

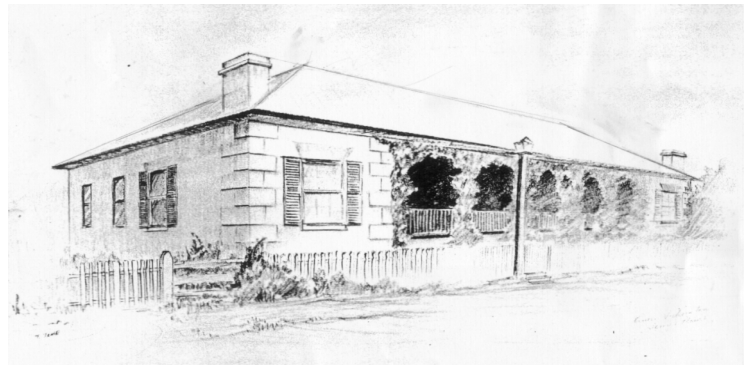


Chapter 17 – Formation of a Township

(1838 – 1844)

In 1838, the residents of Jerry's Plains wrote to the Colonial Secretary requesting the laying out of a township.⁵⁸¹

The astute Richard Alcorn built a new, more substantial inn, this time beside the 'High' Road that ran east to west through his property. The inn was constructed of stone, with 12 rooms, which he called the "Queen Victoria". It was opened for business in June 1838 and became the centre, not only for alcoholic refreshments and food and lodging for local inhabitants and travellers, but also for all types of meetings and celebrations for the next 40 years. It was from its verandah in the early 1850s that Governor Fitzroy, on his tour of the Hunter, addressed the district population.⁵⁸²



Queen Victoria Inn⁵⁸⁴

Alcorn's inn, on this 'strategically placed land' 'could have been even more successful than it proved to be if the highway and railway routes had not eventually bypassed Jerry's Plains'.⁵⁸³

About the time Alcorn opened his new establishment, David Brown junior handed over the running of the Green Gate Inn to his eldest son, Thomas.

Investment in Muswellbrook

David purchased five town blocks of land in Bridge Street, Muswellbrook, or 'Muscle Brook' as it was spelt then for a total of £106, a rather large sum in those days. Four of the blocks were acquired by at auction at 11 o'clock on Thursday 11 July 1838. David lodged a deposit of £10 on 12 July for all five, and paid the balance a month later, on 10 August.

Lot 17, of half an acre had a minimum sale price of £2. It was purchased by David for £22. At the same time David purchased Allotment 6, Section 6 for £22; Allotment 5, Section 5, £26; and Allotment 6, Section 5, £24. It is likely that these properties were seen by David as an investment from the outset.⁵⁸⁵ One of the allotments may have been intended to provide town accommodation for a nearby grazing property?

Wednesday, 31 October 1838, The Government Gazette announced the Land Commission's hearing of claims on grants where the original donee had deserted or was deceased. David Brown of Jerry's Plains, Hunter River was listed as Case No 326. It explains that land in question is the 150 acres granted by Governor Brisbane to 'David Brown, senior, deceased, who, it is alleged, devised to his son, the claimant.'

Monday, 3 June 1839, and the succeeding day was set for hearing in respect of Land and Town Allotments. David Brown as Case No 326 is listed as one of many that were postponed from the previous sitting 'for further hearing or in consequence of the non attendance of the parties interested'.⁵⁸⁶ Solicitor, R Roberts, represented David and some of the others that were to be heard. On the 24th of June 1839, the Land

⁵⁸¹ Elizabeth Baxter, P.O. Jerry's Plains, letter of 4 January 1981, to B & B Griffiths,

⁵⁸² The Inn Renamed as Horse and Jockey, by Ian Ellis, Hunter Valley News 14 October 1992.

⁵⁸³ First village of Jerry's Plains, by Ian Ellis, Hunter Valley News 30 Sept 1992

⁵⁸⁴ Copied from the 'Centenary of Jerry's Plains School Calendar -. Drawn from a photograph..

⁵⁸⁵ Weidman Cottage and Its Owners' by Robert Tickle, Muswellbrook Historical Society. p29. One other large purchase of land at the same time as David was a 'William Brown'. A William Brown is recorded an owner of several properties in Jerry's Plains and is buried amongst the Browns at the Old Wombo Cemetery.

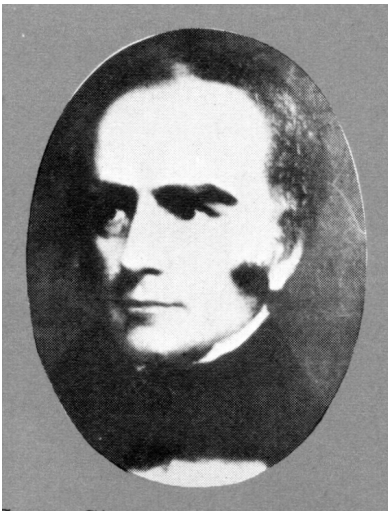
⁵⁸⁶ NSW Government Gazette of 22 May 1839



Commissioners decided to grant to David Brown, 'the younger' the 150 acres at Jerry's Plains previously granted to his father.⁵⁸⁷

David's "Green Gate" Inn was renamed the "Robin Hood" in or just prior to 1840.

