

Journey two

Brisbane to Cooktown by steamer

In 1873, gold was discovered on the Palmer River in Far North Queensland. Prospectors, including thousands of Chinese, travelled by boat to Cooktown on the Endeavour River, which was the nearest port. From there they walked inland for almost 280 kilometres, carrying all their supplies, to reach the goldfield. It took almost three weeks of walking up steep ridges and across many creeks and rivers.

These diary extracts are written from the point of view of a young man travelling from Brisbane to Cooktown by coastal steamship. The young man had left his home in Ireland to live with his married sister in Brisbane. He hoped to find his fortune in Australia as soon as he saved enough money

to get to the goldfields. The diary entries are based on information about real people's lives, although the young man is not real.



The journey from Brisbane to Cooktown by steamship was made in several stages.

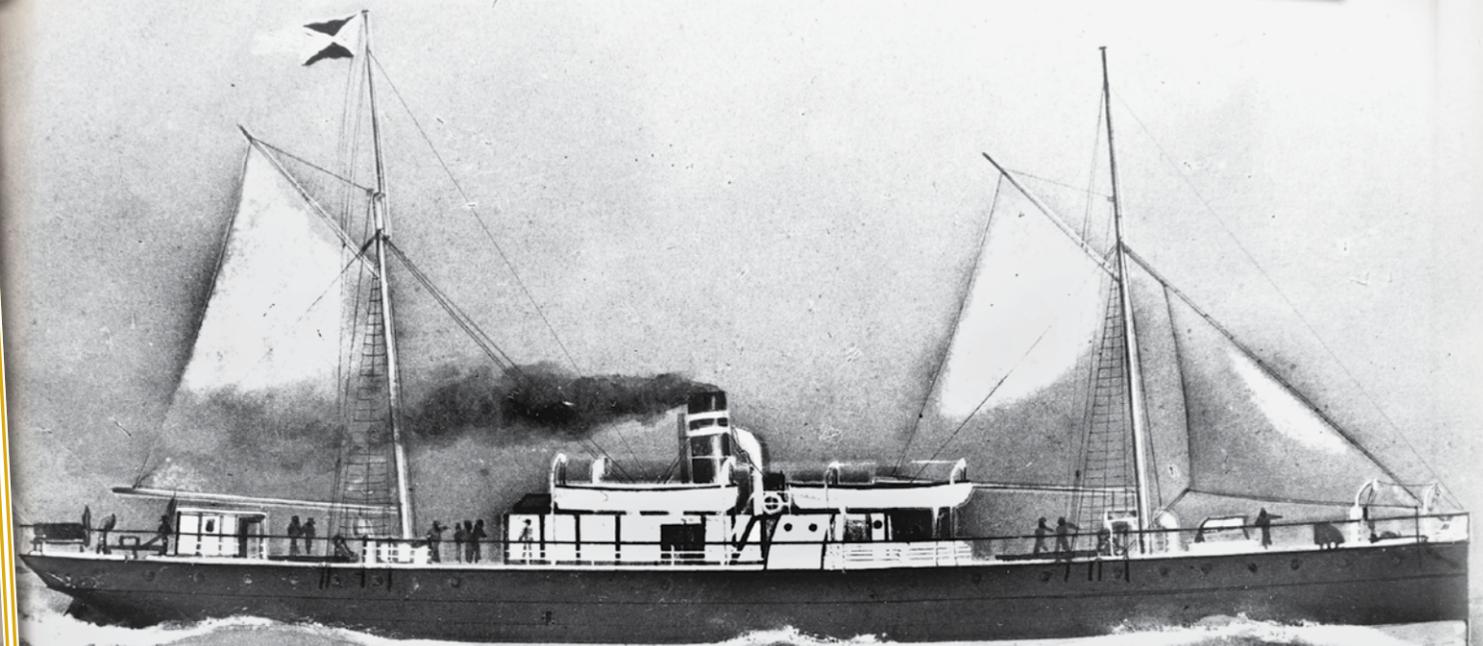
Wednesday 10th

I have been quarrying [cutting or mining] stone for five shillings [about \$25] a day for some months. At last I have saved enough money for my steamer fare. It cost six pounds [about \$600]! Tomorrow we will sail on the SS Corea. I am off to the Palmer River goldfields to make my fortune with two good friends. We have bought six weeks' worth of supplies to take with us. We have a tent, picks and shovels, and a saw for cutting wood to make a hut. It makes a big pile to carry, but we will be able to store it in the hold.

