

Notebook 27

Beagle Bay

For other articles on the Beagle Bay Mission, see the following cuttings :-

- "The Australasian", July 27, 1929 - August 24, 1929.
The Trappist Mission at Beagle Bay.
- "West Australian", July 1, 1925
The Late Bishop Gibney
- "Journal of Department of Agriculture, W.A.," July 1901
Possibilities of Tropical Agriculture in the
Nor'West - The B.B. Mission Experimentants.
- "Year Book of W.A." 1902-04 do
- "The Woman", Nov. 27, 1909
The B.B. and Disaster Bay Natives
- "The Social Kodak", 4th Dec. 1902 - 29 Jan. 1903
Among the Trappists at Beagle Bay
- "Sydney Morning Herald", April 9, 1934
A Weird Vigil
- "Sunday Times", Nov. 27, 1927
Mission Work in W.A. From a Bishop's Diary.

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Notes on Surveying done at Beagle Bay Mission

Correspondence relating to formation of
Beagle Bay Mission by Bishop Gibney.

BEAGLE BAY

When Bishop Gibney twelve years ago selected the country in the vicinity of Beagle Bay for the purpose of utilizing it as a mission for the civilisation and Christianizing of the natives in that district, it was looked upon by many as rather a hopeless undertaking, both from the point of view of the apparent barrenness of the country and also from the fact that the natives of Beagle Bay and the surrounding country had a most unsavoury reputation. They were reported to be fierce and bloodthirsty cannibals, impossible to reclaim, a people who held the character that the Kimberley blacks now seem to be the possessors of, wild and untameable. The country had already been selected by successive white pioneers who became discouraged with their selections in a very short time and forfeiting their deposit fees sought further afield for a district, with a better outlook and one which could be developed with less danger than that around Beagle Bay. From its remoteness and its central position as regards the various tribes of blacks who existed there, Bishop Gibney felt that it was the most suitable spot for his purpose and in 1888 a lease of the Native Reserve of 600,000 acres on the Northeastern coast of the North West Cape was applied for, also a fee simple of 10,000 acres which were to be selected within the Reserve area with the proviso that a number of missionaries should be introduced and a sum of £5000 expended on improvements within a stated period.

The then Government granted the lease of 100,000 acres and also promised the grant of the 10,000ⁱⁿ/fee simple as soon as it could be shown that the improvements as described in the Land Regulations had been effected. All this is ancient history now, but in view of my recent visit to Beagle Bay it is interesting to read that "the place was chosen as it appeared to be the best for gardens where native labour could be made to help to produce them food". What a true prophet Bishop Gibney has proved himself to be! Part of the land which from its hopeless outlook had disgusted so many intending settlers has now become one of the most fertile gardens area in the Nor'West. In the days before Bishop

Gibney had made his tour of those regions, a devoted missionary, Fr. McNab, had already been working amongst the natives at Disaster Bay, encountering innumerable difficulties and only relinquishing his work through physical weakness, brought on by his arduous single handed labours in the Christianizing of the poor natives. On the coast at Disaster Bay the four poles of his poor hut still stand, but when I went there, no other vestige remained of his work, except his name and the location of his hut, pointed out to me by some of the old natives. Not far from where his hut stood the Trappists had built a house and chapel and trenched and planted a garden there; two or four missionaries resided at Disaster Bay and carried on their work there until illness forced them to return. The Disaster Bay house still stands and probably by the time these words are in print, will be again occupied by fresh bands of monks who have come to take the place of those who were compelled by sickness caused through the hardship of living and labouring in an uncongenial climate, to leave their beloved flock and try to regain their broken health in order to continue their missionary labours.

To look at the gardens now surrounding the monastery at Beagle Bay one would never dream that twelve years or so ago it was an unlovely plain, unredeemed by a single feature. Coconut and date trees lend their graceful charm to the faint rise upon which they have been planted. Flowers abound in the smaller garden, the many fruits and vegetables named below add to the homeliness of the scene and best of all is the spectacle of those fine stalwart natives, working, singing and praying in what is really their home, their faces expressive of the change that has come into their lives, their happiness showing itself in the eagerness with which they take up their daily tasks and their love and affection for those whom they know live but to do good to them and whom they trust implicitly.

