

Interesting Reminiscences.

(By "Kyoorie," in the Wingham
"Chronicle.")

Early in 1866 Thunderbolt raided Cattanal Homestead, during the absence of the proprietor, John Higgins, junior, and his young wife, and here he secured a quantity of rations, fruit, and Mrs Higgins' bay hack, Doct. Shortly afterwards he also annexed at Cobark James Hooke's speedy chestnut galloway, Little John, by Beardmore's Saladin. Both horses were subsequently recovered.

At this period Thunderbolt's principal retreat was a high, open plateau, still known as Thunderbolt's Gap, on the main range, showing the Manning and Barrington waters at the extreme head of Tucker Creek, and covered with tussocks, bracken, and fern. It was ill-adapted for horses, of which he now possessed fifteen—three of them being Peel River's fine big chestnuts with white faces. But a few miles farther west was a happy hunting ground on the beautiful Gummi Plain (abo. "Koomi Koomi," hunting place.)

Away back in the early days the late R. L. Alison, of "Cooreel," Dungog, had established a small cattle station on the Pignimbarnie River, a short distance from its junction with the Manning. This spot—Pignimbarnie—had derived its name from a native legend of a platypus (abo. "Pingoot")—having been found overlanding there from river to river.

A large hut, a stock yard, a patch of cultivation, etc., were all the conveniences required. Here, from time to time, with Mr. Alison, sojourned the then well-known medico (Dr McKinley). The late James Hoad (afterwards of Cundle Flat), was the right-handed man; while Mrs Hoad presided over all matters domestic. Here, possibly, some of their children were born. Certainly one was buried there.

By here old Micky the Black carried Hooke's mail from Wirra Gulla to Curricabakh on foot—and to here came the "pack" bullocks bearing the station supplies. Years rolled on. The owner had retired to Cooreel. Yards and fences fell into disrepair,

The owner had retired to Cooreel. Yards and fences fell into disrepair, and the little station had merged into Curricabakh holding—and the lonely hut became an occasional retreat for the hunted Thunderbolt. Domestic troubles seem now to have made their appearance, by a white woman being added to the harem. Who she was, where she came from, and where she afterwards went is to-day a forgotten story. Plain, to ugliness; dressed in men's attire; a Scotch twill shirt, moleskin trousers, and Blucher boots—she presented a sorry figure.

At Pignimbarnie Hut the women quarreled ove some print—the "spoils" of "Cottensel"—and they settled their differences by a fight to a finish. Mary Anne won. To avoid further unpleasantness, the white woman fled from the harem at "Thunderbolt's Gap," and descended a wild bushy gorge, seeking the Manning waters. Striking same, she followed their rugged course back to civilisation.

The knowledge of the wherabouts of Thunderbolt naturally put the police on the qui vive. Fine, big, hefty fellows they were, with beards like Vikings, and a pronounced Hibernian accent—and how we youngsters looked up to them with awe, not unmixed with keen admiration. Perhaps it was the uniform which "fetched" us. There was Kerrigan and Scully, of Maitland; Flood and Cox, from Stroud; Fenlay and Cleary, from the same place. They were all good men in a hand-to-hand grapple; but, in horsemanship, no match for their "quarry"—Thunderbolt.

As a black boy described it—"Baal Boodgery"—me down hill and alonga siding. Boodgery Fellow, me up hill, and along flat."

At the old Pignimbarnie Hut the police surprised Thunderbolt. He was inside resting on a bunk—his horse, a fine chestnut, being tied up at the door. Mary Anne observed the police coming over a rise about 300 yards distant. A chase ensued. It was up hill, and the police struck out diagonally to cut Thunderbolt off. But the pusuit was absolutely hopeless, for Thunderbolt completely out-distanced his pursuers across the range, across the Manning, and away to his far retreat—despite the fact that the police had a black-tracker to assist in tracking the fugitive to his lair.

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Garven, now essayed to run down Thunderbolt—and amongst those engaged in the task was Sergeant Coady of Taree (long since retired from the force, and living in Sydney. He is father of the present parish priest at Taree, Rev J. J. Coady). The police were operating under the guidance of the late Augustus Hooke. Again, on one occasion, they surprised him, on a small flat at the junction of Ward's Creek—(abo., "Kako"—a variety of nut)—with Branch Creek (also. "Boombingeraghat"—small cels). Thunderbolt was butchering a heifer, with his pack horses, Mary Anne, and family beside him.

"There's your man," said Mr Hooke—and the police fell back to consider the best means of attack. Mary Anne, however, detected them. She was on guard. The alarm was quickly given, and the bushranger, abandoning everything, sprang on his faithful horse, and fled. The chase led up a long, leading spur, and then diverged to the left. Here the leading Trooper's horse, in jumping a big

Ward—a tall, quarter caste girl, of rather prepossessing features, was at service at a Gloucester Hotel. I think you will find this sketch fairly authentic, Mr Editor. I had much of my information from an old half-caste named "Moolikat," but now known as Jack Cook. He was apparently acquainted with all the events first hand. He is about 80 years old now, and has the reputation of being the only living native that has gone through the ceremony of the "Boombit"—where he got the name of "Moolikat."

Barrington, May 4th, 1920.

log, fell. A narrow brushy gully now intervened between pursued and pursuers—and here the police fired on Thunderbolt. However, they were compelled to give up the chase, and had to return with the women and the children, and the pack horses only. Thunderbolt was again too good for them. (Perhaps this was the time when the woman, children, and horses were all brought to Taree.—Ed.)

A local "lightweight" now enlisted as a trooper, intent on trying his horsemanship against the redoubtable Ward; but, on discovering that he had, at Pollifogel, quite unawares got within a few feet of Ward (who was concealed behind a rock), his enthusiasm went down to zero. He shortly after resigned from the force, and sought a less precarious occupation—that of shooting brumbies for half-a-crown a head at Gloucester.

Thunderbolt, shortly after this, appears to have sought fresh fields and pastures new—which culminated in the late seventies with his encounter with Trooper Walker, on the New England side—and his death.

Yet Mary Anne persistently asserted that the dead bushranger was NOT Thunderbolt:

P.S.—Some years after the death of Thunderbolt, a daughter of Nellie Ward—a tall, quarter caste girl, of rather prepossessing features, was at