

Some Old Stations.

By A. J. M'CONNEL.

No. VI.

Mount Brisbane.

THIS run was occupied by Frederic and Francis Bigge in September, 1841. As there were several members of the Bigge family who played their part in Australia, I shall give a few particulars of the family. The first member that I shall write about was Thomas Charles Bigge, of Benton House, Northumberland—who had three sons connected with this sketch. John Thomas, his third son, born in 1780, who had previously been Chief Justice of Trinidad, was in 1819 sent by the Colonial Office to inquire into the administration of Mr. Lachlan Macquarie, the Governor of New South Wales. J. T. Bigge was known in Australia as Commissioner Bigge. He soon had differences with the Governor, and considerable friction arose between them. Mr. Bigge made three reports and several recommendations, most of which were afterwards adopted. He returned to England in 1821, and died in December, 1843. Mr. T. C. Bigge's fourth son was Thomas Hanway, born in 1784. He was the father of Frederic William, born in 1818, and Francis, born in 1820, afterwards known to their friends in Queensland as "Bigge" and "Little Bigge." Another son was Charles William, who was the grandfather of Philip Mathew Bigge, who was a well-known resident of Brisbane, and, with the late Eric M'Connell, the last of the Bigges to own Mount Brisbane. The late Lord Stamfordham, the King's private secretary, was a descendant of Thomas Charles Bigge, of Benton House. Frederic and Francis Bigge came to Australia in the late '30's. I do not know what Frederic did previously, but Francis was in the Navy. They gained some colonial experience in New South Wales, and decided to settle in Queensland. So in August, 1841, we hear of them travelling over the Darling Downs with a mob of cattle in search of country. Thomas Archer describes meeting them near Clifton, and mentions the energetic and lively manner of Francis Bigge. The Archers and Bigges travelled together towards the Brisbane River, and on reaching Grandchester the Bigges' cattle were held while Frederic Bigge looked at the country further ahead. When he reached the neighbourhood of Mount Brisbane, which had been discovered and named in September, 1825, by Major Lockyer, Mr. Bigge decided that the country would suit him, and, ignoring the probability that it was within the 50-mile prohibited area of the convict settlement, decided to tender for it.

mile prohibited area of the convict settlement, decided to tender for it. Shortly afterwards the prohibition was cancelled, and the Bigges made their head station on Reedy Creek, about two miles from its junction with the Stanley. The local blacks called Reedy Creek "Coongbooba," meaning "clear water." The run was bounded on the east by D'Aguilar Range, on the north by Durundur and Kilcoy, on the west by the Mt. Brisbane Range and Brisbane River (which formed the boundary of Cressbrook and Mount Esk), and on the south Deep Creek was the boundary between it and Wivenhoe. The area of the lease was 57,600 acres.

A Cattle Run.

MT. BRISBANE was singular, as it was first stocked with cattle. Most other runs had sheep on them when formed. Sheep were afterwards kept, but they did not thrive, so were displaced by cattle. About 1850, however, the Bigges imported some Saxon merino sheep, which were in charge of Andrew Wetherston, and shipped to Sydney in the Emerald Isle, and from there to Brisbane in the steamer Eagle. Some of them were sold to Patrick Leslie, of Canning Downs, and Wetherston arrived at Mt. Brisbane on New Year's Eve, 1850, with the balance. The head station was originally built on a fiat, about 200 yards from the banks of Reedy Creek, but in 1863 a flood occurred, and the water rose to the wall plates of the dwelling-house. Consequently it was removed to a ridge some hundred yards away, quite out of flood mark. From the new site a charming view of the surrounding mountains is obtained. The house was mostly built of red cedar, which was plentiful in the district.

Horses and Bushrangers.

THE Bigges and their manager and future partner, Mr. William Bowman (a son of Dr. and Mrs. Bowman, of Ravensworth, on the Hunter River; his mother was Miss Mary Macarthur, of Camden, before her marriage to Dr. Bowman), were "horsey" men, and the Mount Brisbane horses had a great reputation in Southern Queensland. The stud was founded in 1842, when Frederic Bigge bought about 150 in the Nepean district. With fifty more added for Kilcoy, he started with them for Queensland, but when nearing Aberdeen, his party was stuck up by "The Jew Boy's" gang of bushrangers. Mr. Bigge very pluckily faced them, armed only with a small pocket pistol, and was shot in the shoulder.

