

## Rockhampton Downs

Rockhampton Downs NT was originally formed by Mr **W. G. Hutchins** of Rockhampton, Queensland in 1919 and comprised of land taken up by him and blocks adjoining purchased from the estate of the late Mr Frank Laver. The holding consisted of approximately 3000 square miles of good pastoral country and a large amount of money was spent on improvement material but did not reach the station owing to the big drop in cattle values, the property was then sold. <sup>i</sup>

In 1922, **W. H. Young**, together with **Gilbert, Henry** and **Rudolf Schmidt** acquired Rockhampton Downs Station and formed a company known as the Rockhampton Downs Pastoral Co. Ltd.

**George Albert Easey** was given the role of manager on the property and also became a shareholder in 1923.

Three bores were put down, being named number 1, 2 and 3. (Years later when a survey was done to fence the station boundaries, number 1 bore ended up on Alroy Downs and number 2 bore on Brunette Downs.) Number 3 bore had a good supply of very good water, where a temporary camp was made. Number 4, 5, 6 and 7 bores were then drilled, number 1 and 6 bores were pump-jack steam driven bores (see **Avon Downs** for further information regarding these steam engines) all others were equipped with Comet windmills. Number 5 bore was the chosen spot to build the homestead, in which the Easey family moved into in 1928. By 1956 there were some 26 bores on the station.

Over the years many hundreds of miles of fencing was erected to complete the station boundaries and paddocks for horses and cattle.

As bores were put down on Rockhampton Downs a few thousand short horn breeding cows were purchased from Riversley Station in Queensland's gulf country and shorthorn bulls from Warrah shorthorn stud west of Dalby Queensland, George Easey was instrumental in establishing shorthorn stud to breed herd bulls. A Clydesdale stallion from New Zealand was purchased, named "Highland Discovery" to breed draught horses for pulling wagons, ploughs and scoops to build turkey nest dams (circular with high walls) at the bores, also breeding with lighter mares for pack and bronco horses.

George Easey on horseback explored the countryside to further develop the property. One such trip was with his first employee, an aboriginal boy named Mickey, it was west across to **Phillips Creek** then following the Overland Telegraph line down to the Tennant Creek Telegraph Station (no township then) and from there 40 miles north east to an aboriginal well (since silted up) to water the horses, then continuing on to Rockhampton Downs homestead.

In 1929 George Easey walked a mob of 500 bullocks to Alice Springs and received only 30 shillings a head for them on delivery.

Some supplies from Alice Springs railhead were carted by camel to Rockhampton Downs, but usually supplies came from the port of Burketown (Gulf of Carpentaria) once a year by wagons.

1933 - Workers were 4 aboriginals and 3 white men

When gold was discovered in the Tennant Creek area, George, on behalf of the Company put in a road from Rockhampton Downs to Phillips Creek. Road construction was done by dragging a fire plough behind a 10 ton wagon being pulled by 20 draft horses, 400 gallons of water in ship tanks being carried on the wagon to water the horses. The tanks were filled by buckets then. During the gold rush that followed, the road was very busy and was the main road from Camooweal via **Avon Downs, Rankin store, Alexandrina Downs, Alroy Downs**, Rockhampton Downs to Tennant Creek until the **Barkly Highway** was built during the Second World War.

Rockhampton Downs, supplied beef to the town. A paddock was built at Phillips Creek and cattle were walked from the station. The company also opened a butcher's shop in Tennant Creek under the management of "**Darkie**" **Allen**.

Mail - Alroy Downs station was the nearest neighbour some 78 miles away, which was serviced by a 6 week packhorse delivery which traveled from Camooweal to Borroloola. Rockhampton Downs mail was collected every six weeks weather permitting. In about 1936, **Albert Slight** started a mail run using a truck from Mount Isa to Tennant Creek, using the original road. (The other road connecting Queensland went further north through **Brunette Downs, Anthony's Lagoon** to **Powell Creek** near **Newcastle Waters**.)

In 1948 Rockhampton Downs was bought by the Australian Agricultural Company, George Easey stayed on as manager until 1956, stock on the property being 14,000 shorthorn breeders with Santa Gerdrudis bulls being introduced into the herd.

