

# Moruya's Enterprising Businessmen



## 1. Tobacco Growing in Moruya with James Mooney by Wendy Simes

“Tobacco growing commenced during Australia's early years of settlement. Governor Macquarie experimented with plantings at Emu Plains in New South Wales in 1818, and by the 1820s tobacco was cultivated by farmers in the Hunter Valley. During the 1850s growing extended to Victoria and Queensland. It is likely that some proportion of the early crop was intended to supply the colony with the makings of pesticide for use in ridding sheep of parasites.”<sup>1</sup>

An article appeared in the *Empire* from the Moruya Correspondent on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1864 on Tobacco growing in Moruya. The article states “Tobacco is again to be revived on the Moruya” going on to say that it had been tried previously by Mr Mooney in 1841 when he had a small crop at Kiora. The full text of the article follows.

*Our townsman Mr James Mooney, whose enterprising spirit has before this been felt by many, especially in the opening up of the Moruya quartz reefs in which, I am sorry to say, he was a very great loser, is now erecting a spacious curing and manufacturing shed in Queen Street, and has five acres of land ready to receive the plants, which are looking remarkably healthy. The kinds sown are the Virginia Golden Drop and Havanah. It may well be to remark that Mr. Mooney is not only a tobacconist by trade, but is also a practical grower. Over five and twenty years ago he was both growing and manufacturing on the Hunter, and in the year 1841 he had a small crop in his district, Kiora, which answered his expectations, though in the curing of it he sustained some loss through not having put up a sufficiently weatherproof shed. It is Mr Mooney's intention more especially to manufacture, provided the settlers will grow and supply the leaf, and he informs me that he has beds of plants sufficient for a very large breadth of ground. I should hope this fact will be sufficient to encourage the farmers to try an acre or so, especially as Mr Mooney will be ready to give any information they may require.*

*The crop is of that nature, that where children are numerous it is easily cultivated, as each morning the plants require attendance. Our settlers are not generally unblest with numerous progeny, and many of their little ones, now too small for more difficult work, would soon learn the culture of the plants.*

*Too much praise cannot be given to Mr. Mooney. Of course, there is a risk in such an undertaking, especially the first year, for it is almost a new employment after twenty-five years cessation; he has always been ready to practically advance the district in any shape irrespective of personal aggrandisement, which too often is the cause of failure, each one only looking to their own ends, and they seeing but a very short distance beyond the tips of their nasal organs.*

Presumably the correspondent was expecting these small children to carry out care of the plants as outlined in the *Sydney Monitor* of the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1830. The Monitor recommended after planting out the plants be carefully examined every morning and every evening, for the purpose of removing all sprouts which otherwise grow rapidly, draining all the nourishment from the plant and preventing the leaves becoming a good size. The leaves also needed to be examined daily on the underside to remove the eggs of a caterpillar to which they are subject. When the plants has 10



Tobacco Drying

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tobaccoinustralia.org.au>

or at the most 12 leaves the head needs to be nipped to prevent any more leaf formation.

Not all papers were willing to extoll the virtue of Tobacco. The *Geelong Advertiser* of the 7<sup>th</sup> June 1848 states it is essentially a narcotic; and as such, it is detrimental to the power and healthiness of the nervous system – as such, it stimulates at the expense of subsequent depression and eventual loss of tone ... it is injurious to the health of the system.

## Just who was James Mooney?

James had come to Australia as a convict in October 1832 at the age of 23. On arrival he was assigned to John Larnach at Patrick Plains. James was said to be a Catholic from Dublin and his occupation on the convict records is a Spanish Leather Dresser. He was 5'3½" in height with a fair freckled complexion and fair hair. His assignment to John Larnach may not have been a pleasant one as Larnach had a reputation of harshly treating his assigned convicts. However it would have been here that he gained some knowledge of Tobacco growing as the Hunter Valley was an area where tobacco growing was tried extensively.

By the time James moved down south he was a free man having served his 7 year sentence. He and his wife Mary Barrett had 10 children born between 1843 and 1862. Records show<sup>2</sup> he was at various times a storekeeper, an innkeeper and a farmer as well as owning a number of blocks of land in the township of Moruya. James died in Moruya in 1871.

