

DUNCAN McINTYRE and the Search for Leichhardt

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After 1859 the new Colony of Queensland became the focus of attention of those seeking new pastoral runs. The Plains of Promise of Stokes, the first Leichhardt expedition, the tragic fate of Burke and Wills and the explorations of George Elphinstone Dalrymple all combined to attract attention to North Queensland and to the north-west of the Colony in particular. However, there was the matter of the western boundary of the Colony which was considered by Governor Bowen and the first Colonial Parliament to require adjustment. The letters patent of 6 June 1859 defined the boundary as "the 141st meridian of east longitude, which is the eastern boundary of South Australia". A.C. Gregory the Survey-General had advised the ministry that "a boundary at the 141st meridian would just cut off from Queensland the greater portion of the only territory available for settlement, i.e. the Plains of Promise, and the only safe harbour, i.e. Investigator Road, in the Gulf of Carpentaria". The local legislature asked for an extension of the boundary to the 138th meridian of east longitude.

After some importuning by Bowen, and evidently by certain gentlemen in Victoria who were desirous of forming a settlement on the northern coast of Australia (a phenomenon not unknown today), the Imperial Government acceded to the request. On 12 April 1862 the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for Colonies advised Bowen that the Letters Patent had been issued annexing to Queensland that part of "New South Wales as lies to the northward of the 21st parallel of south latitude, and between the 141st and 138th meridians of east longitude, together with all and every the adjacent islands their members and appurtenances in the Gulf of Carpentaria". Queensland gained 120,000 square miles of territory, which now comprises such centres as Birdsville, Boulia, Camooweal, Burketown, Cloncurry and Mount Isa. ⁽¹⁾

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With the extension of the jurisdiction of Queensland a surge of settlement around the rivers flowing in to the Gulf of Carpentaria ensued. Some interested parties from the southern colonies even sought to overland their stock. Among these were Donald and Duncan McIntyre (or M'Intyre or MacIntyre). The name was spelled variously, but I have adopted the spelling used in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, viz McIntyre.

Duncan McIntyre was born in Scotland in 1831, son of James McIntyre, a farmer, and his wife, Mary, nee MacDougall. He was probably orphaned when young and adopted by a relation, Archibald McIntyre, whose son Donald was often supposed to be Duncan's brother. McIntyre arrived in Port Phillip with his foster parents about 1849 according to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. However, other evidence indicates that an Archibald McIntyre and family arrived in the ship "*David Clarke*" in 1839. There is no record of such a family arriving ten years later, unless they were not assisted immigrants. ⁽²⁾

Ultimately Duncan worked as station superintendent at Bullock Creek, Glengower near Castlemaine, with another relation, Donald Campbell. On 5 March 1862 at St. James' Cathedral, Melbourne, he married Mary Clyde Morris. In mid-1863 Duncan and Donald McIntyre decided to seek a run in the new country around the Gulf of Carpentaria. ⁽³⁾

They left Victoria with sheep, cattle and horses. On their arrival at the Upper Darling in January 1864 they found it to be in flood. Being unable to drive their sheep across they perforce had to halt. Duncan McIntyre, with a small party, proceeded north to find a good route to Coopers Creek. He found several new creeks and lakes and ascertained that stock could be taken without difficulty to Coopers Creek. On his return he learned that the Queensland Government had imposed an embargo on the entry of stock from other colonies, either by land or sea. An application to bring their stock in to Queensland having been made, the McIntyres explored extensively the country to the north of the Darling and in to Queensland. Good country was found to the west of the Paroo River, but no permanent water. Forced by this to go east they explored the Bulloo and Barcoo River basins. Their entry permit still not being available, Duncan McIntyre accompanied by William Fred Barnett, son of Dr. Barnett of Sandhurst (later Bendigo), and three aboriginals with twenty-five horses again proceeded north, this time to ascertain whether the Gulf country was superior to what he already had seen in south-west Queensland. The party left the Paroo on 21 June 1864. On the way to Coopers Creek some aboriginals showed McIntyre and Barnett the grave of two white men, whom they had murdered. McIntyre identified the remains as those of

Messrs. Curlewis and McCulloch, who had been missing for some time, and of whom Curlewis had been well known to him. After this McIntyre proceeded to Coopers Creek, which he reached in twenty-two days from the Paroo. He crossed Coopers Creek at $26^{\circ}10'S$, followed it up for twenty miles and then struck out north-westerly to what he determined to be a new river which he named in honour of the Rev. Joseph Docker of Wangaratta. Still continuing north-west, McIntyre reached the Mueller River of McKinlay which he crossed in $23^{\circ}S$ and approximately in the meridian of $142^{\circ}E$. (My view is that the Docker was the present day Farrars Creek and the Mueller, the Diamantina). He then pursued much the same track to the Gulf as that earlier followed by Burke and Wills, and McKinlay. In about $22^{\circ}S$ he noticed the very faint tracks of animals, seemingly either sheep or goats, and horses or cattle, at a spot not known to have been traversed by any explorer.

