

Some Old Stations.

Cressbrook and Durundur.

By A. J. M'CONNEL.

No. I.

JOHAN M'CONNEL was born on October 3, 1806, at the Polyon, Ardwick, Manchester. He was the fourth son of James M'Connell, of Carriggan, in Wigtonshire, an engineer and mill owner in Manchester. His mother was a daughter of Henry Houldsworth, of Gonalston Hagg, in Nottinghamshire. One of her brothers, Thomas, was for many years a member of the House of Commons; he was also a keen supporter of the turf and, with other good horses, owned the celebrated Filho da Puta, who won the Doncaster St. Leger; he was afterwards matched against the famous horse, The Flying Dutchman, for a race for a thousand guineas, in which he was beaten.

Love of horse-breeding ran in the Houldsworth family, for Thomas Houldsworth's nephew, the late J. H. Houldsworth, was a member of the Jockey Club. He formed a successful stud from mares bought from the late Mr. Merry, and mated with that good sire, Spruaghaid. He bred many fine horses, amongst them the imported horse, Positano.

After being educated at private schools, John M'Connell went to a school in Bristol whose head master was the late Dr. Carpenter, and afterwards spent some time in Geneva under the tuition of Mr. Lutchter.

Having "finished" his education, he entered the silk-spinning business in Manchester, in which he was engaged for some years. About the end of the '30's the Secretary for the Colonies wished to encourage immigration to Australia. Parts of New South Wales and Victoria were thrown open to free men, consequently a number of adventurous English and Scottish young men left for Australia. Among them was David M'Connell, a younger brother of

David M'Connell, a younger brother of John's, who arrived in Sydney at the end of 1839 or early in '40. After staying a few months about Sydney, he determined to go to the new country at the back of Moreton Bay discovered by Cunningham, and lately explored by George and Patrick Leslie. He bought some stock, and with a friend named Herbert Evans followed Leslie's tracks to the Downs. The Leslies allowed him to use a piece of country near Killarney, afterwards known as M'Connell's Plain, for the ewes to lamb on.

At Cressbrook.

AFTER a spell David M'Connell moved on over the range on to the Brisbane River fall, via Crowsnest, which he considered the most suitable route for a railway onto the Downs, and took up the property he named Cressbrook, at the junction of Cressbrook Creek and the Brisbane River. Mr. Evans left the party after the move from Killarney, and bought a block of country known as Stonehenge. David M'Connell first pitched his camp on Cressbrook Creek, about a mile or so above the bridge at Toogoolawah, and later moved on to the present site of Cressbrook, named after Cressbrook in Derbyshire, which was a beautiful home in Monsildale, Derbyshire, owned by Mr. Henry M'Connell, David's eldest brother. He was a very good judge of pictures, and had a fine collection, many of them being by the most noted artists of the day. Amongst these pictures, one I remember was the celebrated painting called "The Horse Fair," which was painted for my uncle by Rosa Bonheur, and has been engraved. Another was J. Phillips's chef d'oeuvre, "The Early

Phillips's chef d'oeuvre, "The Early Career of Murillo, 1634," a very beautiful picture. There were also Landseer's "Hawking in the Olden Time," "Free Trade" and "Protection," both of which had been engraved. Another Landseer called "There's Life in the Old Dog Yet" was much admired. There were some by J. M. W. Turner, Constable, Mulready, Moreland, and one by Millais, "Pilgrims to St. Paul's," and many others. After Henry M'Connel's death his collection was sold at Christie's, in London, in 1886.

David M'Connel was the first squatter on the Brisbane River watershed, and was closely followed by the M'Kenzies, of Kilcoy, and the Balfours of Colinton, in the order named. All in the early part of 1841. Mr. Mort married Miss Laidley in 1847, and took his wife to Cressbrook. To accommodate her an addition was made to the original building, and this is still in existence, as the eastern wing of a larger addition built in 1862. This last building was at first intended to be erected about a quarter of a mile to the west of its present site, but on David M'Connel's arrival from England about that date the idea was changed.

Towards the end of the '30's John M'Connel, finding his silk-spinning business unprofitable, disposed of it; after which he thought he would try his luck in Australia, glowing reports of which country had been sent home by his brother David. So, on July 7, 1842, he left England, accompanied by his younger brother, Frederic, then 21 years old, and the youngest of a family of 13 children, in the ship Aden bound for Sydney via Cape Verdi, off the coast of S. Africa, the ship caught fire. This was caused by a steward dropping a lighted candle on some straw in the hold, and it was some time before the fire was extinguished.