## 2. Arthur H Weatherby

Extracted from "Down Memory Lane" by Aubrey Vernon (Bob) Colefax



Arthur H Weatherby was the chemist in Vulcan Street. He was there as far back as my memory goes and for some time before. When I lived in Morpeth in the early forties, I learned from the aged chemist there – a Mr Cutliffe – that he had the dual business of dentist cum chemist at Moruya when a young man, and sold out to A.H. Weatherby, before the turn of the century – quite a coincidence, I thought.

Mr Weatherby's shop had a Victorian Age atmosphere with cupboards of polished varnish and glass doors, and shelves to match. Whatever he was out of stock of at any time always brought from him the assurance to the customer – "I will have some on the next boat". The phrase became automatic to him through endless repetition year by year, and everybody in Moruya laughed about it.

A.H. Weatherby was the type who would invest money anywhere he could see the chance of making a shilling. He bought the first model T Ford ever to appear in Moruya. It was brought from Tarago through Braidwood down the Araluen Mountain. A.H. told me that the diff. cover fell off near Araluen, and they managed to effect a repair which got them to Moruya by using lengths cut from 6" nails.

<sup>2</sup> His children's birth registrations and List of Licensees. You can search Publicans' licensees at <http://srwww.records.nsw.gov.au/indexsearch/searchform.aspx?id=69>

About 1911 A.H. started Moruya's first picture show in Church St on land about where Vic. Bonnet now lives. It was an open air show, and was one of his few ventures which lost money. He later moved the show from there and ran it for some time in the Mechanics Hall in Page St. For a time he filled the role of town photographer.



Mr Weatherby ran launches on holidays and Sundays to Moruya Heads. The big launch had a piano and it was nice having a sing-song on the water, especially on the homeward trip. The launches were crowded, and ran several trips each day. Practically all Moruya went to the Heads on holidays, and a large percentage would go by launch. At the time I remember best, the North side was favoured, as it had the better embarking and disembarking facilities. The fare was one shilling return. The boatshed was just below the town end of the bridge and was traditionally known as Weatherby's Boatshed. He had row-boats for hire.

A.H. Weatherby's greatest love was motor cars. About 1915 he opened Moruya's first garage of any consequence. I remember the building being erected. It was the nucleus of the premises where Moruya Produce and Machinery Co. now trade – but I am ahead of myself. Through all these activities, Mr Weatherby carried on the backbone of it all – the chemist's shop where he gave such current service as was possible, with the promise of much more when the next boat arrived. He (Mr. Weatherby) at length decided to sell the business, and about 1925 it was taken

over by Mr. Cecil Finucane, an Irish gentleman related to Paddy Finucane, the famous air fighter ace of World War II. Mr Finucane remained in the business for close to 20 years. He organized a jewellery and gift store department at the Church St end of the shop. This part was looked after by a little German chappie named Wennstron, who did watch repairing and engraving. I wonder if fellow Jack Mylott still has the medal he won at Dorman Long & Co. sports for champion school athlete. I remember having Wennstron do the engraving on that medal.

I seem to remember that the redoubtable A. H. Weatherby came out of retirement about 1945 and looked after the shop for a while complete with his "next boat" formula.

He retired when John Ware took the business, and spent most of his time from then on a dedicated angler. Like an old soldier Arthur Henry Weatherby didn't die – he just faded away- or so it seems to me.

## More on Our Enterprising, Up-To-Date Chemist by Dianne Wiggins

This is how the *Moruya Examiner* referred to the local chemist, Mr Arthur Henry Weatherby, early last century. He was known as such for his varied business ventures and early adoption of new technology. Besides running the pharmacy at Moruya, he was local dentist, launch operator, motor car proprietor, cinema owner and town photographer.

