1851 census showed that there were 588 'Mohammedans and Pagans' in Queensland.

Unfortunately, although they were needed as workers, the Chinese were not welcomed by the community. The white workers feared the Chinese would undercut them and wages would drop. Other people simply had a blind prejudice. A letter in the Moreton Bay Free Press in 1848 talked of 'these yellow and beastly strangers'.

The Chinese or the 'Celestials' as they were called were accused of filthy eating because they ate 'rice and other unknown delicacies'. There was even seen to be something sinister about their lack of beards. Wives, families and unmarried Chinese women were not allowed to come with the men. Tales were invented about Chinese offering large amounts of money to buy white brides.

In Ipswich in 1851, a group of Chinese working at Smith's Boiling Down Works was attacked. A quarrel had taken place between some of the butchers and several Chinese men. Later in the day, the Chinese returned with some of their friends and were savagely attacked by the white men, one of whom had used a tomahawk.

None of the Europeans was injured at all, but 12 Chinese were 'shockingly mutilated'. Justice prevailed and the Europeans were imprisoned.

The Queensland Times sometimes mentioned the Chinese people in Ipswich, for example a Chinese man in a vegetable cart had an accident in 1866. The general tone is patronising but not antagonistic.

The number of Chinese in Queensland reached a peak during the gold rushes and in 1876, was 6% of Queensland's population.

The politician John Macrossan spoke about 'the yellow peril' and laws were passed to reduce immigration, so the numbers dwindled.

In Ipswich early in the twentieth century, there remained a number of Chinese people, some of whom worked market gardens and sold their vegetables door-to-door with a pair of baskets hanging from a pole over their shoulders. At Christmas, they brought householders gifts of small jars of ginger.

Other Groups

There were a small number of people of other nationalities and religions in Ipswich. For example, the town once had its own Customs House and the Sub Inspector of Customs, Mr Hutchinson, was a Parsee. Parsees were descendants of a Persian sect who had fled to India to escape religious persecution. Ipswich historian Tom Barker recalled that Mr Hutchinson had planted a palm tree at the customs house. 'Mr Hutchinson was a Parsee gentleman and in the shade of the palm, directly after sunrise, he could be seen going through his own particular form of religious rites,' Tom Barker said.

THE STORY OF JACOB BORN

This true story of Jacob Born is a shortened and edited version of an article in The Queensland Times newspaper in 1913.



In 1863, an 18-year-old orphan called Jacob Born left his home in Germany and sailed to Australia. He had paid his own fare, but most of the other 264 people on the ship were coming to Australia with their fares paid by the German Immigration Agency. The ship reached Moreton Bay on Wednesday 26 November and the following day, the passengers were brought up the river to Brisbane. On Friday, Jacob spent six shillings on the fare for a paddle steamer to Ipswich.

He landed at a wharf at the bottom of Bell Street. Two people immediately noticed the boy, John North who was in charge of Cribb and Foote's 'back' store (at the river end of Bell St) and the firm's carter John Reid. They tried to talk to Jacob but found that he could not speak English and they could not speak German.

The steam boat agent Robert Sparrow allowed Jacob to leave his heavy box in the slab store opposite the wharf and Jacob then set out to look at the town. Jacob stuck out as being 'a new chum' and he became the victim of some teasing by the local boys.

On Saturday, he was still wandering forlornly around the town and he finally attracted the attention of John Foote. A kindly man, Foote called his German assistant Francis Klein to act as interpreter and soon discovered Jacob's story. Mr Foote offered Jacob a job and took him home to his own house in Martin St. On Monday morning, Jacob started work in Cribb and Foote's back store. He was soon a familiar sight around Ipswich as he went out with a basket to make deliveries. He made deliveries to the famous North Australian Club in South Street and watched all the comings and goings in town.

Ipswich was a busy port and Bell Street, Union Street and East Street were crowded with teams of bullocks. Jacob was also present when a big fire destroyed the Cribb and Foote back store in 1865.

Jacob was taught English by James Hockley of Cribb and Foote's ironmongery department and then he attended a school in Upper Ellenborough Street run by William O'Donnell. Here he made friends with other Ipswich people.

Jacob also discovered that a man from his German home had also come to Ipswich - Dr Von Lossberg. In 1866, three years after Jacob started work, a financial depression affected Queensland. Local farmers, particularly cotton farmers, faced hardship and debt. Cribb and Foote instructed Jacob to travel around the district to find out what help the firm could offer.

Jacob again became a familiar sight, this time travelling in a buggy through the countryside, able to speak to the many German farmers of the area. Jacob said he sometimes carried as much as 3000 pounds (\$6000) with him to lend to farmers to tide them over their difficulties. 'No one could have an idea of the misery suffered by people on the land through no fault of their own. They just could not get any money for what they had grown', Jacob said.

In 1871, Jacob was put in charge of Cribb and Foote's store and cotton ginnery at Churchbank near Harrisville. The former friendless youth had become an important man. He was a member of the Ipswich Hospital Board and he visited patients every Sunday afternoon and taught in the Methodist Sunday School for 60 years.

