

Romantic Pioneering in the Tropics: Archibald Meston's Home Life in Cairns, 1882-1888

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Archibald Meston invites attention as a leading contributor to the Aboriginal Protection Act of 1897, the law which regulated Queensland's indigenous people into the 1970s. As Southern Protector from 1897 to 1903 he helped to establish the system of reserves provided for by the Act. Meston had earlier worked as a sugar boiler and farm manager in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland.^[1] From 1878 to 1883 he represented Rosewood in a brief tumultuous career in State Parliament. Following editorial appointments with the *Ipswich Observer*, the *Toowoomba Chronicle* and the *Townsville Herald*, he came to Cairns early in 1882 as editor of the *Cairns Chronicle*. He was aged thirty-one and the father of a growing family. This was the beginning of a six-year tropical interlude in which he sought to further his career through regional politics and investments in the sugar industry, then undergoing its major expansion in the north. Meston's public life in Cairns began promisingly when he led the lobbying to secure the rail connection to the Tableland for the Barron Valley route and was elected Chairman of the Divisional Board. His reputation languished soon afterwards, but revived again in the two years preceding his departure.^[2] However local rivalries and the community's feeling that he was unreliable finally thwarted his hopes of returning to Parliament.

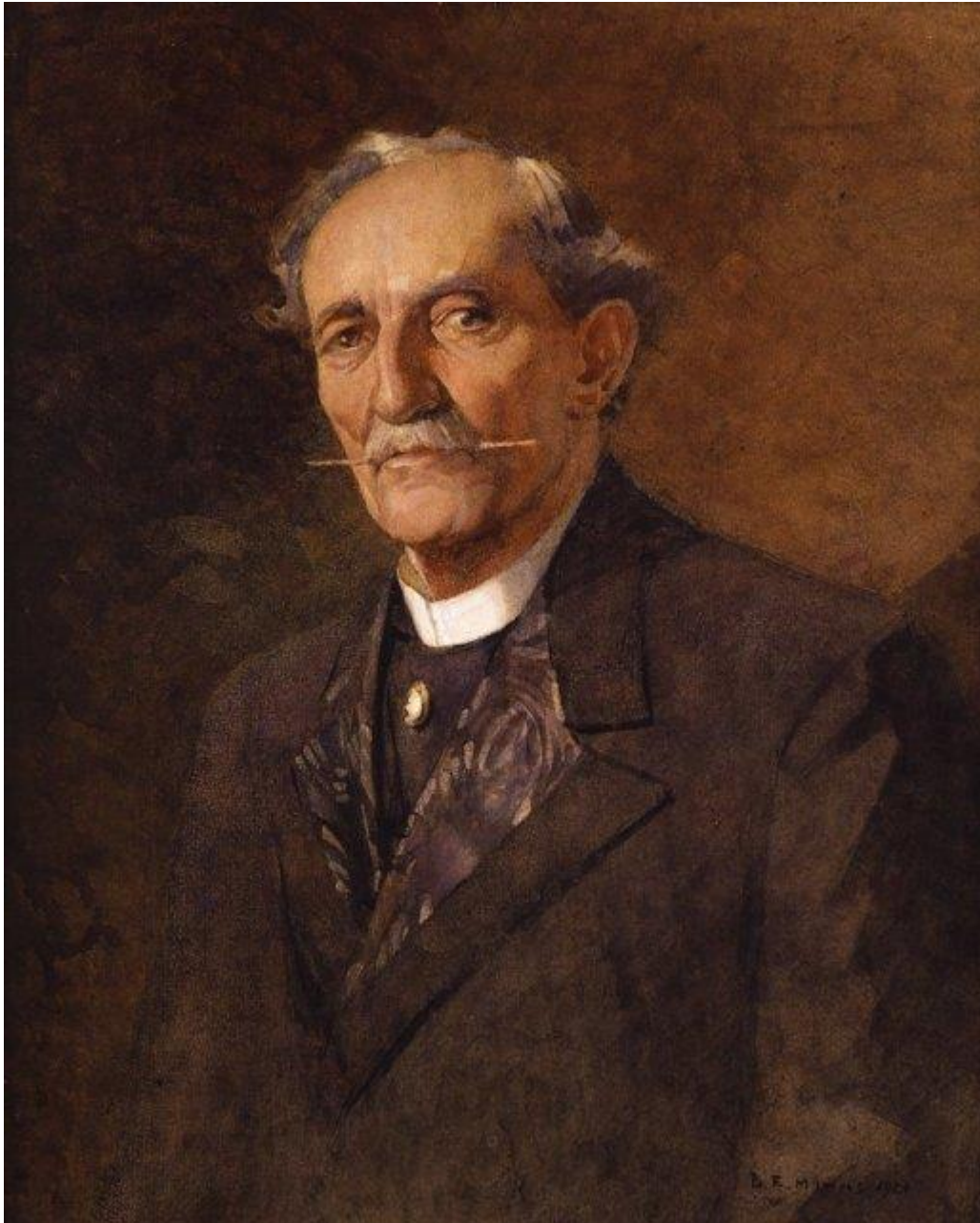
Ambitious, self-taught in ancient history, Romantic poetry and Thomas Carlyle, and exuberantly aware that he possessed exceptional athletic abilities and verbal inventiveness, Meston had early learned the political usefulness of self-promotion. References to his prowess in boxing, throwing the hammer, running and other sports harmonised with what was to become a priority in the new nation.^[3] Above all, in a frontier society obsessed with shooting, when men working outdoors habitually carried guns for hunting and protection, Meston courted acclaim for his marksmanship and knowledge of the bush.^[4] His preferred style of dress from youth to old age drew on a romantic military model of masculinity which also implied superior social status. Published some ten years after his death, a commentary by a correspondent to the *Sydney Bulletin* on B.E. Minns' portrait of Meston aged seventy confirms the success of his image-making strategies:

It is a good portrait, though it is impossible to do justice to Meston's tall, gallant, tight-buttoned figure, his neatly oiled cavalierish locks, his uncompromising waxed moustache, his tower of a hat set jauntily on a lion's head, and his inevitable cravat, like a silk mattress, with its imposing stick pin, in any medium except human memory. He was the epitome of his generation, in which everyone with social aspirations tried to look as much like a cavalry officer as possible, to be speared at least once, and to know a few tags from Horace. No job in the pioneering line ever daunted Archie, and he had an abounding faith in Australia's future. 'Blackfellows' country!' he once shouted as he shook his gold-knobbed cane at a libellous Briton. 'Dammit, we'll be another Rome and come over and steal your Sabine women in a century or two!' (By 'El V.' *Bulletin* 7 August 1935: 45)



Archibald Meston in 1890.

(Courtesy Cairns Historical Society)



B. E. Minns Australia 1864 1937 *Archibald Meston* 1921

Watercolour and gouache over pencil on cardboard 50.8 x 40.8 cm

Gift of the Meston family and public subscribers through Adolph W. Albers and Chas. H. Gough 1936

Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

In the Far North in the 1880s Meston lived with his wife and children at Kamerunga, on a selection which he named 'Cambanora,' from Aboriginal words meaning 'cassowary's nest.'^[5] He frequently journeyed into the bush on shooting and specimen-collecting expeditions. These were the basis of the stories, sketches, articles and poems, many

concerning Aborigines, which he contributed to southern newspapers.^[6] However, Meston's life at home figured prominently in his local efforts at self-promotion. On the basis of notions of the hero as natural ruler imbibed from Carlyle (Thorpe 48'50), he embellished his image with his sporting abilities, and with his status as pater familias and property-owner. Surviving accounts of 'Cambanora' offer insights into the lives of settlers in early Cairns. They also demonstrate how the class codes of a robust Victorian romanticism, transplanted in Meston's case from his native Scotland, continued to fashion settlers' understanding of themselves in their new tropical environment.

'Cambanora' was part of a 2000-acre selection, later the Freshwater Creek Estate, which Meston took up on behalf of the Brinsmead Sugar Company.^[7] When the land proved unviable as a plantation, the venturers converted it to beef cattle production, market-gardening and dairying (Jones 155, 361). Meston first lived at 'Cambanora' with the 'tall Scot,' John Nairne, later manager of the Estate, whom he commissioned to build his house. He often shot Barron-River crocodiles from the homestead verandah, where he also depicts himself, under the persona of Romantic poet, admiring the fury of thunderstorms and the river in flood. He relates in comic-grotesque mode that he once dynamited Chinese neighbours who had come to complain because he had accidentally shot their pet pig.^[8] A visitor's account provides further insights into the aspirations informing Meston's life at home:

A short stoppage was made at Mr. A. Meston's estate, Cambanora. The house is delightfully situated on the south side of the river, of which it commands a magnificent view, the wide deep current sweeping within a few yards of the verandah. All the country in the immediate vicinity of the house is cleared; but at the back the jungle extends for miles. To the north-west are the dark ranges which the railway is to scale with so much difficulty, and ahead the great valley of the Barron pent up between magnificent heights. Mr Cran pointed out the spot where he had seen on a former visit a tremendous alligator meet its death by a bullet from Mr Meston's rifle. From the verandah to where the alligator was floating in the stream, unconscious of Mr Meston's skill with his favourite Swinburn, is fully five hundred yards, and at that distance two bullets out of three fired went through the creature's body.

Cambanora consists of 160 acres on the south side and 200 acres on the north side of the river, the former selection having half a mile and the latter a full mile of river frontage. It is the only estate with acreage on the north side of the river immediately below the range. The

