



Chapter 20 - Spirit of the Scots

(1850 – 1856)

It seems not long after the baptism of his son, Alfred; David felt that matters had settled down enough for him to be comfortable about transferring his new family to Jerry's Plains. A good pointer to this may be that within a few months of Alfred's baptism in Pitt Town, Harriet was pregnant again.

Horse Racing

The Jerry's Plains Races were held on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of January 1850. Richard Alcorn and Patrick Ward had entered horses in most of the events over the three days. The Maitland Mercury noted the event:

'The three publicans of the township had booths erected on the race course, and we are glad to say that they did a good stroke of business, both

at the races, and at their houses, where liberal spreads were laid out for their guests at the conclusion of each day's races. The course was

not very well attended, but those who honoured the races with their attendance appeared to be of the right sort.'

In the same edition, the Maitland Mercury's Jerry's Plains correspondent wrote about the town:

'The new road through Jerry's Plains is progressing apace, but, much to the annoyance and detriment of some of our oldest residents, it passes at a considerable distance from the

premises they have erected in a line with the old road. Some of these buildings have cost a considerable sum in completing them for inns and shops, and owing to the alteration of

the road they will be much deteriorated for the purposes of business.'

20 February 1850⁶⁷²

The third inn built the year before and possibly David's, as one of the 'oldest residents', is likely to be one the 'inns and shops' to which the article refers. In each case, it would have been a costly blow.



End and front? view of David Brown's 'Robin Hood' Inn built c1846. The original 'Green Gate' inn was of timber construction. Small piers and the remains of a chimney are to the right. Photo taken in 1977 by Valma Gee.

'In 1850 there were three inns, one church, three blacksmiths, a denominational school and temporary church and several stores at Jerry's Town as it was then referred to in some quarters.' - These services were soon supplemented by a butcher, a tailor, and a carrier.⁶⁷³

Joseph J. Harper who had 'removed from Jerry's Plains' by 20 March 1850 was replaced as postmaster by Matthew Ward and his wife Mary Ann Kirk at their store and residence erected on lot 3 of Alcorns subdivision. They provided the postal service until 1855 when they moved to Merton.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷² The Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, 23 February 1850.

⁶⁷³ 'Jerry's Plains Saga Finishes', by Ian Ellis, Hunter Valley News 24 February 1993.

⁶⁷⁴ Simson Opens' Plough Inn, by Ian Ellis, Hunter Valley News 21 October 1992.



Twins for David the Younger

Twins were born on 5 April 1850 to David and Harriet Brown.⁶⁷⁵ The Jerry's Plains correspondent for the Maitland Mercury on 6 May wrote:

Scottish Nationality – *The wife of an old and respectable colonist, who came hither before he had attained to his tenth year has been safely delivered of two fine boys at birth.*

The elder was named "William Wallace," and the younger "Robert Bruce," in honour of Scotland's greatest and most venerated heroes. In selecting those names the old man

*observed – "The spirit of the Scot still burns vigorously within me, and I desire to transmit it to my posterity, and to honour in my line the saviours of my country."*⁶⁷⁶

David was reputed to remind people occasionally of his Scottish heritage by reciting his ancestry back to Robert the Bruce and Sir William Wallace.⁶⁷⁷ The newspaper article above does not suggest that David claimed to be descended from the heroes in honour of after which he was naming his children. He would unlikely to pass up on the opportunity.

The baptism of the two boys, like that for his sons, David and Alexander (*aka* Alick), was officiated in a Presbyterian church.



End view of David Brown's 'Robin Hood' Inn at Jerry's Plains built c1846.
 Photo taken in 1977 by Valma Gee.

David's son, James, married Elizabeth Thorley (daughter of Philip Thorley and Mary Griffiths) on 29 May 1850.

Married.

