

The Origins of Caroona . . .

SHEEP STEALING CAMP DOGS LED THE MOOKI RIVER PEOPLE TO NEW HOMES

The good relations between aborigine and white man which existed in the Namoi country in the closing years of last century constitute a shining page in Australia's early history.

In those days the aborigines of the district camped along the Mooki River from Breeza to Pine Ridge.

Three large grazing properties—Breeza (owned by the Clift family), The Mystery (owned by the Leonard family) and Walhallow (owned by an English company), were located along the river route.

It was a time when the animal-loving tribes kept more dogs than they could ever hope to feed. Each family owned six to a dozen dogs.

Sheep began to disappear or were found dead on the grazing properties. The killing of sheep by dogs became such a problem that the station owners cast about for some humane solution.

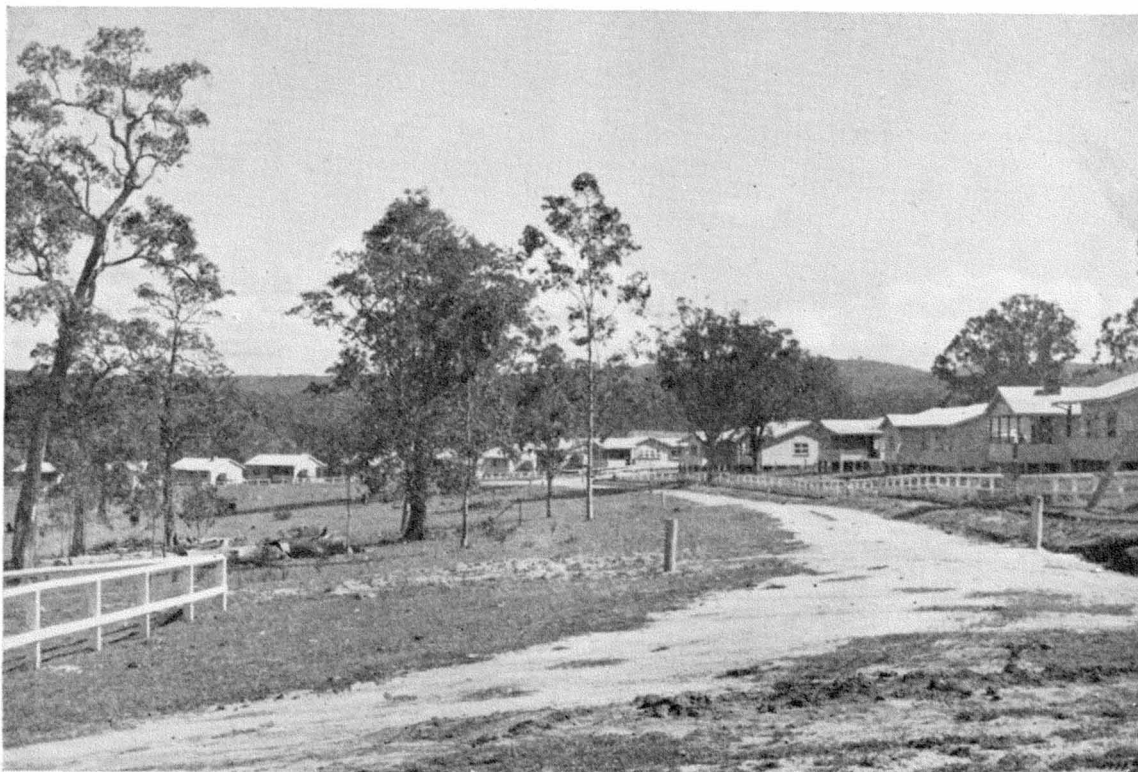
Two of them, Mr. Leonard, of The Mystery, and Mr. Croker, manager of Walhallow, held a conference with the native elders. Without heat the white men pointed out that the sheep losses could not be allowed to continue.

There was no question of taking revenge on the dogs. All the station owners asked was that they be taken away from ranges where the sheep grazed.

They offered to move the entire aborigine community to a trouble-free area of land they had made available, on the Mooki River and which could be used as a permanent settlement.

The aborigine elders saw the wisdom of this suggestion and the tribe moved onto the area set aside for them and they stayed there. This land was located on the bottom section of what is today Caroona Aboriginal Station.

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Typical Post-War Aboriginal Station

—Photo, by courtesy of T. Haggard—Casino