



*discover more about historical Queensland*

## Q150 Digital Books – Section Details

**Name:** *Triumph in the Tropics, 1959*

**Section name:** Part One, Chapter I, Introduction

**Pages:** 1–5

**Printing Notes (Adobe Acrobat):** For best results “Page Scaling” should be set to “Fit to Printable Area”. “Auto Rotate and Center” should also be checked.

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## PART ONE

# EXPLORATION, DISCOVERY, OCCUPATION AND SEPARATION

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The story of the self-governing State of Queensland is essentially the record of the white man's triumph over climate and his taming of the tropics. With its rainfall, its many rivers and its rich natural resources, Queensland has now the greatest economic potentiality of all the States, territories and island groups that are included within the area called "Australasia." Geographically, it fills the north-eastern quadrant of the Australian continent and is greater in actual size than any other State of the Commonwealth except Western Australia. Its effectively occupied area, however, is 60 per cent. larger than that of Western Australia, and was, indeed (in 1956) almost one third ( $32\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.) of the total occupied area of Australia.

Statistics—dull though necessary things—are pegs on which to hang pen-pictures drawn from experience. Figures are only useful if they help to picture this land by comparison and contrast with places more familiar. If, for example, it is said that the State of Queensland has an area of approximately \*670,500 square miles, which is  $22\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of the mainland area of Australia; and that (excluding the Torres Strait Islands and the Great Barrier Reef) it lies across the tropic of Capricorn, between the 10th and 29th parallels of south latitude, and (west to east) between the 138th and 154th meridians of east longitude, it means that its greatest extent from north to south is some 1,300 miles, and from east to west, 900 miles. (\* See note next page.)

The seas that form its eastern and northern boundaries provide it with 3,236 miles of coastline, of which hundreds of miles near settled areas are surfing beaches among the best in the world. With its great variety of altitudes, Queensland has a correspondingly great variety of climates, and of vegetable and forest products. In area alone, Queensland is about one third as large as all Europe, excluding Russia; it is more than three times as large as France or

Germany; nearly six times as large as Italy or Norway, and over seven times as large as the United Kingdom.

Those who know continents other than Europe better, may think of it as being twice as large as Venezuela; or nearly as large as Bolivia, Paraguay, and Ecuador together; or nearly two and a half times as large as Chile in South America; it is one quarter of the size of China; or six times the size of the Philippine Islands; or nearly six times that of Japan; or as large as Persia in the Middle East; or as all Indonesia (excluding West Irian—Dutch New Guinea).

Apart from mere area, an excellent proportion of the whole surface of Queensland is arable land, pastoral land, or land rich in a variety of minerals. As mentioned above, its effectively occupied area is  $32\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. of all the occupied area of Australia. This permits it at present to raise 80 per cent. of the beef exported from all Australia and, among other things, virtually 100 per cent. of the exported sugar.

In 1956, 85 per cent. of the total territory of the State was listed as pastoral or similar leased ground; while about  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. was held as freehold or was in process of purchase. (This  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. included most of the good land in the immediate coastal and sub-coastal areas.)\*

Only about 4 per cent. of its vast extent is *not* occupied either for private or public purposes, and that small area lies mainly in the far north; mineral deposits, long known to exist there, are at present (1958) being defined for early development, and these may include some of the richest and most accessible deposits in the world of some of the most valuable materials for the present age of technology.

So far as general figures for development go, they are what one might expect in a land settled for a century or so by Europeans and their descendants—but, as mentioned above, there is one feature about Queensland that is unique and striking. More than half its area (54 per cent., or approximately 360,000 square miles) lies within the tropics, and in spite of that fact it is peopled almost entirely by white men and women—more and more of whom each year are added to the percentage of locally-born residents; there are already some of the third and fourth generation. The tropics of Australia are almost unique among tropical lands in having practically no aboriginal coloured population acting (as they often

(\* On 13 February 1959, the News Bulletin issued by the Queensland Government Public Relations Bureau (Vol. II, No. 5) stated that the completion of a most accurate survey of the State established its true area as 667,000 square miles. The figures and percentages shown in this introduction should be modified accordingly; the claims made are not, in fact, altered by the revised figure.—Ed.)

do elsewhere) as a permanent reservoir of epidemic and endemic diseases. Because of this, because of our excellent range of climates and because of our high standard of living, this vast tropical area has been successfully colonised by white men and women, who perform in these latitudes every essential activity without any undue loss of health, longevity or fertility.

A century of settlement in Queensland has served, indeed, to demolish hundreds of hoary maxims, once universally accepted, regarding the lethal effects of "a tropical climate." By the triumphant demonstration here that "climate" alone is no invincible barrier to colonisation by white men, deliberate settlement by white men in various other selected tropical areas has been encouraged, as, for example, in parts of Africa and South America, among other places, and has similarly succeeded. But Queensland showed the way.

Another factor of significance for Queensland is that our present western boundary coincides roughly with the limit of profitable pastoral extension inland towards Central Australia. It is true that useful pastoral areas string out through the Barkly Tablelands of north-western Queensland and the Northern Territory, and extend as far as the Kimberley region in the far north of Western Australia, but they do so in an increasingly broken series. Perhaps they should be linked politically just as they are linked geographically, in order that they might be advanced economically.

