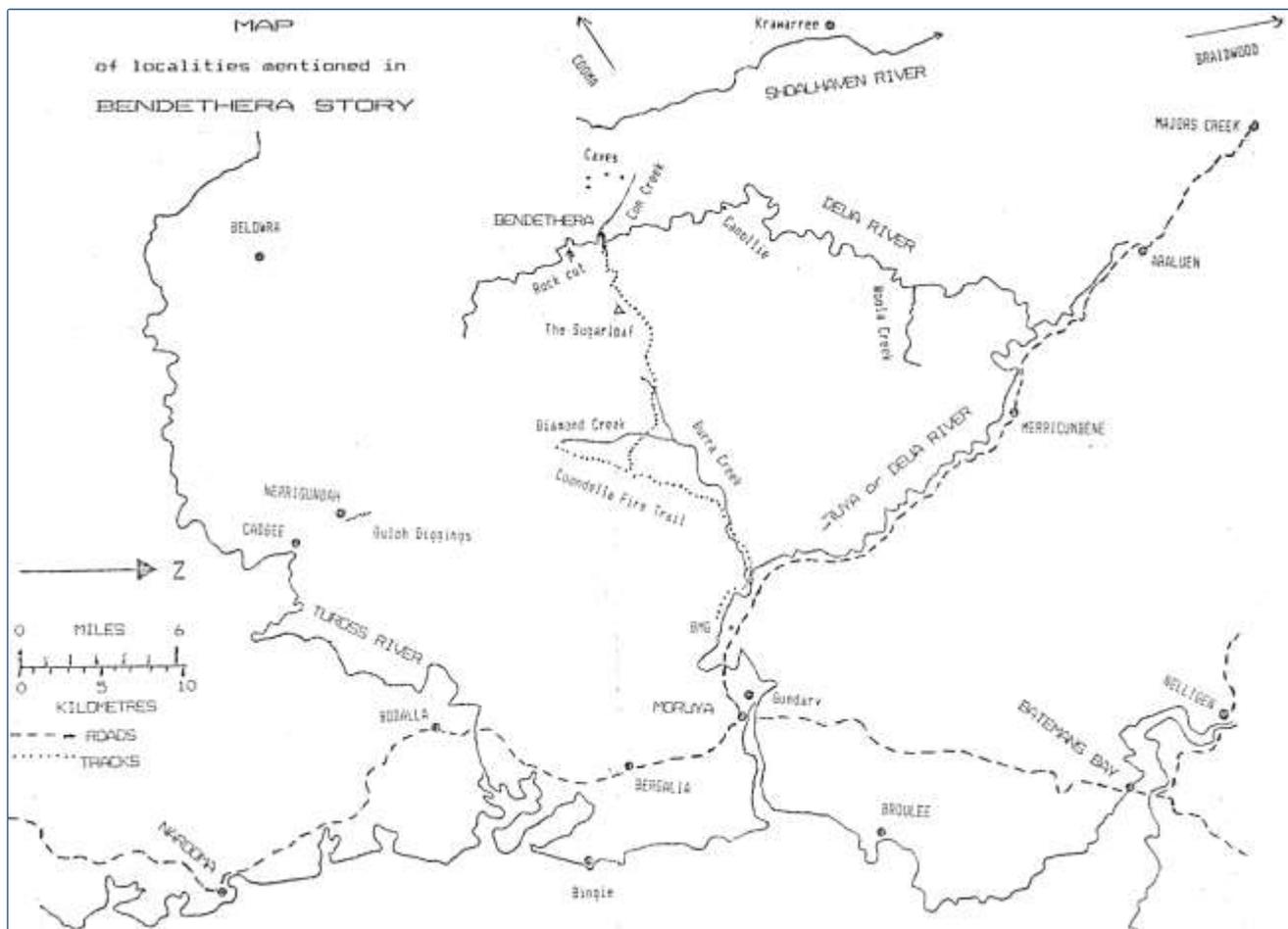


The Bendethera Story

Joseph and Mary George and Family

*This article was originally published in the Genie's Journal of June 1992 which was a forerunner of the Society's current Journal. It was written by **Phyllis and Kerry Reid**. It is a story we thought well worth telling again. Kerry unfortunately died earlier this year.*

Some extra information and corrections have been included that have come to light with the extra resources available since the original research.