Reports at Variance

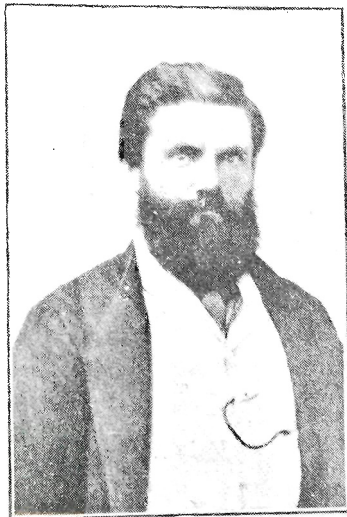
Accounts as to when the next incidents of note on this trip of McIntyre's occurred vary greatly. Some say they happened, but do not say when; others say on the way to the Gulf and others, again, on the return from there. However, a letter written jointly by Doctors David Wilkie and Ferdinand von Mueller to the Melbourne press on 21 December 1864 may be taken as authoritative. The learned gentlemen have this to say:-

From hence (the animal tracks), a system chiefly of granite mountains sends its ramifications in two main lines south-west and north-west. On a new principal tributary of the Flinders River, rising on the north-west flank of this mountain track, Mr. McIntyre passed to the main stream of the Flinders, observing in about 20 degrees 40 minutes South and about one degree westward of Burke and Wills' track, two old horses, an event to which not too much importance can be attached, when it is remembered that neither the Victorian explorers, nor Landsborough, nor A. Gregory, nor Leichhardt, in his first glorious expedition, abandoned any horses in any adjacent locality, Mr. Walker's horses being left about 300 miles to the east. A still more important discovery rewarded Mr. McIntyre's exertions after having reached on the Flinders line, the Carpentaria Gulf; for on his return journey whilst following up the main east branch of the Flinders River, he noticed on its western bank, in approximate latitude, 20 degrees south, two trees each bearing a large L. no number attached as a mark, indicating, as we, with Mr. McIntyre feel convinced, a Leichhardtian camp.

The journey to the Gulf from Coopers Creek had taken 34 days. The tributary of the Flinders was named by McIntyre the Dugald River and that was where the horses had been found.

On the return journey McIntyre by keeping to the Flinders found that the coast range consisted only of high undulating downs without any stones. The difficult terrain of the outward journey where water could only be obtained from rocky basins in gorges and no feed was available for the horses could thus be avoided in any future journey. He found that the Flinders was settled from its head to within 280 miles of the sea. One station, however, was 130 miles lower down. The squatters on the river had lost about thirty per cent of their sheep from the poison bush coming over the ranges from east Queensland. Cattle losses had been considerable also from the poison bush and at least fifty per cent had been lost from the ravages of pleuropneumonia. A large percentage of horses had died from snake bites. Landsborough had presented the Flinders as a "finely-watered" river, 120 yards wide and flowing. McIntyre found it dry 20 miles from the sea and higher up it was often dry for ten miles at a stretch and the general width was found to be 30 or 40 yards. Most of the stations were completely out of provisions. They were cut off by the drought from all communication from Port Denison.

McIntyre called at Bowen Downs Station at the head of the Thomson River and found the cattle there were all clean and in splendid condition, despite the dryness of the season. From there to Coopers Creek the country was well-watered but unstocked. McIntyre had planned to return near Landsborough's tracks, to the source of the Bulloo and from that river to the Paroo and accomplished the whole journey in twenty weeks. (4)



DUNCAN MACINTYRE.

That McIntyre was convinced he had found traces of Leichhardt is evidenced by his hasty return to Victoria. As soon as he had reached the telegraphic line at Swan Hill on the Murray River he sent a telegram to the Secretary of the Royal Society of Victoria on the 15 December 1864:-

Found between Burke and Sturt tracks about 200 miles from Carpentaria two old horses and saw very old tracks of a party going south west: also two trees marked L about fifteen years old.

Duncan McIntyre

Glengower by Castlemaine.

Dr. Robert L.J. Ellery of the Royal Society got in touch with Dr. Mueller for his views as to whether McIntyre had come across some traces of Landsborough's party. Mueller replied promptly that no horses had been lost by Landsborough in his South West expedition from the Gulf of Carpentaria. Hence if the two L's were made by the party to which the horses belonged they could not be marks made by Landsborough. Mueller wondered if there might not be some mistake as to the distance from the Gulf of Carpentaria. He told Ellery that Mr. Gregory had told Mr. Giles of the discovery of other trees marked L at or about the Alice River. Mueller advised Ellery to publish the telegram. It appeared in the *Argus* with accompanying brief letters from Ellery and Mueller on 17 December 1864 as was republished in the *Australasian* on the following Saturday 24 December.

The almost immediate follow up by Drs. Wilkie and Mueller appeared as already stated in the *Age* on 21 December 1864. This was republished in the *Australasian* on 24 December. Apart from the detail about the location of horses and trees already covered, the letter had this to say after stating the conviction of those concerned that the two L trees indicated a Leichhardtian camp:-

With this position the traces of Leichhardt, recently found on the Alice River, can be brought into a line of contact, these L's are clearly distinct from any marks of Landsborough's camps, who in that latitude kept the eastern bank of the Flinders River and who, moreover, attached a consecutive number to his marked camp trees. If further proofs of distinction were wanting, we might add that the bark had encroached to the extent of four or five inches on the incision of the L's, whereby a much greater age of the letters is established than that of Landsborough's camps; and still further we have evidence of one of the natives who served both Landsborough's and McIntyre's expedition, declaring the camp foreign to the expedition of the former gentleman. The position of these momentous trees being in flooded

ground, it would have been in vain to search for further camp traces. Mr. McIntyre, in carrying out a judiciously arranged plan, went homeward near Landsborough's tracks, to the source of the Bulla (sic! Bulloo?), and finally from this river to the Paroo, accomplishing in twenty weeks a journey, by which he has secured a prominent and honourable position amongst our explorers, and this by slender and entirely private means, accompanied only by one of his countymen and five (sic) aborigines.

Shall, whilst we can avail ourselves of the talents of tried and spirited travellers, like Mr. McIntyre and Mr. Giles, the fate of one of the most famed explorers which the world ever possessed, remain uncared for? Shall the destiny of him, who, in Australia, discovered the 'North-west passage', remain still for an indefinite period unascertained? And shall the revelation of the fate of this truly great man be any longer left to the chances of mere accident?"

