

Dr Thomas Pennington Lucas: Queensland Scientist, Author, Doctor, Dreamer and Inventor¹

Introduction:

Late 19th and early 20th century Australian newspapers advertised a mind-boggling range of miracle remedies, guaranteed to cure everything from cancer and biliousness to ‘liver problems’ and ‘ladies’ nervous disorders’. Some were downright dangerous while most were mere placebos—while a few seemed to have actually worked.² Almost all of these have faded into the mists of pharmacological mythology but one, Dr Lucas’ Papaw³ Ointment, has survived to become a modern Brisbane business, exporting around the globe. This is the story of its larger-than-life founder, Dr Thomas Pennington Lucas, a Brisbane medical doctor, scientist, writer, philosopher and utopian dreamer.

Lucas’ literary achievements have never been fully appreciated, nor have his idiosyncratic views about life, religion and medicine. He wrote one of the Australian masterpieces of utopian fiction, was a staunch critic of ‘modern’ medicine, and a significant scientist, yet few Australians even know his name although most would have used Lucas Papaw Ointment.

While Lucas’ invention of Papaw Ointment has been previously described,⁴ this work takes the biography deeper, and integrates the utopian elements of the lifetime work of this little-known Queenslander.

Early Development

Thomas Pennington Lucas was born on 29 July 1843 in Dunbar near Edinburgh, Scotland. His parents were Samuel Lucas and Elizabeth Broadhurst. Samuel Lucas was a well-known Wesleyan Methodist minister whose parents owned High Park Farm near Blidworth, Nottinghamshire where

he had been raised. Elizabeth Broadhurst had grown up on a farm at Farnsfield, also near Blidworth.⁵ Thomas Pennington Lucas was named after his great-grandfather, Thomas Pennington Lucas of Warsop Park, Nottinghamshire, who had died in April 1812.⁶

Five weeks after Thomas' birth, the Lucas family moved to Lerwick, in the Shetland Islands. A few months later they returned to England where, as Samuel Lucas' ministerial career progressed, they lived for several years in Allendale and Alnwick (Northumberland), Stratford-on-Avon (Warwickshire), Brynmawr (Wales), Helston and Launceston (Cornwall), Stow-on-the-Wold and Chipping Norton (Gloucestershire), High Wycombe (Buckinghamshire), Longton (Staffordshire), Scorton (Lancashire), Methwold (Norfolk), St Neots (Huntingdonshire) and Watlington (Oxfordshire).⁷ The Lucas family grew to include Celia (born 1847) and Arthur (born 1853).

The family's annual stipend never exceeded £120 and, although they received free housing, this was inadequate to maintain middle-class respectability. Samuel Lucas supplemented this stipend by using his geological interest to search for fossils to sell to collectors.⁸ His love of natural science shaped the careers of both sons.

Reverend Lucas tried to reconcile his irreconcilable scientific and religious convictions, writing and lecturing on 'Geology and Genesis' for example. Like many Christians of his day, he was too intelligent to reject the revelations of modern science—but neither could he allow Darwin's theory of evolution to challenge the Bible as being the literal word of God. Reverend Lucas wrote three books along these lines, *Creation Redemptive*, *The Noaic Deluge* and *The Biblical Antiquity of Man*.⁹ This schizophrenic intellectual/faith dilemma also plagued his son, Thomas P Lucas, throughout his life.

Thomas Lucas studied the classics and mathematics at three well-known public schools: King Edward VI (or Shakespeare's) Grammar School at Stratford-on-Avon; Helston Grammar School, Cornwall; and New Kingswood School, Bath. The latter School had

an iron discipline, which Prussians might envy. "Thou shalt not play" was the first commandment, and it is on record that a too good-natured master was expelled for actually himself playing with the boys. Premature rising on the cold mornings, chunks of dry bread and a pannikin of milk for breakfast and for tea, with a little meat at dinner, constituted the plain living. Lessons and services made up the curriculum, and manual labour supplied the exercise. The birch flourished as an educator.¹⁰

