

## **“The Brumby family of Norfolk Plains” by Ian Brumby**

The Brumby family have been involved with the Norfolk Plains district since its inception, being one of the original farming families of the district. At various points throughout the settlement, the Brumby family have farmed most of the land Brumby's Creek, near Cressy to Longford.

The first of this family to arrive in the district was a 30 year old soldier, James Brumby.

James Brumby was born on 18 July 1771 at Scotton, Lincolnshire, England, the youngest son of Lincolnshire farmer William Brumby and his wife Margaret, née Popple. The Brumby family had been, at that point, farmers in Lincolnshire for over 300 years.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 1790 James enlisted into the newly formed New South Wales Corps at Chatham near London, England.

James set sail for Australia with the Third Fleet, from Portsmouth Harbour on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, 1791. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1791 Private James Brumby arrived in Port Jackson, New South Wales aboard the “Britannia” with Colonel Francis Grose's Company.

Ten years later on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1801, James was promoted to Corporal and shortly thereafter on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 1801 he was promoted to Sergeant and transferred to Captain Townson's Company. On the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1801 James was again transferred, this time to Lieutenant - Colonel William Paterson's Company, from where he was to be one of sixty-four soldiers to be sent to Van Diemen's Land as an expeditionary party, leaving Sydney Town on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1804. Sergeant James Brumby arrived in Van Diemen's Land as part of Lieutenant - Colonel Paterson's Detachment to Port Dalrymple on the River Tamar aboard the H.M.S. *Buffalo* on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, 1804.

(It is possibly around this time that the Australian icon of wild Brumbies may have developed. James, came from a farming/horse breeding family and most certainly would have had livestock (including horses) on his NSW land grants prior to him being transferred to Van Diemen's Land and various mentions of James in later official papers describe him as very successful landowner, breeder and judge of horses. As a serving soldier at the time of his transfer to Van Diemen's Land he would not have been able to take personal property with him, and certainly not livestock so he would have either needed to sell them or release them. I'm guessing that he released some of his horses into the bush around his grants and this is where Brumbies come from. That's just my guess and it makes a nice story for our family.)

In 1806 Colonel Paterson reported to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Castlereagh, that only three settlers had established themselves with any success, one of these was Sergeant James Brumby. The following year, in 1807, there is reference to a bill being drawn for 92 pounds, 15 pence in favour of Mr. James Brumby *“being payment for Kangaroo flesh, Swine's flesh and potatoes, issued in lieu of usual rations to the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1807”*.

James was discharged from the British Army on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1808 though he was still referred to as Sergeant Brumby in April 1809 when he was issued with a steer and four ewes from the Government store. Thomas Archer, in signing a memorial of James Brumby, said that, *“James remained as a settler in the colony on the 102<sup>nd</sup> Reg. proceeding to England.”*

It's difficult to identify James' early grants but it is believed that a grant of 100 acres on the North Esk River was awarded to James Brumby on 19 April 1809. This became known originally as *Brumby's Plains* - later named Breadalbane in 1811 by Governor Macquarie. James swapped this grant with Edward Yates for 100 acres at *Port Dalrymple*, now known as St Leonards.

1809 also saw James granted with another 100 acres on the Lake River. This was to become James's first permanent home in Van Diemen's Land, the famous Cressy property *Richmond Hill*, presumably

named after Richmond Hill just west of the site of one of James' original land grants at Mulgrave Place, New South Wales. This grant was to establish the Brumbys as one of the leading pastoral families of the district and Van Diemen's Land.

In 1810 Governor Macquarie arrived in Sydney Town to take control of the colony and he immediately set about to improve the conditions of the colony. One of his first reforms was a "*proclamation against the scandalous and pernicious custom so generally and shamefully adopted throughout the territory of persons of different sexes living together unsanctioned by the legal ties of matrimony*". He further stated that neither favour nor patronage was to be accorded such persons. James and Elizabeth were subsequently married on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 1811, in St Johns Church, Launceston by the Reverend Knopwood before witnesses William Lyttleton and Thomas Howard. On the same day their two sons, William, 6 years old and John, 3 years old were baptised. Their youngest son, James, was baptised on 14 Mar 1814.

Elizabeth had arrived at Port Jackson, New South Wales on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1796 on board the *Indispensable*. How she served her sentence or met James is not known however in 1801 she is listed as living off stores as she was residing or employed by Cpl Brumby. Women were scarce in the Colony and cohabitation between soldiers and convict women was normal. Elizabeth's sentence expired in 1804 after serving 7 years as a crown servant. In the *Returns of Women who have been Convicts and are present at Hobart Town, Norfolk Island and Port Dalrymple, 1811*, she is listed as Eliza Annesley. Elizabeth could not write and her name is listed as whoever was writing it at the time interpreted it.

