

Three graves remain of the battle at Lawn Hill

I'll try to get a copy .. Bob F

LATE in October, 1889 one of Queensland's lesser known outlaws went on a rampage which left two men dead on Lawn Hill Station.

He was a halfcaste by the name of Joe Flick. He was also shot dead in the battle at Lawn Hill.

Born at Burketown, Flick was the son of a white man and an aboriginal woman.

A former Queensland Police Commissioner, the late Mr N.W. Bauer, researched Flick's life and in 1979 wrote the account in *Sphere*, a journal published by the National Geographical Society of Australasia.

The events leading to the drama at Lawn Hill began when Flick returned home from a droving trip to find his father bashing his mother.

In a blind rage Flick attacked his father and gave him a savage hiding.

About this time Flick was courting an aboriginal girl who worked as a housemaid in a hotel at Beames Brook, south of Burketown.

Suddenly the girl broke off the relationship. Flick believed the owners of the hotel had persuaded her not to have anything more to do with him.

Set on revenge he waylaid the owners and savagely attacked them before they managed to fight him off.

Flick was later arrested and charged with attempted murder. He was placed in the Normanton lock-up but soon escaped into the bush.

Pointing the bone

Some time later Flick was sighted by an aboriginal houseboy at Turn-Off Lagoons north of Lawn Hill homestead.

Flick surprised the houseboy and threatened him with "pointing the bone" if the boy did not tell him where the police were.

Flick also wanted to know the location of the police horses.

It also happened that at this time a Senior Constable Wavell was at nearby Corinda police station suffering from fever and dysentery.

October 23. In the early evening Wavell visited a Mrs Anderson who had been treating his illness.

The houseboy who Flick had threatened worked for Mrs Anderson and she told the policeman of the outlaw's threat.

That night as Wavell and Mrs Anderson talked, a sound came from the near the back door.

Later a man was heard galloping away and a cooe floated back through the night air.

Wavell and Mrs Anderson were convinced the horseman had been Joe Flick.

October 24. Early in the day Wavell was personally thrown into the Flick saga when he discovered that his troop horse and one of his own horses had been shot dead in the police paddock.

Enraged by the crime and still in poor health Wavell borrowed stock horses from Mrs Anderson and with an aboriginal tracker set off in pursuit of the outlaw.

Night attack

October 25. Flick and his tracker arrived at a dwelling owned by a Mr Symes. Symes had been up all night after his house had been pelted with stones.

He had fired a shot into the darkness and heard a man hoot and gallop away on horseback.

Later in the day Wavell met another policeman who loaned him extra horses and a second tracker.

Wavell's health was rapidly deteriorating but he was determined to capture the outlaw.

October 27. Just on midday Wavell and his trackers sighted Flick leading a loaded pack horse.

Flick dropped the lead rope and galloped off towards the Lawn Hill homestead.

He galloped up the incline to the station complex and when near the top turned in the saddle and fired a shot which downed a horse ridden by one of the trackers.

Reaching the homestead, Flick vaulted from the saddle and ran for the kitchen and barricaded himself inside.

Wavell and his trackers kept up a steady hail of fire on the building.