In the 1890 and 1893 floods, he again traveled around the countryside to help families. He died at his home in Syntax Street in 1928 at the age of 83 and at his funeral, the minister said his story was part of the history of this area.

THE WELSH TEACHER

The following letter from Queensland State Archives (from EDU/Z215, letter 5343 dated 13 September 1886) gives an interesting insight into attributes of that time.

To the Honourable the Minister for Public Instruction:

We the undersigned householders of Blackstone beg leave to submit to you this requisition in reference to the Schoolmaster, which you are about to appoint to the charge of our school.

We deem it expedient to have a man who is in sympathy with us and who understands not only the English Language but also the Welsh, the majority of the inhabitants being of Welsh extraction, many of whom do not understand the English Language and we think it absolutely necessary to have a man who will be able to deal with them in their own language when necessary.

We recommend to your notice one Evan Davis of Brisbane who we believe would be a fit person to be appointed, having made himself very popular amongst the Welsh community in Brisbane and who is known to many here. We respectfully urge you and earnestly pray you to accede to our wishes.

J. Orr, Secretary to the School Building Committee Blackstone.

OFFICIAL COMMENT (written on left hand side of letter by a Government official)

I regard this application as unreasonable and absurd. The Department has never considered national peculiarities in its appointment of teachers, except in a very small degree in localities inhabited to Germans. To pay any great heed to this prayer would be, I believe, contrary to the general public policy of the country which is to weld all nationalities of the order 'Primates' into good men of the genus 'Briton' of the family

'Australian' of the species 'Queenslander'. The sooner those Welshmen lay aside whatever of their national distinctiveness hinders them from freely mixing with their neighbours the better it will be for them.

FIGHT AT SMITH'S BOILING DOWN WORKS, 1851

From: The Moreton Bay Courier 1851.

IPSWICH

(From our correspondent)

THURSDAY 13th MARCH - I regret to say that a very serious affray took place at the Long Pocket yesterday between a lot of white men and Chinese which ended in eleven of the latter being seriously wounded - one being in a dying state and another with a broken arm, the whole of them having received wounds about the head and been evidently kicked about the body.

As the case is under investigation, it would be premature at this stage to venture an opinion. In my next communication, I shall, of course, give you the final result of the trial.

[Since the receipt of the above report from our correspondent, we have ascertained that the inquiry before the Magistrate, up to yesterday morning, had only elicited the following facts:

That a Chinaman had been struck by a cooper in the employment of Mr J. Smith, and that afterwards, the Chinaman returned with other chinamen, and took possession of some cleavers, knives and other implements of the kind, with which they threatened the white men, until Mr Campbell, Mr Smith's superintendent, interfered, by desire of his employer, and preserved the peace. The Chinamen went away and no evidence was given as to how the wounded men had been hurt].

TUESDAY 19th MARCH - ... The investigation into the affray between a number of Chinamen and whites, referred to in my last, resulted in the committal for 'assaulting with intent to do some grievous bodily harm' of James Tracey, Robert Smith, James Collins, Michael Gill, John Gould, and Thomas Calvin and of Edward Toohill, for a murderous assault, he having used a tomahawk.

The case was partly heard with closed doors and partly in open court; but from what I could glean, it appeared that a quarrel had taken place in the morning between some butchers and two or three Chinamen, at Mr John Smith's boiling establishment; the Celestials, being of a very vindictive character, came to Ipswich and collected a mob of their countrymen, to return and take revenge, as sworn to by a young man named John Gow, in the employment of Mr Allan at the Warrill establishment.

The Bench, in committing, stated that, if one of the Chinamen died, the prisoners would all be tried for murder, and I regret to say that two of them are in a very precarious state.

There were twelve altogether most shockingly mutilated, especially about the head. A fact that tells most seriously against the Europeans is, that not one of them had a single scratch on him. The affray took place, I believe, at some distance from the establishment, and therefore without the knowledge of the principals. Mr Macalister conducted the prosecution, and Mr Walsh merely watched the proceedings on behalf of the prisoners, but declined making a defense, or calling any witnesses, until the case came before the higher Court.

MAY 24 1851

After a long description of the case, the result was: The jury found Edward Toohill guilty of a common assault on Tan Pong; James Collins, John Gould and Robert Smith, guilty of aiding and abetting the same. They also found James Collins guilty of a common assault on Ong Awk and John Gould guilty of aiding and abetting the same. Robert Smith was found not guilty of a felonious assault upon Toe Tong and Galvin and Tracey were acquitted on all charges.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Read the story about Jacob Born.

1. Do you think Jacob was brave or easily frightened? Why?
2. Could Jacob speak English when he came to Ipswich?
3. What is a 'new chum'?
4. Why could Jacob help German farmers?
5. Find out what a 'ginnery' is.
6. What firm did Jacob work for?
7. What sort of person was Mr John Foote?
8. What other person in Ipswich came from Jacob's hometown? What was his occupation?