In 1811 Lieutenant - Governor Sorell recommended James to be made a special constable in charge of the fords over the Lake River. In 1813 he successfully prosecuted a man for cruelty to cattle. James also took an active part in local affairs and helped in the struggle against bushrangers. In October 1818 Lieutenant – Governor Sorell sent a dispatch from Hobart Town to Major Cimitiere, the Commandant of Port Dalrymple:

*"It is my intention to publish an order regulating anew the progress of Carts from here to Port Dalrymple, and limiting them strictly to passing into the Settlement by Gibson's Ford, which can be no inconvenience to any. It will be necessary therefore to give instructions to the Constables near the fords of Mr Archer's to arrest all Carts coming from this side by that road, to carry the Carts in safe and deliver them to you, and beg you will have any Carts so stopped sent back without being ordered to unload, under charge of a responsible person, and a proper Escort to this place. I would recommend Mr. Brumby, who lives near these fords at Norfolk Plains, being made a Constable to attend to this duty."*

When James became Constable of the Fords he built cells, dog kennels and a guard house in addition to the small cottage that was the original homestead of *Richmond Hill*. Across the front of the half circle of these buildings a thick hedge was planted and behind the cells at the bottom of the orchard the guard house was built. The barracks were large enough to house 30 or 40 men and were used as the district Constable's headquarters and afterwards as accommodation for the free men who came from England with the Cressy Company.

On 8 Feb 1817, Elizabeth travelled from *Richmond Hill* to a location reported as Black Snake (about 32km south of Launceston) possibly around the Perth area. The Hobart Town Gazette reported that:

*"On Saturday the 8th ult. Mr. Charles Fletcher arrived at Port Dalrymple from this settlement, bringing the intelligence that Mr. Howard would be in town the following day. In consequence of which Mrs. Howard, accompanied with Mrs Brumby and Mr. J. Kitchener, went to meet Mr. H. When at a place called the Black Snake (distance 20 miles from Launceston), they descryed three men, which they supposed to be part of the guard which Major Stewart had kindly directed to accompany the carts that were going over; but on their nearer approach they perceived them to be three bush-rangers, named Septon, Jones, and Brown, with two black girls. These unhappy creatures fearful of any information reaching the settlement, or the parties which now guard (it?), conducted the ladies and their guide to*

*the farm of James Cox, Esq. where they detained them during the night. It is gratifying for us to remark, that these outlaws behaved in the most becoming manner, having refused to take any refreshment till the ladies had done; and even lead their horses the next day over the difficult part of the New River, known by the name of Macquarie's Crossing Place. Since which they have paid a visit to the farm of T. Archer, Esq; and fearful his overseer was unemployed, forced him to show them to the stock-yard of Mr. R. Dry (nearly a distance of 16 miles) ; to which place they went for dogs, provisions, ammunition, &c."*

In September 1817, the Brumby family again came into contact with a gang of Bushrangers, this time not so pleasant. The Hobart Town Gazette reported:

*"By an Official Report which has just reached His Honor the Lieutenant Governor from Port Dalrymple, it appears that the banditti of bush-rangers had effected a Robbery at Mr. Brumby's Farm on the 26th Ultimo; and that the same Night, having quarreled amongst themselves, as is supposed in consequence of the Men who lately run from George Town, wishing to come in, Peter Septon was killed by having his Throat cut; Collyer escaped from them wounded, and was in Custody at Launceston; and Wright, one of the George Town Men, had surrendered."*

James' estate at *Richmond Hill* continued to expand and by October 1819, according to the General Musters of Proprietors of land and stock at Port Dalrymple, James owned 620 acres in Norfolk Plains and surrounds, 50 acres sown with wheat and 570 acres of pasture. His stock consisted of 5 horses, 341 cattle, 1300 sheep and 13 swine. He also had the service of 3 Crown Servants (i.e. convicts). The 1820 Muster showed that James now had 386 cattle, 1853 sheep, 6 Crown Servants and 3 freeman labourers on 660 acres, 300 of which he had received in grants and the remaining 360 acres he had purchased.

