

The
DANISH
GIRL



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FOREWORD



A YOUNG DANISH GIRL travels to Australia for a better future. The year is 1874 when Julia sets her feet in the land Down Under.

Despite it being a different time, the similarities in the meeting with a new environment are striking to this day—the heat, flora and fauna and learning about Indigenous Australia and other nationalities.

I think we all take a ‘piece of home’ with us when we leave the country in which we were born, and from there we then learn and adapt. It’s not always straightforward and we endure challenges as we would in any place where life is lived and where we face cultural differences.

Unique to this story, I believe, is the resilience and energy of a young immigrant who becomes a lady and a mother, and who lived longer than many of her family members in the two countries she called home.

President of the Danish Club ‘Heimdal’

Mathilde Bach Stougaard

PROLOGUE



THE IDEA FOR this memoir had been germinating for several years, and gained momentum after my retirement in 2016. As children, we had been given small pieces of information from our mother and grandmother. We knew that Julia (mother of my grandmother May) had come to Australia as a young girl from Denmark. We were led to believe that she was the youngest of eight girls, and could not find a husband, and that her parents had shipped her off to Australia in order to find one. I was soon able to put that family legend to rest. I undertook much research to piece together her story, both in Denmark and here in Australia. It was often difficult. I was easily able to obtain the date of her arrival alone in Townsville in 1874, but nothing more until her marriage in 1877. I confess therefore that I have taken some liberties in sketching out her movements and her life in those three years.

I often hit a brick wall as I was tracing the family movements around Australia. In this detective work, I was aided by census lists, electoral rolls, school enrolment indexes and Trove. I noted some information on Trove about a Charles Denford with hotel licences in Sydney, but did not think it was relevant to my quest. As far as I knew, the family was never in New South Wales. Later when I re-read Julia's death certificate, I found an entry to say she had resided in NSW for several years. That enabled me to fill in another missing gap. Yet another lost part of their lives was supplied by school enrolment details for the two youngest boys.

Yes, the 'Danish Girl' did find that husband, but the feeling I have is that she came to Australia for a new life, for an adventure, and that her marriage to Charles was an unplanned but very happy event.

ONE



Departure from Denmark

*The human journey is an heroic one
From fear to love
From ignorance to knowledge
From powerlessness to being in control of our lives...*
— STUART WILDE

IT WAS A cold winter's day when Julia waited on the Hadsund dock. It was Monday, 13 October 1873. It wasn't raining but it was grey and overcast. She was wearing her best overcoat, the blue one she wore to church on Sundays with her family. Would she ever wear it on arrival in the semi-tropics of Australia? She doubted this very much. She had managed to do some investigation of the conditions in Queensland, but there was not much to find. What she did know was that it was extremely hot in north Queensland, and in summer very wet, with possible cyclones. The most important thing for Julia was that wages were good, much better than here in Denmark. Also it was a new country, with the promise of growth and change, and there were no wars with neighbouring countries.

Her ship, the *Lammershagen*, had made her first voyage to Queensland in 1871, and another the previous year, but there had been many deaths on that voyage and on arrival. The Queensland Government had held an inquiry and apparently conditions on board were now rectified. Still, she was nervous about such a long journey, of maybe four months or more. Nor had she met anyone who had actually been there. Did this mean they were all happy living there, and had not returned—or were they too poor to return, or had some died on the high seas?

Her mother Johanna and her older sister Anna Maria were there to farewell her. She had said goodbye to her father and her seven other sisters on the previous day, Sunday. They had managed to be at church together in Vesterbolle, where she had been baptised 20 years before. There

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immediately followed a six hour journey by coach, through the beautiful countryside, a little brown now in winter, but pretty, all the same. She passed through Gorup, Lastrup, and then Viborg and Aalestrup, where she had worked as a housemaid a few years before. Four of her sisters were at school today, and the others were of course working, also as domestic servants. Her father Carl was at work in Vesterbolle, as a dyer, in a textile factory.

Would she ever see them again? She doubted this, but knew she was doing the right thing. People like them were poor, work was very scarce, and the future held no promises. They could never buy their own land or property, and would always be indentured to others higher up the social ladder. She was sad to be seeing the last of her family and the last of her country, but she was also excited at the prospect of a new life in a new country, and in a state that was begging for young single women like her to migrate.

The Schleswig-Holstein wars in 1851 and 1864 had decimated the male population of Denmark, so that the prospects of marriage for her and her eight sisters were very slim. She had worked as a domestic servant since leaving school at the age of 14, and did not want to imagine that she



The *Lammershagen* had been built in Scotland in 1869. Constructed of iron and with three masts, its length was 182ft. It was owned by R.M. Sloman Jr. of Hamburg, and was lost in 1882.

would be in the same position for the next 40 years. Besides, some of her male employers made lewd suggestions to her and threatened her with sacking if she failed to comply with their sexual overtures—so she often had to look for a new position. With each change of situation, she had to report to the local police station so as to announce the job resignation, and then again in the next town, to report the new position. She often wondered if the police thought she was an unreliable worker, but she was loathe to report the real reason. Besides, would anything be done about it? She suspected it was a widespread problem with single women such as her who were occupied in menial positions.

The silver lining to this, was that she had found the advertisement for migration in a newspaper in her previous house of employment—and her employer, Herr Jensen, had even helped her with the application to the agent in Copenhagen. They were a good family, had treated her well and with respect, and were sorry to bid her goodbye, but wished her well in her new life. Julia was intelligent enough to realise that most of Europe, including Denmark, was still a feudal society. By contrast, pioneer countries such as Australia would offer opportunities based on a work ethic, not on class privilege, and there should also be religious and political freedom.

The Queensland Government was even paying for her passage all the way across the world, and would find work for her on arrival. She was actually hoping never to be a domestic servant again. Well, perhaps a domestic in her own home with her own husband and children...

After separation from New South Wales in 1859, Queensland embarked on a large scale migration scheme, whereby the government organised and subsidised a system that allowed migrants to travel cheaply and smoothly around the globe. The impetus was the Immigration Act of 1869, which, from 1870, resulted in a fully government-controlled system to attract mostly English and German people, though including Scandinavians. Queensland had the largest migration numbers at the time, more than any other state. Between 1860 and 1879, more than 114,000 immigrants arrived from Europe, 85% of those with assisted fares.

Our young immigrant, along with others to Queensland, was required to have specific items of clothing for the voyage and arrival. The agent had

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Above: Vesterbolle is a small settlement north of Gedsted.
Left: The church at Aarhus where Julia's parents were married in 1847.



At Vesterbolle, the church and (above) the Vesterbolle Fabric Factory.

given her the list months ago. It consisted of the following: six shifts, two warm, strong flannel petticoats, six pairs of stockings, two pairs of strong shoes and two strong gowns, one of which must be warm. This did not seem much for such a long journey, and no items among them seemed particularly suitable for the tropics.

Otto Jensen had shown her the list of items which the Queensland Government required for the ship to supply the passengers: one pair of sheets, one water bottle, one wash-basin, one plate, a one-pint drinking mug, one knife and fork, two spoons, and three pounds of marine soap. If she had been a free passenger, this would cost 10 shillings and sixpence, but the Queensland Government was paying for this as hers was an assisted passage.

She knew through Otto that most migrants to Queensland were from Britain and they heard about the colony through newspaper advertisements or posters or from travelling lecturers, or even from family writing home. Migrants from Germany and Scandinavia had heard about the scheme via newspaper ads. Julia had had to supply references from her current employer and from her parish priest in Vesterbolle. She also needed to have a medical examination from a doctor in Hadsund, and the small payment of one pound. The medical exam was only cursory, lasting five minutes at most, and was paid for by the Queensland Government. She had handed all of the required documents onto the agent.

What Julia did not know was that the migration scheme had operated from 1860, the year after Queensland was formed, and was abandoned in 1867 because of its high cost. The first Agent-General, Mr Henry Jordan, had encountered many difficulties with the Queensland Government, and had even raised funds himself to assist with passengers' expenses. He was accused of having a private financial arrangement with the shipping line which handled migration from Britain to Australia.

By 1869, the Legislative Council in Queensland decided that the time had arrived when there should be a renewal of immigration so as to increase the prosperity of the colony. A new Agent-General was appointed, Mr John Douglas, and he was instructed to arrange for 1,500 migrants from Germany in 1869. Their ship, the *Humboldt*, left Hamburg in July 1870, three days before the Franco-Prussian war started. The ship was blockaded and 900 passengers were stranded, having sold their homes

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Scenes from
Vesterbolle: The
Mansachs family
lived in one of the
houses above.

and given up their jobs. They remained in Hamburg until November when the blockade was broken. Hopefully, this would not happen to the *Lammershagen*.

For Julia's journey to Hamburg, mother had packed for her a small food basket which included cheeses, beer, strawberries, and bread—which she could really ill afford with so many still to feed. There were small family groups around them, farewelling their friends and family. Most were just going to Copenhagen for holidays or work. As far as she knew, none here were joining her on the *Lammershagen* to Queensland, Australia.

It was 1pm now and the small steamship *Ydun* sounded three deep sonorous calls. Julia hugged and kissed her mother and Anna Maria, then fought back the tears as she rushed up the gangplank. There was not much to carry, just the food basket from mother and her small bag of belongings—but in that small bag were two precious items. One was a photo of her family—mother, father, eight sisters and herself—taken just three months before by a photographer travelling though their village.

The second item was a leather-bound book, a recent gift from her parents after she had told them of her migration plan. It would be her diary, with pages at the back devoted to a growing list of English words and their Danish meanings.

The *Ydun* was a German-constructed iron motor vessel, built in 1859. It mostly confined itself to short trips between Hadsund, Arhuus and Copenhagen. In Norse mythology, *Ydun* is a goddess associated with apples and youth, being the wife of the god Bragi. Julia probably did not know this history at all. She was educated to a basic level, and could read and write, but the family could ill afford luxuries such as books—but perhaps she read what books she could in the homes where she had worked since the age of 14.

What she would have quickly learned was that the *Ydun* was powered by steam, not sail, was 117 metres long, had a single deck and could carry about 100 people and much cargo, and was capable of eight knots in good conditions. She had been informed of so much by the agent, Otto Jensen. The first large group of Danes had left just three years before and had settled in Maryborough in Queensland. Some had become farmers with their land grants of 40 acres per man, while others had begun businesses. She was also learning much about its history. Queensland had just become an independent state in 1859, and in 1863 had passed an immigration act providing free passage for farmers, farm labourers, artisans, and domestic servants. She certainly knew that she belonged in the last category, but was determined to follow a different path. Married couples could bring two children with them, while those over 50 had to pay £16, but they were still given land grants.

The exception, of course, related to single women such as Julia. Many had accepted the blocks of land, but others were attracted to the goldfields at Charters Towers, Gympie, Mount Morgan and the Palmer River. Finding work on the goldfields sounded very exciting, and the prospect of finding a husband amongst all those miners was a big possibility—but she would not settle for just any man.

She wiped away the tears and turned to face mother and Anna Maria on the dockside. Her mother, Johanna, was now 51, tired from working to feed and clothe a family with little income. Julia did not want to be like that at 51. She waved and waved as the small ship pulled away, taking her

into her unknown future. She was pleased that it was a steamship, because it would be a reasonably short trip, perhaps 20 hours for the 250 mile journey, first to Copenhagen and then Kiel—an acceptable start to her huge adventure. It was far too cold to be out on deck, as the ship cruised down the Kattegat Sea.

The *Ydun* docked that night in Copenhagen to disembark 20 passengers and to bring another 60 passengers on board, then steamed on through the night, past Arhuus, where her parents had married 25 years before in 1847. She had never been here before, and of course was not allowed to go ashore, so she doubted that she would ever visit Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. She had no need to open the basket her mother had prepared, as a good meal of warm stew of beef and vegetables was supplied in the dining room. As the small ship wallowed in a rough winter sea, there followed a very uncomfortable sleep, with nine other women in a dormitory.

The ship's bell alerted the passengers to rise and have breakfast before disembarking in Kiel, a small German port on the Baltic Sea coast. She had enjoyed being on deck as the sun rose and the boat glided up the fjord in order to dock. Kiel was once Danish, but had been taken over by the Germans during the recent wars. Julia was met by the agent, Otto Jensen, and walked to the train station nearby. There she was joined by several others, also going to Hamburg and migrating to Australia. There were about 20 joining her, small family groups, single men and women, all like her, looking both excited and nervous. She could tell from their conversations and accents that they were from Norway, Sweden, Germany and perhaps Austria. This trip was only two hours, the distance being 55 miles. It was much quicker than the steamship the previous day, but more enjoyable, as the train sped through the pretty countryside, dotted with small farms and charming villages, with cows, goats, and the occasional horse and buggy going to or from a market village. There were even fields of snow here and there.

Hamburg was far more impressive than Kiel and Hadsund, so bustling, so busy and just a bit overwhelming for the country girl that she was. The agent accompanied the group on the train and ensured their safe arrival at the port that very afternoon. Papers were checked on the dock by the Queensland agent before Julia once again climbed the gangplank. This

time there was no family to farewell. She really was on her own now. She felt courageous and intended to make friends aboard.

After storing her meagre possessions in the women's dormitory on the second deck, she explored the *Lammershagen*, her new home for the next three months or so. As Otto Jensen had explained to her, this ship was made of iron and that gave her confidence. It was 55 metres long, weighed 870 tons and could carry 400 passengers. It even had a reservoir on deck, which, using pipes that ran the entire length of the ship, could supply water to baths and toilets. She reflected that the *Ydun* had been double the length, was powered by steam, carried only 100 passengers, and moved twice as fast through the water. These thoughts made her realise just how slow and long the journey to Australia would be.

Otto had also told her that the ship had been built in Glasgow only five years before, for the German Sloman line. Glasgow had a good reputation for shipbuilding, as did Germany, but with so much emigration, Germany could not keep up with the demand. Lammershagen was a small village in northern Germany where the owner resided. Julia was likely to be delighted that it translated as, "Garden of Lambs."

Shortly after departure, everyone gathered in the dining room below decks. Families, numbering 280, sat in the middle, with the 44 single men at one end, and the 21 single women at the other. It was a simple yet hearty meal. She wanted to keep mother's food basket as long as possible. Mr Jensen had even given her the list of food to be supplied by the ship for each passenger for the voyage, as directed by the Queensland Government.

Salted beef: 48 pounds; Salted pork: 24 pounds; Salted herrings: 48 pieces; White bread: 120 pounds; Butter: 10 pounds; Potatoes: nine pecks (a peck was roughly 15 pounds); Wheat, flour, peas, beans, barley, rice, prunes, sauerkraut: 84 pounds; Syrup: three pounds; Coffee: three pounds; Tea: half-pound; and Vinegar: seven pints.

Julia was astounded at the huge quantities but knew it was necessary as the ship would not be stopping in any ports on the way to Australia. Apparently, the costs for ships to stop en route were prohibitive so the government would only pay for the cheaper nonstop passage. Nor could she imagine where this vast

DEPARTURE FROM DENMARK

Food Requirements Immigrants to Queensland 1860s

English for 24 weeks	German for 24 weeks
Salt beef 30 lbs	Salt beef 48 lbs
Salt pork 24 lbs	Salt pork 24 lbs
Preserved meat 24 lbs	Salt herrings 48 pieces
Suet 12 lbs	White bread 120 lbs
Butter 6 lbs	Butter 10 lbs
Potatoes 12 lbs	Potatoes 9 pecks
Rice 12 lbs	Wheat, flour, peas, beans, barley, rice, prunes, sauerkraut 84 lbs
Biscuit 63 lbs	Syrup 3 lbs
Peas 18 pints	Coffee 3½ lbs
Flour 84 lbs	Tea ½ lbs
Oatmeal 30 lbs	Vinegar 7-1/6 pints
Coffee 3 lbs	
Tea 1½ lbs	
Sugar 18 lbs	
Salt 3 lbs	
Pepper 12 oz	
Carrots, turnips, onions, celery, mint 24 portions	
Cabbage 48 lbs	
Raisins 9 lbs	
Treacle 12 lbs	
Pickles 24 gills	
Mustard 12 ozs	
Limejuice 7 pints	

The Queensland Government specified food requirements for immigrants coming to Queensland in the 1860s.

quantity of food could be stored, and as for the water requirements, how would it be possible? Surely, they would have to catch rainwater when it was possible. There was so much to learn, and so much to experience.

Matron Larsen accompanied the single women back to the dormitory, so as to introduce herself and to explain the rules of shipboard life. They were to be in the dormitory immediately after supper around 7pm. No single men were to visit the dormitory. So as to keep the young women occupied, sewing material would be provided, along with sewing lessons if necessary. The articles made on the voyage would be distributed at the end. Julia was happy about this because she had few items with her and she was a capable seamstress.

Matron would also give English lessons to those requiring assistance. This was especially important to Julia, as she had no English at all. She was not the only one, of course. Bible lessons were to be held from 9am to 10am each day. If she wished, she could attend Sunday school with the boys and girls, and men and women.

What an onerous job Matron had: mother, chaperone, keeper of morals, schoolteacher, religious instructor and sewing teacher. This was

to prevent the young women's minds wandering to the young eligible bachelors among the passengers. Of the Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Swiss, Austrians and Germans aboard, all were hoping to leave behind the stressed economy in Europe so as to find a better future in Australia.

After Matron had left the dormitory, there was now the opportunity to survey the quarters which would be their small home for the next three to four months. It was a long, narrow room on the second deck, with no portholes, hence no view, yet this was safer than having portholes that could blow open. Being winter now, the space was warm and cosy, but she hated to think how it would be when temperatures rose later in the voyage.

There were two rows of beds situated against the bulkhead with about four feet of space between each row. There were ten beds per row, butting up head to toe. Belongings were to be stored under each bed. On each wall were two oil lamps, since no candles were allowed because of the obvious fire risk. Each mattress and pillow was filled with straw, as was the custom in Julia's own home. She wondered if the Captain, Doctor and Matron had down-filled pillows, and mattresses filled with soft wool. Julia knew for certain that at some time in the future, she also would enjoy such luxuries.

The *Lammershagen* was scheduled to sail in two days' time, but this did not happen. As each day passed, the passengers became more and more anxious to leave. They were not allowed to go ashore to explore Hamburg, and had to remain on board, doing Bible classes, learning English, and starting their sewing. This proved to be a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other—and this Julia did.

About a third of the women were her age. Six were a few years younger, the rest in their twenties and thirties, and the oldest was 60. Of course, there were many more women but they were married with husbands and children. Julia quickly made close friends with Karen Brandstedt from Germany. Karen was 19 and also wanted a new life. They shared many happy moments together, while sewing, learning English and chattering about the handsome men on board. Danish and German were similar enough that they could converse quite easily. It helped to alleviate their homesickness and the worry of the delayed departure.

TWO



The Ocean Voyage

*My parents bid me cross the flood
My kindred frowned at me
They say I have belied my blood
And stained my pedigree
But I must turn from those who chide
And laugh at those who frown
I cannot quench my stubborn pride
Nor keep my spirits down.*

— A.L. GORDON

IT WAS NOW the first of November, two weeks since leaving Denmark, and there had been so many delays ahead of departure. Various repairs had been done—all unexpected but necessary—as the ship’s owner did not want to repeat the fiasco of the previous year, when many had died from typhus. Three bells again, as the *Lammershagen*, all 853 tons of her, let go her chains and the tugboat brought the vessel down the Elbe River, abreast of Brunshaven, where she anchored.

At 11am the ship and passengers were once more inspected by Mr Hamilton, the Secretary for the Agent-General of Queensland, and received the certificate “Ready for Passage”. At 1pm, *Lammershagen* weighed anchor and headed seaward. At midnight she passed the outer lightship and made sail, whence the tugboat and pilot left her. Three days later she was beating down the Strait of Dover and onwards past the Isle of Wight.

Life aboard the ship developed a routine over the next four weeks, prior to sighting Trinidad. It was still winter, and only crewmen were permitted on deck if it was windy and raining. Yes, it was dry and warm below, but rather claustrophobic at times. When the ocean waves swelled,

the ship kicked like a wild beast, so it was forbidden to move around below decks. Anyway, it was quite impossible to move around. Passengers were forced to eat sitting on the floor, and at night they moved the mattresses off the beds and onto the floor also. The rough seas made most passengers sick, and at times the smell became overpowering. During one five-day stretch when no one was allowed on deck, very little food was eaten for fear of throwing up. At these times, the fluid intake became even more important. Thankfully, the bedding remained dry during this rough weather. For Julia, the thought of lying in a damp, cold bed would have been too much.

When the passengers could eat and move around safely, breakfast—consisting of a simple bowl of porridge and hot water—was served at 7am. The meal at midday was usually salted pork or beef, along with potatoes. Early in the voyage there were still carrots and cabbage, but these were depleted after six weeks, leaving the diet somewhat monotonous—but then, there appeared preserved potatoes and pickled cabbage to replace the fresh vegetables. Evening meals were around 5pm or 6pm, depending on which session you had. It was always a soup, with the merest flavour of meat, but there was plenty of bread or hard tack, which was a biscuit of flour, water and salt, and it went quite well with soup.

The Doctor, or Ship's Surgeon, had total control of the cook and the baker. "No one but the baker and his assistant can be in the bakehouse," was the rule. The Doctor ensured that, "the oven and utensils, after each use, would be carefully cleaned, as well as the bakehouse itself, which must be kept locked when not in use and the key retained in the baker's possession."

As required by the doctor, bread was served on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, having been baked the previous day. On Sunday evenings, a pudding sweetened with molasses was served. Rumour had it that the Captain, the Doctor and the officers had their pudding with sugar, fruit and rum. The Doctor was also instructed by the Queensland Government to "prohibit the use of all intoxicating substances," but Julia imagined that the Captain, Doctor and officers were exempt from this rule. The beer her mother had slipped into her food basket was long ago consumed, and enjoyed very much. She assumed that she would not see Danish beer for sale in Australia.

In the rough seas, bathing was impossible. On the other hand, when the weather improved, it was such a pleasure to have a simple ablution, taken in the female dormitory beside one's bed. The daily fresh water allowance was restricted to four pints. Some was for drinking, and the remainder was for washing oneself or one's clothes.

The toilet facility in the female dormitory was rudimentary, consisting of a wooden bucket, with a lid, located in one corner behind a small curtain. When the bucket reached half-full, that person carried it to the stern and emptied it down an outlet into the ocean. Nearby was a drum of salt water for washing out the bucket. The system worked well, since there was a second bucket ready for use in the cubicle. No one seemed to shirk this job. During rough weather, the buckets were not used since the slop from a bucket which might overturn was too dreadful to contemplate. At such times, passengers made use of the water closets (toilets) spaced at various points along the ship's length from which everything could be flushed into the sea. How clever was that, thought Julia. Such flushing was managed with salt water, not the precious fresh water. In addition to the flushing water closets, was a most incredible invention: a machine for turning salt water into fresh. According to the sailors whom Julia met, the drawback was that it required much power from the small steam engine, and so was used only in an emergency.

There was another roster, performed on rotation between the 20 women, for sweeping the room each morning. Under the beds was swept and the dirt was tossed overboard. Also beds and pillows were to be taken on deck and shaken, weather permitting. According to Matron, the single and married men had extra duties, such as sweeping the ladders, cleaning the water closets, and pumping water into the cisterns of the water closets.

The young women were amused by the sign in the Dining Room: "No smoking allowed between decks. All indecent acts, including swearing, blaspheming, drunkenness, gambling, are prohibited. Firearms, swords and other offensive weapons to be placed in the custody of the Master."

When the seas were rough and passengers could not venture on deck, Julia and Karen took the opportunity to get to know each other better. Karen was also from a large family, so they chatted about their parents and siblings, and imagined what they would be doing now. What was

never discussed was the sad reality that neither of the young women was ever likely to see their families again.

By the first week of December, the bad weather had abated and the temperatures were rising. This allowed for time on deck and the chance to stroll and chat, as well as to observe crewmen adjusting the sails, winching heavy ropes and managing the massive steering wheel.

Leaning on the rails to watch for fish and bird life was a daily highlight. For those interested, Matron escorted seven women at a time to the deck, with instructions not to fraternise with the single males. This was well nigh impossible anyway since single males were confined to the foredeck—with the boom spar used as the dividing line—and single women kept to the poop deck. Julia and Karen somehow managed to befriend a crew member who was slightly older than them, and he was an amazing source of knowledge. He was patient with their lack of English but his smattering of German helped.

The girls loved watching the large pods of dolphins which often frolicked in the bow waves. Flying fish were also a source of amusement for they seemed to be trying to jump aboard the decks—which was impossible of course. The young women were curious about whales and were disappointed to learn that it was the wrong time of year for them. Whales began their journey from Antarctica to warm northern waters in March where they gave birth to their young, and made the return journey by October.

On the third of December, one month after their departure from Hamburg, there occurred on deck a very amusing incident—well, amusing to some, but frightening to others. A creature appeared, dressed to look like a horse and indeed it was called a ‘dead horse’, to remind the Captain in particular that one month had elapsed since departure. Some unsuspecting passengers, especially children, thought that it was a monster which had arisen from the sea.

Not long after this when the two women were by chance on deck, a sailor called out, “Trinidad to starboard!” How exciting! This was the first sighting of land since the lights of Dover. It was simply wonderful to be on deck throughout the day, even though it was never enough time. By now, the rising temperature made sleeping at night almost unbearable. Most passengers had dispensed with the warm pyjamas and now wore only underwear, covering themselves simply with a single top sheet.

Another week passed and the ship slopped around on flat seas. They were in the doldrums now, and very soon would be crossing the Equator—which was another special occasion for those travelling the high seas. In two separate groups, the passengers were escorted to the decks, and with a small glass of sherry or beer, or lemonade for the children and non-drinkers, they saluted King Neptune. Matron informed those close by how lucky they were not to be dunked into the sea. This was the tradition aboard cargo ships, and could be extremely frightening to the youngest sailors. If they refused, they had to forgo four days of wine rations. It was a hard choice for some.

The ship now changed course so as to take advantage of the trade winds that blew them across the Atlantic Ocean on a heading for the southern tip of Africa. Two days before Christmas, they sighted the Cape of Good Hope, though it brought a moment of both joy and sadness because the ship would not be stopping in Capetown.