Introductory Notes

The diary mentioned was kept by Joseph George intermittently between 1863 and about 1883. The diary is now in the possession of Phyllis Reid with a copy at the Historical Society. The 1928 photographs are courtesy of Ethel Andrews nee Greig of Bingie.

To write a story of the way of life for the people who owned Bendethera from 1863 – a lot has to be imagined and put in place with pieces of what older people from around Moruya knew. Maybe I've (Kerry Reid) started this a little late as lots of people who could have helped have passed on.

We know Alexander Wadell at Araluen discovered gold in 1851 and that people from all walks of life came and made the booming gold rush town of Araluen. From Araluen we then have to travel south and follow the Deua River down to the next place, Merricumbene. We know that there must have been some population there as the "Bendethera Story" starts here.

Joseph George and his family

Joseph George was born at Liverpool on 24th January 1833. His father John George had arrived in Sydney on the 'General Stuart' in 1818 having been sentenced to life for house robbery. His mother Anne (Hannah) Stubbs arrived on the 'Competitor' in 1828 with a sentence of 14 years for robbery. His parents married with permission of the Governor on the 18th August 1829 at St James Church Sydney. Their first child Dorinda was born in January 1831.

Joseph grew up in Sydney and was trained as a butcher there. However the Araluen gold rush attracted him and he evidently had some success at Bell's Creek and Jembaicumbene.¹ In September 1855 he married Mary Ann Hart at Majors Creek.

Mary like Joseph also came from good convict stock. She was the second child of Michael Hart and Mary Wilson. Michael arrived in the Colony on the Countess of Harcourt in 1827 and Mary on the Buffalo in 1833, both with 14 year sentences. They married with permission 26th January 1835.

Joseph and Mary George are said to have started a butcher's business at Merricumbene, he was a butcher by trade. From here the story told is that some aboriginal fellows took Joseph's horse, one can image him being quite angry, so he set off to track and find them over mountains, with no tracks and steep stony gullies. Basil Carden from Cadgee told me Joseph tracked the stolen horse along the river – which I've been on horseback and you can cross the river 20 odd times and it's a long way – anyway we know he ended up at Bendethera and maybe it looked much as it does today since the National Park have taken over and the trees have taken back the flats. His horse he found on the first flat, tied to a wattle tree – after tracking it for 40 odd miles.

Joseph then took up the land early in 1863 at Bendethera, that meant buying and leasing in total 840 acres, but cattle could run all over a big area. James Richard their first child was born in 1861 prior to the move to Bendethera he died in 1862 and is believed to be the baby buried at Bendethera south east of the original homestead. Three more children were then born in Bendethera, John Joseph in 1856, Thomas Richard in 1858 and Joseph Francis 1860.

In all 14 children were born to Joseph and Mary 13 surviving and growing up at Bendethera. Mary A 1863, Doranda 1866, Charlotte 1867, Benjamin J, 1869, Randolph George (George) 1871, Charles W 1874, Hannah (Annie) 1876, Maria 1878, James Sydney 1882, and Ernest 1884.

The Diary

From an old diary we have we can piece together some of the things that happened although one cannot possibly know of all the hardships they experienced. In 1863 we can see Joseph had workers who helped build his first home on the flat near Con Creek. It was situated near the old bread oven, which is still there today. This home was later burnt down and they slept in the barn while the next house was built.

The George diary begins in May 1863 and from it we see that 8 people were employed in the first year.

