



A map of the Julia Creek district showing surrounding properties is printed on the end paper.

1. Hospital
2. 'Red-light' Phyllis
3. Johnny & Violet Shaw
4. St Barnabas Church of England
5. St Abigail's Catholic Church
6. Masonic Temple
7. Court House (left), Police residence and station (right)
8. Four railway cottages
9. Football oval
10. Tennis courts
11. State school
12. Eckford dance hall & open-air picture show
13. Ernie Brazier's panelbeating works (later)
14. Alf Stainkey

15. Shire Office
16. Thelma Blanch
17. Bill Davis
18. Arthur Lowe's garage
19. Mathews' Hall
20. Post Office
21. Original Blue Bird Cafe
22. Charlie Byrne's butcher shop
23. Gannon's Hotel
24. Roy Hampton's billiard saloon
25. Lance Lewis' garage
26. O-K Store (left), Mrs Wilkin's drapery (right)
27. Samuel Allen & Sons Ltd
28. Julia Creek Hotel
29. Railway quarters

30. Hilton Park homestead
31. Tassie Triffett, blacksmith
32. Paddy Somers, tinsmith
33. Tommy Guest, mechanic
34. Bill & Hilda Winton
35. CWA cottage
36. Mannie Sill's fruit shop
37. Mann family (left), Lavarack's cordial factory (right)
38. AJ Smith's store
39. Coalstage
40. Bally Kaeser, baker
41. Herb & Emily Wilder
42. George & Mary Foster
43. Max Burns' workshop & home (not yet built)

Uncle Will came out from Inverell one year, and Auntie Blanch, to visit the relations in Julia Creek for the first time. After he'd been there about a week I said to him:
 "What do you think of our part of the world?"
 "Well Kathleen, there's nothing to see and there's so much of it."

KATH BYRNE



A lone kite hawk circles Julia Creek.
 [Merle Flewell-Smith, N15, 1950]

This page won't be printed.

Imposition details on page 817.



Above: Front and back cover of the Blue Bird Cafe menu.
 The inside of the menu is on page 258.
 [Harry Liaros, LH05, ca 1964]

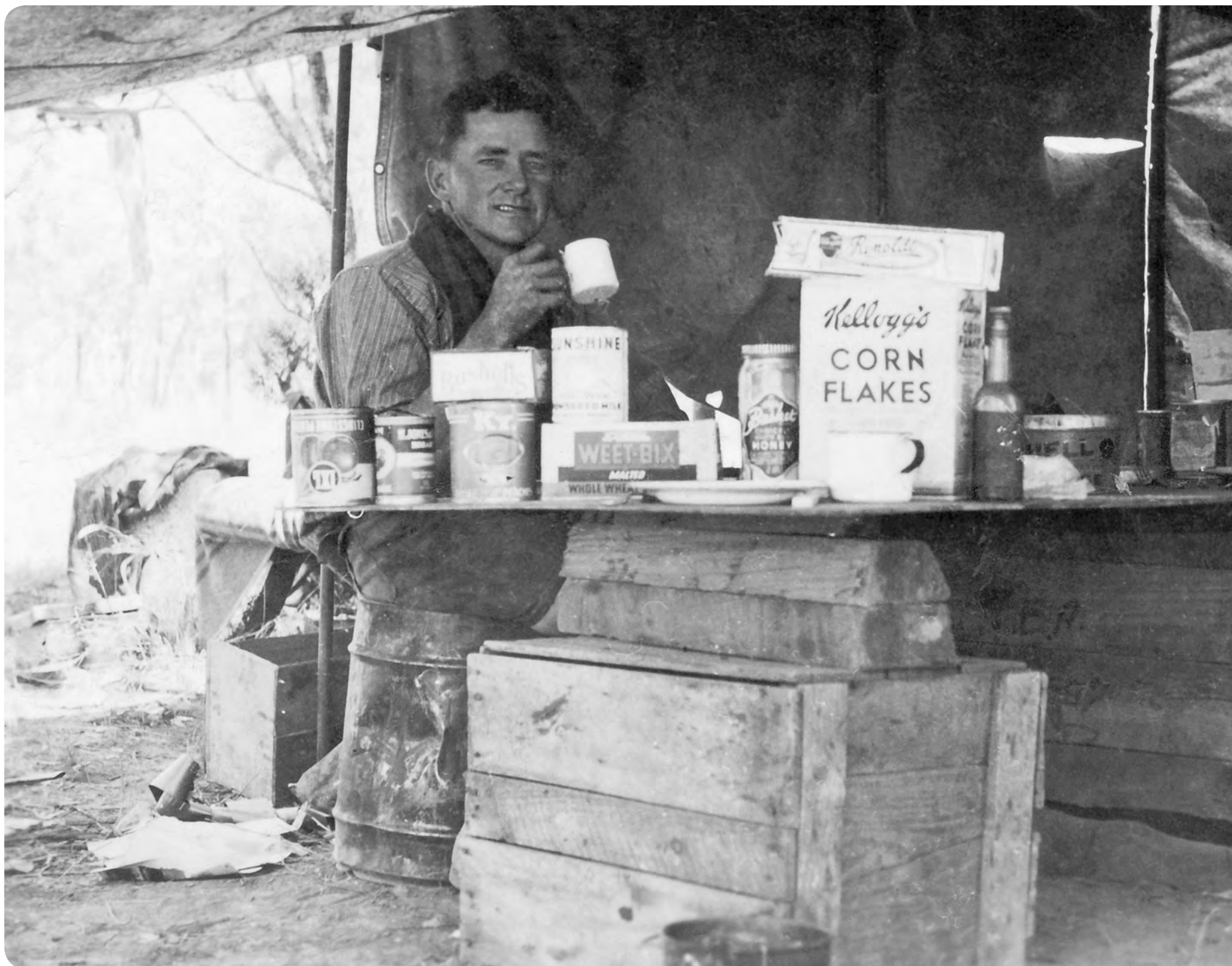
Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages;
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney sweepers, come to dust.

SHAKESPEARE



Outside the Blue Bird Cafe, Burke St, Julia Creek,
5.35 PM, Friday 6th September, 1957:
a little boy comes to dust.
Story page 764.





Above: "The boys snap the boss having his dinner."
 My grandfather, Max Burns, tanksinker,
 Clermont area, North Queensland.
[Joy Burns, J60, ca 1946]

"You couldn't get Kellogg's Corn Flakes when the war was on. It was only when the war was over did all those things come available again."
 (Barry Burns)

Printed on a Xerox iGen3, November 2009,
 on Saxton Chardonnay 115 GSM paper
 in a limited edition of 40 copies.

For details of how to purchase a copy of this book,
 or to download a free PDF version, visit
<http://sites.google.com/site/tanksinker>.

Guy Burns asserts his rights to be identified as the author.



COME TO DUST

A Work in Three Parts

Book One

Tank Sinker!

The Story of Max Burns & Julia Creek

Book Two

Bad Penny

The wartime love letters of Ned Flewell-Smith

Book Three

Tuppence For Tuppence

The story of Jill Burns and her betrayal

WHAT YEAR did you become interested in earthmoving --- 8th October 1940 was when I first started off in tractors.

WHAT HAPPENED on that day --- I took delivery of this tractor.

WHY DID YOU MENTION the 8th October. What is the significance --- I always remember that day because that was the day I went out officially contracting for money. But before that, to get a little bit of experience and know something about what I was taking on, I practised earthmoving on my own property where no one could see me.

THAT DATE IS FIXED in your mind because that was the date you started your rise to wealth --- Yes.

Below: The only photo of Max on a tractor, a Cletrac BDH, putting in fluming in the Julia Creek area. A part of the completed tank is just visible on the left of the photo.

A Cletrac FDE is on the right. The lettering on the horizontal arm of the BDH reads: "Max Burns, Earth Moving Contractor"

[Erol Davis, DE18, ca 1951]

"That's Max there. Of course it is. I recognize him. He's on a little dozer and he's covering the fluming. When the water outside the tank rises up during flood time, it runs through that pipe into the tank.

Very seldom Max ever come out on the job -- and he wouldn't hang around long when he did come out."
(Freddie Holznagel)

Max being questioned by the Official Receiver,
Supreme Court, Brisbane, 17 August 1961.



THROUGHOUT all your business activities you have used your creditors always to the fullest extent, haven't you? --- Yes, I have. That's very true.

IN OTHER WORDS, you have used the Taxation Department, by keeping them at bay as long as you possibly could, to acquire assets; and you have used your other creditors to the fullest extent --- Yes, and my creditors were quite happy to let me use them too.

H.C. SLEIGH couldn't have been very happy because they were the petitioning creditor --- I am talking about the earlier years. I think Sleigh's action was very ill-timed. Had they taken their time, most of the creditors would have got their money.

THE POSITION IS THIS: you could never have acquired these assets which, through the years, you did acquire, if you had met your tax commitments and paid your creditors when they were entitled to be paid --- That's probably right.

Below: Some of Max's assets (purchased with unpaid tax) at work: two Cletrac FDEs towing Britstand C14 scoops, sinking a 12,000 cubic yard tank on Belford Station near Winton. Cecil Willis, the foreman, is driving the crawler on the left, which is actively scooping on the downward run into the tank. The crawler and scoop on the right have finished a scooping run and are moving out of the tank to dump a load of dirt (14 cubic yards) on top of the bank. Just visible on the left skyline is a ripper, used for ripping the ground before the scoops move in.

The boy in the foreground is Beven Flewell-Smith, Max's nephew. The man on the right is Ivor Matsen, a new member of Max's team who was about to begin his short-lived apprenticeship as a tanksinker (page 507). Both were part of a convoy of Max's workers and equipment which had travelled up from Brisbane. Beven and his family were on their way to Balootha (page 481); his father had been employed by Max to build a homestead on the run-down property.

[Merle Flewell-Smith, N06, May 1950]

Max being questioned by the Official Receiver,
Supreme Court, Brisbane, 17 August 1961.



Introduction



I WAS MAX BURNS' first grandchild and I should have been born in Julia Creek, but I wasn't. The Julia Creek Hospital was in between doctors in January 1958 when I was due, so Mum went to Cloncurry.

My parents, Don and Jill Burns, lived on the corner of Burke St and Allison St¹ in a small fibro house, the front part of which was a showroom for cars being sold by my grandfather. Max had an engineering workshop² further along Burke St at the extreme western end of town and he had been selling cars from a showroom there, but the location fell outside the main sweep of traffic. People driving through town along Burke St on their way to Cloncurry, turned left at Allison St before they reached the workshop and therefore missed seeing the cars on display. Max was losing potential customers and so the showroom was relocated to the corner; and it was in the house behind the showroom that I spent the first 12 months of my life.

The Burnses had no connection with Julia Creek before 1947. In that year Max drove west from Charters Towers looking for tanksinking work, and found it in large measure on Clio. It was a lucrative business. Soon, money came gushing in like flood water filling a dam through a fluming pipe. Cash rained into Max's cupped hands, and just as quickly drained through his fingers into hotels, cattle properties, two homes, multiple blocks of land, the golf course and convent at Julia Creek, and women – anywhere but the Tax Department. Towards the end of Max's golden years, his everyday creditors – businesses large and small – joined the Tax Department in not being paid their due. The

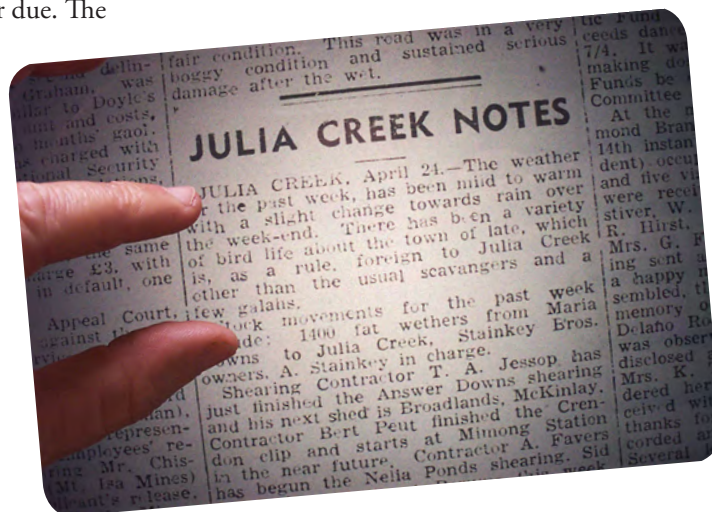
Tax Department was willing to wait but the other major creditors were not, and in 1959 my grandfather was bankrupted by the fuel company H.C. Sleigh. They were the instrument by which he entered bankruptcy, but of course the real reason was that he was a country boy with a pocketful of money at a city fair; a man new to wealth who was unable to restrain his urge to spend.

Because of the impending bankruptcy, all the Burnses living in Julia Creek (Max, his wife Marj, his sons Don, Barry, Mal and Butch, and Mum and I) left during 1959. Who now can know the real reason for the mass departure? Marj offered three in her testimony³ before the Supreme Court during Max's bankruptcy

proceedings: "I had a sun complaint (you can see the scars) and I was advised to leave the west"; "My son, Donald, was very keen on a hotel"; and "All we were looking for was to get away from the Julia Creek climate and live a little decently". No mention of what was almost certainly, in Max's case, the real cause: to escape the awkward situation of being a bankrupt and living among people to whom you owed money – and with no intention of repaying them – while still retaining access to wads of money yourself. Enough money⁴ for the Burns family (except Barry) to buy into the flashiest hotel in Lismore. Bankrupt economically and morally, Max would have been a social pariah had he remained in Julia Creek. Small-town mores compelled the Johnny-come-lately Burnses to move out.

Max left Julia Creek in August 1959. He died in 1979, parted from his wealth, separated from his wife, and divorced from Julia Creek. This book began as the story of the man and the town in the happy years they were together. In the telling, the story grew beyond those constraints to become a history of the man, of the town, and of tanksinking in the surrounding district prior to 1960, the end date being chosen to coincide with my grandfather's departure.

One of Max's legacies is his bankruptcy record which runs to almost 500 pages of court transcripts. Not only Max, but his wife and two eldest sons were subpoenaed to answer questions about where all the money went. Max's story begins on page 15 with the transcript of his first day in court.



WHILE RESEARCHING THIS BOOK, I sat in on a debate entitled "All History is Fiction" during a writer's festival at Southbank in Brisbane. The title should have been "All *Interesting* History is Fiction". The argument from the affirmative side was that written history (unless it consists solely of a list of indisputable dates and events – *boring* history) requires interpretation by the author to make the history interesting; and the process of interpretation, the 'livening-up' of the story, introduces fiction to some extent.

The fiction is dishonest if the story is distorted to fit a certain political view, or for other dubious reasons. The fiction is honest, and we

give it the name 'history', if the basic historical facts are retained and the fiction seeks only to embellish, to bring alive for the reader, what otherwise might make for dull passages.

Although, above, I called this book a history, it is largely honest

fiction. It is oral history of events remembered from many years ago – events each person truly believes happened as described – but the events, often personal, cannot be verified from other sources and are subject to memory distortion. For instance, occasionally I heard accounts of the one event from different people, accounts which differed significantly from each other⁵. There was no fabrication; the varied memories had simply evolved in different directions over the years and had unintentionally drifted away from the facts. Anyone who believes they can recall events from 50 years ago with perfect accuracy, or even within cooee of it, is practising self-deception.

Stories that are verifiably wrong or which seemed to me to be exaggerated have been changed (sometimes I was told a date, which, upon checking, I found to be incorrect). Third-party stories (“I was told...”) and common gossip have been left out entirely, except in a few cases where they have been included to highlight the tricks memory can play on us – the story that gets better as the years go by⁶. But otherwise, I have not overly concerned myself with the accuracy of what people told me. This is a personal history of Max Burns, of Julia Creek, and of tanksinking as seen through the eyes of people who experienced the events they relate. Herein, they speak for themselves. If you disagree with what someone says, first ask yourself: “How can I be sure *mine* is the correct memory?”

1. The house was located about halfway between sites 42 and 43 (see photo, front endpaper). At the time the photo was taken, the house did not exist.

2. Site 43, front endpaper.

3. See transcript page 56, first column.

4. £9000 in cash (~\$400,000 in 2009 dollars). See page 56, third column.

5. See, for instance, descriptions of the Holznagel and Cecil Willis fight, page 521 and bottom of page 525.

6. See page 754 (*Verities and Lurid Rumours*, third column); and *One Chop Usher* stories, pages 274, 275, 276.

7. Bryan Fels, Stumpy Malone, Mannie Sills.

8. One in Tasmania, one in South Australia, two in Victoria, four in NSW, and the rest in Queensland. Queenslanders, I've found, don't often move south of the border.

9. From the *North Queensland Register* (NQR) and *Cloncurry Advocate* (CA). The photo, opposite, shows me framing an article on a microfilm reader ready to photograph.

10. Photo captions are of the form [*Guy Burns, GB08, 1948*]. The person named was the owner of the photo when I scanned it, not necessarily the person who took the photo. The middle letters, *GB08*, identify the name of the photo on the DVD that comes with this book.

I BEGAN THIS BOOK on Nan's 90th birthday, 2nd October, 2001. The yarns she spun on her birthday were oft-told and familiar – Julia Creek, tanksinking, Max's women – and it was during the telling that her age and declining health urged me to collect the stories before they could be told no more. Nan had already entrusted me with the majority of her photo collection, thinking I would be the most likely of her grandchildren to do something with them. Her trust engendered in me a responsibility to document the history of the Burns family and preserve the photos and stories in a permanent form – in this book.

Since most of the stories revolved around Julia Creek, I had to go there and talk to people. Within a month of Nan's birthday I was sitting on a form outside the newsagency in Julia Creek's main street, yarning with three men⁷ who remembered Max Burns. I returned each year for the next four years. One person led to another and the project fattened to include the town of Julia Creek and tanksinking.

In July 2006, with 3000 scanned photos, stories from 200 people⁸, and numerous Julia Creek Notes⁹, I opened the computer program called InDesign and began the layout.

My aim was to put together a beautiful book about a dusty town, and how that town, set lonely on the treeless, waterless black-soil downs of western Queensland, affected people who had passed that way. The photos¹⁰ and the text were to be equal partners, complementing one another, entwined on the page, embracing and bringing alive bygone days. The stories by themselves were mundane, the Box Brownie photos often blurred, but by their marriage I hoped to meld the mundane and blurred into an interesting whole. But foremost, the book had to have beauty. Whether I have succeeded is left to the judgement of others.

Although I have made an effort to present the stories in chronological order, the result is more an encyclopaedia than a narrative. I expect readers will turn the pages back and forth as fancy takes them. To assist in this leaf thumbing, over the page I have compiled a list of contributors in alphabetical order in addition to a normal contents listing, to make it easier to find friends, relatives, or someone the reader might have heard about.

Apart from the people who contributed stories and photos, I would like to thank Stephen Wilson for his imaginative drawings, Jenny Pearce for her thorough editing, and Anne Kiely for her diligent proofreading.

GUY BURNS
Leith, Tasmania
December 2008

Contents

MAX BECOMES BANKRUPT	12	MAX & ROSEVALE	429
Bankrupt Called & sworn	15	Bill McKay, Christine Hennessey,	
Burns Burns & Burns.....	25	Norm Wilson, Alec Crowley, Pat & Margaret Luhrmann,	
£234 Commission.....	28	Bryan Fels, Neville Hamilton, John Pickersgill,	
A Man Named Bird	30	Harry Denman, Tom Forster, Leo Hennessey	
Exhibit 36 & Cheque 598.....	31		
MARJ BURNS	35		
		A CONVOY COMES NORTH.....	481
TIMELINE OF MAX BURNS & FAMILY	60	Isabel Flewell-Smith, Merle Flewell-Smith,	
		Stacey Brand, Ivor Matsen, Neville Sheehan, George Rickertt	
EXPLORERS		The Demise of Dew Drop Inn	494
Stokes	63		
Leichhardt.....	67	MAX’S TRIO POET CLETRACS	517
McIntyre.....	76	Freddie Holznagel, Bill Beutel,	
Henry	92	Erol Davis, Merv Brand, Ron Dau, Ted Sweet	
The Myth of Scorpion Creek.....	110		
O’Connell.....	113	A DUSTY DRY OLD JOB.....	551
		Jumbo Harris, Joe Azzopardi, Bill Burrows,	
THE RAILWAY COMES	119	Choco Winton, John Adams, Bill Ryder, Richard Magoffin	
		A Fearful Mess	553
FOUR YEARS WITHOUT HEART	132		
		PALMY DAYS	575
BUSINESS PEOPLE	163	Joey Mathews, Ard Cooney, Dot Smith, Graham Uhlmann,	
George Sills, Gordon Lavarack, Dadie Dawes,		Bernie Foster, Tom Wall, Alec Wall, Shirley Wall,	
Norm Downey, Betty Kaeser, Kenny Kaeser, John Kaeser,		Arthur Lowe, Clarrie Fickling, Jim Birch, Reg Fickling,	
Jean Jaques, Jenny Byrne, Marty Morris, Mavis McMahon,		Carmel Fickling, Judy Burrows, Ivy Burrows, Herb Fortune,	
Alma Gannon, Grace Horton, Joff Casey, Pam Faithfull		Alma Fortune, Bill Fortune, Albert Laurencic, Lena Akiloff,	
Plague Rats	165	Pat Wilkins, Mossie & Betty McDonald, Vicki Adam,	
Banks.....	174	Roy Hampton, Ernie & Hazel Brazier, Henry Harbutt,	
School of Arts	176	Myrtle Harbutt, Eric Blanch, Dummy Blanch, Thelma Blanch,	
		Frank Fayers, Nora Fayers, Esme, Doreen & Lionel Fry,	
TWO PIONEERING GRAZING FAMILIES.....	280	Edith Mann, Keith Hutchison, Grace Malone, Stumpy Malone,	
Herb Stainkey, Alf Stainkey, Mabel Shaw,		Jim Malone, Pat Malone, Jenny Pearce, Myra Beach,	
Elsie Stainkey, Mrs Shaw, Roderic Browne,		Don Dewar, Malcolm Dewar, Bill Davis, Brian Sohler,	
Rawdon Greene, Geoffrey Browne,		Ray Godier, Vi Edwards, Suzanne Svensson, Jim Svensson,	
Neville Browne, Ulick Browne		Bub Elliott, Maureen Byrnes	
Woolscouring.....	318	Swimming Baths	626
Icyballs.....	326		
		THE FINAL YEARS	771
CHILDREN OF THE DEPRESSION	343	Barry Burns, Eric Day, John Kirk	
Charlie Corrigan, Pat Chardon, Dot Dickfos,		Drought of 1952.....	780
Kath Gerahty, Bert Brisbane, Mary Winton,		The End of Max’s Tanksinking	782
Herb Wilder, Albie Wilder, Cooee Wilder		A Dividend of 5.6%.....	785
Four Pieces of Broken Teapot.....	392	Max’s Funeral.....	788
		Marj’s Funeral	791
		Friend of the Poorer Classes	795
		Bibliography	800

Contributors

Adam, Vicki	659	Downey, Norm	202	Magoffin, Richard	568
Adams, John	565	Edwards, Jim	746	Malone, Jim	713
Akiloff, Lena	650	Edwards, Vi	737	Malone, Grace	709
Azzopardi, Joe	557	Elliott, Bub	759	Malone, Pat	715
Beach, Myra	717	Faithfull, Pam	278	Malone, Stumpy	710
Beutel, Bill	524	Fayers, Arthur	683	Mann, Edith	700
Birch, Jim	617	Fayers, Frank	684	Mathews, Joey	576
Blanch, Dummy	677	Fayers, Nora	689	Matsen, Ivor	507
Blanch, Eric	676	Fels, Bryan	458	McDonald, Mossie & Betty	656
Blanch, Thelma	680	Fickling, Carmel	629	McKay, Bill	432
Brand, Merv	540	Fickling, Clarrie	616	McMahon, Mavis	232
Brand, Stacey	498	Fickling, Reg	621	Mellish, Lyn	59
Brazier, Ernie & Hazel	665	Flewell-Smith, Isabel	481	Morris, Marty	230
Brisbane, Bert	376	Flewell-Smith, Merle	493	Pearce, Jenny	572
Browne, Geoffrey	320	Forster, Tom	474	Pickersgill, John	466
Browne, Nevill	328	Fortune, Alma	641	Polgreen, Jack	22
Browne, Roderic	302	Fortune, Bill	642	Quilty, Tom	644
Browne, Ulick	334	Fortune, Herb	640	Richards, Bert	447
Burns, Barry	771	Foster, Bernie	591	Rickertt, George	514
Burns, Judy	45	Fry, Lionel & Doreen	696	Ryder, Bill	566
Burns, Mal	52	Gannon, Alma	234	Shaw, Mabel	289
Burns, Marj	35	Gerahty, Kath	368	Shaw, Mrs Violet	299
Burrows, Bill	562	Godier, Ray	732	Sheehan, Neville	512
Burrows, Ivy	635	Green, Claudette	200	Sills, Mannie	163
Burrows, Judy	633	Greene, Rawdon	310	Smith, Dot	584
Byrne, Jenny	222	Guest, Nookie	403	Sohier, Brian	729
Byrnes, Maureen	764	Hamilton, Neville	464	Stainkey, Alf	288
Casey, Joff	263	Hampton, Roy	663	Stainkey, Elsie	296
Chardon, Pat	354	Harbutt, Henry	669	Stainkey, Herb	280
Compagnoni, Alice	47	Harbutt, Myrtle	673	Stokes, Esme	694
Compagnoni, Wilf	38	Harris, Jumbo	551	Svensson, Jim	757
Cooney, Ard	580	Hennessey, Christine	434	Svensson, Suzanne	751
Corrigan, Charlie	346	Holznagel, Freddie	518	Sweet, Ted	548
Crawford, Nita	406	Horton, Grace	250	Uhlmann, Graham	586
Crowley, Alec	444	Hutchison, Keith	705	Wall, Shirley	612
Dau, Ron	544	Jaques, Jean	221	Wall, Tom	599
Davis, Bill	728	Kaeser, Betty	212	Walters, Harold	398
Davis, Erol	534	Kaeser, John	220	Wilder, Albie	384
Dawes, Dadie	185	Kaeser, Kenny	218	Wilder, Cooe	394
Day, Eric	773	Kirk, John	773	Wilder, Herb	383
Denman, Harry	469	Laurencic, Albert	647	Wilkins, Pat	654
Dewar, Don	719	Lavarack, Gordon	180	Wilson, Norm	438
Dewar, Malcolm	726	Lowe, Arthur	614	Winton, Choco	564
Dickfos, Dot	360	Luhrmann, Pat & Margaret	450	Winton, Mary	380

Max Becomes Bankrupt

IN THE SUPREME COURT
OF QUEENSLAND
TOWNSVILLE

No. 290 of 1958

MR. JUSTICE JEFFRIES

BETWEEN:

H.C. SLEIGH LIMITED

Plaintiff

and

MAX D. BURNS

Defendant

THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF JANUARY 1959.

The Defendant not having appeared to the Writ of
Summons herein:

IT IS THIS DAY ADJUDGED that the Plaintiff do recover
against the Defendant, THREE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED AND FIFTY
FIVE POUNDS, FOUR SHILLINGS AND NINE PENCE (£3555.4.9) and
TEN POUNDS TEN SHILLINGS (£10.10.0) costs.



FOR THE REGISTRAR

[Signature]
CLERK.

Debt £3529. 12. 3

Interest
at £5

21.11.58 to
13.1.59

25. 12. 6

Costs

£3555. 4. 9

10. 10. -

£3565. 14. 9

Left: This is the court action that ultimately led to Max's bankruptcy. H.C. Sleigh supplied fuel to Max for his tanksinking business, but lost patience waiting for payment. During 1958 they initiated action to recover a debt. Max didn't bother to contest the action and on 13 January 1959 was found to owe H.C. Sleigh £3,555/4/9.

A Sequestration Order, an order for Max's assets to be transferred to the Official Receiver, was made against Max in October 1959 (see point 1, opposite).

The Bankruptcy Act 1924 - 1959

AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION FOR TRANSFER OF
PROCEEDINGS.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF
QUEENSLAND, TOWNSVILLE.

BANKRUPTCY DISTRICT OF THE
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF THE
STATE OF QUEENSLAND.

No. 40 of 1959.

(No. 1 of 1961) re MAX D.
BURNS (whose full name is Mal-
colm Douglas Burns) of Julia
Creek, Earth Moving Contractor.
Date and place of public exam-
ination: 17th August 1961 at 11
a.m. at Bankruptcy Court Com-
monwealth Offices, Brisbane.
27/7/61. L. T. STAPLETON,
Official Receiver,
Commonwealth Offices, Adelaide
Street, Brisbane.

Courier Mail: 27 Jul 1961

I, ARTHUR WILLIAM BRASNETT of 10 Wentworth Avenue,
Mundingburra, Townsville, Official Receiver in Bank-
ruptcy, being duly sworn, make oath and say as fol-
lows:

1. THAT a Sequestration Order was made against the
above named Malcolm Douglas BURNS on the twenty-
third day of October 1959 on the petition of H.C.
Sleigh (Q'ld) Pty. Ltd., a creditor, and I was ap-
pointed Official Receiver of the estate of the said
debtor.
2. THAT the said bankrupt, his wife and two sons,
subsequent to Sequestration, took up residence in
Brisbane and are still resident there.
3. THAT all the real estate and chattel property of
the bankrupt situated in the Northern District of
the State of Queensland, have now been realised.
4. THAT the only remaining assets to be realised are
the collection of outstanding debts due to the
bankrupt, and a farm property at Caboolture in the
Southern District of the State of Queensland.
5. THAT claims in the estate are as follows:

Twenty-eight (28) domiciled in the
Southern District.... £29,170/-/4

Six (6) other claims from creditors
who have an office in Brisbane.... £1,061/9/3

One (1) domiciled in the
Central District.... £151/2/3

Nineteen (19) domiciled in the
Northern District.... £4,130/16/1

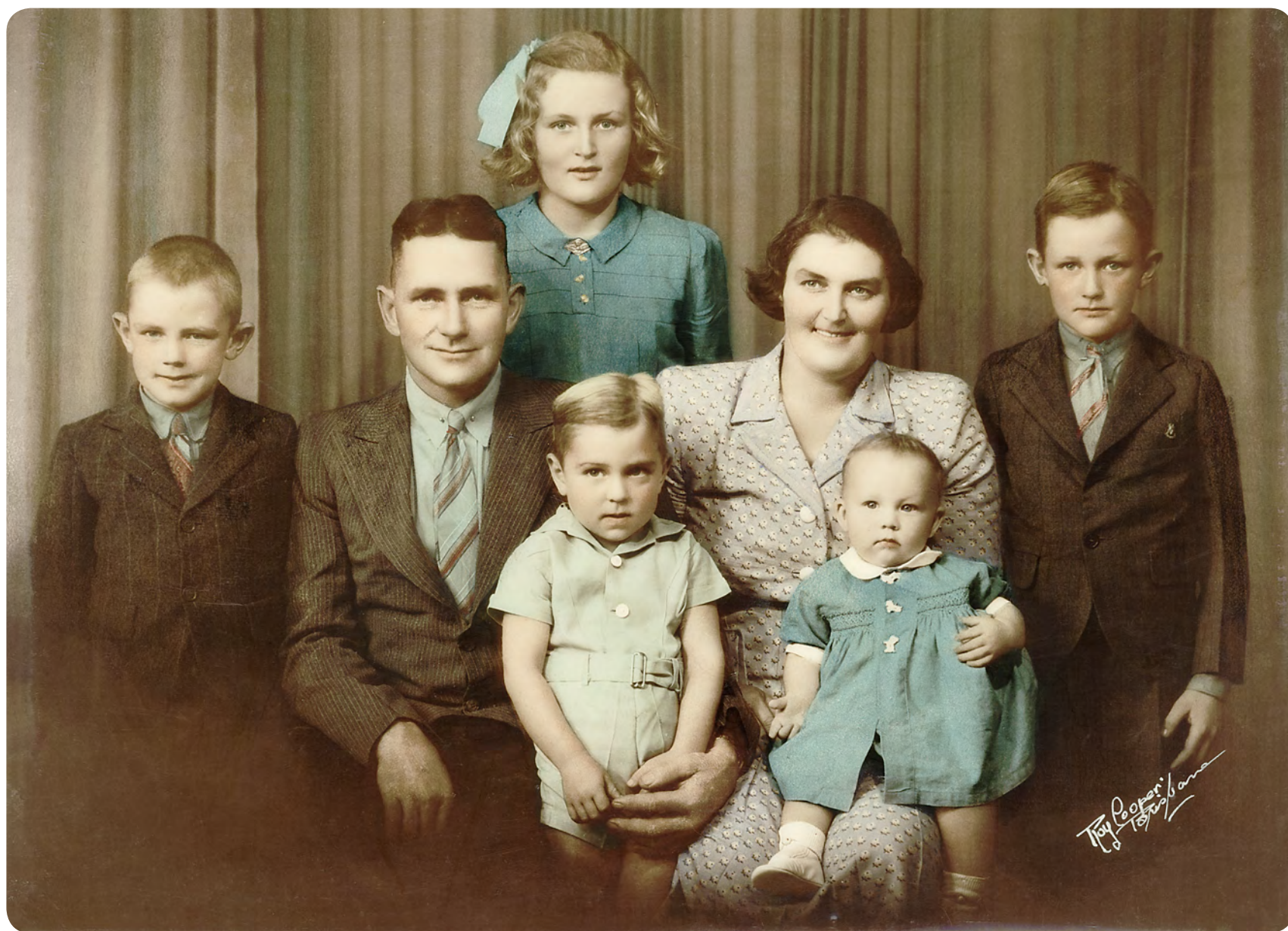
6. THAT investigations made in the estate to the
present time, in my opinion, indicate a definite
intention of the bankrupt, for over five (5) years
preceding his Bankruptcy, to transfer his property
to various members of his family with the object
of defeating his creditors. Consequently, the dura-
tion of the Public Examination of the bankrupt will
be lengthy, and is anticipated to exceed a fort-
night. In my opinion, it will also be necessary to
examine the wife of the bankrupt and two (2) of his
sons.
7. THAT the cost of holding the aforesaid examinations
in Townsville would be considerable, as the bank-
rupt, his wife and sons are resident in Brisbane;
and also Court Reporters and their typists would
have to be sent from Brisbane or Sydney.
8. THAT as the majority of the creditors, in number
and value, are domiciled in Southern Queensland,
and the only remaining asset to be realised is also
situated there, I consider that the administra-
tion of the estate could be handled more efficiently
(particularly in the conduct of the Public Exami-
nations and prosecution for any offences under the
Bankruptcy Act) if the proceedings were transferred
to the Supreme Court in the Southern District.

SIGNED AND SWORN by the above-
named Deponent at Townsville in
the State of Queensland this
fifteenth day of December 1960
Before me -

A. W. Brasnett

A Justice of the Peace.

A. W. Brasnett



Above: The Burns family.
 From left: Barry, Max, Joy, Mal, Marj, Alan (Butch), Don.
[Guy Burns, GB35, 1945]

Opposite: *Dewarn*, the Burns farm at Brigooda, Proston area.
[Guy Burns, GB46, 1932]

Max Burns

MR MOYNAHAN: What is your full name --- Malcolm Douglas Burns.

What is your present address --- At a farm at Ebbw Vale on the Toowoomba line.

You have a farm --- My wife has a small farm.

What is the postal address of that farm --- The nearest Post Office, or most convenient, would be Redbank.

Are you regularly on the farm --- Most of the time, yes.

Would you then describe your present occupation as being that of a farmer --- Yes.

What age are you --- 54.

The Sequestration Order under which you became bankrupt was made on 23rd October 1959 --- Yes, that's right.

The Sequestration Order was made on an act of bankruptcy which was committed on 6th February 1959. You were served with a Bankruptcy Notice were you not --- That's right.

By H.C. Sleight --- Yes

You recall that the Bankruptcy Notice was served on you on 23rd January 1959 --- Yes, I do.

In connection with that Sequestration Order, do you recall that you supplied a statement of your affairs under the Bankruptcy Act which was filed in the court --- Yes.

In paragraph 2 of your statement of affairs you said: "That I am now, in fact, bankrupt, and I became unable to pay my debts in due course as they became due about late 1948. The cause thereof, was monies were all tied up in capital assets". Is that statement correct --- That's right.

Is not the position this: as from about late 1948 right up until the time of your bankruptcy you were never in a position to pay your debts as they came due --- Not in cash, no.

What year did you marry --- 1932.

You would then have been about 25 years of age --- Yes.

I want to just run through the members of your family. How many children have you --- Five.

The first child was Marjorie Isobel Burns --- That's right.

Was she born on 3rd July 1933 --- That would be right.

Marjorie Isobel Burns is usually known as Joy --- That's right.

And the next child is Donald Douglas Burns --- That's right.

Bankrupt Called & Sworn

My grandfather appears in court, along with his wife and two sons

Was he born on 2nd September 1935 --- That's right.

And the next was Barry John Burns born on 13th October 1937 --- That's right.

Malcolm George David Burns born on 8th February 1942 --- That's right.

Alan Clive Burns born on 2nd June 1945 --- That's right.

The Sequestration Order that was made against you referred to you as Max Burns --- It's a nickname I have had for years.

You have used the name Max as a nickname throughout the whole of your trading activities have you not --- Yes, I would have been better known by that name.

Now, Mr Burns, as a young man you operated a farm at Proston, did you not --- That's right.

You operated that farm at Proston from about September 1932 until about 1937 --- That is so.

What sort of farm was that --- A dairy farm.



Was it '37 or '38 that you sold your farm at Proston --- '38.

Was the price that you obtained for the Proston farm £2500 --- That's right.

You in fact made a capital gain of about £1500 on that sale --- Around about, yes.

At that time you used that profit and you bought a farm at Biloela, did you not --- That would be correct.

In 1938 you moved to the Biloela farm --- Yes.

What was the purchase price of the Biloela farm --- £1600 in round figures.

When you moved to the Biloela farm, your wife and the children then born, of course, were moved to the Biloela farm also --- That's true.

That also was a dairy farm --- Yes.

Any other type of farming conducted other than the dairy --- Like most dairy farms you have a go at most things – a bit of cotton.

Did you in fact farm it for various products other than the dairy --- Mostly dairy, the others were only sidelines. I don't remember selling anything else. It was used as a dairy farm.

The Biloela farm was eventually sold about 1950 --- 1948 I think it was. It could have been '50. In round figures I thought '48.

While you were on the Biloela farm you became interested in earthmoving, did you not --- Yes.

How did that come about --- I had always been keen on it because there's a lot of money in it. I had a friend who was an agent for a machinery firm and he came out one day and said:

Would you like to have a go at tractors.

Yes, but where would I get a tractor?

You book up some work and I'll get some machinery out there. I'll juggle around with the deposit until you get enough to pay.

You did acquire one tractor then --- A tractor, a scoop, and a plough for about £600.

What happened was that you were taking on contracts in that district --- Yes, around Biloela.

Who ran the farm? Was it at that point you put a share farmer on the farm --- No, my wife actually took over the farm and ran it. After a few weeks, when I found there was a quid to be made out of tractors, I said: "You'd better take over the farm and take the cows". I think we agreed she'd pay me about £100 for the cows. There were about 40 cows. I said: "Make your arrangement with the butter factory to pay your half direct to you", which they did. Then after a few weeks, or a couple of months possibly, as I was only home weekends I said: "You'd better get a share farmer. It's too much for you". And, as it was, she did, and the share farmer got one half and she got the other half.

How many cows would be worked on that Biloela farm --- There would have been approximately 40 at that time and increased as the years went on. Would probably be about 100 at the time I sold it.

In that first year that you commenced in the earthmoving contracting, your income was comparatively small, was it not --- Yes. It would be natural, too, because in everything new you go into, you have to buy your experience. The prices were low and I was doing most of my work for the Bureau of Rural Development, who pay periodically and were pretty long-winded about it.

What year did you become interested in earthmoving --- 8th October 1940 was when I first started off in tractors.

What happened on that day --- I took delivery of this tractor.

Why did you mention the 8th October. What is the significance --- I always remember that day, because that was the day I went out officially contracting for money. But before that, to get a little bit of experience and know something about what I was taking on, I practised earthmoving on my own property where no one could see me.

That date is fixed in your mind because that was the date you started your rise to wealth --- Yes.

Coming then to the period 1st July 1940 to 1st July 1941, you still conducted the Biloela farm --- Yes, I used to go backwards and forwards.

And in that year you acquired another tractor --- That's probable, yes.

That was the year the share farmer came onto the farm --- That would probably be right, yes.

And the share farmer continued to conduct the Biloela farm from at least 1941 right up to the time when it was sold --- It wouldn't be the same farmer, but a share farmer, yes.

It was during that particular year of 1940 that Mrs Burns – and we haven't yet got your wife's full name... --- Gertrude Marjorie Alice Burns.

... that was the year your wife and family moved into Biloela township --- That's true.

And from about the year 1941/42, the earthmoving you were doing was your main source of income --- That's right.



Left: Looking towards Flat-Top Mountain, Calvale, at the base of which, under the morning mist, was Max's farm *Bauhinia* in the Biloela district. Taken from near the site of the Calvale school (now defunct). Joy and Don Burns were among the first intake to this school when it opened in 1941 (see BL05 page 51). [Guy Burns, GK93, 2003]

Opposite: The first page of Max's bankruptcy proceedings. The transcript runs to almost 500 pages and is available online at <http://sites.google.com/site/tanksinker>.

And that was the position running right through till the income tax year of 1944/45 --- Yes.

Don't agree with me Mr Burns if you don't know --- If you're talking about the bulk of it, yes.

I am saying that the bulk of your income arose from contracting --- Yes.

As a result of your own returns through the years, the position was this: that your income in these earlier years, starting from the year 1938/39, was £291 --- Yes.

The year 1939-40: £397 --- I'd only be guessing, but it sounds correct.

The year 1940-41: £697. Do you accept that --- Yes, near enough.

The year 1941-42: £801 --- Yes, near the mark.

The year 1942-43: £613 --- That's right.

The year 1943-44: £1491 --- Somewhere near it, yes.

In 1944: £1369 --- Yes, sounds like it.

Coming then to the income tax year of 1945-46 your income rose to £2445 --- Yes, that would be right. It would be due to the increase in the number of machines I had just after the war.

I take it, as your income was increasing, you were well aware that a tax liability would accrue and was existent --- That's right; but at that stage it could have been quite easily paid and kept up to date. Had I had better advice on the accountancy side of it, I don't think I would have spent as much as I did and kept expanding as I did. I was very lax. I just went along and went along until it got really serious with the Income Tax Department. I didn't even know myself that the income tax returns had not been lodged, until I suddenly found I was two or three years behind.

And, of course, you knew at that particular time, just after the war and during the war, that taxation was a very very heavy item --- Yes, that's right.

In the 1946-47 year your net income rose to £3462 which was quite a substantial increase over the previous year --- Yes.

And in that year you paid a certain amount of taxation. You were paying your tax each year --- Yes.

Do you recall, in relation to that 1945-46 year when your income tax was £2445, that you paid an amount of taxation amounting to £1176 --- Well, I just can't recall it, but I suppose it must have been paid if the record is there.

I thought that since that was the first large amount of tax, you might remember it --- No, the money was so easy to get and coming in so fast - £1100 wasn't a lot of money for me in those days.

Do you recall, Mr Burns, around about those particular years, 1946-48, that you, in fact, did not pay very much taxation at all --- I fancy that could be right. I

think the reason was that I was arguing with the Tax Department about the five year average. I thought I was entitled to go to a Board of Appeal.

You do recall, of course, that there was a tax investigation into your affairs --- That's right.

That was in 1953 --- I think it would be about that time, yes.

NOTES OF PUBLIC EXAMINATION OF MALCOLM DOUGLAS BURNS, A BANKRUPT

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF QUEENSLAND
BANKRUPTCY DISTRICT OF THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT
OF QUEENSLAND

No. 1 of 1961

Before the Registrar in Bankruptcy, District of Southern Queensland,
at Brisbane, on Thursday, the seventeenth day of August 1961 at
11.00 a.m.

Mr E. J. Moynahan (instructed by the Commonwealth
Crown Solicitor) appeared for the Official
Receiver, Trustee.

MR MOYNAHAN: In this examination I appear for the Official
Receiver if you please Mr Registrar and I
desire to call the bankrupt. I would ask for
the appointment of a shorthand writer.

REGISTRAR: I direct that the evidence of the bankrupt on
his public examination be taken in shorthand
and transcribed and I appoint Miss Snowden
shorthand writer.

(Miss B. J. Snowden, shorthand writer, sworn)

BANKRUPT CALLED AND SWORN:

MR MOYNAHAN: What is your full name --- Malcolm Douglas Burns.

What is your present address --- At a farm at Ebbwvale on the
Toowoomba line.

You have a farm --- My wife has a small farm.

What is the postal address of that farm --- The nearest post office
or most convenient would be Redbank.

Are you regularly on the farm --- Most of the time, yes.

Would you then describe your present occupation as being that of a
farmer --- Yes.

What age are you --- 54.

The Sequestration Order was made under which you became bankrupt
on 23rd October 1959 --- Yes, that's right.

That Sequestration Order was made on an act of bankruptcy which was
committed on 6th February 1959. You were served with
a Bankruptcy Notice were you not --- That's right.

By H.C. Sleight --- Yes.

-1- M.D. Burns 17.8.1961

In that year of 1946-47, when your net income rose to £3462, you bought a house and land at Woody Point, did you not --- I think it was later than that, but it may have been '46.

The records show that the Woody Point house was acquired on 21st January 1947 --- That could be right.

And in that same year of 1947 you bought several pieces of land at Redcliffe --- That's true.

What was the purpose of buying the house at Woody Point. Was it a holiday place for the family --- No, it was just a cheap little place. I think it was about £300.

My records show £450 --- Was it? Anyway, the seller was a commission agent and a friend of mine. He said: "Why don't you buy this thing? You can make a quid on it one day". We never lived there. We had no fixed home at that time.

Coming to the 1947-48 year: you still, at that time, had the Biloela farm, and you were earthmoving also --- Yes.

In that particular year your income jumped very very steeply, did it not --- Yes, according to my accountant.

Below: Mat Maleza, Billy Britten, Max, making out they are jumping over an International T6 tractor.
[Joy Burns, J59, 1946]

"That's outside Clermont. Mat Maleza on the end, Dad on the right, and Billy Britten. Dad bought that T6 in late '44. He bought that after we moved to Clermont.

"All around Capella, Emerald, Clermont, up to the Belyando – it was all heavy brigalow scrub. You'd spend three or four weeks getting rid of the trees before you could put in a dam. Billy Britten was the best one. He used to scale up the trees and put a rope around them so they could be pulled over." (Barry Burns)



Your returns from around this period were late, weren't they --- Yes, they were just done... anyhow.

In fact your 1948/49 return was only lodged in March of 1954... --- That's right.

... after Mr Scott from the Taxation Office investigated the position --- That's very true; yes, unfortunately. After Mr Scott got to know me better, he said if the two of us had got together a few years earlier, the both of us might have made a fortune. He was an accountant; and with my energy, he said, we both could have made a fortune, indicating to me that I didn't get the deductions I was entitled to.

You apparently got on very well with the taxation investigator --- Yes, a nice old chap. He had to do his job and that was that. He came to Julia Creek in a very hot period of the year, and he had to walk back to his hotel in the heat. I offered to drive him, but he said no. After a few days he told me: "You have got yourself into trouble. Don't rob anybody over it". We got on very well.

In 1947-48 you had a spectacular increase in your net income to £16,274 --- That's right. They were the figures that were submitted.

That was on an increased turnover in your contracting business --- Yes.

From a turnover of £9218 the previous year, up to a turnover of £31,400 --- That would be right. I had to acquire a lot of machinery, of course, to do it.

At that time you must have known that you would be subject to very heavy taxation --- Yes, it was getting me worried by this time. I had to come down and see my accountant. Unfortunately, I was 1000 miles away and he was in Brisbane – doing very little – and it was getting into a real mess.

In that year of 1947-48, you bought the freehold of the Commercial Hotel, Charters Towers, for £2700 --- That would be right. It was bought more

for a home than a hotel.

Up to this time, your wife and family had been living at Biloela --- No. Before we bought the Commercial they were living at Clermont. We sold the home in Clermont, and the hotel was somewhere to go.

When you bought the hotel, the family then moved to Charters Towers, is that the position --- Yes, between that and caravanning. We had quite a collection of caravans in those days. During school holidays the family lived in a caravan near tanksinking jobs.

The older children were going to school at Charters Towers --- The boys, yes. The girl went to school in Brisbane.

The three older boys, Donald, Barry and Malcolm, what school did they go to in Charters Towers --- All Souls.

Did those boys also go to Southport School --- Yes, later on for a little time. It was too far away, so we shifted them back.

In this particular year, 1947-48, did your contracting business take you west --- Yes, earlier than that. As early as 1947 I was in the Far North West.

In regard to the Commercial Hotel, who held the licence --- My wife.

But it was your purchase --- I think it was. The idea behind it was that the wife's brother, Ned Flewell-Smith, a young chap who had come home from the war, it was something to fit him into – which he didn't fit into. We bought it for a home, with the hope he would take it over and run it, but he didn't fit into it. He'd been in the army too long.

What was the arrangement between you and your wife in regard to the Commercial Hotel --- I am just a bit hazy on what went on there. Primarily, I bought it for a home; not with the idea of making any money out of it, but with the idea of getting this young chap into it and getting an income for him. I'm afraid I can't recall what the setup was. My wife was in it. Whether I was in or not... I could have been.

Right: Joy, Don and Butch Burns at Woody Point.
(Joy Burns, J64, Dec 1948)

"That's the tent, army disposal stuff, and it was pitched back about 20 yards from the hut built on the waterfront at Woody Point." (Barry Burns)

"Butchy used to love Mum. Every time he got roused on he'd take off and come and stay with Mum. He'd sleep at our place. Pedal over in this little red pedal car. Marj would be worried sick. Mum'd have to ring Marj and say that Butch had arrived in his little red car." (Judy Burns, Butch's cousin)



The Commercial Hotel was never a paying proposition --- No, it was never intended to be.

You did not run the Commercial Hotel for very long --- No.

Where did the family move to then --- The boys were boarding at All Souls, the daughter went to school in Brisbane, and my wife and the youngest son went with me in the caravan, tank-sinking anywhere in Western Queensland.

In this year 47/48 you bought further parcels of Redcliffe land, including a vacant block in Georgina St --- That's right.

That piece of land at Georgina St has a house built on it today, hasn't it --- Yes, that's true.

In whose name is that today --- It's in my daughter's name.

That's Joy --- Yes. Her grandmother lives there, my wife's mother.

Coming then to the 48/49 year, your taxable income for that year was in the vicinity of £18,799 --- According to my accountant, that's right.

Now, in this particular year of 48/49, you purchased a grazing property known as Balootha, and your wife purchased two adjoining grazing properties, Abydos and May Downs. Balootha was a property of something like 33,000 acres --- Roughly in round figures, yes.

And Abydos and May Downs, were, in round figures, something like 34,000-35,000 --- Very close to 40,000 I think.

These three properties, they were really one weren't they? They were contiguous and made up one entire hold --- Yes, they adjoined each other.

And they were operated as one property --- I owned all the stock at all times, yes, certainly; and they grazed on Abydos and May Downs.

It's a fact, is it not, that it would not have been permissible for you, as an individual, to hold in your name Balootha, Abydos and May Downs, because it exceeded the 60,000 acres which was the maximum for a grazing homestead area --- I don't know if I investigated that part of it, but that was probably right. There had to be a second name to hold it.

Neither of you could hold the lot. Isn't that the reason Balootha was put into your name, and Abydos and May Downs in Mrs Burns' name. --- The story behind it is this. We were offered this property. We were told it was cheap, and it would be very easily resold and we could make a quid out of it, so I said to my wife: "You take Abydos and May Downs, and I'll take Balootha". I supplied most of the money to buy them.

In this 1948-49 year, that's the year that you bought Balootha, you also bought further land in Redcliffe --- Yes, I bought quite a few allotments. Mostly off one man. They were dirt cheap.

Didn't you buy a property in Macdonnell Road, Redcliffe; house and land for £3600 --- Yes, my wife and I.

You lived there --- Yes. Our occupation was mostly in the west, but when it got too hot and wet we used to come down here.

This was the family holiday home --- That's right. You could call it a holiday home. It was the only home we had really.

It was, was it not, the practice for the whole of the family to reside at Macdonnell Road, Redcliffe, from say before Christmas right through to Easter --- Yes.

The whole of the family, in effect, spent the wet months down at Macdonnell Road because you couldn't carry on your contracting --- Yes.

What was the purpose of putting that property in joint names --- We both provided the money and bought half each.

You see, this happens in the same year your wife comes in on the grazing property. Where do

Below: Max's tanksinking plant on Clio. Some time in 1947, before Max began work on the ovals at All Souls, he went west with his machinery for the first time, to begin earthmoving on Clio, about 60 miles north of Winton. From left: Max (with dog), ?, Butch Burns, Deric Flewell-Smith, Marj Burns, Clive F-S, Dawn F-S, Ned F-S. [Dawn Flewell-Smith, DF74, 1947]

"Those are the vehicles we had when I first started with Max [a few months after this photo was taken]. The first on the left is definitely a TD18. See the twin exhaust pipes and the air breather? And that's the Le Torneau scoop behind. You can see the arm along the top that lifts the cutting edge up and down. Next is the first Cletrac FDE Max had; and that'd be the Britstand scoop behind it. That Cletrac would be one of the older models - it's got two headlights. The newer models had one headlight. Then there's the water tanker, always parked close to the caravan.

"I suppose that would be Max's van on the right, and in front is his Ford Deluxe ute. That's the one I rode in the back of when we went from Clio to Charters Towers, to visit my wife who was staying at the Commercial Hotel!"

(Pat Luhrmann)



I FIRST encountered Max Burns in 1950. He came to put down two tanks for us on Gairloch: one was 20,000 yards and the other about 15,000. The first one was a beautiful site and a first class job. The second one, unfortunately, Max struck a seam of sand about 3 or 4 feet deep, and it didn't hold water for years and years until the stock tramped the banks in and sealed it off. Not that it was Max's fault. It was the site we'd picked. He did a good job with what we gave him.

Just a little story about those tanks: Mum and Dad were away and left me the cheque book to pay Max when the job was finished. I paid for the first dam, but when it came to the second one I wasn't too happy about the sand seam. Max said: "Well, I'll toss you double or quits what we do about the second one". I wasn't game to take him on; it was

Dad's cheque book.

Before Max arrived, we had all those war years when nothing happened in the west. Absolutely nothing. And prior to the war years you had the Depression. There were only a few tanks before the war. Some had been built with small tractors (though a lot of them would have been done by horse teams), but they weren't of the same magnitude as the tanks Max put down.

Max did a lot of work in 48/49 and into the early fifties. There hadn't been earthmoving plants of that magnitude around that country previously, and a lot of people got in with Max and had tanks put down, us being one of them. The only other contractor that I knew of at the time, would have been Bode & McKay¹, and they were based in Winton.

In the mid-fifties work tapered off for Max, and

for anyone in earthmoving. Wool prices, for a start, came back dramatically and people tightened their belts after the few good years between the end of the war and the end of the wool boom.

Very few tanks go down now because the Julia Creek area has good artesian water. Drilling plants to get to the water have improved to such an extent that you can put down a bore in a fraction of the time, and deeper, than you used to be able to do it.

Tanksinking still happens, it's just done in a different way. Now it's done with a 4-metre bucket on a front-end loader. They didn't have buckets then; not to the extent they have them now, or the size they have them now.

ERIC SLACK-SMITH



1. See story page 432.

you suggest your wife got the money, if she paid half of £3600 --- I don't know, but she had it at that time. If you have got an entry there you could refresh my memory.

Now, Mr Burns, come to the 1949-50 year. In that year your taxable income dropped to £12,416 --- Yes.

Apart from living for certain months of the year at Macdonnell Road, Redcliffe, did the family go and live at Gayndah --- Yes, we bought another hotel.

There was a purchase of the Burnett Hotel at Gayndah --- That's right.

That was purchased for £5437 --- That's the figure, yes.

Was that a leasehold or a freehold of the Burnett Hotel --- Leasehold.

How long was that lease operated at that hotel --- Approximately a year.

With regard to the acquisition: who acquired the lease. Was it you yourself, or was it you and your wife --- Jointly. Originally, it was for my wife's brother. He wanted to go into a hotel, but he knew nothing about it. My wife had had some experience and so they went into it together. That was the story behind the Burnett Hotel.

In that remark about your wife's brother, you're not confusing the Commercial Hotel at Charters Towers with the Burnett Hotel at Gayndah --- Another brother-in-law, but not the same person. This was Stan Flewell-Smith. The other one was Ned, his brother. Stan was a policeman and had had no experience in hotels. When he got in there and found you had to work pretty hard, he pulled out and we were left with the hotel.

When he pulled out who ran the leasehold then --- My wife.

Were you living there also --- No, I was in Western Queensland with the tractors.

Returning to your purchase of Balootha, you paid £8000 for the property --- That's right.

And £7900 was paid for Abydos and May Downs --- That's true.

It's correct, is it not, that you provided all the funds --- I think my wife may have provided £100.

In addition to your £7900? So each property cost £8000 --- Yes, that's right. £16,000 was the total, and my wife was to pay me back £7900.

At the time you purchased Balootha, 1947-48 year, you had had a spectacular increase in your net income --- Yes.

That was when it jumped up to £16,000 odd --- Yes.

And in 1948-49 year your income went up again to £18,799 --- Yes.

But you knew of course that you must face heavy assessments, didn't you --- Fairly heavy. Yes, I would think so. I was still bargaining on a 5-year average from the Tax Department.

I understand that, but the point is: I am just curious as to your knowledge. You must have known you would be facing crippling taxation --- I knew the earning rate was going up alarmingly, but at that time I wasn't greatly concerned, because it looked as though we were going to keep going. I didn't stop to think the income might slow down. It ran itself out, unfortunately.

Your biggest years -- 1946-47 and the next year -- you didn't receive your assessments for those two years until September of 1949 --- I think that would be somewhere about then.

Your tax commitments crystalised into the assessment, in September of 1949, of £21,557 --- Yes.

BP2	Z26 ...	...	Hugh Lloyd	
BP3	AH3 ...	...	Alan Tregoning Paull ...	Carn Brae, Bowenville
BP4			Burns, Burns and Pol- green	Balootha, Julia Creek
			David Small	Calliana



I WAS MANAGING INGLE DOWNS when I first met Max Burns. I gave him a tank to put down and clean out another one. I drove for him for half a day. Old Oliver crawlers he had. Well, they were new Olivers then.

Max was looking at Balootha. He was mad keen to get a bit of land, so I rang the agents and they told me Balootha looked like good buying -- which it was. Plenty of water.

About eight or ten months I was on Balootha. Might have been longer cos I had to build cattle yards, and that took a while. I had men with me, of course. And Bosie Byrne was there. He was a butcher from Julia Creek.

I was managing the place. There was absolutely nothing on Balootha when we bought it. When I say 'we', I was to be a third share. Three of us were supposed to be in it: myself, Marjorie Alice Burns and Malcolm Douglas Burns. (The names are right, aren't they?) We even registered a brand. But when I got the rate notice my name wasn't on it. That's when I packed up. Didn't worry me. I was young and had plenty of ability.

I went back to Balootha only to get my horses, that's all. I had about 20 head of horses that I took up to run the place

with. That was all I was left with after my experience with Balootha and Max Burns, and I brought them all back here to Winton.

I WAS BORN in Port Pirie, South Australia, 1915. My father had a little place called Corona. I pretty well did most of my schooling at a Catholic college in Adelaide -- King's College. Then Dad shifted to Queensland, to a place outside Cunnamulla. We started droving and friggling around and the years went by.

I broke in horses at a place outside Charleville. Never forget the little yella fella they had. He'd be one of the missing kids the blackfellas are moaning about now. Murrays, the owners, adopted him. He had a good home. He'd come down the yard and watch me handling horses. Sit there all day watching; didn't matter the weather.

I went up to the house one day for smoko, and when I got there Mrs Murray said to me:

Send young Murray up. I want him to clean the silver. Righto.

Having a go at me

Jack Polgreen

Died 22 Feb 2004

That was the first very large assessment that you received --- That would be right, yes.

In September 1949, the position was: you were well-aware that you must face very heavy assessments --- To be quite honest I never worried too much about it. My job was out in the bush making money, instead of attending to bookwork. If I had to go over the same track again I'd know much better. I was never very fond of bookkeeping, but when it came to active work out in the open – yes, I liked that.

In fact, Mr Burns, knowing that you must inevitably face heavy tax assessments sometime, you nevertheless went into the purchase of this Balootha, Abydos and May Downs --- It seemed to be a method of helping. The Biloela farm was sold for £12,000, and the Tax Department got the complete proceeds against that £21,000 you mentioned.

I want to ask you about the agistment agreement. What was the arrangement between you and your wife – you said she was to pay you back --- It would be an arrangement for agistment. If I ran so-many head of cattle on Abydos and May Downs she would be entitled to some payment for it. I'd run cattle, and be charged a reasonable agistment rate. I'd be paid back that way.

The position is this, is it not: there was an arrangement whereby you were to pay your wife £100 per month agistment for your use of Abydos and May Downs --- I don't think it was a set figure. It was according to the cattle that were on there. I am a little bit hazy, it's a good while ago.

Do you recall if there was an agistment agreement drawn up between you and your wife --- There could have been.

Have you any idea where that written agreement might be --- I'm afraid I wouldn't have a clue. It would have been kept normally with the rest of the books in the office.

Would Mrs Burns have it by any chance --- Not very likely.

What I am suggesting to you is that you told Mr Scott, the tax investigating officer, that there was a stamped agistment agreement for £100 per month and you told Scott that cheques were actually paid to your wife to the extent of £100 per month. Now, does that assist you, because I want to know where that agreement is and what the date of it was --- No, I'm afraid I couldn't help you on that...



The taxation rates applicable in the late 1940s when Max had his highest income years would be somewhere between the two sets of rates listed: (taken from NQR: 29/9/1951). Max was probably paying tax at a rate of 75-80%.

INCOME (£)	WARTIME TAX	1951 TAX
100	—	—
200	22 (11%)	4 (2%)
500	127 (25%)	36 (7%)
1000	355 (36%)	135 (14%)
5000	3,530 (71%)	2,088 (42%)
10,000	8,155 (82%)	5,621 (56%)
20,000	17,405 (87%)	13,121 (66%)

Opposite: Jack Polgreen.
[Guy Burns, GK114, Sep 2003]

I came across two pieces of evidence that Jack was in partnership with Max for a short time. The first was a brand registered in the name of Max Burns, Marj Burns, and Jack Polgreen, BP3 (Burns-Polgreen 3), opposite, taken from the 1948 *Queensland Brand Directory* in the possession of Tidly Triffett. The second was in the Julia Creek Notes in the *North Queensland Register* of 12/3/1949: "48 mixed cattle were driven from Nella Ponds to Balootha for Messrs Burns, Burns and Polgreen of Balootha."

So I sent him up and she got him the silver. When I came back for dinner, here he is – phutt – spitting on the silver to clean it. I told Mrs Murray and she turned up her nose:

*Never again will I use that silver.
Ya only gotta wash it.*

Yella fella reckoned: "Got rid of that job quick". My old man was managing a property for a bloke named Sol Green and I took on overseer when I was about 17 or 18. Eight men in the camp, four boundary riders, both sheep and cattle, 1200 square mile.

Got married in 1934 I think. Married on a Sunday and was caught in floodwaters trying to get into town. I couldn't get in. Camped there with bloody mosquitoes. I couldn't swim it cos I had too much gear. It was about a mile and a half wide anyway. And of course all the boys around town who knew

me said: "Oh, he's shot through". Wife had a wedding breakfast without me. She thought I'd gone.

After I was married I went out onto Dundoo as overseer. Sol Green owned that too. A million acres; hundred thousand sheep. And that's where I came from to manage Ingle Downs.

I joined up for the war and they sent me to Melbourne in the Light Horse, teaching Yanks to ride horses. Anyway, they discharged me because I was an overseer on a property. I was overseer on Ingle Downs when the war finished and that's where I first met Max.

Max made a lot of money. Bugged if I know what he did with it. He never drank nor smoked. He was a good fella, a good-lookin' bloke. He could converse with anybody. That was his trouble: he was such a likeable fella and could get away with things. I believed everything he told me. Not that I had any reason to doubt him; only when the rate

notice thing came up, of course.

I think the partnership in Balootha would have worked – though I think he was having a go at me, y'know. I don't know why I should say that, but yeah... Max was having a go at me.



ALL I KNEW was that Jack Polgreen was claiming to be a partner in Balootha, but I don't think he put anything into it. Max'd have the money, Polgreen wouldn't. Just might have been a working manager; manage it to become a partner. I don't think any capital was put in, but you don't know. It's only what you hear.

TIDLY TRIFFETT



MY GRANDFATHER'S bankruptcy proceedings in the Supreme Court in Brisbane began on Thursday, 17 August 1961. Over the next month until 22 September when the examination was adjourned, he and three other members of his family were questioned for a total of 10 sitting days. There was no further examination and it was never proved that he committed any offences under the Bankruptcy Act.

Max has been dead for almost 30 years. Because I want this book to speak to the reader as a first hand account wherever possible, I have chosen to allow Max to talk for himself via edited excerpts from his bankruptcy proceedings, rather than me intervening and rewriting the transcripts and trying to turn them into a coherent narrative.

On the following pages are four more stories taken from Max's bankruptcy records. They concern Joy, Burns Burns & Burns, phantom tractor drivers, and Nan becoming mute (a rare occurrence for talkative Nan) when she realizes her evidence is being shredded and shown to be a fabrication.

Max comes across in the transcripts as a gentleman. I imagine Max the bankrupt, and Mr Moynahan the examiner, as being of similar ages, mid-fifties, and of similar intellect. The examiner knows that Max expended considerable effort in avoiding his creditors (phantom tractor drivers, nonexistent agistment agreements, and various other sham arrangements), and wants to prove that Max did so outside the law. On the other hand, Max knows that the examiner won't have any local knowledge of tanksinking in North-West Queensland, 1000 miles from Brisbane, allowing Max the opportunity to mishandle the truth when questioned about his tanksinking operations. As for the examiner trying to prove the non-existence of documents: given that it is not possible to prove that something doesn't exist, and also given the time lapse, Max would be little concerned at being caught out by his financial infidelities from a dozen years previously.

The agistment agreement (which supposedly gave Marj the means to repay her husband the money he loaned her to buy Balootha) never existed. But Mr Moynahan couldn't prove its non-existence. If he had been able to – if he could show that the agistment agreement was a sham arrangement and that Marj had not repaid the £8000 loan for her share of Balootha – then Marj would have owed the £8000 to the entity who had taken control of Max's affairs – the Official Receiver. The same held for Max's children, Joy, Don and Barry. If Max had loaned them money which they hadn't paid back, that money would also have been due to the Official Receiver for disbursement to Max's creditors.

An examination of a bankrupt person like my grandfather, even though it involved a lot of money and a lot of creditors, was a low-key affair. Other than Max and the examiner, the only people present would have been the male Registrar, who interjects occasionally, and a female stenographer. Every word was recorded by shorthand and transcribed into type; a man's life condensed to 449 pages of intimate fiscal dissection, and made public.

As I said, Max comes across as a gentleman.

There are no heated exchanges, just one man probing and the other answering – and sometimes dodging. The few times that Max felt the need to be firm in his response, when asked a question that piqued him, he replied with the graceful phrase: "No, I won't have that".

Max retained his poise throughout the proceedings because he had full knowledge of every aspect of his many businesses, though of course he feigned forgetfulness when it suited him; whereas my grandmother, when it came her turn to appear in court, was befuddled most of the time. She had never been truly involved in Max's financial dealings, except in name, and under intense scrutiny her pretence failed. Max would have coached her about what to say, but poor Nan didn't have the native cunning, or full knowledge of the dealings to which she was a party, to enable her to deal with the examiner's queries. And as such, she was exposed in court as lying for her husband, and was in one instance reduced to shamed silence.

Two of the Burns Burns & Burns partners were also subpoenaed to appear: Don (my father) and Barry (my uncle). The third Burns Burns & Burns partner, Joy, missed out on a court appearance because she had moved to Melbourne.

Unlike their father, the sons showed no poise, grace, or respect for the court. In one exchange, Barry was warned about his behaviour when, in response to a question, he answered curtly: "Now lay off it". The Registrar interrupts the examination¹:

THE REGISTRAR: Behave yourself. You will be in trouble if you don't. You went to school at Southport School, didn't you? Isn't that true? And All Souls --- Yes.

Do you expect a person of that education to come and behave like that in a Court? I certainly wouldn't --- Maybe I've been out west with the boongs too long. You remember: you are not in the west now. Just listen to the questions and we will get on better --- All right, Sir...

Mr MOYNAHAN: I don't know why you are aggressive --- I'm not aggressive. If we could get to the point we could get on a lot quicker.

THE REGISTRAR: Mr Burns, you are doing yourself a grave injustice --- All right, Sir, I'll sit back. I'd better get a solicitor down here. I think that's the best bet.

Mr MOYNAHAN: That might be a very good idea because you might then get somebody sensible to advise you --- That's true.

Max made a lot of money between 1947 and 1951, the rosy years just after the war until the end of the wool boom, and he didn't want to give it to his creditors or to the Tax Office. He wanted to spend it. He spent almost everything he earned. Barry (page 774) provides a litany of acquisitions:

You wouldn't believe the money Max was earning in '48 and '49. Within a few months he went from one FDE crawler – a massive investment in itself – till he had three. And paid them off. He was turning over nearly a thousand quid

a week in '48, and when the wool boom was on, even more. Bought – and paid for – all the FDEs, all the scoops, and the three Macks and semitrailers. Paid cash for Balootha and put a homestead on it; built a double-storey house in Julia Creek and the engineering works next door; bought half a dozen blocks of land at Redcliffe, and a house, the one in Macdonnell Rd. It was on a double block, a beautiful home called 'Rodville'. A Mr Rodway built it. Max paid a lot of money for that house; we're talking about 4000 quid. That was the boom after the restrictions of the war years. Fantasy it was.

Add to Barry's list the Commercial Hotel in Charters Towers and the Burnett Hotel in Gayndah, plus a big-spending lifestyle, and you have some idea of the extent of Max's wealth at its zenith; and the extent to which, because of that wealth, he was able to hurt businesses, small and large, and individuals, when he chose not to pay his substantial debts.

The way in which I introduced my grandfather (previous pages) ended with Max replying to Mr Moynahan: "I'm afraid I couldn't help you on that." I chose that endpoint on purpose because it was an elbow in the interaction between Max and Mr Moynahan; a change in direction. Up until then, Max's answers had a positive lilt ("That's true", "Yes, near the mark", "Yes, sounds like it"). The examiner is asking non-threatening questions, and Max gives honest answers. The cooperation comes swiftly to a close when Mr Moynahan broaches a threatening topic – the agistment agreement. Over the course of five questions, Max's stance turns from compliant to recalcitrant:

*I'm a little bit hazy...
There could have been...
I'm afraid I wouldn't have a clue...
Not very likely...
No, I'm afraid I couldn't help you on that...*

But when he was questioned about circumstances beyond Mr Moynahan's ken, such as earthmoving in the Julia Creek district, my grandfather loses his reticence and becomes impish.

In September 1949 Max received a large tax assessment (~\$1,500,000 in 2009 values) which prompted him to do something about reducing his taxable income. He formed a partnership, Burns Burns & Burns, between his three older children, and diverted work their way. In the extract, opposite, Mr Moynahan is trying to establish that it was a sham arrangement. Max is in his element, playing with the truth, knowing that Mr Moynahan will have no way of checking the accuracy of his answers.

Later, he must have chuckled when remembering exchanges such as this (£7 is ~\$500):

You suggest a grazier would be perfectly happy in paying £7 on an hourly basis to boys of 12 and 14 years of age --- Quite happy. My word, quite happy. They were very good workers.

This was at a time (1950) when Max was paying his men £12 a week, and the basic wage was £6.

1. Page 418 of original court transcripts.

Burns Burns & Burns

Three of Max's children take up tanksinking 'in spite of their tender years'

MR MOYNAHAN: At the luncheon adjournment we were discussing the taxation year of 1949-50. Now that was the year in which you received, in September, that first large assessment for £21,557 --- Yes.

Your tax commitments crystallized into the assessment, in September of 1949, of £21,557 --- Yes.

In fact, in September of 1949, was there not a partnership formed of Burns Burn & Burns --- That's right, yes. The three children.

Comprising your daughter, Joy, who was at that time 16 years of age; Donald, who was 14 years of age; and the third member was Barry, who was 12 years of age --- That's right.

The operations of that partnership were solely directed to the earthmoving and tanksinking business --- That's right.

And that, of course, was the business that you were practically exclusively operating in yourself --- That's right.

Now, will you tell the court how that partnership came about. How did it come into existence --- In spite of their tender years, they could drive tractors at 9 or 10, during their holidays. The wife and myself thought, seeing as they're so keen, we ought to do something for them. And that's exactly what happened.

I take it these tractor units and earthmoving units were rather massive units --- Yes, mine were very big, but the partnership had lighter units, very easily operated.

And you say the three children... --- Not the three children. The two boys, not the girl.

... the two boys had had a considerable amount of experience --- Not considerable, but during their holidays they took their turn on the units.

How did they acquire this knowledge and experience to handle these heavy units of equipment in the tanksinking business --- Only during their school holidays.

The main school holidays are the Christmas recess --- Yes, but they get about a fortnight in the middle of the year.

How did it come about that the partnership of Burns Burns & Burns came into existence in September of 1949; because, you see, it coincides with the crystallization of your heavy tax assessment --- I'm afraid it's got nothing to do with that. It was thought of long before that.

If it was thought of long before, with whom was it thought? With the children or your wife --- I think we discussed it all together. They were young, but they knew what they were doing. Call it schoolboy enthusiasm. They thought they'd like to run their own plant later on. I went to Charters Towers to see a solicitor and I asked was there anything wrong with the children starting off at this age with a small plant. He said he

could see nothing wrong with it as long as it was drawn up properly and I didn't receive any benefit from the plant they were operating.

Were these discussions prior to September 1949, or at a very much later date --- Before the partnership was brought into being. I'm quite sure of that.

What I am suggesting to you is that there is in existence a partnership agreement between the three children, but that it was executed at a much later date than September 1949 --- Not as far as I can remember.

Are you suggesting it was fully discussed prior to September 1949 --- I think so. I don't think we went wildly into it. I think it was given quite a bit of thought and we got some advice before we went into it. It certainly wasn't an afterthought.

Did you at one time as far back as 1951 employ an accountant named F. J. Bennett --- Yes, he was the local accountant in Julia Creek.

And he attended to your taxation business --- Yes.

Now, here's a letter written by F. J. Bennett, "Accountant, Julia Creek", dated 7th May 1951 to the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation. It reads: "In response to your request in yours of 7th March, I now enclose copy of the partnership agreement made between the above named". Your accountant attaches to that letter, a certified copy of the partnership agreement between the three children, which is dated 26th day of February 1951. It's quite obvious the actual written Deed of Partnership came into existence in February 1951 --- It looks like it, yes.

That's 18 months after you say the partnership was formed --- It looks like it, but I think you will find that everything had been arranged prior to that date.

Arranged by whom though? Arranged by you --- On their behalf, yes.

And you conducted the whole of the partnership business on their behalf --- That would be right, yes.

What was the real purpose of the formation of this partnership? Didn't you get the contracts, quote for them, see that the work was done --- I supervised it certainly. They only did small jobs that would be too small for me to be interested in doing with the bigger plant.

You say the contracts were too small for you to be bothered about, yet you were the individual who was arranging those contracts and controlling that same small plant that you speak of. Why couldn't you then have got a couple of items of small equipment and included it in your business --- I could quite easily have done so.

It wouldn't have made a scrap of difference; you were still obtaining the contracts, seeing they were being carried out --- Yes, but it was to create something for them in later life that the partnership was started.

That's the reason that this partnership was formed, so as to create something

for the children later in life --- Yes, when they grew up.

Just broadly, the operations of Burns Burns & Burns were carried on by you; in effect, by you sidetracking contracts that you had obtained --- The boys did them – the small contracts that I wasn't interested in.

When the partnership was formed, would you explain how the partnership was capitalised. Where did it get its plant from --- I had some money, approximately £1000, and the wife and I put it in together. We scraped up this £1000 and we gave it to them for this partnership. The plant cost in the vicinity of £4000. We borrowed the rest on hire purchase. I think that being minors, we possibly, my wife and I, had to guarantee this hire purchase agreement. That might have been possible.

In September 1949 the partnership purchased a tractor for £4566 --- It wouldn't be a tractor, it would be the whole of the equipment. They bought a tractor, a scoop, and a ripper from Dominion Motors. I think there could have been a truck too, but they were the three main items, the essential items.

Is it not correct that the only partnership accounts recorded are recorded in your books of account --- That would probably be true too. For convenience, the bookkeeper would have done that.

Most of the activities of Burns Burns & Burns comprise just three or four entries at the end of each financial year, merely by a posting of so-many cubic yards carried out during the year. So many thousand yards at so much, a credit to Burns Burns & Burns --- Yes, there wouldn't be a lot of entries in it.

Don't you think this was a rather advantageous arrangement for you at that time --- I don't think so. I don't think I ever got any benefit from their partnership.

Didn't you get this benefit: that you were reducing your turnover and you were charging off certain expenses to that partnership which had a very very advantageous effect on your tax assessment --- I never thought of it that way.

Until the boys left school and commenced work, you operated the whole of the transactions in relation to Burns Burns & Burns, did you not --- If you're referring to the books and any banking, yes.

This partnership is in existence for at least four years anyway before the boys leave school --- That would be right.

Well, now, during that four years you said they performed contracts, who obtained those contracts? You did, did you not --- They'd be offshoots of small contracts I didn't want.

In these four years, the only time the boys could have worked would have been during the Christmas school holidays --- No, they get two breaks during the winter: one in April and one in August, a fortnight each.

Are you suggesting that the plant was only used by the boys during their school holidays --- Mostly, yes. Very rarely used otherwise.

Who used the plant at periods other than the school holidays --- It would not have been used.

It wouldn't have been used at all --- No, that's why it lasted so long.

Isn't it almost axiomatic in the earthmoving business that you have to keep

equipment working to do any good with it? Would you consider it good business to invest some thousands of pounds in equipment and then have these boys only use it during their school holidays --- Yes, quite good. If I had done the same with mine I wouldn't be here today.

And the boys were able to work the plant only in the school holidays --- Yes, about a month in April and August, plus a portion of the Christmas holiday.

Mr Burns, what was the average price, around about 1950, of tanksinking work --- About 2/3d, 2/6d a yard; something around about that.

Could you tell me how long would it take to do a contract, say, of £500 --- Three days.

What you mean by that is, of course, three days actually operating on the spot --- Yes, it would be possible with my plant if I started on Monday morning I'd have £1000 on Saturday night without any trouble.

Your children commenced work, you say, about September of 1949 --- That's about the time they acquired the plant.

How long, actually, would the boys have available out of the 1949 Christmas holidays to perform any work --- About three to four weeks.

And that would be putting it at an absolute maximum, wouldn't it --- Yes.

All right. Come to the Easter period, the Easter holidays 1950. There's travelling time to be allowed. Out of the Easter holidays, the boys wouldn't have a week available to do any work, would they --- Oh yes they would. They left Charters Towers by train in the afternoon at 4 o'clock and would be home next morning at 9 o'clock.

Wouldn't you allow them any time at all for Easter jollifications with the family --- It wasn't a case of allowing them; we were living in a caravan on site at a tanksinking job. They got quite a lot of fun out of driving a tractor.

Taking the Christmas period and the Easter period, the total amount of time available could not have exceeded about four weeks --- Five to six weeks.

These two boys, then 12 and 14 years of age, what amount of work do you think would be a reasonable amount to expect them to have produced during those two holidays --- They did their eight-hour shift the same as anybody else.

Can you make a suggestion as to what they could have earned in that time --- They were paid a good rate; about £7 an hour for the dozer they had. Multiply that by 16 hours a day, 7 days a week, and that would be a reasonable estimate.

Are you suggesting these two boys, 12 and 14 years of age, worked 16 hours a day --- No, eight hours each.

At £7 per hour. Don't you think £7 an hour would be a rather extravagant rate to pay to a boy of 12 or a boy of 14 --- That's the usual pay.

You suggest a grazier would be perfectly happy in paying £7 on an hourly basis to boys of 12 and 14 years of age --- Quite happy. My word, quite happy. They were very good workers.

I am showing you an income tax return of the partnership, the first one they put in. It shows their income for the year ended 30th June 1950:

"Contract dam construction, £2507/12/8" (shows document to witness) --- That would be quite reasonable, yes.

You are suggesting these two young boys did that amount of work --- Yes.

That you didn't have anything to do with it; didn't supply any labour or anything of that kind --- I may have lent them a man, if they came back and did a bit of greasing in return, yes.

Don't you think this is rather a remarkable amount of dam construction to be performed by two boys of 12 and 14 --- No, no. If you had been out there in the West and seen them, there's nothing remarkable about the work they did.

Did they transport their own equipment --- They generally drove it.

They drove it? Two young boys drove this equipment from one job to the next --- Yes.

Did you ever transport their equipment for them --- It's possible, if it was a long shift.

It would not be economical to drive the equipment over any great distance, would it --- 20 miles.

Anything over that --- There weren't many shifts over that.

They were working within a 20-mile radius --- Mostly.

And you say that in that period the boys were able to do this construction work worth £2½ thousand --- That would be quite likely.

With very light equipment, I think you said --- Yes, light compared with mine.

In the next year, the income tax year ending 30th June of 1951, the boys then would have been 13 and 15 years of age --- Yes.

And again, the only time they would have had available to work would have been a maximum of four weeks or a little bit more --- Give them six weeks.

Apparently, according to their returns for the 1950-51 year, the children's income from dam construction was £4079/19/-, quite a substantial increase on the previous year --- That's possible. The price probably went up considerably.

Wait a while. It couldn't have gone up considerably. You have already said the average price was 2/3 or 2/6 --- No, it depends on the size of the contract. Smaller jobs go up to four shillings.

But in the main, the price was about 2/9, something like 3/- a cubic yard --- Mine.

Are you suggesting the boys were able to charge a higher price --- Yes, definitely, on smaller jobs. You wouldn't do a small job for the same price as you would do a bigger one.

Why would that be --- Because a grazier couldn't get a contractor to do it.

Because there was waste of time involved --- Yes.

Getting your plant out to the job and getting it away from the job, that would account for the extra price --- In part. I had 10 years out there doing that type of work and you could always get more per yard for a smaller job than a bigger one. The grazier wanted to get it done, he needed water storage, and he's quite prepared to pay a higher price.



Below: The Burns boys playing with a toy handcart near a tank on Clio. From left: Barry, Butch, Don and Mal. According to Max, the following year Barry and Don outgrew the handcart and moved onto Cletrac and Britstand earthmoving equipment, earning £7 an hour (~\$500) as tanksinkers.
[Joy Burns, J29, 1948]



£ 234 Commission

‘There would be a story behind it for sure,
but I just can’t recall it’

MR MOYNAHAN: This same year, 1952-53, your daughter Joy still resided in Julia Creek --- She could have been. I think she may have been.

Wasn’t that the year that Joy went on an overseas tour of the continent --- She did go overseas, but I couldn’t tell you whether it was that particular year.

When did she go away on that trip. It was in April, was it not --- She was in London for the Coronation, that’s all I can remember.

How many months was she away --- Approximately seven, I think.

And she remained on your payroll the whole period --- Probably.

She got the wages for the seven months she was away --- Yes. That was only reasonable because she did fairly long hours and her pay was never very much.

Did you advance Joy any money in connection with her overseas tour --- I think she had some of her own and we probably put in the rest.

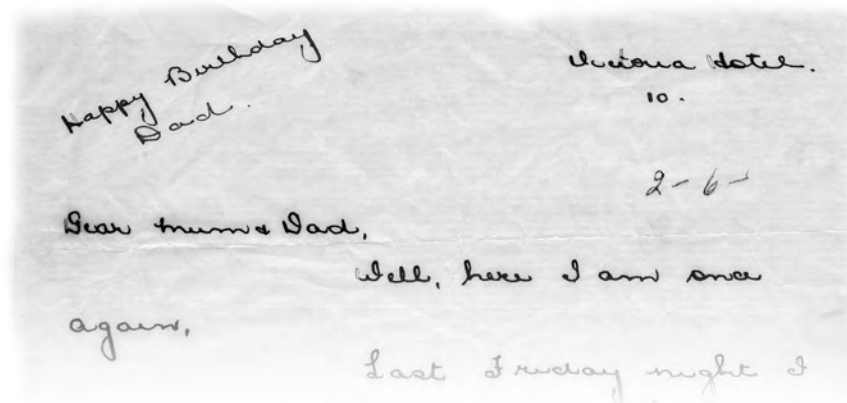
Do you remember what it was --- It would be in the vicinity of £400 I think.

What I want to know is: this £400 you say you advanced in connection with this overseas tour, was that on the basis of loan or gift --- It would be just given to her straight out. I don’t think there was any question of her paying it back. She just wanted to go and that was it.

Your daughter commenced work as a trainee nurse at the Brisbane General Hospital in the 1954-55 year. Do you recall if she commenced at the hospital in July 1954 --- It would be approximately the time. I just couldn’t swear to it. It would be about that period.

Right: Letter from Joy to Max and Marj while she was on her 1953 tour of the continent.
[Kerri Burns, BuK24, 1953]

The letter shows an aspect of English that has altered since the 1950s: the written words ‘today’ and ‘tomorrow’ were once hyphenated (‘to-day’ and ‘to-morrow’). I was intending to use the hyphenated versions in this book, for the same reason that I have used imperial measurements instead of metric – to retain the feel of the era – but ‘to-day’ and ‘to-morrow’ look so strange to modern eyes that I decided against it.



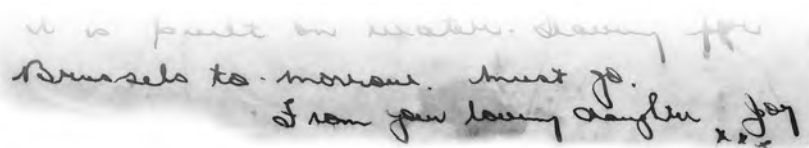
Well, here I am once again.

Last Friday night I went and saw Sonja Henie skate at Earls Court. She was marvellous. On Saturday I booked my seat on a tour bus and went to the Epson Derby. We arrived there at 9.45, so I stood by the track till one o'clock and I got a lovely view, first of Queen Elizabeth, her husband, and Princess Margaret. On one side of the track there are gypsy caravans, merry-go-rounds, hoop-lahs, just like a carnival; and on our side were tea cars, ice cream carts and fish shops. I had a wonderful day.

On Sunday night I went to the Royal Festival Hall to see and hear Burl Ives. He was super. He sang *A Dying Stockman*, *Foggy Foggy Dew*, *The Blue Tail Fly* and many others. On Monday I packed, and at night went and saw *South Pacific*. It was very good.

Tuesday we left Liverpool Station for Harwich. Arrived there at 11 and then boarded Queen Emma for the Hook [of Holland]. Oh boy was it rough and was I sick. Landed at 6.10 and caught a train for Amsterdam. Holland is lovely with its old windmills and lovely green fields. The tulips are off, but saw a few fields of them and they were glorious. There are lovely things to buy, but they will either get broken or Customs will collar them, so I am only getting little souvenirs.

Amsterdam is a city of canals and 350 bridges. Mostly it is built on water. Leaving for Brussels to-morrow. Must go.



During that year your accounts show that Joy received commissions from you totalling £234 --- I'm afraid without seeing the actual book and the entry I just couldn't recall at the moment.

Can you suggest any reason why Joy, while she was a nurse at the hospital, should be paid commissions by you --- No, but there would be a story behind it, for sure, but I just can't recall it.

You can't give any explanation at the moment --- No, I can't even recall it.

Joy continued her training at the Brisbane General Hospital as a nurse, and in the following year also she received an amount of £234 from you as commissions --- No, I wouldn't know. Commissions doesn't sound right, but I might be able to recall what it was.

In this particular year, on the 12th October 1955, you transferred to your daughter, Joy, the Georgina St, Redcliffe property, a property registered in your name --- Probably would have been around that time. I think that I just said: "Here it is". I am a bit hazy about the story. I originally gave the block of land to her grandmother. Joy was a bit of a favourite of hers and she wanted Joy to have it, so I transferred it to Joy.

This grandmother that you refer to is your wife's mother, Mrs Flewell-Smith --- That's right.

At the point of transfer to your daughter the land had a house on it --- The grandmother put the house on it. I said to the grandmother - she wanted to build a house of her own with some money from a son of hers who was killed in the war - I said: "You can have that block of land. It's not the best, but you can have it".

Was the property to be transferred to your daughter as a gift --- I just said: "There's a block of land. It's not very valuable, you can have it". I think I left it to Huller, the old bookkeeper. I said to him: "The grandmother is getting on in years and wants that property transferred to Joy". Huller would have arranged it.

Coming to the next year, 1956-57, Joy was still a nurse at the Brisbane General Hospital and residing there --- Yes.

And in that year also she received commission from you of £234 --- Yes, I am rather intrigued as to what that definition of commission was.

In the 1957-58 year, Joy continued to be a nurse at the Brisbane General Hospital and again she received £234 in commissions from you --- Yes, well, I don't know what that definition of commissions is. I couldn't answer you there.



Above: Joy Burns as a first year nurse.
[Joy Burns, J25, 1954]

Below left: Lou Flewell-Smith's house at Georgina St, Woody Point, nearing completion, transferred to Joy in 1955. Built by Alan F-S (son). Lou and Hazel F-S (Alan's wife) in doorway.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV33, ca1955]

Below right: Georgina St house after extensions on the left and right of original. The home was named Ambon, after the island where Lou's son, Clive, died in a POW camp at the end of WW2.
[Isabel Flewell-Smith, I28, ca1960]



A Man Named Bird

Max and his phantom tractor drivers

Max & The Official Receiver, 21 Aug 1961

MR MOYNAHAN: Now, Mr Burns, did you have an employee working in your earthmoving business named Bird --- There could have been. I can't recall him.

You can't recall him --- No.

Are you quite sure that you can't recall this man Bird --- If you tell me what period he was there and the wages he drew it might help.

Would he be a tractor driver --- Yes, he'd be a tractor driver.

Your records show employment of a man named Bird as a tractor driver, and it was in May 1954. He ceased to work for you on 16th July 1954 --- It's quite possible that he could have come and gone and I wouldn't have even caught up with him. They came and went pretty quickly. The foreman might have given him a job.

This man named Bird, his initials were G.M.A. Bird. Notice any similarity in the initials --- Certainly. My wife's initials.

You can't tell me anything about this man Bird who is supposed to be an employee of yours --- If it was only for a short period he could have come and he could have gone. That's possible.

Can you tell me -- and you should recall this one -- did you have an employee named Ball --- I think there might have been.

These are the men who are out on the jobs. You were the man who looked after the outside jobs --- That's right.

And you can't tell me anything about Ball --- No.

Do you remember that this fellow Ball was supposed to be a man with three children and his address was Post Office, Toowoomba. Does that help you --- I can't just recall him at the moment.

His initials are M.J. Don't know anything about him --- No.

Do you recall that you had an employee named D. Walden --- Yes, I think I remember that name.

Is Walden still about --- I wouldn't know.

Do you recall having an employee named J.B. Williams --- What period was he there?

All these names I have mentioned to you, seem to have been employees around about the same time, around about September 1954. Did you at any time have an employee named Wilson --- If he was only there for a short period, there could have been an employee named Wilson. Tractor drivers in the west came and went. You were lucky if they stayed two months.

D.N. Wilson, does that help you --- No, I can't say that it does.



Marj & The Official Receiver, 24 Aug 1961

MR MOYNAHAN: Mrs Burns, do you remember a man named Bird, a tractor driver --- There could have been.

It doesn't mean a thing to you --- It all depends how long he was there. If they were there for any amount of time I certainly knew them. Sometimes they were only there a week. They'd say: "We're not living like blacks" and they'd go.

Do you remember a tractor driver named M.J. Ball --- I just don't remember. There were so many who came and went.

Did you ever lend any money to Bird or Ball --- Not that I know of. I have never heard the names before.

The initials of Bird are the same as yours apparently: G.M.A. Bird --- Are you sure it's Bird. It might be Burns. I have never heard of the initials of G.M.A. for anyone other than myself.

So far as you know, you can't recall ever having had any dealings with a man named Ball or a man named Bird --- If they were on the books for a long time I should have known them, but not if they were on the books for only a short time. It all depends on what they were doing.

Here's an account of Mervyn John Ball --- We had a Mervyn¹ working for us, but his name wasn't Ball.

You see his credits for wages. You see the various entries running from January 1955 through to the end of June: wages January 1955 (£61), wages February-April (£76). Turn over the page and you see further credits for wages until you get to the end of June when M.J. Ball is in credit to the extent of £367. He's drawn practically no money at all for that six months and this man is supposed to be a married man with three children. Now, on June 30th, you see a transfer to Mrs G.M.A. Burns of £367 --- I don't understand it. Why should he give me money? I don't know anything about it. I have never seen it before and I have never heard of it.

Why should you get £367 wages earned by M.J. Ball --- But I didn't. I have never even heard the name before. Ball -- never.

This is a married man with three children, apparently, who is credited with wages for six months from January to June, and he's never drawn one penny of that. He's in credit £367 and that amount is just handed over to you --- I don't know anything about it. Fred Huller did it. It was not with my authority. I wouldn't work under anyone else's name.

It's a highly suspicious circumstance isn't it --- It does look so, but it's nothing to do with me.

Your account was credited with that £367 in your husband's books --- But why M.J. Ball? Why G.M.A. Bird? I have never heard of them.



1. Possibly Merv Brand, page 540.

Exhibit 36 & Cheque 598

**Marj spins a turkey's nest yarn
(‘Oh what a tangled web’)
and is silenced into no answer**

MR MORNAHAN: Coming then to 1948/49, did you acquire any pastoral interest in that year --- Probably the year of Abydos and May Downs.

Would you explain how it came about that you bought Abydos and May Downs stations --- My husband had bought Balootha. The two neighbouring properties were a very good buy and I wanted to have them, so he said if I gave him a promissory note he would lend me the money.

What was the price of it --- I think my portion was about £8000.

How did you finance it then, your purchase of Abydos and May Downs --- As far as I can remember I gave my husband a promissory note. I think I had some cash and I paid a deposit. I just don't remember how much. I did pay that back through agistment. I let it on agistment.

Will you explain what was the arrangement between you and your husband about this purchase by you of Abydos and May Downs --- I wanted to live there.

You wanted to live on Abydos and May Downs --- Yes.

But was there any homestead on Abydos and May Downs --- No, the only homestead was a very old building on Balootha.

But there was no homestead on Abydos and May Downs --- No, but I wanted to have a homestead there and to live there.

Then you said something about agistment --- That was the only way that I could pay him back. It was all properly drawn up.

You say there was a properly drawn up agreement. Accepting the fact that there was, can you tell me what the arrangement with regard to agistment was --- I know I agisted cattle for my husband. The bookkeeper did all the bookwork.

You never at any time had your own cattle on Abydos or May Downs --- I didn't own any.

I will come back to this agistment question. In this same year of 1948/49 that you purchased Abydos and May Downs, do you remember buying any other property in conjunction with your husband --- That would be the Redcliffe home.

Yes, the Macdonnell Road, Redcliffe home. That was purchased in conjunction with your husband --- Yes.

In your joint names --- Yes.

Do you remember what was the purchase price of that --- £3000 and some hundred pounds I think.

How did you finance the purchase of your half share in that --- I had £100 in the bank and I paid that as deposit.

What about the balance of your half share --- The children and I, during their school holidays, did a small job with the tractors for a Mr Arthur. I think that's where I got the money from to pay my half.

Where was this job done --- Outside Julia Creek, about 30 miles. I have forgotten the name of the property, but I will think of it.

You and the children... --- My brother, Ned¹, was there. My husband was away at the time. I wanted the Redcliffe home half in my name because we had sold the home at Clermont and we were living in a caravan on tanksinking jobs.

Would your half be £1800 --- I think it would be about that.

You said you had £100 and the other £1700... --- Well, it might not have been just that much, but it was somewhere around that amount.

And you say the funds that enabled you to purchase your half interest came from a job that you and the children carried out for a Mr Arthur --- And my brother helped me. I can drive a tractor, but I can't do any tanksinking.

This job which you did for Mr Arthur, that would have been done with all your husband's equipment --- Yes, but it was lying idle while he was away.

When you say you and the children, that would be the two boys, Don and Barry. Weren't they quite young --- While they were on school holidays they did four-hour shifts. Donald could drive a tractor before he was 8.

Are you suggesting that they did in fact drive the tractors --- Yes they did.

On that job --- Yes, they did.

And the boys were 10 and 12 at the time --- Yes.

You see, I am seeking to ascertain the source of your funds that enabled you to buy a half interest in the home at Macdonnell Road Redcliffe. Did this Mr Arthur pay you and the boys for this job --- I think he did. I just don't remember that.

What do you say the price of the job was --- I think it was approximately £1700, something around there, but I just couldn't remember the exact amount.

Was there any labour employed on it --- No.

Who did in fact drive the tractors --- The two boys. £1700 is not a very big job. They're only turkeys' nests, as they're called in the west. But my brother, Ned, who was there, sort of kept them at their bats. He told the boys where to dump and what to do.

1. Marj gives the date of this job (see next page) as July or August 1948. At that time Ned was working at the RAAF base, Macrossan, outside Charters Towers and Marj was running the Commercial Hotel (bottom of page 53). She was

not in Western Queensland tanksinking. Ned had worked for Max on Clio in 1947 (photo, page 20), but that was the only time he worked as a tanksinker. He was killed in the Macrossan Smash on 16 September 1948.

A turkey's nest as distinct from a dam. A turkey's nest: is that where the surface of the land remains at the same level but you build up banks --- Yes.

What was the name of this station that Mr Arthur owned --- I have forgotten it at the moment but I will remember. It's only a short distance out of Julia Creek.

You say it was the earnings from the job for Mr Arthur, carried out by you and your two young sons, that gave you the finance to pay for your half interest in Macdonnell Road, Redcliffe --- Yes.

After that property was purchased, did you go and reside there with the family --- No. We only used it when we came down during the year on business, and again for about a fortnight at Christmas time during the boys' holidays.

Just pausing there for a moment. Did you and the children do any other jobs for anyone else other than Mr Arthur during these particular years --- I wouldn't be sure about that.

I was just curious as to whether you and the children had done any other work for anyone else other than Mr Arthur. Can we take it then that this transaction with Mr Arthur was an isolated transaction --- No, we did others, but I don't remember just when.

Do you remember how Mr Arthur paid you for this job that you and the boys did -- by cash or cheque --- It would hardly be by cash.

Well, I am asking you if you recall how you were paid --- I remember receiving a cheque.

What did you do with the cheque? Would you have banked it --- I just don't remember now.

I draw your attention to certain deposits made into your bank account. In particular I draw your attention to Exhibit 36, a deposit by your husband of £1342. And I draw your attention to Cheque 598 for £1700. It went through your bank account on 29th December 1948, £1700. Can you recollect what that £1700 would be for --- It would be for the house at Redcliffe.

That would be the balance of your half share of the Macdonnell Road, Redcliffe, residence --- Yes, I think so.

So it's quite clear that Cheque 598 paid your half share of the Macdonnell Road house --- Yes.

Coming back to Exhibit 36, this deposit of £1342 by your husband, is there any connection between that deposit of £1342 and you then being in a position to draw a cheque for £1700 to pay your half interest --- It's so long ago. I just don't know what happened there.

This £1342. You see, it goes into your bank account only a month or so before you pay the £1700 for the house. Your husband puts it into your account. Isn't that linked up with your ability to draw a cheque for £1700 to pay your half share in Macdonnell Road --- No, I don't think so.

How could you have paid the £1700 without... --- Because we did some work for Mr Arthur, the boys and I.

Who did you do this work for --- It was Mick Arthur. I can't remember the name of the property. That's not his right name, but that's what they called him.

They called him Mick --- Yes.

You can't remember where you did this job -- the job, you say, you and your two oldest boys did --- No, but I know the name of the man.

How long did this job take you and the boys to do, on this property you can't remember the name of --- About 8 or 10 days.

Tell me this: was this Mick Arthur a manager of the place or was he the owner of this place --- He was the owner.

It was somewhere near Julia Creek --- Yes.

You said you would have received payment by cheque and you would have banked it to your account --- I think so.

Since you drew £1700 on 29th December, and if you say that the money came from this Arthur job, then you must have done the job for Arthur just prior to the 29th December --- We did the job in the holidays and that would be in July/August.

Well, now, all your bank accounts are here. You identify for me this payment you say you received from Arthur for this job. What I want to know is: that £1342, Exhibit 36, we know your husband deposited it, but where did it come from --- I couldn't say. I only know we did that job in July or August.

If your story is true regarding a job done for this Mr Arthur -- that you received the money and it went into your bank account -- I am putting to you the only amount that could be referable to that job would be that amount of £1342 deposited by your husband on 8th November of 1948 --- I just couldn't be sure.

But you can't point out any other moneys that could be referable to the Arthur job... --- No.

... except that £1342 deposited by your husband. That is the position, isn't it --- As I told you, I don't remember, but it could be.

This is not a question of remembering at all, Mrs Burns. This is not a question of remembering. I have shown you your bank account. You say you did this job for Arthur in July of 1948 and he paid you --- Yes.

Whether it came to you direct from Mr Arthur, or via your husband, doesn't matter for the moment. You were paid for the Arthur job, and with that money you paid the £1700 which, you say, purchased your half interest in the Macdonnell Road, Redcliffe, property. Those are the facts that you state, isn't that correct --- Yes.

I have shown you your bank account for the relevant dates, and I have asked you to identify this amount that you received from Arthur. You aren't able to do that, are you --- No.

Or you aren't prepared to do that --- I'm not able to.

I have shown you the whole of your bank statement, Mrs Burns. There is a deposit by your husband on the 8th November 1948 for £1342, and very shortly after you drew your own cheque for £1700, which we know went in payment for the Macdonnell Road, Redcliffe, property. What I am suggesting to you, is that if your story is true, Mrs Burns, the deposit by your husband of £1342 on the 8th November must have come from the work you and the boys did for Arthur --- We did do it.

Listen to my question... and listen very carefully... If your story is true about working for Arthur, then that deposit made by your husband of £1342 must be payment for the job that you say you and the boys did

for Arthur. That's the position, isn't it --- I don't know. I don't disagree. I just don't know.

As I have already said, it is a question of facts, cold facts that are now before you in the witness box. It is not a question of knowledge at all. I don't want to waste a lot of time going over this again. The only explanation of the deposit of £1342 made by your husband on the 8th November, Mrs Burns, is that the amount is in payment of this Arthur job. Do you understand that? Do you follow that --- Yes.

That is not a question of knowledge; this is just a question of obvious inference from proved facts. So in the face of those facts I now ask you: what is your explanation of that deposit of £1342 made to your account by your husband? --- I don't know. I can't remember. I don't know.

I am asking you to draw the explanation from your own evidence. That's all. It's not a question of knowledge, or suggestion, or anything else. This is just cold hard facts, Mrs Burns. You appreciate that. If your story is true, the only explanation of that £1342 is that it is payment to you from Arthur. That is, if your story is true.

You are left with this, Mrs Burns: where that amount of £1342 is concerned, you have two alternatives. One alternative is that you accept the fact it is payment from the Arthur job; the other is that it did not come from Arthur. Now, there is no middle course; it either did or did not come from Arthur. If it didn't come from Arthur, why did your husband make that deposit to your bank account --- I don't know why.

If that £1342 didn't come from the Arthur job, how and when were you paid by Arthur? All your accounts are there. You show me where the money came in from Arthur --- I still don't know. I only know that the money was paid in.

Look, Mrs Burns, what I am putting to you -- and I will put it very bluntly to you -- is that £1342 went in from your husband, so that you would then be in a position to draw that cheque for £1700 --- No. We did do that job. I'm not exaggerating. The two kiddies and I. We did quite a few jobs. It's so long ago.

It could have been a long time ago, Mrs Burns, but it was *you* who told us the story of how you financed your half share in Macdonnell Road. *You* told us it came from a job you did for Arthur --- Yes. If my husband was away and the kiddies were home, we often worked, and we were paid for it.

You were paid for it? Are you suggesting that you and the children, while the children were as young as they were at this time, did jobs for which you were paid --- I don't say we always got paid, because we didn't.

What I am suggesting to you is that this story of yours about getting payment for the Arthur job -- and I'm not saying whether you did the job or not -- is just a fabrication to explain your ability to pay the £1700 --- No. We did do that job for Arthur and I did pay my share of the house. Whether I did it then or later, I don't know. I'm not lying.

I put also to you, Mrs Burns, that the £1342 was money lent to you by your husband for the purpose of your acquiring the half interest in Macdonnell Road, Redcliffe --- No.

You deny that also --- It was always understood I earned that £1342.

I am only interested in cold facts, you see, not what was understood. I am putting to you that that £1342 deposited in your account on 8th

November 1948 was a loan... --- No, I have never had a loan.

...made by your husband to you for the purpose of enabling you to acquire the half interest in Macdonnell Road --- No.

Do you recall giving your husband a promissory note for an amount of £1342 on the 8th November 1948 --- I don't know.

Well, I'm asking you, Mrs Burns, and I am putting it straight at you: Did you give your husband a promissory note for £1342 on the 8th November of 1948 --- No, no, I couldn't say.

Mrs Burns, my information from the Stamps Office records shows that on the 8th November 1948 there was a promissory note for £1342 from you to your husband --- I do remember something about a promissory note.

You remember something about it now --- I don't remember whether that was for Abydos and May Downs. That's the only one I remember.

Mrs Burns: you have already given a promissory note to your husband for £8000 in October of 1948 to enable you to purchase Abydos and May Downs. I suggest this £1342 has nothing whatever to do with Abydos and May Downs --- I just can't remember.

I am just trying to ascertain the facts about this, and I am telling you what my information is and the source of it. There are statutory declarations in the Stamps Office to the effect that on the 8th November of 1948 a promissory note for £1342 passed between you and your husband, the date your husband paid £1342 into your account. If that money is secured with a promissory note, then you will agree with me, I think, that it must be a loan and can have no relation to doing a job for Arthur --- (No answer)

You can't have it both ways. That £1342 is either payment from Arthur, in which case your story is true; or your story is a fabrication, and the £1342 has nothing to do with Arthur and is a straight out loan from your husband, secured with a promissory note --- (No answer)

Mrs Burns, I would like you very much to make a note. I want to know the name of Mr Arthur's property. I would like you, if you can by tomorrow morning, to be in a position to tell me exactly the name of that property¹ --- Yes. Can I write it down?

Yes, you can make any note to assist yourself. I want to know exactly the name of the property and Mr Arthur's name and address if you know it --- No, I wouldn't know it. He sold out and went away.

Well, his address at that time.



1. The next morning Marj informed the court that the property was Yorkshire Downs owned by Hugh Arthur.

Keith Coleman, head stockman on Yorkshire from 1952-55, has been able to confirm that at least some aspects of Marj's story are true:

At the end of November 1948, as soon as school broke up, Dad and I left Hughenden and went to Bodel Station. We went from there to Yorkshire Downs, right up on the head of Julia Creek about 23 miles from town. Went there in '52 and left in June 55.

Hugh 'Mick' Arthur owned Yorkshire, and lived there until Dad came to manage the property. Arthur sold out during the drought of '52 and went to near Dalby.

There was a tank on Yorkshire in the south-east corner of "wether paddock" where all the wethers went, put down by Max before we arrived. The tank hadn't been long established as there were no trees around it.