A daughter, Sarah Jane, was born on 22 June 1840 to Thomas (David's eldest son) and Ann at Jerry's Plains and baptised on 11 August 1840 as a Presbyterian in Singleton (Parish of Whittingham, County of Northumberland). Thomas' occupation is given as 'Innkeeper'.⁵⁸⁸ The Hunter River Gazette contains several advertisements and notices about Thomas Brown, being Innkeeper of the Robin Hood at Jerry's Plains 1842-1843.



*Sir George Gipps
 Governor of the Colony of NSW
 February 1839 to July 1846.*

The Brown's inn and adjoining property may have been intended to be the focal point for the village subdivisions David attempted to develop on his land from the early 1840s until his death in 1857. David honoured his deceased wife by naming the stretch of road incorporated into his development on Portion 28, "Elizabeth Street".⁵⁸⁹ Elizabeth Street ran north/south from the government road to the river.

David oversighted a number of property interests from the time of his arrival in Jerry's Plains up until his death. However, 'any visions David Brown may have had of an enduring subdivision on his Jerry's Plains site had already faded by the time of his death.' 'This was because of the greater success of the competing neighbouring subdivision some few hundred yards to the east, engineered by his long time neighbour and future relative by marriage, Richard Alcorn.' However, it is apparent by the carving up of his land in his Will that David still believed in the future development potential of his property. Ultimately however, David's development projects and ambitions, and

those of his neighbours, the Alcorns, Hobdens, and the Duffs, all lost out to highway and railway routes bypassing Jerry's Plains.⁵⁹⁰

About 1840, Joseph J. Harper became Jerry's Plains second postmaster. He was newly married to the just recently widowed Margaret Taylor, who had five young children. At this time, the post office always moved to the residence of the incumbent postmaster. The Harpers resided a stone cottage on the edge of the banks of the Hunter, on a property that was owned by the Smith family. The building was washed away in the 1857 flood.⁵⁹¹

The postmaster was often the agent and correspondent for The Maitland Mercury, and also it seems its predecessor, The Hunter River News. The agent was responsible for the receiving of subscriptions and orders for advertising and printing. Joseph's brother was, Charles Harper, who is described in 'National Library of Australia News', July 2003, as Australia's first poet and philosopher.

Charles resided with his brother during the ten years or so that he was postmaster at Jerry's Plains. Joseph Harper is the source for many observations and comments that follow. Like many a then resident of the Hunter, they had spent their formative years on the Hawkesbury near Windsor.

⁵⁸⁷ NSW Government Gazette of 14 August 1839

⁵⁸⁸ NSWSR Reel No 5046, V1840 8064 121C.

⁵⁸⁹ 'History of Jerry's Plains' by Ian Ellis in the Hunter Valley News (circa 1992)

⁵⁹⁰ 'Inn Renamed as Horse and Jockey', by Ian Ellis, Hunter Valley News 14 October 1992.

⁵⁹¹ 'Second Master' by Ian Ellis in the Hunter Valley News (7 October 1992)



David's son, David (III) at about 12 years old in 1840-1841, was sent back to the Hawkesbury 'where he passed his youth'. There he seems to have taken over or assisted in the running of the family's Cattai property.

1841 Census

The 1841 Census, of September 23rd, shows that there are two houses belonging to Browns at Wambo. One occupied by Thomas and his family, and three shepherds. The other is in the charge of James. He is apparently in the company of brothers: John 19, George 10, Alec 7 (almost); and sister, Mary 18; and 2 shepherds. There is no indication of a child that might have been Thomas and James youngest brother, Francis.

Both houses were reported to be of timber construction – And it was stated that there were no building of stone construction. The houses would typically have had shingle or slab bark roofing, and separate kitchens with fireplaces for cooking needs.



A timber house indicative of the pioneer homes of the 19th century. Houses at Jerry's Plains are likely to be somewhere between this and houses that one could expect to see in Singleton or Maitland. This photo is of a home in the Daintree area Queensland 1869.

In the 1841 Census for the Liverpool Plains, John Eckford is return 50, presumably at Malaraway; and James Brown is return 51, presumably 'Millie'. There were only two men on James' run, both emancipists and both Roman Catholics. This was consistent with James being recorded at Jerry's Plains.⁵⁹²

The census details are consistent with Kate being at Cattai with her brother, David, and uncle, David Humphries - She may well have accompanied her brother there. The three homesteads, Cattai, and the two at Jerry's Plains,

had a female in residence, each woman was no doubt expected take on as housekeeper. David Brown junior is noticeable by his absence. Possibly, he was in transit between home and Cattai, or Millie? It is also evident that the Browns had diversified at this juncture into sheep farming has a means of generating income.⁵⁹³

The 1841 census showed that Peter Duff had three convicts employed while George Bowman had eight or nine on each of his two properties. 1840 was the year of the greatest number of convicts in NSW. But by 1845 very few convicts were assigned to farms - The convict system in the colony of New South Wales was quickly winding down just as the country was struggling out of a severe depression.⁵⁹⁴

Impact of Steam

Commuting by steamship gathered momentum during the 1840s. The Hunter River Steam Navigation Company, which was formed in 1840, with a capital of £40,000 and founded by Thomas Mort (whose company is now trading as Goldsborough Mort), commenced trading with three paddle wheel steamers, the "Rose", "Shamrock" and "Thistle". All were constructed in England and were of similar size, some 150 feet long and 20 feet across the beam.⁵⁹⁵ This additional service further improved access to Sydney for the settlers of the Hunter.

