Chapter 1 from REMEMBERING THE FORGOTTEN, A HISTORY OF THE DEEBING CREEK ABORIGINAL MISSION IN QUEENSLAND 1887-1915 BY BILL THORPE (2004) SEAVIEW PRESS ADELAIDE

Rescue mission: Establishing Deebing Creek 1887-1892

The location: Pre-colonial and colonial contexts

The Aboriginal mission station and cemetery that became 'Deebing Creek' was located approximately 8 kilometres south-west of Ipswich, a large regional town in south-east Queensland, and next to a small watercourse called Deebing Creek. Like many Australian streams Deebing Creek is dry on the surface for much of the year although 19th century surveys indicate that sections of the creek near the cemetery had waterholes containing more reliable supplies ('Plan of 33 Small Portions near Ipswich', 16 October 1864, S31.57). These waterholes had been the only source of water until tanks were installed in1897 (see chapter 2).

Today, traces of the mission itself are almost non-existent. Most of the buildings were dismantled but mostly reconstructed with new building materials at Purga by 1915; while the remaining Deebing Creek people either relocated to Purga, left Deebing Creek, or were transferred to other reserves like Taroom and Barambah (Cherbourg). The Deebing Creek cemetery site however still survives – thanks largely to the heroic efforts of the late Les Davidson, a Murri man born in Koomi country, who persuaded the Queensland government in the 1970s to gazette a small part of the site as an Aboriginal cemetery reserve (see chapter 4).

Horton states that Deebing Creek, Ipswich and indeed a much wider area including Brisbane, and Moreton and North Stradbroke Islands comprised Yuggera territory (Horton, 1994:1234). Evans, likewise, refers to 'the local Turrbal (i.e. Brisbane) clan of the Yuggera' and that the Yuggera were the main peoples of the Brisbane Valley (Evans, 1999:57,61). Other accounts claim that the Brisbane-based (Turrbal) clans' lands did not extend to Ipswich (Tulmur) itself and to other areas to the west and south but had their western limit at the junction of the Brisbane and Bremer rivers at Moggill – the latter of which lay in Turrbal country (Steele, 1983:137). Occupying the country between Brisbane (Me-an-jin) and Ipswich were the Yerongpan (or Yeeroompan) who

may have spoken a dialect of the Turrbal (Brisbane region language) (Steele, 1983:135).

According to Gaiarbau, a Murri man whose recollections were recorded in the 1950s, Ipswich and certain surrounding regions comprised the territory of the Biri tribe, consisting of the Jukambe (or Yugembeh), the Jergabal (or Jagara, Yuggera, Ugarapul) and the Kitabal. The Kitabal lived west of Ipswich to Gatton and Helidon including Franklin Vale and Rosewood. The Jukambe lived south-east of Ipswich to Canungra and Beaudesert and east to Oxley. The Jergabal (or Jagara, Yuggera, Ugarapul) lived between the Kitabal and the Jukambe, an area which included Ipswich (Winterbotham, 1957:6-7). Adjoining the Juggera and the Jukambe to the south and into north-eastern New South Wales were the tribal boundaries of the Bundjalung people (Langford Ginibi, 1994:7).

O'Donnell suggests that the Yuggera (or Ugarapuls) inhabited the region 'roughly from Ipswich to Maroon and westward to the Dividing Range' (O'Donnell, 1990:149); and that 'Yaggara' (or Yuggera) has come to mean the language of the Fassifern and other districts (Steele, 1983:135). Yuggera land centred on an area ranging from the Bremer to the north (including Ipswich), to Boonah and perhaps Milbong to the south – encompassing Fassifern, Dugandan, Peak Crossing, Purga, and Deebing Creek in between (O'Donnell, 1990:151).

These differing accounts reflect both broader and more precise understandings of the Yuggera nation, its geographical range, and the extent of its influence. At the same time, it is arguable whether hard and fast boundaries existed between the various Murri peoples in south-east Queensland even though it is clear that different languages, dialects and a strong sense of 'territorial integrity' can be identified for 'each tribal group' (Evans, 1999:53). There was 'considerable intercourse between neighbouring clans' (O'Donnell, 1990:150). The tri-ennial Bunya Mountains festivals attracted Murries 'from all over south-east Queensland' (including the Yuggera) and northern New South Wales (Fitzgerald, 1982:19; Jerome, 2002:1; O'Donnell, 1990:150). Widespread trade, in items like stone axes, occurred over hundreds of kilometres. There is some evidence that the 'Ugarapuls communicated with neighbouring clans by way of smoke signals'

(O'Donnell, 1990:153). And the language of the 'Brisbane dialect' (Turrbal) was spoken as far west as Warwick, according to colonial missionary William Ridley (*Moreton Bay Courier*, 11 August 1855), well beyond Turrbal and Yuggera territory.

It is probably impossible to calculate how many Yuggera people there were before colonisation. Archibald Meston estimated that 'no less than 16,000 Yuggera' lived in the Moreton Bay region (*Brisbane Courier*, 14 July 1923) – an estimate which possibly assumes that the Yuggera occupied most of the area as defined by Horton above (Horton, 1994:1234). Others suggest 4,000 for much the same area, with between 1,000 and 1,500 within an 80 kilometre radius of Brisbane (O'Donnell, 1990:153). In 1843 Stephen Simpson, Commissioner for Crown Lands based at Woogaroo, calculated 'the total (Aboriginal) population of the Moreton Bay district at five thousand' and, in 1845, no less than 4,000 (O'Donnell, 1990:153,155).