Thomas was offered a place at Cambridge University but lacked the financial support to accept.¹¹ He joined the prestigious *Linnean Society* in 1861, when he was only 18 years old, and remained an active member until his death, publishing a number of scientific papers.¹²

While Reverend Samuel Lucas served the Wesleyan Methodist parishioners at Stow-on-the-Wold (Gloucestershire), their local squire, W. Chamberlayne Chamberlayne, Esq., took a paternalistic interest in young Thomas, and arranged for him to study at the School of Mines, London, where he attended lectures by such scientific luminaries as Professors Owen, Ramsay and Huxley.¹³

The Lucas family felt that God was watching over them. Thomas described a life-altering event from his teenage years which led to his life-long utopian conviction that he had a divine mission to save humanity. During an unspecified illness 'which brought me to death's door', he heard the doctor say, 'poor fellow, he knows nothing now'. But his family prayed and 'as recovery daily proceeded, my father, who had given up all hope, said to me one day, "You have some work to do for humanity. Your life would not have been so miraculously spared, only for some great purpose".'¹⁴

Thomas believed that God was calling him to the field of medicine, which he studied while supporting himself through part-time work. In 1870 he received his Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians (Edinburgh) and his Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries (London), and became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1871.

After completing medical training, including Homœopathy which he had learnt from his father, Lucas tried to make his mark in medical research but was seen as something of a radical upstart by his elders. Lucas' research led him to challenge the wisdom of using alcohol as a medical treatment, at a time when alcohol was a widely-used medicine.¹⁵

During the spring of 1868, while still a 25 year old student, Lucas had married 23 year old Mary Frances Davies at Westminster, London. They proceeded to have six children of whom three survived: Thomas Pennington (born 1869), Arthur Henry (born 1871) and Celia Juliana (born 1874).

Following acceptance as a medical practitioner, Lucas and his young family moved to the rural Leominster area of Herefordshire. Being a rural doctor was not his forte, so by early 1874 he had returned to practise medicine in 'Hercules Buildings', Lambeth, London. This was a slum area and the Lucas home overlooked a notorious 'gin palace'. Lucas ran a surgery and attached chemist shop, making up his own medicines. His brother, Arthur, who joined him as an apprentice, recalled,

There were numbers of broken-down actors to be found in the neighbourhood and I came across many distressful cases. ... Some of the cases to which my brother was called in were terrifying, malignant smallpox, black scarlet fever, and once to a throat cut through with a worn-down table knife. And the gin palace attracted all sorts of poor devils, dragged down by drink. ... Vice seemed rampant. It was all sad and sordid.¹⁶

Coming to Australia:

In late 1875 Thomas Lucas' wife Mary died, aged 30, but he never mentions her in his copious writings. Lucas then developed tuberculosis about which he wrote at length.¹⁷ He left his three children with friends and relatives and, when sufficiently recovered, accepted a position as surgeon on the 'Essex', an Australia-bound barque. Lucas sailed on 3 December 1876 and reached Melbourne on 10 March 1877 after an uneventful voyage during which he was responsible for the health of the crew and 36 passengers.¹⁸

Thomas Lucas went to the Riverina district where, he believed, the hot, dry air would heal his lungs, and then to Fiji to visit Methodist missionaries. He returned to Melbourne and opened a medical practice at the end of 1877.¹⁹ During that year his first book, *The Laws of Life and Alcohol*, based on his own research and theorising, was published in London.²⁰

In 1878 Lucas married Mary Bradbury Ironside, a woman about whom he also makes no mention throughout all his writings. In April 1879, Thomas Lucas' three children, Celia, aged 5, Arthur, aged 8, and Thomas, aged 10, arrived in Melbourne on the ship, 'Ellen Stuart', to live with their father and step-mother.²¹ They lived in 'Balaclava House', Cecil Street, opposite the Town Hall in Emerald Hill (now South Melbourne). Over the next eight years, six more children were born, four of whom died within days of being born, the two survivors being Harold Ernest, born 1884, and Eunice Sarah, born 1886.