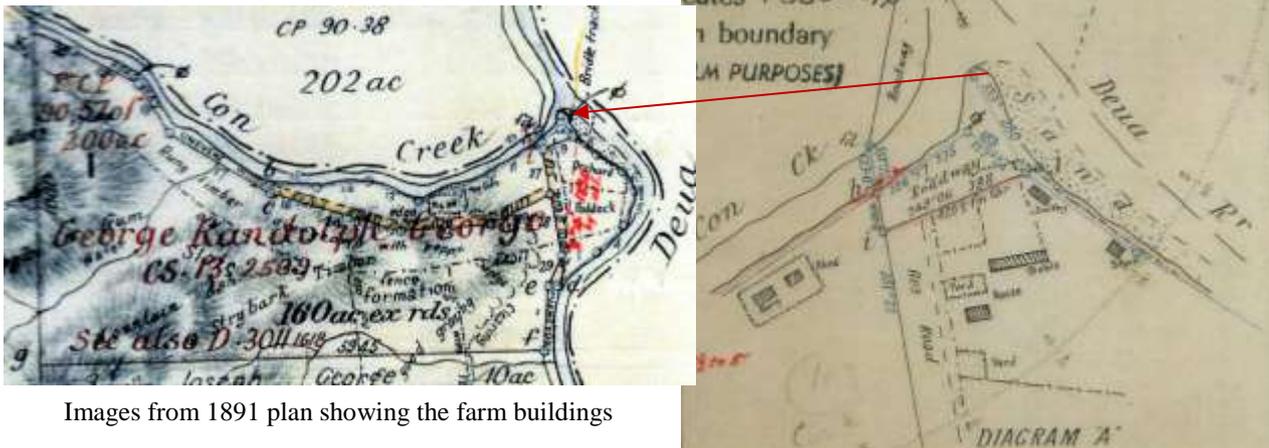
Donald McFarish
Engaged July 13. 1863
Wages 40/- Per Week

October 27 1863
Donald McFarish
Discharged

Joseph Pool
Came to Work
June 5. 1863
Wages 20/- Per Week

¹ Obituary Moruya Examiner 1st May 1909

Donald McTavish working for 40 shillings a week was the highest paid person in the diary so he was probably the carpenter. There were 100 rafters at the cost of 12/- cut for a house at the same time.
Thomas (Connell, Hart or Clarke; the diary does not specify which one) 25 th May 1863, £1 a week
Cornelius (Flynn?) in 1863
George Gildare first 2 weeks 15/- a week must find his own horse.
Joseph Pool £1 a week
Henry (?) engaged at 12/- a week.
Edward Clark was paid £5 on 1 st August 1863 by John Emmott” – no mention of why but we see that J Emmott helped Joseph George a lot.
1865
Frances Tormey £1 a week

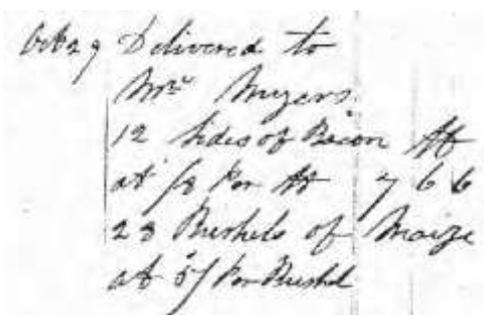


Images from 1891 plan showing the farm buildings

Horse breeding was an important part of the farm activities with many details being included in the diary. He records in 1867 – ‘received from William Henisey – 1 bay mare and foal, 1 tall bay mare and foal, a bay filly 2 years, 1 chestnut colt, all branded W1 on the shoulder.’



Bendethera Homestead about 1910 from Reid Family Photo Collection



With all these children to assist their farm could run quite well. As the sons grew they were told they each had a paddock to cultivate and look after. We know the Connells and the Clarke brothers of bushranging fame were friends and helped out at Bendethera; in the diary it talks of them working for Joseph. We know they bred horses to sell and from William Macintosh in 1874 he bought a stallion called Caliban for £50 and another stallion named Governor. He also had a fine bullock team.

