

# Taunts turned men to

By "Sassafras"

For bloodthirsty deeds, the records of the Bree-long Blacks in the year 1900 have gone down in history as amongst the most callous that ever found a place in the criminal annals of New South Wales.

Yet many had much sympathy for Jimmy Governor, feeling that he had been driven to a mental breakdown by the jibes of biggoted whites who made a "hell on earth" for Jimmy because he had married a white girl.

Jimmy was known as an intelligent and hard-working man, but on the night of 20th July 1900, when he and his mate Jacky Underwood went to the Mawbey home- stead at Bree-long and were taunted by mem- bers of that family and a visitor, something snapped and five people were slaughtered with nulla nulla and toma- hawk.

Jacky Underwood was soon captured but Jimmy collected his brother Joe and the two planned to become bushrangers but instead wrought further vengeance on others who, Jimmy believed, had a grudge against him.

Four more were hack- ed or shot to death.

During their rampage over a period of three months, the tally was: killed Mrs. Mawbey (44), Helena Kerz (21), Grace Mawbey (16), Percy Mawbey (14), Hilda Mawbey (11), Alex Mc- Kay (70), Mrs. O'Brien (30), her son James O'- Brien (15 months), Kier- nan Fitzpatrick (70); grievously injured but survived Elsie Clarke (18), Mrs. McKay (60), Mrs. Bennett (30).

The list suggests the brothers made war against women, children and old men.

They also wounded a police officer.

Of special local inter- est was that the broth- ers came into our dis- trict, their activities here

eventually leading to the end of the Governors reign of terror.

In 1963, the writer on several occasions listened to that great teller of old time stories, Paddy Doyle, of Rollands Plains.

Paddy was then 86 and at that time the only per- son alive, he believed, in this district who actually took part in the man- hunt for the Bree-long Blacks.

When it got too hot in their own area, Paddy said, they headed for the coast and from just above Gloucester headed north. They were seen on the Upper Manning and then crossed to the Hastings.

Jimmy's wife had come from the Macleay and it was believed the brothers felt they would find shel- ter in that area.

In those days many cit- izens were sworn in as "special constables," and Paddy was one of them and he and his mate, Athol Young, were or- dered to take guard at the furthest home up

This bullet is in the possession of Clyde Green, of Wauchope. Clyde claims that when Governor was captured he asked Thomas Green (Clyde's father) for the bullet, placed it in his mouth and bit it with the idea of "blowing himself up." Clyde says the bullet bears Jimmy Governor's teeth marks.

Bril Brill then owned by the Harrower family (lat- er by W. Warlters).

Arriving on the Hast- ings the Governors raid- ed Doyle's Station — on the Ellenborough River, where Paddy's father had once lived while rearing cattle and shooting wild bulls.

Alec Cooper occupied the Station and one morning he was working on the grindstone when he looked up and saw Jimmy close to him with his rifle ready to fire.

Jimmy kept Cooper covered while Joe went into the kitchen and took all the flour he could carry along with what- ever cooked food was in the house.

By then, they had been declared outlaws with a thousand pounds on each man's head, dead or alive.

They reached the Hast- ings but with police or a "special constable" in nearly every home, their chances of reaching the Macleay began to dim- inish.

Const. Harris and a black tracker were sent to a hut known as "Do- herty's Hut"; however, according to Paddy, Harris went grudgingly as he considered it was a waste of time and he took little interest in the job — this was his great- est mistake.

He was sitting inside reading an old news-

paper, his tracker beside him on the floor. The tracker looked up to see Jimmy Governor aiming his rifle through a crack in the wall with a bead on Harris's head.

The tracker called "lookout!" and Harris jumped up just as the outlaw fired, the bullet passing through Har- ris's thigh.

Harris was bleeding a lot but staggered outside and exchanged shots with the Governors but no further hits were re- corded.

"Harris missed the chance of his life," Pad- dy said, "for had he been keenly on the watch he could have got either one of them for a cer- tainty, or perhaps both."

The Governors crossed the Hastings, were seen by Norm Noakes, and on to the Forbes where they crept to the Coombes (Paddy thought it was Charlie Coombes) prop- erty where a lad was cutting wood.

"They told the boy, Billy, to get them some tucker or they would do for him for sure," Paddy

narrated but when the boy did not return quick- ly they became suspic- ious that the house was guarded and cleared out further up the Forbes.

"They got to Ted Coombes property at Cowaral where their bit- ter enemy, Herbert By- ers, and his mate Woods were waiting.

"It was said that By- ers had been engaged to one of the gang's vic- tims, Helena Kerz, and had been on their trail ever since the Bree-long massacre.

