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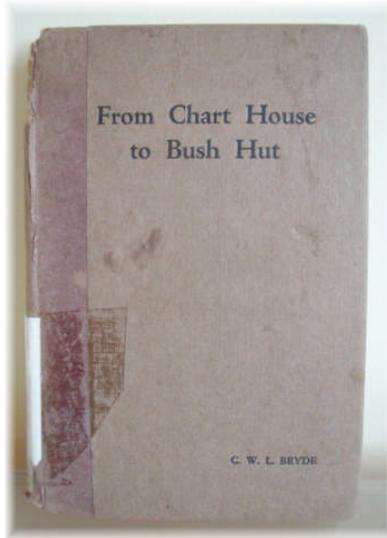
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From Chart House to Bush Hut

Ref. AU4058

ISBN: 978 1 74222 743 6

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From Chart House to Bush Hut

*Being the Record of a Sailor's
7 years in the Queensland Bush*

By
C. W. BRYDE

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Australasian Authors' Agency
Melbourne

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From Chart House to Bush Hut

CHAPTER I

THE NEWCASTLE (N.S.W.)-CHILE COAL RUN.

THE trans-Pacific run is the most god-forsaken, monotonous trade in the world, I think. Our steamer was fairly fast for a tramp, and we were twenty-four days on the Eastbound trip and twenty-seven back to Newcastle—coal one way and ballast back. Not a solitary sail nor point of land to break the dreary monotony of grey sea and greyer sky, clear across to Valparaiso—5000 miles. Following the Great Circle track, you get down to 53 degrees or 54 degrees south latitude. In winter it's cold—blowing a gale pretty well all the time—and your ship's like a half-tide rock. In summer pretty much the same conditions prevail, with fog added. Occasionally there is a day when it's not blowing—then it rains. And there's ice to be looked out for at this time of the year, too, which is an added pleasantry.

Sweeping up on the Great Circle for Valparaiso, you close in gradually with the Chilean

CHAPTER VIII.

I START AS A LANDHOLDER.

I WENT straight to the Land Commissioner in Cairns, and entered his office waving a map. "Look here, sir," says I, "I want 48. How do I get it?"

He laughed. Having got over the shock of my unceremonious entrance, he seemed inclined to enjoy me, setting to work to draw me out, not a hard task in those enthusiastic days. Toil, and long, close acquaintance with Cow, have soured me these times. He asked me what I intended doing with the land, and I at once plunged into a stream of talk which kept his eyes twinkling, and sent his hand to his mouth now and then.

"All right, Mr. Senex," he said at last. "There's nobody in for that block, so you won't have to ballot. I'll wire to Brisbane to-day. Come in again first thing to-morrow."

I paid my £5 deposit, thanked him, and withdrew. Next morning, bright and early, I was back, and shortly afterwards the return wire arrived from Brisbane that 48 was allotted to me. With a mind at ease, I spent the day wandering round town, got a skiff and pulled up

CHAPTER XII.

SCRUB LIFE.

NEXT day I was up with the sun to see what my burn was like, Terry O'Gorman having let my place go when he burnt a fortnight before. I was assured that I had a good burn, but when I saw the black waste, gridironed with logs and strewn with big stumps, I was a bit dismayed. What on earth could I do with it to make a living? It looked pretty hopeless.

I tried to get a fire going round some of the big stumps, but, of course, they wouldn't burn, being too green. When I looked at the place, and thought how many years it would be before it was clear of refuse, it made me feel despairing. Of course, I know now that I had a really good burn, and was lucky, and that in five years I would be able to plough patches, with no other effort than dropping a match here and there, when the logs had rotted a bit; but experience has to be learned. I tried digging a patch, but that was hopeless, the ground being a network of roots, almost impossible to dig among; so I gave that up too. I could have planted corn easy enough; but then, even if the roads had been

CHAPTER XVII.

SOCIAL AMENITIES.

ATHERTON Hospital was a very good country hospital in those days. Now, what with added buildings, increased staff, X-ray plant, and so forth, it can hold its head up with a metropolitan institution. It wants to be good, too, in a rising place like the Tableland, where there are so many accidents in the bush. I was glad of the change, but my heart being in the scrub, I welcomed the day when the doctor said I could go back. I was just in time to see the last trees of my falling go down. The bank paid me, I settled all outstanding accounts, including storekeeper's bill for seven months, and had about £5 left. Couldn't do any heavy work, but got the promise of a wardsman's job at the hospital for the following January, which, being fairly light toil, I thought I could tackle.

Meanwhile I put in the time reaping seed in O'Gorman's, to sow my falling when it was burnt. Len's twenty-first birthday happened, and his hospitable parents gave a big party to celebrate it. Everybody was invited, and came as soon as possible after evening milking, and what with dancing, singing and a splendid supper the even-

CHAPTER XXII.

STRUGGLING ALONG.

I USED to set out at six every morning to go over to my place, where my mate, Jack Redburn, would be awaiting me, and we worked until dark putting up the house. He was a good bushman, and in ten days or so we had a really decent comfortable little house up. Eighteen by twelve it was, with a ten-by-ten kitchen attached, all rough lined and ceiled. It was a lonely time for the wife, and I often felt my way home in the dark to find her crouched alongside the smoky fire, starting at every sound from the scrub.

She and I carried our stuff over to the new place, having to make a long detour through the scrub to avoid scrambling about in Jimmy's overgrown loggy clearing, but the end of March saw us comfortably installed. Mrs. Ellison made us a present of a wee dolly stove she had used at first, so there were no more scorched aprons and smarting eyes for the wife, and the only fly in the ointment was how to make a bob or two. Though so early in the year, people were anticipating a dry spell, as the Rainy Season had not, so far, been up to much, as the grass wasn't as plentiful as it should have been. On that account



We had a really decent comfortable little house.

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 - look for others of the same name
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 - what churches were there and what time were services held?
 - what other activities were there in the community?
 - look for others who had the same occupation or other interests

All of this and more may be available in a seemingly mundane book such as a directory. Learn much of the background of life at the time, even if your ancestor is not listed there.