The monks have pursued the happiest course in their efforts to reclaim the natives. Instead of trying to civilise them according to our notions of civilisation the aim has been to weld Christianity as far as morality, clean living and daily industry

are concerned into the ordinary daily lives of the natives, breaking them away gradually from their old habits, meanwhile instilling into their minds the rudiments of the Christian religion. Their old customs have been gradually abandoned, fights are not now indulged in, a mild and harmless corroboree has taken the place of the sensual corroborees formerly in request, cleanliness is inculcated, industry is stimulated, plurality of wives, drinking of blood, cannibalism - all these are things of the past and a peaceful and happy settlement is the result of the devoted labours of the Trappist missionaries during the last twelve years.

That the results have been slow in coming cannot be wondered at when the character of the native is taken into account. In the first years of the mission, the unwearying patience of the monks was given full scope. To teach the natives the rudiments of agriculture seemed almost a hopeless task. They would come one day and stay away ten; they would leave their work and sit and watch the monks labouring quietly. In church when they were induced to go, they lay on the floor, smoked, spat and talked and made merry over the religious ceremonies, but quietly and patiently the monks worked on, all the while studying their language and character, the monks kept on their self appointed task, while there was not the faintest coercion exercised, slowly and gradually the patient working told and they were gradually weaned from their evil ways and initiated into better things. They were taught gradually the use of the spade, the hoe and other gardening implements and today in the well-tilled gardens, the cleared paddocks, the happy busy useful lives of the natives attest the wisdom of the method adopted by the monks in dealing with the native character.

In no civilised church during the whole of my travels have I seen such single hearted devotion as was manifested by the natives on this mission. During my stay there, I daily attended morning service and watched them closely and I could not doubt their sincerity. The first morning I attended the service happened to be on a Sunday, a day on which they usually sing after mass is over. The opening hymn was the "Benedictus" set to a Gregorian chant, which they sang with a devotional abandonment that had a weird

and striking effect upon those of us who heard it sung for the first time by natives. Afterwards they sang hymns in their own language which had been composed and set to music by the first Superior of the Mission, Fr. Ambrose, who had made a thorough study of their language, who also compiled a dictionary and I believe before ill health forced him to relinquish his labours for a time, he had almost completed a grammar of the dialect of those regions.

I must say that when I visited the Mission I had no expectation of finding the blackfellow anything better than a sneak or a sycophant, a sort of "flour and rice" Christian as it were, but a very few days' stay amongst them and close observation of them convinced me of my error in so thinking. The simplicity of the Fathers' lives, their goodness, their endless patience, their love for the spiritual well-being of the blacks and their disregard of their own comfort, have all tended towards bringing out what is good in the native character and until I saw the results achieved, I did not believe there was much good to be worked upon. The character of the natives is like that of children, a small word of judicious appreciation spurs them on to big efforts, the petulance of a child too is manifested occasionally, and monotony is always to be avoided in apportioning their work. Grubbing gum shoots, weeding the gardens, tending the bananas, making ready the ground for sugar cane planting, brick-making, carpentering, sawmill and smithy work, are continually varied. There is not the slightest doubt that the mission will eventually become self paying; that it has not been a success as far as the primary object of the monks is concerned, that is in the Christianizing and civilizing of the natives, anyone who spends a few weeks amongst them will be thoroughly convinced of. The mention of the products here below will show what has been done during the past twelve years and with the success that has already accrued, it only needs more practical hands amongst the missionaries and good machinery to enable such products as rice, tobacco, arrowroot and other industries to be turned out in their finished state to a market already prepared for them.

Surveying at Beagle Bay

Bro. John's datum line, commencing from post marked No. 17 on Govt. surveyed road to Bangaduc direction E by S & E and W by N & W 85° . Length of line :-
7 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles, 2 chains, 45 feet.

Start cross line from $\frac{1}{2}$ mile post $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from No. 17 roadmark. Length of line :-
100 chains ($1\frac{1}{2}$ miles)

Direction N and S by 5° .

Then we start a line parallel with the Bangaduc line. Length of line :-
120 chains ($1\frac{1}{2}$ miles)

Direction E by S & E and W by N & W 85° .

A cross line is then made to meet the Bangaduc line. Length of line :-
101 $\frac{1}{2}$ chains

Direction 5° W of N & E of S.

A new block is now started to take in land N.N.E. of Bungaduc line. Starting from garden post 5° E of N we run the line. Length of line :-
40 chains.

Then turn E by S 85° parallel with Bangaduc line. Length of line :-
120 chains.

Turn off N.N.E. 5° to take in "Obedong" well. Length of line :-
40 chains.

Again turn off E by S 85° . Length of line :-
100 chains

Another line N.N.E. 5° Length of line :-
40 chains.

Again turning E by S. 85° we take in
40 chains

Then we strike another line S.S.W. 5° Length of line :-
20 chains.