How different this Christmas was! The *Lammershagen*, though Scottish-built, was owned and crewed by Germans, so the event was celebrated in European style, the accent being on the evening of the 24th of December. Dinner was more festive and lavish so as to mark the joyous occasion. The first of the three courses was pickled herrings on fresh bread, followed by a main course of fresh mackerel, an unexpected luxury which came thanks to some male passengers who had been trolling lines from the stern. The final course was a magnificent pudding with rum, sultanas and real sugar. Most exciting also was a small cup of beer or wine.

On board were plenty with musical talent, so out came violins, a flute, a melodeon, mouth organs, and even a small piano accordion. Superb voices entertained the Christmas crowd with national folk songs and carols. Julia could see how delighted the young children were with the small gifts their parents had been able to bring along.

Only four days after Christmas, there was another special event: Julia's 21st birthday. Karen gave her a very pretty set of underwear, sewn by hand in secret, and which was even trimmed with small pieces of lace. How special was this gift which she would treasure forever. On such a day she pined for her family in Denmark, and felt comforted that they would be thinking of her.

There was another special gift too. Karen had told Matron about Julia's birthday, and, with permission from the Doctor also, Julia and Karen were allowed on deck at 8pm, after supper, for 30 minutes, so as to mark the night of her birthday. Being such a clear evening, it was perfect for stargazing. Millions of sparkles in the night sky met them, with a moon rising on the port side horizon. The phosphorescence was simply magical. Fortunately, the officer at the wheel was generous and knowledgeable and was able to point out the Milky Way, as well as other constellations with which the young women were not familiar. When their 30 minutes was almost over, he pointed to a shower of meteors shooting across the heavens. What a very special birthday this had turned out to be! Julia couldn't help wondering where she would be for her next one.

There were more squalls and storms as they crossed the Indian Ocean, and on some days they could not go on deck at all for fear of injuring themselves. Julia did not envy the tough, cold work that the sailors had to perform, as they adjusted and repaired sails in such perilous conditions. It was cold once again and wet too. It took the *Lammershagen* about two weeks to cross this vast ocean, as it was pushed along by the fabled Roaring Forties, used by ships for centuries.

When, on the odd day, the rain ceased and the winds dropped, the passengers could enjoy shipboard life again. Under the eye of Matron, the single girls were divided into two groups and each group was allowed one hour of being on deck—supervised, of course. That did not stop Julia and Karen from discreetly observing the young men on board.

Occasionally, they spotted a large, impressive bird, which—thanks to Matron who was a fund of knowledge on so many subjects—the young women learned was an albatross. If Matron happened not to know the answer, then a sailor would. Indeed, it was a sailor who showed them a tobacco pipe which he had so skilfully made from the long wing bone of the albatross. Apart from such diversions, the days developed a routine, with one-hour time slots given to the Bible, English lessons, sewing bees, and of course, the three daily meals.

The food was monotonous but there was plenty of it, and there were even cheeses three times per week. It was cheese that Julia found to be the first food which she welcomed after rough weather. Once daily, they ate either tongue or ham, and sometimes pork or mutton, always

salted. Sauerkraut was served for the entire trip, long outlasting the fresh potatoes, onions and carrots.

With 300 passengers on board, there were often memorable events. A boy was born about one week after leaving South Africa, the announcement of which before dinner one night, caused much chatter. Women were accustomed to bearing their children at home, but this was different. A pitching, rocking ship gave an added dimension to the notion of a 'difficult' or 'easy' birth. There were plenty of experienced mothers on hand, and of course, the indomitable Matron, who, it was said, had delivered dozens of babies whether at sea and on land.

Joseph and Alma Gritteur were the proud parents of little Christian, their first child, born on the way to a new land and a new life. Would Julia one day become a wife and mother? The thought was a little daunting, since she certainly did not wish to bear nine children as her mother had. How did one prevent so many pregnancies and births? She never had the chance to ask her mother. Perhaps she and Karen could have a helpful chat with Matron before their arrival in Australia. All of this time, Julia was writing brief notes to her family, but when would they ever receive her letter—and when would she ever have a letter from them in return?

Among the passengers were several with skills which had been usefully employed on this long sea journey. Some shot seabirds, which offered some variation to a monotonous diet. Others cast out long lines to catch mackerel—and once a huge tuna—all of which were good eating. When it came to the several sheep and pigs on board which were to be killed and eaten at intervals, one German passenger, a butcher by trade, volunteered his skill, for which the Captain was most grateful. Yet another passenger, a school teacher, produced a newspaper twice weekly. It contained lots of gossip and news, and general advice too.

On Sunday evenings, after supper, when the weather permitted, there was a small concert when passengers sang and some played instruments. Yes, there was a lot of talent aboard the ship, and all were heading for a new life in Australia.

THREE



Australia Appears

THE ALBATROSS

*And now the storm blast came
And he was tyrannous and strong
He struck with his overtaking wings
And chased us south along
The ship drove fast
Loud roared the blast
And southward aye we fled.*

SUCH A VAST body of water was the Indian Ocean that Julia had no concept of its size. She, a young country woman, a domestic servant, naive about anything outside Denmark, could not conceive of being on this ship for another three weeks, simply crossing an ocean and sighting no land. How she ached to set foot on soil once more. How she ached for her family, for her village of Vesterbolle. At least the winds were now behind the ship, enabling good progress.

Matron had informed them that the winds were called Trade Winds, the very winds that had been pushing trading vessels across the ocean for 200 years at least. She thought back to the treacherous days coming around the Cape of Good Hope, day after day of wild wind and lashing waves, mountainous seas crashing across the decks, the iron ship wallowing, passengers unable to move around freely, unable to eat, unable to sleep, wishing for the storms to abate, regretting their decision to leave Europe—and the seasickness!

Julia would recover a little, regain a little appetite, have a morsel of food, and immediately disgorge the contents. The dining room was empty for days on end, as people remained abed, below deck. The odour around the ship in general was nauseating, the stench in the dormitory horrific.

Four days of this seemed a lifetime. Would it never end? But of course, in time it did, and the memories soon faded. Following each episode of wild weather, all adult, able-bodied passengers were expected to help clean any residual mess, done with salt water, mops and disinfectant. Fresh water was too precious to be used for such tasks. Personal hygiene was expected and promoted to prevent outbreaks of sickness. But the fresh water was tightly rationed, a bath was a weekly event, with a small jug of water per person per day. Captain Pauls decreed set washing days, Tuesdays and Thursdays, as long as the weather was calm. This was especially crucial in the hot weather, when hygiene was difficult. Sailors scrubbed the decks every second day, which was important for cleanliness and good health. Clothes could only be washed in salt water. They never truly dried as there was forever a residue of salt remaining.

The weather was not always frightening, and when it was good, it was simply wonderful. Occasionally, they would see schools of dolphins leaping from the water, or chasing the bow wave or simply cavorting with each other like playful children. Clouds scudding across the skies, clouds simply being clouds in all their wondrous shapes and sizes. These were memorable times. When the weather was agreeable, sleeping was a joy and so peaceful. Julia and Karen slept side by side in their narrow canvas beds, and often chatted long into the night, planning their lives, inventing jobs they would probably never attain, and all the time hoping for a kind husband and healthy children.

It was now two weeks since Africa was left behind. There was mounting excitement. At dinner the evening before, the Captain had informed them that the coast of Australia would appear in the next two days, depending on the weather. Well, the weather remained reasonably calm and they saw many more birds now, so they knew that the Captain was correct, that Australia was indeed close. Another lesson in bird identification was welcomed. Seagulls, of course, were familiar, but not birds such as terns, gannets, boobies, petrels and tropic birds. The tropic bird was indeed her favourite, a gull-shaped body with a delicate hue, a bright red bill and two streaming tail feathers. There was nothing like it in Denmark. There was also nothing like the brilliant southern sunsets here at the bottom end of the world.

It was late in the morning, and the sailor's cry of "Land Ho!" set up such excitement and revelry that no one wished to go below for lunch.

It was now twelve weeks since departing Hamburg, and it would be at least another month to Townsville. Everyone was excited, but it was excitement tinged with trepidation and anxiety about the future, tinged with sadness about the sure knowledge of never seeing family and home again. By day the weather was hot, but always it was cooler at night, so sleep was easy and welcome. All of the Europeans on board had to keep reminding themselves that the weather had turned on its head, as they were now in the Southern Hemisphere, with every season reversed. Back home, their friends and families were still struggling through winter, but were approaching a welcome spring. Here, of course, it was summer, and the closer they sailed to Townsville, the hotter it would be.

Always there was the sea, endless, hostile, deep, ever waiting below. It was not just a voyage across the world, it was a voyage into the universe. It was also a period of transition. At that time, there was no longer passenger journey than this one to the Antipodes. Australia was the last continent discovered by Westerners, and the most distant from Europe, often called the Fifth Continent. In some ways Julia was pleased it was a long journey, as it allowed her to adapt to the shock of leaving family and country behind, and to the future shocks on arrival.

The *Lammershagen* soon lost sight of land once again, as the ship ploughed across the Southern Ocean towards Tasmania, a tiny island off the Australian coast, but still part of Australia. It had once been a convict settlement, where the very worst criminals from England were sent, and even political prisoners from all over Europe. Thankfully, those days were over, with Australia now a free country. Even Queensland, her future home, had convict beginnings, from 1825 to 1839. That harsh start to the young colony was also finished, but memories from those earlier times must have still been a presence for a large proportion of Queensland's population.

The next sighting of land after the five-day crossing of the Great Australian Bight, was the Cape Otway lighthouse on the Victorian coast. Suddenly, those gentle winds ceased, and now they were blown through the straits between Tasmania and Victoria by massive gales. Confined below decks once again, seasick again, sleeping on the floor again. Gunwales awash, making incredible speed, canvas tearing, booms snapping, the ship was pushed to the limits the iron hull would stand. The girls knew

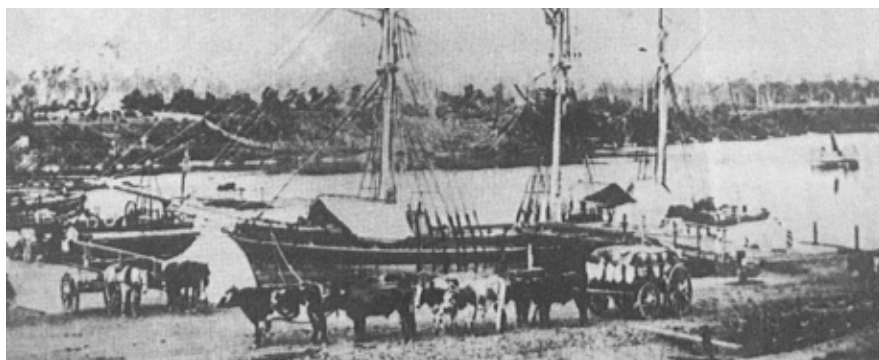
enough by now to realise they were in perilous conditions, with land on either side and raging seas. Thankfully, the passengers were unaware that hundreds of ships had been wrecked on this dangerous coastline.

Conditions here off the coast of Tasmania were as wild as they had ever encountered, a strong gale from the south causing the Captain to have the ship heave-to for two days under reefed sails until wind and wave abated. They had now been at sea for 14 weeks, with at least three more to go.

Between Tasmania and Mount Warning, they saw no land at all, and became concerned. Matron soon reassured them that it was safer sailing to stay well off the coast, so as to avoid rocks, headlands and shallow water. There was to be a brief stop at the mouth of the Brisbane River. It was too hazardous for this big ship to cross the bar, an area of shallow water, sand bars, and dangerous tides. The distance from there to the town of Brisbane itself was 12 miles, so the six paying passengers with their luggage were transferred to a small steamer for the passage upriver. The remaining passengers looked on longingly, desperate to set foot on land once more. The government contract for this ship was to disembark in Townsville, 1,200 miles to the north.



A view of Kangaroo Point and the Brisbane River, ca. 1874.



Maryborough wharves in the 1870s.

There was a very brief stop in Maryborough to pick up the pilot, and to be checked by immigration and health officials before sailing north to Townsville. It looked a pretty town on the banks of the Mary River, six miles from the coast, but 15 miles along the winding river. They gazed wistfully at the shore, so close that they could see flowers, plants, trees, and even horses up close. Some were disappointed that the trees were really quite a drab green compared with those in Europe. The monotony was broken here and there by plantations of sugar cane, maize and some unrecognisable crops.

It was to Maryborough that the first shipload of Scandinavian migrants had come three years before in 1871. Two hundred had settled in the areas around the town and in the village itself, many farming on their 40-acre blocks given to them by the Queensland Government. Others developed businesses in the town, running stores and hotels. Some of them found the heat too excessive, and moved away to New South Wales and even Victoria. As the *Lammershagen* moved slowly up the river, the passengers had their first sightings of native Australians, called aborigines. Julia had never seen black people before. They had long thin legs protruding from grubby apparel which they were obliged to wear in the town. Their heads were small, their trunks slender, but their noses and lips were wide. The Colonial Government forced the women to drape themselves in blankets, supplied by the Government, in order to wean them away from the unchristian habit of nakedness, and to save the morals of the whites.

Now the temperature was decidedly hotter, and on the Mary River, even in those few hours, there were many biting insects, some mosquitoes, quite similar to those in Denmark, but also much tinier creatures with an even itchier bite, called midges. This was another word for the list in Julia's notebook. The further north they went, the hotter and more humid it became, making sleep at night almost impossible.

Several days after leaving Maryborough there was sad news at breakfast. During the night a passenger had died. Fred Pribbenow, from Austria and aged around 65 years old, was possibly the oldest person on the ship. Julia could not recall him, but rumour had it that he had had a bad cough since leaving Europe, and Doctor Mohs thought it was most likely a death caused by tuberculosis.

It was a sad fact of life on board a ship, that a dead body cannot be stored, but must be immediately delivered overboard into the sea, after a short prayer from the Captain or perhaps from a minister, if there was one among the passengers. This ship carried no minister of religion, so Captain Pauls performed the duty.

One more week of fair winds brought them to their destination at last, Townsville. The journey had been long, tiring, sometimes boring, cold, hot, wet, often rough, but she was here, safely. It was a successful trip, thanks to a strong ship made of iron, an experienced captain and a capable doctor. With energetic precautions taken to secure perfect cleanliness and ventilation on board, together with free use of disinfectant, little or no sickness was experienced. The highest credit was given to Captain Pauls, with a reputation in Germany and the colonies as a careful and successful navigator. Full credit was also offered to Dr Randolph Mohs, who maintained good hygiene and nutrition.

It was now more than halfway through February. Julia had farewelled her family in October the previous year, and the journey had been planned six months before that. Decisions had been made, plans accomplished, and now she was here in Australia, here in Townsville. She and many others felt that a climax of sorts had been reached, perhaps not a final destination, not yet a fulfilled dream, but a dream beginning to unfold.

PASSENGER LIST					
LAMMERSHAGEN					
Sailed from Hamburg 1st November 1873 and arrived at Townsville 19th February 1874					
Master - Capt A T Paul Surgeon Superintendent Dr E J Radolph-Moris Matron R Larsen					
BOV - Born on voyage			DOV - Died on voyage		
SURNAME	NAME	AGE	SURNAME	NAME	AGE
FULL PAYING					
HEINIG	Wilhelm	28	BUTLER	Eduard	7
HARTMANN	Peter	28	BUTLER	Elise	2
KRAUSE	Georg	21	BRUHN	Christopher	26
NIELSEN	Andreas P	32	BRUHN	Emilie	22
PRIBBENOW	Friederike	65	BRUHN	Knud	1
RUSCHPLER	Friedrich	23	BRAESTRUP	Fred. And.	24
			BRAESTRUP	Hansine	23
			BRAESTRUP	Christian	6
ASSISTED			BRANDSTEDT	Karen	19
GRITTNER	Joseph	26	BUCHWALD	Isob	24
MADSEN	Juliane	17			
MADSEN	Fredrik M	38			
MADSEN	Maren	39			
MADSEN	Frederik	7			
MIKKELSEN	Amanda	20			
MANSACHS	Julie Math	21			

The passenger list of *Lammershagen*, when it arrived in Townsville on 19 February 1874, included Julia Mathilde Mansachs, aged 21.

FOUR



Townsville

*The stormy seas as dark as coal
Preventing the sailors from reaching their goal
Battered and bruised, but still they fight
Staring ahead into the dead of night
Rocking and rolling as they try to stand
Hoping against hope that they soon reach land*

— AMAR QAMAR

“**T**HERE IT IS!”, was the cry from the sailor high at the top of the tallest mast. It was Cornelius announcing the sighting of Townsville in the distance. He had become Julia’s favourite sailor, as he was so knowledgeable about the bird life and animals in the ocean and along the coastlines. It was only 7am, she had had breakfast already, and there were few people on deck yet. The *Lammershagen* still had several hours sailing for the remaining 10 or 15 miles. With the wind blowing from the north-east, it was pleasant enough, but already hot and humid, as it was February and this was, after all, summer in the southern hemisphere. The clouds were still small and fluffy, and moving slowly, but Julia already knew that by afternoon they would be large and black and filling with moisture, followed by torrential rain before sunset.

She quickly went below to find Karen. She wanted the company of her new friend, well, not so new now, since they had lived together on the boat for 17 weeks. The deck filled gradually with more passengers, all excited about the journey’s end at last. Now there were many seagulls, but of course no more albatross, and the tropic bird had also disappeared because it was so close to land.

How glad Julia was that ship regulations had forced her to have English lessons. It was only an hour each day, but together with Karen

and other passengers, she was able to practise her English and was now proficient enough to carry on a simple conversation. She had learnt numbers, colours, everyday greetings, and she was able to explain where she was from and what her family was like.

Yes, there was the port, slowly coming into view. By midday, with the scorching sun overhead, they had docked at the small wharf, with only room for three other very small boats. The shore was lined with low green trees with roots in the water—mangroves, she was told. She could see about a dozen small ramshackle houses and shops, scattered along a dusty street on a creek. Towering in the background was a formidable hill of red rock, making the town seem even hotter. By now, she knew the drill: no going ashore until all formalities were followed. Customs and Immigration Officers checked papers and passenger lists, and then the local health officer met with Dr Mohs.

“There were no cases of sickness on the ship’s arrival,” reported the *Brisbane Courier* several days later, “and the ship’s doctor, Dr Mohs, may congratulate himself on his success in landing his charges in such good condition.” There were three fewer passengers at the voyage’s end, however, for throughout the 17 weeks, there had been four births aboard, and seven deaths including three infants, three toddlers and one sixteen-year-old man, the majority having died of dysentery. Of course, the most recent death was of the oldest passenger aboard, Fred Pribbenow, who passed away between Maryborough and Townsville. He had almost arrived.

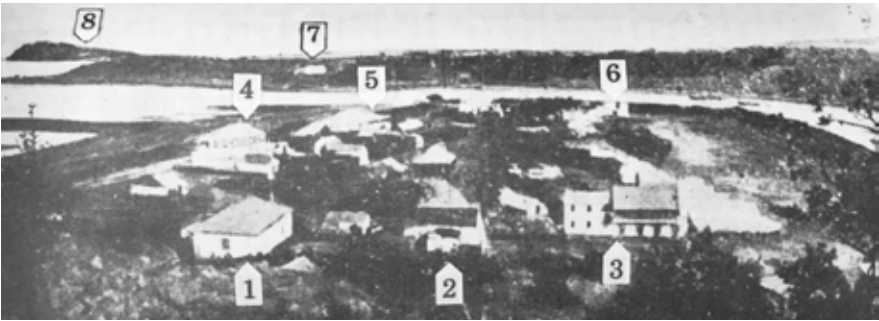
The only downside to the arrival was an Italian who became light-headed while aboard, and ran off into neighbouring bush on arrival at the wharf. The paper also reported that police and black trackers were set in motion, and “he is probably now in custody.” It was not a happy beginning for this fellow, thought Julia. Perhaps 17 weeks at sea was too much for the poor man. That was another new word, ‘black trackers’. She must ask about that one.

Finally, around mid-afternoon, after 17 weeks at sea, all 300 migrants filed ashore to their new home, their new country hopefully, to have all their cherished dreams finally realised. The rains came long before sunset and caused some drama as local officials quickly erected tents for the new migrants. Julia, Karen, and the other single women were given shelter on the floor of the old printing office. Townsville was only ten years old, but

THE DANISH GIRL



Townsville: The stores and wharves of Clifton & Aplin Bros, ca. 1870, near the corner of Flinders and Denham Streets. Ross Island has partly been cleared of mangroves. In the distance are cotton and sugar plantations. — JOL



The mouth of Ross Creek from Melton Hill, ca. 1870. (1) Court and Customs House; (2) Telegraph Office; (3) Tattersalls Hotel; (4) North Australian Hotel; (5) Criterion Hotel; (6) Police Station and Lockup; (7) Hospital; (8) Magazine. — Jubilee Carnival Programme, 1913

already a building was called old. It was indeed a good sign that this town was flourishing and making progress economically.

After stowing their few meagre possessions in the building, they returned to the dock area where a huge picnic was served to the 300 new migrants. The offerings included bread, fish, meat, bananas, tomatoes, and even beer. There were no complaints, and in fact many said it was the best meal and the best sleep they had had since leaving Europe all those months ago. Next day, many were offered immediate employment in the town as labourers and domestics. Some single women and men and families went south to Bowen and Mackay the following day, but Julia and Karen decided to stay in Townsville, with the hope they could get work there or even on the goldfields opening up to the north and the west.

TOWNSVILLE

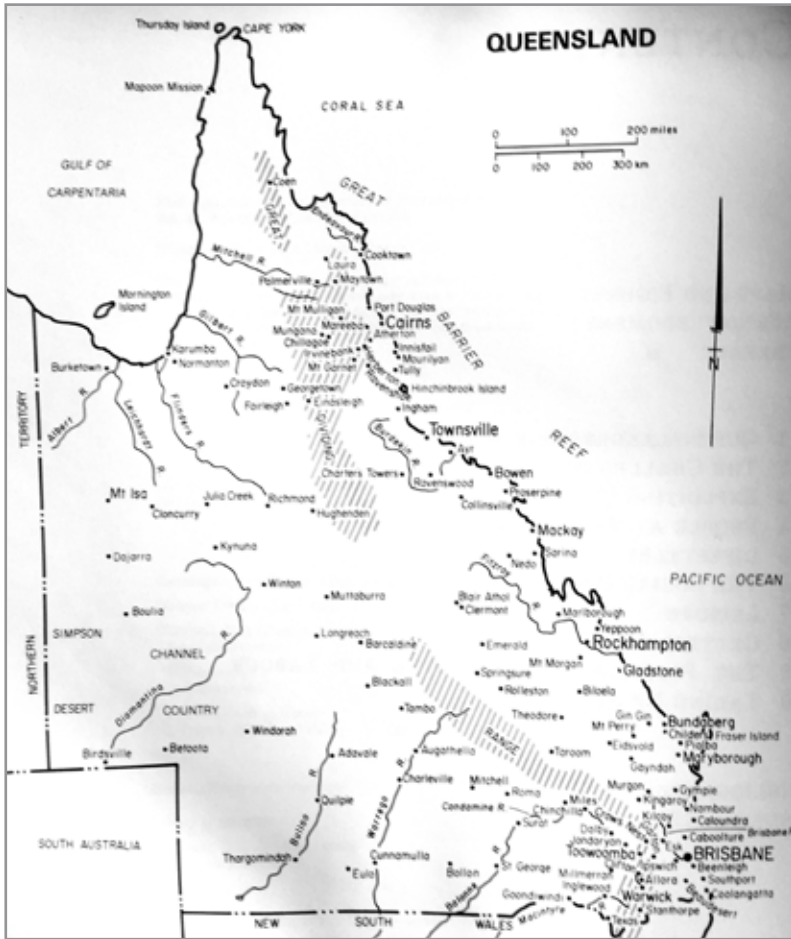


Townsville Post Office between 1867 and 1875. — John Oxley Library

At the time of the *Lammershagen's* arrival, there were newspaper articles both in Townsville and Brisbane decrying the lack of decent accommodation for these new immigrants. Someone remarked that Townsville had a fine and expensive bond store for the convenience of the thirsty population, and surely “when we land a cargo far more important, we should provide a proper migrant depot, not a few rotten tents and wet ground to sleep upon. The pots and pans which were served out to all these people were of such a description that few were in serviceable condition, holes and cracks being the predominant feature.” The journalist added, “however, all has gone off merrily and everyone is satisfied.” That was just how Julia and Karen felt: welcomed, rested, fed and about to be offered new jobs in a new land.

There was much excitement in the town, not just for the newly-arrived, but also for the locals who shared the fever, as many businesses required employees. The girls were keen at last to wash all their clothes. Washing in seawater was simply not satisfactory, and the Government officials also paid for them to have a real bath with fresh towels and soap in a local hotel. They had both enjoyed the sewing rosters on board and were rewarded with many garments to add to the very few pieces they had on leaving Hamburg. They had both decided to dispense with two of their petticoats, keeping only one for good wear. In the steamy, tropical weather, a petticoat was an encumbrance so Matron Hanson had advised them to cut down the petticoats into underwear and simpler skirts. They had also stopped wearing thick stockings.

THE DANISH GIRL



The distance between Brisbane and Townsville is 1345 km (836 miles) compared with the length of Denmark, north to south, which is around 402 km (250 miles).

By the afternoon of their second day in Townsville, February 20, 1874, they had been offered several jobs, some as domestics on pastoral properties many miles west and north, and others as barmaids and domestics and waitresses in the dozen or so hotels in town.

Karen was keen to try her hand on a cattle station, but Julia still had negative memories of being compromised by the man of the house when she was a domestic in Denmark. This is why she accepted a position in the Hotel Retreat, owned and run by Tom Gleeson and his family, who had migrated from Ireland 10 years before.

FIVE



Life in Townsville

*Farewell to you my friend
Even though we are far apart
Your memory shall stay with me to the end
You have made your home deep in my heart.*

THERE WERE MORE FAREWELLS, as Julia bade her close friend Karen goodbye, not envying her one little bit to be working on a lonely cattle station, a day's journey from Townsville, though of course they would see each other when Karen occasionally came to town for a free day or two to herself. There were also many goodbyes to the people with whom they had shared more than four months aboard the *Lammershagen*, all that long way from Europe.