Mystery of the Horses

A lengthy account, entitled "Late Explorations on the Shores of Carpentaria", of the journey of McIntyre and Barnett appeared in the *Riverine Herald* of Echuca on 31 December 1864. It was this article which was reproduced as a supplement in the *Brisbane Courier* of 12 January 1865. The L's on the trees were described in detail; McIntyre expressed the opinion that the letters seen were evidently cut by a skilled hand and could not have been the work of the blacks. The horses, which McIntyre had brought back with him, were also described. One was a bay and the other a black. There were illegible brands on both of them and each had a blotched brand on the same part of the back. Both were old horses. McIntyre said he had horses in his mob fifteen or sixteen years of age, which performed the whole journey well, while the two picked up by him knocked up in a very short time. This indicated they must have been of great age indeed, for when found they were rolling fat.

McIntyre had praise for his sole companion, W.F. Barnett. The latter had collected a large number of seeds and snake skins. Although quite a young man and previously inexperienced in the bush he had shown a surprising aptitude for the work of exploring. The *Riverine Herald* portentiously remarks that it will be gratifying to his Sandhurst friends to hear of his being spoken of in terms of high praise by McIntyre.

On 9 February 1865 Dr. Mueller gave a lecture at St. George's Hall, Melbourne on "The Fate of Leichhardt". In his own words "some space of time has elapsed since Dr. Wilkie and myself drew public attention to the important bearings of Mr.

McIntyre's researches on Leichhardt's fate, without any champion appearing for the lost explorers; and on consulting with my honourable friend, we felt that our call should be suffered to die away, and resolved that it should be renewed in the present demonstration".

He then went on at great length to discuss the possible ends which Leichhardt and his party had met; murdered by the natives; destroyed in a terrible hailstorm; drowned in a flood or burned in a bushfire. On the other hand they might have lost their livestock to poison weed and be living marooned in an area, which might be capable of sustaining them on a subsistence level, but from which neither retreat nor advance was possible. It was a very dramatic presentation and aimed at the ladies of Victoria in an endeavour to enlist their support for a fund raising venture to finance a search for Leichhardt based on the seemingly new evidence found by McIntyre. He advocated the services of McIntyre should be secured. Mueller said

This traveller entertains a persuasion, in which I fully share, that Leichhardt's fate can be discovered, and is inspired with an enthusiasm for bearing the standard of geographic science still further through this continent. With calm judgement he combines trained knowledge, travelling experience, an earnest will, and an unflinching perseverance; and above all he is willing to sacrifice private interest in the good cause. I am commissioned by Mr. McIntyre to state, that whosoever in Leichhardt's search will take the field may unhesitatingly command from him every information calculated to secure success.

At the end of the lecture several men addressed the meeting. A deputation was appointed, consisting of Drs. Wilkie, Crooke, Eades, Embling, Bleasdale and Mueller and Messrs. Summers, Bonwick and Kyte, to wait on the heads of the church sections to solicit that the measure suggested by Dr. Mueller, to call the ladies together for delegating representatives to a central committee be carried out. The central committee would, when appointed, solicit funds to finance a search for Leichhardt. ⁽⁵⁾

The enterprise, needless to say attracted some attention. A Mr. S. Deveson of Little Bendigo, Ballarat, came up with the suggestion that if an expedition was sent it should be supplied with materials for making a number of fire balloons. One should be sent up each evening when the relief party came to country considered by the leader "to afford a reasonable prospect of proving serviceable to the lost men". Mr. Deveson expressed the view that any survivor who sighted the fire balloon would at once conclude that civilised beings were in their vicinity and would use every effort to come in contact with them. ⁽⁶⁾

John Roper, who had accompanied Leichhardt to Port Essington wrote, from the River Acheron in Victoria's southern highlands, to Dr. Mueller expressing his gratitude at the efforts being made to promote a search for his old friend and leader, Leichhardt. He wished the endeavour every success and hoped that at last the world would find what had happened to Leichhardt. ⁽⁷⁾

A.W. Howitt also wrote to Dr. Mueller. He said he had questioned the natives about parties of white men in the interior and had done this as far as latitude 25°30' south. Because of his ability to speak the language of that part of the interior he could be sure of understanding and making himself understood. He found that the natives were acquainted with the movements of Sturt's party, Gregory and the later explorers. He could never gain the least intelligence about such a party as Leichhardt's. In the circumstances Howitt considered that their traces must be sought considerably north of the latitude he had mentioned. This supported the hypotheses of Mueller and McIntyre. ⁽⁸⁾

A Discordant Note

However, all was not sweetness and light. A discordant note had been struck, about three weeks before Howitt's letter, by a gentleman who signed himself "A Murray Squatter". He wrote from Kasima on 28 April 1865 to the *Riverine Herald* as follows:-

Can you inform me and many others who really think that something should be done to learn Leichhardt's fate, what has been done or is to be done about this Leichhardt expedition. I have received a circular from the Ladies' Committee, written with great taste and good feeling, as might be expected, but we want something more than taste, or even good feeling, in fitting out such an expedition. There was enough of both to spare in that most woeful Burke and Wills affair, yet see what a miserable end they came to. To initiate, and even carry on, such a benevolent movement, to enlist sympathy and collect funds, the ladies are admirably suitable; but imagine sixteen ladies selecting horses and bargaining for saddles in Bourke Street. Of course, they will leave all that to others but to whom? Who is to be the leader? Who have the ladies to consult and advise with as to the choice of a leader? And who is that leader to consult with as to his general proceedings? A man must be chosen who may be entrusted with everything, but upon many points any prudent man would prefer being supported by other men's opinions. There must be a pre-arranged route, for instance, and who is to lay it down? Certainly not the leader unrestricted; it would be unfair to him, for if, for one thing, he found good

sheep country and applied for it, it would undoubtedly be said that he had paid much more attention to his own interest than the public object of his journey, as was freely enough said of more than one of disinterested searchers after Burke and Wills; and the best man if unrestricted, might be biased by an anxiety to bring the expedition to a close, to secure some paradise he had discovered. This has been originated by Dr. Mueller and Dr. Wilkie's report, and I would like to know if they are the ladies only advisers. They are both very good men - the first is a botanist of European reputation, and I believe thoroughly acquainted with the whole subject upon paper, but both too much mixed up with Burke and Wills failure to give entire confidence to this if placed under their auspices. In fact, not to make too fine a point of it, people won't have them, that is alone; associated with others their unfortunate experiences might be useful. I am ready to subscribe £10 or £20 if I can see that it will be carried out practically and efficiently, but with the greatest respect for the ladies, I should like to know who they intend to appoint, and who are to assist them in arranging with him as to his proceedings before I subscribe, and I can say that almost everyone I have spoken to is of the same opinion. ⁽⁹⁾