Again turning E by S. 85° we take in :-
160 chains.

Another turn E of N and W of S to meet main line to Bangaduc. Length of line :-
105 chains

Continue the line E of N and W of S from where it joins the Bangaduc line down towards Bangaduc house 5° .

This is now the other side of the Bungaduc datum line. We make the start from corner post. Length of line :-
40 chains.

Now turning W by S we run parallel with the Bungaduc line. Length of line :-
80 chains.

A projected line is to be run from post one mile from mission. This line will be one mile in length (1 mile). Then another cross line one mile wide will meet the line at Bangaduc. (Note : This line is already run in the block enclosing Mission. Length $10\frac{1}{2}$ chains. See Page 1.)

Other lines marked

Base line from first road mark W.S.W. from No. 17 on Govt. Surveyed road (between Nos. 17 & 18.)

14 chains S.S.E. to a post on rising ground marked M.G.

From this base line we start N&N.W. $12\frac{1}{2}$ chains into post in marsh, thence to a post E. on edge of marsh 15 chains from which the marsh runs inland 50 chains.

Run line N.N.W. from marsh to beginning of swamp.
Length of line :- 26 chains.

57 chains all marsh ending in post where base line starts from, viz. road mark next No. 17.

The projected lines which we were unable to mark for want of time:

Starting from $\frac{3}{4}$ miles below No. 17 roadmark between Nos. 17 and 18 mark on Govt. Surveyed Road a line is to run N.N.E. 5° .
Length of line :- 220 chains.

A line will run S.S.W. 5° to join the line run from garden post.
Length of projected line :- 80 chains.

(In this block there is a large area 120 chains by 80 chains which is all marsh and which is to be excluded from this block. See page 7 in notebook.)

Starting again from corner post in the above mentioned block the line is to be run E. by S.
Length of projected line :- 120 chains.

Turning S.S.W. the line will be run to meet one already marked.
Length of projected line :- 40 chains.

Another projected line will be run E. by S. 85° beyond Bungaduc house.
Length of line :- 120 chains.

Then turning S.S.W. 5° the line will run :- 105 chains

where it will join the main line (Bungaduc end) the line will be continued S.S.W. on other side Bungaduc line for 40 chains.

Again turning W by N the line will be run to meet that already marked below Bungaduc house.
Length of line :- 120 chains.

The marked line (W by N 85°) below Bungaduc house is in length : 100 chains. This will be continued in the same direction for 80 chains.

Then a turn S. by W. 5° will be taken.
Length of projected line :- 20 chains.

Again turning W. by N. 85° the line will be run.
Length :- 160 chains.

Again commencing $\frac{3}{4}$ miles below Govt. Surveyed Roadmark No. 17 between Nos. 17 & 18, a line will be run, S.S.W. 5° .
Length of line :- 40 chains.

Then turning E by S 85° the line will be run.
Length :- 180 chains.

This completes the lines marked by the Mission Survey Party,
and also the projected lines now being run according to plan
by Brothers Johnson and Daly.

Copies of Correspondence relating to
the formation of Beagle Bay Mission.

Bishop's House Perth

12 July 1888

Sir

I have the honour to inform you for the information of H.E. the Governor that the duty of providing for the instruction and civilization of the numerous Aboriginal inhabitants of the North West parts of the colony is naturally a matter of the greatest interest to me.

In this respect I am in accord with the benevolent intention of Her Majesty's Government and the Colonial Legislative as manifested in various provisions of the laws dealing with the land regulations of the Colony. The only opportunity which presented itself for taking any steps on behalf of the North West Natives was when the zealous missionary the Rev. D. McNab opened a mission on the Native Reserve and laboured to the best of his power there for some time. Unfortunately the Mission had to be relinquished for want of supplies both of men and means and the failure of Father McNab's devoted endeavours convinces me that it will not be possible for any single individual or even for any weak party of men, however zealous, to achieve a work that will be lastingly effective for the welfare of the natives. This can only be done by a strong staff of Missionaries or a numerous community working on some such plan as is followed at the highly successful mission of New Norcia, which affords the only instance in perhaps all Australia of the complete reduction of the Natives in more than solitary instances to the ways and habits of civilized community life. I beg to assure you for His Ex. consideration that a very hopeful opportunity of something being done on behalf of the Natives of the North West is afforded by the present visit of Cardinal Moran to Europe.