At the same time they were clearing the land they were purchasing a large quantity of produce ready to sell at Araluen and Nerrigundah to the miners.

From the diary we see he had 300 pigs, 200 bullocks and cows and calves. As well as his draft horses he had 40 pack horses on which he packed bacon, corn and in later times wattle bark and chaff was cut and sold for the horse teams. All this produce was taken down and up rivers and along bridle trails. After bringing farm produce into Moruya for instance, the diary says on 10th July 1877 he purchased 570 lbs of fish @ 3½ pence per lb and 180 dozen oranges and another 448 lbs of fish, this was fresh fish – it seems he took these back to Araluen but always in mid-winter. There were plenty of fish caught off Moruya beaches by local fishermen at that time.

The diary talks of so many things. For instance in July 1877 he sold 185 pigs to a Mr Smart for £144/10/-. The same day he cut, ear marked 42 sows and 47 boar pigs and left 100 to do. One can see he worked hard and he had a good business, but in 1882 he must have got in a spot of trouble because he had to pay the banks at Cooma, Braidwood & Moruya and he says John Emmott came to his aid, with money to help him out. In another entry in 1882 he sold all his pigs to Allen Rankin Snr. except for 2 sows. He doesn't say how much but maybe it was drought time, Bendethera can get very dry.



**Kerry Reid and friends
at the water race 1967**

On another occasion in July 1880 he killed 45 pigs and the diary again says he took 1,064 lbs of bacon and 2,000 lbs of flour and 21 bags of corn to miners at Araluen. .

We have an 1886 description of Bendethera from the Moruya Examiner. It talks of the picturesque scenery and the grand farm hidden by mountains. The Georges it seems had worked hard as the visitors observed 17 acres of wheat (to make flour), 60 acres of corn and several paddocks laid with grass. They also had the principle and benefits of irrigation, there was a water race constructed by out of work miners who were looking for tin and gold at Bendethera. It carried water from the creek and irrigated the paddocks. (It is still there today and in 1967 Jack Millikin, John Mehl, Victor Taylor and myself got it to work again.) It seems they had a mowing machine and reaper and binder, a thrashing machine and corn sheller, all worked by a horse team. Not a tree stump was seen in each paddock and each was on average of 25 to 40 acres. (The full article from the Moruya Examiner can be read in "Then and Now" published by the Moruya & District Historical Society)

Right: Bread Oven 1957. The oven consists of a front section used for baking bread and cooking meat and a large rear compartment for scalding pig meat for sale at markets. (From Bendethera Conservation Management Plan)

Stories we have heard

We know the old bridle trail was long and to get his cattle to market he used to drive them over Canollie Mountain to Krawarree and on to Braidwood or down the river to Araluen. To get them to Moruya Joseph used to come up over the mountain along where Sugarloaf Road is today and where it meets Coondella fire trail then go down to the Burra Creek then into Moruya. We know at times he hobbled his horses at Coondella. With his packhorses and cattle he carted produce up the Deua River and down into Belowra



and over to the miners at the Gulf diggings at Nerrigundah. We have also heard that he brought turkeys to town and it's said to get them to market they had a lead horse which carried corn, the bag had a hole in it and as the corn dropped the turkeys followed, must have been some sight.

Basil Carden from Cadgee knew the Georges, he must have rode in and out the bridle trail a few times as well because he married Sylvia Rankin. They worked and lived at Canollie down river. Basil told me how John and Will Emmott of Moruya financed the cutting away of rock up the Deua River to make the river flow north while looking for tin and gold. We have walked up and rode horses to look at the cutting again this year (1992), what a job! At least there is a lovely waterfall with a beautiful swimming hole to cool off in after the struggle to get there. The flats which were once cleared are now so overgrown with trees and dead and fallen ones as well as wombat holes making it a hard track. If you follow the river it is miles of winding water and rocks, some very slippery. Each flat had its own name. One was called Racecourse Flat because people came from miles around for races in the 1880's.