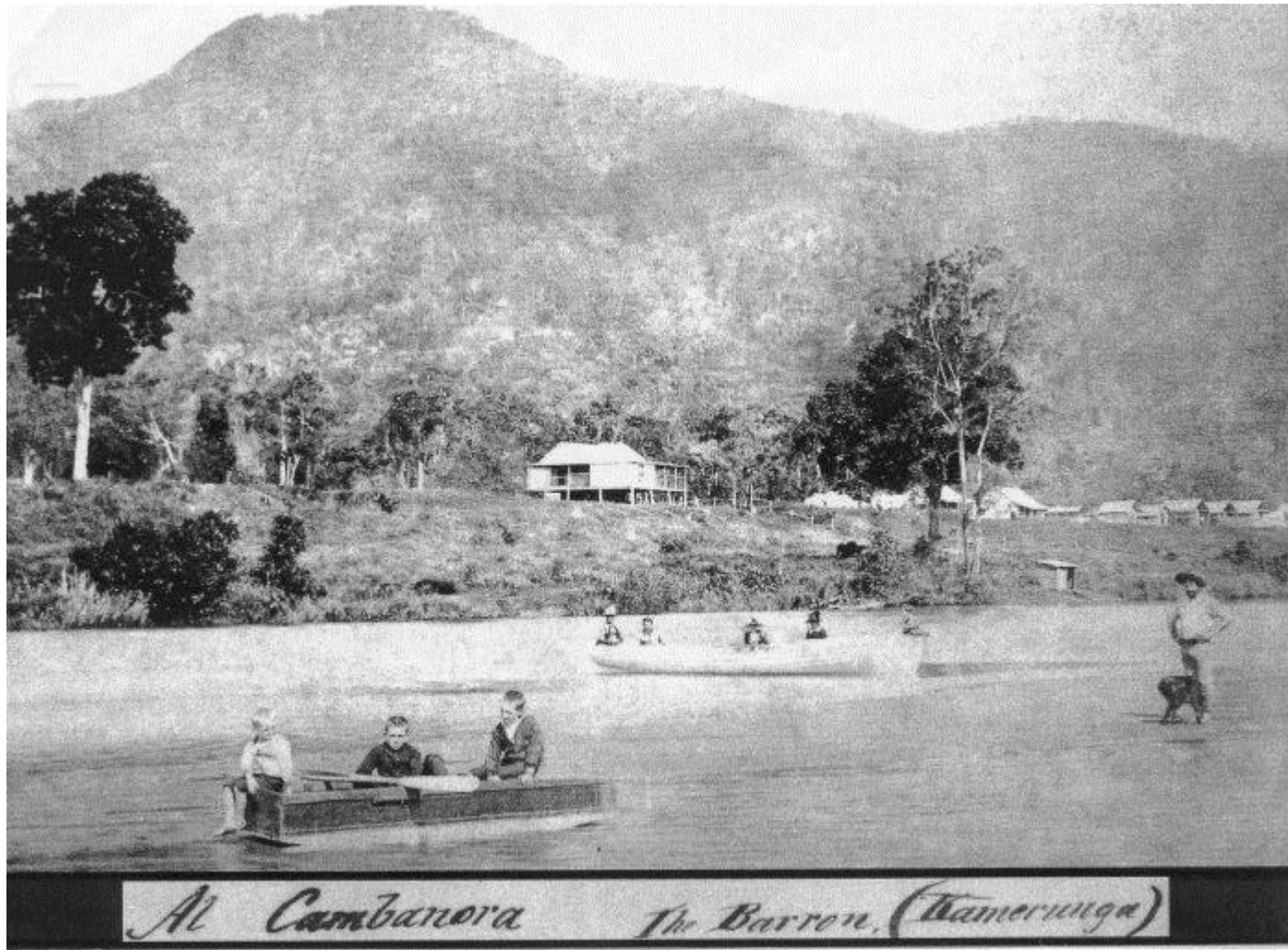
soil is brown loam of great fertility, the huge trees on the edge of the jungle being perpetual witnesses of its richness independent of the wonderful growth which fruit trees and grain crops exhibit. It is entirely composed of decomposed vegetable matter, and in depth it is practically unlimited. There are thirty acres cultivated, twenty under maize and rice and five under bananas, the same quantity being set apart for fruit trees. Oranges, lemons, citrons, limes, mangoes, lichees, the whampee [*sic*], tamarinds, guavas, custard apples, figs, peaches, nectarines, apricots, granadillas, pawpaws, etc. flourish in the orchard, while coffee (Arabic and Liberian) shows that it has found congenial climate and soil. Vanilla may be seen clinging to huge trees at the rear of the house, and Mr Meston expects his robust plants to fruit this season. Vegetables of several descriptions grow to perfection in the garden, and cattle find ample and nourishing feed on the cleared uncultivated patches. On the edge of the jungle, at the back of Mr Meston's house, there is a fig-tree of enormous dimensions, the circumference being, by measurement, 160 feet. It is larger in circumference, though not so advantageously situated, as the giant of the same tribe which grows near the junction of Stoney Creek with the Barron. The estate is one of the most valuable in the district, the railway passing to within a few chains of the south-western boundary, which is also quite close to that bountiful and beautiful stream, Freshwater Creek.