His Eminence takes much interest in the welfare of the
Aboriginals and he acquainted me with an intention he has formed
of trying to get a religious Community of Missionaries to take
upon themselves the charge of an Institution devoted exclusively
to the conversion of the Natives of the North West of our Colony.
Notwithstanding the Cardinal's great influence it is not to be
expected that he will be able to succeed unless he be able to
furnish the Superior of whatever Religious Body he may apply to
with reliable facts as to the means that will be available through
the liberality of the Government or otherwise for the successful
working of the Mission. With the view of obtaining such definite
and reliable data and trusting in the Governor's approval of what
is likely to result in good towards the Aboriginal Races, I
would suggest that His Excellency be pleased to sanction in favour
of a Native Mission at the North West the following Concessions
which I hope would when submitted in an authentic form probably
induce a religious body to undertake the task with possibility of
success and which also would be an evidence of the good will and
interest of the government, limited by such restrictions as are
reasonable in the proposed concessions :-

- I. A lease of the Native Reserve of 600,000 acres on the North
Eastern coast of the North West Cape for stated periods - say of
21 years - renewable while the objects of the Mission required it.
- II The fee simple of 10,000 acres wherever the Missioners should
select within the Reserve area for the support of the community
provided that they bring a party of 10 Missioners be introduced
and provided that they bring a capital of £5000 or make such
improvements on the Native Reserve as within a stated period
shall amount to the value of £5000.
- III The fee simple of 100 acres of the Reserve to each married
Aboriginal as soon as the Natives become civilised and capable of
settling upon and utilising the land: such grant to be given at
the instance

the instance of the Superior of the Mission and upon such conditions as he may deem most advisable. Should H.E. the Governor be pleased to sanction the above concessions it will enable me to forward to His Eme. Cardinal Moran presumably tentative data. Furnished with these definite and reliable details the Cardinal will I trust be successful in inducing some religious body to undertake a Mission to the North West - a Mission which if not begun with adequate resource must ever result in failure as to bring great or lasting good to the native population.

I have the honour to be

Sir

Your obedient Servant

M. Gibney

The Hon.

Colonial Secretary

Perth.

Colonial Secretary's Office,

Perth.

28th July 1888.

No. $\frac{72}{884}$

My Lord

In reply to your letter of the 12th instant I am directed by His Excellency the Governor to inform you that this Government will be prepared to grant to a Missionary Body established in the manner mentioned in your letter, a pastoral lease of 100,000 acres of the Kings Sound Native Reserve under the Land Regulations in the ordinary way, and also to grant to such a body 10,000 acres of the land leased, in fee simple, when they can show that they have spent £5000 on "improvements" as described in the Land Regulations.

The grant to be made in trust for the benefit of the Aborigines.

I have the honor to be

My Lord

Your most obedient

humble servant

Malcolm Fraser

Colonial Secretary

To

The Right Reverend

Bishop Gobney

Perth.

Bishop's House

Perth 6 May 1890

Sir

Following up the correspondence initiated 12th July 1888 and the Governor's reply thereto dated 28 July 1888 re a Mission to the Aborigines of our North West coast I have the honour to state for the information of His E. the Admor. that I have secured the services of a staff of Missionaries to undertake this work at Kings Sound.

Two Pioneers of the celebrated order of La Trappe - Very Rev Abbot Ambrose and Father Alphonsus have already arrived and I propose placing them on their field of labour soon as I can make necessary arrangements. I shall take as a favour any suggestion H.E. may be pleased to make.

I have etc.

M. Gibney

The Hon. Actg. Col. Sec.

Colonial Secretary's Office

Perth

9th May 1890

No 75/136

My Lord

I have the honour by direction of His Excellency the Administrator to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th instant notifying the arrival of a staff of Missionaries to undertake a Mission amongst the Aboriginal Natives of the North West Coast of the Colony.

I have the honour to be

My Lord

Your Obedient Servant

Oct. Burt

Acting Colonial Secretary

The Right Reverend

Bishop Gibney

Perth.

9th February 1891

The Hon. the Com. Lands

Sir

I have the honour to request that the 100,000 acres which stand in my name as shown on the accompanying chart be made a Reserve for the Native Mission in lieu of an equal extent of the 600,000 already reserved for that purpose.

The Mission Station stands somewhere about midway between F45 and F47. You will observe that the whole country is vacant about. Unfortunately there is a poison plant there known as the Darling pea. But this place was chosen as it appeared to be the best for gardens where native labour could be made to help to produce them food.