What is beyond dispute is that the Yuggera population declined drastically. In the Ipswich region itself, it came close to the brink of extinction. One sign of this was in the number of Aboriginal people who came each year to collect government blankets (one blanket per person was issued). In 1858, 480 were present at the muster near the Ipswich lock-up. In 1859, 350 attended, which included 50 Aborigines from Brisbane (Thorpe, 2002:100). In 1861 the Ipswich Police Magistrate needed 382 blankets (Police Magistrate Ipswich to Colonial Secretary, 1 April 1861, COL/A14 QSA). In 1877, '50 blacks turned up' to collect the blankets (*Ipswich Observer*, 26 May 1877). Two years later there were 46 (*Ipswich Observer*, 26 May 1879). This was probably the lowest point, for it seems that the numbers of Aboriginal people in and around the town had stabilised and may have even increased slightly. However, how many of these people were 'original' Yuggera, so to speak, is impossible to determine, as by the 1880s and early 1890s Aboriginal people such as the Jukambe from the Logan had joined, or had been forced to join with, the 'Ipswich blacks'.

In these respects Yuggera experiences under settler domination had their parallels in much of colonial Queensland: tentative, ambiguous and sometimes fatal early contacts; clashes over land-use, culture and Aboriginal women; widespread interracial sexual relations;

dispossession caused by land-taking, frontier wars and introduced diseases (Evans, 1999:23; Evans, Saunders and Cronin, 1988:96-101; Evans and Thorpe, 2001:26-29). Among other things, these events resulted in the slave-like a system of colonised labour (Williams with Thorpe, 1992: 95-99) for those Murries whom the colonials found useful to them – for example as guides, messengers, carriers, pastoral workers, general labourers, domestic servants, child-care workers; timber-getters, land-clearers, fencers, water gatherers, firewood collectors, bark-strippers, and fisherfolk. Such work, much of which relied on Aboriginal physical and social skills and deep knowledge of country was often precarious, intermittent and poorly-paid -- when pay was offered at all. Thus the creation of Queensland's social formation was deeply marked by caste relations where the dominant colonials regarded Murries as 'untouchables', yet paradoxically and intimately exploited their labour power and their sexuality.

For those Murries who, for whatever reason, were excluded from the mainstream economy, particularly in urban areas, life was a constant and stark struggle to hold families and communities together – circumstances often marked by continuous unemployment, destitution, the indignity of begging from the settlers who had displaced them from their country, drug and alcohol affliction, and the condition of what Atkinson calls 'transgenerational trauma' arising from 'the colonising catastrophe' (Atkinson, 2002:81-85). These circumstances and conditions had been evident among the local Ipswich Murries by the late 1840s (Slaughter, 1960:16). Colonial attitudes about these survivors were generally stereotypical, negative and fatalistic, even among the minority of non-Murries who, at various times, spoke out about the Aboriginal plight or who saw something of value in Murri cultures (Evans, Saunders and Cronin, 1988:67-84; Thorpe, 1984:66).

One of the consequences of this was the presence of Aboriginal refugees in and around colonial towns, who sought to escape from the horrors of colonisation by living together in camps; and in the case of south-east Queensland had fled from the Logan, to the Moreton Bay islands, 'over the Dividing Range, to the boiling-down establishments', and to urban areas like Brisbane and Ipswich (Rowley

citing Wheeler, 1971:167). Drawn from this displaced diaspora were the first Murries to become part of the Deebing Creek experiment.

Like most other missions and reserves in colonial Queensland, Deebing Creek's genesis as a place to confine Murries under colonial rule derived from two main principles and precedents that in theory and practice were closely related. As a *mission*, Deebing Creek represented another example of an Australia-wide evangelical endeavour to 'eliminate Aboriginal culture and replace it with a Christian peasantry' (Breen, 2003:80; Broome, 1994:32). As a *reserve*, Deebing Creek represented another example of a place where Aboriginal people could be separated from other Queenslanders and made into workers useful for colonial employers. But, as we shall see, other colonial motives, ideas and phobias lay behind colonial policies to separate certain Murries from the wider non-Murri population.

Before Deebing Creek: A brief missionary history

The first mission to be initiated in Queensland (then part of New South Wales) was the Presbyterian inspired, Lutheran run operation near Eagle Farm in 1837 (Waterson and French, 1987:166) -- the brainchild of Dr. John Dunmore Lang, the Scots Presbyterian leader who had established the first Presbyterian church in Australia in 1823 (Murphy,1982:164). However this was never a success from either a missionary or government point of view. Murries resisted the missionary message strongly (Evans, 1999:71). Few Murries were interested in staying at the mission and the 'major attraction' was snatching potato crops in night-time raids, acts which armed sentries tried to stop by shooting the would-be thieves (Kidd, 1997:4; Evans, 1999:72). Government spending between 1837 and 1840 neither made the mission self-sufficient nor convert Murries to Christianity. Two years later the mission ceased (Kidd, 1997:4).