In 'The Hunter River Gazette' of Saturday, 11 December 1841, a correspondent describes the overnight, eleven hour, voyage from Sydney to Morpeth as passenger on board a steamship as David and family are

⁵⁹² (X947).

⁵⁹³ 1841 Census, Reel No 2222.

⁵⁹⁴ 'First village of Jerry's Plain's, by Ian Ellis, Hunter Valley News 30 Sept 1992.

⁵⁹⁵ Morpeth: Where Bishops and Ships Once Rode Tall, 1989, Shirley Richards and Peter Muller, Published by Kookaburra Educational.



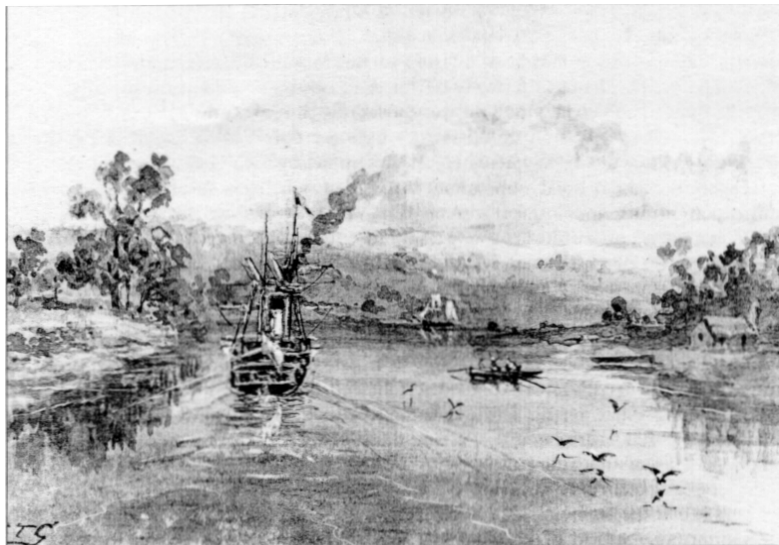
likely to have been occasionally. In this case it was the ‘Thistle’ – Departing at 9pm and arriving at 8am. On rising in the morning, the writer observes:

‘On going on deck shortly after daybreak, we found the prow of the vessel directed right upon the bold, detached rampart-looking rock, called Nobby’s Island, situated at the entrance into Newcastle roads, and forming the only remarkable object on the coast. Between this rock and the mainland on the left, a space is interrupted by numerous shoals, a breakwater is in progress of

being formed, and is far advanced towards completion,’

Newcastle is a neat and thriving town, occupying a conspicuous position on the brow of a gentle eminence. The Agricultural Company’s coal mines are situated to the left of the town, and at a considerable elevation, from which a railroad is carried to a commodious

wharf, which greatly facilitates loading of vessels with this indispensable mineral. In other respects the mining operations of the Company have undergone great improvement, which will enable them to keep pace with the enlarged demand for the coals which the increase in the steam navigation of the colony has occasioned.’



‘A Steamboat from Sydney on the Hunter River’, by S.T. Gill in his original Sketches 1844-1866 (Mitchell library)

‘The shores of Hunter for a considerable distance from its embouchure are low and swampy, and unfit for any purpose of profitable improvement; but as we ascend the stream they eventually lose this distinctive feature, and become fit for cultivation - when stunted, bushy forest of the swamp is succeeded by

extensive paddocks of wheat and maize, by orchards loaded with maturing fruit, and by the rich and luxurious vegetation of the olive, the fig, and vine.’

‘We were surprised to find both banks of this magnificent river cleared and cultivated throughout such an

extensive length of course; and still more were we gratified to witness many rural - and apparently happy homes that dot its banks, half hidden from our view by the dense and close umbrage of the rarest fruit trees, in the midst of which they stand embowered.’

On travelling up the Hunter the writer alluded to the then expanding interest in wine grapes:

‘We look upon the Hunter as the Rhine of New South Wales.’

Races and other Diversions

‘The tradition of the country dance, woolshed dance or barn dance began at the outset of colonial life in Australia’ ‘Upon the completion of a communal building or after the annual races, dances were held. Excitement and expectation made these important to everyone. They were the opportunities for courtship, fun and distraction from daily hard work. Guests might stay overnight on neighbouring farms and as on such festive occasions, dancing would often continue all night.’ ‘The big race meeting might be held annually or perhaps every three years. In outback areas they were an occasion when everyone came to watch.’⁵⁹⁶

On the north side of the Alcorn’s subdivision was his (Alcorn’s) racecourse paddock where the chief social event of the year in the 1840s and 50s was staged over three consecutive days with prize money of at least

⁵⁹⁶ Pioneer Women of the Bush and Outback. P231.