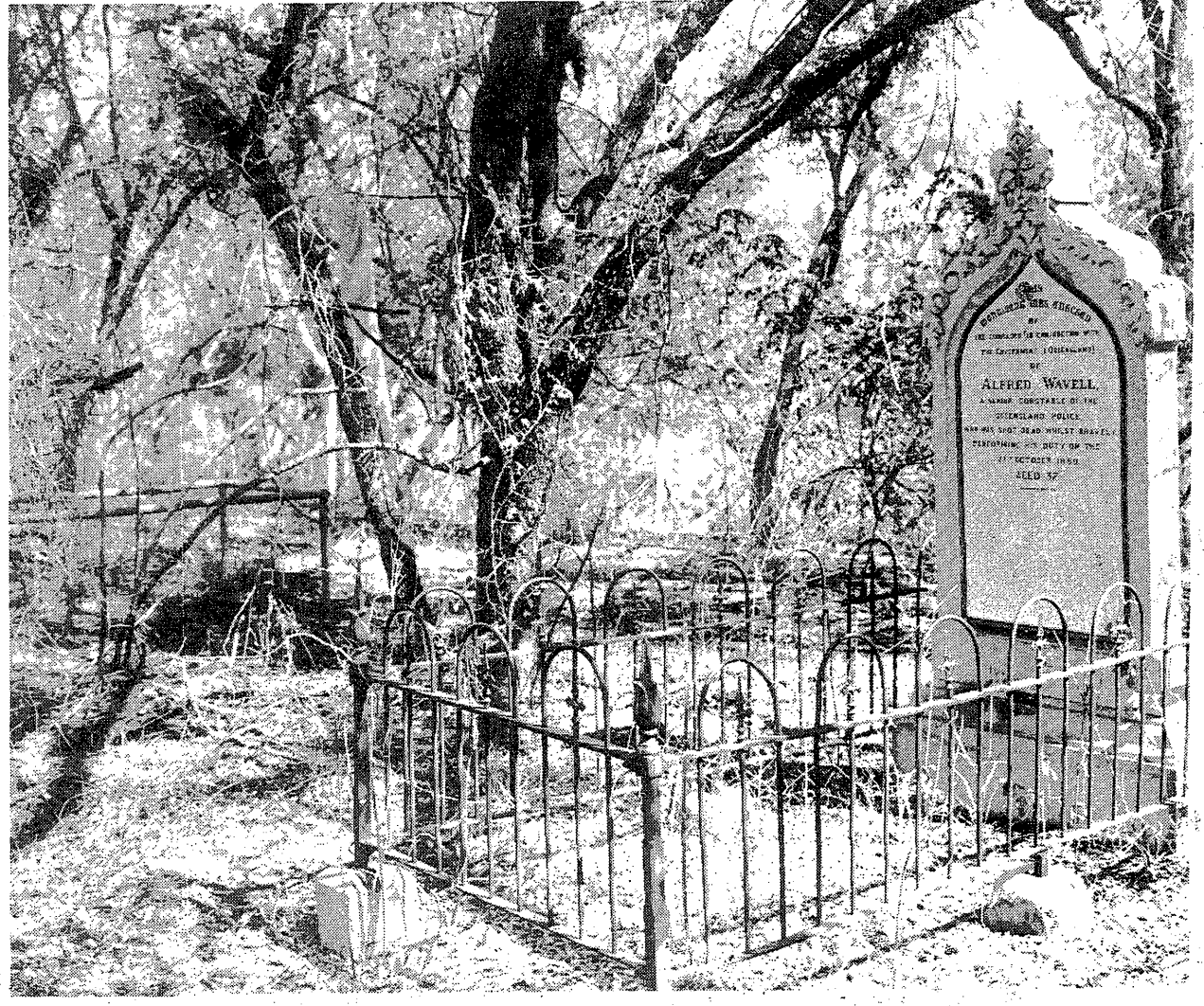
The policeman became convinced he could get Flick to surrender and walked towards the building calling on the outlaw to throw down his arms.

When Wavell was 30 metres from the kitchen Flick appeared at a window and shot the policeman in the chest. He was dead when he hit the ground.

October 27. Sundown. The station owner, Mr F.H. Hann and an aboriginal named Nym arrived at the scene. Hann prided himself on his ability to "get along well" with the natives. He was sure he could talk Flick into surrendering.

Hann walked towards the building quietly talking to Flick, trying to convince the outlaw he would be given a fair hearing.

Flick agreed to step outside if Hann opened the door to the kitchen. Hann did as he was told and as soon as the door swung open Flick opened fire. Hann fell to the ground with a bullet wound to the chest.



● SHOT in the chest, Senior Constable Wavell was dead when he hit the ground. He lies buried beside Joe Flick, the man who killed him. Flick's unmarked grave is visible in the background.

The party of men outside opened fire. Under the hail of lead Hann crawled to safety.

That night despite a watch which was kept on the building Flick escaped down a steep cliff in the confusion of a storm.

October 28. At daybreak the men charged the building only to find spent cartridges, and a blood soaked rag. It was obvious Flick was wounded.

Hann had sufficiently recovered from his wound to lead a party in search of the desperado.

Chase

They discovered blood stains and tracks which led along Lawn Hill Creek.

When less than a kilometre from the homestead a shot rang out and Nym fell dead, shot through the heart.

Flick then unleashed a furious rate of fire, but the search party had already taken cover.

Hann was determined to stop Flick from reaching the rugged Lawn Hill Gorge further down the creek.

This gorge would afford the outlaw formidable protection and Hann reasoned it would be almost impossible to flush him out.

Hann ordered the grass along the creek to be set alight and with moments the blaze had flushed Flick from his hiding place.

The search party opened fire on the running figure and the outlaw fell dead, hit by more than one bullet.

Today, the only reminders of this bloody conflict are the graves belonging to Wavell, Flick and Nym.

But what made Flick, an excellent bushman always in demand on local stations, take to the outlaw trail?