On the 2nd July, by special license, at Jerry's Plains, by the Rev. J. S. White, Presbyterian Minister of St. Andrew's, Singleton, Mr. Charles Harpur, to Mary, the eldest daughter of E. Doyle, Esq., of Montrose Park, Jerry's Plains. The Maitland Mercury **Saturday 20 July 1850**

THE HARVEST,

'Reaping has commenced in many parts of the district; and the wheat harvest will, have no doubt, be an abundant one. There is a great scarcity of hands to get in the grain, a great portion of which, we are afraid, will be lost for want of labourers.'

THE GRASSHOPPERS,

'These destructive herbacious insects now muster in this locality in immense numbers. At certain portions of the day they take their flight through the town, apparently for a change of quarters,

and such droves as to represent a drift of snow. Fortunately they have many enemies who prey and fatten of them: the one is a bird of bluish or lead colour on the back, brown on the breast, and a white spot over each eye; they about the size of an English sparrow, and follow the sparrows in thousands. Hawkes have also appeared in great numbers, and assist in exterminating the grass gormandizers.'

THE TURF,

'We understand that our Jerry's Plains friends have fixed upon the

*1st and 2nd of January for their annual races, and that a good bill of fare has been prepared for the occasion. Our sporting friends here are rather down in the mouth at the badness of the times (which indeed were never worse than here), and nothing has yet been done towards getting up the Christmass races. We hope soon to see a reaction in our commercial affairs, as business is at present perfectly at a stand still.'*⁶⁷⁸

Singleton correspondent MM
 21 November 1850.

⁶⁷⁵ Reg No V1851 1332 51 0 and V1851 1333 51 0

⁶⁷⁶ The Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, 10 May 1851 (twelve months late).

⁶⁷⁷ Blanche Jenkin's family history 1946.

⁶⁷⁸ The Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, 23 November 1850. NLA, mfm NX27. Roll No3.



Peter Duff, farmer, and grandson of the grantee of Portion 30 that adjoined David's property, died 30 November 1850 at the age of 38, and was buried in Jerry's Plains on 2 December 1850.⁶⁷⁹

Annual races were held in Jerry's Plains on Wednesday and Thursday 1st and 2nd of January 1851. 'Richard Alcorn's 5 year old horse 'Crane' won the first race on both days. The correspondent of the Maitland Mercury reported that:

'The weather was fine and warm, but the wind was rather gusty, The course was in excellent order - the lagoon on the racecourse having been drained for the

occasion. There were several booths on the racecourse; and from the number of bacchanalians present, we could expect that a fair amount of business

was done. 'On the first day there were about sixty people present, including aborigines; and on the second day we might say that there were about half that number.'

The correspondent noted the presence among the aboriginals at the racecourse of 'Jackie Jackie' and 'Combo' and commented on the government's failure to ensure these people were given adequate allowances 'for past services' - Combo having 'been attached to the mounted police for some years, and rationed and clothed; This poor fellow is now turned adrift with his tribe,'⁶⁸⁰

'The Maitland Mercury' of 3 January 1851 included the following advertisement which reflected the kind of medical care that could be expected in the Hunter region:

'Leeches, if of good quality, and quantities of not less than 100, Purchase for Cash.

F Naisby,

Apothecary, &c, Morpeth.'

OFF FOR THE DIGGINGS.

'A number of our mechanics and others are making arrangements to start to the "diggings" in a few days. Some (and most of them) are now earning good wages; and servants have given their employers notice

to quit. In a few weeks there will scarcely a mechanic or laborer in Singleton, but plenty of "grass widows." No one has however yet left here for Bathurst, and it is all "consummation devoutly to be wished" that a discovery of gold may

soon be made in our northern districts, so as to prevent our Singleton adventurers from making a gap in the population.'

*Singleton correspondent
 Maitland Mercury
 Wednesday, June 2, 1851*



'Travelling to the Diggings' Engraving by G. F. Angus

⁶⁷⁹ BDM V1850 1065 36A

⁶⁸⁰ Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, 4-8 January 1851.