Julia had not been keen to go to Cairns or Bowen with the others, since she wanted to get her bearings here in Townsville. Also she wanted to send those many accumulated letters about the boat journey home to Denmark, and to add fresh news about this new village of Townsville. Naturally, the sooner that her letter left on the next boat, the sooner she would receive family news in return, for which she was aching. She hoped the letters would not take 17 weeks to get there, and trusted that they would get to Denmark aboard a steamer which was becoming a more commonplace method of transport now.

It was winter in Denmark, and there would still be snow around her parents' cottage. The days would be short, and all of the domestic chores there would be so difficult to complete. What a contrast with this new life, where the temperature was high at 5am and was still high after sunset. Those tropical downpours each afternoon! She had never seen such rain—though it was all over in 20 or 30 minutes, leaving the temperature slightly cooler, and the trees, shrubs and plants fresh and dust free. On the other

hand, the dirty streets could quite easily turn to muddy swamps, and as yet there were no gutters to control the water flow. Well, if Townsville continued to prosper and grow, amenities such as sealed roads and gutters would arrive shortly.

What frightened Julia more was the threat of tropical cyclones which could arrive each year from November to March. As far as she knew from the Gleasons, Townsville had been spared these destructive events in its young ten year life, but the threat was always lurking, plus many houses and buildings were flimsy in this fledgling township. Most dwellings were constructed of timber, the small rough ones on the edge of town having dirt floors. The gently sloping hills rising from the Ross River held more substantial homes, with wide verandahs, and some with decorative iron lace work. Most of them were on wooden stilts, to keep away snakes, rats, torrents of water in summer, and most of all, to keep the home cool.

Back in Denmark, Julia had vowed never to accept work as a domestic again but here she was, a domestic and a chambermaid at the Hotel Retreat. She was familiar with the work and good at it, and this allowed her time to accumulate money and to improve her English before venturing further afield. The lure of the goldfields still beckoned.

The Hotel, built in 1871, was on the road to Ravenswood and Charters Towers and the Gulf. It was ideally situated beside a permanent waterhole and adjacent to the camping ground for the carriers before they began their journey inland, transporting freight and the necessities of life to those in the remote areas of the vast northern and western region. Mr Gleeson had owned the hotel for three years now, and she could see that it was busy but well-maintained. The bonus was that Mrs Gleeson provided a bedroom for her, and of course, all meals. It was perfect.

The Gleasons were happy with her English, and said that it wasn't perfect, but it was sufficient and would improve quickly, as she met and conversed with the many people in the dining room and with other staff.

The hotel had two levels of timber construction, with a bar, dining rooms, the Gleeson family bedrooms and two staff bedrooms on the ground level. On the upper level were ten small bedrooms, mainly rented by young single men, on their way further west or north or back south to Brisbane. There was an occasional married couple also, but it was a rarity. Of course, this disparity in the sexes was the reason that the Queensland



Ross Creek is in the foreground of this view of Townsville ca. 1890. Around 16 years earlier, Julia had landed in the town. — SLQ API-057-01-0010

Government was paying for women's migration to the state. Eventually, Queensland would be a more gender-balanced society and far more acceptable to live in. Julia was to be a part of this huge transition and this massive social change.

At the rear of the hotel, but close to the dining room, was the kitchen, close enough for the ease of serving meals, but not too close in case of fire in the wood stove. Also out the back was the toilet, a timber and iron construction, to be used by staff and guests day and night. Chamber pots were to be used sparingly, if at all.

So Julia swept, dusted, made the beds, emptied chamber pots, and washed sheets and bedding and kitchen items. Naturally, the laundry method was similar to that at home, with timber burning underneath a huge copper boiler full of water. The clothing was placed inside, soap flakes were grated, and all was stirred with a timber pole. There were two rinses in clean cold water, then items went through the mangle to squeeze out excess water. Next, everything went onto the lines which were slung up between two trees in the garden behind the hotel.

Julia even had to deliver cups of tea in the morning to the men's rooms, and this she did not like at all, but she became adept at dodging groping

hands. She served three meals a day in the dining room, often receiving tips from grateful diners. This all added to her savings. It was helpful that Mrs Gleeson provided her with a lockable bedroom, all meals, and in addition, one pound each week.

The days were long, the work could be very physical, but she had company and this diverted her attention from sad thoughts of family in Denmark. She realised that it would be August at the earliest before she would receive news from home—so she waited and worked and made more friends.

There was so much that was new to enjoy and surprise her. She marvelled at the huge gum trees, some with rough straight trunks and soft green, grey leaves. Others had pale, greyish-white trunks, called ghost gums; others were the same pale colour but were embellished with vertical scribbles along the trunks. Mr Gleeson informed her that they were caused by a small grub eating the bark. She loved the name, 'Scribbly gums'. How appropriate, and another word for her growing list. No soft, green, pine trees here. Also there were some stands of palm trees along the shore out of town, where she loved walking during her occasional free time. This was in the evenings, after dinner was served and the washing-up was done. This was when she saw kangaroos sprinting through the scrub and the bush, and occasionally a female carrying a young joey in her pouch. What a fantastic sight, which she loved writing home about!

The bird life was exquisite, with flocks of cockatoos screeching overhead. They were white, with yellow crests, and bombed the blossoms in the treetops. Her favourites were the red and green parrots, busily sucking flowers from the banksias and the melaleucas in the early morning or evening, with much squeaking and squawking and squabbling.

Mrs Gleeson was a fund of knowledge about the bird life and the vegetation. Every day, Julia was learning so much and heard so many new English words to add to the lists in her notebook. Dawn was the best time to see and hear the bird life. She really loved the magpies with their melodious warblings. She enjoyed watching the crows dominate and attack other birds, in their competitive fights for food and territory. As Mrs Gleeson told her the names of the birds and trees, she jotted them in a notebook in her pocket, in order to memorise and detail them in letters

home. She didn't even know the Danish words for cockatoos or parrots or wallabies or kangaroos.

She was sorely tempted to swim in the creek or down on the beach, but everyone warned her about crocodiles that would kill you with one snap of their almighty jaws. What a shame! She was also warned to take care of snakes on her walks in the bush, most of which she was told would cause death instantly. Apparently, Australia had the highest number of venomous snakes in the world. She was glad the agent back in Denmark had not told her that piece of information! When out for her bush walks she maintained a vigilant eye for snakes, so she always made plenty of noise so as to scare them off.

Her first sighting came not in the bush but at the rear of the hotel. She bent down in the wood shed to collect more logs for the fire under the washing tub, when she heard a rustle and jumped back in fright. She spotted a long, black sinuous reptile with a beautiful red underbelly slithering to the back of the shed. Her heart was pounding as she ran into the hotel to report the sighting. Later that morning, Mr Gleeson informed her that he had found and killed it. She was relieved of course, but also a little sad that such a wonderful creature had to die. The Gleesons had many snake stories to tell that night at dinner, and knew several men who had died from the bites. The advice was to lay the victim down, keep them still, incise the snake bite with a penknife, cover the wound, splint the limb and hope they survived. Apparently some did, and it was thought that perhaps not much venom had been injected. Aboriginals had much the same method: lay the person down, suck out the venom, spit it out, rub the leaves of the acacia tree into the wound and then cover it with mud. The victim was to lay unmoving for five days, the family bringing water and food, until death or recovery. Julia had too much to write in those letters home.

From her bed at night, she could hear the hoot of an owl and sometimes even a dingo howling, as well as the sad, plaintive cry of the curlews.

Mosquitoes were a huge drawback. On her evening walks, they would descend on her fair skin in droves, so she ensured that she applied citronella to any exposed skin—but in bed at night, it was difficult to sleep if they came buzzing and biting. She tried a mosquito net but she found it making her hotter and claustrophobic. Finally, she heeded Mrs Gleeson's

advice and burned cow dung in a jam tin. This was successful and she even became accustomed to the smell. What would her mother say!

Mrs Gleeson had a small garden behind the hotel where she grew corn, tomatoes and onions, but she had little time to spend there, nor did Julia. Mostly they relied for fresh produce on the market garden run by a Chinese man, Lenny Leong, who had been in Townsville since its inception ten years previously. He was one of the thousands of Chinese who came to Australia for its gold, but it was a tough life and made worse by marauding aborigines and angry white Australians who saw the Chinese as competitors. Lenny had settled happily in Townsville but missed his family back in China. In her occasional free time, Julia would walk to the garden, survey the fruit and vegetables, do an occasional purchase for the hotel kitchen, but mostly have a pleasant chat with Mr Leong.

His English was better than Julia's, and he helped her a lot with new words describing the produce he grew, the birds, the animals, and the surrounding native trees. She enjoyed browsing through his garden, especially the orchard of fruit trees, bananas, papaya, and mangoes just budding now. These were fruits she had never seen or eaten in Denmark.

SIX



Still in Townsville

AUGUST CAME AND WENT, and still there were no letters from Denmark. There was a ship arriving almost daily from Brisbane or even from the north, where steam ships were now sailing from Europe. She would not leave Townsville until she had news from Denmark and home. After six months, she had grown settled here and was happy at the hotel with her work and her kind employers, and had made friends with young women who worked in the other hotels or shops. All the time her English was improving and her savings were growing. There was always exciting news about gold discoveries to the north and the west, in a place called the Palmer River, which was more remote than Townsville and even hotter. When the time was right, that's where she would go.

Meantime, she watched as the town grew in population with more buildings and services. Indeed, Townsville was developing quickly, from a tiny port in 1864 to serve the fledgling pastoral industry. Boiling down works, sugar and cotton plantations, and the first newspapers were all established by 1866, with a population then of just 300. It was now the major port and service centre for the Cooper and Gilbert Rivers, Ravenswood, and the Charters Towers goldfields. One year before Julia's arrival, a mercantile business had begun called Burns Philp and Company. When she arrived in February 1874, the population was 2,400.

There were now ten hotels, a small school, a hospital and several doctors. Even the race track was established. People would attend a race meeting, even in the pouring rain. Julia had never been to a horse race in Denmark, so here was another new experience. Of course, when she had the opportunity, she dressed in her best and attended with her new friends. There was even a lemonade, soda water and cordial factory on the seafront. In addition to the three doctors, there were two chemists who were also dentists, and they operated their businesses in the Apothecaries Hall on the Strand. In fact,

these two men were the only medically trained people until those doctors arrived in 1866. Of course, lots of businesses operated for the growing population, and these included stock and station agents, bootmakers, saddlers, dressmakers, builders, butchers and bakers, and general merchants. Three dairies had been established and there was even a vineyard.

Townsville had almost failed in the 1860s because the pastoral industry had declined then, but it battled on and was saved by the success of the boiling down works where tallow and beef extract were made. Two cotton gins were also erected nearby, along with the slaughter yards, sorting houses, cottages, joinery works and sawmills. Wool was also arriving in the town from sheep stations to the west, before transfer to Sydney. The farming industry also contributed to Townsville's prosperity, with maize, coconut and sugar plantations. Sugarcane seedlings were imported from the Pacific Islands, along with cotton from Robert Towns' farm on the Logan River near Brisbane. In addition to all this industry came gold discoveries to the north and the west, which was another stimulus for Townsville's development.

In the 1860s, before Julia's arrival, there were no churches or clergy, so funerals and marriages were conducted in the courthouse by government officials. Occasionally, Anglican or Catholic priests would arrive from Bowen to conduct services. Now, in 1874, most churches were represented and each had its own minister. Julia enjoyed attending the Church of England on Sundays with Mrs Gleeson's children. She dressed in her best, with bonnet, gloves and her nicest leather shoes. It was such a social occasion in the town.

It was now September, and Julia reflected on the end of the winter months. It was nothing like the winter of Europe, but so much more enjoyable than the summer weather when she had arrived. The winter months were dry also, with fewer mosquitoes to inflict pain and itch.

There was still quite an imbalance of the sexes in Townsville, so Julia had many advances made towards her, whether at the hotel when working, or out walking, or at church or at the occasional dance. She never attended the dances alone, but was accompanied by Mrs Gleeson if she was free, or by Karen when she was in town. Julia made it clear to any suitor that she was not interested in romance or marriage at this stage. She was still young and seeking adventure before settling down to husband and family.

She had been approached by the owner of the Criterion Hotel to take up employment there since her duties would be somewhat different from those at the Hotel Retreat. The owner explained that she would be serving in the bar, of course, but would also be available to the men who requested her company in their bedrooms. The pay would be double what she was receiving at her hotel. There was a drastic shortage of women in Townsville, but Julia said a firm no, and remained working for the Gleasons.

The dances were fun, with music provided by locals with accordions, fiddles, tin whistles and a piano. Local women prepared small suppers and there were soft drinks, beer and spirits for sale. There was no refrigeration, of course, and not even an ice supply until 1883, so beer and soft drinks were served warm. Julia was used to this. Kegs were cooled slightly by covering them with wet sugar bags.

When October 1874 arrived, Julia had been here now for eight months, and at last there was news from home! She was so excited. She was desperate for family gossip. Her father Carl, now 56, was well and still working as a dyer in Vesterbolle where he had worked for thirty years.

Her mother, Johannah, 52, was also healthy, and was still running a home and working locally as a domestic. The big news was that her older sister, Elisa, aged 25, had married a local lad just three months after Julia had left Denmark. She was now expecting a baby. Elisa's twin sister, Dorothea, and Amelia (Emilie), the next youngest (24), were still working as domestics near Hadsund. Anna, 20, was back at home and helping her mother. Laura, 18, was now working in the same factory as her father. The three younger girls, Emma, Othilde, and Theodora, were still at school. In short, the family home was still busy with her parents and five sisters.

How she yearned to see them again, to touch them, to speak in Danish, to sing Danish folk songs, to cook the local foods, to cuddle her baby sister, Theodora, and to share the gossip of boyfriends with the others. She knew that it was not to be. She had struck out on her adventure and she had no regrets, just the occasional pang of sadness. She had been waiting for that letter from home, waiting contentedly while she worked and saved—but now she wished the next step in the adventure would begin.

Her position in the hotel enabled her to meet many men travelling to and from the goldfields to the north and the west of Townsville. Charters Towers was about three years old now, having been established after the discovery of a gold nugget in 1871. It was only 90 miles to the west. Closer still was Ravenswood only 40 miles away. It was slightly older than Charters Towers and also a pastoral area.

The newest place causing much excitement all over Australia and indeed the world was the Palmer River. Gold had only been discovered there in the previous year by James Mulligan, but already finds of gold were so substantial that there was a virtual stampede occurring. It was a lot further away, however—400 miles north-west of Townsville.

She was told that people could make a quick fortune on a small mining site. It would be a challenge getting there, requiring first a boat from Townsville to Cairns, then a coach to Maytown on the Palmer, another 180 miles.

Another option was to take a boat from Townsville to Cooktown, further north of Cairns, and then from there a bullock dray, which altogether was slightly shorter at 140 miles. She had much to consider, about where to go, and when. It was already hot and humid and the summer had not yet officially begun. She decided to wait for the end of summer, and the end of the wet season which made roads to the north and west almost impossible. Perhaps she would take her leave in April and strike out for Ravenswood, only 40 miles away. That was much less of a challenge.

SEVEN



Farewell to Townsville

THIS WAS, OF COURSE, her very first Christmas in Australia, and certainly only the first of many more to come. How different from the winter Christmas back in Denmark, with the cold, the snow, warm fires, being indoors most of the time, and the short days and long nights. Here in Townsville, people did not celebrate Christmas on the night of the 24th, Christmas Eve, as did all of Europe. Here in Australia it was lunch on the 25th December, with raging hot temperatures, flies, mosquitoes and often pouring rain. In spite of the stifling heat, still a hot meal was prepared, paying homage to where most people came from, that is England, Ireland and Scotland. Julia woke early, as was a requirement, performed all of her hotel duties, and then helped prepare the Christmas meal for the hotel patrons and the family.

Stuffing was prepared for the chickens and into the ovens they went, all 12 of them, followed by potatoes, pumpkin, onions and carrots. A custard was made to accompany the plum puddings, made a month before and still in their muslin cloths in a cool place. There was much beer served, cordials for the children and non-drinkers, ginger beer from the local factory, even sweets and chocolates sent all the way from Brisbane.

Julia had made a special decoration for the table. In Denmark, it was traditional to have a wreath made of mistletoe, with four candles placed in the arrangement, a candle being added each Sunday in December. Everyone loved it! It was indeed pretty even though it was quite inappropriate in this bright light and hot temperature.

Mr and Mrs Gleeson had a gift for Julia—a box of embroidered handkerchiefs, all the way from Melbourne. Julia had made presents for the children—dressed dolls on pegs for the two girls, and she had carved toy soldiers from camphor laurel trees for the three boys. One of the hotel guests played the piano quite acceptably, and everyone sang carols and

songs from their native lands. Julia didn't know all the words, of course. Perhaps by next Christmas she would, but she treated them all to some Christmas songs sung in Danish which they loved. What a memorable Christmas it was. She counted ten nationalities present for lunch. This was even more than the previous Christmas aboard the *Lammershagen* in the Atlantic Ocean. Much had happened in these past 12 months. It was a very special day, her first Christmas in Australia, not her last, but tinged with a slight sadness for her family.

The Townsville summer was almost unbearable for this young woman from Europe. From December to March it rained in great sheets, usually starting at about 5pm and continuing sometimes for an hour, sometimes on and off all night. The dirt roads became slippery, and one had to be careful walking everywhere. Drays often became bogged, requiring much effort to be extracted. It was difficult to get washing done too.

All during the summer months, Julia was preparing and planning for when she would leave Townsville. She had saved £50, had made some more suitable clothes for the hot climate, and in early April 1875, she farewelled the Gleasons who had been so kind to her. With one smallish bag, she began the 40-mile, two-day journey to Ravenswood, by horse and carriage. It was still a rather hot journey, but there was a stop every two or three hours to rest the horses, the drivers and the six passengers.

The landscape was different from coastal Townsville—no palm trees now, more eucalypt species. Likewise no habitation the further they moved from the coast. Every ten miles or so, she glimpsed signs of native dwellings in the bush, primitive bark and timber huts, and smoke from cooking fires, but the aborigines never approached the coach as it made its way along the rough track.

She had seen the occasional native in Townsville, since some worked as employees on cattle stations west of the settlement, and accompanied the owner on visits to the town, when purchasing supplies or selling cattle. This was the first time she had seen a black man up close, apart from those few along the banks of the Mary River, and she was quite startled at first. He was much taller than the local white men, with masses of black wiry hair, wide flat nostrils, and very dark eyes. He had kept his eyes cast down, avoiding any eye contact at all. Of course, as an employee, he was required



Cobb and Co's coach leaving Calley's Hotel at Port Douglas for Granite Creek and Herberton by way of the bump road, 1883.

to wear clothes, but generally the aborigines were naked, except in winter, when they maintained warmth with kangaroo skins.

There was one overnight stop at a very small inn which offered the bare essentials when it came to food and sleep, and then it was onto Ravenswood. The Gleasons assured her she would easily find a position in any one of the three hotels. Gold had been discovered there in 1867, and by the time Julia arrived in 1875, 1,500 people were living there, working the mines and providing services in shops and hotels. There were also 300 Chinese running the market gardens which kept the goldfields supplied with fresh fruit and vegetables. There was a small post office, a police station, and even a School of Arts building where the miners could meet after work to chat and read books and newspapers. It was also used for dances, concerts and live theatre.

There was even a corrugated iron and wooden Temple which the Chinese had erected to continue their worship. Somehow, they were prevented from working in the batteries, but fortunately, the Australians were glad of their prowess with farming and cultivation.

Julia had a job the day after her arrival. The letter of referral from the Gleasons surely helped to secure for her the position of domestic in the Imperial Hotel. It was not as large or as lavish as the Criterion Hotel in Townsville, but adequate. Again, she had her own room with meals

supplied. Her English was quite proficient now, and she was even learning slang words, though she was very careful about using them, as she knew full well the men often blasphemed, even at the bar and in the dining room. The men worked hard—she could see that—and ate enormous quantities of food at the hotel, and could certainly imbibe much ale.

When gold was first discovered here, they concentrated on alluvial gold in the creeks, but soon it was realised that it actually came from quartz reefs. When Julia arrived, there were five batteries in operation, her favourite being the Mabel Mill. She thinks that it was the name really that attracted her, as one of her childhood friends was also named Mabel. In fact, she loved the name so much that she promised herself that if she ever had a daughter she would call her Mabel.

The town itself was much smaller than Townsville, being only eight years old, but still it had many shanty houses of canvas, bark, and cut timber. The surrounding landscape was sadly denuded of most trees, as the timber was used to stoke the boilers to drive the batteries and other machinery to process the gold. It was also extremely noisy, more so than Townsville, but she quickly accustomed herself to this.

It was now more than a year since her arrival in Australia. What an adventure she was having, with a new language, new landscape, new people and experiences. In the hotel bar and dining room, she kept her ears open for gossip about other gold towns, and often asked questions, now that her English had improved.

Occasionally, she detected the Danish language being spoken, or even just the accent, and excitedly indulged in conversation with men from her native land. There was never fresh news, just the same sad tales of poverty, unemployment and hardship after the war with Germany.



JULIA WAS OBSESSED with the Palmer River and the lure of gold—but the Palmer River was much further to the north, and purported to be the richest gold deposit in the world. How exciting her plan was now, after three months in Ravenswood, to make her way north-west to Charters Towers, also a rich gold town, more so than Ravenswood.

Gold was found in Charters Towers in 1871 and by year's end there were 4,500 people living and working there, making it bigger and

FAREWELL TO TOWNSVILLE

better than Ravenswood by far, and only 55 miles away. Again she bid farewell to her employers, and armed with yet another favourable letter of introduction, paid her ticket on the weekly horse-drawn coach to Charters Towers.

She would have liked another few months in Ravenswood but she did not want to travel in the summer heat. Early August 1875 saw her arriving in the Towers, as it was known then. This was a town more the size of Townsville, but slightly more primitive, still with shanties and canvas dwellings as in Ravenswood, just more of them. There were also several modern buildings in timber and stone and brick which were so much more substantial and attractive.

Julia was taken straight to her new employment at the Saint Patrick's Hotel, to meet the owners Mr and Mrs Murphy, who had migrated to Australia from Ireland in the 1850s as a result of the potato famine.



A cart stands outside St Vincent's Dance House at Charters Towers in 1878. On the left of the photograph is the Royal Hotel at the corner of Marion and Mosman Streets. — SLQ 20489

EIGHT



Cooktown

HERE SHE WAS IN COOKTOWN, unbelievably so as this was not her plan when she had arrived in Charters Towers in August 1875. She had talked and talked with the local gold miners, the local business owners, and the Murphys for whom she worked at the hotel, and could sense that the fever pitch for gold had shifted way north to the Palmer River, 450 miles from Charters Towers.

The advice was not to leave it too late to get there as the cyclone season would start in November and make the sea voyage dangerous. In other words, she should arrive in Cooktown by early November. As a result, her stay in Charters Towers was short-lived, only ten weeks. She often puzzled over this urge to keep moving, and the attraction of the gold rush. She could only imagine that it related to the very stable and unchanging lives which people lived in Denmark, with most folk staying anchored to their places of birth—and there was no gold in Denmark.

She had retraced her route back to Townsville via Ravenswood, reuniting with the hotel owners there, and of course, the Gleasons in Townsville. All were pleased to see her again and it was a happy reunion for her also. She booked her sea passage from Townsville to Cooktown, 400 miles to the north. She recalled that it was almost two years since her departure from Denmark in October 1873.

The Gleasons in Townsville had mail for her from her family, which she hungrily read and re-read. She had kept all her letters from home, and they gave her such comfort. She was never lonely, but occasionally felt a twinge of homesickness and a desire to see her sisters and parents once again. Two years had been sufficient time to forget that arduous 17 week voyage across the world. She could easily manage this one—only 400 miles, roughly four days and in a steamship. Things indeed were changing. The fare did deplete her savings a little, since it cost one pound

10 shillings, but she knew there was always work for her because of her good reputation, which was relayed in the letters of introduction and recommendation she was now accumulating.

Thankfully, the seas had been kind and it was quite an enjoyable four-day voyage, sharing the time with others also making their way to Cooktown and beyond. Below decks were 40 horses, each horse's passage costing more than Julia's.

The *Leichhardt* entered the mouth of the Endeavour River just before midday, but not far away along the river was a cacophony of activity. The young town had only been settled three years before. Men were hurrying to and fro, tents were rising in all directions, horses were grazing and neighing, and all around were the shouts of sailors and labourers landing more horses and cargo, and this combined with the rattling of a donkey engine, cranes and chains.

There were thousands of people already in Cooktown, those on their way to the goldfields on the Palmer River, and those starting up businesses. Merchandise of all sorts was being sold, most of it arriving by ship from China, much less from Brisbane and Sydney.

Julia was by now skilled at disembarking, quickly appraising the surroundings and finding accommodation and work, mostly in combination. There were by now 63 hotels along the two-mile stretch of Charlotte Street in Cooktown. Some were of canvas, while others were more attractive and substantial, made of timber or corrugated iron. She chose the most salubrious one closest to the wharves and made her way there, carrying her small valuables and important references. Once again, she quickly had a job and a bed, in the Criterion Hotel, and once again the hoteliers were Irish, also refugees from the potato famine. She quickly slipped into her new position, learning all she could about this new town.

It was booming, she could see that, and was Queensland's second busiest port after Brisbane. It was the government administration centre for the Palmer goldfields, and more and more ships laden with gold miners were arriving from the southern parts of Australia and overseas. The town also boasted 20 eating houses, 32 stores, six butchers, five bakers, three tinsmiths, four tentmakers, six hairdressers, seven blacksmiths, and a number of doctors, chemists, bootmakers and saddlers. It even had a Customs house, several banks and a post office. Among the buildings was

THE DANISH GIRL

a new weatherboard brothel owned by 'Palmer Kate', who had with her a dozen young prostitutes from Brisbane. At night, the main street was lit up from one end to the other, by way of the kerosene lamps that burned in the pubs, dance halls, gambling dens and brothels.