Above: The three youngest Flewell-Smith children.
From left: Ned, Marj, Clive.
[Joy Burns, J79, 1923]

"I was about 12 there. Clive'd be about 6, just before he had his curls cut off. I don't think he ever wanted his curls, but in those days they didn't cut their curls, they left them. I remember them being cut when he went to school." (Marj Burns)

MARJ FLEWELL-SMITH ♥ 1932 MAX BURNS

- ↪ Joy ♥ 1960 George Everest
 - ↪ Barry
 - ↪ Andrew
 - ↪ Donald
- ↪ Don ♥ 1957 Jill Brennan
 - ↪ Guy ♥ Jenny
 - ↪ Kal
- ↪ Barry ♥ 1959 Josie
 - ↪ Trevor
 - ↪ Karen
 - ↪ Jeffrey
- ↪ Mal ♥ 1967 Mary
 - ↪ Kerri
 - ↪ Stephen
 - ↪ Kalli
- ↪ Butch ♥ 1969 Liz
 - ↪ Tony
 - ↪ Jason

FLEWELL-SMITH. — In loving memory of our dear Sons and Brothers, QX10858, Sapper Clive Flewell-Smith 2-11, Gull Force, died P.O.W. Ambon 9-6-45; also Edgar (Ned) Torbruk Rat, QX3199, 2-15, killed Charters Towers, 16-9-48.
Loved and remembered always.
Mother and Family.
MARTIN. — In loving memory of Flight-Sergeant Douglas Martin killed in air operations.

ROLL OF HONOUR
FLEWELL SMITH, Clive Burwood. — 2/11 Fld Coy., 8 Div.—In loving memory of our dear Son, Uncle, and Brother, who died P.O.W., Ambon, 9th June, 1945.
Gone is the face we loved so dear, Silent is the voice we loved to hear. Deep in our hearts a memory is kept, Of one we loved and will never forget.
Inserted by Mother, Marjorie, Max, Joy and Boys, Julia Creek.
KENZIE.—Tribute of love to the Flying-Officer Gordon

I Grabbed the Po

Gertrude Marjorie Alice Burns
1911 – 2005

Marj Burns

Died 29 Mar 2005

YOU CAN ASK ME QUESTIONS but I don't think I'll remember much. Lately I've even started to forget bloomin' birthdays. I haven't had a chance to forget my own though – this 90th birthday. Oh God, I'm just sick of hearing about it.

Second of October, 1911 – I can remember *that*. I was born in Lowood. I haven't seen it for years.

My father was a builder. William Weir Flewell-Smith. All around Lowood he built houses. He was born in 1868. I think he was 85 when he died. Lowood cemetery is where most of the elder Flewell-Smith people are buried. Both my grandfather and grandmother are buried there.

Mum was a Michel and she was born in 1880. She was 12 years younger than my father. She was born in Australia. They both were – in Queensland. They lived in Lowood for many years. She was called Lou but her name was Louisa Isabella. When the grandkids came along we called her Gran. I objected to being called Gran when my turn came, so I was Nan.

My brothers are all dead. I didn't have any sisters, I had six brothers – Douglas, Stanley, Alan, Keith, then me, then Clive and Ned. I remember my brother's names but I don't remember their birthdays. Stan, he was the second eldest. He lived to 93. He's been dead just a couple of years. Now I'm 90 and I'm the last one left.

The two young ones, they died in their 20s. Clive died as a POW on Ambon just as the war ended. It was a terrible thing. Ambon's a little place; you can see it on the map. Australia's here and Ambon's just up there. And Ned, he was a Tobruk Rat. He did something to his knee during the war and they tossed him out. He was in Charters Towers in 1948 working for the army when a semi went over a bridge. He was killed in the Macrossan Smash.



Above: My grandmother, Marj Burns, on her 90th birthday.
[Guy Burns, GB56, 2001]

Right: The Michel store at Lowood.
[Joy Burns, J04, undated]

"That store would be in Lowood. Some people say 'Mickel', but it wasn't. The proper pronunciation is Michelle." (Marj Burns)

"Gran Flewell-Smith always said her maiden name was 'Mickel'. I happened to be stopping with Gran – I was 18 at the time – and we went out together somewhere, Gran and Auntie Marj and I. And Auntie Marj, talking about relatives, says 'Michelle'. Gran leans to me: 'Mickel, it's Mickel'. She blamed Marj for trying to put on airs and graces." (Merle Flewell-Smith)





I grew up in the Wondai district. When I was about 6 we went to a place called Cloyna, 25 miles north of Wondai by road, and we lived there. Glenrock was the name of our property; a dairy farm, but my father still did building.

My mother never worked outside on Glenrock. She never went and milked cows and kept pigs and all that sort of thing – but I did. I did quite a lot of the mustering and I helped with milking. I did help with the pigs on occasion too – cows, pigs, horses. We didn't have a lot of horses but we had to have them because we did a lot of riding.

I was pretty good at mustering cattle, which was my job more or less when I got up to 10 or 11. I lived on a horse in those early years until I was about 18. Then we sold the farm and moved to Wondai. My father mostly did building then. He and my brother Alan, they were both builders. Actually, two of my brothers were builders. They were taught



how to build by my father. He was able to give them lessons on it. They were good carpenters.

At Cloyna there was a little shop that had everything in it, and a school house, and that was where I first went to school. I was about 8 I suppose. It was 5 miles to school – 10 miles a day. First of all we had to walk.

There was no road to school, so being bush kids we cut through paddocks. Eventually there was a road and we used to ride. I can remember riding horses to school until I was nearly 14. We all went to school until 14. Grade 6 was the top grade.

My father and brother built a little church at Cloyna. A Baptist church, because it was Baptist people that got it going, but we were Methodists. Way back, my people were Church of England when they first came out from the old country, but at Cloyna there were no ministers of religion until the Methodist minister came. Then we just went with the Methodists and we grew up Methody.



We had a big barn and every month some minister would come out; might be it was Baptists, Methodists, Anglicans. The Catholics never came but the other denominations did, once a month. Everyone used to go to that church, the one my father built.

First of all, we had church in our barn. No – first of all, in our house. But then when we got the barn – it was bigger than the house – it was more convenient to have it in the barn. It was primitive in those very early days.

Everybody went to the same church. Whatever faith didn't matter; whether it was Anglican or what it would be. I suppose it would only be the Catholics that didn't come to our church because they weren't supposed to. I remember in Julia Creek – everybody in that little place was friends and they'd all be invited to a church wedding. One that I particularly remember was Anglican. When we got there I thought we were early; the people were still in the yard. They said: "No, it's just about to start". I didn't wake up that the Catholics weren't supposed to be in the church. A few weeks later there was a Catholic wedding. Everyone was inside except one man at the gate and I said to him – I knew him of course – and I said:

What are you doing here? Why aren't you inside?

I'm not going into that bloody church. They wouldn't come in ours last month and I'm certainly not going in theirs!

Our entertainment? Well, we had school fetes and dances. That was our entertainment – dancing. I suppose we'd have them every month; we wouldn't have them every week. We looked forward to them. Most kids, we all danced. We'd go to Murgon to a dance or Wondai to a dance. People would come from 60 miles away. There weren't a lot of cars, but somebody always had a car. I remember there was a young couple who lived near us, they had a car and we'd all go together. Never cost me anything. I suppose the boys put in for petrol.

Balls – there were a lot in those days, and you always had a long dress. Even if you didn't have any money you always had a long dress.

We had an old gramophone. They were popular. The old ones with the big horn. The wireless didn't come in until the thirties when Joy was born. I can remember one of the first words she said was "whylliss". Do you know: I still call it a wireless occasionally.

And there was a travelling picture show came around. They came out to all the little towns and everybody went to it, especially kids. Mostly in schools or halls. They had their own screen with them.

The first car we had – I can remember it. I must have been about 15 I'd say. Before that it was sulkies. We never had buggies. A sulky is a two seater. It has a little seat up front that two kids can sit on, and it sits two adults. A buggy is double seated – four people. Sulky one horse, buggy two horses.



MARJ BURNS was not my real grandmother, but Guy's. Nevertheless, I called her 'Nan' because she was like a grandmother to me. And there was something about Nan that made you like her. She was matter-of-fact, down to earth, easy-going, and funny without meaning to be.

I got to know her in the 1990s when Guy and I stayed in the Sandgate unit with her. She always made me feel welcome and part of the family. We would chat for hours while doing a bit of housework or drinking cups of tea. She told me of her young days, her marriage to Max, stories about Julia Creek, and she talked a lot about Guy's mother, Jill. I think she really loved Jill. Her death so young was a great tragedy for Nan.

Nan and I found we had one interesting thing in common – we both liked opals. She fossicked for opals and other gem stones and polished them. It was a favourite hobby of hers. One day she gave me a piece of blue opal patch that she had found and polished into a small oval shape. Later, when I told Guy that I would like to have it set to make a necklace, he took it to a jeweller, had it set in silver, and gave it to me for my next birthday. Today I treasure that necklace made from Nan's opal.

Nan also gave me her fossicking tools and a white lace headscarf which had belonged to Guy's mother. Jill had worn it for 'best', and to church.

As Nan became older, it often happened that the name of an object would momentarily slip from her memory. In substitute she would use the word 'whatsiname'. It wasn't always the case that you knew what she meant, although Phyllis, her flatmate, seemed to have no difficulty in understanding Nan's intent:

*Phyl, where's that whatsiname?
I don't know Marj; haven't seen it for ages.
It was here yesterday. I put it down
and now it's gone...*

And so the conversation went on, without anyone else having a clue what they were talking about. Yes, there was something about Nan that made her a memorable character.

JENNY PEARCE

Opposite top: "14 LBS, W.W. F-SMITH"

Cream can label belonging to Marj's father, William Weir Flewell-Smith, found on Glenrock, May 2002. Dug up by the owners (the Kapernick family) while fencing. [Guy Burns, KH06, 2002]

Opposite bottom: Cloyna School. Keith F-S, back row fourth from right; Marj in front of Keith. [Joy Burns, J06, 1922]

Right: Lou F-S sitting on verandah of Glenrock with a sulky underneath. [Joy Burns, J15, Nov 1929]





Left: Mondure XI. Max, second from left, front row.
[Robin Burns, R42, 1929]

Below: Extract from an exercise book in which Max kept quotations ranging from the ancients (Plutarch, Plato), through Shakespeare to the Romantic poets and modern philosophers. There are several from Swedenborg. This one reads:
"Many a writer and poet dies young in the breast of the ignorant".

The book includes several hundred quotations and indicates that Max was very widely read. He even authored a few pithy homilies himself:
"Man retains in manhood's prime,
The habits of his boyhood years".

Opposite: Opening day of the Mondure Hall.
Max and Marj had their first dance together in this hall on the 16th November 1929.
[Bill Burns, BuW12, 15 Sep 1928]

Wilf Compagnoni

I WAS BORN in Wondai in 1910. My father was on the land, mixed farming: some cattle, some agriculture. The property was called Hillcrest, 9 miles from Wondai in an area called Mondure. Mondure was a huge cattle station at one stage. Most of the Wondai district belonged to Mondure until it was broken up for closer settlement in the early 1900s.

It used to be a fairly busy little area. They had a school at Mondure and a school at North Mondure. They had a hall which the Burns family helped build, and they had dances. There was a butcher shop and a grocery store, but, like a lot of small country towns, disuse has set in I'm afraid.

I went to school at North Mondure about a mile away from where we lived. RL Burns, Max's father, had a farm opposite the school. We always knew when he was about. He didn't mince his words when it came to talking to his horses or his dogs in his Scottish brogue. Our school mistress used to say: "Listen to the voice of Burns".

We had 15 to 20 pupils at North Mondure school. When it closed down we all went to school at Chelmsford, about 2 miles south-east of our farm. I remember Max Burns pretty well at Chelmsford. He was a couple of years ahead of me and was always a get-up-n-goer. He liked to be in front and lead if he possibly could.

We had a fantastic record as school cricketers. No school could beat us. I was a left-hand bowler, fairly accurate, and nobody could handle my leg breaks. Max was an excellent batsman; they couldn't get the beggar out. We were always very successful in our cricket.

Max continued to play cricket as he got older. He was an important member of the Wondai Cricket Club because he was a good batsman and he had quite a few centuries to his name. He played in composite teams a number of times and he did pretty well. What they'd do is assemble the best players from North Queensland, from the Burnett

district, from the Darling Downs, and bring them all to Brisbane. I think it was to promote cricket. In the Wondai area cricket was the most important sport, followed by football and tennis. During the summer season we played cricket every weekend and some of the time we'd go away.

Max was a natural sportsman, more so than the other members of the family; and because of his sporting ability, especially at cricket, he was a bit of a personality around the place. If there was something going on Max would try and be in it. He had get-up-n-go.

Max showed me a letter one day at a cricket match¹. It started off: "Dearest Lady". I remember that clearly. "Dearest Lady" is how it started off – the opening gambit. This was a letter to Marjorie Flewell-Smith. Here was Max declaring his good intentions and making his play for her. I don't remember the year, but I remember it was during a cricket match at Mondure. He had the letter with him. He wanted to get some comment on it.

I met Max again at a school reunion after the war and we talked about old times and renewed old acquaintances. He asked me to come around to where he was staying because he had a book he wanted to talk about. He'd gotten hold of some books by German philosophers. He was reading them in English, but he wished he could read them in German.

One of the books he was very keen on was by Swedenborg. Max was interested in human destiny, where we were going. At that stage I think he was more interested in philosophy than making a living. He was always keen to improve himself.

Max was intelligent, there's no doubt about that. He was the most intelligent of the Burns family. He had ambition, and if he wanted to do something it took an awful lot to stop him. He could be aggressive and straight-talking.

Sometimes, when I was home from boarding school, I'd go to the Burns' farm at Mondure and play a bit of cricket with him. He'd say to me: "You're not a bad bowler, but you can't bat. If you were playing against yourself you'd bowl yourself every time." That was Max, y'see.

I'd say if you tried to take Max for a ride you'd lose. He was inclined to want to get his own way irrespective of the cost. If anybody had an argument with him, or a difference on some commercial thing, they wouldn't take Max down. He'd make sure he got the best of the deal. He'd find ways of getting around things. That's probably why they called him... what was it? ... a mongrel.

Max got into tanksinking at Julia Creek and it became a lucrative business. He bought the machinery, worked it, paid it off, and showed a fair bit of profit. The problem was – and why tanksinking became his downfall – it didn't

challenge him to any great extent. He wasn't that interested in it except as a way to earn money. Max had abilities and talents that were really never developed – that couldn't be developed while he was an earthmover.

I don't think he was ever satisfied with his life. The impression I have, and I'm quite sure of this, is that Max was never quite content with what he was doing; that he was looking for something which always evaded him somewhere along the line.

*Many a writer & poet
dies young in the
breast of the ignorant
Swedenborg*

1. Wilf came out with this comment unprompted. He was referring to the first letter written by Max to Marj (opposite).

I had a copy of the letter on my laptop, and when I showed it to him he recognised it as the letter he was describing.



With six brothers – four of them older than myself – there were always plenty of boys around Glenrock. The place was alive with boys. I had quite a few boyfriends before Max, though nothing was very serious. None proposed marriage. I think it was more just friends.

I met Max while we were still living at Glenrock. Max lived at Mondure and he used to play cricket for the Mondure team. My brother Keith used to play cricket too – for Windera. We went to Mondure for this cricket match and that was where I was introduced to Max. He must have been a bit taken with me. All he knew about me was my name, but we all knew about Max Burns because he was a good cricketer. Then I got an anonymous letter with no name on it. It was quite a romantic start: how he'd seen me at this cricket match and he'd like to meet me. As soon as Keith saw it he said: "That'll be Max Burns". His name was Malcolm but we all called him Max.

The next Saturday night I went to a dance at the Mondure Hall and that was how our romance started.

Max romanced me mostly by writing and sometimes a telegram. The first time I met him he was living at home at Mondure and I was living at Glenrock. Then he bought a little farm at a place called Wooroonden. He didn't have a motor car and we didn't see each other very much unless he rode into town or came by sulky. He'd use the phone or I'd use the phone; there was always a phone somewhere. And letters of course. He wrote the most beautiful letters and I kept them all for years and years. Anyway, we had a barney one night – be in the late sixties not long before he left me – and I gathered all his letters and burnt them. All except one – that first letter.

Right: The first letter sent from Max to Marj, probably written on Sunday, 10th November 1929. Although dated by Marj (at the top) as 1930, it was actually 1929. There was no Saturday, 16th November (third last line) in 1930. [Kerri Burns, BuK01]

Miss M. Smith
Windera

Australia, Sunday

Dearest Lady,

Here's a puzzle! A letter from one you scarcely know. Someone who is apparently thinking of you. Whether those thoughts be cherished and dear remains a mystery. However, as it is not usual for us to write to those for whom we care not, you may guess that thoughts serenely sweet are passing now your way. May you, therefore, send forth but one in return? If the wind blows this way it's sure to reach its destination.

A wayfarer told me that you were at a dance in Mondure last night. As there's to be another on Saturday 16th of Nov. do come again. Your writer will be in Mondure that night.

Anon



19-30

Miss M. Smith,
Windera.

Australia
Sunday

Dearest Lady

Here's a puzzle!
A letter from one you scarcely know.
Someone who is apparently thinking
of you. Whether those thoughts
be cherished & dear remains a
mystery. However, as it is not
usual for us to write to those
for whom we care not, you may
guess that thoughts serenely
sweet are passing now your way.
May you, therefore, send forth
but one in return? If the wind
blows this way it's sure to
reach its destination.

A wayfarer told me that you were
at a dance in Mondure last night.
As there's to be another on Saturday
16th of Nov. do come again. Your
writer will be in Mondure that night.

Anon
M.B.



Max was born at Maryborough in 1907. He was four years older than me. He had one sister and three brothers. His father was Robert Lindsay Burns; people called him RL. He was a tough man, but he was also a gentleman and well-respected. He wasn't just a nobody; he had his own farm, Avondale, and

he was on the council. In his little group at Mondure he was well-known, well-liked, and into everything.

Although RL wasn't poor – Avondale was quite a good farm with a nice home – there wasn't much money. Avondale was a lovely place really. It was a going concern when I first knew the Burnses. [continued page 46]



Right and far right: RL (Robert Lindsay) Burns,
shire councillor, front row, second from left.
[Murgon Council Office, MC01, ca 1910]

Below: Avondale.
In 2008 the house was still being used
as a dairy farming residence at
482 Flats Rd, Wondai.
[Bill Burns, BuB09, 1925]



I CAN REMEMBER as a little kid visiting the grandparents' farm at Mondure with its big old rambling home and a wide verandah all the way round. And there's two things I remember. Grandpa Burns loved sour cream and bananas. Absolute putrid, eh. And Grandma used to make junket. Every time we went there she made junket and we'd say: "Oh, not again!"

Anyhow, she'd always put it out on the verandah to set. Us kids'd be running around the farmyard with shit all over our feet and Christ-knows-what.

Don would be chasing me, trying to catch me as usual (but I could always run a lot faster than him), and here I was running round the corner of the verandah – and straight into the junket went me cowshit-covered foot. I was shaking me foot and wiping it down, and at the same time trying to smooth over the bowl of junket.

Come dessert time Don said: "No thanks Grandma", Joy said: "No thanks Grandma". "Oh, you gotta have some." But she couldn't get any of us to eat it.

BARRY BURNS



Above: Unidentified man harvesting lucerne on Avondale.
[Robin Burns, R40, 1933]



Above: Jane & RL Burns, Max's parents.
[Bill Burns, BuW08, 1 Dec 1925]



E.T. No. 2
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.—POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

RECEIVED TELEGRAM.

Station From.	Words.	Charge.	Time and Date Lodged.	No.
Mondure	17	12 45pm		2

Remarks.

To Miss^m Flewell-Smith
-Wondai

This message has been received subject to the Post and Telegraph Act and Regulations

Sweetest birthday greetings and wishing you many happy returns of the day
Max

12 58pm SM.

Time received at this Office.

Sched. C 107—6/1926

OFFICE STAMP: WONDAL, -20030, QUEENSLAND

Above: *There's no place like home.* Avondale, with grapes growing around the verandah. Max's writing.
[Bill Burns, BuW32, 1 Feb 1926]

Left: *Sweetest birthday greetings and wishing you many happy returns of the day.* Telegram from Max to Marj for her 19th birthday, 2 Oct 1930. Marj was then living in Wondai at the Flewell-Smith boarding house. Max was living at Avondale (the telegram was sent from Mondure, the nearest Post Office).
[Dawn Flewell-Smith, DFT05, 1930]

Opposite: Burns outside Bob Burns' house at 23 Georgina St, Woody Point. Bob was Max's brother. Their father, RL Burns, was living with Bob at the time.

From left (as related to RL):

- Judy (granddaughter, daughter of Bob)
 - Kal (great grandson, son of Jill)
 - Jean (daughter-in-law, Judy's mother)
 - Robert Lindsay
 - Jill (granddaughter-in-law, married to Max's son, Don)
 - Guy (great grandson, son of Jill)
- [Guy Burns, GB94, 1960]



I WAS ONLY A LITTLE KID when I first remember Pop and Gran Burns. We were running around the verandah at Avondale pinching grapes, that's all I can remember. We weren't allowed in past the kitchen – old Grannie didn't like us grandkids. We'd pinch the grapes off the vine and she'd rouse on us; but Pop, he'd pull off a big bunch and give them to us and we'd hide up the backyard eating grapes.

Pop had a Scottish roll. I think he was born in Scotland. They both were. He had relations come from Scotland to visit us and you couldn't understand what they were talking about. Really Scottish. She had a bit of a Scottish accent too, old Gran. That's when she spoke at all. I'm pretty sure they both came out from Scotland when they were kids.

I was born in 1944 and I was 15 in that photo. That's Pop on a visit to our house at 23 Georgina St, Woody Point. He never smiled. Grouchy old bugger he was – God yeah. He had a house at Margate until Gran died, then he came and lived with us at Georgina St. He lived with us for about five years. I mostly remember him from that house. I'd sit by and cut his tobacco for him, and all I'd get in return was a snortch. Big plugs of tobacco I used to have to cut up for Pop. I'd stick them in his stinky old pipe.

He used to go to bowls a lot. He had his little bag of bowls and he'd polish them every day. That's about all he'd do, other than rousing on us for making a noise.

Sometimes he didn't want to eat with us, he wanted to eat in his bedroom. I'd have to take him his lunch and dinner. He was just used to being waited on, I think.

And Gran – old crotchety face, that's how I remember her. She totally disliked us. She'd growl at us the whole time. We had to tippy-toe through the house at Avondale and the one they lived in at Margate. She was very strict; even her boys were scared of her. She loved her boys, I know she did; but their families – no, forget it.

I don't know when she died or what she died of. Probably died whinging!

JUDY BURNS



Max and I were married on August 17, 1932 at Wondai in the Methodist church. I was 20. I don't remember when he asked me to marry him. I know we couldn't afford a ring; I had a watch. Never heard of an engagement party either.

Max had this farm at Wooroonden and we were intending to live there, but he sold it before the wedding and bought a farm at Brigooda, outside of Proston.

Right: Max and Marj Burns' wedding reception, Flewell-Smith boarding house, Wondai. Bob Burns, Max, Marj, Alice Compagnoni.
[Guy Burns, GB37, 17 Aug 1932]

"Alice Compagnoni was one of Max's little friends when she was only a kid. Then I met her in Wondai when we were living there and she was my bridesmaid. She came to Julia Creek and stayed with us for a while. I always thought that Max had an affair with her, but I wouldn't know."
(Marj Burns)

Below: Utopia, Max's farm at Wooroonden. Max's writing.
[Guy Burns, GB13, June 1932]





I WAS BORN in Wondai in 1914. My parents were on a farm 9 miles out from town. I went to the North Mondure school when I was 5, just across the road from the Burns' farm. I was in the same class as Max's younger brother, Billy. Sometimes after school I would go over and recite poems for their mother.

In the middle of the Burns house there was a room with polished floor boards. Max used to put on parties when I was a young teenager, an evening with a gramophone, and he taught me to dance. Not only me, he taught my sister and other girls too.

Max left the farm. He didn't want to work at home for his father anymore. He bought a little place at Woorooden and do you know what he called it? *Utopia*.

Max married Marj Flewell-Smith. I didn't know Marj until her family moved into Wondai at the start of the Depression, not long before she was married. The Flewell-Smiths ran a boarding house and were making no money. They hardly had enough to set a decent table for their boarders. I was staying at their boarding house and that's how I met Marj.

Before she married Max she used to go and watch the cricket matches. That's the sort of thing you did for an outing. Max was playing cricket at Mondure. That was his home town. He saw Marj and he got in touch with her. I said to her at the time: "You're not going to marry Max Burns, are you?" But he did have some good qualities: a fine cricketer and

very good at tennis. Later, in Julia Creek, he played golf. He was good at sport all round.

I didn't think Marj should marry him. To me Max seemed too far above her. See, he was a smart man. He used to read a lot. He didn't have much education beyond primary school, but he was a reader and he studied and he was clever; clever enough – or so I thought – to do something other than starting up that jolly engineering place in Julia Creek and going bankrupt through not paying his bills.

I wasn't terribly interested in Marj as a friend, and I must admit I didn't want to be her bridesmaid because we didn't have many things in common. But, with her being new in Wondai and not having many friends, when Max suggested me as bridesmaid I said yes.

They were married at the Methodist Church in Wondai and that photo was taken at the bottom of the Flewell-Smith boarding house at the reception. Marj got married with no teeth, y'know. You can tell she's got no teeth. She had all her teeth taken out while she was arranging to get married.

Bob and Bill Burns, Max's brothers, were at the wedding, and the parents. Nobody much else. After they were married I didn't have much to do with Max and Marj.

Years later, in the fifties, I met them again. I wanted to see the outback and I was planning a trip to Mount Isa. Around that time Marj called to see me. We were reasonable friends, though I hadn't seen

her since she lived at Brigooda a few years after she was married. I told her I was going to Mount Isa and she said: "Look, Max and I will be going back to Julia Creek in a few days. We'll take you. You can come by car with us as far as Julia Creek". We went out through Mitchell, Tambo, Longreach and Winton. At Mitchell, Max paid my accommodation overnight. He was generous like that; he knew I didn't have a lot of money.

When we got to Julia Creek I ended up with a job at the shire office. Max and Marj were kind enough to offer me a room upstairs at their double-storey house beside the workshop. But I didn't know the position would arise that I would be stopping in the house with just Max. I wasn't responsible for that happening.

I knew that Max had had an affair when he was in Brigooda, and I knew that he'd had a woman in Proston. And now, while Marj was away visiting her father in Brisbane, he was trying to be sweet on me – trying to get me to have a relationship with him. I objected. I felt I couldn't stop with him in the house any longer, so I booked into Gannon's Hotel. I think I stayed in Julia Creek eight months.

I never saw Max again after I left Julia Creek. Never saw him. I did see Marj once more. She came to visit me and told me that Max was very ill and was dying.

ALICE COMPAGNONI



Right: Proston XI 1935-6. Back row, 3rd from left: Keith Flewell-Smith (Marj's brother), Max, Bob Burns.
[Robin Burns, R38, 1935]

Below right: Max & Marj celebrating their first Christmas on Dewarn, the farm at Brigooda. The writing below is Max's, taken from his photo album.
[Guy Burns, GB14, 1932]

Dewarn Xmas Day 1932.

Opposite: Christmas Day at Brigooda with a wind-up gramophone for music. From left: Ned Flewell-Smith, William F-S, Marj, Lou F-S, Max.
[Guy Burns, GB07, 1932]

Below: Max and Marj at the Brisbane Cricket Ground, 1st Test, 8 Dec 1936. Marj has an umbrella; Max has a wooden fold-up chair and a waterbag. *Courier Mail* flier in the background reads: "Mr Baldwin Speaks". Stanley Baldwin was the British Prime Minister at the time.
[Joy Burns, J66, 1936]





We got married in the morning and went out to the property in the afternoon. It was called *Dewarn*. Three hundred and something acres. Max grew mainly potatoes or whatever was going, and we had nearly a hundred dairy cows. Every month we got a cheque for the cream.

I can remember going to a neighbour's place at night to listen to the cricket. We'd get home at 3 o'clock in the morning. Max was a great Bradman fan. We used to find enough money to go and watch Bradman play when he was in Brisbane. We went to Sydney once to see him. Might have gone to Melbourne too, I just can't remember. Max was mad on cricket.

We had our own team at Brigooda. Properties in that area were only about 300 acres – they weren't big farms miles apart – and with 20 or so farms close by we had enough men for a cricket team. Every Sunday they played. They'd go to Proston or Wondai. A few times Max was picked to go to other places further afield. He was a batsman, and he bowled quite well too. Slow bowler – spin.

We saw quite a lot of tramps pass by *Dewarn* during the Depression and we always gave them a cup of tea and a slice of bread. Sometimes they'd

do a bit of work and sometimes they'd just call in. We were near the road. It was the main road through, but it was a very lonely road. We never turned anybody away. Even if we could only give them bread we always gave them something to eat for the next day. Our place was always known you'd get a feed. And when the salesmen came around they always dropped in because, as they said: "We know we can get a cuppa here".

We were never poor enough that we had to stint on food. There was always plenty of flour and sugar; we got them by the bag. You didn't get a pound of sugar, you got a bag of sugar. I do remember, though, we were often short of bread. I hated making bread. Instead, I used to bake muffins from Mum's recipe because they were easy to make. Now I've lost the recipe and I've forgotten how to cook them.

We were on the farm when Joy was born, 3rd July 1933, and we were still on the farm when Donald Douglas arrived in 1935. Donald, after Bradman, and Douglas after Max's middle name. You never planned, not like women do today. It was pot luck. And all my kids were born in hospital. I wouldn't be having any home birth, thank you. That'd be too much like hard work.



Right: Account book of Mr R. J. Ronald, Mondure, showing 40 bags of oats sold to Max at a cost of £20/16/0. Max regularly purchased large quantities of oats from Mr Ronald, a close friend of Max's father (both of whom were trustees for the Mondure Hall). "G. Companonga" is George Compagnoni, Wilf and Alice's father (see page 38 and 47).
[Mondure Hall documents, MN02, 1935]

C. Freeman 30 bus new

Max Burns			
40 bags ^{for} 2 x 2 x 2 x 0 Paid	20	16	0
Henry Bick 12 bus Paid	2	2	0
Jim Pointing 9 bus Paid	1	11	6
G. Companonga ^{paid 2 3/4 bus} 18 bus	3	3	0

Below: Max's store in Proston. Under the awning on the left is a hand plough (two handles in the air); in front of the plough and lying flat on the ground are harrows (a heavy frame that is dragged over ploughed land to break up clods and remove weeds); and on the right is a horse-drawn mower (the cutting blade is stored vertical against the wall). Max's passion for cricket is highlighted by the cricket bats for sale in the display window.
[Robin Burns, R26, 1935]





After a couple of years at Brigooda we moved into Proston and Max started a produce business. We had a shop in town and we lived behind it. We did all right. Max travelled all over the place selling produce. I think it was a drought that finished him as a produce dealer. Once that sets in, well...

From Proston we went to Biloela, in 1938, after Barry was born. It was opening up, it was new land. Max heard about it so we went there and started another dairy property. It was bigger than *Dewarn*, six or seven hundred acres, with a lot of scrub. Scrub felling was a big job so we got the Cherbourgs in; the blackfellas. Cherbourg is near Wondai. It's an Aboriginal settlement. If you asked for assistance in clearing scrub, Aborigines were sent out to help.

Biloela was undeveloped country like Brigooda had been. Max got the farms going at both places and made quite a bit of profit when he sold them.

We weren't actually at Biloela, we were at a district called Calvale. Dad built the first school at Calvale with the help of the locals, and Joy and Don were among the first intake in 1941.

I've forgotten what we called the farm. We always gave names to our properties and homes. Wait a minute... *Bauhinia*. Although that name really came from Proston. Where we lived in Proston there was a beautiful bauhinia tree growing and that's how the Calvale property got the name.

The house we first lived in at Calvale was made of slab. The roof was high in the front and sloped down to the back. It had one big room which we dined in – a fair-sized room, but just one – and it had a little skillion which we used as a bedroom. They were primitive days, Guy. There was no real homestead.

In my memory, when I close my eyes, I can see the dairy shed. Solly – he was an Albanian working for us – he lived in that little shed. The cream separator was in there, and Solly was there as well. Every morning without fail, the kids used to ride over on their tricycles to say good morning and have a biscuit, or whatever he offered. Joy had a tricycle with a tray at the back. Barry was about 9 months old and he used to sit in the tray. Don had his own little bike. Then the three of them would pedal on over to the milking shed. I suppose Max and I kept them entertained for a while until they went back to Solly's and over to the house. That's what they did before they were old enough to go to school.



Below: Extract from *Application for the Development of a Provisional School* at Calvale. Max lists his daughter Marjorie (Joy) as being of school age (5), and living 2½ miles from the proposed new school.

[Biloela Library, BL05, 20 Apr 1939]

Middle: "In my memory, when I close my eyes..." Buildings on *Bauhinia*, Max's farm at Calvale. Cream shed in foreground (where Solly lived); milking shed in background.

[Joy Burns, J19, 1939]

Bottom: Barry, Don, Joy, on Creamy.
[Joy Burns, J54, 1940]

"Creamy was Don's and mine. We always took him to school. The two of us rode him. We had a little saddle for two kids with two sets of stirrups. Dad got it specially made." (Joy Burns)

"Joy and Don didn't come home from school one afternoon and I was worried that something had happened to them. The school teacher knew that they had to catch their pony, but he'd gone home and left them. I had to go down and catch the damn thing myself. So I went to the teacher and he really got my tongue." (Marj Burns)

Bottom left: School at Calvale, built by Marj's brother, Alan, in 1940; since removed.
[Biloela Library, BL01, ca1948]

Charles Wilcox / Shirley
J.D. Burns / Marjorie
Hasitman / Patricia
7 Port. 9. 1/2 Ballade 1 mile
5 Portion 7 1/2 Ballade 2 1/2 miles
7 Portion 141 1/2 Ballade 1/2 "





Max started tanksinking at Biloela. He made enough money out of the farm to buy a tractor. I don't know where he got the idea from, but he got the idea at Biloela. Later on, out west, he went into tanksinking in a big way. At Biloela he was mostly building dams. Dams have three walls and the water comes in the open side, whereas a tank's got four walls, is dug in the ground, and water comes in through a pipe. Max was doing tanks in the end, but he started off building dams.

I can remember the first dam he built because I drove the tractor. The two men who had been working for us enlisted, so Max and I ran the farm. We did all the milking ourselves, and we put that little dam in ourselves. It was only small, it wasn't very big.

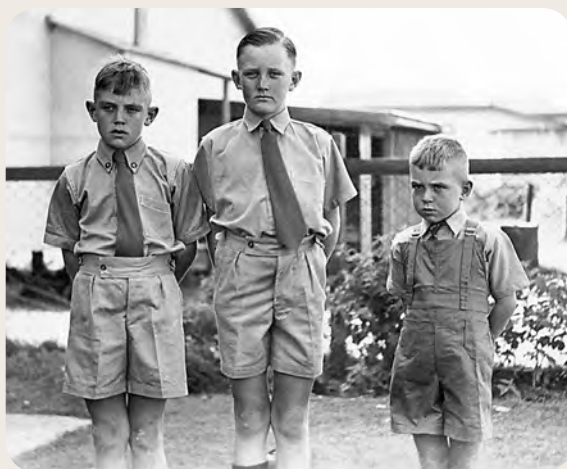
THE BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT of my life was the Min-Min light at Julia Creek, the time Beven Flewell-Smith was with me. We got bogged about 15 mile south of Julia Creek on the way to Kynuna. The road curved round in a big loop, so we cut across country and were walking back to town. Three or four hours we'd been walking. It was night, dead flat, not a tree in sight, and this light appears – the Min-Min light. Perfectly round. You hear all sorts of weird things about it – blokes getting killed chasing it on horseback; it will get you lost; a ball of lightning. This one seemed to vary from between 10 feet and 50 yards away. For an hour and a half it was there, right up till dawn. It would go out and it would flash on; it disappeared and then it was a flame. It was actually there, we could see it.

What it was, this particular one, was the flame of a railway oil lamp fluttering in the breeze, sitting beside the tracks throwing light around. It just sat there all night, and then a bloke picked it up before dawn and walked along the track with it. That was the flickering. To find out it was just a railway light – that it wasn't something from outer space like Beven and I imagined – that was the disappointing part. Scared the hell out of us at the time though.

I STARTED SCHOOL at All Souls in 1947 when I was 5. I went because Don and Barry were going. You did Prep 1 and Prep 2 in the first year, then Prep 3 and Prep 4 in the second year, and then grade 1. Max was building ovals at All Souls, and I remember being there in Prep One while they were being built.

Except for half of 1950 in Southport, and a term in Gayndah, I did all my schooling at All Souls, right through to 1958, through to Junior.

In 1959, after I finished school, I had three months at the Royal Hotel, Lismore. Max bought it. On the ground floor was the main bar and the saloon bar. Underneath were the beer cellars. On the second floor was the Ladies' Bar – women weren't allowed in the others – and behind the Ladies' Bar was the dining room. Up on the third floor were the bedrooms. Mostly for permanents. I don't think we did much overnight stuff.



Beautiful woodwork in the bars, and that's where I worked. Max walked around looking important and buying everybody beers. I think Mum did most of the work. Max occasionally got behind the bar, but when he did he never seemed to charge anything.

Then Donny had some tanksinking jobs to do, so I went back to Julia Creek with him. Max had gone bankrupt. All his equipment was still out there, so Donny just took it over and I worked with him.

At the end of '59 when I came back to Brisbane, I was walking past the naval registry office one day and thought: *That'd be a good idea*. So, in April 1960, I joined the navy.

MAL BURNS





Then the war came and we went with the war people and helped with aerodromes. The army called our tractors in. As a country we had to build things up; we thought we were going to be invaded. Our tractors were requisitioned and we had to go. We lived in a tent for a while on the Rockhampton aerodrome. Joy and Don were going to school only in the morning because the war scare was very real. One lot of kids would go in the morning and the other lot in the afternoon.

My third son, Mal, was born in 1942 at Yeppoon while Max was working on the aerodrome; and Butch in 1945 at Clermont. We moved to Clermont during the war. We bought a house and we shifted there. Max continued his dam building and was gradually moving north towards Charters Towers, following work.

In 1947 Don, Barry and Mal went to school in Charters Towers, boarding at All Souls, and somehow Max got the job of making ovals for the school. One of the ovals is still called Burns Field.

At the end of '47 Max leased the Commercial Hotel. It was going fairly cheap and Max thought it would be a good place for us to live, close to the boys and close to his work. My youngest brother Ned and his wife Dawn ran the Commercial for a while. I didn't want anything to do with it. I only went in and took it over because Ned got a job at Selheim, the nearby army base, a few months before he was killed.

We didn't have the Commercial long; not quite a year.

Max began to get a lot of tanksinking work out west: Clio, Rosevale, all around the Julia Creek area. For a couple of years we lived in a caravan on site. We were making a lot of money, and within a short time Max bought three cattle properties north of Julia Creek: Balootha, Abydos and May Downs, and God-knows how many blocks of land at Redcliffe. Then he got the brainstorm that he'd lease the Burnett Hotel at Gayndah and my brother and I would run it. Stan was a policeman and had six months long service leave. After the six months, Stan went back to the police force and I was left running the hotel on my own. I think I had about 12 months in Gayndah.

When we gave up the Burnett Hotel – I'd had enough by that time, I never wanted to be in the hotel to start with – we shifted to Julia Creek. Money from tanksinking was still pouring in, helped along by the wool boom. By the end of 1951 we had a large engineering workshop and a double-storey house in Julia Creek, and a homestead on Balootha – all built by my brother Alan.

MR MOYNAHAN: Now, Mrs Burns, when you were last in the witness box on Tuesday we had referred to you going into the Commercial Hotel at Charters Towers. Before you went into the hotel where had you been living or residing? Was it in Julia Creek --- No. I was in a caravan with my husband while he was tanksinking.

At this time the children, the boys, were going to All Souls, Charters Towers --- Yes.

Will you explain how did it come about that you went into the Commercial Hotel --- My young brother Ned was tanksinking with us on a property called Clio, and his wife Dawn didn't like being out there. I thought it would be a good idea if we all had a home – we were in caravans on Clio – and it always worried me that if anybody got sick we'd have nowhere to go except to come to Brisbane to my mother. I think that was the reason we bought the Commercial.

Did you hold the licence --- Yes, but only for about three months. My sister-in-law (Ned's wife, Dawn) held the licence for the first few months. We didn't own it very long.

Those three months, was that the only period that you ran the hotel --- Actually, I ran it even when I wasn't the licensee. I was still in charge of it all the time we had it.

Was it a profitable concern --- No, it didn't make any money. We knew we wouldn't make any money. It was more-or-less a home for the children to come to at that moment.

On the sale of the licence, when you left the Commercial Hotel, where did you go and reside --- Must have gone back to the caravan with my husband. Yes, I did. I went tanksinking again.

MARJ & THE OFFICIAL RECEIVER
24 August 1961

Left: Burns Field, All Souls.
[Guy Burns, GK076, 2002]

Opposite top: Max's first dam on Bauhinia, built with the help of Marj. Flat-Top Mt in background.
[Guy Burns, GK093, 2003]

Opposite middle: Barry, Don, Mal dressed in All Souls' uniform, outside Lou Flewell-Smith's home, Ambon, Beaconsfield Terrace, Brighton.
[Joy Burns, J58, ca 1947]

Opposite bottom: Royal Hotel, Lismore. In January 1959, nine months before his bankruptcy, Max purchased the lease for £14,000 (£9,000 of which was in cash) showing little concern for his small creditors in Julia Creek. (See Downey p210, and McMahon p232).
[LS02, 1954]

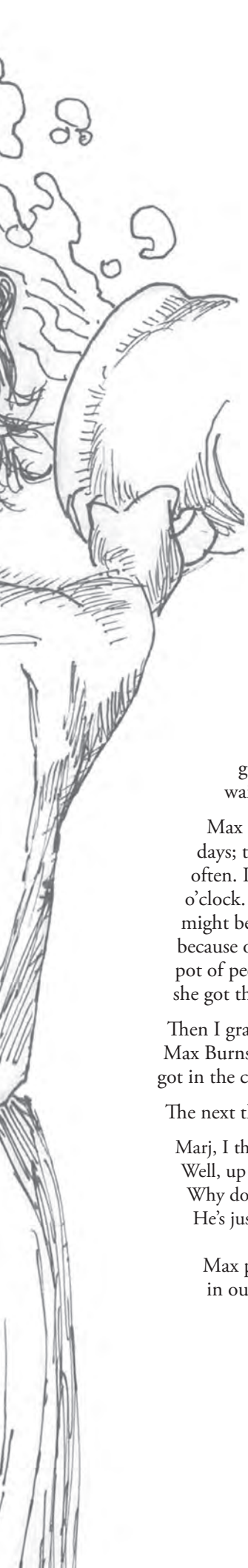


Burnett Advocate: 20 Dec 1950



Northern Miner: 15 Nov 1947
The initial 'M' is for Mabel, but she was known as Dawn.





IT WAS AROUND THIS TIME that Max had a fling. Well, he had lots of women, but this was one I caught him with. They worked for us; at least her husband did. I knew there was something going on. I'm not a fool; I'm not a fool altogether. Anyway, I ignored her. We were somewhere – a hotel, the whole lot of us. It was after golf. She didn't play golf. They happened to be there and I ignored her. The husband came up and complained to Max that I ignored his wife. One thing led to another and I think I might have accused her, openly, of having an affair with Max. Some days later she ups and catches the train. She's going away, leaving Julia Creek. And Max disappeared. Something told me he was only going to the next town.

I had a friend who knew Max. We were at a dance and I said: "Wanna come with me to Richmond?" "Yeah, I'll come with you."

She knew all about Max; knew he was a bit of a ladies' man. We went to Richmond, miles and miles away on a dirt road. When we got there, right in front of the hotel was Max's truck. So I said: "You wait here. You don't want to get into this".

Max and I used to stop at this hotel. We used the hotels quite a lot in those days; travelling, y'see. I knew that hotel like my own place, I'd stayed there so often. I just marched up the stairs, torch in hand – it was late at night, 2 or 3 o'clock. And as I walked down the corridor, never thinking that this woman might be there too, I saw Max and her in bed. Everybody left the doors open because of the heat. I bowled in, grabbed the po (under the bed I could see this pot of pee), and before she could get out – Max got out, he didn't cop it – but she got the lot.

Then I grabbed some clothes of hers and said: "You won't need these, not with Max Burns" and shot the whole lot out into the street. With that I walked out, got in the car and started for Julia Creek.

The next thing the lass with me said:

Marj, I think Max is following us.
Well, up him. I couldn't care less.
Why do you think he's following us?
He's just going home. Don't worry about him.

Max passed us and we caught him up down the road. He was standing there in our headlights, if you please, having a leak!

I assumed nobody knew about that night until someone said to me:

I'll take my hat off to you, Mrs Burns.
What are you talking about?

I saw all those clothes in the tree at Richmond. They're still there.

I didn't know they were stuck in a tree until then, and this was weeks and weeks later. Max must have spread the bloody story, I suppose. To this day I believe he did. He thought it was a wonderful story. I reckon he got a laugh out of telling that story – mongrel!

I think Max had quite a lot of affairs. I don't know of any others, really, except I suspected there were. I think he just had a roving eye. He was always on the go, moving about chasing work; and with plenty of money he had plenty of opportunities.

There was not much I could do about it. I didn't make a big fuss. The kids came first. To go for a divorce cost money and a lot of dirt, and I didn't want to put the kids through that.

I never saw or heard from the woman or her husband again, apart from two occasions. I got a phone call one day. Joy sang out to me: "Somebody wants you on the phone, Mum". It was this chap. His name was Rickertt, the husband of this woman. He was going for a divorce and he wanted £2000 from Max as compensation. I told him: "If Max has £2000 he can give it to me, never mind giving it to you". I wouldn't come into it. I wanted nothing to do with it. My kids meant more to me than a bit of gossip in the papers. That's what it would have amounted to. You know what divorces were like those days; every bit of dirt was written up. I just hung up the phone and I never heard from him again. He wanted my evidence as well as £2000. He wasn't there in the hotel, y'see. He wasn't a witness. And without my evidence he had *no* evidence.

A number of years later I ran short of petrol in Brisbane. I called into a petrol station and who should bloomin'-well serve me but that woman. I looked at her for a minute and she looked at me: "It *is* Marj Burns, isn't it?" She called out: "George, come over here". It was George Rickertt. He didn't appreciate being reminded of his wife's infidelity, though by that time, of course, not much venom was left.



At the end of the 1950s it just all fell in for Max. This tax thing was hovering about and took all the money. I never realised what was coming. Max might have known but I didn't. We went from being as poor as a church mouse, as the saying is, up into the higher brackets once he started tanksinking, then back again.

The Official Receiver took everything. We had no assets left out west. Nothing. The only thing they didn't get was Gran's house in Georgina St. The house was in Gran's¹ name and the tax couldn't take it. It was our money, but we bought it in Gran's name. Everything else that Max owned the tax grabbed.

We sold what we could in Julia Creek before the bankruptcy and Max bought a hotel in Lismore with money that was in my name, and Don's and Joy's. I held the licence and I ran it, more or less. Max, as usual, dealt with all the finances. Don and Jill and you two boys were there for part of the time.

Right: "You two boys were there for part of the time."
Kal, Jill and Guy
at the Royal Hotel, Lismore.
[Guy Burns, GB106, Aug 1959]

1. Transferred to Joy in 1955.



MR MOYNAHAN: Your next venture in business, apparently, was in the Royal Hotel, Lismore --- Yes. When did you go into the Royal Hotel, Lismore --- February 1959.

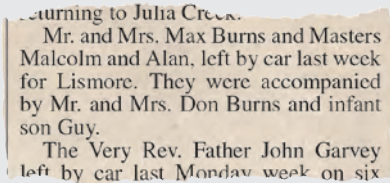
Or was it January --- No, it was February. We didn't leave Julia Creek until then. I think it was 8th February we took over the hotel.

How did it come about that you went into this venture, the Royal Hotel, Lismore --- I had to get out of Julia Creek. I had a sun complaint (you can see the scars) and I was advised to leave the west. My son, Donald, was very keen on a hotel and we intended to come somewhere around Brisbane. We didn't intend to go to New South Wales, that wasn't in our plan at all, but on talking to the agents they said: "Why not New South Wales?" We went to the Northern Rivers first and thought how beautiful it was. We fell for Lismore, and I'm afraid we didn't really go into it. We didn't know there were poker machines subsidising lower beer prices in the clubs. They were unheard of in North-West Queensland. All we were looking for was to get away from the Julia Creek climate and live a little decently.

Was your husband with you on this visit --- He was with me when Donald and I looked at it.

Is that when you made the decision to buy into the Royal Hotel at Lismore --- Yes. We went down for a week just after Christmas, early in January,

and we went back to Julia Creek for three or four weeks. I think we left Julia Creek for Lismore on about the 3rd February.



NQR: 14 Feb 1959. The author's only mention in the *North Queensland Register*.

Did you take it over yourself. Were you the licensee --- Yes. But Donald was with me, and his wife, Jill.

Was there a partnership operating the hotel --- Yes, definitely. Burns Burns & Burns. There was Donald, my daughter Joy, and myself.

Your daughter was residing in Melbourne at the time --- She was nursing. She was with us for three months.

You bought the leasehold of this hotel --- Yes. It wasn't a freehold --- No.

What did you pay for the lease --- About £14,000, but we didn't pay all that at once. It was nearly 12 months before we made the final payment. We

didn't pay that until I had sold again.

How long did you run it --- About 11 months. In the meantime we were unfortunate enough to have two new clubs go up. It was such a bad proposition. At first it was all right.

How much actual money was paid when you went into the Royal Hotel, Lismore --- I think my share was about £3000.

What about Donald and Joy --- They put in about the same.

Where did you get your £3000 from --- The first two payments from the sale of Abydos and May Downs went to pay my husband's tax, but the next payment was mine. I kept that one. And I had some money from the sale of furniture at Julia Creek.

You say there was £9000 in funds available for the purchase of that lease. £3000 from you, £3000 from Donald and £3000 from Joy --- I just don't remember the exact amount, but I think that was what we had.

You ran this hotel for 11 months and then you sold the lease --- Yes.

What was the sale price --- About £6000. I think £6000 would be near enough. We tried to sell it for the price we paid, but we couldn't.

So you lost heavily --- Yes. As a matter of fact we didn't save a thing out of it. By the time we had finished paying our debts there was nothing left.

About a year later we came back from Lismore with nothing. Unless Max had a secret stash, whatever was left after the tax went through us we lost in Lismore. We moved in with Gran in Georgina St.

I ended up in court over the bankruptcy. We all did: Max, Don, Barry. Joy was in Melbourne so they didn't question her. It would have been 1960 or '61. In the court room I felt about that big. They must have thought I was pretty dumb, but I really didn't know anything about the money side of things. I never did anything with the finances. Not in Julia Creek, not anywhere. I was lucky to be given a couple of quid. I had nothing to do with the money part of it at all. That was Max. He had studied to be an accountant, y'see. Most of his brothers went to Maryborough Grammar School, but Max didn't. He did this accountancy course instead and he always handled the money. And as it turned out, he didn't do a very good job...

Right: "We moved in with Gran in Georgina St."
Lou Flewell-Smith holding Kal;
Jill holding Guy; outside the Georgina St home
Ambon, named after the island where Lou's son
Clive died of berri-berri in the closing
months of World War 2.
[Guy Burns, GB095, 1960]



None of the capital came back at all --- No.

You mean you lost the whole amount. You got nothing back --- By the time we had paid everything, there was nothing left. The books are all there. We tried to sell it, but it was difficult because we didn't have poker machines. We couldn't even get an offer. We were going downhill, and my son, Don, decided to go back out west in early August, tanksinking.

What amount of money do you say you lost in the Lismore Hotel --- Near enough to £14,000, probably more because we didn't get our price. We lost very heavily. The overhead expenses were terrific. It was run on three storeys and we had to have a big staff. It would have been all right except for the RSL Club and the new Workers Club that went up. Trade just dwindled away. They sold beer for 1/- a glass and we had to charge 1/4d.

Who, and for what amount, was your largest creditor when you came to sell out --- They would be the breweries, Tooheys and Grafton.

If the price of the lease was £14,000 and if you sold it for £6000, wouldn't that have represented only a loss of £8000 --- Our beer bills to Tooheys would be about £1000 a month.

Were you able to, out of the sale, pay all the commitments in relation to the Lismore Hotel --- Yes, I think pretty well. But not out of the sale; out of what I had in the bank and the sale.

Was there no surplus at all left for division between the partners --- I doubt if there would be a penny left because I know I paid a small account out of my own, £32 something. There may have been others. The books are all there and they'll tell you the story. It was just an unfortunate affair. The man who sold the lease to us was desperate to get out of it. I think £9000 was paid as a deposit and the rest wasn't to be paid until September. By that time we were pressing for a misrepresentation case, but there was nothing we could do about it. We had to pay what we still owed because the solicitor said even if we went for misrepresentation we'd still have to pay what we owed.

You didn't pursue your action --- No, we would have lost more money than we already had. The man who owned the hotel - I've forgotten his name - offered us £6000 to take it back.

For the lease --- Yes.

When you left the Royal Hotel, Lismore, that would have been when --- I think it was February 1960 before I got away from there.

Where did you go and reside then --- I went down to my mother's at Georgina St, Redcliffe.

Where are you residing at present --- Well, we have a small farm out on the Ipswich Road, at Ebbw Vale, near Redbank. We go home to Georgina St every weekend. I have an 80 year old mother

who lives there on her own.

How long have you had this farm at Ebbw Vale --- Since about last August.

Did you purchase this farm --- Yes. It's about 8 or 9 acres.

What crops would be grown on it --- We had tomatoes, and at the moment we have gladioli, but there doesn't seem to be any sale for them.

Is your husband actually working this farm property, personally --- Well, he helps.

Apart from this farm, have you today any other property --- No

No land or anything of that kind --- No.

Apart from real property such as land, have you assets or property of any other kind --- No.

What is your source of income at present --- My husband keeps me; and what we grow on the farm. That's all we have.

Has the farm been producing much income --- It has produced some. It hasn't been a real success. We haven't been with it long enough. It was a bare property when we went on it last August.

Your only source of income at present are the earnings of your husband and what comes off the small farm --- Yes.

MARJ & THE OFFICIAL RECEIVER
24 Aug 1961



In 1962 or '63 I started a snack bar in St Paul's Terrace in The Valley, where Whiskey au Go Go was later on, before it was burnt and all those people died. Your mother used to come in and help me.

After the snack bar we got into real estate. It was under my name; I had the licence. Max was the salesman and he did quite well. We had a good little business there in Brunswick St, just around the corner from where I had the snack bar.

In 1965 we sold Gran's Georgina St house and built a house at Tingalpa¹ in my name. Max also had about 10 acres of market garden at Ebbw Vale, on the way to Ipswich. I didn't have much to do with it because by that time he had a lady friend, Judy. She lived next door to the farm.

Max was cleared from his bankruptcy in 1967, and that's when he went haywire over Judy. He was having an affair with her. It had been going on a good while – and God, she was ugly as sin. How he ever went and lived with her in that pigsty I don't know. Judy's still alive. She's Joy's age, and she's in the phone book under Philippi if you want to look her up.

I don't recall kicking him out, but Joy says she remembers standing in the kitchen at Tingalpa and hearing me say to Max: "Go pack your bags and get out!" I suppose it was about 1972. When he left he didn't take much with him. I bet he had a bit of money though. I think he probably had a secret bank account.



1. 73 Boundary Rd, Tingalpa.



Opposite: The gathering of the Burnses
for Butch's 21st birthday.
[Guy Burns, GB32, 2 June 1966]

Standing:
Butch, Lyn Mellish
Josie & Barry
Marj & Max
Mal & Mary
George Everest & Joy

Sitting:
Don, Lou Flewell-Smith, Trevor, Jill

Below: In her fading years Nan was wont to write
out poems and sayings that appealed to her.

She refers to this particular poem,
I Will Guide Thee,
as her bible during the bad years with Max:

"This one was like my bible
when I had my bad years.
Now I'm too old to have bitter memories.
Love of my grandchildren,
and mother and family,
saved my sanity in those far-off years.
Now it's time to forget & forgive."

[Kerri Burns, BuK16, 2001]

I WAS WORKING at Brisbane Realty in St Pauls Terrace when I first met Max and Marj. I was 17, it was 1965, and I was working as a receptionist. It was just after Marj sold the snack bar on the opposite side of the road. They started selling real estate at Brisbane Realty and I became friendly with them.

Then they began their own business around the corner in Brunswick St – Burns Realty. Marj had to get the licence; Max couldn't because of his bankruptcy. So she got the licence and I started working for them. I'd just got married, September 1967, so it would be towards the end of that year. I probably called in to see them – I tried to keep in touch – and they offered me a job. They hadn't been going long because nobody worked there before I did.

Max was selling farms; Gatton and all out that way. I can remember him going out to Gatton and Dayboro. He specialised in rural properties. I remember distinctly quite a lot of farms and acreages and things like that. Marj looked after the listings, whereas I looked after the office part and collected rentals. They had quite a few rentals, too, which they got commission from.

Max was great to work for. He was fine. You did what you liked, more or less, as long as you did your job. I never had any problems; I never had a run in with him. He was fairly laid back and easy going, but I don't think he would have been if I hadn't done my job.

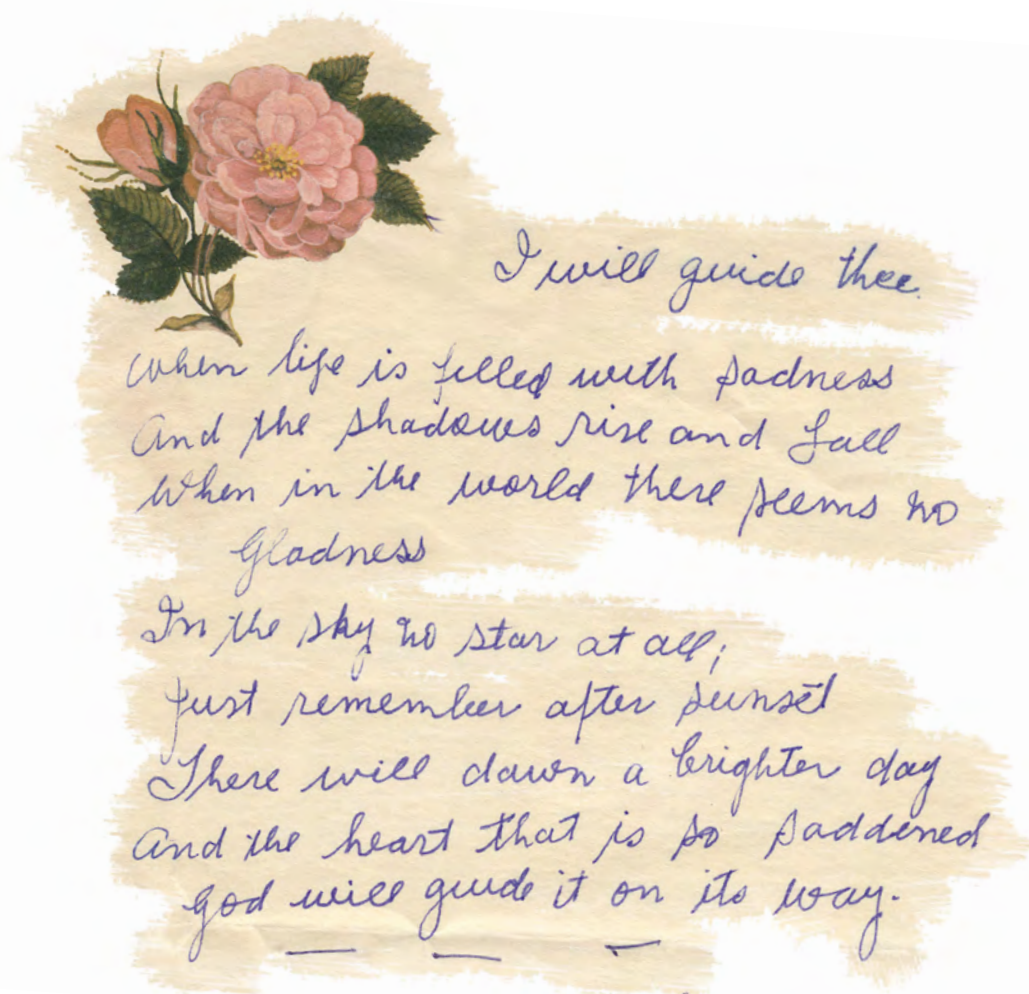
I'd say Max was just scraping by in real estate, because at night he drove a taxi. He drove the taxi nearly every night for most of the time I knew him. He'd go home from work, have his tea, get changed, and go straight out to drive the cab, so he couldn't have been making a lot of money in real estate, unless... Y'know, sometimes I think maybe the cab was an excuse for him to be not at home. I know that Max and Marj didn't get on really well the last few years. You can't blame her. I think he would have been a mongrel to live with. I think he did what he wanted to do without much thought for anybody else.

I worked at Burns Realty from the end of '67 till about August 1970; nearly three years. And that's when Judy came. Judy ended up working there. She came in only a couple of times before I left, but she definitely worked there after July 1970.

I knew about Judy from Marj because I was such good friends with Marj. She had suspicions for a long time. A couple of months before I left I'd see Judy waltz into the office, and that's when Marj stopped coming. She didn't turn up anymore after Judy arrived on the scene; it was mainly Max and I. And I have a feeling that if I hadn't been leaving anyway, that I would have had to go as well – to make way for Judy.

Max was definitely a gentleman. I would never have called him anything else. He conducted himself well, anywhere at anytime. He knew how to conduct himself and he always treated me with the utmost respect. He could be very charming in public; but I also knew, through Marj, what a bastard he could be in private.

LYN MELLISH



Timeline of Max Burns and Family

1907	Jun	14	.....	Malcolm Douglas Burns born.	1951	...	...	.....	Biloela farm sold for £12,000; £10,000 paid to tax. <i>Julia Creek Engineering Works</i> and <i>Dew Drop Inn</i> are completed.
1929	Nov	10	.....	First letter from Max to Marj.					
	...	16	.....	Max and Marj meet for the first time at Mondure Hall.		Apr	02	.....	Burnett Hotel sold.
1932	Aug	17	.....	Max and Marj marry at Wondai.	1952	...	...	.....	Don finishes school and starts work for Max.
	Sep	...	.....	Move to Brigooda farm.		May	23	.....	Earthmoving partnership of Goundry & Burns formed (Harry Goundry, Marj Burns).
1933	Jul	03	.....	Joy born at Wondai.	1953	...	...	.....	Mr Scott of the Taxation Office comes to Julia Creek to investigate Max's affairs.
1935	Sep	02	.....	Don born at Proston.		...	...	.....	Joy goes to the coronation.
	...	...	.....	Max starts produce business in Proston.		Oct	12	.....	Fred Huller starts as Max's accountant.
1937	Oct	13	.....	Barry born at Proston.		Nov	...	.....	Barry starts work for Max.
	...	...	.....	Move to Biloela farm.	1954	Jul	...	.....	Joy starts her training as a nurse.
1940	Oct	08	.....	Max begins contract earthmoving with a tractor.		Oct	30	.....	<i>Dew Drop Inn</i> burns down. It is uninsured. Max rebuilds a low-set home and calls it <i>Midnight Sun</i> .
1941	...	...	.....	Move into Biloela.	1955	...	...	.....	Don learns to fly.
	...	...	.....	Max starts work on Rockhampton aerodrome.	1956	Mar	...	.....	Goundry tries to get his capital out of Goundry & Burns. Max is reluctant to let him have it. A legal dispute ensues.
1942	Feb	08	.....	Mal born at Yeppoon.		Jun	30	.....	£32,370 tax owing by Max.
1943	...	...	.....	Move to Clermont to escape war work. Max starts earthmoving in the area.		Nov	13	.....	Max has interview in Brisbane with the tax office.
1945	Jun	02	.....	Butch born at Clermont.	1957	May	01	.....	Barry takes over workshop in Julia Creek.
1947	Jan	21	.....	Max purchases land at Woody Point for £450.		Jun	08	.....	Don Burns marries Jill Brennan of Nelia.
	...	...	.....	Max begins tanksinking on Clio with Ned Flewell-Smith, Cecil Willis and Bob Pulley. Pat Luhrmann arrives towards the end of the year.		Nov	04	.....	Max buys an Oliver OC18 tractor for £14,468 under hire purchase with the Commonwealth Bank. He is still trying to make a go of earthmoving, though prospects look dismal.
	Nov	22	.....	Max purchases Commercial Hotel, Charters Towers. Dawn Flewell-Smith is the first licensee.	1958	...	...	.....	Goundry & Burns dissolved.
1948	May	20	.....	Deposit paid for Abydos, May Downs and Balootha.		Jan	19	.....	Max's first grandchild, Guy, born at Cloncurry (no doctor in Julia Creek). On the same day H.C. Sleigh Ltd applies for <i>Issue of Bankruptcy Notice</i> .
	Sep	30	.....	Commercial Hotel sold.		Jun	30	.....	Barry finishes at workshop, and leaves the partnership of Burns Burns & Burns. Takes certain equipment as his share and starts work on his own.
	...	...	.....	Pat Luhrman and Alec Crowley begin work on the two Rosevale tanks, the largest Max built.		Sep	17	.....	Mr Ney buys Balootha (£14,067), Abydos and May Downs (£16,326).
	Nov	20	.....	34 Macdonnell Rd, Redcliffe, purchased for £3600.		Oct	...	.....	Fred Huller finishes working for Max.
	Dec	...	.....	Rosevale tanks are completed and the Burns family spend Christmas on site.	1959	Jan	13	.....	H.C. Sleigh Ltd wins case against Max for £3565/4/9. Max did not appear in court to contest.
1949	Sep	...	.....	First heavy tax assessment, £21,557.		...	16	.....	Marj draws a cheque for £1000 as deposit for Royal Hotel, Lismore.
			.....	Burns Burns & Burns earthmoving partnership formed (Joy, Don & Barry).		Jan	21	.....	<i>Bankruptcy Notice</i> issued by the Supreme Court. Max has 14 days to pay £3565/14/9. By not complying Max commits an act of bankruptcy.
1950	Apr	...	.....	Convoy of Max's equipment and about a dozen people leave from Brisbane and Murgon for Julia Creek. In June, Alan Flewell-Smith begins work on the Balootha homestead.		...	23	.....	<i>Bankruptcy Notice</i> served on Max in Julia Creek.
	Apr	20	.....	Marj becomes licensee of Burnett Hotel at Gayndah.		...	31	.....	Redcliffe home sold for £4,500.
	Jun	30	.....	Burns Burns & Burns earn £2507/12/8 for the year.		...	31	.....	Auction in Julia Creek of Max's household items raises £494/7/9.
	Oct	...	.....	Erol Davis, Freddie Holznagel and Bill Beutel leave Murgon for Julia Creek to start work with Max.					

- 1959** Feb 03 Burnses leave Julia Creek.
 ... 08 Marj becomes licensee of Royal Hotel, Lismore.
 Price: £13,000, of which £9,000 was paid up front.
 May 28 H.C. Sleigh Ltd applies for a *Sequestration Order* to sell Max's assets.
 Jun Max obtains an earthmoving contract on Iffley, Miranda, Glenore and Vanook in the Gulf area. This is his last earthmoving contract.
 Jul *Julia Creek Engineering Works* closed. Don returns to Julia Creek from the Royal Hotel to take over Max's Iffley contract.
 Aug Max leaves the west and never returns. Hires his earthmoving equipment to Don for £800 a month.
 Sep 08 *Creditor's Petition* served on Max in Lismore.
 Oct 07 Barry leaves Julia Creek.
 ... 23 Sleigh obtains a *Sequestration Order On Creditor's Petition*: "The following act of bankruptcy has been committed, namely: That the said Max Burns failed to comply on or before the sixth day of February 1959 with the requirements of a *Bankruptcy Notice* duly served on him on Friday the twenty-third day of January 1959 at the hour of one-fifty o'clock in the afternoon. A sequestration order is hereby made against Max D. Burns of Julia Creek in the State of Queensland, Earth Moving Contractor". Max did not oppose the order.
 Nov 02 Tax Office lodges *Proof of Debt*. There were 54 unsecured creditors owed a total of £32,220. Proofs of Debt were still being lodged as late as 3/10/1966 (Elphinstones for £20, page 786)
 Dec 02 The Trustee is authorized by a meeting of creditors to dispose of Max's assets by auction, public tender or private treaty at his discretion.
 Dec 25 All the Burns family gather at the Royal Hotel in Lismore for Christmas.
- 1960** Jan Don abandons an Oliver OC18 on Iffley and returns to the Royal Hotel. The Burns family have no further involvement with earthmoving.
 Feb 13 Ad in the *North Queensland Register* for the Official Receiver's auction of Max's assets in Julia Creek.
 ... 26 Max's property auctioned on Friday, 9.30 a.m. under instructions from the Official Receiver.
 Mar 19 Public meeting in Max's garage at Julia Creek regarding the formation of a Town & Country Club.
 ... 31 Max's interest in *Midnight Sun* transferred to the Official Receiver.
 Sep Marj purchases two blocks of land at Ebbw Vale for about £1300.
 Oct 25 *Midnight Sun* transferred to Murray Halloran.
- 1961** Mar 21 *Midnight Sun* transferred to Mrs Godier who still owned it when this book went to print.
 Jul 21 *Order for the Public Examination* of Max, beginning 17/08/61.
 ... 22 *Summons* for Don and Barry to appear.
 ... 24 *Summons* for Marj to appear.
- 1961** Jul 29 Notice in *Courier Mail* regarding public examination of Max.
 Aug 17 Thursday: Public examination of Max by Mr Moynahan starts in the Supreme Court in Brisbane.
 Aug 18 Friday: Max's examination resumes and continues until Tuesday afternoon. It is adjourned at 3.55 till Monday 18th September. Marj's examination starts after Max leaves.
 ... 24 Thursday: Marj's examination continues all day. Adjourned till 18/9/1961.
 Sep 18 Monday: Marj's examination restarts after a month's break.
 ... 19 Tuesday: Marj's examination continues; adjourned after the morning session to 20 November. Max's examination continues in the afternoon.
 ... 20 Wednesday: Max's examination continues; adjourned at 4.00 p.m. till 22 November 1961. Don's examination begins after Max leaves.
 ... 21 Thursday: Don's examination continues all day; adjourned till 20 November 1961.
 ... 22 Friday: Barry's examination starts and continues all day; adjourned till 21 November 1961.
 Nov 21 Mr Drapes appears before the Supreme Court, Brisbane, for the Official Receiver, and adjourns all the examinations of the Burnses until a date in March 1962.
- 1962** Mar 12 Mr Drapes, for the Official Receiver, asks for the examination of the Burnses to be adjourned to a date to be fixed. Further examination was never proceeded with.
 ... 22 Application by the Official Receiver for £3500 of Max Burns' estate to be held on fixed deposit with the Reserve Bank of Australia for three reasons:
 (1) The investigation into the affairs of the bankrupt are not yet complete and that further examinations will be held in the near future.
 (2) To pay the cost of my examination and to have funds in hand to pay the costs of any litigation which may arise after consideration has been given to the results of the proposed examination.
 (3) That all funds realised in this estate to date will be absorbed in payment of preferential claims lodged by the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation.
- 1967** Mar 16 Max writes letter to the Official Receiver asking for discharge from bankruptcy.
 May 09 Discharge is granted. It was not proved that Max committed any offences under the Bankruptcy Act, or any other offence connected with the bankruptcy. But proof was made: "That the bankrupt has, after knowing himself to be insolvent, continued to trade, or obtained credit to the amount of one hundred dollars or upwards".
- 1979** Sep 20 Max dies in Brisbane. He had been separated from Marj for about seven years and was living with Judy.
 ... 22 Saturday. Max's funeral held at Mt Thompson Crematorium, 11.45 a.m.

Five Early Visitors



IN THIS SECTION are stories of five early visitors to the Flinders River area: Stokes, Leichhardt, McIntyre, Henry and O’Connell.

Captain Stokes named the Flinders River in 1841. He ventured upstream only a few miles from the mouth because he could see it was not a navigable river that would lead him south. A few days later he discovered the Albert River and the Plains of Promise. Although these plains are not directly linked to the black soil downs of the Julia Creek district – and hence lie outside the scope of this book – they became an Eldorado for settlers seeking land in the Flinders region.

Four years after Stokes, Leichhardt travelled down the Flinders on his third, and fatal, expedition, becoming the first European to see the Julia Creek area. But it was not until after the search parties for Burke and Wills (McKinlay, Landsborough and Walker) came through in 1861-2, that

the Flinders attracted the interest of pastoralists.

In 1864 McIntyre came to the Gulf seeking land, found evidence of Leichhardt, and returned in 1866 as leader of a search party. Within two months he was dead from ‘Gulf Fever’, and was the first white man known to be buried in the Julia Creek district.

At the time of McIntyre’s death another explorer/settler, Ernest Henry, was on the verge of discovering copper on the Cloncurry River. He had already founded Hughenden Station – later, the site of Hughenden.

The last of the early visitors portrayed here, Maurice O’Connell, was sent out in 1868 to survey the new copper mines on the Cloncurry and the new pastoral runs on the Flinders. He finished the survey and was on his way home, but couldn’t find water in the dusty bed of Julia Creek. He became the second white man buried in the district.



Time being, as I have before said, very precious, we moved off in a south-east direction at the rate of almost 4 miles an hour in spite of the long coarse grass lying on the ground and entangling our legs... the soil is of a rich quality... which suggested to me a name for this part of the continent: *The Plains of Promise*.

- ▲ Campsites
- 6 Points of interest noted in the text
- Stokes' reverie on foot

5 miles

Captain Stokes

MR FITZMAURICE REPORTED SO favourably of the last opening he discovered, bearing south-west 15 miles from the ship, that I determined on making up a party to explore it. My party left the ship with the gig and the other whale boat on the evening of the day we returned from the Flinders River.

The prospect that lay before us raised our spirits to the highest. With the temperature at 60° – clear, cool and bracing – the weather could not have been more favourable. Ripples expanded from the bow over the glassy surface of the water, whilst the men stretched out as if unconscious of the exertion of pulling, everyone of them feeling his share of the excitement. Overhead the cope of heaven was gradually growing more sober in hue, but in the western sky a brilliant halo encircled the sun and from it came a flood of gold. Night rapidly came on. In these latitudes the sunset is as brief as it is beautiful.

Presently the masts of our ship could no longer be discerned and we were pursuing our way in darkness towards the mouth of the opening. After vainly endeavouring to get over the bar, we anchored the boats outside. The awnings were spread and the kettle for our evening's meal was soon hissing over a blazing fire. Of all things, tea is the most refreshing after a day's fatigue; there is nothing that so soon renovates the strength and cheers the spirits. Grog was afterwards served, and pipes and cigars were lighted. The jest was uttered, the tale went round, some fished (though with little success), and the officers busied themselves with preparations for the morrow's work. But all things must end. The stories at length flagged, the fishermen grew tired. Getting into our blanket bags with a hearty "Goodnight!" we resigned ourselves, with the exception of the look-out, to the arms of slumber.

1 August – The morning broke with a strong breeze from the south-east, and although the temperature was not below 52° we were all shivering with cold. Soon after daylight we entered the opening, and for 3 miles travelled in an almost straight direction – 200 yards between banks with a depth of from 2½ to 5 fathoms. The banks were fringed with mangroves, behind which stretched extensive mud flats.

Eight miles from the mouth two islands were passed, and two others 4 miles further on. The breadth at this point was nearly a mile, but the depth was scarcely 2 fathoms. The above-mentioned islets, one of which was of some size, lay at the upper end of a reach, trending south¹, where this river (as we anxiously hoped it would prove to be) divided into two branches: one continuing in a southerly direction and the other turning to the westward. Though the west arm had a greater volume of water passing through it, I decided on ascending the south arm first.

2 August – After proceeding about 5 miles we rested a few hours,

1. Numbers appearing in the text refer to circled points of interest shown on the map, opposite.

Plains of Promise

Stokes names the Flinders and Albert Rivers

During the years 1837-1843, Captain John Stokes in the HMS Beagle (of Charles Darwin fame) surveyed the Australian coast, twice circumnavigating the continent and discovering the Flinders and Albert rivers.

In this edited extract from his journal of 1841, he has just returned from exploring the Flinders and is about to find and name the *Plains of Promise* that extend southwards from the headwaters of the Albert. Unable to contain his excitement as discoverer, he sets out at a brisk pace on foot hoping to see mountains to the south. The culmination of his fantasy has him leaving his companions behind, to run alone a short distance across the plains, lost in a reverie "which carried me rolling along on the back of a camel over many miles of the new lands of Australia"¹.

1. Stokes, *Discoveries in Australia*, vol 2, p302.

Flinders River (30 miles)

continuing again soon after midnight. As the tides in this area run 12 hours each way, it was necessary that we should take advantage of the favourable stream, whatever might be the hour, though this plan kept the men for a very long time together at the oars. For 6 miles our general direction was south, but the inlet became so reduced in breadth and volume as to be scarcely a hundred yards wide and not a fathom deep – and still salt. There was now little hope that it would lead into fresh water. The banks were still of the same monotonous mangrove character.

Our course now changed to south-west, and the width and tortuousness began to decrease – a sure indication that the country was rising. We soon made another 6 miles², but after this the boats could no further proceed. The inlet, at low water, had become a mere ditch. Behind, the country was very open, consisting of plains covered with coarse grass, interspersed with patches of dwarf gums. About 7 miles in a north-east direction the country was thickly wooded and appeared to be a little higher than the surrounding plain. The soil was of a light brown colour, void of sand, and of considerable depth. Nothing now remained but to retrace our steps and try the other branch. It was dark before we reached the point of separation. We made camp and the boat's crew regaled themselves on some large brown hawks (in the absence of better fowl). There was, this evening, a beautiful eclipse of the moon.

3 August – We were obliged to move off at one in the morning to catch the incoming flood. We found the tides rise here 4 feet, and both flood and ebb ran from 1 to 2 knots. The earth's shadow had passed from the moon, and the waters swelled in silence between the growth of mangroves fringing the banks. At the end of 3 miles, nearly double by the windings, we passed an island on the left. One of the whaler's crew put his hand over to taste the water and gave us the delightful news that the stream was quite fresh! A general tasting followed and the agreeable intelligence was confirmed.

Of the importance of our discovery – that we were on a river – there could now no longer be any doubt, and the exhilarating effect it produced was quite magical, every arm bending to the oars as if the fatigue they had experienced had suddenly passed away.

There could be little difficulty in finding a name for our discovery. We had already named two rivers the Victoria and the Adelaide, and we were glad of the opportunity of again showing our loyalty to Her Majesty by conferring the name of her noble consort upon this important stream. It was accordingly christened the Albert.

Our boats now glided rapidly onwards. A mile brought us to three islands, which we passed on the right, and further on we landed on the left bank³ at some earthy cliffs 10 feet high to make observations using the stars Achernar and Aldebaran.

Daylight now burst upon us with tropical rapidity. The banks had assumed a very different appearance; the monotonous mangroves had given place to gum trees and acacias. This change in the character of the foliage was not only in itself a relief, but meant that we had escaped the influence of the sea and were penetrating towards the interior of the continent. Brown whistling wood ducks now made their appearance, and being unaccustomed to man and his destructive weapons, allowed us to revel in wild-fowl for some days afterwards.

After following a reach⁴ with a string of islets in the upper part, our progress became more rapid and direct, and with the exception of one bend to the northward⁵, we made 3 miles in a southwest direction. Near a sandy point we observed some fires, and by crawling up the bank⁶ I got a peep at a small party of natives engaged intently in digging for warran. As they were few in numbers, our abrupt appearance would have too much terrified them to leave any chance of an interview; accordingly, we did not disturb them but contented ourselves with watching their movements.

The spectacle was an interesting one. Both men and women were engaged in delving for their food, whilst a few more a little beyond were burning the bush and looking out for game and snakes. It does not often fall to the lot of the white man to behold the wild people of the earth engaged in their daily avocations, completely unconscious that the gaze of a superior class of beings is upon them. We have seen savages exhibited to us – professedly in all the simplicity of the woods – but how can children of nature retain their freedom of action and manners under the curious gaze of a civilized multitude? We may depend upon it that we gather nothing but erroneous ideas from such a display. If we are to understand, truly, what our savage brethren are like, we must penetrate into the woods and the wilds where they are to be found; we must see them as they are, in all their excusable degradation, and not invested with a fictitious dignity or a theatrical simplicity. We must observe them, also, unawares, and see how they conduct themselves under the ordinary influences that beset them.

It was with great reluctance that I departed without making our presence known. But I could not refrain from leaving, at the place where we landed, the perplexing legacy of a few presents. With what curious anxiety must these people have traced our footmarks, from which they would surmise that strangers had been nearby.

After making 2 miles in a south and nearly 3 in a west direction, with but few interruptions from windings, we opened a splendid sheet of water trending south-west⁷. A mile back in a crooked reach I had found some native huts – built of sticks and neatly plastered over – with doors so narrow that none of our broad-shouldered fellows could enter. At this place a large alligator afforded us sport, although we did not secure him.

The country was gradually becoming perceptibly higher and the scenery extremely picturesque. Tall palm trees and bamboos appeared among the rich foliage on the lower slope of the banks, which rose here to an elevation of 50 feet and were much intersected with watercourses. Onwards we hurried, the influence of the tide being scarcely felt and the river preserving its direction.

At the end of 3 miles no change was perceptible and we began to congratulate ourselves on, at last, having found a stream that would carry our boats far towards the point it was always the height of my ambition to attain – the centre of the continent. This part of the Albert that gave rise to such expectations we named Hope Reach.

A little higher up we landed on the right bank to cook a meal and examine the country. I shall here attempt to give the reader some idea of the beauty of the scene that now presented itself to our anxious gaze. It was in truth as glorious a prospect as could greet the eye. A magnificent sheet of water resembling a smooth translucent lake lay before us in one unbroken expanse. Clustering on the banks and dipping their foliage into the water, stood gums, palms, and acacias. The country that stretched away from either bank was an extensive plain, covered with long coarse grass, above which was occasionally seen the head of a kangaroo, listening with its acute ear for our approach. No high land presented itself in any direction. The eye was only relieved by the growth of trees and shrubs that marked the line of watercourses. Near the river the gum trees were of considerable size, though on the plains, small. During our rambles over the country the men in one of the boats tried the hooks and lines, and from the number of catfish and a dark kind of bream that was caught we can state that this part of the Albert abounds with them. The report of our guns as they dealt destruction among the quails that here abounded, rolled for the first time along the Albert breaking in on the hush of stillness.

In our eagerness to proceed, after a hasty meal we moved off rapidly up the river. The day soon closed in, leaving only the pale light of the moon to guide us. The depth continued regular, at 2½ fathoms, and the width 200 yards. We hastened onwards, the night scenery being almost more beautiful than the day. The heavens seemed more vast, the water more glittering, the trees more graceful and feathery; and here and there a tall palm reared its thin and spectral form above the foliage, through which, at intervals, the moonlight broke.

We had traversed nearly 7 miles when our hopes of proceeding further were, for a time, destroyed by the appearance of a dense woody mass ahead. A little further on, one branch of the river turned off to the southward, whilst another, in the mouth of which we found ourselves, trended west⁸. Utter darkness soon surrounded us. The trees on either side over-shadowed the river. Our progress, at length, began to be impeded by fallen or sunken trees, which not only rendered the ascent dangerous, but at the end of about 2 miles fairly brought us to a standstill⁹. This detention was a bitter disappointment to us all, and we crept into our blanket bags with disgust – but with the hope that in the morning a passage south might still be found.

4 August – Daylight brought no better hopes of our taking the boats higher up by this branch, as a succession of large trees lay across it a quarter of a mile above. It was a gloomy corner we had got into, and so sheltered that it seemed as though a breath of wind had never swept through it. Wild-fowl, by a splash, occasionally disturbed the unruffled smoothness of the water. Trees with every variety of foliage overhung each other,

connected by bowers of creepers.

Returning, we entered the south branch, but we were again stopped¹⁰ by fallen trees after proceeding about a mile and a half. Here we observed driftwood and rushes in the trees, 15 feet above our heads. It was now quite clear that all hopes of water carriage towards the interior were at an end.

The boats were at this time above 50 miles from the entrance. Our provisions only admitting land exploration for the remainder of this day, a party was immediately selected for this service. On following up a short woody valley to its head a view burst upon me. A vast boundless plain lay before us, here and there dotted with woodland isles. I sent a man up a tree to have a further view, but nothing beyond an extension of the plain could be seen. The Albert could be traced to the southward by a waving line of green trees consisting of tall palms and three kinds of gums. No trace of the western branch could be discovered.

Time being, as I have before said, very precious, we moved off in a south-east direction at the rate of almost 4 miles an hour in spite of the long coarse grass lying on the ground and entangling our legs. The soil was a light-coloured mould of great depth, and according to one so well-qualified to judge as Sir W. Hooker (who kindly examined some that I brought to England), the soil is of a rich quality – confirming the opinion I entertained of it – and which suggested to me a name for this part of the continent: *The Plains of Promise*.

I was now stepping out over terra incognita; and though no alpine features greeted my eyes as they wandered eagerly over the vast level, all was clothed with the charm of novelty. The feelings of delight which are naturally aroused in those whose feet for the first time press a new and rich country, and which I have so often before endeavoured in vain to express, burst forth on this occasion with renewed intensity.

At the end of nearly 4 miles¹¹ we turned off to the westward for a rise at a short distance. From its summit we got a view of the country to the southwest. On this rise we met an emu, which, after several bad shots, got away from the whole of us. This was owing to our over eagerness, as the bird was at first inclined to approach.

Holding our west course we made the Albert¹² at the end of another mile. Its size was reduced to a mere rivulet, being scarcely 15 yards wide with a depth of 5 feet. Yet it had greater velocity than we had before observed, running at the rate of a mile an hour, a clear babbling brook over which acacias and drooping gums formed a leafy tunnel. Its course was still from the south.

Whilst the rest of the party halted, I proceeded in a southerly direction with the freshest man, urged on by the hope, perhaps now unjustifiable, of discovering some distant point rising above the horizon as a reward of my exploration. We soon gained another 2 miles¹³, when I availed myself of the opportunity to outstrip my companion in approaching that land

of mystery, Central Australia. I asked Brown to make for the river abreast of us, while I ran a short distance further¹⁴, meeting again the Albert flowing on as before with undiminished size. Even this short distance was

something to gain in a new and untrodden country. The line of trees still pointed out the southerly course of the river across the endless plain, and it became natural to speculate on its source or origin; whether it was the drainage of a swamp, or the outlet of some lagoon. But to speculation alone was I reduced, time and provisions not permitting me to clear up this point. All I could do before I returned was to give one long lingering look to the southward. In that direction, no curling smoke denoted the presence of the savage. All was lonely and still. And yet even in these deserted plains, equally wanting in the redundancy of animal as in the luxuriance of vegetable life, I could discover the rudiments of future prosperity, and ample justification of the name I had given them – *The Plains of Promise*. I gazed around and could not refrain from breathing a prayer that ere long the level horizon would be broken by a succession of tapering spires rising from the many Christian hamlets that must ultimately stud this country.

My position was in latitude 17° 58½' south, longitude 139° 25' east – within 400 miles from the centre of the continent. What an admirable point of departure for exploring the

interior! A few camels, with skins for conveying water, could be the means of effecting such an undertaking. These ships of the desert, as they have been appropriately called, might accomplish in one month at a trifling expense that which has been attempted in vain by the outlay of so much money. When we consider that Australians remain in total ignorance of the interior after 60 years of occupation, and after thousands have been spent annually in geographical research, it seems not unreasonable to expect that so important a question should at length be set at rest. In the whole continent there exists no point of departure for the central interior to be compared with the head of the Albert.

A shout from Brown, who had come in search of me, roused me from the reverie – a reverie which had carried me rolling along on the back of a camel over many miles of the new lands of Australia. Returning with him I rejoined the rest of the party and we all moved back towards the boats, in the silence that usually succeeds great excitement.

Mr Forsyth made the necessary observations for latitude, and we were soon following the downward course of the Albert. We reached the mouth before daylight on the 6th. Behind the eastern entrance point we saw a large light-coloured kangaroo, which, for want of a better, afforded us a name for this spot – Kangaroo Point which I place in latitude 17° 35' 10" S and longitude 7° 85' 50" E (of Port Essington).

We took advantage of the afternoon's lull to make the best of our way to the ship, which we met under way running down towards us; Mr Parker, the master, having become anxious at our lengthened absence.



Admiral John Stokes, 1879





LEICHHARDT & PORT ESSINGTON¹



WHERE EXACTLY was Port Essington? And why would anyone in Australia in the 1840s want to find an overland route to it from Moreton Bay?

Port Essington, 100 miles north-east of present day Darwin, received its name in 1818 during a survey along the northern coast by Captain King. Thirteen years later a party of British sailors established an outpost which colonists imagined as a gateway to South-East Asia. They pictured a road running from Sydney through to Port Essington carrying drays and carriages and people. There were other perceived advantages. A steamer plying between Port Essington and Ceylon would make possible a fast connection with England by steam (steam ships were at that time running between England and Ceylon, but not as far as Sydney). Immigrants arriving at Port Essington could travel on the new road and avoid a two-month sailing trip to Sydney via the dangerous Torres Strait.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* was lost in the dream and helped to heighten it. Talk drifted to India and the need for workers. The call from settlers was for cheap workers now that convict transport had stopped. There would be little difficulty, the *Herald* said, in obtaining labourers from India. They could be passed along down the new road to all the anxiously waiting settlers and begin work at once. And there could be trade. Sheep weren't selling well, neither were cattle. Instead, sell horses to the English cavalry in India.

Except there was no overland route to the north along which to drive horses. Every advance in the colony, it seemed, depended on the road to Port Essington. The talk became excited. "We want a high road to India, to China" one correspondent said. "Public spirit is wanting" said another. Dreams

of a road to Port Essington became as highly coloured as any fantasy. Such a road would not carry enough traffic in decades to pay for a fraction of its cost. But the comments continued. Sydney was distant "not 20 weeks by dray from a seaport within easy sail of southern Asia, that hotbed of the human race where man is a very weed" – and his labour cheap. But a road would require an explorer to find a suitable route. Ludwig Leichhardt became that explorer.

Leichhardt was born 23 October 1813 in Prussia. By the time he finished school his teachers had summed him up as a sound worker with a retentive memory and a capacity for independent thought. As for his own summation, Leichhardt thought himself a young man with a destiny. At the age of 23 while at university studying botany and natural history, he wrote to his father:

Do not worry about my future whatever it may be. All my striving is bent towards accomplishing something outstanding, to raising myself above the ordinary.

And in a letter written after completing his studies, he explained to his family his life's ambition:

While the coasts of New Holland are gradually filling up, the interior remains completely unknown. Expeditions have gone in but have

not penetrated any worthwhile distance either because they ran out of provisions or were forced back by hostile natives... This interior, the unknown core of the continent, is my goal and I will never give up until I reach it.

Leichhardt decided to go to Sydney, and by this action two streams of thought joined as one: a man in Prussia convinced that destiny had him marked as an explorer, and colonists in Australia seeking a road to Port Essington.

He arrived in Sydney in February 1842 with a letter of introduction to Major Mitchell, the explorer, hoping to become a member of Mitchell's proposed expedition to Port Essington. The two men met while Mitchell was waiting for government approval, the outcome being that Leichhardt was enrolled in the venture. Mitchell's expedition did not eventuate.

The edited excerpts which follow are drawn from the journal of Leichhardt's own expedition (his first) and from letters written to his family in Prussia.

1. Edited extracts from the writings of Catherine Cotton and Colin Roderick (see bibliography).

With Pilgrim Feet

The first European to see
the black-soil downs
near Julia Creek

Ludwig Leichhardt

Sydney
23 March 1842

MY DEAREST BROTHER-IN-LAW – Wide oceans I have crossed, fiery storms I have weathered. The sun passed over my head from south to north, and now the whole earth lies between you and me. The south is cold, north is hot. Time, season, even the character of the skies is different, and the shadow of my body draws at noon towards south.

I left London on October 1st, 1841. We experienced exceedingly stormy weather from London to Cork, but the longing to go abroad was so great that danger and hardships were forgotten, and in the midst of the howling storm and the roaring ocean, protected by coats and canvas, we sang jolly *Wander Lieder* into the moonlit nights.

Oh, if I could but express in words how deeply I was moved by the grandiose spectacle of nature at sea. Often I looked down from the ship into the ocean, regretting that I was not able to penetrate deeper into the wonders which were hidden in the depths. We were often amused by herds of dolphins which came up from the water and were especially in evidence when stormy weather was approaching; or the cautious shark, swimming around the boat with slow movements, searching, hungrily snapping up any refuse which was being thrown overboard.

Life on board was peculiar. Besides the 250 immigrants, 20 independent passengers were on board. We lived like one big family, since we had breakfast, dinner and tea in company. Still, there was sufficient opportunity for privacy in the interval between meals to follow our individual occupations. I studied principally nautical science, learned the latitudes, and observed the changes in barometer and thermometer readings.

Since sailors indulge in horseplay when crossing the equator, the captain kept the crossing time secret and we learned of the fact only when the ship was already 5° south. The sailors usually baptise passengers who are crossing the line for the first time, i.e. they splash them with water and attach to their faces tarred beards.

Four and a half months passed, October to the middle of February, before we entered the rocky gates of Port Jackson. When the pilot came on board ship I could have embraced him – a scowling, old, olive-skinned child of the sea – as the first herald of a new world.

Port Jackson is a wide bay, rich in inlets, surrounded by hills and rocks, covered with fresh green growth on account of long expected rains, and everywhere showing to advantage friendly homesteads. The people had suffered for nearly 18 months from a continuous drought. Sheep and cattle herds had perished from thirst at the dried-up

waterholes. Two days before our arrival rain had set in at last, and for a fortnight it rained incessantly. This proved a little uncomfortable at the beginning of my stay, but since it altered the outlook in nature considerably, and to advantage, I suffered the discomfort gladly.

The shores of this magnificent harbour were inhabited 50 years ago by wild blacks who had never seen a white man. Now there stands a town of 42,000 inhabitants surrounded on all sides by the portly homes of its wealthy citizens. She lies partly in a dale and partly built up along two hills, comprising, as a rule, large houses and wide streets. Sandstone, the dominating geological formation of the district, can often be seen in the streets, and frequently the latter are hewn out of it.

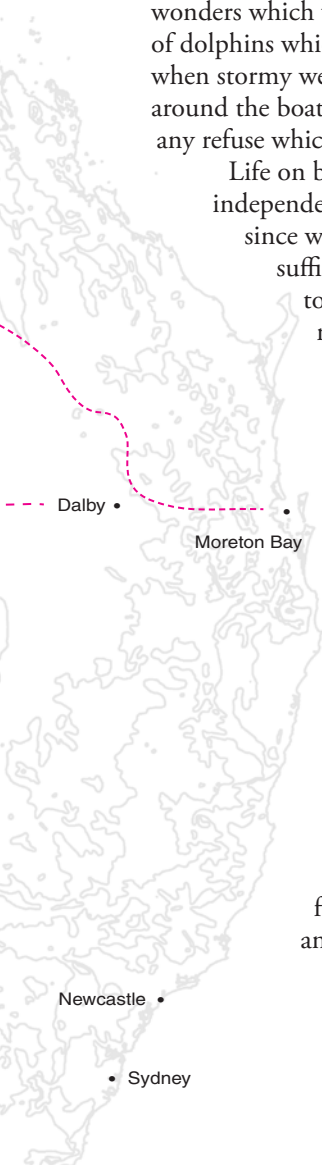
Astonishing activity and speculative ardour reign in the town. The harbour is filled with a great number of ships that arrive daily from England and return there; also to China, New Zealand, Van Diemen's Land, Port Phillip, and different places along the coast. Steamboats are running to Hunter River, to Moreton Bay and to Port Phillip.

In 1788, Arthur Phillip led a transport of 850 convicts to Sydney, founded a colony and began to cultivate this country through their labour. From that date convicts were sent constantly to Australia and used in the erection of buildings, or allotted as servants to settlers.

Gradually more and more free people emigrated here, and the total of those on Australian soil amounts to 100,000 by now. Few come out here to remain for good, but many change their intentions after they have learned to face hardships and when they get more acquainted with the beauties of this rich country. Such families of free settlers, who take interest in the colony and consider it as their fatherland, are the only true treasure of the country and they will be the nucleus of a mighty nation which will make us forget the old Europe. It is a great fascination to me to observe these people in their development. Like the United States of America, this country, perhaps in less than a century, will cut loose from England to form an independent state or commonwealth. An energetic people like the English – in such a mild climate, in such blessed nature, and under such favourable conditions for commerce – must achieve extraordinary success.

The climate is mild and pleasant, especially in the present season. Fruits are to be had in plenty – our apple, the pear, the peach, the figs, grapes, tropical fruits, the pineapple, the banana, the coconut – all of those thrive in Sydney and in distant settlements and towns towards the interior or on the sea coast. But they are very dear, as also are vegetables; whereas meat is very cheap, especially just now. Wages for servants are very high, and even boys receive £7 to £8 per year, as well as food and clothing. This explains why servants are very independent. One has to take care not to be left by them without notice.

Previously, when a convict ship arrived in Sydney, people who needed servants were given a number of convicts according to their standing in business. They were invested with power of police towards these convicts



Newcastle
10 November 1842

and this power was, unfortunately, frequently misused. The great advantage was that the business people had no other expense to meet but food and clothing for the convicts in their care. Later on it was realised the unfairness of populating the colony with the scum of Europe, and the system of hiring convicts to settlers was abandoned. Another penal settlement was instituted at Moreton Bay, more towards the north, and it is now opened for free settlers.

Since I left my fatherland I have nowhere felt so much at home as here. One of my travelling companions was a teacher of music, a young married man without children. When he arrived he rented a house for the enormous price of £150 per annum, and since he had a little spare room he asked me to stay with him and share some of his expense. I accepted, and have a simple but comfortably furnished room. I live now in my new surroundings, comparatively contented, and am fully devoted to my studies.

I hope to reach my exploration objective in time, though great means are necessary to achieve anything worthwhile. I have learned that an expedition into the interior [Mitchell's] would not be feasible before a year's time, and as I want to live independently during that interval I thought of taking a few pupils. It pays well, but the feeling of independence and freedom is so strong in me, and the worry with lazy pupils so distasteful to my mind, that I have abandoned the idea. There is a school of arts here and I shall perhaps lecture on botany and zoology during the winter. The inclination to make money, the purely material life which submerges higher goals, does not appeal to me at all; but through my lectures I may be able to arouse in the audience a desire for higher achievement – and this thought inspires me.

There are several men here who have through special circumstances achieved a handsome independence, and they occupy themselves occasionally with science. I had a letter of introduction to Sir Thomas Mitchell, the Surveyor General, and he introduced me to Dr Nicholson – both influential men. Gradually I trust to gain ground.

*Farewell then my dearest ones.
Greetings to my dear mother and everybody.
Lovingly yours
LUDWIG*

THROUGH MITCHELL, Leichhardt met several men interested in natural science. He was introduced to the Scott brothers, both amateur naturalists, and was invited to pay them a visit at Newcastle to study nature and bushcraft. He also met a man who was to become his closest friend: "After I had lived for some time in separate lodgings, I made the acquaintance of an English officer who invited me to live with him and save thereby considerable expense. I have been staying with Mr Lynd now over three months".

MY DEAR PRECIOUS MOTHER – Shall I let this day pass [his mother's birthday] without thinking of you, without joining my wishes with those of all your children and grandchildren who have the advantage of being near you, pressing your hands, and hugging you? Oh, my mother – irresistible desire to learn has driven me away from you; and though home remains always fresh in my memory, it is only memory at best. I often lament my fate which, though it opened the world to me, robbed me of the pleasure of living near my family.

After living in Sydney for about six months, having observed the surroundings of the town, its inhabitants, its civic constitution, and its way of living, I wished to see other parts of the colony. I left that town and went by steamship to Newcastle. A wealthy squatter, whose acquaintance I had made in Sydney, offered me his hospitality and I have been living with him for the past seven weeks. Apart from plants, geological objects, and animals which I have collected, I also saw something of farming.

Young men who come here from England to settle are usually of good family and have some money. But if they are poor they enter service as overseers for the squatters. After they have saved some money they go inland and open up a cattle or sheep station on their own account. Usually they lease from the government stretches of 1000 to 2000 acres of land which will provide sufficient feed for their herds, and they pay for it the sum of £7/10/- per year. But this does not make them owners, and when the land is put up for public auction their claims collapse.

When the young man and his shepherd have arrived at the selected spot, they build a hut from split trees and line it with bark. The hut consists of one room (in which the dweller eats and sleeps), and a fireplace. He possesses a tin tea-kettle, several plates, a cup, and a couple of spoons. He lives exclusively on meat and a heavy, unfermented wheat bread which is called damper. One kneads flour and water into a stiff dough, lights a fire with dry tree bark, and when it is burned down puts the flat dough into the hot ashes and lets it bake for 40 to 50 minutes. Tea is almost the only drink. It is drunk for breakfast, dinner, and supper, and sweetened with coarse brown sugar. If there is no milk, as generally happens, an egg is broken in each cup; but if there are no eggs, one has to do without anything.

Despite the hard conditions of life, this loneliness holds peculiar fascinations for the young and healthy mind. The facility with which they ride through the bush on their horses, the feeling of independence which this wild and simple life gives, makes their lonely bark hut precious to them. If I tell you about a miserable hut made of boards, which lets wind and weather through all sides, you must not forget that we live in a blessed climate here, in which the thermometer descends never to zero. For almost 8 months, the sky is bright, or only occasionally clouded, and the heat of the sun is often extraordinary.

*Farewell, dear mother
a thousand kisses from your wandering son
LUDWIG*

AFTER NEWCASTLE, Leichhardt continued his northward movement and travelled for three months along the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range to the Moreton Bay district, only recently opened to free settlers.

Moreton Bay District
27 August 1843

MY DEAREST MOTHER – Your wandering son has not yet found a quiet place, but moves on through forest and field, over mountain and dale, sleeping in the open before a camp fire, or in the hut of an hospitable settler; at times even under one sheet together with a convict, whose sins I forget because of his hospitality.

Your son leads a curious life. Being poor he battles bravely with the circumstances, but a helping hand appears always when the outlook becomes clouded. Think of a young peasant in pants and coat, riding on a small black horse, knapsack and blankets over a saddle, a heavy geological hammer at his side and a small one in the pocket, and you will have a fair idea of your son riding through the forests of Australia. If the district does not show anything of interest and it is a matter of forging ahead, I ride for about 5 to 6 miles. If the district proves of interest, I stop, rest my horse, and stroll through the neighbourhood to observe and collect interesting objects.

It is very difficult to give you a clear idea of the conditions here. Most of the white people who are employed on the stations are convicts, mostly unmarried, and devoid of any morals and principles. These men mix frequently with black women who naturally keep to these men's huts where they find good food and plenty of it, whereas they often have to starve in the bush. The blacks, although they are not so very particular about their women, do not like to lose them altogether; and when they do lose their women they become unpleasant, threatening revenge. They carry it out, too, by killing sheep and cattle or attacking the white people wherever they can.

You might ask why the squatters employ convicts. The answer is that the free settlers very often have not sufficient experience; and besides, they lack the courage to go inland. The transported convicts, forced to live on these stations for a long time, gain much experience. It is amazing how versatile such a man becomes: he is shepherd, tends the cows, builds huts, is a woodsman, woodchopper, carpenter and blacksmith. He understands the ills of horses and sheep, knows how to bake bread, to cook, to sew. In short, everything needed for life in the bush. In addition, he is most enduring and can ride hundreds of miles in one stretch.

Bush life is very instructive and I have become a fairly good bushman, having gained much experience in this regard.

I expect to return soon to New England, to the Hunter River, and to Sydney, where I hope to arrive in three months' time. As my travelling has to go slowly, there being so much to see and to search for, progress is cumbersome.

Since my means are gradually dwindling down, I shall soon have to think seriously of earning my bread because I will not leave Australia until I have crossed it. I had several exploring proposals from squatters in Moreton Bay, but have not yet decided about them.

Farewell, and remember your loving son
LUDWIG

WHILE IN THE Moreton Bay district, Leichhardt visited a number of stations on the Darling Downs for the purpose of botanical studies. He met David Archer, the Russell brothers, and others, and the possibility of organising a private expedition to Port Essington was discussed. Mitchell's expedition had yet to be approved and Leichhardt was becoming impatient. He returned to Sydney.

Newcastle on Hunter
14 May 1844

MY DEAREST BROTHER-IN-LAW – My faithful mare has carried me back 600 English miles from Moreton Bay. On the way I have visited many interesting points. Dense scrubs cover the foot of some of the ranges. In them grows an acacia (*Acacia pendula*), called by the settlers myall, with dripping branches like a weeping willow and pendulent golden flowers, and the loveliest scent of wild violets coming from their wood.

I climbed through a high mountain pass from the Brisbane River up to the Darling Downs, a highland, 1600 feet above sea level. The Darling Downs are wide, treeless plains covered with grass. From the Downs, I walked in a southerly direction to New England. The residents of New England live very comfortably, whereas the settlers of the Downs and Moreton Bay are still contented with the most simple bush hut.

The whole of New England is studded with squatters' runs, and nowhere does one realise more why God carved Eve from Adam's rib. An almost entirely male population in an expansive area of about 600 miles is very interesting, though not satisfactory. The labourers, shepherds, and cattle overseers are mostly convicts, but have now received their freedom. Few of them are married. They have no relatives to support, no children to look after, no wife to keep. A wife would bring a feeling of decor, and ambition for home comfort, for sociability towards neighbours, and in general more balance to the heads of these wild bachelors who play up like a sailor coming to port after a long sea voyage when they leave the bush and come to the coastal towns. As soon as they come to a public house, boss, employment – even punishment which follows loss of self control – are forgotten. The publican is their father, his wife their mother; they being the only ones who receive them friendly and with open arms, but only till the last penny of their wages is drunk.

500,000 sheep graze on the New England plateau, an entirely unknown wilderness 10 years ago when its forests were inhabited by blacks only. The tribes have now almost totally disappeared; in any case, their sense of independence is broken, and they put up with the crumbs from the table of the white man. And it will be like that wherever European civilisation comes into contact with the wild races. It was like this everywhere. Although I am too great a friend of my own race not to prefer a well-populated, well-governed country of white people to blacks, when I was amongst the tribes I often thought of their dismal future: that many of these fine bodies will soon be killed by the bullet of a white man; that many will find an early grave through treacherous diseases; and that the rest will beg around the dwellings of the white settlers, or cadge for drinks outside public houses of newly risen townships. If it is impossible to civilise these black children of nature, or at least bring them nearer to civilisation, the upper hand of the Caucasian will demonstrate a law of nature – the survival of the fittest.

It is a good thing you did not see me as I rode into Newcastle after living so long in the bush. My pants were torn to such a degree that a red woollen shirt that serves me as a coat barely covered the weakness of my trousers. People took me for a shepherd, a bushranger, or somesuch. You can imagine how comfortable I felt after I had put on again some clean clothes.

Farewell, and do not forget your affectionate brother-in-law
LUDWIG

LEICHHARDT was 30 when he arrived back in Sydney. Having spent the last two years roaming through trackless forests he considered himself a fair bushman – as did others who in that time had got to know him. He decided to go ahead and organise a Port Essington expedition under his own leadership. On 24 July 1844 he wrote to Mitchell explaining that he did not like the confined life of Sydney and that he proposed to explore the country in the direction of the North-West: “Should the consent of Home government to your intended expedition come – may we meet in the Interior, which I consider my home, as I have no other one”. And in a letter to his brother-in-law Leichhardt outlined his plans:

...My journey to Port Essington, allowing for probable deviations, will cover about 2000 miles. I can only advance 10 to 15 miles daily and for that reason will be on the way about 5 to 6 months. The tropical interior of the continent promises a rich harvest for my scientific explorations and my journey will very likely become a very useful one for the colony by opening communication between the east and north-west coast, enabling the northern islands [Indonesia] and China to get, perhaps, in closer contact with the east coast. I am carrying with me tea, sugar, and different other provisions, but no meat. Our rifles will have to provide the necessary kangaroos, emus, bustards, pigeons and so on.