£35 per race and entry fees of £3/10/-. Entry fees were collected at each of the three hotels in turn over the three days to give a fair spread of the patronage.⁵⁹⁷

A notice on the front page of the regional newspaper 'The Hunter River Gazette' of Saturday, 11 December 1841 announced:

"Jerry's Plains Races

A meeting of the Friends and subscribers to the Jerry's Plains Races will take place at the Victoria Inn, on Wednesday the 22d instant, at 6pm, to arrange the preliminaries for the ensuing races.

*E. Dyte Sec. pro.tem. December 9, 1841*⁵⁹⁸

A letter written on 9 February 1842 by Stockman, F Crampton to the Gazette, regarding difficulties with aborigines at MacIntyre River, well north of the Brown's 'Millie' run, refers to G(eorge) Dight, Mr Yeoman, Mr Drake, and **Brown's hut**.⁵⁹⁹

In The Hunter River Gazette, the Jerry's Plains correspondent observed on Wednesday, 19 February 1842⁶⁰⁰,

'The district has at length been relieved from its parched up state, by a copious fall of rain, after several weeks of most intense heat, the Thermometer standing frequently as high as 100 (degrees) to 115 (degrees). ...Sunday ...as night approached, a fine steady rain set in which continued without scarcely any intermission the lowering sky this morning (Wednesday), portends more wet weather.. The beneficial effects of this soaking,

are already apparent in the improved appearance of the District, as well as in the visages of its inhabitants. From a state of inactivity and anxiety,..... Farmers are cheerfully preparing their paddocks for wheat, hay, &c., and their gardens for the reception of potatoes and other culinary (sic) vegetables'

Our evenings of late have been enlivened by preparations making for the Races, which come off here next

month.. From the description of the horses that have paid a visit to the course, for the purposes of training, good sport may be expected.'

'It gives us sincere pleasure to state, the rumour so prevalent the last few days, that one of our most respectable settlers, and party, in searching for a station on the Barwin, had met with an untimely fate, by the spears of the blacks is totally incorrect.'

David's son, Thomas, got into the spirit of the races with this advertisement in 'The Hunter River Gazette':

ROBIN HOOD, JERRY'S PLAINS.

**'To the Up-Country Settlers and the
Inhabitants generally of the Hunter River District.**

THOMAS BROWN,

'Having replenished his stock of wines, spirits, cordials, ales, porter etc. respectfully solicits the inhabitants of the above district and assures them that he has studied every convenience that may be likely to promote their comfort at the ensuing Jerry's Plains Races. The stable is replete with the best description of hay, corn, and straw. The comfort of the interior of the premises, Thomas Brown flatters himself, requires but to be tried to convince his friends of the truth of his assertions.

A superior stock of wines, ales, porter, champagne, cyder, & C., always on hand.

*Jerry's Plains, March 1*⁶⁰¹

In the same newspaper of 5 March 1842, it was evident that there were at least five steamers offering public transport between Morpeth and Sydney. The service was available six days a week from three different companies. Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday there were two steamers offering fares to Sydney.

⁵⁹⁷ 'Inn Renamed as Horse and Jockey', by Ian Ellis, Hunter Valley News 14 October 1992

⁵⁹⁸ NLA, mfm NX 132.

⁵⁹⁹ NLA mfm NX 132. The Hunter River Gazette of 12 March 1842. Possibly the property of the other 'John Browne' of Singleton, not related to David, who also married an Alcorn, or another Brown who is supposed to have settled at Goondawindi.

⁶⁰⁰ NLA mfm NX 132. The Hunter River Gazette of 19 February 1842

⁶⁰¹ NLA mfm NX 132. The Hunter River Gazette of 5 March 1842



The steamers: Rose, Thistle, and Shamrock, were operated by the Hunter River Steam Navigation Company – The Victoria, and Sovereign were managed independently.

David's horse, 'Young St John', entered the race festival and easily won the Third Race (and last race of the day) – 'Sweepstakes' of £5, on Tuesday, **29 March 1842**, the first day of the event. Only two horses started, the other horse being 'Pickpocket'. The Hunter River Gazette described the first day:

'On the Tuesday, a great concourse of people assembled to witness these races, and considering that this is only the second year during which these sports have been established here, the attendance was far more

numerous than could have been anticipated.'

'The races were well contested, the people orderly and quiet, not a disturbance of any kind having taken

*place, nor even a drunken person having been seen on the course. The manner in which the arrangements were effected, reflected the highest credit on those who had the control of them.'*⁶⁰²

The newspaper described second day of racing on Wednesday, 30 March, which it seems, had become the last day:

"This was decidedly the best racing day. The greatest exertions were used both by owners and riders to obtain the superiority for their respective horses.

Previous to starting, ten to one was offered that St John would be distanced, but those who offered it were very much disappointed, since he proved himself bottom and very nearly distanced the filly, (Cinderella)."

The first heat they went to work in good earnest, but the filly had nothing to boast of. Young Whisker being close on her flank, and Young St. John close on his.

In the second heat, the mare had a poor chance, she looked as if she had had a belly full, and did not seem much inclined for more, her rider however managed to bring her in third.