Ten months before Julia's arrival, the first shipload of Chinese miners had stepped ashore from the *Victoria*. By the end of 1875, shortly after her arrival, the Chinese outnumbered the Europeans by three to one on the Palmer goldfields. This almost coincided with the beginning of the monsoon rains, and the local newspapers reported that the town was full of failed gold miners begging for food. Illness and disease abounded, and there were even 110 deaths. Dysentery reached epidemic proportions, and in the absence of a hospital, the police station was full with the sick and the dying.

Not only did the Chinese outnumber Europeans, but men outnumbered women by an even bigger ratio, more like ten to one. As with Julia, the women were here to work. Some were migrants from Europe given a free passage, while others were from the southern states looking for jobs and husbands. There was plenty of work to be had here, whether



Chinese miners on the Australian goldfields in the 1860s. — Photo (on left) by Richard Daintree

in the pubs and shops, or as domestics in the homes of the wealthy, and of course, as prostitutes. Julia would not go down that pathway, even though the money was much, much better. With her religious and family background she had her morals and her standards.

She was enjoying Cooktown since the work was busy but satisfying, and again, she had her own room and all meals supplied, along with one free day each week. She often spent that time with Frederika, also from Denmark, who was a little older than her. They packed a picnic lunch and headed inland a mile or so, enjoying the quiet, the trees, the birds, and the occasional sighting of a family of kangaroos. They looked for koalas in the trees but never saw them.

The advice was not to go too far from Charlotte Street as they might encounter unfriendly aborigines. It was understandable that there was trouble, since their hunting grounds and fishing areas were being taken over by Europeans, keen to clear the scrub for habitation. They never saw them in Cooktown itself, as the police were quick to send them on their way if they sauntered into the town. Occasionally, when Julia and Frederika ventured further east along the river, they spied groups of natives fishing in their outrigger canoes. The young women were warned against swimming because of the prevalent crocodiles. On one afternoon walk they spotted a dingo, alone and quite scrawny, but they backed slowly away as they had been advised.

Another enjoyable pursuit was to visit the docks on the river, which were always bustling with activity, with people embarking and disembarking, horses and cows being offloaded, and boxes and crates of goods heading to the Cooktown shops, or out to the goldfields on the Palmer River. Just before Julia's arrival, a powder magazine of brick was constructed on the docks so as to store the huge quantity of explosives required on the goldfields beyond Cooktown.

Saturday evening was a delight since there was always a dance or a concert at the Catholic Church which had been built only the year before. She and Frederika attended the opposition on Sundays, the Church of England, a wonderful place for praying quietly and socialising afterwards. Of course, people dressed in their very best, and Julia enjoyed admiring the fashions since the very latest in fabrics, hats, gloves and shoes were on display. There was much wealth in this town, and people loved flaunting

it. She had always enjoyed sewing and dressmaking, skills taught to her by her mother, and now used out of necessity. This harsh climate meant that the clothes worn every day were lighter and simpler than those back in Denmark. Sundays were different and provided an opportunity for display, in spite of the weather. It was a relief to shed the multiple layers of heavy clothing after church.

If the weather wasn't too hot, and it wasn't raining, they walked to the top of Grassy Hill which gave wonderful views out to sea. Captain Cook and his men had also done this, nearly 100 years before, while they repaired their ship, the *Endeavour*. During the night, it had run aground on a coral atoll, spearing an enormous hole in the side. They had stayed six weeks there until the ship was repaired and they sailed north once more.

On board that vessel was Joseph Solander, a compatriot of Julia's from Sweden, a naturalist who was employed by the British Government to seek out, collect and draw all the exotic plants he could discover in this vast, new, southern continent.

Julia had learned this from the minister at her church, a man extremely interested in the history of this new town, young though it was. Julia complained to him that she still had not seen a koala. He explained that the best time was at night, and agreed to take both Julia and Frederika to the top of Grassy Hill for a likely viewing. In his opinion everything looked better at night, especially 500 feet up the hill. It was called Janellganell by the local aborigines. He also thought Australia was a nocturnal country. "Everything looked better at night. You don't notice the dryness or the space or the heat. The kangaroos, possums and koalas often sleep through the hot days and come out at night." True to his word, and just before a brilliant sunrise, they spotted possums and a family of koalas.

Julia was working the evening shift at the hotel on New Year's Eve and was caught up in the wild celebrations to welcome in 1876. The brass trumpets and drums of the Fire Brigade Band thundered out "God Save the Queen" as the revellers went wild. English migrants gave three cheers for Queen Victoria—though not the Irish who would rather have cheered the Pope. A few minutes after midnight the mood of mateship pulled together these diverse people who had come to this new land of space and sunshine and hope.

NINE



To the Goldfields

*Gold upon the mountainside
Gold in rock and river
Gold in men whose spirits ride
From the vast forever.
To seek again the better time
Their loves, and lusts, the flowered rhyme
The warm red days that softened crime
Back of never never.*
— VICTOR KENNEDY

THE WET SEASON drifted interminably on, with mosquitoes and sandflies a terrible nuisance, but Julia now knew how to solve this problem. The best remedy she found was a dab of honey which stopped the itch and prevented infection. She had tried other remedies too: vinegar, baking soda, salt paste—but honey was by far the best. Even here in Cooktown, with so much trade and commerce, honey was expensive. She had heard, again from the minister, that the aborigines had plenty of honey, especially in spring and summer when the trees were full of blossoms. Native honey, it was called, but there was no trade between whites and natives, instead mostly suspicion and animosity.

There was so much excitement about gold on the Palmer River which was only 180 miles to the south-west. The conversation in the bar and the dining room and in the shops, was dominated by gold—and Julia picked up the fever. She would not leave before May, when the rain had finished and the temperature was cooling and the humidity dropping.

Why wasn't she just content to stay in Cooktown, with all of its amenities, a good job and friends? She dwelled on this conundrum a lot, and her final conclusion was that she simply had a thirst for new places, new

experiences and adventure. On the other hand, her friend, Frederika, was staying put. She had just developed a new friendship with an Australian man, nevertheless the girls still enjoyed their free time together. Plenty of men paid attention to Julia as well. She was young, healthy, worked hard, now spoke English well, and yes, after church on Sundays and the dances on Saturday evenings, she did enjoy their company—but she was not yet ready for marriage, a husband or children. She often reflected on the fact that her mother, Johanna, with nine children, all girls, had her last child at the age of 43. How did one ever control the size of a family? No, she would wait for the right time, the right man and the right place.

May was approaching, and Julia was gathering specific information on the journey to Maytown, the main village on the Palmer River goldfield, which was 180 miles away. There were two ways to travel there—either on foot as most Chinese did, or by horse and coach.

One could take the cheaper option costing £1, which paid for the coach and the use of bedding overnight, but you supplied your own food. This option took seven days, as the horses were rested overnight. Her preference was the more expensive choice which involved a journey of four days with a change of horses each midday, so that the coach could travel 50 miles a day, not 25. Also, food and accommodation was provided for the sum of £3. She could afford it since she had worked hard and had been frugal these two years in Queensland.

For several months now, she had enjoyed watching the packers and bullock drovers loading up for the Palmer River goldfields. Charlotte Street became a stirring sight, a great spectacle of noise, excitement and activity. A great deal of transport was done by packers. Some used horses, some used mules, and others used both. The mule was the animal of choice on the rough roads. The crack packer outfit belonged to Ned Finn, called The Flying Packer. He was a small, wiry Irishman, famed for his safe deliveries and quick service. His fee was £100 per ton. A well-packed mule could carry up to 100 tons. Julia noted that the Chinese basket carriers competed with the mules. Some could carry 200 pounds of goods in two baskets slung across their shoulders.

Even in the six months Julia was living in Cooktown, she could see changes happening. Tough living and careless spending meant prosperity in Cooktown. Tents were being replaced with weatherboard, zinc and

corrugated iron structures. Granite from the hills was used to build a few grand houses, and gutters and drains helped to manage the flood of monsoonal rains. Such contrasts in architectural styles were nothing like what you would see in Denmark, thought Julia. There were so many different cultural groups here, and they were not always cohesive—but they all had one aspiration: quick money—gold. Many a night Julia was entertained by riotous drinkers in her hotel singing the “Old Palmer Song”:

I hear the blacks are troublesome
 And spear both horse and man
 The rivers are all wide and deep
 No bridges do them span
 No bridges do them span, my boys
 And you'll never have to swim
 But never fear the yarns you hear
 And gold you're sure to win.

Some of the tales Julia heard told across the bar made her a little frightened of what lay ahead on the goldfields. The battlers coming back from the Palmer River wanted good tucker, fresh tobacco, rum and a bath. They told her of a monotonous diet of roast kangaroo eaten out of a frying pan with a penknife, or fried possum with a strong flavour. No, when they returned to town they wanted steak and kidney pie and mashed potato. They sweetened their damper with eggs snatched from a bird's nest.

That very year, as Julia moved to the Palmer River, a census was taken in North Queensland. The population was roughly 22,000 males and 5,500 females, and half of those males were Chinese. Yes, in her six months in Cooktown, she had seen much. She had seen men with black eyes from drunken brawls use leeches bought at the chemist to reduce the swelling. The ‘damned yella fella’ kept opium dens and cafes with the aromas of incense and Oriental cuisine. They ran gambling shanties, joss houses and brothels, which soothed both the white and yellow clientele.

The whites grumbled and complained that the Chinese were creating a New Canton, but they were content with so much less than the whites. In her letter home from Cooktown, Julia felt she had to censor herself. There was so much to relate, but there was no need to make them fearful for her safety.

Conversations in the hotel had provided her with information about the journey, and it really sounded quite arduous, with narrow, hilly, rocky paths, and creek and river crossings, and the threat of attack by aborigines. Many died on the way, of thirst, starvation, spearing by natives, and attacks by thieves. All of this did not deter the brave, intrepid Julia, who was now just 23 years old. There was yet another farewell to her employers at the hotel, as well as her friend Frederika, and also Father Alridge, the Church of England priest. She obtained yet one more reference and a letter of introduction.

Departure was at 7am, when it was just light, and cool. Her companions were a married couple, a single man her age and three young women, all—like her—hoping for work, money and a new life on the Palmer River. Up front were the two drivers, managing the two fine, strong-looking horses. Well, the horse had to be strong since a very rough track declared itself not far out of Cooktown. The first stop was fine, 25 miles from Cooktown, where the horses were changed, and the drivers and passenger stretched legs. This provided a chance for a drink and to take a little food from what they had brought with them. The only meals included in the price were breakfast and an evening meal. Soon after crossing the Normanby River, they travelled up a series of alarming gradients and curves to a platform known by the drivers as Battle Camp. It was only two years before that natives had speared a teamster. Police came from Cooktown and slaughtered many aborigines in reprisal. It was not a good beginning for race relations.

By dark, they had gone another 25 miles and stayed the night in a shanty hotel, with a shack attached where the horses rested. Bunking down was simple: stretchers lined one side of the hotel, and there was no provision for showers. The following day was going to be a 60-mile leg in order to reach Laura for the night, but again a change of horses halfway ensured this.

The track was like a battlefield, being littered with graves, abandoned equipment, and lonely starved men on their way back to Cooktown with no gold. At the same time, there were the optimists going the other way to Maytown, full of eagerness and hope.

They passed small groups of Chinese who shared their loads. Perhaps one would carry rice only, another iron buckets. Many groaned under

donkey-loads of picks and shovels, dishes and tents, packed in wickerwork baskets and fixed to long bamboo poles. Others, returning to Cooktown with gold in their pockets, were often attacked by thieves and left for dead, their pockets now empty. It was indeed a harsh landscape and a brutal life. What was Julia doing out here? What would her parents and sisters think if they could see her now? Would she describe this journey in the next letter home? She thought not. Better that they didn't know.

Another night passed without incident, this time at the hotel in Laura. It provided all that was needed, including food and shelter for the passengers, drivers and horses. Only earlier that year, a Native Mounted Police camp had been established in Laura so as to protect travellers from natives, thieves and desperate men.

They were warned by the drivers on the third day, that they would be approaching Hell's Gate in the morning. This was a spot notorious for attacks by aborigines. It was narrow and flanked by huge rock walls, which could shield the natives until they suddenly struck. The drivers carried rifles but preferred not to use them. Thankfully, the passage through Hell's Gate that day was without incident. This was the longest day, being 53 miles from Laura to Maytown, and it was only possible with yet another change of horses, and good weather.



The goldfields, North Queensland.

TEN



Maytown

*Fourteen men
And each hung down
Straight as a log
From his toes to his crown.*

*Fourteen men
Chinamen they were
Hanging on the trees
In their pigtailed hair.
Honest poor men
but the diggers said nay
So they strung them all up
On a fine summer's day.*

— MARY GILMORE

THEY ARRIVED IN Maytown just on sunset, all tired, hungry, but alive. Julia was directed to the hotel recommended by her employers in Cooktown, one of many, and fortunately they welcomed her with food, a bed and the promise of a job the very next day. She was far too exhausted to do anything else.

William Hahn had found alluvial gold here in 1873 and that year Mulligan also arrived from Georgetown with a party of five men to establish a goldfield on the Palmer River, with financial incentives from the Queensland Government. It was regarded as an ideal small man's field, for diggers without capital and experience had the opportunity to get rich quickly. The alluvial mining groups tended to concentrate in canvas camps.

Julia could barely wait to rise the following morning to survey the town. The main road, Leslie Street, had stone kerbing and there were various business houses built of stone, corrugated iron, canvas, and rough timber. She counted 12 hotels, six stores, three bakeries, three



'Roll up, roll up' became a common call to Europeans to run the Chinese off the goldfields. This 'roll up' banner is from Lambing Flat (now Young) in New South Wales, where a large mob rallied and attacked Chinese miners in June 1861.

tobacconists, a butcher, a lemonade factory, a surgeon, a post office and a Chinese temple. There was even a School of Arts in the main street, a great boon to those residents who did not enjoy drinking, or playing cards or billiards in their spare time.

Stretching away into the distance were low-lying hills, covered in tents, shanties, and equipment, and they were sadly denuded of trees, as they were required for stoking the machinery. It was noisy and dusty and very busy, with 35,000 people in the main town and surrounding areas, and half of these Chinese. She was already familiar with the Chinese people, having first met them in Townsville on her arrival in 1874, and then in Ravenswood, Charters Towers and Cooktown, but never in these numbers. She was happy to see them here, as they also ran the market gardens, so important in this isolated community. Soon, Julia was to learn that not everyone felt the same way. White miners felt threatened by them, for their ability to work harder and longer, often for more miserable returns.

White miners who had made their way here from the goldfields of Victoria were astounded at the numbers of Chinese and they were the ones who most resented their presence. In fact, a European visitor to the Palmer River in 1876 remarked: "You might almost fancy yourself in China, there are so few whites to be seen."

In 1876, the first steamship, the *Victoria*, arrived in Cooktown from China, and that ensured that the numbers of Chinese boomed. A succession of steamers followed, bringing an average of 1,000 Chinese to the Palmer each month. By 1877, the number of Chinese had reached 18,000, over 90 percent of the field's population. They lived frugally, and survived on fewer provisions than the white men. They worked hard and

were happy to take over abandoned claims, and re-work the soil to find gold that had been missed the first time. The hard work paid off, and it is estimated that in the boom years of 1876 and 1877, more than 50,000 ounces of gold was sent back to China officially, and much more smuggled out to evade tax.

Growing hostility led to the Queensland Government's passing The Chinese Immigrants Act in 1877, which ordered a poll tax to be collected by masters of the ships for each disembarking Chinese person. When even this failed to slow the Chinese arrivals, the Act was amended to increase the tax, and to restrict the Chinese to one person per 50 tons of vessel arriving from China.

Julia's hotel work was familiar, though even busier in a town of this size, but it was not as salubrious as the other three hotels where she had worked. In fact, the hotel was quite a primitive two-level building, with some timber but mostly of corrugated iron. There were six rooms for paying guests, two rooms for the owners, and Julia shared a room with another girl, Maria, also a migrant like Julia, but from Switzerland.

On her first night as she served in the bar, she recognised one of her customers, a tall, slim young man, perhaps a few years older than her, who was also on that three-day coach journey from Cooktown. She remembered his name, Charley, and knew that this was his second visit to the Palmer River. He had been on the expedition trip with Mulligan and others two years before, to establish the area for gold mining.

Julia had one day per week to herself, and she spent this walking the lanes and the bush tracks around Maytown and nearby. The weather was coolish still, and the walking enjoyable, but she could see that conditions were rough, with the diggers working in rocky banks and camping in tents in the nearby bush or living in shanties.

The landscape was pocked with dry mounds of anthills, cleared trees, but what she really loved were the kangaroos, wallabies, black cockatoos and other bird life. As summer approached with hotter temperatures, snakes were often seen, as were spiders, mosquitoes, and flies. When the rain came and filled the rivers and creeks, the occasional crocodile was also spotted. She loved chatting with the locals, in the hotel or in the street, and she was prepared for spider bites and snakebites with bush remedies. For spider bites, the most popular method involved grains of

permanganate of potash in water, rubbed into the bite, or the tobacco juice left in the bottom of a smoking pipe. For a snakebite, heaven forbid, the remedy was a poultice of crushed onion or a dab of vinegar.

It was apparent to Julia that business owners and carriers often made a better living than the miners, a lot of whom barely made an income, even if some made a fortune. A local shop owner paid a carrier £130 a tonne to bring supplies from Cooktown, and these were often sold in a day. In 1875, the year Julia had arrived in Townsville, gold valued at £200,000 made its way from the Palmer River to Cooktown, at £3 per ounce. Flour was £3 per 10-pound bag; sugar, sixpence a pound; tea, three shillings and sixpence a bag; and salt, three pence a bag.

By November 1876, Julia had been in Maytown six months. The wet season was here and she was pleased that she had arrived in May. In fact, the warden, Mr Sellheim, declared that food was already short and that no more miners should attempt to come until April 1877.

When the rains came, they swept over the region like a blanket, blotting out the hills and hammering down in a blinding torrent that turned everything to mud. Dry riverbeds became raging torrents and some mining sites were swept away. Sensible men had already left to return to Cooktown, and those who didn't guarded their meagre rations with rifles. Some even ate horses, snakes and pet dogs.

There were reports of dysentery and typhoid killing many. Malaria was also rife, and though this could be treated with quinine, it was not always successful. She even heard reports of leprosy, smallpox and tuberculosis.

In Maytown there was a hospital and several doctors now, all busy with treating mostly injuries, as well as these infectious diseases. The hospital was a mile out of the town proper, having been erected in 1874, only a year after the township had begun.

Due credit was given to the Chinese doctors who were invaluable for looking after their own. They were also happy to treat the non-Chinese with massage, acupuncture and other herbal remedies which they imported from China. There were very few Chinese women on the goldfields but they contributed much to the community, offering in addition, midwife services, which were much appreciated by pregnant women.

Many had sensibly returned to Cooktown by December 1876, including Julia's new friend, Charley. Out of all the young men she had

met in Maytown over the previous six months, Charley was a standout. He was polite, good looking, hard-working, and not a heavy drinker like a lot of the others. He had been born in Robe, South Australia, a long way from North Queensland, to parents who had migrated from Cornwall in 1838, just a week after they had married.

Charley was the sixth child in a large family of five girls and four boys, nine in total, just like Julia's family. His father Robert was a carpenter and had built many government buildings in the new town of Adelaide before moving to Robe, where he also constructed fledgling buildings such as the police station. He also took over the licence of the Bonnie Owl Hotel and renamed it Robe Town Hotel. From there the family moved east to Wellington on the Murray River, and ran the Bushmans' Camp Hotel. After being best man at the wedding of his older sister Mary in 1868, Charley made his way north to Queensland. He may even have accompanied his sister and brother-in-law when they went to the Northern Territory for gold mining. At any rate, he made his way to Georgetown in North Queensland in 1870, at the age of 20, and like so many others, he was looking for a new life and to make a fortune.

He had acquired mining rights in Etheridge, near Georgetown, late in 1870, and he stayed in the area until he accompanied Mulligan and four others to the Palmer River in June 1873, where they found five pounds of gold. At that time, Julia was still living in Denmark, but was planning her immigration. At the end of the wet season in April 1877, Charley Denford arrived back in Maytown and acquired a mining licence the following month. Julia and Charley rekindled their friendship, Julia working in the hotel and Charley working in various creek beds around Maytown and camping out. He came into Maytown itself every two weeks or so.

On 14 November 1877, Julia and Charley sealed their friendship with marriage in the registry office in Maytown. According to Mr P.F. Sellheim, the celebrant, registrar, and mining warden, it was only the 18th marriage that year on the Palmer River. That was not many when you consider that 35,000 people were living in the area. It is an indication of the harshness and brutality of the times.

Julia remembered the talk in Cooktown and the advice that many had given her: "It is not a fit place for a woman." In fact, the general consensus at the time was that the Palmer River goldfields were the toughest and



On 14 November 1877, Julia and Charley sealed their friendship with marriage in the registry office in Maytown, the celebrant being the mining warden, P.F. Sellheim (above right) who was originally from Germany.

most brutal in Australia. In Maytown in 1877, the only religious building was the Chinese Temple. There was neither the time nor money for building 'unnecessary' churches.

The witnesses to the marriage were Charley's best friend and work partner, John Edwards, and Maria Seibel, Julia's girlfriend at the hotel. They had a grand celebration later in the hotel, with many friends wishing them happiness and a long life together. Only one sadness marked the occasion and that was the absence of their two families, both so far away. It would be a long time before this special news reached both Denmark and South Australia. How different this wedding was from her parents', celebrated 30 years before in the cathedral in Aarhus, Denmark. There were no photos of that wedding, just memories and a certificate. Julia's wedding was far simpler. It was not religious, there were no family members present, and the weather was extremely hot—but, still, there were the same hopes and expectations of a wonderful life ahead.

THE DANISH GIRL



These images of typical bush huts (internal and external) offer an idea of the rudimentary living conditions for the Denfords in Maytown, especially considering that children were soon on the way.

The couple had timed their wedding day to coincide with the arrival in town of the travelling photographer, as had many others. Julia had spent all of her spare time in the preceding weeks making her wedding gown. It was of creamy white silk, with special pearl beading, and a swirly net

petticoat beneath. It all went with her new leather shoes.

All this was purchased in Maytown, mostly at the Chinese stores which were full of beautiful items all the way from Canton, Hong Kong and Shanghai. Even Charley was handsomely attired in a black suit, bought just for the occasion. A new life for Julia and Charley had begun in this far-flung primitive town in outback Australia.



Remains of the main street in Maytown.

ELEVEN



Leaving Maytown

*Oh, gaily sings the bird
And the wattle boughs are stirred
And rustled by the scented breath of spring.
Oh, the dreary wistful longing
Oh, the faces that are thronging
Oh, the voices that are vaguely whispering.*

— ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

THEIR NEW LIFE BEGAN in a small slab hut which had been built just two miles out of town, at Gregory. It was indeed a primitive dwelling with one simple room. It had timber sapling walls lined with newspaper, ant bed floors, and an iron roof. Julia cooked outside on a wood-fired stove, for which she and Charley chopped the wood. There was no glass in the two windows, just some hessian sacks.

Summer was hellish, not only due to the heat, but because flies swarmed over their eyes and mouths. An improvised kerosene tin became the sink, and was used for washing dishes and themselves. Water was at least abundant in the nearby creeks, but it still had to be carried. Lavatories were another issue in this cruel country. Around the mining leases the latrines were open pits with a couple of saplings laid across them to act as a seat. Charley had dug a deep pit for Julia and himself, and placed the lid of a 44-gallon drum across the top with a hole cut out of it. For modesty, he had erected a primitive wall around it, made of saplings and hessian.

It was actually a step down from her comfortable room at the hotel in town, but this home, simple though it was, was their own, and marked their new life together. What would her family think of this home, this village? Together they worked the claim there, until Julia's first pregnancy was quite advanced and she stayed in town. Their first child, Annie Maria

Johannes, was born in September 1878, with assistance from two local women experienced in midwifery.

Julia was nervous about the pregnancy and the birth, way out there in the bush, but both her pregnancy and birth were without complication. She soon befriended several other women with babies, but there were not many, as living out here was harsh. Still, it was comforting to discuss issues that arose with breastfeeding, sleepless nights, and when to introduce solids, and so on. She often reflected on her mother's experiences with so many babies to deal with. Something she did puzzle over was vaccination. All babies in Denmark were vaccinated against smallpox three months after birth. The other mothers here knew nothing of this, and were very surprised to hear about it.

Charley had already renewed his gold licence in April 1878, and in addition, he took out a business licence in Maytown in May 1878, most likely for a hotel as he came from a family of hoteliers in Robe, South Australia. In addition, Julia had had four years of experience working in hotels here in North Queensland. They lived another wet season in Maytown, with Charley working on his lease, and Julia enjoying their first baby.

Her life was quite different now that she was a wife and mother, and no longer working in the hotel but running her own home, simple though it was. They no longer lived in the slab hut in Gregory, but were back in Maytown in a slightly larger and better-equipped home, constructed of timber and corrugated iron. It even had windows, though not glass, just hessian, but it was a step up. Several days a week Julia would strap Annie to her back in a swaddling cloth, and walk an hour to Charley's lease, bringing him lunch, chatting to miners on the way, pointing out birds and kangaroos to Annie.

Once more, in May 1879, Charley renewed his lease in Maytown, but that was the final time. Julia had miscarried a baby that year. They had saved money, and gold on the Palmer River was now declining rapidly. The roaring days had been in 1875 and 1876, and by now, at the end of the 1870s, most of the alluvial gold had been worked. Even the Chinese were returning home to China, or remaining to become farmers and shop owners.

It was now 1880, and ten years since Charles had left South Australia. He had been in Maytown on and off for seven years, and Julia had been

here four years. She was tired of the heat, and always anxious about the skirmishes between the natives and the miners, and between the white miners and the Chinese, and of course between the natives and the Chinese. Rumour had it, that as the native food supplies diminished through mining, they had tasted and enjoyed Chinese flesh very much.

In May 1880, at the end of the wet season, Julia returned to Cooktown via coach, this time with a husband, a toddler, and more possessions than four years previously. A few days were spent enjoying Cooktown and catching up with her previous employers, before taking the steamer south to Cairns, and then a coach to Emuford, so as to manage a hotel. Emuford was a new tin mining town in the hinterland, a week's journey from Cairns via the towns of Herberton and Irvinebank. It was all very remote in vast hilly country, and with a long history of tin mining.