The longer I live in the colony, the more familiar I am getting with its nature, the more I feel at home. Still, I would be happy to have you and your family here, knowing that friendly, loving souls were awaiting me every time I returned from an adventurous expedition. Although I possess a generous friend in Lynd, he is, nevertheless, too much the “old bachelor” to nurse me in a sisterly or brotherly fashion...

INDIVIDUALS offered their support – typically squatters keen to acquire additional grazing land – and with their financial help Leichhardt bought equipment, stores, and instruments for navigation. He chose five companions to join him, and on 13 August, along with 13 horses, they took passage to Brisbane. Leichhardt was welcomed by a group of squatters who pressed him to add four men to his party, one of them being John Gilbert, a collector for the ornithologist, John Gould. Gilbert became the only casualty of the expedition when he was speared by Aborigines on Cape York. In memory, his name was attached by Leichhardt to a nearby river.

From Brisbane, the party made their way to the Darling Downs. The last station before the unexplored country was Jimbour Station, 17 miles north of Dalby. They left Jimbour on 1 October with 16 bullocks, 15 horses, 10 men, and a pack of dogs – “and launched, buoyant with hope, into the wilderness of Australia”.

The character of the country ahead of Leichhardt was unknown. On maps of the time it was blank space. One factor determined his course – the need for water (see entry for 17 March, opposite).

On 28 March 1845, Leichhardt was camped on the Suttor River, named after William Suttor “who made me a present of four bullocks when I started on this expedition. We camped about 2 miles from the foot of a mountain which I called Mt McConnel after Fred McConnel Esq who had also most kindly contributed to my expedition. The Suttor winds round the western base of Mt McConnel and joins a river, the bed of which is fully a mile wide, through which a stream 10 yards broad and 3 feet deep was meandering. I called it the Burdekin in acknowledgement of the liberal assistance I received from Mrs Burdekin of Sydney.”

For two months Leichhardt travelled upstream along the Burdekin, his greatest friend among the rivers. A typical day was 1 May.

1 May 1845

I usually rise when I hear the merry laugh of the laughing-jackass which, from its regularity, has not been unaptly named “the settlers’ clock”. A loud cooe then rouses my companions: Brown to make tea, Mr Calvert to season the stew with salt and marjoram, and myself and the others to wash and to prepare our breakfast, which, for the party, consists of two pounds and a-half of meat stewed over night; and to each, a quart pot of tea. Mr Calvert then gives to each his portion. By the time this important duty is performed, Charley generally arrives with the horses, which are then prepared for their day’s duty. After breakfast, Charley goes with John Murphy to fetch the bullocks, which are generally brought in a little after 7 o’clock. The work of loading follows, but this requires very little time now, our stores being much reduced. At about a quarter to 8 we move on and continue travelling four hours, and, if possible, select a spot for our camp. As soon as the camp is pitched and the horses and bullocks unloaded we have our allotted duties. To make the fire, falls to my share; Brown’s duty is to fetch water for tea; and Mr Calvert weighs out a pound and a-half of flour for a fat cake, which is enjoyed more than any other meal. The large teapot being empty, Mr Calvert weighs out 2½ pounds of dry meat to be stewed for our late dinner.

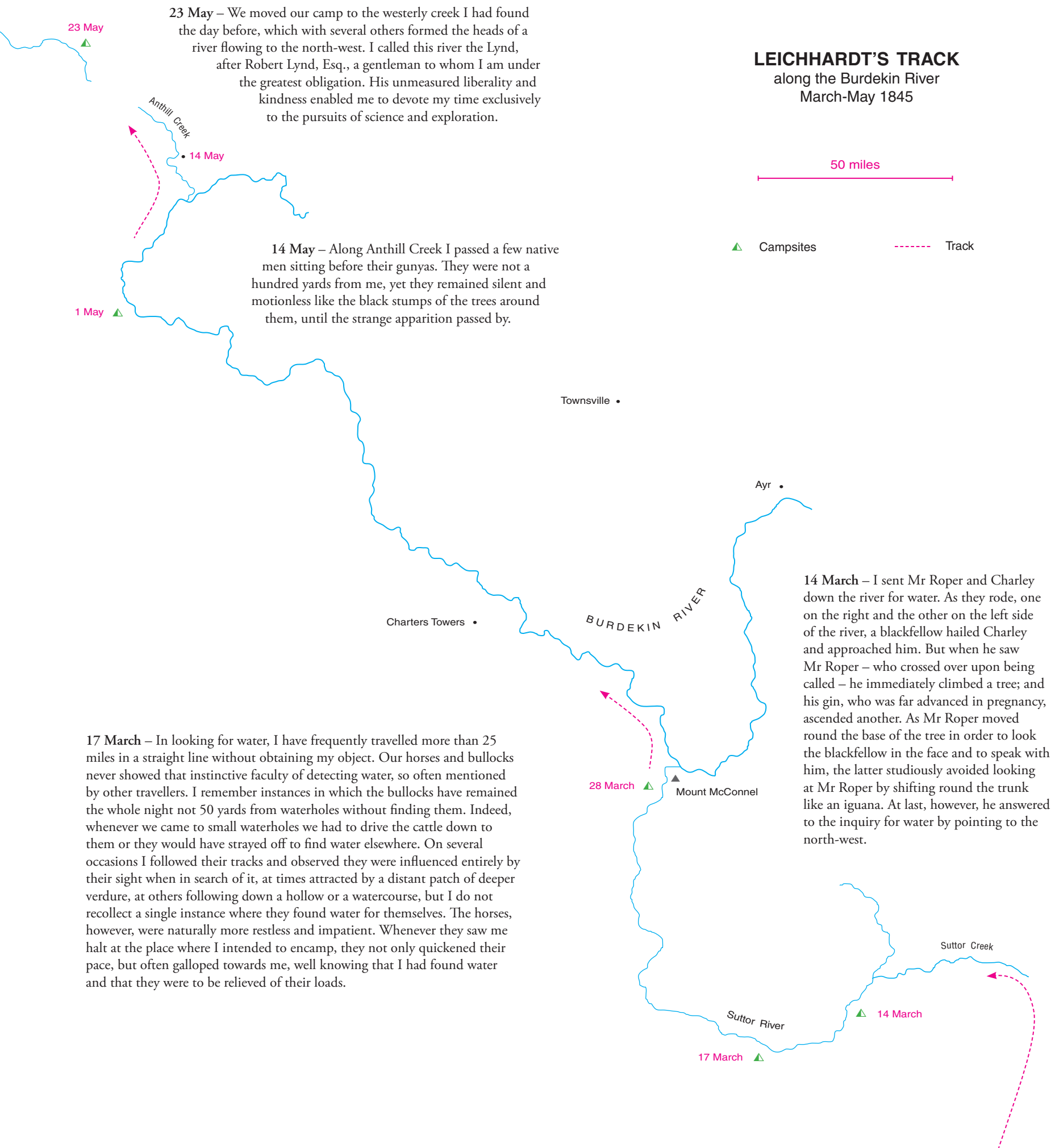
During the afternoon, everyone follows his own pursuits such as washing and mending clothes, and repairing saddles, pack-saddles and packs. My occupation is to write my log and lay down my route, or to make an excursion in the vicinity of the camp to botanize, etc, or ride out reconnoitring. My companions also write down their remarks and wander about gathering seeds or looking for curious pebbles. Mr Gilbert takes his gun to shoot birds.

A loud cooe again unites us towards sunset round our tablecloth; and, whilst enjoying our meals, the subject of the day’s journey, the past, the present, and the future, by turns engage our attention or furnish matter for conversation and remark, according to the respective humour of the parties.

As night approaches we retire to our beds. The two blackfellows (Brown and Charley) and myself spread out, each our own, under the canopy of heaven, whilst Messrs Roper, Calvert, Gilbert, Murphy and Phillips have their tents. Mr Calvert entertains Roper with his conversation; Murphy amuses Gilbert; and Brown tunes up his corroboree songs, in which Charley, until their late quarrel, generally joined. Brown sings well and his melodious plaintive voice lulls me to sleep, when otherwise I am not disposed.

Mr Phillips is rather singular in his habits. He erects his tent generally at a distance from the rest, under a shady tree, or in a green bower of shrubs, where he makes himself as comfortable as the place will allow, by spreading branches and grass under his couch, and covering his tent with them, to keep it shady and cool, and even planting lilies in blossom before his tent, to enjoy their sight during the short time of our stay.

As the night advances, the blackfellows’ songs die away; the chatting tongue of Murphy ceases after having lulled Mr Gilbert to sleep; and at last even Mr Calvert is silent as Roper’s short answers become few and far between. The neighing of the tethered horse, the distant tinkling of the bell, or the occasional cry of night birds, alone interrupt the silence of our camp. The fire, which was bright as long as the corroboree songster kept it stirred, gradually gets dull, and smoulders slowly under the large pot in which our meat is simmering; and the bright constellations of heaven pass over the heads of the dreaming wanderers until the summons of the laughing jackass recalls them to the business of the coming day.



*On board the Heroine
an English ship which sails from Java to Sydney
24 January 1846*

MY DEAREST BROTHER-IN-LAW – I trust you will have received my letter which I wrote to you before the commencement of my large expedition, and in which I informed you that I was just ready to cross the continent of New Holland, to go from Sydney to Moreton Bay, and from there to Port Essington on the north coast of New Holland. I have completed my voyage, which lasted 16 months, and have lived in the wilderness for 14½ months, with the blue sky above and New Holland's forests around me.

We found little game on the east coast, and when we found it my companions could not shoot it. I had expected too much from these fellows and found they were very mediocre shots; they could shoot neither birds nor four-footed animals – except when they were sitting still and close by. My blacks also made some efforts at hunting and with good results.

I had not thought that our voyage would last so long, and in consequence our provisions were insufficient. We were without flour for 7 months, much longer without sugar, several months without salt, and finally ran out of tea, leaving us nothing but dried beef. As dried beef is, to my knowledge, unknown in Germany, I will tell you how I prepared it. We killed a bullock in the evening, skinned it and cut it up. The meat cooled down sufficiently during the night to allow us, next morning, to cut the meat in slices one inch thick. We hung these slices on ropes, tree branches, and tree trunks, and turned them several times. Within 2 or 3 days of being in the sun the meat was sufficiently dry to be packed in sacks without danger of going bad. Good dried meat was best raw and tasted better than smoked beef – although my judgment might deceive me because during the voyage my stomach enjoyed anything that was eatable. We ate, for instance, the skin of the bullock after we had cooked it for 12 hours overnight, and we even preferred it to the lean meat. When we arrived at Port Essington we had killed all our bullocks except one.

Frequently I saw blackfellows and came in touch with them repeatedly. They were always friendly, with the one exception which caused Mr Gilbert's death. They attacked one night after I had retired to my tent. Mr Gilbert was killed by a spear which went through his heart, and two other companions, Calvert and Roper, were dangerously wounded. The blacks fled after the first shot. I buried Mr Gilbert, and after two days I continued my journey. I crossed the Nassau River, the Staaten River, and the Van Diemen, rivers that flow into the Gulf of Carpentaria; and further on, a little river which I called the Gilbert.

I followed the Gulf about 15 to 30 miles away from the coast. The grass was scanty, the daily marches were very long and tiresome, and we were repeatedly forced to make a stop without having found water. Repeatedly we were on the banks of a fine, broad river, but we had to be satisfied with looking at the water, because it tasted and looked unpalatable.

I continued my journey and found the small spit of Coburg Peninsula with the help of friendly blackfellows; and arrived at last on 17 December 1845 at Victoria, the English settlement of Port Essington. You can easily imagine my feelings at the sight of a house, and the welcome by civilised people.

We were lucky enough to shoot a buffalo at the approach to Coburg Peninsula, an incident which gave us meat and saved the life of my last bullock. The idea of killing this bullock was very distasteful to me; it was my favourite during the whole voyage, and I had loaded it personally. This animal was at first wild and unapproachable, but gradually it became tame and quiet, although from time to time it gave me a kick with its hind leg making me lame for several days. It is now in Port Essington. I presented it to Captain McArthur, the Governor of the place, who promised me to look after it.

Captain McArthur received me in a very friendly way and did everything possible to make me forget the hardships of my travels. I completed my maps and the report of the expedition during my stay.

I am writing this letter on board the ship *Heroine*. When I arrive in Sydney I will work out my travel notes and get them ready for printing. I will then try to raise means for another expedition from the east coast, through the interior of Australia, to the Swan River on the west coast. You see, I have yet a lot to do.

It is believed in Sydney that I have been murdered long ago, or that I starved to death. People have so little trust in the happy success of my undertakings that they are on the point of sending another expedition afield under Sir Thomas Mitchell at a cost of £7000, whereas my own cost barely £900. What will the people say when I appear suddenly resurrected from the grave with a heap of mountainous ranges, rivers and creeks in my pockets?

*Farewell, my dearest brother-in-law.
Greet my dear mother and all those who remember me.
Your affectionate brother-in-law
LUDWIG*

Leichhardt's Grave¹

Ye who prepare with pilgrim feet
Your long and doubtful path to wend
If, whitening on the waste, ye meet
The relics of my murder'd friend;
His bones with rev'rence ye shall bear
To where some mountain streamlet flows
Then, by its mossy bank, prepare
The pillow of his long repose.

It shall be by a stream whose tides
Are drunk by birds of ev'ry wing
Where ev'ry lovelier flower abides
The earliest wak'ning touch of spring.
Oh meet that he (who so carest
All-beauteous Nature's varied charms)
That he, her martyr'd son, should rest
Within his mother's fondest arms.

When ye have made his narrow bed
And laid the good man's ashes there
Ye shall kneel down around the dead
And wait upon your God in prayer.
What though no reverend man be near
No anthem pour its solemn breath
No holy walls invest his bier
With all the hallow'd pomp of death.

1. Bunce, *Australasiatic Reminiscences*, p 208.

Sydney
18 April 1846

MY DEAREST BROTHER-IN-LAW – I arrived in Sydney at the beginning of April, and no king could have been received with greater joy and more affection. Taking for granted that I had long died or been killed by the blacks, my dear friend Mr Lynd had written a mourning chant [see below] and a musician, Mr Nathan, had set it to music. Everybody mourned the poor wanderer through the Australian wilderness. During this almost universal feeling of sympathy by the people, I suddenly came out of my grave, successful in my undertaking. A popular tobacco dealer, Mr Aldis, had assisted me before my departure and he was the first one whom I encountered on my return. He burst out into such a jubilant welcome that I did not know what to think of it, and whilst accompanying me to Mr Lynd's house he called out to everybody in the street: "This is Leichhardt whom we have long buried and for whom we sang death chants; he comes from Port Essington and has conquered the wilderness". I believed the whole town would go mad with joy. I was congratulated from all sides and from all classes. Societies were formed at once to collect money for me as a worthy reward, and from all ends of the colony arrived letters of thanks and considerable amounts of money.

I hope to start a new expedition across the interior at the beginning of October which, though longer, will be more interesting than the last. What I have in mind is to go up to the tropics, to make my way thence right across to the west coast of Australia in 22° or 23° latitude, and then to follow the coast southwards to the Swan River. I trust to return in two years' time. I have written to India for camels, and I shall try, in any case, to get at least two camels which are already in the colony.

Farewell, my dearest brother-in-law.
Greetings to my dear mother
from your loving brother-in-law and brother
LUDWIG

Sydney
19 August 1846

MY DEAREST BROTHER-IN-LAW ...I wrote you that I have found in this colony a dear friend in Mr Lynd. Our friendship has become even more affectionate after living together for some time, and the dear fellow has not only written my death chant but tries to brighten my life and make me feel at home. He is unmarried and about 48 years of age; his house is a safe port in which I can find peace always...

LUDWIG

ON 7 DECEMBER 1846, Leichhardt started his second expedition, again from the Darling Downs. But in June 1847, having travelled only 500 miles and following very closely the route of his first expedition, the attempt to reach the Swan River was abandoned and the party returned to their starting point.

To Leichhardt, abandoning his second expedition was only a temporary upset, and on his return to Sydney he organised a third.

Sydney
20 October 1847

MY DEAREST BROTHER-IN-LAW – I have again returned from an expedition, not quite victorious with flying colours and acclaimed by the enthusiasm of the people as before, but exhausted by sickness, with disgruntled companions, forced to turn around and guide them back to the fleshpots before I had penetrated unknown parts. The reasons for this failure are the following. The young people in my expedition came originally from Sydney and were accustomed to soft, comfortable city life instead of the roughness of the bush. Their bodies lacked that elasticity which, despite sickness, permits of speedy recovery; and their minds lacked the pliance to face the daily realities instead of longing for the joys of city life. They only had worldly interests. They expected employment by the government and monetary reward from the people at the conclusion of the voyage. They had witnessed my reception in Sydney on my return from Port Essington and expected to earn the same laurels without difficulty. Their steadfastness was shaken as soon as the hardships of the expedition started, and forgetting their previous profession of loyalty they regarded me as a hard taskmaster. Now, I have returned to Sydney to make the necessary preparations for a new expedition...

LUDWIG

Yet humble minds shall find the grace,
Devoutly bow'd upon the sod,
To call that blessing round the place
Which consecrates the soil to God.
And ye the wilderness shall tell
How, faithful to the hopes of men,
The Mighty Power he served so well,
Shall breathe upon the bones again.

When ye your gracious task have done,
Heap not the rock above his dust,
The angel of the Lord alone
Shall guard the ashes of the just.
But ye shall heed, with pious care,
The mem'ry of that spot to keep;
And note the marks that guide me where
My virtuous friend is laid to sleep.

For oh, bethink, in other times,
(And be those happier times at hand)
When science, like the smile of God,
Comes bright'ning o'er that weary land.
How will her pilgrims hail the power
Beneath the dropping myall's gloom
To sit at eve and mourn an hour
And pluck a leaf on Leichhardt's tomb.

ROBERT LYND
Sydney Barracks, 2 July 1845

Darling Downs
22 February 1848

MY DEAREST BROTHER-IN-LAW – Four months have passed since I informed you about my return from Peak Range. I have used this time to equip for a new journey, and I will be ready in a few days' time to penetrate again the interior of Australia and cross the whole continent. The whole party consists of seven people and I trust that this number will be sufficient. I did my utmost to find good, efficient men. I have hired two labourers and I am taking along two blackfellows, one of whom accompanied me on my last expedition.

The government sent a Mr Kennedy to follow the Victoria River [Barcoo] up to its estuary. Sir Thomas Mitchell had seen this river on his expedition without completely investigating it and presumed it flowed to the north. Mr Kennedy has returned and found that the river turns towards the south and disappears in Sturt's Desert. It is very likely a tributary of Cooper Creek. Therefore, I am again alone in the field and will have no help from the Victoria in attempting to pass the northern end of Sturt's Desert.

I was pleased to hear that the Geographical Society in London has honoured me with one of its medals, and that the Geographical Society of Paris has conferred a similar honour. Naturally, I am pleased that such learned men find me a worthy recipient; but I have never worked for anything other than science and for science alone, and I will do the same in future even if nobody in the world troubles about me. I am afraid of losing God's blessing if I give the rein to vanity or if my steadfast striving for knowledge gets mixed up with a self-seeking drive for recognition and fame.

It was a happy coincidence that I saw before my departure from Sydney my journal and my maps. The latter are very beautiful and I owe great thanks to Mr Arrowsmith for arranging my rough drafts so nicely. I let others judge about my book. It is a simple tale about our expedition, and just as simple a description of the territory. As long as the traveller is faithful, the scientist at home will be thankful to him.

Although I feel quite strong enough to start this new expedition, I cannot deny that my constitution has suffered very much, especially on my last expedition, and that I possess much less muscular strength than four years ago when I first started out on my wanderings.

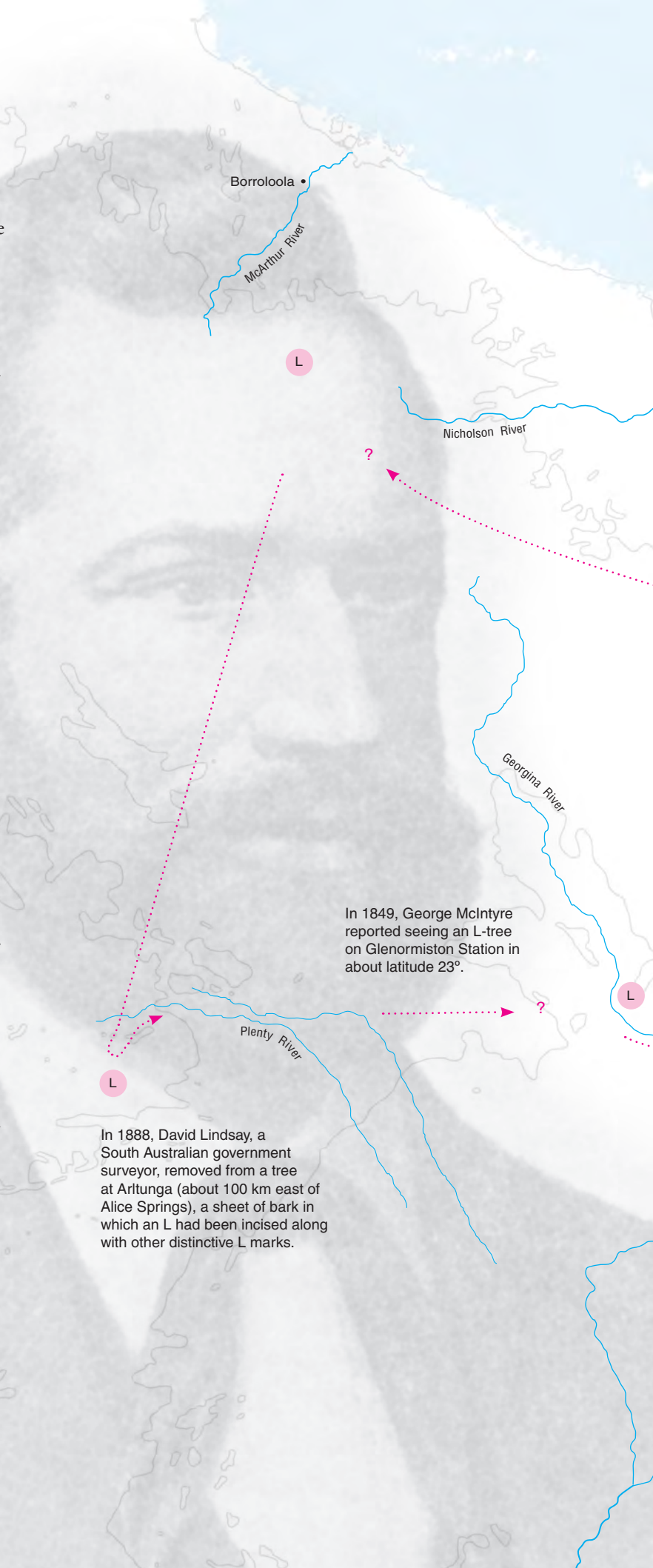
Your news about happenings in state and church are of great interest to me. But why do you omit to inform me about German poetry? Have all of the German poets gone to sleep? Does the present time not find any poetic expression? I have grown up with the idea that great times produce great poets – and I cannot resist the thought that we live in great times. I have read again Schiller's poems after three years of my life in the wilderness. What a magnificent, noble language. What fine feelings harboured in the breast of this remarkable man.

Never has music made such deep impression on me as during my voyage from England to Sydney. It was a wild night and the ocean roared below the keel of the advancing ship; I had long listened to the strange noises. I suddenly entered the cabin of Mr Marsh, my travelling companion, who was a great master on the harp and who was improvising on this instrument when I entered. Hearing the harmonious tunes after the distorted roar of wind and waves moved me strongly, but pleasantly, and tears clouded my eyes. I was overcome by a similar feeling when I read Schiller again. How true is this seer when he says:

Just as after hopeless pining,
Partings long and bitter pain,
Children, eyes with tears a-shining,
Creep to mother's heart again.

Such the fugitive is brought by song,
From places far and customs queer,
Back to happiness missed so long,
To his happy childhood's sphere.

*Farewell, my dearest brother-in-law.
Greetings to my dear mother.
Your affectionate brother-in-law
LUDWIG*



In 1849, George McIntyre reported seeing an L-tree on Glenormiston Station in about latitude 23°.

In 1888, David Lindsay, a South Australian government surveyor, removed from a tree at Arltunga (about 100 km east of Alice Springs), a sheet of bark in which an L had been incised along with other distinctive L marks.

Where's Ludwig?

L Leichhardt Trees

..... Assumed Track



LEICHHARDT'S THIRD EXPEDITION started, as did the previous two, from the Darling Downs. In his last letter, sent from a station on the Darling Downs on 4 April 1848, he wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald*: "We have killed our first bullock at this station to obtain the necessary provisions to carry us to Victoria" [Mitchell's Victoria River – the present Barcoo]. Nothing more was heard from Leichhardt or any member of his party.

A plausible theory of Leichhardt's movements is that during the first weeks of his third expedition he reached the Barcoo River. The evidence for this comes from Gregory in 1858 and Walker in 1861 who each found a tree on the Barcoo marked with an L. From the Barcoo it is likely that he crossed to the Thomson (as Walker did in 1861), travelled to its headwaters south-east of Hughenden, crossed over the watershed to the Flinders, and followed that river to a point about 50 miles north of present day Julia Creek. Here, in 1864, Duncan McIntyre came across two more L-trees.

According to Colin Roderick in his book on Leichhardt, other L-trees have been found between the Nicholson and McArthur rivers; at Arltunga; and on Glenormiston Station on the Georgina River.

The true fate of Leichhardt remains a mystery, but it is possible that the party was massacred by Aborigines at Wantata waterhole on the Diamantina while making an attempt to return from the Georgina River to the Darling Downs. Three skeletons, shown to be of European origin, were found at Wantata in 1871 by a search party. An Aborigine of about 30 told the leader of the search party that the white men had been killed when he was a boy, which suggests a time around 1850, the presumed year of Leichhardt's death.



31 December 1864 – The trees found by Mr McIntyre were marked with a single L, neatly cut. One of the L's is cut in the bark of a tree and is 32" long by about 12" in width. The other was marked deeply in the wood, the bark having been removed for the purpose. This latter one was 5½" long and cut with a tomahawk. These trees are close together, showing that a camp had been established thereabouts.

RIVERINE HERALD

21 April 1858 – Continuing our route along the river we discovered a Moreton-Bay ash [146.02°E, 24.66°S] about 2 feet in diameter, marked with the letter L on the east side and cut through the bark about 4 feet from the ground.

Near it were the stumps of some small trees which had been cut with a sharp axe; also a deep notch cut in the side

of a sloping tree, apparently to support the ridge pole of a tent, or some similar purposes; all indicating that a camp had been established here by Leichhardt's party. No other indications having been found, we continued the search down the river, examining every likely spot for marked trees, but without success.

AC GREGORY

In 1871, JM Gilmour of Thargomindah, commandant of the Bulloo detachment of the Queensland Native Mounted Police, made two journeys in search of Leichhardt. At Wantata Waterhole, guided by local Aborigines, Gilmour found parts of three human skeletons.

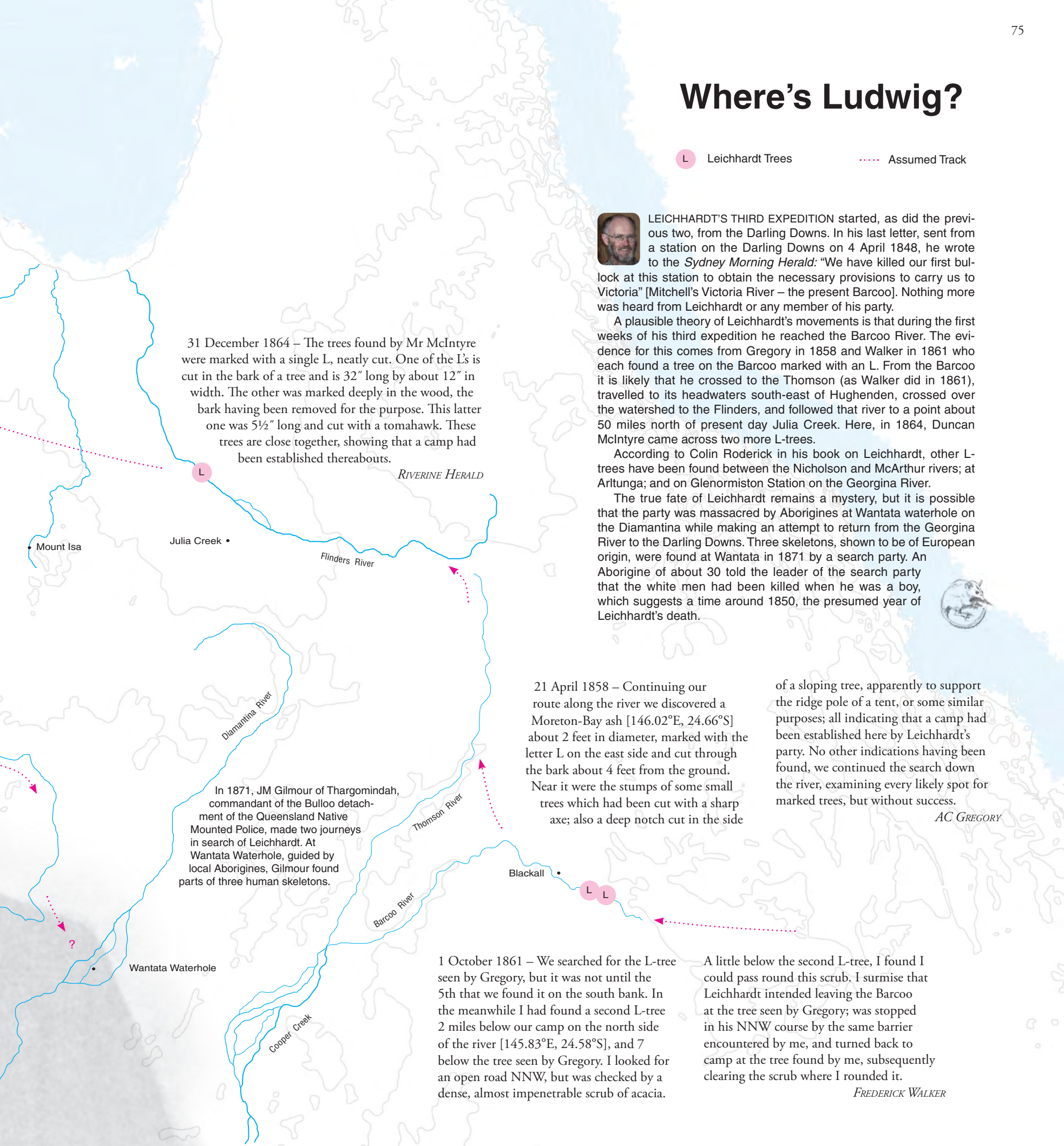
Blackall

L L

1 October 1861 – We searched for the L-tree seen by Gregory, but it was not until the 5th that we found it on the south bank. In the meanwhile I had found a second L-tree 2 miles below our camp on the north side of the river [145.83°E, 24.58°S], and 7 below the tree seen by Gregory. I looked for an open road NNW, but was checked by a dense, almost impenetrable scrub of acacia.

A little below the second L-tree, I found I could pass round this scrub. I surmise that Leichhardt intended leaving the Barcoo at the tree seen by Gregory; was stopped in his NNW course by the same barrier encountered by me, and turned back to camp at the tree found by me, subsequently clearing the scrub where I rounded it.

FREDERICK WALKER



McIntyre Went Riding

... claims Dalgonaally
and finds evidence of Leichhardt



DUNCAN MCINTYRE was born in Scotland in 1831. He was the fifth child of James McIntyre and his wife Mary, Gaelic speaking farming people. In 1839 he came to Australia with his father's eldest brother, Archibald, his Aunt Elizabeth, and five of their children. A sixth child, Donald, stayed behind in Scotland and did not rejoin the family until 1851.

Only sketchy details are known of McIntyre's youth. He married Mary Morris in Melbourne on 5 March 1862. At the time he was superintendent of Glengower, a property near Castlemaine owned by Donald Campbell, a brother of his Aunt Elizabeth.

On the day McIntyre was married, a man named William Landsborough was searching the Flinders River for Burke and Wills. Landsborough didn't find the lost explorers, but he did find pastoral land suitable for grazing sheep and cattle. He had this to say to the Colonial Secretary of Queensland at the end of his trip:

*Mt Murchison Station,
Darling River,
5 July 5 1862*

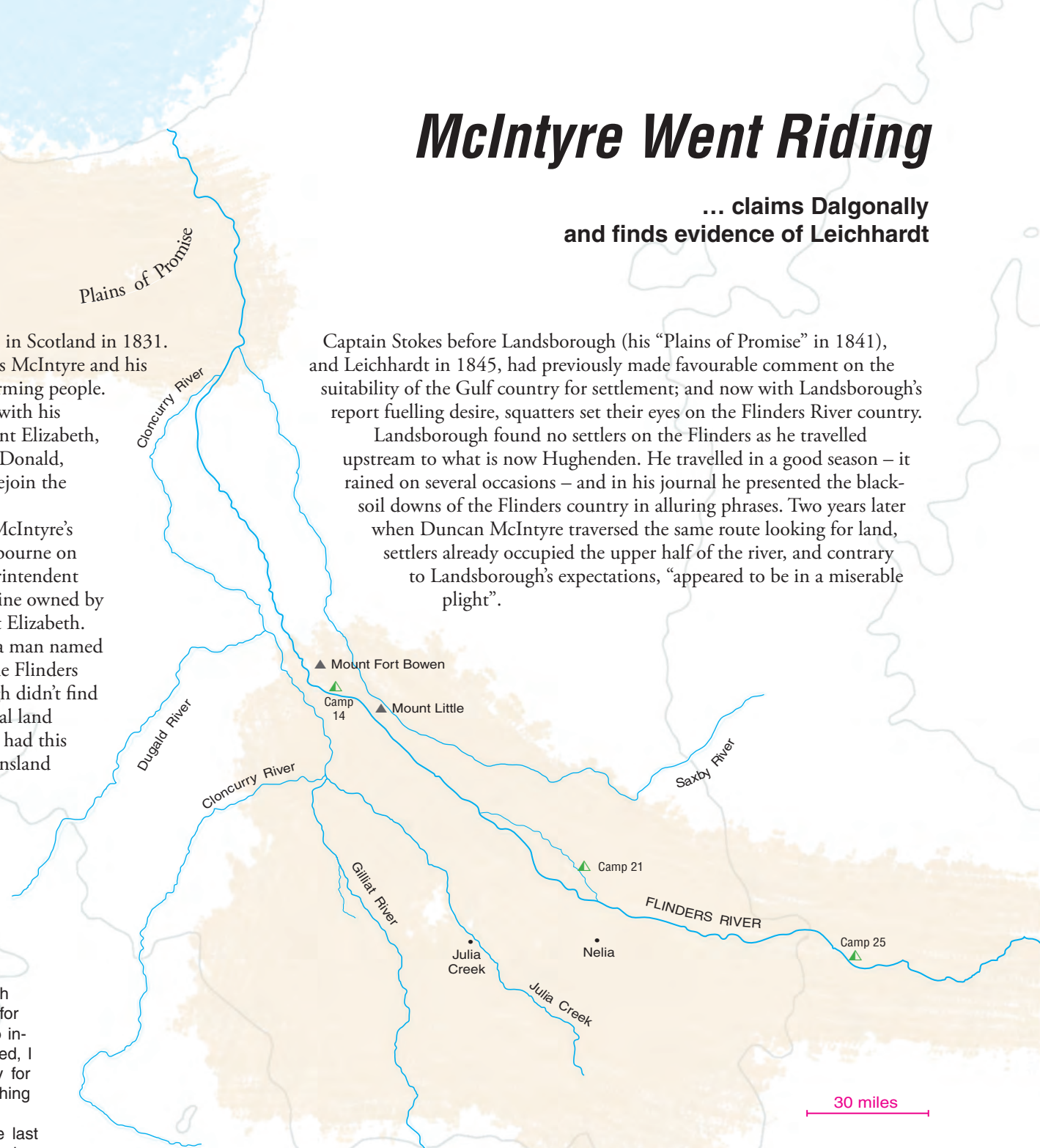
SIR – Having learned in the *Sydney Weekly Mail* of the 24th May, that the Colonial Treasurer said that he had no doubt the parties in search of Burke's tracks were making tracks for themselves, I have now the honour to inform you that, so far as I am concerned, I have no immediate intention to apply for country discovered by me while searching for Burke's tracks...

Of the country I have seen on the last expedition which had not been previously explored, I consider the most valuable, on which I am sure sheep will thrive, are the plains on the west bank of the Leichhardt River and the plains on the Flinders River...

*I have the honour to be, sir,
Your obedient servant,
W. LANDSBOROUGH*

Captain Stokes before Landsborough (his "Plains of Promise" in 1841), and Leichhardt in 1845, had previously made favourable comment on the suitability of the Gulf country for settlement; and now with Landsborough's report fuelling desire, squatters set their eyes on the Flinders River country.

Landsborough found no settlers on the Flinders as he travelled upstream to what is now Hughenden. He travelled in a good season – it rained on several occasions – and in his journal he presented the black-soil downs of the Flinders country in alluring phrases. Two years later when Duncan McIntyre traversed the same route looking for land, settlers already occupied the upper half of the river, and contrary to Landsborough's expectations, "appeared to be in a miserable plight".



Landsborough's camps are indicated by a tent symbol (▲). His numbering system is confusing. His log for each day refers to the camp he reached *yesterday*. For instance, his entry for February 27 (written during the evening of the 27th), begins: "Camp 14,

situated on the right bank of the Flinders". But Camp 14 is actually the camp he reached on the 26th. Note that his 'left' and 'right' are taken when facing downstream. When he refers to the 'right' bank of the Flinders he means the north bank.

Among the more seductive observations of Landsborough that persuaded settlers to squat on the Flinders River country were these journal entries of February and March 1862:

22 February

CAMP 14 – Situated on the right bank of the Flinders River at a point about 7 miles south-east from Mt Fort Bowen. The weather during the night was showery, accompanied by a northerly wind. Left camp at 8.40. At 10.50 sighted hills, named by me Mount Brown and Mount Little. At 12.15 we halted for 15 minutes to wait for Jackey, who had gone to a waterhole for the purpose of shooting ducks. Jemmy and I left the party to ascend Mount Little, which is nearer to the river than Mount Brown, and rode to its rocky summit. Its elevation is about 50 feet. From the mount nothing was observable except Fort Bowen, Mount Brown, and extensive thinly-wooded plains. I built here a small cairn. Having no knife, I scratched my initials and a broad arrow with a mussel shell which I picked up at a blacks' camp. Started again at 1.30 after the rest of the party, who had gone on ahead. At 2.30 came south 1¼ miles and encamped.

I never saw finer-looking herbage than that along our path today. If it always rained when the grass required moisture this would be one of the best places, if not altogether the best, in Australia.

7 March

CAMP 21 – Situated on right bank of Flinders River. Knowing that plains with just a sufficiency of trees for firewood and shade have proved better than any other for pastoral purposes, this country delighted me; but I must say it would please me more if there were a few high hills in the distance. I was, however, charmed with the landscape around the camp this morning. In the foreground I saw trees festooned with beautiful cumbering creepers, and beyond them the horses feeding on a grassy plain extending to the north and east.

We started at 8.14 a.m. and came east for 10 miles along a plain behind the wooded country near the river, but further back it is either covered with roly-poly and pig-weed or with young grasses which I am afraid are annuals. Yet notwithstanding these drawbacks it is a very fine country, and if care is taken by the future occupiers not to overstock it, sheep and cattle will do remarkably well upon it.

14 March

CAMP 25 – situated on the left bank of a western channel of the Flinders River. We started this morning at 7.37. When we had come 7 miles over rich well-grassed downs we observed a great number of blacks on a level flat which extended to the southward. Mr Bourne and I approached them and they all ran away except some gins and children who hid themselves in a waterhole. We remained near them for a short time and were joined by Jemmy and Jackey [Aborigines]. The gins and children soon abandoned their hiding-place and assembled on the bank, where they had their coolamons filled with rats. The old gins repeatedly offered to us the wives of the men who had run away. Amongst the females whom I observed was a girl about 10 years old with a large bone stuck through the cartilage of her nose. We declined the offer, although I daresay Jackey would have liked to have taken one of the ratcatchers with him – but Jemmy said he would not, as he does not approve of wedded life. He has seen it, I presume, under disadvantageous circumstances.

The young gins had fine eyes, white teeth, and good expression. The children looked particularly lively and intelligent. Jemmy understood a few words of their language

but not sufficient to get information from them. Their word for water, *cammo*, I caught while we were getting them to fill our pint pots.

19 March

CAMP 29 – Jemmy was so unwell this morning that we had to delay some time before he could proceed. Started at 9.52 a.m. Having come 3 miles south-east we waited for some time as Gleeson was too unwell to travel. Afterwards we proceeded about 2 miles and encamped.

The land we saw today was on the whole well-grassed. The flattest portions of it are wooded with myall, Port Curtis sandalwood, and western-wood acacia. Seen from the unwooded plains, this beautiful country is filled with luxuriant herbage and the surrounding isolated ranges lends an interest to the scenery. The river has here a sandy channel about 120 paces wide with a shallow stream meandering along its almost level surface.

20 March

CAMP 30 – situated on the left bank of the Flinders River. This morning I was glad to find that Gleeson and Jemmy had recovered sufficiently to start on the journey. We started at 10.12. After crossing the river we followed it up on its right bank in an east direction for 1½ miles. We then followed up a creek I named Jardine's Creek in a south-east direction for 5 miles and encamped.

The country we saw from our path along the right bank of the river was not, of course, extensive, but what we saw was flat, covered with long grass, and wooded with bloodwood and gum. These trees were the largest I have seen in this part of the country, and almost the only ones I have seen since leaving the Albert River at all well-adapted for building purposes. The country in the valley of Jardine's Creek [near present day Hughenden] is most beautiful. It is thickly grassed and in some parts without trees; in others thinly wooded or wooded with clumps of trees. The hills on both sides of the valley are picturesque. Distance today 6½ miles.

26 March

CAMP 35 – We left camp this morning at 8.45 and travelled at our usual pace till 1.45 when we encamped at a small creek. We stopped here as we found dray-tracks near the creek that I wanted to trace. After unsaddling, I traced them a short distance to the north-east. The tracks were made probably by the parties who have occupied Bowen Downs – a fine tract of country that Mr Nat Buchanan and I discovered about two years ago. Distance come today 14½ miles.

The district of Bowen Downs is at the head of the Thomson River. A station had been established, as Landsborough noted, although he wasn't able to locate it. From Bowen Downs he followed the Thomson River downstream. Had he continued far enough he would have come to the graves of Burke and Wills on the Cooper, but lack of stores forced him to return to the settled districts via the Barcoo, Warrego and Darling rivers (see map over page).

Landsborough's description of the Gulf country led to an influx of squatters. Most moved in from the east, travelling up the Cape River and taking a short hop over the watershed to the Flinders, the highway and lifeline of the western downs, to take up the choice country along its banks. But at least one party – led by Duncan McIntyre – came from the south. In mid-1863 Donald Campbell financed a land-seeking expedition with McIntyre as leader. The



party left Glengower and made for Mount Murchison on the Darling River, and then for Cooper Creek. From there to the Gulf they followed the general direction of Burke and Wills. They returned from the Gulf by Landsborough's route.

Duncan McIntyre did find suitable land in the Gulf – it became known as Dalgona – and something else of significant historical interest: evidence of Leichhardt's third, and last, expedition. McIntyre sent a telegram to the Royal Society of Victoria from Swan Hill, the first telegraph station he reached on his way back to Glengower:

15 December 1864

Found between Burke and Sturt tracks about 200 miles from Carpentaria two old horses, and saw very old tracks of a party going south west. Also two trees marked L about 15 years old.

Continuing on from Swan Hill, McIntyre stopped at Echuca a few days later and spoke with the *Riverine Herald*:

Mr McIntyre, who recently succeeded in accomplishing the journey overland and back from the Darling River to the Gulf of Carpentaria, arrived yesterday in Echuca and has supplied us with some interesting notes with respect to his late arduous journey. It will be fresh in the memory of our readers that several letters have appeared in the Melbourne journals relative to the discovery by Mr McIntyre of certain marked trees on the Flinders River. The trees found by Mr McIntyre were marked with a single L, neatly cut. The marks must have been made at least 15 years ago – before Queensland was occupied – and before any settlers thought of leaving the coast for the interior. One of the L's is cut in the bark of a tree and is 32 inches long by about 12 inches in width. The other was marked deeply in the wood, the bark having been removed for the purpose. This latter one was 5½ in long and cut with a tomahawk. These trees are close together, showing that a camp had been established thereabouts.

The McIntyres, Duncan and Donald, left Victoria about two years ago with sheep, cattle, horses, and a splendid outfit, intending to proceed to the Gulf of Carpentaria. On their arrival at Mount Murchison Station on the Darling they found the river flooded and were unable to cross their sheep. Mr Duncan McIntyre, the gentleman now in Echuca, then proceeded northwards with a small party in order to find a good route as far as Cooper Creek. He reached those waters and ascertained that no difficulty existed for taking stock to that point.

On his return he learned, to his great disappointment, that the Queensland Government had forbidden the entrance of stock to their colony, either by land or sea, from any other of the Australian colonies. They moved their stock to the Paroo and made application to the Queensland Government for permission to pass the border with their stock.

In the hope that this request would be granted, Mr Duncan McIntyre, accompanied by Mr William Barnett, and taking with him three blacks and 25 horses, again proceeded to the north with the view of ascertaining whether the Gulf country was superior to what he had already seen. The party started with a small quantity of flour, rice, tea and sugar, but took no meat. They had a good supply of ammunition and expected to find large numbers of ducks and eggs on the route as the season towards the coast had been very favourable for this description of game. None of these, however, were met with as there had been no rain at all north of Cooper Creek. The country did abound with opossums, kangaroos and

emus. Native rats were more or less numerous the whole way across the continent, and a good many bandicoots were met with. Mr McIntyre says they were excellent eating. Wild turkeys were seen everywhere, but were especially numerous in the neighbourhood of the Gulf. Pigeons too, were found in thousands; and fish, also, were caught in large numbers in all the creeks, frequently more than could be eaten. Altogether, the party had no reason to regret not having brought a supply of meat with them.

To begin a detailed description of the journey: the party left the Paroo on 21 June 1864 on their way to Cooper Creek, which they reached in 22 days, finding nothing new in the 200 or 300 miles of country previously explored by them. Cooper Creek was crossed about 50 miles below the junction of the Thomson. The course then taken was for the head waters of the Albert River. In crossing the coast range (described by Burke as giving such terrible work to the camels that they groaned and bled), the feet of McIntyre's horses got so much worn down by the rocks and stones that it became necessary to follow a creek to the north, and afterwards to the north-east, in order to get down onto the low country. Instead of the Albert, the Flinders was struck at a point a little north of Donors Hill, from where it was followed to the Gulf.

The journey from Cooper Creek to the Gulf occupied 34 days – a little over half the time taken by Burke and Wills. Mr McIntyre states that he was within a mile of the coast, but having got in between two mangrove creeks he was hemmed in by a large number of blacks whom he was obliged to charge on horseback in order to get away. By showing fight and shooting a number of them he might have had the opportunity of seeing the ocean; he considered, however, that such gratification bought with the sacrifice of human life was too high a price.

On several occasions large numbers of blacks were met. Once an exchange was made with them for fish, some hawks shot by the party being given in barter. In the coastal range the blacks were dreadfully frightened at the appearance of the party whom they took for supernatural beings. But neither on the journey out nor back was a single blackfellow shot.

In returning along the Flinders River, no mountain or hills were visible towards the west but some lofty peaks were seen at a great distance towards the east. From the description of the Flinders given by Mr Landsborough when he came up the river in March 1862, it would be inferred that it was finely-watered. He states that when he left the river it was 120 yards wide with a stream flowing along its bed. However, 20 miles from the sea Mr McIntyre crossed it dry; and higher up it was often dry for 10 miles at a stretch. The general width was found to be from 30 to 40 yards.

The Flinders is settled from its source to within 280 miles of the sea. One station, however, is 130 miles lower down. Most of the stations Mr McIntyre visited were completely out of provisions and they were cut off by the drought from all communication with Port Denison [Bowen]. Squatters had lost about 30% of their sheep from the poison bush when coming over the range from the east coast. Poison bush also caused great losses among the cattle, and at least 50% had been lost from pleuropneumonia. A very large percentage of horses had died from snake bites.

When the party passed along the Flinders in September the flocks were lambing, the average not expected to be over 15%. The sheep generally looked healthy, but poor, though there was plenty of grass. The flocks were unshorn, and no appearance of shearing commencing, for no men were procurable. On the whole, the squatters along the Flinders appeared to be in a miserable plight.

Mr McIntyre called at the Bowen Downs station at the head of the Thomson River. The cattle were clean and in excellent condition.

McIntyre to the Gulf 1864



The journey from the Paroo to the Gulf and back had taken McIntyre and Barnett five months. Barnett recorded his version of the events in a long letter to his aunt in England.

My dear Aunt

HAVE JUST RECEIVED YOURS dated 11th March '64 from which I derived much pleasure and was only sorry when I came to an end. Believe me your letters cannot be too long.

You ask me why I left the bank and I answer: the bank authorities treated me shamefully. I therefore tendered my resignation, which was accepted, and I am heartily glad it was for I disliked desk work. I had other reasons for wishing to leave Bendigo and I am now very likely to get an occupation which I like.

After leaving the bank I went to Mr Lintott's cattle station, Lake Bael Bael. Here I was treated as one of the family, had plenty of riding after wild cattle, and then travelled to market in charge of them. About 18 months passed away very pleasantly at this sort of work when Mr Lintott decided to add sheep to the run. I was favoured with the charge of 10,000 from the River Edwards, NSW, which I drove satisfactorily to Bael Bael.

Mr Lintott now advised me to go into new country where I should have a better chance to get on, kindly telling me should I not be successful I could come back to him. Having provided myself with letters of recommendation to influential squatters, I started up the River Darling on my dear old mare, Polly, intending to get employment at the Bogan River Company, a very large squatting concern at the junction of the Darling and Warrego Rivers.

Arriving near the Queensland boundary I fell in with Messrs McIntyre and party. This was a party who had left Victoria with sheep about 12 months previous intending to go to the Gulf of Carpentaria, but the Queensland Government would not allow the introduction of sheep or cattle for fear of disease, so the party was stopped.

Duncan McIntyre was wishing very much to go on and explore the country to the Gulf, but he wanted someone to go with him. It was just the style of thing to suit me, and had he not proposed for me to accompany him I should have volunteered. His brother Donald would remain on the Paroo to look after the sheep.

We at once set to work breaking horses for the journey and getting rations ready and packed. We determined our party should consist of: Duncan McIntyre (chief); Wm Fred Barnett (second in command); Albert, Charlie and Billy (blackfellows); 25 horses and one kangaroo dog; and rations of tea, flour, sugar and a little rice. I will now refer to my journal.

21 June 1864 – We experienced much trouble

getting the packs on, the horses being very fresh and a number of them lately broken. Unfortunately, a foal of one of the pack mares got amongst our mob when we were all ready to start. Not wishing to have it follow us, McIntyre desired me to cut it out, and in so doing I disturbed the packhorses who, when they began to move about, felt their girths and packs rather disagreeable. Thereupon they one and all commenced bucking, kicking and galloping until they had rid themselves of their loads. It was indeed a very deplorable, yet most ludicrous sight which beggars description. We brought up the horses again, repaired the packs and got them on, and at length started, although it only wanted an hour to sunset. Donald McIntyre and McLeod came along with us for a few days' journey.

Sunday 3 July – We are camped today on a beautiful lake never before visited by white men. As Donald and McLeod leave us tomorrow we have christened it Lake Farewell. The horses are now moderately easy to manage having become used to the packs. I write to my brother and shoot ducks for supper.

Friday 15 July – Camped on Coopers River. Yesterday we passed over immense plains of roly-poly, a very prickly bush. Having much trouble in driving the horses over the plains, and continuing to travel long after dark to reach water, we did not notice our dog missing. We shall have to go on without him tomorrow. Four blackfellows pass at some distance from our camp, but do not pay any attention to our shouts and signs to come up. McIntyre and Charlie go out for game and return with a native companion, three ducks, two hawks and an owl.

Sunday 24 July – Yesterday we left Charlie and Albert at camp to find and bring up four horses which were missing, the whole party not being able to remain as we had camped without water. They had not arrived this morning and as we had camped again without water, McIntyre and Billy proceeded with the horses and I remained to wait for Charlie and Albert. I go on a stony rise that I may the more readily see the horses should they come, and lie down. Presently I see two black objects approaching, and bye and bye make them out to be two blackfellows. Not knowing but that there may be more, I mount my horse and look to my revolver. When within 200 yards they see me. Their astonishment is evident. I cooee to them but they alter their course to avoid me. As soon as they get to a bush they make a fire

*November 1864
River Paroo
New South Wales*

and one of them steps out in front with a fire stick which he keeps waving towards me whilst crying out some incantation in a loud voice. This having been completed they pursued their way.

About an hour before sunset Charlie and Albert came up with the lost horses, and without delay we started after McIntyre. We had not proceeded more than 5 miles to a large dry creek of many channels when we met McIntyre and Billy returning. They had met a large party of blacks who surrounded them and who by their gesticulations appeared to be hostile, tapping their shields with their boomerangs and then with their heads. McIntyre fired a shot close to the foremost one, which rather intimidated them.

Having seen to all the firearms, and slackened the fastenings of our knives and tomahawks, we started forward intending to make our way through the darkies should they oppose our progress, for we had now been two nights and nearly three days without water. We had crossed nearly all the channels of the creek when we observed 15 or 20 blacks stooping over something very busily. As soon as they saw us they gave a yell and disappeared amongst the timber. We found that they had been busy ripping open a flour pack which had been thrown off by one of the horses and not noticed by McIntyre and Billy in their hasty retreat. We halted to repair the pack as we could not afford to lose nearly a cwt of flour. Whilst doing so the blacks made their appearance and pointed to their weapons which they had left by the pack. I threw their weapons to them, and, in a sign of goodwill, laughed as well as my parched mouth would allow me and made signs that we wanted water. They pointed the way we had come from.

Being painfully aware there was no water the way the blacks pointed we determined to follow them as they were sure to go to water. They kept amongst the timber some distance, continually jabbering in a loud tone and pointing the way we had come from. Seeing we would not leave them and all of us making signs for water, they struck across a plain and to our great delight and relief came upon a small lagoon. We quenched our thirst and unpacked the horses and prepared to have a yarn with our unwilling guides who, evidently much interested, were watching us. We beckoned for them to come up and they did. Soon they were rubbing our hands and faces, pointing to the flour as if they thought they were painted, but when I showed them my arms and breast their astonishment was immense. We explained to them that we would stay here one night and then go away.

To show our power, McIntyre shot a hawk. After giving them a few trifles we bid them goodnight, giving them to understand that should they make their appearance during the night we would cause them to tumble down like the hawk.

They are a fine lot of men, wear no clothing and are circumcised, are afraid of horses, but only laugh when a loaded revolver is pointed at them. They have evidently never seen white men before.

Thursday 4 August – We have had a dreadful day's work today over almost impassable mountains. When the horses reached the tops they had to go single file through little gaps, the only possible places to pass. On the precipitous descents they snorted back with fear and it was with great difficulty we compelled them. Often I thought they would be dashed to pieces by losing their footing. At length we came to a dry sandy creek with almost perpendicular mountains 500 feet high on both sides. As the creek was coming from the direction we wanted to go, we followed it up hoping to get water near its head and cross to the northern drainage tomorrow. We had not proceeded far along the creek when boulders partially blocked it. After much difficulty we got up a ravine and in a granite basin found plenty of water. McIntyre went farther up and found the channel entirely blocked by immense granite boulders. Tomorrow we shall have to turn back some distance and try another pass.

This is indeed a wild looking place. Blocks of granite are heaped and strewn about in fantastic ways across the 20 yards width of the creek. For 100 yards ahead of us on either side there is a rugged incline, and for the next 400 to 500 yards mountains go up nearly perpendicular. No feed for the horses who remain standing where we left them.

Saturday 6 August – Yesterday after much difficult travelling we succeeded in getting on the northern drainage. We followed down a creek which soon led us to a beautiful valley. At the first water we came to we camped. Today as we continued along the creek we surprised 50 or 60 blacks who, with frightful yells, set fire to the grass and ran up the mountains which were not far distant. They kept up with us for about 3 miles, running along the top of the mountains shouting and yelling hideously.

About 3 miles farther on we stopped to take an observation of the sun and we found that our axe had somehow got away. Thinking that perchance it had been torn from the pack in some scrub we had passed through, Charlie and I started back in quest

of it. We had gone about 3 miles when we heard a chopping over a small ridge. Imagining that very likely the blackfellows had picked up our axe and were trying it, we rode over the ridge and saw a blackfellow and his lubra busy getting a possum out of a tree. So busily were they engaged in their occupation that we were not observed until close up, when I cooed. They instantly sprang to their feet and, dropping everything they had, stood for a moment or two in mute bewilderment. Then with yells that made the mountains ring again, scampered off. Seeing that the blackfellow was using his own tomahawk (a sharpened stone fastened between two sticks) and hearing yells in all directions, I deemed it advisable to give up the search and returned to the party.

We kept on until after sundown without seeing water, but observing that the sand in the creek looked damp in one place we made a hole which was soon filled. We camped and shot two cockatoos and a pigeon for supper.

THESE EXTRACTS will give you an idea of our journey. On the 28th August we arrived at the Gulf of Carpentaria, and though we were within 2 miles of it, mangrove saltwater swamps and creeks prevented our reaching the sea beach and obtaining a sight of the ocean. It was impossible for horses to cross the creeks, the banks being almost perpendicular and the tide running out very strong. The presence of 200 or 300:

Hostile black

Rushing to the fierce attack

Rude spears in woomera firmly placing

Boomerang and waddy wildly shaking

rendered it foolhardiness to swim across and proceed on foot – to say nothing of the alligators.

Having proceeded up the Flinders River about 200 miles on our homeward journey, we came upon a newly formed sheep station, the nearest settlement to the Gulf. We continued up the river calling at the several stations that have lately been formed, and thence along Walkers Creek and Landsborough Creek to the Thomson River which we followed down some distance. We then struck across for the Barcoo and onto the head of Bulloo which we followed until we came to a cattle station which has been formed since we started. Here we got on our outward track and in a few days I was reading your letter and playing with our dog that we lost at Cooper River on

our outward journey. He had found his way home 300 miles, causing a good many to think we had perished.

I have given you an idea of our homeward course. I can only give you our outward by saying that it was generally north-west as we were endeavouring to make the Albert River (want of water prevented us). We crossed McKinlay's track about latitude 25°, Burke and Wills' in latitude 20°, Landsborough's in latitude 19°, and recrossed Burke and Wills' in latitude 18° 30'. So, if you get a lately published map of Australia with the routes of the explorers on it and take into consideration that our journey was made in a dry season whereas the explorers had good ones (and yet we never carried water though they did), and that we travelled a greater distance in less time than any of them and came back in good health, you will have some idea what a great Australian pioneer I have become. Who would have thought the delicate boy would have grown to the hardy back-woodsman?

I am having a spell now for a little bit, living like an eastern king. On either side of me is a black girl squatting down, ready to fetch a light to my pipe, or a drink, or anything else I may require. Don't blush when I tell you they are as naked as the day they were born – it's their fashion. Outside the gunyah my blackboy is lying asleep, ready to fetch my horse or whatever I order him; and this morning I started half a dozen blackfellows and their lubras, the former to net ducks and the latter to catch fish, some of which I shall have for my supper.

You must not expect regular letters from me – this long letter must cover all previous delinquencies – but I dare say you will get them nearly as often as my mother (who gets them more often than anyone else) for you are my two dearest and best friends.

I shall have to ride 150 miles with this and other letters in order to leave them at a place where they can be forwarded to a post town, for if I send a blackfellow he will play old Harry with the horses and take three times as long.

Give my dear Grannie plenty of kisses and love, and believe me,

I remain
Your sincere nephew



WHEN IT BECAME KNOWN that McIntyre had found evidence of Leichhardt, a group of Melbourne ladies formed a committee and sought contributions for a new search. Some people had concerns. One, who signed himself “A Murray Squatter”, wrote to the *Riverine Herald* on 28 April 1865:

Can you inform me what has been done, or is to be done, about this Leichhardt expedition? I have received a circular from the Ladies Committee, written with great taste and good feeling, as might be expected, but we want something more than taste, or even good feeling, in fitting out such an expedition. There was enough of both in that most woeful Burke and Wills affair, yet see what a miserable end they came to.

To initiate and carry on such a benevolent movement, to enlist sympathy and collect funds, the ladies are admirably suitable. But imagine 16 ladies selecting horses and bargaining for saddles in Bourke St. Of course they will leave all that to others – but to whom? And who is to be the leader? A man must be chosen who may be entrusted with everything. And who is that leader to consult with as to his general proceedings? There must be a pre-arranged route, for instance. But who is to lay it down? Certainly not the leader unrestricted. It would be unfair

to him, for if he found good sheep country and applied for it, it would undoubtedly be said that he had paid more attention to his own interest than the public object of his journey – as was freely enough said of more than one of the disinterested searchers after Burke and Wills. And the best man, if unrestricted, might be anxious to bring the expedition to a close prematurely, to secure some paradise he had discovered.

I am ready to subscribe £10 or £20 if I can see that the search will be carried out practically and efficiently; but with the greatest respect for the ladies, I should like to know who they intend to appoint before I subscribe – and I can say that almost everyone I have spoken to is of the same opinion.

The Ladies Committee referred to by Murray Squatter was a group of Melbourne society ladies who had formed the Leichhardt Search Committee to gather contributions to fund an expedition. McIntyre was appointed leader, probably in May 1865, though he was unaware of his appointment – he was in the Queensland bush buying cattle to stock Dagonally. To elicit wider support, the search committee sent a telegram to Lady Bowen, wife of the Queensland Governor:

The Victorian Government will bear a share of the expenditure which may be incurred in prosecuting a search of Leichhardt if other Governments will assist. If Queensland will contribute liberally, say £1,000, the expedition can be organised immediately; otherwise the services of Mr McIntyre will be lost. Private contributions will soon amount to £1,000. Pray send soon an answer. Surety to be given that no squatting interest will be pursued.

MRS ELLEN TIERNEY
Hon. Secretary
Leichhardt Search Committee

Lady Bowen replied on 3 June. Melbourne ladies were to be joined by Brisbane ladies in the search for Leichhardt:

The Queensland Government will recommend to Parliament a vote for the Leichhardt Search. I will form a ladies committee to receive contributions.

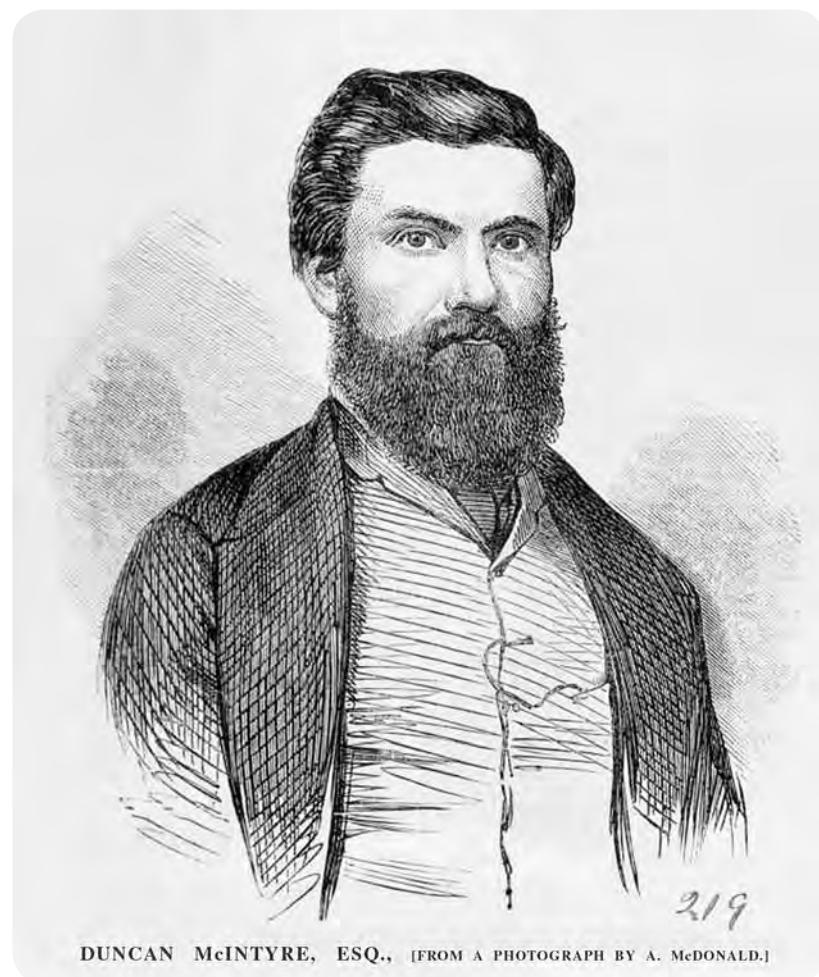
LADY BOWEN

The Queensland Parliament voted £1,000, and Victoria and South Australia each voted £500. Private contributions amounting to about £1,500 had also been collected, the total amount being sufficient to maintain an expedition for two years.

The Australasian
1 July 1865

Mr Donald Campbell, of Glengower, deserves much credit for the spirited and disinterested manner in which he completed in Melbourne all arrangements for the Leichhardt search. He acts on behalf of his nephew, Mr Duncan McIntyre, who takes command of the expedition. Members of the party are required to be at Glengower by the end of this week, from whence they will then start with camels and horses for Mount Murchison without delay.

With McIntyre somewhere in Queensland – and still oblivious of his new role as leader – the Leichhardt search party left Glengower on Monday, 3 July 1865, at midday.



Meanwhile, at the end of 1864, McIntyre had returned from the Gulf and was home for Christmas at Glengower with much talk of the wonderful new country he had seen on the Flinders. His intention was to return north in the cooler months of 1865 and to claim Dalgonaally – but he would have to stock it with Queensland cattle because stock were still prohibited from crossing the border.

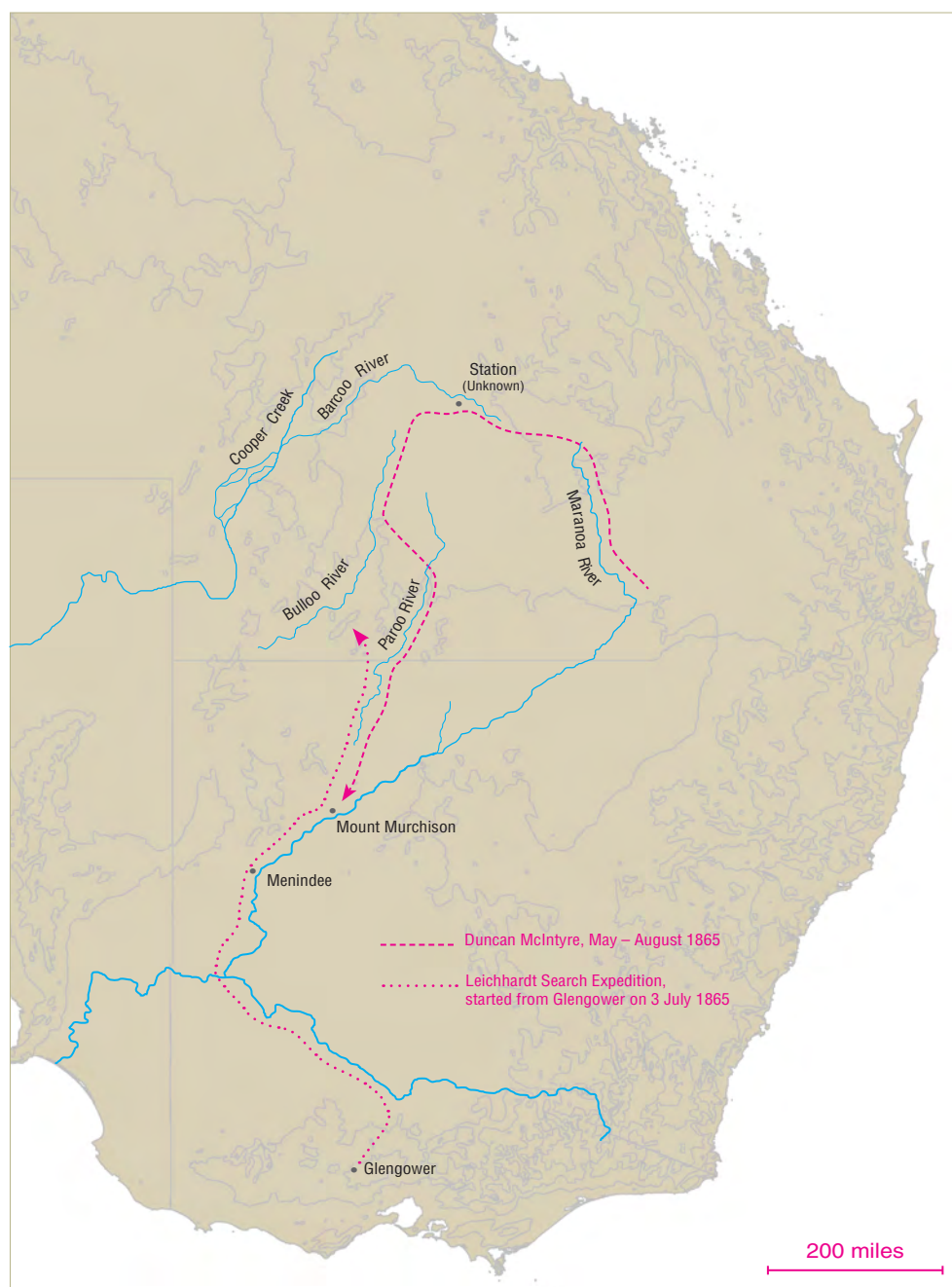
In late May 1865 McIntyre was in Queensland on his way to collect a mob of cattle on the Barcoo River, and from there to drive them to Dalgonaally. But circumstances changed. In a letter to Donald Campbell dated 24 August 1865, and written (possibly) near Lake Menindee on the Darling River, McIntyre describes his movements:

I have been up in Queensland and bought a lot of cattle from a station near the Barcoo River. I started on May 27, passing through the Maranoa district. After a journey of nearly 500 miles I arrived at the station to take delivery. Everything was in great confusion. We had to put up cattle yards before we could do anything – and no water where the station and yards were. After a month's hard work we got the cattle together and started them. I intended to go a week with them to see how McLeod would shape. In a few days I saw he was not capable of taking the cattle on alone, and as I would not be able to continue with him (I had to return to the Darling River for the horses) we drove the cattle back to the station and let them go again – for the place had been deserted by the owners...

On 12 July, McIntyre and McLeod left the station for the Darling River. They reached the head of the Paroo without difficulty and followed it down for 300 miles, arriving at Lake Menindee [?] in mid August. The letter continues:

...I learned for the first time that I had been appointed leader of the Ladies' Leichhardt Search Expedition... The camels and stores left here yesterday [23 August] for Mount Murchison – 90 miles without water. I am going up the river to get horses and to sell the rubbish they sent up. Had they been the best horses in Victoria they would not be fit to go northward after getting here in such a season as this.

In late August 1865, with fresh horses and in drought conditions, the expedition started from the Darling. It was to proceed to that part of the Flinders where McIntyre had seen traces of Leichhardt. Fresh stores could be obtained as needed from Burketown, the settlement recently established on the Albert River.



Opposite: Duncan McIntyre, 25 July 1865.
[State Library of Victoria, image mp000902]

On 5 October the party was camped at Curracunya Springs, 240 miles from the Darling and 200 miles from Cooper Creek. Five weeks later, after the party was forced to leave Curracunya, a disaster occurred. The true circumstances surrounding this disaster are not known. The available evidence suggests that the party could not find water at Cooper Creek and retreated. The party split in two: McIntyre and one other man moving ahead on camels and planning to return with water; the second group, led by Dr James Murray, coming along behind with the horses and stores. When the two groups met again, the expedition in its original composition was at an end: 66 horses dead in the desert, and stores and equipment scattered. In his diary for November 1865, Alexander Gray had this to say:

- 26th. Went to Cooper Creek, 45 miles no water.
- 27th Came back. Got to a dry hole at night.
- 28th Started to crawl and we made to save our own lives. Donald McIntyre, Barnett, McCalman, Dr Murray, a Black Boy and I travelled until our horses gave out. Dr Murray went on and left us. We let the horses go and we tried to walk but we were not able, so we laid down for dead. When the cool of the night came on we got a little stronger and we crawled along the tracks until we met Belooch with a little water which gave us great ease. We walked into camp about 10. Sixty hours without a drop of water, 86 hours without anything to eat, 97 hours on half a Johnny cake...

The main cause of the disaster, as described in a letter sent by McIntyre to a Mr George McGillivrey (edited extract below) appears to have been Dr Murray’s drunken negligence:

Wilson River
17 December 1865

GEORGE MCGILLIVREY, ESQ. – I suppose you have been hearing news of the Leichhardt Search Expedition from time to time since I left your quarter, and, no doubt, the last account has astonished you a little. The total loss of 66 horses and the lives of 10 men in danger, all in one day, is something quite new in exploring. I will, however, in as few words as possible, tell you all about it, as gathered from the evidence of the blacks and whites of the party, for I saw nothing of it myself.

After leaving your place we arrived at the head of this river: 71 horses, 12 camels, 10 white men and 4 blacks. Three of the men did not belong to the party: my brother Donald, Anderson, and Statue – they came down from the Barcoo to see us start, and afterwards they intended to follow the Thomson up to where their cattle were.

We camped for nearly a week. I then started out to look for water along our track ahead – the leader of an exploring party often finds it necessary to go ahead so as not to risk the whole party – leaving Dr Murray in charge with instructions to move down the creek when the water was gone. I returned the third day to move the party forward to a little water I had found, but Dr Murray had sent the horses and camels

6 or 8 miles down the creek even though there was still water for three of four days longer. I was quite mad at this. All my plans were upset. The delay would see the waterhole I had discovered go dry.

On 25th November we all started for Cooper Creek, the distance being 66 miles. We found the creek quite dry and no certainty of getting water for 100 miles further. As the horses had been 36 hours without water and the men about six hours, I told the doctor to retrace our tracks to the last camp. I went ahead searching for water, and finding some within 10 miles of our former camp I immediately sent back 54 quarts.

While I was away the doctor lost all command of himself. He opened the brandy and got quite drunk, and made everyone else the same. About half the horses were unpacked but the rest were left with their packs on. In the morning all were gone, packs and all. The doctor declared the expedition at an end and again got quite drunk. Had it not been for the doctor and his confounded brandy, all the men and the horses would have been into water in 30 hours or less.

The end of it was: all lives saved, nearly half rations saved, all instruments saved, all the camels

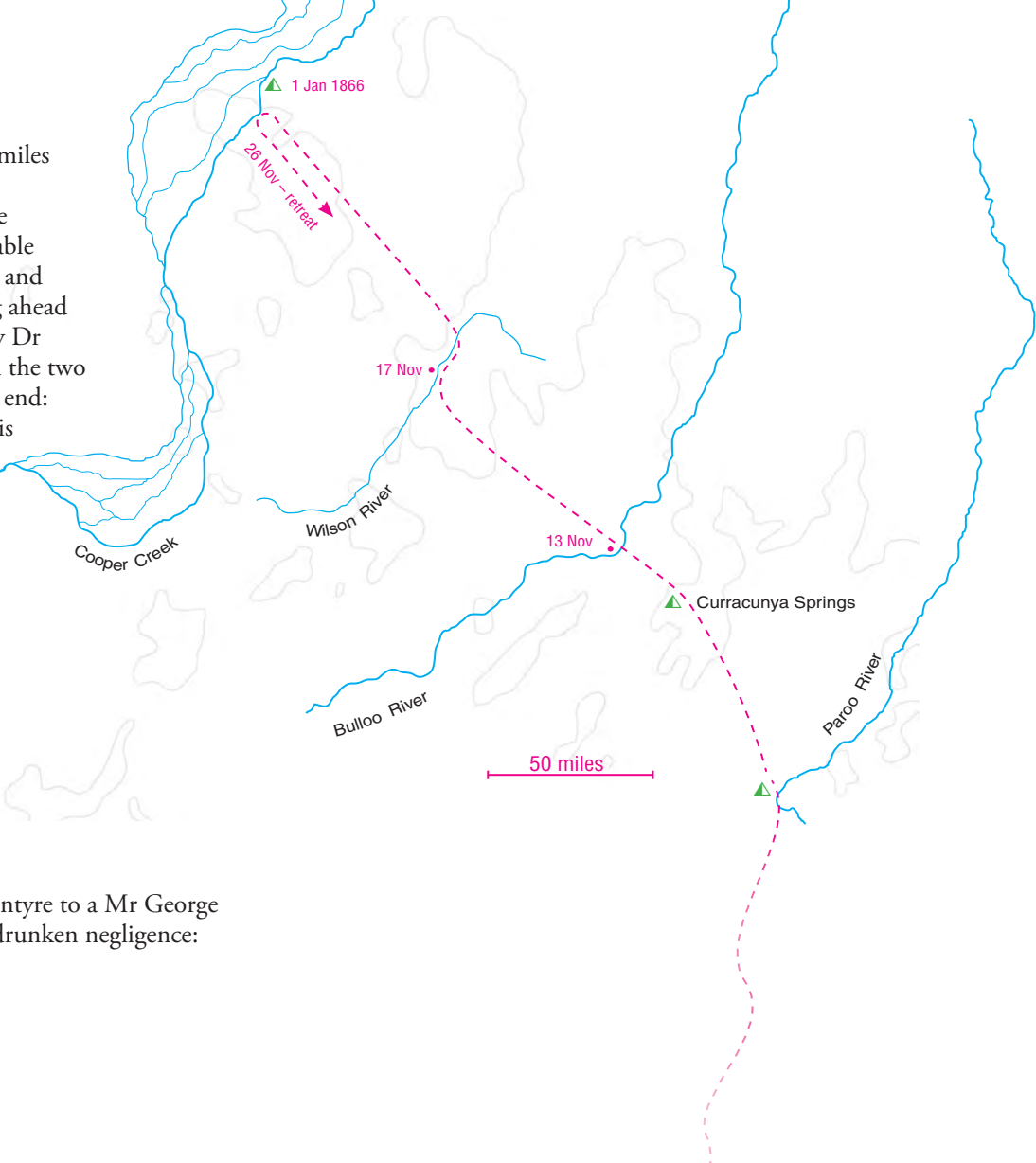
saved, but only five horses out of 71. To do all this I have travelled 600 miles within the last two weeks.

The expedition is far from being at an end. I have now McCalman, Barnett, Belooch (East Indian) and two blacks, with rations enough to take us to the North coast. I have found water about 25 miles NW from here and as soon as the camels are rested I will start. Perhaps I am better – certainly safer – than before, for I am not depending on anyone.

You need not show this to anybody as the less said about this episode the better. It will be all found in my journal when I return. You will, however, be able to tell anyone who contradicts what I have stated here that they are wrong. I have no doubt that the doctor will spread reports to my detriment, but if he does he may look out when I return. McDonald and Gray will no doubt support him and will say they were not drunk. The doctor acknowledged to having taken three quarters of a pint. At any event, they finished six bottles between them.

I send this hurried note by private hand up the Barcoo. It may reach you some time, or it may not. I have no writing material, only these leaves of my note book.

DUNCAN MCINTYRE



In a report to the Ladies Leichhardt Search Committee dated 30 March 1866, sent from his base camp near the Flinders River, McIntyre describes his journey after leaving Curracunya. They had camped at Curracunya from 5 October:

...until the 11th November, when, although not quite ready, we were obliged to move on, as the water was nearly done. Leaving Curracunya the expedition consisted of 65 horses, 12 dromedaries, about 5 tons of stores, and 10 men: Duncan McIntyre (leader), James P. Murray (surgeon and second-in-command), John McCalman, William McDonald, William Barnett, Alexander Gray, John Barnes, Belooch (Indian camel-driver), Welbo and Myola (Aborigines).

On the 13th November we crossed the Bulloo, and on the 17th reached the Wilson which was followed up for some days. Late on the night of the 26th we arrived at Cooper Creek and found it quite dry. As soon as day dawned Welbo and I started to look for water. We didn't go far. After a careful examination of the bed and banks of the channel, and old native footpaths, we returned to the expedition camp. Soon afterwards the party started back along the expedition track towards the last water. This retreat ended in the loss of all the horses but three, and the return of Gray, McDonald, Barnes, and Dr Murray to the settled districts.

Along with our doctor and the three men, we lost some thermometers etc. I will try and replace the men and lost equipment at the settlement on the Albert [Burketown]; and also try for a surveyor if there is one to be had. I am doubtful about being able to get a legally qualified surgeon – and a surveyor capable of making astronomical observations is still more difficult to procure. Other men are plentiful enough. We have still four thermometers and two barometers, two large sextants, a number of smaller ones, and eight compasses, so that, allowing none are to be had on the Albert, the expedition is pretty well supplied, except in horses, and I will arrange about getting enough of those.

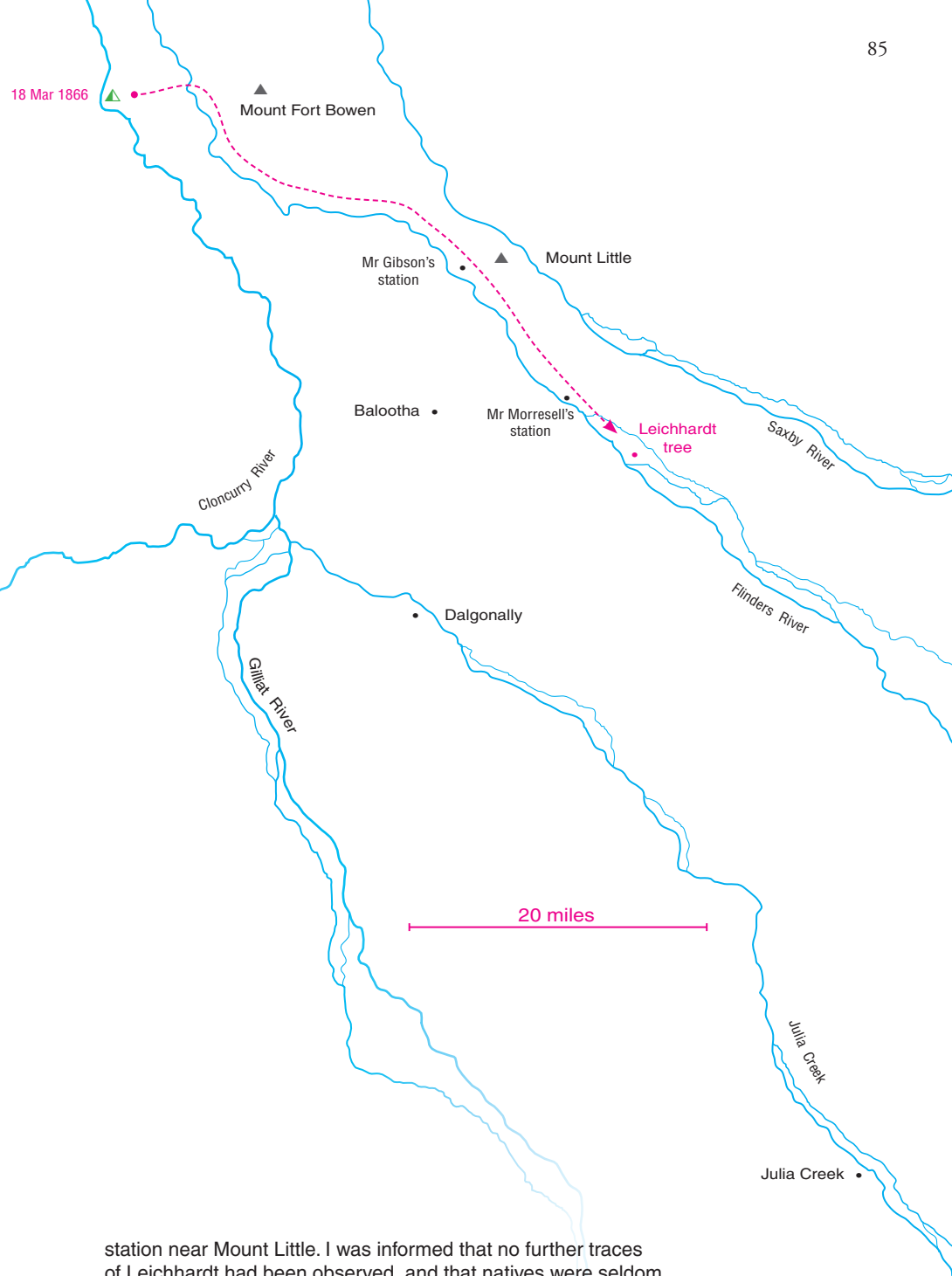
The whole of December was lost in finding permanent water in Cooper Creek, and collecting stores, firearms, ammunition, instruments and other valuables, which, owing to the expedition being declared at an end by Dr Murray during the retreat, had been thrown anywhere and anyhow, or carried away on the horses.

On New Year's Day we were camped on a fine sheet of water on Cooper Creek, but as the dromedaries required a month or two's rest, and the natives troublesome, we moved a few miles up the creek to where there was good feed for the animals, and timber to build a stockade. By the 14th January we had the stockade up and the annoyance from the natives was at an end.

In a few weeks the horses and dromedaries got quite fresh, and an unlimited supply of the finest fish put us all to rights. On Friday, the 9th February, we packed up and started. The expedition leaving Cooper Creek consisted of 12 dromedaries, five horses, nearly two tons of stores and six men: Duncan McIntyre (leader), John McCalman, William Barnett, Belooch, Welbo and Myola.

On Sunday, the 18th February, we were enjoying ourselves in the clear water of the Docker River [Farrars Creek], and on the 1st March we left the Mueller [Diamantina] and almost immediately entered the tropics. On the 9th March we crossed the coast range, and the next day we came on the head of this river, which we traced down.

On Sunday, the 18th March, the expedition was camped on the east side of the Cloncurry River nearly opposite Mount Fort Bowen. Welbo and I started to see if there was a station in the neighbourhood. A few miles in an easterly direction brought us to the Flinders River, which we crossed, and soon after we met a stockman looking for horses, who conducted us to Mr Gibson's



station near Mount Little. I was informed that no further traces of Leichhardt had been observed, and that natives were seldom seen in the neighbourhood.

After resting a few hours we proceeded to Mr Morresell's station, about 12 miles up the Flinders and only a few miles below the LL-trees, Leichhardt's supposed camp. We got to the station by sundown and remained all night. Mr Morresell told me that the old camp near the station was the only trace of Leichhardt that he knew of on the river. I remained all Monday with Mr Morresell, and on Tuesday returned to the expedition camp. Since then Welbo and I have been searching down this river and up the Flinders, but have not found any marked trees or other traces of Leichhardt, neither have we been able to find any natives.

The dromedaries, although in good condition, are leg-weary and will require a few weeks' rest before starting into the western interior. In the meantime, the search will be going on, and, if possible, the natives of the district found and interrogated. Perhaps I will attach some of them to the expedition.

DUNCAN MCINTYRE

To make good the loss of equipment that occurred at Cooper Creek, McIntyre went to Burketown towards the end of April 1866. He could not have gone at a worse time. A fever of plague proportions¹ was sweeping the town, thought to have been brought in by a ship, the *Margaret and Mary*. It was the wet season, the climate oppressive, there was a want of proper provisions and medicines, and resistance to the disease was low.

On 21 May, McIntyre showed the first symptoms of the fever. Two days later, still unwell, he rode back to the Gilliat River base camp². He died there on 4 June 1866. The two letters on the opposite page regarding McIntyre's death are from Mr Sloman, second-in-command of the expedition, addressed to the Ladies Leichhardt Search Committee.

After McIntyre's death, Dalgonally became the base for the expedition and several rivers were investigated. In the latter part of 1866 Sloman died suddenly without discovering any further traces of Leichhardt.

William Barnett (the same man who accompanied McIntyre on his first trip to the Gulf) became the new leader. Starting in January 1867 and finishing in May, the expedition made a sweep of the country between latitudes 20° and 21° south, and longitudes 142° to 140° east. No further traces of Leichhardt were found and the search was terminated.

Below: The Duncan McIntyre tree at Grave Hole.

DM
LE

(Duncan McIntyre
Leichhardt Expedition)

[Gordon Lavarack, LG06, ca 1930]



1. For more details about the fever, see pp106-7.
2. See map p89.

*Leichhardt Expedition Camp
River Gilliat, 7 June 1866*

LADIES – It is with feelings of the deepest sorrow that I beg to communicate to you the melancholy intelligence of the death of our leader, Mr Duncan McIntyre, which occurred on the morning of the 4th instant at his brother's camp on the River Gilliat. I will endeavour, as clearly as I can, to narrate the circumstances immediately preceding and attending his death.

Mr McIntyre, accompanied by Archibald McLeod and two blackboys, left his camp on the 3rd April and proceeded in a direction slightly to the northward of west to the River Leichhardt. After convincing himself that Leichhardt could not have taken his party over the country he saw there, he travelled generally in a north direction following the river down to 18° 56' south latitude. Here he left the Leichhardt, and struck across for the Gregory on his way to the township on the Albert River, where he proposed buying horses and rations. They arrived on the evening of the 20th April and camped in the vicinity till the 4th of May, making such visits to the township, distant 16 miles, as business required.

At this time a disease, generally known as "the fever", was raging in the township. McLeod and McLoughlin (who entered the service of the expedition there), as well as the two blackboys – one of whom has since died from its effects – were attacked by it. Mr McIntyre apparently escaped.

In the meantime I had joined the party, and on the 20th May we arrived at the River Dugald. Up to that time Mr McIntyre had been by far the strongest man amongst us. Next morning he felt unwell. He attributed it to his having lain all night in the smoke which arose from a hollow damp log on the fire. The next day he was still unwell, but on Wednesday 23rd May, Mr McIntyre and one blackboy proceeded to the Gilliat, distant 50 miles east, to bring the other portion of the expedition to us. He intending to be back in about a week. I did not again see him alive.

The dromedaries and the remainder of the party arrived at our camp on the Dugald on the 29th May. Mr McIntyre had forwarded me a note of instructions, informing me that he had arrived at the Gilliat in a very exhausted state. He also said that he now (26th May) felt better and hoped to rejoin us in a few days.

Late in the evening of the 2nd June I received a note from Mr Donald McIntyre stating that his brother was very ill, and as he would not be able to start with the expedition for some weeks I was instructed to return with the entire party to the Gilliat. The 3rd June was occupied in mustering the horses and preparing for a start, which we made the next morning.

On the 5th June, when about 26 miles from the Gilliat, I was met by a messenger bearing the sad tidings that our leader was no more. I immediately pushed forward. I arrived at the camp in the evening and learnt that during the last two days of his life he had been speechless and without the slightest power of motion. Occasionally he suffered very severe pain, while at other times he was in comparative ease. At 6 o'clock on the morning of the 4th he gently breathed his last.

He had expressed a wish some days previous to his death that I should read the funeral service over his remains. I need hardly assure you that his desire was religiously respected. We buried him on the morning of the 6th June.

How severe his disappointment at not being permitted to finish the great task he had undertaken, few can imagine. Rumours, which though utterly groundless had been widely spread, to the effect that he had accepted the post of leader of this expedition simply with a view to benefit himself and not to achieve its grand object, had reached his ears and had grieved him exceedingly. He had every confidence that he would succeed in the performance of his duty, and thus practically refute so base a scandal. On several occasions he mentioned this subject to me, and once added: "It's no use telling them they're wrong, I'll show them". But this he has not been allowed to do.

In his last letter of instruction to myself, which he had dictated to his brother, he said: "All those who have travelled with me will be able to give evidence that I adhered to the terms of the agreement to search for Leichhardt while ever there remained a horse or camel of the expedition". That he did so, and would have continued to do so, none who knew him can doubt.

Under another cover I forward you a statement of my proceedings since Mr McIntyre's death, and beg to remain, Ladies,

*Your most obedient servant
WS SLOMAN
Second in Command
Ladies Leichhardt Expedition*

LADIES – In a separate communication of this date, I have appraised you of the death of Mr McIntyre, and I now have the honour to submit for your information a statement of what has been and is now being done in accordance with the written instructions left by that gentleman for my guidance.

On the 27th May, Mr McIntyre appointed myself second-in-command of the expedition. Today I have discharged all the members of the party excepting Mr McCalman and Belooch, and we are now encamped on a fine waterhole near the River Gilliat, awaiting your further instructions. I may mention that the men discharged had been engaged, one here and the other on the Albert, so that they have not the slightest ground for complaint that they had been taken far from their homes and their services then dispensed with.

While camping here I shall be engaged in compiling a journal. This will occupy some time as Mr McIntyre, unfortunately, never had the necessary leisure to prevent this work falling into arrear. He says himself, in his last letter to me: "The journal in every expedition should be written up every night, but I had too many things to do".

The two blackboys who were with the expedition were attached to Mr McIntyre personally, and by that gentleman's desire will now remain with his brother, Donald. Mr McIntyre expected, and with ample reason, that these blackboys would prove powerful auxiliaries. You will, doubtless, see the advisability in any continuation of this search, of providing substitutes for them.

Please address any communication you may send me to the care of R. Morisset, Esq., Flinders River, Queensland. I have informed the officer in charge of the telegraph in Rockhampton of my address, so that he may forward a telegram should you deem it necessary at any time to send one.

An inventory of everything connected with the expedition will be taken as quickly as possible, but I will not detain this communication to enclose it. In the meantime I append a list of the numbers of dromedaries and horses, and the quantity of store with us. And remain, Ladies,

*Your most obedient servant
WS SLOMAN*

Number of dromedaries and horses, and quantities of stores at the Leichhardt Expedition Camp: 11 dromedaries, including one young one not yet broken-in, 32 horses, 2300 lbs flour, 600 lbs sugar, 80 lbs tea, 80 lbs dried apricots, and 100 lbs apples.

WS SLOMAN

The last letter written by Duncan McIntyre was to his uncle, Donald Campbell. The letter was written in ink, the signature in pencil. It was evidently left uncompleted.

A snippet of information in the second paragraph of this letter goes some way in explaining how Dalgongally was taken up: "I got another man named McLeod, and two of the blackboys Donald brought over with the cattle, and seven horses". McLeod is the same man who was with McIntyre when they rode from Queensland to the Darling River in July and August

of 1865 after setting cattle loose on the station near the Barcoo River. Given that McLeod appeared on Dalgongally seven months later with Donald McIntyre, it seems likely that these two men and some Aborigines collected the cattle that had been let loose on the station in the Barcoo district and drove them to Dalgongally via the Thomson River and the Flinders River, arriving in March 1866. Duncan McIntyre was also going to Dalgongally but by a different route – and at the head of the Leichhardt search party.

*Gregory River
2nd May, 1866*

DEAR SIR – I wrote to you about five weeks ago from the Gilliat River sending a lot of accounts and other papers connected with the expedition. The dromedaries, horses, and men needed rest for a few weeks. I got another man named McLeod, and two of the blackboys Donald [McIntyre] brought over with the cattle, and seven horses. On the 2nd April I started in search of further traces of Leichhardt, and also to call at the port to get some more rations.

Nothing of any consequence happened during the first week. We passed over splendid country all the way until we entered the watershed of the Leichhardt River. The country then became rough and stony. It took us nearly a week going straight west before we got to the main branch, which we crossed, and then we kept west for one day more. The country was all but impassable. Our horses, not being shod, could not stand it, so we had to turn eastward again to the main channel of the Leichhardt, which we followed down for three days. We then left it and struck out north-west, and in about 50 miles arrived at T.B. McDonald's on the Gregory. Here we were informed of the unhealthiness of the climate – a man having died a few days before our arrival. His grave was quite close to the bit of a shed they called a hut, and there being only two men on the station, the survivor was unable to carry his unfortunate companion any distance.

We kept on down the river and in due time arrived at the township. The population is about 60 – 45 or 50 being bad with the fever. People are sick everywhere. I could not count 10 able to do anything in the shape of work. Before I came here there were about 80 in town, 66 of whom were bad with the fever. I am told that 25 have died, and they are making coffins for two more who are past recovery. I hope I will get away all right. People are leaving by sea and land as fast as they can. Perhaps there is something unusual in the atmosphere this season, but the natives of the country appear to be all right.

The present site of the town is on a plain, only

a few feet above the level of the sea. There are two public houses and two stores. Flour, tea and sugar are in abundance, but of a very bad quality. The flour we can hardly eat as it is quite sour.

I camped at a lagoon about a mile from the town, thinking that I was away from all the sickness. There were two tents near us. Next morning one of the men in the tents was dead, and on going up to the township to get the stores I was told two men had died that morning. I got my stores and started up here, 16 miles higher up. While putting them into order for packing on the horses, one of the blackboys got the fever; and this morning McLeod has got it. The blackboy, I think, will get over it, but McLeod thinks it is all finished with him. I am all packed, only waiting for the men to get well. I hope in a few days they will get better. The sickness does not last long: in a week one is either in his grave or well again.

We have met with no positive traces of Leichhardt yet, but we have ascertained beyond a doubt that whites have been among the blacks within the last 10 years. There is a boy from 10 to 12 years of age, almost white, with light blue eyes and red hair; and in another tribe a girl about 15 years of age; and in another a full-grown woman perhaps 18 years of age; and there is a rumour of a white man being within a day's ride among a strong tribe of about 200. They are very fierce; none of the settlers have come to any terms with them as yet.

I have been after this supposed white man already. I was accompanied by the officer in charge of the native police here. He had two troopers with him and I had a blackboy. We saw between 30 and 40 blacks, but there was no sign of a white man among them. We had to make prisoners of them all before they would allow us to see them properly.

In order to have an interpreter we brought a young fellow back with us. He is now quite at home. In three or four months he will be able to speak a little English and we will learn how the half-caste came among the blacks.

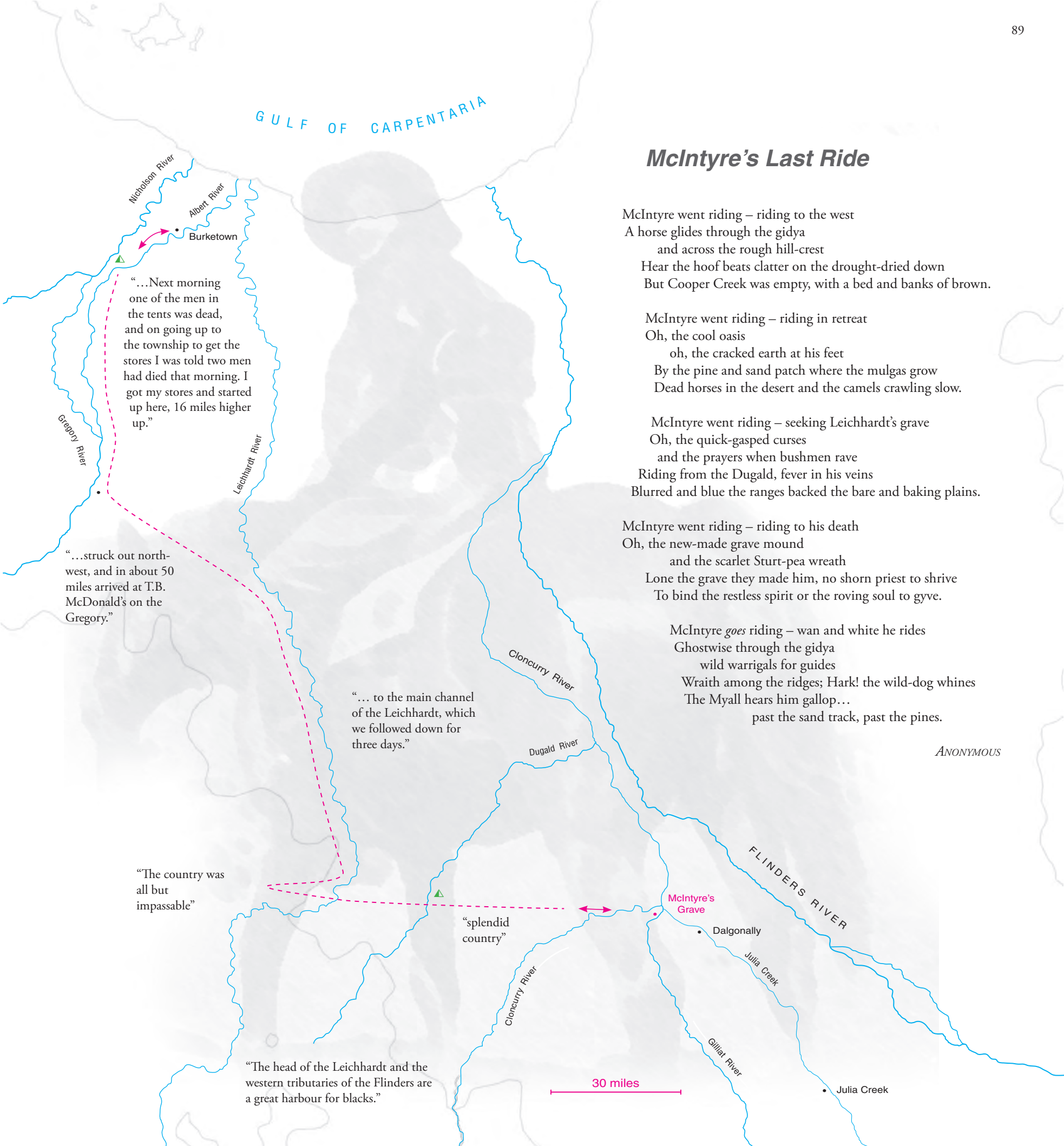
The blacks are now all collected near the sea-coast between the Albert and Leichhardt Rivers. As soon as ever I can get away from here – tomorrow or next day, perhaps – I intend going to where the blacks are and to camp nearby until I find out who the white man is. I am almost sure there is something in it. I should know about it in a few days. I think the officer and native police will go with me as there is only one blackboy and myself able to do anything because of the fever, and two are not enough to surround 100 or more blacks and disarm them; whereas five or six can do so without shooting any. At Cooper Creek, while we waited before coming north, we were camped for nearly two months among 600 blacks, but we never had to shoot any – although sometimes they richly deserved it.

They are cannibals here, and all the way on to the east coast. I have seen no positive proof of their eating one another, but they have the same habits as those that are further eastward. I have had no time to examine many camps yet. Any that I have searched contained nothing but what all wild blacks have – no sign of iron or any metal in any shape.

The head of the Leichhardt and the western tributaries of the Flinders are a great harbour for blacks. They contain so many mountain passes that a few natives could defend themselves against a regiment of soldiers; mountains perpendicular for 600 and 800 feet. Except in the beds of the watercourses, the country is quite impassable for anything; but a man without boots and shoes might, like a blackfellow, get up one ravine and down another.

Since leaving the depot-camp on the Gilliat we have explored about 300 miles of new country, mostly along the northern face of the coast. Should the search in this neighbourhood be unsuccessful, we will continue the search on the inland rivers, south-west towards Swan River.

DUNCAN MCINTYRE



McIntyre's Last Ride

McIntyre went riding – riding to the west
 A horse glides through the gidya
 and across the rough hill-crest
 Hear the hoof beats clatter on the drought-dried down
 But Cooper Creek was empty, with a bed and banks of brown.

McIntyre went riding – riding in retreat
 Oh, the cool oasis
 oh, the cracked earth at his feet
 By the pine and sand patch where the mulgas grow
 Dead horses in the desert and the camels crawling slow.

McIntyre went riding – seeking Leichhardt's grave
 Oh, the quick-gasped curses
 and the prayers when bushmen rave
 Riding from the Dugald, fever in his veins
 Blurred and blue the ranges backed the bare and baking plains.

McIntyre went riding – riding to his death
 Oh, the new-made grave mound
 and the scarlet Sturt-pea wreath
 Lone the grave they made him, no shorn priest to thrive
 To bind the restless spirit or the roving soul to gyve.

McIntyre *goes* riding – wan and white he rides
 Ghostwise through the gidya
 wild warrigals for guides
 Wraith among the ridges; Hark! the wild-dog whines
 The Myall hears him gallop...
 past the sand track, past the pines.

ANONYMOUS

"...Next morning one of the men in the tents was dead, and on going up to the township to get the stores I was told two men had died that morning. I got my stores and started up here, 16 miles higher up."

"...struck out north-west, and in about 50 miles arrived at T.B. McDonald's on the Gregory."

"... to the main channel of the Leichhardt, which we followed down for three days."

"The country was all but impassable"

"splendid country"

"The head of the Leichhardt and the western tributaries of the Flinders are a great harbour for blacks."

30 miles



IN
MEMORY OF
**DUNCAN
MACINTYRE**
WHO
WHILE LEADING
AN EXPEDITION
IN SEARCH OF
LEICHHARDT
ORGANISED
BY THE LADIES
OF
MELBOURNE
DIED HERE
ON 4th JUNE 1866 AGED 34 YEARS.

HE WAS A MAN
OF PROMISE OF COURAGE AND INTEGRITY
AND WHILE BESET WITH DIFFICULTIES PUSHED ON
FAITHFULLY UNTIL STRUCK DOWN BY FEVER AND DEATH
BEING ATTENDED AT THE LAST BY HIS BROTHER
DONALD MACINTYRE OF DALGONALLY
TO WHOM ALSO THIS STONE STANDS IN MEMORY.
HE TOOK UP THIS COUNTRY WITH HIS BROTHER IN 1863
LIVED HERE UNTIL 1906 AND DIED IN SYDNEY MARCH 1907
AGED 80 YEARS.
HE LEFT A WIFE AND FAMILY
BY WHOM THIS STONE IS ERECTED
IN LOVING MEMORY.

GUS AM BRIS AN LA AGUS AN TEICH NA SGAILEAN.



Left: Duncan McIntyre's grave at Grave Hole, surmounted by a Celtic Cross. The inscription is in error when it states that Dalgonally was taken up in 1863. Donald McIntyre arrived on Dalgonally in March 1866.

The Gaelic part of the inscription (see above) can be translated as:

"Till the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

[Dot Dickfos, DD04, photo printed 12 Mar 1951]

"I am pleased to have witnessed in 1918 the arrival at Julia Creek of the monument now erected at the Grave Hole, put there by the family, the proceedings directed by Mrs Annie McKay. Melrose and Fenwick of Townsville supplied and engraved the stone, but by 1957 the inscription was well-nigh illegible. Bill Horton, teamster, carted the monument on his table-top waggon with a 19-horse team (no lorries then); and Bill Norton, butcher and handyman of Julia Creek, erected it."

ULICK BROWNE SNR

"Regarding the name, it really should be *McIntyre*, because my father did spell it that way. I know quite well that we should have been rapped over the knuckles by my father over this matter; but it is a distinction without a difference. In Scotland the 'Mac' is more in use than 'Mc' and is more correct. In our case it means 'The son of a carpenter' – originally *Mac an t-Saoir* – anglicized to Macintyre."

ANNIE MCKAY

(daughter of Donald McIntyre,
in a letter to Ulick Browne)

Ernest Henry



SPEARED IN THE BACK by an Aboriginal employee; laid low by the same fever that killed Duncan McIntyre; losing all his possessions to creditors – Ernest Henry always rose again from calamities that

beset him. A very capable bushman, he explored North-West Queensland with just a few horses and a blackboy or two for company. He was in the first wave of settlers to take up country along the Flinders River after reading the reports of Landsborough and Walker. The town of Hughenden took its name from the station on the Flinders that Henry founded (and lost) and Cloncurry came into existence when Henry discovered copper nearby.

In a short handwritten manuscript submitted to the *Pastoral Review* in early 1930, though it may not have been published, SE Pearson¹ summarises the life of Ernest Henry:

Few men have encompassed more in their life time than he, and not many have known greater toil and hardship. In his unassuming way he probably did more for North Queensland than any other man. The wide untrammelled bush was his home and he revelled in it.

Ernest Henry was born on 1 May 1837 and after leaving school was apprenticed to the sea. On his maiden voyage in 1853 he sailed to Australia on the steamship *Victoria*, one of the vessels of the Australian Royal Mail Steamship Co. He returned to England to serve in the Crimean War.