Third heat; the filly all at fault,

not the least prospect of winning,after she had passed the distance post she could hardly manage a gallop at all.; the result was as follows:

Mr Waterford, b.f. Cinderella, by Scratch, J. Ross

Mr Waterford b.h. Young Whisker, by Scratch, J. Ross

Mr Brown, Young St. John by St. John, J. Evans

Having dismissed the efforts of 'Cinderella', the writer sums up the performance between 'Young Whisker' and David Brown's 'Young St John' as "A capital race... all round the course". He goes on to describe several other races on the day and then:

'In the evening the Stewards and a party of gentlemen sat down to a sumptuous dinner, prepared by mine host of the Victoria, which was kept

up to a late hour and gave a general satisfaction. Throughout the evening the utmost harmony prevailed, and the party separated highly pleased at

*the result of the meeting, and the manner in which the entertainment provided for them had been got up.'*⁶⁰³

Church Events

On 4 and 11 June 1842, an advertisement both appealing for contributions and listing those who had already subscribed, appeared in the Hunter River Gazette:

'The District of Jerry's Plains, with a population of about five hundred souls, has not a single edifice of any description for Public Worship. The Kirk at Patrick Plains, a distance of over twenty miles, being the nearest building for religious purposes. At a former period, a Clergyman was accustomed to perform Divine Services once a month, at the Victoria Inn, but the many inconveniences necessarily attendant on this arrangement, obliged him to discontinue his visits.'

David Brown, 'Farmer', Jerry's Plains, is listed as having contributed £5/-, and his son, Thomas, 'Innkeeper', five guineas.⁶⁰⁴

David's brother-in-law, David Humphries, at the age of 27, married Jane Mary Daley at St Matthew's, Roman Catholic Church at Windsor on 13 June 1842.⁶⁰⁵ Witnesses were his daughter, Catherine (Kate), and

⁶⁰² The Hunter River Gazette, 9 April 1842. NLA mfm NX 132.

⁶⁰³ The Hunter River Gazette, 9 April 1842, NLA, mfm NX 132.

⁶⁰⁴ Hunter River Gazette. 1842. NLA, mfm NX 132.

⁶⁰⁵ BDM V 1842 1642 92 0. It seems that David Humphries was still working for David at Cattai.



a John Daley. David Humphries and possibly his brother George were still working for the Brown family at Cattai. His marriage brought another female into the Brown family.

David's daughter, Mary, married Charles Solomon Capp at Mt Loder near Singleton on 26 June 1842.⁶⁰⁶ Her marriage would have left her brothers without the housekeeping services that they are likely to have got used to. However, the addition of Jane Daley to the Brown household, conveniently a few weeks beforehand, meant that Kate was free to be brought back to Jerry's Plains to take over household duties from her sister, Mary.

Royal Mail and Other Amenities

The Hunter River Gazette contains several advertisements and notices about Thomas Brown and the 'Robin Hood Inn' at Jerry's Plains in 1842:

<p style="text-align: center;">ROBIN HOOD, JERRY'S PLAINS.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>'To the Up-Country Settlers and the Inhabitants generally of the Hunter River District.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">THOMAS BROWN,</p> <p><i>'Having replenished his stock of wines, spirits, cordials, ales, porter etc. respectfully solicits the inhabitants of the above district and assures them that he has studied every convenience that may be likely to promote their comfort at the ensuing Jerry's Plains Races.</i></p> <p><i>The stable is replete with the best description of hay, corn, and straw. The comfort of the interior of the premises, Thomas Brown flatters himself, requires but to be tried to convince his friends of the truth of his assertions.</i></p> <p><i>A superior stock of wines, ales, porter, champagne, cyder, & C., always on hand.</i></p> <p><i>Jerry's Plains, March 1'</i>⁶⁰⁷</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>"11 June 1842 Royal Mail for Merton calling at the Robin Hood J.P."</i>⁶⁰⁸</p>
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*#A son, Thomas Edward, was born on 9 January 1843 at Jerry's Plains to Thomas and Ann.*⁶⁰⁹

The Maitland Mercury carried advertisements for merchants and of many towns in the Hunter River region, and others, for a diversity of goods and services, eg.: property, bullocks, horses, sheep, cattle, timber, looking glasses (mirrors), barometers, thermometers; boarding school in Sydney, steam milling services, dancing and callisthenic classes, livery services, passenger and cargo transport by steamship to and from Sydney.

Indicative of the style of advertisement for household items David and family would have read is:

<p>'New Stores, Singleton.</p> <p><i>JUST RECEIVED, and on Sale at the stores of the undersigned, the following GOODS, which will be sold at Sydney prices, carriage included, viz. :-</i></p>	
<p><i>Hysonskin and black Teas.</i></p> <p><i>Good brown Sugar</i></p> <p><i>Best ground Coffee</i></p> <p><i>Best colonial Soap</i></p> <p><i>Best Starch</i></p> <p><i>Best Thumb Blue</i></p> <p><i>Best washing Soda</i></p> <p><i>Prime Westphalia Hams</i></p> <p><i>Prime mess Pork</i></p> <p><i>Fresh Salmon, in 4lb. Tins</i></p> <p><i>Raisins and currants</i></p>	<p><i>Quart and pint Pots</i></p> <p><i>Milk Coolers and Candle Moulds</i></p> <p><i>Negrohead Tobacco</i></p> <p><i>Variety of Snuffs</i></p> <p><i>Black silk and beaver Hats</i></p> <p><i>Felt Hats and Jim Crows</i></p> <p><i>Regatta and striped Shirts, & c. & c.</i></p> <p>GEORGE WATSON,</p> <p><i>Exactly opposite E. Ogg and Co.'s</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>27th January 1843'</i></p>

⁶⁰⁶ Pioneer Register shows marriage on 25 June 1842 at Mt Loder near Singleton.