Julia had adapted to the Australian landscape by now, having been here six years. In the early days she had pined for the soft greens of her native Denmark, the winter snow, the autumn colours, and she regarded the landscape here in Australia to be harsh and ugly. Now she appreciated the different greens, the soft grey, and the varied shapes and colours of tree trunks and leaves—and she truly loved the coastal rainforest she saw near Cooktown and Cairns. The birdlife here in Emuford was so much richer than Maytown, which had been sadly denuded of its timber. Emuford had black cockatoos, and white ones with glossy yellow heads, and flocks of magnificent lorikeets in colours she would never have dreamed of.

James Venture Mulligan, the man responsible for the goldmines of the Palmer River, also initiated tin mining at Coolgarra. It was a much smaller township than Maytown, with only 50 or so people. They were all there for the same reasons as Julia and Charley—to make a living, and hopefully more than just a living. They had brought enough canvas with them to construct a primitive dwelling, while Charley set about building a shack of saplings and corrugated iron. Julia miscarried again in 1881 and despaired of having a second child. She felt this as some sort of punishment for hoping she would not have nine children as her own mother did. Annie was almost four years old when Alice Adelaide was born in August 1882 in Emuford. It was only a short distance from Coolgarra, and she had a midwife there to help.

THE DANISH GIRL

Charley could see more opportunity running hotels, especially here in Coolgarra, which was also a tin mining town where Mulligan had staked claims. Mulligan had made discoveries of alluvial and lode tin which began rushes to the district. The first hotel was built in 1882, and perhaps Charley Denford managed this one. Tin from the area was sent to nearby Herberton and Watsonville batteries for crushing. By 1885, Coolgarra had five hotels and several mines. How quickly these small hamlets grew, but by the same token, how fast they could decline, as was happening in Maytown.

Life was busy with Charley running the Greencamp Hotel in Emuford, and then acquiring the licence for the Coolgarra Hotel in 1883. The following year their first son, Herbert, was born. Charley was thrilled that he now had a son, as was Julia, and of course, both Annie and Alice revelled in the excitement of a baby in the family. Although only small themselves, the children were a great help with the new baby. Julia certainly needed help, as life was constantly busy with her own household, cooking, children, and occasionally needing to help with cooking in the hotel.

In 1884, an incident occurred that frightened them all. In nearby Irvinebank, only 15 miles to the north, a group of aborigines had been



The Herberton to Emuford area included Denford, Coolgarra and California Creek, where Charley Denford and family lived. — Courtesy, Dr Ruth Kerr

murdered around the campfire during the night, including an old man, two women and a six-year-old child. The town itself had only been established that very year by John Moffat, in order to support his tin mining operations. He alerted authorities and an investigation was held. Seven troopers and Sub-Inspector Nichols were charged.

A year later, however, they were all discharged of the crime but were dismissed from the Native Mounted Police by the Queensland Government. In the years since, the Irvinebank massacre has been regarded as a turning point away from the policy of indiscriminate killing of indigenous people in the colony.

In 1885, the Greencamp Hotel was closed but Charley continued running the Coolgarra Hotel until 1888. The *Herberton Advertiser* in April 1885 mentioned that “the cricketing visitors and the local team enjoyed a banquet at Denford’s hotel, where 60 people sat down to a splendid spread.”

In a letter to the editor two months later, Charley complained that his neighbour had 40 or 50 unregistered goats roaming the town and some of these had broken into his vegetable garden. A few months after that complaint, a humpy belonging to Charley and Julia was burned to the ground, and all the contents, including lumber and saddles, were destroyed. Two natives were living in the humpy at the time, and these men helped Charley as labourers around the hotel, and, in return for food and clothing, slept in the humpy when not with their families out of town. These men were learning English words, and were teaching the Denford family, including the children, common words in their aboriginal language. Julia was very keen to learn more but occasionally had difficulty mixing English and aboriginal words. She also spoke some Danish with her children, something with which Charley really did not agree. She still had her notebook, full of English words with their Danish translations, but had stopped adding to it now, as her language skills had become quite proficient. Of course, she still retained an accent, and many people thought that she was German.

In those same years, Charley also had lode claims for the precious tin in Coolgarra, probably paying a man to do the labouring work while he ran the hotel. Life was busy for Julia too, with three children, a husband and a hotel, all in the remote bush, so very far from Denmark and her

THE DANISH GIRL

home and family. There were other young families here too. Most were Australian and some were migrants from Europe like her who were escaping war and poverty.

It was indeed a harsh climate, especially in the summer, but winters were beautiful. Julia could take the three children for walks along the rough bush tracks, stopping to look at native flowers, while her eyes were peeled for kangaroos and koalas, as well as snakes. She was forever busy, tending the three children, baking bread, cooking meals, and of course, there was plenty of washing. This involved carrying water from the creek nearby in a kerosene tin to the back garden, lighting a fire underneath it,



Three miners seek to eke out a living in the rugged terrain of North Queensland.

and stirring the clothes with a wooden stick. The children loved helping with the stirring, and held the clothes for their mother as she hung them out on the lines looped between saplings.

She avoided ironing if she could, only doing Charley's best shirts and her Sunday dress. This she did on Tuesdays, heating the small iron over the fire in the kitchen area. While she used one iron, the other was heating. When occupied with this household duty, she ensured that the children remained outside, for fear of burns. At times like these, she could often enlist the aid of the two young native men to entertain the children, with singing, dancing and teaching them native words. What a very different childhood they were having, compared with hers back in Denmark 30 years before.

TWELVE



Life in Coolgarra

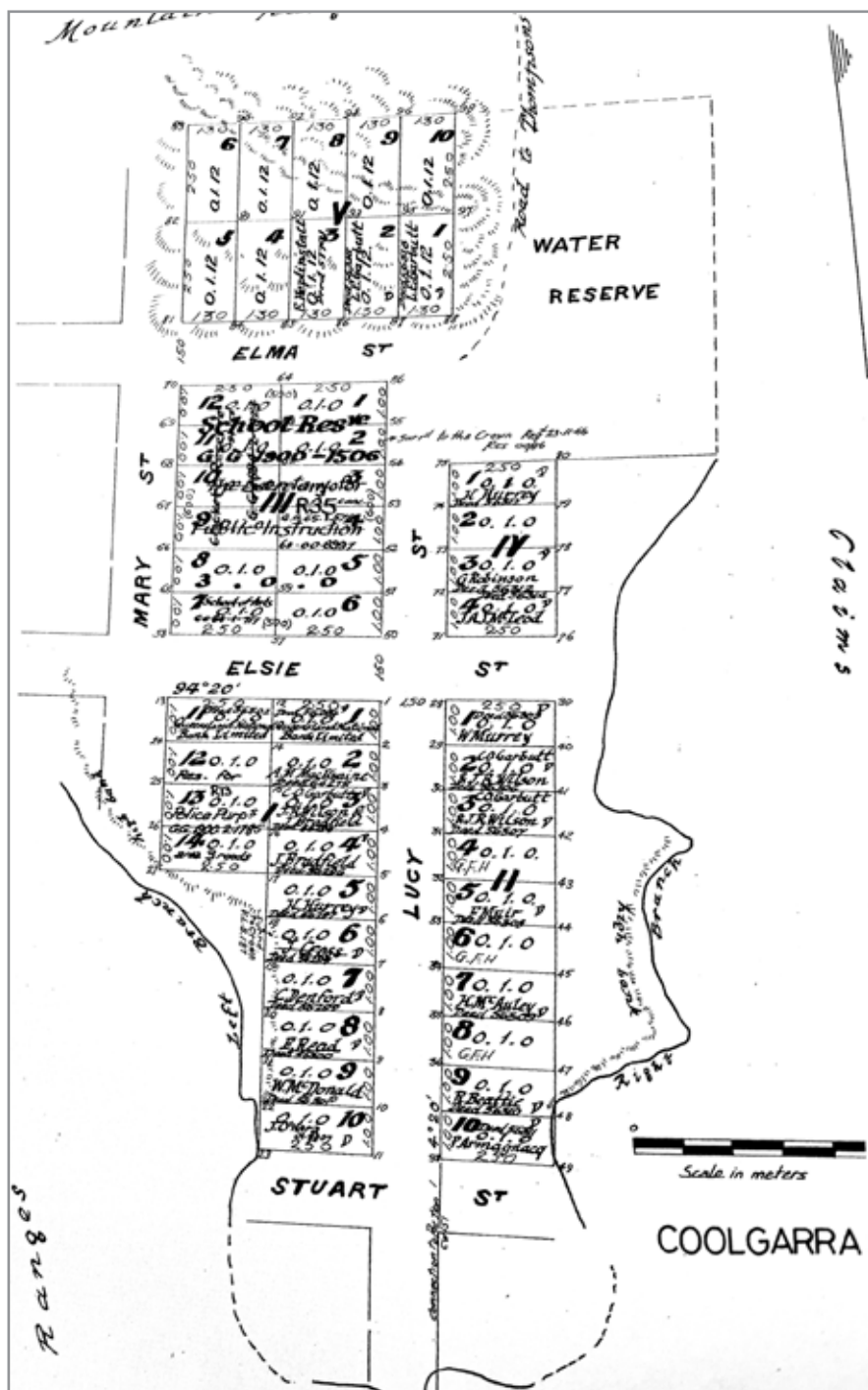
IT WAS NOW 1889, and their life in Coolgarra was humming along with work, children and domesticity. Two more daughters had been born in the bush: Mabel Valentine on the 14th of February 1887, and May on the 10th of April 1889. Five children, and Julia was only 37 years old! Yes, she got her Mabel! How many more would they have? She seemed to be as fecund as her mother.

They had now been in Coolgarra seven years and the population was growing. There had been 500 when they arrived in 1883, and now there were 5,000, all working their own leases or employed by people such as Mulligan or Moffat, or Charley Denford on larger leases.

There were now three stores, three hotels, a blacksmith, bakery, butchery and two dairies. Butter and milk were plentiful and cheap. Because the population had increased so much, there were about 100 children in Coolgarra now, and a small school had been built out of timber and bark with an iron roof. A private teacher was employed to teach the rudimentary skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. The town was envious of a school which had opened in Irvinebank in 1886, paid for by the Queensland Government—but it was too far to travel each day. Besides, when they had arrived in Coolgarra in 1883, Annie was the only one of their family of school age. By the time they left in 1889, all of the children—Annie, Alice and Herbert—were of school age.

Charley continued renewing the lease for the Coolgarra Hotel, and also had three lode claims paid for by 1887. A residential area had been granted to him and his family at California Creek in 1888, but they were not quite ready to leave Coolgarra and move there. Now the family numbered seven, and good money was being made on the tin claims and in the hotel. Julia enjoyed raising chickens for meat and eggs in the coop at the back of the house, where she also had a small vegetable garden.

LIFE IN COOLGARRA



Plan of Coolgarra, showing Charley Denford's allotment in Lucy Street (fourth from Stuart Street, on the western side).

On the other hand, most of the family's vegetables were supplied by the local Chinese market garden. She always had a good supply of salted beef, procured every two to three weeks in nearby Irvinebank. The family now owned two horses as well as a small cart which was used for driving to Irvinebank for supplies, and out to the various tin mining claims in the surrounding bush. Charley occasionally caught rabbits and Julia had developed a tasty method of cooking them. They were skinned, dressed, and stuffed with onion and bread. Following the meal of rabbit, a favourite dessert for the five children was bread and treacle.

For the very rare free time that Julia managed, she enjoyed sewing, a skill she had learned back in Denmark from her own mother, and which had been reinforced on her *Lammershagen* journey to Australia. Now she sewed for enjoyment as well as necessity. On rare occasions, she was able to accompany Charles or the children to Irvinebank where she bought materials, threads, laces and buttons. Sewing by hand was tedious, but enjoyable. She had made dresses for herself and the girls and even a shirt each for Charley and Herbert.

For Christmas in 1887, Charley surprised her with a Singer treadle sewing machine. That meant no more tedious hand-sewing. She was adept at creating her own patterns, often swapping them with other women in the town. Charley also surprised her by finding for her ready-made patterns by Madame Weigel. She was a Polish immigrant about Julia's age who lived in Melbourne and who designed beautiful patterns for Australian women. These patterns were at the forefront of European fashion. By now, Julia's skill with English enabled her to read the language with ease. Just as her mother had done, she began teaching her two daughters the delights of sewing.

Night came early here, even in summer. Since there were no street lights, candles and kerosene lamps were used in the homes. Night also brought the clouds of mosquitoes. They could hear dingoes howling in the distance. The cries of curlews added to the night-time sounds that she so much enjoyed, and which were so very different from the after dark noises in Denmark. She burnt citronella for the mosquitoes now, and if that ran out, the old standby was burning cow dung.

When there was a little time to spare, she gathered the children, visited Charley at the pub, and then walked down the dirt tracks towards the

mining leases. She enjoyed the clean fresh air here, and she had become accustomed to the strange trees. The ironbark and yellow box were so different from the oaks, elms and larches in Denmark. She enjoyed the call of the currawong and the melody of the butcher birds, but especially loved glimpses of kangaroos bounding away through the bush. She kept her eyes peeled for koalas, only glimpsing them very occasionally, as they were only found in certain gum trees. Perhaps once a month they spied a koala, occasionally with a baby on its back. Sometimes at night in the mating season, they could hear the raucous calls of the male koalas, sounding very much like wild pigs.

The year that Mabel was born, 1887, also brought sad news from Denmark. Her father Carl had died in September aged 69, leaving behind his wife Johanna, aged 67, and of course, eight daughters, some married now with children, and five grandchildren in Australia. Julia wrote letters home to Denmark two or three times a year, and they were received with much anticipation and excitement. In her most recent letter, after news of her father's death, she told them of the Aboriginal camps outside Coolgarra. She had only given them scant mention in prior letters as she did not wish to alarm her family. Certainly, she did not relate the incident of the massacre in Irvinebank in 1884. She decided that a soft introduction would be appropriate for now.

When the Denford family were living in North Queensland in the 1870s and 1880s, there were about 70,000 aborigines living in North Queensland, and they vastly outnumbered the thinly-spread European population in the area. Many blacks resented the white intrusion into their territory and, generally speaking, the Europeans' attitude towards the aborigines was disgraceful. In fact a state of undeclared racial war existed in northern Queensland, and Henry Reynolds in his book, *Race Relations in North Queensland*, quotes one observer as saying, "For every white man killed, six black fellows on average bit the dust".

The Denfords had witnessed violence to the aborigines on the Palmer River, and also to the Chinese. They had recently heard of riots in Brisbane against the Chinese who had quite a number of businesses in Albert Street in the city. There emerged a groundswell of antipathy against their obvious business success, and a riot occurred in June 1888, which drove the Chinese out and into the nearby Fortitude Valley.

THE DANISH GIRL



The main street of Coolgarra town on Return Creek.



Above centre: A large group photographed at the Coolgarra hotel in 1899. Above: The Coolgarra hotel as it looked in 1971. — Slide from Elna Kerswell © Centre for the Govt of Queensland, 2018. All rights reserved



Above left: The Coolgarra Battery, which is located on Coolgarra Station, is on the Qld Heritage Register. — Heritage Branch, Queensland

Above right: The view of Coolgarra from Alhambra Hill.

There were several aboriginal camps on the edge of Coolgarra when the Denfords lived there. In general, most of the white folk in the town treated them with respect, because most of them realised that they were intruding on their land. The whole encounter was very new for Charley and Julia, even though they had both had some experience with the original inhabitants in Maytown to the north. Here in Coolgarra the population of the blacks was much smaller than in Maytown. Julia was entranced when she would go walking past the camp of the local aborigines. It consisted of about 50 huts called gunyahs, formed in a large circle. Each dwelling was a small conical structure about six feet in diameter, formed by pieces of cane being fixed into the ground in an arched shape, so as to make ribs, which were covered with flaking sheets of tea tree bark, and laid perfectly close and compact, in which position they were fixed by the outer network of a reed fibre. It was a primitive form of accommodation but it was perfectly impervious to the weather.

In each of these small gunyahs sometimes there were five or six people, and on cold nights they would coil themselves up to maintain warmth.

Each dwelling had a fire in front of the opening which also served as a door. In warm weather though, these people generally slept outdoors under the heavens.

Julia's letters back home to Denmark were full of these details of how the aborigines lived in her village, and those back in Europe were fascinated with these stories. What she failed to tell them was that occasionally some adults and children came into town, probably out of curiosity—and there was fascination on both sides, with the colour difference, and the clothing or lack of it. During summer, the blacks were naked, while in winter they often wore kangaroo skins. Julia noticed that no black women came into town—and she could guess why.

THIRTEEN



California Creek

THERE WAS MUCH excitement as the year 1888 drew to a close. The previous year they had purchased a residential block in California Creek, another 15 miles west of Coolgarra. It was at California Creek that they had a home constructed, the biggest and most salubrious yet. It was elevated on small timber stumps, boasted three bedrooms, lounge and dining room, with kitchen and bathroom attached to the rear of the house. They arrived early in 1889 and their fifth child, May, was born soon after in April. Julia had really enjoyed choosing fabrics for curtains and buying the furniture from Cairns via a catalogue. The family had come a long way from canvas tents and bare dirt floors. She wished her mother and sisters could see her now.

California Creek was a newish settlement, further west even than Coolgarra, but they felt they had even more opportunities here, at the same time as leasing out their tin claims, and shops and hotel licences in Coolgarra. The population was only a few hundred, and unfortunately the settlement had no school.

In the town was a newly-married young woman who had been a teacher in Cooktown, and it was to her home that Annie, Alice and Herbert walked each day for three hours of schooling. Julia had been in Australia now for almost 20 years, and though her English was quite good, she was eager to be able to read and write at a better level. That's why she very much enjoyed perusing the children's lessons after school. She was now able to read the occasional newspaper that came their way, mostly local ones from Montalbion, Herberton and Cairns, and yes, sometimes an old paper from Brisbane.

She had been fascinated to follow the story of Louisa Collins who had gone to trial in Sydney four times on the charge of killing her husband by poison. She was finally hanged in 1889, after many protests from religious

and women's groups to no avail. She was the last woman to be hanged in Australia. Closer to home in 1891 was the shearer's strike, which gave way to the first Labour Party in Australia, ensuring fair conditions and pay for workers. Julia also followed with great interest the rise of the suffrage movement in Australia and the world. South Australia, her husband's birthplace, had given women the right to vote in 1894, and women in New Zealand achieved it in 1893. Women in her Denmark did not vote at that time.

The year 1889 marked a period of settling-in to their new home, to California Creek town, and to their fifth child, May (named for Maytown). Now, in the 1890s, two more children were born: Charles on 17 May 1892, and Leonard George on 23 July 1894. This meant that they were a family of seven: four girls and three boys. Seven seemed quite enough children, but how to stop them coming?

Charley was always ambitious and he acquired another tin claim in 1891, in nearby Montalbion. He opened another store in Redcamp the same year. He built a store in California Creek and acquired a licence for the Post Office Hotel in the town. Considering that he ran the hotels, supervised two stores and a butcher shop, Charley was an active member of the community in California Creek, as he had been also in Coolgarra.

Problems arose with the local aborigines similar to those that had occurred on the Palmer River. Their food supplies and hunting areas were compromised and being destroyed by the incursion of the white settlers and miners, as well as by the destruction of trees and creek beds for the tin mining. Charley wrote a letter to the local Member of Parliament, W.C. Little, in Herberton in 1894, advising that "the aborigines in the district have been stealing rations from the miners camp. There are often 200 of them at a time and I have at my own expense been feeding them".

He requested remuneration from the government, and gave the government a tender to supply beef and other food to the aborigines. Following on from this letter, Sub-Inspector James Lamond travelled from Herberton to California Creek to assess the situation. He claimed that "the present annual expenditure on rations for the aborigines of £1/6/8 is excessive, and he suggested that a 50 pound bag of flour and 100 pounds of beef weekly will stop further complaints".

CALIFORNIA CREEK

Queensland State Archives [Item ID 6820](#), Letter number 92/4723 (no top number-no previous or subsequent letters).
Microfilm Z1604, Microfilm frame number 104.

Letter from Charles Denford at California Creek via Herberton to WC Little MLA advising that the Aborigines in the district have been stealing rations from the miner's camps. "There are often from 150 to 200 of them in at a time and I have at my own expense been feeding them. He wishes to make an application to the government for remuneration and asks Mr Little to direct him to the proper department.

Queensland State Archives [Item ID 6820 92/7165](#), Letter number 92/6319
Microfilm Z1604, Microfilm frame number 107.

Telegram from AH Zillman, the Police Magistrate in Herberton to the Colonial Secretary advising that he is going to the California Creek district to inquire about the condition and necessities of the Aborigines and to determine the best place and method of distributing rations.

Queensland State Archives [Item ID 6820 92/7165](#) (top letter)
Microfilm Z1604, Microfilm frame number 109.

Report from AH Zillman the Police Magistrate in Herberton to the Colonial Secretary advising that he was unable to proceed to California Creek to enquire into the condition of the Aborigines so he sent Sub-Inspector Lamond in his place. He makes the recommendation that the present expenditure on rations for the Aborigines of one pound 11 shillings and 8 pence

Report from Sub-Inspector Lamond to AH Zillman the Police Magistrate in Herberton on the condition of the California Creek Aborigines. He advises that they are "fairly well off" and distributed half a blanket to each of the 30 or so Aborigines there. He has also advised that if a 50 pound bag of flour and 100 pounds of beef weekly there "would be no further complaints". He also comments: "I made particular inquiry as to whether the California Creek tribe ever went to [Mulania?], Coolgarra, Mount Albion or Irvinebank but found they do not, this tribe's boundary in the north east being near California Creek".

Queensland State Archives [Item ID 6820 92/12879](#)
Microfilm Z1604, Microfilm frame number 112.

Letter from TP Lucas on behalf of the Bribe Island Mission Station to the Colonial Secretary: "As our Mission is in straits, as to the needful, I am directed by the Committee of the Bribe Island Aboriginal Mission to respectfully ask you for the quarter's grant June 30th to Sept 30th of this year, as promised by yourself. We have kept down the expenses as much as possible, by the Ladies Auxiliary making clothes and by other helps, but at present we are as reduced as to be unable to carry on our work unless by your aid as promised".
PS: The grant of 250 pounds per annum would be 62 pounds, 10 shillings for this quarter.

Queensland State Archives [Item ID 6820](#) No letter numbers
Microfilm Z1604, Microfilm frame numbers 115-117.

suggesting that, in his experience, when the Aborigines are brought into the stations and fed, after a while, they "commit fewer depredations". He suggests that this course of action is safer because "supervision can then be exercised over them".

Queensland State Archives [Item ID 6820 94/13850](#)
Microfilm Z1604, Microfilm frame numbers 194-201

The second letter is from (?) Suggesting that it is time the government did something about the plight of the aborigines. He suggests that to say we will not feed them or cannot afford to feed them would be a "stigma on ourselves to hand down to future times". However the supply of rations should be done judiciously so that they are not given too many rations and give up their traditional hunting. They should also be gradually encouraged to work for their rations. The rations should be handed out by the police because "they know more about the blacks and their movements, centres, number, requirements and condition generally than anyone else". He suggests that rations should be distributed at designated centres such as Coen, Maytown, Laura, Bloomfield, Butchers Hill, Thornborough and Atherton. And on the coast at Cooktown, Port Douglas, Cairns and Innisfail. He also asks why the Aborigines did not get their blankets this winter, "surely the government did not stoop to false economy". He suggests that a country which exports 8 million pounds worth of goods per year can afford half a blanket for each Aborigine. "After all it is the blacks country taken from them which yields the 8 million pounds worth". "The intruders are not satisfied with having shot half the aboriginals that were in the country but they actually refuse a rag to each of the survivors, once a year".

Charley Denford's concern for the plight of aboriginal people on the northern mine fields was apparent from these records of correspondence held at the Queensland State Archives.

never kept small fish, instead throwing them back to grow and breed. In fact, it was often Herbert who advised his own father about such matters when the two of them went fishing. This did not often happen as Charley was indeed a busy man.

Herbert was invited on an emu hunt and knew that this was a privilege. He was fascinated, and enjoyed telling his family the details over dinner that night. The blacks used a boobinch—a small didgeridoo—to call the male off the nest, then the men chased it down and killed it with a nulla nulla or spear. Kangaroos were hunted in a similar way. One kangaroo would feed a family of five for almost a week. Herbert also went hunting for goanna. This was in April and May when the goanna was at its fattest as it prepared to hibernate underground for the winter. The men would tap the ground with sticks, the goanna appeared and was killed, and then it was cooked on hot coals in the ground.

The Denford girls were envious of Herbert's forays with his black friends, but realised it was not possible for them. Herbert was also taught how to catch, kill and cook bandicoot—which Julia declared tasted just like pork. Scrub turkey was also good eating, as long as it was hung to bleed for a day. There were even wild pigs now roaming the country. These were difficult to catch, and were called Captain Cookies, after the man who had released them at Cooktown all those years ago.

Herbert's black friends also taught him how to catch crayfish, and to fish from their stone fish traps, and how to catch ducks from the lagoons. What Herbert was most proud of, though, was being able to light a fire without matches. His aboriginal friends taught him the technique. It took a lot of practice but he accomplished it. Herbert's parents and sisters failed to master the method even though it looked simple enough. His mother very much enjoyed recounting all of this in her letters to Denmark. It was difficult to describe the technique on paper, and try as they could in Denmark, her family failed to master it, just as she had.

Julia had spaced out her pregnancies as best she could, breastfeeding for two or three years when possible. The occasional miscarriage helped. Charley was able to buy condoms sometimes. In the early days of their marriage they were made out of sheep gut or bladder, and were secured with a ribbon. The aboriginal women had shown Julia how to make a cervical cap of honey and acacia leaves. There was a special drink, moora,

made from a vine that grew along lakes after the wet season. There was always the withdrawal method, *coitus interruptus*. It was not popular with Charley, and nor was the condom. Aboriginal women sometimes made abortion teas from mint or other bush herbs, but Julia was reluctant to use them. Julia had observed that the aboriginal families were small, generally only two or three children per family. She reflected that they were cleverer with spacing their children than she or her mother were.