Above: Michael Comans, Randolph George, Ida Brown and Sandy Cantlay at the Burra on the way to Bendethera April 1928. Below; Arriving at the old homestead.



There are many stories from people with connections to Bendethera. Rankin McCarron's mother Irene Rankin from Canollie down river talks of riding in on horses to go to dances at Moruya, then at daylight the next morning riding home. They had good and bad times as in her story in "When Grandma was a Girl" she says how her mother had to pack flour into one of her son's legs all night or he would have bled to death, after cutting it with an axe. Frightening things also happened to the George children. When one son who was 14 years old, broke his leg way up river his father set it and built him a lean-to. The boy stayed there a fortnight till the leg set. They carted him food but one can see the hardships of having no doctor around.

We know Jack Millikin of Moruya first went to Bendethera about 1940, he remembers his grandmother Suzanne Lavis being midwife to all the women on the Deua River as well at the Georges – one wonders how? But it seems as their time drew near she would leave her own family and go to live with the family till after the baby was born, then she would go home again. Suzanne Lavis lived on the Deua River 10 miles from Moruya.

Jack Mylott our local baker, also talks of the Georges and remembers being told of the packhorses coming up the mountain loaded with corn and one losing its footing and falling down the mountain and getting killed. Also

how he started out with Leo Heffernan & Clyde Noonan on ponies to go out to the Georges but got lost in the gullies looking for the bridle trail.

The Fate of the George Family members

After all this we know that Joseph Snr. Died on 28th April in Gundary in 1909 at 77 years.² Failing health had caused the couple to move closer to town firstly to Krawarree and then to Moruya. Mary died in August 1908 aged 70 of pneumonia. Her obituary³ describes her as a most hospitable and kind hearted woman always opening her home to travellers or visitors. Both are buried at Moruya cemetery.

Their children seem to have gone all over Australia.

Of **John** we know nothing (His mother's obituary records him as being in Queensland).

Thomas went to Queensland. He died in 1924 in Lismore.

Joseph jnr walked Australia looking for work but came back to Burra Creek. He died in Moruya 20th March 1935 aged 74.

James R died in infancy.

Mary A. used to sometimes walk in from Bendethera to the Millikins place on the Deua River and stay a while, then just leave in the night and walk back.

From the dairy **Doranda** was born on 10th July 1866 but was called Jane; nothing else is known.

Charlotte married Michael McGann in Kalgoorlie in 1902, they had one child Mary Ellen who unfortunately died in 1911 in the infectious diseases ward of Kalgoorlie hospital. Charlotte died in Kalgoorlie in 1932 and her husband in 1936. She had 100 acres of land at Bendethera for a time in the name of McGann.

Benjamin was caretaker of the caves in 1890 and getting £50 a year.

Randolph – maybe the bank finally closed on the Georges because the Moruya courthouse records show that Randolph George bought Bendethera from auction in 1932. He left it to his brother Charles's two sons who sold it to Allen Rankin in 1939 for £500. Randolph must have left Bendethera and gone to live around Moruya as he had a housekeeper Mrs Hart who lived there with her two children Nell and Mick. Mick is remembered as owning a plane and he used to land it in the bullock hole or as it is now named Gundary oval. Mick Hart died in his plane while dropping food to stranded people in the big flood in Queensland. Randolph moved to an old place (Stewart's flat place) on the south side of the Deua River opposite Dempsey's place or where the BMG crushing plant is today (1992). He later moved with Billy George to live at Ryans old place Cobora House near Bergalia. He died at Moruya in 1938 of cancer of the throat. He also had a bent arm and shoulder which were broken when he had a fall from a horse.

Charles William married in 1919 to Gertrude Finlay, he died 2 March 1946 in Lismore.

Hannah who was also known as Annie is buried at Moruya having died 28th July 1923 aged 44.

Maria was in Moruya at the time of her mother's death, it is said she may have gone to Queensland.