He emigrated to Australia when he heard that gold had been discovered, and arrived in Melbourne with his brothers Arthur and Alfred in 1858 on board the sailing ship *Red Jacket*. From Melbourne he made his way to Ballarat. Not greatly impressed by prospects on the



Virgin Loveliness

The father of Hughenden and Cloncurry finds a mother lode of copper

goldfields, Henry rode to Brisbane with the idea of exploring the outskirts of northern settlement to take up a run of his own. He rode alone, travelling by way of the rivers, through country only sparsely occupied.

In Brisbane, Henry met George Dalrymple who was planning an expedition to explore the Burdekin River. Henry was invited to join the expedition in mid 1859. They travelled via the Darling Downs and the Upper Burnett River to Rockhampton, and from there to the junction of the Suttor and Burdekin Rivers.

Henry's participation in Dalrymple's expedition resulted in his securing three stations: Baroondah on the Dawson River, Mt McConnel at the junction of the Suttor and Burdekin rivers, and Conway (which adjoined Mt McConnel) at the head of Selheim Creek. By 1861 he and his brother Arthur had stocked them with sheep and cattle driven from southern Queensland properties.

But Henry was never satisfied. His desire for new land and adventure, always aflame within, was fed by the reports of Walker and Landsborough who returned from their separate searches for Burke and Wills in 1862 with promising reports of the Flinders River country. Henry took to his horse to view this new country himself. He set out from Mt McConnel on 24 November 1863 with a Mr Devlin and his favourite blackboy, Dick. They found Hughenden.

Through extracts from his diaries and letters, the following pages give a glimpse into the life of a pioneer of western Queensland. But it is only a glimpse. The book about Ernest Henry has yet to be written.

1. More info about Pearson is on page 110.

Cloncurry
28 January 1884

MY DEAR MOTHER – I returned to Cloncurry a few days ago in rather a sorry plight. Do not be alarmed for I am nearly well now, and don't be alarmed for the future for I promise you to take more care of myself.

The fact is, I have been speared by a black fellow. It happened at my new copper mine, Argylla. I had been employing several natives to help me in clearing a track between Cloncurry and Argylla. On the 15th instant I was saddling up my horses intending to return to Cloncurry. When in the act of bridling a horse, a black fellow drove a heavy spear into my back. On my turning around he immediately closed with me. I was unarmed at the time and being partially paralysed by the wound and exhausted by the loss of blood I had a desperate struggle before I could free myself from the brute. Soon as I cast him off he decamped.

When I was first speared I was sure they were all against me and I was doomed. But although the fiend yelled for the others to help him, not one would move to his assistance though there were about 20 fighting men in the camp. At first I had no hope of recovering for I thought the spear had broken in me and I felt as if I was stuffed with a rod of iron.

I have a small hut at Argylla made of grass and in it I lay down in my blankets and never moved for two days and nights. The other blacks watched over and did all they could for me. I made them put flannel shirts round my body and kept soaking them with hot water. On the third day I got great relief and was able to lie outside.

Immediately after it happened I started two boys to the nearest station for help, distant about 40 miles. They returned on the day I was able to lie outside, saying there was no one at home, but as I was feeling better I did not mind so much – though I had rather an anxious time waiting, for other blacks had assembled at the camp and were quarrelling every night. I have not the slightest doubt they were disputing as to whether they should kill me or not, fearing I should send the Police after them.

However, all went well and on the fifth day I managed to ride about 10 miles of my way to Cloncurry, several blacks going with me. The next day I made about the same distance, and rested the next. The following day I rode 15 miles, and the last day I made 23 miles. There was no water on the way and I arrived at Cloncurry rather exhausted, as you may imagine, but otherwise mending fast.

For the last two years I have frequently had blacks with me, feeding those who worked for me, making presents to them, and have always been on the best of terms with them. The only reason I can assign for the assault is that I had stopped the man's rations, and the rations of several others, because they would not work. It is a most extraordinary thing that none of them would help him.

I know you will be anxious about me and so will promise not to go out alone. I am fast recovering from my wound and hope in my next letter to be able to tell you I am again quite strong.

Your loving son
ERNEST



Above: Undated portrait of Ernest Henry.
[John Oxley Library, 65929]

Opposite: Portrait of Ernest Henry at age 31.
Taken in England after his discovery
of large copper deposits at Cloncurry.
[John Oxley Library, 65928, 1868]

Hughenden Station 1863¹



THE EVENTS I AM ABOUT TO RELATE took place in the early 1860s. I had arranged to undertake in conjunction with a Mr Devlin an exploring expedition with the object of securing for each of us a tract of good grazing country. Our association was therefore merely in the discovery of the required land, not in its occupation. We joined force in order to be a mutual help and protection to each other on a journey through trackless and unoccupied country.

A year or two previous, several parties had been despatched from different parts of Australia in search of Burke and Wills. It was in consequence of the glowing reports made by members of two of these search parties that determined us to steer for the head of the Flinders River which empties itself into the Gulf of Carpentaria.

We made our start from Mt McConnel Station, taking with us but one blackboy. We call them all boys regardless of age. Ours was probably some 23 or 24 years old. For the first 80 or 90 miles we had the advantage of a track which led us to Natal Downs, the farthest out station on our route along the Cape River. From thence our course was determined by compass and the nature of the country.

I can remember nothing of interest to narrate in connection with our outward journey, except that we had to camp one night without water in what is now known as the desert, a belt of sandy country some 30 or 40 miles wide, lightly timbered but waterless. It is covered with spinifex which grows in tussocks and is very inflammable, even when green. Its points, when matured, are almost as sharp as needles. The pastern joints of horses become very sore after travelling through a long stretch of such country. Spinifex is peculiar to the western and northern districts, and when not too plentiful on a run is an acquisition in time of drought, for if burnt will spring again, rain or no rain; and when young, stock are very fond of it.

After a journey of some 200 miles through much indifferent and worthless country, the valley of the Flinders broke suddenly on our view and raised our expectations to a high degree; for though at this point the valley is confined amongst somewhat broken country, we could see

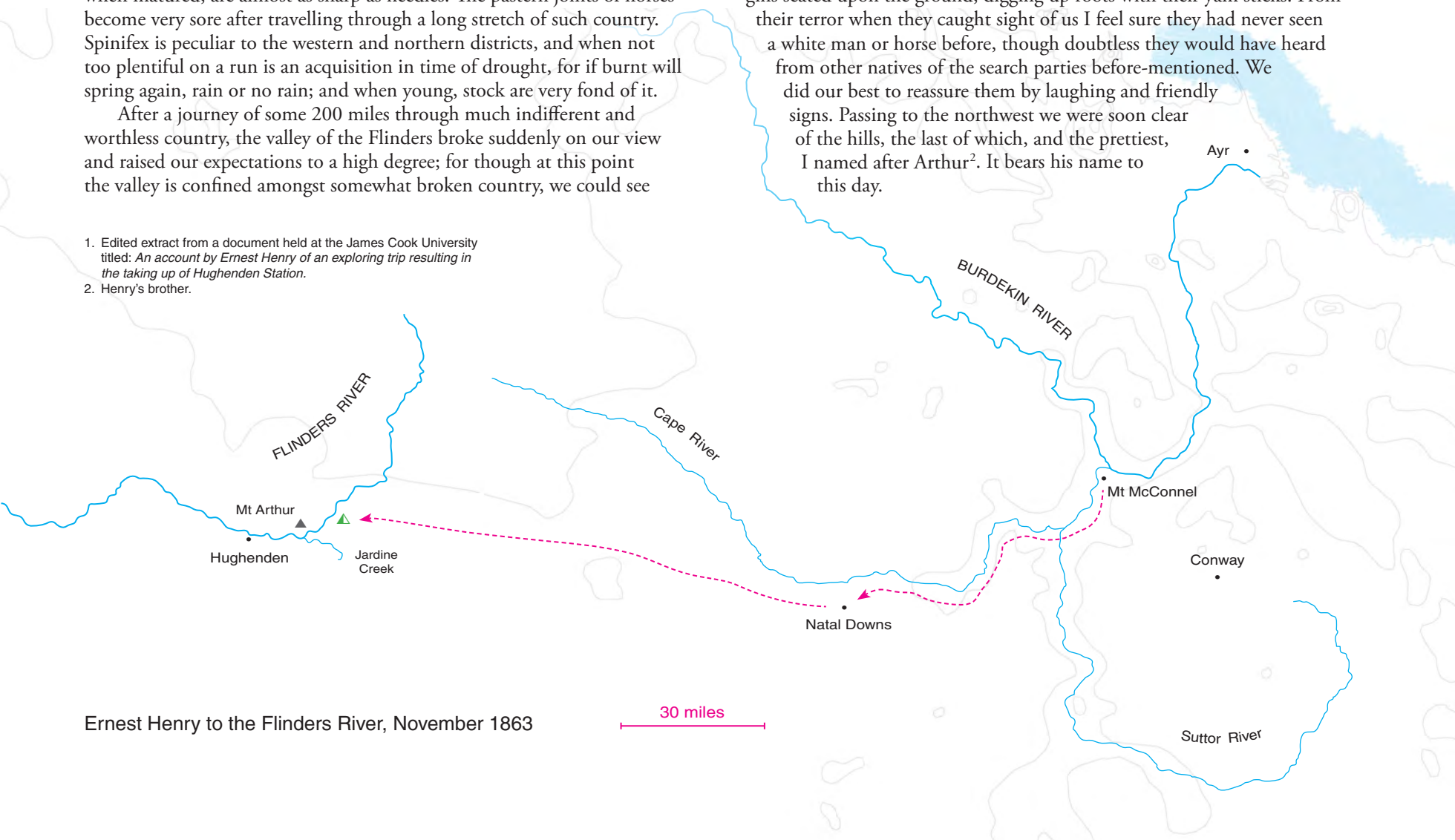
stretches of open downs in the distance which experience told us was first class pasturage. We descended from the tableland into the valley, crossed the river, ran it down for a few miles and camped for the night on its dry sandy bed, considerably elated with the prospect before us.

Early the next morning Devlin and I left the blackboy in charge of our camp with instructions to keep a good look out for natives, and gave him a pistol, double-barrelled gun and a carbine for defence. We then recrossed the river and passed up a narrow defile which formed a gap in a low range close to the bank of the river. On reaching the summit of this gap no scene could be more gratifying to the eye of a pastoralist. Below us was a valley of undulating downs, studded here and there with groups and belts of graceful myall trees. The grass had evidently been burnt off a few weeks previously, but now clothed the rising and falling ground with a rich pasture, trackless and undisturbed by a single hoof. A small creek [Jardine Creek] trends northwards through the centre of the valley. To the south the valley narrows picturesquely amongst the hills, and to the west is bounded by another low range only a few miles distant. To the north it widens out and joins the extensive valley of the Flinders along whose course open downs stretch far away, unbroken, save by narrow belts of timber.

After feasting our eyes on the prospect for a few moments we descended into the valley, our horse's hoofs sinking deep into the untrodden soil. We had not proceeded far before we came upon five or six gins seated upon the ground, digging up roots with their yam sticks. From their terror when they caught sight of us I feel sure they had never seen a white man or horse before, though doubtless they would have heard from other natives of the search parties before-mentioned. We did our best to reassure them by laughing and friendly signs. Passing to the northwest we were soon clear of the hills, the last of which, and the prettiest, I named after Arthur². It bears his name to this day.

1. Edited extract from a document held at the James Cook University titled: *An account by Ernest Henry of an exploring trip resulting in the taking up of Hughenden Station.*

2. Henry's brother.



Ernest Henry to the Flinders River, November 1863

We continued westward for half the day, the river being on our right and the downs widening out on our left. At our farthest point we could still see rolling downs stretching away as far as the eye could reach, and being satisfied that there was plenty of good country, not only for ourselves but in all probability for many others, we turned back to the settled districts.

I should mention here that the Queensland law regulating the lease of grazing lands makes it incumbent on anyone requiring the same to stock it before his application will be recognised. Consequently, Devlin suggested that as he had much further to go than I for his stock, and that others might very possibly come out with cattle in search of country before he could return with his, that I should take my pick of the land. So I elected to secure that which we had already ridden over, feeling sure that however much farther down the Flinders I might go I should find nothing better.

We remained on the river another day, which I spent riding about alone with increased interest, feeling it to be almost a certainty that the country I was exploring would fall to my lot. The following day we started on our return journey and reached Mt McConnel in due time without any experiences worth recording that I can remember. I very much regret not having kept a diary of all my wanderings for I have so bad a memory for all but the most startling events.

On reaching Mt McConnel we found two parties there with cattle, who, having heard that we had gone in search of grazing country, had determined to follow our tracks as the easiest and quickest way of obtaining country for themselves. Two partners and their men formed one party, while Roger Sheaffe, who I then met for the first time, with his men formed the other. They had joined their herds into one for the trip so as to make their work the easier.

They left Mt McConnel the next day, but I was determined to overtake and pass them so as to secure the country I had set my heart on. It took us a week to muster a suitable herd of cattle and get everything ready. Finally I started with about 800 head and a horse dray to carry rations and camp gear. Two bullock drays with supplies for 12 months, tools etc, I had sent on a few days previously. My cattle being in far better condition than those ahead of me, I could afford to push along until, in about a week or 10 days, I overtook and passed them.

Our greatest troubles began near the desert where the ground, which was of a very rotten nature, had become thoroughly soaked with incessant rain. The bullock teams with their drivers (both mine and Sheaffe's) we had to leave behind to wait until the weather cleared and the ground hardened. The horse dray we took on with us a considerable distance farther.

One night when camped between two creeks the rain came down in such torrents that both watercourses overflowed their banks. Those who were not watching the cattle were employed, off and on, digging up the floor of the tent and banking the earth round it to prevent the water from flooding the only dry spot we had to lie on.

From this camp we found it impossible for the horse dray to travel owing to the boggy nature of the ground, so we left it behind. Our blankets and rations we packed on horses and thus continued our weary way. From this point we outstripped the other party altogether.

I should have mentioned that there is a poison plant that grows in the desert with which we were unacquainted at that time. Sheaffe and Co, whose two herds together numbered about the same as mine, lost 200 head, while I only lost about 25 on account of my cattle being in good condition and consequently more particular as to what they ate.

Notwithstanding all the rain which had fallen since we left Mt McConnel, we had to travel some 30 or 40 miles through the desert without water. It would have been nothing to ride over that distance, but with cattle it took us two long days. We suffered considerably from thirst the second day.

After three months of incessant toil and many hardships we drew near to the Flinders River. In fine weather we could have reached it in three weeks.

We had kept to the same route that Devlin and I took, but for the last two day's stages I altered the course so as to strike the head of the valley before described. You may imagine our relief when the expansive view of beautiful rolling downs was upon us and the cattle streamed down the rocky slopes onto the rich pasture – pasture far surpassing anything we had travelled over. Had the feelings of all my men been condensed in one, they would not have reached the summit of my own satisfaction when I felt myself possessed of the object of my ambition after so hard a struggle.

No sooner were the cattle into the valley than we left them to their own sweet wills and rode down to the creek and camped for the night. Having no cattle to watch we enjoyed the first unbroken rest we had known for three months.

The following morning the cattle were spread out around us over the downs, grazing contentedly and happy, knee deep in grass and herbage. The next evening we camped under Mt Arthur on the bank of the Flinders River, then a fine running stream. There we remained until the horse dray was brought on by the man whom I had sent back for that purpose. The next day we rode to the cattle camp where I gave instructions to Morisset to form the station on the spot I had chosen, and then my faithful Dick and I started back for Mt McConnel.

A railway now runs through this country and the iron horse shrieks down that once sequestered little valley. Settlement too has marred its beauty, its natural herbage replaced by gardens and crops, its pasture continually trodden down. Never again will it wear its virgin loveliness; no eye will in future behold its wild, silent solitary beauty as we saw it that first morning, bathed in the light of the rising sun.

Hughenden is the name I gave the station. About a mile from it, and bearing the same name, an important little township has since been built, the terminus of the western railway.

Right: The Flinders River at Hughenden, near where Henry camped. "We descended from the tableland into the valley, crossed the river, ran it down for a few miles and camped for the night on its dry sandy bed..." [Guy Burns, GK129, 2005]





HENRY NAMED Hughenden Station after his mother's childhood home in England, *Hughenden Manor*. The township of Hughenden was laid out in 1876.

By the time Henry had stocked Hughenden with cattle, the tide of settlers to the Flinders was increasing. Close behind him were Hugh Walpole (Telemon), Walter Hays (Richmond Downs), and Roger Sheaffe (Marathon). Sheaffe sold Marathon within a short time and took up Minamere Station after Aborigines showed him two large permanent

waterholes on Alick Creek, the largest of which he named after his sister Minna. (It was from Minamere that Henry set out on 23 June 1865 to search for new country after consigning all his assets to creditors.)

Downstream from Richmond Downs, Nelia Ponds was taken up by James Kennedy, James Gibson had applied for Millungera, and Edward Palmer was on his way with stock for the occupation of Canobie. Forty years after the influx of settlers, Palmer remembered the land rush in his book *Early Days in North Queensland* (edited extracts below).

THE YEAR 1864 may be styled the year of Hegira – the flight of stock outwards to settle new country. They came from all parts and helped to fill the Flinders country with the beginning of civilisation. A boom had set in for pastoral occupation. The reports of recent explorations told of enormous tracts of grand, open country waiting for stock to utilise it and each one was anxious to be the first to secure some of it for his sheep or cattle. Among the first stations to be settled at the head of the Flinders River was Hughenden Station, taken up by Ernest Henry, and later, Robert Gray. This run annually shears close on 100,000 sheep.

Outward and westward went the movement of stock. The principal topic of conversation turned always upon new country, the latest discoveries of good grazing lands, and the men who were following with sheep and cattle. The way out west in those first days led up the Cape River through poor country, with a good deal of spinifex grass and patches of poison bush. This dangerous plant, bearing a scarlet blossom, grows to a height of 6 to 8 feet in separate bushes and exhibits a bluish-silvery sheen conspicuous afar off. Its poisonous nature was soon proved by the first stock that attempted passage through its country. All stock paid some tribute to its evil properties, with many of the early drovers losing large numbers of both cattle and sheep from its deadly effects. The symptoms of poisoning from this plant are a kind of madness, causing animals to rush about furiously and then becoming paralysed, to fall helplessly to the ground and soon expire.

A great scarcity of surface water and low stony ridges with heavy patches of red sand, are characteristic of the poison country. Glad indeed were the pioneers to leave it behind, and with great satisfaction to stand on the rocky eminence that bounded it on the western side, whence they looked down the open valley of the Jardine, and beheld the grassy downs of the Flinders River spreading before them for many miles. A new fauna and flora is evident on the very first entrance into the new region. The birds are different and more numerous. Galahs, parrots, and pigeons abound and assure the newcomer that he has found a new pastoral country, and the grasses are more enduring and nutritive than those he has hitherto met.

The Mitchell grass downs stretch away to the western horizon, the flat monotony broken only by heavy

timber along the creeks and rivers. Like the ocean, but without its interesting movement, the plains present a dreary sameness. Far ahead the river timber winds over the black-soil, so that the traveller can see a whole day's stage ahead.

Following down the Flinders from Hughenden through the great plains country, the next station occupied was Richmond Downs, where a struggling township named Richmond now stands. This was held in 1864 by Bundock and Hays, with cattle driven in from New South Wales. They lost many on their way out by the poison bush already described. Opposite Richmond Downs, across the Flinders River, was Cambridge Downs now a large sheep station. All these runs on the Upper Flinders were first settled in 1864 and formed an outpost of settlement by which other pioneers directed their course lower down the river.

During 1865 and the following year, another wave of occupation flowed on past these outer stations. These new pioneers, finding country further on, became in their turn a starting point for others. And still the tide flowed – outward and westward – till all available country was taken up.

The pioneers of 1864 and 1865 faced a dry season and were compelled to follow the course of the river, as it was almost certain death to stray from its banks looking for water or country. All the tributaries of the Flinders were dry, and those who ventured out had soon to return to the main watercourse. The blacks themselves had also to resort to it. During that trying season, none of the western rivers ran in their channels, and all except the largest waterholes dried up. Stages of 30 or 40 miles without water were frequent.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the pioneers in search of some unfrequented nook pressed on in the hope of better country ahead where hills were always green and water abundant. These men followed each other in quick succession and took up runs along the entire length of the Flinders and all over the Gulf Country wherever water could be found.

Still the tide of occupation flowed on, and when all the available watered runs around the Gulf were occupied in 1865 and the following year, those remaining unsatisfied marched on. Some travelled south up the Gregory River, and some to the Barkly Tableland. In after years, when this country came to be restocked

1864 – The Year of Hegira

by a new generation from the south after being deserted and forsaken by the original pioneers, the new settlers were surprised to find evidences of previous occupation. Who were they? From where had the settlers come? To where had they gone? Sheets of galvanised iron, they well knew, did not grow like the gidya trees; neither were old sheepyards (built of basaltic stones) the work of blacks. The pioneers of a prior generation went unremembered.

All the country bordering on the Gulf suitable for grazing purposes was portioned out and occupied between the years 1864 and 1868. It was recognised that a great future was in store for this new territory. The rivers flowing into the Gulf of Carpentaria, through hundreds of miles of open plains covered with valuable pasturage, gave to the early settlers good reasons for believing they were the pioneers in opening up a grand and wealth-producing territory.

The high hopes seemed likely to be realised – until a change came over the aspect of things. A change brought about by influences far removed from the local scene and in which the settlers had no voice; a change that no amount of energy or sacrifice on their part could make good. Commercial panic set in, culminating in the crisis of 1868-69. The march of settlement was instantly checked, the outward flow of civilisation turned backwards. The financial crisis was felt everywhere. Banks of old standing collapsed, and low prices for wool and stock brought the pastoral industry to a low ebb. All credit was stopped. Agents declined to loan money to places so far distant as the Gulf stations – even the little required for running expenses – and as the newly-formed stations could not be made self-supporting in the absence of local markets, the stock had to be abandoned or removed. The tide began to ebb at a greater rate than it had risen. Some of the stock were sent south, while the rest were boiled down, scarcely clearing expenses in either case. Runs were abandoned, sheep came in from Barkly Tableland and the Gregory River, and by 1871 there were but few runs occupied.

The Plains of Promise, named by Captain Stokes in 1842, had been much talked of for years, but when it was stocked the talk died away in the gloom of an economic depression.

EDWARD PALMER

HENRY and his “faithful Dick” returned from the Flinders to Mt McConnel (for the second time) in March 1864, after stocking Hughenden Station. Later that year Henry went into Bowen on important business (see letter below).

Bogie River
August 16, 1864

MY DEAR MOTHER – On my way back the second time from the Flinders I had the misfortune to lose the pouch from my saddle containing the enclosed letters. They were found about a week ago after lying in the bush about 5 months. I hope you will be able to make them out.

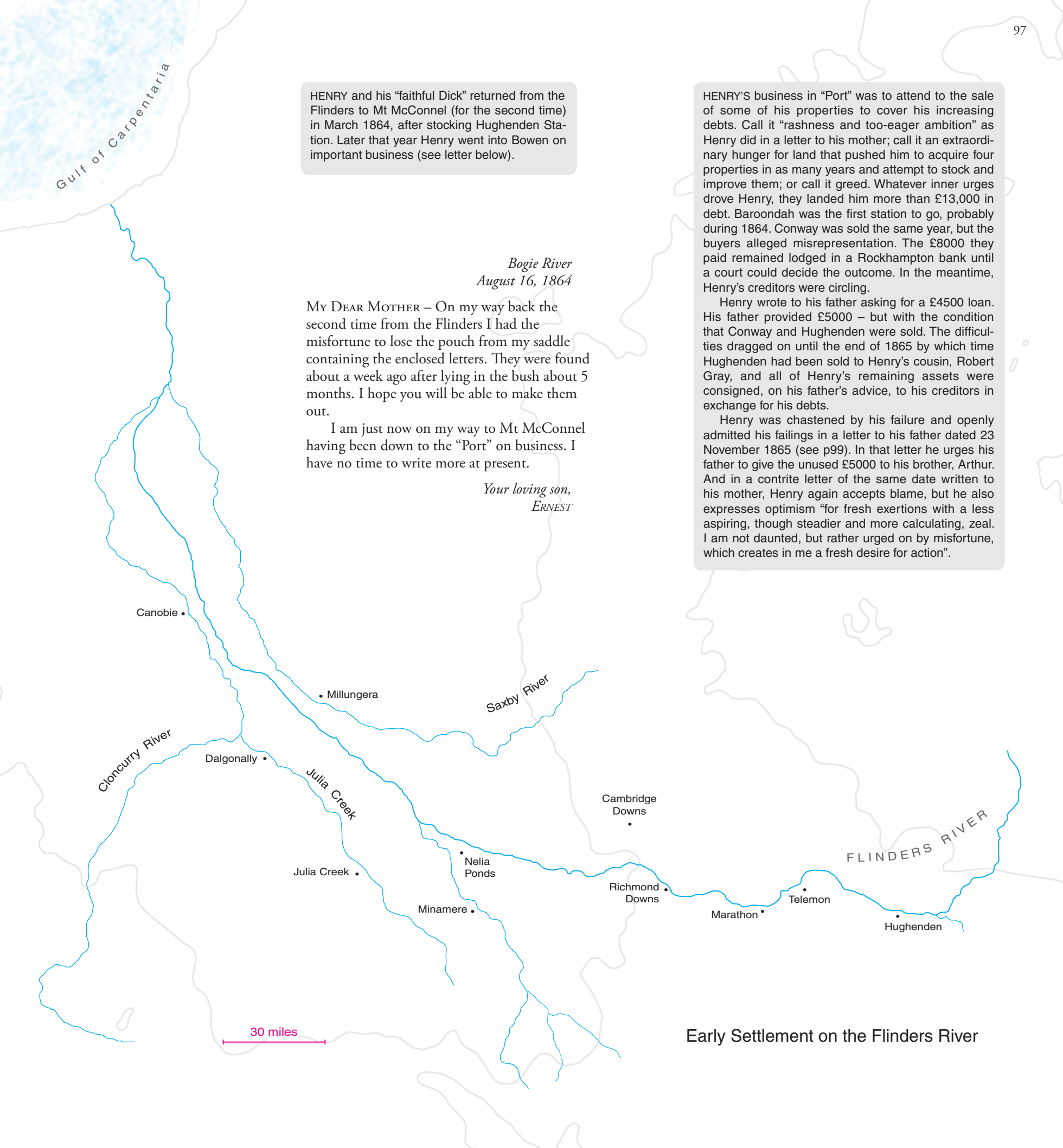
I am just now on my way to Mt McConnel having been down to the “Port” on business. I have no time to write more at present.

Your loving son,
ERNEST

HENRY’S business in “Port” was to attend to the sale of some of his properties to cover his increasing debts. Call it “rashness and too-eager ambition” as Henry did in a letter to his mother; call it an extraordinary hunger for land that pushed him to acquire four properties in as many years and attempt to stock and improve them; or call it greed. Whatever inner urges drove Henry, they landed him more than £13,000 in debt. Baroondah was the first station to go, probably during 1864. Conway was sold the same year, but the buyers alleged misrepresentation. The £8000 they paid remained lodged in a Rockhampton bank until a court could decide the outcome. In the meantime, Henry’s creditors were circling.

Henry wrote to his father asking for a £4500 loan. His father provided £5000 – but with the condition that Conway and Hughenden were sold. The difficulties dragged on until the end of 1865 by which time Hughenden had been sold to Henry’s cousin, Robert Gray, and all of Henry’s remaining assets were consigned, on his father’s advice, to his creditors in exchange for his debts.

Henry was chastened by his failure and openly admitted his failings in a letter to his father dated 23 November 1865 (see p99). In that letter he urges his father to give the unused £5000 to his brother, Arthur. And in a contrite letter of the same date written to his mother, Henry again accepts blame, but he also expresses optimism “for fresh exertions with a less aspiring, though steadier and more calculating, zeal. I am not daunted, but rather urged on by misfortune, which creates in me a fresh desire for action”.



Early Settlement on the Flinders River

Sydney
22 October 1864

MY DEAR FATHER – I came down here on business a few days ago and consequently missed your letters (by the last mail) which have gone on to Queensland.

The business I came here about is connected with the Conway Station. The people who bought it have refused to take delivery, alleging as their reason that the station was misrepresented by my agent. I was not present at the sale but am assured that such was not the case. The contract which they have broken is most binding and the lawyers are of opinion that we are entitled to heavy damages for which I intend to sue. But in the meanwhile it has put me to the greatest inconvenience as I was calculating on the purchase money to meet my liabilities. Money to the amount of £8000, which I calculated on as a certainty, was lodged in a Rockhampton bank ready to be handed over to me on delivery of the station. The money still remains there, for the purchasers are not able to touch it until the matter is settled.

My expenses have been very great lately. The sheep were more than 12 months on the road, delayed first by lambing and shearing and then by the flood. The expense of moving the sheep, together with the expense of putting up a wool shed and yards, has been considerable.

Had Conway been delivered I should have been all right. As it is I am afraid I shall have to sell Hughenden, and if sold in a hurry I fear it will not fetch its full value. In a short time when the country becomes populated it will be twice as valuable as it is now, so I am loath to part with it. Joined to this we have had a very bad season; no rain since March. The consequence was the ewes were not able to rear their lambs. I intend in future to lamb immediately after the rainy season when we are sure of green grass.

We have had hard work this year. If Conway had gone off all right I could have come home.

ERNEST

Sydney
December 1864

MY DEAR FATHER – I have been detained in Sydney trying to make a sale of Hughenden, the Flinders Station. I have had an offer of £6000 for the country and cattle, all else on the station to be taken at a valuation which will amount to about £925 more.

My objection to selling Hughenden is that it is the best of the three stations. In another year when there is a settlement formed at Cleveland Bay [Townsville], distant about 200 miles, Hughenden will be worth considerably more than I can get for it just now. On the other hand, if I sell Mt McConnell (which is now in thorough working order) in a hurry I probably should not obtain its value either. It is the difficulty about the sale of Conway which has put me in this strait, as I calculated on the purchase money for paying off some of my liabilities and carrying on the other stations until I should have an opportunity of selling one or other at a good figure.

I am recommended by Sir William Manning to take proceedings against the purchasers of Conway and compel them to a specific performance of the contract. If I gain the case – and there seems every likelihood of my doing so – and sell Hughenden for what I am offered, I shall more than clear my liabilities, leaving Mr McConnell free and worth between £15,000 and £16,000.

We have been most unfortunate with the sheep the last two seasons. They were more than 12 months on the road incurring great expense, and arrived on the station during the most severe drought that has yet been known in the North. The consequence was we were not able to rear any lambs which has thrown us back considerably. But notwithstanding this, and the enormous amount of interest I have had to pay on the money I borrowed, you will see by the enclosed memorandum of my assets and liabilities that I am able to show a fair balance. I was nearly clear after the sale of Baroondah, but the purchase of the sheep for Mr McConnell and those sold with Conway, together with the road and station expenses and those attendant on stocking the Flinders Station, have run up my debt again. By the sale of Hughenden I should reduce the amount to £6475, and if I gained my case in the Conway affair the whole debt would be cleared off. The latter of course I cannot count upon for a certainty.

Can you in any way help me to clear off part of my liabilities until I am able to make a satisfactory sale of one or other of the stations? Were I free from debt I should have no difficulty in paying you 7% on the money you advance. If I have a temporary loan of about £4500 I could clear my debts – after making a sale of Hughenden at the price above named – as I would also sell Robert Gray a £2000 share in Mt McConnell. He has a flock of 2000 ewes he purchased some time ago and he is now anxious to purchase an additional share in the station. He sticks to the work well and is very useful.

ERNEST

Sydney
21 January 1865

MY DEAR FATHER – I have been detained here arranging my affairs since I last wrote and hope to get away next week. I do so dislike being in a town with no active employment.

I have sold Hughenden, subject to approval, for £6000. Teams, horses, stores etc to be taken at a valuation which will amount to about £900 more. I am very sorry to part with it as it is the best country I have ever possessed and will be twice as valuable in another 12 months. There is a settlement being formed at Cleveland Bay which is not much more than 200 miles from the station – and I believe a good road.

By the sale of Hughenden I have reduced my liabilities to £6500, and by selling Robert Gray a £2000 share in Mt McConnell they will be reduced to £4500. The temporary loan of the last sum would clear me entirely. I could repay it very shortly either in the event of my case against the purchasers of Conway turning out successful, or by another sale of that station. My difficulty at present is to satisfy my creditors. In the meanwhile I think I can get them all to hold on until I hear from you.

ERNEST

THE SALE of Hughenden did not proceed. Realising the loss of all his stations was imminent, Henry returned to Bowen and then rode to Hughenden. He arrived in June 1865 to begin the search for a new property west of Minamere (story next page).

Sydney
23 September 1865

MY DEAR FATHER – When your letter dated London, February 27 arrived at Mt McConnel I was out on the Flinders and this is the first opportunity I have had of answering it. In it you told me that a credit for £5000 would be sent out to me by next mail, to the Agra Bank, but you did not tell me that I could only draw against it on condition that Hughenden and Conway were first sold. The first I heard of these conditions was from Mr Campbell on my arrival here.

The Conway affair is not yet settled, but I think it will be shortly. I am still endeavouring to sell Hughenden. I don't like to sell Mt McConnel in a hurry, but will part with it if I can arrange other matters and get a fair offer.

If we lose by this affair the loss must be mine. Nothing would ever induce me, now or at any future time, to touch what I consider belongs to my brothers. I should never be happy again with the thought that I had been the cause of injuring them in any way.

ERNEST

Brisbane
Wednesday, 18 October 1865

MY DEAR FATHER – I came up here last Saturday on account of the Conway affair which is still going on. I intended to have begun a letter to you earlier in the evening, but I have been so bothered about this Conway business all day that I was obliged to take a sleep first. It is now nearly 1 a.m. on Thursday morning and the mail starts at 6.30.

I have sold Hughenden to Robert and Charlie Gray for £4000 cash, so the former has now nothing to do with Mt McConnel. Charlie Gray came out about two months ago from India. He was up at Mt McConnel, as I dare say you have heard from Arthur. He is going to England, I believe, by this mail.

It is now past 2 so I must turn in or I shall not be fit to meet lawyers in the morning.

Thursday, 6 o'clock a.m.

I am now writing on the steamer. I had to get up this morning to bring this letter on board. It is a beautiful fresh morning. I must leave off now or the steamer will bear me away.

ERNEST

Sydney
23 November 1865

MY DEAR FATHER – I only received your letter dated 24 July the other day, sent back by Arthur from Mt McConnel. I am acting as you advise.

I think I told you in my last letter that I had sold Hughenden to Bobby Gray for £4000, so he has no connection with us now. The rest of the properties I am about to consign to my creditors, on doing which they will give me a release from my debt and wait for a favourable opportunity to sell, handing to me any surplus. I undertake to look after the properties in the meanwhile, but shall arrange so that Arthur can go to India and join James if he feels inclined. If he does, I presume you would wish him to take the £5000 with him. My dear father – you must make this advance to Arthur alone. Nothing would ever induce me to touch a farthing of it as my own. It is not his fault, but mine, that we have been unfortunate here, and it makes me utterly miserable when I think that he may suffer financially through me.

In acting as I have done with regard to the properties I have taken the best legal opinion I could get. It is a bad time to realise just now. Most people seem to think things will take a turn and that pastoral properties will rise in value. I must bide my time and seize the most favourable opportunity – but of course the time of sale will rest chiefly with my creditors after I have made the assignment.

ERNEST

Sydney
23 November 1865

MY DEAR FATHER – I have come on board the mail steamer to send this at the last moment because I fear my previous letter must seem cold when I write of nothing but business. Do not think I am in any way changed since the time we parted when I left [England] on board the *Red Jacket* eight years ago.

ERNEST

Sydney
23 November 1865

MY DEAR MOTHER – I hope you will not grieve too much for my misfortunes. Who knows better than yourself that all these things are the working of God's hand. I do not mean to say that I have not deserved failure. It is because I have deserved it that I *have* failed and have thus been taught to place less reliance on myself and more on Him who is dispenser of all things according to men's desserts. I believe this lesson is intended to curb my rashness and too-eager ambition and to nerve me for fresh exertions with a less aspiring, though steadier and more calculating, zeal. I am not daunted, but rather urged on by misfortune which creates in me a fresh desire for action. I grieve for losses, not for myself but because it affects all who are most dear to me, and it makes me very sad when I think how much you expected from me.

My greatest ambition in life is to see you once again. It is only those who have been parted for so many years from a mother and father such as mine, who can guess how great is the yearning of my heart to see you both once more. But I cannot return with empty hands. I believe it my duty to remain and work, at least for some time to come.

Your loving son
ERNEST

*Hughenden
June 1865*



WHEN IT BECAME OBVIOUS that he was going to lose all his assets to creditors, Henry undertook another expedition in search of grazing country. His account of the trip (opposite), written many years later, does not tally with snippets of information in letters to his father (22 June 1865, right), and his mother (July 1866, page 103). For example, the earlier letter states: "I start tomorrow with Mr Morisset and a blackboy to look for a new run", yet his later account does not mention the blackboy.

There are other discrepancies in Henry's account, notably the direction he followed after leaving Minamere (he says west; it was more probably south-west), and the distance travelled down Eastern Creek looking for water (he indicates it was more than 40 miles, yet a year after the event he tells his mother it was 30).

Age and forgetfulness are enough explanation for these errors. It is worth repeating what Henry said in his account of finding Hughenden:

I very much regret not having kept a diary of all my wanderings for I have so bad a memory for all but the most startling events.

The thing is: he did keep a diary (a typed copy resides in the James Cook University), but had forgotten he had done so.

Henry left Mt McConnel in early June 1865 and rode to Hughenden, the first leg of his journey in search of new country. The details are described in a letter to his father (in two parts, right), and an account written much later (opposite).

Below: Typical country near Eastern Creek at approximately the point where Henry turned back to Minamere when he couldn't find water. [Guy Burns, GK142b, 2005]

...We rode to within about 17 miles of Hughenden and camped. It was the middle of the night when we did so. Another mile further on from where we camped the track leaves the barren useless country of the tableland and enters a valley of the most beautiful downs country it is possible to imagine. I don't know whether I look at it with the eye of a sheep farmer, but nothing ever pleased mine so much as this said valley. On either side of the valley are timbered ranges up which, in places, the downs run almost to the top. This style of country covers the whole run on the southern side of the river, excepting near the river where it is interrupted with timbered flats.

We arrived here on the 13th at noon. The cattle are waiting until the drays arrive, which I expect will be the day after tomorrow. This is my first visit in 15 months since I brought the cattle here last March. Besides Mr Morisset (the Superintendent), and two blackboys, there has only been one man on the place. They have put up two very good slab huts (one roofed with shingles, the other thatched) and a stockyard. Building timber is very scarce here as it generally is on first class country.

The station stands on a small hill. The view in front, and on the right and left, is of a fine stretch of downs country. Square basalt mountains rise at a distance from 5 to 8 miles, and where they do not form the background there is nothing to break the horizon but clumps of myall here and there...

*Hughenden
22 June 1865*

...The drays arrived here a few days ago. One brought supplies for this place, the other I have sent on with the cattle. I start tomorrow with Mr Morisset and a blackboy to look for a new run. I believe I shall have to go further than I expected as all the good country on the Flinders has been occupied – but the nearer I go to the Gulf of Carpentaria the nearer I shall be to the new port [Burketown] which is to be on the Albert River. We take six weeks' supplies with us, but I hope to be back in less. The cattle and dray will in the meanwhile move on down the Flinders.

I will write to you every chance I have.

ERNEST



West of the Flinders¹



I WILL BEGIN with my first attempt to explore the country west of the Flinders River. At that time I owned Hughenden Station (now belonging to Robert Gray) having discovered and stocked it sometime previous. The time of which I now speak would be between 1864 and 1866.

I took with me as a companion Mr Morisset, then in my employ, our object being to find another cattle run. We started from Hughenden and travelled down the Flinders some 80 miles and then struck out a little south of west to a newly formed station on Alick Creek belonging to Mr Sheaffe. Beyond it lay the great unexplored open downs stretching away as far as the eye could reach. Believing it to be very dry country, and it being an exceptionally dry season, I made two large canvas waterbags which we carried on a packhorse.

Early one morning we continued on from Mr Sheaffe's station, steering westward. It was very cold weather and much to our disappointment we could not induce our horses to drink before starting. A cutting wind was blowing and we rode all day with double blankets wrapped round us, I taking the lead and Morisset driving the packhorse behind me.

We pulled up about noon for dinner, but as there was no water for the horses we did not unpack them. We had much difficulty, I remember, in collecting sufficient fuel from a few stunted bushes with which to boil our billy. At sundown we struck a good-sized creek, but finding no water travelled down it for several miles in fruitless search, and ultimately had to camp without water. We still had some in our canvas bags but our poor horses had to go without. We calculated that we had travelled in all about 40 miles. The next day we followed the creek down for fully another 40 miles without finding a drop of water and again had to camp without.

Our plight was now getting serious for we could not expect our horses to hold out much longer without a drink, so we determined to strike due east in the morning for Alick Creek. Our horses were beginning to suffer very much. One of them had a bell on and the others stood round him during the night licking it to cool their tongues, so that it was ringing continually. When the following day broke, the timber down the creek seemed so heavy that we thought there must be water and so we risked following it down a few miles further – but without success. Our waterbags were dry and so were we. At length we turned east with the knowledge that we could not possibly reach Alick Creek till long after dark.

Our horses were fagged and could only crawl over the heavy and dreary plains. At last they grew so famished for want of water that we had to walk. A favourite mare of mine walked immediately behind me licking the perspiration off the back of my neck. Occasionally we had to wait and give some of the horses a rest. However, we came to the conclusion that we must push on at all hazards, and when any of the horses came to a halt we continued to walk on, driving the rest in front of us. Seeing this the others followed, their instinct telling them we were making for water.

We journeyed till the sun went down, and still before us lay a seemingly endless expanse of plains. We shaped our course by the stars, driving the freshest of the horses before us while the rest followed like dogs. Towards midnight we drew near Alick Creek, when lo, a joyful sound struck our ears – the lowing of a cow – and we knew that water must be near. The horses, too, knew the import of that sound, and before we could lay hands on any of them away they went up the creek. We followed more slowly and in about a mile came upon a good-sized waterhole on the margin of which stood our horses, having drunk their fill.

Such moments as these are perhaps the most enjoyable one knows in the bush. Imagine, after quenching our thirst and unsaddling the horses, with what intense enjoyment and satisfaction we lit a fire and appeased our hunger. Having no water, we had eaten nothing all day. It was a great satisfaction, too, not to have lost any horses, and such a relief to know that after three days entirely without water their suffering was at an end. Had it been summer, few, if any, would have survived.

I have nothing to add except that we journeyed slowly up Alick Creek to Sheaffe's station and that there we heard of some good unoccupied country on the northern side of the Flinders River, which we went in search of, found and stocked².

I discovered by subsequent exploration that if Morisset and I had followed for another 7 miles the watercourse which we left on our return to Alick Creek, we would have come to a sheet of water nearly a mile long and could have secured some splendid country.

1. Edited extract from a document held at the James Cook University, *Account of exploration by Ernest Henry: including the first discovery of copper at Cloncurry.*

2. Burleigh Station. Henry did not hold Burleigh for long, just two or three years.





ON THE LOSS of his properties, Henry focussed his intentions on the country west of Minamere beyond the point he had penetrated in June 1865, with the object of acquiring another run. He returned in April 1866 to Minamere, the home of his friend Roger Sheaffe, and headed west. At Eastern Creek he saw the tracks of Duncan McIntyre and the Leichhardt search party who had passed north on their way to a base camp near Dalgonally just a few weeks before. Henry and McIntyre, separately, were heading to Burketown. McIntyre

arrived there on the 20th April, Henry on the 26th. Both stayed in the vicinity for some weeks and both caught the fever then rampant in the town. Henry survived; McIntyre didn't. Also in town, as Police Magistrate, was William Landsborough.

Henry, McIntyre, Landsborough – three pioneering explorers of the Flinders River in Burketown at the same time. It's easy to imagine they drank together at the local hotel and swapped exploration tales. And they would have drunk rum, not coffee as Henry wrote to his mother in delicate tones:

Afterwards Dick and I rode towards the township, hobbled our horses on the east side of the river and crossed over in a ferry boat. I left Dick at the town-side landing. There he met lots of acquaintances, both white and black, while I went to the hotel.

On entering the coffee room I saw six or seven men, all of whom I knew. Amongst them was William Landsborough, the explorer, who has been appointed Police Magistrate of the place.

9 April – Last night's camp is the furthest out I have previously been, so all before me is new. In 7 miles crossed a creek¹ with plenty of water, and in 4 miles more camped for dinner and again had recourse to our bags for water.

The country we have as yet passed over is one continuation of immense plains and downs. When we have dinner away from water it is not always an easy job to collect sufficient wood for a fire to boil our quarts, there being only here and there a few solitary situated trees; but all would be fine grazing land for both sheep and cattle if there was only permanent water and more shelter.

Five miles more struck a large watercourse² and crossed McIntyre's tracks close on the east bank, following the creek down. McIntyre is, or rather was (he died a few weeks ago*), the gentleman sent out by the ladies of Melbourne to ascertain, if possible, the fate of Leichhardt. He had in his party, besides horses and bullocks, a number of camels.

Crossed this creek and camped on the downs about ¼ mile away from creek at a small water hole. Shot two galahs – very fair eating. They are a kind of cockatoo with a pale slate-coloured back and rose-coloured breast.

Caught one young duck. We afterwards caught a good many of these half-grown ducks, generally on finding them in pools of water too shallow to afford them escape by diving. On being disturbed they take to the land and are easily run down. Sometimes they hide in the grass so dexterously as to give some trouble in finding them, though you may have seen them enter it only a few yards off. They are capital eating and it surprised me that they should be so light and yet unable to fly.

- ▲ Campsites
- ⑥ Points of interest noted in the text
- Henry's route

11 April – I rode 4 miles to the top of some downs⁵ and got a good view of the country ahead, then returned to camp. In the evening, Dick and I concealed ourselves on each side of a waterhole and shot 4 pigeons, 6 galahs and 4 cockatoos as they came down to drink.

10 April – Caught two more young ducks before starting. Crossed a good-sized creek³ at 4½ miles and saw fresh tracks of natives. Halted ¾ miles further, and spent some time looking for permanent water but did not find any. Had dinner and then continued our journey. As yet the country has been nothing but vast plains and downs all the way from Sheaffe's, indeed from the Flinders. In 12¾ miles mountains in sight, bearing SW. It was quite a relief to see them. 3½ miles crossed a sandy creek⁴ about 80 yards wide but no water to speak of. It being near sundown I halted the horses and after some searching found water ¼ mile from the creek and 2 miles up. Went back and brought the rest of the party on to it. This took me out of my course a little. 23 miles altogether. As there was splendid grass at this camp I determined to give the horses a rest on the following day.

Gilliat River

1. Numbers appearing in the text refer to circled points of interest shown on the map.

* McIntyre died on the 4th June. Henry is writing this letter in July.

*Hughenden
July 1866*

MY DEAR MOTHER – It has been my intention to begin a letter to you for the last two or three days, but I am recovering from my first real illness since I have been in the country. Sometimes I feel so enervated that I can do nothing, and yet I have ridden about 500 miles since I began to recover and generally I feel better when I am travelling, I think because my mind is not then employed so much on unpleasant affairs. My illness began with my head.

I arrived at Hughenden on my outward journey on the 23rd March. I determined to go to the Gulf with some horses for sale, travelling through unoccupied country. Several people had spoken to me about taking up new country and were willing to pay for information if the locality suited them. My party consisted of Morisset, two blackboys, and one white – the latter about 14 years of age. After following down the Flinders for about 100 miles from Hughenden, on April 4th Morisset left us for Lara and I turned off to Mr Sheaffe's station [Minamere] which is about 20 miles south of the river. We started for Sheaffe's at 8 a.m. and made Sheaffe's Creek [Alick Creek] at 1 p.m..

Parts of my letter (as you will perceive) are copied from my journal just as it was written, so it will be rather a curious production, but I hope intelligible.

8 April – Changed course to due west. I am steering for the head of some rivers (or rather, for a point where they break through ranges). They are described by McKinlay in his journal which he published after his return from an expedition to the Gulf in search of Burke and Wills.

At 10.45 a.m. had lunch, making tea of the water we carried. Did not unpack. In 13 miles from our last camp struck the Caroline [Eastern Creek], the creek that Morisset and I were on last year, about where we left it to make back. This creek we had followed for over 30 miles without finding a drop of water, and now there are long, deep and broad reaches in it, some places extending over a mile in length. Here we unsaddled for the night and camped on the west bank as I thought it probable we might have to go a considerable distance before we found more water. Shot four black ducks which are the best eating of any. Shooting a duck in a large piece of water generally includes a bathe – in doing the work of a retriever.

I am afraid my narrative will not be very interesting as one day's work is so much like another, but I will if I can, send you a tracing of my route which perhaps may add interest.

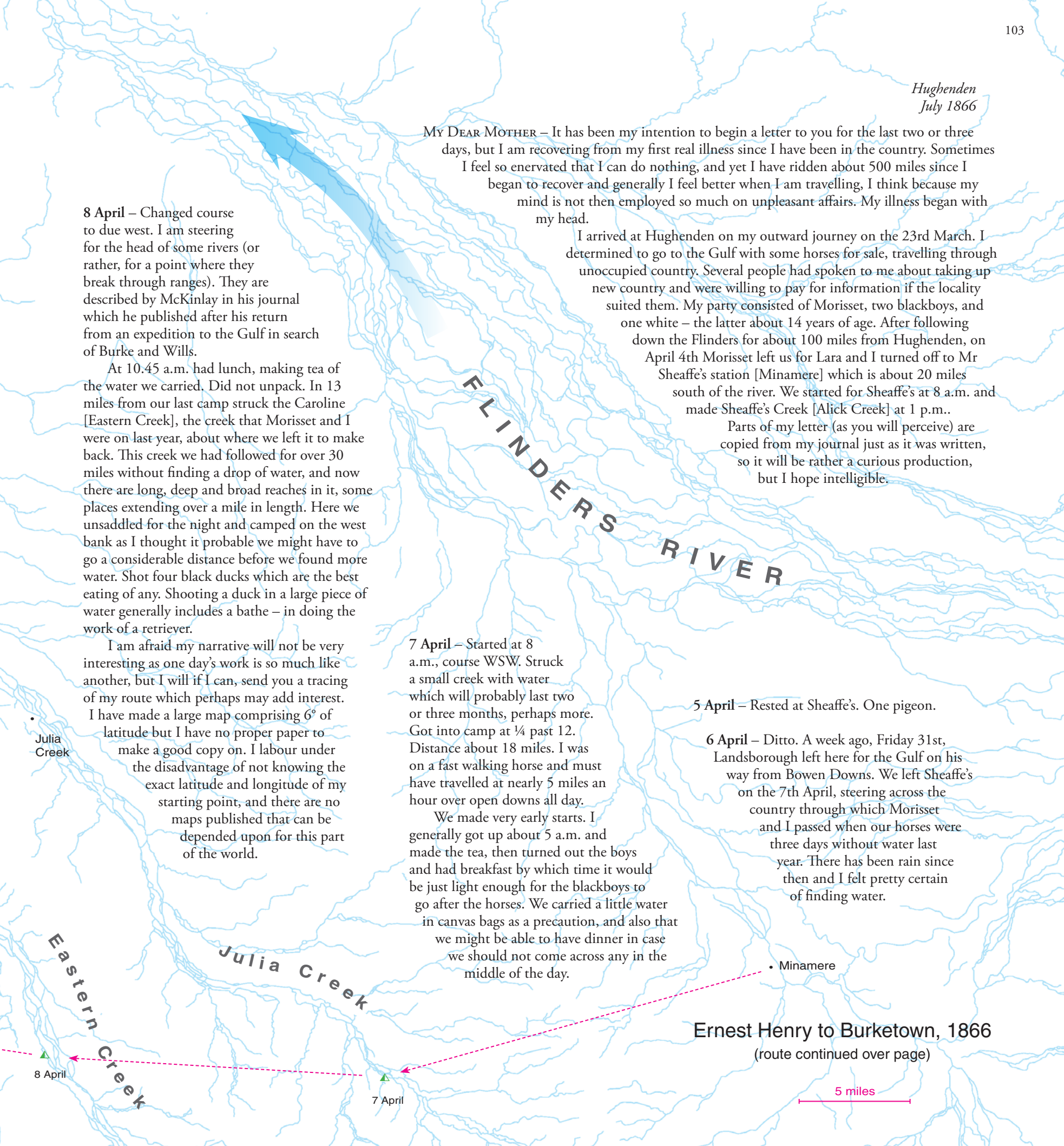
I have made a large map comprising 6° of latitude but I have no proper paper to make a good copy on. I labour under the disadvantage of not knowing the exact latitude and longitude of my starting point, and there are no maps published that can be depended upon for this part of the world.

7 April – Started at 8 a.m., course WSW. Struck a small creek with water which will probably last two or three months, perhaps more. Got into camp at ¼ past 12. Distance about 18 miles. I was on a fast walking horse and must have travelled at nearly 5 miles an hour over open downs all day.

We made very early starts. I generally got up about 5 a.m. and made the tea, then turned out the boys and had breakfast by which time it would be just light enough for the blackboys to go after the horses. We carried a little water in canvas bags as a precaution, and also that we might be able to have dinner in case we should not come across any in the middle of the day.

5 April – Rested at Sheaffe's. One pigeon.

6 April – Ditto. A week ago, Friday 31st, Landsborough left here for the Gulf on his way from Bowen Downs. We left Sheaffe's on the 7th April, steering across the country through which Morisset and I passed when our horses were three days without water last year. There has been rain since then and I felt pretty certain of finding water.



Ernest Henry to Burketown, 1866
(route continued over page)

5 miles

8 April

7 April

12 April – The country passed over this morning is intercepted with bushes and patches of scrub in places. In 12½ miles came to a good-sized sandy creek but could find no water in it. Changed course from west to NW to some timber on the plains where we found water and had dinner. In 2 miles NW struck a small but deep creek with just sufficient water for ourselves and horses, so I camped as the day was well-advanced. Fresh tracks of natives in the bed of the creek.

15¾ miles altogether. I had to be very careful in taking the dead reckoning as I could take no observations, having only a watch and compass.

13 April – I fully expected to strike some large river before reaching the range ahead, so continued a due west course. In a short distance got into spinifex country (spinifex is a horrid useless kind of grass, grows in wiry-like tufts generally on sandy or red clay soil). Here there were an immense number of pyramid ant hills several feet high.

In 6¾ miles found I was getting onto the spurs of the range, so had to change my course to NW and WNW. In a small water course we found a shallow pool of water and unsaddled for the night. As water seemed to be getting very scarce we filled our quarts and bags with sufficient for dinner, supper and breakfast on the morrow, before letting the horses drink. They made a nice mess of it when they did get at it, some of them rolling in it. It was only a few inches deep.

After dinner I rode in a northerly direction to a point of the range about 5 miles distant and from the top I got a good view. From this point the range bears away to the westward and I could see several isolated hills in different directions, one bearing about NNW [Castle Rock]. The country ahead looks promising; indications of a river some 10 miles distant and smoke of natives in a north-easterly direction – a sure sign of water.

Returned to camp. In the course of the afternoon Dick caught one kangaroo rat, two opossums and shot three pigeons.

14 April – Five miles to point of range I ascended yesterday. Through open myall and Brigalow scrub, and then fine plains with bushes here and there. Went up a small rock [Castle Rock] and then made for a larger one at the back of which we could see heavy timber. Made the larger rock [Mt Fort Constantine] in 4 or 5 miles and camped for the night at a long,

deep rocky waterhole in the bed of a large river [Cloncurry River] a few hundred yards beyond, the first permanent water we had seen since leaving Sheaffe's – beautiful clear water in rocky holes. This clear water was a great treat. I had a glorious bathe before dinner and went to the bottom in a channel between perpendicular rocks. I should say it was fully 15 feet deep with solid rock at the bottom. The river itself is about 300 yards wide and it is not running now, and the holes are by no means full. Fresh tracks of natives, and smoke, up the river. General course today about NNW, 12 miles.

A few hundred yards back from the river is a quartz rock standing by itself on the edge of the plains. After dinner I rode back to the rock and ascended it. From the top I got a fine view and could see downs on both sides of the creek with plenty of shelter... [Henry goes on to say he thinks the river is the one which McKinlay named the Marchant, but he is mistaken. The rock Henry climbed is still known by the name he gave it – Mt Fort Constantine.]

15 April – Followed the direction of the river down, course about N by E. Saw plenty of water both in and back from the river. I left the party several times to go across to the river to see how the water was. On one occasion I came on three natives. I was within 20 yards of them before they saw me, or I them. One walked quickly down into the river and disappeared. The other two climbed trees. I got into a sort of yarn with one of them, carried on by way of signs. He grunted every time I made him understand anything.

In 15 miles crossed the river and stopped in the bed for dinner⁶. We took the packs off the horses as we could afford the time, water being on the increase. We afterwards took the packs off at dinner time nearly every day. We found here growing on the banks some cabbage tree palms one of which we cut down and ate some of the heart. It is first rate with a little salt; tastes something like a fillet.

After dinner, travelled 13 miles down the river on left bank, course about NNE. Camped on the sand in the bed of the river. Tracks of a large mob of natives in all directions. Distance altogether 28 miles.

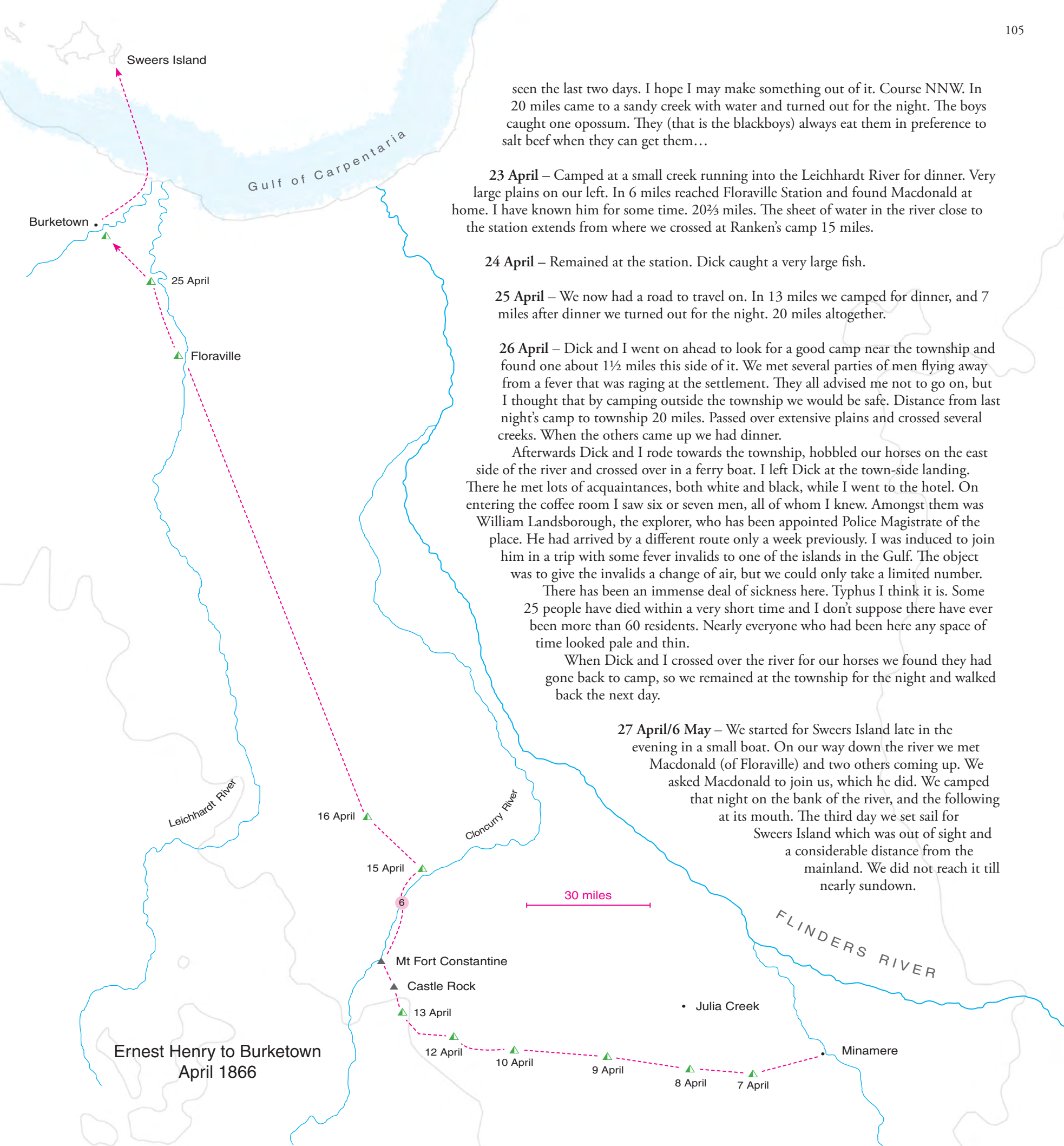
16 April – I determined now to make for Burketown, the new settlement at the Gulf of Carpentaria, being quite satisfied with the country I had



Castle Rock
[Guy Burns, GK165, 2005]



Mt Fort Constantine
[Guy Burns, GK168, 2005]



seen the last two days. I hope I may make something out of it. Course NNW. In 20 miles came to a sandy creek with water and turned out for the night. The boys caught one opossum. They (that is the blackboys) always eat them in preference to salt beef when they can get them...

23 April – Camped at a small creek running into the Leichhardt River for dinner. Very large plains on our left. In 6 miles reached Floraville Station and found Macdonald at home. I have known him for some time. 20 $\frac{2}{3}$ miles. The sheet of water in the river close to the station extends from where we crossed at Ranken's camp 15 miles.

24 April – Remained at the station. Dick caught a very large fish.

25 April – We now had a road to travel on. In 13 miles we camped for dinner, and 7 miles after dinner we turned out for the night. 20 miles altogether.

26 April – Dick and I went on ahead to look for a good camp near the township and found one about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles this side of it. We met several parties of men flying away from a fever that was raging at the settlement. They all advised me not to go on, but I thought that by camping outside the township we would be safe. Distance from last night's camp to township 20 miles. Passed over extensive plains and crossed several creeks. When the others came up we had dinner.

Afterwards Dick and I rode towards the township, hobbled our horses on the east side of the river and crossed over in a ferry boat. I left Dick at the town-side landing. There he met lots of acquaintances, both white and black, while I went to the hotel. On entering the coffee room I saw six or seven men, all of whom I knew. Amongst them was William Landsborough, the explorer, who has been appointed Police Magistrate of the place. He had arrived by a different route only a week previously. I was induced to join him in a trip with some fever invalids to one of the islands in the Gulf. The object was to give the invalids a change of air, but we could only take a limited number.

There has been an immense deal of sickness here. Typhus I think it is. Some 25 people have died within a very short time and I don't suppose there have ever been more than 60 residents. Nearly everyone who had been here any space of time looked pale and thin.

When Dick and I crossed over the river for our horses we found they had gone back to camp, so we remained at the township for the night and walked back the next day.

27 April/6 May – We started for Sweers Island late in the evening in a small boat. On our way down the river we met Macdonald (of Floraville) and two others coming up. We asked Macdonald to join us, which he did. We camped that night on the bank of the river, and the following at its mouth. The third day we set sail for Sweers Island which was out of sight and a considerable distance from the mainland. We did not reach it till nearly sundown.

Ernest Henry to Burketown
April 1866

The island is only about 6 miles long and about 2 broad. The day after we landed, Landsborough and I walked over the island. I carried a gun with which I shot a turkey, or more properly a bustard. Very acceptable in the camp for eating.

7 May [returning from Sweers Island] – At first we had very little wind, but in a few hours it freshened and we went along well. Ran from our course a good deal owing to the incorrectness of our steerman's compass, so we did not reach the mouth of the Albert till after sunset.

As we were coming along I laid down in the bottom of the boat for an hour or two and fell asleep. I got very cold and damp which gave me a touch of fever and ague. By the time we got to the sand spit at the mouth of the river where we were to camp I was very bad. The sea had only just left the sand and was quite wet, so I rolled myself in my blankets without going ashore or having supper and slept on the boat. During the night as the tide left the boat she heeled over and some of the water in the bottom came into my blankets.

8 May – I was awfully bad when I got up in the morning, suffering chiefly from fearful shooting pains down the



right side of my head. The pains came sometimes so quick and sharp as to take away my breath, and for the life of me I could not help crying out. I clenched my teeth and did all I could, but had no power to help it. I laid on and under blankets at the bottom of the boat.

We luckily had a fair wind up the river and reached my camp (1½ miles from the township) early in the evening. I went ashore and found Mr Campbell (squatter) and his wife camped close to my camp. I knew they both had just come down from a newly-formed station. Mrs Campbell was confined with child the night she arrived.

I suffered terribly all night. The pains in my head never ceased and my thirst was awful. I don't suppose a quarter of an hour passed but that I drank a mouthful or two of water.

Very bad all next day. In the afternoon Macdonald sent me a bottle of Perry Davis' painkiller, amongst other things, which I made the boys rub into my head. It took the pain away for a time, but at night it came on as bad as ever, thirst the same as before, and if I did sleep at all it was delirious. I was reduced in no time to skin and bone and so weak that I could hardly stand.

The day after I landed at the camp I made the blackboys make a kind of hovel, open on one side and made of boughs

PERRY DAVIS' PAINKILLER

Taken internally for Chills, Cramps, Colic etc.
Applied externally for Sore Throat, Sprains Bruises, Chilblains etc.

Two Views of Early Burketown

WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT of Burketown on the Albert River during 1865, it became the shipping centre for the Gulf stations. However, in February 1866, the *Margaret & Mary* arrived from Bowen bringing with it an epidemic known as 'Gulf Fever' – now thought to be malignant tertian malaria (Fenner 1990; Kettle 1993) – and within a few days, virtually the entire crew was dead, and soon, around 60 persons were recorded to have died in the district.

When William Landsborough, the newly appointed Police Magistrate for the district, arrived in April he arranged for the removal of most residents to Sweers Island. Landsborough departed for Sweers Island in the pilot boat accompanied by the surveyor George Phillips, the pastoralist John G. Macdonald, and the prospector Ernest Henry (who was to go on to discover large copper deposits at Cloncurry in 1867). On revisiting the island after five years, Landsborough wrote: "The country is high downs and a few fine trees with thick foliage... The northern end as well as the southern end of Sweers Island is rather thickly wooded. In the course of one walk we saw several pigeons, cockatoos and bustards. Although the birds are shy, Mr Henry succeeded in shooting some cockatoos and a bustard".

Sweers Island virtually replaced Burketown

as the official government centre, with all vessels trading in the Gulf region calling at the newly laid-out town of Carnarvon, which consisted of around 15 houses, several stores, a Customs House, a lock-up, and at least one hotel. But by January 1868, Landsborough and a surveyor had laid out a new township on the Norman River and most of the Sweers Island residents relocated there to escape the isolation of island life, and within a few years Carnarvon was virtually deserted in favour of Normanton.

PETER SAENGER

FOR THE FIRST YEAR or two of Burketown's existence, a saturnalia of a most original and determined fashion set in. There were only two or three women in the town, and no police, and the crowd enjoyed themselves in their own breezy, sunshiny way. Burketown was the haven of refuge for all the outsiders and outlaws from the settled districts when they had made other places too warm to hold them any longer.

*God forsaken, devil may care,
Every one with his sins to bear;
From east from west, they are camping there,
Where all the bad lots go.*

One of the first vessels to arrive in the Albert River in 1866 was the *Margaret & Mary*. There is little doubt but that the great mortality among the residents of Burketown during 1866 was traceable to the infection brought by this vessel. It was the wet season at the time, and this, in conjunction with the reckless life led by most of the people, and the want of medical assistance, increased the danger of the disease, and scores of strong men succumbed to its malign influence. The disease, which ended in fever and delirium, was as fatal to the strong as to the weak, and the little cemetery soon looked like that of an old established town, so numerous were the graves.

This outbreak gave Burketown an evil name. People began to leave it, and when Normanton was opened in 1867 with the prospect of becoming a more suitable port for the district, many removed there to carry on their business. Burketown was deserted and nothing was left to mark the spot except heaps of empty bottles and jam tins, and some large iron pots belonging to a boiling-down plant. A few stumps remained standing on the open plains where once had been buildings. None were left to sigh over Burketown's fallen fortunes, or sing a dirge in memory of its history; and none lamented. Its short and merry life was over.

EDWARD PALMER

(what we call a “gunyah”). They also pulled a quantity of dead grass on which my bed was made, so I was comfortable in that respect.

For several succeeding nights I had to wake one of the boys about every hour to rub my head with the painkiller, but it only gave temporary relief. Thirst continued the same, and awake or asleep I was in a half delirium all night, whispering at a tremendous rate.

One night, I forget which, Mrs Campbell recommended a mustard blister. I kept it on for 40 minutes and it gave me some relief. Next night, on the same place just where the pain was, I put on a stronger one. It was on 20 minutes and when it was taken off – Oh! the relief I felt. The pain was entirely gone, but I was so weak I could not stand by myself. I found that by rubbing the painful area (which was quite raw) with the mustard for ¼ of an hour, the pain was kept away all night, but my thirst continued still the same and I was troubled still with delirious dreams.

I now had the same fever that so many people have died of here. It may have been on me before, but I thought of nothing but the pain in my head. If I went out in the sun, sometimes only for a few minutes, the day would become to me quite dark and I would fall down. Macdonald was very kind. He used to come from the township nearly every day to see me.

It was May 19th before I was able to start back overland, 10 days since I landed at the camp. I rode 20 miles the first day, but would have camped long before if we could have got water. My bones ached and thirst was very great the last few miles. I had to hold on to Macdonald's arm and

he rode by my side till we came to water. He then went on to his station, Floraville, 20 miles distant. We are camped midway between Floraville and Burketown.

20 May – 14 miles camped for dinner. 6 miles reached Macdonald's. 20 miles altogether. I stood this day's journey much better than the last. I had one tumble off my horse, but I felt altogether much better. I don't think I would ever have got right at the township.

I remained at Floraville until the 27th. I began to improve much quicker after I was fairly on the road again to Hughenden with plenty to employ my mind about.

I am afraid I shall not be able to write more by this mail. In the few days I have had to write, fever and ague have visited me every other day and I have been obliged to give up writing altogether. You need not have the least alarm about me. There is no danger in it, and when I am actively employed I never have a sign of it. I shall take care to keep busy after this.

Tomorrow I have to ride to a station 25 miles from this to meet the postman in order to send my letters. It is now late in the evening and I have several other letters to finish.

Your loving son
ERNEST



PERRY DAVIS' PAINKILLER was patented in the United States by Perry Davis in 1845. It was sold around the world and had some novel uses. In Alaska in the 1880s, the Sourdough Thermometer¹ – a row of four bottles filled with mercury, coal oil, a Jamaican ginger extract, and Perry Davis' Painkiller – would be placed outside a staging post where they could be seen from a window. If the mercury froze it was nearly -40° F, the coal oil froze at -50°, and the ginger at -60°. If the painkiller froze it was unsafe to travel because the temperature was below -75°.

The ingredients of the painkiller, opium and ethyl alcohol, are what inspired Mark Twain to describe it as “simply fire in liquid form”. In the following excerpt, Tom Sawyer gives a dose to Peter, his Aunt Polly's cat:

One day... his aunt's yellow cat came along, purring, eying the teaspoon avariciously, and begging for a taste. Tom said:

“Don't ask for it unless you want it, Peter.”

But Peter signified that he did want it.

“You better make sure.”

Peter was sure.

“Now you've asked for it and I'll give it to you, because there ain't anything mean about me; but if you find you don't like it, you mustn't blame anybody but your own self.”

Peter was agreeable. So Tom pried his mouth open and poured down the painkiller. Peter sprang a couple of yards in the air, and then delivered a war-whoop and set off round and round the room,

banging against furniture, upsetting flower-pots, and making general havoc. Next he rose on his hind feet and pranced around in a frenzy of enjoyment, with his head over his shoulder and his voice proclaiming his unappeasable happiness. Then he went tearing around the house again spreading chaos and destruction in his path. Aunt Polly entered in time to see him throw a few double summersets, deliver a final mighty hurrah, and sail through the open window, carrying the rest of the flower-pots with him. The old lady stood petrified with astonishment, peering over her glasses; Tom lay on the floor expiring with laughter.

“Tom, what on earth ails that cat?”

“I don't know, aunt” gasped the boy.

“Why, I never see anything like it. What did make him act so?”

“Deed I don't know, Aunt Polly; cats always act so when they're having a good time.”

“They do, do they?” There was something in the tone that made Tom apprehensive.

“Yes'm. That is, I believe they do.”

“You do?”

“Yes'm.”

The old lady was bending down, Tom watching with interest emphasized by anxiety. Too late he divined her 'drift'. The handle of the telltale teaspoon was visible under the bed-valance. Aunt Polly took it, held it up. Tom winced and dropped his eyes. Aunt Polly raised him by the usual handle – his ear

– and cracked his head soundly with her thimble.

“Now, sir, what did you want to treat that poor dumb beast so, for?”

“I done it out of pity for him – because he hadn't any aunt.”

In its heyday, Perry Davis' Painkiller was widely regarded as a wonder drug. As Ernest Henry attests, it could be obtained even in the outreaches of early North Queensland settlement; and though it may have been an effective way of judging Alaskan cold, it was of little use against Gulf fever.

The fever that ravaged Burketown in 1866 has been assigned a variety of diagnoses. I opt for the diagnosis proffered by Henry himself – typhus; in particular *epidemic typhus*, the symptoms of which appear to closely match Henry's description².

Typhus is the name applied to several similar diseases carried by lice. Epidemic typhus (also called “ship fever” and “famine fever”) is so named because the disease often causes epidemics under conditions of poor hygiene (conditions favourable to the transfer of lice), such as would have been found in Burketown in 1866.

The incubation period is one to two weeks. Symptoms arrive quickly, and are among the most severe of the typhus family. They include severe headache, a sustained high fever, cough, rash, severe muscle pain, chills, falling blood pressure, stupor, sensitivity to light, and delirium. The mortality rate is 10% to 60% if untreated.

1. Jane Gaffin, *The Trading Trio of Arthur Harper...*, p 22.

2. Joseph Conlon, *The Historical Impact of Epidemic Typhus*.

The Discovery of Cloncurry Copper¹



SHORTLY AFTER I RECOVERED from the fever, and while I was staying at Hughenden with the Grays who were living there then, I met a man named Pigott travelling with sheep in search of country, and I arranged to pilot him to a good run for a certain sum of money, having in view the country near Fort Constantine, the rock I had so named on the Cloncurry River. The whole district was at that time suffering from a severe drought and I warned Pigott, before starting, that we might be two days without water, to which he replied: "Oh, I can stand that if you can". So away we went, each taking a blackboy. My boy was Dick, who had been with me nearly 10 years.

We travelled first to Sheaffe's station² on Alick Creek. Between there and our destination I knew of only one creek in which we were likely to find water, and to it we travelled on the day we left Alick Creek. We still had about 90 miles to go. The following day after filling our waterbags we journeyed on till sundown without finding water and consequently had to camp without. The next morning I proposed to Pigott that I should ride ahead and search all the creeks on our route for water, to which he gladly assented. My boy Dick knew where I was going and would have no difficulty in following my tracks. Every watercourse I came to I followed up for about a mile and then down about the same distance, always returning to the spot at which I struck each creek so as to leave an unbroken track for Dick to follow. It was a great undertaking both for my horse and myself and also a fruitless one for I found no water till I reached the Cloncurry River – and not very much there.

It was late in the afternoon when the rest of the party appeared, but without two of the packhorses. One they left 25 miles back and the other about 12 miles. Fortunately they had spare horses onto which they shifted

the packs. It was this seeming misfortune of leaving behind two horses which led me in a roundabout way to the discovery of copper.

The next morning Dick and I started back in hopes of saving the life of the nearest horse. The one 25 miles away I knew it was hopeless to go after. We filled the waterbags and took a mackintosh for the horse to drink out of. Near Mount Fort Constantine, on our way, we came across a rich lode of iron which I took to be red oxide of copper. I was almost totally ignorant of minerals at that time and had never seen iron of that description before, but I had once seen red oxide of copper which is somewhat similar to this variety of iron.

We continued our journey after the horse and found him looking very woebegone, standing in the shade of a tree. He greeted us with a feeble neigh, but he soon brightened up when he discovered that we had water, the greater portion of which we poured into the mackintosh. It was not much, but freshened him up considerably. I kept one of the bags about half full, and by holding it to his nose as I walked, enticed the poor wretch the 12 miles to our camp.

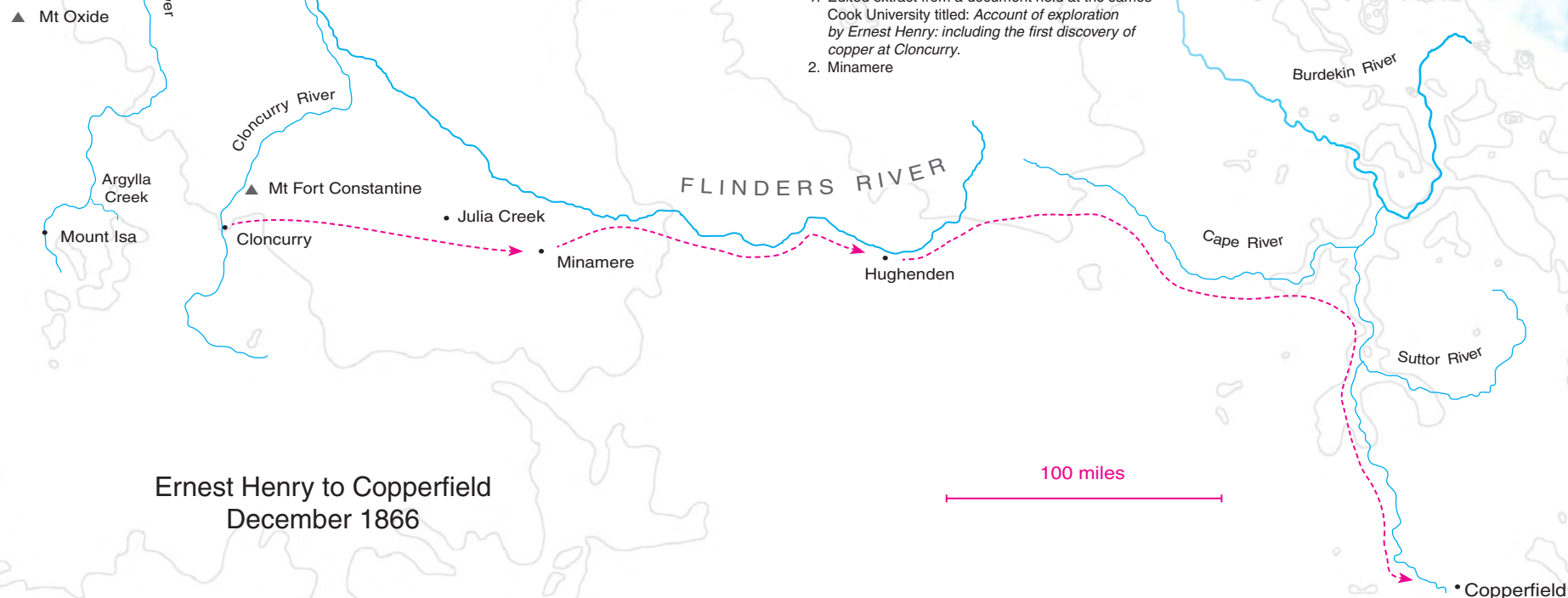
I said nothing to Pigott regarding my supposed discovery of copper, but in the evening I went back to the place, broke off a few large pieces and put them in my saddle bags.

Two days later we started on our return trip to Sheaffe's station. We saddled up before sundown so as to get over half the dry stage during the cool of the night, and travelled to within a few hours of daylight. Pigott and I were soon asleep, being very weary, but the boys lit a small fire and had a smoke before turning in.

I was awakened by a startling report, and on sitting up was amazed to see a number of small fires burning round about our camp. It soon dawned upon me what had happened. The fire the boys lit had crept among the dead leaves to one of my saddle bags, burnt a hole in it, and then ate its way to a full flask of powder which exploded, bursting the bag and throwing the burning contents in every direction. A packsaddle, the stock of my gun, and many other things were completely ruined.

1. Edited extract from a document held at the James Cook University titled: *Account of exploration by Ernest Henry: including the first discovery of copper at Cloncurry.*

2. Minamere



Ernest Henry to Copperfield
December 1866

Altogether about £25 worth, which was a serious matter in those days. With the exception of a dray and 10 sets of harnesses at Sheaffe's station, all I possessed in the world were the horses and things I had with me. Whenever I required a fresh supply of rations I used to sell a horse and the proceeds would keep me going for a considerable time, one's want being few in the bush.

As soon as it was light we were in the saddle again and made the nearest water about sundown. The next day we reached Sheaffe's station.

Pigott led me to believe all along that he was going to take the country I had shown him, but at the last moment rejected it. I was indifferent at Pigott's refusal, for believing the mineral I had found to contain copper, I thought it would be better not to have him in the neighbourhood; still the price he was to pay me for the country would have been a very great boon.

I told Sheaffe of my discovery and promised him a share in it should it prove of any value. We returned together to the place where I found the deposit, and then rode to a black mountain about 20 miles up the Cloncurry River which I had observed from the top of Fort Constantine. I imagined it to be composed of the same mineral; and so it turned out to be – a mass of the richest iron ore nearly 300 feet in height, but which we both believed to be copper.

We packed about 400 lbs weight of it on some of the horses and returned to Sheaffe's station. From thence I carried it on my dray to Hughenden. I sent the greater portion of the mineral to Townsville, but two blocks weighing 50 lbs each I packed on a horse, and, with my faithful Dick, started for Peak Downs copper mine¹ distant about 350 miles, to ascertain the value of my discovery.

I now have to tell you what you will have anticipated: my disappointment in finding that the mineral I had taken so much trouble over and carried so far (600 miles) contained nothing but iron, worthless on account of its distance from port.

I remained at Copperfield about three weeks and thoroughly inspected the mines and adjacent country to procure all the knowledge I could regarding copper. My conviction firmed that copper existed in the neighbourhood where I had discovered the iron, and so Dick and I started on our return journey to the Cloncurry River to make another search.

Towards evening of the last day but one, as we were travelling through lightly-timbered country, we saw a string of blackfellows trotting from the

river each carrying a load of bark on their heads. Rain was coming on and they used the bark for making their gunyas (huts). I cantered up to the leading man and held a stick in front of his nose as a hint to stop, but he merely pushed it away and continued on, evidently in mortal dread. I let them be.

I am reminded of a subsequent scene I witnessed when first I made friends with the blacks in the neighbourhood of the Cloncurry River. They were camped near me on the dry sandy bed. My tent was pitched, for rain threatened, and during the night it came on. I knew the blacks had made no provisions against rain so I looked out of my tent to see how they managed. It was tolerably light, the moon being nearly full. Every man had stripped a sheet of soft and pliable bark from a ti-tree. They were crouched on the sand, face downwards, their knees up to their chins, and each man had a sheet of bark resting on his back and lapping down on either side of him. The numerous grey hummocks were very suggestive of a graveyard.

To return to my narrative. The following evening we camped about 2 miles from where the township of Cloncurry now stands. I had made up my mind to give the neighbourhood a thorough and exhaustive search. The following morning, therefore, when riding over the hills, I dismounted at every vein of rock that I thought might possibly carry traces of copper and broke it here and there with the blunt side of a tomahawk. You may imagine my satisfaction when a blow from my tomahawk revealed the first green copper stains. Though but stains, they were sufficient to increase my confidence. I rode for several miles in the direction the vein had been trending, but found nothing further that day or the following. On the third day [20 May 1867] I made a circuit of the hills around the spot where I found the first indications. Late in the afternoon as I was working my way back towards the camp, I came across some loose fragments of tolerably rich ore. I immediately dismounted and tried to find the vein, following the indications, my eyes intent on the ground and my faculties alert with expectation. I was led to a rock standing 7 or 8 feet high, one side of which was covered with green copper stains. After examining it, and feeling that I was drawing near to some great discovery, I raised my eyes to look around. Not a hundred yards from me was a rocky hill 50 feet in height carrying copper stains to its very summit. It was an immense outcrop of copper ore, the realisation of my convictions. I walked over and climbed it, a supreme moment of satisfaction and triumph.

1. Copper was discovered at Copperfield, about 4 miles south-west of the fledgling township of Clermont, in 1862. This discovery led to the formation of the Peak Downs Copper-mining Company.



ENCOURAGED BY HENRY'S discovery of copper, Roger Sheaffe shifted cattle from Minamere to occupy Fort Constantine, envisaging a mining field being established in the area. And he was right. In 1876 the township of Cloncurry was laid out by Surveyor Bishop, the same man who laid out the township of Hughenden.

For several years Henry toiled at the outcrop of the Great Australian Mine (as his discovery was called) bagging and exporting copper ore. Although the lode was rich, copper was low in value, and it was costly to cart ore to Normanton and bring stores to the mine. Henry worked the Great Australian Mine until it was sold in 1879. In 1882 he discovered copper mines at Argylla, 50 miles

west of Cloncurry, and at Mount Oxide, 90 miles from Argylla. Writing to his mother in the same year he said:

When I first discovered copper in this district there was not a white man within a hundred miles and great tracts of country lay in every direction, unpopulated save by a few tribes of savages. At the present moment it would be difficult to find a patch of available land that has not been secured by squatters. Hitherto they have been cattlemen, but now the southern capitalists are turning their attention to our northern prairies and are introducing sheep. Sheep have always been the harbingers of prosperity to all good grazing districts.

In 1883 Tarsis Copper Smelting Company began working the Great Australian Mine. A furnace, rail tracks, rail trucks and other mining equipment were dragged from Normanton. But the mine soon closed, and the furnace on the bank of Coppermine Creek decayed into a rusty Cloncurry landmark.

Henry disposed of his various mining leases over the years, and by 1913 the last of his holdings, Mount Oxide, had been sold for £40,000. For the remainder of his life he lived alone at The Grange on the outskirts of Cloncurry. His wife, whom he had married in 1870 and by whom he had two children, died in 1888.

Henry's turbulent and gutsy life came to an end at Epping, New South Wales, on 26 March 1919.

Furphies, Fallacies, Fables

The myth of Scorpion Creek



HENRY'S ACCOUNT of his discovery of copper contains a few errors, as would be expected when relying on memory a long time after the events being related (he had forgotten he'd kept a diary). For example, instead of two days¹ to Minamere from where his pack saddle was burnt, it was four. His diary entries for that return trip from the Cloncurry River to Minamere in October 1866 are simple and to the point:

Sunday 21 – Cloncurry River

Monday 22 – Started at sundown on our way back. 20 miles and camped. Near sunrise, when asleep, one of the pack saddles and large bag caught fire and were completely burnt.

Tuesday 23 – Had to leave gun carbine and several things on account of losing the pack saddle. Planted them in the creek.

Got to Scorpion Creek at sundown.

Wednesday 24 – The Gilliat and camped.

Thursday 25 – Shot a calf and made the Caroline.

Friday 26 – Sheaffe's.

Henry's mention of Scorpion Creek is the prime source of a fallacy about Julia Creek – that it was originally named Scorpion Creek. The myth can be traced back to S.E. Pearson who had access to Henry's diaries. Pearson did his best, but the stories he promulgated contain errors which are still being repeated. The first to repeat them was Ulick Browne Snr when he delivered an address to the Royal Historical Society of Queensland on 27 March, 1958:

S.E. Pearson (letter 14 November, 1944) observes: "In the early stages of pastoral occupation in your district, the watercourse now known as Julia Creek was Scorpion Creek. It was so known up till about 1870 when the first Government Surveyor, Maurice O'Connell came out to fix run boundaries. The name Scorpion was objected to by the surveyor as it was a prejudicial sort of name... It was at the suggestion of Donald McIntyre, I understand, that the name was altered to Julia Creek – a niece and aunt being Julia." (From diaries of Ernest Henry's in Pearson's possession.)

Unfortunately for Pearson's story, the creek was called Julia Creek² as early as 1868. One of the McIntyre brothers had named it – and probably after a relative as Pearson's letter suggests.

Another example to illustrate how stories shift over time, and how important it is to use original sources if possible, is contained in a letter

to Geoffrey Browne (Ulick Browne's son) who was concerned about another incorrect story – that Burke and Wills named Julia Creek. That fancy has been laid to rest by the letter reproduced opposite, but within that letter the "Scorpion Creek-Maurice O'Connell-1870" furphy has been reinforced. Pearson's remark about Julia Creek, that it was known as Scorpion Creek "up till about 1870", becomes "Julia Creek was known as Scorpion Creek *until* 1870". This new interpretation of the fable is easily refuted because Maurice O'Connell (who supposedly caused the creek to be renamed) died of thirst near Julia Creek in December 1868.

Forget the furphies, fallacies and fables. The proof that Julia Creek and Scorpion Creek were different creeks comes from Henry himself in his diary of 1866-67. At that time he was continually on the move, riding to and from his copper find on the Cloncurry River. The point of reference in the diary extracts below is the Gilliat River. The Cloncurry River is off the map (opposite), 50 miles west.

NOVEMBER 1866

Saturday 10 [riding west from the Gilliat]
Started with Sheaffe and Dick and camped on Scorpion Ck. 12 miles.

Wednesday 21 [riding east to the Gilliat]
Started back. Found a water hole 8 or 10 miles from Fort Constantine and camped.

Thursday 22 – Scorpion Ck. [Gilliat on Friday]

MAY 1867

Friday 10 [riding west from the Gilliat]
Left Sheaffe 2 miles clear of the Gilliat. 5 miles struck Scorpion Ck.

JUNE 1867

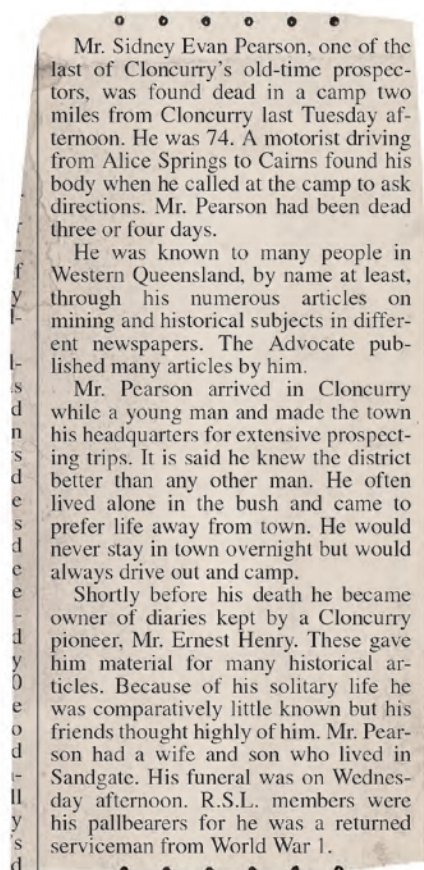
Thursday 6 [riding east to the Gilliat]
Camped on a creek corresponding with Scorpion Creek.
Friday 7 – Camped on the Gilliat.

Saturday 29 [riding east to the Gilliat]
Camped on anabranche of Scorpion Creek.
Sunday 30 – Gilliat in 6 miles.

JULY 1867

Monday 1 [riding west from the Gilliat]
Started with the cattle. Camped on a small creek about 10 miles west from Scorpion Creek.

Today's Julia Creek is 20 miles east of the Gilliat, but Henry's diary indicates that Scorpion Creek was somewhere between 5 and 12 miles *west* of the Gilliat: possibly today's Holy Joe Creek or Gidya Creek.



CA: 10 Nov 1953

1. Second paragraph, first column, previous page.

2. Deposition of George Sparke given at the inquest into O'Connell's death, first line page 114.





Author – Ian Hutchings
File / Ref number CHQ Julia Creek
Geographic Data Services (Place names),
Podium 3, Landcentre,
Cnr Main & Vulture Sts,
Woolloongabba Q 4102

Natural Resources and Mines

McIntyre's
Grave

Dalgonally

11 November 2003

Mr Geoff Browne
Oasis Retirement Village
65/118 Bellflower Road
Sippy Downs Q 4556

Dear Mr Browne,

I refer to your enquiry regarding the town of Julia Creek and the naming of the creek from which the town name is derived. With the information supplied by yourself and further information from the State Library of Victoria, I now believe that from the plan of the route taken by Burke and Wills, they did not pass near Julia Creek and as such, they could not have named the creek. This is also reflected in the diary of Wills from the State Library of Victoria and further diary extracts published on the web site of the National Library of Australia in Canberra.

Accordingly, I have altered the database to reflect these findings. My only concern now is "was it Duncan or Donald McIntyre that named Julia Creek?" Your letter suggests Duncan, but the database refers to Donald, as does S.E. Pearson's letter of 14 November 1944. Duncan died in 1866 and Julia Creek was known as Scorpion Creek until 1870 when Surveyor Maurice O'Connell renamed it, at the suggestion of Donald (diaries of Ernest Henry). No field notes of Surveyor Maurice O'Connell are held in the Department.

I trust this will establish the origin of the naming of Julia Creek.

Yours Faithfully,

Ian Hutchings
Principal Cartographer,
Place names

Julia Creek

JULIA CREEK

Eastern
Creek (The Caroline)

Sadowa Creek

Wild Duck Creek

McKilay River

Gidya Creek

Holy Joe Creek

Gilliat River

Gilliat River

10 miles



Labouring Under Insanity

A surveyor loses his way, and his life,
near Eddington Station



THE YEAR following Ernest Henry's discovery of copper near the Cloncurry River, Maurice O'Connell, Commissioner of Crown Lands, aged 35 and single, was sent to the area for reasons described by his superior:

In July last he was directed to proceed to the Cloncurry River and mark off certain mineral selections in the vicinity of the copper mines recently discovered in that locality. Before he had the opportunity to begin this work, Mr O'Connell was further directed, in November last, to carry out a survey of the Flinders River in order to adjudicate several disputes – which could not be adjudicated without a survey being made.

O'Connell was a surveyor, not a true bushman, and on his return from surveying Henry's copper discoveries, he was two days without water near Julia Creek. Rather than linger and die of thirst, at sunrise on the third day O'Connell chose to end his life by bullet. He was only 6 miles from Eddington Station.

*Eddington
Eastern Creek
1868*

J.P. Sharkey

SIR – I have to bring under your notice that Mr Commissioner O'Connell was found dead in the bush yesterday. We therefore have the honour to request you will be good enough, at your earliest convenience, to proceed to this station to hold an enquiry into the cause of the death of Mr O'Connell, you being the nearest Magistrate.

*We have the honour to be your
obedient servants
Arch^d Ferguson
John Martin*

Deposition taken and sworn this 26th day of January in the year of Our Lord 1869
at Eddington Station before John Philip Sharkey
one of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for the Colony of Queensland
at an Inquest¹ of the death of Maurice Geoffery O'Connell
late Commissioner of Crown Lands.

George Augustus Sparke on oath sayeth:

MY NAME IS GEORGE AUGUSTUS SPARKE. I am a chainsman. I was in the employment of Mr Maurice Geoffery O'Connell. I reside temporarily on Eastern Creek. I came out here with the late Mr O'Connell. He was about to survey the copper mines in this district.

We left Cleveland Bay² on the 8th of September last and arrived, to the best of my belief, on the 13th October at Mr McIntyre's Station³ about 35 miles from here⁴. While at McIntyre's Station, Mr O'Connell purchased a five-chambered revolver. We spelled on the 14th October, and having left five horses on the station to spell we started for the copper mines⁵ on the 15th October.

On the 22nd we arrived at the copper mines after travelling over 100 miles from Mr McIntyre's Station and being out seven days.

Mr O'Connell completed the survey of the copper mines on the 2nd of December last, and we started for Mr McIntyre's Station on our way to Cleveland Bay on the 3rd of December. We arrived at Mr McIntyre's at about noon on the 6th, the third day after leaving the mines, and left in the afternoon of the 7th, after getting the five horses left spelling.

We arrived at this station on Eastern creek at about noon on the 8th of December. We spelled at this station for three days. This station belongs to Mr Ferguson.

Mr O'Connell and myself started from this station on the 11th of December on our way to Minamere Station. I got no directions as to the way we were to travel on our way to Minamere and I did not hear Mr O'Connell get any. He might have been told the way without my knowledge. When we left, Mr O'Connell was in good health. I never heard him complain of illness.

The country about here is very destitute of water. There is very little timber except on the creeks – and it is very light there. We watered our horses before we started, and took as much water with us as we required for that night and the next morning.

The day we started for Minamere was very close and sultry. We had two packhorses and six idle horses driving, beside the horses we rode. We left mid afternoon Friday and camped on the plain between 5 and 6 miles from Mr Ferguson's Station⁶.

Saturday morning after breakfast we packed the horses and started. We had about a quart of water left in the waterbags. We were travelling by compass bearings, following no track, but Mr O'Connell expected to cross the track going to Minamere during the day. All day on Saturday the 12th we travelled without finding the Minamere track. That evening we crossed two dray tracks which were running along

1. See bibliography under O'Connell for Qld State Archives references.
2. Townsville.
3. Dalgonally.
4. Eddington Station, where Sparke was giving evidence.
5. Near Cloncurry.
6. See map over page.

the bank of a creek. I have been since informed that the name of this Creek is Julia Creek. We went into the creek and camped that night but found no water. We had had no water in our waterbags since about 10 o'clock that morning. I tied up three horses according to Mr O'Connell's instructions and short-hobbled the rest.

At the Julia Creek camp Mr O'Connell complained of being very unwell. During the night he said that he had been so unwell on arrival at this camp that he had not been able to make his calculations to find our distance from the station. After making his calculations he said we could not be more than 16 or 18 miles from Mr Ferguson's station¹.

That night the weather seemed unsettled, and believing that we were about to have some rain we set the tent to catch some water. However, it did not rain, only a few drops sufficient to damp it. We lay down to sleep until daylight when we got up and caught the horses.

1. A straight line drawn from Eddington to Minamere crosses Julia Creek at a distance of 17 miles, confirming O'Connell's estimate of 16-18 miles.
2. O'Connell would have followed Julia Creek, which trends in the general direction of Minamere in this area.
3. It is unclear what Sparke means by: 'the tracks of the horse drays... went away from the creek across the plain'. If the tracks had turned east towards Minamere, O'Connell would have followed them. I assume they turned west to Eddington, and since O'Connell had just come from that direction the tracks were of no use to him.

The last time I saw Mr O'Connell alive was on Sunday morning the 13th December at about 6 o'clock in the forenoon. After adjusting the packs on the horses we started in the direction of Minamere. Mr O'Connell went ahead to look for water and left me to drive on the packhorses.

He went ahead about 2 miles² and returned saying that he could find no appearance of water; that the tracks of the horse drays met with on the previous evening went away from the creek across the plain³; and that he wanted to take a waterbag and follow the creek down to look for water. He directed me to take all the horses and follow the dray tracks.

Mr O'Connell then proceeded down the creek while I followed the track⁴. I went along the dray track until about 11 o'clock. The horses became very troublesome to drive, constantly trying to break away from me down to the creek. I felt a weakness coming over me so I got off my horse and tied him to a tree. I had no bridles or halters to tie the other horses up with. I lay down until the evening, being very weak from exhaustion. The place where I lay down was within a few yards of the road or dray tracks. Mr O'Connell could not have passed on the dray tracks without seeing me⁵.

• Copper mines

4. O'Connell and Sparke turned away from Minamere and rode north-west, following Julia Creek downstream looking for water.
5. If O'Connell came back looking for Sparke he would presumably do so by following the dray tracks. Sparke made sure he laid down close to the tracks so O'Connell would see him.
6. The position of this waterhole is approximately 141.71°E, 20.62°S.

7. At first reading, "until I struck the main road" seems to indicate that Sparke had found the road between Eddington and Minamere, as no other road has been mentioned to this point. However, Brewer in his evidence says that the waterhole Sparke found was 10 miles from Eddington, placing the waterhole north of the present-day township of Julia Creek – the only section of Julia Creek (the creek) which comes within that distance of Eddington.

When I awoke from my sleep all the horses were gone except the one I had tied up. This was on Sunday evening. When I got on my feet I fell down again from weakness and exhaustion caused by thirst. I crawled over to where the horse was tied – about 2 or 3 yards – and with great difficulty I mounted the horse. I followed the dray track for about a mile, when I had to get off my horse and rest. I remained there that night being too weak to proceed any further.

The next morning I managed to get onto the horse by means of a log and followed the track about 2 or 3 miles until I struck a waterhole⁶ on the creek that I have learned since to be Julia Creek. This waterhole was distant about 7 or 8 miles from where Mr O'Connell left me to look for water. Two of the spare horses were at the waterhole when I arrived, and two more horses came in a few hours later. One had a pack saddle on which I took off. The horses and myself were too weak to look for Mr O'Connell. I remained at this waterhole all day on Monday and all Monday night.

On Tuesday morning, December 15th, after sunrise I left the horses at the waterhole and I started in search of Mr O'Connell with a small waterbag full of water. I continued along the dray tracks for about 4 or 5 miles until I struck the main road⁷. I saw a fresh horse track on the road going in the direction of the station. I did not know at this time who the track belonged to. I followed the horse

I presume the road that Sparke found was the one between Eddington and Dalgonally, a well-used road between the only two stations in the area – and a road which Sparke had already travelled on when he and O'Connell came from Dalgonally a week or so before.

O'Connell left Dalgonally for the copper mines on the 15th October. He would have followed the Cloncurry River. He returned on the 6th December and left the next day for Eddington.

Cloncurry River

Dalgonally

track for about 2 miles until it turned off on the north side of the road. I continued to follow the track a short way to see the direction it was taking. It ran parallel with the road and not far from the road. I came onto the road again and did not proceed far when I saw a large object, which I could not distinguish, lying on the plains. This was on Tuesday morning at about 9 or 10 o'clock.

I went off the road to see what the object was. On approaching near to it I saw that it was a horse. I recognised the horse as being that which Mr O'Connell was riding. The horse was dead and had the saddle and bridle on. A few yards from the horse I saw Mr O'Connell lying apparently dead. I went up to him and put my hand near the region of his heart but felt no pulsation. I saw a lot of blood lying near and under his head. I saw that blood had come from Mr O'Connell's left ear. He was lying on his right side. I saw a revolver lying near his head – almost touching – with the muzzle pointing towards his head. I examined the revolver and saw blood on the muzzle and a little on the barrel. There was one chamber of the revolver discharged when I found it.

Mr O'Connell wore, when found dead, moleskin trousers and a Scottish twill shirt over a Crimean shirt. He did not carry a watch. His belt was lying about 3 feet from him. I strapped on the belt and took up the revolver and put it in the pouch. I then got on my horse and continued to follow the road until I met cattle tracks on Eastern Creek. I went along the cattle tracks which took me to a water hole. I had a drink and then followed the creek to the station. Mr O'Connell was lying about 6 miles from this station⁸.

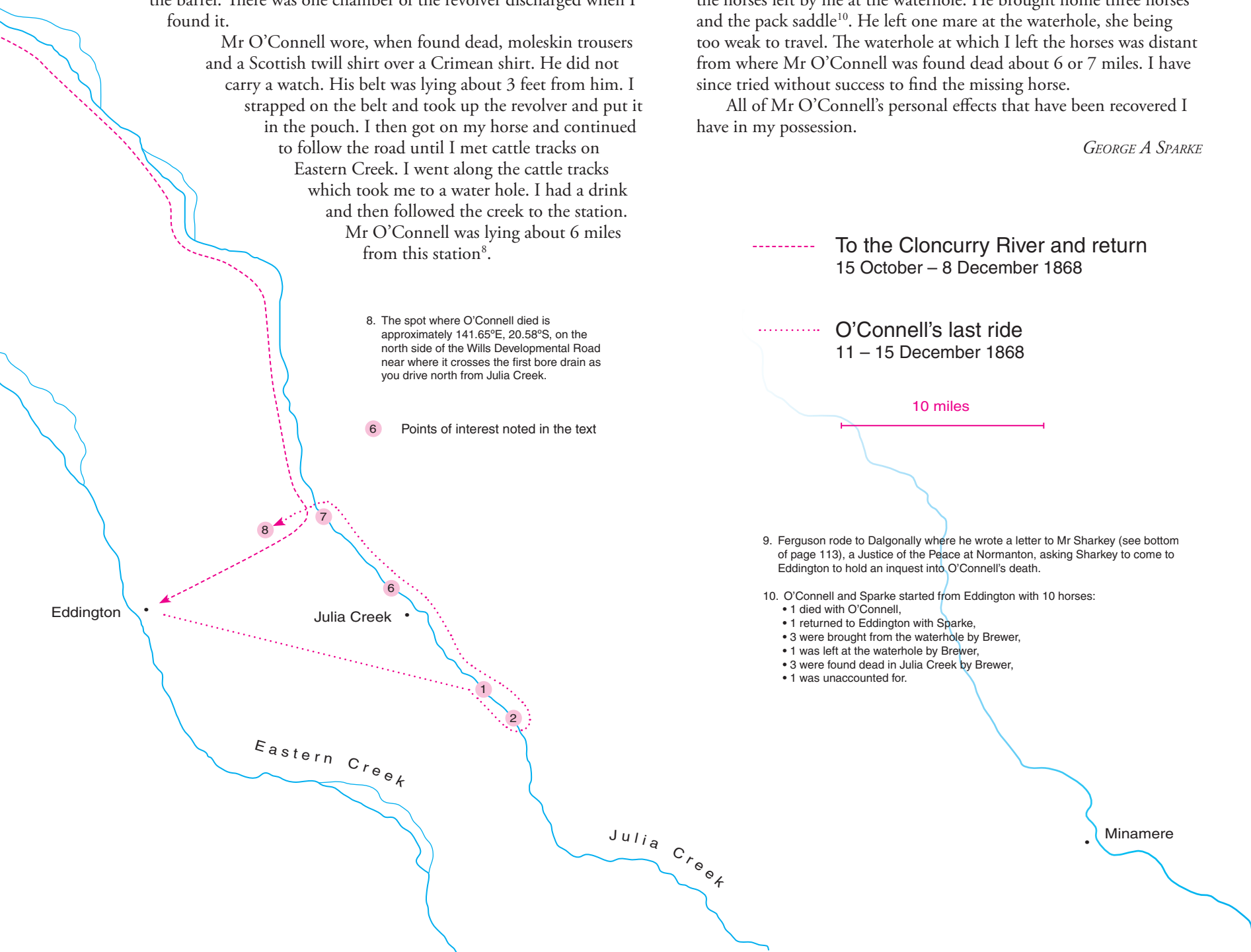
On my arrival at the station I gave information to Mr Ferguson and William Brewer of what had occurred. After procuring their horses they started out with a dray to bring in Mr O'Connell's remains. They returned to the station that evening with the body.

On the next morning, Wednesday, December the 16th, Mr Ferguson and Brewer went out to dig a grave while I got some hot water ready and went down to wash the body. I saw what appeared to be a ball wound in the left ear. The ball seemed to have entered in the left ear and lodged in the right cheek. When the grave was ready, Mr Ferguson, Brewer and myself rolled the body in a tarpaulin bag and buried it nearly a quarter of a mile from the station on the bank of the creek. Just as we were going to bury Mr O'Connell, Mr Martin of McIntyre's Station came up and assisted to lower the body into the grave.

That same morning Mr Ferguson started from the station to give information of Mr O'Connell's death⁹, and Brewer went to look for the horses left by me at the waterhole. He brought home three horses and the pack saddle¹⁰. He left one mare at the waterhole, she being too weak to travel. The waterhole at which I left the horses was distant from where Mr O'Connell was found dead about 6 or 7 miles. I have since tried without success to find the missing horse.

All of Mr O'Connell's personal effects that have been recovered I have in my possession.

GEORGE A SPARKE



Archibald Ferguson on oath sayeth:

MY NAME IS ARCHIBALD FERGUSON. I reside at this station, Eddington. I am a squatter. I knew the late Mr O'Connell. I met him first on Eastern Creek when he was on his way to the copper mines. I do not remember the date, but believe it was in October 1868. He was camped on my station, Eddington, when I met him. He had a man with him named George Sparke. I stopped a short time with Mr O'Connell and then went on to McIntyre's Station.