Herbert was a keen observer of aboriginal practice and was able to pass on some gems of bush medicine to his mother — for instance, the leaves of the dogwood bush were boiled and the liquid used for coughs and colds. The bark of the leopard wood tree was soaked and applied to sores on the skin, which were prevalent in the hot humid weather in summer. The bark of the tea tree was pounded into strips and used as bandages. Conjunctivitis was cured with the water made from boiling leaves from the sandalwood tree. There was always so much to tell the family back in Denmark.

At about the same time, W.C. Little, Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Herberton, sent a letter to the state government in Brisbane, suggesting: “It is time the government did something about the plight of the aborigines”. He stated that to say ‘we cannot afford to feed them’ would be “a stigma on ourselves to hand down to future times”.



Irvinebank, pictured in 1908. The town is close to Coolgarra and California Creek.

He suggested that the supply rations should be judicious, so that they do not give up traditional hunting. He asks why the aborigines did not get their blankets this winter. He states that “a country which exports £8 million of goods per year should be able to afford a blanket for each aborigine. After all, it is the blacks’ country we have taken from them that gives us that £8 million. The intruders are not satisfied with having shot half the aborigines that were in the country, but they also refuse a rag to each of the survivors once a year”.

Charley was indeed a busy man but loved horse racing, and with seven other men, owned Colada. Sadly, it ran last in the handicap pack race in September 1897. The three boys inherited their father’s love of horses and learned to ride well from a very young age.

It is likely that Charley Denford was considered a political man, with his involvement in aboriginal issues of the area, and his awareness of the problems that arose on the mining fields, where dreams were of financial independence, not politics. Before 1900, politics did not matter, and concerns about unpopular wardens or the Chinese presence were the closest to political agitation that the miners came.

In California Creek, however, the polling papers for the 1893 election arrived on the same day as a wagon with the rum supplies. Times were lively, and when it came to voting, everyone voted five times. On the whole, they remained unanimous in sticking to the same candidate. The presiding officer went to jail.

Charles and Julia were very busy people but also hospitable. In the 1890s, Charles Birch, an amateur botanist, was in the area, and collapsed in Charley’s shop. Charley and Julia cared for him in their home until he suffered a seizure and was transferred to the Montalbion Hospital where he died several days later.

The Denfords made the newspaper again, both locally in Herberton and also in the Brisbane *Courier Mail*. On 20 April 1897, it was reported that Charlie, aged five, had fallen into a dam in California Creek, and his older sister May, aged eight, had pulled him out and run for help, but it had taken two hours of resuscitation to revive him. The following day, Herbert, 13, fell from his horse while out chasing kangaroos. He broke his arm but splinted it with bark, got back on his horse and rode to Irvinebank, where it was repaired properly by the doctor. In her next

THE DANISH GIRL

Geo Bull Miner
Patrick Mollay Miner
Patrick Luskow Miner
George Harrod Miner
Peter Nelson miner
X Chas Denford Miner
Robert Small Miner
Peter Hilton Engine Driver
George Johnston miner

Among miners of the Wild River and others at Cairns who addressed a petition to the Governor of the Colony of Queensland, was 'Charles Denford, Miner'.

acquainted with ... necessities

We would therefore
humbly pray that your Excellency would be
pleased to direct that this District with such
Boundaries as to your Excellency may seem
most fit: May be declared a separate Electorate

And your petitioners will thus pray

Signed at Wild River Dec: 28th 1881
and signed at Cairns
15 Dec. 1881

In December 1881, miners at Wild River petitioned the Governor for a new electorate.

letter back home, Julia told the story of the broken arm, but not the near drowning.

Later that year, in September 1897, the Post Office Hotel and Charley's two stores were burnt to the ground. This catastrophe, and the fact that Annie was now 20 and working in Cairns, caused them to reassess their lives in the remote California Creek. Alice was 16, bored with life in this small, remote town, and was eager to join her sister and work in Cairns.

In January 1898, Charley Denford transferred the licence of the Post Office Hotel to Ellen Emerson, and the family moved to Cairns in time for the new school year. At their departure, it was clear that they would be sorely missed. Charley had stood by the stream tanners in good and bad times, and was considered the backstay of California Creek. He and Julia had worked hard, had made good money with tin mining and their businesses, but realised it was time for a move, so as to give their five younger children a better education and more opportunity.

FOURTEEN



Cairns

IN JANUARY 1898, Charley Denford transferred the licence of the Post Office Hotel in California Creek to Ellen Emerson, and the family moved to Cairns in time for the new school year. Annie, the eldest aged 20, was already working as a bar attendant at the Post Office Hotel in Cairns. Alice was very keen to join her so as to leave the isolation and boredom of California Creek. Herbert now 14 was also helping his parents in the hotel and the two stores. The four youngest had all attended school in California Creek.

Education had been made compulsory in 1875 by the Premier Charles Lilley, and was provided free by the Queensland Government. Julia, however, was never happy that the older children had not extended their education, so she was determined that the younger four would have more opportunities and this was more likely to happen in Cairns. They had lost a considerable amount of money in the fire, as not all was covered by insurance.



In 1870, the government of Charles Lilley introduced free primary education in Queensland.
— SLQ 111372

The Denfords took over the licence of the Post Office Hotel in Cairns where Annie was working, so they were once again together as a family. Julia would have preferred the children to attend the church school, but money was short so they all enrolled at the state school which had more experienced teachers than those at California Creek. There were 250 children and five teachers. The minimum leaving age was 12, and the minimal level was Grade Four. At that time there was no high school in Cairns.

By mid-1898 the Denfords had relinquished the licence of the Post Office Hotel and taken over the Crown Hotel, a more prestigious and

popular place. Cairns was a far bigger town than California Creek of course, but was also founded in the 1860s and named after Sir William Cairns, the Governor of Queensland at the time. Bêche-de-mer fishing was responsible for its beginnings, and the settlement had then been spurred on by gold discoveries on the Palmer River. The bêche-de-mer, or trepang, also called a sea cucumber, was prized as a culinary delicacy by the Chinese and Malays. They also called it 'sea ginseng', as it was thought to be a stimulant and an aphrodisiac.

The growth of Cairns was further aided by a rail line built in 1886, west to Herberton. The immigrants needed for the construction later settled in the area and established sugarcane and fruit farms. When the Denfords arrived in 1898, the population was about 3,000 and growing. The children revelled in the different lifestyle which included boating, swimming and fishing, and they still rode horses. Annie, the eldest, now had a serious boyfriend, and Alice, four years younger, had to be closely supervised since Charles and Julia observed that she was always the centre of attention with men of all types and ages in the hotel.

Social life in Cairns was far busier for them all, and once again they made the gossip in the papers. Mr Desmond's Troupe arrived in Cairns for a concert in November 1898, with the final performance, 'La Troubadours' by Kitty Ward. Her dress contained 90 yards of twirling silk on which appeared the portraits of well-known local identities, including Charley Denford. Though he had been in the town less than a year, he was already a prominent local figure.

The landscape of Cairns was totally different from that inland. It was mountainous and vegetated with rainforest, with a sparkling blue sea and Trinity Inlet providing anchorage for shipping. They found the summer rains and humidity stifling, and clothes and shoes were often covered in mildew. Also there was always the threat of cyclones.

In terms of social problems, here they were similar to those they had encountered in Maytown and California Creek. The aborigines were dispossessed by the introduction of farming. Timber-getting also caused disruption, and by 1883 all cedar stands had been depleted. Once again, the Chinese had been ousted from mining tin and gold by legislation, and turned their expertise to agriculture. When the Denfords arrived, 60 percent of all farmers were Chinese. They were regarded as the fathers of

agriculture in the Cairns district, as reported by the *Cairns Post*, but were undervalued and unappreciated by most. Understandably, Chinatown developed in the main street.

The Denfords were also surprised to see significant groups of Japanese, Melanesians, Kanakas and Indians. Rumour had it that the Kanakas had been captured from their Pacific islands and brought against their will to North Queensland to work the cane farms. It was also rumoured that many were actually sold to farmers. Julia thought that slavery had been abolished long ago. She also reflected that the social system in Denmark was not much better than slavery.

Cairns was fortunate to have a gasworks established in 1898, the same year the Denfords settled there. Until then, acetylene converters were used to provide gas lighting for streets and homes. The streets, of course, were unpaved and became raging torrents in the wet season.

Mosquitoes were more prolific as well, and led to many cases of malaria and dengue fever, causing many deaths. When the Denford family was residing there, Dr Edward Koch was the hospital superintendent and involved himself in malaria research. He supported the clearing of the swamplands around the town, and he also established an ambulance service. This service was mainly to bring injured jockeys from the race track to the hospital. The Denford family, in particular the men and boys, were thrilled to be involved in the horse racing in the town.

Only four months after the Denfords arrived, several cases of bubonic plague were identified by Dr Koch, with the first case being one of the crew on the *Aramac*, newly berthed in Trinity Inlet.

The Denford family was still living and working in Cairns when the Boer War began in South Africa. It had been triggered by the discovery of huge diamond and gold deposits. How ironic, thought Charley and Julia, as it was gold that had brought them both to Queensland, and together as husband and wife. Thankfully, conscription was not introduced, but large numbers of men did enlist until the war ended in 1903.

Julia persuaded her husband that life in Brisbane would be more enjoyable weather-wise and socially, and it would offer better education for the children. The Denfords had been very well-respected licensees of the Crown Hotel and were given a farewell supper by a large number of friends including all the people boarding there. Mr Smith, the oldest

boarder present, spoke in “high terms” about Mr Denford’s “good qualities as host, father, husband and friend.” “He came to Cairns with a good reputation and on leaving carried with him the good wishes of the whole community,” said Mr Smith. All who spoke expressed regret at Cairns losing so good a citizen as Mr Denford. In reply, Charles said that he hoped he would be treated as well in Brisbane as he had in Cairns. The farewell went on until 2am and the evening closed with “Old Lang Syne”.

Another episode in the family life of the Denfords was closing, since Annie was remaining in Cairns to marry James Mullins in March 1900. Alice, now 18, also wished to remain in Cairns, for more independence and to be with her older sister, but somehow her parents persuaded her to join them in Brisbane, ensuring some continued supervision of her wilful ways.

Very sadly, Annie’s parents did not approve of her impending marriage to James, as he and his family were Roman Catholics—so the Denford family departed from Cairns only days before her marriage.



Abbott Street, Cairns, ca.1890. — SLQ 9196

FIFTEEN



Leaving North Queensland

IT WAS THE last day of March 1900 when the Denford family departed Cairns, leaving behind Annie, their eldest child, who was about to marry. It was a wedding that they would fail to attend. Another phase of family life was over and another was beginning. It was a six-day sail to Brisbane, this time on a steamer. The cyclone season was over and the weather was cooling down. It was truly their first holiday as a family, with money enough to have three cabins. Food was plentiful and good, and there was even a bar aboard. There were other children there also to amuse young Charlie and Lenny, now aged eight and six.

Mabel and May were young women, now 13 and 11. They were very close friends and not yet interested in boys. Alice was 18 and extremely interested in the opposite sex! She turned many heads aboard the ship, including crew, passengers and even the captain.

Herbert, 16, had remained behind in Cairns, having acquired a butcher's apprenticeship. He was a sensible and very capable young man, and would live with his sister, Annie, and her husband. Did he go to the wedding? He likely did. No doubt Julia and Charley were sad and somewhat regretful about their absence at their eldest child's wedding, but they had their principles to uphold. Mabel and May would have been bitterly disappointed also, since they should have been flower girls at their big sister's wedding. The young girls hoped that Alice's wedding would be soon. She seemed to attract so many suitors. They realised that their parents were not altogether happy about this talent that Alice had acquired.

Julia felt a little whimsical and sentimental and even shed a few tears, as she recalled her long voyage all those years ago in 1873, when it was under sail, taking 18 weeks in total, with no stops. Now here she was with a husband and five children about to begin a new life in the capital of Queensland. Charley had now been in the hotel trade more than 20 years

in Queensland, he and his family having previously been in hotels in South Australia. As a result he had plenty of experience and many contacts, even in Brisbane. Already, the licence of the British Empire Hotel in Queen Street next door to the Theatre Royal, had been transferred from Simon Lipstine to Charley. On arrival in Brisbane they immediately made their way to the hotel, where, thankfully, there was accommodation.

The family were absolutely thrilled to be at the British Empire Hotel. It had undergone extensive renovations and remodelling just 13 years before by the Brisbane architect, Richard Gailey—but it was much older than that. It had been a timber single-level building when first constructed in 1843, just a year after Brisbane became a free settlement following the end of the convict era. The spot had first been a butcher shop, and continued as one when the notorious Patrick Mayne bought it in 1849. The Mayne family prospered, and in 1853, they extended it to become a two-level brick building, with a shop on ground level and residence upstairs.



The British Empire Hotel in Queen Street, Brisbane, following rebuilding and extending in 1886-87, the design being by Richard Gailey.

After Patrick's death, his widow, Mary, rented the building to Michael Daly who then established the British Empire Hotel. Five years later, Gailey carried out the renovations. When the Denfords moved in, it had a ground level, two levels above and a basement. The exterior had the most beautiful wrought iron balconies. Another feature of the facade was a large central window at ground level on Queen Street featuring the British coat of arms, flanked by a kangaroo and emu.

The bar also attracted attention. It was constructed of Queensland timbers and shaped like a horse shoe with a division in the middle in which an ice chest was placed so as to be accessible from both sides of the bar. Of interest to Julia was that it had been designed by a Danish-born cabinetmaker, Peter Thomle, and here was Julia, a migrant from Denmark living and working in a hotel with design features by a fellow Dane. She was surely thrilled and would have been proud to relate this in news home to Denmark.

On the ground level behind the bar were private parlours and a dining room, and at the rear, a courtyard, fernery and stables with access to Elizabeth Street. The kitchen was in the basement. The second level also had a large commercial room at the front, which opened onto a beautiful balcony. There were bedrooms and lavatories at the rear. The top floor was devoted entirely to bedrooms, some of them also opening onto the balcony with beautiful views. It was up here that the Denford family lived. The bedrooms had ceilings 13 feet high, designed to encourage flow-through ventilation. Charley and Julia had made it! After years of rough and tough living in remote parts of Queensland, here they were living and working in a growing town, in quite a salubrious establishment.

Charley, Julia and Alice all worked in the pub, while the four younger children began at nearby St John's day school, next door to St John's Anglican Cathedral in William Street. At the end of that same year, 1900, the *Courier Mail* recorded prizes for May and Mabel, in needlework and drawing, presented by the Archbishop. Julia would have been very proud.

In 1900, the State of Queensland, emerging from the doldrums of nearly a decade of severe economic depression, was poised on the brink of renewed prosperity. The mood was enhanced with nationalistic fervour following the proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901. That same year, Queen Victoria died, with the Duke of

York inheriting the throne. Brisbane came alive with his visit, with a wonderful procession down Queen Street past the British Empire Hotel, where trade boomed even more. The hotel was situated beside the Theatre Royal, a very salubrious establishment whose patrons frequented the hotel *before* a performance—but not after, as the closing time for hotels was 6pm for many years into the 20th century.

Julia was enjoying living and working in Queen Street, the centre of fashion and retail. She was a skilled seamstress and took pride in dressing herself and her daughters in the latest fashion. When money allowed it, she even bought a gown for each of them, mainly for dressing up on Sundays for the church service in St John's Cathedral. When time allowed, Julia caught the horse-drawn tram from Queen Street to the shops in Fortitude Valley, a mile to the north. Here she enjoyed browsing the beautiful and quite new department stores, T.C. Beirne in Brunswick Street, and nearby McWhirters, the first owned by a Catholic Irish immigrant, and the opposition by a Scottish Presbyterian. Knowing Julia's antagonism to Catholics, she is likely to have favoured McWhirters with her custom.

During school holidays, as a special treat, she took the children to the Museum on Gregory Terrace, but a little further by tram. They all enjoyed the wonderful displays of insects, rocks and precious stones,

Sick—Awfully.

The Brisbane edition of Sydney *Truth* must have fallen into mau-llin hands. Listen to this sick clipping about Miss Alice Denford: "Yet another addition to the youth and beauty of our city. Miss Alice Denford, late of Cairns, and daughter of Mr Charles Denford of the British Empire Hotel, has now become a resident here. Local Johnniedom has become quite concerned, and nightly loanges over the private bar to have a word with the handsome northern charmer, whose gold rimmed glasses lend her quite a classical appearance." Miss Denford must have felt disgusted at reading such slobber and our old friend Denford, we venture to think, longed and still longs for the scalp of the fool who penned it.

Alice Denford was often mentioned in the newspapers, such as this story in the *Cairns Morning Post* (14 Sept. 1900, p. 2).

but especially the stuffed animals and birds. Julia felt as though she was living in a European city, as this was the grandest edifice she had seen. It was lavish with rich arched colonnades, monochromatic banding in orange and gold, round domes atop every buttress, and four towers giving Brisbane a stunning skyline. The windows were magnificent works of art, with panes of lavender and green, a nod to the colours of the stone work, made from local Brisbane tuff.

Charley's interest outside the family and the hotel was with the Masonic Lodge. He had attended Lodge in Herberton occasionally, but it was too far from both California Creek and Coolgarra. However, while living in Cairns for those two years, he had very much enjoyed the fellowship and camaraderie it offered him. In those days it was far more secretive than now, so Julia and the children were not privy to what went on, however, it had the same principles then as now. It was and is an association of men who are of good character, who believe in a higher being, and who wish to contribute to the community through their professions and charity work. The first Lodge in Brisbane began when Queensland became a State in 1859, in the Freemason's Hotel in Albert Street. By the time Charley arrived in town in 1900, it had moved three blocks down to Alice Street.

Another particular pleasure for all the family was attending the Spring Hill Baths, a ten-minute walk uphill from Queen Street. As men and women had segregated bathing times, it is likely that Julia took the girls, and Charley the boys. It had been built only 15 years before and it aimed to enable everyone in Brisbane to have a place to bathe. The water was refilled early every morning from the river. The Baths thus served two purposes: to provide for public health and hygiene, and to drain the discarded water into the Spring Hill Hollow.

Before her migration to Australia, Julia had been told of the Danish Club in Brisbane, established in 1872, two years before her move to Queensland. Now she had the chance to attend and to converse with others in her native language, and exchange gossip and news from her home country. It was actually a club for all three Nordic countries: Denmark, Norway and Sweden. It also provided a health fund for the sum of sixpence weekly. Its aim at the time was to celebrate Nordic holidays and to provide a library and newspapers for its members. Picnics were also

LEAVING NORTH QUEENSLAND



The intersection of Edward and Queen Streets, Brisbane, in 1901. — SLQ 85145



Lord Lamington reads the Proclamation of the Commonwealth at the Treasury building in William Street near the corner with Queen Street. — SLQ 129450

arranged and held at Indooroopilly, Ekibin and Mount Gravatt, with the club hiring horse-drawn carriages to convey the members there.

In the 10 years prior to the Denfords' arrival, the club had declined, first because of drought and then because of severe floods. At that time the Danish Club was in Queen Street in the Hornsby Building. There was even a Danish Church in George Street near the Gardens, however Julia and her family attended the Church of England as Charley was a devout member, and the children attended school there.

Brisbane welcomed the new year, and the new century on 31st December 1900, with a grand explosion of thousands of rockets, fireworks and the shrieking of dozens of tin whistles. The following day was perhaps more exciting and significant in the minds of Brisbanites.

1 January 1901 became known as Commonwealth Day, and a local editor declared that never in her brief history "has Brisbane been so excited and celebrating." Just a year earlier, Brisbane's attitude towards Federation had shifted from apathy to antagonism. At the 1899 Federation referendum, Brisbane rejected the Commonwealth Bill by two to one. Despite this, the majority of Queenslanders voted for Federation. As a result Brisbane was dragged into Federation.

By 1901 the lavish events planned for Brisbane dampened down the city's apprehension about Federation. There were fundamental concerns that occupied the attention of Brisbane and its Council. The ongoing drought which had begun in 1898 had created serious water shortages in Brisbane and had caused a slump in the economy of the whole state. Also, the presence of the bubonic plague had created alarm and drew attention to the inadequacies of sanitation practices in the city.

Commonwealth Day in Brisbane was a public holiday for everyone. The Proclamation making Australia a Federation was read by Governor Lamington outside the Treasury Building, which was beautifully decorated as was every public and private building along Queen and George Streets. Boats, ferries, dinghies, steamships and yachts on the river were also brilliantly festooned for this special day. After the Proclamation was read, there was a huge procession proceeding from the Treasury Building down Queen Street to the Customs House, with large crowds cheering wildly, while they enjoyed the beautiful summer weather in Brisbane.



The Grand Royal Arch was erected on the corner of Queen and George Streets, Brisbane, during 20–24 May 1901, in honour of the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York. The British Empire Hotel was located nearby to the right of the photo. — SLQ 62420

The British Empire Hotel was bursting with excited customers as they welcomed a new year and a new decade. Perhaps it was Alice, now 18, who was given leave from the Hotel to escort her four young siblings down Queen Street so as to enjoy the revelling in the exciting atmosphere. On the other hand, perhaps not. Maybe Julia as their mother, took on that duty so as to provide herself with a special pleasure with the children while Alice continued serving adoring drinkers at the bar. There was no doubt that Alice turned heads. There was a mention of her in the *Courier Mail* in March 1901, where she was described as, “a handsome northern charmer, whose gold rimmed glasses lent her a classical appearance.”

The celebrations continued in Brisbane two weeks later, with a huge procession of 1,100 soldiers of the Empire, again to celebrate Federation. There was a general consensus that the city was even more handsomely decorated than two weeks earlier. Three triumphal arches were erected at the Treasury, the City Hall and the Customs House, displaying the variety of Queensland produce, naval guns, anchors, flags and general bunting. Most shopfronts down Queen Street were also decked out in a similar fashion. It was difficult for some to believe that there was still

a depression in the state. It was also noted in the press that one of the most outstanding displays was put together by Mr J. Christensen, a dentist of Danish background and now also the Consul for Denmark. His establishment on the corner of Queen and Albert Streets was draped with the flags of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and a shield bearing the Danish coat of arms.

On the heels of all of this excitement came news of Queen Victoria's death on 22nd January, followed by a universal expression of sorrow and sympathy. Flags were lowered to half-mast, shop shutters were draped with crepe, and many hotels closed their doors. All Government offices closed and court business was suspended. Grieving for the Queen was intense and public, and portrayed a deep sense of loyalty to her and to the Empire. The opening of the Opera Season was delayed; churches, schools and businesses closed. Her funeral was held on 2nd February, and once again a public holiday was declared to honour her death. Hotels closed under public pressure. On the very same day a proclamation was made to announce the accession of the new sovereign, King Edward VII.

The Royal Visit by the Duke and Duchess of York took place in May, with more merriment in the town. Ladies of note spent small fortunes on frocks befitting the occasion. Once again, the Denfords in the British Empire Hotel were run off their feet. Once again, Queen Street was lavishly decorated for the Royal procession. Julia probably had no time to make special dresses for herself and her three daughters, but you can be sure that she enjoyed shopping at a variety of department stores close by, namely Finney Isles, McDonald and East, and Bayards. Perhaps she was not so pleased when The Factories and Shop Act of 1901 shortened opening hours, and made 6pm the compulsory closing time, with only a half day on Saturday.

Charley would have been involved in heated discussions about hotel opening hours. At the time, hotels were open from 6am to 11pm, Monday to Saturday, but many hoteliers opened slyly on Sundays also, with paid lookouts. Drinking became such a problem in 1901 that a Royal Commission was launched. Since in that year there were 146 hotels and beer cost sixpence a bottle, excessive drinking was possible with a small outlay. There was no change in the legislation, however, since the problem was too difficult.



Officials and health workers inspect a mound of dead rodents. During the bubonic plague of 1900–1902, rats, the worst carriers of the dreaded disease, were destroyed by the thousands. — SLQ

Once the Royal Visit was over, discussion in the press resumed regarding the plague and what measures should be taken. The Denfords had already encountered the problem in Cairns, and now here it was again. Cases were sporadic, but they continued, with those afflicted being quarantined at Port Lytton while their houses were closed and treated. Posters were pasted up around the city to raise public awareness, to increase sanitation, and to instruct on the destruction of rats. Galvanised rubbish bins were made compulsory. The Council offered a reward of sixpence for every rat killed. Herbert was aged 16 at this time and perhaps he made some good pocket money.

Life continued with news of the Boer War in Africa. Queensland had been the first colony in the Empire to send a contingent in 1899, and by the end of the war in 1902, had sent six contingents in all. Many had said it was preferable to be at war than to be starving at home. Julia must have reflected on the Danish-German wars of the 1860s, and been relieved that her three sons were too young and her husband too old to enlist—and pleased that there was no conscription.

Immediately next door to the Denford's hotel was His Majesty's Theatre which had extensive alterations done to it during their time in Brisbane. Architects, mechanics and decorators worked hard for several months, with a sliding roof and electric lighting being additions of which Brisbane could be proud.

Many changes were afoot for women in general. A movement to give women the vote was underway in Britain, with a smaller group agitating in Sydney and Melbourne. Julia was probably too busy to be caught up in it, but what she may have noticed in Brisbane was the formation of a Women's Cycling Club with a Saturday race from the city to Rocklea. In 1901, women were also invited to join the Rifle Association in Brisbane. Horse racing was Brisbane's oldest and best attended sport, and it is probable that Charley and his eldest son, Herbert, would have occasionally visited the track at Eagle Farm. Perhaps young Charles and Lennie even accompanied them. Certainly, they all had great horse experience from their time in the bush in north Queensland.

SIXTEEN



Life in Sydney

*The jewelled city glitters through the night
The jewelled boats glide softly through the gloom
On either hand, dark isles and headlands loom.*

— MARY RICHMOND, 1897

THE FAMILY STAY was not very long in Brisbane. Perhaps Alice was causing problems and turning more than heads. Perhaps there were other business issues that had arisen. In September 1901, the licence for the British Empire Hotel was transferred from Charley to Mr John S. Sutherland, and in December 1901, the licence for the Unity Hall Hotel in Balmain, Sydney, was taken up by Charley from a Mr Welsh.

