

THE MARKS FAMILY IN EASTERN LAKE MACQUARIE  
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BY JACKIE BOYTON

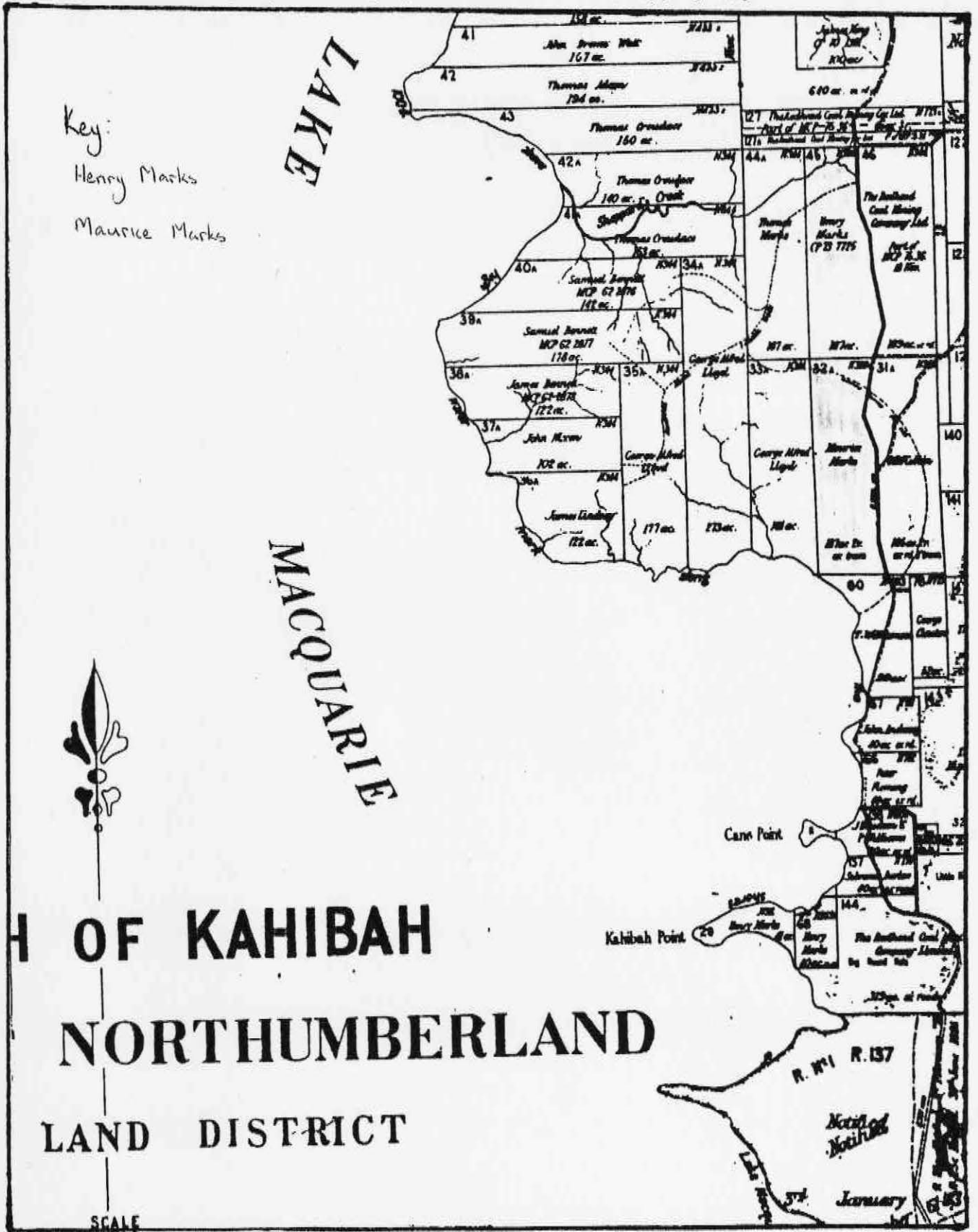
MAURICE MARKS ARRIVED IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA ON 11TH JUNE, 1860  
LITTLE DID HE KNOW, IN JUST A FEW YEARS HE WAS GOING TO BECOME ONE OF  
THE FIRST PIONEERS OF BELMONT. HE MARRIED HIS WIFE, MARY, ON THE  
4TH AUGUST, 1864, AND BROUGHT HER HOME TO BELMONT, TO WHAT SHE  
DESCRIBED AS A 'SHACK'. THEY HAD TWELVE CHILDREN, BUT ONLY SEVEN  
SURVIVED. (1) ONE OF THOSE SURVIVING CHILDREN, ALICE MARKS, MARRIED  
A MR. GRAY. ALICE GAVE BIRTH TO THREE CHILDREN, NAMING ONE OF HER  
TWO DAUGHTERS, ANNE. ANNE GEE (NEE GRAY) HAS VIVID RECOLLECTIONS OF  
HER RELATIVES LIVING AROUND THE BELMONT AREA.