Dr. Mueller, three weeks later, replied to the Murray Squatter at considerable length, ostensibly to shield Dr. Wilkie "against an attack which, had the Kasima gentleman been acquainted with all the facts connected with the first Victorian expedition, he could never have ventured".

The Doctor pointed out that neither Dr. Wilkie nor himself were involved with the arrangements which led to the disasters of the Burke and Wills expedition; in fact they were both opposed to the decision which led to its sad fate.

Now that he had entered "the arena" Dr. Mueller took the opportunity to repel the attacks against himself. He pointed out that since 1848 he had travelled about 24,000 miles within Australia and no one could say he had ever deviated from public duties for the sake of personal interest. He treasured his reputation and would not hazard it in promoting the ladies enterprise other than for altruistic motives. Murray Squatter should be aware from practical considerations that a safe and tried explorer like McIntyre should not be fettered in the details of his operations. Rather than seeking to impede the objects of the enterprise every right minded person should be seeking to assist the ladies. It had been stated months ago the ladies, when the fund was obtained, would go for advice that might be needed to gentlemen and seek from them the counsel for practical initiation of their enterprise. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Queensland Aid Sought

Mrs. Eliza S. Bromby, the President and Mrs. Ellen Tierney, the Honorary Secretary, of the Leichhardt Search Committee sent a telegram to Lady Bowen in Brisbane. It read

The Victorian Government will bear a share of the expenditure which may be incurred in prosecuting a search of Leichhardt if other Governments will assist. If Queensland will contribute liberally say £1,000 - the expedition can be organised immediately; otherwise the services of Mr. M'Intyre (sic) and the advantages of instituting the search a year earlier will be lost. Private contributions will soon amount to £1,000. Pray send soon an answer; surety to be given that no squatting interest will be pursued.

On 3 June 1865 Lady Bowen received a further telegram from Melbourne:- "South Australian Government announces its decision to recommend unconditionally a vote for the Leichhardt search to Parliament".

Lady Bowen replied on the same day:- "The Queensland Government will recommend to Parliament a vote for the Leichhardt Search. I will form a Ladies Committee to receive contributions".

The *Brisbane Courier* stated: "After her return from Ipswich, Lady Bowen will call a public meeting of ladies with the object of forming the committee referred to. Meanwhile, contributions in aid of the 'Leichhardt Search Fund' will be received by Captain Pitt, R.A., Government House. Subscriptions already received:- Sir George and Lady Bowen £5; Hon. R.G.W. Herbert £2; C. Fitzsimmons Esq., M.L.A., £5".⁽¹¹⁾

On 20 June 1866 the Rev. W.B. Clarke, well known for his geological researches in Australia, wrote from Sydney to Dr. Mueller expressing his strong support for the Leichhardt search. He said that in 1858 he had canvassed the New South Wales Government to prosecute a search for the lost explorer to clear up the mystery of his disappearance and had recommended the search be concentrated upon the area between 25° and 18° south latitude and between 144° and 148° east longitude (an area of just over 100,000 square miles). The Rev. Clarke noted with satisfaction that McIntyre's discoveries had been within that region, as the New South Wales Government had not given any support to his proposal.⁽¹²⁾

The *Australasian* of 1 July 1865 also contained an item of topical interest:-

Mr. Donald Campbell, of Glengower, deserves much credit for the spirited and disinterested manner in which he completed in the metropolis all arrangements for the Leichhardt search,

acting on behalf of his nephew, Mr. McIntyre, who takes command of the expedition. These members of the party who are not yet with Mr. McIntyre, on the Darling, are required to be at Glengower by the end of this week, from whence they will then start with the camels and horses for Mount Murchison without delays. Provisions will be brought from one of the Queensland ports to the sources of the Thomson River. For the long keeping of the dromedaries the colony is indebted to the Messrs. Samuel and Charles Wilson of the Wimmera.

On 3 July 1865 the Leichhardt search party left Glengower at mid-day (it was a Monday). According to the Castlemaine *Daily News* all the men seemed accustomed to bush life and endurance and mostly of middle age. None of them, however, excepting the leader, Mr. McIntyre and Dr. Murray, the second in command and surgeon, had been in previous expedition parties. Mr. McIntyre was then supposed to be about 500 miles from the Gulf and was to meet the party on 1 August on the Darling. In the meantime the party was to travel under the leadership of Mr. Murray and Mr. Grey, the latter being an experienced bushman. A lengthy letter from William Landsborough to the Queensland *Guardian* was at his request republished in the Victorian press. It expressed some practical views on the modus operandi of the search for Leichhardt. Landsborough appears to have been under the impression that Howitt would be accompanying the expedition as surveyor and journalist; duties which should not devolve on McIntyre as leader. However, in a footnote to the letter Landsborough says

Dr. Mueller has just ordered me to send a quantity of provisions to Cornish Creek, one of the heads of the Thomson; and has informed me that the dromedaries are about to be taken to the Darling, and that Dr. Murray (of Howitt's expedition in search of Burke) is to join the party.⁽¹³⁾

Dr. Murray will be discussed at length later on, but suffice it to say at this stage it was Mueller's and the Ladies Committee's fatal mistake when they appointed him as a second in command of the expedition.