As well as conducting his medical practice and campaigning against the medical uses of alcohol,²² Thomas engaged in various scientific pursuits, founding the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria in 1882, and publishing numerous articles on natural history. He became friends with the famous scientist and Government Botanist, Ferdinand von Mueller.²³

Thomas' brother, Arthur Henry Shakespeare Lucas, and wife, Charlotte (nee Christmas), followed him to Melbourne on the 'S.S. Cuzco', landing at Hobson's Bay on 2 February 1883. Arthur had been offered the position of Mathematics and Science Master at Wesley College, Melbourne. Arthur and Charlotte stayed with Thomas and Mary until they could find their own accommodation. Arthur Lucas went on to become a famous Australian teacher and scientist, better known today than is his older brother, Thomas.²⁴

In early 1885, Thomas Lucas was nearly killed when thrown from his buggy. He gave up his medical practice and, while recovering, wrote his second and third books, *Do Thyself No Harm: A Lecture to Men*²⁵ which, among other things, is a veiled warning about the dangers of masturbation, and *Cries from Fiji*,²⁶ a polemic book in defence of Methodist Missionaries and against 'blackbirding'. Then, 'seeking for a warmer climate', Lucas came to Queensland to travel as a Medical Referee for an insurance company. He applied through Dr Joseph Bancroft and was registered by the Queensland Medical Board. Lucas returned to Melbourne, then moved his family to Brisbane in 1886 and established a medical practice.²⁷ Also during that year he published his fourth book, *Creation and the Cross: The Harmony of Science and Revelation*, an attempt to combine his scientific and religious beliefs.²⁸

Lucas's first Brisbane medical practice was in 'Whitecliffe' at the corner of Earl Street and Petrie Terrace, although he soon moved to the more central 'Maximilian House' on Ann Street, between Raff and Bowen Streets, and installed one of Brisbane's first telephones.²⁹ He opened a dispensary in Hick's Buildings, on the north side of George Street, between Ann and Turbot. During the early 1890s, Lucas moved his medical practice to his family home on the south side of Stanley Street, South Brisbane, near the corner of Raymond Terrace, conveniently located between an undertaker and a

chemist. The Mater Children's Hospital car-park is now on this site. He maintained his dispensary on George Street for several more years.

Lucas joined the Royal Society of Queensland on 13 April 1887 and, over the years, published ten scientific papers, mainly about butterflies.³⁰ On 6 August 1891 the entomologist Millais Culpin visited Dr Lucas' home in South Brisbane and described his insect collection as 'the finest in Australia. It consists of 100 drawers, all pretty full. About 80 are exclusively Queenslanders.'³¹ Lucas was an avid natural historian and gained fame and satisfaction from his natural science research, including discovering an unidentified butterfly, *Lycoena scintillata* (Lucas), about which he wrote a romantic poem.³²

Lucas' scientific competence was challenged by William Henry Miskin, of the Queensland Museum, leading to great antagonism. Lucas accused Miskin of incompetence, ignorance and ungentlemanly conduct.³³ Meanwhile, Miskin tried to deny Lucas access to the Queensland Museum collections, accusing him of stealing and selling specimens.³⁴ The official history of the Queensland Museum comments on this controversy by stating, 'with the taxonomic hindsight of almost a century it is worth noting that more of Miskin's new butterfly species have survived synonymy than have those of T.P. Lucas'.³⁵

Lucas's second wife, Mary, died on 28 June 1888, after giving birth to Irene Mary who then died within a month. Both were buried in Toowong Cemetery. This left Thomas with five children: Thomas (19) Arthur (17) and Celia (14) from his first marriage, and Harold (4) and Eunice (2) from the second. On 31 January 1889, 45-year-old Thomas Pennington Lucas married Susan Draper, the 41-year-old daughter of a well-known Queensland Congregationalist minister William Draper, and his wife Augusta. Lucas' descendants remember Susan as 'a real tartar and a source of great unhappiness'.³⁶ Then, on 4 October 1890, Lucas' son, Harold, who had 'suffered much physical injury'

died and was buried beside his mother, with Susan being accused of having abused and ‘murdering’ him.³⁷ With Victorian stoicism, Lucas ignores these family deaths in his copious writings.