Friday 12th

We have arrived at Maryborough this afternoon after a safe and easy voyage. It was pleasant to sit on the deck under the awning and talk to the other passengers. There are hundreds of them, and many of the men are also going to the Palmer River. They were able to give us more information on the journey we are facing. I am glad we have brought all the supplies we can carry, for it seems the prices in Cooktown are quite alarming.

The SS Corea was a coastal steamship built in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1865.



Thursday 18th

We have arrived in Rockhampton after a terrible storm that I thought would send us to the bottom. There seemed almost no warning before the wind came up and there were torrents of rain. The seas were soon running mountains high, and the Captain could barely make any headway against them. Then we realised that there was water in our sleeping quarters below the deck - we had sprung a leak! We stuffed anything we could find into the crack that had opened up, while the crew set to work with the pumps. We finally managed to limp into port after a long struggle, and never was I so glad to feel land beneath me!

Saturday 20th

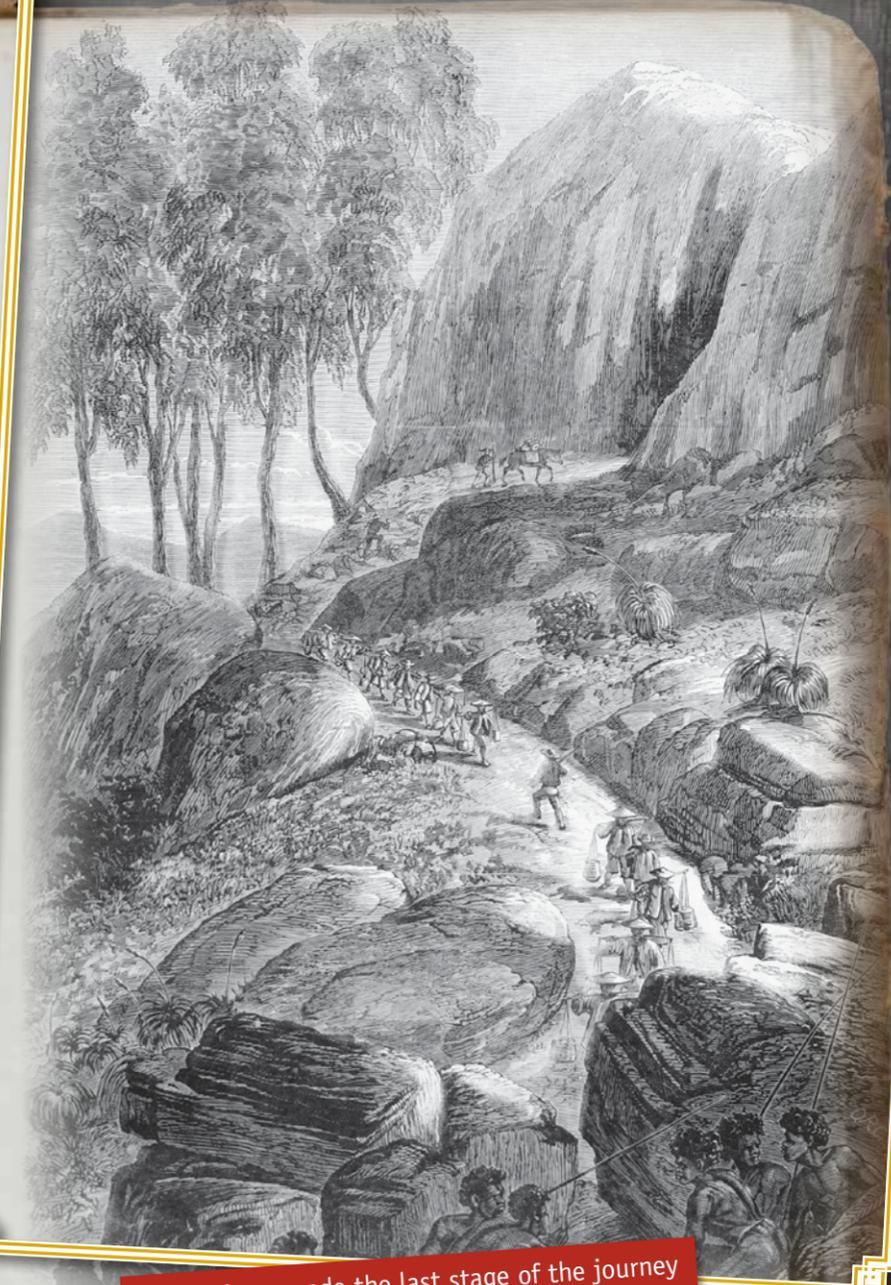
Today on our journey north we saw one of the other ships that had passed us near Maryborough. It was full of men going to the diggings, who had cheered us as they went by. They were not so cheery today, as the mast of their vessel had been broken in the storm, and they were forced to turn back. We shall arrive before them after all.