A Queensland letter of 1 July 1865 which appeared in the *Australasian* on 15 July 1865 indicated that Queensland led by Lady Bowen was putting its best foot forward to raise money for the expedition.

The Government of Queensland was expected to give at least £500. It was believed Queensland would bear a fair share of the expenses of the expedition. Then full of praise for the generosity of the Legislature and people of Queensland Dr. Mueller published a

letter he had received from Mr. Gordon Sandeman, M.L.A. for Leichhardt (Q) which informed the Doctor that the Queensland "House of Assembly" had voted £1,000, in aid of the "Leichhardt Search Fund", by a large majority. ⁽¹⁴⁾

After the Queensland Parliament had voted the £1,000 Sir George Bowen, the Governor, sent a very full report about the whole matter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. From Bowen's despatch we learn that the Victorian and South Australian Parliaments had each voted £500. Private contributions amounting to about £1,500 had also been collected, mainly in Victoria and Queensland. The total collected being sufficient to maintain the expedition for two years, it had already started on its journey. Bowen then gave an account of Leichhardt's career as an explorer and of the search expedition mounted for him after his disappearance. He went on to say, despite Havenden Hely's report of a native account of a massacre of the whole party about 200 miles west of Mount Abundance, later explorers had found traces much to the north of the reported location of the massacre. Eventually, Duncan McIntyre's discoveries of horses and marked trees in 1864 led to those, particularly Dr. Mueller, who had never ceased to urge the probability of Leichhardt or some of his party still being alive to espouse the cause of a renewed search for the lost explorer and members of his expedition. Bowen mentions Buckley in Victoria and Morrill in North Queensland as examples of survival among the aboriginals in the Australian bush.

The Governor mentioned how the Victorian Ladies' Committee had enlisted the aid of Lady Bowen, who had obtained the assistance of Queensland ladies of social influence which had been successfully exercised in obtaining the liberal aid which had been received from the colonial Parliament.

Bowen expressed the view that whatever the outcome of the expedition it must add to the knowledge of the remoter portions of the colony and assist materially in its development.

In conclusion the Governor informed the Colonial Office that Duncan McIntyre had set out from Victoria some months before. The rest of the party was now moving to meet him and the expedition was to be finally organised in Queensland. It would consist of eight to twelve carefully selected "bushmen", 14 camels and about 40 horses. It had the means to have supplies for two years. The expedition would proceed first to the Flinders River where the last traces had been seen by McIntyre. From thence it would proceed towards the interior. Bowen said the expedition would receive every assistance. It will be able to procure fresh stores from time to time from Burketown, the new settlement recently established on Bowen's recommendation at the head of navigation of the Albert River flowing into the head of the Gulf of Carpentaria. ⁽¹⁵⁾



TREE MARKED BY DUNCAN MCINTYRE.

On 21 August 1865 near Mount Murchison, McIntyre took charge of the expedition. On 23 August the party moved on and on 5 October was camped at Curracunaya Springs. Two reports both dated 30 March 1866 were sent to Dr. Mueller and the Search Committee respectively by McIntyre from the Gelliot (Gilliat) River covering the period from October 1865 to March 1866. The first (to Mueller) reads:-

In writing to you a full and particular account of everything of importance connected with the expedition from the time it left the Darling, New South Wales, until its arrival here, and especially of what took place in the neighbourhood of Cooper's Creek, we came nearly straight from the New South Wales boundary on the Pine River to Cooper's Creek, where it turns south, or from about $29^{\circ}\text{S.}, 144^{\circ} 30' \text{E.}$, to about $26^{\circ} \text{S.}, 142^{\circ} \text{E.}$ and nearly in a direct line from there to the intersection of the tropical line and Mueller River, and afterwards almost direct to (Mount) Fort Bowen, or from the point where I was directed to commence the search. The search has been commenced, and will be carried on while it is possible to (go) on with it. Along with our doctor and some other members of the expedition we lost some thermometers, &c., all of which I will try and replace at the settlement on the

Albert (Burketown), and also a surveyor if there is one to be had. I have kept a complete field book and journal from Cooper's Creek to this point, all the important geographical features being as ascertained as near as possible, and the position of the camps ascertained to a tenth part of a mile, five or six observations on each side of the zenith being taken almost every night. We have still four thermometers and two barometers (such as were sent up with the expedition), two large sextants, a number of smaller ones, and eight compasses, so that, allowing none are to be had on the Albert, the expedition is pretty well supplied. I am doubtful about being able to get a legally qualified surgeon; and a surveyor capable of making astronomical observations is still more difficult to procure; other men are plentiful enough. The other part of the expedition, except in horses (and I will arrange about getting enough), is still all right; in fact, I believe the most complete that ever started. I expect you will get my other letter as soon as this, when you will know all about our movements. I have sent a hurried despatch to the committee along with this. You must excuse this scroll (sic), for I am really very busy, but I suppose you will be glad to hear something of what we are doing.

The despatch to the committee was addressed to the Hon. Sec. of the Ladies Leichhardt Search Committee, Melbourne, Victoria. After dealing with the party's movements to Curracunaya where they stayed -

until the 11th November, when, although not quite ready, we were obliged to move on, as the water was nearly done. Leaving Curracunaya the expedition consisted of sixty-five horse, twelve dromedaries, about five tons of stores and ten men:- Duncan M'Intyre (sic)(leader), James P. Murray (surgeon and second in command), John M'Calman, William F. M'Donald, Alexander Grey, John Barnes, Belooch (Indian camel-driver), Welbo and Myola (aborigines).