Lucas decided to abandon medicine, and applied for the position of Chief Entomologist at Queensland Museum. He was unsuccessful, at least partly because he had annoyed local scientists such as Miskin, a key member of the Museum’s Board, and Charles J. Wild, the Government Entomologist.³⁸ Lucas continued his medical practice where he could at least earn a living.

In 1894, Lucas moved his home and surgery to a much grander house, on the south-east corner of Stanley and Sidon Streets, facing the ‘Ship Inn’ and the Dry Dock, on what is now Memorial Park, South Brisbane.

Lucas Papaw Ointment

In October 1890, Thomas Lucas had purchased a sixteen hectare farm just off Beaudesert Road, on the north-east corner of what is now Learoyd and Paradise Roads, Acacia Ridge. There, Lucas grew papaws and undertook scientific experiments into their remedial properties. He built a farmhouse, and by 1900 the Lucas family had moved out to this farm, while his medical practice was re-located to 160 Adelaide Street where it remained until 1911.

Papaw (*Carica papaya*) originated in Mexico and was first reported in Australia in the 1840s. It was being grown in Brisbane in the 1880s and was widely believed to be medically useful for removing intestinal worms and external warts, as well as for treatment of dysentery and diphtheria. It was also alleged to be an abortifacient although there is no evidence that Lucas prescribed it in that way.³⁹

Lucas grew papaws and manufactured 'Dr Lucas' Papaw Ointment' which was becoming ever more famous. He also bought papaws from nearby farmers, leading that area to be known as 'the home of the Pawpaw'.⁴⁰ Lucas claimed to have conducted experiments showing the remarkable efficacy of papaw, after controlled fermentation, in treating a wide range of medical conditions including epilepsy, tapeworms, uterine problems, hydatids, difficult childbirth, cancer, constipation, burns, removal of bullets and slivers of wood or metal, infections, blood poisoning, diphtheria and quinsy. Lucas Papaw Remedies could be taken as pills, applied as ointment, inhaled, or gargled.⁴¹

In 1894, Lucas published a dystopian novel, *The Ruins of Brisbane in the Year 2000*, and its utopian response, *Brisbane Rebuilt in the Year 2200*. In these, Lucas imagined Brisbane being destroyed through the evil, selfish and unchristian ways of its citizens and the corruption of politicians, but then being rebuilt as a Christian utopia of peace, health and prosperity. This literary creation is funny, touching and annoying, describing a utopian future which even today grabs our attention. This work deserves to be far better known as it presents such superb literary images of Brisbane.⁴²

On 27 April 1900 Bubonic Plague broke out in Brisbane with the first patient identified as 21 year-old James Drevesen, of Hawthorne Street, Woolloongabba. The diagnosis was 'confirmed by clinical and bacteriological evidence of such a convincing description as to place the diagnosis beyond any doubt'.⁴³

It was assumed that Drevesen, a carter, had contacted this dreaded disease while working at South Brisbane wharves. He and his family were forcibly removed from their home and taken to the 'Plague Hospital' at Bulimba where they had to sleep in tents because the buildings had not been completed. Their own house was quarantined, all bedding and clothing was burnt, and the

area blockaded by police. Under special regulations, many civil rights were suspended in Brisbane. Over the next few days, several other plague cases were identified and were similarly carted off to the Plague Hospital. The Editor of the *Brisbane Courier* later recalled, ‘the terror which an outbreak of plague may arouse in a community’.⁴⁴ There was such hysteria that a ‘Vigilance Committee’ was formed to support police, and the ‘Joint Epidemic Board’ had draconian powers.⁴⁵

Over the next eight months, 56 people were diagnosed with Plague, of whom 25 died, there being little effective treatment. This pattern continued until 1907 by which time 300 Brisbane people had been diagnosed with Plague and 118 had died.⁴⁶