Cooktown on the Endeavour River was a very busy port during the gold rushes.



Monday 29th

At last we have reached Cooktown, where we have been for one week now. It is a wild and strange place. There are thousands of people here, mostly living in tents, preparing to set off for the diggings as soon as the flooded Palmer River goes down. More ships arrive daily, some even carrying horses! There are many foreigners here who have come from China to look for gold. Many of the other miners distrust them, and mutter as they pass by. I do not see why they should not have their chance - surely there is gold enough for all!



Many miners made the last stage of the journey to the Palmer River on foot.

Tuesday 30th

Today we will set off for the field. We will be going to Palmerville, which I hear is a wild, dangerous and unhealthy place. It is 172 miles [278 kilometres] away and will take us nearly three weeks of walking to get there, but there will be plenty of company along the way. The track is well trodden by the pack-horses that travel constantly to Palmerville though, which will make it easier. Our swags weigh about 69 pounds [31 kilograms] and will make the going hard. My tin whistle will be welcome at least, to play us a tune at night.

Journey three

Robe to Bendigo on foot

In 1851, the wives of two farm workers were panning for gold at Bendigo Creek in Victoria. When a reporter saw how much gold they found, another gold rush began. Thousands of prospectors, including many from China, soon arrived to try their luck. The Europeans resented the Chinese because they were so different, and often very successful at finding gold.

By 1857, the Victorian government began placing heavy **taxes** on Chinese miners landing in Melbourne. To avoid these taxes, the Chinese landed in Robe, South Australia, which did not charge Chinese immigrants at that time. From there they walked to the goldfields. Many hopeful young Chinese men made the difficult 500-kilometre journey, which took several weeks.

These diary extracts are written from the point of view of a young Chinese man making the journey from Robe to Bendigo on foot. The diary entries are based on information about real people's lives, although the young man is not real.



The journey from Robe to Bendigo on foot was long and difficult.

Saturday 31st

This is such a strange and foreign place, this New Gold Mountain [Australia]. I know I must work here for years and I am afraid I may never see my new wife again. I must earn enough to repay the merchant [businessperson] in my village the money I borrowed for my fare, and to provide for my family. We have set up tents for shelter tonight, and tomorrow we start to walk. There will be 400 in our group.

The local agent here in Robe, who is from our own part of China, has arranged everything for the journey. It has cost a lot of money for this, and we have already paid so much to sail from China. There are four horse-drawn carts for our equipment and supplies, and four white men to guide us. We have heard stories of some groups being left to find their own way after a day or so. I hope our guides will stay with us. The elders [respected older people] in our party say that if we are strong and obedient, all will be well.

Many young Chinese men made the journey to Australia to search for gold.