For much of the 19th century other missions and reserves had similar histories. Hampered by a lack of funds, tenuous legal title, mixed Murri responses, government and settler indifference or hostility and unsuitable land, most of these sites set aside for Murries did not usually last more than a few years (Evans, Saunders and Cronin, 1988:119). In some cases, for example at Somerset on Cape York in 1864, missions never started because of government opposition (Fitzgerald,

1982:207). Another proposed mission at Hinchinbrook Island in 1872 could not be established because a native police force had shot all the men there before the Reverend Edward Fuller's arrival (Kidd, 1997:14). (Fuller was the first superintendent of Deebing Creek from 1892 to 1895.) Before 1887 a number of other missions and reserves began, ran for a while and then ended – for example the Roman Catholic mission at Dunwich on Stradbroke Island (1844-46) (*Moreton Bay Courier*, 27 June 1846). Other examples include attempts to have 'official Aboriginal reserves' at Ipswich, Rosewood and Nundah (1840s); a mission and sugar plantation at Beenleigh (1866); the first Fraser Island mission (1871); Frank Bridgeman's 'reserve' at Baker's Creek near MacKay (1874); Binambi or Durundur near Caboolture (1877); and Thomas Petrie's fishing station at Bribie Island (1877) (*Brisbane Courier*, 8 July 1871 for Fuller and Fraser Island; Waterson and French, 1987:166; Evans, 1971; Evans, 1999:113; Kidd, 1997:14; Thorpe, 2002:100). (And, according to Kidd, the Douglas government gazetted a reserve at Deebing Creek itself in 1877 (Kidd,1997:26), but there is no record of this in the Queensland *Government Gazette* for that year or indeed any other *Gazette* until 1892.)

Despite this, missionaries, religious organizations and other concerned colonials persisted. At Ipswich in 1849, Dr Challinor chaired a meeting mainly concerned with the condition of the 'poor blacks' (*Moreton Bay Courier*, 10 November 1849). Inspired by the London-based Aborigines Protection Society, in the 1850s 'Aborigines Friends Societies' emerged at Moreton Bay (*Moreton Bay Courier* 11 August 1855). These groups' main purpose was to 'convey Christian instruction' to Murries but some of their leaders, for example William Ridley, also acted as lobbyists on Murries' behalf (*Moreton Bay Courier*, 11 August 1855; Kidd, 1997:14-15). In the early 1870s, if not before, groups calling themselves the 'Queensland Aborigines Society, 'Aboriginal Protection Societies or Aboriginal Friends Committees' were running at Ipswich, Brisbane, Warwick and Toowoomba (*Brisbane Courier*, 22 July 1871; Kidd, 1997:15). As discussed later, the Ipswich branch of the 'Aborigines Friends Society' – usually called the 'Aborigines Protection Society' -- emerged as a key body along with other philanthropic, religious and business figures who came together to create 'Deebing Creek'.

By the 1880s the colonial emphasis to plant immigrants throughout

Queenland had shifted from subduing strong, autonomous and numerous Indigenous peoples, to dealing with subdued and shrinking numbers of Indigenous survivors -- particularly in the central and southern regions of the colony.

Just the same, it took at least forty years (from the late 1840s to the late 1880s) for any colonial groups or individuals, religious or otherwise, to set up and maintain reserves or missions in the Ipswich district. As pointed out above, missionaries like William Ridley were active in the region in the mid-1850s from Moggill to Warwick, including Ipswich, operating as travelling preachers (*Moreton Bay Courier*, 11 August 1855). However they did not appear to take the next step of founding a more permanent presence, at least for the Murri population. The Presbyterians were the main religious denomination which actually established Deebing Creek and had been operating in Ipswich since the early 1860s (Slaughter, 1960:23). The Reverend Peter Robertson, the leading colonial religious figure throughout Deebing Creek's history, had been the minister of the church since 1870 (*Queensland Assembly Minutes,* 17 May 1917:35). But the 'unofficial camp and school' (Kidd, 1997:40) did not begin at Deebing Creek until the late 1880s.

Explaining this apparent time-lag is probably less important than examining what went on at Deebing Creek mission during its existence but some attempt at an explanation should be made. However the difficulty we have, as Evans points out in another context, is that 'we possess mainly sketchy official accounts which tend to fall curiously silent at crucial moments; to indicate significant information only cursorily and in passing; to record events partially without assigning plausible causes' (Evans, 1999:51). In Deebing Creek's case, a lack of crucial information (both in the public record and recorded testimony from Aboriginal people themselves) makes it hard to find out why there was little apparent interest or concern with the 'Aboriginal question' in and around Ipswich in 1870, to the situation in 1887 when 'the work was begun' to set up a mission there (Foote to Secretary of Public Instruction, 30 November 1894). Nevertheless, from the evidence available, and from what we know about missionary, government, settler and Aboriginal motives elsewhere in Queensland in this period, we can suggest a range of reasons why the Deebing Creek mission was established when and where it was and not before.

One reason has been mentioned already – Murri reluctance to embrace the missionary message. Such resistance was probably stronger during the early phases of colonisation when Murries still comprised the overwhelming majority, and where their spirituality had not been displaced from the vital 'being of place' (Swain, 1993:35). Yet Aboriginal beliefs, languages and lifeways continued, albeit in different forms. Indeed, as discussed in chapter 2, both church and state authorities controlling Deebing Creek were continually engaged in a 'civilising process' to deter the inmates from 'camp life'. At the same time, while Aboriginal people did not 'lose' their culture, colonialism radically changed their control over it, forcing them to adapt to the imperatives of the invaders, including the missionary movements themselves. As pointed out earlier, one of these radical changes was the decimation of Murri populations which, by the late 19th century, inevitably weakened all forms of opposition -- military, economic, social, cultural and spiritual -- to this apparently insatiable colonial power. In this grim situation, Aboriginal survival became paramount, and one way to survive was to accept, however willingly or unwillingly, spaces which evangelical religion and private philanthropy offered to Murries – namely 'rescue' from the whites 'for their own protection' (Pollard, 1988:13).