On the 13th November, we crossed the Bulla (?Bulloo) and on the 17th reached the Wilson, which was followed up for some days. Late on the night of the 26th we arrived at Cooper's Creek and found it quite dry. As soon as day dawned Welbo and I started to look for water. We didn't go far. After a careful examination of the bed and banks of the channel, and old native footpaths, we returned to the expedition camp, and soon afterwards the party started back along the expedition track towards the last water. This retreat ended in the loss of all the horses but three, and the return of Dr. Murray, Grey, M'Donald and Barnes to the settled districts.

The whole of December was lost in finding permanent water in Cooper's Creek and collecting stores, firearms, ammunition, instruments and other valuables, which, owing to the expedition being declared at an end by the officers in charge, had been thrown anywhere and anyhow, or carried away on the horses. On New Year's Day we were camped on a fine sheet of water on Cooper's Creek. But as the dromedaries required a month or two's rest, and the natives troublesome, we moved a few miles up the creek to where there was good feed and timber. By the 14th January we had a stockade up, and the annoyance from the natives was at an end. In a few weeks the horses and dromedaries got quite fresh, and an unlimited supply of the finest fish put us all to rights. On Friday, the 9th February, we packed up and started. The expedition leaving Cooper's Creek consisted of twelve dromedaries, five horses, nearly two tons of stores and six men:- Duncan M'Intyre (leader), John M'Calman, William T (?F) Barnett, Belooch (Indian), Welbo, Myola (aborigines).

On Sunday, the 18th February, we were enjoying ourselves in the clear water of the Docker River, and on the 1st March we left the Mueller, and almost immediately entered the tropics. On the 9th March the coast range was crossed, and the next day we came on the head of this river, which we traced down. On Sunday, the 18th March, the expedition was camped on the east side of the Gelliot (Gilliat) River nearly opposite (Mount) Fort Bowen. Welbo and I started to see if there was a station in the neighbourhood; a few miles in an easterly direction brought us to the Flinders River, which we crossed, and soon after we met a stockman looking for horses, who conducted us to Mr. Gibson's station near Mount Little. I was informed at this station that no further traces of Leichhardt had been observed, and that natives were seldom seen in the neighbourhood. After resting a few hours we proceeded to Mr. Morresell's station, about twelve miles up the Flinders and only a few miles below the LL trees, Leichhardt's supposed camp. We got to the station by sundown and remained all night. Mr. Morresell told me that the old camp near the station was the only trace of Leichhardt that he knew or had heard of on the river. I remained all Monday with Mr. Morresell, and on Tuesday, the 20th March, returned to the expedition camp. Since then Welbo and I have been search for marked trees and other traces of Leichhardt down this river (Gilliat), up the Flinders, and across to the Cloncurry, but have not found any, neither have we been able to find any natives.

The dromedaries, although in good condition, are leg-weary, and will require a few weeks' rest before starting into the western interior. In the meantime the search will be going on, and, if possible, the natives of the district found and interrogated, and, perhaps, some of them attached to the expedition. ⁽¹⁶⁾

This seems to be the longest surviving report from McIntyre. It appears he crossed into Queensland in the vicinity of what becomes in later colonial days the border customs post of Hungerford. The stock numbers quoted by Bowen and McIntyre respectively vary somewhat. In setting out the composition of his party McIntyre (or the *Weekly Herald*) omitted one member — William F. Barnett. It could be that Barnett and McDonald had similar initials and the scribe omitted the second person inadvertently. Barnett had accompanied McIntyre in his 1863-64 venture to the Gulf and could be counted on not to desert, as becomes apparent when M'Calman and Barnett are McIntyre's only white followers at and after Cooper's Creek.

McIntyre seemed to have been reticent about the events following on 26 November 1865. Sir George Bowen sent the Colonial Office a copy of McIntyre's report of 30 March 1866 (which had appeared also in the *Brisbane Courier* on 14 June 1866). Bowen comments that the Gelliot (Gilliat) River where McIntyre had been encamped is supposed to be a tributary of the Cloncurry River, but may enter the Flinders higher up than the Cloncurry. The camp near Mount Bowen, named by Landsborough, would be in the vicinity of 19°12'S. 140°55'E. Mr. A.C. Gregory believed the "Docker" is a tributary of the Barcoo, which joins it from the north-west in about 26°S; the Mueller is probably a tributary of the Thomson River coming in on the west side at about 24°S. I think A.C. Gregory placed the Barcoo and the Thomson too far to the west.

Bowen had also noted that the expedition had narrowly escaped perishing from want of water at or near Cooper's Creek during the severe drought of early 1866. The expedition was deserted by Dr. Murray, the second in command and surgeon, and by others who had returned to the settled districts. The circumstances surrounding this had not yet been fully explained. ⁽¹⁷⁾

The drought referred to by Bowen had in fact commenced in early 1865 and was at its worst in late 1865 in the Coopers Creek area.

I was able to find several references, one contemporary and two later ones, to the events surrounding the near disaster the party suffered at Cooper's Creek. It is in regard to this that my earlier remarks, about the fatal mistake made by Dr. Mueller and the Ladies Committee, can be explained now.

The Murray Story

Dr. James Patrick Murray, whom they appointed second in command and surgeon of the expedition, was a peculiar person to say the least. He had a comfortable social background, a manner that could win friends when he wanted them, and an erratic streak that often came close to madness. He showed brilliance at times whilst practising medicine in Melbourne, but all too soon he had involved himself in several disreputable incidents. Because of these his family disowned him. He was for a while on the staff of the Victorian Benevolent Association and was found to be dosing his patients with morphia to keep them quiet whenever he felt like a few days off. He joined Howitt's expedition to search for Burke and Wills and apparently did nothing to blot his copy book.

However, the failure of McIntyre's expedition is to be attributed largely to Murray's gross misconduct.

