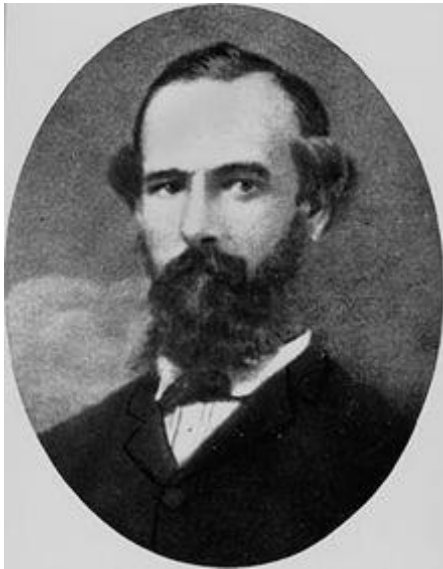




Nat Buchanan



Nat Buchanan was born near Dublin, Ireland in 1826 and arrived in Australia with his parents and four brothers in 1837, settling on a station in the Walcha area. Ten years later, Nat and his brothers Andrew and Frank joined the gold rush to California. After bad luck on the goldfields and poor management on the station forced the family to surrender the property, he took to droving between New South Wales and the Victorian goldfields.

In 1859, he joined the explorer William Landsborough and set out to find new grazing lands in Queensland. As a result of the experience gained and his knowledge of the area, Nat was asked to be pioneer manager of Bowen Downs Station. His reputation as a bushman was well established and his sense of direction and locality unrivalled. Nat married Catherine Gordon in 1863, who, at the time, was the only white woman in central Queensland.

Over the next 20 years, Nat opened up land in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley. His most famous exploit was to move 20,000 head of cattle from Central Queensland to Glenco Station south of Darwin. This feat has never been equalled by any other drover in the world.

In 1883 Nat pioneered new tracks from Queensland to the Kimberley. He took up Wave Hill Station in partnership with his brother William and helped his son Gordon to pioneer Flora Valley and Gordon Downs Stations near Halls Creek in 1887. At the age of 70 he made his last big expedition in the Tanami Desert between Tennant Creek and Halls Creek, trying to find a shorter route to the Barkley Tablelands. In 1899 he retired to a small farm in Dungowan, near Tamworth, where he died in 1901.

Nat Buchanan became a legend well before his death. His mates often called him Old Bluey because of his red hair and fair skin, which he shaded with a battered green umbrella. His feats of droving, his bushcraft, his powers of observation and his endurance were widely known and marvelled at by his peers. Through his explorations he helped settle more new country than any other white man in Australia's history and yet he died with almost none in his possession. Nat Buchanan was King of the drovers.