Dr Thomas Lucas, however, ardently believed that there was absolutely no Bubonic Plague in Brisbane, that the disease was just influenza or ‘dengue catarrh’, and that the aforementioned events were a scandalously hysterical over-reaction by incompetent doctors and officials, and the deaths because of mistreatment. Lucas wrote that because ‘a few straggling bacilli’ were found ‘in glands affected by dengue catarrh or suppressed influenza, our shortsighted Government sprang a scare on the city, and manoeuvred their cleverest best to frighten sick and nervous people to death’. Lucas concluded, ‘there has been no single instance of the true Asiatic Bubonic Plague in Brisbane’.⁴⁷

Lucas saw this hysterical over-response as an assault on the reputation of Brisbane, and a threat to the lives of those unfortunate influenza sufferers. He lamented,

Oh that it could for ever be blotted out of Queensland’s history—that, in this most unwarranted of all senseless scares, captured victims were made to thrice run the gauntlet to death; first, in terrored fright; second, in unwise exposure to weather, in advertised plague

conveyances to the dreaded Plague Hospital; and, thirdly, by plague serum injections. ...

Was ever tyranny more brutal! Gangs of paid officials had to divinate the gods, to offer sacrifices of life and property to kill imaginary plague germs. ... The real damage done was the loss of life and property, the damage to our commerce, the labelling Brisbane a permanent Plague centre, the waste of thousands of pounds of Government and Municipal monies and the assaultive injuries committed on the so-called contacts and families.⁴⁸

No doubt angering his fellow doctors and Queensland's medical establishment, Lucas rhetorically asked his fellow citizens,

Shall we allow our city to be ruined by scientific éclat adventurers? Shall we drive away our commerce by pretending to harbour filth and Plague in one of the most healthy and clean cities of the world? Shall we allow our homes to be assaulted and our wives and children terrified by the impertinence of a few fanatics? ... The assault on the privacy of our homes and family life, is a violence against our British Constitution and liberty. Shall we tamely submit to be killed?⁴⁹

Lucas alleged that this misdiagnosis had a strong class basis. 'The whole matter has been throughout an audacious farce. It was played as Asiatic Bubonic Plague for the poor, the stranger, and the unfortunate ... hospital patient. But the same disease was dubbed pneumonia, typhoid, or other, for a premier, a judge's son, a railway commissioner, a doctor and gentry.'⁵⁰ The Board of Trade pressured the *Brisbane Courier* not to publish Lucas' allegations, a serious abrogation of their public responsibility.⁵¹

Dr A. Halford, the Queensland Medical Officer in charge of Plague prevention wrote bitterly about 'misguided persons' such as Lucas who denied Plague.

In Brisbane the same disbelief in the nature of the disease exists as is found in other countries. The same defiance of authority and obstruction to the performance of appropriate measures has been met with. ... There have been some persistent endeavours to incite people to revolt against the so-called Plague farce.⁵²

So provoked was Dr Thomas Lucas that he stood for election to the Legislative Assembly, for the seat of Brisbane South. Lucas eschewed both

the Labor and Ministerial parties, instead calling himself 'Independent Opposition'. His rambling manifesto probably alienated more voters than it attracted. He wrote a poem to promote his campaign:

We have a power-grabbing Ring,
Whose brains no man relies on ;
Who always do the foolish thing,
And never do the wise one.

Away this Queensland Tammany—
These sellers of the people—
With all their hazy politics,
And weather cock and steeple.⁵³

The election was held on 12 March 1902, but Lucas received only 346 of the 5651 votes cast (6%). As far as can be discovered, this was Lucas' only attempt at gaining political office, and the clear rebuff by his old neighbours and patients must have humiliated him.

In 1906, Thomas Pennington Lucas's oldest son, also called Thomas, died in Sydney, aged 37, so his widow, Morea (nee Marcolino) and their two children, Reginald Thomas (aged 6) and May Morea (aged 4) Lucas, came to live with the Lucas family, and attended Acacia Ridge State School.

