

## The Lynches

By Jane Smith

The Lynch family had difficult lives. Most of the troubles appear to have been caused by the family's association with alcohol. The Lynches were a family of nine from Limerick: a Roman Catholic labourer named Michael, his wife, Margaret, and their seven children. Shortly after their arrival, Michael took a job at R.J. Smith's boiling-down works at Town Marie, an area now known as Tivoli on the north bank of the Bremer River near Ipswich. Michael's life was short. He died in his early forties in 1853, within three years of arriving in Moreton Bay. Michael's widow, Margaret, lived on in Ipswich until about 1870, when she moved to Helidon.

Her eldest son, Daniel, who was 20 when the family emigrated, became a publican at Dalby and raised five children. Violence seems to have dogged the lives of Michael and Margaret's children. In Helidon in 1866, Daniel got into a fiery quarrel over money that led to an assault charge, of which he was later acquitted.

Daniel's sister Catherine, who was 18 when she emigrated, married an aggressive drunk in July 1856. Her husband, Daniel Alone, was an Ipswich policeman with four children from a previous marriage. Only a few months after the marriage, Daniel Alone was dismissed for a gross violation of duty for 'withholding evidence relative to a prisoner'<sup>1</sup>. (According to him, his transgression was merely failing to mention to the Bench – because he was never asked – that a prisoner had attempted to evade arrest by fleeing).

Daniel Alone, deprived (unfairly, in his view) of his job as police constable, became a bullock driver. He abused and threatened his wife, who fled from him in 1858 with their nine-month old baby. Catherine took refuge with her mother and had her husband charged with desertion and refusing to pay maintenance for their child. The Judge took a dim view of Catherine's complaint. Considering that Alone had offered her a home at Yandilla, where he was working, the Judge ruled that Alone could not be said to have deserted his wife, and maintained that it was the duty of a wife to follow her husband. Alone was not necessarily unreasonable, the Judge ruled, in his refusal to let his wife 'have her own way'. He dismissed the case, referring to Mrs Alone's 'extravagance' in pursuing legal action against her husband.<sup>2</sup>

Catherine had no choice but to reconcile with Daniel Alone. But her husband was not reformed. In 1859, he was back in court, accused of failing to pay wages to a bullock driver. He was ordered to pay the wages and court costs. The following year saw Catherine taking her husband to court for assault. Once again, the case was dismissed. Through the 1860s he was charged with being drunk and disorderly, using obscene language, assault, and – again – refusing to pay a bullocky.

Catherine's sister, Johanna (or Hannah), who was two years her junior, also married a man who was fond of a drink. Her husband, Owen Burns, was a publican in Helidon. He died in a riding accident in 1873. A witness who saw him just before his death described Burns as 'the worse for drink', although the victim's friends insisted later that he was a man of sober habits.

Michael and Margaret Lynch's middle children fared better than their sisters. Edward (or Edmund), Bridget and Thomas all made their homes in Ipswich. Bridget, who was 11<sup>3</sup> when her family emigrated, married a publican who later worked for the railway at Ipswich. She raised a large family (seven daughters and two sons), and throughout her long life saw many changes in the town. Bridget 'had a fund of reminiscences of the early days, with which she often delighted her numerous coterie of friends'. She lived until 1919 and was described as 'of a homely disposition and highly respected by her neighbours'.<sup>4</sup> Bridget's younger brother Thomas, also a hotel proprietor, died prematurely from chronic gastritis, exhaustion and hepatitis in 1880, leaving a widow and seven young children behind.

Patrick, the youngest Lynch, was only seven when his family settled in Queensland. Like many of his siblings and in-laws, he worked in a pub. Patrick started his working life as a carrier but by the mid-1870s he was managing the Railway Hotel at Helidon for his sister, Johanna (Hannah) Burns. Late one night in 1874 he chastised a drunken patron for neglecting his wife and child, whereupon the customer rose and stabbed him in the groin. The wound bled profusely; it was deep and close to the femoral artery and kept Patrick in bed for a week. The case was taken to court, where it was revealed that Patrick had had a few drinks himself before the argument broke out. His assailant was found guilty of an assault causing actual bodily harm, and sentenced to 12 months' hard labour.

Patrick recovered, but his struggles were not over. Over the next ten years, business went badly for him. In desperation, he entered into deals to sell horses and land, taking the money but failing to provide the goods as promised. In 1884 the courts declared him insolvent. Patrick died in Helidon in 1905. He had never married.

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<sup>1</sup> (1856, Oct 7). *The North Australian, Ipswich and General Advertiser*, p.3

<sup>2</sup> (1858, March 13). *The Moreton Bay Courier*, p.4

<sup>3</sup> Or 9, according to her obituary

<sup>4</sup> (1919, May 21). *Queensland Times*, p.4