Mr Meston very kindly exhibited some of his curios, representing numerous excursions into the jungle and along the river banks. He has a number of cassowary skins, two complete specimens of male and female, in full plumage, being, perhaps, the pick of the collection. There are cases of butterflies of every imaginable shade of colour and shape; drawers stocked with the well-preserved skins of the birds of the district 'bewildering in the magnificence and variety of plumage; boxes of strange beetles; skins of snakes and of dingoes, and of stranger denizens of the jungle. A fine young cassowary, which was caught a few months ago, and which has become the pet of the family, has a roomy enclosure to itself underneath the house. What with the cats, dogs, and a family of remarkably healthy-looking children.' [cutting ends].[\[9\]](#)

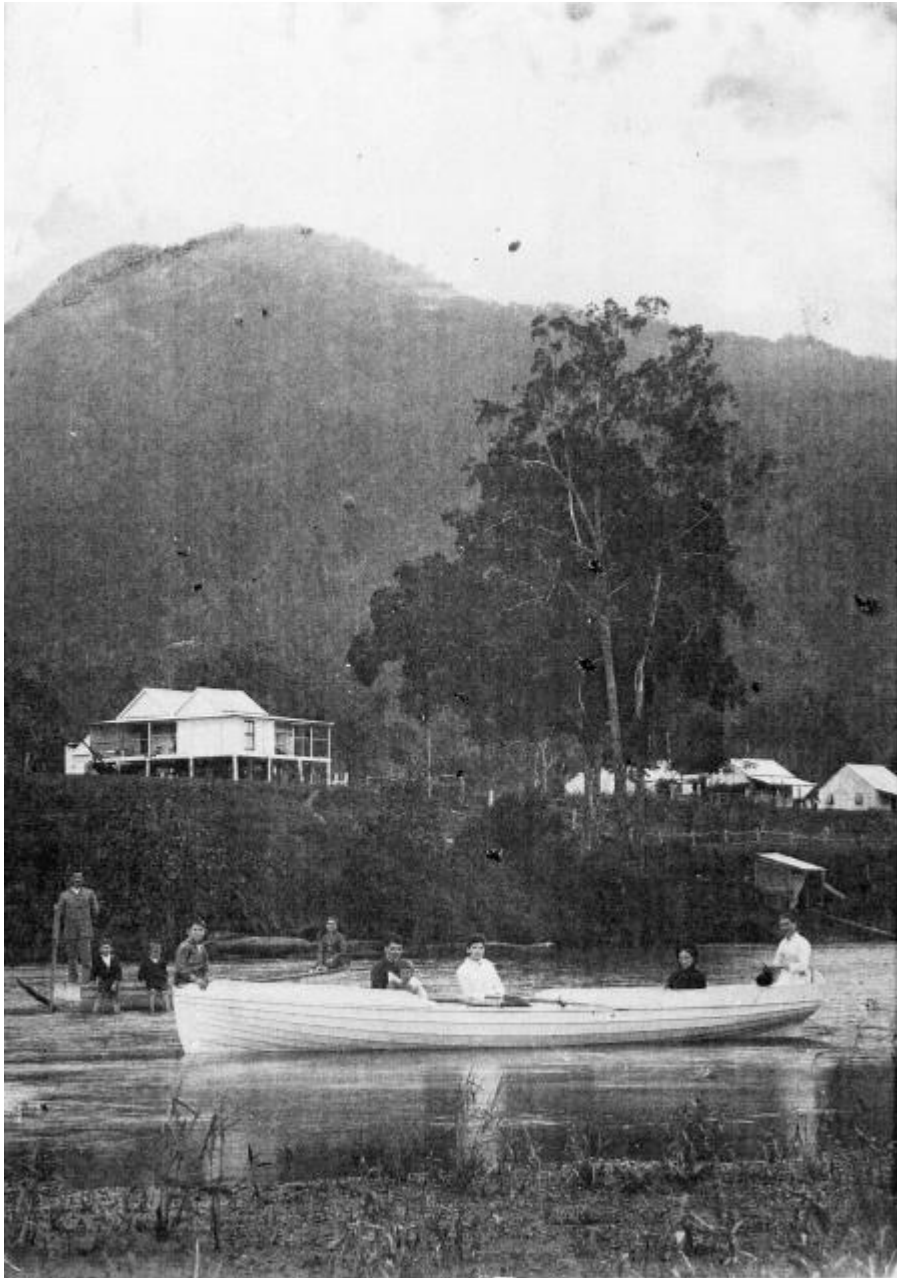
The sense of abundance and fertility approaching excess, seen in the protracted list of fruit trees, the 'tremendous' nature of the 'alligator,' the perfection of the vegetables and the unparalleled dimensions of the fig tree, suggest that the writer was influenced by the hyperbole which was a leading feature of Meston's journalism and public speaking.[\[10\]](#) The innumerable fauna collected dead or alive at 'Cambanora' imply the operation of a restless

intelligence and of a drive to hoard and control, little moderated by the concern for conserving cassowaries which Meston once asserted.^[11] Dominance over the natural world is unquestioned. Above all, the leisurely scientific pursuits and the aesthetic interests suggested by the 'magnificent view' of the 'sweep' of the Barron at 'Cambanora' confirm Meston's maintaining in his imagination of his family links with the Scottish aristocracy^[12] and with the Australian squattocracy of his farming childhood at Ulmarra.^[13] That he was also influenced to live out Carlyle's idealisation of plantation aristocracy in the American South and the British West Indies is suggested by a report that he paid Chinese labourers to pull him into Cairns in a rickshaw (*Brisbane Courier* 17 March 1884; Thorpe 49'50).