In that same year, Lucas published his fifth and sixth books, *Domestic Medicine, How to Live, And How to Avert and Cure Disease*,⁵⁴ and a novel, *A Search for the Soul By the Aid of Nature's Flashlight*.⁵⁵ Both sold fairly well. In 1907 he published a political text, *Shall Australasia be a Nation*,⁵⁶ and two years later what would today be called a new-age, eco-spiritual work, *A Restatement of the Atonement as Interpreted from the Holy Scriptures and from Nature*.⁵⁷

Lucas continued to be scathing in his condemnation of the medical profession, seeing many doctors as being unscientific and prone to use surgery rather than natural remedies and prayer. He saw the medical

establishment as being blind to the wisdom of his discoveries, particularly the efficacy of papaw ointments. Lucas complained that

Medicine, in the practice of the day, is a libel on the medical profession, as scientists. ... We must acknowledge that surgery can butcher very neatly and cleverly. But, if ever a reckoning day were to be taken for the medical profession, where would the killed and devitalised through the knife, drugs and carelessness find room?⁵⁸

Promotion of Lucas Papaw Ointment

Thomas and Susan Lucas went to England in 1909 both as a holiday, to visit relatives and his birthplace, and to promote Dr Lucas' Papaw Ointment.⁵⁹

Lucas had earlier sent samples to the British Medical Association for analysis, but when he called in, was angered to find that no-one had bothered to look at it let alone conduct tests. Lucas sought recognition within the British medical establishment for his reputedly miraculous papaw ointment—and when that was refused he became increasingly bitter. The British medical establishment, like that in Australia, regarded Lucas as a crackpot.

While Thomas and Susan Lucas returned to Australia on the S.S. Otway, leaving London on 18 February 1910, smallpox supposedly broke out. The ship's doctor, ignoring Dr Lucas' advice, ordered the vaccination of all passengers and crew. This annoyed Lucas who later complained, 'evidently the vaccine, whether too old, or badly preserved, or by other reasons, carried some forms of blood poisoning. I had afterwards a number of these vaccinated patients with horrible sores and wounds to attend or advise.'⁶⁰

Thomas and Susan Lucas refused to be vaccinated and were held in quarantine for several days after the Otway reached Sydney on April 1, during which time there were several deaths.⁶¹

No amount of counter-argument or medical evidence could shake Lucas' disdain for modern medical practices which he detailed in his ninth book, *The Terrors of the Knife: Operative Surgery or Science Falsely So-Called*.⁶²

In November 1911, the 68 year old Thomas Lucas purchased a large, single-storied Queenslander, known as 'Vera', with wrap-around verandas, on the south-east corner of Sydney and Moray Streets, New Farm. He moved his family there from Acacia Ridge, and moved his medical practice there from Adelaide Street. He called this 'Vera Papaw Hospital' and proudly included its photograph in his 1914 book, *The Most Wonderful Tree in the World: The Papaw*.⁶³ In that same year, he published his eleventh book, mainly of poems, called *Sacred Songs and Nature Pieces*.⁶⁴

As well as doctoring, Thomas and Susan also ran a growing business producing and marketing a range of medicines based on fermented papaw. Lucas joined with William Thomas Atthow, Solicitor, and Hedley Scott Stephens, medical manufacturer, and, in 1911, started the 'Australian Pawpaw Company Ltd', with 30,000 £1 shares. This company's objective was to 'manufacture for and sell in the whole of Australasia the medicinal preparations known as Dr. T.P. Lucas's Pawpaw Remedies'.⁶⁵ They sold shares to about 200 pharmacists and shopkeepers around Australia, all of whom hoped to make money out of retailing Lucas' papaw medicines.