These circumstances, and sheer missionary persistence did make converts, which in turn created varied responses to Christianity including syncretism (the melding of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal religious systems), and Aboriginal Christian movements (Edwards, 1993:78-79). In Ipswich itself, a local press report in 1891 on an Aborigines Protection Society meeting stated that 'four Christian blacks' were to accompany Society representatives on a proposed visit to Bribie Island (*Queensland Times*, 28 January 1891). Unfortunately, this article, typically, did not name who these Aboriginal people were. But the existence of these 'Christian blacks' could help explain why Deebing Creek's first superintendent, Edward Fuller, was able to persuade some Ipswich-based Murries to go to Deebing Creek.

The second reason why Deebing Creek emerged when it did has been alluded to already: most missions and reserves until then rarely lasted more than a few years. The colonial side of things throughout this fifty-year period was always a conflicting and confusing mix of ideologies, policies (or lack of policies), economic interests, government

priorities, humanitarian concerns, settler reactions, justifications for dispossession and, importantly, ubiquitous white racial fears about so-called 'half-castes' who in reality were Murries whose mostly non-Murri fathers had largely abandoned (Williams and Thorpe, 2003:27-28).

Thirdly most colonials believed that, if enough time passed, the whole 'problem' of the Aborigines would go away, especially since Aboriginal people died considerably younger than white people and since the Aboriginal death-rate was far greater than the Aboriginal birth rate. Many Queenslanders saw this as a 'practical application of a scientific law' of nature where the strong supplanted the weak (Evans, Saunders and Cronin, 1988:81). In other words, what was the point of saving the survivors if they were unlikely to be around much longer? Moreover, as the Catholic missionary, Duncan McNab stated in 1880, '"nineteen-twentieths of the population of the Colony care nothing about them, and the other twentieth regard them as a nuisance to be got rid of"' (quoted in Evans, Saunders and Cronin, 1988:79). In these oppressive circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the minority of pro-Aboriginal Whites in Ipswich in the churches and elsewhere might have been wary about setting up another mission or reserve.

On the other hand, Peter Robertson and the Presbyterians would have noticed the trend of events in the 1870s when, as noted before, attempts were made to establish reserves at a number of sites in Queensland. Hoskin has claimed that this was 'the first important movement to give positive help to the Aborigines' (Hoskin, 1967:2). Irrespective of the truth of this statement (see Evans 1971a:26-30; Robinson, n.d.:3), the 1870s movement was the first significant one in conceiving that Aboriginal people could be 'useful' members of Queensland society provided they were kept away from whites and closely supervised. Queensland's first Aboriginal reserve, (as distinct from the first Aboriginal mission) was gazetted by the Douglas ministry in 1871 at Baker's Creek south of Mackay (Evans, 1971a:28). The historical puzzle is why the Presbyterians themselves, or any other group, did nothing along these lines when the colonial government seemed prepared to allot some land and financial backing for this purpose.

What was probably more decisive in preventing the Presbyterians or anyone else from doing anything substantial was the incoming McIlwraith

government's decision in 1879 to cut government expenditure to the Mackay, Townsville and Bribie Island reserves (Evans, 1971b:8). At the same time, while this government was withdrawing financial support for Aboriginal reserves, it was spending more money on the Native Police to crush remaining pockets of Aboriginal resistance. Moreover the new administration had contempt for Aborigines Protection Societies and their London headquarters, confident in its belief that it could ignore their views – a belief that was borne out by the increasingly feeble responses about Aboriginal affairs coming from the British government and British philanthropic groups (Evans, 1971b:8-9). Again, this could account for the apparent quietude of their Queensland counterparts. It was clear to those in the Aborigines Friends Societies, including the Ipswich branch, that colonial governments were not prepared to help Aborigines in this period – except to continue distributing blankets on Queen Victoria's birthday each year (Fitzgerald, 1982:205). If non-government philanthropic and religious bodies wanted to 'rescue' or convert the Murri refugees in and around Ipswich to Christianity, they would have to rely on raising money and obtaining land from their own, and other, private sources. As discussed in chapter 2, this precarious financial state was a constant feature of Deebing Creek's history.

The election of the Griffith government in 1883 did not improve the situation for Aboriginal people to any discernible extent but it spent considerably more than the previous regime on reserves, rations and blankets. According to Kidd, this policy 'captured the imagination of the newly federated Presbyterian Church in 1886'. The Church had been running 'several successful night-schools … for Melanesian plantation workers in Queensland' and now decided to extend their missionary efforts to Aboriginal people (Kidd, 1997:38). At first these efforts were directed to Cape York, and then possibly to Deebing Creek in 1887.