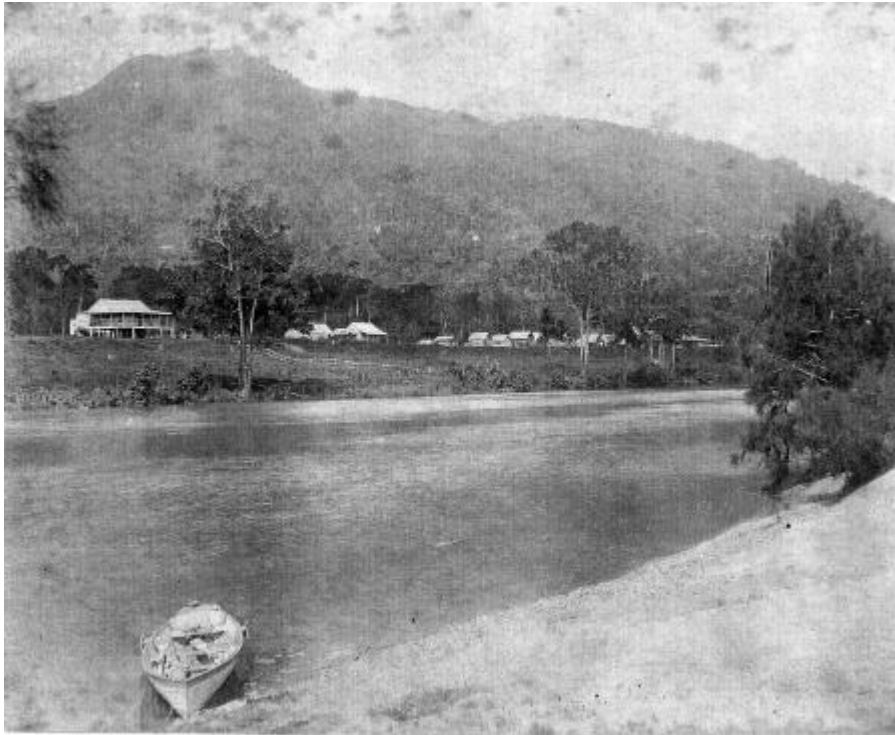
The only known photographs of 'Cambanora' are shot at a distance from the homestead, and date from the 1890s, after the Meston family had left. The people in them are unidentified. However, far from validating the abundance and class superiority suggested by the newspaper description, they sustain the claim of a 'Freshwater Selector' who wrote in the *Cairns Post* that Meston was 'simply a homestead selector, who by writing and talking about himself has led a few people in Brisbane to the erroneous belief that he is a large sugar planter' (23 October 1884).



'Cambarora' in the 1890s (Courtesy Cairns Historical Society)



'Campanora' in the 1890s (Courtesy Cairns Historical Society)



'Cambanora' in the 1890s (Courtesy Cairns Historical Society)

During 1887 and 1888, when the *Post* became more favourably disposed towards him after he formed a political alliance with the proprietor, Frederick T. Wimble, Meston proceeded by various other imaginative means to raise his profile as a gentleman land-holder. When his youngest son's birthday was celebrated with a school fete, the *Post*'s description revelled in the extravagant hospitality which 'Cambanora' provided:

At four o'clock a reunion took place within the hall, the platform being spread with a variety of good things which caused the eyes of the little ones to sparkle with delight; and, under the kindly supervision of Mrs. Meston, assisted by Misses Meston and Severin [daughter of the Mayor of Cairns], a generous distribution of sandwiches and cakes of all description soon made the small guests happy in the highest degree, a free consumption of the edibles being materially assisted by a plentiful supply of lemonade, gingerbeer, and tea. A gigantic decorated iced birthday cake was reserved as a *bonne bouche*, and even then more joys were to follow in the shape of oranges, and what was perhaps the most enjoyable treat of all, a scramble for the contents of a huge tin of sweets. Roars of delight testified to the popularity of this part of the entertainment, and the bigger boys, particularly, at the conclusion looked as if they were satisfied with life in general, having filled themselves and their pockets, and in instances where such an article was available, their handkerchiefs as well....Nor should it be

forgotten that the grown up people who were present in considerable numbers, were cordially invited to partake of a capital luncheon at which champagne was freely dispensed in generous bumpers....Before departing the youngsters joined lustily in three cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Meston, and the afternoon closed on what will be a red-letter day in the annals of the children of Kamerunga for a long time to come. (16 June 1888)

Meston constantly sought ways to exploit the resources and improve the value of his estate. On 21 June 1887 local people celebrated the Queen's Jubilee in a day-long athletics competition, when a track was prepared, presided over by Meston, who welcomed 'about six hundred persons, mostly from the railway' (*Post* 25 June 1887). He sold all suitable timber on the selection to the railway contractor, John Robb, for construction of the line, in an agreement which also provided for the erection of sawmills (*Post* 10 and 27 August 1887). On Christmas Eve 1887, the *Post* reported that gold had been discovered opposite Hart's Hotel on Meston's land, during the sinking of a well for Robb's sawmill. The well-sinkers sought a protection order for the vicinity, and about fifty miners' rights were immediately taken out. The *Post* advised caution however, and on 28 December reported that the mining warden, who after testing had not found 'even the slightest indication of gold,' had concluded that the business was a hoax. Historian Dorothy Jones (278) assumes that Meston was the perpetrator, seeking financial advantage from an influx of miners, just as he was already profiting from the railway workers who made their base camp at Kamerunga. He also planned a local athletics club and a 'guerilla corps' of riflemen (*Post* 22 September, 10 November 1888).