Richard Hobden of 'Great Lodge', David's long time neighbour, died on 20 July 1851 at the age of 63 years, and was buried in Jerry's Plains on 23 July.⁶⁸¹

Charlotte Alcorn, age 42 years, who is described as "Licensed Victualler", died on 23 August 1851 and was buried at Jerry's Plains on 26 August.⁶⁸² On 21 October, the same year, a Mary Partridge, 'Licensed Victualler' of Jerry's Plains, passed away. On the face of it Jerry's Plains seemed to be exceptionally well provided for in licensed victuallers. However, it appears that the description in the case of females and children usually related to the male provider of the household to which the person belonged.

On 4 November 1851, a replacement for the office of 'Pound Keeper' at Jerry's Plains was appointed in lieu of David's son-in-law Robert Hobden, who had resigned.

During this period David's stepsons became established in the in the Hunter region, probably with David's help:

Thomas Taylor, as a 'Splitter & Fencer' in Jerry's Plains, and

Daniel Darcy⁶⁸³, in a victualling business at Wambo, based on experience Daniel had acquired from an early age with his father, Thomas.

Harriet's brother, Henry Davis, with his family, arrived in the colony on the 'Humbolt' in 1852 – In the immigration papers Henry declared "Relations in the Colony" to be "A sister named Harriet Brown, married and living at Jerry's Plains".⁶⁸⁴

By 1852, David's inn was known as the 'Horse and Jockey, with Patrick Ward as licensee.'⁶⁸⁵ Previously it was called the 'Green Gate', and 'Robin Hood' before reverting to the Green Gate.

Hunter farmers and shippers of cargo considered their rates too high and formed their own shipping company, the Hunter River New Steam Navigation Company, in 1852 and competed with the earlier company. This new company followed on the lines of the pioneer company by importing three steamers but of larger size and lighter draught than the 'Rose', 'Thistle' and 'Shamrock'. These new vessels were the 'Hunter', 'Williams' and 'Paterson'." By this time, competition and more modern ships maintained a daily return service between Morpeth and Sydney. Also, the time taken for the journey each way had been reduced to between six and a quarter and six and a half hours.⁶⁸⁶

Married.

At Jerry's Plains, by special license, on the 6th instant, by the Rev. Joseph Cooper, Mr. Richard Alcorn, of the "Queen Victoria Inn," to Elizabeth, relict of the late Richard Hobden, Esq, of Great Lodge, Jerry's Plains

The Maitland Mercury Saturday, 9 October 1852

The following is an abstract, compiled from the published manifests of the steamers and coasters, of principal produce (exclusive of wool and tallow) received cost wise in Sydney, from the Hunter River district, during the week ending October 6: -⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸¹ BDM V1851 1231 37B

⁶⁸² BDM V1851 1232 37B. Also a Mary Partridge, described as a 'Licenced Victualler', died in October of that year.

⁶⁸³ Daniel seemed to prefer this spelling of his name. It may be that his mother had at some point chose to opt for D'Arcy to gain some form of status?

⁶⁸⁴ "From Armagh to Parks" by Barry L Campbell, page 46

⁶⁸⁵ Second Master, by Ian Ellis, Hunter Valley News 7 October 1992

⁶⁸⁶ Morpeth: Where Bishops and Ships Once Rode Tall, 1989, Shirley Richards and Peter Muller, Published by Kookaburra Educational.

⁶⁸⁷ Maitland Mercury, Hunter River District News, 13 October 1852



Wheat – bags	10	Lambs	12	Coals - tons	48
Maize – bags	374	Pigs	1322	Eggs cases	5
Flour – bags	40	Bacon – bales	9	Tobacco – kegs	7
Bran - bags	232	“ - packages Butter – kegs	60	Soap – boxes	1
Hides	78	Cheese	4	Wine cask	9741
Sheepskins – bales	17	“ -- case	115	Hair – bales	3
Hay – Trusses	107	Lard – casks	1	Fowls- crates	
Horses	52	Pork – casks	2		
Calves	10		10		

THE WHEAT CROPS

‘Never in the memory of the ‘oldest inhabitants’ have we had a fairer prospect of a bountiful harvest; large fields of wheat everywhere meet the eye waving in luxuriance.We are half afraid that a great portion of the harvest will be lost for want of labour;..’