AS A CHILD, ANNE LIVED IN ADAMSTOWN BUT REGULARLY VISITED HER  
GRANDPARENTS WHO WERE LIVING IN BELMONT. ANNE'S JOURNEY FROM  
ADAMSTOWN TO BELMONT TOOK AROUND HALF A DAY TO COMPLETE. SHE WOULD  
BOARD THE TRAIN AT ADAMSTOWN, THEN ALIGHT AT COCKLE CREEK, THEN  
CATCH A TRAM FROM COCKLE CREEK TO WARNERS BAY. THEN SHE WOULD PICK  
UP A FERRY AT WARNERS BAY AND SAIL ACROSS THE LAKE TO MARKS POINT. (2)

MARKS POINT IS LOCATED BETWEEN SWANSEA AND BELMONT. WHEN THE  
MARKS BROTHERS, MAURICE, HENRY, CHARLES AND GEORGE CAME INTO CONTACT  
WITH THIS AREA IT WAS KNOWN AS KAHIBAH POINT. MAURICE MARKS WAS THE  
FIRST SETTLER IN BELMONT, (3) 'HE SETTLED ON THE FLAT NEAR THE LAKE  
AND LATER MOVED TO A NEW HOME, 'MARKSVILLE', BUILT ON THE SITE OF THE  
PRESENT BELMONT HIGH SCHOOL'.

ANNE'S GRANDFATHER, MAURICE, PERSUADED HIS BROTHER, HENRY MARKS  
TO MIGRATE FROM ENGLAND TO AUSTRALIA AND TO SETTLE AT BELMONT. ON  
THE 23RD MARCH, 1865, HENRY PURCHASED 41 ACRES OF CROWN LAND AT  
KAHIBAH POINT, ON WHICH HE ESTABLISHED A LAKESIDE FARM. ENDEAVOURING  
TO DERIVE AN INCOME FROM THE SOIL, HENRY PURCHASED AN ADJOINING 40  
ACRES OF LAND JUST SEVEN DAYS AFTER OBTAINING HIS FIRST PORTION.  
HENRY BOUGHT ANOTHER 187 ACRES OF LAND ON THE 31ST JULY, 1873 IN AN  
AREA KNOWN TODAY AS BELMONT NORTH. (4)

Map by courtesy of the Mitchell Library, Sydney



1885 Map of part of the Parish of Kahibah showing Portions of Crown Land alienated at Belmont.

HENRY DEVELOPED A CITRUS ORCHARD ON HIS BELMONT NORTH PLOT. THIS AREA WAS NOT NATURALLY FERTILE BUT HENRY 'PERSEVERED WITH HIS CITRUS ORCHARD UNTIL ABOUT 1885, BUT APPARENTLY IT DID NOT GIVE HIM AN ADEQUATE LIVING'. (5) CHARLES MARKS TOOK OVER ANOTHER OF HIS BROTHER, HENRY'S, CITRUS ORCHARDS, AT KAHIBAH POINT, IN 1885 AND REPLACED THIS WITH A MARKET GARDEN. PRIOR TO THE MARKET GARDEN PROJECT CHARLES HAD BEEN A COAL MINER AT LAMBTON. (6)

LIKE CHARLES, MAURICE ALSO OBTAINED WORK IN A COLLIERY, WHEN HE FIRST MOVED TO NEWCASTLE. IN THIS PERIOD MAURICE CAME INTO CONTACT WITH A G.A.LLOYD. LLOYD INTRODUCED MAURICE TO THE BELMONT AREA BY ASKING HIM TO JOIN A SYNDICATE TO MINE COAL IN BELMONT. MAURICE ACCEPTED, AS DID TWELVE OTHERS INCLUDING, APART FROM LLOYD, L.LUNN, A.KIRKALDY, R. AND J. ANDERSON, AND J.BARTON. (7) CARDIFF COAL COMPANY WAS SO FORMED AND MAURICE 'ACCORDING TO FAMILY TRADITION, (HE) WORKED THERE FOR ABOUT SIX MONTHS IN THE PREPARATIONS FOR LLOYD'S COAL MINE. HE LATER WITHDREW FROM THE SYNDICATE'. (8) THIS WAS FORTUNATE BECAUSE CARDIFF COAL COMPANY WAS A FAILURE, INCURRING COMPANY LOSSES OF 10000 POUNDS. (9)