A Mr. Kruger wrote to his brother Bernhard of Rutherglen, Victoria about April 1866 to say that whilst on his way back from the Warrego River he had met and talked to a Mr. Anderson. The letter said he had been looking for new country on the Paroo (Mitchell's Victoria) and hearing that McIntyre was on the road, he made up his mind to join him. He met McIntyre at the Bulla (Bulloo), a creek between the Paroo and Cooper's Creek. Having seven horses of his own, he succeeded in joining the expedition. The expedition moved on to a station occupied by a Dr. Hutchinson (from the Ovens district in Victoria) where, all going well, they moved to a waterhole 35 miles away. From this was a journey of seventy-five miles to the next waterhole on Cooper's Creek. The whole party set out. All the animals were heavily laden and suffered greatly, being three days without water. To McIntyre's great distress, on reaching Cooper's creek it was found that the bed of the creek, eighteen months ago full of water, was now completely dry. There were only two courses open. To advance or retreat. The latter having been decided on, McIntyre with either Belooch or one of the aboriginals (it is not clear which) returned with two camels in advance of the main party intending to rejoin it with a supply of water. Murray was to bring the rest of the party back towards the last waterhole. McIntyre got to the waterhole, loaded up, and returned to meet them. Meantime this is what happened. Scarcely was McIntyre out of sight when Murray called a halt, and knife in hand ripped up the bags of flour, in which were concealed several bottles of brandy. All excepting Barnes (according to one report) or Anderson on his own say so drank of the spirit until they were delirious and then fell into a drunken stupor. The fifty or sixty horses were abandoned en masse and wandered away with their packs and saddles on to die in agonies of thirst. Only three were saved.

McIntyre dismissed Murray. Grey, McDonald and Barnes elected to go with him (and apparently Anderson). McIntyre gave them one packhorse, and one of the aboriginals went with them as a guide. They went first to Dr. Hutchinson's station and after a three-day rest went on to Charleville on the Warrego River. ⁽¹⁸⁾

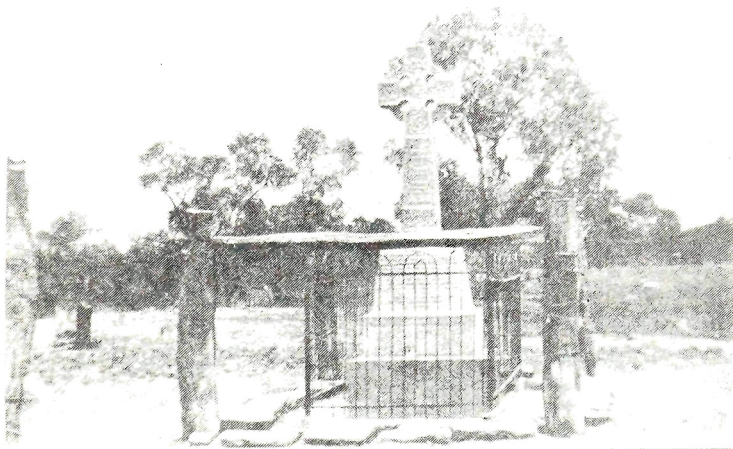
On his return to Melbourne Murray claimed it was he who had saved the expedition and that McIntyre should never have been placed in charge of it. His persuasive powers were such that there were many people who believed him. Subsequently Murray turned his hand to blackbirding and became a partner in the recruiting ship *Carl*. After kidnapping some 70 natives in September 1871 a further 80 Buka men were kidnapped and the ship was grossly overloaded. The main method of kidnapping was to run down fishing canoes and then seize the men left floundering in the water. The natives in the crowded hold started fighting. Murray panicked and he and the crew started firing into the packed hold. Seventy natives were killed or badly wounded. The latter, although still living were thrown overboard with the corpses. Murray escaped the gallows by turning Queen's evidence. A letter his father wrote which the *Sydney Morning Herald* published on 23 May 1873 is a truly remarkable document. It reads -

As regards Dr. Murray, the celebrated *Carl* mancatching approver, whom I have for years cut off as a disgrace to creed, country and family - your condemnation of that cruel, unhappy being I fully endorse and add, although opposed to capital punishment on principle, that if any of the Carl crew murderers ever ascend the gibbet for the seventy kidnapped and cruelly slaughtered poor Polynesians, Dr. Murray should be the first, as head. ⁽¹⁹⁾

So much for Dr. Murray; but a fresh and final disaster awaited McIntyre. The wanton loss of stores at Cooper's Creek, as a result of Murray's misconduct, led to certain replenishments being required before the remainder of the expedition set off for the western interior. From his base camp on the Gilliat River, McIntyre went in to Burketown towards the end of April 1866 to purchase the required stores. He could not have gone in at a worse time. It happened that in late March or early April the ship *Margaret and Mary* sailed into Burketown with its crew mortally ill from unknown fever which had been caught in Java. The captain alone of the ship's crew survived. The fever, assuming plague proportions, swept the town. It was the wet season, the climate oppressive, there was a want of proper provisions and medicines, and resistance to the disease was low. In April, 60 persons fell ill and in May and June 1866 there were 40 deaths out of a population of 90. Of the survivors there were few who had not suffered an attack of the "Gulf fever" as it came to be called.

For a while it looked as though Burketown might have to be abandoned, but the fever ran its course and by 1868 it had cleared up and the town site was no longer regarded as unhealthy. ⁽²⁰⁾

Whilst McIntyre had camped about sixteen miles from Burketown, where he remained from 20 April to 4 May, he frequently visited the township on expedition business. He reported on 4 May that he was following rumours of a white man among the aboriginals, but on 23 May he fell ill with the Gulf fever while on his way to the base camp on the Gilliat River. There he died on 4 June 1866 and was buried on the east bank of a billabong by the Gilliat River. ⁽²¹⁾



STONE ERECTED TO DUNCAN MACINTYRE

The ladies of Melbourne sent a handsome gravestone, inscribed in both English and Gaelic, to be erected over McIntyre's grave. For many years it lay unnoticed on the beach at Thursday Island.