Weatherby's pharmacy was the first business to have a telephone wire connection in the town as well as a cash register. He was the first resident of Moruya to invest in a motor bike and motor car, building up a fleet of cars to transport passengers between Bega and Moruya. This service later linked with the Lawless and Mann's service to Nowra. He expanded this venture by opening a garage, running the mail contract and operating a car ambulance service. The *Moruya Examiner* reported the purchase of his first car on Saturday, 7 March, 1908:

*"Our enterprising Chemist, Mr A.H. Weatherby, has secured the distinction of introducing the first motor car into Moruya. Mr W started with a small bike, which he soon cast aside for a motor bike, this latter being shortly afterwards superseded by a much more powerful one. Mr W's penchant for fast travelling has induced him to abandon the bike for the car, and he is now the possessor of an 18 h.p. 4 cylinder American motor car. The Maker's name is "Ford" and his shop turns out no less than 10,000 annually of a similar make to the one under notice. A Mr M.G. Mitham who has an unmistakable Yankee accent, brought the car from Sydney over-land*

*on Monday, and has since remained tutoring our Chemist in the mechanism of the “adventurer”. Family buggy horses should be brought to town and made familiar with this car as the motor has come to stay, and the sooner the fact is recognised the better for all concerned.”*

Before this, Weatherby had invested in a passenger launch, ferrying people from Moruya to the Heads. He purchased the town’s first oil launch in 1905 and a decade later, owned a 40 foot launch with a 12 foot beam,



capable of carrying 50 passengers. It was used for fishing and leisure activities and remained a very successful venture.

A riskier investment was the establishment of a local picture theatre, a year before the outbreak of World War I. He commenced showing in the Mechanics Institute and later operated as a semi-open air show in Church Street before the venture collapsed in early 1916. News of the picture show was reported in the *Ulladulla and Milton Times* on Saturday, 9 August, 1913:



*“Moruyaites can now boast (thanks to the enterprise of Messrs. Weatherby and McCauley of the establishment of a really first class and modern picture show in their town. The machine is one of the best procurable, and the services of an expert have been secured. Carefully selected films will be supplied each week by West’s Sydney. Music will be supplied by one of the best Allisonolas in the State.”*

Many town events were photographed by Arthur Weatherby, including the Moruya Races and Kiora Picnic. In his Obituary (*Moruya Examiner*, 8 August, 1947) it is reported: “many views of Moruya and scenery can be seen today, originally taken by Mr Weatherby;” and that, “his photography has been sent all over the world”. Perhaps it is not surprising that a man so fascinated with technology, should also be enamored with the camera and photography.

Born in Yass and trained in Sydney, Moruya was indeed fortunate to have claimed this enterprising man as its own.

Photograph shows what was known as the Weatherby bridge at Mullimburra Point which was used by the areas keen fishermen.

### **3. Kings of the Monarch** **by Shirley Jurmann**

Those who were fortunate enough to know Jack King had many happy memories of him and many stories to relate about his up and down life.

Jack came from around Cessnock according to his obituary but was actually born in Lambton, the son of John and Elizabeth King. He was named John Joseph after his father. He grew up the hard way, learning to defend himself in these tough areas.

As a young man he moved to Sydney. It was the time of the worst Depression the State of NSW has known. His landlady asked him to drown some unwanted kittens. He did this for her and earned the princely sum of seven shillings. With this money he visited a two-up school and built this into a sum large enough to pay his way to New Zealand. While working there he met and married Maria Scheel. Maria had been born in July 1881 in Wuerttemberg, Germany, the daughter of Sebastian Scheel and Franziska nee Hafner. Fortunately for Jack Maria was an excellent cook which they put to good use when they returned to NSW.

They came to Moruya and took over the Adelaide Hotel, perhaps influenced in this choice of occupation by the fact that Maria's father was a brewer. Being German at this time was not exactly popular so locals were given the impression that she was Swiss or maybe Swedish. After a time Jack tired of being in the same place and decided to try another adventure. He bought a hotel at Walcha.

This hotel had been a prosperous business but it had become very rundown. Groups of hoodlums had taken to frequenting the place and their behaviour drove decent citizens away. Very soon after Jack took over the "Walcha Hotel", two well-known thugs arrived, settled down in the lounge and ordered two beers. Jack pulled two mugs of beer and put them on a tray to serve his customers. As he entered the lounge one of the men rose and kicked the tray out of Jack's hands. Jack didn't blink an eye and proceeded to clean up the mess while he considered what would be the best way of dealing with the situation. He went out to the kitchen and told his wife that they had put everything into this venture and would lose it all if he did not have a go.