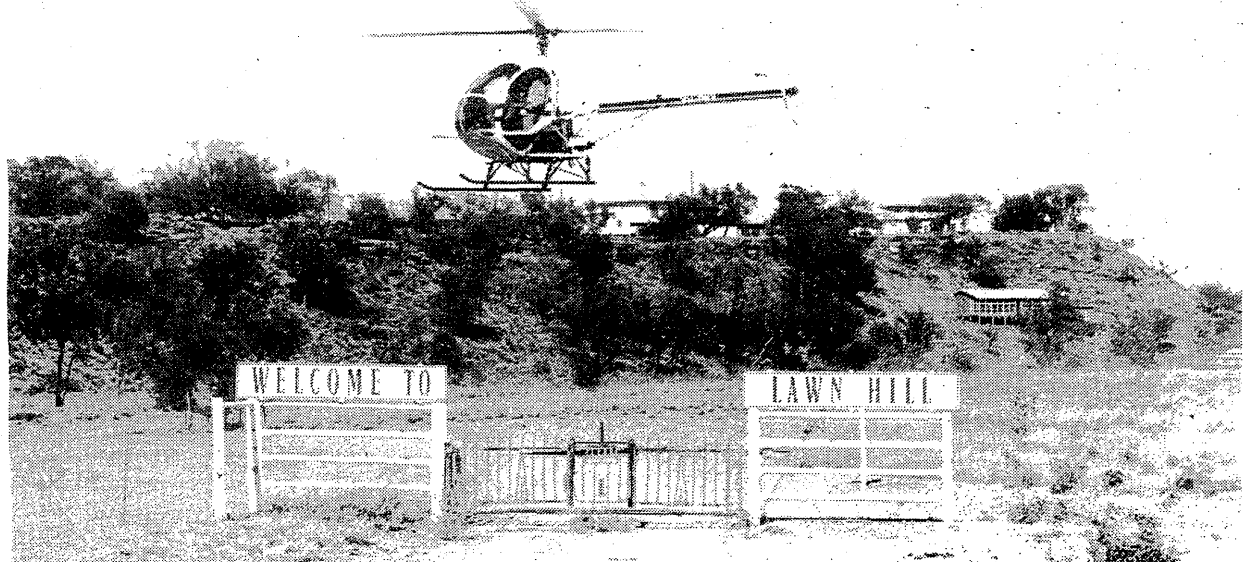
Bauer surmised it could have been the attitude of whites to his mother of whom he was very fond.

Then again it could have been the taunts concerning his breeding which would have inevitably come his way in the mustering camps.

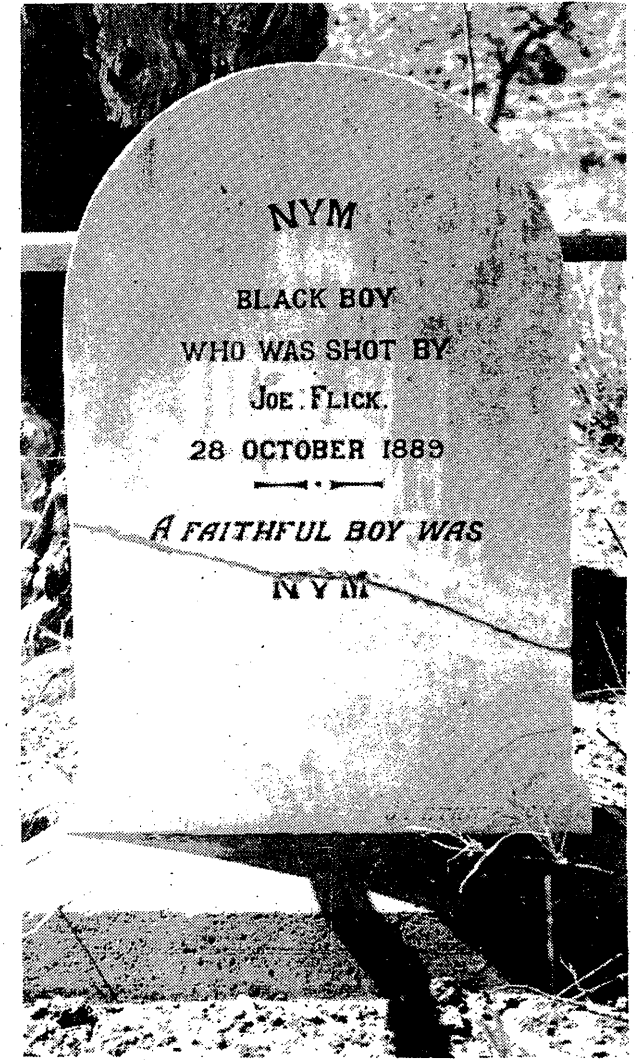
Could Flick reconcile himself to being classed as a "brindle", a "creamy", or a "yeller feller"?

According to Bauer: "Nobody knows just what went on in his mind."

BAUER



● THE Lawn Hill Station complex has changed since the day Joe Flick spilled the blood of Senior Constable Wavell and the aboriginal boy Nym. The hill down which he escaped from the besieged kitchen is still there and can be seen clearly in this photograph. (It's a safe bet they didn't have the "Welcome to Lawn Hill" sign out when Joe galloped up the incline to the house with his revolver blazing.)



● ABOVE: Nym's grave on Lawn Hill Station. "Nym fell dead, shot through the heart."