On the 26th of August 1822, the Hobart Town Gazette reported:

*"At Port Dalrymple, where the inhabitants had so long been compelled to grind their own corn with handstones and steel mills, there are now two mill erected, one a windmill erected by J. Smith, another a watermill belonging to J. Brumby."*

However, correspondence from James indicates that there was a dispute over the ownership of the mill, which had been built by Edward Yates. James stated in a letter to the Lieutenant Governor that he had paid Edward Yates to erect the mill on land that James had purchased from Yates (now St Leonards), that he had supplied Yates and his family with provisions throughout the construction of the mill and that he had directly incurred the cost of the two bridges across the North Esk. According to James, the agreement was that Yates would work the mill and in return receive a half of the profits and that a one half share in the mill would be made over to Yates, once he had paid half the building expenses. The records of these transactions were left with William Field in Launceston. Yates and Field, both ex-convicts, were in league and destroyed the transfer deeds. The Lands Commissioner described William Field at the time, as a "notorious rogue". James also wrote that the expenses that he had incurred in erecting the mill were upwards of £2000, a massive amount of money in those days. James further claimed that he had been forced sell 1200 acres of land and much of his stock to meet his debts. A reference in the Land Commissioners Journal shows James sold 1200 acres to Thomas Archer of *Woolmers* and the 1822 Stock Muster shows the amount of stock owned by James had decreased. Ultimately it appears that James was not able to prove his case and the mill remained in the possession of the Yates family until the 1840's.

In 1824, William wrote a memorial to he wrote a memorial to the Lieutenant - Governor in which he stated that he had been born in the Colony and that Governor Macquarie had made him a grant of 60 acres. He went on:

*"That on an estate received from his father Memorialist in conjunction with him, enclosed with log - fencing at a heavy expense, about 800 acres that in consequence of the grass taking fire the whole of it was destroyed.*

*That Memorialist, notwithstanding this serious drawback upon his exertions, has again fenced in nearly 300 acres, cleared 200, and brought 100 into cultivation.*

*Memorialist therefore humbly prays, that as the greater part of his farm is hemmed in by very extensive locations behind him, and the run for his cattle very seriously curtailed thereby. Your Honour will be pleased to take these things into consideration, and likewise the vigorous exertions of his family in this Colony from its first establishment, and make him an additional location in the rear of the farm in which he currently resides."*

The famous pastoralist Thomas Archer endorsed the memorial:

*"Mr William Brumby, Your Honour's Memorialist, is an industrious, deserving young man - he has a considerable herd of cattle, besides horses. I beg leave to recommend his Memorial to the favourable consideration of Your Honour."*

The application was referred to the Land Board who recommended an additional grant of 640 acres; the Lieutenant - Governor approved this in April, 1829. This was to become Williams farm, *Cornrigg*.

On 29 July 1824, William married the daughter of a convict and Ward of Thomas Archer, Ann Mansfield. Thomas Archer's letter of approval is as follows;

*"I hereby certify that Ann Mansfield aged 18 years who was sent to me as a Servant from the Orphan School at Sydney in September 1819, and whose father has been dead many years, has my sanction to her marriage with Mr. William Brumby."*

William and Ann had eight children.

Ann was to prove herself a remarkable and resilient woman over her lifetime.

In 1825, James purchased 355 acres on the Lake River near Cressy from Thomas Hammant, which was believed to have been for his son John. Sadly John died in a horse riding accident on 10 August 1825.

James later purchased a further 206 acres on Brumby's Creek from Nathaniel Willatt, which he later conveyed to his youngest son, James, this was to become *McRae's Hill*. James also brought 43 acres from Samuel Day in Longford, which he again conveyed to his son, James.

It is believed that in 1826, most likely due to losses that he had sustained in regards to the St Leonards mill dispute and the fire of 1824, James sold most of *Richmond Hill* (including the homestead and buildings) to the Cressy Company (which became known as the Cressy Establishment) except for about 220 acres which he maintained as *Richmond Hill* and subsequently purchased a land grant of 100 acres from John Dell situated on the banks of the Lake River, and it was here that he established the second famous Brumby property, *Harwick Hill*, thought to be named after Hardwick Hill just west of his birthplace of Scotton.

Sadly, during that year William was involved in a tragedy in which a young child was accidentally killed. The Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser reported that William had *"on Wednesday last, accidentally shot dead a little boy, about 7 years old."* As a result he was admitted to bail and appeared in the Tasmanian Supreme Court on the 12th January 1827.