ANNE CAN RECALL THE COLLIERS WORKING A PIT NEAR CROUDACE BAY. A LARGE JETTY WAS BUILT INTO THE LAKE ON THE BELMONT SIDE AND COLLIERS FREQUENTLY CALLED TO CARRY COAL TO SYDNEY. CONSTANT DREDGING IN THE SWANSEA CHANNEL ALLOWED THE SMALL CARGO VESSELS ACCESS INTO THE LAKE. THE VESSELS MOORED AT THE JETTY AND THE COAL WAS TRANSPORTED TO THEM USING MECHANICAL MINING TRUCKS. WHEN LADEN, THE COAL WAS TAKEN TO SYDNEY. THE LAKE WAS MUCH DEEPER THEN AND ANNE CAN REMEMBER A COMMON SIGHT WAS TO SEE SHARK FINS IN THE VICINITY OF THE COLLIERS. (10)

AFTER THE COAL MINING VENTURE, MAURICE MARKS BECAME A FISHERMAN. HE FREQUENTLY FISHED A KAHIBAH POINT. WHILST MAURICE WAS FISHING, HIS WIFE, MARY, WOULD BE AT HOME TAKING CARE OF THEIR CHILDREN AND PROPERTY. ON SOME OCCASIONS, MARY WOULD PREPARE SANDWICHES FROM THE BREAD THAT SHE HAD BAKED, SHE WOULD GATHER HER SMALL CHILDREN AND THEN ROW A BOAT TO HER HUSBAND'S FISHING SPOT. AFTER DELIVERING HIS LUNCH, SHE WOULD ROW BACK TO BELMONT FROM KAHIBAH POINT, THEN WALK UP THE HILL TO RETURN TO THEIR HOME IN 'MARKSVILLE'. (11)

MAURICE MARKS WAS A FISHERMAN FOR TWENTY FIVE YEARS, UNTIL 1890. AFTER THIS YEAR, HE BECAME INVOLVED WITH TRANSPORTING FISH FROM THE LAKE TO NEWCASTLE. FROM NEWCASTLE, THE FISH WERE TAKEN TO SYDNEY BY STEAMSHIP. ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE MARKS FAMILY, JOHN MARKS, EARNED HIS LIVING THROUGH FISHING BUT DROWNED IN 1883, 'LEAVING A WIDOW WITH EIGHT CHILDREN AND A NINTH WAS BORN SHORTLY AFTER THE TRAGEDY' (12)

IN THE AREA WHICH IS KNOWN TODAY AS SWANSEA, A WELL ESTABLISHED FISHING INDUSTRY WAS RUN BY CHINESE 'WHO BROUGHT WITH THEM FROM ASIA, THE ART OF SUN-DRYING FISH AND A METHOD OF PICKLING FISH IN SALT'. (13) THERE WAS A COLONY OF FISHING HUTS, ACCORDING TO HISTORIAN LOUISE BOON, WHICH STRETCHED FROM RAWSON STREET TO COON ISLAND. THE CHINESE FISHERMEN'S NETS ATTRACTED SOME CRITICISM BY THE EUROPEAN FISHERMEN BECAUSE OF THERE IMMENSE SIZE. THEY WERE MORE THAN TWICE THE SIZE THAT THE LAW PERMITTED. (14) LAKE MACQUARIE'S CHIEF INDUSTRY WAS FISHING AND THIS DEVELOPED INTO THE BIGGEST SOURCE OF ESTUARINE FISH IN NEW SOUTH WALES. (15)

CHINESE ALSO MOVED INTO THE LAKE FLAT NEAR ANNE'S GRANDPARENTS' FIRST HOUSE. GRANDMOTHER MARKS SEWED CLOTHES FOR THE CHINESE. FRIENDSHIPS WERE FORMED THROUGH THIS AND SOME CHINESE RETURNED TO CHINA WITH A PHOTOGRAPH OF MAURICE MARKS. THEY HAD THE PHOTOGRAPH SET IN A BEAUTIFUL CARVED WOODEN FRAME. ANNE'S BROTHER HAS THIS FRAMED PORTRAIT AT PRESENT. (16)

ANNE'S GRANDPARENTS TRAVELLED TO NEWCASTLE BY HORSE AND BUGGY EACH FRIDAY. THE DISTANCE BETWEEN BELMONT AND NEWCASTLE WAS TWELVE MILES. THE JOURNEY TOOK OVER A DAY TO COMPLETE 'GUIDED BY ABORIGINES HE (MAURICE) BLAZED A ROUTE FROM BELMONT OVER THE CHARLESTOWN HILLS TO WHERE THE NEWCASTLE SUBURB CALLED THE JUNCTION IS NOW'. (17) IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO KEEP IN CONTACT WITH NEWCASTLE AS THEY NEEDED SUPPLIES, WHICH WERE BROUGHT BACK BY PACKHORSE.