Beyond these developments, the context of Ipswich's colonial settlement must be noted as another element in the formation and timing of any Aboriginal reserve or mission in the district; or indeed whether there would be any in the first place. Initially, in the 1820s and 1830s, Ipswich was an outstation of the Brisbane penal settlement, supplying lime for buildings in Brisbane -- hence its first colonial name of 'Limestone'. In 1827 Yuggera warriors clashed with the convicts at the lime-kilns – located at the northern end of Queen's Park – and four

soldiers were sent to guard them (Davis, 1974:2; Evans, 1999:61). By the 1840s, 12,000 sheep and 1,620 cattle (Davis, 1974:2) were on Yuggera land on a large area extending from Limestone Station to Redbank, and the government had a 'plough station' on the site of Ipswich racecourse, which could have been a bora ground or Murri meeting place to resolve disputes between the Yuggera, the Turrbal, Tent Hill, Bunya Bunya and Amity Point tribes (*Moreton Bay Courier*, 6 November 1847; Campbell, 1875:12; Slaughter, 1960:14).

From the late 1830s and through the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s 'Limestone' (renamed 'Ipswich' in 1842) grew steadily as a pastoral and commercial centre -- the 'squatters' town' which rivalled Brisbane for a time as the future capital of the colony. In 1846 its 'migaloo' (white) population was about 100 (Davis, 1974:2-8); by 1863 this had grown to around 3,000 -- about seven times greater than the non-Aboriginal population, as far as we can tell. All the features of a thrusting colonial town driven by the idea of 'progress' (Fitzgerald, 1982:47-48; Evans, 1976:75) appeared and expanded from then and thereafter – hotels, houses, churches, newspaper offices, banks, a prison, schools, shops, stores, farms, cotton fields, a flour mill, a woollen mill, coalfields and railways (Slaughter, 1960; Thorpe, 1996:118; Whitmore, 1985:171-221; Johnston, 1982:94). These activities obviously took large areas of land but also in the process put greater pressure on the formerly Aboriginal-managed natural environment. Most of these industries and activities employed non-Aboriginal colonials and immigrants; and few Aboriginal people found work, regular or otherwise, in them.

In this universe, as Evans points out, 'colonial morality … was singularly attuned to the prospect of social and material success' and had little room or sympathy for those who, like displaced Murries, did not fit 'anywhere within the grand colonial plan' (Evans, 1976:75-76). Failing to see that Aboriginal unemployment, destitution and alcoholism arose directly from 'colonial morality' and the unbridled quest for 'social and material success', more and more colonials were becoming more and more intolerant of the surviving Murries who, despite such disruptions, stayed resolutely in their camps and continued their forays into urban areas.

Intolerance of Aboriginal people and worse, always present, gained

momentum by the last two decades of the 19th century as colonials agitated more than ever to have Murries cleared out of towns, at much the same time as colonials were defining themselves more sharply in terms of respectable, Anglo-Celtic, monocultural whiteness (Evans, Moore, Saunders and Jamison, 1997:15). This imagined and idealised identity stood in stark contrast to colonial perceptions of 'town blacks' as lazy, dirty, disresputable and drunken no-hopers. 'In this way, the social landscape of the new nation was being racially "cleansed" and homogenized' (Evans, Moore, Saunders and Jamison, 1997:27). This agenda coincided with renewed interest among the Aborigines' Protection Society and the Presbyterians who wanted to 'rescue' the Murries living in Ipswich from 'the influence of drink', but who were also influenced by settler objections to Murries and their behaviour; and thus sought to isolate them from non-Aboriginal society in a separate camp and school in 1887 (*The Austral Star*, 1 October 1897; Foote to Secretary of Public Instruction, 30 November 1894). (See below.)

The Aboriginal targets of these contrasting colonial motives of concern and disdain around Ipswich mostly lived in camps – the main one in Ipswich itself being 'Queen's Park' (Thorpe, 1978:85; Frances Wright pers. comm. November 1999). Another Murri camp was at Purga Creek about 14 kilometres further south, whose significance in Deebing Creek's establishment will be examined later. Given that some of the Murries at Queen's Park were among the first people to go to Deebing Creek, a brief history of this space is in order.

'Queen's Park'

Queen's Park lay directly south of the Bremer River, with the northern part of the park closest to the river, and where the lime kilns used during the convict era of Ipswich's history were situated. Given that conflict occurred at this spot in 1827 between Aborigines and the convicts extracting and burning lime (see earlier), it is almost certain that Queen's Park was an important pre-colonial camp and meeting ground for the local Yuggera. Surveyed in 1862 as a 'Reserve for Public Recreation and Gardens', it covered an area of about 200 acres (80 hectares). It was on the eastern side of the main urban area, while its southern end formed part of the town's southern boundary

(Plan of Reserve for Public Recreation and Gardens, Town of Ipswich, February 1862).

Numbers of Murries living there at any one time in this period are hard to estimate but it was likely that the core group was about 30 to 40 by the time the Deebing Creek mission was being established and consolidated (Thorpe, 1978:85). Again there is little evidence in the public record whether the Murri residents were allowed to stay in the park since it was first surveyed in 1842 (Slaughter, 1960:88) or when the area was gazetted as a public reserve 20 years later.

What is clear is that the site came under greater government, private and finally, local council control. At first, in 1862, the Queensland government appointed a number of 'trustees' of a 'Botanic Garden': John Panton, George Thorn (jr.), Patrick O'Sullivan, Frederick Augustus Forbes, Christopher Gorry, Dr. Henry Challinor, Arthur Macalister and Henry Kilner (Slaughter, 1960:88).