MICE.

‘Several of our settlers are making great complaints of damage done by these little marauders to their wheat stacks.’

INFLUENZA.

‘We can hardly find a single person in the neighbourhood .. but is

more or less attacked with this complaint. ...You hear coughing in every house.’

Monday, 8 November 1852⁶⁸⁸

WEATHER AND THE CROPS.

‘We feel sorry to have a, dry report to give about the weather, the drought is still continuing. In taking an occasional ride about the agricultural portion of our district, we regret to see the crops withering fast. We had some severe frosts during the last week; particularly on Thursday night when considerable damage was done to the grape vines. The potato crop

has also suffered from the same cause.’

LOOK OUT FOR SNAKES.

‘Several large snakes have made their appearance lately.’

OFF TO THE DIGGINGS.

‘Great numbers of persons have passed through the town within the last few weeks en route for the northern diggings. In one day we noticed three coachloads of passengers leave one of our inn yards.’

Monday, 10 October 1853⁶⁸⁹

Singleton correspondent
 Maitland Mercury

A son, Henry, was born to David and Harriet on 22 December 1853 in Jerry’s Plains.⁶⁹⁰ His naming, it seems, is in honour of Harriet’s brother, Henry Davis, and coincides with his arrival in the colony the year before.

Within a few months of lamenting drought, the Singleton correspondent of the Maitland Mercury reported:

THE WEATHER, THE CROPS, AND THE HARVEST.

‘During the past week we have had a succession of storms which have greatly retarded the labours of the harvest men. The corn crops are looking good all

over the district, and we have grass and water in abundance.there is a great demand for labourers, ... The river is barely passable for some days,..’

THE OLYMPIC CIRCUS.

‘On Monday last Mr. Ashton’s troop of equestrians performed here; On Tuesday, ...the whole of his canvas circus burned down.’

26 December 1853

Bate’s Wharf announced the addition of two new steamships ‘William Miskin’ and ‘Iron Prince’ to the Sydney Morpeth run ‘thus giving an advantage to shippers of four trips per week beyond the present opportunities.’

‘Scottish Entertainment’

The Maitland Mercury of 15 April 1854 contains fairly lengthy paid announcements about ‘Scottish Entertainment’. A Mr. Paxton of Scotland was to present ‘A Grand Entertainment of HIGHLY POPULAR SONGS’ at the East Maitland Courthouse, and the Rose Inn at East Maitland. The program was no doubt geared to appeal to a large population of Scots immigrants like David. Robert Burns was well represented in the program.

More of the Jerry’s Plains Annual Races

The three-day ‘Jerry’s Plains Annual Races’ were held on Wednesday, 19 – Friday, 21 April 1854. Patrick Ward, lessee of David’s inn, the ‘Horse and Jockey’, took an active role in the event as one of the publican sponsors, and as owner of three horses: Little Wonder, Blarye, and John Bull. Little Wonder won the third

⁶⁸⁸ Maitland Mercury - Wednesday, 10 November 1852, page 2

⁶⁸⁹ Maitland Mercury - Wednesday, 10 October 1853

⁶⁹⁰ Presbyterian, Parish of Whittinham, V1855 881 53 0



race (Galloway Stakes of ten pounds) on the first day. John Bull won the third race (Beaten Stakes for ten pound) on the third. Richard Alcorn had two horses in the races that did well: Sugar Bag, and Garyowen.

This year's races were better supported than in other years, in that several of the races involved more than two horses. Rain dampened Spirits on the first day. Betting, laughter, and dancing were the order of the second day. On the third day the publicans were selling a 'very agreeable drink' 'vulgarly called "flareup"' a concoction of lemonade powders. As a consequence, not one person was taken in charge for being drunk and disorderly by the police.'