Improvements at 'Cambanora' included 'several substantial five-room cottages' (*Post* 13 July 1887), one of which was intended to house police (10 August 1887), and a hall twenty metres long (12 November 1887). The latter quickly became renowned for accommodating, not only the birthday party described above, but also, on 19 April 1888, a meeting attended by three hundred railwaymen, in which they formed a branch affiliated with the Victorian union. On 21 April Meston chaired a public meeting in support of Wimble's candidature as MLA for Cook. At a concert on 18 August, his recitation of his poem, 'The Australian Marseillaise,' recently published in the *Boomerang* (28 July 1888, p. 13) and the *Post* (8 August 1888), was praised as 'a perfect exhibition of the art of elocution,' and he joined in a burlesque of the graveyard scene in *Hamlet*. 'The Australian Marseillaise' versified Meston's vision of a united Australia heroically defying monarchy and 'all alien races.' On 28 September a special

train brought guests from Cairns to a grand bachelors' ball (*Post* 3 October), and a second ball was held on 20 October, when a regular train service was established to Kamerunga (*Post* 20 October). 'Meston's Hall' was also used for roller skating (*Post* 3 November 1888).

Despite the success of the civic functions that he created at Kamerunga, the signs in the *Post* of his restoration to community acceptance, and his affirmation at the meeting which culminated Wimble's campaign that he 'was going to stand or fall by the Cairns district' (*Post* 8 May 1888), Meston shelved plans, announced in the *Post* of 25 April, to stand as a candidate for the mining seat of Woothakata. In December advertisements in the *Post* trumpeted: 'The Gigantic Sale of the Season/ Archibald Meston, Esq. Of Cambanora, Kamerunga/ To Sell by Public Auction/ THE WHOLE OF HIS VALUABLE FURNITURE AND PERSONAL EFFECTS/ On account of the projected departure of his family for the South.' The items listed for sale indeed confirm Meston's aspiration to the lifestyle of the lairds: 'Splendid Drawing Room Spring-seated Suite,' 'SUPERB PORCELAIN JARS (bought in Brisbane at a high figure),' 'Elegant Tea and coffee service,' 'Large plated Cruet-stand, with cut-glass bottles,' 'Choicely cut Spirit Bottles in plated stand,' 'SUPERIOR LADY'S HACK, not to be equalled in the district,' 'Handsome Prize Side Saddle (1st prize at Melbourne Exhibition),' '22 ft Cedar Pleasure Boat' and, incongruously for an avowed republican, '12 Steel Engravings, in oak frames (Scottish Kings, Queens, and Nobles, Exhibited by Mr. Meston at last Caledonian Exhibition in Brisbane).' Even taking into account the auctioneer's inflated language, the life-style implied by this list appears inappropriate to the physical dangers and petty political antagonisms of remote northern life. Meston himself, however, may well have regarded shooting crocodiles from his verandah an acceptable substitute for deer-hunting in the Highlands.

The fact that such personal items as books, guns, silverware and 'kitchen utensils of every description' were advertised for sale suggests that financial exigency played some part in the family's departure. Soon afterwards, 'Meston's Hall' came to be 'devoted exclusively to school purposes and no longer available for balls or concerts' (*Post* 2 February 1889). 'Cambanora' was purchased by a Mr Stephen Smith, 'one of the Government line inspectors,' who was a less colourful figure.^[14] When his family was resettled in Brisbane, Meston recommenced Government inspection tours of sugar-growing sites. Reports place him early in the new year at Mount Buchan, a few kilometres north of Kamerunga (*Post* 23

January 1889), and at Yeppoon in Central Queensland.^[15] Later in 1889 he visited Cairns once again on the first of his four exploring expeditions into the Bellenden Ker range.



Meston's 1904 Expedition to Bellenden Ker.

(Meston is foregrounded on the right, holding a plant; the boy to his left is probably his son, E. A. Meston.^[16] Courtesy Cairns Historical Society)

Meston's self-fashioning as a squatter and family man at 'Cambanora' concealed some dubious actions. 'John Smith,' a correspondent to the *Brisbane Courier*, who in December 1882 had accompanied him on the initial survey of sugar-growing properties, accused him of robbing Lower Mulgrave tribes of artifacts and weapons 'without compunction' and of getting 'a pot shot at a Myall if he could find one' (19 January 1885: 6).^[17] An incident which confirms a dislocation between the romantic, respectable image Meston cultivated and an underlying reality occurred in June 1887, when he sued his tenants, J.P. and Marie Johnson, for criminal libel. After he had begun proceedings to recover unpaid rent, a sign two metres high was erected at the Johnsons' gate, which read:

Warning. To A. Meston. If you do not keep away from my house during the absence of my husband, trying to commit indecent or felonious assaults on me, you will get a bullet into your worthless carcass, if you escape the ropes of the gallows, *which you deserved long ago*. Marie Johnson. (*Brisbane Courier* 30 June 1887: 2; emphasis added)

The closing accusation adds weight to 'John Smith's' allegations. When the Attorney General nevertheless declined to prosecute the Johnsons, a leader in the *Cairns Post* commented at length on the peculiarities of the libel law (27 August 1887).