He pulled two more mugs of beer, placed them on a tray. He walked back into the lounge, handed the beefy bully the tray, saying, "Here, you might make a better waiter than I am." The bully instinctively took the tray – and this was his mistake. Jack hit him square on the chin. Down went bully, tray, mugs, beer and all. Jack pulled him to his feet, grasped him by the lapels of his coat, pulled him forward and down and head butted. The thug's nose was flattened across his face and the blood flowed freely. He fled. Jack was not finished. He was in a fighting mood and invited the other fellow to have a go but he had seen enough of the little fighting publican and wisely decided to follow his friend out the door. From then on the Walcha pub flourished untroubled by the local thugs. Decent people quickly returned, keen to see this man who had beaten the town bullies.

It was possibly while they were at Walcha that their only child, a son, was born and died.



The Kings later returned to Moruya and purchased the old "Commercial Hotel" on the corner of Vulcan and Church Streets. Under Jack's management and with Mrs King's excellent cuisine, the hotel flourished. There had been a hotel on the site since at least 1859 when Thomas Staunton had the "Gold Diggers' Arms", there. It had been replaced in 1866 by a substantial timber two-storey building called "The Commercial". By now it was quite old and tired. Jack decided to pull it down and build a new hotel, the present "Monarch". It opened in 1939.

Jack was a fine sportsman and loved his horses, dogs, poultry, football and everything to do with sport. His whippet dogs scampering around the football field were a familiar sight. It did not matter if it was a horse race, a street fight, a football match, a dog fight, a hare race or a foot race, Jack would be there. He loved his race horses and particularly liked to take on a horse which had been regarded as worthless, or rejected as an outlaw. He won several races with a horse which had been discarded by the local police.

Jack took great pride in the poultry served on the hotel menu and bred birds especially for the table. They were a cross between Indian Game and Croad Langshan and were a tall heavy bird. The sailors from the I.S.N. Co. steam boats which visited Moruya each week, were regular visitors to the King establishment. They were impressed by the birds and were convinced one would do well in a cock fight in the pits in Sydney. They persuaded Jack to sell them a likely looking fellow and took him off in the “Narani” for a promising career in the “big smoke”. For his first fight he was fitted with three inch steel spurs and he was up against a city champ, known as the Redfern Champ. Bets were heavy and fast. The fight began. The Redfern Champ flew straight at the Moruya bird, who took fright and seeking any means of escape, flew into the air. The needle-sharp spur caught the city bird in the neck, ripping out his throat. The sailors collected big money but unfortunately did not quit, betting on further cock fights until the money was all gone. Moruya’s champion ended up where he was bred to be - in the pot with an onion.

Pony racing was all the go and of course Jack had to be part of it. Jack bought a tiny fellow about 10 hands high. He named him “King’s Own”. Ponies were given starts of 12 yards per inch so “King’s Own” did well in this regard. However like most ponies, he was very shrewd and would often duck out the “Pink Gates” rather than run the extra three furlongs to finish the race, depriving Jack of a certain winner.

Jack was always on the lookout for something new to engage in. On one occasion he decided to organise a fox hunt. He paid good money for two live foxes. The hounds, horses and riders gathered in the Moruya Park. The hounds were given a good sniff of the foxes. The foxes were let go and given a good start but they were in unfamiliar territory and the hounds were too fast. In a disappointingly short time the hounds caught the foxes. A white greyhound owned by Mr Mick Honan was first to catch a fox.

Maria had a large influence on the design and interior fittings of the new hotel. She died in 1943 aged 62. Various theories have been put forward about the exact reason for the name “The Monarch” being chosen as the name for the new hotel. It has been suggested that it was named after a British battleship or that a competition was held. However according to an obituary for Jack published in the “Moruya Advertiser” of 13<sup>th</sup> July 1966, it was stated that Jack told personal friends that the name came about because of a mantle clock. When the furniture and fittings were being cleared out ready for the demolition of the old “Commercial Hotel”, an old mantle clock with the brand name “Monarch” came to light. As his name was King, Jack thought that this was an appropriate name and so it was chosen.

Jack passed away in a Sydney Hospital in 1966 at the age of 84 years of age. His remains were laid to rest in the Moruya Cemetery.

