

Information Sheet No. 12



City of
Greater Geraldton
Regional Library



Heritage Services

Geraldton Regional Library

MAITLAND BROWN – “Stopping the Sand Dunes”

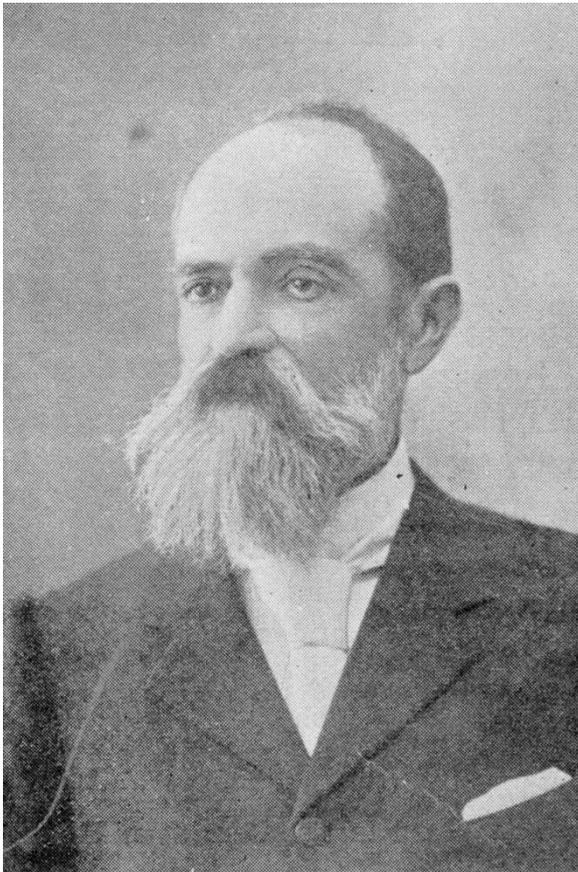
1843, Jul 17	- Born in Grassdale, York, WA.
1858	- Moved to Glengarry.
1861	- Explored the North West with FT Gregory.
1863	- Exported first shipment of horses from Geraldton to India.
1865	- Recovered the bodies of Panter, Goldwyer and Harding.
1866	- Appointed Stipendiary Magistrate for the Victoria District.
1869	- Government Resident at Geraldton.
1874-1883	- MLC for Geraldton.
1875, Feb 16	- Married Amy Frances Howard.
1877	- Sold Glengarry.
1886-1904	- Government Resident for Geraldton.
1887, Jun 21	- Officially opened the Geraldton-Walkaway railway line.
1905, May 9	- Died in Perth, WA.

The fourth son of Thomas and Eliza Brown, Maitland was born on their property at York and educated at home. At the age of fifteen he was apprenticed to his brother Kenneth at Glengarry for three years, to learn about the sheep industry. On the completion of his contract Brown accompanied Gregory on his expedition to the North West, where he gained a reputation as a skilled bushman. On his return he helped establish Newmarracarra, where horses were bred for export to India and Mauritius. In December 1863 Maitland shipped the first load of horses from Geraldton. The trade flourished until 1884.

In 1865, the young Brown eagerly volunteered to Governor Hampton to lead a party of men north in search of missing explorers Panter, Goldwyer and Harding. On bringing their bodies back to Perth he was acclaimed a hero, and as a reward appointed Stipendiary Magistrate of the Victoria District in 1866. In 1867 he became Resident Magistrate of the Greenough District. He was only 23, and was known amongst his squatter friends as the ‘boy magistrate’.

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Maitland Brown. Photograph from *Twentieth Century Impressions of WA*.

Whilst serving his first term as Government Resident at Geraldton in 1869 the farmers on the Greenough faced destitution through the destruction of their wheat crops by rust. Brown came up with a scheme that would solve two problems at once. Geraldton was continually threatened with being buried by the drifting sand dunes. The Greenough farmers needed to earn money. Brown proposed to the Government that these men be employed by the Government to stop the sand drift. By careful observation Brown had noticed that the most successful method was to cover the sand with cut brush and vegetation to hold the drift and allow for a natural regrowth. That the project went ahead, was solely due to Brown's conviction and enthusiasm. When Governor Weld visited Geraldton in

1873 he was pleased to observe that the efforts employed in bushing the sand dunes had been successful.

Brown married Amy Frances, the daughter of Reverend Howard, in St George's Cathedral, Perth, and raised a family of two sons and four daughters.

Maitland Brown died in 1905 and was buried at Karrakatta. His remains were later removed to the East Perth Cemetery and buried with fellow explorers Harding and Panter. His 1865 expedition to recover their bodies is commemorated by a monument on the Fremantle Esplanade. It is probably more appropriate that in Geraldton one of those once-bare patches of sand has been made into an attractive park and named in his honour.

References

Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 26.

Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton 6531) for \$27.50 (plus \$6.50 postage and handling).