What caused this departure to Sydney is not clear since the family had only been in Brisbane 20 months. Julia and the children had stayed behind in Brisbane following Charley's departure for Sydney. This was apparent from an advertisement she placed in the *Courier Mail* in August 1901 requesting a house for rent close to the tram line. It's possible that the family could no longer reside at the British Empire Hotel while the children were completing the school year. Perhaps Julia was attempting to rise up the social ladder—from poverty in Denmark, to mining in the harsh Australian outback, and now to the affluent cities.

Annie at 19 was working, though considered 'the family problem'. Mabel had turned 14 and was just completing primary school before going to work. May had one more year of primary school, and the two young boys still several years to go.

It must have been a time of great upheaval in the Denford family but Julia and Charley had faced greater issues than this in their lives. They were all reunited in December 1901 in Sydney. It must have been an

exciting Christmas indeed to be together again. Once again they were living on the premises at the Unity Hall Hotel at 292 Darling Street, Balmain. The three younger children began school after Christmas, while Annie and Mabel worked in the hotel with their parents.

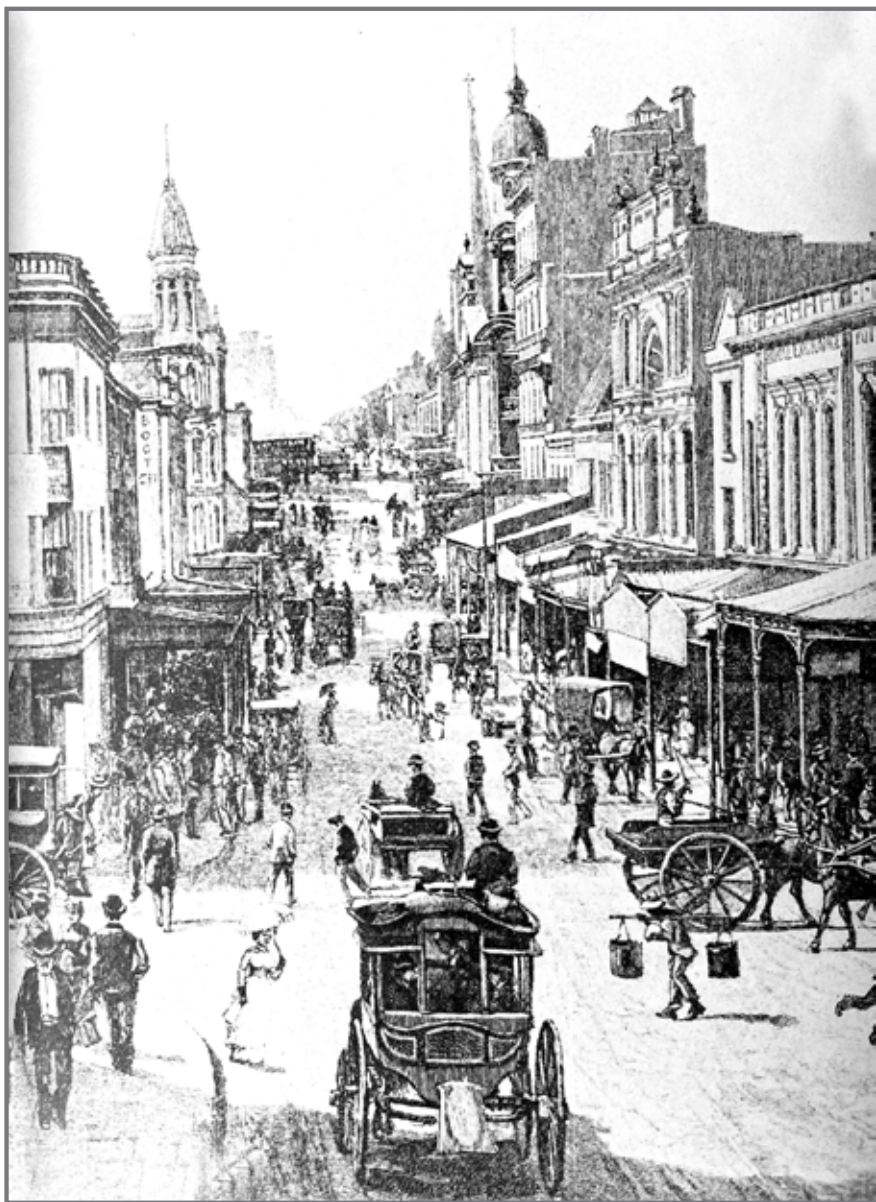
A busy life such as this did not afford much free time, but when possible, they began to explore the suburbs close by, and even travelled into the centre of Sydney on the electric tram. Surfing beaches were a novelty for them all, but when Charley was free he accompanied them all to nearby Clovelly Beach. Up until 1902, daylight bathing was only allowed at Manly, but with the water shortage of 1902, the council allowed daylight swimming at all beaches. How the children revelled in the surf, Charley also, but in spite of her adventurous spirit, Julia did not frolic in the ocean and merely enjoyed the gentle waves close to the beach.

During the school holidays they had a special outing: a tram to the city, then the ferry to Manly, followed by a picnic on the beach. How exciting! The family also enjoyed attending the local Balmain Cinema at least once a fortnight, as well as regular attendance at the nearby St Mary's Church at 85 Darling Street.

In 1902, the *Balmain Observer* stated that Alice Denford "has travelled by train to Cairns to holiday with her sister Annie for three months." One could wonder whether she was being expelled from Sydney by her parents for unacceptable behaviour or for worse, perhaps a pregnancy? Just one year later, she was married to a Sam Alison and was living in Sussex, England. Indeed she had turned heads, and very quickly it seems.

Soon there was more sad news. The Christmas letter arrived from Denmark in January 1903 to report that three of Julia's sisters had died in 1902. Othilia, 42, and Theodora, 37, were the youngest of Julia's sisters and both were married with children. Anna Maria, 48, was Julia's favourite, being only two years younger than herself. All three had died of influenza. Such sadness was cause for reflection about her Danish family. Her parents and four of her eight sisters were now deceased, and Julia herself was only 50.

In that very same year Australian women were given the vote. The Denfords were acquiring more hotels. In 1903, they gained licences for the Four-in-Hand Hotel in Paddington, and the Star and Garter Hotel nearby. Just a year later, they took over the Coronation Hotel at Park



CORONATION HOTEL.

A la Française.

Absinthe — Gomme — Vermont
— Grenadine, etc., etc.

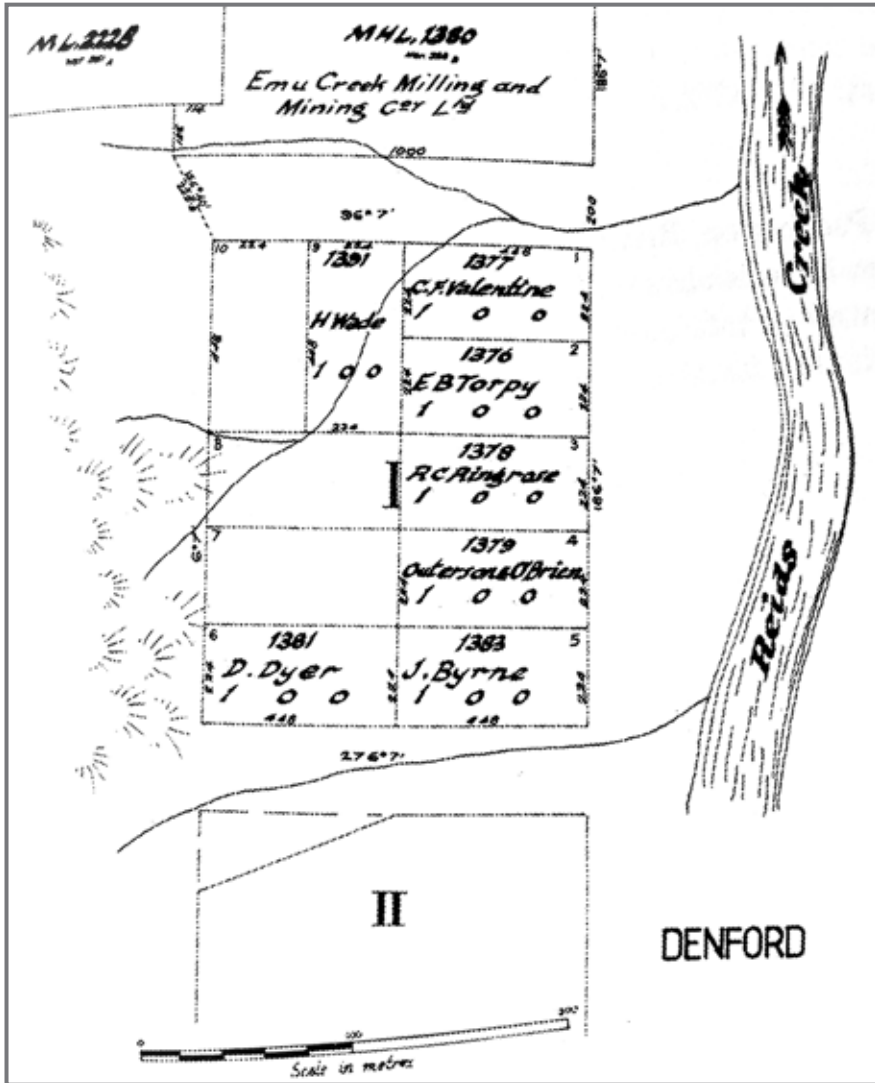
Angle de Park et de George Streets.

Chas. DENFORD, Propriétaire.

Above: King Street, Sydney 1901. — From Helen Vellacott [ed], *A Girl at Government House*, 1982

Left: The Coronation Hotel obviously appealed to French speakers in Sydney. *Le Courrier Australien*, 17 June 1905, p. 1

THE DANISH GIRL



Soon after the Denfords' departure from the area in 1908, the town of Denford was surveyed on the adjacent Reedy (Reid's) Creek.

and George Streets, Sydney, yet only a year later in 1905, the licence was transferred to a Mr Willis.

It seems that the Denfords had taken on too much debt, too quickly, and in 1905, the Denford family in South Australia records that Charley's brother, Frank, made him a sizeable loan of £400 which was never repaid.

Mabel was now aged 19, May was 17, Charlie Junior was 14, and Lenny was 12. It seems that Julia and the four children returned to Brisbane late

in 1905, but Charley went north to take up all the ground around Donnie Gray, a tin mining lease in California Creek, which was his old, favourite stomping ground. This separation must have been a very sad period for their family life, with the added worry of financial ruin after working so hard for 30 years in the isolated mining towns of North Queensland.

Mabel and May were probably working as barmaids in the British Empire Hotel in Queen Street, Brisbane, once again, while Charlie and Lenny (14 and 12 respectively) were enrolled at the Brisbane Central State School and remained there until late in 1908.

Charley worked that tin lease in California Creek but not for very long. Soon after his departure from the area in 1908, the town of Denford was surveyed on Reedy Creek nearby. This was a fitting memorial to a good man and his family who had worked hard for themselves and the wider community, including the aboriginal community. Soon after, Charley became the proprietor of a hotel in Rockhampton, and his family moved there in early 1909 to be together. May and Mabel worked in the hotel, as did Julia. The boys had finished school, with Lenny gaining an apprenticeship as a carpenter.

The family was still living and working in Rockhampton when Australia introduced its own currency in 1910. Up until then, it was a mishmash of British silver and copper coins, Australian-minted gold sovereigns and half-sovereigns, copper trade tokens, and private bank notes. The new currency was still based on the English system of pounds, shillings and pence, but now a unique set of Australian coins replaced them.

A long time had passed since rum had been a system of currency. In those early days, Spanish dollars were also used. In 1813, such was the shortage of coins that Governor Macquarie ordered the Spanish dollars to have their centres punched out. This doubled the number of coins and stopped the 'holey dollar' leaving the country, as it was worthless elsewhere. No doubt Charley could remember when South Australia had its own gold pound coins, minted in Adelaide.

SEVENTEEN



1911: A Big Year

THERE WAS SUCH HUGE EXCITEMENT in the family when the eldest Denford son Herbert married Miranda Cumming in Cairns in May 1911. This was the third wedding in the family for Charles and Julia. The first had been 11 years earlier, just after their move to Brisbane in 1900. Attending this wedding in 1911 were Julia and Charles, Herbert's sisters Mabel and May who were both living and working in Rockhampton, and his two young brothers, Lenny and Charlie.

Just two months later, May Denford married Joseph Hempenstall, an auctioneer, in Rockhampton, with the same family members attending the lavish wedding at the Catholic Cathedral.

Julia and Charles' second daughter, Alice, was already married and living in England and was now considered the 'black sheep' of the family. Julia and Charles had never met Alice's husband. They had never said goodbye to her. They did not even know if she had children.

It is not clear from available records exactly when the family moved from Rockhampton to Brisbane. It was possibly in 1912 at the time of Mabel's relationship with the mayor of that town. He had terminated the affair, worried that the scandal would adversely affect his public life. Mabel was devastated and never married.

Since May was married and living in Rockhampton, and since Mabel was in disgrace, it may have seemed an opportune time for the move. Charley was now 63, worn out from that last stint at mining in North Queensland, which was presumably a last effort to restore the family finances. He may have felt ready to farewell the hotel industry.

Census data collected in 1913 showed that the parents and their two youngest offspring were at Norfolk Road, West End, where their eldest daughter and her family already lived.

Charley's occupation was listed as 'retired'. That same census records Mabel as residing at the Gresham Hotel in Adelaide Street where presumably she worked as a barmaid. Charles junior was a commission agent and his younger brother, Lennie, a carpenter. At that time in Brisbane, West End was quite a sought-after locality for the middle class. There must have been a reconciliation with Annie by then. Perhaps it had already occurred while Charley was living and working alone in North Queensland. It must have been a very crowded home, with six adults and four children there.

Perhaps this was when another family home was purchased in Beesley Street, West End, which they named Coolgarra, after the mining town in North Queensland where they had lived and worked in the late 1800s. Charley must have recouped money from tin-mining in North Queensland. Since both sons were now working, they would have been able to contribute to the purchase of the property.

Now, there was another grandchild in the same year: Rowena, born in November, was Herbert and Miranda's first child. This brought the total number of grandchildren to five, the other four being Annie's children.

On the world stage, 1911 produced news of the Norwegian Amundsen who became the first person to reach the South Pole. Of course, Julia would have been delighted with the achievement of a fellow Scandinavian.

Though cars were now an everyday presence on the roads of Brisbane, Rockhampton and Cairns, the Denfords decided that the purchase of a home was more important than having a motor car. In the following year, 1912, the gigantic cruise ship *Titanic* made headlines when she sank on her maiden voyage from England to the United States, when only one-third of those aboard survived.

On her visits to Annie and the five grandchildren, it was noted often that Julia was wearing an Assam suit, the skirt of which she removed on arrival. Sometimes, she returned home four streets away wearing only her petticoat, with the skirt on her arm. She had a reputation of being very bossy, always well-dressed, and fastidious about her appearance. It was ironic that Charley and Julia had refused to attend Annie's wedding in 1900 to a Catholic, but now, 11 years later, they attended the wedding of May to another Catholic in Rockhampton. Things had changed.

THE DANISH GIRL

It was now 40 years since Julia had arrived in Australia as a shy, young, and inexperienced young woman with very little English. Now here she was, living with Charley, a good man, a good husband and father, with four, maybe five children married, and with many grandchildren to cherish and visit.

Charlie and Lennie were living with their parents in the new home on the Brisbane River, and Julia enjoyed having them still at home. They were good company, and their income had allowed the purchase of this new home with all of the modern conveniences of the time.

Coolgarra boasted four bedrooms, lounge and dining rooms, verandahs overlooking the river, an internal kitchen with a coal burning stove and oven, lino on the floor, and an ice box for keeping food cool. It was a long way indeed from dirt floors, wood-fired stoves, hessian-covered windows, and the constant threat of snakes in and outside the house.

They no longer had to keep a supply of chopped wood, but had coal delivered weekly, also ice every third day, and best of all, the delivery of bread, milk and the newspaper daily. There was even hot water available through the stove. No, maybe the prized feature was the internal bathroom, with hot shower, and internal flushing toilet. Julia still had so much to report in her letters home, if only to her two remaining sisters.



Charlie and Lenny Denford attended the Normal School bounded by Ann and Adelaide Sts, Brisbane. Parents were willing to overlook the cramped conditions at this school since their children would have a better chance of winning a Scholarship. — Supplement to *The Queenslander*, 29 April, 1916, p. 21



EIGHTEEN



War Declared

*In Flanders fields the poppies grow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the dead. Short days ago,
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.
— JOHN McCRAE*

IN AUSTRALIA, far from Europe's perplexities, the future had never looked brighter than in the early years of the 20th century. By 1905 the nation had recovered from the worst effects of the Depression of the 1890s, and immigration from the United Kingdom was reopened. In Europe, however, tensions were brewing. Following on from the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, war was declared in August 1914, ensnaring Australia in the conflict as a British dominion.

Julia felt uneasy. She could still recall from so long before the horrors of the Danish-German wars in the 1860s, with the loss of so many young men and the ensuing poverty. In reality, it was one of the reasons she had migrated to Australia—and here was war once again showing its menacing face.

Thankfully, her husband was too old to enlist, and so far, conscription was not mandatory—but she knew how young men could respond with excitement, fever and adventure. Of course, she also dwelled upon her family in Denmark and how they would fare. Both her parents were now deceased. Her father had died in 1887, the year her daughter Mabel was

born. Sadly, five of her eight sisters were also dead, some only in their thirties and forties. The nine sisters between them had given birth to 26 children. News in the papers soon revealed that Denmark was remaining neutral during the war, ironically supplying both the UK and Germany with food for the war effort. Julia breathed a sigh of relief for her motherland.

There was one shining light that year: the arrival of May and Joe's first child, Roy, but she didn't get to see him immediately, as the family lived in Rockhampton, and travel from Brisbane was restricted during the war.

Conscription was not introduced though the Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, did his best to promote it by travelling all over the country by train. In Warwick, not that far from Brisbane, Billy Hughes had rotten tomatoes thrown at him by locals when he gave an impassioned speech about conscription on the railway station.

Following this attack on the Prime Minister, who received no support from the local police, the Commonwealth Police Department was established. Even a referendum produced a "no" for conscription. In spite of this, many men who had not enlisted received white feathers in their letter boxes, a symbol of cowardice.

Charlie and Lenny were still at home. Both were fit young men and working but there was pressure in communities all around Australia for young men to enlist. The physical requirements included being aged between 18 and 45, standing at least 5 foot 2 inches high, and having a chest measurement of at least 34 inches, along with good teeth and eyesight. Even aboriginal men could enlist as long as one parent was white. Finally in 1916, both Denford boys enlisted. Lenny, 21, a carpenter, joined in January, then Charlie, a trainee auctioneer, joined in October, aged 24.

Julia's eldest son, Herbert, aged 32, was married with three children. He farmed cattle and ran a butcher shop in Cairns, and was required to remain on the land and not enlist. Three more grandchildren were born that year, giving Julia some happiness and joy—but would she ever see her young sons again? Would they return safely, marry and give her more grandchildren? How ironic that they would be so close to her homeland of Denmark!

When each of their sons was due to depart, Julia and Charley travelled by train to Pinkenba near the mouth of the Brisbane River, so as to farewell them. It had been a quiet port, about eight miles from the centre of



Soldiers heading to World War I being farewelled at the Pinkenba Wharf in Brisbane. — SLQ 57052

Brisbane, but now it was very busy with the war effort of moving soldiers and goods. They farewelled Lenny first, in the stifling heat of January. He went first to Sydney for three months' training, then by ship to Europe via Albany in Western Australia, Suez, Alexandria and on to Southampton. He had several more months of training in England (when he was admitted to hospital with influenza) and was finally shipped to northern France in January 1917. Meanwhile, Charles, aged 24, had decided to enlist in October 1916 but had spent an entire year training in Sydney. He was a crack shot and had joined the Field Artillery 29th Regiment.

Christmas of 1916 was a sad time, with Charlie and Lenny away at the war in France, and their second daughter, Alice, lost to them, probably still in England or wherever she went with that man.

Annie and her husband and six children were now in Warwick. Herbert, his wife and their three children, were far away in Cairns. May, Joe and their two toddlers lived in Rockhampton, while Mabel was running the Windsor Hotel also in Rockhampton. The brightest news was that there were three new grandchildren born in 1916. What a blessing to the Denford family. Now there were 11 grandchildren.

It was many years now since Julia had celebrated Christmas Eve, as was the custom in Denmark and all over Europe. In fact the last occasion had been in 1873, on the *Lammershagen*, somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean on her long voyage to Australia. She and Charley attended the Christmas service at 9am at St John's Cathedral in Brisbane. It was always a magnificent celebration with a wonderful choir.



The Anzac Day procession along Queen Street, Brisbane, 1916. — SLQ 39805

Julia cooked the customary Australian Christmas lunch of roast chicken, roast vegetables and plum pudding. Charley had killed and bled the chickens the previous day, then Julia plucked and prepared them for roasting. A quick calculation proved that she had now cooked 41 Australian Christmas Day lunches—but this was their first one alone.

Over the ensuing two years, letters arrived sporadically from her sons in Europe. Many of their friends were killed or badly injured, often being transferred to English hospitals for rehabilitation. There were restrictions placed on the contents of soldiers' letters home, but Julia and Charley were avid readers of the newspapers, loved the wireless, and this way they gleaned news of the war in Europe.

Their sons were both gunners, in different regiments, serving in northern France. Artillery dominated the warfare there, with massive field guns and huge landmines. Bombardment was the horror from which few emerged unscathed or unshaken. For the first time, the Germans were also using poison gas, firstly phosgene and later mustard gas as well. This was used by both the Allies and the Germans.

Out of a battalion of 1,000 men, 600 were fighting, while the rest were drivers, runners, grooms, guards, police, cooks, orderlies and stretcher bearers. A division of 20,000 men had 13,000 infantry, 7,000 horses, 1,200 vehicles and 200 machine guns.

Having grown up with horses, both Lenny and Charlie were experienced and skilled riders, and these talents served them well during the conflict. Charlie was also an accomplished rifleman, having belonged

to the Enoggera Rifle Club in Brisbane before the war, when he won many medals. Lenny dropped out of a march one day in northern France without permission, and entered a shop, hungry. He was punished by losing some rank. In late 1917, he was wounded in the shoulder but was able to rejoin his battalion two weeks later. He was wounded once again six months later, with a gunshot to the knee. He was sent to England and returned to Australia four months later for discharge.

His older brother, Charles, had no gunshot wounds, but was sick in hospital several times with dysentery and was admitted to Abbeville Hospital in France, dangerously ill with pneumonia. From there he was invalided back to England and spent many more weeks in Graylingwell Hospital in Chichester. He was considered unfit for further duty and arrived back in Australia in early 1919.



Victory Parade, Queen Street, 1918. — *The Queenslander Pictorial* (p. 22), supplement to *The Queenslander*, 23 November 1918



World War I medals for Charlie and Lenny Denford. — National Archives of Australia

Three months before the arrival home of the Denford brothers, the Armistice was declared and Brisbane came alive with celebrations. Thousands took to the streets to revel and rejoice, but the cost of this long-awaited victory had been exorbitant. Half of eligible Australian males had enlisted, and of that number, 60,000 were killed and 145,000 wounded. In Queensland, it was 6,800 dead and 16,000 wounded.

Julia indeed was so grateful for the return of her two young sons. She and Charley were delighted to have them back at West End, safe in the family home Coolgarra on the Brisbane River—but they could see that they were changed men, now morose and quiet, and Lenny no longer interested in swimming and diving. Fortunately, they were able to work. Charlie was once again a commission agent, and Lenny was a cabinetmaker. They would not talk of their war experiences at all, and only mentioned the celebrations in England for Armistice Day. The young men were so grateful to be alive and well, and back in the family home, named Coolgarra after the small tin mining town in North Queensland in which they had resided. It was a spacious weatherboard home on the Brisbane River, looking across to the Regatta Hotel and the beautiful residence, Moorlands, nearby.

When her brothers were away at the war, Mabel had moved back to Rockhampton to be near her younger sister May, who now had three children. Mabel, now aged 30, was licensee of the Windsor Hotel in Rockhampton. She had had plenty of experience in the hotel trade, (dating from when she was 14 or 15), first in Coolgarra, then in Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney and Rockhampton. There was no further mention of her affair with the mayor of Rockhampton.

Celebrations for the end of the war were not long over when another fear descended upon Brisbane. The Spanish flu was ravaging millions in Europe, and it threatened Australia via ships returning from the war in

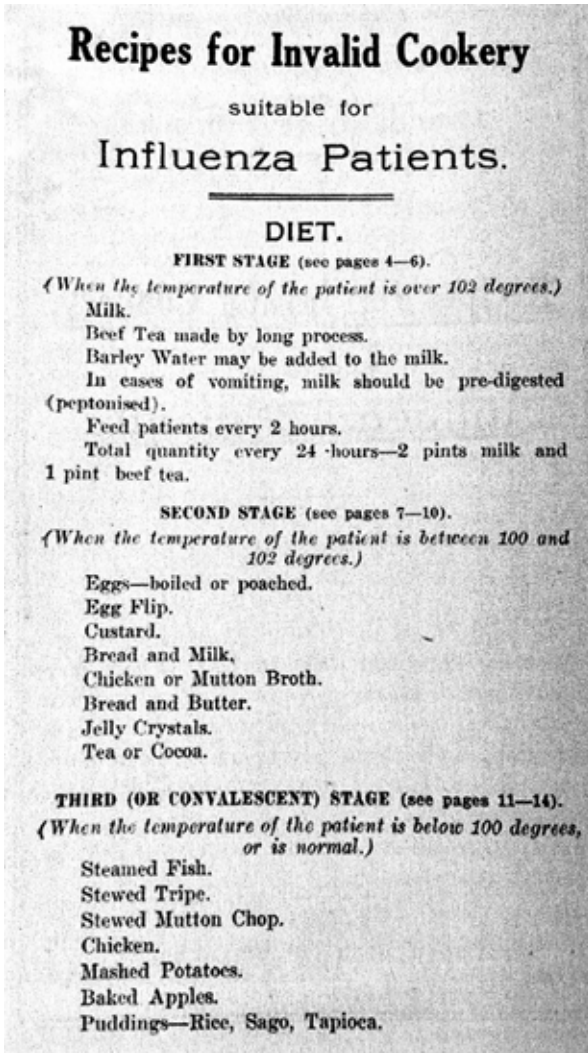
Europe. Before 1918, influenza was common at certain times in most years, and it was not feared because it was not dangerous. Flu might kill a few infants and a few old people and then went away. It was simply considered annoying. The 1918 pandemic was different. It spread rapidly among young soldiers who were often malnourished, underfed and lived closely in confined spaces. The flu hit men in the trenches hard, and also decimated civilian populations in Europe, causing great economic disruption.