I next saw Mr O'Connell at McIntyre's when he returned from the copper mines about the 7th or 8th December. Mr O'Connell left McIntyre's to come to this station. I next met Mr O'Connell at this station on my return on or about the 11th December. As I came up he was about to start for Minamere. He told me he had been up the creek the day before and found the Minamere road¹. He left in the evening and took a short cut across the plains, where there was no track, until he should strike the road. It was about 4 o'clock on the Friday evening that Mr O'Connell started. George Sparke was with him. Mr O'Connell seemed to be in good health and spirits when he started.

Mr O'Connell seemed to know where to go and he should have had no difficulty in finding the Minamere road as the character of this country is generally open plains. I never saw Mr O'Connell afterwards alive.

On the following Tuesday, George Sparke, Mr O'Connell's man, came to the station in the afternoon and informed me that Mr O'Connell and himself had missed their way; that the horses had got away, some with packs on; and that Mr O'Connell was dead. Sparke seemed very weak and exhausted. The horse he rode was very weak also. He produced a revolver which he said he found with Mr O'Connell. The revolver before me is the one Sparke said he found. I examined the revolver when Sparke gave it to me and saw that one chamber was discharged.

I then procured horses and went out with a dray to bring in the body of deceased. William Brewer was with me. We found the body at about sunset. It lay a short distance off the road² about 6 miles from here. There was a horse lying dead within 30 or 40 yards of Mr O'Connell's body. The horse had a bridle and saddle on, which we took off and brought here.

The deceased was lying on his right side. His hands were clenched. There was blood about his nose, mouth and ears. There was some blood also on the ground. The body then seemed quite fresh and did not smell. Judging from the appearance of Mr O'Connell I would not suppose he was dead over 12 hours. I would say that he must have died that morning. I consider the horse was dead some time before Mr O'Connell.

I examined the deceased and found a bullet hole in his ear and saw a bullet in his cheek. I do not remember which side of the head the bullet entered. We then took the body to my station. It is my opinion that the death of Mr O'Connell was produced by a revolver bullet wound in the head.

We arrived at the station some time after dark and interred the body next morning, Wednesday the 16th December, in the presence of William Brewer, George Sparke and John Martin, all who assisted in the interment. Sparke was very weak and exhausted. On the 16th I started³ to give information of the death of Mr O'Connell and directed Brewer to go in search of Mr O'Connell's horses.

ARCHIBALD FERGUSON

John Martin on oath sayeth:

MY NAME IS JOHN MARTIN. I reside at Mr McIntyre's station, Dalgona. I am in charge of that station. I knew Mr O'Connell. He was at Dalgona in the beginning of December. He arrived with one George Sparke from the copper mines. He remained one night at the station and left in the afternoon of the next day for Eddington – this station. I never saw Mr O'Connell alive afterwards.

On the morning of the 16th December I arrived at this station. I saw Mr Ferguson with other parties down the creek. I went down to there and saw that they were digging a grave. Mr Ferguson told me what happened and showed me the body of Mr O'Connell on a dray. I plainly discerned the features of the deceased to be those of Mr O'Connell. I saw a bullet lodged in one of the cheeks. Mr Ferguson, Brewer, Sparke, and myself assisted to bury the body. We rolled it in a tarpaulin before putting it in the grave.

JOHN MARTIN

1. The Minamere road was a few miles south of Eddington Station and would have run almost east-west between Minamere and Eddington. Instead of going south to pick up the road, then east along the road, O'Connell must have decided to take a short cut in a roughly south-easterly direction to pick up the road as it traversed the plains between Eastern Creek and Julia Creek.
2. The Eddington–Dalgona road
3. 'Started' meaning he left for Dalgona.
4. For a waterhole on Julia Creek to be 10 miles away from Eddington, it must have been north of the present-day township of Julia Creek. A waterhole south of the town would be much further than 10 miles away.

William Brewer on oath sayeth:

MY NAME IS WILLIAM BREWER. I am a stockman in the employment of Mr Ferguson. I reside at Eddington on Eastern Creek. I knew the late Mr Commissioner O'Connell. He arrived at this station some time in the beginning of December 1868 in company with one George Sparke. They had about 10 horses with them and were on their way to Minamere. They stopped here about three days. Mr O'Connell was in good health and spirits while he was here. He started from here with Sparke on Friday afternoon the 11th of December. He made some enquiry as to the road to Minamere before starting. I did not see Mr O'Connell alive afterwards.

The following Tuesday about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, Sparke arrived at the station. He was very weak and seemed quite exhausted. The horse Sparke was riding was knocked up. Mr Ferguson was at home when Sparke came. Sparke said that he and Mr O'Connell had lost their way; that he had to let the horses go to enable him to find water for himself; and that Mr O'Connell was dead. Also that he believed he had shot himself. He showed me a belt on which was a revolver. I examined the revolver and found one chamber discharged. The revolver produced is the one Sparke said he found with Mr O'Connell.

Mr Ferguson and myself having received the direction of the place where the body lay, started with a dray to bring it to the station. We arrived at the place where the body lay about one and a half hours before sundown. There was a horse lying dead about 30 yards from Mr O'Connell's body. Mr O'Connell lay on his right side. He had a bullet wound in his left ear. It seemed the bullet entered at the left ear and went out at the right jaw. We put the body on the dray and brought it to the station. From the appearance of the deceased I consider Mr O'Connell died that morning, Tuesday the 15th of December.

The next morning Mr Ferguson and myself dug a grave. John Martin having arrived from Dalgona Station, all assisted in the interment of Mr O'Connell. George Sparke was present also when we buried him. His grave lies on the creek about ¼ of a mile from here.

George Sparke for some days after the interment of Mr O'Connell was very weak and exhausted. Mr Ferguson directed me to go to look for Mr O'Connell's horses. I received directions from Sparke as to where they were, and also where he left four horses at a waterhole on Julia Creek about 10 miles from here⁴. One of the horses I saw at the waterhole was too weak to bring here, so I left her and have not seen her since. The other three horses I brought to the station.

It was on the 18th December I went to look for the other horses. I found three horses dead lying in Julia Creek belonging to Mr O'Connell. I have not since found the remaining lost horse. The rain having set in I have not been able to travel.

WILLIAM BREWER

*Dalgona Station
17 Dec 1868*

John O'Connell Esq.

DEAR SIR – It is my painful duty to inform you of the sad accident that happened to your brother Maurice O'Connell.

On his return from the copper mines, he left my place, along with his servant George Sparke, on the 11th December on his way to the Flinders. On the 15th George Sparke came back to my place with the sad intelligence that they had got lost and that your brother had perished, supposed to have shot himself during the time he was insane for the want of water.

I started out that evening with my stockman and a blackboy and took a horse dray with us. We got the body about 5 or 6 miles from my place and it was quite clear that he had been shot: the ball was to be seen stuck in his jaw bone on the opposite side from where it entered. I rolled the body up in a large fly and put it in the dray and took it home and buried it the next day.

It was on the 15th he died and he could be no time dead when Sparke saw him. It seems Sparke and your brother parted two days before Sparke came back to my place. The horses, packs and everything are lost, but I started my stockman and blackboy to look for them and they are sure to find them. I will write to you next mail and give you all the particulars.

I am going down to the Norman to report the accident. The mailman is waiting for me and I cannot say much more.

*I now remain
Yours truly
ARCH^d FERGUSON*

*Crown Lands Office
Normanton, 1869*

**The Hon. A. Macalister
Minister for Lands
Brisbane**

SIR – It becomes my painful duty to have to report to you the death of Mr Maurice Geoffery O'Connell near Eddington in this district on the 15th of December last. I was called on to proceed to the scene of the death, a distance of 256 miles, to hold an inquest and started out on the 13th of January from this office, I being the nearest Magistrate. The verdict arrived at by me was as follows:

The death of Maurice Geoffery O'Connell late Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Districts of North and South Kennedy was caused by a revolver bullet wound inflicted by himself while labouring under insanity brought on by thirst and exhaustion while lost in the bush having been without water four days.

I take this opportunity of requesting you will be good enough to take into consideration my previous application for removal from my present position, and trust you will consider my services entitle me to the vacancy created by the untimely death of Mr O'Connell.

*I have the honour to be, Sir
Your most dedicated Servant,
P. SHARKEY*



IT WAS A LONG TIME COMING¹, the Cloncurry district rail connection with the coast, though it was proposed on at least three occasions before connection was finally made.

The first proposal on record was made in the early 1880s when the Transcontinental Railway Bill was put before the Queensland Parliament. An English company wanting to enter into grazing on a large scale proposed to build a railway in Queensland in return for extensive land grants. As a result of their proposal, the Government agreed to the construction of a railway from the south-western line to the Gulf of Carpentaria with branch lines to Hughenden and Cloncurry. The company was to receive a bonus of 10,000 acres of Crown land for every mile of railway south of the Gulf watershed, and 12,000 acres north of the watershed. It was estimated the bonus would amount to 12,000,000 acres. The agreement was subject to ratification by Parliament, but in 1883 was defeated by the opposition on the second reading, 27 votes to 16.

In the mid 1880s there was a scheme put forward to build a line from Normanton to Cloncurry and the amount of £300,000 was appropriated. However, when gold was subsequently found at Croydon, Edward Palmer proposed in parliament that part of the money raised for the Cloncurry line should be diverted to the

construction of a line from Normanton to Croydon, and that was eventually done.

In 1900 there was a third proposal to give Cloncurry a rail connection with the Gulf, but it came to nought when a judge was appointed to inquire into charges that an offer had been made to a member of parliament to influence him in his voting on the bill. On the judge's report the bill was dropped and Cloncurry remained isolated.

There were not many more years to wait for a railway, but it did not come from the Gulf. The line west from Townsville reached Hughenden in October 1887, and in 1904 it was extended to Richmond. Further west, Cloncurry was booming as a mining centre and a rail connection became necessary to develop the copper deposits on a proper scale. Beginning in September 1906, the line was hurried through at a cost of £1,400 a mile to satisfy the Premier's promise to the Cloncurry people that the line would reach them by Christmas 1908. It was a cheaply constructed line laid for slow mineral traffic of 15 miles per hour, and soon after completion it was damaged considerably by floodwaters, particularly in the vicinity of Julia Creek.

The extension remained as a light rail until the 1920s when it was properly ballasted to service the newly discovered mines at Mount Isa.

1. Edited extracts from NQR 15/4/1929, p97

IT WAS BECAUSE of the line to Cloncurry that Julia Creek began as a township. Between the initial excitement of Edward Palmer's hegira years 1864-66, when prospectors and squatters regularly passed through the Julia Creek district searching for land or minerals, and June 1908 when the coming of the rail brought new vigour and promise, the site of today's Julia Creek was an unremarkable part of a large black-soil plain that extended to the horizon, flat, treeless and waterless, indented only by the hoof prints of a few cattle. Even visits by cattle would have been doubtful. Outside the wet season, it is unlikely they would have ventured the 10 miles from the nearest permanent water at Eddington Station on Eastern Creek.

Ulick Browne in an article entitled *Exploration of Julia Creek District* described the waterless aspects of the area and the inherent protection it gave against wandering cattle:

Cattle, as full of curiosity as human beings, are similarly attracted by far horizons. In the heat of summer and eating dry feed, they grow restless, especially if some line of timber on the skyline, with the promise of cool shade, of water, of green feed, looks inviting. Julia Creek's coolibah-fringed watercourse is well-isolated from similar features: Eastern Creek to the

west and Alick Creek to the east. It is defended by treeless downs without any natural water a month after rain, and in those unfenced days such downs afforded a ready-made bullock-paddock that would keep cattle from straying.

Before the coming of the railway, Cloncurry's access to the outside world was provided by Cobb & Co. On the 200-mile run from Richmond, coaches kept close to the Flinders River along the first section, then deviated away from the river at a point near Nelia and ran in a direct line for Cloncurry. During the 20-year period that Cobb & Co ran the service (up to 1908), passengers could enjoy a short rest at a staging post about a mile north of where Julia Creek stands today. A small dam on the creek provided water for the horses, but the overnight stop was at Eddington, later moved to Gilliat when that small settlement came into existence.

The first hotel at Julia Creek, beside the creek near the Cobb and Co dam, was born of a publican who saw opportunity. Under licensee John Ryan, a hotel was established in 1899. Five years later, the licence was transferred to JF Scott. With the coming of the railway in 1908, there was no longer a need for Cobb & Co or its staging post on the creek, and Scott moved his hotel to the corner of Julia and Goldring St, across the road from the present day

Julia Creek Hotel. Scott held the licence through the formative years of Julia Creek until 1915.

Cobb & Co was not missed. How quickly Cloncurry people expressed venom against it and forgot the important part it had played in their lives after the railway lowered prices and transit times:

People resent paying Cobb & Co 35/- for a trip which can be got for 9/- by rail, and not one-half the expenses to pay along the route. What a harvest Cobb & Co must have made on the Richmond-Cloncurry Road during the last two years during the boom before the arrival of the rail...

People leaving here by train, I am sure, would be only too pleased to pay £1 for their ride to Julia Creek rather than travel in the objectionable coaches.

The gestation and birth of Julia Creek were directly tied to the existence of Cloncurry. From the dust and gravel of a creek bed rose a dam to cater for horses and a hotel to cater for travellers. Trains came. Horses and camels were displaced by a thirstier customer, and a small township grew out of the black soil of an ancient sea bed to cater for the needs of a railway.



The Railway Comes



Wilson

6 SEPTEMBER 1906—Mr Pagan, the Chief Engineer for Railways, returned yesterday after inspecting the Townsville, the Cairns, and part of the Cooktown railways and becoming acquainted with the extension of the northern railway from Richmond towards Cloncurry. Mr Pagan confirmed that platelaying¹ on this section will commence on September 10.

10 SEPTEMBER 1906—The following information was gathered during the course of a conversation with Mr Pagan, Chief Engineer for Railways, on a rail trip from Cairns to Townsville, neither party being aware of the other's identity at the start of the conversation.

The newspaper man opened with a "put your foot

in it" remark that progress on the Richmond railway extension seemed to be very slow. "Oh, I don't know" replied the gentleman addressed, "things are pretty well ahead. I told the Premier I'd have the line out at the 90-mile in March and that's when it will be there."

The use of the personal pronoun had a somewhat strange sound until it slowly dawned on the pressman that he had been guilty of a blunt criticism addressed to a leading railway man. Continuing the conversation, the gentleman made himself known as Mr Pagan, Chief Engineer for Railways, and he had much to say.

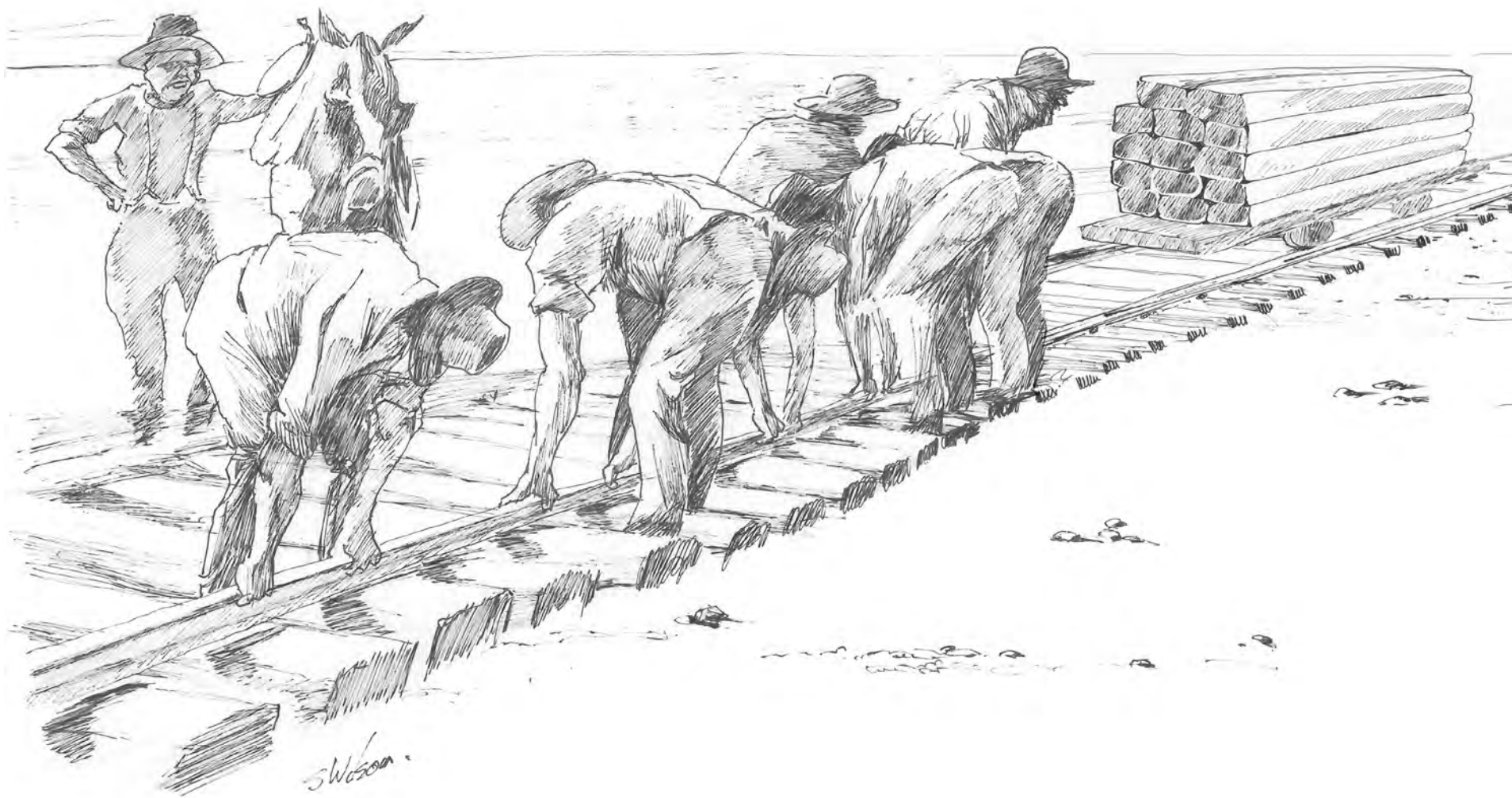
With regard to the obtaining of railway sleepers, he said that despite all the papers had to say on the matter, the rate offered for sleepers was quite sufficient. Cutters could make good wages at the work, but the trouble was that they could get no teams to haul the cut timber. They had given a man a contract for 100,000 sleepers at Cardwell. After a time he asked

to have the contract reduced to 50,000 and then to 25,000 as he found he could not procure the higher numbers. And then as the sleepers were still coming forward in a very unsatisfactory manner, the railway took over the contractor's sawmill, sent up timber waggons, and were now working the contract on their own. "And making a success of it?" "When we take anything up in earnest it will be a success" was the quick reply.

Mr Pagan also remarked that platelaying would be commenced on Monday. "It is no use commencing until we have sufficient material in hand to keep the work going without stoppages. The platelayers are an independent class of men and could not be expected to stay unless they have regular employment."

In reply to a question as to how unballasted lines would perform, he said they were very satisfactory. They were built at £1400 a mile. Better for the country to have cheap lines run out to new fields such as

1. A platelayer is a person who constructs a railway line. He puts in place the ballast, sleepers, baseplates, spikes and rails — everything that supports the train wheels.



Cloncurry than not at all.

Asked as to the expected progress, Mr Pagan responded that the line would be through to the 90-mile by March unless there was a very wet season, when, of course, work on blacksoil would be out of the question. "But" he remarked "a good wet season will be of much greater importance to Queensland than a month or so delay in the construction of the Cloncurry line."

12 SEPTEMBER 1906—Platelaying commenced on Monday last, a quarter of a mile being laid that day. A ballast train is now busily engaged on the extension. Sleepers continue to arrive and two trains unloaded spikes and rails this morning.

7 MAY 1907—On Saturday the 4th of May, the Richmond to Cloncurry line had reached to the 80½ miles beyond Richmond, giving a total of 3½ miles laid in the week.

10 JUNE 1907—Mr Pagan and Mr Bashford arrived on Thursday by special coach to fix the site for the railway station. In the course of an interview, Mr Pagan said he had every confidence in having rails sufficient to get to Cloncurry by the end of the present year. He had brought Mr Bashford out to oversee the cuttings which would be required in the last 20 miles through the hill country, and so be ready for the rails when they reached that far. It was the intention to put on men and teams forthwith, paying the current rate of wages of 10/- a day.

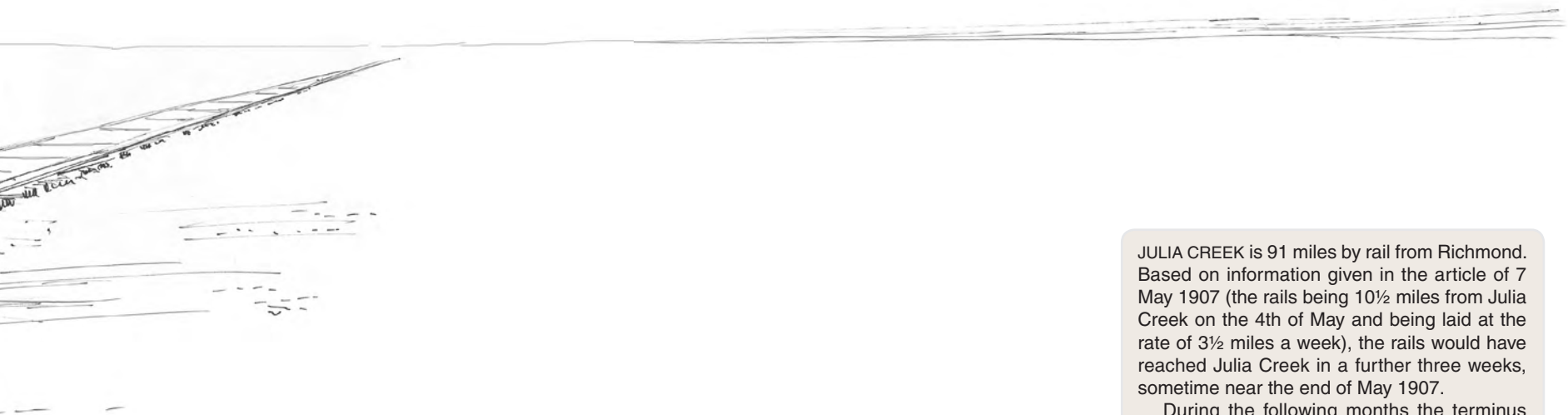
The railway was prepared to run two regular trains every week (Tuesday and Saturday) starting on the 13th June, taking heavy machinery and loading from Richmond as far as Julia Creek.

Until the line has been opened to public traffic, goods and passengers from the coast will be booked to Richmond only, and must book again at Richmond for the stations on the unopened line. The stations beyond Richmond have been fixed as follows:

Maxwelton (30 miles), Nonda (43 miles), Nelia Ponds (61 miles), and Julia Creek (91 miles).

8 JULY 1907—In the latest report to hand on the extension of the Richmond to Cloncurry line, the resident engineer (Mr W.H. Munro) says that clearing has been completed to 106 miles, cuttings to 91 miles, side ditches to 88 miles, bridges to 63 miles, concrete pipes through side-drains to 45 miles, and cattle grids to 44 miles. The rails have been laid as far as Julia Creek Station (91 miles) and the yard at that station is being laid down. The station buildings have been finished at Maxwelton and Nonda, with the exception of the painting, and at Nelia the station is in course of progress. The telegraph line has reached Nonda and poles have been erected to Nelia. This work should be completed to Julia Creek in about six weeks' time.

Altogether 496 men are engaged on the work. Of these, 286 are engaged on the line and 210 cutting sleeper logs.



Opposite: The drawing at left is based on a photo (one of several) that appeared in the *North Queensland Register*, 28 October 1907. The photo is captioned: "... a group of platelayers at work at the very end of the line will convey an understanding as to the nature of their duties". A drawing of another photo from the NQR of the same date is on page 125.

L A B O R E R S.

TWO HUNDRED required for Richmond to Cloncurry Railway. Wages, Nine to Ten shillings per day for good men. Free railway pass and long job. Apply -

DISTRICT ENGINEER, Townsville

Or Inspectors of Permanent Way, Charters Towers, Hughenden, or Resident Engineer, Richmond.

Townsville Daily Bulletin: 17 Jul 1907

JULIA CREEK is 91 miles by rail from Richmond. Based on information given in the article of 7 May 1907 (the rails being 10½ miles from Julia Creek on the 4th of May and being laid at the rate of 3½ miles a week), the rails would have reached Julia Creek in a further three weeks, sometime near the end of May 1907.

During the following months the terminus at Julia Creek – the new buildings under erection, the jumble of goods awaiting transport, together with the temporary presence of horse teams, camel teams, and the men who controlled them – went by three names: Julia Creek (meaning the creek, but encompassing the terminus); Julia Creek (meaning the terminus as distinct from the creek); and Helton, the official name given by the railway department to the station. Eventually the terminus, the new township, the railway station, and the nearby creek were all known as Julia Creek.

10 JULY 1907—The first official passenger train left Richmond for Julia Creek at 6.30 a.m. on the 18th of June. It was anything but a passenger train, consisting as it did of goods waggons with supplies for the railway work. A converted luggage van carried the passengers.

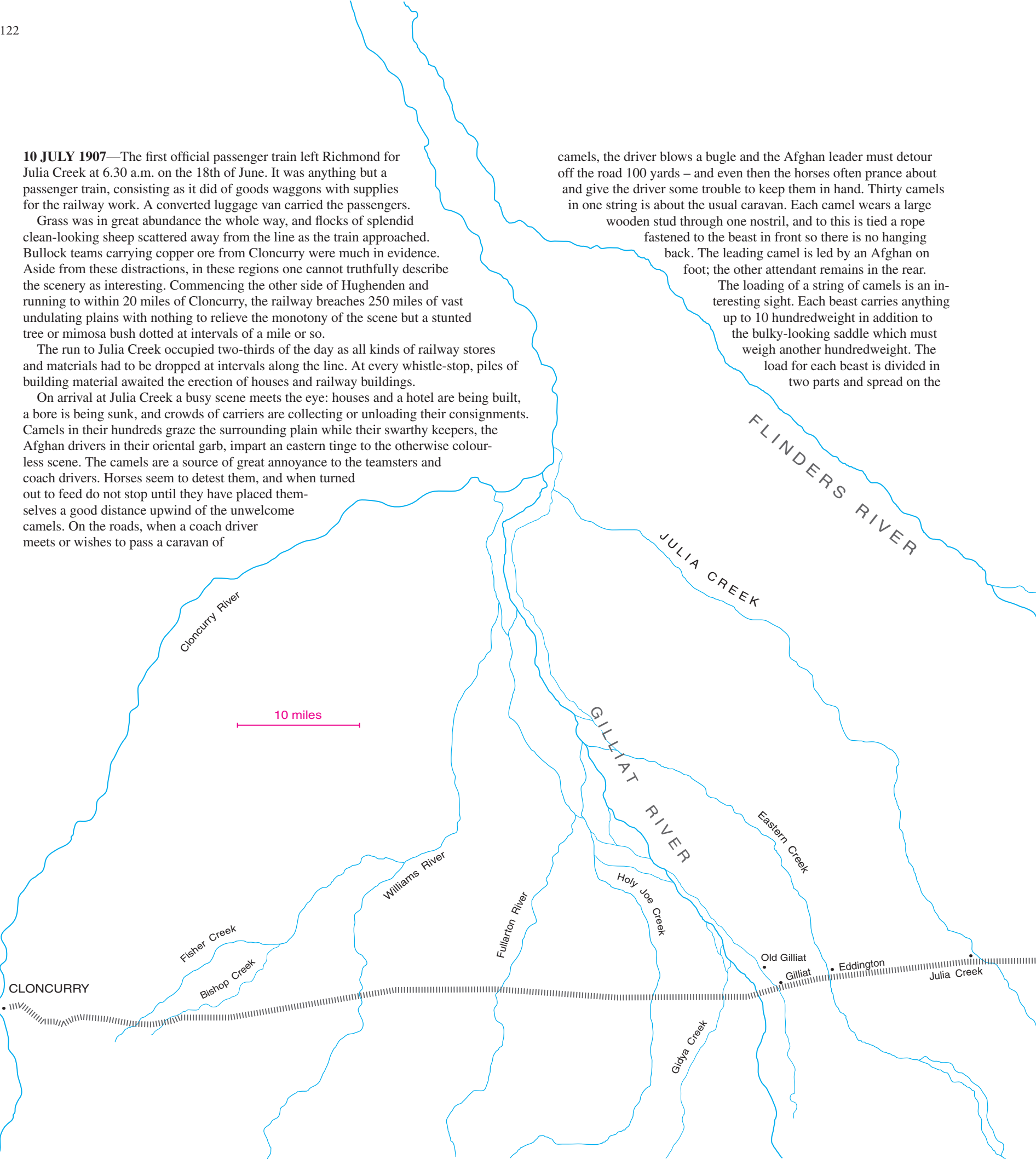
Grass was in great abundance the whole way, and flocks of splendid clean-looking sheep scattered away from the line as the train approached. Bullock teams carrying copper ore from Cloncurry were much in evidence. Aside from these distractions, in these regions one cannot truthfully describe the scenery as interesting. Commencing the other side of Hughenden and running to within 20 miles of Cloncurry, the railway breaches 250 miles of vast undulating plains with nothing to relieve the monotony of the scene but a stunted tree or mimosa bush dotted at intervals of a mile or so.

The run to Julia Creek occupied two-thirds of the day as all kinds of railway stores and materials had to be dropped at intervals along the line. At every whistle-stop, piles of building material awaited the erection of houses and railway buildings.

On arrival at Julia Creek a busy scene meets the eye: houses and a hotel are being built, a bore is being sunk, and crowds of carriers are collecting or unloading their consignments. Camels in their hundreds graze the surrounding plain while their swarthy keepers, the Afghan drivers in their oriental garb, impart an eastern tinge to the otherwise colourless scene. The camels are a source of great annoyance to the teamsters and coach drivers. Horses seem to detest them, and when turned out to feed do not stop until they have placed themselves a good distance upwind of the unwelcome camels. On the roads, when a coach driver meets or wishes to pass a caravan of

camels, the driver blows a bugle and the Afghan leader must detour off the road 100 yards – and even then the horses often prance about and give the driver some trouble to keep them in hand. Thirty camels in one string is about the usual caravan. Each camel wears a large wooden stud through one nostril, and to this is tied a rope fastened to the beast in front so there is no hanging back. The leading camel is led by an Afghan on foot; the other attendant remains in the rear.

The loading of a string of camels is an interesting sight. Each beast carries anything up to 10 hundredweight in addition to the bulky-looking saddle which must weigh another hundredweight. The load for each beast is divided in two parts and spread on the



On The Outback Track

(By the North Queensland Herald's Travelling Representative)

ground with sufficient room between for the camel to walk. The driver mutters something which sounds like "hish-hish-hish", the animal immediately dropping on its haunches all quivering and trembling – not with fear, but as if it is a strain to do so – then flopping down on its brisket with its legs twisted like a trussed fowl. In this position it rests on large, hard corns. On the brisket the corn is about 6 inches in diameter and about 1½ inches thick. There are corns on the forelegs and also on the knees, while on the hind legs there are corns on the front of the thighs and on the hocks and front of the fetlocks.

Three men are required to place the load. One man holds half the load steady on his side while the other two fix their half-load to the saddle. The camel remonstrates in a most plaintive manner during the loading operation, opening its capacious horrid-looking mouth and throwing out a reddish bladder from which it emits a low rumbling sound like distant thunder. When the inflated bladder collapses – it seems to be the receptacle for a reserve water supply – the camel throws its head back, mouth open, and the strange thing drops back to its place. Before the load is properly adjusted, the beast is anxious to rise. This it does rear first without any bidding.

Anything that a carrier can carry on his waggon the Afghan will carry on his camel and do the journey quicker, indifferent to drought, water or grass. I have seen two bales of wool on one beast; on others, galvanised roofing iron, cases of kerosene, bags of flour, bundles of plain and barb wire, and even two water tanks with goods inside, making a very awkward, bulky burden. Owing to their peculiar gait the load maintains a continual sliding motion backwards and forwards. It is no wonder these wretched looking beasts suffer with sore backs and shoulders.

They live any period from 40 to 80 years (so the owner informed me), a remarkable age considering the treatment they receive and the long distances they carry their tremendous loads – an average of 25 miles daily. On a sandy road they leave a print 2 feet wide and keep in each others steps, giving the impression that a broad, flat shovel has been trailed along the ground.

Although the railway reaches 91 miles to Julia Creek, it is incomplete. Most of the bridges are not yet finished, and the sensation of running up and down creeks, gullies and billabongs gives the feeling of traversing a switchback. At Julia Creek the train can be seen coming an hour or so before it arrives. The smoke can be seen 30 miles away, and the train itself 20 miles, enabling hotelkeepers to prepare a hot meal for the hungry travellers whether the train is in the time or late.

Once he arrives at the Julia Creek siding, the passenger must carry his luggage a distance of one mile to the coach road. Perhaps by the time this appears in print, Cobb & Co will have ceased running their coaches from Richmond to Julia Creek. The train that left Richmond on Tuesday morning arrived at 4 p.m., while the coach which left half an hour earlier did not reach the Julia Creek Hotel until 2 a.m. the following morning, the train passengers having the advantage of saving 10 hours travelling and the sum of 24/6 (the coach fare from Richmond to Julia Creek is 35/-, but the train fare is only 10/6).

A coach traveller who goes all the way to Cloncurry, a distance of over 200 miles, takes three days and pays £3/10/-. The expense of food and accommodation adds a further 10/- per day (three meals at 2/6, and a bed at 2/6). However, taking all things into consideration the accommodation price is fair, even if the coach price is not. Once the railway is completed the coach will disappear and the wayside hotels will be done for. It will not pay these caterers to await the pleasure of the travelling public in such dreary, lonely surroundings.

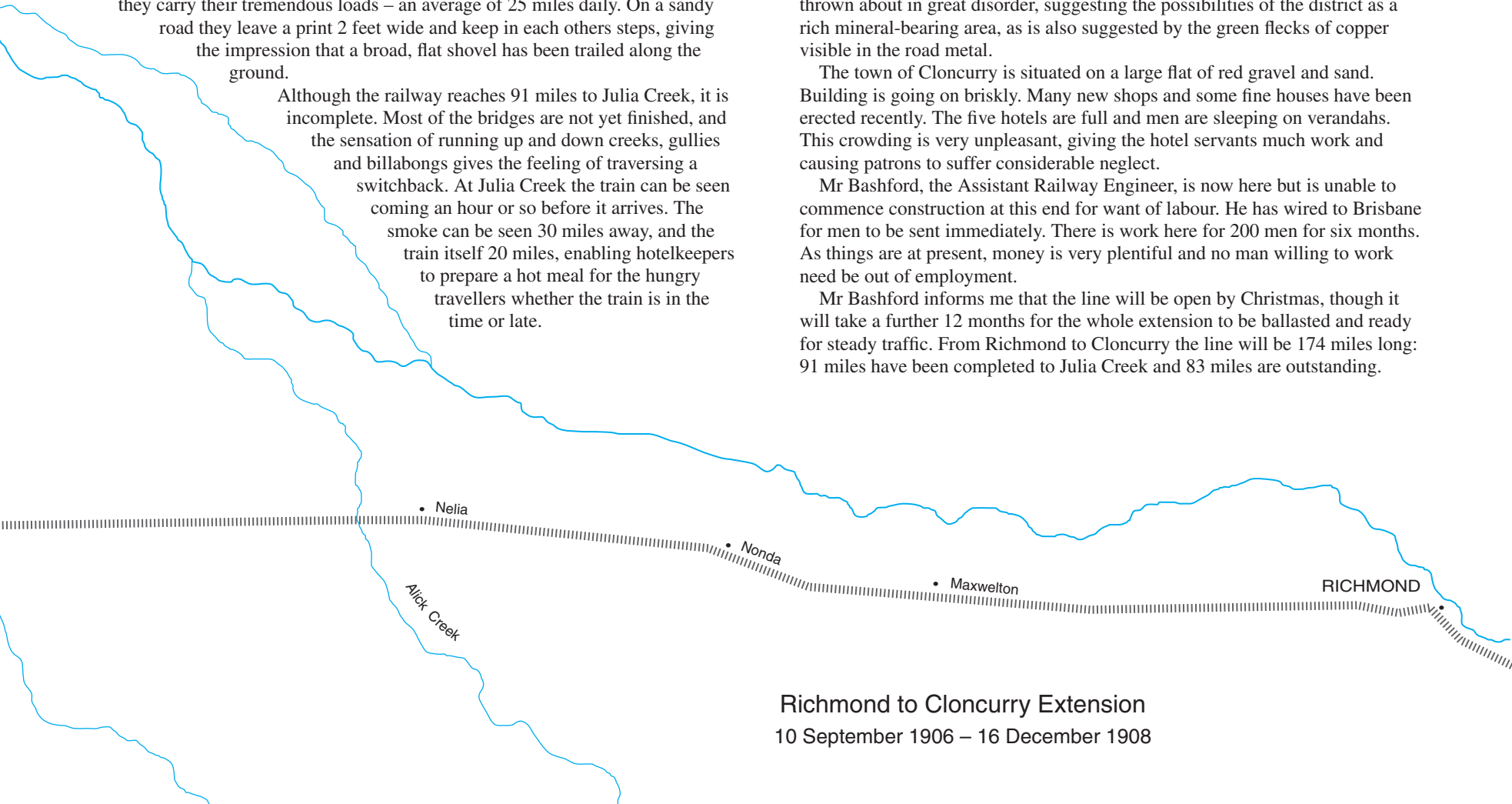
After Julia Creek the first staging stop is Gilliat, 18 miles distant, where the traveller finds fair meals and accommodation. Gilliat is the last link of, let us say, civilisation and sixpenny drinks. Then commences the region of dust, flies, long waterless stages, Barcoo shouts (three drinks for 2/6, but the exact amount must be tendered), indifferent half-crown feeds, and one-shilling pies that retail in Townsville (with sauerkraut and mashed potatoes) for threepence.

From Gilliat a start is made at 4 a.m. the next morning to ensure reaching Cloncurry in time for 6 o'clock dinner. The first stage is a long one, passengers being in the coach until their 2 p.m. arrival at Fishers Creek. Lunch consumed, and a change of horses effected, the remaining 18 miles to Cloncurry commences. From this point the country changes markedly. Trees make their appearance, and mountains on each side resemble giant upheavals of rocks thrown about in great disorder, suggesting the possibilities of the district as a rich mineral-bearing area, as is also suggested by the green flecks of copper visible in the road metal.

The town of Cloncurry is situated on a large flat of red gravel and sand. Building is going on briskly. Many new shops and some fine houses have been erected recently. The five hotels are full and men are sleeping on verandahs. This crowding is very unpleasant, giving the hotel servants much work and causing patrons to suffer considerable neglect.

Mr Bashford, the Assistant Railway Engineer, is now here but is unable to commence construction at this end for want of labour. He has wired to Brisbane for men to be sent immediately. There is work here for 200 men for six months. As things are at present, money is very plentiful and no man willing to work need be out of employment.

Mr Bashford informs me that the line will be open by Christmas, though it will take a further 12 months for the whole extension to be ballasted and ready for steady traffic. From Richmond to Cloncurry the line will be 174 miles long: 91 miles have been completed to Julia Creek and 83 miles are outstanding.



Richmond to Cloncurry Extension
10 September 1906 – 16 December 1908





24 JULY 1907—The terminus at Julia Creek at the present time is a very busy centre. Forwarding agents are up to their eyes in work, loading the various teams with timber, machinery and merchandise for this district. Last Tuesday week there were fully a dozen teams at Helton, some loaded up, whilst others were drawn up ready to be loaded. Between Helton and Cloncurry there are over 20 teams on the road with inward and outward loading.

The line last Wednesday was within 2 miles of the Gilliat. They are building it at the rate of 4 miles a week. The promise to have the rails laid into Cloncurry by Christmas looks as if it will be an accomplished fact.

2 SEPTEMBER 1907—A gentleman who has recently visited Cloncurry furnishes us with a few notes about the road and railway.

The fact that Cloncurry and district is booming strikes the visitor immediately he arrives at Helton (as the new station at Julia Creek is called). Bullock teams, horse teams and camel teams are busy taking away merchandise and goods which have accumulated there since the line opened. A glance inside the goods shed shows great quantities of groceries and perishable items. Outside, stacked in heaps awaiting removal to Cloncurry and the surrounding copper mines, there is galvanised iron, timber, fire bricks, heavy machinery and general merchandise.

It was said a few days ago that 1600 tons of loading at Helton awaits despatch by teams. The rate of carriage is high, ranging from £6 to £7 per ton to Cloncurry for a distance of 99 miles by road, a price in excess of that which was paid a short time ago from Cloncurry to Richmond, more than double the distance.

Cloncurry itself assumes a very busy aspect. New buildings, mostly shops, are springing up as fast as the timber can be landed, and carpenters are reaping a harvest, being at work early and late.

A large number of men are employed 10 miles out from Cloncurry, putting in cuttings through the rough hilly country, and preparing for the rails which are some 30 miles further out towards Helton.

The rails had reached the 130 mile peg from Richmond on the 27th, and on or about the 2nd of September should be across the Fullarton. At the Fullarton a bore is being sunk by the well-known borer "Lightning" Brown. He expects a good flow to be met at 1000 feet.

The way the construction is being carried out speaks volumes for Mr Munro and his gangers. The cutting, adzing and boring of sleepers, both by daylight and gaslight, proceeds like clockwork. A log arrives from the sleeper-getter down the line, goes off the waggon over the saw bench, through the adzing machine, through the boring machine, and then straight onto the waggons and away to the head of the line that night – about 2000 going forward and being loaded and spiked down the next day.

The formation gang is some 4 miles ahead of the platelayers. Their road-making and grading machines are doing first class work. Earthworks span all the creeks, pending the erection of the bridges, and temporary

deviations are made over them for the trains to run on. Bridge construction at this stage is some distance behind the rest of the work.

The platelaying gang has first-class camping quarters: two large waggons fitted with beds. Their kitchen and dining room are also built on a waggon, complete with dining tables and forms and all necessary furnishings. The rations are everything that could be desired, plenty of all kinds of preserves and vegetables making for a first class diet. All rations, meat excepted, are brought direct from Townsville.

The horses are like the men – well-fed and do their work well. They are in excellent condition and show they have been carefully selected for the work of hauling drays and rail trucks.

Given favourable weather, there is little doubt that Cloncurry people will see smoke from a steam train before the end of 1907.

Opposite: This drawing is based on a photo (one of several) that appeared in the *North Queensland Register*, 28 October 1907. The photo is captioned: "A general view of Helton and of carriers loading for Cloncurry affords an excellent idea of a temporary western terminus".

Below: Jackson & Co were one of the first businesses to operate in Julia Creek and the only one to use the name Helton (for Julia Creek) in its ads. [NQR: 16 Sep 1907]

JACKSON and Co.,
PRODUCE MERCHANTS,
AUCTIONEERS, RECEIVING AND FORWARDING AGENTS,
AND LIVERY STABLE MEN.

WE Stock Large Supplies of
DOWNS MAIZE,
GEELONG OATEN CHAFF,
BRAN and OIL CAKES,
and are prepared to deliver any quantity
to all parts of the district.

STABLE-FED HORSES and GOOD BUGGIES
always on hand for hire.

AGENTS FOR BROMHALL'S
EXPRESS LINE of COACHES and PARCEL VANS.

JACKSON AND CO.
CLONCURRY AND HELTON

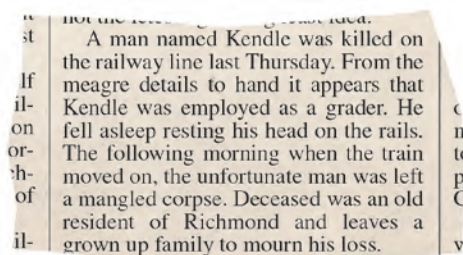
Green Herbage & Grasshopper Stew

16 SEPTEMBER 1907—Cloncurry people are jubilant at the near approach of the railway, and property is realising very high prices. For instance, a piece of land in Ramsay St, 165' x 30' with a street frontage of 35' was disposed of privately for £300, equal to £10 per foot. Many other land owners refuse to sell at similar prices. Respecting the building trade, the merry ring of the carpenter's hammer can be heard from early dawn till late at night, and even now the buildings are not enough for the requirements of the district. All the hotels are full and it is difficult to get a bed. There are five hotels under construction and even with this number it will be difficult to provide accommodation for those in need of it.

28 OCTOBER 1907—There is hardly a doubt but that the railway will reach Cloncurry before Christmas. That this feat has been accomplished is due to the energy and capacity of the Assistant Railway Engineer, Mr Munro.

A few facts connected with the construction of the line are worthy of mention. The distance from Richmond to Cloncurry is 174 miles. It was 220 by road, but the teams had to follow the surface water, whereas the line strikes out due west. Bores at various points provide water for the steam engines. There are 2640 sleepers to the mile and about 460,000 will be used before the line is completed. The total weight of rails and fastenings used on the line is 13,000 tons. When the rails are laid, ballasting will begin from three points: the Cloncurry, the Williams and the Flinders Rivers, as it was decided not to ballast while construction was proceeding.

The pictures in this week's Register give a good idea of the work being done. A general view of Helton¹ and of carriers loading for Cloncurry afford an excellent idea of a temporary western terminus; and the group of platelayers² at work at the very end of the line will convey an understanding as to the nature of their duties.



A man named Kendle was killed on the railway line last Thursday. From the meagre details to hand it appears that Kendle was employed as a grader. He fell asleep resting his head on the rails. The following morning when the train moved on, the unfortunate man was left a mangled corpse. Deceased was an old resident of Richmond and leaves a grown up family to mourn his loss.

NQR: 18 Nov 1907

Opposite: Horse-drawn Cobb & Co coaches, piled high with mail, luggage and passengers, preparing to leave Cloncurry. Photograph taken by The Crown Studios, Sydney. [John Oxley Library, 39883, ca 1907]

18 NOVEMBER 1907—The railway from Richmond to Cloncurry now is within 12 miles of its destination and the Commissioner is anxious to have the line sufficiently ballasted in order that the Christmas traffic may be served. Trains already run as far as Julia Creek.

1 DECEMBER 1907—The railway line has progressed beyond anticipation and there is only one small cutting to finish. Last week Assistant Engineer Bashford had gangs on both ends of the big cutting about 7 miles out. The men were like an army of ants round a sugar pot, and in less than four days the work was finished. They were just breaking up camp when the platelayers ran the rails through. I am informed that the rails are now barely 4 miles away. I suppose this time next week they will be right into the station.

16 DECEMBER 1907—Today (Saturday) the residents of Cloncurry had the satisfaction of witnessing one of the construction trains steaming into town. It arrived at midday and left at 2 p.m. with over 100 passengers going coastwards. The train on Sunday also took a further 100.

The trains were six days later than anticipated due to rain a fortnight previously between Julia Creek and Cloncurry playing havoc with the temporary creek crossings. The washaways in many places were more serious than at first thought. Mr Pagan, Chief Engineer for Railways, hoping to reach here on Tuesday night, came as far as the Fullarton River and found a lot of places washed out that had only been repaired the previous day. He went on to the Williams River by pumper, but found there were so many washaways it would be better to go back. He came to the conclusion that the railway could not undertake to carry traffic in a regular way, but every effort would be made to get through at least one train before Christmas.

22 DECEMBER 1907—"Rain, glorious rain!" is the cry to be heard from the throats of all who have struck this town during the last two or three days. We had a glorious downpour of 310 points Tuesday evening. Creeks and rivers were overflowing in all directions and the various mailmen report ploughing their way through mud. The flats were sheets of water and the streets were running torrents. This general rain has come in the nick of time for miners, many of whom have abandoned their shows on account of the scarcity of water. I expect to hear of renewed activity in copper as soon as the Christmas holidays are over.

Coppermine Creek, which runs at the south side of the main street, came down a banker for five days. A number of billabongers who were camped in the bed of the creek had the whole of their abodes washed away. Clothes and cooking utensils littered the banks

of the creek as far as the river.

Residents on the opposite side of town were completely isolated, especially the female portion. Many of the male element swam the creek to get to town, and several narrowly escaped drowning. One poor fellow named James Madden, a copper gouger, lost his life attempting the swim. It appears Madden, a single man, went to the creek at the back of Lobeton's Hotel on Friday night. Several residents advised him not to attempt to negotiate the crossing, but he took no heed and plunged into the torrent. They saw him washed up against a tree and it is supposed he was stunned by the impact. He immediately sank and no more was seen of him until next morning when a blacktracker discovered his body a quarter of a mile downstream. The unfortunate fellow attempted to swim the creek fully clothed and wearing boots, a task almost beyond human power. His body was brought to the Court House at 11 a.m. and later conveyed to the cemetery.

Two trains arrived here at midday today (Sunday). They left Julia Creek last Tuesday morning and battered their way through, fixing up countless washaways along the way. One of the trains contained material for the line, and the other about 150 tons of merchandise for business firms. With scarcely any sugar, flour or potatoes available in town before the arrival of this pair of steam horses, the outlook was beginning to look blue. Sugar was selling at 30/- a bag – and hard to obtain at that. As I write, men are dumping goods from vans and a large number of drays are busy loading up.

There was great rejoicing when the train arrived. One well-known hotel proprietor collected a buggy load of drinks and shouted all the navvies; though among the crowd I noticed more than navvies having a swig.

The trains were scheduled to depart tomorrow morning taking with them a number of miners on their way home to the Towers for Christmas. Unfortunately, the weather has delayed them, with the likely result they will be spending Christmas somewhere on the line clearing washaways.

27 DECEMBER 1907—The Railway Commissioner has received the following wire from the resident engineer at Cloncurry – "Still raining heavily, 9½ inches since December 15. The line is very heavily damaged. Between here and Eastern Creek all the deviations have been swept clean and there have been washouts on many flats."

4 JANUARY 1908—Mr Sexton, resident engineer, returned yesterday after being stuck at the head of the line near Cloncurry for two weeks due to heavy rain. It has now been decided to close the line between Julia Creek and Cloncurry until after the wet season, which means the end of March.

1. See drawing on page 125.
2. See drawing on page 120.

4 JANUARY 1908—What a grand Christmas box this country has had. Rain – and plentiful rain at that – keeps coming to hand from all quarters. At Fort Constantine, Mr Taylor informed me that from December 15 to January 1 they had almost 16 inches, the best they've seen for years. Quamby, Granada and Canobie report equally good downpours. Water fills every creek and hollow, and the grass is shooting up inches a day. At the racecourse it is a foot high in some places. The rain was a handsome Christmas box for the district and should give a big fillip to the mining and pastoral industries during 1908.

Cobb & Co's coach put in an appearance today bringing the Christmas mail with it. Driver Fred Richards states that his billet has not been a bed of roses during the holidays and I am sure no one will dispute him. His previous journey to Helton took 11 days and he and his two passengers were three days without food. Their Christmas dinner, as one of the other coach drivers put it, comprised "green herbage and grasshopper stew".

24 FEBRUARY 1908—Over a hundred camels arrived here from Helton last Friday, all laden with

produce. They marched boldly into town but were ordered outside the boundary until 4 p.m. This caused consternation amongst the owners, as they pleaded ignorance of the by-laws regulating camel traffic, which debars camels from entering the town between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. They pulled out of the main street and then a deputation waited on the shire clerk who granted them a special permit to unload on account of the bulk of the load being potatoes and onions which, as they stated, were fast decaying. However, the pound-keeper came down on them like a ton of bricks and has given them until Wednesday next to register their camels under penalty of being summonsed. I may state that one of the new by-laws compels all camels to be registered, a fee of 10/- each being the fee.

Since then the camel men held a meeting, and from what I could glean I believe they have decided to boycott Cloncurry. If this be true then it will be hard on some of the gougers who are working in the fastness of the mountains where no waggon can possibly get and who rely solely on camels to get their ore away.

23 MARCH 1908—A petition bearing some 300

signatures has been forwarded to the railway authorities, praying that the line to Cloncurry be opened for passenger traffic. If the line is safe for goods, why is it not safe for passenger traffic is the cry of all you meet in Cloncurry. It is about time it was opened. People resent paying Cobb & Co 35/- for a trip which can be got for 9/- by rail, and not one-half the expenses to pay along the route. What a harvest Cobb & Co must have made on the Richmond-Cloncurry Road during the last two years during the boom before the arrival of the rail.

20 APRIL 1908—Goods trains run to time, but the railway authorities are still flouting the residents in this district by not opening the line for passenger traffic. People leaving here by train, I am sure, would be only too pleased to pay £1 for their ride to Julia Creek rather than travel in the objectionable coaches.

13 JUNE 1908—The first official passenger train from Cloncurry leaves this morning with several people travelling to the coast. Messrs Cobb & Co are ready to close their branch here, and will do so when the railway takes over the mail.





IN 1881, while in the Cloncurry area as Government Geologist investigating the country to be traversed by a proposed railway line, Robert Logan Jack made an important contribution to Queensland development. He recognized from the geology of the surrounding country that it would be conducive to bearing artesian water, surmising that rain falling on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range would seep between layers of impervious rock and remain trapped deep underground. Together with J.B. Henderson, a hydrologist, Jack led a team responsible for drilling the first (unsuccessful) artesian bore in Queensland in 1885. Two years later, the first viable artesian flow was obtained by a Canadian team drilling near Barcaldine.

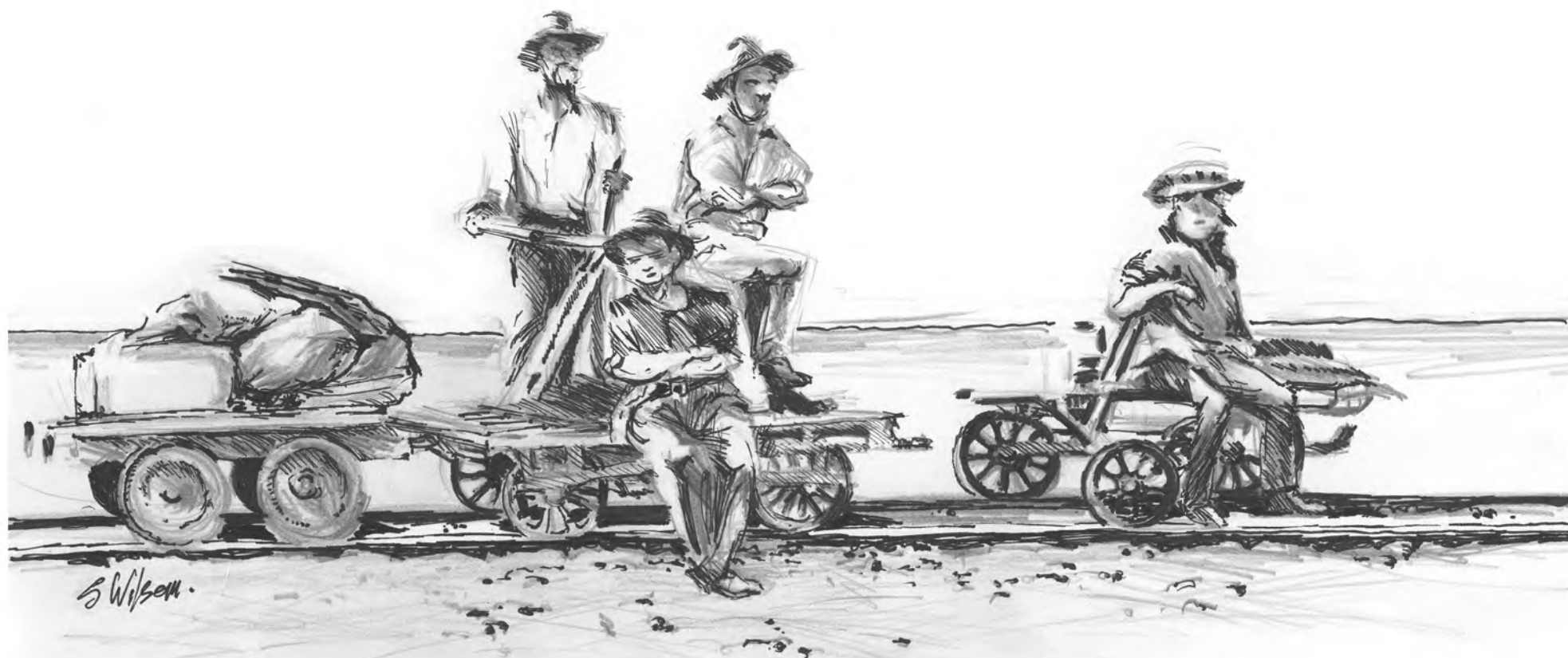
R.L. Jack returned to Cloncurry in 1908 and was a passenger on the third train to leave Cloncurry on the newly-finished line. His 10-day adventure, travelling by flood-impaired train to Julia Creek, was reported by the *North Queensland Register*.

SUNDAY, 22ND DECEMBER 1907 was a memorable day for Cloncurry. The annual famine was threatening, but a train loaded with 150 tons of the necessities and some of the luxuries of life arrived from Julia Creek. It was preceded by a train carrying a large gang of navvies who repaired the breaches in the line as they went. The journey of 83 miles took six days. The train was to start on the return journey on Monday morning, but something like 2 inches of rain fell in the night. The crowd of passengers whose expectations lay elsewhere, gloomily unpacked the baggage they had packed with high hopes the day before. It was understood to have been authoritatively stated that there must be at least three dry days before the train could be started.

The three dry days did not come for some time. The town became a bog through which imperfect footpaths wandered. Coppermine Creek, which divides the business part from the residential part of the town, and which is generally dry, rose to formidable proportions. Many had to swim from their homes to their work, and one man was drowned when making for his home. Some leading citizens put their dignity in their pockets and their boots and socks under their arms, and thus bade defiance to the perils of sitting in an office with wet feet.

The heaviest rain of all fell on Friday 27th and the creek again became impassable. In all, about 12 inches had fallen since the break of the drought. The last heavy downpour was, however, followed by three almost rainless days, and it was announced that the train would leave on Tuesday 31st.

During the night of Monday there was anguish among the intending passengers as they lay awake listening to the roar of rain on the roof. When day broke it was evident that the good effects of three days drying had been undone, and it was with some surprise that we learned that the train would start all the same as it must get away some time and the weather might clear as we travelled.



Two pigsties and a sweetener **R.L. Jack**

Passengers took with them six days' provisions and their sleeping gear, and signed an indemnity solemnly declaring that they travelled at their own risk. There was a sound of hurrying to and fro as all hands made for the railway.

The first excitement for our little party was the cart carrying our luggage and provisions becoming bogged in a drain only a few yards from the hotel. The horse proved a hopeless jib and one of the party had to run for another as we feared to be left behind by what would probably be the last train for months. No train, we argued, however slow or however crowded, could possibly be as uncomfortable as camping out in the rain on wet clay, our fate if we were obliged to be a passenger of Cobb & Co.

We arrived at the station in plenty of time, for the embarkation of 150 railway officials and workmen and somewhere about 100 passengers, with all their swags, tools and provisions, is a tedious matter. Our train consisted of an engine and tender, with nine waggons in front and 17 behind. For a train bent on a mission such as ours, this disposition is necessary so as to have trucks loaded with sleepers in front of the engine ready to be pushed up to the places where the sleepers will do the most good.

With seven others I found accommodation in a luggage van, but the majority of the passengers and crew had to cover open trucks with tarpaulins to make up for the absence of a roof over their heads.

The residents at both ends of the railway extension had clamoured for the speedy construction of the line, and the Premier had promised that the locomotive would be in Cloncurry by Christmas. The engineer accomplished the feat with eight days to spare, but not by any means in the way he would have gone about it had he been left to his own devices.

The line encounters no serious grades except where watercourses have to be crossed. The sleepers are laid directly on the baked muddy soil, without ballast and with a minimum of packing, and until the rains came they carried the rails almost as well as if ballasted.

Bridges and viaducts have yet to be thrown over numerous watercourses. The policy pursued, so far as a traveller can judge, has been to select places for bridges where the rivers and creeks are at their narrowest, even if at the same time at their deepest, the object being to reduce the length of bridges to a minimum. However, the bridges could obviously not be built by Christmas, and the temporary line was carried on deviations which dipped into the watercourses, supported, if necessary, by temporary bridgework consisting of sleepers stacked into square

"pigsties". This was a good enough makeshift as long as dry weather lasted. But with the coming of the wet these deviations had the earthwork washed away from beneath the sleepers as soon as the river began to run, and the pigsties simply melted away.

The Cloncurry line has been put in order and the first goods train got through on Friday. The opening of the line will be a great boon to the Cloncurry district. No less than 60 trucks of goods are now awaiting transit from Julia Creek to Cloncurry.

After the heavy rains the Railway Department proposed to close the line till April, but Dr. R.L. Jack's article in this journal, showing how a train had returned from Cloncurry in the wet, directed public attention to the possibility of reopening the traffic. The Premier recognised the importance of the line to Cloncurry and directed that it at once be reopened – and kept open. The work of reconstruction was then hurried on with the above gratifying result.

NQR: 03 Feb 1908

"While the bridging of the Williams was in progress, a pumper was dispatched to Cloncurry for additional rations in case the journey should take more than the estimated six days."



Tuesday 31st December was, on the whole, a dry day in spite of a few showers in the forenoon. The train progressed slowly and cautiously, preceded by men on a pumper who were quick to note any defect in the line. After several stoppages for minor repairs, we had traversed the whole of the slightly hilly country east of Cloncurry and camped 20 miles from the town on the left bank of Bishops Creek, a strong running stream. There was more rain from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. which did not improve matters.

New Year's Day was fair, except for drizzle in the early morning. It was a quarter to 6 in the afternoon before a temporary bridge had been completed and the train crossed Bishops Creek, passengers having previously received the order to get out and walk, transmitted by some wit as: "All hands take to your feet". We went on 2 miles and camped for the night.

Thursday 2nd January was a fine sunny day. We moved on at half-past 7 and reached the Williams River half an hour after midday. The river was only 14 inches deep, but had been 10 feet or more a day or two before. We found it spanned by a suspension bridge consisting of rails carrying about 35 sleepers, the sag in the middle just dipping into the water. The hope was entertained that we should cross the river in the course of the day. It was intended to lower the rails, or rather the sleepers, to the bed of the river, but just as this was about to be done a freshet raised the level of the water by a foot and it became evident that the crossing would be more difficult than anticipated.

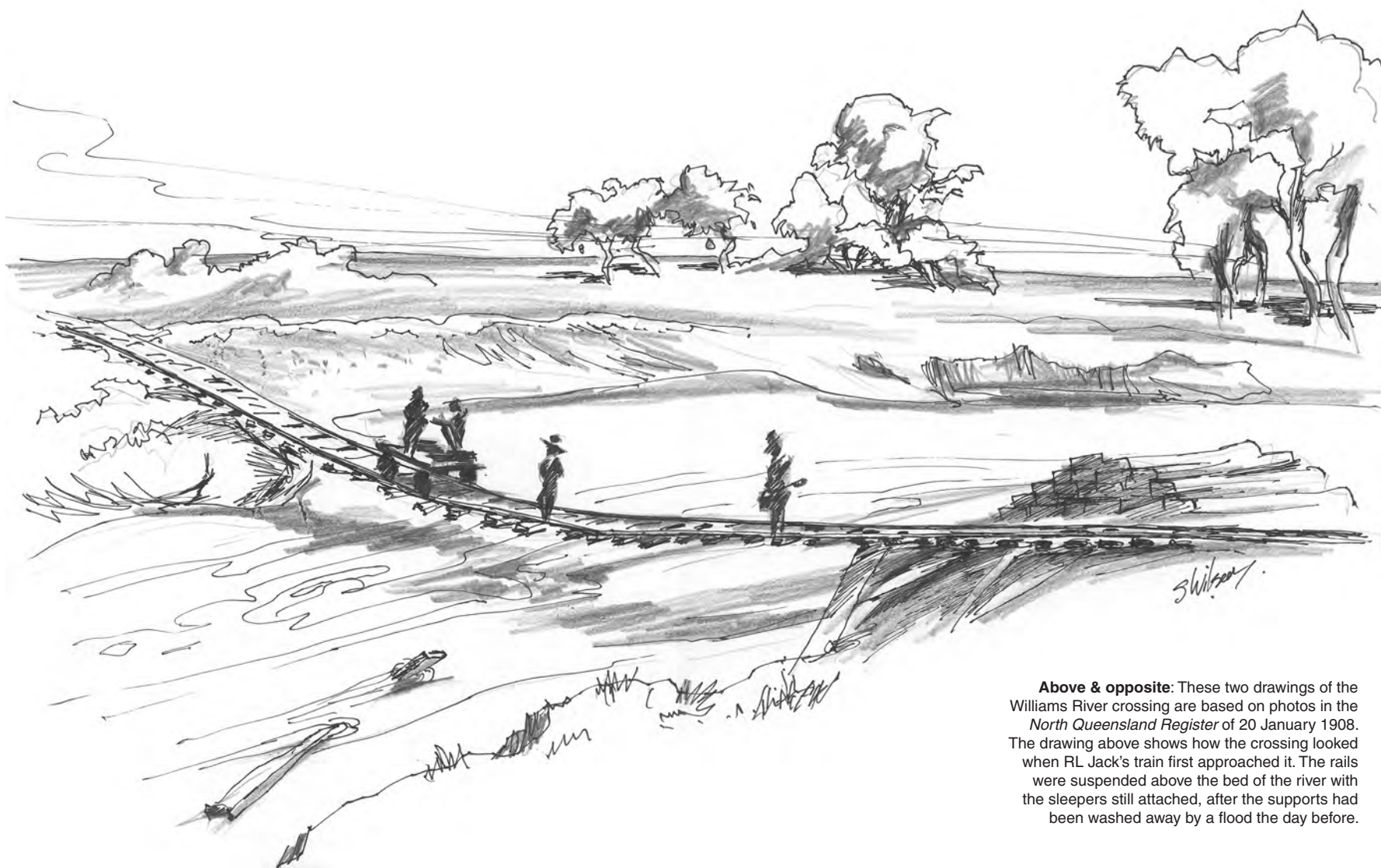
Friday 3rd January was another sunny day and very hot. While the bridging of the Williams was in progress, a pumper was dispatched to Cloncurry for additional rations in case the journey should take more than the estimated six days.

The crossing of the Williams was effected at 5.30, and at 7.15 we camped at Fullarton Siding (38¼ miles from Cloncurry). Here an artesian well, sunk for railway purposes, was utilised by the passengers and crew who revelled in hot baths and the washing of dirty linen. No thermometer was available, but the temperature was precisely that at which a hot bath is most agreeable and effective.

Saturday 4th January was dry and sunny in the morning, but a very heavy rain set in and delayed us till 2.15 when we again set forth ploughing through water. We camped for the night on the left bank of the Fullarton River (42 miles from Cloncurry). Here about 60 sleepers hung by the rails, forming a suspension bridge spanning a waterhole 8 feet deep.

On the following day the grades on both sides of the river were 'sweetened' by lengthening the slope. Wattle trunks were thrown into the water from both sides, and the middle was logged in such a manner as not to interfere with the slight current. The pumper, with rations from Cloncurry, overtook us in the afternoon.

We crossed the Fullarton on Monday morning. After passing two or three slight washaways which had to be replaced, we reached Holy Joe



Above & opposite: These two drawings of the Williams River crossing are based on photos in the *North Queensland Register* of 20 January 1908. The drawing above shows how the crossing looked when RL Jack's train first approached it. The rails were suspended above the bed of the river with the sleepers still attached, after the supports had been washed away by a flood the day before.

Creek (55½ miles from Cloncurry). This creek has two channels, both of which had to be pigstied and the rails lifted. We crossed at 5.30 and camped on the downs, 60 miles from Cloncurry.

On Tuesday 7th January we moved on and pulled up at Gidya Creek (61½ miles from Cloncurry) While we waited here a bullock was driven over from Eddington Station, killed, and cut up for the various messes. Gidya Creek had three narrow channels of running water, each of which received a couple of pigsties, and each of which had their approach sweetened. We crossed at 3 p.m. and arrived at 4.30 at the Gilliat River (64 miles from Cloncurry) where we camped for the night on the left bank.

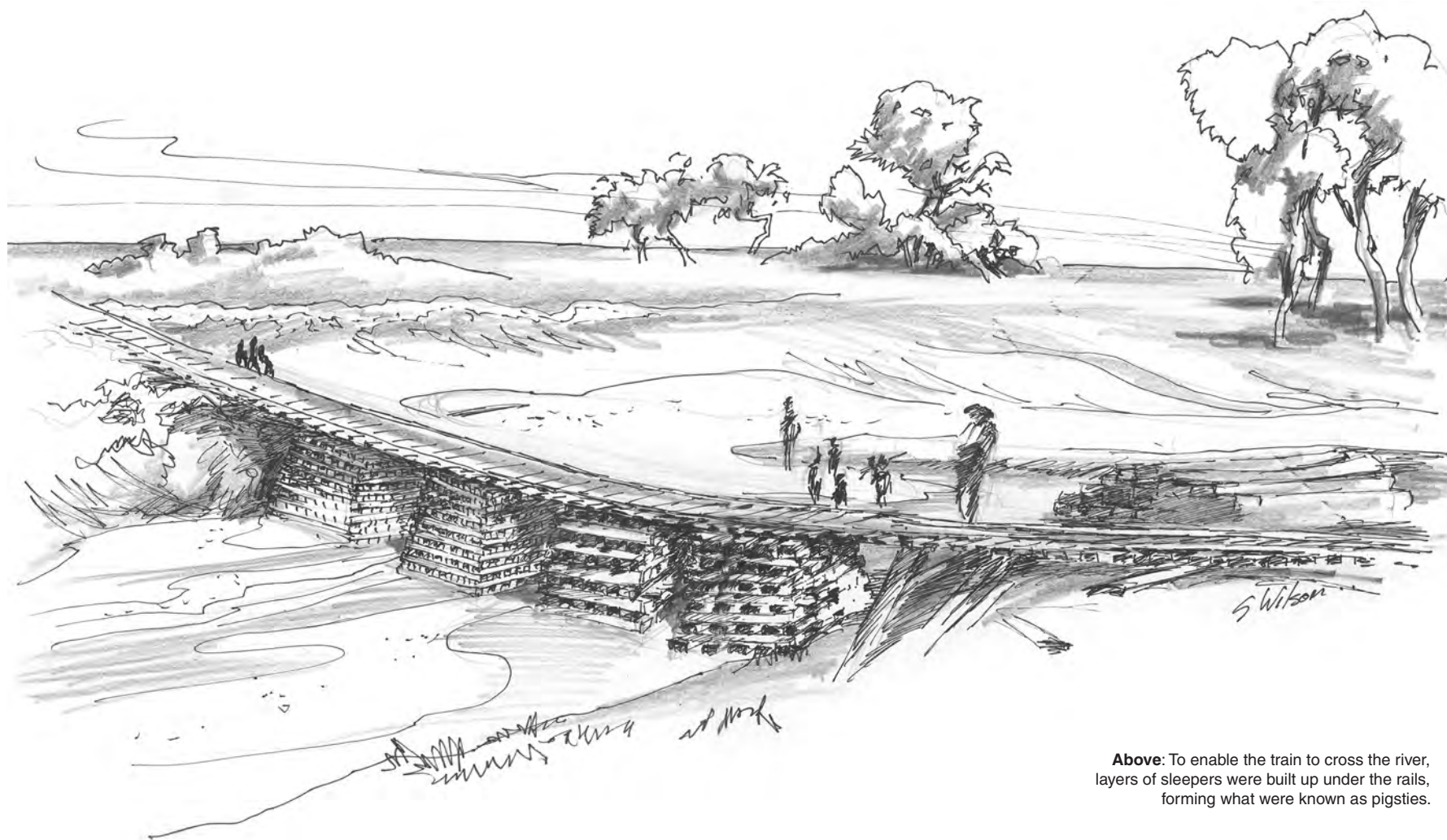
The Gilliat had no less than eight channels. The first and main channel had a narrow stream with a strong current, above which 13 sleepers were suspended by the rails. It was treated by four pigsties. The second channel took two, the third one, and the fourth two. The fifth was only boggy and required no repairs, although the sleepers sank under the pressure. The sixth took two pigsties and a sweetener. The seventh proved more difficult to deal with than anything we had encountered. It had a wide stream about 3 feet in depth and the bottom was pure mud. No less than 200 sleepers were used before a safe foundation was made for the rails. The engine passed over the bridge four times, bringing with it a part of the train each time, and each time further sinking was noted. The eighth and last channel was wide and still, taking four pigsties, one of them in 7 feet of water. It was almost dark before the Gilliat was finally negotiated by our train. We drew up and camped for the night on the right bank.

On Monday 9th January we moved on at 8 a.m. to Gilliat Siding where there is a triangle and a newly-finished station and residence. A number of horse waggons were waiting with loads of wool for dispatch by rail.

The Gilliat township, 2½ miles north, is visible from the siding. No one can help sympathising with those who have expended capital on hotels, stores and other buildings, to be suddenly rendered valueless. Probably the railway surveyors argued that the bodily removal of the township would cost less than the deviation of the line.

We crossed Eastern Creek by a bridge which had not been damaged, and we finally reached Julia Creek at 6 p.m. This ended a memorable railway journey of 83 miles in 10 days. Slow though the rate may appear, it was in reality rapid considering the number and variety of difficulties met with. Passengers learned with some satisfaction that if they had waited at Cloncurry for the next coach they would still have been on the wrong side of Julia Creek.

We were informed at Richmond that one of the crossings we made was swept away by a freshet the day after we left it behind us, giving rise to critics – wise after the event – who say that it was a great mistake to construct this railway other than as a permanent work. But I for one am not convinced. As it stands, this severe test may prove a blessing in disguise. It has pointed out with unerring finger the weak points of the Cloncurry extension which will have to be permanently defended against flooding water.



Above: To enable the train to cross the river, layers of sleepers were built up under the rails, forming what were known as pigsties.

Four Years Without Heart

The Cloncurry railway begets a town
The children of Julia Creek beget a school

Below: Detail taken from the plan of the first Julia Creek land auction held at Richmond on 25th February 1908. 'X' marks the spot of the proposed school. I presume that locals had copies of this plan and that they included it with their application for a school because the document is now a part of the Julia Creek State School records archived in Brisbane.

Of the families listed on the application, only the Grahams had a lasting impact on Julia Creek. John Graham's wife, Matilda Alice, the Matriarch of Julia Creek, has left a genetic legacy in Harold Walters, Mannie Sills and Vicki Adam, whose stories feature elsewhere in this book.

[Queensland Archives, AQ08, 1908]

Property Owners noted on plan:

Section V

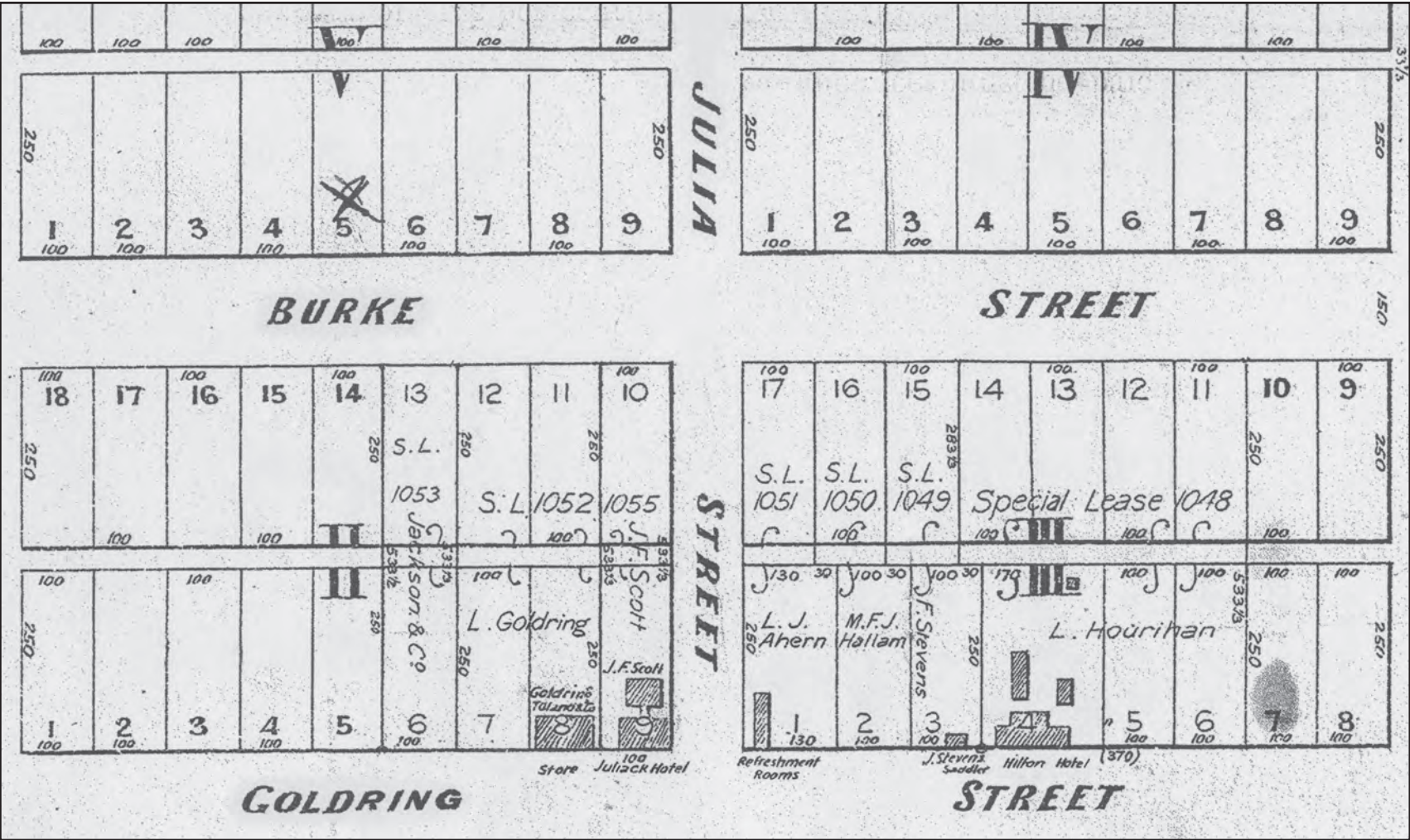
Lot 5: Proposed school

Section II

Lots 6, 13: Jackson & Co (see ad page 125)
Lots 7, 8, 11,12: Goldring Tolarno & Co, Store
Lots 9, 10: JF Scott, Julia Creek Hotel

Section III

Lot 1, 17: LJ Ahern, Refreshment Rooms
Lot 2, 16: MFJ Hallam
Lot 3, 15: J. Stevens, Saddler
Lots 4-6, 11-14: L Hourihan, Hilton Hotel



16 May 1908

Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

SIR – at a public meeting held on the 3rd day of May 1908 at Julia Creek, the following gentleman, namely: C. Rosenskjar, J.F. Scott, T. Tobin, J. Bisly, W. Mundy, J. Graham, W. Smith, E. McMahon, S.J. Ingham and R. Ingham were elected members of a Building Committee for promoting the establishment of a Provisional School at Julia Creek. Mr Ronald Ingham has been appointed secretary to the Committee. His postal address is Julia Creek.

The number of children over the age of 5 and under 15 years likely to attend the proposed school is 22. Annexed is a list of the same and of their parents, which we certify to be correct. The amount of local subscription already promised is £35. The total amount expected to be collected is £50. The nearest school maintained or subsidised by the State is at Cloncurry, distant 84 miles by the nearest road.

The proposed site consists of Crown Land and is situated at Allotment 5 of Section V, facing Burke St. The total cost of the building, furniture, tanks, closets, and fencing is estimated at £150 to £250.

We have the honour to request that a Provisional School be established as proposed, to be known as the Julia Creek Provisional School.



J. Graham
J. F. Scott

Members of the
Building Committee.

PARENT	CHILDREN
Ahern, L.J.	John 8, May 6
Body, Frederick.....	Sidney 12, Harold 5
Graham, John.....	Eliza 13, Charles 10, John Bernard 7, Thomas 5
Ingham, Ronald	Beryl Dasson 12, Jessie 7, Rijssiala James 5
Ingham, S.J.....	Samuel 12, Frank 4
Juhan, Edward.....	Gertrude 11
McMahon, Edward.....	Marrey Ellen 15, Johanna 12, Kate 10, Timothy 8
Murray, W.	David 6
Scott, John F.....	Harold 7, Charlie 6
Smith, William H.	Elsie 6, Rubie 5



UNTIL 1911 JULIA CREEK was four years without heart – if a primary school is considered the heart of a place – and within 12 months of the rails being laid locals wanted the absence remedied. ‘X’ marked the location of the applied-for Julia Creek school (see map opposite) at the site of the present-day butcher shop. In the margins of the application an anonymous official wrote:

I recommend writing to Mr Taylor, Inspector for this district, informing him of this application and asking him whether, without a special visit to the locality (which he may have lately passed through on his way to Cloncurry) he can give any information which may be helpful in enabling a decision to be arrived at as to whether such a school should be approved and subsidised. He might be told that the list shows 23 children, but that information is desired as to the nature of the locality and the pursuits of the parents; whether the population is in his opinion floating (such as might arise from the place being temporarily a railway terminus, or the site of building a railway bridge) or likely to be permanent.

The proposal was rejected on receipt of Mr Taylor’s report due to the small number of children and the transient nature of their parents’ occupation. A second attempt was made in 1911 and this time a school was approved, bringing to Julia Creek not just a school but a valuable record of the town’s early history.

Julia Creek’s dark ages are the years between 1908 and the mid-1920s, pierced only by school records and a small number of eye-witness accounts. A bustle of interest in the young settlement lasted only while the railway was being built, and soon fell away when the railway lost its newsworthiness after it was completed.

Apart from its small population, the primary reason for Julia Creek’s dark ages (and the reason the school records are so important as a source of early Julia Creek history) is that the town never had a local paper. It relied on weekly columns in the *Cloncurry Advocate* and the *North Queensland Register* to report town happenings. The Julia Creek Notes column in the *Register* began on a regular basis in February 1925. Before then, Julia Creek received the sporadic coverage befitting a small town 500 miles from the paper’s Townsville base. If it wasn’t for the *Register* being the pre-eminent newspaper in North Queensland, striving to cover all news from the north, the newspaper record of Julia Creek in the years 1909-1929 would today be almost a complete blank. The *Cloncurry Advocate*, in existence since 1888 and the closest newspaper, would have had something to say about Julia Creek, but no copies prior to 1929 have been preserved. Twenty years of Julia Creek snippets in the earthy style of a mining-town paper have been forever lost, except for the occasional article considered to be newsworthy enough to be reprinted in the *Register*; for example, articles about One Chop Usher¹.

The story of the Julia Creek State School as outlined here condenses to seven sections:

- 1908... Unsuccessful attempt to establish a school.
- 1911... Provisional School is established, but in a substandard building.
- 1915... Government builds a state school.
- 1921... Governor visits the school.
- 1922... New school is built.
- 1928... Old school is sold.
- 1943... Children endure disgraceful toilet facilities.

1. See One Chop Usher story on page 274.

Application rejected 1908

9 July 1908

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

Report on the circumstances attending the settlement at Julia Creek

SIR – I was in the neighbourhood of Julia Creek in early May. Twelve months ago there was nothing but one small public house and a mail change for coach horses. This year there are two hotels, a stationmaster's residence and a sawmill. There are cattle yards for entraining stock.

After a few months (information as to which may be obtained from the Department of Railways) the sawmill will be removed, probably one hotel will close, and the settlement will, I consider, be limited to one hotel, one store and the stationmaster's residence. The fact that yards are built at Julia Creek will ensure the continuance of a small settlement, but I do not think it will be very large.

Of the families applying, only Body and Smith are actually engaged on the railway. R. Ingham, S.J. Ingham, McMahon and Graham appear to have come to Julia Creek on account of the sawmill (which was moved from Richmond). As there is practically no local wood at Julia Creek for the sawmill, it is quite probable that these six families with their 16 children will move again when the sawmill is shifted.

The locality is wide-reaching plains and sheep stations occupy it.

WILLIAM TAYLOR
District Inspector.

[Undated]

Secretary
Commissioner for Railways

SIR – Mr Taylor, District Inspector of Schools, reporting in May on the application for the establishment of a provisional school at Julia Creek, advised that there are at the place two hotels, a sawmill and the stationmaster's residence; that it is probable that the sawmill will be removed at an early date; and that most of the families in whose interests a school is desired will not remain at Julia Creek after the mill is removed.

The Minister did not regard it as expedient, in view of the particulars afforded by Mr Taylor, that the department should incur the expenditure involved in the establishment of a provisional school at Julia Creek and the school committee was advised accordingly.

Having regard to the above, I have the honour, by direction of the Secretary for Public Instruction, to enquire whether the Railway Department could advise this office as to whether Julia Creek is likely to be a sufficiently permanent settlement to warrant an expenditure of £200 in the erection of school buildings.

UNDER SECRETARY
Department of Public Instruction

11 November 1908

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

SIR – I am now desired to inform you the stationmaster at Julia Creek reports that when the line to Cloncurry is officially opened only about 12 children will remain at the former place, the parents of whom state they intend residing there permanently. The railway men now at Julia Creek have no families.

Under these circumstances it is not considered that Julia Creek is likely to be a sufficiently permanent settlement to warrant an expenditure of £200 in the erection of school buildings at the present time. Perhaps a lesser expenditure would suffice to start with.

SECRETARY, Commissioner's Office
Queensland Railways.

28 November 1908

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

SIR – with regard to the provisional school at Julia Creek for which an application was made several months ago. We have not asked for £200, we are satisfied to rent a building if the Department will find a teacher.

Trusting that this long deferred application may receive more favourable consideration.

Yours faithfully
RONALD INGHAM
Hon. Secretary

8 December 1908

Secretary
School Building Committee Julia Creek

SIR – I have the honour, by direction, to inform you that before the Minister could appoint a teacher to Julia Creek at the usual full salary it would be necessary to have at least 18 children of school age available for attendance. The experience of the Department shows that an enrolment of not less than 18 is needed to ensure a permanent average attendance of 12, the minimum average required by the regulations to warrant the payment to a teacher of the usual full salary; and it is not likely that a teacher would be found who would be willing to accept appointment to the place at a reduced salary.

The Minister regrets that it will not be practicable for him to afford educational facilities at Julia Creek at present, even though the parents may be prepared to rent a building and furnish and equip it for teaching purposes.

UNDER SECRETARY
Department of Public Instruction

Application accepted 1911

18 July 1911

J.F. Scott
Julia Creek

SIR – with reference to previous correspondence on the subject [next page], the Minister has approved that a provisional school be established at Julia Creek and that the necessary furniture be provided without cost to the parents. When the committee reports that the building is available and that closets have been provided, a teacher will be appointed.

UNDER SECRETARY
Department of Public Instruction

29 July 1911

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

SIR – in reply to your letter of July 18 re provisional school at Julia Creek, I beg to inform you that the building and closets are ready and we are now awaiting you to appoint a teacher and send along the necessary furniture.

Thanking you for deciding to grant us a teacher and supply furniture.

*I am,
Sir,
yours faithfully,
J. F. Scott
Hon. Sec.
Julia Creek School Committee.*

12 August 1911

J.F. Scott
Julia Creek

SIR – with reference to previous correspondence on the subject, Miss Mary Julia Cahill has been appointed to the position of teacher. She has been requested to take up duty as soon as possible and to advise you of the date on which she expects to open the school.

The teacher has also been requested to call a meeting of subscribers for the purpose of nominating a School Committee to supersede the Building Committee.

UNDER SECRETARY
Department of Public Instruction

I WAS BORN in Richmond in 1906. I travelled with my parents to Julia Creek by four-in-hand coach. My father was on the building committee which applied to have a school built at Julia Creek in 1908 when the railway line came through, but that application was not approved.

The first pupils were enrolled in 1911: five Grahams, two Coopers and three Scotts. Eight boys and two girls. My sister Gracie, two years older than me, sat with me.

Lots of things have happened since I began school at Julia Creek. It was only a provisional school until 1915, then it became a state school. A new schoolroom was built in 1922 and a few years later the old one was removed to the corner of Byrne and Quarrell Streets to become the Stock Inspector's office. It burnt down in 1938 while Mr Seymour was Stock Inspector.



GLADYS GRAHAM

Above: Gladys Graham. Gladys married Roy Hampton and stayed in Julia Creek until the 1950s. The Hamptons were quite successful in business, Roy dealing frequently in Julia Creek property and running a hairdresser and billiard room as a front for being an SP bookmaker. The Hampton story begins on page 659.

[Vicki Adam, QV04, ca 1930]

We regret to announce that the Stock Inspector's residence was destroyed with all its contents on New Year's day with the exception of a few small articles. Numbers of people came to their aid, but little could be done as the fire started at an early hour of the morning and had the advantage of being well on its way before being noticed. The contents were insured but not to an extent to compensate the owners for their loss. The car was saved, but in getting this out Mr. Seymour was badly burnt and had to be taken to Cloncurry. He is still seriously ill and Mrs. Seymour is suffering from shock. We trust that they soon regain their good health. To lose your all is very bad, but to lose your health is far worse. Let us hope that neither Mr. or Mrs. Seymour are affected in health in any way. During the week several swimming parties were organised in the afternoons to visit the Eddington waterhole, where a swim was indulged in, and after a short stay the journey was made back

NQR: 15 Jan 1938

Julia Creek
May 10th, 1911

The Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction
Brisbane

SIR - I beg to write on behalf of the parents of children at Julia Creek expressing our desire that the Department establish a Provisional (or other) school here, or as an alternative, provide for us a teacher and the necessary furniture, etc, if we obtain the use of a suitable building for the purpose of a school.

There are nine children here at present of school age, including my own son of 11 years whom, at great inconvenience, I have had to send to Townsville Grammar school, though he has had very little primary education. There are more children of the age of 3 and 4 years who will soon be fit to attend school.

The itinerant teacher, Mr Laffey, has done some good for the children on his recent visit, and we appreciate very much what the Department is doing for us in this direction, but we feel that if it be possible to have a teacher so that the children would be under regular control they would make more progress.

We trust you will give our application a favourable consideration.

I am,
Sir,
yours faithfully,
J.F. SCOTT

Mr. Laffey, itinerant teacher, who had been through all the country to the east of Cloncurry, returned here last week and has now gone out south-west to the Djarra and Boulia districts. Mr. Laffey has a large number of children on his route, as well as having to patrol a big area, but still he appears happy and looks well.

NQR: 26 Jun 1911

11943
16 MAY 1911
J.F. Scott
May 10th, 1911.
The Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction
Brisbane.
That a school be established.
Sir, -
I beg to write on behalf of the parents of children at Julia Creek, expressing our desire that the Department would establish a Provisional (or other) School here, or as an alternative, provide for us a teacher and the necessary furniture, etc, if we obtain the use of a suitable building for the purpose of a school.
There are 9 children here at present of school age, including my own son of 11 years whom, at great inconvenience I have had to send to Townsville Grammar School, though he has had very little primary education. There are more children of the age of 3 and 4 years who will soon be fit to attend school.
The Itinerant Teacher, Mr. Laffey, has done some good for the children on his recent visit, and we appreciate very much what the Department are doing for us in this direction, but we feel that if it be possible to have a teacher so that the children would be under regular control they would make more progress.
We trust you will give our application a favourable consideration.
I am,
Sir,
yours faithfully,
J.F. Scott.

First of all send lists to writer to fill in the names of prospective pupils.
(On receipt of the lists they might be referred to the Itinerant Teacher for report as to the need for the establishment of a school)

18.5.11

CHIEF CLERK
MAY 18 1911

An open-air school is built **1915**

24 June 1914

Deputy Government Architect
Re: School Building at Julia Creek

SIR – Mr May, MLA, who has lately returned from the district, spoke to me this morning regarding the Julia Creek school building. There is now an enrolment of 18 and an average attendance of 15. Mr May states that the building is an iron one, is unlined and unceiled, is wretchedly cold in winter and stiflingly hot in summer. The ventilation is exceedingly bad, practically no ventilation at all. An open-air tent school costing about £60 would be a vastly better arrangement than this. Please supply particulars.

UNDER SECRETARY
Department of Public Instruction

2 July 1914

JF Scott
Julia Creek

SIR – with reference to Mr John May’s recent interview with me in the matter, I have the honour to inform you that the Minister has approved the erection of a new open-air tent school at Julia Creek. The Works Department has accordingly been requested to take the necessary action.

UNDER SECRETARY
Department of Public Instruction

26 September 1914

Secretary
Department of Public Lands

SIR – I have the honour to inform you that the Minister has approved of the erection of a state school building at Julia Creek to supersede the existing provisional school and to request that you will be good as to grant to this Department as a site for the new school an area of 4½ acres being section IV of the town of Julia Creek as shown in red on the accompanying tracing [over page].

Kindly advise me whether the building may be erected in anticipation of the granting of the site for school purposes.

UNDER SECRETARY
Department of Public Instruction

THE SCHOOL BUILDING is a small corrugated iron shed 12' x 24' and is very hot during the summer months. Arrangements have already been made by the Department for an open-air tent school and it is urgently needed.

STATISTICAL RETURNS 1914

14 October 1914

J. May Esq, MLA

SIR – I have the honour to inform you that the Works Department has been requested to invite tenders for the erection of an open-air school building at Julia Creek, via Richmond.

UNDER SECRETARY
Department of Public Instruction

18 June 1915

Secretary
Department of Public Works

SIR – in pursuance of advertisement in the Government Gazette dated 8th day of May 1915, I the undersigned do hereby tender to provide the materials and perform the various works required in the erection of an open-air school with closet buildings at Julia Creek for the sum of £212, and to complete the same within three months from the date of acceptance of this tender.

J. DOYLE
[Successful tenderer]

23 October 1915

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

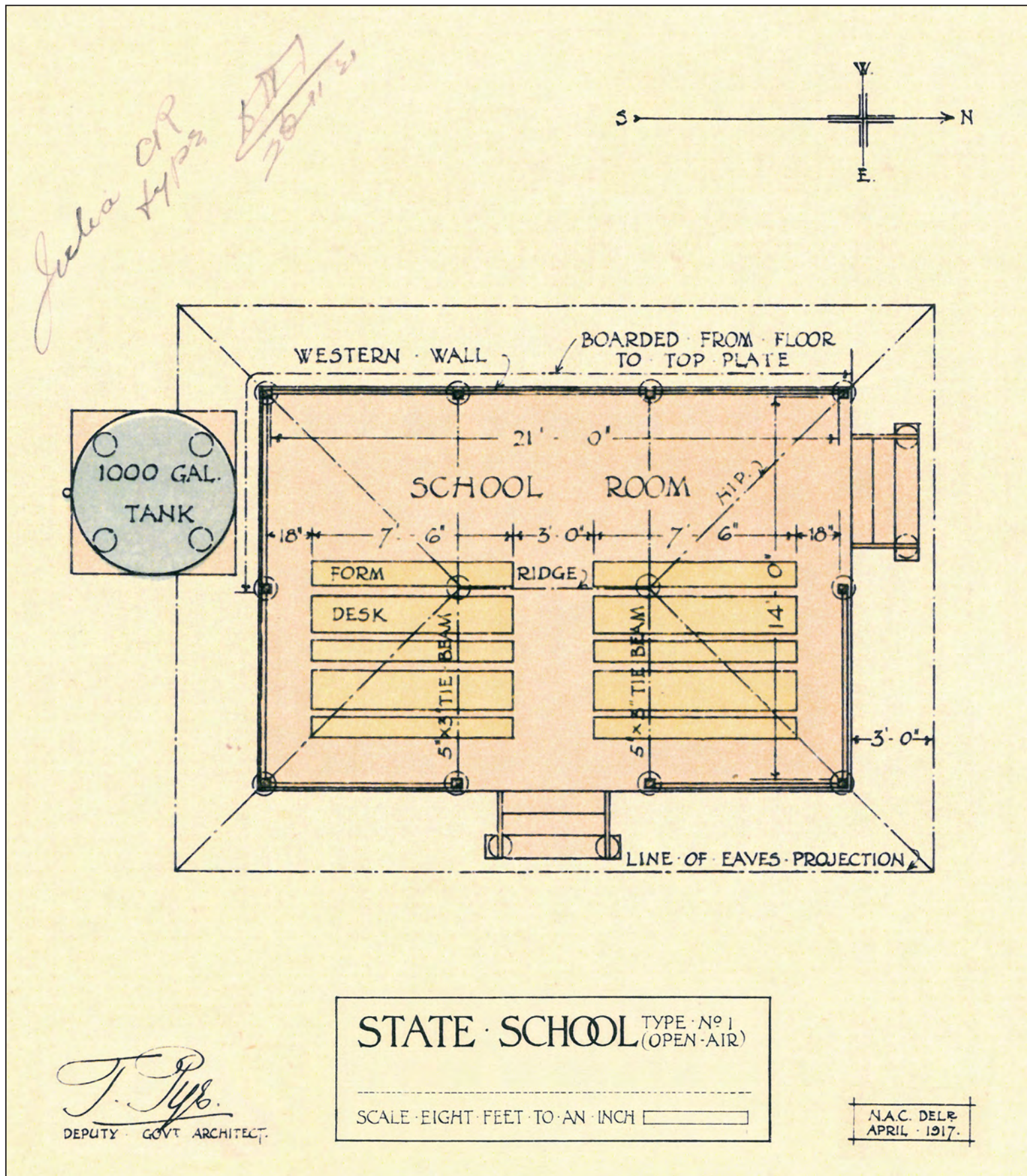
Sir – I have the honour to inform you that school was held in the new building Monday the 18th instant. I should like to state that it would be advisable to erect a fence around the new building as owing to its present position the canvas blinds are liable to injury by goats and cattle.

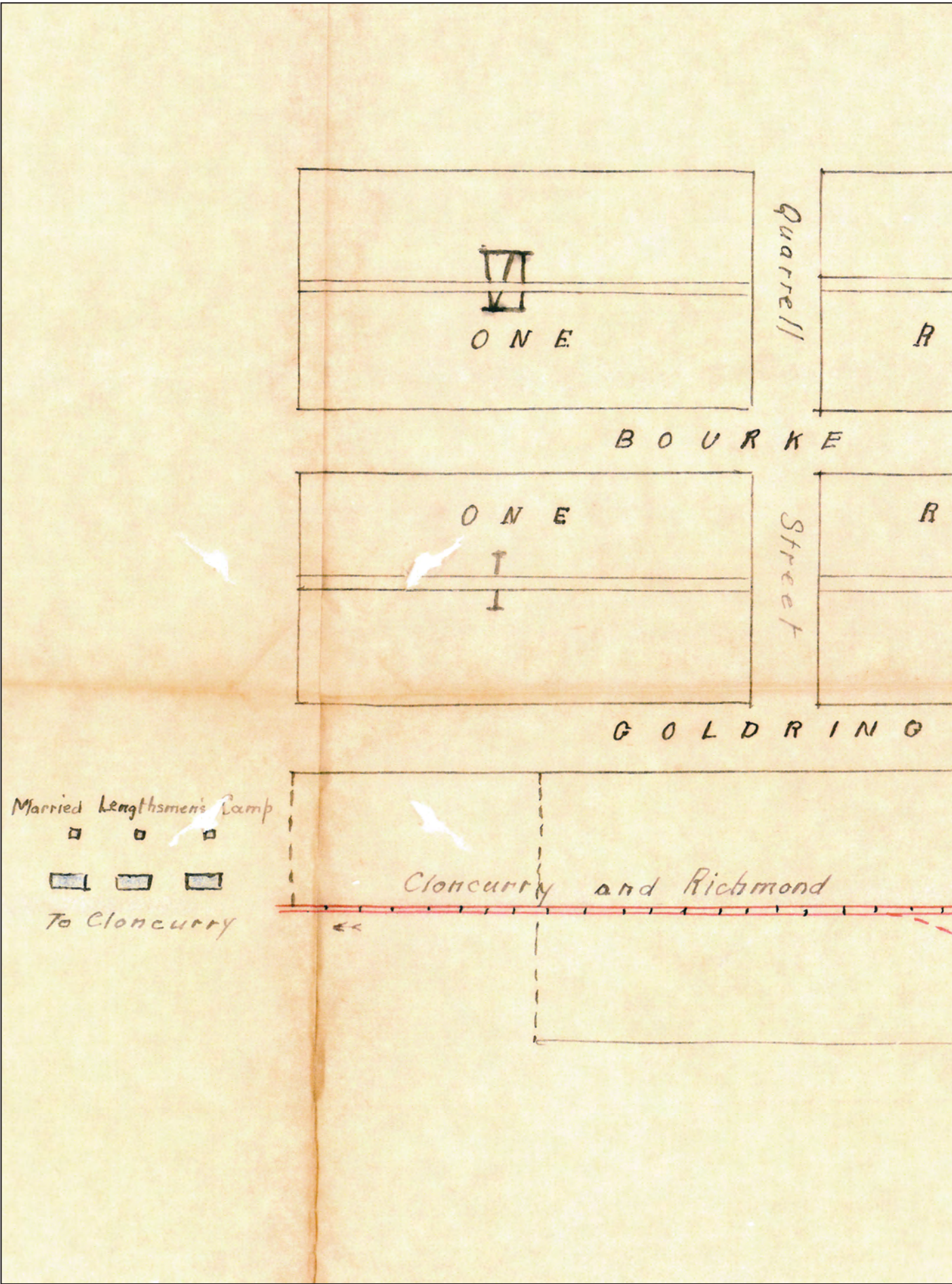
A.W.L. RUSSELL
Head Teacher
Julia Creek

Opposite: Plan of the 1915 Julia Creek school. There are two dates on the plan: April 1917 (bottom right) and 20/11/21 (top left) which, at first glance, might appear to suggest that this plan is not for the 1915 school. A drawing dated 28 August 1914 was prepared (page 142) but, for two reasons, I believe this was not the school that was built: (1) a photo taken in 1921 (page 145) matches the plan, opposite, very closely; and (2) the page 142 drawing shows the steps and water tank in the wrong position compared with the 1921 photo.

The simplest explanation for the date discrepancy is that the 1915 school was built from an earlier version of the plan shown opposite.

[Queensland Archives, AQ03, 1921]





Right: Town plan prepared by the School Committee in 1914 as part of their application for a new school. The existing school, erected by the Committee in 1911, was located on Lot 6 of Section III.

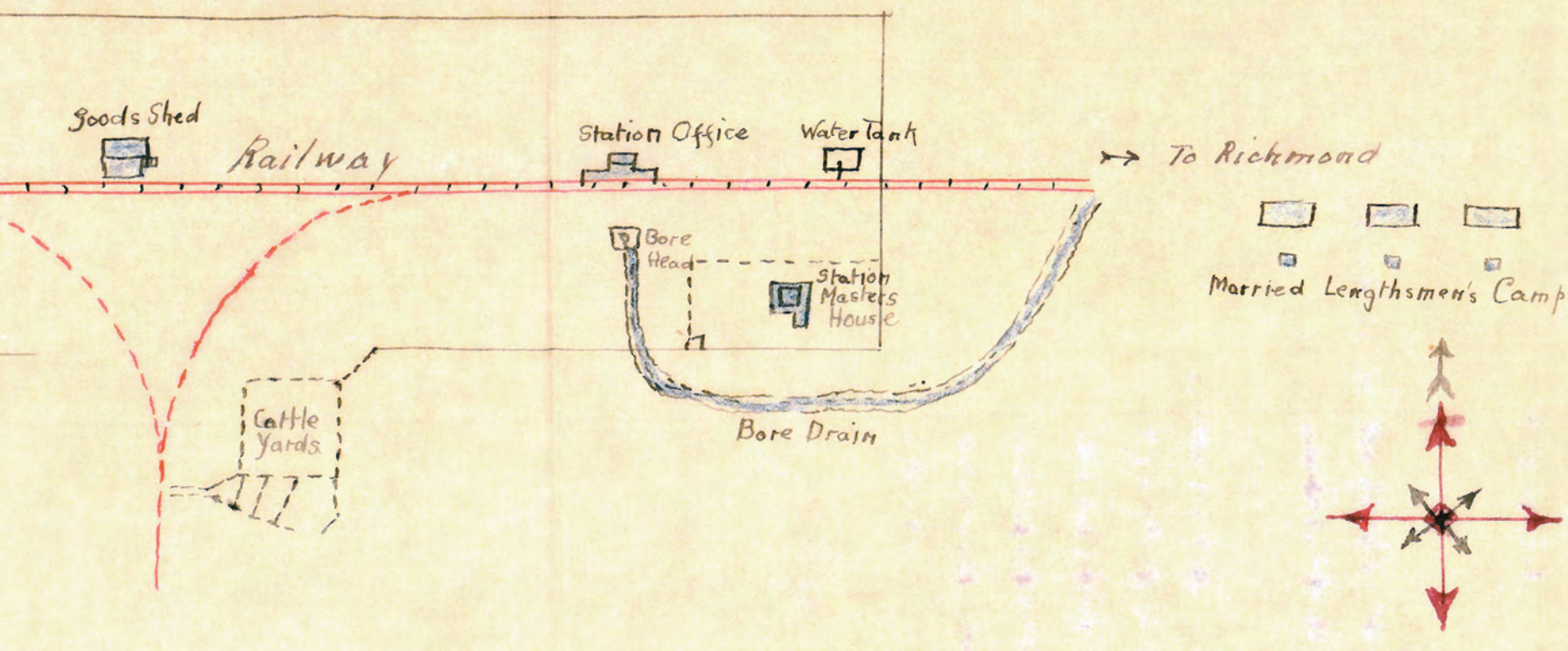
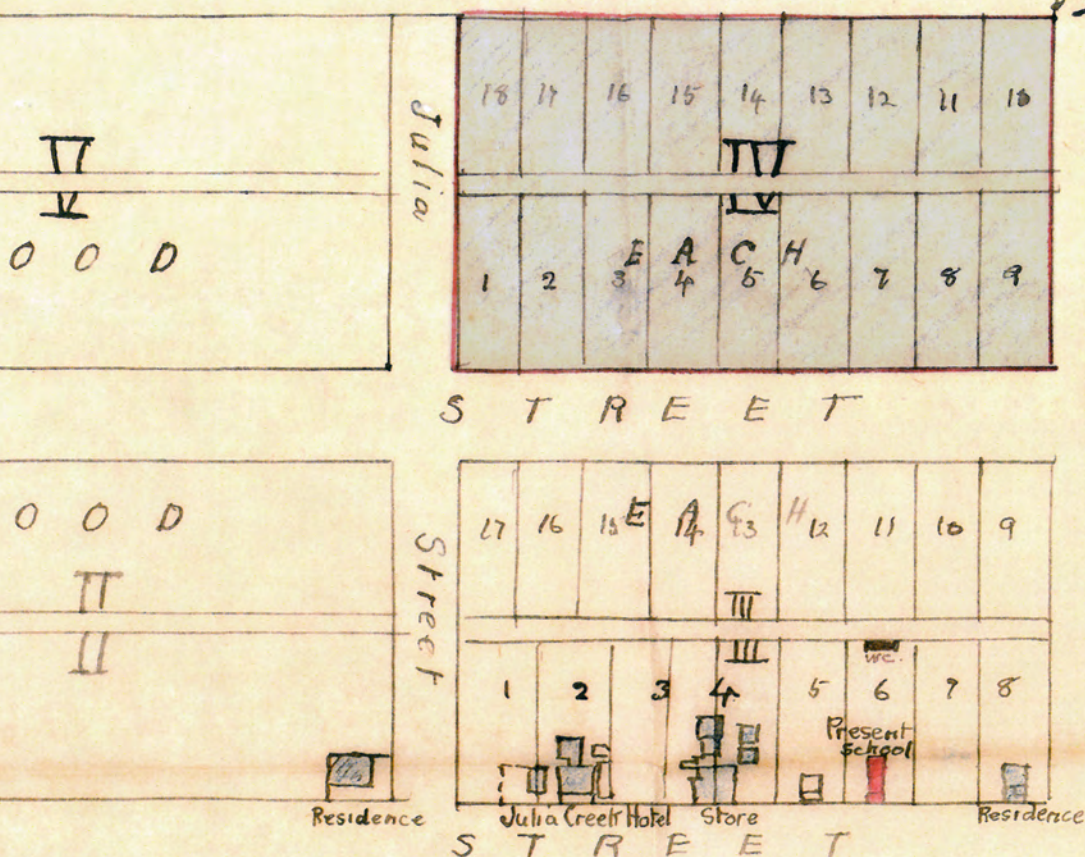
Note the misspelling of "Bourke St".