The trustees of the park represented a fair cross-section of men who were prominent in local business and colonial politics. Panton was a storekeeper. George Thorn (jr.) had inherited enough family wealth to be called a 'gentleman'. He was first elected as a member of parliament in 1867, rising to premier in 1876 (Murphy and Joyce, 1978:498). Forbes had owned a large general store (Slaughter, 1960:16). Forbes, Macalister and Challinor were elected in 1860 to the government seats for the Ipswich and West Moreton electoral district (Slaughter, 1960:88). Macalister became premier in 1866 (Murphy and Joyce, 1978:497). These men were also substantial property holders who regarded the site as their domain. Forbes and Challinor had purchased 6 of the 13 blocks of land totalling 29 acres on its eastern boundary. Patrick O'Sullivan was also a member of parliament and owned a 5-acre block (2 hectares) on the park's southern boundary (Plan of Reserve for Public Recreation and Gardens, Town of Ipswich, February 1862).

It is tempting to suggest that these trustees in particular wanted to maintain and improve the value of their properties by retaining the park as an open, aesthetically pleasing space. In 1863 the trustees issued rules which allowed public access every day but not from dusk until 6 a.m. Any horses, sheep, cattle, goats or pigs found in the park were

impounded. ‘Any person removing stone, timber, lime or gravel without authority, would be prosecuted’. Furthermore anyone cutting timber, burning the grass trees or damaging the trees and fences would also be prosecuted (Slaughter, 1960:88).

Ipswich City Council chafed at these restrictions, arguing that it was undesirable that ‘private persons should control land for the people of Ipswich’ (Slaughter, 1960:88). On the face of it, the Council’s claims looked reasonable, fair and had popular appeal. But the Council was hardly a disinterested party and was fighting to gain greater autonomy from the Queensland government as a political entity. Furthermore, given the way most colonials acted towards the environment, the trustees may have done the park a favour. Their limitations against grazing animals, cutting down trees and damaging native plants implied that it was common practice to do these things. The Council however continued its objections until the land was transferred to the government which in turn transferred the land to the Council in the early 1890s, subdividing one part of it for Ipswich Girls’ Grammar school in 1891 (Slaughter,1960: 88).

How these regulations and changes affected the Murries camped there may be inferred from colonial actions elsewhere. If the dusk to dawn curfew was enforced, Aboriginal camps were broken up and Aboriginal people driven out of urban areas at sunset ‘when their labour services were no longer required’ (Evans, Saunders and Cronin, 1988:121). ‘From 1855, a curfew was imposed upon Murries in the South Brisbane-West End region, to keep them out of the city after dusk’ (Watson, 2004:310).

How Ipswich itself fitted this pattern is unclear. On the one hand Henry Challinor’s presence during his term as a Trustee, and his role as a Magistrate and Ipswich Police Coroner, may have restrained the police and others from turning Aboriginal people out of the park. Challinor had demonstrated that he was prepared to act against colonial and Native Police brutality towards Yuggeras when he held a magisterial inquiry in 1861 regarding the murder of several Aboriginal men at Fassifern (Rosser, 1990:167-171; Cryle, 1989:65). Challinor had also made a statement in 1861 that ‘“the life of a black man is just as valuable … as that of a white man”’ (quoted in Fitzgerald, 1982:206).

On the other hand, Challinor was also a teetotaller who aimed to curb Aboriginal drunken behaviour (*Moreton Bay Courier*, 10 November 1849; Slaughter, 1960:16). He was unlikely to tolerate an Aboriginal presence in the park unless Aboriginal people stayed sober. Moreover, given the growing 'exclusionist clamour' among whites in Queensland (Evans, 1999:137) it is equally likely that both the other park trustees whose land adjoined the park, as well as the Council, saw the Murri camp as an unsightly blot on the landscape which lowered the tone of the town. George Thorn (jr.) was a founding member of the Deebing Creek Committee (see below). His actions in January 1900 in leading a campaign to keep Deebing Creek mission from relocating to Purga on the grounds that Aborigines should be isolated from whites (see chapter 2) suggest one reason why he was on the Committee in the first place, and why he probably preferred that the Aboriginal group using Queen's Park go elsewhere.

What is beyond doubt is that at least enough colonial Ipswichites had convinced the police to remove Aboriginal people from Queen's Park in the early 1890s (if not before), either during the day or by dark (Thorpe, 1978:85). Moreover, according to the Reverend Peter Robertson, they had 'no homes' to go to and were thus compelled to wander about the suburbs at night, sometimes drunk. Indeed, a justification for turning Murries out of Ipswich, according to the Reverend Peter Robertson, was to enable the Ipswich suburbanites to sleep undisturbed by the sounds of Aboriginal night-time revelry (*The Austral Star*, 1 October 1897). Interestingly, this agitation to 'clean up' Ipswich coincided with reports that the local Aboriginal population was not 'dying out'; indeed between 1888 and 1891, Aboriginal births had 'about balanced' the death rates (*Queensland Times*, 20 February 1892). In other words, Aboriginal people looked likely to survive and even increase their numbers – a new state of affairs which may have added to this 'mounting pressure' to relocate them to a segregated space well away from town.