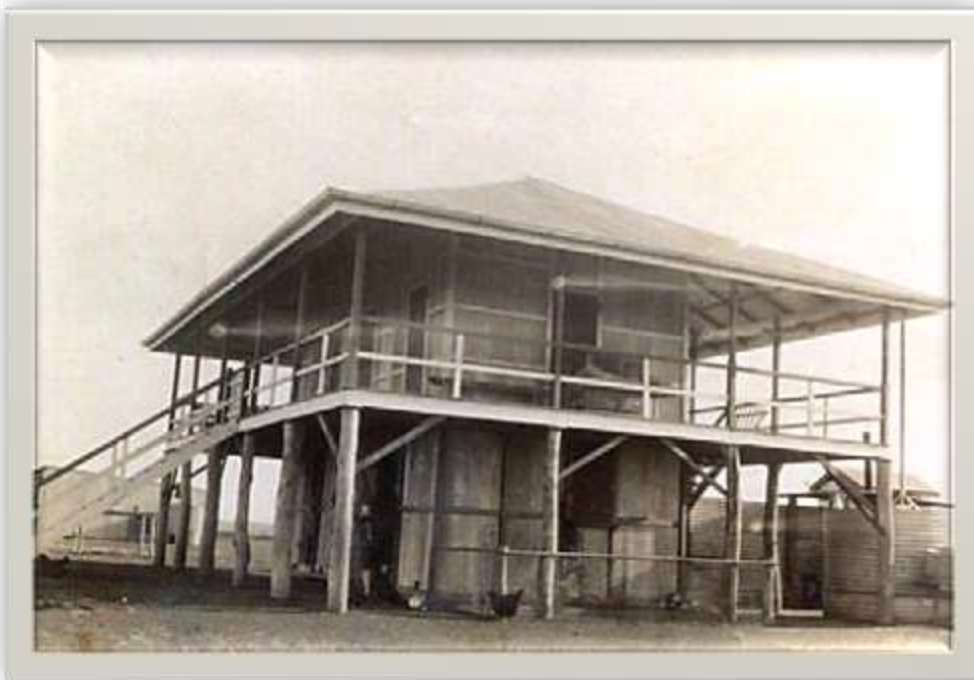
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<sup>ii</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> January 1926 - Morning Bulletin ( Rockhampton Qld : 1878 – 1954)

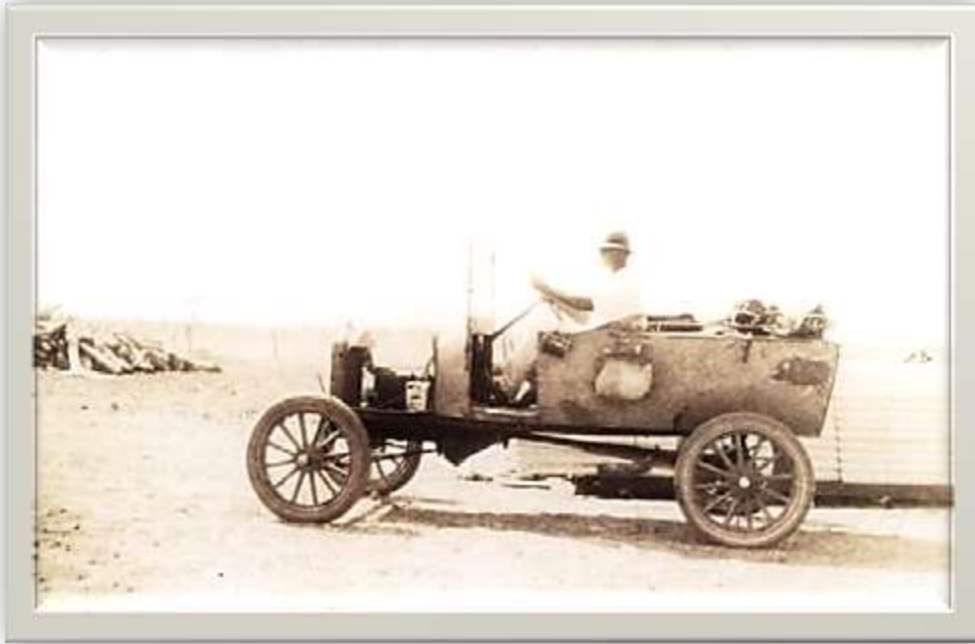
<sup>ii</sup> extract and photos from written recollection of George Albert Easey's son



1925 ... Newly wed Mrs Doris Easey in her first home - It was a tent bough shed and lean-to, constructed where the steam engine was housed at the Number 1 bore.  
(13<sup>th</sup> June 1925 Marriage Doris Edith, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs Alfred Murry of Gatton Qld to George Albert Easey of Rockhampton Downs NT.)



The original homestead at Rockhampton Downs built in 1928



George Easey in his 1926 Chevrolet on Rockhampton Downs Station



Picking dates at the homestead (L to R) Mundy, Chuckler, Andy and Andy's brother



Bronco Branding Rockhampton Downs (L to R) Aussie with back to the camera, Tommie and John



In 1949 ... 10 inches of rain fell overnight at Rockhampton Downs station.

Taken from the turkey nest dam looking west to the old stockyards



After rain taken from the homestead looking north west out across the plain (Ray Easey and his dog)



After rain taken from old stockyards looking east towards homestead



Billie Grant with a large King Brown snake



Number 5 bore.



Camp at number 16 bore. Tommie and Chunama were the water pumpers there at the time.



Paddy Noonan with a large goanna he bought home for the mob to eat





1950 (L to R) Mr George Easey Manager, Mr Ray M Easey (son) Mrs Doris Easey (wife) Governor General Sir William McKell: in front Dorothy Easey and a couple of dogs.



(L to R) Paddy and John painted up for a corroboree