The Hobart Town Gazette and Colonial Times and Gazette reported *"William Brumby, a settler was placed at the bar charged with the shooting at and killing one William Henry Whyte, a child, in January*

*last. It appeared by testimony of the different witnesses, that the gun had no cock on it, that it had not been used for some time, that the touch hole was crusted with damp gunpowder, that at the time of the accident the prisoner was amusing himself with the deceased, and two other children, and casting bullets for them to play with, in place of marbles. But the deceased, having occasioned him frequent playful interruptions, in the manner of children, the prisoner took up the gun, and threatened to shoot him, having previously tried in vain and believing it to be unloaded. Putting however, a piece of hot iron, and presenting the gun at the child, to his utter astonishment and dismay, he found that he had shot him in the left breast, and killed him on the spot. He was, it appeared, exceedingly partial to the boy, treating him as his own child and that the child was very fond of him. That he had clothed and fed the child in his own house and that from the moment the accident had happened he had appeared extremely sorry for what had occurred.*

*The jury immediately returned a verdict of Not Guilty. His Honour, the Chief Justice, congratulated Mr. Brumby on the issue of the case. It must be satisfactory to all parties to have had it thus impartially investigated, however painful it might be to the feelings of the prisoner to be placed in such a situation, as every doubt upon the circumstances of the case was now removed. His Honour added, that not the least blame could attach to Mr. Brumby, and that his character is now unimpeached."*

From the court records, it appears that the incident was a terrible mistake and must have had a significant impact on William as a 22 year old.

Ever the keen horseman and breeder, in August 1835, James brought a famous thoroughbred chestnut stallion called 'Buffalo' from the Cressy Company for a price of 75 guineas. Buffalo had been imported from England by the Cressy Company in 1826. After his death, James had the horse skinned, it's hide tanned and used to cover a large wooden box which became a family heirloom.

About 1836, James sold *Harwick Hill* to his nephew Robert Brumby who had arrived in Van Diemen's Land the year before with his brother John. Robert married Hannah Hodgetts, the daughter of his neighbour and continued to farm the property until his death in 1873. Hannah and Robert's trustees managed *Harwick Hill* until 1890, when the Tasmanian parliament enacted a bill which enabled Hannah to sell. Prior to this, widows could not be involved in land transactions.

After the sale of *Harwick Hill* to Robert, James and Elizabeth moved to *McRae's Hill* where they lived with the son James until their deaths. During this period, James and his son carried out a butchering business during which they supplied meat to the Colony under contract.

On 25 October 1836, James married the daughter of another farming family, Mary Ann Flood, subsequently having 13 children (three of whom died within days of each in 1853 during the scarlet fever epidemic that racked Tasmania.)

James (snr) died on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1838 at *McRae's Hill*. He was subsequently buried in the grounds of Longford's Christ Church.

Sadly, only 3 years later on 13 May 1841, William died.

On 14 September 1841, James (jnr) entered into an indenture to purchase *Moat Farm* at Carrick and placed the remainder of *Richmond Hill* as guarantee. Shortly after, the Cornwall Chronicle reported that James had been injured:

*"We regret to record a serious accident which occurred to Mr. James Brumby, of Richmond Hill, on Tues-day last. While superintending the branding of cattle, some of them having broken away, Mr. Brumby mounted his horse, and hastily galloped on to head them, when passing a fire his horse shyed, and threw him with much violence, by which his leg was broken, and an ankle severely fractured."*

The injuring was severe enough to effect James and his work for the rest of his life. As a result of the accident, James and Mary were unable to make the payments for *Moat Farm* and the indenture was called in in 1843 forcing James and Mary to sell their 220 acres and ending the Brumby connection with *Richmond Hill*.

Elizabeth lived out her days at *McRae's Hill* with James (jnr) and Mary. She died on 12 Mar 1846 and was buried next to James at Longford.

James and Mary sold *McRae's Hill* shortly thereafter to his father-in-law, John Flood and took up residence in Longford where James established a blacksmithing and veterinary surgery business.

In 1853, Scarlet Fever struck Longford. The Cornwall Chronicle reported:

*"During the past ten days three fine children of Mr. James Brumby's, a resident of Longford, have been cut off by scarlatina."*

Sadly it had struck the heart of James and Mary's family.

Two years later, on 7 April 1755 James died in Longford.

About 1864 Mary purchased the Berriedale Inn at Longford and ran it until her death on 25 August 1871.

Shortly after the death of William, Stephen Adey who had previous entered into an indenture of release with William, amongst others, for £2000 called in the indenture forcing Ann to dispose of most of the land that William had left, including much of *Cornrigg*. The remainder she let out for income.