⁶⁰⁷ NLA mfm NX 132.

⁶⁰⁸ NLA mfm NX 132.

⁶⁰⁹ NSW SR Reel 5007, BDM registration V1843 20081 27A.



COUNTRY NEWS.

JERRY'S PLAINS

Monday, being Boxing Day, was kept up here as a general holiday, cricket playing, quoit matches, and shooting matches, being the order of the day.

But the greatest attraction was. a race between a horse belonging to Mr Waterford, rode by J. Evans, and Mr. Rochford's horse Jerry, rode by H. Smith, for £10 a-side. At starting, they went away neck and neck,

which pace they kept up for the first half mile, during which time it would have been difficult to have said which would have won; but at last Jerry took the lead, which he kept during the remainder of the race. Altogether it was a good race, and well contested.

Every thing went off well, there being no drunkenness or quarrelling, but every one appeared to be pleased and desirous to please. Mine host of the "Victoria" and "Robin Hood" entertained a few select friends.

I am happy to write, that since the beginning of the month, we have had some delightful rain. The settlers up here have commenced putting in corn; and, from the quantity of ground in this neighbourhood, if we only have a favourable season, there is likely to be plenty. The grass is springing up in all directions, which, thanks to the blessing of Providence, has opportunely arrived, as cattle were just beginning to drop off from starvation.

The Australian
Monday 2 January 1843

On Saturday, 28 January 1843, Thomas ran this advertisement in the Maitland Mercury:

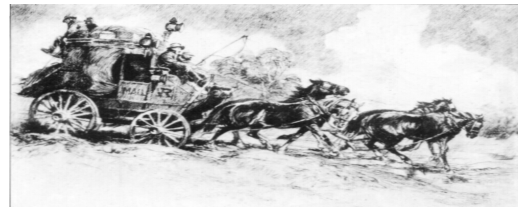
"Royal Mail for Merton.

THE above Mail starts from Singleton Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, calling at the "Robin Hood," Jerry's Plains; and returns on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday.

The conveyance is good, and passengers will always find a good Breakfast at the "Robin Hood," coming or going, with a constant supply of very superior Wines, Spirits, and Malt Liquors.

Saddle Horses and Gigs to Let, either at the "Robin Hood," Jerry's Plains, or the "Sir Thos. L Mitchell," Singleton, or at Merton, if required."

Of note in the advertisement is that it implies a significant commercial association between the Robin Hood and the Mail Service contractor. Thomas' association may well have been some form of ownership in the coach service as an extension of his management of the inn.



We have had a plentiful fall of rain throughout the district, and the weather continues showery. The rivers are still passable, but the roads are very heavy, and much cut up.

A gentleman who has just returned from the interior informs me that the to the very gates of the stock yards. pasturage at Liverpool Plains and upwards is of the most luxuriant

description, growing knee high up to the very gates of the stock yards.

Jerry's Plains correspondent
The Australia,
8 February 1844

The Jerry's Plains correspondent in the Maitland Mercury reported on 11 February 1843:

"A new Line of road will very shortly be opened from Jerry's Plains to

Muswellbrook, which will have the effect of shortening the distance

*between the two townships from five to six miles."*⁶¹⁰

David's name occurs amongst a list of notables in the Maitland Mercury of 11 March 1843 who were electors of the County of Durham who endorsed Robert Scott as a nominee for the county in the new Legislative Council. Some others listed were: J Bowman JP, James Arndell, Richard Ward, H.L. Lindeman, and John Howe.

⁶¹⁰ NLA, mfm NX 27. The Maitland Mercury, February 1843.



The Jerry's Plains Races for 1843 originally advertised to take place in March of that year took place the following month with a three-day racing program:

'These races commenced on Wednesday, the 26 ultimo' (April 1843), but were indifferently attended, very few of the	neighbouring gentry making their appearance. Owing to some misunderstanding among themselves, neither stewards nor judge were	forthcoming; their places were however soon filled and the races commenced...'
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On the third day, a horse owned by Thomas' brother, John, called 'Filo da Pata' won the 4th Race - 'Hack Race'; one mile heats with a 2nd, and two 1^{sts}.⁶¹¹ Thomas, as in the previous year ran advertisements during March and April, telling of services that the "Robin Hood" inn had to offer.