Most significant of all, is the recent discovery of rich uranium fields and other sources of nuclear energy in the north-west of Queensland and in the Northern Territory, for this has not only altered strikingly the economic and political potential of those areas, but also of Australia as a whole.

Finally, there is historic significance for Queensland in the rapidly increasing importance of aviation as a means of communication and transport. It is inevitable as direct flight through the coastless seas of the air links Australia increasingly with Asia, with Africa, and so with Europe and the world generally, that it should do so through the North. Residents of Queensland, are closer by thousands of miles than either England or America to the greatest part of the vast population of the world—particularly to those areas of Asia, the Middle East and Africa, which are newly freed from suzerainty by western powers. Their eager attempts to "industrialise" as a means to an improved standard of living; and to establish an export, import, and transit trade to modify their former agrarian economy—must have a profound influence on the development of those States that border this "new frontier." It will have as profound an influence upon Queensland as the discovery of America

had upon what were then the petty States of Western Europe that bordered the Atlantic in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They, too, fronted new areas of mutual opportunity across a sea that linked as well as separated them. Queensland is certainly the chief of the areas of mutual opportunity to-day fronting South-East Asia. Her actual and relative status, so far as the southern States of Australia are concerned, must therefore change rapidly with these changing circumstances—indeed, it already is doing so.

The Southern States and their capitals—Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne and Sydney—were all creations of Great Britain's maritime ascendancy during the "steamer" age of the 19th century. They arose, naturally enough, along the "run" of the sailing ships and steamers of those days—which was from the homeland, round the Cape of Good Hope, east with the steady winds of the "roaring forties" for 4,000 miles or more, and so along the south and ultimately, the east coasts of Australia. In the "age of ships" this route and this result were inevitable; the "air age" and the "age of nuclear power" must, just as inevitably, exploit the short routes through the north, and must develop, to their increasing advantage, the natural strategic "ports" on those routes in Queensland, the Northern Territory and North-Western Australia.

Queensland, like Tasmania (separated in 1825), South Australia (separated in 1836), and Victoria (separated in 1851), was originally part of the area of "New South Wales," which (as claimed by Cook for the British Crown in 1770) included the whole eastern seaboard from 38° south (near the south-east angle of Victoria) to the northern tip of Queensland, and from 1788 included the hinterland as far west as 135° E. longitude.

In 1824, this western boundary was extended westerly to the meridian of 129° E. to bring Melville Island (occupied that year) within the scope of British possession.<sup>(1)</sup>

*Queensland was last to reach the status of colony, but it is a striking fact that her northern tip was the first part of Australia to be seen by recorded European explorers, both from the east and the west.*

In March 1606, Willem Jansz, a Dutchman, coasting down the western shores of New Guinea, in the "Duyfken," crossed the western edge of Torres Straits with its many islands without realising that any strait existed, and continued far down the west coast of Cape York Peninsula thinking that that land was a continuation

of New Guinea. It was shown thus on Dutch and other maps for 150 years afterwards.

A few months later in the same year, Don Diego de Prado y Tovar, with his captain Luis Vaez de Torres, a Spaniard, in the "San Pedrico," seeking to return from the New Hebrides to the Philippines after parting from de Quiros, was forced by contrary winds to go "south about" New Guinea, and in two and a half perilous months (18 July to 3 October 1606) crept from point to point westerly till he had passed from the East through the straits between New Guinea and Queensland, of which there had been rumours and some quite definite assertions for many years.

The nine waterways among the islands (several being recognized marine highways) are now called Torres Strait or, perhaps, merit the name "Torres Straits." De Prado y Tovar and Torres perhaps saw the northmost tip of Australia without realising that it was more than another of the many islands in those dangerous seas. Their maps, which were believed lost, were spirited across to France and included in prints there, overlooked, it would seem, by later authors. (See Plate V; and Text Figure 4, p. 31.)

James Cook, 164 years later, a few miles from the point where in 1606, Prado and Torres, safely through the straits, set their course northerly to run for the Philippines, recognised that he had actually completed the discovery of the last great segment of the coastline that bounded this new continent—Australia—and took possession of the whole eastern coast down to 38° S. in the name of George III.

*The northern tip of Queensland—the finger tip by which Australia clings to the "Spice Islands," and to Asia—had been the first and the last essential link in the identification of the Australian continent.*

The fact that 164 years elapsed between the first recorded visits of these Dutch and Spanish explorers in 1606 and Cook's act of annexation for Great Britain in 1770; and the even stranger fact that Australia had remained for some centuries a land of mystery and mere speculation, whose very existence was often denied—the "Terra Australis Incognita" of the cosmographers—demand some explanation.

(1) For particulars of the allocation of area among the six States and the Northern Territory, see pages 161 et seq. Western Australia was granted responsible government partly in 1870 and fully in 1890; Queensland was endowed with it at the time of separation in 1859.