Forced from her home Ann her children to Perth where she attempted to establish a public house however by the end of 1846 she had become insolvent and moved back to Cressy in 1847. Not to be outdone by the small matter of insolvency, Ann attempted to establish another public house, this time at Cressy but was initially met with considerable opposition, most notably from James Toosey. During a licencing hearing in November 1847 before the Police Magistrate, a petition led by Toosey was read to the court. The Cornwall Chronicle reported that:

*"The petition was a general petition and which applied to Mrs. Brumby or any other applicant; or to any person or premises in the neighbourhood, it was, in fact, a general opposition to a license being granted at Cressy and not against any particular individual."*

Subsequently, Ann's solicitor stated: *"Mrs. Brumby had been at a great expense building the premises; had a large family to support, and although many of the gentlemen who opposed the present application might not require the accommodation which this house would afford, still the wants of the public should be consulted..."*

Despite this, the bench refused Ann's application.

On 7 February 1848 at the appeal, the Cornwall Chronicle reports that:

*"The only application was that of Mrs. Ann Brumby for a license for her new house at Cressy to be called the Cressy hotel. This was her second application, the former one having been refused at the last annual meeting. Mr. Kocher appeared in support of the application, but after hearing the remarks of two or three of the justices thought it unnecessary to make any observation on the subject. The remarks made by Mr. Joseph Archer were to the effect that he did not see why Mrs. Brumby should be refused a license as it was much better to have a regular public house which would be under the inspection of the police, and open to public observation, than encourage a system of sly grog selling, which was the cause of bad characters assembling in the bush with bottles of grog, tempting and seducing the men from their masters' premises. Captain Ritchie, and Dr. Wilmore, also spoke in favor of the license being granted; and Mr. Arthur said, that as Mr. Archer, whose property was in the*

*neighbourhood, had spoken in favor of it, he should not offer any opposition, although he retained his former opinion as to there not being any necessity for it. The licence was therefore, granted."*

As a result, Ann established the Cressy Hotel.

On 24 April 1850, Bushrangers again became a feature of the Brumby family's life at Cressy, this time involving Ann and the Cressy Hotel.

The Cornwall Chronicle reported that at about 9.00pm on 24 April 1850 three men, Jonathan Lunson, William Bell, and George Bullock robbed Ann at the Cressy Hotel. Ann had retired to bed when she was woken by her daughter, Elizabeth, who told her there were Bushrangers in the house. Ann got out of her bed and was confronted by a man at the foot of her bed who pointed a pistol at her and threatened to kill her and burn her house down. Proving she was no shrinking violet, she tried to hit the man twice and had to be restrained by her daughter. In what must have been a truly terrifying experience, Ann and Elizabeth were then ordered in to the bar-parlour where she was confronted by other men with guns. The gang were not the smartest Bushrangers in Van Diemen's Land and unfortunately for the gang, whilst they were disguised Ann and Elizabeth actually recognised the voice of one of the men, William Bell, as they had had a conversation with him about 2 weeks before. In addition, Ann's 13 year old son Mansfield, who had been in the parlour with his sister when the Bushrangers had come in, also recognised the gun that one of the men carried. Mansfield stated to the court that, "*the man who came in at the bar-door presented the gun at me; he jogged me with it on the breast, and told me to stand back; the gun which the man held at the bar-door was split at the lock; I know how that split came there; my brother William split it shooting; we borrowed it from Jonathan Lunson a couple of months before; I returned it two days after I borrowed it.*"

At the completion of the trial, Lunson was ultimately found not guilty while a finding of guilty was held against Bell and Bullock and they were sentenced to death, although this caused some consternation among some members of the community at the time. As a result, the matter proceeded to a long and drawn out appeal.

The run-in with the Bushrangers and the subsequent trials must have proved a little too much for Ann and in August 1850 she transferred the lease of the Hotel at Cressy (but maintained ownership) and took over the lease for the Lass O'Gowrie Hotel in Longford.

Ann died in Longford on 26 March 1864.

After her death, her second son Mansfield ran *Cornrigg* up until his death in 1915

Over time the descendants of James and Elizabeth, the boy soldier and the convict, have continued to live in the Norfolk Plains and surrounding districts of Tasmania, subsequently spreading across the length and breadth of Tasmania and Australia.

For more information, go to the following website:

*Before We Are Forgotten: The Brumby Family*

[www.thebrumbys.co.uk](http://www.thebrumbys.co.uk)