Australia was one of the last countries to have contact with the flu in 1919. Many families were already grieving over sons who had died in Europe. The first case had occurred in Melbourne, and now in May 1919, Queensland was declared an infected state. How fortunate that Julia's two sons had returned from the war in Europe before the flu became rampant there. Quarantine stations were set up at Wallangarra and Coolangatta, towns with railway stations on the border with New South Wales. Once people had had two vaccines and three inhalations, they were allowed to board the train for Brisbane.

There was a major outcry and huge protest in Queen Street when the Federal Government allowed hundreds of returning soldiers off ships in Brisbane, without any vaccines or quarantine. This situation soon changed, with most soldiers realising the gravity of the situation, nevertheless many escaped quarantine in their quest finally to get home.

It was like war all over again. Businesses and supplies had barely returned to normal when once again they were closing, with food, clothing and other necessities of life in short supply. Schools, churches and sporting fields were closed. An emergency canvas isolation hospital was set up in the Showgrounds across the road from the Brisbane Hospital. Vaccination depots were commenced in South Brisbane and in the centre of Brisbane.

In January 1919, 500 people had their first dose of vaccine. It was made worse by an accompanying diphtheria outbreak for which there was no vaccine. The quarantine strategy at the time consisted of four key practices: isolation, wearing face masks, spraying throats, and vaccination. Another method involved the use of inhalation chambers. It was thought that inhaling a vapour of zinc sulphate would neutralise the germs. This method was used as a preventative for those who had made contact with people who had been infected with the flu.



The advised diet for Queenslanders who had succumbed to the Spanish Influenza in 1919. The diet was simple, with a focus on soft foods. — Dept of Public Health, Qld

The population of Brisbane at that time was 190,000, and when the epidemic ceased in September 1919, there were 350 recorded deaths in Brisbane, 15,000 Australia wide and 50 million worldwide—in short, a greater number of fatalities than those of World War I.

Would life ever return to normal? None of Julia's family in Denmark had died of the Spanish flu, for which she was grateful, but then, six out of eight of her sisters had already died at around the age of 40. She was outliving them all. She was indeed blessed by migrating to Australia.

NINETEEN



Life After War

*This life's a scene of bustle, care and noise
Of certain trouble, and uncertain joys.
Death ends the contest, we can only have
A peaceful refuge in the silent graves.*

NOW THAT THE sorrow of war and the anxieties of the Spanish flu had been settled, life in Brisbane for Julia and her husband resumed some normality and routine. They enjoyed having their two sons home from war. Both young men were working, but obviously had no intention of seeking marriage partners. They never brought young women home and never talked about meeting female friends. Julia and Charley secretly wondered if they had liaisons with women in brothels, or even if they perhaps were “queer”.

Something had changed for both Charlie and Lenny, and other parents also spoke about it. The horrors of war had altered their personalities. Thankfully, they were able to continue working, Charles as a stock and commission agent, and Lenny as a skilful carpenter and cabinetmaker. The young men also enjoyed swimming and diving competitively, and belonged to the Belmont Rifle Range.

They all enjoyed living in Coolgarra, their home which looked across the Brisbane River to Toowong and the beautiful Regatta Hotel. It boasted a jetty from which Charley and his two sons often fished. A small boat also gave them all a lot of pleasure. It was used mainly for fishing but also simply for the enjoyment of rowing on the river. Occasionally, Julia was persuaded to join them, but only in fine weather as she was not a great lover of the water. Perhaps this was due to that long voyage from Europe all those years ago, or more likely because her childhood had not been spent around water.

Once a year since the war, Julia and Charley travelled by train to Rockhampton in order to see Mabel as well as May and her family. May and Joe now had four children, all under eight in 1922. That was a big year for May and Joe since they enjoyed a six-week cruise to Hawaii. Financially, their lives were secure. Joe was a very successful auctioneer and an hotel agent with his two brothers.

During that six weeks, Julia and Charley helped care for the children, and worked with the household staff which consisted of a cook, cleaner, laundry woman, gardener and nursemaid. Joan, the youngest, was only one-year-old at that time. Julia and Charley, in their early 70s, were still healthy enough grandparents and were well able to enjoy this special time in their lives. Mabel, 35, no longer lived and worked in Rockhampton. Instead she was back in Brisbane in the family home, Coolgarra, where she became the household manager for her parents and two brothers.

1922 was a memorable year on the world stage also since the first birth control clinic had begun in the UK. Julia and her daughters wondered when that would happen in Australia. Annie and her husband James were devout Catholics and eschewed birth control. May had also married a Catholic, but remained an Anglican, and would also have refused birth control measures. Though May and Joe had four children, they also had had four miscarriages.

In Australia in 1922, the country's first airline, Qantas, began in Winton in Queensland, and offered regular flights from Cloncurry to Charleville. It was an exciting achievement but Julia and her husband doubted if they would ever fly in an aeroplane. Perhaps their children and grandchildren would.

A milestone for 1922 was when Queensland became the first Australian state to abolish capital punishment. Indeed, it was the first jurisdiction in the British Commonwealth to do so. It made Julia wonder when it was abolished in Denmark. She would have to ask her family in the next letter home. Lenny had informed her that the guillotine was still legal in France, and was still being used, mainly for acts of treason. Julia recalled a news item from way back in 1889 about the hanging of a woman in NSW. Now she read also that one woman only had been hanged for the murder of her husband in Port Douglas in 1887, at the time that Julia and her young family were also living in North Queensland.

Charley continued enjoying his monthly Masonic Lodge meetings in the city. They were a mystery to Julia, but she accepted it, as many women did. She occasionally visited the Danish Club in the city, to enjoy conversations in her native tongue and to read magazines and newspapers from Denmark. Though long out of date, they were enjoyable nevertheless.

On her sojourns into the city by tram, she often strolled through the newly-constructed Brisbane Arcade which connected Queen Street and Adelaide Street. It had been commissioned by Mary and James Mayne, two children of the notorious Patrick Mayne, who had confessed to murder and robbery on his death bed. The beginning of his wealth was the construction of his butcher shop on the very land where his children had now erected this glorious shopping arcade.

From the very outset, a Trust had been established by the Maynes, with proceeds going to the Medical School, and this continues today, 100 years later. Brisbane society felt that the Mayne family wealth was tainted, and the family was ostracised—however, the city fathers did not refuse the enormous parcel of land up the river at St Lucia being given to the city for the construction of a fine new university.

Julia could not afford the exquisite clothing and jewellery on show, but strolling through the arcade of Edwardian Baroque design and admiring the intricate stained glass windows, gave her a great deal of pleasure. She was such a talented dressmaker that she could examine the fine dresses on show, and copy them at home on her trusty sewing machine, for the benefit of herself, her daughters and grandchildren. Once a year, on her birthday, her daughter Annie and granddaughter Doris, accompanied her there for a most expensive high tea.

Julia also admired The Mansions in George Street, not far from Parliament House. It was here that she kept her medical appointment with Dr Lilian Cooper, the first woman medico in Queensland. When the Denfords had first moved to Brisbane in 1900 and were living and working in the British Empire Hotel, Dr Cooper already had her practice in The Mansions, but, in those years, Julia was too busy and too healthy to need her services. Now, with advancing age, she occasionally needed medical advice. Julia remembered the doctor in those early years doing her house calls in a horse and buggy, but she soon became the owner of her own motor vehicle, and there were many stories of her accidents



Queen Street in 1923. — Queensland Newspapers

and near-misses as she was apparently quite a reckless driver. Julia also admired the way Dr Cooper and her female companion had volunteered their services in Europe in the First World War.

Charley fished in the river alone or with his sons. Julia spent much of her time sewing for her daughters and grandchildren, and mending her sons' work clothes as well. She had always enjoyed needlework. It had been a necessity in the early days, but now though money was more plentiful, she still made clothes for herself and her family. Indeed, she had passed on her love of good clothes, fashion and the art of dressmaking to all her daughters, and no doubt hoped that they in turn would pass that accomplishment onto *their* daughters in the years to come. She had been very fond of her Singer treadle sewing machine, but Charley, Mabel, and her two sons surprised her with an electric model for Christmas 1925.

As grandparents, they were now able to enjoy their grandchildren very much. In 1925, Mabel had holidayed in Rockhampton with her sister May and her five children, and had brought back Esme and Marie (aged nine and seven) to Brisbane by train for the Christmas holidays. What joy for Julia and Charley, and what a busy happy Christmas it was with the house full with five adults and two children.

Early in 1926, Julia and Charley received word from old friends in Sydney that their daughter Alice, whom they had not seen in over 20 years, had died the previous year. She had remarried, had been living in Sydney

for several years, but there was no news of any children. She was only 43 years old. Perhaps it was the shock of this news about their estranged daughter which—on top of a particularly bad attack of the flu—brought about Charley's death in June 1926 of pneumonia.

This meant that Julia had lost both parents, seven of her eight sisters, her daughter Alice, and now her dear husband Charley. It hardly seemed that it was over 50 years since she had left Denmark.

It was a very sad funeral held in the nearby Anglican church, attended by all their adult children (except their deceased Alice), half of their many grandchildren, friends and Freemasons. As was the custom, a wake and refreshments were held in their home on the river at Coolgarra.

TWENTY



Julia Alone Again

*The tide goes out
The tide goes in
Sand washes away
And is brought back again.
Every day I sit here
And wish you were by my side
To dry my tears before
They are swept away upon the tide.*

CHARLEY'S DEATH AT the age of 77 gave Julia pause to reflect once again on events. She had led a busy life in Denmark in a large family of girls, enjoyed a short education, then undertook the menial work tending to the household needs of others above her in social status. Where did she find that desire for adventure and risk and to travel alone to a foreign country? It was certainly not apparent in any of her sisters, nor in her mother. Perhaps it was her father who was responsible for that adventurous streak since he had migrated from Prussia to Denmark as a young man, and had never returned. Why had she never asked him about this? Her only regret was not seeing her parents and sisters again, but letters had been a wonderful way to share love and experience, and to keep her Danish language alive.

She had married a truly wonderful and remarkable man, who was a kind father and husband, and she had seven children and 17 grandchildren. She had outlived, in years, her father, all eight sisters, and one daughter. Her mother had reached the age of 79, so could she outlive her too? Added to this, she had the luxury of two precious sons and a daughter still living with her, loving her and caring for her in her widowed years.

In her excursions to the city, she had been watching with interest the construction of the new Masonic Lodge in Ann Street which was to replace the existing one in Albert Street which Charley used to attend. How sad that he was no longer alive to admire and enjoy this marvellous edifice. Her two sons had not followed in their father's footsteps to become Masons. She always wondered why but never asked them. She assumed that it was related to the tragedies of those war years, that they no longer wished for the company of men exclusively.

Julia also enjoyed watching the construction of the new City Hall in Adelaide Street, a fine Italianate design with an impressive clock tower. It was very close to being finished, and due to open in 1930. Apparently, it was the second most expensive building in Australia, and expected to cost one million pounds. She had been watching it take shape for nine years. It was being built at the same time as the Sydney Harbour Bridge, which was *the* most expensive project in Australia.

Julia was unlikely to ever see it. She reflected that her city indeed was coming of age. Yes, she realised that she felt truly Australian and no longer Danish, but her birth country remained precious for her.

In 1929 at the age of 40, May gave birth to her sixth child which they named Juleen. Julia hoped that this would be her last, but there was no guarantee. Julia herself had had her seventh at the age of 42. The year before Juleen's birth, a Queenslander, Bert Hinkler, had flown solo from London to Australia. Such an achievement!

About this time, a remarkable drug called penicillin was discovered by Fleming and Florey. Perhaps people such as her husband Charley would not have died unnecessarily from pneumonia, if they had had the use of this antibiotic drug.

The year 1929 was always remembered for the Wall Street crash. The general feeling in Australia that year was that all would remain well, but there was still disquiet and rumours of impending financial hardship. Julia was anxious about all of her children, their jobs, their homes and their financial security. In 1930, the Great Depression did occur, affecting Australia and all the world.

The letters from May, her daughter in Rockhampton, were grim. There was talk that the banks were near to foreclosing on the businesses owned by her husband, Joe, in partnership with his two brothers. Julia

THE DANISH GIRL

was so comforted to know that her home, Coolgarra, now owned with her two sons, was totally paid for and there could be no threat of losing it.

Perhaps all of this anxiety affected Julia's health, since she also died at home, from influenza and pneumonia, in August 1930, at the age of 77. She had survived a long, gruelling voyage from Europe on a sailing ship, had borne seven children, endured several miscarriages in the rough, remote bush without succumbing to death, had come through the Spanish flu unscathed, but death had finally claimed her.

EPILOGUE



FURTHER DETAILS about the lives of Julia's seven children and 19 grandchildren.

1. ANNIE MARIA JOHANNA, 1878–1962

Annie was ostracised by the family for many years because of her marriage in Cairns to James Mullins, a Catholic. Reconciliation occurred in 1906, when they moved to West End with their five children. They had seven children in all, and in turn, those seven children had 12 children. Annie's grandchildren described Annie as "a lovely granny."

2. ALICE ADELAIDE, 1882–1925

Alice was the 'black sheep' of the family. She went overseas in 1902 with her first husband, divorced, returned, then married a second time in Sydney in 1918. She may have had two children but this is not certain. She remained estranged from her family from 1902 onwards.

3. HERBERT, 1884–1962

Herbert and his wife Elsie owned Lakefield and Laura stations in North Queensland. He became a councillor, and owned racehorses and butcheries. Herbert had hunted crocodiles in his early life. One of their four children married a minister who became the last Bishop of Carpentaria. The bishop flew a plane to visit his isolated parishioners.

4. MABEL VALENTINE, 1887–1962

After her failed affair with the Mayor of Rockhampton, Mabel never married, but lived with her parents and brothers in West End, before and after her parents' deaths. She was adored by her nieces and nephews in Brisbane and was called 'Auntie Ba.'

5. MAY, 1889–1959

May and her husband Joe Hempenstall, an auctioneer and land developer, had six children. Their fine and lavish lifestyle in Rockhampton came to an abrupt end in the Depression in 1931, when the banks foreclosed on them, even taking May's wedding and engagement rings. May moved to Brisbane with the six children in 1931, and lived with her two brothers and sister for at least a year at West End. Those six children ranged in age from 16 to two. Her husband Joe remained behind in Rockhampton, living alone in a hotel where he worked at menial tasks. The stress and heartbreak was so huge that May tried one night to drown herself in the Brisbane River, but was saved by

her brothers. Joe Hempenstall's brother Ned avoided bankruptcy by owning a sheep station. At each wool clip he gave his brothers 1000 guineas each, and it was this money that enabled May and Joe eventually to buy a home in West End, and to educate their daughters at All Hallows Convent in Brisbane. Sadly, their two older children died early, Roy in 1933 from a brain tumour, and Esme in 1939 from tuberculosis.

6. CHARLES ROBERT, 1892–1961

Charles had service in World War I as a gunner and came home to live with his parents and sister Mabel at West End. He became a stock and station agent but never married.

7. LEONARD GEORGE, 1894–1980

Leonard also lived with his parents until their deaths, and later lived alone at West End, never marrying. He had also enlisted as a gunner in World War I. It was rumoured that in his remaining years, he became a recluse, and threw all of the family memorabilia into the Brisbane River before his death.



HOW IRONIC that five of the seven siblings died in the space of the three years from 1959 and 1962, with three deceased in 1962. On the other hand, there was a profound stretch between Alice's death in 1925, aged 43, and Lennie's death in 1980, aged 86. It was very sad that Alice, the estranged daughter, predeceased her parents.

By 1930, the year of Julia Mansachs' death, her parents and all eight sisters in Denmark were deceased, and the family name, Mansachs, no longer existed in Denmark. After World War II, a male descendant of one of Julia's sisters approached the King of Denmark for permission to reinstate the name, as a reward for his services to the underground movement during the war. Permission was given, and the Mansachs name continues.



MY GRANDMOTHER WAS MAY DENFORD, later to become May Hempenstall, Julia's fifth child, and named for Maytown where Julia became a bride. I knew May for a short nine years, and she was a special and loving part of my childhood. I enjoyed watching her dress and apply powder and lipstick before taking me by tram to Rowe's Arcade in Brisbane for morning tea. I enjoyed watching her on the floor cutting patterns for dressmaking. With my siblings I loved picking macadamia nuts and mangos from her backyard trees at West End. Her death in 1959 was my first experience of grief and loss. — *Joanna*

9. Decbr. 29 ^{de}	Julie Mathilde Mansachs. —
Hjæmme fra 24 ^{de} Januar 1853. I Kirke fra 3 ^{de} Mai 1853. —	Fædren Carl August Ludvig Mansachs og Hustru Johanne Cathrine Sellmann i Lerkens- feldts Mølle. —
Fødsel af Kirkejænger Poulsens søn af Gjedsted; fødtes sigem Kirsten Jensdatter af Vesterbølle. Vid- nerne: Gm. Peder Christiansen af Aarup, Gm. Chr. Jensen Garb- ner af Vesterbølle og Jens Thoma- sen Garbner af Lerkensfeldt.	

The Birth Certificate of Julia Mansachs.

Translation: • Number 9 (the ninth birth in 1852) • December 29 • Julie Mathilde Mansachs • Dyer Carl August Ludvig Mansachs and wife Johanne Cathrine Sellmann in Lerkensfeldt Mølle (Mill) • Presented by the wife of church singer Poulsen from Gjedsted, assisted by girl Kirsten Jensdatter from Vesterbølle. • Witnesses were farmer Peder Christiansen from Aarup, farmer and gardener Christian Jensen, and gardener Jens Thomsen from Lerkensfeldt. • Vaccinated the 3 July 1856. • Mother introduced in the church, the 1 May 1853.

THE DANISH GIRL



Julia Mathilde Mansachs.



Lenny, Mabel and Charlie Denford snr,
ca. 1926. Courtesy Miss M. Andrew, S.A.



Annie Maria Johanna Denford,
ca. 1900. Courtesy Mrs G.
Cosgrove, Qld.



Mabel Denford.



Herbert William Denford,
ca. 1958. Courtesy
Mrs V. Hall-Matthews, Qld.

EPILOGUE



The gravestone of Charles and Julia Denford at the cemetery at South Brisbane (Dutton Park). Pictured in 1992 are Jane Phillips, 11, great-great-granddaughter of Julia, and Joan Murphy, 71, granddaughter of Julia.



The *Lammershagen* was wrecked in 1882 off the coast of Wales near Swansea with no loss of life.

We are often asked

“What remains today at Maytown?”

Maytown is definitely a ghost town today. All that remains is the stone guttering and a few old house stumps which indicate where some of the buildings were.

Some years ago the Palmer River Preservation Society erected a replica miners hut and also placed markers along the street to indicate where the businesses were situated.



Replica Miner's Hut



West side of Leslie Street



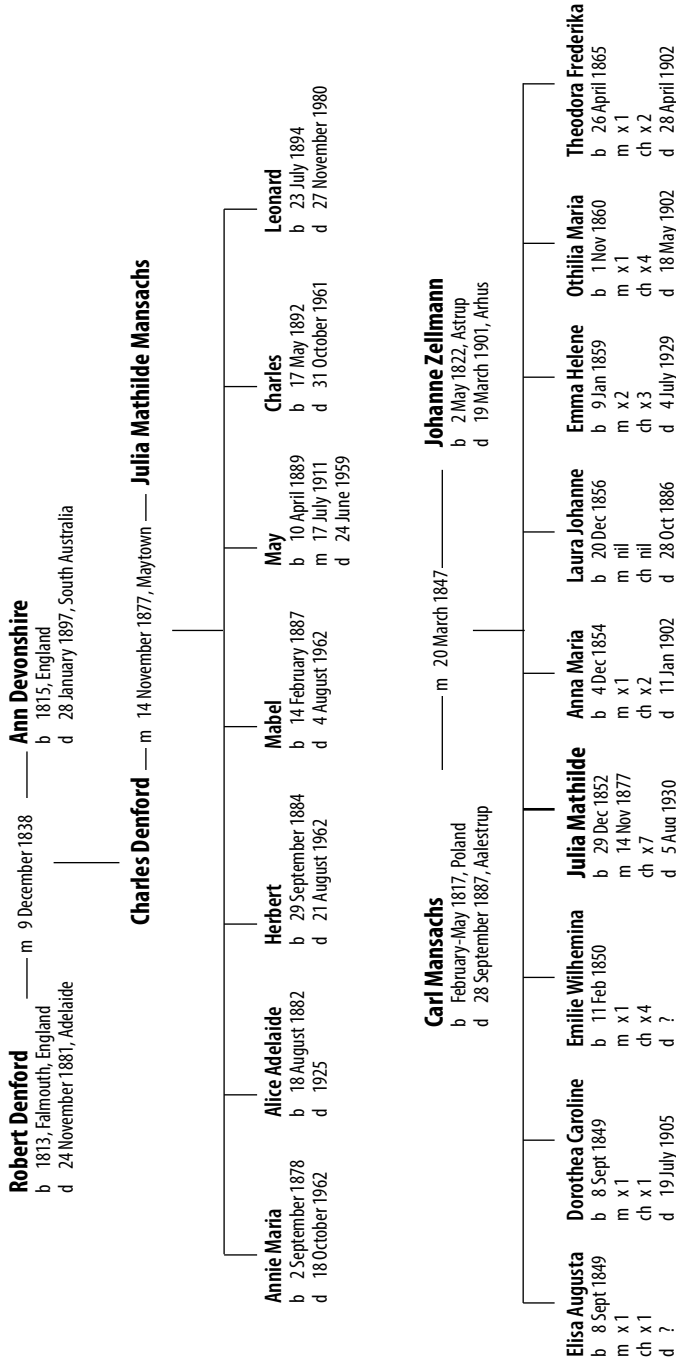
East side of Leslie Street



This memorial and time capsule to the pioneers and families of Maytown was erected in 1983 by the Palmer River Preservation Society.

“Although Maytown was abandoned during the Second World War, the deserted streets still resound to the tread of activity as visitors come and go, leaving nought but the dust to settle...” — John Hay, “Remnants of a Golden Era: Palmer River Goldfield, 1986”, *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 13 (2) 63-72.

FAMILY TREE



TIMELINE



- 1849 Charles Denford, born Robe, South Australia
- 1852 Julia Mansachs, born Vesterbolle, Denmark
- 1872 Danish Club opens in Brisbane
- 1873 Julia departs Hadsund, Denmark, 13/10/1873, on the *Lammershagen*
- 1873 Julia departs Hamburg, Germany, 1/11/1873
- 1874 Julia arrives Townsville, 19/02/1874
- 1877 Julia marries Charles, Maytown, 14/11/1877
- 1878 First child, Annie, born at Gregory, Palmer River, 2/09/1878
- 1882 Second child, Alice, born 18/08/1872
- 1882 Denfords manage Greencamp Hotel, 1882-1884
- 1883 Denfords manage Coolgarra Hotel, 1883-1888
- 1884 Third child, Herbert, born 29/09/1884, Coolgarra
- 1887 Fourth child, Mabel, born 14/02/1887, Coolgarra
- 1887 Julia's father, Carl Mansachs, dies in Denmark, 28/09/1887, aged 69
- 1889 Fifth child, May, born, 10/04/1889, California Creek
- 1892 Sixth child, Charles, born 17/05/1892, California Creek
- 1894 Last child Leonard, born, 23/07/1894, California Creek
- 1898 Denford family moves to Cairns
- 1900 Annie Denford marries James Mullins in March, Cairns
- 1900 Denford family moves to Brisbane in March
- 1901 Julia's mother dies in Denmark on 19/03/1901
- 1901 Denford family moves to Sydney; Charles in September, the others in December

TIMELINE

- 1901 First grandchild born in Cairns
- 1903 Alice Denford marries Sam Ellison in UK in September
- 1905 Charles snr moves from Sydney to California Creek in October
- 1905 Julia, Mabel, May, Charles jnr and Lennie move from Sydney to Brisbane
- 1909 Julia and four children move from Brisbane to Rockhampton
- 1909 Charles snr moves from California Creek to Rockhampton
- 1911 May marries Joseph Hempenstall in Rockhampton
- 1911 Herbert marries Miranda Cummins in Cairns
- 1913 Denfords move from Rockhampton to Brisbane
- 1916 Charles jnr and Lennie enlist in WWI
- 1918 Marie Hempenstall born in Rockhampton
Charles and Lennie return from WWI
Alice Denford/Ellison marries William Rink in Sydney
- 1921 Joan Hempenstall born in Rockhampton
- 1922 May and Joe Hempenstall take a cruise to Hawaii
- 1926 Alice Denford dies in Sydney, 27/01/1926
Charles Denford snr dies in Brisbane, 24/06/1926, aged 77
- 1930 Julia Denford dies in Brisbane, 05/08/1930, aged 77

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JOANNA was born and raised in a large Catholic family in Brisbane. She married at 20, and her sons, Jim and Adam, were born halfway through her medical studies. After completing her degree and establishing a practice at Wellington Point near Brisbane, her daughter, Jane, was born. Shortly after, the family purchased a yacht, and enjoyed the next three years sailing from Brisbane to the Canary Islands. Upon return, Joanna resumed her medical work in Redland Bay, south of Brisbane, and later performed locum work in rural Queensland.

In her retirement, Joanna has indulged her curiosity about her forebears which has culminated in this memoir about her great-grandmother. She continues to enjoy her large family of siblings, children and grandchildren, as well as cycling, travelling, theatre, local history, and voluntary work as a Brisbane Greeter.



Joanna at the Brisbane City Hall in September 2022 for the celebration of the Danish Club's 150 years in Brisbane.

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