On 20 April 1843, David mortgaged his Little Cattai Creek property (Portion 39) to a Thomas Tebbett for Two Hundred pounds Stirling. Witnesses were David Lawson and Francis Biddeck of Windsor.⁶¹² David followed this by announcing on 20 May 1843 the Robin Hood Inn 'together with 15 acres of cultivation and a large grass paddock with all improvements thereon,' was 'leased to Alexander Munro for three years for' one hundred and eighty pounds". This now left David with £380 at his disposal.

It may be that David was raising capital for another venture, or like many others in the colony, he was trying to settle his debts. At this time, the colony was still in the grip of a depression, 'with falling prices and incomes leading to insolvency and unemployment on a serious scale'.⁶¹³

His son, Thomas, then pursued farming and grazing interests, after some five years of being an innkeeper. The 'Robin Hood' Inn reverted to the original name 'The Green Gate', and during 1843, Morris Magnay took over as innkeeper. 'The inn under various names remained in Brown hands (but with different licensees) until 1891'.⁶¹⁴

The Jerry's Plains correspondent in the Maitland Mercury reported on 17 June 1843:

The New Road- The new line of road from this to Muswellbrook is now open for travelers, and the mail contractors on this side of the country are going to star a two-horse coach on the 1 st of July from Singleton to Jerry's Plain, and thence to Muswellbrook, to arrive at Jerry's Plains by Breakfast time	. This will be much pleasanter than the former travelling mode of travelling, as it will not only give time for refreshment on the road, but it is also a great deal better than the old road from Singleton to Muswellbrook.. The coach will arrive at the same time as the mail, and the and return to	Singleton in time for the Maitland Mail. The Elections - The polling day at Jerry's Plains is fixed for the 24 th of this month. R. L. Jenkins Esq., is the deputy returning officer for this district.
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The Jerry's Plain correspondent to the Maitland Mercury wrote this concerning an accident near David's property:

'A man of the name of Connors a few nights ago, whilst in a state of intoxication, fell down a precipice which overhangs the river, and dislocated his hip, broke his ribs, &c.	After laying there till morning, he was conveyed to Mr Brown's, of Jerry's Plains , in a cart, and on the following evening Dr. Jenkins was called in, and succeeded in reducing the dislocation, which was of a dreadful	description, the thighbone being nearly forced through the groin. The man is still in a precarious state, and, at the best will probably be a cripple for life.' ⁶¹⁵ July 26 th , 1843.
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In the same report:

⁶¹¹ NLA, mfm NX 27. Correspondent for the Jerry's Plains Races, The Maitland Mercury, Saturday, 6 May 1843.

⁶¹² Lands Titles Office Ref:91M102(235) of 11 November 1993. Re: Portion 39, Parish of Maroota 'Crown grant dated 5/8/1806 of 100 acres to James Brown'. Memorial Book No. 864 dated 9 May 1843.

⁶¹³ Economic Reform Australia Newsletter.

⁶¹⁴ History of Jerry's Plains by Ian Ellis in the Hunter Valley News (circa 1981)

⁶¹⁵ NLA, mfm NX 27, The Maitland Mercury, 29 July 1843.



'A bachelors ball, at which most of the gentry of the neighbourhood were present, was given by Dr Jenkins, Captain Scovill, and the bachelors

Of Jerry's Plains on Wednesday, the 26th,
'There is a rumour afloat here that Liverpool Plains have been flooded,

in consequence of eighteen days of successive rains, and that the country towards the Namoi and Big River has been all under water. ..."⁶¹⁶

The Browns and Bowmans having runs in the region, would have concerns about the latter report. They may have in fact been the informants.

About the farmers in Jerry's Plains in particular and all those on the Hunter in general, in this time of great depression for the colony the writer said:

'That the farmer is not sufficiently remunerated is indisputable, ... it is owing to the scarcity of money, and to the general poverty of the agriculturalist, which compels them to make sale of their produce at any price that offers'

Thomas gave his occupation as 'Farmer' at the baptism of his son, Thomas Edward, in the Parish of Wittingham (Singleton?) on 13 August 1843.⁶¹⁷ The baptism seemed to be a delayed event for those times - Perhaps an indicator of how long between visits to the Town of Singleton? Thomas seems to have been given the task of maintaining the Jerry's Plains property as 'farmer', while his two younger brothers and father were heading off in various directions tending to other family business.

Advertisement in the Maitland Mercury of 4 November 1843 listed Brown and Alcorn, Alexander Campbell, Henry Danger, Thomas Hall, William Dumaresque, Charles Wyndeyer, as some of the persons who obtained a licence to depasture stock in New England for the year commencing 1 July 1843. In the same paper, licences to depasture in the Liverpool Plains were granted to **John Brown, and Thomas Brown**⁶¹⁸, and various others eg James Arndell, William Blaxland, George Bowman, George Dight, Henry Dangar, Thomas Eather, George Hall, John Howe, Phillip Thorley, W C Wentworth etc.

David sold off the first of his Muswellbrook allotments, Allotment 6 Section 6 on 3 January 1844 to James McCubbins, blacksmith, of Muswellbrook for £30. Allotment 8 Section 6 was sold on 27 February 1849 to Richard Henry Cloweth McAlpine of Muswellbrook for £50. The remaining allotments 4, 5, and 6 Section 5 were sold to Mary Ann Bellew on 14 August 1850.⁶¹⁹

JERRY'S PLAINS

We have had a plentiful fall of rain throughout the district, and the weather continues showery. The rivers are still

passable, but the roads are very heavy, and much cut up.
A gentleman who has just returned from the interior informs me that the pasturage at Liverpool Plains and upwards is of the most

luxuriant description, growing knee high up to the very gates of the stock yards.