[Queensland Archives, AQ04, 1914]

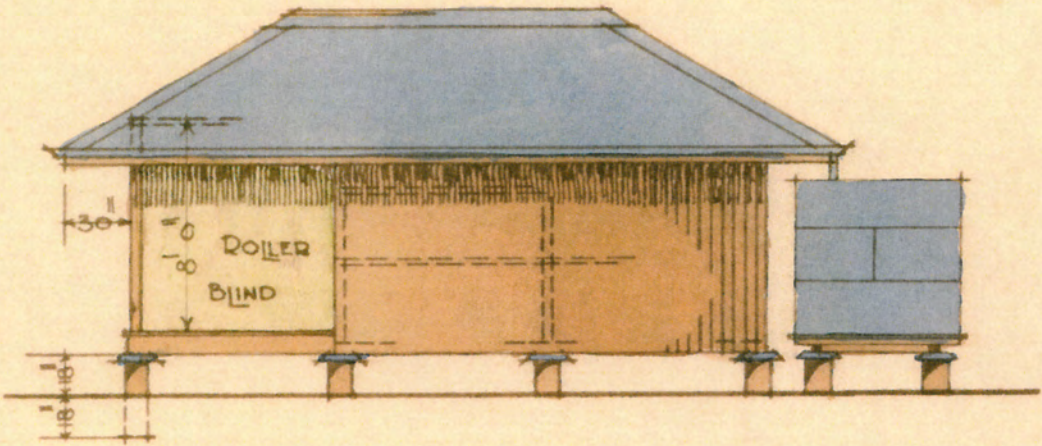
Block Shaded Represents ground
Chosen by Committee + Inspector
As being Suitable For School

Distance to Creek about 200 yds.

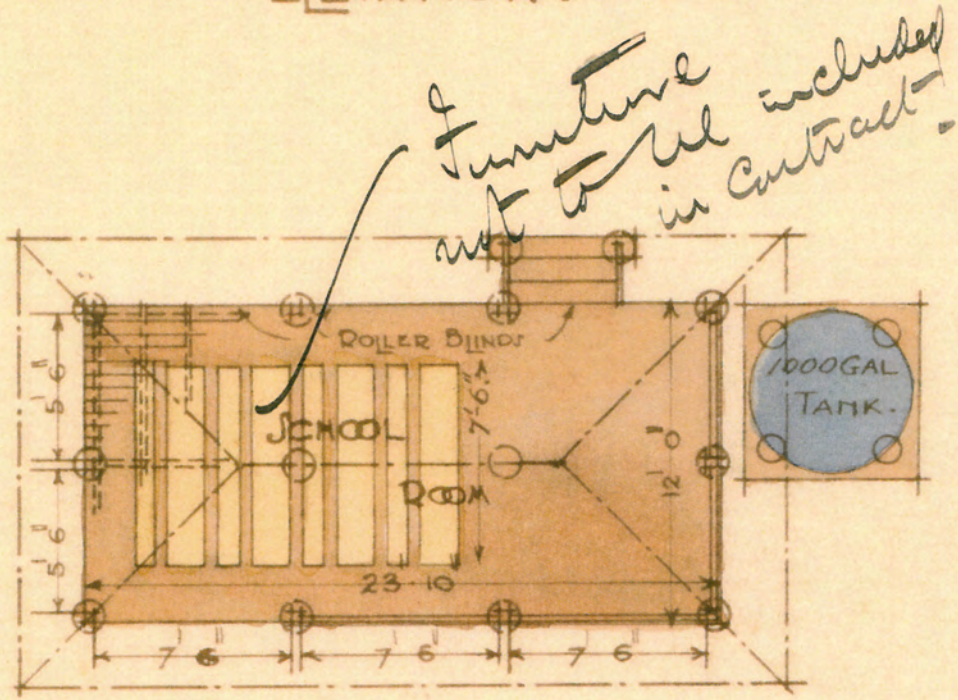
PLAN OF
TOWN OF JULIA CREEK.



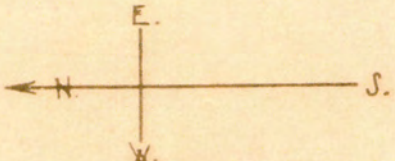
JULIA CREEK,
VIA RICHMOND.
PROPOSED NEW SCHOOL.



ELEVATION.



PLAN.



Left: The first proposal for a school at Julia Creek, dated 28 Aug 1914. It is likely that the school shown in the plan on page 139 was built instead, as the steps and the water tank do not match up with a photo of the school taken in 1921 (over page) during the Governor's visit.

This drawing is still of interest because it shows the roller blinds that teachers and parents complained about on several occasions.

[Queensland Archives, AQ05, 1914]

Pigs, goats and cinders 1916-17

28 June 1916

Report – Inspection of Julia Creek School

SIR – I inspected the Julia Creek school on the 3rd June and found that fly-proof netting is required around the school building. Mr Ryder, Itinerant Teacher, explained that flies were very bad in summer in consequence of a pigsty owned by the hotel proprietor being very close to the school. Efforts are being made to have the sty removed.

DISTRICT INSPECTOR

4 July 1916

Clerk
McKinlay Shire Council, McKinlay

SIR – I have the honour to inform you that it was pointed out to the Minister on his recent visit to Julia Creek that a pigsty is situated very close to the school and that efforts are being made locally to have the nuisance removed. The Minister will be glad if your council will make the necessary representations to the owner of the sty with a view to having it removed as soon as possible.

*UNDER SECRETARY
Department of Public Instruction*

21 July 1916

Under Secretary
Minister for Public Instruction

SIR – In reply to your letter of 4th instant, re pigsty at Julia Creek, I beg to state that the sty is about 70 yards from the school. A nuisance did exist and the council served a notice on the offender, E.D. Clifford, proprietor of the Julia Creek Hotel (where the nuisance was created) who failed to attend to abating it. Proceedings were instituted against him, the council securing a verdict in Police Court on 13th instant wherein the defendant was fined 10/- with costs and also a daily penalty of 5/- per day for 15 days.

*HARDGRAVE
Shire Clerk*

School was closed. No full-time teacher here.

STATISTICAL RETURNS 1916

24 January 1917

Under Secretary
Minister for Public Instruction

SIR – I have to report that during the recent violent rain storms the canvas blinds which form the walls of the school proved inadequate to resist the force of wind and rain and have blown in and torn across. Apart from the damage thus caused, a herd of goats had taken refuge in the building during the rain and caused considerable damage inside, having chewed up some of the stationery and otherwise knocked things about. The cleaning up of the mess can be attended to locally and the ruined stationery can, I presume, be requisitioned as soon as the expected teacher arrives; but the matter of the blinds is one requiring the attention of the Department. Until adequate protection against undesirable ingress is provided, there is nothing to prevent the goats repeating the dose the next time a violent rainstorm comes.

When may we expect the new teacher?

*CHARLES STEWART
Secretary
Julia Creek State School Committee*

24 November 1917

Under Secretary
Minister for Public Instruction

SIR – Will you please advise if possible to get a grant of £5 to allow of engaging a horse and cart to procure cinders to put a path to the school so as the children won't have to trudge through mud and water every time we have any rain. At present, the mud to be walked through to get to the school is terrible.

*NICK BURROWS
Secretary
Julia Creek State School Committee*

MY FIRST DAY at the little Julia Creek State School was in 1918. My dear old Gran dressed me up very nicely, all set with slate, pencil, sponge and hankie (a must in those days, and often pinned to our dresses). Off I went with my Aunt Gladys Graham who was still going to school at that time. All went well until playtime, then I ran off home. Wise old Gran was waiting for me in the shade of the 'little house' in the backyard and I ran to her calling out: "Save me! Save me!" I could see my teacher, Miss Alice Winn, following like a sergeant-major, slapping the cane by her side. Gran said: "Now Sylvia, take your teacher's hand and go back with her to school and don't come home until your Aunt Gladys does".

I did just that and I never ran home again. I finished my schooling at that same state school.

SYLVIA SILLS



Left: The Governor bogged on his way to Hilton Park. This incident wasn't mentioned in the *North Queensland Register* article (opposite).
[Geoffrey Browne, BG09, 1921]

Below: The Governor (standing in front of the steps, facing away) leaving the Julia Creek State School. He was then driven to Hilton Park in the vehicle near the gate. The cars are lined up in Burke St.

The shadow of the man near the Governor, cast on the north-south wall of the school, indicates the photo was taken in the morning (as the newspaper article states). This photo, taken looking west, appeared in the *Register*, 15 Aug 1921.

[Geoffrey Browne, BG10, 1921]



The Governor's visit 1921

North Queensland Register

20 JUNE 1921 — When it was made known at Julia Creek that the Governor, Sir Matthew Nathan, was to visit Julia Creek on the 3rd June and remain till 11 a.m. on the 4th June, a reception was arranged for him by the ladies of the district, headed by Mrs McGowan of Yorkshire Downs and ably assisted by Miss Faithfull and several other ladies from the country. It was arranged that the Progress Association should meet him. Mr M.L. Byrne, as president of the association, was given that honour, assisted by Messrs P.J. Byrne and J.H. Mathews who represented the McKinlay Shire Council.

On arrival of the train at 10 p.m. a party of citizens assembled at the railway station to bid the Governor welcome. But His Excellency expressed a wish, unless anything urgent was required of him, to be allowed to rest till morning and his wish was gratified.

Arrangements were made to meet him at 9 a.m. on the following day. The first deputation was from the school committee who escorted His Excellency to the school where the teacher and children were introduced by Mr Mathews, who explained the present difficulty under which the children were being taught and handed His Excellency copies of numerous letters which were written by the committee asking for better conditions and improvements for the school. His Excellency promised to do what he could in the matter. He then addressed the children and gave them a holiday and had something to say to each and every one. The children sang *God Save the King* and were joined by all present.

The party then adjourned to Hilton Park, the residence of Mr Mathews, His Excellency being driven by Mrs R. Wharton of Kamarooka. The large reception room was beautifully decorated with flags, ferns and flowers, and was also prettily draped with all kinds of fancy curtains for which the ladies were complimented.

[continued over page]



About 30 guests were present and all seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves. When all had been provided with seats, Mr Mathews asked those present to charge their glasses with champagne and drink the toast of the King. He then called on Mr Faithfull to propose the toast of His Excellency. On rising, Mr Faithfull said that it gave him great pleasure to propose the toast of the guest, Sir Matthew Nathan, Governor of Queensland, because in the Governor we had a soldier and a gentleman. Mr Faithfull ended by expressing his belief in the loyalty of the people to their King and country. The Governor, responding, said that there was no better proof of the loyalty of the people of Australia, and especially Queensland, than the way they responded when called to assist the Empire in the great war just past. He referred to the great future of this cattle and sheep raising district with its vast expanse of land, and he wished the district every success and hoped to visit it again at some future date.

Before departing, the Governor thanked the party for their reception and said he had spent one of the most enjoyable mornings of his tour. The party was then driven to the railway station where the train was waiting. As His Excellency stepped into his carriage, Mr Byrne called for three cheers for the Governor which was responded to by all present. The crowd sang *God Save The King* as the train steamed out of the station. The party then adjourned to Hilton Park and passed an enjoyable time during the remainder of the day. A number of photographs were taken of His Excellency and party present.

Below: Guests at the Governor's party at Hilton Park.

Standing, from left: Mick Byrne, Charlie Byrne, unidentified man holding flag, Nick Burrows (13, stationmaster), Mr O'Neill, Policeman (7, unidentified), Mr Fitzpatrick (15), Paddy Byrne, Harry Mathews, Mrs McGowan (pouring champagne), Mr McGowan, P. McAllum, A. Menzies (5), Reg Wharton (4).

Sitting, from left: Mrs Short (14), Mrs Monica Browne, Miss Wells (12), Miss Potts (11), Mrs Mathews (9). Children unidentified.

[Geoffrey Browne, BG08, 1921]



No place for a woman 1920-22

19 March 1920

V. Wellington, MLA
Government House, Brisbane

SIR – I would be extremely grateful if you would use your influence with the Department of Public Instruction in the matter of the erection of a gauzed-in shed for the school children at Julia Creek. These children during play have absolutely no shelter from excessive heat, scorching winds and flies. They have to crawl under the school (and I do mean crawl, as the school is not high-set) to eat their lunches in peace. On several occasions I have had to send children home on account of both eyes being bunged by blow flies. Were a little shelter shed made available for the children I am sure the attendance would be more regular.

The parents are willing to assist the Department financially towards the erection of the shed. As these little children do not enjoy the pleasures of children in large townships, a shed would be a great benefit to them.

*I have the honour to be,
Sir
Your obedient servant,
Elsie Stapleton*

11 June 1920

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

SIR – for several years past the Department has consistently turned down requests for playsheds. A playshed for Julia Creek is without doubt very desirable seeing that the pupils cannot get underneath the school, but I do not think the expenditure is warranted for this small school. The average attendance for May was 18.3 (21 enrolled).

I recommend informing the head teacher that the Works Department estimates the cost of a gauzed-in playshed 24' by 12' at £178 and it is regretted that this expenditure cannot be approved at present.

*SECRETARY
Department Public Works*

28 January 1921

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

SIR – I hereby apply to the Department to have the water supply laid on to the Julia Creek State School. Since the opening of school this year each of the children has been carrying a tin of water to school daily. This is very unsatisfactory.

I hear that plumbers will be along shortly to lay the water to the new police barracks. I would be grateful if the Department could manage to have the water supply laid on to the school while the plumbers are in town.

Thanking you in anticipation.

*I am
Yours truly
ELSIE STAPLETON
Head Teacher*

SOME TIME before I went to Julia Creek I met a gentleman who boards at the hotel in Julia Creek, the only place where accommodation can be obtained. When he knew I was a school inspector and that Julia Creek was in my district, he told me that Julia Creek was no place for a young female teacher, that it was very rough, and that her surroundings were by no means suitable.

Consequently, when I went to inspect the school, and without stating what I had been told, I

had a quiet talk with her. In the course of our conversation she told me that she felt her presence at the hotel was resented; that she had to share a room with one of the servants of the hotel; that this room was quite close to the bar and the noise proceeding from the bar was such that she could not secure proper rest; that she was not allowed to do her washing at the hotel laundry but had to take it to the school on Saturday and do it there; and that on the whole she was very uncomfortable.

On the face of these matters it would seem as though Julia Creek is no place for a woman, and yet, if a man was sent here, he would need to be a very strong man morally not to succumb to the temptation of drinking more than was good for him.

*JOHN GEORGE
District Inspector
[1920s]*

15 April 1921

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

SIR – I have been instructed by the School Committee to write you pointing out how inadequate the school is under present conditions. The school is one room, 22' x 14', with only one side walled, and the other three sides gauzed. Blinds are provided but afford very little protection, if any. When it is raining the water beats into the school, and during windy weather the blinds are of little use.

There are 28 children on the roll and every prospect of that number increasing. At present there are six classes and to accommodate these classes only four desks are provided. Under such conditions, instead of education being made pleasant for the children it is made very uncomfortable.

My committee suggest that the school be raised on 7' blocks and a verandah put all round. This would enable underneath to be used by the children for shade, of which there is none at present. The verandah could be used partly for lessons and partly for a hat rack. The hats at present are hung up in the school room.

One other matter which we consider is very important is providing the teacher with living quarters. At present there is very little for the teacher, Miss Stapleton, to chose from in selecting a lodging place. There are no boarding houses in Julia Creek and only one hotel, which, I am sure you will agree with me, would not offer any chance of privacy or quiet for study. The same applies to Miss Stapleton's present accommodation – a private house where there are children.

J. TREGEA
Secretary
Julia Creek State School Committee

22 April 1921

Mr J. Tregear
Secretary of the School Committee
Julia Creek

SIR – with reference to your letter of the 15th instant I have the honour to point out that the school building at Julia Creek, which is 22' by 14' (308 sq. ft), affords accommodation for 38 pupils on the usual basis of 8 square feet of floor space per pupil, whereas the average attendance for February and March was 20.1 and 21.7. The accommodation is therefore ample for the attendance.

The building is of the open-air tent type enclosed with gauze. The Works Department does not regard a building of this type as suitable for raising upon high blocks, nor for verandahs.

The matter of additional desks and forms is receiving attention.

For obvious reasons the Department regards it as undesirable that Miss Stapleton should reside by herself. She should be accommodated with a private family as at present.

UNDER SECRETARY
Department of Public Instruction

28 August 1921

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

SIR – I have again been directed by the committee of the Julia Creek State School to place before you the pressing requirements here. With reference to your letter of 22nd April pointing out the area of the school building, this room would probably be large enough were only one class to be taught. But when it is borne in mind that classes from infants up to fifth class have to be taught, it will surely be quite apparent that there is but very little chance of any one class being taught properly. It must also be remembered that this room also holds press, blackboard, table, chair and hats, which leaves still less space for scholars.

Further, re school being only walled one side and no protection from weather – as already pointed out, the gauze and blinds afford no protection against rain, nor do they against wind, which can be very strong here. The law compels parents to send their children to school; the law should also be compelled to build schools so that children's health is protected as far as possible.

We again ask for living quarters for the teacher. My committee agrees that it is much better, in one way, for a female teacher to be living with a private family, but in a crowded home this does not permit of allowing the teacher the privacy for study.

Trusting that our application will receive favourable consideration.

J. TREGEA
Secretary
Julia Creek State School Committee

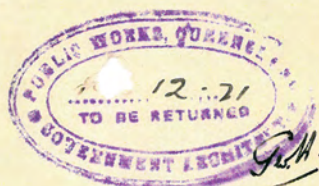
24 May 1922

Mr J. Tregear
Secretary of the School Committee
Julia Creek

SIR – I have the honour to inform you that His Excellency, the Governor, has been pleased to approve of the erection of a new state school at Julia Creek. An expenditure of £846 has been authorised for the erection of this building. The work will be put in hand by the Construction and Maintenance Branch of this Department.

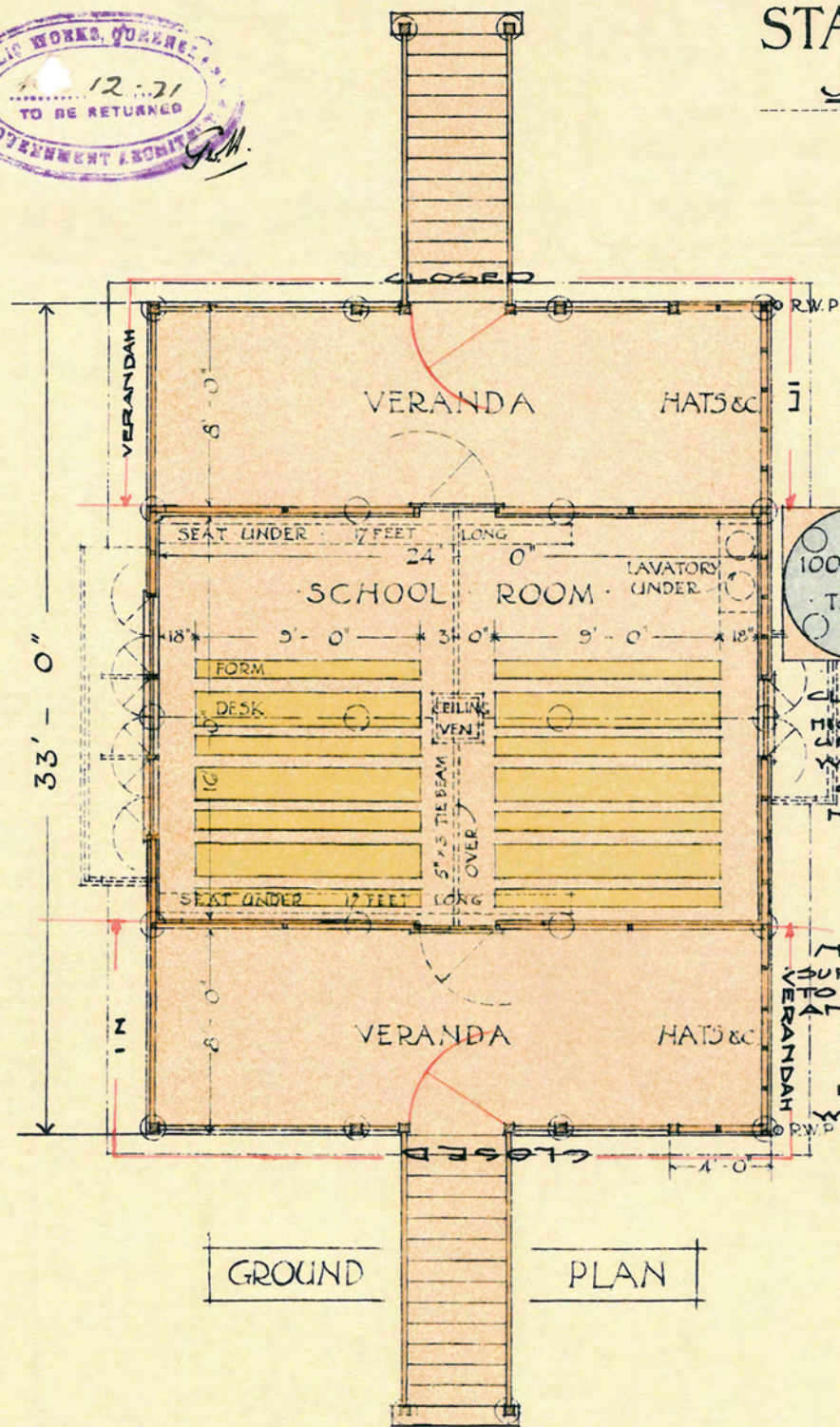
UNDER SECRETARY AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS

Opposite: The new school, completed in late December 1922. The old school was used as the Headmaster's residence until it was sold in 1928.
[Queensland Archives, AQ06, 1921]



STATE SCHOOL SKETCH PLANS JULIA CREEK

Arb. Brady
Gen. Architect



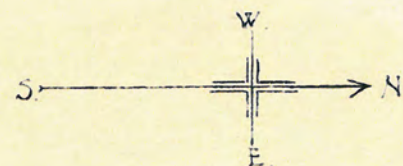
NOTE. ALL VERANDAHS TO BE CLOSED IN. THE LOWER PORTION 3' 0" HIGH WITH T&V JOINTED SHEETING, THE UPPER WITH POMPEIAN BRONZE CAUZE. WINDOWS TO BE COVERED WITH CAUZE. CAUZE DOORS TO BE FITTED AT HEAD OF STEPS AS SHOWN IN RED.

TYPE NO 3
(CLOSED-IN)

NEW DESKS AND FORMS TO BE SUPPLIED. THE REMAINDER OF FURNITURE TO BE REMOVED FROM EXISTING SCHOOL AND RE-USED.

ENCLOSE UNDERNEATH ON S & W SIDES 6' 6" HIGH WITH H'WD WEATHERBOARDS

6.9.1



Happy, carefree, barefooted days **Edna Eckford**

WHERE ARE THEY NOW, the class of 1924-1931? The boys and girls who laughed and played with me in those far-off happy days.

School days, dear old golden-rule days. We lined up in answer to the school bell, usually in two rows. On the order, "right turn", we trundled up the high stairway in raggedy hats, straw hats, felt hats, some in bare feet, some in shoes and socks, and someone always at the top of the stairs to swish away the flies before we stepped onto the gauzed-in verandah. Then round the corner to hang our hats on the hooks attached to the wall, and finally into class. Years later a second class was built, with folding doors dividing the old from the new.

Our shaded play area was under the school until a play shed was built in 1929. One of our pastimes was to swing hand-over-hand on the great beams under the floor. Edna Gillett was the champ. She could go the whole distance, right round the beams – but her hands would suffer.

The boys carried their school bags on their backs, the girls a port in their hands. Slate, slate pencil, a small tin (usually a match tin) with a wet rag or sponge in it to clean our slates, a reader, a ruler case, and sometimes a concertina cup for drinking. Later on the slate was discarded – I wonder where all those slates went to – and we moved to pencil and notebook. That was when the ruler case came into its own. We ruled our notebooks on one side with long lines drawn with a sharp pencil.

Betty Garrity kept our teachers supplied with canes, cut from a clump of bamboo in her yard. I cannot remember any of the girls being caned, but many a boy cursed "Betty Bot" and her bamboo canes.

I wasn't very interested in readin', writin' or 'rithmetic, but I loved sport. I could never beat Olive Gannon in the high jump (Olive would sail over that bar like a bird), so I concentrated on running and novelty events. Sport carried over from the school ground to the open road between the railway line and Kaeser's baker shop. With old Joe Kaeser as starter (on your mark, get set, go) I would join the Kaesers and Wilders pounding along the road in a smart 75-yard sprint.

Families came and stayed briefly in Julia Creek, their children pupils at the school for six months, a year perhaps, then they were gone. We never

thought in those days to wonder why they came or where they went. I have often wondered since.

Games played a big part in our lives. We tried everything from *Hens and Chickens* to *Walking the Rails* (walking on the rail on top of the wire fence around the school ground). Everything was fun, even the fights after school beside the Post Office (six cuts if the boys were caught fighting in the school grounds) where the boys would toss off their school bags and shape up. Those in the know formed a ring around them. George Gillett and Bobby Lowe were contestants one time and they settled things their own way, fair and square. No adult ever interfered, excepting the day Mrs Lowe arrived in the ring swinging a broom handle. There wasn't a kid in sight two minutes later.

A lot of the fights started over pinching marbles. A barefoot on-looker would edge near a game until he could get his toes over a marble, and then he would squeeze his toes and move off with the marble safely trapped. Many a player lost his agate¹ or stonker² that way.

Prize-giving at breakup was always something we looked forward to, as was our breakup sports day – sports again. And how we loved those children's fancy dress balls. The Grand March was something I will never forget: fairies, Red Indians, cupid dolls, eastern princesses. The best cupid doll I ever saw was Keithie Pollard – stark naked with a lovely pink satin ribbon round his middle.

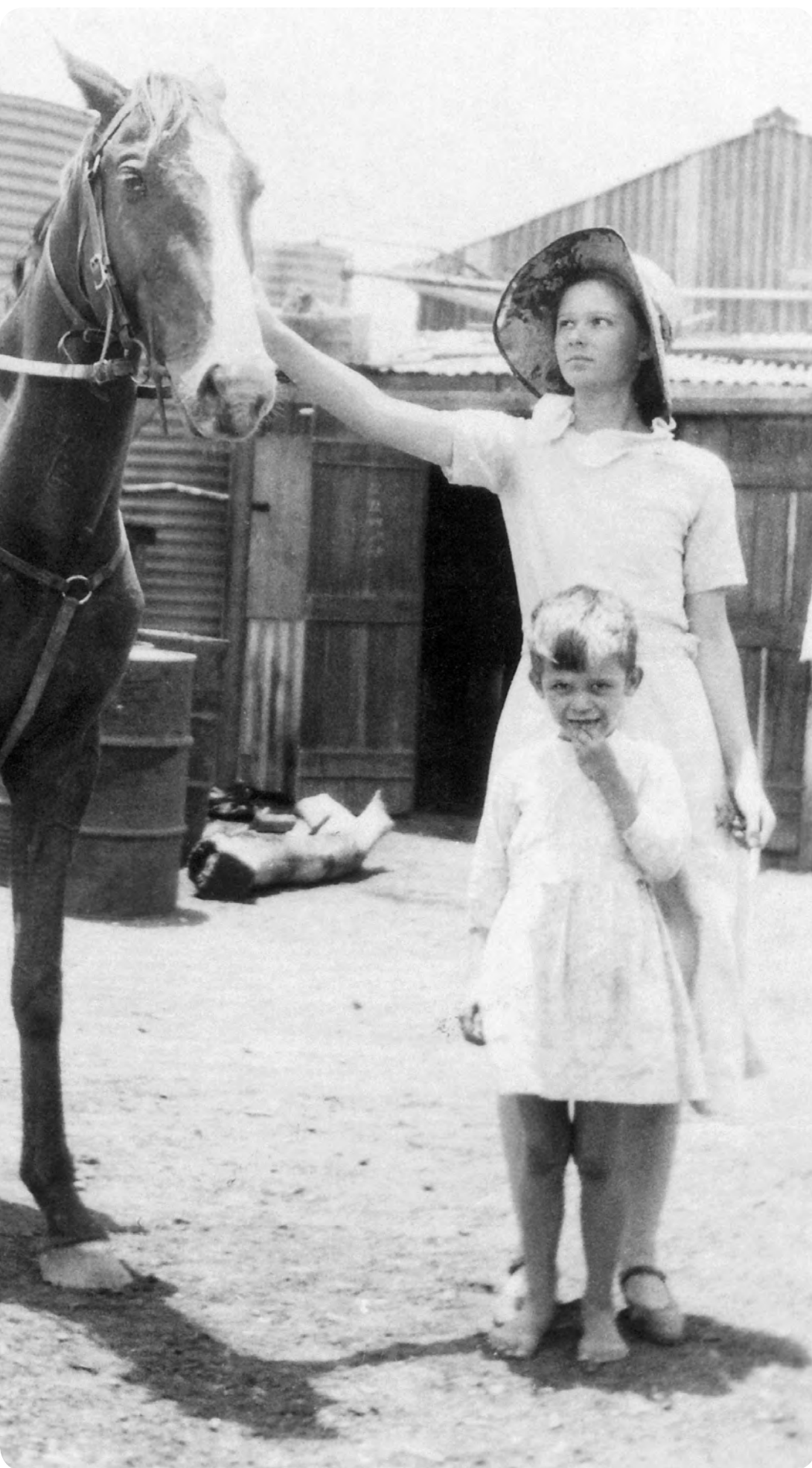
Mrs Horton's shop and chinee-apple tree were great attractions. No one ever seemed to have much money to spend in her shop but they gave her chinee-apple tree a hammering. Another store was near the Julia Creek Hotel run by Mr and Mrs Sanphy. Some Saturday afternoons Mrs Sanphy's brother, Jack Emmerson, would get a couple of bunches of bananas for the town kids and take us to the creek on a big dray drawn by his two quiet draft horses; or the Young and Graham families would drive us to the creek for a swim in a muddy hole near the dam. That was only possible after heavy rain ran the creek. We swallowed more mud than was good for us, but it did not appear to have any ill effects.

Happy, carefree, barefooted days.



Left: Edna (behind) and Meldie Eckford in front of the Eckford ice works, Burke St, opposite the school. [Dadie Dawes, DW22, ca 1930]

1. Agate: coloured marble resembling a banded gemstone.
2. Stonker: a very large marble.



HENS & CHICKENS

ONE CHILD is chosen to be the fox and must sit down and look sly and hungry. The others are the hens and chickens. They begin tormenting the fox by forming a procession, holding each other's clothes by both hands and marching past the fox, reciting:

*Gum tree, gum tree, bloodwood red,
I went to the bore to wash my head,
And when I came back a chicken was dead.*

The chickens form a ring around the fox and one of them says:

*What are you doing, Mr Fox?
Making a fire.
What for?
To boil some water.
And what is the water for, Mr Fox?
To cook a chicken!*

At this point the fox runs after the chickens and if one is caught the chicken and fox change places.

WHAT I REMEMBER about school were the good times: running, jumping, basketball and rounders, for which we had old pick handles for bats. And I remember on every Wattle Day we bought a badge for a penny and sang *Here's to Australian Wattle*.

I wasn't much good at the three R's, and neither were some of the boys. Bill Pedersen was fooling around one day when pig iron was the subject. Mr Nelson asked him what pig iron was made of. "Pigs, Sir" was Bill's stab at an answer. That was a big mistake. Mr Nelson exploded.

Over the road from the school, Mr Eckford at the ice works would always give us an extra large block for our threepence. It would take ages to save threepence for a block of ice and any kid who had a farthing or half-penny to contribute was welcomed. Back at school, the ice was broken up and anyone who wanted some could have some.

For most kids breaking-up day was Christmas. The School Committee ladies waited on parents with afternoon tea, and gave the kids lollies, sandwiches, cakes, plums, ice cream, watermelons and soft drinks. No one wagged school on breaking-up day.

HILDA WILDER
[enrolled in 1924]

11 March 1924

Report on Julia Creek State School

UPON THE SCHOOL RESERVE at Julia Creek is an open-air school building of the old type and a new school building of the modern type. The acting head teacher, Mr Dodt, and his wife live in the old building. The single room is divided into two divisions by means of curtains hung on a wire stretched across the room. There is no bathroom, no verandah, and no ceiling. The temperature in summer is exceedingly high and it must be very trying on a woman to live in this little house in the hot season. However, there is nothing desperately urgent, and when funds permit I recommend that a residence be built.

The school reserve at Julia Creek is unfenced. Owing to prevalence of goats, something should be done to enclose and protect the buildings, both new and old, as the old building will probably be officially converted into a school residence when money is available. I understand from the Works Foreman for this district that he will be pleased to supply material for the fencing (K-wire) if the school committee will do the work gratis.

The head teacher asks for two dozen hat pegs for the school porch. This is necessary and I recommend that the request be acceded to.

PERCY MOORHOUSE
District Inspector

Right: Julia Creek State School students with Queensland Governor Sir Matthew Nathan on his second visit to the school in 1925. This photo (and two others) were published in the *North Queensland Register*, 1 June 1925.

Front row, sitting, from left: 1.?, 2. Edna Gillett, 3. Dadie Eckford, 4. Nonie Wright, 5.?, 6. George Gillett, 7. Bill Edwards.

Second row: 1.?, 2. Jim Eckford (hand over forehead), 3.?, 4. Hilda Wilder, 5. Violet Edwards, 6.?, 7. Lilly Burrows, 8.?, 9. Nellie Moller, 10. Billy Moller, 11.?

Third row: 1. Governor, 2.?, 3. Martha Gillett, 4. Herb Wilder, 5. Edna Eckford, 6. Lucy Byrne, 7. Sylvia Sills, 8.?, 9. Horton?, 10. Marj Smith, 11. Mr Dodt (Teacher)

Back row: 1. Herb Gillett, 2.?, 3. Henry Hammond, 4. Fred Sing, 5. Nick Burrows, 6. Biddy Wilder, 7. Gillett, 8. Horton (Jim Horton's daughter)

[Dadie Dawes, DW57, 1925]





Sanitary inspections and gymkhanas 1925-27

8 July 1925

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

SIR – I have the honour to advise you that the Health and Sanitary Inspector of the McKinlay Shire paid an official visit to this township today in connection with the improvement to sanitary arrangements. The result is that every householder in the town area of Julia Creek has been served with a notice that they must immediately install the pan-system, with cabinets, in lieu of the present cesspits. Two notices have been served to me, as occupier of the state school grounds. I am enclosing these for your consideration.

*I have
the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
H.E. DODT.
H.E.*

NOTICE THAT, pursuant to the provisions of the Health Acts 1900-1917, and the provisions of the Sanitary Conveniences and Nightsoil Disposal Regulations of 1922, the council of the Shire of McKinlay hereby requires you within 28 days from the service of this notice to erect two earth closets on premises at Julia Creek, of which you are the owner or occupier, in accordance with the Regulations aforesaid, such earth closets not to be erected on a site which has been previously used as a cesspit.

You are also hereby required, within 14 days after the Sanitary Service has been installed, to demolish the timber or other material of which the cess-pit may have been constructed, to a depth of one foot below the natural level of the surrounding ground. The disused cesspits, after two bags of fresh lime have been placed in them, shall be filled up with earth which shall be banked up to a height of 1' 6" above the natural surface of the ground.

Should you refuse or neglect to comply with this notification, legal proceedings will be instituted. Dated at Julia Creek this 8th day of July 1925.

T.S. ARMSTRONG
Shire Health and Sanitary Inspector

DIMENSIONS OF EARTH CLOSETS

Floor not to be less than 12" above the level of the ground. Wall: at least 6' 6" at lowest point, 5' long and 4' wide, outside framing. Fly proof cabinets complete with vent pipe for these closets are being supplied by the McKinlay Shire Council at cost price.

20 August 1925

Under Secretary
Department of Public Instruction

SIR – I have the honour to ask you to consider the question of laying on water from the school to the residence by means of an extension from the existing main. I wish to assure you that the position is such that I have no other option but to ask for your consideration in this matter.

The supply from a tank of 1000 gallons in this climate of the North-West is not by any means enough, especially now as the hot season is approaching. Allow me to explain the position clearly. Since the month of May, one of my daily duties has been to carry two benzine tins full of water a distance of 120 yards for washing purposes. On washing and scrubbing days the number increases to four, and sometimes six full tins. In spite of this, the supply in the tank is now less than 200 gallons. Should the season continue rainless, as has been the case since March, I am certain that I will have to carry from four to six tins daily as was the case from October to January last. During these months a daily bath is an absolute necessity, hence the reason for a good supply of water.

Please note: the water is laid on to all other residences in this township, the supply being controlled from a bore, the property of Queensland Railways.

H.E. DODT
Head Teacher

9 March 1927

Report on Julia Creek State School

SIR – I have the honour to report on the old Julia Creek State School building previously used as a school and now being used as the residence for Mr McIvor, the head teacher. The building is of the open-air type on blocks 18" from ground, interior 2' by 14', height of walls 8'. Two walls are closed by canvas and pieces of fibrocement and are not weather proof. The back wall is single sheeted and daylight can be seen between boards. A kitchen leads off through an opening in the northern wall. It is ceiled with calico and floored with packing cases laid on the ground. The kitchen was erected by the late Mr Dodt and is only what you might call a temporary structure.

The building is quite unsuitable for a residence and to alter it would be very expensive. I would recommend that a new residence be erected, Julia Creek being a progressive town.

J.F. FRASER
District Foreman of Works

9 March 1927

Mr D. Riordan, MLA
Parliament House
Brisbane

SIR – you will see by this that I still wield the pen of the School Committee. I put in my resignation, but the others of the committee were going to pull out if I resigned, so for a while I said I'd carry on.

Knowing the conditions as you know them from actual experience, I have been requested to write you as one who has done so much for us in the past. It is quite usual at any committee meeting for someone or other to remark "Ask Darby".

With regard to the school building, just imagine 48 children (the average attendance of last month) sitting in a room 20' by 15'. At the time of writing it is 110° in the shade. Is it any wonder that when one child gets a cold or sore eyes an epidemic breaks out and the average attendance is reduced? We are sure that if the Under Secretary was conversant with local conditions under which the children suffer he would take immediate steps to have the school made larger.

We are fully in sympathy with the new head teacher, Mr McIvor, in his endeavour to secure a suitable residence. Mr McIvor contends that the present building is unsuitable and will not live in it, and we contend that his objection is justifiable. It was previously occupied by Mr Dodt who made alterations to the building and who died before the end of school year. Evidently the Department in Brisbane does not know the local conditions or perhaps a better residence would have been built long ago.

Trusting this finds you and yours in the best of health.

Yours faithfully
F. HAMILTON SINGH
Hon Secretary
Julia Creek State School Committee

5 April 1927

Report on Julia Creek State School

SIR – I have to report that the present school building at Julia Creek does not provide sufficient accommodation for the pupils in attendance. The present enrolment is 62 and if previous years are a true criterion the attendance will increase towards the end of the year. There is one school room 20' x 15' with an area of 300 square feet in which 43 pupils work; the remaining 19 occupy desks on the verandah and cannot be effectively taught.

The township is progressive. It has increased in population despite the drought of last year. Wooden houses of a good type are replacing the galvanised iron structures. There are no empty houses in the locality and a substantial Post Office has recently been erected. Most of the families resident in the township are regarded as permanent, there being very few of the nomadic type.

Julia Creek is situated on the main stock routes from the Gulf, midway between Cloncurry and Richmond. I consider that the prospects of the district warrant an extension to the present school building.

A.E. PALFREY
District Inspector

1 September 1927

F. Hamilton Singh
Hon. Secretary
Julia Creek State School Committee

SIR – I have the honour to inform you that His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to approve of the erection of additions to the state school at Julia Creek, to provide for an attendance of 80 children. The existing building at Julia Creek will be lengthened by 2' and an additional room 31' x 18' will be erected. The work will be put in hand by the Construction and Maintenance Branch of this Department.

UNDER SECRETARY
Director of Public Works

the drought persists.

The Gymkhana arranged by the Church of England Building Committee in Julia Creek on Easter Monday was a huge success. The day opened bright and fine with a cool wind blowing and this tended to increase the size of the heart of the public for they gave with a free and open hand to everything. The grounds were arranged for all events: foot running, horse's high jump, figure of 8, flag race and bending race, all at different parts of the ground in readiness for each event. Then there was a sweet stall and a booth nicely arranged for ice cream, drinks, tea, coffee, sandwiches and cakes.

The results for the sports were:

Boys 10 to 14 years – 1st Bill Edwards, 2nd B. Fidler

Girls 10 to 14 years – 1st Dorothy Gillet, 2nd Biddy Wilder

Boys 6 to 10 years – 1st Bill Peder-sen, 2nd Bill Gannon

Girls 6 to 10 years – 1st Hilda Wilder, 2nd Edna Eckford

Tiny Tots – 1st Shiela Triffet, 2nd Coral Eckford

Boys High jump – Herb Wilder, height 4 feet

Special mention must be made of Mr. Downey who gave his services free for all carting in connection with the function. Owing to lack of time not all donations were able to be raffled, but are expected to be cleared and realize about £130 by the end of the month.

NQR: 02 May 1927

Boom Before the Bust



IN MAY 1928 two important events took place in Julia Creek. The more important of the two, at least to some of the locals, was the chance to rent, buy, remove, or by some other means to take possession of the much sought after 1915 school building which was no longer required. First in, via an enquiring letter to the Director of Public Works, was the Agricultural Department which was seeking an office for the Stock Inspector:

I have to inform you that a difficulty has been experienced in obtaining office accommodation for the Inspector of Stock stationed at Julia Creek. It is understood that there is a building at Julia Creek recently vacated by the head teacher of the state school. I would be pleased if you could supply information as to the location of the building and its size, as it is considered that it may be an advantage to this Department to secure it as an office.

Others also heard rumours, including Grace Malone ("Any possible chance of my renting it?"); Mick Byrne (who offered 12/- per week); Jack Walters ("Have offered £30 to Works Department for old school house"); the School Committee ("Committee will remove old school building for children's play shed. Own expense. Reply collect); and Mrs Tichborne ("I beg to apply for permission to rent the school house dwelling at Julia Creek").

Mrs Tichborne was in pole position as she and her family were already living in the building while her husband drilled a bore in the school grounds. The Tichbornes had the say-so of the head teacher: "I have strong objections to a family living in such a hovel in the schoolyard, but in the case of Tichborne it is a case of choosing the lesser evil; if he did not secure the room he would have erected a temporary hut".

The school-house drama is the story of a housing shortage. It offers a vignette of Julia Creek life just as the town was beginning to share in the prosperity of the late 1920s, before the gloom of the Depression and the restrictions of the War sapped the town's vitality.

Julia Creek had struggled to achieve a certain measure of prosperity since the platelayers, gangers and navvies first crossed the nearby creek in 1907 on their way west to Cloncurry copper. Julia Creek was never a destination. It was a rail stop on the road to somewhere else and it didn't have a definite future. What began as a temporary railway terminus to service the needs of a construction crew, gradually became wedded to the soil

as families took root and made Julia Creek home. Not many, but enough to justify a school teacher being appointed if the parents provided a room. Together with a pub, a saddler, a few shanty houses and a store or two, the fact (and symbol) of a school teacher gave the township a good chance at surviving.

In the years before the First World War, Julia Creek received little support from the graziers in the district to bolster its chances. Unlike the period after the war when properties were progressively broken up for closer settlement, with the result that properties became smaller, one-family operations measured in thousands of *acres* – in prior years properties were measured in thousands of *square miles*. They were townships unto themselves, larger than Julia Creek in population and area, with dozens of full-time staff working as saddlers, blacksmiths, storekeepers and accountants, in addition to the more obvious roles of cooks and ringers. Toorak, for example, had its own woolscour. Such properties purchased their requirements in bulk from suppliers in the large coastal cities, not from Julia Creek.

The war brought significant changes. The school was closed in 1916 due to lack of a full-time teacher (although for some of the year at least, an itinerant teacher was present). Julia Creek must have been a dismal place indeed during that time, depopulated of men because of the war and minus the focus of a school. A dreary and dreadful life for families struggling to keep cool in ripple-iron shacks perched on treeless, grassless, half-acre lots, and surrounded by a interminable flat plain sprouting heat haze.

Yet the dreams of pioneering families could not be easily rebuffed. As the larger properties were resumed (cut into smaller selections) when their leases expired, new arrivals, with little thought and less hesitation, filled the vacant land. Lack of farming experience proved no barrier to native-born Australians or recent immigrants, and many were in for an unpleasant surprise. Mabel Shaw, 14, her father an English barber, describes the day she and her family arrived in Julia Creek around the time war was declared, and the subsequent dismay she felt on seeing Maria Downs for the first time¹: "I disliked it from the day I arrived. From the very hour I arrived I never liked it. I never liked the life at all".

1. Mabel's story is on page 289.

Mrs. Grace Horton of the Austral Cafe has found it necessary to add further additions to her premises. Since the invasion of Peters Ice Cream in these parts Mrs. Horton has been kept particularly busy catering for the wants of her many patrons, and at the present time she has a fine display of the novelties in readiness for the festive season.

There is no doubt if one wishes to take a stroll about our streets one will certainly see calico signs of southern firms advertising their presence in the town. We do not begrudge any of them this privilege as they are entitled to sell their wares wherever they wish, but we do protest against them being allowed to sell at all hours of any day or night, including Sundays or holidays, while our own local businesses are compelled to close at the allotted time. This I consider unfair competition and requires immediate attention which I trust the authorities in charge will give utmost consideration to.

A considerable number of new buildings have been erected within the past month including a chemist's shop for Mr. Griffiths, who has been in business here for some time having previously been installed in Eckford's Hall. Undoubtedly this town has made vast improvements notwithstanding the price of wool, the drought, and many other disadvantages that at times have arisen. Judging from the energetic feelings of the citizens of the town and district, further great improvements may be expected with a short space of time.

NQR: 21 Dec 1929

By all accounts it appears that the erection of the coal stage, engine shed, and quarters is near completion. The above shed and quarters have been completed for some time and the coal stage is about on its last lap. The coal stage itself stands out very prominently on the horizon as an excellent piece of architecture and we are given to understand that the cost of erecting same will be repaid in the saving of labour in handling the coal. The men's quarters are undoubtedly a fine structure and should meet the requirements of this district for many a day to come.

The next question is when are these works to be opened. It is anticipated by many that nothing is to be done until

NQR: 09 Nov 1929

AFTER THE WAR, the settling of the Julia Creek district intensified, and towards the end of the 1920s the increasing population brought prosperity and hope. During 1929, Bill Gannon built a double-storey hotel in the front street (p238); Jim Eckford erected a new picture theatre (p189); the railway spent £12,000 on an engine shed, men's quarters, and a coalstage (p680); the town gained a chemist, Mr Griffiths (p587); and even old Hortie (p250), still young then, felt the need to expand her Austral Cafe to cater for the growing popularity of Peters Ice Cream. Boom times in Julia Creek – but an ephemeral boom brought undone by events on Wall St.

The 24th of October, 1929 – Black Thursday – was the day of the initial stockmarket crash. On that same day in Julia Creek, a writer for the *North Queensland Register* had optimism on his mind as he assembled that week's stories for the Julia Creek Notes column. His optimism was seasoned with pessimism because of the drought, but overall the article was upbeat and rather endearing in its simple portrayal of life in an outback town:

Julia Creek, 24 October—The weather during the past week has been anything but pleasant. The continuous daily change – days have been hot and nights rather cool – contributes to the numerous colds and other mild complaints so frequent about the district. Today has been particularly hot with a strong north-easterly wind accompanied by clouds of dust, which died down towards evening leaving the atmosphere very hot and stuffy.

Tonight as I go to write there is every appearance of rain before morning. Away to the south the sky is overcast with heavy, black clouds and the air has the scent of moisture. Let us hope we are up to our ankles in mud by morning, as a decent 3 or 4 inches would do lots of good.

Stock movements at present are rather dull and there is very little buying and selling. No doubt stock would be moving pretty freely if rain were to fall.

Although the future does not look prosperous for many, still, the town is lively enough. Business houses don't show any sign of a depressed wool market and our two hotels have plenty of custom. Being the centre of a pastoral district certainly helps give a busy appearance. Recently a number of sheds cut out, and as a rule the shearers and shedhands make for our town before seeking fresh pastures.

The building industry appears to be fairly robust of late. Many new dwellings have been erected within the past few months and slowly the gaps in our streets are filling up. Vacant houses are hard to come by, and one wishing to secure a house of any sort has a two or three months' wait. The landlords are aware of this and they don't look lenient on the tenant. Anyone having the capital would do well to speculate in erecting houses in this town.

THE SECOND IMPORTANT EVENT OF 1928 can be pinned to a single day, May 17, when the inaugural Flying Doctor flight from Cloncurry landed at Julia Creek. A photo and a newspaper article (right) adequately covers this historic event. The story of the “hovel in the schoolyard”, however, requires a more thorough portrayal (over page).

Right: Doctor Welch (left) and pilot Arthur Affleck at Julia Creek. The caption on the reverse of the photo in Geoffrey Browne's handwriting says: “The first flight of the Flying Doctor service was to Julia Creek on the 17 May 1928. Taken by Dad. It shows Dr Walsh and the pilot Arthur Affleck.”

‘Dad’ refers to Ulick Browne.

[Geoffrey Browne, BG16, 1928]

were quite sufficient.

The Aerial Medical Service was inaugurated from Cloncurry to the outlying parts of the far west by a visit of the Special Ambulance Plane to Julia Creek on the 17th instant. The plane, in charge of Pilot Affleck, left the aerodrome at 9.10 am carrying Dr. Welch who recently arrived from Sydney to establish the Service.

Mr Knyvett, Police Magistrate, was the first passenger by the plane to Julia Creek on the auspicious occasion. Mr Knyvett also represents the Australian Inland Mission which body was primarily responsible for the circle of centres to be served by the “Flying Doctor”.

Julia Creek was reached in one hour and ten minutes flying and a perfect landing affected near the cattle yards. Dr Welch was met on arrival by a number of local residents who made the genial medico soon feel quite at home, judging by the warmth of their reception. Formal introductions over, the party proceeded to the Bush Nursing Centre in charge of sister M. Dickson.

Australia in general, and this community in particular, should feel proud of the fact that an Australian doctor and pilot were the first selected to establish this mission of mercy.

Dr. Welch has had 20 years general bush experience in addition to his experience as one of Sydney's leading specialists. People of Julia Creek should feel grateful that he has the spirit to leave a home and lucrative practice to come to these parts, bringing with him the latest in skill and science for the medical comfort of those whose occupations compel them to reside outside the range of ordinary civilisation. The eyes of the medical world are now watching this great experiment. It behoves us to lend the necessary moral support to make the venture the success it deserves.

NQR: 28 May 1928



11 July 1928

Director of Public Instruction

SIR – In connection with the old school building at Julia Creek, I have to report that Mr Tichborne, boring contractor, who begins boring in the school grounds today, approached me for the use of the old school building stating that he was prepared to pay rent for same. I informed him that I could not give him authority to use the room. Mr Tichborne expressed his intention of erecting a temporary hut on the school grounds if he could not secure the room. He mentioned that he had wired Mr D. Riordan, MLA, in connection with the matter, but was anxious to go into the room immediately as one of his little children was very ill. I then told him that I would communicate with the Department and advised him to do whatever he thought best in the meantime for his sick child.

Mr Tichborne expects to complete the bore in seven weeks. I believe it will be better to have him and his family living in the old school room than camping in the schoolyard. I might mention that four families have approached me with a view to renting this room. I have strong objections to a family living in such a hovel in the schoolyard, but in the case of Tichborne it is a case of choosing the lesser evil; if he did not secure the room he would have erected a temporary hut. Two offers for purchase (for removal) of this building have been made to me. I have referred these people to your Department.

Considering the shortage of house accommodation and the demand for this building, and as it is useless for school purposes and an eyesore with its home-made additions (kitchenette and small ground verandah), I would strongly recommend taking the opportunity to have this unsightly and useless structure sold for removal. When a teacher's residence is eventually built in the school grounds it will be decidedly unpleasant to have this dilapidation in the backyard.

If the Department of Agriculture consider it suitable for an office they could remove it. The building is a small one and could be removed without dismantling at very little cost.

The following particulars of this building, which through lack of house accommodation I was compelled to occupy for a considerable time, should be interesting: length 21', breadth 14', ceiled with calico. There are no windows and one double door. The eastern wall is closed partly by a canvas blind and strips of fibro cement. Part of the southern and northern walls are also enclosed by fibro cement strips. An opening (no door) leads from the room into a small addition used as a kitchen. The western wall has no door or window – numerous cracks allow for ventilation. A little verandah with no floor was added to the eastern wall by the late Mr Dodt, at the time in charge of this school. Mr Dodt also built the addition used as a kitchen.

The present is an opportune time to stress the urgency for a teacher's residence. Though I have at last secured a house at a rental of 30 shillings a week, no guarantee of tenure can be given; consequently I may at any moment find myself in that unenviable position – homeless.

Trusting that under the circumstances my action in countenancing Mr Tichborne's use of school building will be approved.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
D. Jas. McQuinn
H. T. Julia Creek S.S.

Since the aeroplane doctor has been stationed at Cloncurry he has been called to Julia Creek on several occasions. This service is most valuable to persons at isolated centres and first-class medical aid can be obtained within a few hours' notice. In this respect we are almost as well provided for as the city folk.

It is understood this service is on a twelve-month probation and if proved satisfactory, service will definitely be established. As far as Julia Creek and district is concerned it has proved a most valuable and satisfactory service and I am confident that the fund for the maintenance of this service will be well contributed to.

A new bore is being sunk at Julia Creek situated behind the School of Arts building. The contractor is Mr. Roger Tichborne. Boring commenced on July 11 and on Tuesday July 17 a depth of 148 feet was attained. Very solid matter was struck when down but a few feet, though only of a thin layer. From then on boring has been through grey shale. It is considered the contractors have made very good progress and it is anticipated to strike a good flow of water at 1100 feet.

Mr. Bill Davis met with rather a painful accident last week when a bale of wool fell on his back. Mr. Davis escaped very luckily with a few sinews strained and he will be able to resume his usual occupation by the end of the week.

NQR: 23 Jul 1928

This bore which has recently been completed gives half a million gallons of water a day. It is the only bore in Australia to be cemented between casings all the way down.

With regard to the objection...

NQR: 29 Oct 1929

26 July 1928

Under Secretary
Director of Public Instruction

SIR – I have the honour to report that the old school building in Julia Creek has been enquired about in regard to sale and renting by different parties.

Passing through Julia Creek on the 24th instant, I was informed that this building had been taken possession of by a gang of well-borers who have been camping there without authority. I saw the District Stock Inspector on this occasion and he informed me that he has made application for these premises as an office. Acting on this information I have written to the officer in charge of the Police Station, Julia Creek, to have the party in possession removed unless they can produce authority showing why they are in possession, and have told the Stock Inspector to move in and look after these premises pending information and confirmation from Head Office.

I trust that this action is in order.

J.F. FRASER
District Foreman of Works

2 August 1928

Director of Public Instruction

SIR – I beg to apply for permission to rent the school house dwelling at Julia Creek. With the permission of the head teacher and several members of the school committee I moved in as I could not get a vacant house. I have five small children, the eldest being only seven years.

My husband is one of the contractors putting down the town bore in the school grounds at the rear of this building. If we are unable to rent this building it would mean building huts in the school grounds, which would be very inconvenient. We will only need it for the time the bore is being sunk, perhaps about a month to six weeks at the longest. I will be quite prepared to pay 15/- per week for it.

We have been living in it now since July 7th, but so far have paid no rental. Mr McIvor says he is unable to collect as he has no authority for doing so. May I have your permission to pay him in full? Trusting I may be successful in my application as it means quite a lot to me.

I remain
yours gratefully
ELIZABETH TICHBORNE
wife of Roger Tichborne
Well-borer
Julia Creek

16 August 1928

Elizabeth Tichborne
Julia Creek

DEAR MRS TICHBORNE – with reference to your letter of the 2nd instant, I have to inform you that this Department cannot enter into any arrangement regarding the renting of the old school building at Julia Creek as, prior to the receipt of your letter, the building was handed over to the Department of Agriculture and Stock for removal. It will therefore be necessary for you to vacate the building when required to do so by that Department.

In the meantime, rental at the rate of 15s per week as from the date of occupation of the residence, namely, the 7th July 1928, should be paid to the head teacher who has been instructed to collect it.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

16 August 1928

Director of Public Instruction

SIR – Further to my report of 26th ultimo, regarding Julia Creek State School old building, I have the honour to report having called at these premises on the 30th ultimo and interviewed the occupant of these premises. They had been in possession a few weeks and were willing to pay rent at the rate of 15/- per week (a reasonable value) and agreed to vacate on the 21st instant. The head teacher, Mr McIvor, was willing to collect the money. Whether he has done so or not I do not know at present.

I acted thus, considering it better to take the opportunity of receiving a cash payment instead of nothing, which is probably what would happen if these parties left before collection.

J.F. FRASER
District Foreman of Works

14 September 1928

Director of Public Instruction

SIR – I have to report having approached Mr Tichborne with regard to the rent due on account of Mrs E. Tichborne occupying the old school building. Mr Tichborne informed me that he had already paid the sum of £3 as part payment of rent to the Secretary of the School Committee as a donation to local school funds. He is of the opinion that considering he was compelled to suddenly vacate the building owing to its removal, a rental of 15 shillings weekly is excessive. However, he says he is prepared to pay in full, an additional £1/10/-, providing the rental is paid to the local school funds.

Mr Tracey, secretary of the committee, informed me that he had received a cheque for £3 from Mr Tichborne and he expressed the opinion that the committee should be allowed to retain it as school funds. I have now interviewed the Chairman (Mr Mathews) and he also said that Mr Tichborne's cheque should be regarded as a donation to local school funds.

DOMINIC JAS McIVOR

29 September 1928

Head Teacher
Julia Creek State School

SIR – with reference to your letter of the 14th instant, I have to request you to be good enough to collect and remit to the Department, rental for the old school building at Julia Creek as from the date of occupation, namely 7th July last, to the date of vacation owing to the removal of the building. The retention of the money for school purposes cannot be approved. You should exhibit this letter to the School Committee as your authority to collect the money.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

5 October 1928

Director of Public Instruction

SIR – in connection with your memorandum of the 29th ultimo, the Chairman and Secretary of the School Committee have expressed the opinion that the committee was entitled to use this money as school funds. I understand that Mr Tichborne left the district this morning, and I have been informed by the secretary of the school committee that he has not made a further donation of the £1/10/- due in rental.

D. JAS McIVOR

9 October 1928

Director of Public Instruction

SIR – with further reference to your memorandum of the 29th ultimo, I do not expect any difficulty in the collection of the £3 paid to the committee by Mr Tichborne. I understand that he is now in the Roma district and I would respectfully suggest that the committee be authorized to collect the balance owing of £1/10/-.

D. JAS McIVOR

21 November 1928

Head Teacher
Julia Creek State School

SIR – I invite your attention to the Department memorandum of the 29th September and to your letter of the 9th ultimo, and to inform you that the receipt of the rental of £3 for the old school building at Julia Creek is awaited.

You are advised that when Mr Tichborne's address is known, the Department intends to communicate with him relative to the balance owing of £1/10/-.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

26 November 1928

Director of Public Instruction

SIR – with reference to your memo of 21st instant, received this evening, I have to report that the committee decided to forward to you the cheque for £3 paid to them by Mr Tichborne as rent for the old school building. I have today received this cheque from Mr Jim Tracey. Please find same attached hereto.

With regard to the balance owing £1/10/- I am personally of the opinion that Mr Tichborne has already paid more than the old building was worth to him. If it is your wish that I collect the balance I will endeavour to do so, but I would be grateful if this rather unpleasant task would be entrusted to the Secretary of the School Committee.

D. JAS McIVOR

AS THE GOVERNMENT has voted the sum of £12,000 towards the establishment of a Railway Depot at Julia Creek, a marked increase in school enrolment is expected in the New Year. There is no reason why the present rate of town development should be retarded; consequently it is safe to assert that additions to the school and staff will be required.

Three pupils¹ sat for the High School Entrance Examination in November, two being successful. I regard this as satisfactory as these pupils were not specially selected but comprised the whole of the upper class in the school. This is the first occasion on which pupils from this school have qualified for admission to a secondary school.

Perhaps the most pleasing feature of school life

for the current year was the introduction of inter-school sporting competitions thereby creating a spirit which did not formerly exist. In August a team of tennis players acquitted themselves fairly creditably despite the fact that it was their first competition in Cloncurry. The school boys decisively defeated the Cloncurry team in football, the final score being 14 points to nil. It would be difficult to ascertain who were the most elated with the victory – the boys themselves or the parents generally. This match alone forged a link between the parents and the school which will be very binding.

Owing to the great distances separating Julia Creek from neighbouring schools it is difficult to arrange more than one competition of a kind during

the year. Cloncurry and Richmond, the nearest schools of any size, are distant respectively 83 and 91 miles. Cricket and vigoro are played with zest, but competitions in neither of these have yet been arranged.

Tree planting and gardening: owing to the prevailing drought this work had to be abandoned. It is our intention to proceed with an ambitious tree planting and lawn scheme in the new year. The school and town generally will by then have been connected with the town bore.

D. JAS McIVOR
Headmaster

[School Statistical Returns, 1928]

1. Joff Casey (p263), Dadie Eckford (p185), and Ivy Edwards (sister of Jim Edwards, p737). Ivy was the unsuccessful one.

The school is very shabby 1943

26 January 1943

Director of Public Works

SIR – I have to furnish hereunder for your information and urgent attention a copy of a report dated the 11th instant by the Inspector to McKinlay Shire Council, Julia Creek, Mr Dhu.

The State School, Julia Creek

This building is constructed of wood with an iron roof and is standing on 5'6" stumps. The size of the main building (which is subdivided into smaller rooms) is roughly 60' x 21' with a 10' lean-to verandah in front and on both ends. The verandahs and windows are screened with gauze to prevent the ingress of flies. The windows are of the casement type and afford ample ventilation. The school is very shabby in its present state owing to lack of paint and minor repairs.

No standard refuse bin was provided for waste scraps of food in order that the yard is kept in a sanitary state and to properly protect against flies and rats. This is a breach of the Plague Prevention regulations.

Wash basins are an absolute necessity at any school in order to encourage personal hygiene amongst the children, particularly after coming away from a privy or before eating their lunches, and I was astonished to find that none existed at this school.

Sanitary Conveniences

The girls privy is of wood with iron roof, subdivided into two compartments. They are in a filthy state. The enclosure, which affords the girls some degree of privacy upon entry, is in a bad state of repair.

The boys privy is constructed of wood with an iron roof, subdivided into three compartments. These compartments are also in a filthy state. The urinal is a trough 5' in length, rusted through at the outlet to the discharge pipe which conveys the urinal to the soakage pit. The enclosure around the urinal is in a very dilapidated state. This enclosure is contiguous to the privy and the locks are off the doors.

Water Supply

Three 1000 gallon tanks are provided and bore water is reticulated throughout. The tanks are not screened against the ingress of mosquitoes as required by the Mosquito Prevention regulations. This breach allows *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes to breed in the tanks, thus fostering an outbreak of dengue fever.

I understand there are about 80-100 pupils attending this school. As their health is paramount I would ask that the following matters receive attention so as to help those who have to spend at least six hours of each school day within its boundaries.

Recommendations

1. That the school be painted.
2. That two refuse bins be provided.
3. That five hand wash basins be provided with running water to each.
4. That the privies and urinal be repaired.
5. That the tanks be made mosquito proof.

Yours faithfully
 SECRETARY
 Department of Public Health

25 February 1943

Director of Public Instruction

SIR – I have to bring before your notice the matter of the report of the newly appointed Health Inspector to the McKinlay Shire Council, Mr Dhu¹, recently submitted to that Shire and referred to the Health Department as well as to the Department of Public Instruction.

Mr Dhu was appointed on 4th January 1943, this being his first appointment. Recently, he called on me in my capacity as head teacher and showed me a copy of the report he had submitted on the Julia Creek State School. In this report it was mentioned that the boys and girls closets were in a filthy condition. I immediately protested at this remark, explaining that the closets were dirty with dry mud caused by three days of heavy rain totalling 5 inches preceding Wednesday, 9th December 1942. As that Wednesday was breakup day, and being still wet, it would have been useless to clean these buildings as they would have to be done again just prior to reopening this year. During a school year, these closets are scrubbed with soap and water weekly and swept and cob-webbed daily.

I wish to protest emphatically to this Department on the attitude of a newly appointed Health Inspector visiting a school during the latter part of the summer vacation and making a report on aspects of school management. The report of this official, forwarded to two government departments, is apt to belittle my organisation of the school.

I request the Department not to consider the remark "filthy condition" in view of the above explanation. Also, I have to request that in future a health inspection of the school be made only when the school is under working conditions.

Yours faithfully
 A.R. CANN
 Head Teacher

LOOKING BACK from our comfortable positions in 1986 down the years to 1911, we often marvel at the fortitude of the many people who have helped bring our school to its present position, and we wonder how they managed under such conditions. Probably the hardships seem much worse to us than they did to the people involved, for the conditions they worked under were the standards of living at the time.

If a teacher's work was onerous, and pay and conditions poor, so were the jobs and living conditions of the other members of the community. The teacher's accommodation, though appearing poor and cramped to us, was the average standard of that time and might even have been envied by some members of the community.

The Julia Creek State School 75th Jubilee 1911-1986

1. For another story about Health Inspector Dhu, see page 197.

A public meeting is to be held in the Anzac Memorial Club's new premises (formerly Max Burns' garage in Burke St) at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday, April 3, for the purpose of proceeding with formation of the club and to appoint trustees. A club is a long overdue amenity which will be of great value to the district. It is hoped that a large number of local and country residents will be present at this meeting.

NQR: 19 Mar 1960

Opposite: Mannie.
[Guy Burns, GB71, 2001]

Below: Julia Creek Town & Country Club with Choco Winton's van outside. Prior to 1960 this building was Max Burns' Julia Creek Engineering Works.
[Guy Burns, GK68, 2002]



George 'Mannie' Sills

Died 24 Feb 2009

WHEN MAX BURNS first came to Julia Creek he bought an allotment on the western end of town to build his house and garage. The land was a bit low and water laid there after rain, so Max put in a bit of extra dirt. It was a good idea too – but he got the dirt from off the road. There was no proper street there then, just a track going west. So Max got his graders, and whatever, and bulldozed this dirt and built it up, say, a foot. The council didn't cotton on that he'd done this until a week or so after. They made him go out and cart dirt and level off the road again; fill it up where he pinched the dirt from.

Max came to Julia Creek and he was a tanksinker. No such animal now I suppose; they've got different names for them. A tanksinker was a bloke who put a dam on a creek or dug holes in the ground that caught water. In about the 1950 mark is when I first remember him. Next he got that block of land and built a place to service his graders and tractors. A good few people worked there too. It turned out to be a garage as they used to be in those days – a mechanical engineering workshop. I don't think he ever had a bowser for selling petrol to the public.

I'd see Max now and again when he'd buy fruit and vegetables off me. I had a fruit shop in Julia Creek and a garden over on Hilton Park, Joey Mathews' place.

A bloke come over to the garden one day, Arthur Fayers, he was a worker around the town, and he said: "Hey Silly, can I borrow ya plough off ya". I had a single furrow plough that I pulled behind a horse to till the garden. A few months later I wanted to do a bit of ploughing and I went and dug Arthur up:

Hey, where's that bloody plough I lent ya?
Aah... I broke the nose off the front off it. I put it
down to Max Burns to get it welded.
Righto.

So I went to the garage and who do I find there? It's Frank Byrne, the bloke in the office, and I said to Frank:

Arthur Fayers says me plough's here.
I'll have a look. It might be outside along the wall.

Frank went outside and looked around: "It's not here now". Anyway, Frank got busy on the other blokes and one of them said: "Yeah, we were cleaning up, so we chucked it in the rubbish and took it to the tip".

I had no plough then. That was the end of my ploughing. Soon after, the rats and goats finished off the garden anyway.

One time I saw Max and his tanksinking crew out on Belgravia, about 10 miles from town. My mate Joey Mathews owned Belgravia and he got Max to do a job. Joey had a bore drain running through this paddock and he had the idea that if Max put in a lot of small dams half a mile apart on this bore drain, he'd have extra water capacity. It worked; the idea was all right. But Joey had to bypass every hole except the last one because the

No Such Animal Now

Julia Creek's fruit and vegie man remembers
Max, rats, and the days before TV



drain would have run dry if all the holes filled at the same time. As the months passed, when one hole filled he moved up the line to the next one. It took a couple of years before Joey got all of them full up.

People in the district at that time wanted water – dams, tanks, turkey's nests – and Max was doing pretty well at it. Bulldozers weren't very familiar around the place, not like they are now. Max had the equipment and people wanted water – he was right in the business.

But it didn't last. In 1960, after Max went bankrupt, we had an RSL meeting and decided to bid for Max's garage with the intention of using it as a clubhouse. The problem with the RSL was that we didn't have enough members so we couldn't get a liquor licence. Another group of people, including some of those who were involved in the RSL bid, they bought Max's garage and turned it into the Town & Country Club.

one month's imprisonment.
When the residences, garage and plant in the bankrupt estate of Max Burns were auctioned last Friday, a representative of the Anzac Memorial Club successfully bid for the large garage building. The cost of a new building was rather prohibitive and it is considered that after slight alterations have been made to the garage, a modern club with all amenities can be established for a greatly reduced amount.
The Cessna aerial ambulance has re-

NQR: 05 Mar 1960



I WAS BORN IN CAMOOWEAL, about 12 miles from the Northern Territory border. My parents married in 1911 at a place now called Kuridala, but it was Friezland when they got married there. Friezland is a German name, as it sounds, and because of World War 1 they changed the names of all those places that had a little bit of German in them.

My mother first came to Julia Creek in 1908 before she was married. I've been here since 1922.

I did all my schooling at the state school. I left in 1934 and did anything there was a pound in. The Great Depression was from '29 to '35 and when you're leaving school in '34 there's not much chance of getting a job. Everybody was looking for jobs, but I was fortunate enough that there was a bloke going to Prairie to get some sheep and he needed a horse tailer.

From then on until the war, whether you were a fencer, a kangaroo shooter, or a rouseabout in the shearing sheds, whatever job you could get that's what you took. And you considered yourself very lucky to be working.

You didn't have to worry about a job after the war started. All us young fellas got a job very easily

The passing of Mrs. Jim Sills on Wednesday 8th at the Julia Creek Hospital, aged 57 years, cast quite a gloom over the town. She had not been enjoying the best of health for some time, and went to Brisbane some twelve months ago where she underwent an operation. After coming home she entered the Julia Creek hospital where she received the greatest care and attention.

Until her death, Esther Sills (nee Spence) was the resident of longest standing in Julia Creek. She arrived in 1908, at the age of 16, in company with Mrs. Gillett and Miss Lizzie Hourihan, shortly after the railway was extended to this centre. Soon after she arrived in Julia Creek, her mother and other family members followed and made their home here.

Deceased leaves a grieving husband, Jim, daughter Sylvia, and son George to mourn their loss.

The cortege left the R. C. Church after service by Father Devereux. The pall bearers were Mr. Roy Hampton, Mr. Tom Graham, Mr. Jack Walters and Mr. Les Adam.

The funeral was largely attended by many relatives and friends who paid their last respects to a grand lady and a great woman.

CA: 17 Jun 1949

then. I was four and a half years in the army. When the war finished it was home to Julia Creek as quick as I could get back. I got married in 1947.

DAD STARTED THE GARDENS on Hilton Park in 1922. He grew mandarins and oranges, mulberries, and he used to grow grapes and figs. In those days the cattle yards were close to town and there was plenty of manure. You could shovel manure out of the yards all day and all night and there'd still be plenty more. Cattle were coming and going all the time. The other fertiliser we used was blood from the slaughter yards. The butcher, when he killed, he drained the blood into drums. Mix that with water and it's the best fertiliser of the lot.

Mum used to take the fruit and vegetables around town in a horse and cart until 1927 when Dad bought a Whippet, the first car we owned. That took over from the horse and cart. It had four cylinders and a little utility back. The only trouble was teaching Mum to drive. The bloke who sold it, Lance Lewis, his wife took Mum for lessons. It took a while to get her to change from the cart, but she came around to it.

I took over the garden from Dad after the war

Below: Esther Sills' vegetable run, in front of school teacher's residence, corner of Coyne St and Julia St. From left: Bill and John Pedersen, Olive Gannon, Esther Sills (back), Ivy Gannon, Thelma Pedersen, Alma Gannon.

[Dadie Dawes, DW31, 1928]



Quite a number of our lads serving in the forces who have been spending leave at home, depart on Monday night's mail to rejoin their units. They include Sgt. George Sills, Private James Parsons, Corporal Tom Foster, Private Jim Roberts and Private Ernie Hill. With the departure of these bright lads many of our young lassies will be kind of lonesome.

Mr. Bradley, dentist, Richmond, on

CA: 06 Oct 1944

Let's hope that this means farewell to the hot weather for some time.

Mr. George Sills has opened his fruit and vegetable shop next to Mrs. Bradford's drapery.

Reeret to report that word has been

CA: 28 Mar 1947

Mrs Bradford was formerly Mrs Wilkins. Her drapery was in between the O-K Store and Mannie's fruit shop on the corner.



THE LONG-HAIRED RAT, or Plague Rat, is a native species found in northern parts of mainland Australia where its populations sometimes reach plague proportions. It is larger than most other native rats and is light grey in colour, but because of long black guard hairs it has an overall dark grey appearance. They occur in sub-tropical, temperate and desert grassland areas.

In their natural habitat the diet of Long-haired Rats includes the roots of desert grasses, succulent plants, seeds and some insects. They are nocturnal and their night time activity seems to be influenced by the amount of light. One study, for instance, found that they stayed below ground while the moon was above the horizon. During the day they rest in their burrows.

Long-haired Rats are usually uncommon, living in widely scattered populations near bore holes and other wet areas. They reach sexual maturity at 70 days and can breed throughout the year. After a good wet season their numbers will increase. Litter size varies from 5-10, but can increase to an average of 12 under plague conditions, during which their predators (letter-winged kites, black kites, dingoes, feral cats, foxes and snakes) also increase in number.

The return of dry conditions, combined with the effects of predators, causes the population to fall. The rats are then restricted to small refuge areas where they have access to food and water.

Long-haired Rats have been accused of starting bushfires by biting waxed matches (the type seen in movie westerns, that can be lit by striking against any rough surface). The accusations turn out to be true. In one of the articles which follows, a contributor found that starved rats were able to ignite waxed matches. But he goes on to say that in reality, the chance of a rat causing a fire "is so small that it is not worth considering".

finished. I was in Rabaul in New Britain not doing much, so I put in for compassionate discharge to help Dad and I came back to the garden. In 1947 I started the fruit shop in town.

For a while I went on with both: the garden and the fruit shop. But in 1956, all year, the rats ate the garden out. The rat plague lasted all '56. It did. The cats wouldn't look at them; they just got sick of them. A fella gave me two dogs: "These blokes will kill em, Sillsy" so I took the dogs over to the garden. After three weeks they had rats dead everywhere, but the dogs knocked off too.

I had drums full of water sunk in the ground

with a trap arrangement: a plank across the top on a pivot. When the rats walked on the plank to get at the bait they'd drop in the water. In the morning the drums would be full and it'd take me two hours to empty them all.

I used poison, sap poison. Put it on bread and threw it about the garden. That killed a lot of them, though the poison nearly killed me too.

In the stores in town – Peter Dawes had a store where the newsagent is now – you'd go in to get your groceries and the rats would be scurrying out the door and running across the main street, that's how bad they were. All day they'd be going.

[continued p168]



A Short History of Plague Rats

27 SEPTEMBER 1930—Grass fires seem to be common of late. The cause of the fires remains a mystery, though it is surmised that the rats, whom I understand are plentiful, have a certain amount to do with same. But, as rats do not carry matches about their persons, it appears that carelessness by humans must be at the bottom of the real cause. At a recent meeting of the Selectors Association a suggestion was brought forward advocating the abolition of wax matches. After considerable discussion the suggestion was not approved of by the majority.

14 SEPTEMBER 1940—"The serious plague of rats in Western Queensland may mean a big falling off in Mitchell and Flinders grass seeding in that country" said Mr S. W. Jackson, ornithologist, in Sydney this week. "These rodents – they are of the long-haired type indigenous to Central Australia – appear to live mainly on grass seed."

"I remember a great plague of them in the Boulia district in July and August 1918. They were in millions and spent their days in large cracks in the black soil. At night they spread over the country so that we had to hang all our belongings on wires suspended from the branches of the coolibah trees. They were fearless of man. The tracks they made across the plains to billabongs or waterholes were like sheep-pads. The Aborigines had a great time cooking and eating them.

"Along with the rodent", Mr Jackson continued, "come flocks of the beautiful letter-winged kite hawks, inland birds somewhat resembling silver gulls. Because they subsist largely on rats, these

birds have changed their habits and become night feeders. Out on the plains after dark we could hear the call of the birds as they caught their prey, and could also hear them feeding their young in the nest. The nocturnal instinct was also developed in the young, which remained quiet during the day. "Another thing we discovered was that the male rats ate many of the females and devoured all we killed about the camp."

8 NOVEMBER 1940—For the past week the temperature has not been below 100°. The intense heat has forced the strenuous sports to a standstill. Skating is popular despite the bruises, and the swimming pool is becoming first favourite.

Bush fires continue to menace the countryside, and station employees are kept busy almost every night of the week. The plague of rats which is still running the downs is said to cause many of the fires.

20 SEPTEMBER 1941—There have been several bush fires in our district, but with plenty of helpers these were soon extinguished. Nevertheless, bush fires have done a lot of damage this year, no doubt due to wax matches and the plague of rats.

The plague seems to be getting worse and the rats are becoming a nuisance. Nothing is safe from them and they are causing damage in homes. Traps are being used extensively in Julia Creek, but the number of rodents does not seem to lessen.

This is the second year of the plague and they are worse than ever. It will be a relief when they take their departure to other districts.

10 OCTOBER 1941—W.V.Y. of Augathella, writing to *Queensland Country Life*, says that every effort he has made to induce rats to eat wax matches has failed. He even mixed wax matches with food, the food being eaten, he says, but the matches carefully avoided. Either the Augathella rats are a different species to our Julia Creek rats, or a different brand of matches is used in the South.

During race week when country people were in town from all parts of the district, the prevalence of bush fires and what starts them was a constant subject for discussion – and rats were generally blamed. Two different graziers told of trying the rats out with wax matches. One said he put three wax matches amongst some dry grass. For two nights they remained untouched. On the third morning a heap of ashes marked where the matches had been. Another grazier put wax matches out and they were ignited, but wooden matches remained untouched. These countrymen tell of fires springing up in the middle of the day. Almost invariably it is found that the fire started at, or adjacent to, old camps where there was a possibility matches could have been dropped. Another old Westerner, who has seen many plagues of rats, stated that the rats are always accompanied by bush fires.

28 NOVEMBER 1941—Mr E. C. Luck, writing in the *Queensland Country Life*, states that to prove or disprove whether rats cause fires, he carried out a test on Portland Downs for seven weeks. Results, for the benefit of those interested, were as follows:

Sep 4—Four rats, along with dry Flinders grass and 48 wax matches, were placed in each of two cases.

Sep 10—Twenty matches were added to each case,

making a total of 136 matches in all.

Sep 12—Two rats died and two were substituted.

Sep 16—Another rat died and another was added.

Sep 21—There were still no fires, so the eight rats were transferred to a cage measuring 5' by 3' with an earth floor to give more natural conditions. The cage was filled to a depth of 6 inches with dry Flinders grass and 145 wax matches were put in.

Sep 26—Grass caught fire during the night. The rats had been starved for two days previously, except for the grass, of which they ate considerably more than one would think. A fresh supply of dry Flinders grass and 50 matches were added.

Sep 29—No more fires. Rats and cage removed into tennis court so that gates could be locked to prevent the human element coming into the picture. Dry Flinders grass, but no matches were put in, as we wanted to see if the spontaneous combustion theory would work.

Oct 10—No fires. Four out of the eight rats were transferred to a cage with a wooden floor, the idea being to see what happened to the matches. No grass was put in, only 10 matches. Within a couple of seconds a rat sat up with a match, bit the business end and ignited it, the match falling onto the floor still alight. I might mention that the rats had been starved for two days previously.

Seven hours later, only one of the 10 matches remained intact. Four match heads had been bitten but had not ignited. The four rats were then fed and returned to the tennis court cage containing the other four rats.

Oct 14—Four rats were again put in a cage with a wooden floor. Dry Flinders grass and 10 matches were added.

Oct 16—Ten more matches were added.

Oct 18—Three of the four rats died and substitutes were introduced.

Oct 21—The cage caught fire.

Oct 26—Test discontinued.

The test definitely proves that rats do cause fires by igniting wax matches. However, it surely is logical to assume that as the distance increases from a point of human habitation, so should there be less matches dropped and, thus, fewer fires. But this is not the case. One must conclude, therefore, that the cause of the fires lies elsewhere than with rats eating matches; and that the risk of rats starting fires by igniting wax matches – after taking into consideration the few matches available to them – is so small that it is not worth considering.

7 FEBRUARY 1942—The rat plague in Julia Creek is very bad and townspeople have resorted to trapping and killing. Last night over 1000 were killed in the town area and carted away by a council man. If this rate goes on for a few nights the rodents will be a minor pest and will soon be wiped out.

24 FEBRUARY 1945—About 50 miles from town, rats are reported to be swarming the country. “A rat for every blade of grass” I have been told. The worst plague they have ever been. It appears they are slowly working in from the Gulf country as they were 20 miles further out a fortnight ago.

25 FEBRUARY 1950—A plague of ‘hairy’ rats sometime this year has been forecast. The rats are called ‘hairy’ because of the long, wiry black hairs, mostly white tipped and 2 inches long, on

THE HOMESTEAD in those days was very unpretentious. The hut had a mud floor, and as there happened to be a plague of rats the floor was literally covered with their tracks. At night the place was full of them. They ran all over the hut and over us in our bunks, squeaking like a lot of guinea-pigs. These rats were all, I believe, marsupial, and whence they came or whither they went, no one seemed to know.

We used to hear of rats being plentiful at some place in the west, and in the course of a few weeks a wave of them would suddenly appear, myriads of them. The cats would catch a few at first, but soon they would look on with indifference whilst the rats raced about the floor. No place was safe from them. Anything eatable had to be placed out of reach. At night, the traveller camping out, unless he hung

all his saddlery to the branch of a tree, would find in the morning that the rats had nibbled everything to pieces.

Since the country in the far west has been more fully stocked, this plague has disappeared almost entirely; nor do we see the vast swarms of flock pigeons which used to cover the downs and rise up, twelve hundred or fifteen hundred in one lot. Beautiful birds of a chocolate and black plumage and almost the size of a grouse. And like grouse flocking into a stubble field towards sunset, these pigeons flying to water in the evenings used to afford capital shooting.

ROBERT GRAY
Reminiscences of India and North Queensland, 1913

RATS everywhere. I used to sit down in the chook yard with a spear and

switch the torch on – zoom! I used to catch rats like that. They used to eat all the eggs, y’see.

My father had a kerosene-tin trap: cut out the top of the tin, put a swivel on it (spring loaded), and a bait in the middle. Then bury the tin so the top was level with the ground. Overnight the rats would run on this thing, and up she’d tip. They’d end up in the water. Next day I had to clean them out.

TOMMY JESSUP

OUT of nowhere all these rats came: hundreds, thousands of them. The baker, Joey Kaeser, used a 44-gallon drum with flour in the bottom and a greased stick across the top. They’d fall in the drum, see, and be trapped.

The rats went overnight. One day they’d be there, and the day after you’d see just half a dozen.

The next thing: cats. They were worse. It was nothing to have to get rid of 30 kittens a day.

ELSIE STAINKEY

EVERYWHERE you went there were rats. We happened to be in Julia Creek in the middle of this plague and we went to Mum Dawson’s cafe. We’d always go to Dawso’s. Used to go there for a feed. We’d order our meal, and while we were waiting for it to be served we were running around the cafe chasing rats.

Out on the tanksinking jobs when you were driving across the downs, there were thousands of them in the grass. We even saw some inside the tanks we were building. And there was nothing for them to eat inside a tank but black soil and dust.

MERV BRAND

the hindquarters. The plague forecast was made by the shire council Health Inspector after he had caught some in the town area. The last serious infestation was in 1945 when it was not safe to leave any sort of leather article within reach of the rats.

30 SEPTEMBER 1950—For some time now, reports have been coming in from country areas that rats are very numerous. However, until last week the town area has not been bothered too much by them, but they are now invading the town in rather large numbers. The invasion of these rodents is following the same pattern as in the last plague (they are coming in the wake of the good season) and it seems certain that we shall have to put up with a lot of inconvenience and bother before they migrate to other regions.

15 SEPTEMBER 1951—In the north country, and not a great distance from town, cats and snakes abound in great numbers. These have come in since the rat menace drifted on. The wild cats are to be seen in greater numbers than the snakes, but the latter are no doubt more plentiful than realised.

23 JUNE 1956—Reports in general are that the season is one of the best experienced for many years. Both grass and water are in plentiful supply for stock.

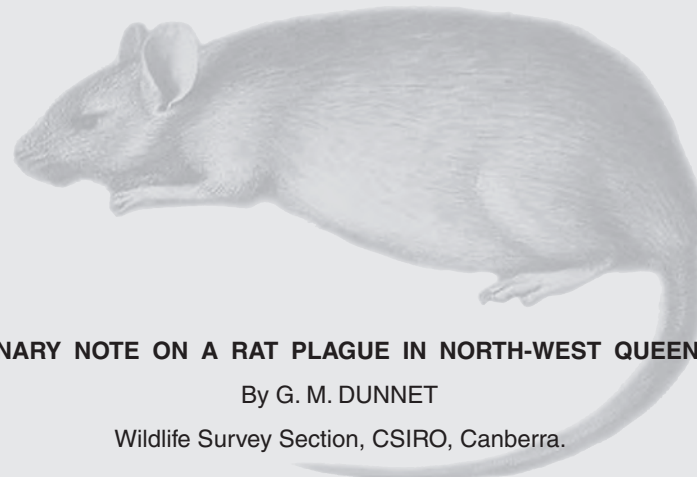
Rats are in such numbers in this district that their presence can be termed a plague. They have even invaded the township and vegetable gardens are suffering: tomatoes, cabbages and kohlrabi being picked out as a new diet. Chickens are also being selected. The rats are particularly hungry and daring. The position is so bad that hotel guests have been warned by the proprietors not to leave anything in the nature of leather exposed during the night or it may be devoured by the rats. The rats are partial to leather portions of clothing such as shoes, slippers, belts and anything of a like nature.

Reports tell of men who are camping out having to take every precaution so that their provisions are not raided overnight. The rats have been known to gnaw through strong canvas in order to get at food.

30 JUNE 1956—The rodents have been troublesome. Not a vegetable garden has escaped their attention, and young chickens and ducklings have been killed by the pest. Dogs and cats have abandoned the chase – they simply got tired of the massacre. If owls could be introduced in large numbers, and hawks converted to the idea of working three shifts, some diminution of the rat population might be accomplished.

21 JULY 1956—Measures to combat the rats are continuing, for it seems that another wave of rodents has arrived in the township. Many of the local residents are devising secret methods to cope with the rat reinforcements. With the use of several traps, one shop owner claims a record catch of 75 rats within two hours.

18 AUGUST 1956—Following representations by the United Graziers Association to the CSIRO, a questionnaire has been prepared and is being distributed concerning the frequency of rat plagues in the past and seeking up-to-date information on the recent rat infestation.



PRELIMINARY NOTE ON A RAT PLAGUE IN NORTH-WEST QUEENSLAND

By G. M. DUNNET

Wildlife Survey Section, CSIRO, Canberra.

IN THE Mitchell grass downs of North-West Queensland, irregular severe droughts cause large losses of sheep. In an effort to prevent these losses, pastoralists have recently begun to grow crops of sweet sorghum for silage. During 1956, the sorghum crops in some areas were completely destroyed by rats, and the CSIRO was asked to look into the problem. A visit was made in July to a sheep station, Dundee, about 60 miles south of Richmond, where some of the first crops of sorghum had been grown, and where damage by rats was severe.

Rats were still plentiful and had been in plague numbers for some months. They occurred around and in the homesteads and station buildings where they were a considerable nuisance and ate everything edible within their reach, including boots and clothing. Vegetable gardens and lawns were eaten out.

In addition, the rats were abundant throughout the open Mitchell grass paddocks. There they dug short (18 inch) shallow burrows, and distinct runways were seen occasionally between the tussocks. In one paddock, a rat burrow was encountered every four or five paces, which represents a density of some 300 burrows per acre, and many were still occupied. The burrows occurred in open patches of soil as well as in the tussocks of Mitchell grass; and in the sorghum paddocks rats were sheltering on the ground in small piles of dead sorghum leaves.

Tremendous damage was caused to the crops of sorghum, most being completely destroyed by the rats, which gnawed through the stems near the base and caused the plants to fall so that it was impossible to harvest them. This damage occurred only a week or two before harvesting was due to begin, and rates of destruction of 16 acres per night have been cited. In the Richmond area alone, about 2000 acres of

sorghum were destroyed. The damage to the native Mitchell grass and Flinders grass pastures must be considerable, but is as yet impossible to estimate.

Eight specimens of the rats were obtained at Dundee and were identified as *Rattus villosissimus*. This is a native species occupying the sub-arid areas of central Australia. It is well-known as the "plague rat" of the interior, and is suspected to increase enormously in numbers after good rainy seasons and to undertake long migrations. There seems little doubt that considerable movement of the rats may occur, but so far there is insufficient data on the present plague to determine its direction and extent.

R. villosissimus has been described as strictly nocturnal, but under plague conditions at Richmond during winter 1956 they were being caught in large numbers by birds of prey such as fork-tailed kites and wedge-tailed eagles. The kites were frequently seen rising from the ground with rats in their talons; and one eagle's nest, with two well-grown nestlings, contained the bodies of eight rats, while the ground below was littered solely with rat remains.

R. villosissimus appears to be a very poor climber. One small patch of vegetable garden at Dundee was successfully protected from the rats by a 3 ft high netting fence of 1-inch mesh, and the patch contrasted strongly with its bare surroundings. This type of barrier could be used, along with poisoning, to obtain protection of larger but still relatively restricted areas. Control of the plague as a whole is not yet feasible.

Information on the geographical extent and economic effect of the plague is now being sought. Records of previous plagues and the conditions under which they have occurred are also being collected so that a full assessment of the economic importance of *R. villosissimus* in this region may be made.



I HAD A FRUIT AGENT in Townsville and one in Brisbane. It took three and a half days from Brisbane by train, and one day from Townsville. In the wet season there were always delays. The thing was: the Burdekin River only had a low crossing and after a decent rain the water rose over the bridge. The fruit would get held up on the Townsville side and arrive in Julia Creek rotten. There were no cold cars or anything like that. Later on, before the high bridge was built, they ran barges across the river. The fruit would still be held up, but only for two or three days and that wasn't too bad.

People waited for the train to come in. It didn't matter whether it arrived at 6 in the morning or 7 at night – the Inlander coming in was a big event and there'd be somebody waiting at the shop to get the fruit. I'd sell it off quick, see. In a day and a half it'd all be gone. There were no frozen foods. Fresh stuff was always the thing and that's what they all went for: cabbages and cauliflowers, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, pumpkins, choccos.

Plenty of mangoes. I had a mate in Townsville who bought mango trees for the fruit, and when they were ripe he'd send them out to me. I'd get six or eight cases of mangoes and sell them for six bob a dozen: Kensington Prides, Bullock's Hearts, Peach mangoes; a lot of varieties. The only one that was a bit hard to eat was the Turpentine mango. He wasn't a good eatable mango, the Turpentine.

MY UNCLE, TOMMY GRAHAM, had a truck. Lorries we called them. He used to run the mail from Julia Creek on a 3-ton lorry. On his days off he might decide to go to Eddington for a swim, about 12 miles out just this side of the Gilliat. There's a big swimming hole; water there all the time. He'd drive around the town calling out: "Anybody want to go swimming?" and people would jump on. You might take a sandwich, or a piece of steak and a shovel: put the shovel on the coals and chuck a bit of steak on it.

SEE THE SIGN on the back of that truck: "Tommy Graham Carrier"? Well, Tommy grew up in Julia Creek (he was among the students in the first year of the state school) and he had that truck for his mail run. On hot afternoons he'd call out: "Comin' wimmin?" instead of "coming swimming". Not on purpose; he just had a funny way of talking. I don't know whether he ever used an 's'.

I was only small when Tommy took us swimming. Somehow we all knew to be at his house and we'd hang around his old lorry and his two horses until it was time to go. He'd collect all us kids and take us down to the creek with a bunch of bananas.

DADIE DAWES

19 JANUARY 1957—For several days after the rain the cool change continued, but the days are again becoming warm. Backyards and local roads are drying up and motorists are discarding the chains on the rear wheels of their vehicles. A great volume of water has been flowing down Julia Creek and this morning the volume increased, running a banker the second time within 12 months.

Julia Creek was the terminus for Wednesday's flood-bound Inlander. Stranded passengers en route to Mt. Isa and Cloncurry resided on board in their air-conditioned coaches. Local householders took some of the passengers into their homes; others made bathrooms and washing facilities available.

The enforced stay in Julia Creek meant financial embarrassment for those on the train whose funds were running low. On Friday and Saturday nights, concerned local residents and members of the C.W.A. catered at each meal for sittings of not less than 100. Nobody went hungry. Four shippers of ice cream consigned to the Mary Kathleen Uranium Mines were donated to the train passengers. The members of the C.W.A. saw to its proper distribution.

On Friday night a dance for passengers in need of financial assistance netted £21 odd. Then, shortly before lunch on Saturday, to the cheers of passengers (an expression of thanks to this community, and, it must be said, an outburst of joyous relief from a period of

boredom) the westward train departed our township.

This is not the first time that flood water has wet the rails and passengers have been marooned in Julia Creek. Now that considera-



tion is being given to the provision of a better and faster service on this line, it is hoped that the authorities will incorporate in their project the building of higher embankments and bridges at those places where flooding is likely to occur in the wet season.

The Inlander to Townsville left on Thursday night at its customary time.



Opposite, top: The Inlander at Julia Creek.
[Joy Burns, J26, 1954]

Opposite, bottom: "T. Graham, Carrier,
Phone 80". Tommy Graham's mail truck
with sulky on back.
[Lesley Bode, BoL01, ca 1935]

Below: Mannie and relations at Eddington,
on the back of Tommy Graham's truck.

Sitting, from left (relation to Mannie in brackets):

- Matilda Alice Graham (grandmother, at back)
- Grace Graham (auntie)
- Ivy Wilkins
- Esther Sills (mother)
- Kathleen Graham (cousin, looking away)

Standing:

- Gladys Hampton (auntie, left)
- Mannie

[Lesley Bode, BoL04, ca 1935]

25 MARCH 1944—The week began with a few drops of rain which cleared the haze that had been enveloping the district for the past few days and returned to us the cool nights we look forward to so much. This leap year, however, is leaping over the bounds of reason insofar as rain is concerned, and brings to mind a few lines of *The Bushman's Farewell to Queensland*:

And then it never rains in reason,
There's floods one year and droughts next season.

A few points over 24 inches have been registered on one property, and 23 inches on another so far this year. There are a few places out from Julia Creek and Nelia that have not seen the mailman for five weeks and are not likely to for another couple. I was told on Friday that the Flinders River was again 5 feet over Hulbert's Bridge, so that settles any chance for those on the wrong side getting mail just yet, as the crossing will be silted over afresh.

At time of writing there is a shower falling along the Kynuna road. George Peut, the Kynuna mailman, had a fair trip last week, but a rough one the week before. Ray Parker on the Millungera run told me he got out as far as it was possible to travel, and for the last 30 miles he was never out of second gear.

Tommy Graham, the Dalgonally mailman, left at midday last Wednesday and never got back till midnight Friday. It is no fun being a mailman at the best of times, let alone in the wet. The three of them are good mud larks and if there is a possible chance they will have a go in spite of the odds.

The children lined up before the local medical officer, Dr Donald Carter, last Tuesday for the anti-diphtheria needle. The doctor has the kiddies' welfare at heart and if an adequate supply of green vegetables was forthcoming into the town, his job of keeping the children fit would be lightened considerably.

Drover Herb Fickling and sons left for Millungera to bring in a mob of fat cattle to truck coastwards. Bill Davis is getting ready for his seasonal run of fire-ploughing, and so are Ted Triffett and Roy Pattison.

The blowfly is still making itself felt on a good many places and work is cut out endeavouring to hold them in check till such times as crutchers are available. The district is in a sorry state as regards labour. On more than one property a solitary man is doing all the work, as it is hard to get men to assist. In some cases it is on a "help me, help my neighbour" basis. I know of one case where the owner, a man over 60, is battling along on his own with about 20,000 sheep spread over 80,000 acres of country.



Right: At Eddington, around Tommy Graham's truck.
[Lesley Bode, BoL02, ca 1935]

Letter references are across the bottom;
number references are from the back to the front.

Relationship (in brackets) is with respect to Mannie.
An abbreviated family tree is on page 658.

- A1: Jack Walters Snr (uncle)
- A2: Jack Walters Jnr (cousin)
- B1: Elizabeth Walters (auntie)
- B2: Joy Graham (cousin)
- C1: Matilda Alice Graham (grandmother)
- C2: –
- C3: Gladys Young (cousin)
- C4: –
- D1: Emily Elliott
- E1: Ivy Wilkins
- E2: Kathleen 'Chookie' Graham (cousin)
- F1: Wicky Wilkins (son of Ivy)
- F2: Grace May Graham (cousin)
- G1: Grace Young (auntie)
- G2: Merle Hampton (cousin)
- H1: Bill Fry
- H2: Bub Elliott (niece of Bill Fry)
- H3: John Elliott (brother of Bub)
- I1: Shirley Graham (cousin)
- I2: Esther Sills (mother)
- I3: Mannie Sills
- J1: Bill Elliott Jnr
- K1: Evelyn Graham (cousin)
- K2: Tommy Graham (uncle)
- K3: Bill Elliott Snr
- K4: Harold Walters (cousin)
- L1: Daisy Graham (auntie)
- L2: Gladys Hampton (auntie)
- L3: –
- M1: Barney Graham (uncle)
- M2: –

night on holidays.
Mrs. R. Magoffin and son Richard spent a few days in town the guest of Mrs. McCarthy.
Mr. Tommy Graham, the Dalgonally mailman who has been mail contractor here for 25 years, has sold his mail run to Mr. Vince Ahern who will take over on the 1st January.
The school children's Fancy Dress Ball held on Friday night in Eckford's Hall attracted a large crowd and was a grand success, every child being in fancy costume. The Grand March was well carried out, Miss Meldie Eckford putting the children through in fine style, while Mr. Moran Byrne was M.C.

CA:12 Dec 1947



A

B

C

D

E

F



G

H

I

J

K

L

M



WE'RE STILL LUCKY we've got a butcher in Julia Creek. One time we had a baker shop. It's important to have a baker shop in town, but ours closed. Bread now comes from the coast by overnight transport and the supermarkets sell it. It's a shame, really.

In the 1970s there were about 2100 people in the McKinlay shire. Now there's about a thousand less. That's how many people have left. There are at least 30 properties gone from the district. The neighbour buys a property and he doesn't put anybody on it; he runs it from his own property. Then he'll buy another one nearby. Where there would have been several stations of 20 or 30 thousand acres, and a family with five or six kids on each, there are now three or four put together and run by the one family.

Take fencing. Fencing was a crowbar, a shovel, a brace and bit to bore a hole – and you were a fencer with a long job ahead of you. But look at all the equipment they've got now. An engine drills the hole. Or they might not even do that: a star picket is driven into the ground. Quick, easy, and very little employment comes of it. That's just the way it is.

In the 1950s even more people were about the district. We had Gilliat and we had Nelia. Gilliat was a place of 50 or 60 people. It's nothing now. Nelia had about the same. Every 10 mile along the line there was a settlement of a few houses. The fettler who lived there was responsible for the line in that 10-mile section. Going towards Richmond there was Quarrell Siding (that's 16 mile out), then Nelia (another 14 mile on), then Nonda and Maxwelton. Eight mile out the other way there was a camp at Eddington Siding and another at Gilliat; then one at the 420 Mile (21 mile from Julia Creek), one at Undina and one at Oorindi. There's none of that now.

Ernie Brennan¹ had a store at Nelia and alongside his store there was a hotel. In those days if you had a store in a place like Nelia you could guarantee that people in the district would support that store, and by supporting it the town prospered. Not only the locals supported the small towns, the train passengers also did their bit. The trains ran to a slower timetable than they do now. They'd pull up at Nelia and stop for half an hour. That was to give the publican a chance to make a

quid: sell a few beers and a few meals to the passengers. And away they'd go again.

Back then, every train that went from point A to point B had a carriage for passengers. Every day, twice a day, you could board a train going to Nelia. Now we've got the Inlander twice a week.

Nelia used to have a couple of race meetings a year. Never missed the races at Nelia. Never missed them. Everybody from Julia Creek who was interested in horses went to the Nelia races. It's a pity that it ever stopped. There'd be six or seven events on the card, and after the meeting was over, well, there'd be a dance. Sometimes me and a bloke named Keith Dunn did the catering. And there was gambling. Hazards or somesuch would be on. You had a chance of making a few bob at Nelia – always. It's only in the last five or six years that the races at Nelia have stopped.

ANY NUMBER may play Hazards, but only one player – the *caster* – has the dice at any one time. The rules may appear rather complicated to a beginner. The *caster* starts the game by placing his stake on the gaming table. The other players do likewise if they wish to participate. Bets are between the individual players and a banker.

In each round, the *caster* calls out a number between 5 and 9 inclusive. This is the *main*. He then throws two dice.

- if he rolls the *main* he wins;
- if he rolls 2 or 3 he loses;
- if he rolls 11 or 12 the result depends on the *main*:

MAIN	WINS	LOSES
5	5	2, 3, 11, 12
6	6, 12	2, 3, 11
7	7, 11	2, 3, 12
8	8, 12	2, 3, 11
9	9	2, 3, 11, 12

Any combination not shown in the table is called a *chance*, and the *caster* throws again, and keeps throwing, until he throws the *chance* for a second time, or the *main*:

- if he rolls the *chance*, he wins;
- if he rolls the *main*, he loses (unlike on the first throw).

If the *caster* wins on his first throw of a new game, all the players win an amount equal to their stake. If he throws a *chance*, the banker gives him certain defined odds. For example, with a stake of £1, a *main* of 7 and a *chance* of 4, the players each win £2.



1. The author's maternal grandfather.



Above: Nelia races.
[Edwin Maxwell, ME01, ca 1930]



We had two ice works in town before home refrigeration came in. And we had two soft drink factories. Fancy having two soft drink factories in a small town like this and both making a living out of it. Big bottles, 26 ounces, not those little stubby things they've got now. You could buy them for sixpence. Jim Eckford made one lot and Darcy Lavarack made the other. The last person to make soft drink in Julia Creek, in Lavarack's factory, was Jumbo Harris – G.O. Harris on the label.

The banks that were here – three banks there were – they'd give you a job clerking after year 7. You were educated enough at the local school to do the jobs that were available. Now, when the young people go away

and go up to year 12 – and further – you don't get many of them come back. You send your children away to high school and they educate them for jobs that are not available in country towns. That's why they move to the city. In my family I've got grandchildren in Melbourne, in Sydney, in Brisbane, eight or nine in Mackay, in Townsville – they're split all over the place. Some of them might have stayed in Julia Creek if this place could have supported them.

At one time there were two dance halls in town and we had a dance every week. No problem getting somebody to play a piana and a set of drums. There was a solicitor, a blacksmith, two saddlers. They've all gone. None of them made a fortune, but they all made a living.

A Short History of Julia Creek Banks

2 MARCH 1925—A collecting agency of the Queensland National Bank, Richmond, was established here some eight months ago. The agency is open every Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and has proved very handy to townspeople and country people alike. Locals can now transact their banking business direct, instead of by post.

Rather an amusing incident occurred recently when a man, who was sitting on an empty rum cask dropping lighted matches down the bung hole, found himself lying on his back on the ground. The top of the cask was suddenly blown off owing to the fumes exploding. Rather a practical demonstration of the kick of rum one so often hears about.

5 SEPTEMBER 1927—A branch of the Commercial Bank of Australia was opened in Julia Creek yesterday with Mr Mullins as manager. It is temporarily situated next to Mr Vic Faithfull's office¹ in the front street.

The town is showing several other signs of progress. It is understood that plans have been prepared for both a Catholic Church and a Church of England and that tenders will be called for the

erection of these in the near future.

17 JUNE 1929—The new hotel is almost ready. It will be known as Gannon's Hotel²... The local branch of the Queensland National Bank will have its offices in the building, and Mr Roy Hampton will have a hairdressing saloon and billiard room there.

13 JULY 1929—It is pleasing to report that we are to have another banking institution in our town, namely, the Bank of NSW, which intends opening up in an office adjoining F.H. Garrity's³. This means we now have three banks in our midst which should undoubtedly speak well for the progress of this town and district.

22 FEBRUARY 1930—The erection of the new Commercial Bank of Australia⁴ opposite the Post Office has commenced, and a glance at the plans convinces one that the building, when completed, will stand out prominently as a fine piece of architecture and a further asset to this district. Wilkinson's new chemist shop is practically completed, also the Bank of NSW⁵. It is simply wonderful the

vast improvements that have been carried out in this town during the past two years. The present developments speak volumes for the future, and it is obvious the residents have great faith in the district.

A Progressive Western Town

19 APRIL 1930—Julia Creek for the past few years has made wonderful progress as a pastoral centre. Compared with the writer's first visit seven years ago, it has grown from a gloomy wayside place into a small city. It now has two hotels: Gannon's, which was only erected and furnished a year or so ago at a cost of something like £12,000, and which makes a big improvement as far as visitors are concerned; and the old hotel now run by Alf Hudson, which is by no means lacking. Both hotels offer accommodation well up to standard.

Mr Eckford has built a fine theatre with seating accommodation for something like 500; the Masonic fraternity have their own hall; shops in the main street are being rebuilt with a modern tinge; and there are two chemist shops. Several nice residences have recently been erected, as well as a railwaymen's quarters which compares very favourably with other railway quarters along the Great Northern Line.

Two of the three banks in Julia Creek (Queensland National Bank and Bank of NSW) occupy leased premises, one of which is owned by a Charters Towers boy, Lance Lewis, who has a very prosperous motor garage business. The Commercial Bank of Australia Ltd is presently under construction. There is also a School of Arts, with Billy Taaffe, another Towers-ite in charge.

Every comfort exists in the township. Ice, which is most essential in the western districts, is available in abundance, and the refreshments rooms give good service.

Compared with Hughenden and Richmond, the place looks overbounding with prosperity. There is no lacking of public spirit. Already a movement is afoot to establish a hospital. Despite the low price



Opposite: Queensland National Bank, south-east corner of Julia St and Burke St, across the road from Gannon's Hotel. Purchased by Roy Hampton in 1943. Photo taken looking east.
[Alma Gannon, GA16, ca 1941]

Below: The Bank of NSW, Burke St, leased from Lance Lewis. On the right is a petrol bowser belonging to Lance Lewis' garage. This photo was taken just after completion: a carpenter's horse is turned over to the left of the door, and the bank sign is at the side, not at the top as it was later on (page 637). In 1934 Tommy Guest built a garage on the left (page 404).
[Dadie Dawes, DW32, 1930]



of wool, everyone looks bright and full of optimism, although some say that it is a mere boom and cannot last.

Recently a corner allotment opposite the Post Office brought £1700; but this cannot be taken as an indication of the land value of the place. Although it is not in the main street it would make an ideal position for an hotel – and one of the present hotel proprietors⁶ was the purchaser.

It is good to see a small western centre growing so rapidly. When wool prices improve, which we trust will not be long, Julia Creek will be one of the most important pastoral centres along the line.