Death

On Wednesday, 22nd March last, at Great Lodge, Jerry's Plains, Jane Hannah, the beloved wife of Henry Hobden, aged 20 years. All who knew her mourn her loss.

Maitland Mercury Wednesday 5 April 1954

Death

On the 12th August, 1854, at the residence of her father, Great Lodge, Jerry's Plains, Blanche Sophia, youngest daughter of Mr. Henry Hobden, aged ten months.

Maitland Mercury Wednesday 6 September 1954

George P Bowman at 'Archerfield' advertised in the Maitland Mercury of 8 July 1854 for expressions of interest in construction of Cattle fences at his cattle stations at 'Maidenhead' and 'Aikins Flat' on the Severn River.

Death

At Jerry's Plains, on 15th December, after a long and painful illness, caused by a severe attack of scarlet fever, Richard Alfred Duff, beloved son of Sarah Ellis, aged seven years and five months.

Maitland Mercury Wednesday 27 December 1954

Signs of Drought

The Singleton correspondent tells of extreme high temperatures and a lack of rain leading to the failure of much of the wheat and maize crops in the district. And that there was:

'...so much fever and sickness prevalent' '... it is a great blessing that we have two medical gentlemen in the town, there being, between measles, scarletina, and other diseases which flesh is heir to, a superabundance of patients. The number of deaths, especially amongst children, have been far above the average of many years past- scarcely

a day passes without the "solemn knell of death".....⁶⁹¹
31 October 1854

'We have had for the last four or five days almost constant rain. It has come down in gentle showers, and has saturated the earth; we have grass and water in abundance, and the cattle are improving fast in their condition. From the beautiful

verdure now covering the earth, you would scarcely believe that it was the same place it was a month back. The roads and streets are of course in a great mess; and in a few days, we expect teams and coaches will be stuck up. The river has been rising gradually, and is now barely crossable on horseback.'

Thursday, 8 February 1855.⁶⁹²

The Maitland Mercury reported:

Industrial Action

'The strike of the A.A. Co.'s miners has produced such effects on the shipping interests, and the community at large, the cause is traceable to the system of hiring and working the mines being open to an extensive sub-system of fraud and favoritism, equally injurious to the employer and employed.'

Newcastle, Wednesday, 20 June 1855.

Construction of Railway in the Hunter

'Yesterday afternoon the contractors, Messrs. Wright and Randle, with their friend, and a very numerous

assemblage of the inhabitants of Maitland, Morpeth, and Newcastle, assembled for the purpose of turning the first sod of the Maitland portion, contract No. 2, of the Hunter River Railway. About 3 o'clock the enlivening strains of a German band were heard in the distance on their approach from Morpeth, followed by a number of omnibusses and cabs (containing the contractors and their friends), and on their arrival on the grounds, at the Brickfields, East Maitland, they were received with enthusiastic cheers and the navies discharging salutes from two brass cannons. '.....joined by a number of

magistrates and influential parties in the district,'

Singleton correspondent

Maitland Mercury

Maitland, Wednesday, 3 July 1855. Public Meeting at Jerry's Plains.

The inhabitants of Jerry's Plains, and parties interested, are invited to attend a PUBLIC MEETING, to take place at Mr. R. Alcorn's Victoria Inn, Jerry's Plains, on TUESDAY NEXT, 21st August, at Two o'clock, for the purpose of adopting the best means for the Repairing of the Jerry's Plains Road.

OLIVER SAUNDERS,
Secretary Pro Tem,⁶⁹³

Jerry's Plains Aug. 14, 1855

⁶⁹¹ Maitland Mercury, 1 November 1854.

⁶⁹² Maitland Mercury, 10 February 1855.

⁶⁹³ Maitland Mercury, 18 August 1855. Adv. 4685.