Contested spaces: Purga and Deebing Creek 1887-1892

As mentioned above, the first clear evidence of Deebing Creek's beginnings as an informal mission and school can be traced to 1887, although we do not know the exact date. Robertson appears to have

been the major promoter (or at least its major religious figure), as well as the Reverend Edward Fuller, who was the mission's first superintendent and the person mainly responsible for recruiting as many Aboriginal people as possible to the mission. Robertson, a keen evangelist, was a Catechist at Dalby in 1874 (Rev. J.T.T Campbell, pers. comm., 23 February 1978). In 1877 he became the Presbyterian Minister for Ipswich, building up a strong following. In 1886 he was appointed Moderator for Queensland (Rev. J.T.T. Campbell, pers. comm., 23 February 1978). In the Queensland Assembly Memorial Minutes, Robertson was described as a 'Convenor of the Heathens Mission Committee for many years' and as 'a pioneer in work among the (A)borigines' (*Queensland Assembly Minutes*, 17 May 1917:35).

Before migrating to Queensland, Edward Fuller had been a soldier in the Kaffir Wars, the Indian Mutiny and the Taiping Rebellion in China (Habermann, 2003:9). Fuller had acquired some religious training, and in Queensland had founded the first, short-lived reserve on Fraser Island where he lived from 1870 to 1874, marrying another active Christian, Mary Winstone of Ipswich in 1871 (*Brisbane Courier*, 8 July 1871). While at Fraser Island Fuller complained about white men coming to the island and kidnapping Aboriginal women and girls but was unable to stop this happening (Evans, Saunders and Cronin, 1988:105). As pointed out earlier, Fuller had planned to set up a mission on Hinchinbrook Island in 1872 but this failed to even begin. Prior to taking on the Deebing Creek appointment he was holding religious services at the 'Sandy Gallop Lunatic Asylum' (Thorpe, 2002:102).

Between 1887 and 1889 Fuller and other 'friends' tried to solve the conflicting realities of Aboriginal destitution and settler hostility, as well as their own evangelical interests, by giving Aboriginal people tents to live in. At this stage, the Aborigines Protection Committee had not found a block of land that suited their purposes for a segregated space away from Ipswich (*The Austral Star*, 1 October 1897). By 1889 it was evident that more than a few tents and more than a handful of people were needed to carry out and manage a plan to relocate in one place the 30 to 40 Murries still camped in Queen's Park, and those Murries still about the town.

The first decision, on 2nd of April 1889 was to form a 'Deebing Creek Committee' and Trustees for an 'Aboriginal Home'. 'All the clergymen in Ipswich' – two of whom besides Robertson included Reverends J. Walker and A. Hutchinson -- comprised a core element in the group of people who started the mission and who set up the Deebing Creek Committee. They were joined by a number of prominent local businessmen and others who took part in the Committee's formation and subsequent operations, and the election of trustees. Those men who elected the trustees for the proposed 'Aboriginal home' were: F.W. Johnson, George Thorn (jr.) (see above), John Greenham, and John Murray. The trustees themselves were: Thorn, Greenham, W. Latham, Johnson, J. Spresser, Gordon Cameron, and Murray. The Deebing Creek Committee were: The Rev. Peter Robertson (chair), W.H. Foote (secretary), George Thorn (jr.), J.M. Gillespie, T.B. Cribb, Latham, A. Muir, J.Ivett, and Murray. The women Committee members were: W. Vowles, G.J. Hudson, A.W. Darvall, A.H. Barlow, E.W. Hargreaves and Miss Trotman ('Ipswich Aborigines: Extracts from Minutes of Meeting, 1 July 1892').

At first sight, this mix of evangelists and businessmen was somewhat unusual. Either ministers of religion and/or missionaries dominated organizations of this kind; or, less commonly, secular individuals like Frank Bridgman (Mackay) and Thomas Petrie (Bribie Island) ran Aboriginal reserves. This suggests that hard-headed economic motives played a part alongside seemingly more charitable, altruistic ones in Deebing Creek's case. The new mission was a chance for the businessmen on the Committee, notably Cribb and Foote, to provision a captive market, so to speak, supplying rations, medicines and building materials – from William .H. Foote's flour mill, to Cribb and Foote's chemist shop. Indeed this is just what happened once the mission was a going concern. In 1906 Cribb and Foote sent 405 pounds' (810 dollars) worth of rations to the mission ('Statement of accounts, Deebing Creek: expenditure'). Greenham, another Committee member, was also a chemist (Thorpe, 2002:102).

In another important respect, though, these apparent differences between piety and profit-making were not all that far apart if one subscribed to the 'Protestant ethic' -- as would be expected from the composition of this Committee. In general, the Committee's

religious and secular members belonged, or associated with, the Protestant sects: Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Wesleyan, but mainly Presbyterian. The Cribb family in particular, beginning with the brothers Benjamin and Robert, were closely associated to the leading Presbyterian minister in Australia, the Reverend J.D. Lang and his ideas (Cryle, 1989:30,33-34). William Foote was a leading figure in the local Presbyterian congregation, sharing the platform on at least one occasion with the Rev. Robertson at a mission meeting in 1891 (*Queensland Times*, 6 October 1891).