Meston's life in Cairns brings to mind an image of Chinese boxes. The outermost box, on which he lavished the most painstaking decoration and many coats of varnish in the form of speeches, publications, performances and a dress-style chosen with the skill of an actor, was his political career as a lobbyist and campaign chairman. Inside was the box of his paradoxically public private life at 'Cambanora,' heavily decorated as well with mixed romantic traditions, and validated by the innocent activities of wife and children. This essay has traced some of the contours of the outer boxes. However, only 'John Smith's' letter and the Johnsons' accusation offer clues as to the shape of the unvarnished innermost box containing the truth about Meston's private life in Cairns.

ENDNOTES

[1] 'I had been staying for six months with Robert Muir on Benowra Plantation, whose sugar mill stood on the exact spot now occupied by the Nerang Sugar Mill, and there I first learned sugar-boiling, a knowledge which I used afterwards when succeeding John Bahot as manager and sugar-boiler of Dr Waugh's Pearlwell Sugar Plantation, Brisbane River, in 1874.' ('Some Christmases.' By Archie Meston. *Humpybong Halcyon* 15 Dec. 1917: 11'13.)

[2] See my article, 'Prologue to Protectorship: Archibald Meston's Public Life in Far North Queensland, 1882'1888,' forthcoming in the *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*.

[3] For example, in a letter published in the *Cairns Post* on 8 June 1887, Meston corrected an editorial claim that he had broken the 15 second record for the 150 yards sprint, but recorded that he *had* won the Maiden Plate and Handicap 100 yards race in Sydney in 1869, the 150 and 200 yards races in Grafton in 1870, and that he was 'an easy winner' of the 150 and 200 yards races at the Caledonian Games in Brisbane in 1873. He won first prize for light hammer and putting the stone and second prize for heavy hammer at the Ipswich Hibernian Sports in 1876, and first prize for heavy hammer at the Townsville Hibernian Games in 1880. 'As an amateur runner I came off the turf unbeaten.' In a 1911 issue of the Brisbane *Sun*, an article, 'Athletic Training. Some Startling Theories. Gymnasium Mistakes,' was illustrated

with a photo of Meston's back, nude to the waist. The introduction stated: 'Meston is now a man some years over 50 [he was sixty], and has never been a week out of training, but his system differs widely from that of the modern gymnasium. His athletics cover a wide field. At 18 he was one of the best axemen on the Clarence River, and has taken first prizes against all comers in rowing, wrestling, running, boxing, swimming, diving, putting the stone, throwing the hammer, shooting, and feats of strength.' Meston goes on to comment scathingly on current gymnasium training and boxing techniques. (John Oxley Library OM 64-17, Box 1, Item 6.) His reputation as a fitness mentor persisted for years after his death, as in the recollections of Harry C. Perry: 'I have in my possession a programme of one of the old Caledonian sports which used to be decided each New Year's Day in the Queen's (now Botanic) Gardens, at which Archie Meston won a first prize for tossing the caber'. Archie Meston never lost his interest in athletics, his tall, spare figure was as erect as ever when I last saw him a week or so before his death, his vice-like hand clasp was a test, as well as a token, of his friendship, and he habitually carried a walking stick, the weight of which would have wearied most men half his age' ('Wild Days in the Far North. Mestonian Memories. A Funeral Pyre on Dunk Island.' *The Steering Wheel and Society and Home* 1 July, 1935: 56'58).

[4] Meston earned his reputation for shooting in the 1870s by organising 'battues' for the Laidley Hunt Club in which hundreds of marsupials were slaughtered: 'At Laidley there were 300 killed, of which I killed *eighty-seven* [Meston's italics], and at Normanby about 350 were shot, but no one knows who was the highest scorer' ('Field Shooting: A Kangaroo Battue.' Unsourced cutting, John Oxley Library OM 17-64, Box 1, Item 2; cf. Thorpe 31). In 1891, under the *nom-de-plume* of 'Ramrod,' Meston published a column in the *Boomerang*, 'Field Shooting in Queensland,' or 'Field Sporting.' He shot crocodiles regularly, e.g. *Cairns Post* 11 May 1887 and: 'A day or two ago Mr. A. Meston, the crocodile hunter, added another of those full-flavoured brutes to his museum.'; and again, *Cairns Post* 7 April 1888. Later he referred to his exploits in the Far North as: '[e]ight years' continuous residence in crocodile country from 1881 to 1889, during which, it is fair to say, I shot more crocodiles than any man in Australia' ('Crocodile Tragedies. One of the World's Most Dreadful Animals: Their History and Habits.' *World's News* 4 March, 1922: 12 and 13).