I have the honour

M. Gibney

Berth 12th June 1891

My Lord

I have the honour to inform you in reply to your letter of the 9th of February last that the boundaries of the Reserve 747A for a Native Mission at Kings Sound have been amended as requested in your letter, so as to include late pastoral lease 71/203, which will now be removed from the gazetted list of leases liable to forfeiture.

2: The amended boundaries of the reserve will be gazetted as soon as possible but some delay has been unavoidable owing to want of information for a correct description of the land.

I am My Lord

Your obedient Servant

W.E. Marmion

Commissioner of Crown Lands

His Lordship

Bishop Gibney

The Palace

Perth, 28th February 1900

The Beagle Bay Trappist Mission

Sir

I have the honour to state for your information that in the year 1888 I entered into an agreement with the then Government to introduce a body of Missionaries to labour on the Government Reserve Beagle for the welfare of the Aborigines.

The conditions were fixed and mutually agreed upon :- vide my letter of 12th July 1888 : also reply of Colonial Secretary no 72/884 and other correspondence.

The conditions have been fulfilled by us and it only remains for the Government to carry out their side of the agreement. I enclose statement of improvements made, furnished me by the Superior of the Trappists.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

The Right Hon. Sir John Forrest P.C. K.C.M.G.

Perth.

Statistics relating to
Beagle Bay Mission for Aborigines.

The members of the Community

Conducting the Mission consist of

- 3 priests
- 9 lay brothers
- 4 Labourers (Manila-men)

since the foundation of the Mission the number of Natives fully instructed and made Christians by Baptism is :- 108

The number of Adult Natives, for the most part living at and supported by the Mission, is about :-

45

Other Adult Natives call at the Mission and are occasionally fed to the number of about :-

100

These could be regularly kept and employed permanently, did means permit.

The number of children living at the Mission are :-

26 Christian boys and girls

12 Boys and girls receiving religious
instruction in preparation for baptism.

In 1899 Constable McKeller of Derby visited the mission and on personal inspection drew up a list of very old, blind, decrepit and diseased native men or women numbering

31 cases.

Trappist Mission Disaster Bay

Members 1 priest 1 student

Christian adults 37

.. children 12

Pagans 30

Very many pagans visit the Mission from Derby, Swan Point &
Cignet Bay

Building 52 x 20 Walls 10 ft. ^{sawn} timber covered with galvanised
iron. Cost of building £150

Garden contains a large embankment 90 ft. long and irrigation work

Large native shed (valuation not given)

Cost of fencing stock yard and garden 49 chains £49

Stock 8 cart bullocks

Some cows

plough Harrow

£100

Road from Beagle Bay Mission to Disaster Bay 30 mls. £40

(Letter 28 Feb. 1900
to Sir J. Forrest)

Perth 30 May '00

Sir,

I beg to call your attention to some facts in connection with the aboriginal Trappist Mission at Beagle Bay.

Between priests and brothers, there have been 16 working on the Mission and mission Stations (2) besides 4 Manilamen.

The priests have thoroughly mastered the native language and taught them in their own tongue. Hence they have been enabled to instruct and baptize in and around Beagle Bay 108. At this Mission they maintain and instruct 38 children of whom 26 are baptized. They also maintain 31 old blind decrepit and diseased persons.

Total maintained 38 children
31 old persons
69

Broome Mission Station

One priest and a brother attend this Station. Here they have 60 Christian adults and 22 children who attend instructions regularly.

On the maintenance list they have only 10 children and 7 infirm old people.

Total maintained 10 children
7 old people
17

Disaster Bay Mission Station

One priest and a brother attend this Station. They have 37 Christians Adults, and 12 children.

Total maintained here : 12 children.

Grand total maintained by the Missions

Beagle Bay	69
Broome	17
Disaster Bay	<u>12</u>
	98

I was astounded when the missionaries told me how little help you gave them since you became Chief Protector of Aborigines. It was bad under the aborigines Board and very bad, but under you it is worse. Now I notice you do not treat my mission as you treat the Church of England half cast mission on the Swan. And I am entitled to know why not? There is nothing so invidious as to slight one institution and liberally help another where both work for the same object. And bear in mind my institutions are far out in the wilds and yours is at home.

Our missionaries have written to me that they must give up as they are unable to support the mission and themselves. If they do give up I will hold the Government responsible who have thrown away the opportunity to save the race because they refused a fair allowance for the work. I wired yesterday to the Superior directing him to still carry on the work, that I would come to his relief. I am very intent on this - give mine the same per caput as you give the Swan institution and I will be satisfied. Otherwise I must feel agrieved.

I have the honour etc.

The Chief Protector of the Aborigines,
Perth.