In due course the ship arrived in Sydney, and the two brothers went to Moreton Bay to meet David. As Brisbane town was a penal settlement, all who passed through it required a permit. No settlement within a radius of fifty miles was permitted. It was presumed the authorities were afraid the settlers would contaminate the convicts. This regulation preventing visitors entering the area of the settle-

ment without a permission was a great

drawback to the settlement of the back country, as it meant that the new settlers had to travel to the Downs via the New England route. So far as taking up runs was concerned it prevented good land near to Brisbane (supposed to be within its radius) from being occupied, and inferior country further away was taken. As a matter of fact, many of the runs on the Brisbane River were within the area, for as the crow flies the distance from Brisbane to the head station at Cressbrook was just on 50 miles. Durundur 42 miles, Kilcoy 45 miles, and Mt. Brisbane and Mt. Esk about 38 miles. The new arrivals went to Cressbrook, and for the next few years remained there gaining colonial experience.

Mr. Henry Mort.

IN 1842 Mr. Henry Mort arrived at Cressbrook in charge of some Short-horn bulls, bought by David M'Connel in Sydney, and he remained on as superintendent till 1849, when he took up Franklyn Vale and made it his home. Afterwards with his brother Thomas, he was the founder of the famous wool broking firm of Mort and Co., Sydney, where, after leaving



DAVID M'CONNEL.

Franklyn Vale, he spent the end of a useful life in his beautiful home, Mount Adelaide, on Darling Point, overlooking Sydney Harbour. I think Cressbrook and Franklyn Vale are the only properties that are still held by the original occupants in the '40's.

Mr. Mort is said to have got on well with the blacks, and was a great favourite. On account of his rather reddish, round, John Bull-shaped face, the blacks called him "Mr. Moon." His first two children were born at Cressbrook—a son, Wallace, now the Rev. Wallace Mort, of Sydney (and said by his youngest brother, Mr. Arthur Mort, to be the oldest living Queenslander), and a daughter, Miss Sissie Mort.

The Original House.

THE original house at Cressbrook was built on the ground. It had slab walls and a shingled roof. Besides the dining-room there were two fair-sized bedrooms, a couple of skillion rooms, a seven foot verandah on one side, and a brick fire place and chimney, the bricks being burnt on the place.

The bunya tree, which grows opposite the N.W. corner of the oldest building, is said to have been planted by David M'Connel in 1843. I have a dim remembrance of another bunya tree planted in line with the existing one, but at the N.E. corner of the old house. This tree was either killed by lightning or cut down because it interfered with the growth of the other. If this be correct, the eastern tree must have been removed over 60 years ago.

Monsildale.

IN a letter written in January, 1844, Mr. Mort mentions that "the three M'Connels (John, David, and Frederic), with five men, had just started with a bullock team up the river to form a helper station on Monsildale Creek, a branch of the Brisbane River. They had a very hard trip owing to floods and rough country, and thinks it was a capital initiation for the two newcomers, especially John." Owing to trouble from the blacks, Monsildale was abandoned some years afterwards, and the stock returned to Cressbrook. Mr. Mort made a muster of the stock in February and March, 1844—the

Mr. Mort made a muster of the stock in February and March, 1844—the sheep numbered 8561, and consisted of 103 rams, 4107 ewes, 1712 wethers, 2639 lambs, and the cattle numbered 1385, all Shorthorns. A sale of 500 old sheep at 2 6 a head was made to James Ivory, of Eskdale. When the M'Connels gave up Monsildale, it was taken up by the owners of Colinton, and was added to that property. Later, when resumed by the Crown under '68 Act, it was selected by the late Mr. James Steven (a Scotchman who had gained his experience with the late James Swanson, of Yabba), who improved it into a fine property, and lived on it for many years. After the timber had been ringbarked, the country being warm and well sheltered fattened stock well. Since Mr. Stevens's time the property has been subdivided and sold to several owners.

In the middle of 1844 Dr. Leichhardt, the explorer, was preparing for his expedition to Port Essington, and the M'Connel brothers were among those who subscribed towards his outfit, Frederic contributing a considerable amount, and volunteering to join the party. His offer, I believe, was accepted, but bad news concerning his mother's health reached him, so he went to England instead, where he married.

(Illustrations on Picture Page.)