[5] Meston married Margaret Frances Prowse Shaw in Sydney in 1871. Four sons and a daughter were living at his death on 11 March 1824. A poem, 'The Choosers of the Slain: In

Memoriam E.O. Meston, aged 5' (*Queenslander* 28 November 1891: 1025), mourns the loss of probably another daughter.

[6] See my forthcoming article, 'Constructing Aboriginality: Archibald Meston's Literary Journalism, 1870'1924,' *JASAL (Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature)* 2, 2003.

[7]. John Oxley Library cutting, OM 64'17, Box 1, Item 5: 'A Few North Queensland Xmas Episodes,' dated 22 December, 1907: 'Life in the North 26 years ago was somewhat different from the present'. Cairns was then in its primitive innocence, if the term innocent could be appropriately applied to the wild pioneers who painted that township a vermillion colour from 1881 to 1889'. I had promptly appropriated two thousand acres of choice country on Freshwater Creek for 'Brinsmead and Company,' of whom I was managing partner.' Concerning Meston's arrival in North Queensland, his friend, Spencer Browne, recalls: 'The [Townsville] *Herald* for eight months was an arbiter on philology and politics in the North, and then Meston pushed off to Cairns with Horace Brinsmead to clear scrub and grow sugar and to subdue the heights of Bellenden-Ker' (11).

[8]. Meston. 'Northern Holiday Time.' John Oxley Library OM 64'17, Box 1, Item 5, unsourced. Startled by the terror of his Chinese cook, Meston says that he shot the pig under the impression that it was a crocodile. He concludes this article by philosophising on the force of the Barron in flood, comparing it with the tide of time which sweeps away human life.

[9] Our Special Reporter. 'Through the Plantations. Part III. The Banks of the Barron' Fresh Water Valley' Mount Buchan' Cairns.' John Oxley Library OM64-17, Box 1, Item 5, unsourced.

[10] The writer is not Meston himself, since he deplored the error, common in the 1880s and later, of referring to North Queensland crocodiles as 'alligators.' John Oxley Library OM 64'17, Box 2, Item 1 is a cutting book containing a letter, headed 'Crocodiles and Alligators.' Meston writes as Director of the Queensland Government Bureau in Sydney (1909'1913) to point out that Dr Woolnough's report on the Northern Territory refers to 'alligators,' when the animals are 'crocodiles.' He discourses learnedly on the discovery and naming of North Queensland crocodiles, their species and habitats: 'It is time we heard the last mention of

'alligators' in Australia.' Similarly, the *Cairns Post*, 28 April 1887, quotes an paragraph sent by Meston and written by Mr. E.P. Ramsay, Curator of the Sydney Museum, settling the controversy in favour of 'crocodile.'

[11] When Meston published an appeal to the Government, 'to check the ruthless slaughter of the cassowary....Its habitat is confined to the dense tropical scrubs of the north-east coast, and it is a pity that such a noble bird should become extinct' (7 December 1887), his neighbours at Kamerunga found the idea laughable: '...people fancy he wants to do all the killing himself. It is said that when at home his place was always perfumed with the blood of those innocent birds' (*Cairns Post* 8 February 1888). On 19th May, 1894, Meston read a paper, 'On the Australian Cassowary (*Casuarius australis*),' before the Royal Society of Queensland.

[12] Oscar Meston refers to his father's ancestor, 'Sir William Meston, a Scottish warrior and poet, and the last Governor of Dunnottar Castle after the Battle of Sherrifmuir,' and his cousin, 'Lord Meston, of Dunnottar, in the county of Kincardine, Scotland, and of Agra, in the Indian Empire, who was one of three delegates appointed to represent India at the Special Imperial War Conference held in London in 1917' (*World's News* 29 March, 1924). A 'Meston Genealogy,' compiled in 1977 by Gordon Meston and preserved by the Cairns Historical Society, traces the Australian branch of the family to an Archibald Meston (1767-1847), leasee of two farms in Parish Towie, Aberdeenshire.

[13] 'Meston was quite literally related to what was then the ruling class in New South Wales'the squattocracy of 'Shepherd Kings' and graziers' (Thorpe 18).

[14] An unsourced report in a Meston family cutting book in the John Oxley Library OM 64-17, Box 2, nevertheless describes a later 'pretty wedding' at 'Cambanora': 'There were no weddings at this romantic spot by the Barron River in Mr. Meston's time, but by a singular coincidence, at the moment Mr. Smith's eldest daughter was flying away to another nest, the news came that Miss Meston, one of the most accomplished girls in Queensland, had changed her name.'

[15] 'CQ Sugar Industry. Mr A. Meston Thinks It Should Come.' Unsourced cutting, John Oxley Library (OM 64-17, Box1, Item 5).

[16] E.A. Meston. 'Mestonian Flashes.' *Cummins and Campbell's Monthly Magazine* 30, no. 8 (August 1954): 13.

[17] I would like to record my gratitude to Jonathan Richards of Griffith University, who alerted me to items relevant to Meston published in Brisbane papers.

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