It was finally brought in via Normanton and erected over the grave by the Billabong, seven miles away from Dalgonally Station. ⁽²²⁾

Before discussing the merits and demerits of the expedition and its leadership and whether its resources were used to find a run for the McIntyres, I will tell you how the Leichhardt Search Expedition arrived at its termination. By the time Duncan McIntyre died Donald McIntyre, with 1000 head of cattle, had taken up or was about to take up a run on Julia Creek, which became the Dalgonally Station I have mentioned. Duncan McIntyre had examined this fine area in 1864 and had directed Donald to it. Donald was to remain there until his death in 1907.

Barnett, at his own request, had been released from the expedition on 24 March 1866. He received £35 wages which were due to him. As it was necessary to conserve his funds he walked 200 miles to Burketown alone and unarmed at a time when armed horsemen made up parties of threes and fours for mutual protection. His eyesight was affected, and semi-blind he travelled the last 100 miles through the bush in three days without anything to eat. No steamer or other vessel being available at Burketown nor the early arrival of one being anticipated, Barnett was forced to travel overland to Port Denison (Bowen). He took ship to Sydney. By this time, having used up his small financial resources, he was compelled to walk to Echuca in Victoria.

After Duncan McIntyre's death, Dalgonally became the base for the expedition. Donald McIntyre appears to have exercised the role of field supervisor, but does not seem to have participated actively in the exploration. McCalman was joined by a Mr. W.F. Sloman (to act as leader), Dr. White, a medical man and G. Widish (sic - Wildish). Dr. White had "performed great exertions" to look after the fever-stricken population of Burketown. Landsborough, who filled the dual roles of magistrate and Crown lands commissioner there, spoke highly of the services Dr. White had rendered. We learn also from a report from him that Dr. White had not escaped the fever himself and that McCalman and Donald McIntyre also had suffered from it.

In the latter part of 1866 Sloman died suddenly from the combined effects of sunstroke and an organic disease of the heart, after having followed several of the Gulf streams, but not succeeding in discovering any further traces of Leichhardt.

Barnett by then had been three weeks back in Victoria. He was requested by Donald Campbell to rejoin the expedition. Barnett was agreeable and returned to the depot camp at Julia Creek overland from Rockhampton, where he had arrived by steamer. Donald McIntyre then called on Barnett to assume command of the expedition. Letters from Barnett to the Ladies' Committee (dated 21 December 1866) and McIntyre to Dr. Mueller and Donald Campbell (dated, it seems 22 December) were taken by Belooch to Port Denison (Bowen) in the ship *Black Prince*. He left Julia Creek on 23 December and arrived at Port Denison on 11 January 1867. Belooch reported that the party were all well. A press item in the *Port Denison Times* of 12 January (copied in the *Australasian* on 23 February 1867) stated:

As to the party itself there appears to be some difficulty in obtaining a competent leader, and considerable dissatisfaction amongst the men in consequence thereof. We are inclined to hope that Mr. Christieson, of whose competency there can be

no question. . . will become the leader. Belooch has, we understand, sent telegrams to Dr. Mueller and the Ladies' Committee in Melbourne, and is awaiting the result. There are at present but three white men in camp, the whole party consisting of eight, the five who are not in camp being engaged in examining the surrounding country.

The *Port Denison Times* hopes for Mr. Christieson were not fulfilled as the Ladies' Committee and Mr. Donald Campbell confirmed the appointment of Barnett. ⁽²³⁾

With J. McCalman as second in charge, Dr. White (Medical Officer), Colin McIntyre, George Wildish and Myola (the aboriginal), Barnett set out from Julia Creek on Monday 21 January 1867. He carried out a search of an area encompassed by 20° to 21° south latitude and 142° to 140° east longitude being about 7,200 square miles. He found no further traces of Leichhardt and on 7 May 1867 returned to the depot camp at Julia Creek. Further local searches up neighbouring watercourses were carried out from the depot camp and the expedition was finally terminated on 27 May 1867. The camels were left with Donald McIntyre and eventually increased to quite a herd. ⁽²⁴⁾

Due to the vilifications of Dr. Murray and statements such as that of Mr. Kruger in his letter to his brother Bernhard:-

He (Duncan McIntyre) purposely did not accept any salary from the committee in case any mishap should befall the party; he only looked out for himself. He afterwards selected a run on the Bulla, but, having no stockmen to put on, a Mr. Sullivan jumped it. When he found he had lost his run he pushed on to the Thomson River, where he had no business to go, as his path and duty lies due north across the Thomson and on to the Barcoo, and up the Barcoo on to the Flinders River, where he would come across Leichhardt's trail in 22 parallel, but never by going east into the settled districts. This is the second time that public money has been thrown away in such a shameful manner through bad management in not selecting proper leaders and men; it is no wonder people begin to drop to it, and will not give it more money.

. . . . I am sure it is not the best way to get Leichhardt's trail - travelling through the settled districts of Victoria and New South Wales for 1,200 miles, wearing out man and beast to little or no purpose. ⁽²⁵⁾

an anti McIntyre school of thought grew up in some quarters.

David Blair, in his *Cyclopaedia of Australia*, already referred to, says the expedition was an ignominious failure, the result of want of judgement and experience. Blair considered the marked trees on the

Flinders were done by Landsborough, and the horses had been left by McKinlay.

Nevertheless McIntyre's honesty and bushcraft must have received more than a modicum of support when the provision and transport of the handsome gravestone by the Ladies' Committee is considered. Also Dr. Mueller does not appear ever to have launched any criticism of McIntyre.

Perhaps Duncan McIntyre was one of those children of misfortune for whom once any enterprise commences to go wrong, despite all care taken and skill employed, it can never be righted again. In his case the ultimate loss was his own life.

The riddle of what had happened to Leichhardt remained unsolved.

[The illustrations accompanying this paper are from M.J. Fox's *History of Queensland*.]

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