




Speech by

Rosemary Menkens

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Hansard Thursday, 31 May 2012

HOME HILL, CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

 **Mrs MENKENS** (Burdekin—LNP) (2.45 pm): Centenary celebrations are being held within the Burdekin electorate to mark Home Hill's 100 years of settlement. In June 1770, Captain James Cook discovered and named Cape Upstart off the coastline of Home Hill. However, it was not until 1839 that Captain Wickham, with a party of men, rowed about 16 kilometres up the Burdekin River and observed the vast plains destined to become the prime sugarcane fields of Home Hill.

When Queensland became a separate state on 6 June 1859, land was being surveyed and opened up to grazing. In the early 1860s, the Inkerman Downs cattle station was settled. When the Queensland government saw the potential for the sugar industry in the area, the Closer Settlement Act 1906 paved the way for smaller blocks, with the arrangement to open up that land to sugar growing, all dependent on the promise of Pioneer Sugar Mill's John Drysdale to build a new mill on the Burdekin River's southern bank. In December 1911, the first ballot draw of down-river blocks took place at the Ayr Courthouse. Another ballot took place for up-river blocks in June 1912.

The original Inkerman Downs cattle station was converted to sugar cane in 1911 and it was a time of rapid growth for the town of Home Hill, especially after the establishment of the Inkerman Sugar Mill in 1914 when workers and sugarcane farmers were attracted to the area. The sale of blocks for business and housing in the township of Home Hill commenced in 1913, with the Crown Hotel, which is still there, Gunter's store and Mrs MacGregor's lolly shop among the first buildings erected.

The Home Hill centenary celebrations were launched in Home Hill's main street in May last year, with the town's annual harvest festival and mardi gras in November also taking on a centenary theme. Local author and historian Laura Scott's book *John Drysdale's Dream: Home Hill the First Fifty Years* was launched and the town's centenary committee has worked tirelessly on a number of centenary milestones. A centenary gala celebration dinner, attended by Her Excellency Ms Penelope Wensley AC, Governor of Queensland, was held on 10 December 2011, marking the 100th anniversary of the first ballots for the sale of land in the Home Hill district.

A family fun day was also held, with Pioneer Avenue plaque dedications to the district's pioneering families: the Delaney, Ferguson, Ford, Linton, Menkens, Mann, Wallace, Swindley, Wall, Little, Mihailides, Oats, Warren, Marriott, Ross, Marshall, Stockdale and Young families. In the coming weeks, celebrations will continue to mark Home Hill's important 100-year milestones with the Up-River Land Ballot Centenary Celebrations to take place at Osborne State School on Sunday, 24 June.

It is a proud and monumental time for the town of Home Hill, which has evolved from uncleared virgin bushland on the southern side of the Burdekin River, with no permanent surface water supply, no mill to crush any cane that was grown, no railway line continuing on from Bowen and, of course, the ever-unpredictable Burdekin River separating Home Hill from its neighbouring Burdekin town of Ayr. Happy 100th birthday to Home Hill.