



HERITAGE SERVICES INFORMATION SHEET NUMBER 13

UPPER ROSS SUBURBS

Much of the land now covered by the suburbs of Condon, Rasmussen and Kelso was taken up as selections by pioneering families in the late nineteenth century. The names Condon, Rasmussen and Kelso are the names of those pioneers who established farms where they ran dairy cattle and grew small crops.

Selections are rural holdings taken up under the *Queensland Selection Acts* which came into force after the formation of Queensland in 1859. They were smaller holdings designed to provide closer settlement and to break the monopoly of the squatter who held large areas of land.

The land was surveyed before it was opened for selection. Selectors paid for their land in instalments; they had to reside on the land and undertake improvements to it. It was not an easy life and many selectors had to supplement their income doing other work.

CONDON

Patrick Condon was born in Fermoy, County Cork Ireland in 1831. He married Dora Henes in Cork, County Cork, Ireland before coming to Australia. In 1884

Patrick took up a selection of 241 acres at the foot of Hervey Range however later the family had farmland in what became the suburb of Condon.

On the Hervey Range site Patrick cleared the land, dug a well, built a house and partially fenced the property. He paid an annual rental on the land of £12.2.0. His son William took up an adjacent selection at about the same time.

In April 1892 the bailiff of Crown Lands on Selection inspected Patrick's property to ensure that he had fulfilled the conditions of the selection. The bailiff's report stated that the property was occupied by Patrick, Dora and their granddaughter and that the following improvements had been carried out:



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- There was one mile fencing with 4 wires and split posts of 8 feet apart around cultivation and 5 wires, at £50 per mile.
- There was a 2 roomed slab house, 30x20 on blocks, iron roof and a front verandah with a floor. The rooms were built in stones and cemented, and there was a bark kitchen 10x14 on the ground.
- 1½ acres of land had been cleared and were under cultivation.
- There was a well 22 feet deep, 5 feet slatted and the rest through decomposed granite, (the 5 feet at £1 and the 17 feet at 10/-).
- There was a stockyard 30 panels, round posts 4 rails and cap 1 bail and a bark roofed calf pen.
- 5 acres of land had been grubbed but was not cleared.

As a result of this inspection Patrick Condon made an application to purchase the land in June 1892 for the balance of the 10 year's rent including fees on the deed, totalling £14.17.3.

Mrs Blanche Sheehy remembers that her grandfather William Condon worked as a carrier to supplement the family's income:

“Grandfather he had the team, he used to have twenty two draft horses and they used to take loadings, as they called it from Townsville, they'd do up over Herveys Range and then on through that back country up to Normanton, Bourketown and on cattle stations and small mining places, they carried food and machinery, all across the ranges and to Port Douglas because that was the port”.

Mrs Sheehy and her sister Mrs Holden grew up on the Ross River Road dairy farm operated by their mother and father, Mr and Mrs Vickers. Mrs Vickers was the daughter of William Condon.

KELSO

James Kelso selected land on the Upper Ross in 1879.

James Kelso, senior, first came to Australia during the 1850s gold rushes. He was a blacksmith by trade but had tried his luck without success on a number of goldfields. Eventually he returned to his trade as a





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blacksmith to earn a living. He went back to Scotland where he met and married his wife Mary. In 1874 James and Mary with their one surviving child migrated to Australia and settled in Warwick. About 1876 they moved to Townsville, where James Kelso obtained work at the Cleveland Foundry. In 1879 James and Mary Kelso and their children took up a selection on the upper Ross River where they ran cattle. The property became known as *Laudham Park*. James used his skill as a blacksmith to repair a broken wagon and then he began carrying goods to many of the mining centres as a way of earning extra money during the dry seasons. The women of the family established a dairy.

His son, James Kelso, junior, worked as spare boy on his father's carrying teams, which transported freight to Georgetown, Gilberton and other places. They carried the first cyanide treatment plant from Charters Towers to the Cumberland,

situated beyond Georgetown. They also transported the first load of timber to Richmond for the construction of Goldring and Tolano's Store. When James Kelso, junior, was 21 years old his father died. James, junior, continued in the carrying business but later gave it up to concentrate on pastoralism. In 1907 he married William Ireland's daughter Annie and in 1911 they went to live at the *Laudham Park* property on the Upper Ross. During World War I, James Kelso and William Ireland went into partnership in a cattle property, *Granite Hills*.



The Kelso family continued to operate *Laudham Park* until it was resumed for Ross River Dam in the early 1970s.

RASMUSSEN

Jorgen Rasmussen selected land on the Upper Ross in 1875 and 1878. The Rasmussens were Danish settlers who





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developed a dairy farm on the banks of the Ross River.

The property was called *Allambie*. It was a favourite Sunday drive for people from the town who were able to refresh themselves with afternoon tea at the “Danish Dairy”.

These are just three of the families who held land on the Upper Ross. There were many more and their names are reflected in local street names and sites.

Acknowledgements:

- Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages Queensland
- Queensland State Archives
- Thuringowa Library Services Oral History Collection
- Thuringowa Library Heritage Services