them, armed only with a small pocket pistol, and was shot in the shoulder. The rest of the party cleared out, and the horses were scattered. The bush-rangers left also, and it was some time before Mr. Bigge was found and his wounds were attended to. However, he made a good recovery. The horses were found, and the bush-rangers caught and hanged. The

mares in the mob were mated first with Satellite and Sir Charles, and later descendants with the brown horse, Sailor, by The Sea, from Rebecca, by Brutendorf, who had been imported in 1849 by Mr. Roydes to New South Wales. I believe Sailor ran fourth in the Derby of his year. He proved a splendid sire, and his stock were much valued by those lucky enough to own them. Other good sires followed in later years, and when the Bowman family left Mt. Brisbane about 1891 they bought the stud. The cattle on Mt. Brisbane in the early days were Shorthorns, but in the 'seventies Mr. Bowman introduced Hereford bulls into the herd. Among them was a very good bull named Melbourne, which had been bought from Mr. Hy. Barnes, of Dyraaba, on the Richmond River. Melbourne had been bred by Mr. William Lyall, of Harewood, Westernport, Victoria, and was the descendant of very high-class English stock. He proved a good purchase, as he got many stock. Mr. Bowman also used Devons in the herd; so it was of a mixed character. In 1877, the drought being very severe at Mt. Brisbane, Mr. Bowman asked my father to take 1200 head for relief, which he kept on Durundur for about six months till the rain came. Generally the seasons were good on Mt. Brisbane, and it fattened bullocks quickly.

Mount Esk.

MT. Esk, an adjoining property, was bought about 1845 from Messrs. Scott Bros., who had taken it up about 1842. It had an area of about 45,000 acres, and joined Cressbrook on the north, "Heads of Cressbrook" or Neukininda on the west, Wivenhoe on the south, and the Brisbane River up to Deep Creek on the east, where it faced Mt. Brisbane on the eastern side of the river. This run was practically surrounded by ranges, and had some very fine flats on the Brisbane River. The town of Esk is on the old lease.

I fancy Mr. Frederic Bigge went to England about 1850, and did not return to Australia. In 1862 he married a Miss Fenwick, and died without having a family about 1896. Francis Bigge took much interest in public matters, and was in the New South Wales Legislative Council to represent Southern Queensland in 1851. He also took a prominent part in the meetings about the retention of the convict system in Queensland, and at a meeting held in Ipswich moved the resolution in its favour in very forcible

ing held in Ipswich moved the resolution in its favour in very forcible terms. There was much friction at that time between Brisbane and Ipswich over the site for a port for Moreton Bay. The Ipswich people and some of the Brisbane River squatters favoured Cleveland as a port rather than Brisbane. Mr. Bigge was much in favour of Cleveland, and said that "the squatters should confine their patronage to Ipswich and Cleveland, and wipe out dirty Brisbane." He did much to further the scheme, and built a jetty and store, and a fine residence at Cleveland, and is said to have spent over £10,000 in the attempt. After separation, Francis Bigge was a member of the first Legislative Council in Queensland. He went to England in the middle of the 'fifties, and married Elizabeth, the daughter of the Rev. Thomas Ord, in 1857. He returned to Queensland in June 1858, and lived principally at Cleveland. Mrs. Francis Bigge was a very pretty woman, and was considered the belle of the Brisbane River. They left Queensland again about the end of 1869, and lived in England, in later years at Torquay, where Mr. Bigge had a beautiful home named Heunapyn, in the garden of which were growing bunyas, gum trees, and watties. Mr. Bigge had given many bunya and gum plants to the Torquay Town Council, which were planted out in public grounds, &c. He had a fine collection of Australian stuffed birds, of which he was very proud. When I saw him last, in 1902, he was very interested in things in Queensland, and showed signs of his old energy. The late Mr. Alexander Ruff was his agent in Queensland, and kept him informed of all that happened. Mrs. Bigge died in 1914, and Frederic Bigge in 1916. Mr. William Bowman, a son of Dr. Bowman, of New South Wales, came to Mt. Brisbane when quite a young man, and was made manager when Mr. Bigge went home. He married a young lady who came out with Mrs. Bigge in 1858, and who died only a few years ago. Mr. Bowman died about 1889, having met with a fatal accident when breaking young horses to harness. He was widely recognised as a fine judge of horseflesh. Prior to his death he selected a large block of land, called Mt. Byron, for his family, which is still in their possession. Two of his sons managed Mt. Brisbane till about 1893, when the late Mr. Eric McConnel was appointed manager. In that year Mr. Philip Bigge arrived from England, and in 1895 he and Mr. Eric McConnel leased 35,000 acres of the freehold for 14 years, with the option of purchase. Eventually they bought 25,000 of it, part of which they subdivided and sold. Mr. P. M. Bigge died in 1913, and Mr. Eric McConnel bought 10,000 acres of the land round the homestead, on which his family still reside. The balance of the country has, I believe, been disposed of. Mr. M. F. Bigge, Mr. P. M. Bigge's only son, lives in Brisbane.