Lucas soon had a dramatic falling out with this company of which he was a Director and major shareholder, claiming that they did not adhere to his recipes. He denounced his fellow directors as charlatans, their products as worthless or harmful, and the company as a fraud.⁶⁶ Lucas claimed that analysis by the Health Department showed that this company's papaw ointment 'had no papaw in it'.⁶⁷ Lucas started making his own 'Lucas Papaw Ointment' once again, and sold this in competition with the company he had

helped to found. It is no wonder that the Australian Papaw Company failed to generate profits. It was wound up in 1915, although legal action against Lucas continued.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Dr Lucas offered Papaw Ointment to the army to treat wounded soldiers, but it became 'lost'. Lucas wrote a bitter, rambling letter to the Queensland Medical Council in which he detailed his complaints and listed the panacea-like qualities of fermented papaw;

medical officials ... infringed my position as a medical man duly qualified and licensed to practise as surgeon and physician and had commandeered a gift of Papaw ointment which I sent to the front ... for the treatment of wounds and diseases. ...

Through the Papaw Treatment I have ... cured hundreds given up by our surgeons and physicians.

I have many patients alleged by our leading surgeons to have had incurable cancer, who are now well. I have cured quite a number of cases of appendicitis, diphtheria, goitre, internal liver and other abdominal tumours, and without the knife or so called antiseptic or other injections. Hydatids die and are voided to the poison power of the drug. I have been able to cure hundreds of throat cases.

I have had perhaps the greatest successes in surgery. With the ointment I have extracted broken splintered bone, bullet residue, blood clotted and other naps of blood poisons, splinters of wood, grass seeds, metal wire filament etc.⁶⁸

Caught up in World War I hysteria, Lucas blamed Germany for all the problems of the world, and published a bizarre tract called *Dr. Lucas's Papaw Treatment versus Kaiser Kulture*.⁶⁹ In this, he hysterically decried Germany and its supposed scientific culture as one which

exalts itself to heaven. It lodges its bed in hell. It exists in a focus of blasphemy, lies deceit, and all manner of murder and rapine. It is the very antagonism of the righteousness and governance of the moral law. It destroys womanhood ; it damns manhood. ...

To-day this Kaiser kulture exposes itself as a deeply laid scheme to secure the destruction of the stud faculties of regeneration of nations alien to Germany.⁷⁰

Decline and Death

In 1917, the 73 year-old Dr Lucas was regarded as a quack by many of his peers. He had never made more than a decent living out of medicine, and now forces were gathering to bring him down. Carl Schmidt, of Dart Street, Paddington, sued Lucas for £200. Lucas had previously engaged Schmidt to promote and market Dr Lucas Papaw Ointment. When the case came into court, Lucas claimed that Schmidt had done almost no work while accepting a salary, while Schmidt alleged that he had done the work but Lucas refused to pay. These two men had earlier been friends, and the case was bitterly fought out in the Queensland Supreme Court, before Justice Chubb and a jury. Lucas was said to be 'very evasive in some of his replies', and the Judge warned him 'that he must not play with the court'.⁷¹ In his summation, Justice Chubb instructed the jury that in his opinion, Dr Lucas 'was either a very credulous, trusting old gentleman, or else he was the opposite—a cunning person'.⁷²

The jury opted for the latter explanation, Dr Lucas lost and was ordered to pay Schmidt the £200, plus all legal and court costs totalling an additional £315/18.⁷³ Lucas refused and pleaded penury. Fearing that he might lose this action, Lucas had previously transferred the titles of his Acacia Ridge farm and New Farm house into the name of his wife and their family solicitor, Edwin W Fowles. Lucas applied to be declared insolvent, and most of his remaining assets were seized, including his valuable collections of stamps and butterflies, and some household furniture.⁷⁴ Part of his butterfly collection, described as 'the finest in Australia'⁷⁵ is now held the South Australian Museum but the location of the rest is unknown.⁷⁶

On 30 September 1917 Lucas made his will in which his wife, Susan, was appointed sole executor, and was to inherit everything, much to the disgust of his children.⁷⁷ He added,

It is my wish that the wonderful virtues and remedies which I have discovered and prepared in connection with pawpaw should become a world trust for the good of humanity in order that tens of thousands of suffering people may be relieved and restored to health without the awful butchery of the knife, and I also wish that a book in connection therewith be published after my death but I leave both these wishes entirely to the discretion of my dear wife whom I hereby appoint as sole executrix of this my will.⁷⁸

Within a month of having been declared bankrupt, Thomas Pennington Lucas died of 'Sarcoma [cancer] of bladder, Haemorrhage and exhaustion' on 15 November 1917, and was buried next to his second wife, Mary, and their son, Harold, in Toowong Cemetery the following day.