Presbyterianism was attractive to businessmen because it sanctified the hierarchy between managers and employees, and stressed the middle-class values of hard work, thrift and sobriety. According to Weber, Presbyterians were the 'single religious group which held in all respects' strictly to the principles of John Calvin (Weber, 1930:125). While Calvinists criticised the pursuit of wealth, it was a greater sin if the wealthy *enjoyed* their wealth in idleness and 'the temptations of the flesh' (Weber, 1930:157). What was different about the modern capitalism which dominated colonial life was not the 'amoral pursuit of personal gain, but … the disciplined obligation of work as a duty' (Giddens, 1971:126). As Williams puts it, 'Protestantism (and Calvinism) elevated work in the life of the individual and society and gave it a uniquely spiritualised status' (Williams, 1983:219). In other words, if a man or woman had a 'calling' to accumulate money through his or her individual efforts, it demonstrated a moral superiority that might lead to them joining the elect and thus achieve eternal grace in the afterlife. And if such people – and Presbyterians in general – followed these Puritan precepts to work hard and do 'good works' (such as turning Aboriginal people into sober, industrious and pious workers), so much the better. As we shall see in the next chapter, these principles were embedded in the methods both mission and government authorities used to manage, control and extract labour from Murries at Deebing Creek.

Once the Committee decided in 1889 to create a segregated mission and school, the next important issue was to find a suitable block of land that could literally support the enterprise, and which used Aboriginal labour to do so. But it was not Deebing Creek that the Committee chose first, it was an area at Purga.

Purga was clearly a more attractive site. First of all, there was a good, if not permanent supply of water from a large waterhole there (Survey of Portions, Parish of Purga, Cat. No. Ch 31-136, 8 July 1868; see also photograph in Habermann, 2003:10; *Queensland Times*, 14 January 1892). Secondly, Purga was further away from Ipswich than Deebing Creek and thus more satisfactory to the interests of both the Committee and those Ipswich citizens urging the removal of Murries from the town. Thirdly, a water supply like this was a valuable resource for possibly the Yuggera from Fassifern and Dugandan – who used it as a campsite or at least a place where they could stay for a time. The fact that these Murries had their dogs with them strongly suggests that the Purga location was a camp more than a stopover (*Queensland Times*, 14 January 1892). It is likely (although difficult to prove without further research) that the camp was close to an Aboriginal pathway (or a track which was originally an Aboriginal pathway), which linked the southern parts of Yuggera territory (e.g. Fassifern) to Ipswich through Purga. An 1868 survey noted an 'old track, not used' running about 200 metres south-west to north-east, about 40 metres east of the waterhole (Survey of Portions, Parish of Purga, Cat. No. Ch 31-36, 8 July 1868). Sometime in 1891 the Ipswich Aborigines Protection Society lobbied the Minister for Lands, Arthur Cowley, 'asking him for a reserve to be granted' (*Queensland Times*, 14 January 1892). Cowley then contacted the Purga Divisional Board, which had no objections.

However the scheme ran into local white opposition which coincided with some concerns that the Committee itself was having about the site's suitability – one reason being that the Committee thought a smaller location was more appropriate for such a modest operation. By the 1860s and 1870s settler agitation for agricultural land around towns like Ipswich (and supported by so-called 'town liberals' like James Foote and the Cribbs) had led to more and more colonials taking up blocks of land around Purga and Deebing Creek. One of these blocks, portion 201, encompassed the Purga waterhole and was purchased or leased by Ishmael Chant (Survey of Portions, Parish of Purga, Ch 31-36, 8 July 1868). Once Chant found out that the Aborigines Protection Society had successfully persuaded the Queensland government to grant a 100-acre (40 hectare) block near the waterhole, he joined two other men, T.P. Horton and Joe Harding, in a 'deputation' to the

Minister for Lands, Arthur Cowley. Their main purpose was to stop the reserve going ahead. They objected to the Yuggera camp, urging its removal; complained that the 'blacks with their dogs' contaminated the only water supply 'near many of the settlers'; and claimed that any Aboriginal reserve 'would cause great inconvenience' to local farmers and white people travelling to Ipswich from up-country who camped there themselves (*Queensland Times*, 14 January 1892).

Although Cowley insisted that the gazettal would remain, he assured the deputation that the area would be kept open as a 'water reserve' and 'camping purposes' for white settlers; and, if the 'blacks' became a nuisance, the Aboriginal reserve would be cancelled (Thorpe, 1978:87). Despite this settler pressure, the government did not reverse its decision. The Queensland government issued instruction 'to supply rations to the (A)boriginals' – no doubt as an added inducement to make them go to the new mission (*Queensland Times*, 20 February 1892; *The Austral Star*, 1 October 1897;*Queensland Government Gazette*, 16 April 1892). Just one month later, Edward Fuller, using a large tent for a 'dwelling, church and school' was assembling some 25 Murries to begin work to create a mission station on a 42-acre (16 hectare) forfeited selection next to Deebing Creek.

While the Committee may have preferred a smaller block of land to begin with, settler agitation ensured that the 'choice' was a limited one. We do not know for certain if Chant and his supporters had succeeded in driving away yet another Murri mob from using their country. What we do know, at least according to Robertson who was interviewed nine years later, is that the Committee could not build any dwellings at Purga 'because of threats which were used by some residents in the district … which … would … possibly lead to bloodshed' (*Queensland Times*, 15 January 1901). There was no 'return' to Purga for the next 13 years; and when the Committee needed the site then, white opposition erupted again (see chapter 2).