AN ABORIGINAL CAMPSITE WAS DISCOVERED AT SWANSEA HEADS IN 1972. THIS SITE CONTAINED ABORIGINAL BONES AND ARTIFACTS DATING BACK 7000 YEARS. (18) ANNE HAS RECOLLECTIONS OF A BLIND ABORIGINE WHO LIVED AT SWANSEA SOUTH IN THE 1920'S. BLACK JACK WAS THE NAME THAT THE LOCALS REMEMBERED HIM BY. (19) IT IS POSSIBLE THAT BLACK JACK WAS A DECENDANT OF THOSE ABORIGINES THAT ONCE INHABITED THE SITE UNCOVERED AT SWANSEA HEADS.

METHODISM WAS WIDELY PRACTISED IN BELMONT. MAURICE MARKS DONATED THE LAND, AND SOME MONEY, FOR THE FIRST CHURCH. THE SHELL GARAGE AT BELMONT IS NOW USING THE GROUND ON WHICH THE CHURCH WAS BUILT. MATTHEW COBBIN, ANOTHER EARLY SETTLER, DONATED A SECTION OF HIS LAND, OPPOSITE THE CHURCH, FOR A HALL.

THE COMING OF THE RAILWAY ENTICED PERMANENT RESIDENCY OF THE EASTERN SIDE OF LAKE MACQUARIE. WEEKEND HOUSES ALONG THE SHORES OF THE LAKE WERE IMPROVED TO BECOME DURABLE COTTAGES. ROAD BUILDING BETWEEN NEWCASTLE AND BELMONT ALSO BROUGHT MORE RESIDENTS. THE BELMONT AREA IS NOW A BUSY COMMERCIAL CENTRE WITH A SUBSTANTIAL POPULATION.

ANNE GEE'S ANCESTORS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF WHITE SETTLEMENT OF THE EASTERN AREA OF LAKE MACQUARIE. MOST OF ANNE'S STORIES HAVE BEEN PASSED DOWN TO HER BY HER MOTHER AND GRANDPARENTS, BUT HER RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EVER-CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF THE BELMONT - MARKS POINT AREA ARE VIVID. ANNE'S GRANDFATHER AND THREE OF HER GREAT UNCLES, AS WELL AS OTHERS, CONTRIBUTED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BELMONT - MARKS POINT COMMUNITY. IT SEEMS THAT AN EARLY LAND GRANT GIVEN TO CHARLES MARKS WAS THE REASON FOR THE RENAMING OF KAHIBAH POINT AS MARKS POINT AND THIS IN ITSELF SHOWS HIS, AND HIS BROTHERS, SIGNIFICANCE IN THE BEGINNINGS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS AREA. (20)

FOOTNOTES

1. TAPED INTERVIEW WITH MRS. A. GEE, 17 OCTOBER 1986, 59-63
2. INTERVIEW TAPE 69-77
3. INTERVIEW TAPE 12-15
4. A.C.GRAY, EARLY SETTLEMENT OF BELMONT N.S.W. 1861-1891, SYDNEY, 1985, P.6 -----
5. IBID P.13
6. IBID P.14
7. NEWCASTLE SUN, 21 NOVEMBER 1921 IN GRAY, EARLY SETTLEMENT, P.5 -----
8. GRAY, EARLY SETTLEMENT, P.8 -----
9. K.H.CLOUTON, REID'S MISTAKE, LAKE MACQUARIE SHIRE COUNCIL, 1967, P.182 -----
10. INTERVIEW TAPE 103-109
11. INTERVIEW TAPE 114-124
12. CLOUTON, REID'S MISTAKE, P.172 -----
13. GRAY, EARLY SETTLEMENT, P.13 -----
14. J.TURNER, DOWN TO LAKE MACQUARIE, BROADMEADOW, 1982, P.56 -----
15. GRAY, EARLY SETTLEMENT, P.13 -----
16. INTERVIEW TAPE 141-151
17. GRAY, EARLY SETTLEMENT, P.12 -----
18. TURNER, DOWN TO LAKE MACQUARIE, P.44 -----
19. INTERVIEW TAPE 165-171
20. LAKE MACQUARIE COUNCIL, LAKE MACQUARIE, PAST AND PRESENT, 1986, (UNPUBLISHED) -----

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UNTAPED INTERVIEW WITH ANNE GEE ON 8TH OCTOBER, 1986.

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MACQUARIE SHIRE, 1986 (UNPUBLISHED)

ARTICLE

A.C.GRAY

EARLY SETTLEMENT OF BELMONT N.S.W. 1861 -

1891, SYDNEY, 1985 (UNPUBLISHED)