

C.O. (Charles Overend) Garbutt Archive

Notes prepared by Geoff Wharton, great-grandson of C.O. and L.E. Garbutt, 2020.



Charles Overend Garbutt. Digital scan of the photograph published in volume 3 of the History of Queensland.

Charles Overend Garbutt was born to Thomas Garbutt and Jane Garbutt (née Overend) on 14 April 1850 at Norton, Durham, England. He left Yorkshire for Australia at the age of thirteen with his widowed mother and brothers, arriving in Brisbane on the vessel “Cairngorm” on 2 July 1863. Mrs Garbutt reputedly brought about £50,000 into Australia and invested in land in south-east Queensland. Her other sons were John Edward Garbutt (died Sydney, 1894) and Arthur Henry Garbutt (died Brisbane, 1873). Jane remarried in Brisbane to a surgeon, Dr Thomas Burnet Temple, on 17 December 1864 and she died in Brisbane on 24 November 1875.

During a visit to England in 1872, Charles married Lucy Elizabeth Watson and they returned to Australia. Lucy (born Poulton, Morecambe Bay, Lancashire, 10 October 1852) was the daughter of John Watson M.I.C.E. and Elizabeth Watson. During the 1870s, Lucy and Charles lived at Mount Cotton and from 1876 at Cryna station in the Beaudesert district.



Lucy Elizabeth Garbutt, c. 1924. Photo by the Federal Studio, Townsville. Digital scan courtesy of the Herberton Mining Museum. An original enlargement of this portrait is held in the North Queensland Collection.

In 1878, Charles bought Woodleigh Station on the Herbert River watershed (near the present towns of Mount Garnet and Ravenshoe), which he sold in 1883, then took up adjoining country which he named Tirrabella. In addition to cattle grazing, Charles was a keen prospector for minerals and along with Anthony Linedale and others, he prospected the Chillagoe copper deposits for the mining investor, John Moffat, in 1888. Charles and a man named Skardon discovered gold at Balcooma near the Dry River in 1895 and the Balcooma Goldfield was declared on 27 January 1897. In the early 1900s, Charles suffered severe stock losses due to pleuropneumonia and cattle tick. Charles died at Cassowary Creek on the Newellton road on 6 September 1905 and was buried in the Church of England section of the Herberton Cemetery. In 2017, a permanent monument was erected in memory of Charles and Lucy at his grave by five of his great-grandsons..

Charles was survived by his wife, Lucy, who had raised their nine children (Olive Gwendoline; Charles Cecil Arthur; John Overend, known as Jack; Lucy Maud; Herbert Radcliffe; Ernest Temple; Kate Winifred; Mary Geraldine; and Dorothy Evelyn). A further three girls and one boy died in infancy.. Lucy passed away at Kengoon station near Kalbar on 1 January 1948 and was cremated at the Mount Thompson Crematorium in Brisbane. Her ashes were placed in Columbarium 5, Section 7 at Mount Thompson Memorial Gardens.

In 1907, three of Charles and Lucy's sons: Arthur, Jack and Ernest, moved to Townsville and established a butchery business (Garbutt Brothers) in Flinders Street. Garbutt Siding on the Townsville – Ingham railway was named for the Garbutt Brothers' holding paddocks situated



nearby on the southern side of the line. When the Commonwealth Government acquired nearby land for an air field in 1939, the new air base derived its name from Garbutt siding and the suburb of Garbutt in Townsville was also named after the family, probably due to its proximity to the aerodrome..

Charles's handwritten diaries for 1897, 1899 and 1903 tell of his daily life and his gold mining ventures. The diary for 1897 includes two accounts of General Meetings of Balcooma Shareholders and Directors' Reports. The archive includes the original diaries and photocopies of them.

See the Grant Family Archive at 17L-17R, 18L, 79L, Microfilm FX 94.

Archive Location: 3R

Detailed Listing

COG/D/1 Diary 1897

COG/D/2 Diary 1899

COG/D/3 Diary 1903

COG/XD/1 Xerox of diary of 1897

COG/XD/2 Xerox of diary of 1899

COG/XD/3 Xerox of diary of 1903