13 FEBRUARY 1932—It was my unpleasant duty to report last Thursday a brief outline of the fire which completely gutted Gannon's Hotel in the early hours of that morning...

As a result of the above fire, a safe, property of the Queensland National Bank Ltd, suffered damage. The day following the fire the bank recommenced business in a vacant shop of O'Sullivan's building⁷ and the burnt safe was removed with much difficulty to the new premises.

On Sunday night an attempt was made to open the safe, but it was soon learnt that the job required

the used of oxyacetylene plant. Mr Tommy Guest was summonsed and it was fully five hours before the door was opened. Books were a little charred and several documents slightly scorched but the notes and silver were intact.

A new safe has been received and business is again in full swing, although the officers of the bank are not altogether in their stride just at the moment.

15 JULY 1933—If a sign of the future prosperity of the district could be taken from improvements made, this town will certainly go ahead by leaps and bounds. As well as having two hotels and three banks catering for a population of about 400, we now have (or at least soon will have) two ice works and cordial factories, two butcher shops, six general stores, and three refreshment rooms, not mentioning the new homes being constantly erected.

The new premises⁸ for the Queensland National Bank is rapidly nearing completion and not before time. The premises in which the Bank has been carrying on business for the past 18 months since the fire in Gannon's Hotel, were a disgrace⁹.

5 MARCH 1943—The Julia Creek branch of the Queensland National Bank will close on March 15.

26 MARCH 1943—Mr Roy Hampton has bought the Queensland National Bank building. The furniture was auctioned and sold like hot cakes, all bringing good prices.

1. Vic Faithfull was Julia Creek's only solicitor. His office was in Goldring St, several doors west of the Julia Creek Hotel.
2. The first Gannon's Hotel in Goldring St.
3. Fred Garrity had a Commission Agency in Goldring St, near Vic Faithfull's office. He sold to Fred Hickman in September 1933. Garrity's claim to Julia Creek fame is that he pulled a pistol and shot Roy O'Sullivan near Gannon's Hotel in 1931 (page 270).
4. South-east corner of Julia St and Burke St, the same location as the Queensland National Bank of 1933.
5. Photo above.
6. Bill Gannon. When Gannon's Hotel in Goldring St burnt down in 1932, a new hotel was erected opposite the Post Office.
7. Roy O'Sullivan's building was in Goldring St in between the Julia Creek Hotel and the burnt-down Gannon's Hotel. Roy is the person who was on the receiving end of Fred Garrity's pistol.
8. The writer probably means 'newly refurbished' premises. The building into which the QNB moved (opposite Gannon's Hotel) had been occupied by the Commercial Bank since February 1930. The building underwent alterations in March 1940. See GA16, opposite.
9. A shop in Roy O'Sullivan's building.



We had a School of Arts in Julia Creek and an indoor picture show. And an open-air one, too, which doubled as a skating rink. Jim Eckford started the picture shows. The indoor theatre, which became a dance hall when the open-air theatre was built, was sold to some grazier¹ who took it out to Clifton Park and made a woolshed out of it.

Norm Downey took over the open-air theatre from the Eckfords and he operated it until TV came in. Pictures four times a week. That's the entertainment we had because we didn't have TV to trap you in a room all the time. We were better off then – in some ways – than we are now. Once TV started it interfered with a lot of things.



1. Harry Stainkey – see NQR 22/3/1958 on p208.

Right: School of Arts, north-east corner of Julia St and Burke St, after rain. Built prior to 1922, blown down 9/2/1940. The words "School of Arts" can just be made out above the entrance alcove. School house on left, old shire office behind school house (partly cut off). Taken from the footpath in front of Gannon's Hotel.

Mannie Sills is on the right, walking towards the front of his father's Whippet. On the ground in front of Mannie is a metal fixture known as a Silent Cop. They were placed at the centre of an intersection to prevent drivers from cutting corners when turning right – a kind of ultra-miniature roundabout.

[Dadie Dawes, *DW38*, ca 1937]



A Short History of the School of Arts

Julia Creek—A Thriving Western Centre

11 NOVEMBER 1924—In 1918 the township of Julia Creek comprised a store, a shop, and a small hotel. Since then it has made rapid progress due principally to numerous selectors settling in the district. Today it has a huge hotel, a building previously known in Charters Towers as the Metropolitan Hotel, which was removed by Mr Roy O'Sullivan. To lease this hotel for 10 years, an amount was paid sufficiently large to purchase a small selection and a couple of thousand sheep with a little wool on. In addition to the lease a substantial rent is paid.

Despite this financial burden, the hostess is always in a cheerful mood and her only worry seems to be the getting of the precious fluids that she sells so quickly. Rumour has it that during a recent race week 30,000 drinks were named; but, for the size of the place, this seems an exaggeration. Still, the atmosphere is extremely dry and the dispensing is exceedingly good.

For the 12 months ending June last, nearly 2000 tons of wool was railed at Julia Creek and Gilliat. Besides being the centre of a vast sheep area it is the 'port' for cattlemen from the Gulf. For the past year something like 10,000 cattle were railed at Julia

Creek, while at Gilliat, 13 miles further west, the number was 6000.

At the western side of the township, and costing between seven and eight thousand pounds, a wool-scour has been erected recently by a local company. It is now in full swing, cleaning greasy wool that has been grown in the district. The directors of the concern are sanguine of its success.

Numerous houses, stores, refreshment rooms and other buildings have been erected during the past few years. Motor experts from two up-to-date garages give quick service in repairing selector's cars.

A School of Arts Hall has not been overlooked; and it is probable that ere long, thanks to Mr Jim Eckford, the residents of Julia Creek will enjoy seeing "the world's best" projected on the screen. Mr Eckford is also in the course of erecting an ice works and its product should find ready sale. At present, each train from Richmond brings consignments of blocks of ice, a very necessary commodity.

Julia Creek is under the jurisdiction of the McKinlay Shire Council, 65 miles south, but apparently is not without strong representation. Footpaths and watercourses are being made, and the roads are in a good state.

Land for building purposes is valuable. A quarter acre with a 65 feet frontage, almost at the extreme end of the business section of the town, is reported to have changed hands at £275. Altogether, Julia Creek is a busy little township and the centre of a thriving and prosperous district.

30 MARCH 1925—A revue company gave several entertainments in the School of Arts on the 20th and 21st, which were well-attended by townspeople.

27 APRIL 1925—A fete was held in the School of Arts on Easter Saturday, proceeds in aid of the Bush Nursing Cottage Building fund. Hoopla, fish-pond, jumble stall, and lucky dip all contributed to the day's success. A refreshments stall relieved the thirst of the visitors.

The event was very successful and a good sum was added to the fund.

Also at the School of Arts, a very enjoyable entertainment was given on Easter Monday night by the members of the Julia Creek Amateur Concert Company with a record number present. Many pleasant items were rendered by the members who are all residents of Julia Creek. The concert



surpassed the usual imported article and it is hoped the company will continue to give entertainment from time to time. The funds of the School of Arts benefited by door takings, which were considerable owing to the record attendance.

11 MAY 1925—Every day the grass is becoming noticeably drier and several fires have been started from passing trains during the past few weeks. About 5000 acres of country on Oxton Downs was burnt out on the 28th of last month. Many other small fires have started near the line, but so far have caused no damage. Fireploughing is being done, so there should not be much trouble from fires from now on.

A sale of perpetual town leases recently surveyed in the town was held in the School of Arts today. Competition was very spirited for practically all the blocks submitted. Amounts ranging from £7 to £205 were paid for the town leases, while a suburban lease of an area of over 1½ acres was purchased for £1200. This latter, it is said, was bought on behalf of the Masonic Lodge. Altogether, 68 town leases of about ¼ acre each and one suburban lease of 1½ acres were put up for auction. All were sold. The major portion was purchased by local inhabitants.

23 JULY 1928—A new bore is being sunk behind

the School of Arts building. The contractor is Mr Roger Tichborne. Boring commenced on July 11, and by July 17 a depth of 148' was attained. Very solid matter was struck when down but a few feet, though only of a thin layer. From then on boring has been through grey shale. It is considered the contractors have made very good progress and it is anticipated to strike a solid flow of water at 1100'.

Julia Creek Horticultural Show

17 SEPTEMBER 1932—The Julia Creek Horticultural Society held its first show in the School of Arts hall on Friday, the 2nd of September, and it certainly was a pronounced success despite the awful drought conditions existing in the district and the rather pessimistic idea that prevailed regarding the use of bore water for growing vegetables and flowers in the chocolate soil.

Under the direction of the society's president, Dr J. Hogg, and with the assistance of Mr Sneyd the secretary, and the support of a live-wire committee of the leading townsmen, the exhibition proved conclusively that a splendid exhibition of the district production could be staged.

The committee sought the services of Mr W. Mather, Townsville, to act as judge and this was kindly granted, with the result that the society was able to secure a capable judge from outside the

district and one qualified to give a comparative opinion as to how the show compared with those staged in coastal towns.

In a short speech Mr Mather expressed surprise at the wonderful collection of exhibits presented for judgement. "I had an idea", said the judge, "that the show would not present many difficulties and that in a very short time the exhibition would be over as far as I was concerned as judge. To my surprise I found stands packed with classy exhibits. The vegetables being quite outstanding in regards to quality."

Mr Mather went on to say: "The cabbages as a whole were excellent. Three out of the 10 entries that secured the coveted cards of first, second, and highly commended were what I term 'picture cabbages'. I congratulate Mr Ulick Browne on his meritorious win."

One or two exhibitors of turnips thought that size was the essential thing, and consequently presented vegetables past show quality. The various bean prizes went to Dr Hogg and Mr Jim Parsons.

The judge appreciated Dr Hogg's exhibit of lucerne, and was very interested in the tussocks of Mitchell and Landsborough grass exhibited by Mr Ulick Browne. Mr Swayne's stool of wheat was admired for the great number of heads and the hardness and flour quality of the grain. For northern grown wheat it was certainly good.

[continued...]

The flower section brought forth many competitors, but owing to strong winds prevailing during the last fortnight a number of the entries were not up to the high standard set by the vegetables. The rose entries were poor, but several annuals were fairly well displayed.

Dr Hogg, together with his splendid committee, is to be congratulated on inaugurating this movement in Julia Creek. It demonstrates that such exhibitions can be staged successfully, and that flowers and vegetables can be grown to a high standard even under great difficulties.

A splendid display of children's work was exhibited and included copybook writing, mapping, and work in pastel colours. Many still-life studies were accurately drawn and quite naturally coloured. The exhibit reflected great credit on the staff of the Julia Creek State School, and their worthy headmaster, Mr Harry Nelson.

A novel contest for children was a competition for the best homemade toy to be entirely the child's own work and made from waste material only. A splendid wheelbarrow made by Maurice Huey caught the judge's eye for the boy's prize, and Hilda Wilder won the girl's prize with a set of doll's furniture made entirely from a discarded kerosene tin.

The show was in every way quite a success and proved a surprise even unto the townsmen and women of Julia Creek.

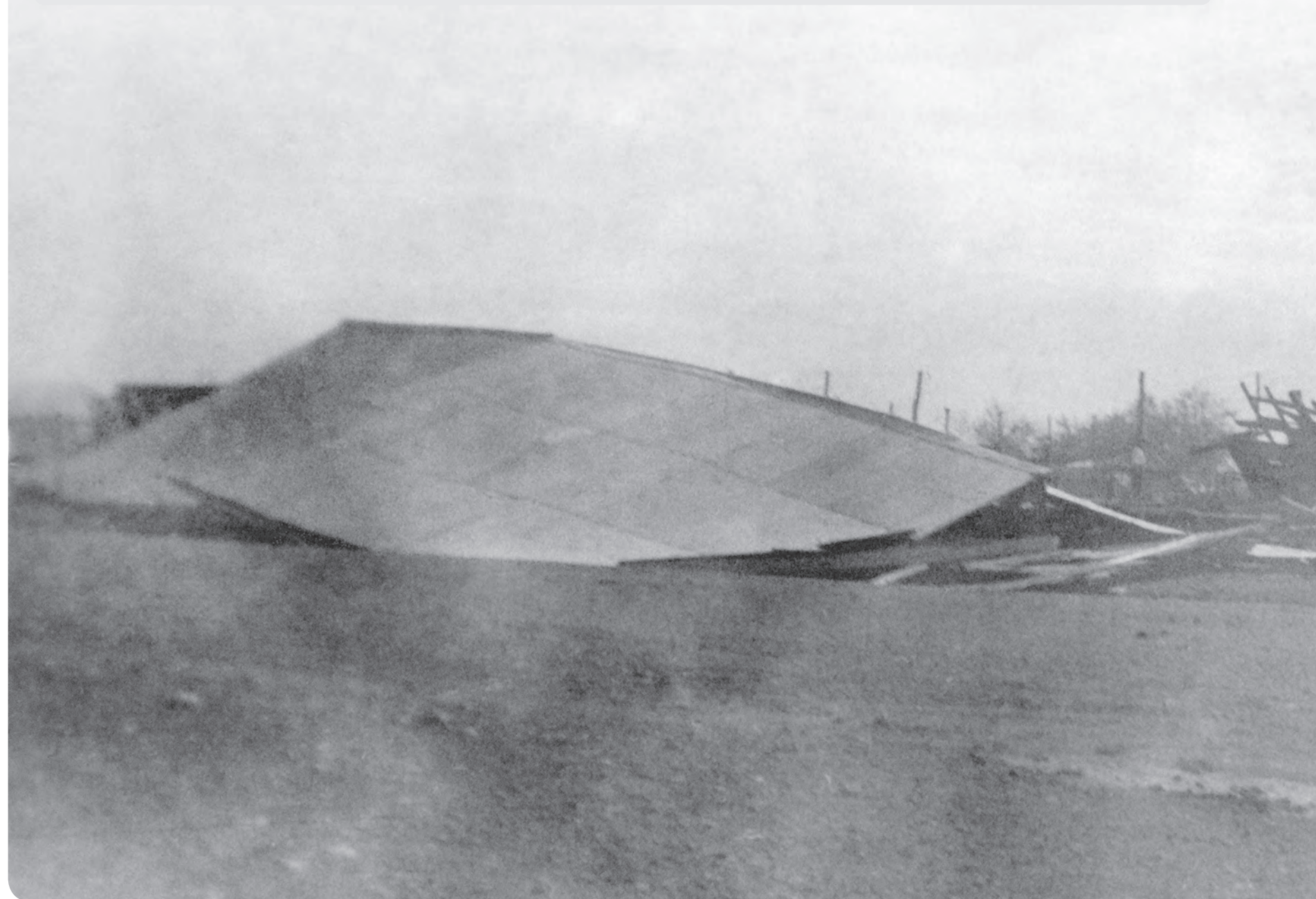
2 OCTOBER 1937—The School of Arts library is now open every Friday night and already a few members have enrolled. It is the intention of the committee to try and popularise the reading of books.

17 FEBRUARY 1940—Splendid wet weather conditions have prevailed in the Julia Creek and

adjacent districts during the past 10 days. On the evening of Friday the 9th, a very heavy storm broke over Julia Creek district and gave falls ranging from 2 to 4 inches. The north side of the line got the heavier falls, but the south side had falls ranging to an inch.

Tenders are being called for the purchase of the School of Arts building which was blown down with the wind that accompanied the rain. Tenders are also being sought for the lease of the School of Arts ground, with the condition that the two rooms still standing be used for School of Arts purposes.

8 JUNE 1940—Contractor Whiting is still busy on building operations in Julia Creek. He is removing the iron and timber from the School of Arts ground, which is a long felt eyesore, caused by a cyclonic blow in February.



Below: School of Arts after being blown down. Taken from in front of Gannon's Hotel, slightly to the left of the photo on the previous page. In the distance, behind the two rooms left standing, is the state school.

[Gordon Lavarack, LG09, 9/2/1940]

WE USED to have dances in the School of Arts just across from the Post Office. After a big storm came through one night, the two little rooms at the front (the dentist used one of them when he came) were all that was left. The storm blew the rest of it away.

The floor was still good and sound, so dancing went on as usual after that, despite having no roof and no walls. You would only do that sort of thing in a country area.

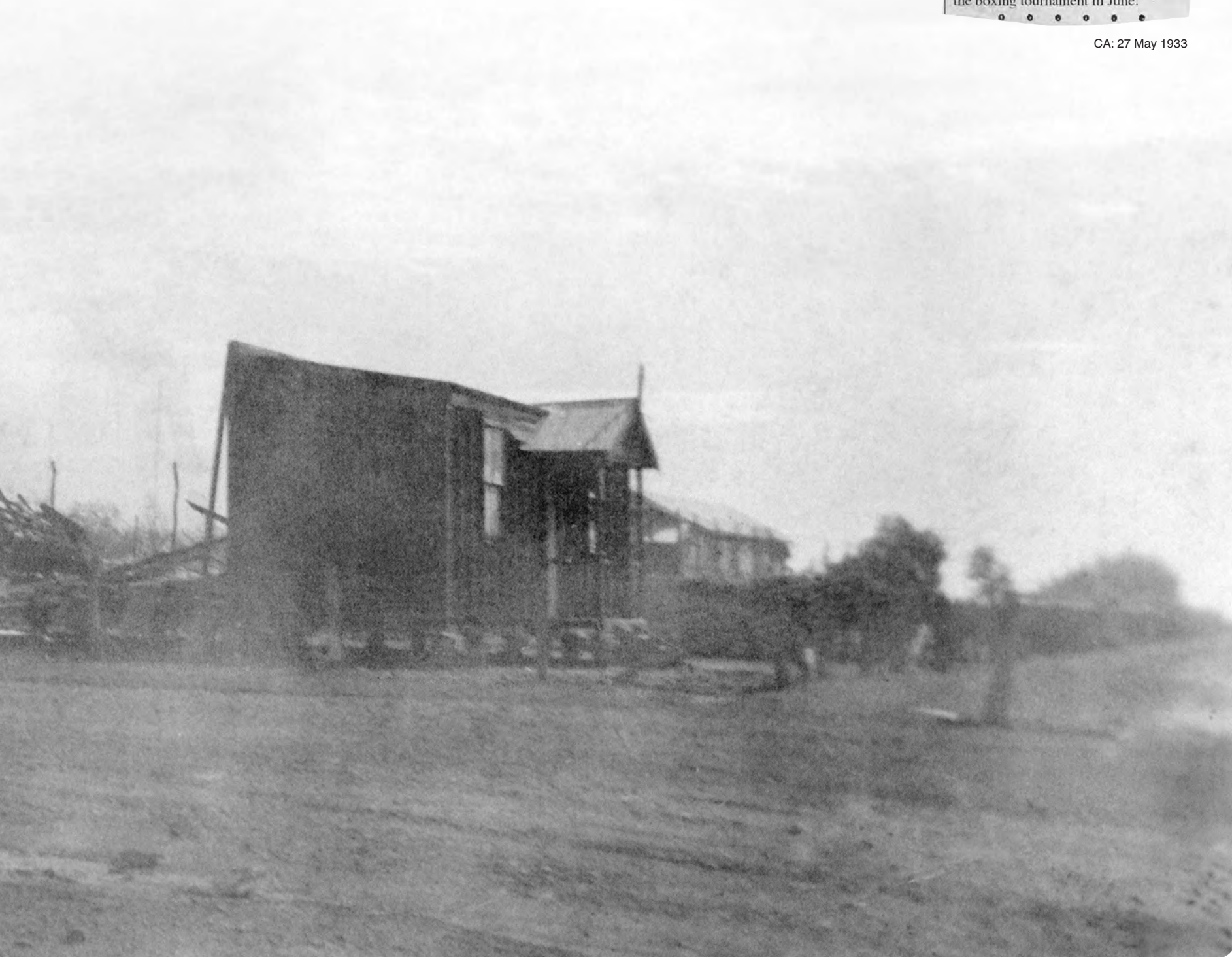
KATH BYRNE

The Julia Creek Races will be held next Friday and Saturday. On the Friday night the Cabaret will take place.

The children's Mad Hatter's Ball on Friday night last was a great success. Quite an array of fancy hats were to be seen. Mannie Sills wearing a bedroom mug (chamber pot) caused quite a lot of laughter.

On Sunday morning cars could be seen speeding towards the creek. Upon investigation it was found that four of our lads were settling their arguments with fists. One fighter received a broken hand, so the fighting was put off until the boxing tournament in June.

CA: 27 May 1933



Slab Ice and Soft Drinks

Gordon Lavarack

WHEN I WAS A KID, when Tony Lucas had a cafe in the front street, I'd go there and make ice cream for him. It was made in a wooden cask with a metal bucket inside. He'd blend the ingredients and pour them into the bucket. A mixture of coarse salt and ice was packed in the space between the bucket and the cask – there was a gap all around – and the winding mechanism was fitted over the top. I'd sit there, wind wind wind, until the ice cream was made. Take a fair while. He'd give me a plateful of ice cream for my troubles, and it was bloody good ice cream too, I don't mind saying.

Goldring St was called the front street because it fronted the railway line. It was the main street with all the shops. Someone looking out from the train, the first building they'd see, and the biggest, was the Top Pub on the corner. On the other corner was Samuel Allen's store (Sallens). Charlie Ahern, well, he was the manager; he had the house next to the store.



The Lavarack brothers start an ice factory and cordial works

Then there was Hortie's cafe, the Austral. Next to her was Dick Cooper's billiard room and barber shop. He was an SP bookie and used to run a two-up game of a Sunday in the vacant lot to the side of the billiard room. Next to the vacant lot was Jaques' butcher shop; George Jaques from Richmond. He moved in when I was 7 or 8. Further down, before you got to what they called the Millions Club, Fred Hickman had a stock and station agency.

The Millions Club was more or less one building with a few businesses inside. Vic Faithfull, he was a solicitor in there; and Tony Lucas, his cafe was in there too. Later on Nick the Greek¹ had the cafe for a few years until he built the Garden of Roses in Burke St about the time of the war. I think there was a saddler next to the Millions Club; and right on the corner was AJ Smith's, another large store like Sallens.

1. Nick Vamvakaris ('Harris'), see page 261.



WELL, THE MILLIONS CLUB was a place for ex-shearers, ex-ringers. I wouldn't say they were lower class or anything like that, but when they were out of work and had no money they always used to stay there. Take it this way: anyone else would call them a mob of derelicts, but in Julia Creek we knew they weren't derelicts. They were mostly blokes out of

a job, and in those days, if you had no job there was no dole. So what a lot of them did, they'd come into town and stay with Darkie at the Millions Club. You could call it a boarding house, yeah. Near Tony Lucas' cafe. During the Depression.

Darkie Williams was an ex shearers'-cook. Nature's gentlemen he was too, old Darkie. He

made sure the fellas had a feed: big stews, curries, that sort of thing. And he made sure they had a bath and put clean clothes on. He stopped them from sinking down into the gutter. Darkie was just one of the characters around town, one of the Julia Creek old-timers now almost forgotten.

NORM DOWNEY

Darkie Williams, a big fat old shearer's cook, he retired to the Millions Club. Must have been before Faithfull and Nick the Greek went in there. It was a rather large hut, and anyone looking for a cheap place to stay in Julia Creek would bunk with Darkie. A bloke might arrive in town, shearer say, cashed up with a cheque in his pocket. Darkie would look after him – and the cheque. He was the banker as well as the cook. Darkie would give someone a quid to go and get some meat; another, to go and get some vegetables. When your cheque cut out, you moved out – old Darkie seen to that.

If you walked down Julia St from the railway station you came to Gannon's pub. You can see it there behind Sallens. Jerry Francis was Gannon's cook. Of an afternoon he'd make a batch of biscuits and hand them out of the kitchen window. We'd line up at the window after school, waiting for Jerry to hand out these biscuits. And if there weren't biscuits, we'd tear down to Bally Kaeser's bakehouse in the front street to get some mickie loaves – little breadrolls like the ones you can buy today.

Opposite: Gordon Lavarack on his wedding day.

[Gordon Lavarack, LG03, 1953]

Below: Goldring St shops, looking north from the railway station into Julia St. From the right: Julia Creek Hotel, Sallens store & manager's home, Grace Horton's Austral Cafe (twin-peaked front, burnt down in 1944), Dick Cooper's billiard room (burnt same date), vacant block (Lance Lewis' double-storey home can be seen in the distance behind

this block); Jaques' butcher shop (edge of photo).

Two buildings are visible in Julia St: Gannon's Hotel on the left behind Sallens, and Roy Hampton's Billiard Saloon on the right behind the woman in the street.

There is a radio aerial (aimed at 4LG Longreach?) just visible on the left end of the hotel. The bright sky has washed it out, but it is clearly discernible in the reflection.

[Kath Batt, BK10, ca 1944]



During the past few weeks quite a few changes have taken place. Lavarack Brothers ice works and cordial factory is nearing completion and is expected to be in operation within the near future.

The commission agency business of Mr. Fred Garrity has changed hands, the new owner being Mr. Fred Hickman who has managed a similar business for many years.

NQR: 09 Sep 1933

Below: Gordon fights "Basher" Whiting to a draw in a boxing tournament.

JULIA CREEK, 10 June — On Wednesday night in the School of Arts Hall, a very successful boxing tournament was held. The door takings were about £20 and the crowd that turned up to witness the events exceeded all expectations. The boxing was good and clean. Messrs Hudson and Butt acted as judges, Cliff Parker as referee, and Bert Burrows was the secretary.

The programme went off without a hitch and there was no lost time between events. Beyond the crowd being a bit disappointed by one of the contestants not turning up for the principal event, the evening was voted most enjoyable and the committee has been asked by a large number of the public, as well as intending boxers, to stage another tournament in the near future. The committee would like to see representatives from other towns come along to the next tournament to compete with our boys, so please send along names as soon as possible.

The results of the various bouts were as follows: Gordon Lavarack and 'Basher' Whiting, both five stone, fought a very lively three rounds to a draw. This bout was both fast and furious and brought forth loud applause from the crowd.

Reg Fickling, 5st 5lbs, and John Somers, 5st 6lbs, fought one of the outstanding matches of the evening. After three hard and fast rounds, the judges decided in favour of Fickling.

Another good bout was between Clive Wilder and Les Peut, two 5½ stoners. The judges could not separate these boys, so the referee ordered another round. Peut, who was not too well, threw in the towel and the judges gave the fight to Wilder.

Another Wilder, Albie, 4st, fought Spider Pattison, also 4st, to a good solid three-rounds draw.

Neither Joe Kaeser, 7st, nor Tom Tracey, 6st 2 lbs, could get a match owing to a shortage of boys. The boxing concluded with a match between 'Buff' Gillett and 'Lightning' Brown, two 3st midgets, followed by a ring full of blindfolded boys which caused much merriment.

The dance that followed the boxing was a decided success and everyone present had a most enjoyable time.

NQR: 15 Jun 1935

DAD'S NAME WAS DARCY. He was married in 1928 and I was born that same year in the nursing home at Julia Creek, a two-storey joint. I think the CWA had their gatherings in there.

Dad had been a ringer on Dalgonally. His brother, my Uncle Huey — I don't know what he was doing in the area — but the two of them got together and started a carrying business in Julia Creek. Then they built the ice works and cordial factory.

To be honest, I haven't got many fond memories of Julia Creek. My mother and father divorced when I was very young and Dad never remarried. He reared me alone.

We lived in a house behind the factory and Dad looked after me, or Uncle Huey looked after me, or I'd look after myself. I'd ride my bike to the woolscour and hang out with Jimmy Brisbane. His father worked out there. Jimmy and I were good mates. We'd knock around town, go to the mud hole in the creek and have a swim, go to a dance when we were old enough. I couldn't dance but I'd go just the same. And we'd go to Eckford's pictures. We weren't allowed to sit in the canvas seats, we had to sit on hard forms, rows of them at the front. You had to be a teenager or an adult to sit in the canvas. Wintertime we used to get on the floor with a blanket.

Dadie's uncle, Joe Eckford, he used to put up the posters advertising what pictures were on. We'd say to him: "What's on tonight, Joe?" and he'd say: "A Cowboy and Another". That was his favourite answer. And he was right — they showed a awful lot of cowboy pictures at Eckford's. Still good fun. I never missed the Tom Micks' shows, the cowboys coming over the range. Tom Micks, he was a great cowboy in the early days.

At school in Julia Creek I remember Billy Bragg as a bloody good teacher. Used to run all the concerts. End of the week he'd hire a truck and take us to Eddington waterhole for a swim. Whoever wanted to go, they'd all get on the back of this... I think it was Bill Blanch's toilet truck. Cost us tuppence.

I went to the state school till 1939 and then I boarded at All Souls for four years. My last year there was the best 12 months of my life. It was a real picnic. The school was commandeered by the military and we camped out in the bush and did schoolwork on the banks of the Burdekin in big marquees, 30 or 40 boys in each one. There was the main marquee — I was in that — and there were two smaller ones. Some of the boys had their own tents. The brothers were in tents too. The headmaster, Mills, he had a little hut. We all enjoyed it. The school came back into town the next year, 1943, and we camped at the race course. They converted the horse stables to classrooms.

My first job was in Julia Creek at the ice works. Dad had sold it by then to Jack Jensen. Uncle Huey went away to the war and the old man couldn't handle the ice works by himself so he concentrated on the carrying business. I was working for Jensen for a while, getting £2/10 a week making ice and cordial. We made the ice in molds, 12" long, 14" wide, 5" thick — 28 pound blocks. Used to get four blocks to a hundredweight. Eckford's was the opposition ice works, down the other end of Burke St behind their picture theatre.

Then I went rouseabouting with Tom Jessup. If I'd stayed with Tom I would have had a pen, I would have been a shearer, but I'd had enough of Julia Creek. When Dad said: "I'm getting out, what are you doing?" I said: "Well, I was born here, I'm not going to die here". We both left Julia Creek in 1944. Just Dad and I. The entire family.



JULIA CREEK NOTES

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

3rd March, 1944

A very pleasant evening was spent on Tuesday 15th instant when members of the QCWA invited members of the RSSAILA and visiting soldiers of the present war to a dinner party welcoming home Private Hugh Lavarack, brother of Lieut-Gen. Sir John Lavarack.

Huey, who is an old resident of Julia Creek, was an ambulance driver captured in Greece and imprisoned in Austria. He was among those recently repatriated.

The tables were decorated with gum tips, fruit and jellies, which added a festive air to the sumptuous dinner served by the QCWA ladies. Mr. Vic Faithfull, president of the RSSAILA, was Chairman. After the toast to the King, Mr. Faithfull spoke in glowing terms of Pte. Lavarack, both as a soldier and a friend, and welcomed him back to Julia Creek. In supporting the toast, Mr. Jim Parsons representing the Shire council, also expressed his pleasure at Pte. Lavarack's safe return from overseas, and hoped it would not be long before he was once again settled into business amongst his old associates at Julia Creek. The drinking of Pte. Lavarack's health was accompanied with musical honours.

In responding to the toast, Pte. Lavarack thanked the guests for their warm welcome and said he was glad to be among his trusted friends again. He described his capture by the Germans in Greece and gave a few insights into camp life. The bread was made of pumpkin, potatoes and sawdust, and was very heavy and of a greenish colour. He spoke of the countryside through which he passed on his way to the camp in Austria; of the symmetry of the farms and the gay national costumes worn by the peasant farmers; and remarked at the hundreds of geese seen from the train.

Other toasts honoured were The Old Diggers, The Young Diggers, and Absent Friends, the latter observed with one minute's silence.

Between toasts the guests indulged in old-time songs sung with gusto. The evening came to a happy ending with *Auld Lang Syne*.

Pte. Lavarack spent a few days visiting his brother, Mr. Darcy Lavarack, and attending to his business interests in Julia Creek. He returned to Brisbane on Wednesday 16th instant.

Mr. R. Watson, Blue Bird Cafe, left



CA: 03 Mar 1944

Below: The Lavarack brothers carting Waverley wool on their steam-powered, 'Standard' Sentinel Waggon. The man on top is Jim Edwards¹; the driver is unidentified.
[Fred Edwards, EF04, ca 1935]

Note the chain drive to the rear wheel, and the chimney running vertically through the front of the cabin. The Sentinel Waggon image, opposite, was taken from the tool box that hangs beneath the tray under the word 'Creek'.

The information that follows is from Tony Thomas, Records Officer of the Sentinel Drivers Club in the UK.

Dear Guy – I have quite a number of photos of early Sentinels in Australia but few can be identified specifically. Sentinel exported all their waggons through their Australian agents, William Adams, but they went out of business about 30 years ago and no records have survived of who they sold each waggon to. Sentinel made four different waggons over the years:

- *Standard (1905-23)*
- *Super (1923-30)*
- *DG (double-gearred, 1927-37) and*
- *S (shaft drive, 1933-38).*

No DG or S types were exported to Australia at the time of their manufacture, so your photo must be a Standard or a Super. I would appreciate a copy in case it is one I do not have. There are 18 surviving Sentinels in Australia and another three in New Zealand.

Sentinel dominated the steam market, but by the end of the 1930s was unable to compete with diesel trucks for all-round convenience and carrying capacity, and their range of steam-powered waggons was gradually phased out.

The waggon you describe is most likely a Standard². They weighed just over 8 tons and could carry a payload of 6 tons. The engine gave approximately 60 horsepower. Speed was limited (by law) to 12 mph, and at that speed the engine turned at 215 rpm.

There were no gears; the engine drove the

rear axle by two chains with links of 2-inch pitch. The engine sprocket had 8 teeth, and the rear axle sprocket had 33 teeth.

The early waggons were only fueled by coal, but later ones could also burn coke. All Sentinels had a vertical boiler mounted in the cab and were stoked through a hole in the centre at the top. The chimney was at the front going through the cab roof.

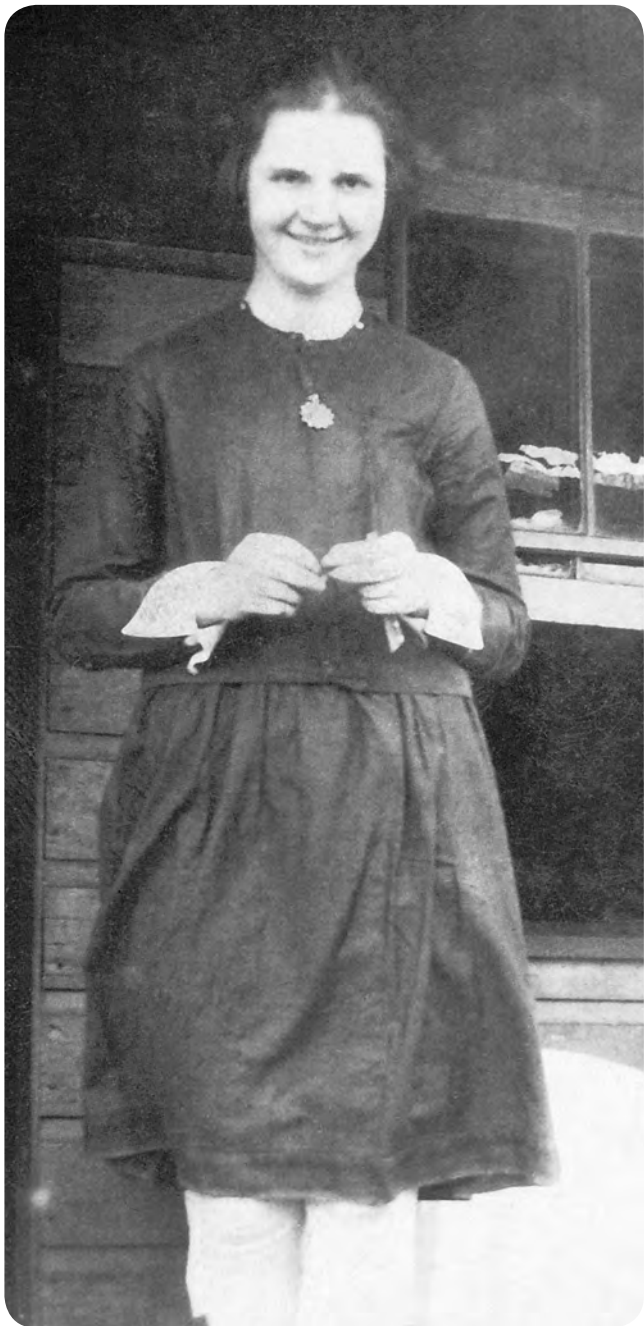
Sentinel did not talk in terms of miles per ton of coal; instead, they compared total running costs of their steam waggons with equivalent petrol lorries. These costs included depreciation, maintenance, wages, fuel, licences and so on. Costs in 1919 for a Sentinel carrying 6 tons, doing 60 miles a day, were £2/10/3; whereas costs for a petrol lorry were £4/4/9. This gave a saving of £431 per year. Compared with the price of a new waggon (£1050), this meant a substantial saving.

*Hope this helps
TONY*



1. Jim Edwards was the first man drowned at the Punchbowl. His story is on page 737.

2. After he had seen the photo, Tony confirmed that it was a Standard, made about 1920.



shou,
always at this time of the year.
Plans for the new Catholic convent
are well in hand and building opera-
tions will commence early in the new
year. This will be a boarding as well
as a day school, and music will be
taught as an additional item. The site
will be chosen at some point just east
of the court house. The ground will be
prepared by Mr. Max Burns who has
generously agreed to do this work gra-
tuitously through the medium of his
earth-moving plant and tractor drivers.
This is a worthy gesture and is to be
commended.
Again on Sunday the golfers were on
the course and more than 100 op-

CA: 12 Dec 1952

Left: Dadie on the verandah of the family home,
Burke St, Julia Creek, wearing her St Mary's
uniform (without detachable white collar).

[Dadie Dawes, DW19, 1931]

The Loss of Community

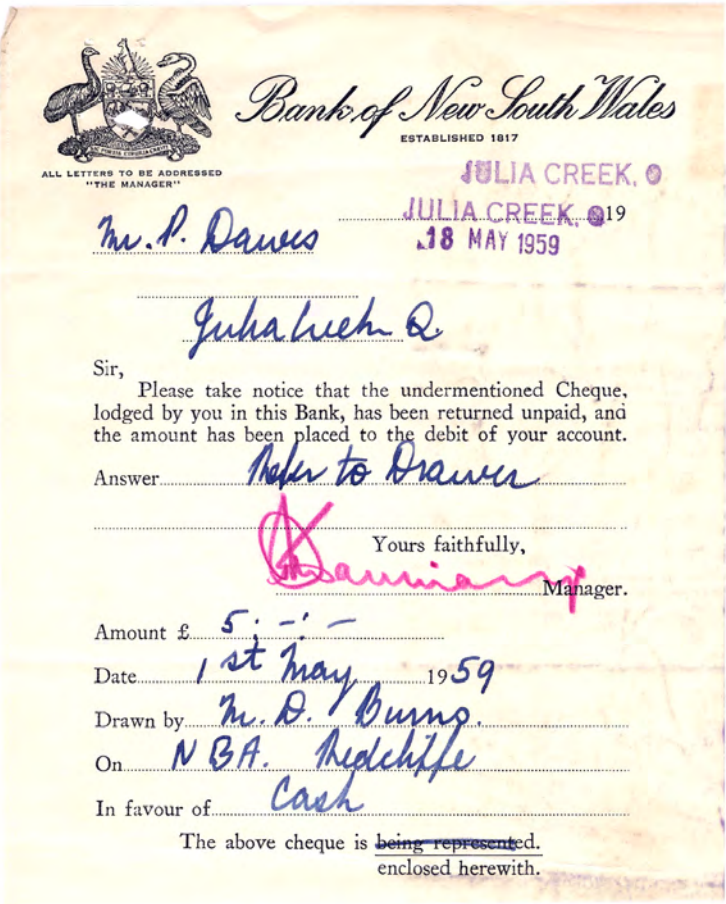
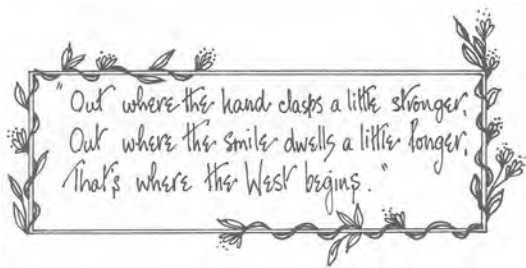
Dadie Dawes

I THINK WITH MAX BURNS it was a case of someone who grew too big too quickly. To be quite honest, from where I stand – having lived in Julia Creek for so long – the Burnses were more or less transient people. They didn't come and put their roots down. They came all right, and established themselves, but their kids didn't grow up and go to school there. The Burnses arrived, made a big stamp, then disappeared. No doubt they contributed to the social life of the town during their short stay and had a marked effect on the community. Anybody who lived in or around Julia Creek during that era would know the name Max Burns and what he did for the district. Max was one of our largest customers on a regular basis.

When we became involved in getting the playground set up – it's now called the Peter Dawes Park – the first thing my husband said was: "Oh, Max Burns, he'll level the ground for us". It was accepted that he would do that. The same thing when the convent was being built. My father was instrumental in buying the land for the convent. Then he had to think about who'd do the earthmoving. Somebody would have suggested Max Burns. And Max would just do it. I'm absolutely sure he never charged any organisation or charity for earthwork he did in town.

It wasn't so much their leaving Julia Creek that caused the blow up. The Burns family, as such, wouldn't be very much missed because the children hadn't grown up in town. They weren't really a part of the social weft. It was knowing that Max Burns was bankrupt and wouldn't be paying his bills that provoked gossip and distress.

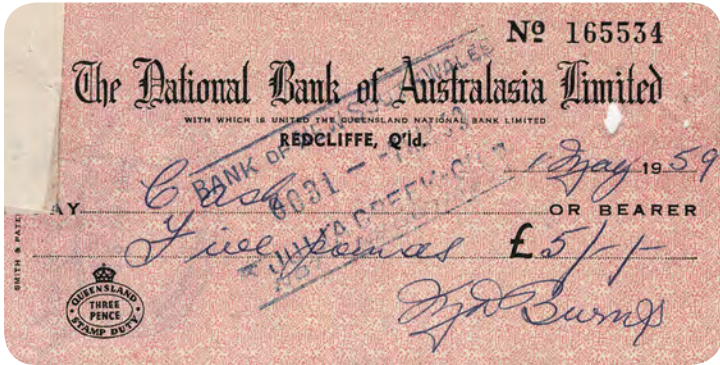
2816 Byrne P.J.	69	1	5	2
2829 Barsona	75	18	4	7
2831 Burns B.D.	90	25	4	5
2835 Blanch M.	98	21	8	7
2839 Beruma	66	15	4	8



Above: Extract from Dawes' account book, showing Max Burns as a big spender. [Dadie Dawes, DW18, Feb 1952]

Right top: Part of the Dawes' farewell card when they left Julia Creek. [Dadie Dawes, DW53, 1985]

Right centre: Letter to Peter Dawes re cheque from Max Burns that bounced. At the time of his bankruptcy, Max owed money to 54 businesses and individuals (page 785). Max had the money to pay his debts. In February 1959, three months before the cheque (right) was returned, Max bought the best hotel in Lismore (in the names of other members of his family), ignoring his debt to small businesses in Julia Creek.



Eckford Family

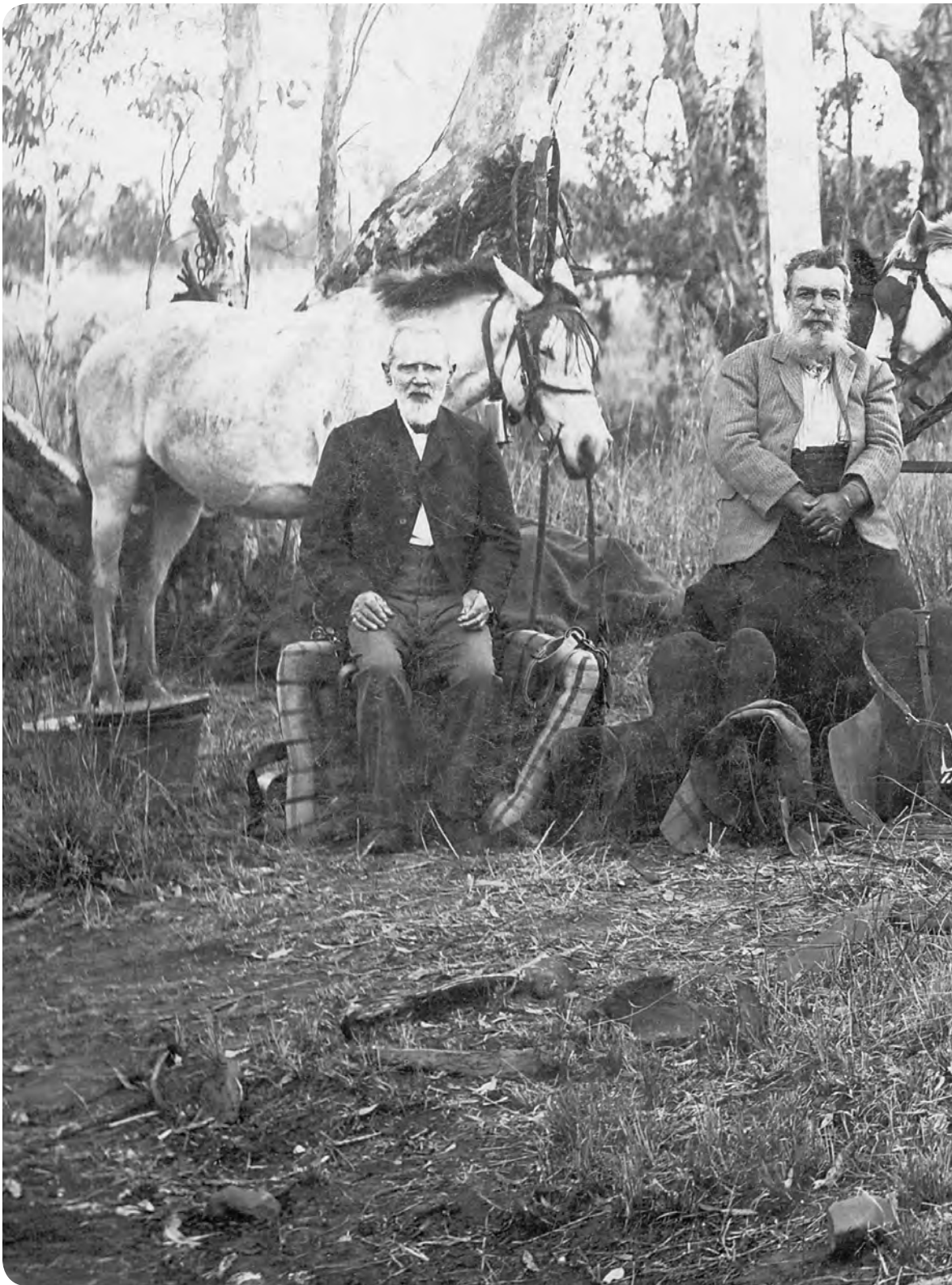
- ↪ JIM ♥ LILY PARKER
 - ↪ Dadie ♥ 1939 Peter Dawes
 - ↪ Edna ♥ Rod Quilty
 - ↪ Jim ♥ Shirley Collins
 - ↪ Coral
 - ↪ Meldie
- ↪ JOE

IT ALL BEGAN FOR ME the day I was born in Townsville on 23 July 1915, the eldest child of Jim and Lily Eckford. I was christened Catherine, but everyone knows me as Dadie. I don't know where the name Dadie came from but I know when I got it: my maternal grandfather called me Dadie when I was two or three days old.

During my early childhood, Dad managed pastoral properties in the Cloncurry area. My younger sister Edna, Mum and myself, moved from Townsville to join him when I was about 18 months.

When I was 4 years old our family moved to a small selection which my parents owned, Eden Vale, a few miles north of Georgetown. We travelled overland by a dray drawn by one draught horse. All our possessions were packed in the dray and covered by a tarpaulin hood for shade. The road was just a dirt track from one property to the next. I remember being dressed in bright red turkey-twill on that trip. Mum said that if any of us should get lost we would be much easier to find in our bright red clothes.

Our family didn't put down roots at Eden Vale and within a few years we returned south to Charters Towers. Dad went droving. He used to drove from the Gulf right down to Thargomindah in Queensland's south-west. His assessment of Julia Creek, in about 1920 before we moved there as a family, was that it was going to be a prosperous little town and a focal point for the sheep and cattle stations in the area. And in the heyday of the rural industry, in the 1950s, it became a prosperous little town. So that's what took the Eckford family to Julia Creek.



Above: The droving Eckfords near their pack saddles. Swags in foreground. From left (as related to Dadie):
Edward Parker (grandfather)
Peter Eckford (grandfather)
Joe Eckford (uncle)
Mr Croft
Jim Eckford (father, born 1880)
[Dadie Dawes, DW45, ca 1920]



JIM AND JOE ECKFORD, they had the picture theatre in Julia Creek. *Big Spoon* and *Little Spoon* we used to call them. They were drovers early on and we reckoned that's what they used to say to each other when they were going droving:

*You got your little spoon Joe?
Yeah. You got your big one Jim?
Yeah.*

It's a good story, but I don't know whether it's right or not.

REG FICKLING

I CAME TO JULIA CREEK as a 9 year old in July 1924. It was a freezing cold night when we arrived at the railway station. Dad carried a suitcase on his shoulder to a house he had built for us. The rest of our belongings stayed in the railway goods shed.

My father had bought a lot of second-hand iron from Malvern or Duchess – the mines were closing down – and he built a little corrugated iron place in Julia Creek. It was, I suppose, a 12' by 20' room with a skillion on the front and a skillion on the back. The back part, with a little partition down the middle, we used as a kitchen and dining room. Our home was very modest but we were luckier than most – we had a wooden floor. Many families only had dirt floors covered by woolpacks; others just had dirt. In winter we slept on the floor in front of a wood stove to keep warm.

Within a year of arriving in Julia Creek, Dad decided to set up an ice works and cordial factory. Soon after, he opened an open-air picture theatre with cinder floor. Cinders were the remains of coal after it

had been burnt in steam trains. There was always a large pile of it at the coalstage in the railway yards. People would get dray loads of it and make a path to their outside toilet, for instance. We put cinders in our backyard and on the floor of the picture theatre.

At the theatre, I can recall playing the pianola to provide musical accompaniment for silent films. Patrons sat in canvas deck chairs joined in gangs of six.

in when the line was built.

Mr. Jim Eckford, who recently established an iceworks here, intends starting a picture show shortly. This will be a welcome diversion on Saturday nights.

The woolscour, which operated for the first time last season, is at present being added to. The scoured-wool rooms are being enlarged, accommodation huts will be built, and a new boiler will be installed

NQR: 02 Feb 1925

the new one is completed.

Saturday night, the 6th of April, saw the opening of Eckford's new picture hall. This hall no doubt is a fine addition to Julia Creek. Eckford brothers, Jim and Joe, are no doubt convinced of the prosperity of our town. This building I understand cost somewhere in the vicinity of £14,000, and as a picture theatre and a dancing hall it stands out on its own in the west. Many outside residents journeyed into town for the opening night, and long before the pictures were due to start practically every seat had been occupied.

Dr. Ralston has now opened up a temporary surgery near Byrne Bros. office, Burke St, pending the erection of a more suitable place in the near future. His services will be much appreciated as in the past it has been the necessity to send to Cloncurry or Richmond for medical aid when some was required which is rather inconvenient in urgent

NQR: 15 Apr 1929



In Julia Creek's early days all the shops were in the railway street, Goldring St, close to the station. Everything happened along there. There were two double-storey hotels: Bill Gannon's hotel was directly across from the railway station on the eastern approach, and the Julia Creek Hotel was on the corner of Julia St. Sanphy's Store, later to become Samuel Allen, was on the other corner. Mrs Horton's cafe was there as well, and further along, a tailor, a garage, and a baker. Everything was in the front street, including the Post Office which was originally at the railway station. At about the same time that Dad built the ice works, a new Post Office was built in Burke St on the site where it still stands today.

When Gannon's Hotel burnt down – it was only in the front street a few years – Bill Gannon rebuilt in Burke St. He thought that people would congregate at the Post Office, so he built his new hotel across the road. When he moved, Burke St gradually became the business centre of Julia Creek.

Meantime, for three years from 1929, I was completing my education at St Mary's College in Charters Towers. I passed Commercial Junior in 1931. Before going to St Mary's I was at the Julia Creek State School. In 1928, with two other girls, I sat for the high school exam. You had to pass that exam before you could progress to high school. Joff Casey and I passed the exam and we were the first students

from the Julia Creek school to progress to secondary education. I could have left after I sat the exam if I'd wanted to, but I fancied going on to Junior.

When I came home from Charters Towers after finishing school, my first job, briefly, was an exchange girl, putting plugs in and out to make phone connections. I moved from there to a stock and station agency, Hickman & Co, as an assistant bookkeeper. Later I became head girl in the drapery department of AJ Smith's general store – another business in the front street. It was while working at AJ Smith's that I met my future husband, Peter Dawes, who came from Cloncurry to Julia Creek in 1934 to manage the store.

In 1936, Peter purchased a small general store in Burke St owned by Jimmy Tracey. It became the Peter Dawes Store. Jimmy had a sick child and was wanting cash pretty quickly, so Peter borrowed £500 from Cummins & Campbell, the wine and spirit merchants. They imposed the condition that he sign a five-year trading lease; for five years he couldn't buy anything from another supplier that Cummins & Campbell stocked. The £500 debt became our joint responsibility when I married Peter on 10 September 1939, a few days after the outbreak of war. Peter added a couple of small rooms at the rear of the store to make a suitable home for us to commence our married life.

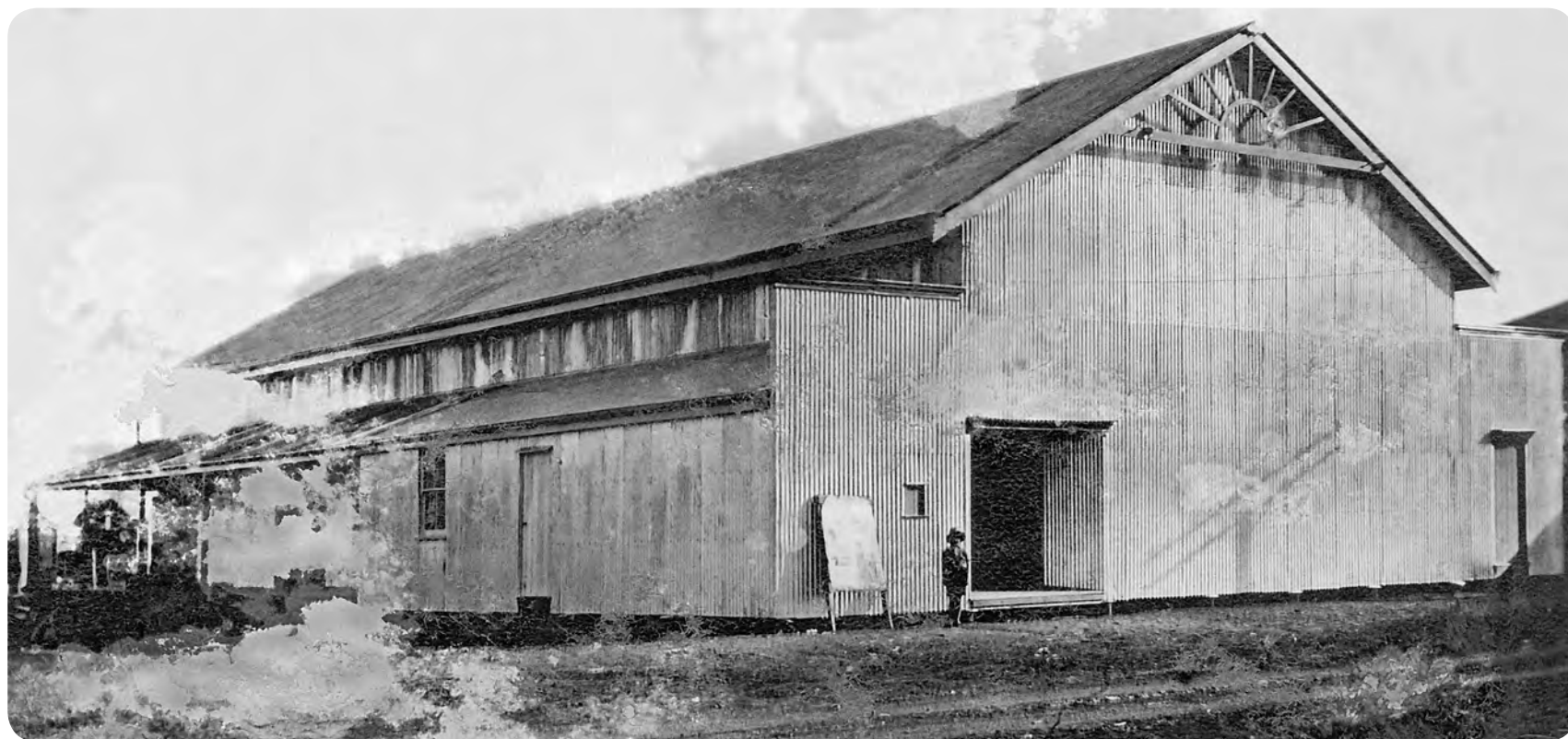
Opposite: Eckford family beside their first home in Burke St. From left: Dadie, Meldie, Coral, Jim, Edna. Taken from the back of the house looking east.

The police station is just visible in the background.
[Dadie Dawes, DW21, ca 1929]

Below: Jim Eckford Jnr in front of Eckford's combined dance hall & picture theatre. This building was opened on Saturday 6/4/1929 and was built by Mr Hammond from Townsville. In the same year, Mr Hammond also built Gannon's two-storey hotel in Goldring St.

The open-air theatre with cinder floor where Dadie describes playing the pianola, was an older building, opened on an unknown date in 1925, and demolished to make way for the building below.

On 16/9/1940, a new open-air theatre and skating rink was erected on the right (see page 198 and 206). The building pictured became a dance hall until its removal in 1958.
[Dadie Dawes, DW06c, 1930]



I SUPPOSE THERE ARE SOME THINGS you try to shut out of your mind. The loss of a baby can be one of them. I never got round to asking my husband what happened to our baby or anything at all about it. And I know I didn't cry.

Vague words came to me through the anaesthetic – “breech position” – and I just nodded. It didn't mean anything to me. I already had Pete and a daughter Cathy, but I didn't understand what breech position meant. No idea. The two nurses didn't know my situation that morning either. Matron Blanch and another sister were there all day. Two good nurses. They said to me: “It won't be long before your

Mr. Peter Dawes' mother and his brother, Alex, have arrived to be with him while his wife is seriously ill in hospital. Pleased to report that Dadie has shown slight improvement.

To Mr. and Mrs. Dawes we extend our very sincere sympathy in the sad loss of their infant daughter at birth in the local hospital. Many friends wish the popular Mrs. Dawes a very speedy recovery to good health.

Mr. Ben Burrows has taken over the grocery store of Mr. Bill Mathews and opened up on 2nd instant. We wish Mr

CA: 05 Jan 1945

baby'll be born”. That was the last I remember before the anaesthetic took my senses.

One night and another night. I don't remember the day in between. They asked the Flying Doctor to come because I was still vomiting. I was in the Julia Creek Hospital and he put a tube down my nose and poured in a little bit of fluid to stop the vomiting.

I was 10 days in the labour ward because they didn't want to move me. Another lady at the hospital had just died of delayed shock, so I was kept there for 10 days.



I didn't even know I had lost the baby. I heard a baby's cry when I came out of the fog and I thought: *Aah... that must be mine*. An old raw-boned Irish priest came along and said: "You know you haven't got your child?" That was the first I knew. And once again, as I say, I didn't cry. But when I left the hospital nearly two months afterwards – leaving the hospital and taking nothing with me – I had a terrible feeling of wanting to hold a baby.

I was in the Julia Creek hospital from early January until the end of February. The poor doctor had lost two babies shortly before mine, and another lady had died of delayed shock after giving birth. He was already dealing with three deaths when I came along and compounded his problems. After my upset he left Julia Creek and went to Brisbane. I

also went to Brisbane – straight into the Mater hospital. I came out in late June.

The Julia Creek Hospital must have dealt with the little body. I suppose it's buried at the cemetery. There's no plaque. I only found out a long time afterwards that the council doesn't put a plaque – or a mark or anything at all – for stillborn babies. I don't know whether they do now. How I found that out: I was on the council and a woman who'd borne a stillborn baby at Julia Creek came back to see where it was buried. The council said they don't mark... I don't know if they even keep a record.

I didn't name the baby and I didn't ask Peter what happened to it. As a bereaved mother I was in too much shock. This is where I have regrets. Over the years I thought about naming it, but... too late now.

Below: Julia Creek District Hospital, Sunday, 21st May 1939
(Writing on back of photo)

[Rita Byrne, FR28]



Julia Creek
*Bench Record and Summons Book*¹
 24 May 1948

PETER RUFUS DAWES and CATHERINE DAWES trading under the firm name of Peter Dawes & Company. Breach of *Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act, Prices Regulations*. Failure to exhibit price notices. Convicted and fined for all the following, each with 4/6 costs:

Price notice – £1/10
 Onions – £20
 Maxam cheese – £3
 Holbrooks sauce – £2
 PMV Mustard Pickles – £7/10
 Silver Star Starch – £4
 Aunt Mary's Baking Powder – £2
 Milo – £2.

1 DECEMBER 1953—The Julia Creek Citizens' Playground Association decided last week to hold the opening ceremony in late March or early April. It was felt rain was too liable to disrupt the ceremony if it were held earlier.

The playground has two slides, a see-saw, three different kinds of swing and a gymnasium bar. A shelter shed 40' by 20' has been built and a lawn laid down. The McKinlay Shire Council has built an ornamental fence at the front of the playground.

All work on the project was carried out by volunteers. The playground scheme was originated by Mr Peter Dawes who called a public meeting on May 2 this year to discuss it. The meeting elected a committee with Mr Dawes chairman, Mr Kevin Bannah secretary, and Mrs Dawes assistant secretary. In the next few months the committee raised £230 with a street stall, by catering at a race meeting, and by holding a ball. Town and country residents supported the committee, donating a further £340. All expenses connected with the playground have now been paid and the committee has a credit of £24.

At the meeting last week Mr Dawes thanked all residents who had helped with the project. "Had we not received such fine support we could not have completed the scheme so quickly" he said. "The pleasure children are already getting out of the playground proves that our efforts have been worthwhile." The association's balance sheet shows that £565/15/9 was raised and £541/0/6 expended, leaving the association with £25/15/3.

Many towns men are employed.
 Mr. Peter Dawes has on show a nice range of pretty winter materials, clothing and hats; also children's wear. Call and have a look.
 The town is very quiet. Saturday should be a busy day as the C.W.A. are holding their 21st Annual Meeting and

CA: 26 May 1944

THERE WERE THREE OTHER STORES in Julia Creek at the beginning of the war. Samuel Allen & Sons had a branch near the railway hotel. They were a grocery chain throughout the west; purely and simply grocery stores. AJ Smith's was in the same block as Samuel Allen's, but on the next corner. The other store was run by Alex Cameron in Burke St, the O-K Store.

The war turned the situation to our advantage. Samuel Allen closed down because of the difficulties of trading in war years – rationing; Alex Cameron closed down to join in the war effort; and Mrs Wilkins, who had a drapery shop, she closed down and moved south, though she did return in later years. So that left only us and AJ Smith's.

We prospered during the war. We made improvements to our little shop and it just grew, and gradually we were able to pay off our debt to Cummins & Campbell. But it wasn't all summer rain on the downs. See, we came right into rationing and price controls. We were summonsed a couple of times for price violations.

Rationing meant that people got a book full of half-inch coupon squares that enabled them to buy rationed items. It might cost you two coupons to get a pound of sugar. You gave your two coupons to the man behind the counter, got your pound of sugar, and then he in turn – before he could buy more sugar – he'd have to paste these tiny stamps onto a sheet of writing paper. But they weren't sticky. You had to glue these wretched little things on a piece of paper to get a bag of sugar.

There were a lot of ups and downs in running a shop during wartime. That Arthur Fayers, he'd telegram us from a shearing shed out at Boulia: "Send 5 pounds of sugar. Coupons following". But we never saw Arthur's coupons. That meant we couldn't replace that sugar to resell. We sent it to him because we couldn't leave him without sugar.

During wartime many products were hard to obtain, but we managed to cope. Some choice items we kept back from the general public. If we had a carton of sweet biscuits we'd hide it under the counter for our pet customers.

Just after the war finished we bought a building in Mount Isa, one of those army-disposal igloos, and railed it to Julia Creek in sections. We pulled down the old corrugated-iron store and set about reconstructing the army igloo in its place. It was a solid structure with a beautiful floor made of tongue and groove timber, 2 inches wide instead of the more common 4 inches.

At the same time we bought a block of land behind the store. It was across the lane in Goldring St. We built a lovely family home there, bit by bit, as the money became available. We bought the block from Fred Hickman. Our house was at the rear of the block close to the lane. At the front we added a carport facing onto Goldring St and eventually converted that to a residence. My Uncle Joe who helped out at the picture theatre, he lived in that for a long time.

For starters we didn't have close neighbours in Goldring St. Then Lance Lewis built a small house next to us for his staff. On the other side was Dick Cooper's billiard room, and next to that Mrs Horton's cafe. She sold ham and eggs and a few lollies. Near the lane, right on the fence line in her backyard, she ran a boarding house – a long one-room building with a verandah on it. Just before we moved into our new home, Mrs Horton's cafe and Dick Cooper's billiard room burnt down.

1. A/44902, Qld State Archives.

Right: An example of a ration card with the ration stamps that Dadie would have had to collect before she could sell an item to a customer. This card belonged to Fred Edwards, whose father, Jimmy, drowned at the Punchbowl in 1939 (page 737).

[Fred Edwards, EF12, 1948]

Below: Going to a fancy-dress ball in Julia Creek hoping to win the 'best eight'. From left: Dadie Dawes, Fred Peut, Edna Eckford, Trevor Smith (Bank of NSW), Olive Gannon, Gordon Topping (school teacher), Eileen Macallister, Peter Dawes.

[Dadie Dawes, DW09, 1935]



By the 1950s we had quite a large country store: a grocery section, a clothing and haberdashery section, a saddlery, and a newsagency. Even with competition from the likes of the O-K Store and the Grant brothers (who took over AJ Smith's), our business kept seven people employed full-time: two people on the grocery counter, one in the newsagency, one in drapery, one in the office, and I did the bookwork and ladies buying. Peter did the rest of the buying and he supervised the store.

At that time there were at least three mail runs servicing the district. A very large district, I might add, extending from the Gulf country in the north, to Kynuna and McKinlay in the south, and to Nelia in the east. On a Sunday, mail contractors would take the mail from Julia Creek on their separate runs to Kynuna, Dalgona and Millungera. They'd collect the mail from the Post Office and then come to the stores and pick up the property orders: the potatoes, the onions, the butter, the newspapers, all that type of thing. As you would imagine, there was quite a deal of work involved in getting the property orders ready for delivery.

Opposite: Cover of the Dawes' farewell card printed when they left Julia Creek. It was sketched by Dadie's daughter-in-law, Kate. [Dadie Dawes, DW53, 1985]

Below: Peter Dawes store, between the Garden of Roses Cafe (left) and Bank of NSW (right). [Bernie Foster, FB01, ca 1945]



To Mr Dawes of Julia Creek Store,
I write to ask for tick once more.
The sheep aren't shorn, the pounds are few,
So what in hell can a battler do?
But when we cut-out Ardrin Station,
A quid I'll own, and high elation.
I'll pay my debts and feel so swank,
I'll spit on the floor of the Queensland Bank.
But till that time my only plan,
Is to carry on the best I can.
So send along, be it shine or hail,
(For me tomorrow on Ardrin's mail)
A pound of sugar, a tin of tea,
And powdered Sunshine addressed to me.
Six of onions, seven of spuds,
And Sunlight flakes for frothy suds.
A yard of havelock (if you please),
Plus macaroni and cheddar cheese.
And if in stock, I do require,
A new camp stretcher made of wire.
The mattress should be not too hard –

Yours sincerely
Charles Tankard.

Charlie Tankard was a shearer
in the Julia Creek district.

After the 1960s our business faltered. Cattle came into the district in increasing numbers, replacing sheep. Shearing, therefore, employed less men than in previous years. Unfortunately, as far as jobs were concerned, the increase in cattle didn't offset the fall in sheep. Road trains put a stop to cattle droving and that meant even less employment in the area. And then Woolworths opened in Mount Isa and we had to close our grocery section. The bitumen roads were through by then. People would drive to Mount Isa in the morning and do their shopping in an air-conditioned Woolworths, go to the hairdressers, do various things like that, and drive home again. Even though Woolworths was 200 miles away it affected our business; it took away some of our grocery trading. In the last few years we were cutting back on staff.

We operated our store from the late 1930s through to 1986. When we left Julia Creek we printed a small farewell card saying how much we had enjoyed living there, and thanking the people of the district for 50-odd years of support.

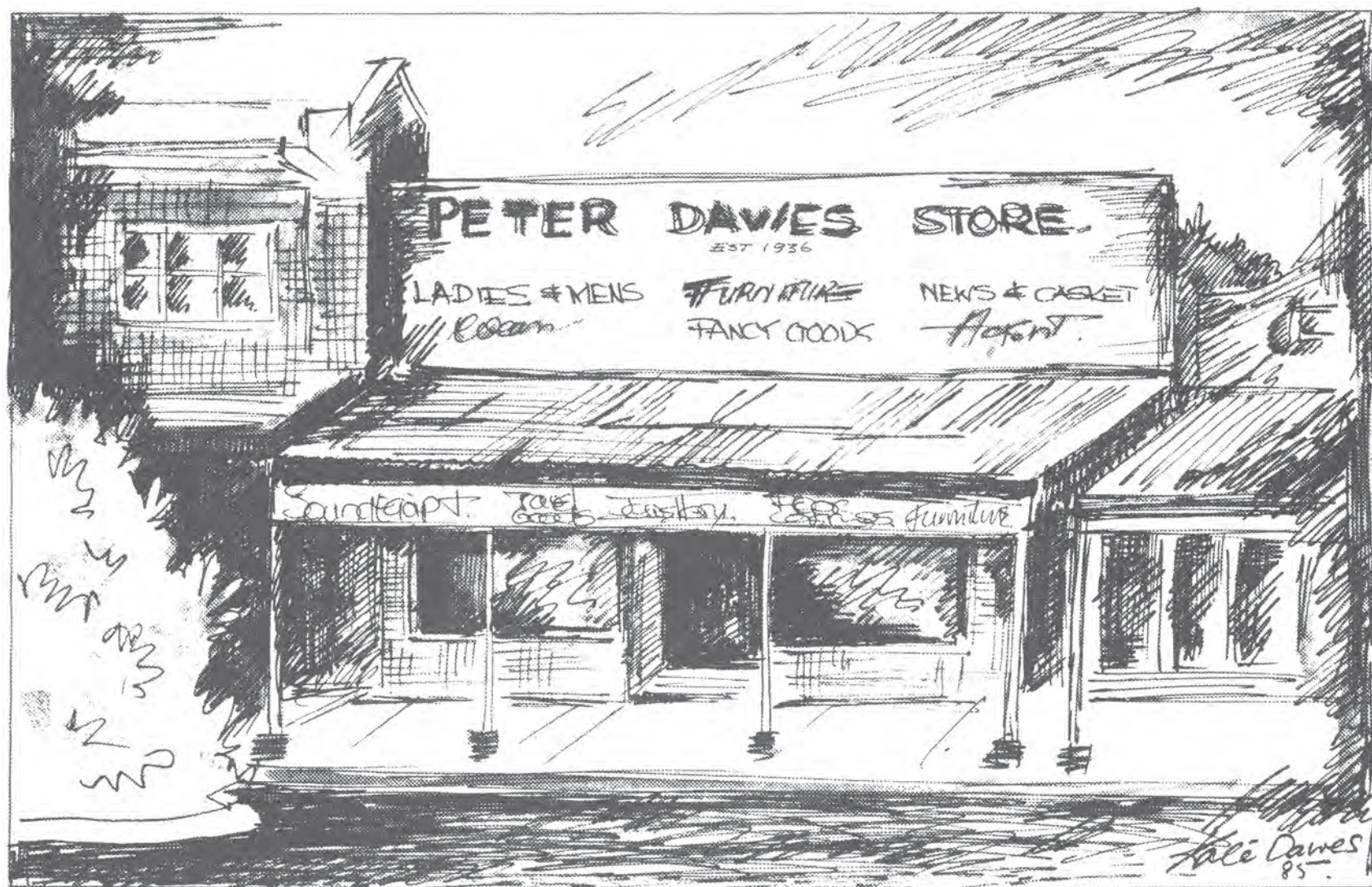
I USED TO WORK for Mr and Mrs Dawes. Yeah, I worked there in the grocery department after I was married. One of my jobs was to pack property orders – wrap the butter in newspaper and then in wet hessian. The things we used to do.

They were wonderful to me, good bosses. I used to think they were the royalty of Julia Creek. That's how I had them in my estimation.

JUDY BURROWS

MY PARENTS and the Dawes were very friendly and I knocked around a lot with their son Peter. As kids we used to work in the shop. Later on when I started shearing for my father we still shopped at Dawes', but as a grocery store they were really on the way out. Business had run down – or that side of the business had run down. They never ever had anything when you wanted it. So when I took over contracting from my father I switched to Crawford's.

TOMMY JESSUP



I WOULDN'T LIKE TO GO BACK NOW. I'd like to remember Julia Creek as I left it: a busy, prosperous little country town. Lots of money went through there, lots of activity, lovely balls, lively race meetings. All sorts of things.

So many buildings have been pulled down. When the high-school was still operating, I think there were five lady teachers and five men teachers – no longer there. The convent's gone; a convent boarding school with 120 pupils including day scholars. In consequence there are no inter-school sports unless it's with schools from other towns. We had two banks. Now, there are no banks. With the buildings gone, the people have gone, the employment's gone, the activity's gone. The Christmas tree in the park: four or five hundred little kids would turn up of a night time to receive toys and sweets and balloons from Santa. You couldn't muster that number of kids anymore. I wouldn't like it as it looks now. I would feel the loss of community more than anything else.

What particularly interests me about Julia Creek is what brings someone into a district like that and causes them to stay, or entices them to stay. The countryside doesn't invite them, or rivers or hills, because it's flat, barren, desolate country. This is my concern: people are not going to understand how their grandparents lived. I was talking with George Sills one day about the corrugated iron place I first lived in, how primitive it was, and he said: "Ah yes, Mrs Dawes – but your house had a floor in it". And when I reflected on his comment I thought: *Yes, most houses didn't have floors in them*. Some people had wool bales nailed to the dirt, but most had plain dirt floors which they damped of a morning to keep down the dust. It's very... you'd have to be a writer to describe it properly. Or have photos. You couldn't have a conception of it otherwise, I don't think.



the township's sewerage project.

Friday night last saw one of the biggest functions in Julia Creek for many years, the occasion being the Christmas Party given by the Citizens' Playground Committee. The large Christmas tree was festooned with myriads of lights and the playground area was brilliantly lit up transforming the grounds into a miniature fairy land. In all, 450 children were regaled with ices, soft drinks, blowouts, whistles and balloons. Father Christmas, in the traditional costume, made the scene more picturesque. Parking space was at a premium. Hundreds of vehicles brought children, parents and friends from all parts of the district and beyond. A dance for grownups, taxing the floor space in O'Neill's Hall, commenced at 10 p.m. and finished at 1 a.m. A barbecue after the dance detained the young and gay until dawn was breaking.

At the monthly meeting of the Council it was decided to amend the existing

NQR: 27 Dec 1958

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close,
On yonder down the village murmur rose:
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school.
But now no busy steps the footways tread,
And all the bloomy flush of life is fled.

There, in his noisy mansion, skilled to rule,
The village master taught his little school.
A man severe he was, and stern to view;
I knew him well – and every truant too!
The village gazed at him; their wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew.
But past is all his fame. The very spot
Where many a time he triumphed is forgot.

Here, as I take my solitary rounds,
Among these dusty walks and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once a building stood, the hawthorn grew.
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.



Above: Julia Creek State School (primary only) in 1960. A secondary department opened in 1963 and closed in the 1990s.
[Dadie Dawes, DW44, ca 1960]

Poem adapted from Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*.

You Bloody Bastard!

Jim Eckford and brother Joe
get stuck into the Health Inspector

JULIA CREEK ASSAULT CASE

HEALTH INSPECTOR SUES PICTURE SHOW PROPRIETOR FOR ALLEGED ASSAULT.

STIPENDIARY MAGISTRATE DISMISSES COMPLAINT

(Before Mr J. C. Baker, SM)

JULIA CREEK, 13 July—In the Court of Petty Sessions, Mr Vic Faithfull appeared for plaintiff and Mr Williams for defendant.

LIONEL EDWARD DHU¹, Health Inspector of the Shire of McKinlay, said he was complainant in the action and knew defendant, Jim Eckford, and his brother Joe.

On Wednesday evening July 5th, 1944, I was at the picture show, owned by defendant, with my wife and daughter. During the interval I was discussing a matter with Jack Jensen, and when the second half commenced Jensen left me and rejoined his party. I then left my seat to proceed to the urinal block situated at the back of the theatre. As I approached the back door, the exit door at the rear of the hall, I noticed Jim Eckford standing there on my right. I opened the door and proceeded to go outside. Immediately I did so I was followed by defendant who was joined outside by his wife and brother Joe. Defendant then grabbed me by the right arm and said:

“You b— b—! You came out here to sneak around again to see what you can find and report back to your council.”

His brother Joe grabbed me by the back. Defendant then said:

“Don’t go over to the men’s urinal block. Come here and have a look at the ladies’ urinal block and see if you can see any urine on the floor there.”

I was dragged about 5 yards in that direction by defendant with his brother pushing me from the

back. I then said:

“What’s this all about? Take your hands off me.”

“You b— b—! You got the council to summons me. I’ll fix you. I’ll get you the sack.”

Defendant then said, and kept repeating:

“What about Gannon’s cow yard? You close your eyes to Gannon’s cow yard. He’s a councillor so he gets away with it, does he? We will show you Gannon’s cow yard. Come on over.”

I was dragged and pushed approximately another 5 yards in that direction. I then managed to free myself and defendant said:

“You b— b—! Just because Gannon’s a councillor he gets away with it.”

“The situation of Gannon’s cow yard is not controlled by a council by-law. I have pointed this out to you before. I didn’t come out here to make a further inspection of the sanitary conveniences, but to enjoy the rights common to all of His Majesty’s subjects.”

Defendant’s wife then said:

“You sneak! You pimp! You have come out to see what you can find to report back to your council.”

Defendant said:

“You b— b—! I have taken this matter up. You will be sacked. You will be fired.”

“For Heaven’s sake quieten down. I can assure you that I just came out here for the express purpose of relieving myself at the urinal block.”

“You b—b—! You are hostile on me just because I wouldn’t give you a free pass to the pictures. You wanted that concession. I have two railway men to prove it.”

“That’s absurd. I already have that concession. Council by-laws give me free entry to the picture

since the recent rains.
Our new health inspector (Mr. Dhu) and family have arrived and have taken up residence in Burke St.
Mr. and Mrs. Lance Lewis arrived home after spending an enjoyable Christmas with relatives in Charters Towers

CA: 15 Jan 1943

theatre but I have never taken advantage of it. And I have never discussed this matter with any railway employees.”

Defendant, his wife and brother then left me and entered the theatre through the rear door. Defendant stood in the doorway and yelled out: “Get out! Stay out! I’ll fix you”. The door then closed. I did not see the defendant again that night. I then entered the theatre the same way and went back and rejoined my wife.

I did not give the defendant any reason to catch hold of me when I was making for the urinals. I was very surprised as a matter of fact. I have taken this action truly for my protection.

Witness was lengthily cross-examined by Mr Williams, saying in response to questions: My wife is the only one in the hall I can discover who heard defendant call out: “Get out, stay out”. I have a weak case but am prepared to fight it. It is not right what the Eckford brothers did to me. It is not correct to say that I did not defend myself because I am gutless.

PHYLLIS LILLA DHU, wife of complainant, said that on the night of July 5th she was with her husband at the pictures. After interval he went to the rear of the pictures and was away about a quarter of an hour. I heard an altercation at the back and saw defendant coming in the back door. He was singing out: “I’ll fix you. Get out! Stay out!” My husband came in after.

This was the case for complainant.

JAMES PATRICK ECKFORD, picture show proprietor at Julia Creek, stated that on July 5th at about 9 p.m. he was at the front of the theatre and heard a beast bellowing at the back. When I got outside, my wife and my brother Joe were there. I turned around and I saw Dhu coming out of the rear exit. I called out

1. Mr Dhu, the new Health Inspector in Julia Creek in 1943, tried his best to clean up the town, but he got on the wrong side of Jim Eckford, the picture show proprietor, and also got on the wrong side of Arthur Cann, headmaster of the school (page 161).

to him but he did not reply. I called out again to him:

“Dhu, come here. Come over here and see if you consider this a nuisance.”

“No, there is no by-law to deal with it.”

“You’ve got no by-law to deal with that nuisance, but you say there is a nuisance here on my property. There appears to be one by-law for the ratepayers and one for the councillors.”

Dhu made no reply. I left then and went inside.

Defendant was cross-examined by Mr Faithfull but did not alter his evidence in chief. When I went outside I saw a cow standing in the lane near Councillor Gannon’s cow yard. It was not bellowing then. It’s Joe’s job at interval to oil the engine, that’s why he was outside. The engine is over on one corner of the allotment some distance from the theatre. I did not follow Dhu out of the theatre. I did not drag Dhu by the right arm. Joe did not push him from the back. I did not say to Dhu: “You b— b—. You came out here to spy around” or anything like that. I am not in the habit of using language such as that, more especially in the presence of my wife. I have never used such language in the presence

of my wife. I did not say: “Don’t go over to the men’s urinal block. Come here and have a look at the ladies’ urinal block and see if you can see any urine on the floor there.” I did not say any of the statements that the complainant has sworn I said. He did not have any of the conversation he said he had with me, or anything like it. I did not that night put my hand on Dhu or touch him at all.

JOSEPH FREDERICK ECKFORD, sworn, states: I am a labourer. Defendant is my brother. I remember the 5th July 1944. During the interval that night at the pictures I had been down oiling the engine up. I finished the job and when I was coming back I met Mrs Eckford at the foot of the operating-box steps. She said something about a cow bellowing. I went over towards Gannon’s cow yard and I saw a beast over there. My brother came out of the picture show and said to me:

“Where is that beast bellowing?”

“It’s over against the cow yard.”

Dhu came out and my brother said to him:

“Come here Dhu. You said there is a nuisance in my yard. Come over here to Gannon’s yard and see

if this is a nuisance.”

Dhu said “No” and my brother replied:

“Why don’t you come over?”

“There is no by-law to deal with it.”

“Then there must be two by-laws: one for the ratepayers and one for the councillors.”

My brother and myself went into the picture show. I went into the buzzer and he went up to the front entrance. Neither myself or defendant put a hand on Dhu that night. I did not push the complainant while my brother grabbed him by the right arm. None of those statements that Dhu has sworn were made by defendant, by me, by Mrs Eckford, or by Dhu himself, were ever made that night. None of those statements were made by any of those persons.

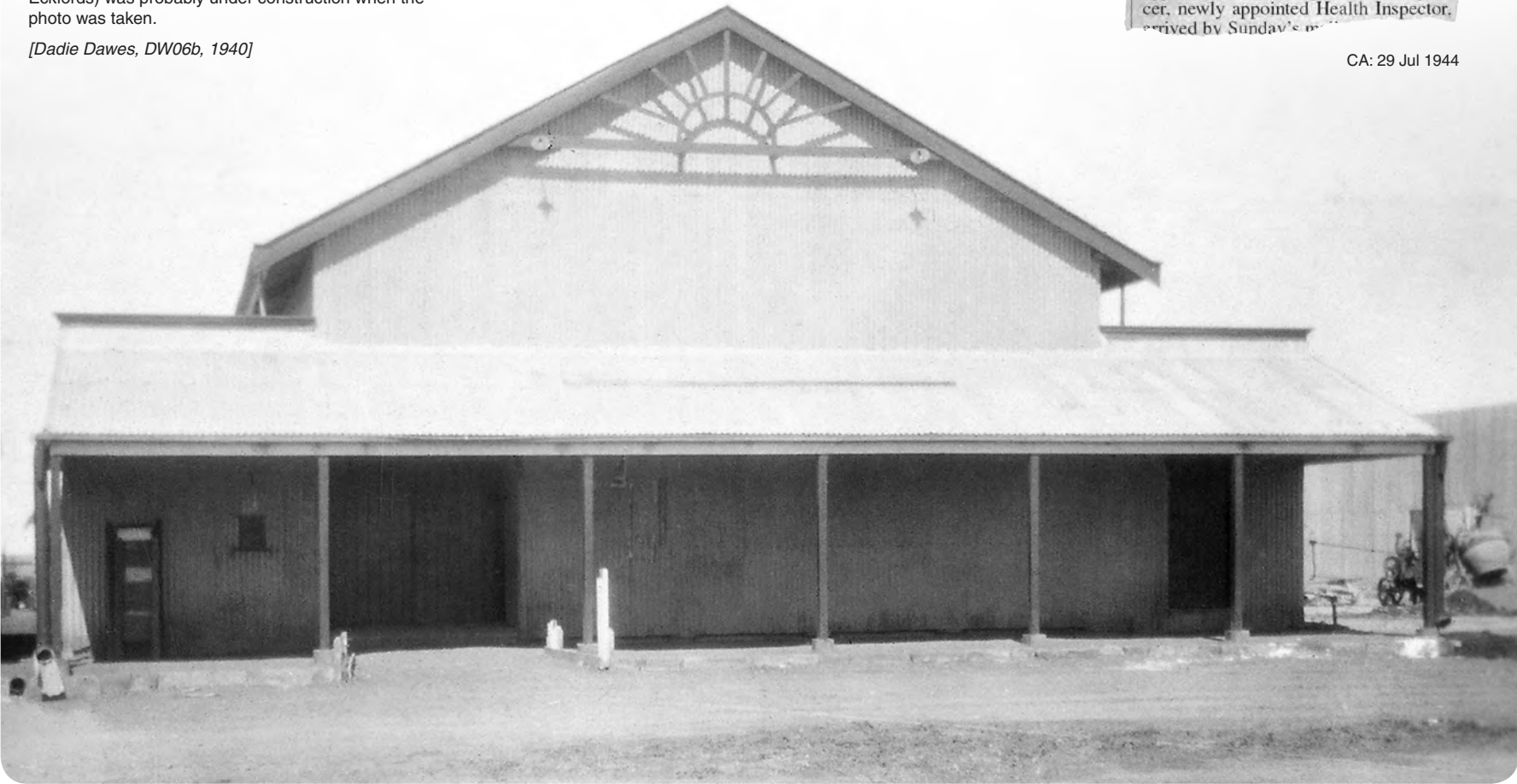
This was the case for the defendant.

The Stipendiary Magistrate dismissed the complaint. Mr Williams applied for cost and was allowed witness’s expenses of £1/2/6, and professional costs of £2/2/-, a total amount of £3/4/6.

CA: 04 Aug 1944

Below: Eckford’s 1929 picture theatre and dance hall, just before the new open-air theatre and skating rink was built on the right. The cement mixer indicates that the open-air theatre (where Dhu had his run-in with the Eckfords) was probably under construction when the photo was taken.

[Dadie Dawes, DW06b, 1940]



Mr. and Mrs. Dhu and family left Julia Creek by Sunday morning's train for Blackall where Mr. Dhu has been appointed Health Inspector. Mr. Spencer, newly appointed Health Inspector, arrived by Sunday's morning train.

CA: 29 Jul 1944

JULIA CREEK SUMMONS CASE

(Before Mr J.C. Baker, SM)

JULIA CREEK, 20 July—In the Court of Petty Sessions, Julia Creek, the McKinlay Shire Council proceeded against James Patrick Eckford for not abating a nuisance said to exist at the urinals at his picture show. Mr Vic Faithfull appeared for the prosecution whilst Mr Williams appeared for defendant.

James Parsons, shire clerk, gave evidence of Eckford being owner of the allotments on which the urinals are situated. Together with Health Inspector Dhu and Doctor Carter, witness inspected the urinal block. Before entering the block he noticed a smell of urine and inside the enclosure an attempt had been made to cover some damp patches. "At the male lavatory there was urine in a pan. The sole cabinet was not fly proof. At the ladies' lavatory there were damp patches on the ground. There were two compartments and only one cabinet, which was not fly proof. Dancing and pictures are held in the hall, also skating occasionally. I have seen the urinal crowded and people waiting

outside. The proceedings have been instituted to compel the defendant to abate the nuisance."

Donald Ashley Carter, medical practitioner, gave evidence of having inspected the urinals. "In the men's, the urinal has an open trough which contained urine and from which there was a strong aroma of ammonia. From my inspection of both the ladies' and gents' compartments I formed the opinion that the condition of them was potentially detrimental to the public health. There would be about two pints of urine in the trough when I inspected it."

Lionel Edward Dhu, Health Inspector, also told of making the inspection in company with the other two and of what he had found. In reply to Mr Williams he said in his opinion Eckford's premises were prejudicial to the public health.

Bertram Arthur Pollard, carpenter, gave evidence that he installed cabinets at Julia Creek and that in the past six months Defendant had not approached him regarding new cabinets. This was the council's case.

William Edmund Blanch, sanitary contractor, gave evidence of the condition of the urinals, and of serving them, and that in his opinion the urinal

arrangements in both ladies' and gents' compartments are adequate to cope with requirements.

Henry Bell, Stock Inspector stationed at Julia Creek, said he used the urinal and lavatory at the picture show frequently and he had never noticed anything objectionable about the pan cabinets or undue presence of flies. "I have the opinion that defendant should not have been summonsed for a nuisance."

This was defendant's case. The Stipendiary Magistrate's decision was as follows:

I find a nuisance exists on defendant's premises. I find defendant has been served with a notice to abate the nuisance in accordance with the provisions of the Health Act. I find defendant has not complied with the requirements in such notice. I find such requirements are not unreasonable. I make an order requiring defendant to comply with the notice within a period of 40 days from this date. I impose no penalty. Cost allowed: Witness expenses £1, costs of Court 8/6, professional cost £6/6/0. Total costs £7/14/6.

CA: 11 Aug 1944

Below: Eckford's picture theatre and dance hall (opposite) was sold to Harry Stainkey in 1953 and relocated to Clifton Park in 1958 (see NQR 22/3/1958, page 208). where it is still used as a woolshed.

[Guy Burns, GK175, 2005]

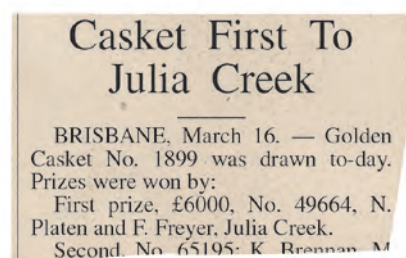


He'd peer over those glasses

Claudette Green

ON THE RIGHT, when you first went into Peter Dawes' store, there was the newsagency. He had the newsagency on that side. Then when you went further back, there were lollies and sweets and things, then the groceries. On the other side it was all drapery, men's and women's drapery. In the middle of the shop he had the Casket. I sold the winning ticket in the Casket once. £6000 it was in those days. Then I married the guy that I sold the ticket to – Noel Platen. Well, I did! Freddie Freyer and Noel won the Casket and I sold them the ticket.

They used to come in: "Whaddaya doin'? Youse goin' to the movies tonight?" and talk to you. Peter Dawes didn't like that. If Peter saw you talking – like, they might only say: "Is it all right if we come over to your place tonight?" – and you weren't actually selling anything, he'd be looking over the top of his reading glasses at you. As soon as he was peering like that, you knew to get back to work. The boys decided that if they bought a Casket ticket he couldn't complain. As long as I was selling them something it was all right to come in and chat. So they used to buy a Casket ticket. That's how I came to sell Noel the winning ticket.



NQR: 21 Mar 1953

I WAS BORN IN MILES IN 1937. Mum was at home and Dad was a shearer. Dad's father was a shearing contractor and Dad used to shear for him.

I went to school at Yulba, a tiny place between Miles and Surat, in that area. I started school at Yulba, then I went to Surat for a while, then I was at Emerald for a little while, then we went to Julia Creek when I was about 8 or 9. My father had moved out of shearing and got a job as a union organiser with the AMWU. He went to Emerald to start with, but when he got there they sent him to Julia Creek.

It was after the war, because I was in Surat when the war finished. I can remember the big parade. They were belting drums and making a noise.

I worked at the Julia Creek Post Office when I left school. I was the telegram girl. I delivered telegrams with a little outfit on, a little uniform they gave me. One day I came home and Mum said:

Mrs Dawes has offered you a job.
I don't want to work there.

But I did work there. Mum decided that I should work for Peter Dawes and that's what happened. He was good to me and I was well treated – he bought my wedding dress – but he hated you talking and not working. He'd peer over those glasses.

My wage was £5 a week for six days' work. No, I worked the seven actually: five days all day, Saturday half day, and then Sunday you had to go in for the newspapers, for the Sunday papers, for an hour or two.

The times when I wasn't working everybody used to congregate at our place. They just seemed to turn up at the Green's. The Burnses would come over and the Wintons would come over. We were in Burke St, the next block from the shops, down towards the Burnses more or less. Joy Burns and I were good friends. We hung around together, went swimming together, dancing, tennis. Donny was always the one with the car. Everybody who could fit in his car went with Donny. We used to go swimming at the Punchbowl a lot. It was like one big happy family.

There were always people at our place playing cards or having a sing-song. But when Dad came home they used to blow through. Dad was sort of... everyone was scared of Dad I think. I remember one night we had a sing-song and Mum's playing the piano. There's Choco Winton, Cooee Wilder, Isabel Flewell-Smith, all the gang. Dad walked in the door and next thing everybody's saying goodbye: "Bye Mrs Green. Bye, see you later".

The dances were great. Mossie McDonald used to play the piano and bash a drum. His wife, Betty, was a good dancer. Every now and again somebody else played a couple of songs so that Betty and Mossie could have a dance. There was probably a dance every week or fortnight, and movies two or three times a week.

I got married to casket-winner Noel when I was 17. Noel was in the railway. He wanted to go back to Rockhampton, where he came from, and he was convinced that he wouldn't get a transfer. So he resigned from the railway and we left Julia Creek and went to Rocky in 1955.



Above: Claudette at the Grand Annual Catholic Debs' Ball held in Eckford's Hall.
[Claudette Green, GC01, 21/9/1951]

"Miss Claudette Green was partnered by Mr Ned Kerley. This dainty deb favoured a lovely frock of sunray-pleated silk organdie (skirt over skirt) and bodice of embroidered organdie. The over-skirt was drawn back to the hips with blue and pink forget-me-nots. The dress featured puffed sleeves; the square-cut neck line was trimmed with a finely-pleated silk organdie frill; mittens, pearls and ear-rings to match. She carried a white ostrich-feather fan, a bouquet with a cluster of baby pink roses, blue forget-me-nots, and maiden-hair ferns on both sides."

NQR: 28 Sep 1951

Last week, Mr. Bill McNickle, head master of the State School, organised a tennis tournament amongst the children. This took the form of singles for both girls and boys and each event was run under championship rules, without any handicaps. The girls' singles championship was won after a close game by Claudette Green, and the boys' by Claude ('Cooee') Wilder. The children had been practising for some time for the event and the tennis in the finals was proof that improvements had been made. These winners will be presented with a silver cup each.

The local branch of the Red Cross has been notified that a library has been

NQR: 08 Oct 1949





Above: Road sign outside the Julia Creek Post Office. Distances in miles.
[Ivy Burrows, B112, ca 1952]

A Painter Before an Easel

Norm Downey

Died early 2009

Max almost puts the picture show proprietor out of business

WE WONDERED WHO THE HELL this Max Burns was. He blew into town with all these trucks and crawlers. Came in up the main street with his circus in tow. He arrived in Julia Creek and the cockies had never seen tanks like Max built. Professional work. He made a damn good tank.

When he first arrived he used to get all his stuff off Lance Lewis; tyres and so on. I was working for Lance at the garage and I'll always remember Max coming out with this bloody great cheque book. He had the biggest cheque book in the world. One of those double bangers, double leaf, not the little ones that we had. He'd stand back and wield his pen – *MD Burns* – like a painter before an easel:

MD Burns

But he had to pay cash at first – nobody knew him.

I didn't really know him socially, he was a rank or two above me. I was just a wage earner. Not that people were class happy in Julia Creek. Nothing against him, but I just didn't go into the bar and stand beside him and have a drink. I didn't drink then, anyway.

I always felt that Max was too big and too vain to become bankrupt, that he would have done anything... But on the other hand, he might have been just cunning enough to make plans. Not: "I should do the right thing and pay all these bills", but instead: "If I don't pay..."

We always had the feeling that someone in the Burns family had a lot of money stashed in a bank account somewhere. That's what we were sour about – where did the money go? Now, it doesn't mean a thing to me. It's just something that happened in life.



Below: Max Burns' tanksinking plant in Burke St.
 Vehicles from right: Ford Marmon-Herrington truck,
 towing workers' caravan (an ex-army troop carrier).
 Behind the caravan, and nearer to the kerb, is a second
 truck (a Mack, not visible) which has a Cletrac FDE
 crawler on the tray (the canopy of the Cletrac is visible
 on the skyline above the rear of the caravan).
 This truck is towing a Britstand 14-yard scoop.

A third truck (another Mack, also not visible) is parked
 behind, and it too is towing a Britstand scoop. The
 canopy of the Cletrac on the tray of the third truck is
 visible on the skyline above the buildings.

In the distance, also a part of the convoy, is a
 Marmon-Herrington towing the workshop.

Buildings from right: O-K Store, Lance Lewis Garage,
 Bank of NSW (peak to the right of chimney on caravan),
 Peter Dawes Store (left of chimney). The roof of Lance
 Lewis' home, set back from Burke St, is visible as a
 small peak over the O-K store verandah
 to the left of O-K store sign.

[Mossie McDonald, M07, ca 1950]



I WAS BORN IN CLONCURRY IN 1921. My grandfather, that's Mum's father, he was a bookkeeper on Eddington Station where that waterhole is; and my father, he was head stockman. I suppose that's where my parents met. Eddington was a big place then, extended right down as far as Nelia. They used to have 22 shearers. Eddington was the closest waterhole to Julia Creek, only 13 miles out of town. Deep, lovely clean water, and nearly a hundred yards wide. It was a beautiful waterhole after a good wet season.

Dad decided to leave Eddington and put horse riding behind him. He bought a one-ton Chev truck and moved into Julia Creek. He had the first town-carrying business. That was 1924. Two years later they hit a drought. When you are 5 years of age a drought doesn't mean anything to you, but it meant something to Dad. The graziers weren't paying their bills, and Dad sort of folded up and got a job on the council. Later, he was a fettler on the railway.

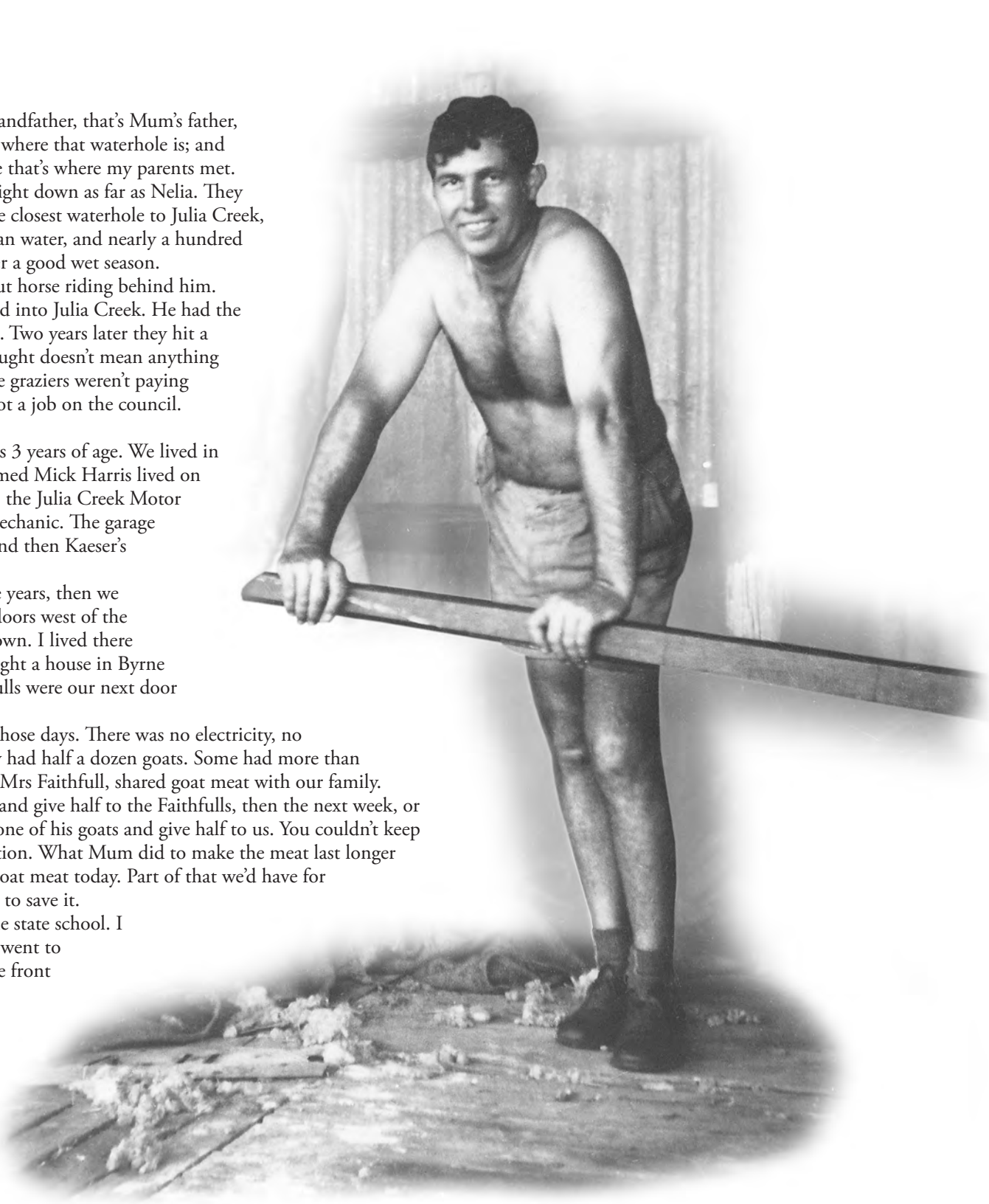
When we first came to Julia Creek I was 3 years of age. We lived in the front street, in Goldring St. A bloke named Mick Harris lived on one side and on the other side was a garage, the Julia Creek Motor Works, run by Les Stout. Les, he was the mechanic. The garage was next door to us, Wilders next to that, and then Kaeser's baker shop.

We lived in Goldring St for about three years, then we moved into Burke St. Our house was four doors west of the picture show, pretty close to the centre of town. I lived there till I was about 9. Then Mum and Dad bought a house in Byrne St and I stayed there till I left home. Faithfulls were our next door neighbours, on the corner of Quarrell St.

Everybody had goats in Julia Creek in those days. There was no electricity, no refrigeration for milk or meat, so everybody had half a dozen goats. Some had more than others. The people alongside of us, Mr and Mrs Faithfull, shared goat meat with our family. One week Dad would kill one of our goats and give half to the Faithfulls, then the next week, or the next fortnight, Mr Faithfull would kill one of his goats and give half to us. You couldn't keep a whole goat because there was no refrigeration. What Mum did to make the meat last longer was half-cook some of it. Say we got fresh goat meat today. Part of that we'd have for tea tonight; the rest, Mum would half-cook to save it.

I grew up in Julia Creek and went to the state school. I finished school in 1934 when I was 13 and went to work in George Jaques' butcher shop¹ in the front street. Wasn't too bad. I used to start work at half-past 4 in the morning, delivering meat on a pushbike with a huge basket across the bar. See, everybody had meat for breakfast, and with no refrigeration it had to be fresh. Dad would wake me at 4 o'clock and stand there till I got up. If he just woke me and went back to bed, I'd go to sleep again.

My first delivery was to the woolscour about a mile up towards Cloncurry. There used to be a woolscour in Julia Creek back then. They worked three shifts and employed a lot of men. The single blokes had their own quarters, had their own cook, had their own football team. They wore white jerseys, representing the scoured wool, with a black 'V'. I'd pedal my pushbike up there first thing of a morning, have a cuppa tea with the cook, and come back and do the deliveries in town. Deliver those, go home at 8 o'clock and have breakfast, have a bath, change my clothes, go back to the



Above: Norm leaning on a wool press handle.
[Rita Byrne, FR33, ca 1950]

Opposite: Norm's father, Horace Downey,
at the wheel transporting *Kings Image*
from Julia Creek to Normanton.
See NQR article opposite.
[NQR, NQ633, 1930]

1. Jaques story is on page 221.

shop, and then ride around town and get the orders for the next day. I did that for three years.

Then I got a job on the council as an offsider on a grader. Just the two of us out in the bush. Pull your swag out of a night time and lay alongside the machinery. A couple of years I was doing that until I got an apprenticeship at Lance Lewis' garage in 1940.

I'd been working at the garage a little bit before then, because in those days the council wasn't a full-time job. At the end of the year, Christmas time when they broke up, they put you off so they didn't have to pay blokes sitting down in the shed doing nothing during the wet season. They'd employ one or two blokes for various jobs, but the rest of the crew were paid off. Come March or April they'd put the crew on again. Over the wet when I wasn't with the council I used to work with Lance Lewis doing bits and pieces: yard cleaning, things like that. At the end of one particular wet season, the Shire Overseer, Doug Pheasant, came around to the garage and asked me to report for work: "Council's starting up Monday". Mr Lewis said to me:

Would you like to stay and work here?
Oh, I'll have to see Dad.

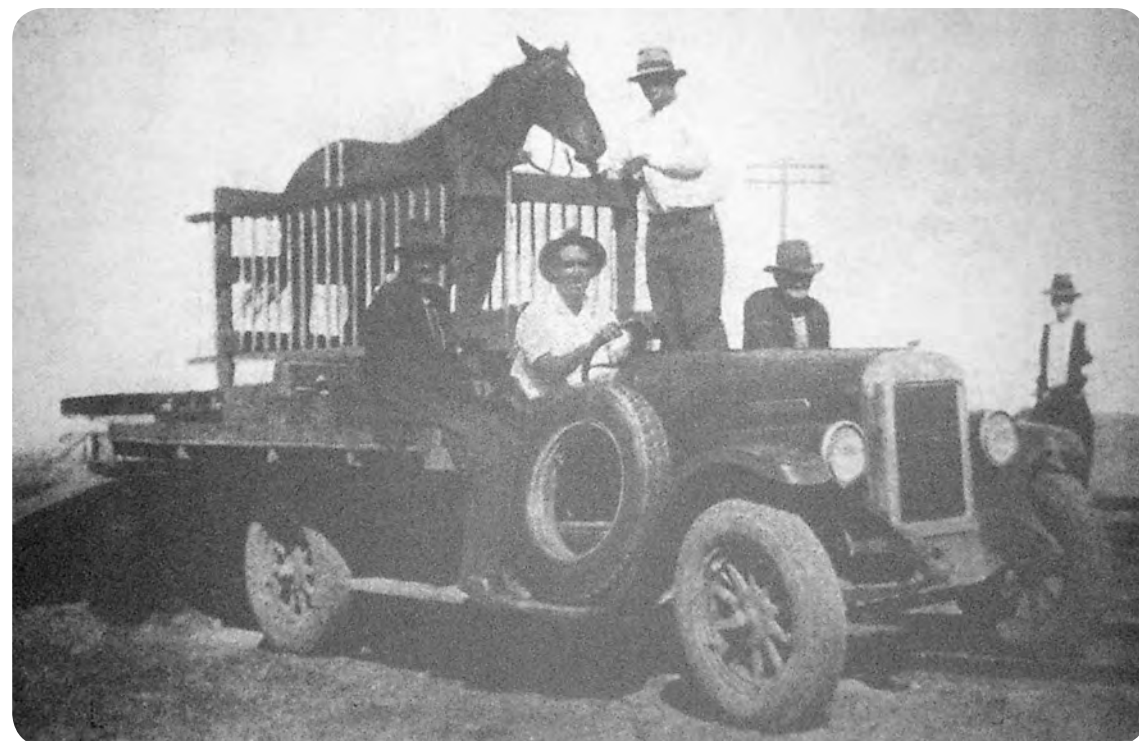
In those days you had to "see Dad". Even though you were 18 or 19, you still did what your father thought best.