Lucas owned no real estate, having transferred it all to his wife and solicitor. His personal estate was valued at £507, consisting of the payout from a life insurance policy plus £20 for 'Medical Books and instruments and bedding which deceased was entitled to retain out of his insolvent estate'.⁷⁹

During his life, Dr Thomas Pennington Lucas had been a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, England; Licentiate of Medicine and Midwifery, Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh; Licentiate Apothecaries' Society, London; Late Fellow Medical Society of London; Fellow of the Royal Society; and a member of the British Medical Association, The Literary and Scientific Club, the Royal Society of Queensland, the Linnaean Society of New South Wales, and the Natural History Society of Queensland.

Conclusion:

Dr Thomas Pennington Lucas was, in some ways typical of his era and social class. He was a misogynistic, ambitious, hard-working, scientifically and religiously driven Victorian gentleman who became well-known across a wide variety of spheres. He was also atypical in being driven by the conviction that

he could save humanity through his fundamentalist religious views, in his arguments against surgery and the germ theory of disease, and particularly through his vehement commitment to the use of fermented papaw as a panacea. In some respects, Lucas was generations behind time—but in other respects he would fit in today as a New Age, holistic healer and religious fanatic. He was an eccentric Queensland writer, scientist, inventor, medical doctor and utopian dreamer.

Epilogue:

In October 1919 Susan sold the papaw farm to Lucas' widowed daughter-in-law, Morea, and her new husband, John Compton, after whose family Compton Road is named. John Compton had worked for many years for Dr Lucas, running the small Papaw Ointment factory at Acacia Ridge. With the support of Susan Lucas, John and Morea Compton continued to manufacture Dr Lucas' Papaw Ointment until the business was taken over by Morea's daughter, May Morea Talbot (nee Lucas), and then by the next generation who continue to operate this family enterprise at 1590 Beaudesert Road in the Brisbane suburb of Acacia Ridge, very close to where Dr Lucas had his farm.⁸⁰

In September 1921 Susan Lucas sold Vera Papaw Hospital to William Bramwell Booth, the eldest son of General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army.⁸¹ The house became a Salvation Army hostel but has long since been removed, with a plain block of units erected on the site. A picture of Vera Papaw Hospital still appears on each container of Lucas Papaw Ointment.

When Susan Lucas died on 30 October 1933, aged 86, she was buried next to Thomas and his second wife, Mary, and son, Harold, in Toowong

Cemetery. The Lucas tombstone, however, only mentions Thomas and Susan and, in any event, it has fallen over and the Lucas grave is unkempt.

Endnotes:

- 1 The Museum of Brisbane helped support the research underpinning this paper. The author also acknowledges the help of fellow arts-workers Daryll Bellingham and Errol O'Neill, and the descendants of Dr T P Lucas: Sue Wynne, Kevin Talbot, Ryl Parsons, Lady Bennett and Barbara Cooper.
- 2 P. Martyr, *Paradise of Quacks*, Sydney: Macleay Press, 2002.
- 3 'Papaw', 'paw paw' and 'pawpaw' were all spellings used by Lucas at various times and the original spellings have been retained.
- 4 J. Thearle, 'Dr T.P. Lucas and the Papaw', in S. Atkins, et. al., (eds) *Outpost Medicine*, report from the Third National Conference of the History of Medicine, Hobart, 1993, pp. 49-53.
- 5 Information contained on Death Certificate for Thomas Pennington Lucas (Qld: 17/B026221); and in A. Lucas, (1937) *A.H.S. Lucas, Scientist: His Own Story*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, p. 16. In some later documents the mother's family name is misspelt as Broadhead.
- 6 <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/lost-mansfield/mnews/news1811.htm>.
- 7 A. Lucas, pp. 1-35.
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Members of the next generation also work there.
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father died in 1912.