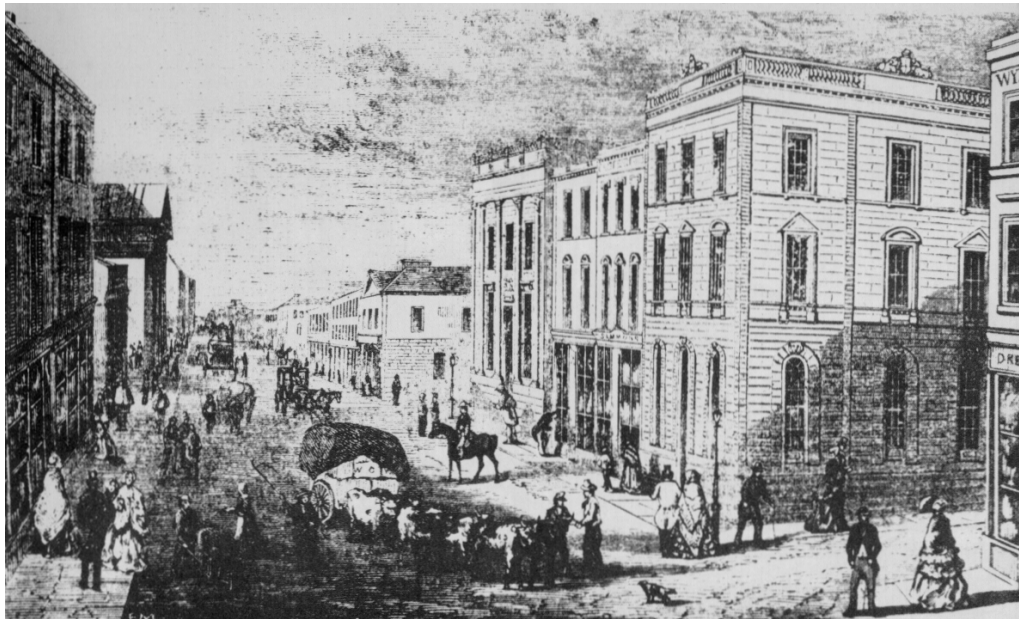
Patrick Ward, lessee of David's inn, the 'Horse and Jockey', placed the following advertisement in the Maitland Mercury on Wednesday, 22 August 1855:

FOR SALE or EXCHANGE, about 100 Head of quiet CATTLE, to be delivered at Merton or Jerry's Plains. The undersigned would be willing to take some Store Sheep in exchange, as may be agreed upon. There are several milkers amongst these cattle, and young bullocks fit for breaking in. Application by letter will be attended to, or, by a few days' notice, can be seen at either of the above places.⁶⁹⁴

Caring For Thomas' Family

It seems that David and his daughter-in-law, Ann came to some arrangement in the mid 1850's, whereby she is likely to have taken the three daughters to Sydney - There she was able establish an income for herself as a midwife and shopkeeper.

The three boys: David, Thomas and John were in David's care in 1856. David had made provision in his 1856 will for his third wife 'Eliza' to be liable for educating and bringing up his grandsons 'during their infancy' – An interesting term in respect of his eldest grandson, David, who was well into his 21st year by then, and long been working for his grandfather and uncles. It is more than likely by then that he had done many a trip to and from Millie driving cattle. It is unlikely that Ann would have left the two younger boys before 1855 when the youngest, John, was 9 years old. It was evident on several occasions in later years that the family ties between mother and children, brothers and sisters, remained close.



View of George Street from the corner of Grosvenor Street 1854

To what extent David helped Ann Brown (nee Shepherd) get established in Sydney (Balmain and Darling Harbour area) is uncertain. There is a question to what extent George Huntley of Balmain (who was entrusted to a considerable portion of David's estate) assisted her and her daughters to become established in Sydney. It is noticeable in his will that Ann's sons are provided for specifically but neither she nor the daughters get mentioned, presumably because David had already made provision for them?

⁶⁹⁴ Maitland Mercury, 22 August 1855. Adv. 4588.