



The Story of a Settlement . . .

“Animal” from Outer Space Gave Woodenbong its Name

A meteorite which, legend says, looked like a strange animal from outer space gave Woodenbong Aboriginal Station its name.

Warriors of the ancient Githebul tribe who watched from a distance the meteorite's swift passage to earth could never find where it landed. It disappeared without trace and the “animal” left no tracks.

From that day Githebul folk lore has retained the story of “Wootenbotem” the tribe's name for “disappearing animal”. Because of the white man's difficulty in pronouncing the aboriginal word it became corrupted to Woodenbong.

The settlement, however, has been known as Woodenbong only since 1930.

It was first called Williams Town by the white settlers because members of the Williams family were the original inhabitants. The family put down its roots there and today Woodenbong station, out of a total population of 162, houses 126 descendants of the first Williams boys.

The history of the Williams family dates back to the early 1800's, according to linguist Brian Geytenback who has compiled a record with the assistance of Stan Williams, a present-day resident of Woodenbong.

At the dawn of the 19th century a man named Yagoi (“Bandicoot”) was born. Yagoi married and had six sons and six daughters. The sons' names were Billy, Dudu, Tommy, Alf, Dicky and Jack. The boys took the surname of Williams. Billy and Dudu both married but the others remained single.

Billy Williams had four children who must have been born during the 1840's or 1850's. They were Doctor, Hughie, Mary and Lizzie.

As a young man Doc worked on Unumgar and Rosebery Stations. He broke and trained horses and rode as a jockey in races. He was a famous horseman and once rode at a race meeting as far away as Rockhampton in Queensland.

Doc married Lizzie McBride of the Yagarabul Clan about 1870. Lizzie came from Boonah in Queensland and the romance began while Doc was driving bullock teams down from Ipswich for Unumgar and Tooloom stations.

By the 1890's Doc and Hughie and their families had moved to where the town of Woodenbong now stands. Doctor's hut was at Wagaani by the soak west of the town from where water is pumped up to the dip-yards. Hughie built a bark hut about where Stanfield's garage or the sawmill sheds now stand.

In 1897 Doc ringbarked the district from Tooloom up to the McPherson ranges for various landholders. His four children, Julia, King, Summer and Gordon helped him as did Lily and Eileen, Hughie's two daughters.

