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## EARLY SETTLEMENT OF HUGHENDEN AND DISTRICT

### Ernest Henry

All sources agree that Ernest Henry should be given credit for being the pioneer of Hughenden. He was the first to select a pastoral holding here. The Town takes its name from his head station; his claims for the pastoral leases of Hughenden and other runs were the first to be entered in the Commissioner for Crown Land's register. Hughenden was the name of the Tudor manor house of his grandfather in Buckinghamshire, England and known to fame in later times as the residence of Benjamin Disraeli, the Earl of Beaconsfield – formerly Prime Minister of Great Britain.

Henry was born in May 1837 and served as a cadet in the Royal mail ship "Victoria" visiting Australia in 1853. He served in the Crimean War and in 1857 he came to Australia with money given to him by his father. Henry took up "Baroondah" Station stocked with sheep and cattle. In 1863 Henry met up with his cousin, Robert Gray. Gray travelled with Henry to the Burdekin and purchased sheep that later became the founders of the flock of "Hughenden" Station. In 1863 Henry set out for the Flinders River Country. He drove his cattle across sodden plains and descended into "Jardine Valley". The tract of country that he occupied there he named "Hughenden" Station. Henry took up the following runs on the Flinders River – Canterbury, Hughenden, Sussex and Somerset – thus the birth of the sheep and cattle industry in Hughenden. Some thirteen years later Surveyor Bishop laid out the township of Hughenden. The main street of the township was named after John Brodie, one of the pioneering brothers from the Murrurundi district (New South Wales). By 1878, Hughenden has a Police Court and two years later the Queensland National Bank opened its premises. In 1881 the town had a Post office and a soft-drink factory – by then the town was starting to attract commercial men of marked ability.

### Robert Gray

Robert Gray, who like, many others who came to settle the Flinders River Country was a retired army officer. Gray served through the Indian Mutiny and he retained his military habits and dress right throughout his life. Gray had been included into the North Queensland pastoral life by his cousin; Henry and his wife, Lottie later joined him.

Ernest Henry sold his lease to Hughenden Station in 1965 for 4,999 Pounds to his cousin Robert Gray. Gray stocked Hughenden Station with 3,000 sheep. Mrs Gray was the first pioneer white woman on the Flinders.. The advent of Hughenden did not take place until 1876. In that year, Robert Gray allowed a friend by the name of William Mark to build a hotel on his land to cater for the travellers passing through to the Cloncurry mining area.

By the following year, a store, a blacksmith and a butcher shop joined the hotel. After 1887, Hughenden began to grow again, as it became the railhead. It was around this time that a hotel was built and named the Great Western - the name still in use in Hughenden.

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## William Landsborough

William Landsborough was one of the great Australian explorers. He was born in Ayrshire, Scotland and migrated to New South Wales in his youth. He explored many areas of Queensland.

He discovered Torrens Creek, Towerhill Creek, Landsborough Creek and other headwaters of the Thomson, the river they followed down to the site of Longreach in August 1861. He was in charge of the expedition to search for Burke and Wills, starting at the Gulf of Carpentaria and working southward. On this trip he discovered the Gregory River, the Herbert River and the Barkly Tableland. Landsborough's report on the return journey via the Flinders River led to pastoral occupation of the region. He later became a Member of Parliament for one session. In 1865 he became the Government Resident for the district of Burke and the southern end of the Gulf of Carpentaria. During this time there he investigated much of the Diamantina River. He was rewarded for his services as an explorer by the Queensland Government and purchased a pastoral property at Caloundra where he died in 1886. The township of Landsborough, 80 kilometres north of Brisbane commemorates him.

## Frederick Walker

Frederick Walker was one of the nation's most interesting characters. He was born in Devon, England in 1820. On his arrival in Australia in 1844 he became superintendent on W.C. Wentworth's property, Tala Station on the Murrumbidgee. A man of considerable presence, he commanded the respect of black and white.

Because of his views on racial harmony, he was commissioned to form a Native Police Force. He recruited and trained Aboriginals and the force was widely acclaimed in 1848 – 1849. Walker lost his position in the force and in 1852 he began searching for new pastoral lands. He was a skilled bushman and was commissioned in 1861 to search for Burke and Wills. He started westward from Rockhampton and it was this trip that opened up a considerable area of good country in Northern Queensland. In 1866 Walker was commissioned to find a route for a telegraph line from Cardwell to the Gulf. He arrived at the Gulf ill, and on the return journey he died at Floraville on the Leichhardt River and was buried there. Landsborough named Mt Walker in Hughenden in his honour.