

A Trip to Cobark

NEARLY 60 YEARS AGO.

(By HAYSEED.)

Well, Mr. Editor, I saw some time ago an article headed, "Back to Cobark, after 40 years," by an "Old Timer," and I have from time to time been going to tell you of a trip I took to Cobark with the late John Sanders before he married, so you can guess that was a good many years ago. When I first went to Cobark Mr. and Mrs. James Hooke were living there and their daughter Cora (then a baby), now Mrs. Ralph Hall, was their only child living then, two before her dying of diphtheria, I believe, at Cangon. Well do I remember my first trip, as it was my first time of leaving home. I was overjoyed to think of the new, and at that time, exciting, life on a station. I well remember it was on a Saturday we left Hanley's Creek and got as far as Grant's accommodation house, which they kept on the flat the Gloucester side of the brick school house on the hill, and where a house and beefarm now stand. They were a really fine couple and Mrs. Grant was a fine type of that sturdy good-looking English woman that one would often meet in those days. The old gent. was a kindly disposed old man. No paddocks for your station cattle in those days—not on your life, for no strange paddock would be strong enough to hold them. Why the quiet run cattle of those days would be classed as wild by many now-a-days. You had to put them in a strong stockyard and sometimes mind the rails at that. Why, just fancy Cobark with three small paddocks—horse, weaning, and a small paddock over the river for wild ones; so you can see that all the cattle were managed on the run. But to return to the trip. Well, we started on the Sunday morning from Grant's for Cobark, and we had not gone far before John said, "I'll bet Paddy O'Brien is ahead of us," pointing to a blob of spittal on the roadside, "I could swear to his spit." And sure enough, Paddy was not far ahead of us, but we called into Berrico for dinner and he went

not far ahead of us, but we called into Berrico for dinner and he went on. In those days Berrico was owned by the late John, grandfather of J. R. and T. L. Higgins, and as "Old Timer" mentioned, looked very picturesque with its white gates. Look almost where you would you could see a glittering white gate, and I believe they were all made by John Dent. Berrico was a pretty place and in my time seemed to carry a lot of cattle. I have since heard it said that the last two wild bullocks were brought from the top of Sugarloaf knob at full speed by the late Jack Cook, Tom Bugg and others. One they yarded but the other would not look at the yard, but stalked sullenly down the road where the late George Parish was fencing. George saw the bullock before the bullock saw him and had the presence of mind to stand perfectly still against the post he was putting up, and the old warrior passed on. They were great riders in those days and coming off Sugarloaf at full speed was nothing out of the way for them. Well, after dinner and a pleasant chat we went on our way to Cobark, and not long after leaving Berrico we came to Caterneal, the residence of the late John Higgins jun. and his wife and two young sons. Mrs. Higgins was formerly Miss Lavers and was, I think, one of the grandest women I ever met. Nothing seemed a trouble to her and she was always doing something to make one welcome—one of nature's ladies. After leaving Rawdon Vale (the late A. T. Laurie's place) we came to the Barrington crossing, and as we got on the Cobark side John said to me, "By jingo there is something going on at old Watt's place," and so there was. You see the O'Brien's lived at Wattenbark, not far from the crossing, and it seems that Jim, the brother, and Watty, the father of Paddy, had sent him to Dungog to buy rams (you see they had some 300 sheep, there and they used to run them right up the Barrington.) Paddy was to buy some three or four rams of pretty good quality from J. K. Mackay, but the rum of Sam Wade's was too much for poor Paddy and he spent the money on rum instead of sheep, and when we crossed the river Jim and old Watty were belting the rum out of Paddy, and he was roaring

out of Paddy, and he was roaring for mercy. Last time I was up that way I fancy I saw some of the old timber of O'Brien's house and cow yard lying about. Well, we had only to top the ridge when Cobark in all its glory burst upon us and the sight held me spell bound. Mind you, it was not the Cobark of to-day we were looking at, but a scene far more beautiful, but perhaps not as useful, for there was plenty of green timber about the ridges then, and on each little plain (as we used to call them) on the river was a clump of beautiful green saplings, tall and straight as arrows; and the Cobark river running right through the property from the Dilgery to the Barrington. Even in those early days the Cobark bullocks were noted for their quality. I can well un-

derstand "Old Timer's" remark of the difference he could see in the road to Cobark from when he travelled it first to the time of his last visit some months ago. But I have been up and down many times since my first visit and so saw the change coming. I may continue this article in another issue, of life at Cobark sixty years ago.

—Gloucester "Advocate."