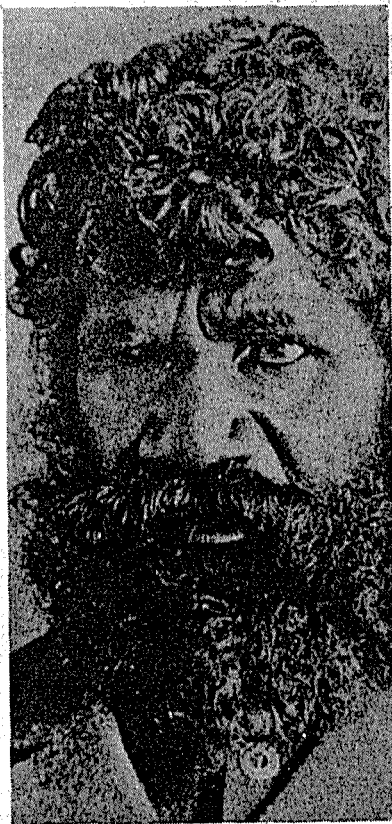
"On a Sunday morn- ing, Byers was on watch and saw the two men out on the run about 300 yards away, they sat down and for a while watched the place, and, apparently satisfied, be- gan to move towards the house.

"As they got closer Byers, a crack shot, said to Woods 'I can get Jim- my from here,' but Woods said 'No, lets them get a bit closer and we'll get both of them.'"

Paddy said that a hen hopped onto a dish that was on the washing bench outside



Jimmy Governor turned killer when he was told Mrs. Mawbey had degraded his wife.



Joe Governor, died in his sleep?



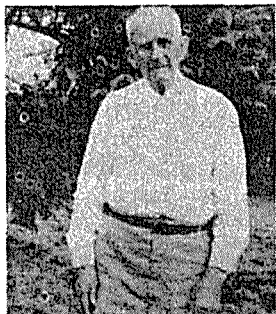
Richard Harris survived after being shot by Jimmy Governor in the Upper Hastings. The slug taken from Harris's leg was later attached to his watch chain.



Dozens of police horses were tethered around the Mawbey house at Bree-long on the day following the first killings. It was the headquarters of a wide- spread manhunt that spread to the Hastings three months later.



# murder!



Thomas Green — he called to Jimmy Governor to surrender at Bobin on October 27, 1900.

the house. The dish fell to the ground and the noise startled the Governors and they started to make off.

Byers ran towards them and when Jimmy's face momentarily appeared from behind a tree, Byers loosed off a shot that ripped through Jimmy's mouth, tearing out several of his teeth and coming out his cheek.

Jimmy was knocked down and Joe stood over him, firing, until Jimmy could get up and run.

The brothers became separated and it was thought that Joe believed Jimmy had drowned while crossing the Hastings.

Knowing their plan to reach the Macleay was hopeless, Joe made off towards the tablelands he knew so well; while Jimmy headed south.

Police and trackers were soon on the scene and came across a water-hole where Jimmy had washed the blood off his face, and one of his teeth was found in the water-hole.

Twelve days later, Jimmy had reached the Upper Manning and stole food from John Wallace, then set up a hideaway in Bobin Creek, 16 miles north of Wingham. When he found his food gone, Wallace alerted neighbours and the group of eight armed settlers went a hunting.

They were Alex Cameron (Hastings), John William McPherson (Bobin), John Wallace (Bobin), Thomas Moore sen., Thomas Moore jun., and Thomas Samuel Green.

Wallace had found the outlaw's camp and the party lay in wait watching the camp until daylight on the morning of 27th October 1900.

When Jimmy moved, Thomas Green — father of Clyde Green, Wauchope — called out to the outlaw to surrender, but he immediately made off, darting over a bank.

The party opened fire and Governor was struck about the legs by shot-gun pellets.

He dropped his rifle and the party rushed in and captured him.

A waggonette was sent from Wingham and Jimmy, badly wounded, was taken to Wingham where his wounds were dressed by Dr. W. A. Kelly.

Meanwhile, Joe Governor had almost reached Singleton where he was shot under controversial circumstances by John Wilkinson.

Paddy Doyle said that Constable T. A. Bowen, then stationed at Port Macquarie, had previously been at Cassilis where Jimmy Governor was his Police Tracker.



Schoolteacher Helena Kerz and her fiancée Herbert Byers who tracked the Governors to the Hastings.

Const. Bowen was instructed to go to Singleton to assist in identification and when he returned he told Paddy it was Joe alright.

Wilkinson had claimed he shot Joe on the run, but Paddy said that the Constable said there was no doubt in his mind that Joe had been shot while asleep.

"Sergeant Crawley was in charge of Port Police," Paddy said, "and he expressed sorrow for Jimmy, saying he had been pushed into outlawry by the taunts of people against Jimmy's white wife."

"The Sergeant also said that Jimmy Governor was a gentleman compared to the man Byers who had tracked him down."

Paddy recalled that Jimmy was taken by the steamship "Electra" from Taree to Sydney, there he was tried, found guilty and went to the gallows in Darlinghurst Gaol on January 18 1901.

Four days previously Jacky Underwood had met a similar fate at Dubbo.



Mrs. Ethel Governor, Jimmy's wife. She claimed she had prayed to the Lord to take her away from the cruel tongue who condemned her for "marrying a blackfellow." In actual fact, Jimmy's father was a white man. Joe was a full-blood aboriginal.

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