The Australian
Thursday, 8 February 1844.

On 10 April 1844, the Church of England started a school in Jerry's Plains for the district's children.⁶²⁰

'No mail has been received here since last Friday, the 26th, Which has given rise to a good deal

of disappointment and dissatisfaction. the blame is generally ascribed

to the steamers.'⁶²¹
Jerry's Plains Correspondent, MM
July 31, 1844.

⁶¹⁶ Big River was another name for the Gwydir

⁶¹⁷ NSWRS Reel 5007, BDM registration V1843 20081 27A.

⁶¹⁸ There appears to be a Thomas Brown of Tamworth who was issued with a licence.

⁶¹⁹ p29, 'Weidman Cottage and Its Owners'.

⁶²⁰ Elizabeth Baxter, P.O. Jerry's Plains, letter of 4 January 1981, to B & B Griffiths.

⁶²¹ NLA, mfm NX 27, Reel No1, The Maitland Mercury, August 1844,

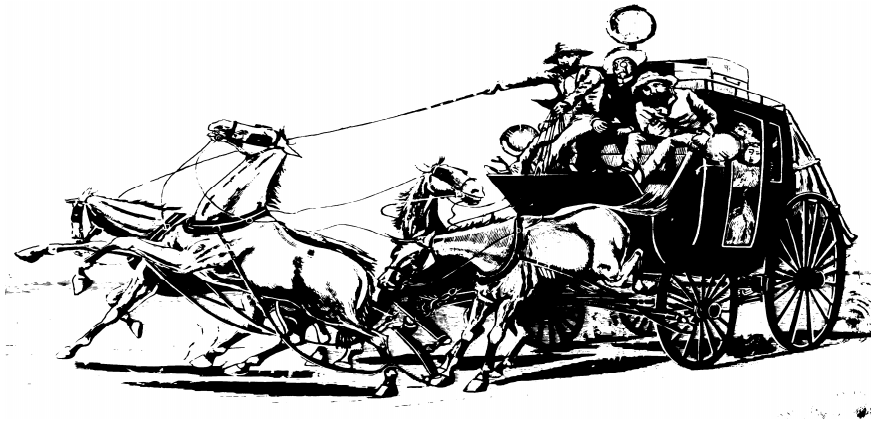


'MAIL ACCIDENT, - On Wednesday last the mail for this place from Jerry's Plains had not proceeded far on the road before one of the wheels got into a hole, which occasioned so great a shock that the driver was precipitated from his seat.

The horses were startled, and in their efforts to extricate the vehicle, broke the reins, and thus becoming ungovernable they ran the coach up against a tree, by which the shafts were broke and thus the horses got away. They were however, found on the following day.

We are happy to say that the driver received no injury, and no further damage was done than the breaking of the shafts and the guard iron of the coach.'

Merton Correspondent, MM, Monday, 12 August 1844



'....The horses were startled, and in their efforts to extricate the vehicle, broke the reins, and thus becoming ungovernable they ran the coach up against a tree, ...'

During 1944, Alexander Gibson took over as the keeper of the '**Robin Hood Inn**'.

Advertisement in the Maitland Mercury of 26 October 1844 listed familiar names of Brown⁶²³ and Alcorn, Alexander Campbell, George Bowman, Henry Dangar, Thomas Hall as persons who had obtained a licence to depasture stock in New England for the year commencing 1 July 1844. In the same paper licences to depasture in the Liverpool Plains were granted to '**Brown James and John**', and various others eg George Bowman, G and S Dight, John Brown, Thomas Brown⁶²⁴, William Dangar, Mrs Eathers, John Howe, Phillip Thorley, W C Wentworth etc. The '**Brown James and John**' entry points to the two brothers combining their efforts at Waterloo/Millie.

"His Excellency, Sir George Gipps, and Lady arrived here rather unexpectedly on Tuesday forenoon, and put up at Alcorn's Inn. Owing to want of notice, his Excellency did not meet with that warm reception which the people of Jerry's Plains were disposed to award him."

"After taking breakfast at the Inn, an audience was given to several of the inhabitants, who, being gathered together in a hurry, thought it too good an opportunity to be lost in making known the requirement of Jerry's Plains. It was pointed out to his Excellency that a court of petty

sessions, and a school under the general system, were imperatively required here. Sir George. remarked that he was favourable to general system of education, but that the question had not been finally settled."

⁶²⁵ Jerry's Plain correspondent, MM, October 31, 1844.

⁶²² NLA, mfm NX 27, Reel No1, The Maitland Mercury, 17 August 1844, No 85.

⁶²³ No direct connection with David Brown's family

⁶²⁴ There appears to be a Thomas Brown of Tamworth who was issued with a licence.

⁶²⁵ NLA, mfm NX 27, Reel No1. The Maitland Mercury, 2 November 1844.