James the second last son; people have said he also walked around Australia on foot and Jack Jeffery explained he was once in a "world wind of lightening"; not sure what that is but he must have lived through a frightening experience – people remember James, nick-name Jimmy, as being the last George son at Bendethera and in 1939 he was there as caretaker for the new owner Allen Rankin but they had a row over agistment for horses so he left and went up the north coast.

Ernest (the last); it seems also ended up the north coast working on a dairy farm and working a punt which is used to ferry cars, horses etc. over a river. He married in 1932 at Casino to Catherine Kelly. He died 21st July 1952 at Palmers Island, Clarence River, NSW.

A lot of folk also remember **Billy George**. It is said he could shoot a king parrot out of the air. He enlisted in WW1 and gave his next of kin as his brother Ben of Moruya. However his birth registration in Braidwood shows he was the illegitimate son of Mary George who was 16 at the time. He was born at Bendethera and would appear to have been brought up as one of the family. He also eventually moved up the North Coast.

² Obituary Moruya Examiner 1st May 1909

³ Obituary Moruya Examiner 15th August 1908

The Fate of Bendethera

Before Randolph died we know he was paid £10 a year by the Shire to keep the trail to Bendethera open. He employed Les Jeffery and Bill Clulee in the depression of 1930, to help him re cut the bridle track through Coondella which is near Diamond creek and people bush walk to see the falls on Diamond Creek today. Jack Jeffery at 11 years old with his brother Les and friends Basil and Bob Carden went through this track and it was said it cut half the distance off from Bendethera to Moruya.

In later years Allen Rankin sold Bendethera to Ross McKinnon of Wollongong. The he sold it to the Robinson family also from Wollongong. They ran cattle and horses which with the roos ended up dying in the drought or being shot; not a paying farm. The Robinson's were at one time charging to visit the caves. They sold to the National Parks in 1979.

I've been to Bendethera many times, firstly about 1956 when I was 17 years old. I walked in with a mate Reg Tindell along the old Bendethera bridle trail. Then in 1965 in a 4 wheel drive and friends John Mehl, John and Michel Nader, Bill Jewell and Col Elliott who was the Moruya Police sergeant at the time. Neta and Vern Davis who lived in Woola Creek out from Araluen were there and Jack Millikin was at the hut. Among all the things that happened Neta caught a 7 lb Bass in the Deua River. The following year 1966 I rode a new black and white pie-bald horse in to break him in (he's 30 years old now). Jack Millikin and I had rain for a few days, each day hoping it would stop, finally after 13 days and heaps more rain, our tucker gone we ended up cooking the green pears from the old trees (dreadful). We had to cross the flooded rivers to get home, what a time that was! Another time I took my old yellow tractor and a trailer in with work friends John Mehl and Red Heffernan and the mountain was so steep we put a log on the back to steady it down – the log kept slipping under – I remember Red's legs shaking so much with fright it is a wonder he didn't fall or we all weren't killed.

In later times I've gone in on a motor bike or 4 wheel drive; I've been in there when there's been hundreds of roos and rabbits and when the beautiful wattle trees were all in flower.

Now each year at Easter my family and friends ride through the same bridle trail that Randolph re-cut in the 1930's. We find when we go to Bendethera and we walk or ride and camp at the site of the yards and homestead you can't help but remember the battles that just being there caused. One can almost see or feel the fellows coming from each paddock with their horse teams. We've been told it was a pretty sight seeing teams coming home to be fed before everyone had tea. This year we put stones made in the form of a cross on the baby's grave. We really want all who camp or bushwalk through to remember the once happy family who lived there, and we don't mind the wallabies and kangaroos and wombats. The caves are a well known tourist attraction. I just love the place and dread the day I'll be too old to ride that old bridle trail.



1960 at Bendethera: Kerry Reid aged 20 with Irwin 13, John Mehl 24 and Wilfred 24

Thankyou Phyllis for allowing us to again share in yours and Kerry's love of Bendethera.