I got an apprenticeship with Lance. As a matter of fact, I was his first and his only apprentice. It was low wages and a kick in the backside every morning in case you did something wrong that the boss didn't see you do. I had to do technical correspondence with a tech college in Brisbane. Every week my papers were sent away and every week they'd send them back. If you made a mistake they wrote to the boss, not to you, and he told you off.

Before the war, no commercial aircraft landed at Julia Creek. Anybody wanting to fly ANA or TAA had to go to Cloncurry. Lance had a taxi attached to the garage and one of my jobs was to ferry passengers to Cloncurry to catch the plane. I did that for a few years after the war, too.

At one stage the woolscour was short of men. The manager, Waldron Taylor, spoke to Lance. He wanted a bloke for three weeks on the feeder to put the wool in. Things were a bit quiet at the garage so Lance lent me to the scour. Best job I ever had. The work was easy and I was paid twice the wages I earned as an apprentice. It was shift work. When I was on the midnight-till-8 shift I'd come home and sleep for a while then I'd do a bit for Lance. It was the same when I was on the 4-till-midnight shift; Lance still expected me to put in a few hours at the garage.

When the war came I was called up and I went in the army for five years.



shearing operations etc

Owing to the proposed increase in petrol duties, horse-drawn waggons, again becoming an important factor in the carrying industry. Many waggons that have been for years standing idle are greased up and on the road again. Certainly it will take time for us to get used to the slower transport.

An overland trip of considerable interest, necessitating utmost endurance and energy, was undertaken during the past week by the well-known local carrier Mr. Horace Downey in his four-cylinder 15 cwt International truck.

Mr. Tom Ford, part-owner of the race horse *Kings Image* and desirous of getting the horse to Normanton for the races, engaged Mr. Downey for the trip. A special crate was built on the lorry and the horse loaded into the crate from the local railway ramp. After a hard trip through rough timbered forest country the horse was eventually unloaded at Normanton, a distance of 284 miles. Mr. Ford accompanied Mr. Downey on the trip, both men taking it in turns at the wheel.

The party left Julia Creek at 5.30 p.m. on the Thursday afternoon. Apart from the occasional stop to feed and water the horse, the journey continued until 4 a.m. Saturday morning at an average speed of slightly more than eight miles per hour. During the long journey it was found that no great speed could be attained as with the least lean to either side, the top-heavy lorry had a tendency to turn completely over. Under these circumstances it required careful slow driving to accomplish the trip without disaster.

Away from the downs country surrounding Julia Creek, for miles and miles thick forest was a menace to the party. On several occasions it was necessary to cut overhanging branches and small trees out of the way. The road in many places, having being chopped about by motor cars in wet weather, was impossible for the lorry to traverse. To allow the journey to proceed, the party found its own road through the bush. In heavy sandy country such detours made it necessary to spread blankets and bags under the wheels of the lorry to obtain the required traction.

The party, after a long, tiresome and exciting journey, eventually arrived at their destination none the worse for their experience. The horse appeared to be free from any ill effects when unloaded and this may be substantiated as I have just learnt that he won his race in fine style.

Great credit is due to Mr. Downey and his assistants for a successful journey undertaken under considerable difficulties.

Stock business at a star

NQR: 11 Oct 1930

Shortly before midnight on Friday one could hear the cries of "Fire!" and on answering the call one noticed that Mathews' Garage was well alight. The fire had too good a hold when the alarm was raised to make any attempt to try and save anything.

The only buildings in the danger zone were just across the street: Charlie Byrne's butcher shop and Thrower's blacksmith shop. Little fear was expressed for the blacksmith shop as it has a dirt floor and walls of iron. Willing workers with a bucket brigade kept the supply of water up to the butcher shop and fortunately had everything in their favour. No wind was blowing and the outside iron walls of the garage stood practically till the last, containing the inferno.

A considerable quantity of lubricating oil in big 44 gallon drums made the fire a spectacular sight, with columns of black smoke leaping into the sky. Luckily there was no benzene in the garage, but the bowser on the footpath suffered severe damage from the heat of the burning building. Four motor cars that were in the garage for repairs were damaged beyond any hope of recovery.

The telephone pole in front of the garage caught alight. What might have been an inconvenience was fortunately avoided with the aid of a fire extinguisher. Had this pole been burnt, many properties would have been isolated from Julia Creek until same could have been repaired.

The fire lasted from about 11.45 p.m. to about 2 a.m. The contents were owned by Mr. Bill Mathews. I am not sure whether he had any insurance on the contents or the cars that were burnt. The origin of the fire is not known.

NQR: 01 Apr 1929

... was a ...
We feel very proud to see one of our local lads, Sergeant Norman Downey, QX43786, awarded the Military Medal. Norman assumed the duties of Signal's Officer for his Battalion in Bonis Peninsular and maintained communication to all units over a front of 8000 yards during advances. Norman forestalled the enemy by the installation of alternative communication and was often under fire. His actions contributed much to the success of the operations of his Battalion group.

With regard to ...

CA: 14 Mar 1947

Opposite top: Lance Lewis' garage, where Norm started as an apprentice mechanic in 1940.

[Alma Gannon, GA15, undated]

Opposite bottom: Julia Creek Motor Works, taken from near railway line looking north. The first Downey home in Julia Creek was on the left; Mick Harris was on the right. West of the Downeys were the Wilders, and then the Kaeser bakery.

[John Oxley Library, OJ01, ca 1928]

Below: Eckford buildings, Burke St. From left: home, butcher shop, dance hall, open-air theatre. Sold to Norm, and Alf and Harry Stainkey 9/12/1952. [Dadie Dawes, DW06, 1952]

THAT NEWSPAPER ARTICLE IS QUITE TRUE, YES. I received a medal. Actually, it wasn't a Military Medal, it was a British Empire Medal. Some papers printed it as an MM, but it was a BEM. The MM is for one act of valour, for outstanding bravery. If you read through my citation, I received my medal more for overall performance. What happened, there were 30 soldiers in a platoon. A platoon has one officer, one sergeant, and four corporals. I was the sergeant. The officer was away when we went into action – he was back in Australia somewhere – so I assumed the duties of Signal's Officer. I commanded the platoon during that particular action.

After the war I went back to Julia Creek and finished my apprenticeship with Lance Lewis. I could push a pen, so Lance put me into spare parts. As well as four mechanics – myself, Maurie Byrne, Ron Watson (son of Flo Watson in the Blue Bird Cafe) and Toby Turner – Lance had another bloke in spare parts, Dave Kiddle. Mrs Lewis did the bookkeeping.

The garage was a big place and we were kept pretty busy. Lance had the GM distributorship and he sold cars and trucks: Chevs, Buicks, Pontiacs. He sold bicycles and radios too. For quite some time the Lance Lewis garage was the only one in Julia Creek and he became quite wealthy out of it.

I was with Lance over a period of 14 years, but in that time I was away in the army five years, so nine years I had there. Lance wasn't a bad bloke. In the 1920s he'd been working in a garage for a bloke named Bill Mathews, a shearing contractor. That garage burnt down when I was only a boy. Lance bought the land and built a shed there, and that's how he started his own garage business.





north-western area.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Stainkey returned by Wednesday's mail. They were in Townsville to negotiate with Mr. Lance Lewis over the purchase of his garage business here in Julia Creek. Harry has now completed the purchase but will not be taking over for a few weeks. In addition to the garage, Harry and his father, Alf, recently purchased the Eckford business which included the picture theatre, dance hall, cordial factory and several dwellings. Alf owns St Elmo, a sheep property just out of town, and Harry is owner of Belgravia, another sheep property adjacent to town. We wish them every success in their town ventures.

Mr. Alf Stainkey has made certain improvements at the picture theatre. A soft drink counter has been set up inside the theatre with drinks kept cool by a large refrigerator. As well, it is the intention to cover about 25 feet of the back portion of the open-air theatre in order that picture goers may have some shelter from summer rains and winter winds. This will be a welcome addition. People practically take their beds along in midwinter, and in summer when rain falls, they are forced to run to a side awning for cover.

Mr. and Mrs. Lewis returned by last Wednesday's mail train after visiting Townsville.

CA: 13 Feb 1953

LANDMARK DISAPPEARING

A landmark in town for the past 28 years is fast disappearing under the contractor's hammer. The picture theatre and dance hall erected by Mr. Jim Eckford in 1930 is being demolished for re-erection at Clifton Park where it will be used as a shearing shed. The architect for this building was Mr. J. Rooney and the contractor was Mr. W. Hammond who also built a two storey hotel in Goldring Street for Bill Gannon. The latter structure was destroyed by fire within a few years.

The picture theatre had seating accommodation for 500 persons and the dance floor was specially made to cater for all types of dancing. Its opening was celebrated by a combined Church of England and Roman Catholic Church cabaret and from then on continued as a happy place of entertainment for residents and visitors. The disappearance of the picture theatre and dance hall will be a loss to the township. Motion pictures will still be shown in the open-air theatre next door.

NQR: 22 Mar 1958

I left Lance in 1953. I had a chance of going into partnership with my brother-in-law, Harry Stainkey, and his father, Alf. The Stainkeys bought out the Eckfords: the picture theatre, the hall, the butcher shop, the home, and I went partners in the theatre and in the cordial factory – Stainkey & Downey Cordial Works. I didn't really want the factory – let's face it, there was only room for one cordial works in Julia Creek (Dickfos had the other) – but I had to go partners in the factory to get into the pictures. I did all right out of cordial. I sold the soft drink through the picture show. That kept the factory going. Later in the 50s I ended up borrowing money off the NSW bank to buy the picture show myself.

In addition to the pictures and cordial factory I took on the Caltex distributorship. I had three businesses going. Impossible. I sold the cordial factory as soon as I could – to a bloke named Paddy Byrne. I only had it a year or two. There was too much work for one bloke and not enough money to employ wages. Getting bottles was the big problem. You couldn't buy new bottles, so I'd have to go scrounging by the roadside or at the rubbish dump. Find a bottle, wash it, scrub it, fill it up with soft drink, put a label on it, deliver it, some silly bugger would drink it and throw it who-knows-where, then I'd have to go and find another bottle.

I'll tell you about bottles. To get hold of clean bottles the two hotels in Julia Creek bought my soft drink. After the war there were no large bottles of beer like you can buy now. The hotels filled their own. I'd deliver soft drink to the hotels and they'd use the nice clean empties to bottle their draught beer. They were on a winner; but me, I'd never see the bottle again. The publican, he didn't go to the rubbish dump looking for bottles – Norm Downey did.

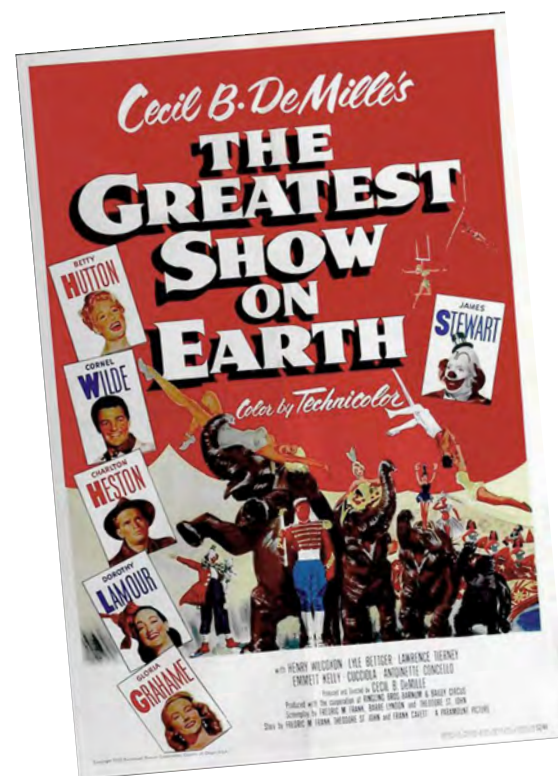
After I got rid of the cordial factory, a few years later I bought the picture show. Harry was looking to get out of the hall and picture show business. Eventually the council was going to build a Civic Centre, and when that happened the hall would be redundant. Harry moved the hall to his property, Clifton Park, as a shearing shed, and I borrowed money to buy the theatre.

THE PICTURES WERE AN IMPORTANT CENTRE of entertainment in Julia Creek. It was the meeting place on a Friday night or a Saturday night and everybody went there. It was fantastic running a picture show in the fifties. It was good. I remember we played *The Greatest Show on Earth* with Jimmy Stewart, that circus picture. At 7 o'clock – the show didn't start till 8 o'clock – at 7 the queue was from the picture theatre down to Gannon's Hotel, waiting for us to open the doors.

Right from the first day I ran the pictures. I was the projectionist for 23 years. My wife used to sell the tickets and I did the projection up top. I screened four nights a week: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and every picture day I put posters up. People didn't just turn up to see any old film. The programme changed every night unless there was a big one. *Sound of Music*, *South Pacific* – we screened those for seven nights.

The audience got good value for their 2/6. Always a newsreel and a cartoon first, followed by a Cowboy & Indian – supports to the main feature. The audience came out about 11 o'clock, depending on what film was shown. Mostly about 11, half-past 11 (it didn't really matter), but I went through till midnight some nights if I couldn't get the right-length movie.

We couldn't start till half-past 8 on Sunday because of the church services. The services went from 7 till 8, and the council restriction was you couldn't start the pictures till after the church service



had finished. That was fair enough. I just put on a shorter programme. The first half on Sundays consisted of a serial (*Son of Geronimo* or *Tarzan*), cartoons – plenty of cartoons – plus news and shorts, but no Cowboy and Indian. They were quite good, the shorts. You might get a 20-minute short on New Zealand, or fishing in Bass Strait. And then you had the full-length picture.

Part of the theatre was open-air. If it was raining heavily, well, I'd put the pictures off, but I'd leave it right till the last moment. And it had to be pretty heavy, not just a light shower.

I think there were eight film-distributing companies: Metro, Fox, Columbia, United Artists... eight altogether. The reps came out twice a year and sold me their films. They'd give me a list of films and what each one cost. I'd try and haggle a little bit, but you couldn't haggle very much because they were professionals. I signed a contract for films 12 months ahead.

Some pictures such as *South Pacific* – what they called “percentage pictures” – they were shown on percentage. Companies got a certain amount of the takings. Those films had to be shown seven nights a week. The film distributors insisted on it. I'd say: “But this is Julia Creek, for God sake”. For a few films, *Sound of Music*, *South Pacific* – yeah, we met their contract and showed them for a full week.

Each of the companies had a rejection clause in their contract because you couldn't show every film on offer. I only wanted seven films each week:

one on Sunday and two on each of the other nights. On American films there was a 25% rejection clause, but there was no rejection on British films. I had to take the lot – or none.

Films came out by train. They were on a circuit: Charters Towers sent to Hughenden, and Hughenden had a week's holding on it. Hughenden sent to Richmond – a week's holding. Richmond sent to me, I sent to Cloncurry, Cloncurry sent to Mount Isa, and Mount Isa sent to Winton. I had to put my films on the train Thursday morning because some of them would be listed in Cloncurry on Friday night.

The Sunday paper from Brisbane – they called it the *Truth* back then – they'd write about what the larrikins down south were doing during the pictures. Tell you what, the next week I'd cop the same things from the Julia Creek kids. They'd cut the seats, have little lumps in shanghais... Oh God! Wouldn't have enough brains to work out their own mischief, but as soon as they read where somebody else did it, the locals would copycat.

A bit before 1970 television arrived in Julia Creek. Down south, TV was knocking picture shows about and people were saying to me: “Oh, it won't effect Julia Creek. Everyone will still go to the pictures”. But TV did affect Julia Creek. They all stayed home – and they only had the ABC. They'd never had television before. The three or four dollars a week they were paying for hire purchase on their TV sets, that was the money they would have spent coming to the pictures. It put me out of business overnight. Overnight! I couldn't believe it.

I REMEMBER Mrs Downey patrolling the picture theatre with a torch. At that stage I wasn't old enough to be up to any trouble with the girls, but the ones who were, they never got away with anything under the glare of Mrs Downey's torch. Not too many shenanigans went on. It was certainly no den of iniquity, just a bit of harmless kissing and hugging. Mrs Downey saw to that.

JOHN KAESER

EVERY Saturday afternoon when I was younger, but every Saturday night after that, I went to the pictures. In my middle teenage years Norm Downey used to show pictures on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday night. That was the big thing of the week, going to the pictures on Saturday night. You'd swear you were going to a bloody Command Performance. What else did we have? There was little else to do.

RAY GODIER

THE PICTURES were probably the biggest thing of the lot in Julia Creek. In my case we went every Saturday; never during the week. At interval you'd duck over to the ice works behind the picture show, or the soft drink factory, and you bought a big bottle of soft drink. That was a real treat.

Open-air theatre of course, with canvas seats. Always had the old canvas seats, and whenever it rained, the seats in front, you'd pull them up over the top of you and stick your head through in between the seats and continue to watch the movies.

TOMMY JESSUP

NORM DOWNEY used to own the picture theatre. It was an open-air theatre with a small section at the back that was covered. All the rest of it was open-air with canvas seats.

We used to take raincoats in the wet season. We watched pictures in the rain. Even wearing a raincoat you'd still get wet trousers, so what you had to do: you'd move to a seat that had an empty one in front. Then you'd pull the canvas from the seat in front of you up to your chest. That way you could keep the rain off your legs.

People used to take heaters in the winter, it got that cold under the open sky. Alex Wall was a great one for doing that. He always sat in the same place and he always had a small kerosene heater with him.

CHARLIE CORRIGAN

I USED to help run the picture show. Me and a bloke by name of Frank Forde. Frank ran the show when

the owner was away. I'd wind the films back when they finished.

It was interesting how they got the light for the projector. It was controlled by hand. No such thing as turn the projector on and let it go, you had to keep adjusting the arc between two rods. You looked through a black window, kind of like a welder looks through his goggles, and you could see the arc. If the rods got too far away from each other you turned a knob to keep them together, otherwise the arc would go out and you'd lose the picture.

JOE AZZOPARDI

I NEVER used to pay for the pictures at Julia Creek because I knew the bloke who was running it. I used to go up where the projectors were, with a couple of bottles of beer, and watch the pictures with him.

RON DAU

WELL, I was the bloody projectionist for 23 years and I don't remember drinking beer with a Ron Dau. My wife used to sell the tickets and I did the projection up the top. Unless of course I was away. A bloke named Frank Forde used to fill in for me then.

NORM DOWNEY

I ONLY HAD DEALINGS WITH MAX BURNS in the last few years he was in Julia Creek, when other fuel suppliers refused him. I was the Caltex distributor. I never really had any dealings with him personally. He'd send down Choco Winton, mainly, to get the fuel. Or, if they were out on a tanksinking job, one of the drivers might come in. I hardly ever spoke to Max. The only time I did was right at the end.

What happened: things were going bad for him. I suppose when you think about it, only so-many tanks could be built in the Julia Creek area. Max couldn't get fuel from anyone else, but I stuck with him. I supplied him with all his fuel to keep him going. He said he could afford to pay me. He'd just sunk a tank somewhere near Normanton¹, but he wasn't too sure whether the money was in the bank. If he knew for certain he'd been paid, he'd be able to pay me. Before that happened they bankrupted him and closed everything down.

In those days it was a disgrace to go bankrupt. I always felt that Max was such a big boy that there was no way in the world he'd let that happen. Maybe he didn't have the money. Or maybe – if he had money put away that the bankruptcy people couldn't get at – maybe he thought it was better to go bankrupt and not pay anybody.

Max put me in a hell of a position. And it wasn't necessary. We had the feeling that he was shrewd, that he got away with avoiding paying his bills. Look at it this way: Max's debt to me was almost half a house. He owed me, in round figures, £1000. Later, I bought a house in Julia Creek for £2500. When it got down to the nitty gritty, at the last, I said to him: "This is not Caltex, Max. This is me, Norm Downey".

Caltex reversed Max's account to me straight away. And I was bloody lucky they stuck with me. I didn't have any money. I'd been five years in the army, came home and got married. There was no pill, so you started a family straight away. I had a wife and three kids. The only reason Caltex stuck with me was because I didn't even own a house. If I'd owned a house they would have gone me. I had nothing except a decent manager who put it to the bosses in Sydney: "This Downey, he can't go anywhere, he's got no money. He's gotta stay in Julia Creek, and as our distributor he's doing all right". So they kept me on, with the proviso that they would take half my commission every month.



I reckon I rolled 3000 drums of fuel to pay Max's debt. It directly affected my income for several years.

I went and saw old Max: "By law, you don't have to pay me. You've been declared bankrupt". I told him the story. I explained that I was paying off his account with half my commission. So we came to an agreement – the court didn't have to know anything about it – that at the end of each month when I got my papers from Caltex, that whatever they took off my commission he would pay me. But I never got one razoo.

I'll never forget this Sunday morning at Mass a number of years before. Old Father Garvey talking about the work Max did at the convent grounds: "... but there will be no charge for the levelling. This is an account from Max Burns, already receipted. Mr Burns has donated the services of his drivers and his trucks to the Catholic Church".

Clap, clap clap.

Later, when I realised that Max wasn't likely to pay me, I thought: *I know who paid for the levelling at the convent – N.L. Downey*. The priest thanked *Max*. I was the bloke who should have got the thanks. It wasn't only at the convent that Max spent my money. He spent a fortune at the golf club. He would have wasted enough money at the golf club that he could have paid his debt to me. Just as well I've got a sense of humour.

After Max left town, a couple of blokes from the bankruptcy office arrived in Julia Creek to see everybody who had a claim against him. They wanted to verify that the facts were right. I went to Gannon's and had a couple of beers with them. They wouldn't tell me too much because they couldn't. They did say, however, that it looked like being one of the biggest – well, at that time it was the biggest – the biggest bankruptcy they'd seen in North West Queensland.

I don't know how to describe your grandfather. When I was talking to these bankruptcy blokes at Gannon's, one of them asked me:

What sort of bloke is this Max Burns?

To be honest with you, as far as I'm concerned, he was a bloody good bloke. I really can't say much against him.



1. Max was working on Iffley, Miranda Downs and Wakakarack in the first half of 1959 (page 782, third column). He knew he would be unable to pay Norm for fuel, because in January of 1959 H.C. Sleight obtained a court order against Max (page 12) for recovery of a £3500 debt. My grandfather was intentionally taking Norm for a ride. His attitude towards Norm and other small businesses in Julia Creek was an utter disgrace, saturated in greed, given that in January 1959 Max and some of his family had £9000 available in cash to buy the lease of the Royal Hotel in Lismore.

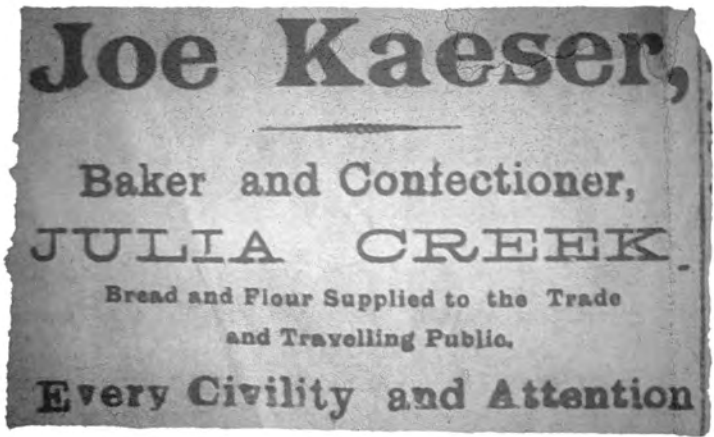
Opposite: Norm Downey, Garney Evans, Roy Stainkey at Eddington Waterhole. [Dot Stainkey, SD10, ca 1950]

Above: Norm's notepad cover. [Norm Downey, DN02, ca 1970]



Kaeser Family

- ↪ JOE
- ↪ BALLY ♥ 1909 ELIZABETH
 - ↪ Hazel
 - ↪ Nellie
 - ↪ Edna
 - ↪ Myrtle
 - ↪ Leo (died young)
 - ↪ Joe ♥ Iris
 - ↪ John
 - ↪ Betty
 - ↪ Marie
 - ↪ Audrey
 - ↪ Kenny
 - ↪ Beverly



Left: Ad in the *Cloncurry Advocate*, 18 Nov 1929.
Joe was Bally's brother.

Opposite: Gordon Topping, one of Betty's school teachers,
ready for a fancy-dress ball in Julia Creek.
See page 193 for complete photo.
[Dadie Dawes, DW09, 1935]

Not Quite the Baker's Dozen

Betty Kaeser

Died 11 Oct 2008

**Bally Kaeser starts a bakery in Julia Creek
and hands out mickies for the kids**

BEFORE I WAS BORN, in 1924, Dad had been a partner with a baker in South Townsville. There was a fire – some people spoke of a put-up job – and Dad became insolvent. He wasn't allowed to own his own business anymore and he went to Mount Isa to work in his father's bakery. After his father died he stayed in Cloncurry for a while, and then a bakery owned by a Mr Stout in Julia Creek came up for sale. Dad's eldest brother, Uncle Joe, decided to take it on. Dad and Uncle Joe moved to Julia Creek sometime before 1924.

My father's name was John Albert but they called him Bally. He got that name because as a kid he had some hair cut off to remove a piece of chewing gum. Kids teased him with "Baldy", but it's easier for kids to say Bally and that's the name that stuck. My mother's name was Elizabeth Anne. After Uncle Joe died the bakery went into her name – E. A. Kaeser, Baker – because Dad was insolvent.

I had seven sisters and four brothers, not quite the baker's dozen that some people in Julia Creek reckoned Dad was trying for. Two of my sisters, Hazel and Nellie, went to Julia Creek after Dad moved there. Hazel worked at the woolscour in the galley. She was the cook. Nellie worked for Dad in the bakery as a shop assistant.

Julia Creek was a small place then, with hardly any people in town and Nellie wanted one of the other children to come out as company. Marie was the baby, she was about two and a half, so she couldn't be sent. Joey was three years older than me, but Mum wouldn't send Joey, or Myrtle; she wouldn't send them. Mum wrote to say she was sending Betty – me! I was the one who went to Julia Creek to be with Nellie.

I had been just two months at school. Oh, I loved school in Townsville. We lived near the Railway State School and I wanted to stay at that school. I was happy there.

I was in Prep One in Townsville
and this old Miss Ferguson was like a grandmother to us.
You could go up and stand beside her and pat her hand.
She'd teach us about blowin' our nose,
and havin' a handkerchief,
and birds,
and making wheat grow.
You could watch the wheat shoot in little bottles
with blotting paper and sawdust in the jar.
But they never had anything like that at Julia Creek.

I don't know who took me out there, but it seemed the end of the world. My friends had told me: "You'll be *black* when you come back. You turn *black* when you go out there in *blackfella* country".

I went to Julia Creek in 1929 when I was in first grade. They never had a baby grade then in Julia Creek, no kids of that age, and there were only six in second grade. So I was put in second grade – and I howled every day. It put me right back. I couldn't learn sums or the alphabet cos I was crying all the bloody time. My uncle used to give me threepence to stop me from crying. When the Chinaman came around with his fruit basket I'd buy a piece of fruit to console myself.

Gordon Topping was one of our teachers. He was shy, a very shy person, only about 18 or 19. In the summertime he kept his suit coat on (he'd come from England) and he had smelly sweat marks under his arms. The heat in those tin classrooms it'd nearly kill you. He'd walk the aisles, looking over our shoulders at the work on the desk, and we'd pass the message along, we'd whisper, we'd be cruel: "Here comes the dead sheep".

The scholars sat at the back of the class, but I was always in the front. I seemed to get into trouble a lot because I didn't do my work properly. And if you sat in front the boys hit you with matchsticks using rulers and rubber bands.

They used to make bows-n-arrows and fire matchsticks at me. Topping caught me when I turned around to whack one of the boys:

I can't stand your mischief any longer, Betty Kaeser. Go to the headmaster.
Aw, Sir, it wasn't only me. The boys back there...

We were a difficult lot for that young man.



MY FATHER USED TO MAKE a little loaf of bread, a cottage loaf, like a French loaf, with a split in the middle. He made them for Mrs Hudson as a special treat when she was pregnant. When she'd come to the shop he'd say to her: "This one's for Mickie". And that's how Mickie Hudson got her name. When she was born that's what she was called. That's all the name she ever had. I don't know what her real name was.

Dad christened those loaves 'mickies' and then everyone called them mickies. After school there'd be kids coming to the shop: "Have you got any mickies?" Dad started to make them out of the leftover dough, especially to give to the kids. How Dad chose the name, well, I don't know, but to me they looked like a girl's mickie. I told a girl in Longreach about these mickie loaves when I was held up there once with a flood, and she laughed and reckoned she was going to ask the Longreach baker: "Have you got any of those fanny loaves?" But I don't think she was game.

SOME OF THE KIDS used to call Uncle Joe *Old Fat Joe Kaeser*. He had a big fat belly and he laughed all the time. I was about 10 when he died. The bakery went into Mum's name, but some of Uncle Joe's relatives arrived and tried to claim. See, he was a bachelor, they thought he was rich, but he gave bread away all the time. In the Depression years all the hobos that came to Julia Creek – you might have 20 men under the coalstage – they came over and got free bread. They'd go to Charlie Byrne the butcher and get free meat. Best place in the world, Julia Creek, for generous shopkeepers. A few town people got their bread for nothing as well.

Arthur Culloden was one of the men who camped under the coalstage. I think he had been married to a relative of Dad's. Every Sunday he went to the Catholic Church with Uncle Joe and he'd come home for a meal afterwards. On other days Mum would ask us to take Arthur a block of cake or some eggs. Joey and I'd go together. Arthur always wanted us to stay for tea and share his campfire. "I don't think Mum would let us" Joey would say. I would have stayed but Joey was a scaredy-cat, that's why I had to go with him. We were like two sheep in a pen, Joey and me.

I WORKED WITH DAD in the bakery helping to make bread from when I was about 12. Ooh, it used to be hot in there. We baked mainly the upright loaves, double loaves upright in the tin with a high-top crust; and sandwich loaves for the cafes and hotels – square ones; and French loaves; and round loaves out of the tin on the tray; and buns and rolls: cinnamon rolls, coffee rolls, coconut rolls. Sunday we didn't bake but there was a lot of packing – the bread was wrapped in parcels ready to send out on the mail runs.

People bought their Christmas cakes off us. Dad made hundreds of them over the years: plenty of butter, mixed fruit, lemon peel, cherries and almond nuts. And anyone who ordered a wedding cake, he'd ice it, decorate it, put things on top and give it to them as a present. He wouldn't charge them.

We sold to people straight out of the shop, we didn't sell to the stores. We didn't do that, no. Although Peter Dawes would come in and buy a bag of bread and go bush and sell it to the drovers¹.

and will soon be wiped out.

A large meeting of townspeople assembled in Eckford's Hall on Tuesday night to consider the question of evacuees from Townsville and other important matters. Mr. Allison occupied the chair and explained the purposes of the meeting. A large committee was appointed and this committee met again next night and appointed several sub-committees. The townspeople are doing all that is possible in these very stressful times.

The sporting bodies of Julia Creek are inactive at present.

NQR: 07 Feb 1942

ARCHIE JONES AND REGGIE JOHNSON were cousins. They came to Julia Creek (14-year-old kids and their mothers) and stayed at the quarters behind the bakery when Townsville was evacuated after the Japanese bomb scare. I remember they had a shanghai each. Every time I'd get loaded up with fresh bread to take into the shop they'd shanghai a stone at me. A few times I let them get away with it until the day I dropped the board on the ground (with four double loaves) and grabbed them by the scruff: "Give me those bloody shanghais!" I was pretty strong for a girl and I knew how to handle boys. They were frightened of me after that. And they weren't the only boys who were frightened of me – I could box.

1. See photo of Peter Dawes' hawker van on page 391.



Nugget Stanley, he was a little fella, a wool presser at the scour. He married Cecil Gerahty's sister, Kath. When he wasn't pressing he was into boxing, training the kids and organising inter-town competitions with Richmond and Cloncurry. Joey and Kenny (my brothers), Normie Albrecht, Paul Faithfull – they all trained in Mathews' Hall and had competitions there as a regular thing. It had a big following. Nugget and the boys got quite excited about it. Dad too. He'd be sitting there with a cigarette in his mouth, not smoking it, chewing it he'd be that excited. It was funny to watch him.

Dad used to get me sparring with Joey to keep him active between competitions. He'd say to boys when they came in the shop for bread after school:

Come out the back room for a while.
What for Mr Kaeser?
Give Betty one or two rounds, will you? She's
got to keep in practice for Joey.
Aw... I can't Mr Kaeser. Mum told me to come straight home.
But I'd have to put my gloves on for the boys who *were* willing.

I WAS 14 AND JUST GOING into seventh grade when I finished school. Couldn't understand spelling and sums; couldn't read. I was frightened to read. But I was good at drawing and printing. That, and very good at sport. Dad used to get us doing sports in the backyard, especially when gaslight sports were on, the sports at night time. We'd practise the hop step and jump, the three-legged race, the high jump – all those we practised. Dad was pretty keen on: "Stay home, don't annoy anyone". A lot of our entertainment was just outside the door in our own backyard.

I worked in the shop for a while when I left school, but I was no good at it cos I didn't know how to give change. "You can pay tomorrow." I'd write their name down and often it wasn't spelt right – or spelt at all. Dad would ask me:

What's this here, Betty?
Ah... that's two loaves for Mrs Fickling.
How do you make that out?
Well, there's an 'F' and two crosses.

I wasn't very good at readin-n-writin, so Mum took over the shop again and I never got that job back. I worked in the house: ironing, washing, cleaning, and I helped Dad with the bread.

While my older brothers Joey and Albie were still at home I didn't have to help much at the bakery, but when they went to war I was Dad's helper until he employed Cecil Gerahty. Cecil learnt to do everything, but he wasn't very good at moulding; the dough used to slip away from him. Dad played tricks on Cecil. One time he stood close to me and moulded the bread while Cecil wasn't looking. I just did the finishing. Cecil looked at me: "Bloody hell, how did you do that", cos he'd been there a fair while and still couldn't get the right mold. Cecil became the dough maker. He was very good at that. Even though he was crippled in the legs he was strong and he could throw the dough around.

Opposite: Mickie Hudson, dressed for a children's concert in Eckford's Hall organised by Mrs Hickman. According to Betty, Mickie was named after Bally Kaeser's mickie rolls.

The original of this photo is on page 342.

[Dadie Dawes, DW43, ca 1928]

I worked at the bakery for nothing, no pay. Couldn't ask Dad to buy me things – "Ahhh!" would be his response. Myrtle used to suck up to him: "Give Dad a kiss now and again and he'll let you have anything". I couldn't, but Myrtle got whatever she wanted.

"Dad can I have some shoes?"
(kiss, kiss)
and she'd send away for shoes on appro,
get about three or four pair,
pick out what she wanted and parcel the rest back.

I never had a new pair of shoes.

People,
because we had a big family,
they gave us their old shoes they didn't want.
We had a big cupboard,
was a linen cupboard,
and in there was shoes.
When you wanted shoes you rummaged to find a pair.

Anyhow, this time there was no shoes that fitted me and I wanted to go to a dance. I went over to the shop to see if Myrtle had left her shoes there. I looked under the counter and here's these beautiful blue sandals in a box, brand new. They were being sent back but I put them on. Ooh, they fitted nice.

So I went to the dance in blue sandals. I was about 15 and I'd only dance with girls. Every time we got near Myrtle and her partner we'd start giggling and she was getting angry. "What's so funny?" We'd giggle all the more cos she didn't notice. Then she looked down at my feet: "They have to go back!" But I ended up with that pair of shoes – they were worn.

I WAS COOKING AT THE NELIA HOTEL for Mr Franzman when I was 15. Mum got me the job. I never looked at a recipe book, I'd get everything out of my head remembering how Mum did it. I just added ingredients till I got the right consistency. I might have stayed several months I suppose and then I went to Gilliat, to Gladly Bulley at the Eddington Hotel. Gilliat was five houses and the hotel.

I was working at Gilliat when I first met Roy. I was not quite 17. Someone told me about this new fella in town. "A real gentleman, doesn't swear, doesn't talk dirty, and he's polite" and I thought: *God, can this new fella be real?* Anyhow, the Julia Creek mob came to Gilliat to play cricket and Roy was with them. They came into the hotel (I was the waitress) and George Triffett says to me, I'd known him for a while: "Hello Betty, how are you? I haven't seen you for ages". George is looking me up and down – I'd grown and looked more like a woman than a kid, see – and he introduced his friend, Roy Donald, the wonderful Roy they'd been telling me about. Roy asked me to a dance that night, but Dad wouldn't give his permission; he wouldn't let us go out with anyone till we were 17.

own was enveloped in heavy fog.
Miss Betty Kaeser left for Townsville to spend a holiday with her sister, prior to her marriage to Mr. Roy Donald. Both parties are very popular in our town and all join in wishing the happy couple the best in their future wedded life.

Betty's sister, Mrs Farrell will be

CA: 10 Sep 1943



I didn't see Roy again for a few months until I was at a dance in Julia Creek. We were dancing together:

Can I take you home?
Oh, I don't know.

I'd come with my girlfriend, Norma Harris, and I didn't want to say yes without asking her. But every time I asked her could Roy take us home, she wouldn't answer. So in the end I told him yes. Norma never spoke all the way home.

JOEY CAME BACK TO JULIA CREEK after the war and helped Dad in the bakery. Joey wanted to go into the business with Normie Albrecht – they got on well together, they married sisters – so Dad let Joey and Normie have it cheap. Joey had the bakery for about 15 years.

Dad shifted to Townsville and lived in Ahern St. He died helping people. Anyone that needed a baker they'd ring and ask for Dad and he'd go on a pushbike. He never bothered to ask them to send a bloody taxi. This particular time he had a bad cold and he rode his bike over to South Townsville. When he got there he collapsed. Didn't live but five days; pneumonia set in. That was about 1957 and he was in his mid sixties.

I HAVE WONDERFUL MEMORIES of Julia Creek. Tassie Triffett, he was a blacksmith. I used to go and watch him belt a few things. Before the dairy came I'd go over to Tassie for milk. He had cows, we bought milk off him. I always seemed to be the one Mum sent to do her messages. I went every day for the milk and I'd have it in a billy with no lid on, swinging it round my head all the way home with the milk staying in place.

I had good times in Julia Creek. Kids played together, played in the streets at night, played rounders. We had a dance every week. If we saw anyone new come off the train we'd say to them: "There's a dance tonight, would you like to come?" It was a very friendly town. And on Sunday we'd say to Bill Gillett: "Hey, Bill, can you pick us up and take us to Eddington?" He'd get his flatbed truck and call at each house, see who wanted to come. You'd ask your mother: "Yeah, all right." Our end of the town would fill up the lorry, legs hanging over, and off we'd go to Eddington or the Punchbowl. I couldn't swim, but I'd always be in the water, dog paddling.

The Gannons and Eckfords, they had another group at their end of town. We didn't see them at our picnics and none of us were ever invited to theirs. And tennis – you couldn't get near the tennis courts for Gannons and Eckfords and bank Johnnys and different ones like that.

I forgot to tell you that after I met Roy I worked with Mrs Pedersen in the kitchen at the hospital, serving the wards and the dining room. I loved cooking and I loved being in the wards. The nurses and doctors wanted me to be a probationer, and so did I, but Mum said that nurses drank and smoked and she didn't want me to do that. I ended up being the cook after Mrs Pedersen left, when Tuppy Blanch came to be Matron.

And then there was the war, and us women were given an independence we'd never known. I was the baker's assistant and Coral Eckford ran the pictures. She'd start them late because of daylight saving, otherwise we wouldn't have seen the picture on the open-air screen, too much light. All of us girls had to do men's work.

Good times though they were, I wanted to get away, and the only means for a woman to do that was to get married. I married Roy in Townsville in 1943 and never went back to Julia Creek, except visiting.

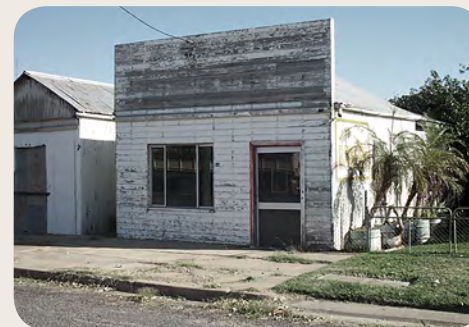


WE LIVED IN BURKE ST at the back of Bally Kaeser's bakery. It was only across the laneway. I could jump the fence and be in the bakehouse yard.

We bought our bread at Kaeser's. I'd tear the guts out of it going home. You had to watch the billy goat in Kaeser's yard. He'd chase you and take the bread out of your hand.

We never knew such things as bread rolls. Bally, any dough left over, he used to make what we called mickies: "Bally, ya got any mickies today?" He always made sure that each child got one during the week he was making them. Just like a round bread roll.

IVY BURROWS



I CAN REMEMBER walking into the bakery, a little dark dinghy place facing the railway. It was pretty good bread. We used to buy 'tin' loaves which are those high-rise loaves. Unsliced. I don't think sliced bread would have been heard of then. God, I'm going back a long way.

The bakery was a scruffy little brown place; never painted I don't think. I don't think it ever had any paint on it. Walk in there and it used to be dark. All the buildings in Julia Creek were white or cream but that one wasn't, that was brown.

JUDY BURROWS

Top left: Betty, 25 Sep 1943.
[Betty Kaeser, KB01]

Above: The Kaeser bakery in Goldring St.
[Guy Burns, GK111, 2003]

AUSTRALIA'S ONLY WOMAN FILM OPERATOR

Twenty-four year old Coral Eckford of Julia Creek, North Queensland, has been Australia's only woman film operator for the last four years.

By MARGOT STREETER

MANPOWER shortages due to the war

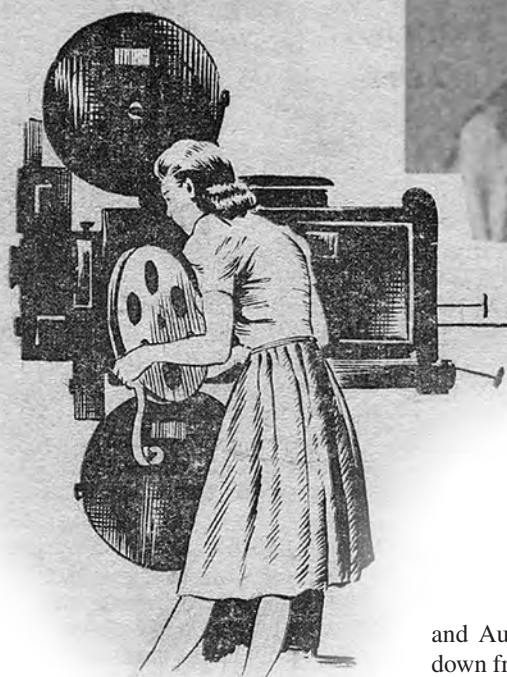
MANPOWER shortages due to the war have caused women to take over many jobs formerly held by men. Quite different to tram conductresses, postwomen, female mechanics and farm hands is the work of 24 year-old Coral Eckford of Julia Creek. She has been Australia's only woman film operator since her brother joined the army four years ago.

Coral works the film projector at her father's theatre in Julia Creek – a town of 1000 people, 400 miles due west of Townsville where everything is in terms of sheep and cattle. She has lived most of her life there and, as a result, always has a sympathetic and friendly audience at the shows. Miss Eckford took over her job after only two lessons from her brother Jim, who received his military call-up unexpectedly. Her novel career began on June 7th, 1941, when she ran off *Edison the Boy*, starring Mickey Rooney. "That's one film I'll never forget" she said.

For the first few months she found the job extremely nerve-racking. She used to run the films on a trial-and-error method, but managed to get by without making any serious mistakes. Breakdowns are always taken in good part by the audience who fill in the time by shouting, "Are you asleep up there, Coral?" and other such remarks.

Before she took up this job, Coral worked in the local newsagency at Julia Creek. She says she is quite prepared to return to that work when her brother comes home, and she is just another woman doing a man's job taken on during the war.

For the last six months Coral has been assisted by her elder sister, Edna, who combines this with her work as manageress of the theatre. The Eckford girls are the only women members of the Bio-Operators Union. Coral received a thorough training from a Union representative soon after she joined, and from that day has had little trouble carrying on her work. She is mistress of any situation that arises in the control room. Often the projector runs hot and the film breaks, causing fires. Coral deals with them by flooding the projector with a fire extinguisher. At first, when she was inexperienced, the audience used to get the jitters, but now they have confidence



Coral Eckford, who took over her difficult job after only two lessons from her brother

in her and take it as a matter of course.

A film operator's job in Julia Creek is a very different proposition to one in a city. There is no electricity in the town and Coral has the man-sized task of managing her own power-driven dynamo to run the projector.

"The only time it ever let me down was in the middle of a film, *The Youngest Profession*, with Herbert Marshal" Coral said. "For three days, until the engine was repaired, the main topic of conversation in town was whether Herbert Marshal would drink his prospective son-in-law under the table. Money changed hands as to the outcome, and when they finally discovered it several nights later, for many the result was disappointing."

At Julia Creek, they have to cater for the tastes of an extremely mixed audience. Rip-roaring cowboy films always have a priority between June

and August of each year, when the drovers come down from the Gulf Country with their cattle stocks. Owing to the wartime shortage of labour in the district, some of these drovers are Aborigines – only half civilised. "These pictures appeal particularly to them" manageress Edna said.

Coral's job has become increasingly difficult each year since she started. Owing to the war, replacement parts have been hard to get and even the most minor repairs have to be sent to Mount Isa – the nearest large town. She has become an expert at improvising while the parts are away, and somehow she has always kept the show going.

In Julia Creek and other similar pastoral centres in Queensland, films are the main source of entertainment for residents. In these districts, competent film operators are few. Thus, Coral, and others like her are key members of the community. The work they do is of direct importance to everyone. And this is the reason why Coral Eckford has the appreciation of everyone in her home town for filling the gap left when her brother joined up, and for the way she has stuck to her job under even the most difficult circumstances.

Can I still get the pushbike? **Kenny Kaeser**



DAD NEVER MADE BREAD ROLLS. There were no hamburgers those days, just bread to make sandwiches. You'd go to a cafe and it was steak and eggs, ham and eggs, or sandwiches. Not much variety.

When he made bread he put it into the oven with a peel, what they call a peel, a big wooden handle with a flat blade on it. Each loaf was made in a tin. He'd put them in the oven, all over the oven, and pack it right up to the front with just a small space left. Any pieces of dough left over, Dad rolled them into a little round ball and called them mickie

loaves. He'd put the mickies in front, cook them like that. Kids, when they'd come to the shop

after school: "Any mickies today, Bally?" But they were lucky if they got one. He'd only make a few a day.

I WAS BORN IN JULIA CREEK at the end of 1933, not in a hospital, in the back room of our house beside the bakery. Mrs Walters delivered me. Her son Harold was postmaster in Townsville for years. Mum told me that while she was giving birth, Dad was in the backyard chopping wood for the bread oven. When I was born she sung out: "Bally, it's a boy!" She'd had seven girls and only two boys... well, three boys but one died. "It's a boy!" And she reckoned Dad went like buggery with the axe, chopping up the wood, he was that excited about having another boy after so many girls.

I started school in 1939 and I didn't like it – first up, any rate. I'd hide, play the wag. Betty used to catch me and drag me to school, but I'd go for me quoit whenever I had the chance and hide under AJ Smith's store. Little sticks turned into posts, and goat turds became sheep or cattle as I pretended to herd them in and out of stockyards.

When they did get me to school, Boofhead Cann, the head teacher... He was a tyrant, y'know, old Boofhead – he stood me in front of the class one day and threatened to take me to the police sergeant. I was scared of Tom Brennan, the police sergeant, cos he was a bull of a man and he always seemed to be so gruff. In those days, as kids, we were frightened of coppers. If you played up they generally gave you a boot up the bum. I was terrified that Boofhead was going to take me to Brennan. I wanted him to give me the cuts instead. In the end, I don't know if he gave me the cuts, but he sure frightened hell out of me and I never played wag again. I came to school after that.

The Wilders lived next door to the bakery. Cooe was my age, Herco [Herb] a bit older. Every Saturday one of them used to rake the backyard and clean it up, even though there was no grass, only dirt.

The Wilders kept goats. We never had goats at our place. We bought milk from the Harbutt dairy out near the scour. A lot of Saturdays Cooe would hitch up a couple of goats to a cart and we'd go camping on the bore drain, get under a parkinsonia tree, boil the billy. Where the railway station is, the bore was just beyond that across the line. The bore drain ran from there to service Hilton Park. I don't know how much further it went.

We'd follow the bore drain to Silly's market garden, get some carrots, radishes when they were growing. Mannie was there, he'd give us a few for a couple of pence. Mannie took over the gardens from his father.

We'd go camping on weekends, chasing goats out near the race course, trying to catch the wilder ones and ride them.

When the scour was operating we'd go there, about two mile out of town.

It'd be working, putting the wool through the process, cleansing it.

Upstairs where the finished product came out, the clean wool, it accumulated in the corner until they had enough to bale.

Coe and Herco and me, when the bloke wasn't watching, we took flying dives into the wool as it came out of the blower. It was blown from below and made a big heap on the floor.

Was good times growing up in Julia Creek. We just wandered the downs.

AND SMITH SON.
Reports are that "Bally" Kaeser, our well-known baker, who has not had a holiday for eight years is making the most of it. He is relieved by his son Albert, who owing to ill health was relieved from military service. Mr. Kaeser is spending his holidays with his three married daughters in Townsville.
Quite a gloom was cast over the town

NQR: 06 Oct 1944

Above: Bally Kaeser, Kenny's father.
[Betty Kaeser, KB07, ca 1930]

Opposite: Kenny's brother Albie, member of the victorious 1947 Julia Creek football team (winners of the Western Zone). Joey was also a member of this team. For full photo see page 593.
[Nora Fayers, FN04, 1947]

When I was about 12 we had a boxing tournament in Julia Creek, schoolboy boxing, and I fought Paul Faithfull. He was a few pound heavier than me and a little bit older. Dad said to me before we went to the fight: "If you beat Paul you can have a new pushbike". I think they cost £19¹. "You bewdy!" I thought. But I didn't win; Paulie beat me. We came home, we're having a cup of tea and I've got my head down, sulking. I said to Dad:

Can I still get the pushbike?
No – I told you if you won.

Next morning I thought: *Bugger it, I'm gonna get the pushbike*. Lance Lewis, he used to sell pushbikes, the only one in town who did. I went to his garage: "Mr Lewis, Dad said I could have a new Ashby pushbike". Nineteen quid! In those days nineteen quid... and poor Dad with all those kids. I didn't realise the battle they had.

I arrived home with a pushbike and sung out to Dad. He's in the shop: "Dard..." I used to call him Dard:

Dard, look at this; look at the bike.
Where'd you get that?
Lance Lewis. I booked it up.
Well, you can take the bloody thing back!

But he let me keep it. See, I was spoilt – by Dad, not Mum. I was the youngest son. Joey was 13 years older than me and Albie 19 years older. They were grown up before I came along. Dad would have been about 43 when I was born, and middle-aged when he let me keep the bike.

Yeah, I was spoilt rotten by Dad.



I can remember Joey being at home with us when I was very young, Albie not so much. We'd be in a dim bedroom, Beverly and I, being frightened by Joey telling us spooky stories. No electric light, just kerosene light, the ones you pumped up. Aladdin lights, they were a good light; but carbide or kerosene – you couldn't see much by them.

And if we played up: "Watch out. Jacky Jacky'll get you. He's under the bed!" Bloody Jacky Jacky. He was always a blackfella of course. Once he was mentioned we'd soon behave ourselves.

My oldest brother, Albie, I remember him going away to war. He went mainly because his mates went. He was married, he was exempt, but: "No, I wanna go too". They all wanted to go, though towards the end I don't think they had much choice. Albie was 26 when he enlisted and his wife went crook. I remember her crying the day he caught the train. She was crying and Mum and Dad were saying: "He'll be right". Albie and Joey both came back, but Albie came home bomb happy; nerves and that.

We left Julia Creek at the end of 1947. Mum and Dad, me and Bev, that's all. The others had already left home. Dad sold the bakery to my brother Joey and a butcher from Richmond, Norm Albrecht. I was back out there in 1954 for 10 months, working for Joey and Norm in the bakery, but I've never seen Julia Creek since.

I ENJOYED MY CHILDHOOD in Julia Creek. Has anyone mentioned the old swaggie? Greeny lived in a humpy of canvas and tin near the coalstage², just outside the railway perimeter. He lived there for years. He was a hobo, recluse, just kept to himself like a hermit. Put a little fence up, made a little garden, grew a few vegies. Every day he'd come into town and sit around. I don't think he worked. We used to go over there, play around the coalstage in the railway trucks. But if you went near Greeny's little patch he'd chase you. By God, he'd chase you.





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TUBING.

swing.

Mrs. Kaeser and children left on Saturday to make their home in Townsville. Mr. Kaeser is remaining for some time to attend to business. Mr. and Mrs. Kaeser successfully ran the baker's shop in our town for many years. We will miss this grand old couple and they take with them the best wishes from their many friends in Julia Creek.

Mr and Mrs. Les Adam (Merle

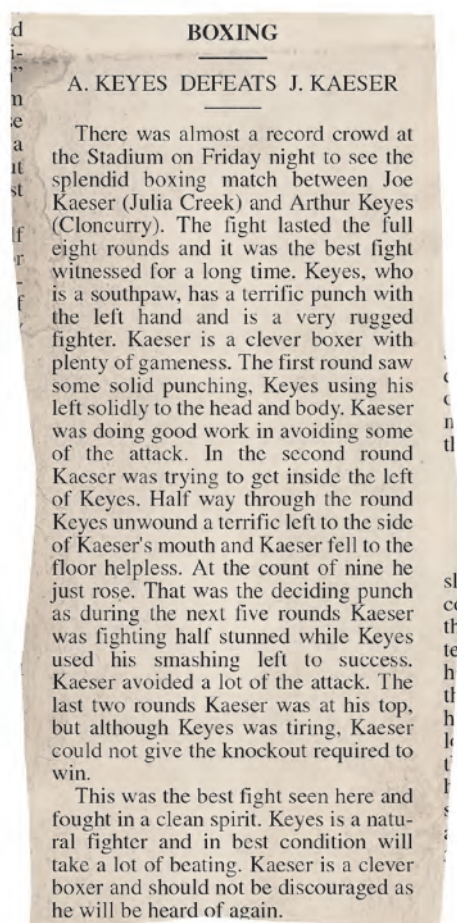
CA: 07 Nov 1947

1. If Kenny's recollection is correct, the cost of the bike in 2009 values was ~\$1500.
2. A photo of the coalstage is on page 680.

Wild and free John Kaeser

MY FATHER, JOEY KAESER, was from a family of 12 of whom only four were boys (one boy didn't survive childhood). He was born around 1919, in Richmond, so he's a true child of the North West. His grandfather was a German immigrant and the family trade was baking. At one stage or another there was a Kaeser, or a son-in-law of a Kaeser, in every town from Townsville to the Isa. The one at Richmond was run by my uncle, Roy Donald, for many years. Kenny, Dad's younger brother, worked in bakeries in Townsville, Richmond and Julia Creek.

March 9, 1948, was my birthdate. At that stage Dad was in the baker shop at Julia Creek with Norman Albrecht. Dad was a keen amateur boxer and that's how they met. They joined up to go to war at the same time. After the war they bought the bakery from Bally Kaeser, Dad's father.



CA: 23 Feb 1940

It was always acknowledged that Norm was the offside and Dad was the baker. He made good bread and it kept well. That was important because if you had a reputation for bread that kept well, and was good to start with, it stood you in good stead. Some people who were closer to Cloncurry preferred to order bread from Dad and pick it up from a railway siding. A lot of his work was parcelling bread into empty flour sacks and taking it to the railway station, or waiting for the mailman to collect it for delivery to properties. The business was not all that business-like, but the bread was good enough to sell itself and Dad made sufficient money for our needs.

We never had a car until about 1963. Our only car was the work truck, a 1938 Ford. Dad drove to the railway in that to off-load hundred-weight bags of flour. I remember struggling to lift a corner of one of these bags while Dad hefted all the others onto the truck. Then he drove home and carried them into the flour shed. Incredible hard work.

Our house was beside the bakery on quite a large block facing directly over the railway line. I had one of the best places for a young boy to romp because the flour room, with its huge sacks of flour at all sorts of disjointed angles, made an ideal place to play Cowboys and Indians, stage ambushes, build forts and fight wars. And the boxes of dried fruit which were used in the buns, they were always there to be raided and taken off as booty.

NOW THAT I THINK BACK ON IT, I appreciate my childhood far more now than I did then. Driving to Cloncurry in mid-winter on the back of flat-bed trucks to play football; out to Eddington and the Punchbowl for swimming; the country races at Nelia; the goats. Our next-door neighbour kept goats and they'd hop the fence. If a door was open they'd come straight into the bake shop and start nibbling bread. Dad would yell out: "Get those bloody goats over the fence". Goats infested Julia Creek.

All those recollections form a blur. Nothing seems distinct except contentment, happiness, how wild and free it was. Open, and never feeling any sense of what today we call "stranger danger" – that someone might wish to harm us. Life was... it's a cliché, but it was simple. Adult concerns never seemed to intrude. We'd roam

until all hours, and provided we hadn't been up to mischief nobody would be concerned.

I never realised just how relatively poor we were till I went away to boarding school and saw boys with several pairs of shoes. That was an eye-opener for me. It took me until my second year to be comfortable wearing shoes on a daily basis. And I don't regard that as a feat, I regard that as a retrograde step.

Both my brother and myself feel that we had a great childhood in Julia Creek. I certainly wouldn't change it for... My wife was born and bred in Brisbane, and even though Brisbane was just a big country town then, she had more restrictions and much less freedom than we had.

IN 1960 NORM ALBRECHT decided to get out of baking and he bought the town butcher, Champneys & McMahon. Dad bought Norm's share of the bakery and he stayed in Julia Creek for a few more years before he moved on.

Mum and Dad were having marital problems by this time. I knew very little about it because I was away at boarding school. The problems deepened, and in 1963 Mum left. Dad kept on running the business but he wasn't doing well – in life or in business. Eventually, in 1965-66, he moved to Townsville and stayed there until his death in 1991.



Above: John's father, Gunner Joseph Charles Kaeser, QX30069 [John Kaeser, KJ01, ca 1940]

Cutting rumps and rolling roasts Jean Jaques

WHAT YEAR WAS I MARRIED? Nineteen thirty... Now, here we go...

Nineteen thirty...

When did I say I went to Richmond nursing?

[You said 1934]

Early nineteen... Isn't this ridiculous. Gee, I am getting old and silly. Now, wait a minute...

June 1935!

I'd known George about a year at that stage.

WELL, I WAS BORN in Mt Morgan in 1913. My Dad was a civil engineer at Mt Morgan Mines. He enlisted in the First War and we went to Brisbane and lived there for three years while he was overseas. When he came back he joined the government and was building railway lines around Queensland. From then on we were all around; when he finished one line we'd move to another. The last one he built was from Ingham to Cardwell.

I became a nurse and started nursing at the Rockhampton Hospital. When I finished in 1934 when I was 21, a friend and I went out to Richmond. I met George while I was nursing at the Richmond Hospital. He was working with his father in the family butcher shop. After we married he stayed working with his father in Richmond until they opened a branch in Julia Creek.

Every year for three years I had a son: George, Ronnie, then Barry. Then I waited four years for a daughter. The first two boys were born in Richmond. I was living in Julia Creek, but I came back to Richmond, to Grandad, and stayed there and had them in the Richmond Hospital. Then I had Barry at home in Julia Creek, with the two littler boys traipsing in. There was a bush nurse present, Sister Barefield. She was a wonderful woman. English she was – and to go way out there to Julia Creek. She rented the top floor of the CWA cottage. I belonged to the CWA and they bought this old place on high blocks in the main street. We built in underneath, and that part became the CWA.

Anyway, I had Barry at home and had Sister Barefield attend me. It was the best birth I ever had.

JACQUES' BUTCHER BUSINESS was expanding and that's why George, my husband, opened the Julia Creek shop in the front street near the railway line. We didn't slaughter in Julia Creek; all the slaughtering was done in Richmond and the meat was sent over by rail. It'd come in bulk and George'd have to cut it up. They had two slaughtermen in Richmond and a rouseabout, but only one man helped out in Julia Creek.

When George got sick, when he got typhoid fever during the war, I used to go to the shop and open up; and, golly me, I was cutting rumps and rolling roasts with the best of them. I had to. It was during the war years and there was no manpower. Even the barber joined up – there was no barber in Julia Creek – and when people found out I cut my husband's and boys' hair, they'd roll up to get their hair cut. I did it all voluntary, y'know. Sort of war effort.

We were in Julia Creek all through the war. It was a good business. The customers used to come, and we did well. We'd make up orders and send meat further along the line towards Cloncurry, to all the fettlers.

Charlie Byrne had his butcher shop around in the main street. Old Charlie was a bit rough, y'know. He'd been there for quite a long time, but he didn't worry us. We still did well. We could have gone back to Richmond if it wasn't paying. There was no reason for us to stay in Julia Creek.

After the war, George's father passed away. He'd been running the Richmond business, so we sold up and went back and managed the Richmond shop. 1948 we left. We were in Julia Creek a bit more than 10 years.

I liked Julia Creek. It was a lively little town. Better than Richmond. It was a newer town and we got to know people. My husband played the drums in a dance band and we used to go to all the balls: out to McKinlay, Kynuna, Nelia. Frank Norton played violin; Ardie Smith, he played a sax; a lady, Mary McMillan, played the piano; and George, the drums. George was very well-liked. He was a good man, my late husband.

When did he die? Now, see, I've got to stop and think about that. When we left the west we bought a property this side of Gladstone. He got very sick there and he had a cerebral haemorrhage in...

ah... nineteen...

nineteen fifty-nine.



Top: Jean at the Nelia races.
"To George with Love, Goody."
[Jean Jaques, JJ02, ca 1936]

Left: George Jaques.
[Jean Jaques, JJ01, ca 1930]



whilst Mr. Col Leonard made a very efficient emcee.

Carpenters are busy with alterations and additions to Mrs. Horton's shop, recently occupied by the Queensland National Bank Ltd, which will now be leased to Mr. George Jaques as a butcher shop and freezing works. Mr. Jaques, of Richmond, has decided to open a branch of his butchering business in Julia Creek and will commence operations about the 1st of August. The public will be well-catered for with this new shop and the existing butchering business of Mr. Charlie Byrne.

Quite a number of McKinlay folk are...

NQR: 15 Jun 1935

Quite a number of McKinlay folk arrived to attend the popular Taylor-Parsons wedding on Easter Monday.

Mr. George Jaques returned from his father's funeral in Richmond to attend to his butchering business. Owing to the death of his father, he intends closing the Julia Creek branch. To Mr. and Mrs. Jaques and family, many friends extend their sincere sympathy in their great bereavement.

CA: 9 Apr 1948

Below: Jenny, taken in Brisbane during August school holidays.
[Rita Byrne, FR41, 1942]

Opposite: Charlie Byrne's butcher shop, Burke St.
[Rita Byrne, FR06, Sunday, 21 May 1939]

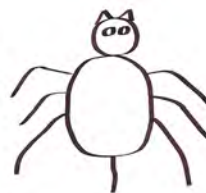


Byrne Family

- ↔ CHARLES ♥ MARY
 - ↔ Lucy ♥ Tom Foster
 - ↔ Lawrence (*Bosie*)
 - ↔ Athol (*Irish, Paddy*)
 - ↔ Jenny ♥ Marty Morris
 - ↔ Rita ♥ Frank Forde
 - ↔ Stewart (*Boydie*)
 - ↔ Joan
 - ↔ Gregory
- ↔ MICHAEL
- ↔ JIM
- ↔ PATRICK
 - ↔ Moran
 - ↔ Frank
 - ↔ Kath ♥ Terry O'Neill
 - ↔ Pat ♥ Doris Tunny
- ↔ RICHARD

Jenny Byrne

Died 25 Apr 2007



Or Was It Six Legs?

Wog parties: the weekly highlight for a 1950s Julia Creek housewife

MY PARENTS, Charles and Mary Byrne, had a butcher shop in Julia Creek. My father was one of five Byrne brothers who came from New South Wales to Julia Creek in the early days. They put him in the butcher shop because he had the head for the diesel engine that ran the freezing room.

Charles, Mick, Jim, Patrick and Richard Byrne – they came from Narrabri in 1912 or 1913, I'm not sure which. That Byrne St in Julia Creek was named for Uncle Mick because he was on the council. Their father sent the five of them up – all the boys – after the railway line went through and the land was starting to open up. Dad and Patrick went back to New South Wales to join the army for the 1914 war, and that's when they got married. I think they both went overseas. I know Dad did anyway. He was at the Somme and Passchendaele and every-bloody-where.

sary crossing on Gilliat road alone.

Outward correspondence. In reply to Mr. Charlie Byrne, clerk to inform him that there are no objections in issuing a slaughter licence and that Council has approved his application for a slaughter-yard site. To Mr. A. T. Powne, re increased rates and high council expenditure, clerk to mention that rates are only two and a half times greater than 1910, and that last year £531 was spent in salaries for clerk and superintendent amounting to 10% of council spending as against 18% in 1910. Carried.

Mr. G. Emblen has been appointed as

NQR: 27 Sep 1920

The war gave Mum a four-year break from having babies. Lucy was the oldest. She was born and then Dad went to war. When he came back Dad made up for lost time and Mum had five of us in five and a half years: Bosie, Paddy, Jenny, Rita, Boydie. Then there was a gap until Joan in 1929. The last born was Gregory John in 1932. He died at 13; that red and white corpuscle thing, leukaemia. He died in Julia Creek and is buried there.

The Byrne brothers built the first butcher shop in Julia Creek. I'm not sure when, but I'd guess the 1920s. It'd be Dad who was most responsible. We lived in Burke St in the house next door to the butcher shop. There is still a butcher in the same spot. It's only in the last 10 years that more concrete has been added to the original slab that Dad put in place.



I WAS BORN BACK IN FEBRUARY 1923 in Hughenden. I'll be 79... hang on, I am 79... I'll be 80 next February, and in that lifetime I've spent only five years out of Julia Creek or the McKinlay shire. Seventy-four years I was in the district. I'm the last one left in my family.

There was no church, hospital, doctor, priest, midwife – no nothing in Julia Creek when Mum was pregnant with me. So in 1923 she went to Hughenden to give birth to a bouncing 10-pounder. Back to Julia Creek we went. A fellow who worked for Dad in the butcher shop, the fella who gave us all our nicknames, he said to Mum, after three babies in three years:

And whaddaya gonna call this one?

She's Agatha Mary.

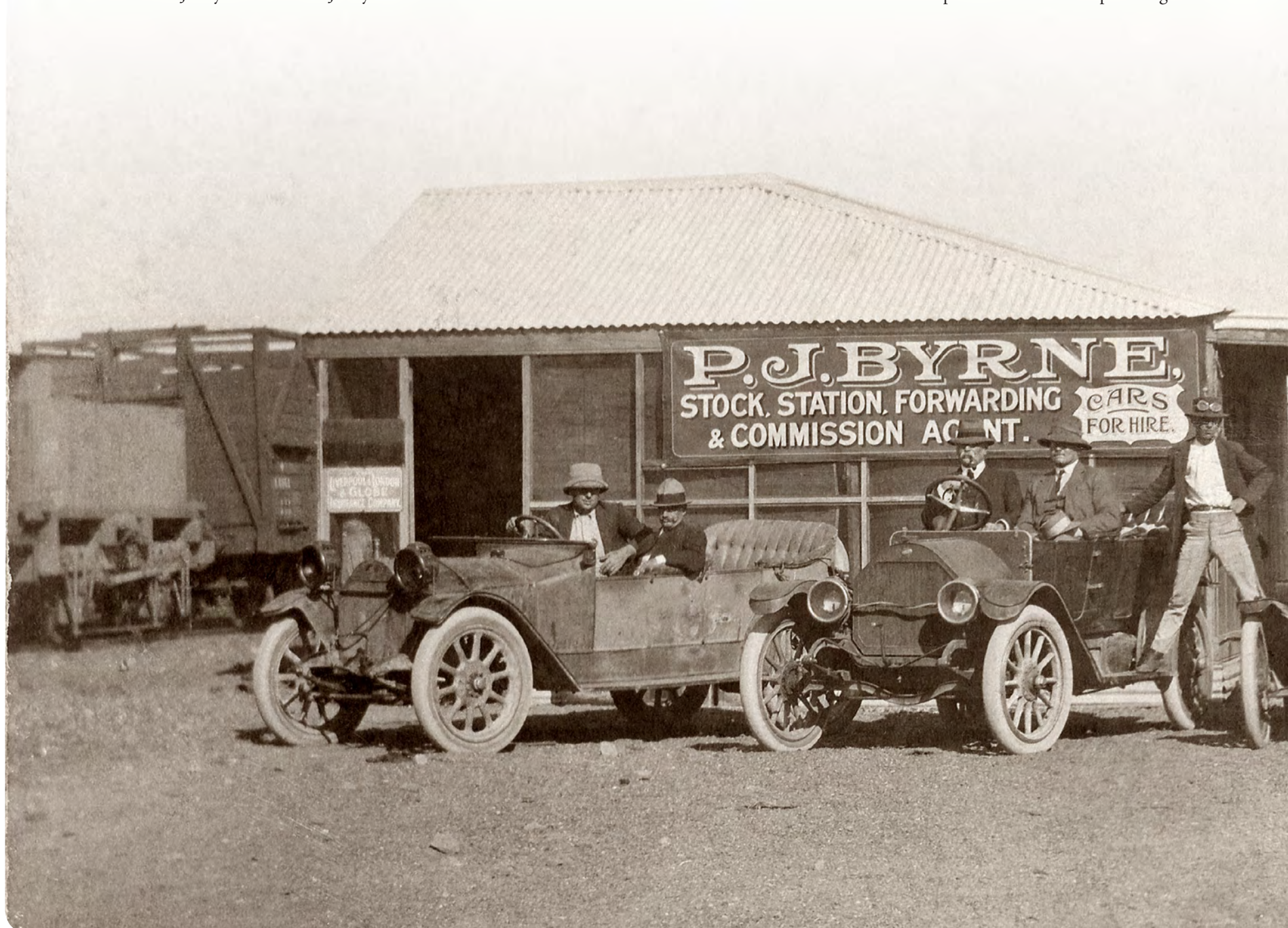
Ah, she's too pretty for that. I'm going to call her Jenny.

So he called me Jenny and I've been Jenny ever since.

Mum was a bush nurse. There were always callers at our place for body parts to be fixed up and splinters to be got out. Before she got married she was a governess and she had to be able to do just about everything. Later on there was a real bush nurse in Julia Creek, but in my early recollection it was Mum who fixed up everybody's boils and cuts and worms.

One thing I remember about our family life – there were so many kids we didn't have fancy hankies. Mum would tear the decent-looking pieces out of old sheets and cut them to hankie size for us kids to use in winter.

I'll never forget the day Mum burnt her leg. A teacher came to me in school and said I had to go home and give my mother a hand. She'd had an accident. It happened like this: Mum needed a bucket for boiling water and she had to make one herself. Nobody was ever around when she wanted something done, even though there were half a dozen kids in the house. So she made a bucket out of a kerosene tin; a four-gallon kerosene tin cut down to about half size with the top folded over – to stop the edge



cutting her – and a wire handle through a hole in each side. You didn't throw anything away in those days. At least we didn't. We never had anything we could afford to throw away. Anyway, she was lifting this homemade bucket off the stove – boiling – and the handle tore through the metal. Maybe when she made the thing she didn't fold the top edge over enough times. I didn't see the accident happen but I saw the leg. Never forget the leg. The boiling water went down her leg and into her shoe. She was on crutches for a long time. I might have been 6 I suppose, maybe 7. I was old enough to wash up; but you didn't have to be very old before you had to wash up.

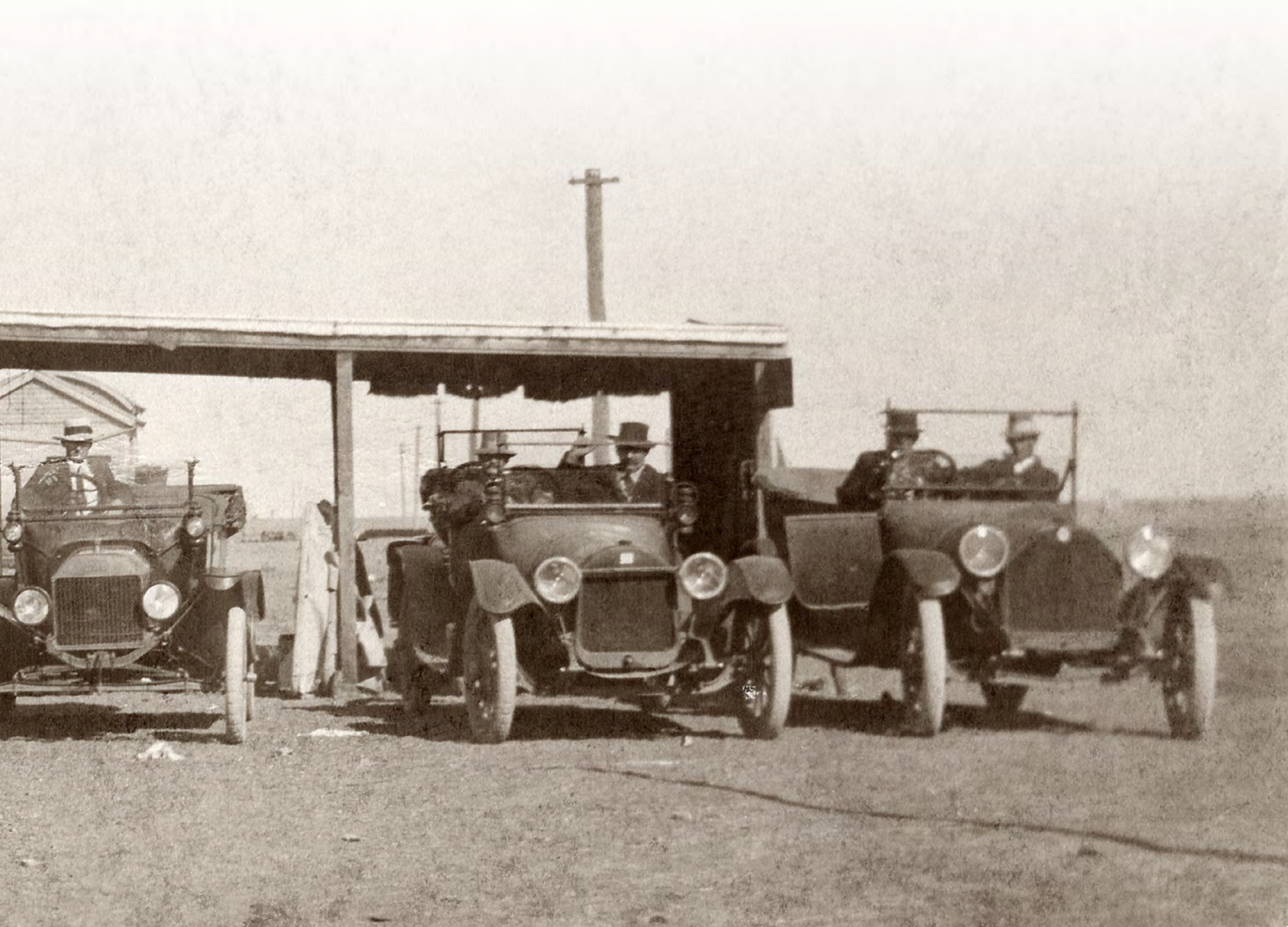
The accident didn't stop her working. With all us kids she couldn't afford to be incapacitated. And it didn't stop her playing the piano. She played the piano rather



wonderfully and the accident never affected that. Every time I heard Mum play, didn't matter what I was doing, I'd get to my feet and dance. Mum told me that from the time I could get to my feet, even as a toddler, I'd baby dance at the drop of a hat. I wore out a pair of those wooden-block toe shoes, dancing.

Left: Mary Byrne, Jenny's mother.
[Rita Byrne, FR42, ca 1945]

Below: Paddy Byrne's business at Julia Creek. Paddy was Jenny's uncle. The rail trucks at left indicate the office was near the railway line. Cars pictured are, from left: 1.? 2. 1912 Buick, 3. Model-T Ford, 4. Buick, 5. Hupmobile. Cars 3 and 4 have kerosene lanterns at both ends of the windscreen.
[Noel Peut, PN05, ca 1920]



Dancing and fundraisers go together in my memory. Every year in Julia Creek there were various fundraisers: the Catholic Ball, the Masonic Ball, the St Patricks Ball, Church of England Ball, somebody else's ball. That's how the churches got built in Julia Creek. Mrs Pedersen used to take us kids for dancing practice every afternoon. She was terrific organising us for the Church of England fundraising cabaret. She made all our costumes. About eight or ten kids were involved and we'd do two items for this fundraiser. Mrs Pedersen was really terrific – but she bellowed if we put a foot wrong when we were practising the steps.

One year at a fancy dress ball I remember my brother Paddy won a prize as a swagman. Mum fixed him up in a long pair of pants with patches, a blanket roll, and one of Dad's old hats.



Left: Alma Gannon and Jenny (right), in fancy dress.
[Alma Gannon, GA36, ca 1934]

Opposite: The Blue Bird Cafe where Jenny worked, next to the Post Office. Rita, her sister, is cleaning the window.

On either side of the word 'cafe' a drawing of a bluebird is just visible. See page 259 for more about this cafe, and for a similar photo taken the same day.

"K & F Byrne, Phone 7, Orange & Lemon Squashes, Peters Ice Cream & Family Bricks, Stationery, Confectionery."

[Rita Byrne, FR10, ca 1948]

JULIA CREEK NOTES

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

28th May, 1928

Monday night 7th instant was a gala night at the School of Arts when a Plain and Fancy Dress Ball for children was held under the auspices of the Church of England Ladies' Guild and a social committee of the R.C. Church. Mrs. Charlie Byrne attended to the musical arrangements and the lighting was by Mr. Lance Lewis. Special praise is due to Mrs. Pedersen for the way in which the children were taught the Grand March which was a spectacular event, the picturesque costumes showing to real advantage.

A feature of the evening was a new departure in the arrangements for the dancing: children from 7.30 p.m. to 11 p.m. (when they had to leave the floor) and the remainder of the night was left to the adults, much to their joy. It is hoped the innovation will become an established practice. The following is a list of prize winners together with description of their costumes:

Best boy: Joe Mathews – *Toreado*
Best girl: Kathleen Graham – *Golden Butterfly*
Best set: Bernie Fidler, Walter Fidler, Herb Wilder, Charles Lowe, Lucy Byrne, Edna Eckford, Biddy Wilder, Ivy Edwards – *Aboriginals*.

Special prizes:
Paddy Byrne – *Swaggie*
Helen & Jim Downey – *Masqueraders*
Albie Wilder – *Baker*
Harold Walters – *Footballer Joe Daley*.

Others in fancy costume were:
Jenny Byrne – *Goodnight*
Bosie Byrne – *Butcher*
Joffrette Casey – *Follies*
Clive Wilder – *Red Devil*
Coral Eckford – *Alladin*
Jim Eckford – *Oliver Twist*
Mannie Sills – *Aviator Hinkler*
Norm Downey – *Aviator Hinkler*
Rita Byrne – *The Sweetest Thing on Earth*.

I did my schooling at Julia Creek up to grade 7. A few years before I finished school I remember we had this Saturday afternoon thing. They might have had it before, but I wasn't old enough to go. When you were about to leave school you had to learn a few extra social graces. But I learnt all that at home anyway – I can tell you – from Mum. The Byrne kids never called any older person Dick or Thelma or anything else. It was always Miss, Mister or Mrs.

I finished school at the end of 1936. I wasn't working over Christmas, but some time not too much later I started at the Blue Bird, a little cafe in Burke St between the butcher shop and the Post Office. That's where I started work when I was 15. Bert Burrows, *Mr Burrows*, had it then. He was my boss. How I got the job I don't know. I didn't ask for it. Mr Burrows might have suggested to Mum, as a kindness, that I work for him because he knew it'd be extra money for our struggling family. I worked at the Blue Bird for about 12 months.

When I was 15 I started at the telephone exchange and stayed there till 1944. Julia Creek was pretty quiet during the war years, all the young people had joined up. There wasn't much entertainment, though I do remember spending a lot of time at the new skating rink in Eckford's open-air theatre. I just about lived there. Eckfords used to have skating competitions. There'd be a cup for ladies, gents, girls, boys, and two for the couple – six cups in all. One time the Byrne family got four of them: Bosie got it for the mens, Joan got it for the girls, and Bosie and I got it for the couple¹.

In August 1944 I was seriously thinking of going to Brisbane and helping out in the war effort. The only ones left at home with Mum and Dad were me and the two younger ones. Paddy and Bosie were in the army, Boydie was in the air force, Rita was in the Women's Army Service (AWAS) and Lucy was working at the Central Trunk Line Exchange in Brisbane.

so roll up and make a good day of the Diggers Races.

The Younger Set held a happy farewell party at the home of their supervisor, Mrs. Fairbanks, in honour of one of their popular members, Miss Jenny Byrne, prior to her departure to Brisbane. Dancing, singing and games took up the evening.

Mrs. Fairbanks said it was with regret that all were gathered together to say farewell to Jenny who was on the postal staff for many years and always gave the public the best service. As well as being a good worker for the Younger Set, she will be greatly missed at concerts as she sings very sweetly and is a good dancer.

Many other speeches were made and all spoke in glowing terms of their young friend. The singing of *She's a Jolly Good Fellow* brought the happy party to a close. When this young lady leaves for Brisbane she takes with her the best wishes from her many friends in Julia Creek.

At the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lance Lewis a very cheery card party was held. Music and games took up

CA: 18 Aug 1944



1. See photo page 415 for some of the Byrne family at the skating rink.

a large field. So don't miss out. Be at the Gilliat races on 28th June.

Miss Kath and Frank Byrne have sold their Blue Bird Cafe business to the Misses Lucy, Jenny, Rita and Joan Byrne. The business will change hands on 30th June and we wish the Byrne sisters the best of luck in their new venture.

Don't forget the Grand Masonic Ball in Eckford's Hall 25th July. Good music, good floor, excellent supper.

CA: 13 Jun 1947

Two properties in the Cloncurry River area have changed hands lately. The properties are Bellevue (adjoining Byrimine station) and Wallacooloobie, 56,000 acres, about five miles distant from Bellevue. The purchasers are the well-known Julia Creek sheepmen: Michael and Patrick Byrne.

Messrs Byrne Bros have recently purchased a 30 h.p. tractor and have already completed over 100 miles of fire break ploughing with the machine. This is the first tractor to be used in the district and the performance is being keenly watched. Complete satisfaction has been given so far in the work which has hitherto always been done by horse teams.

While leaving the railway station here, the driver of a lorry went too close to the bore head in order to avoid a wet patch on the road and was unfortunate in having his rear wheels sink axle deep in the soft ground. The lorry proved immovable and resisted all efforts to pull it out. Two lorries tried to tow it out backwards but failed. It was not until the tractor recently purchased by Byrne Bros was also requisitioned that it was extricated. The vehicle was so firmly embedded that the tractor snapped two wire ropes. The chain had to be doubled before it stood the strain and pulled the lorry out. This was a very good demonstration of the power that can be developed by a tractor of this class.

Mr. Charlie Byrne is having a new butcher shop erected in Burke Street, while the new Post Office, which occupies a corner next to the School of Arts, is three parts finished. Both these buildings are badly needed and will add greatly to the look and convenience of

NQR: 11 May 1925

Wallacooloobie (in the article above) changed name to Kalmata sometime around 1940. According to Dadie Dawes, someone asked Mick Byrne why he changed the name:

*Because I can't spell Wallacooloobie.
Well, how do you spell Kalmata?
Buggered if I know!*

A year or two earlier I said I was going to join the women's navy, but the postmaster, poor Mr Hough, talked me out of it in his croaky voice: "You don't want to go down there; I'll have to train someone else". Mr Hough had it bad with asthma, he was terrible. Harold Walters used to pick him up on his bike and double him to work and take him home. He couldn't even walk out of the Post Office yard, down a block and across a street to his house. Yet he did his job. Sitting down all day he did his job. He was a good postmaster.

So I said I'd stay. And I did – until August 1944. Lucy more or less talked me into going to Brisbane and working with her on the exchange. It was August school holidays and I just said: "Why not we all go?" It was a good time to go because Mum hadn't seen Rita or Lucy since they went away, and young Joan and Greg hadn't been out of Julia Creek except maybe Townsville on a couple of occasions when they were much younger. So I set off with Mum and Joan and Greg to start work in Brisbane at the exchange.

When the war finished Lucy and I went back to Julia Creek. Not straight away; not until July 1947. Bosie, Paddy, Boydie and Rita were already home and they thought it would be nice if we were there too.

Dad was still in the butcher shop, giving meat away. Dad gave away almost everything he could, y'know. Too much. Normie Downey will tell you. Normie told me once: "I can still hear my father saying if it hadn't been for Charlie Byrne and Bally Kaeser, some people would have gone terrible hungry in Julia Creek in the Depression". After the war, after I was home, Dad was still saying about customers: "If they want sixpence worth of bones for the dog, put a bit of liver in as well because they really want to make soup".

I returned to Julia Creek and I worked in the Blue Bird again, this time with my three sisters. Rita talked Lucy and Joan and I into buying the Blue Bird. I didn't like it and I didn't stay long because I married Marty Morris. Marty was mates with my brother in the army.

The year we married? I can't remember the year we were married. Hang on, I'll ask Marty:

When were we married?

Eh?

What *year* were we married?

Eh?

He wants to know the year we married.

I remember when I was bloody married. I'll never forget that. 1948.



See, I'm deaf, but Marty's deafer. I had lots of friends before Marty – none after. You get married, that's the end of friends, isn't it. No friends anymore.

We went to Mackay for two years, then out to Longford Station near Oorindi for another two years. Marty was manager. When I married him he didn't mention we'd be going bush. The rest of the time, until we moved to Townsville in 2002, we lived in Julia Creek or Nelia.

Back in Julia Creek I was available to be called on if the exchange wanted a telephonist when someone was on holidays or away sick. After I had the kids I was on the exchange till I was 60, till Julia Creek went automatic in September 1983. I was at the exchange on the last day when they had the finish-up gathering.



Opposite: Bogged truck near Julia Creek Railway Station as described in the NQR article dated 11 May 1925. It was pulled free by a tractor owned by Jenny's uncles, Mick and Paddy. The photo did not accompany the article; it appeared several weeks later.

[NQR, NQ608, 8/6/1925]



THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH used to run wog parties of an afternoon underneath the CWA cottage, the old bush nurse home. You went along and there'd be somebody on the door, somebody handing out the papers, and somebody doing the checking. You don't have fundraisers without somebody doing the work. They gave you a clean sheet of paper and a pencil and you had to draw a kind of bug. It had to look like an insect: an oval for the body, a round ring for the head, four legs... or was it six legs? Fancy forgetting how many legs... and two eyes, two ears and one tail. You had to throw a 6 on the dice before you could start drawing the body, and you had to throw the right number before you could put on anything else. From memory I think it was:

- 6 to draw the body;
- 4 to draw a leg;
- 5 for the tail;
- 3 for the head, before you could put on the ears and eyes;
- 2 for an ear, and a 1 for each eye.



You had to draw the body first – oval like an egg. I used to draw the body about an inch long. You had to throw a 6 to get a body. No good throwing a 3 and drawing a head all by itself because there was no body for it. You gotta throw that 6 first.

After you had a body then you needed 4's to get the six legs – didn't have to be in a row, just so long as you got a 4 for each leg – and a 5 for the tail. The tail had to come from the centre of the bottom of the egg, just half an inch long.

You couldn't draw the eyes and ears until you got a 3 for the head. It didn't matter how many 2's and 1's you got, they all went to nothing unless you had the head. The ears were triangles on the top of the head-shaped piece.

It was just a fun thing to fill in the afternoon and make a couple of quid for church. Once a week, Thursday afternoon I think it was, and whoever drew the most wogs for the afternoon, they won. We'd get there about 2 o'clock. It was great. All us women would meet and have a yap. Weren't too many men used to go. It was afternoon, see; the men would be at work.

Everybody sat around a table. There'd be... two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve... twelve on one side and twelve on the other. Never be any less than 20 I don't think. The woman organising it would say: "You four, you four, you four..." and if there were two left on the end, well, those two go between themselves. Usually we played in fours: two this side and two that side. That was the way everyone joined in. You didn't just sit there on your own throwing the dice to get the numbers.

Wog Parties

You had to be not-too-slow about it, throwing the dice, else you'd have less chance of winning. You kept the dice going round and round. I'd throw the dice and do something; then the lady next to me had her turn, and the two on the other side had theirs. It went around the table like that, just between those four.

Used to be finished by 5 because the women had to get home and get tea. The kids would probably be looking for getting home by then, too. It was a fun afternoon.

I doubt there'd be anybody left now in Julia Creek who'd remember wog parties.



Townsville on business.

Last week a very nice afternoon was spent at the C.W.A. Hostel in a game of wog. First prize went to Mrs. Marty Morris and the booby prize to Mrs. Horace Downey. Afternoon tea was served. Only one more afternoon at wog, then they go into recess until February.

A busy day was spent

NQR: 04 Dec 1954

'Mrs Marty Morris', the first prize winner, is Jenny.

I was the goat **Marty Morris**

I WAS BORN IN 1920. Dad was in the First World War in the Light Horse and he met Mum in England. She was a Land Army girl over there. They came back here and while they were on their way to Rolleston, near Emerald, I got born in Bundaberg. Dad was in Rolleston a good while and then we shifted to Springsure and I went to school there. That was during the Depression.

Dad was nine months out of work in the Depression and it was bloody awful, I tell ya. We had a heap of goats at the start of the Depression, but come the end there weren't too many left. That's more or less what we lived on: goat's milk, goat's meat, and bread and fat and treacle. Goats are how I got this scar here on my forehead. I was riding a billy one day and he threw me and I hit a rock. Don't worry, a big billy can throw you.

When I was a kid in Springsure I had a four-wheel cart with six goats harnessed to it. I used to go 2 mile to the railway station and pick up these carbide drums. They'd hold about 10 gallons, the big tall ones. I'd have three of them on this cart and six goats pulling. But then during the Depression I had three goats... two goats... one goat. Ended up with no goats. I was the goat. I was pulling the bloody cart myself in the end.

I didn't finish school. Dad used to take me droving to save money cos he wouldn't have to pay me. I'd be six weeks out of school and when I got back I'd cop it from the teachers for being behind, and cop it from the kids for being stupid. So I said to Mum:

Hooray.
Where ya goin'?
I don't know, but I'm goin'.

Fourteen I was. I put my swag on the horse and got a job straight away on a property. I was there about six and a half years until I left to join the army. A bloke in Springsure was recruiting and I went in to see him on the Wednesday and he asked me:

Whaddaya do?
I'm a ringer.
You're in a reserved industry. We don't want you.

So I went in again on the Saturday and saw a different fella:

Whaddaya do?
I'm a labourer.
Right, sign here.



I did my training – as much as it was, three months – at Redbank in Brisbane. I went to the Middle East and twice to New Guinea. I was at Morotai in New Guinea when the war finished.

In 1946 I got out and I went slaughtering with Paddy Byrne, Jen's brother, in Julia Creek. I'd met Paddy during the war. Nine months I was there, slaughtering for Charlie Byrne's butcher shop. Then I worked for Lance Lewis in his garage. The first time I went into the garage was 1947. Normie Downey was there. He was in spare parts and Maurie Byrne was the foreman. I remember my first job was to completely overhaul a Blitz: brake, engine, everything except the electrics. I usen't to do the generators or starter motors, Maurie did them. He was an A-grade mechanic.

I worked at the garage on and off for about 10 years in total, different times. I worked for Lance when he had it. Lance sold it to Harry Stainkey and I worked for him. Harry sold it to Frank and Maurie Byrne, and at one stage I was there with them. Then Daren Ginns bought it and I worked for him too.

AROUND ABOUT 1960 Eric Tuckett and Eric Slack-Smith came to the garage one day and asked me would I take on the Nelia mail: "I can't afford to, I got no money". They were having trouble with the bloke who was doing it, some wog. Eric Tuckett was so keen to get a new mailman that he loaned me 300 quid. I went to Nelia for a trial run with this wog bloke, and he was drinking gin, straight, all the way around. I could see why they wanted a new mailman. I went with this bloke a second time for another look at the run and he said to me:

You take-a da mail now?
No, I don't take over till next weekend.
You take-a today, I finish.

His truck didn't have any fuel in it. I went to see Ernie Brennan at the Nelia store for a drum of fuel, and although Ernie had known me for years he wouldn't give me any. So Bob Lord on Kilterry gave me a cheque for a drum of juice and that's how I started on the Nelia mail.

There was no such thing as hours on the mail run. At shearing time I'd be on the truck day and night carting bales of wool. The Post Office mail was every Sunday. I used to leave at 4 a.m. on the Bunda Bunda run, then I'd come in and go out the other way, south, out as far as Clarafield and come back past Yorkshire. First year I did both mails on my own. The next

Left: Marty's 'Commer Knockers' 8-ton truck used on the Nelia mail runs.
[Marty Morris, MM03, ca 1962]

Opposite: Postcard.
From right: Frank Byrne's garage (originally Lance Lewis); unidentified building behind pole (originally Bank of NSW); Peter Dawes Store; Australian Estates (tall brick building); Gannon's Hotel.
[Pat Malone, MP06, ca 1975]

year I paid a bloke named Stickling. He had the mail on the south side. When he left – he was only there about 12 months – I took them both over again. I tried to get permission to take one run on a Saturday and one on a Sunday; I could have done both myself then, easily, but old Joe Tunny was in the Post Office and he wouldn't let me. Old Joe, he was tough. If it rained he'd make you go anyhow. Even Mum Tunny (she ran the Post Office): "Yeah, ya gotta go". I'd go out and get bogged and be half a day freeing the truck.

I tendered every three years and I had to have guarantors. I had Eric Tuckett and Eric Slack-Smith on the north side, and two others on the south side. I asked Eric Tuckett one year:

You gonna be guarantor for the mail?
Yeah, I suppose so. Who was it last year?
You were – for the last three years.
Oh! Was I?

See the guarantors had to take the mail if I couldn't. Could have been a sticky sort of situation for a cocky if he was busy doing something else.

One part of it there, the mail wasn't making enough money. I wrote to the people on the run and told them next year I'd have to put the prices up. One of them said:

You're getting 3/6 a mile now. That's better than a taxi.
C'mon, you've never been in a bloomin' taxi out this way.

I don't rightly remember how long I was doing the mail. I got sick of it. The money was getting less because the graziers were changing to road transport for their wool. I used to take the bales into the railway at Nelia, but the railway was getting a bad name for a lot of things: slowness, price, disruption by strikes. Once I left, wool was sent by road straight to Brisbane.

After I gave up the Nelia mail I went to Julia Creek and worked around the place. One stage I went to the council. Now this is the council. I saw them about a job – this is on Wednesday – "You can start on Friday". So I went round first thing Friday and they're putting a fuel tank on a stand. The stand was ready. Old Bill Ryder, that's young Bill's uncle, he was there with a crane, this big tank hooked on. There's another bloke with a dozer and six or eight others helping. At 4 o'clock they were still putting it on. I thought: *Christ, I can't work here*. So I walked up the main street and saw Daren Ginns. He said to me:

Whaddaya doing?
Nothin'. I was gonna start on the council.
You wanna come back here?

I went back and I was seven years working for Ginnsy. I retired from there in 1985.

WE'VE LEFT JULIA CREEK NOW. Jen and I have to go back and pack up the house and sell it. That's all that's left for us to do in Julia Creek.



Burke Street, Julia Creek, W.Q.

Mavis McMahon

REMEMBER THAT INVOICE. It's my handwriting, except for the 'paid' note in the corner. My sister, Ethel, scribbled that. Your grandfather had paid £50 off his bill – and he told Ethel we were lucky to get it. Y'see, Max went bankrupt, and when he left Julia Creek he still owed us money. He never settled fully. I was the one who wrote out the invoices for our butcher shop, and that one wasn't fully paid. I had to send it to the bankruptcy people to prove how much was owing.

I remember Max quite well, apart from him not paying us. He spent a lot of time at the golf club and he had a lot to do with putting in the course: the fairways, the hazards and the sand bunkers. The few times I played golf, if I had a good game I thought: *Max has done a fine job here*. But when I didn't play well, which was fairly often, then I used to think: *Why did they ever get Max Burns to do this?*

We entertained royalty at the golf club once: Princess Alice (the Queen's auntie), and the Governor and his wife. The Civic Centre wasn't built then; the golf club was really the only place to hold official functions. At this luncheon Princess Alice heard that I'd been in the air force. She wanted to have a talk to me, but I just wanted to listen to her, being royalty. I was reluctant to say much because I didn't consider that I had done anything spectacular, really. Anyway, we had a good talk and she had quite a lot to say.

16 May 1959—Over three decades have passed since a Governor visited Julia Creek, and therefore the appearance of our present Governor, Sir Henry Able Smith, during the Queensland Centenary celebrations, was awaited with interest. The Governor was accompanied by Lady May, and H.R.H. Princess Alice.

A comprehensive programme made complete arrangements for the entertainment of the Vice Regal party during their visit of 24 hours. When the train pulled in, Councillor E. Netterfield tendered a welcome to Julia Creek and introduced the visitors to the councillors. Many residents and children were also present at the railway station.

The first item on the programme was a civic luncheon at the Golf Club where, prior to the luncheon taking place, two girls of tender age, Sally Anne Smith and Margaret Lord, presented sheaves of flowers to H.R.H. Princess Alice and Lady May.

During the afternoon the Governor visited the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. club house where he was met by Mr Mick Byrne (president) and introduced to the veterans of two world wars. In the meantime, H.R.H. Princess Alice and Lady May were entertained at afternoon tea in O'Neill's Hall by the president and members of the Q.C.W.A., over 70 members being present.

At 4 p.m. both parties combined and proceeded to the sports oval to view the parade of 50

children from St Joseph's Convent and the state schools of Julia Creek, Kynuna, McKinlay and Nelia. Three young pupils on correspondence also appeared in the parade. Misses Lynette Fels and Maureen Downey, representing the school children, presented sheaves of flowers to Princess Alice and Lady May. The Governor said that he was pleased to be present on this occasion, and that Queensland was well-known to the Royal family – for on the dais was Princess Alice, granddaughter of Queen Victoria after whom Queensland was named.

At night, a buffet dinner attended by 200 guests was arranged at the Golf Club. Later they proceeded to O'Neill's Hall for a ball. The Governor was on the floor for one dance, his partner being Mrs Macklan.

On Wednesday morning the Governor and Lady May visited the hospital where they were welcomed by Dr Pegg and Matron Crowley, while Princess Alice made a tour of inspection of Julia Creek on foot and was delighted with some of the gardens.

The train for Cloncurry moved out at 1.30 p.m. and farewells were waved by the councillors, residents and school children.

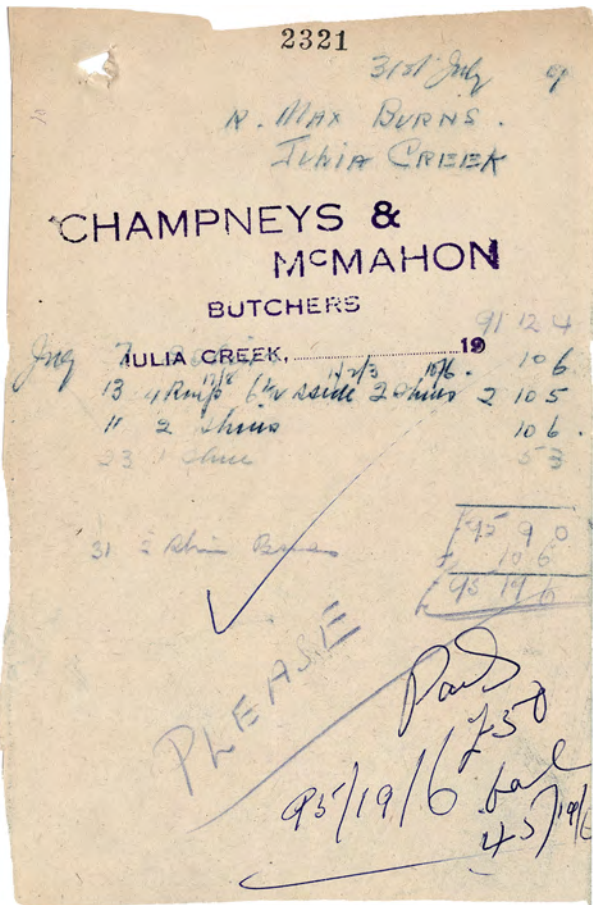
The visit will long be referred to in Julia Creek and district. The British gift of establishing friendships will ring a bell in the memory of all. Without any doubt, the Vice Regal party slipped inside the life of this small township.

Please

A struggling butcher pleads with Max Burns for payment

Below: Carbon copy of invoice sent to the Official Receiver as proof of Max's debt. Max left Julia Creek owing Mavis £45/19/6. It may not appear much money, but in 1959 it was equivalent to three weeks' basic wage. The invoice reads:

		31st July 1959		
		Mr Max Burns		
		Julia Creek		
[Brought forward]		£91	12	4
July	7	2 shins	10	6
	13	4 rump (17/8)		
		6½ silver side (1/2/3)		
		2 shins (10/6)	2	10 5
	11	2 shins	10	6
	23	1 shin	5	3
	31	2 shin bones	10	6
		£95	19	6
Paid:		£50	0	0
Balance:		£45	19	6



I WAS BORN OUT FROM BARCADDINE on a property my parents managed. My father was buying and selling stock. We weren't there very long. Heading up towards the Depression we went to another property called Hulton, between Longreach and Barcaldine.

On my tenth birthday I went to Bethel Downs, just outside Nonda on the Flinders River, to live with an uncle and aunt as company for their daughter. In my family I was one of nine children and I was in the middle, so I suppose I could be spared. Apart from visits to Hulton to see my family, I stayed on Bethel about 10 years.

In 1941 the government decided to allow women into the services and I elected to join. I went to Brisbane for all these tests, including a medical test and what they called a trade test, and then I went back home to Hulton and waited for the call up. It came by telegram: "Services urgently required". I thought: *I'm off to win the war.*

I left by train, travelled to Brisbane, and was told that I was being sent to Melbourne to do my rookies. I did my rookies and was posted back to Brisbane, stationed at Newfarm. Every couple of weeks there were calls for volunteers to go overseas. I put my name in, but they really were wanting nurses and I wasn't a trained nurse. I got posted to Toowoomba and stayed there till I was discharged.

I met my husband, John McMahon, when he came back from the Middle East during the war. He was in the army. We got married at Bethel in 1947. Not long after that, Charlie Byrne's butcher shop in Julia Creek came on the market. John and I went in as partners with Lionel Wall, and at the beginning of 1949 we moved to Julia Creek. Four years later, Roy and Ethel Champneys came into the picture when Lionel sold out. Ethel was my sister. She was the oldest in the family. We formed our partnership in 1952 and it lasted 10 years.

When we moved to Julia Creek there was no electricity, and in the early evening you'd hear the putt-putting of diesel generators starting up for lighting. No electricity meant that our cold room was powered by generator, and because of the inconvenience of regularly checking on it at the butcher shop, John preferred to be close by. So we built a little cottage beside the shop. It may have been convenient, but it wasn't a good idea. People came after hours wanting meat. We seemed always to be on call.

Our slaughter yards were a mile and a half north of town. We had access to an area of land close by, about 3000 acres I think it was, and we were able to carry a few stock: sheep, cattle, even carried a few pigs.

We were the only butcher in town. Didn't need any more: the drovers were competition enough. Julia Creek was a great trucking centre for cattle, and some of the townspeople – I suppose you couldn't blame them – they'd go out and buy meat from the droving camps. That affected our turnover a bit. We had price fixing too, for quite a while, a hangover from the war years, which made it hard to slice a margin of profit from a carcass. We couldn't sell meat above what the authorities said we could sell it for. Very hard really.

Butchering, by any means, wasn't as well-paid as we would have liked. We put the business on the market in 1962. John felt tired due to a genuine desire to be involved in the local community, and because of the lengthy hours involved in the business – not to mention the energy-sapping effect of the heat. We sold to Ard and Glad Cooney in 1962.

I was sorry to leave behind the friends I'd made.

One other thing I remember about Julia Creek – there wasn't a dentist. Adult teeth seemed to look after themselves, but the teeth of children were affected by the bore water; it put a stain across them. You could tell if children came from Julia Creek because of the stain. My daughter's teeth had the stain and it was very costly to remove. I sent her to a good dentist in Brisbane.



Right: The new (in 1952) Champneys & McMahon butcher shop in Burke St, replacing the one built by Charlie Byrne.

[Trevor Stainkey, ST40, ca 1955]

Mr. John McMahon has purchased the butcher shop owned by Mr. Charlie Byrne. Mr. McMahon will take over the business next week.

The dentist is visiting Julia Creek and is kept very busy.

CA: 11 Mar 1949

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

It has been a very wet week and everybody has had enough of it. There is mud everywhere and this has made the usual duties irksome. The butchers, Lionel Wall and John McMahon, have worked extra hard to get the necessary meat from the killing yards, the road to which is only accessible by way of tractor.

A very long term resident of Julia Creek, Mrs. Graham, passed away at

NQR: 25 Mar 1950

Jim will assist his sisters at the picture show and cordial factory.

Ever since the roof blew off the butcher shop, Julia Creek has been without meat, and will be without for some time as the shop is being pulled down and rebuilt. It will mean at least several meatless weeks for the town.

Matron Blanch has arrived home and will spend a fortnight's holiday with her parents. Mr and Mrs Bill Blanch

CA: 14 Mar 1952





Left: Olivia & Bill Gannon.
[Alma Gannon, GA21, ca 1950]

Opposite: "That's a good photo, isn't it. Olive (left) and me. We used to sit on the casks alongside the hotel to get our photo taken. When you came down the back verandah of the hotel the casks were near the garage." (Alma)

On back of photo: "With love from Alma, Olive and the barrels".
[Alma Gannon, GA02, ca 1946]

WE'D COME HOME to Julia Creek on leave during the war and stop at Gannon's. Nothing to pay, wouldn't take any money off you.

Mr and Mrs Gannon would send Christmas cakes and canteen orders to us boys overseas. A canteen order was a slip of paper that allowed you to get what you wanted from the canteen. They used to send parcels too. They were terrific people.

ERNIE HILL

MY SISTER, KATH, worked for the Gannons at the little hotel in the main street. They were good people. Y'know, I can tell you this about the Gannons – every soldier woman who joined up from Julia Creek, every Christmas we got a Christmas package, a comfort parcel. Old Bill Gannon and Mrs Gannon sent us a parcel.

My husband reckoned that the enlisted boys (they never had any money; got five bob a day sort of thing), he reckoned they never went back to their units from leave in Julia Creek without Bill Gannon gave them something. He was a marvellous person. But he used to look over the top of his glasses if you weren't 21: "Get home! Don't come near here".

LIL GERAHTY

IF ANYONE tells you that Bill Gannon wouldn't serve you under 21, that's bullshit. Many a time I had a drink in Gannon's. He'd serve anyone. As long as you had the money Bill took it off you. I wasn't 21 for a long time after I had my first beer.

I tell you what... y'know the front of the hotel? Back from there were his quarters and it had wooden louvres. You could go along and knock on the louvres any time of the day or night, bar 7 o'clock, and he'd sell you beer in big bottles. But 7 o'clock, well, that was the time to listen to the news.

ALBIE WILDER

BILL GANNON used to ring a bell in the morning and give the old derros a drink of rum. The "dawn patrol" they called it. I suppose they'd spent most of their money at the pub over the years, so he gave them a free one in the morning. I can recall that real clear at Julia Creek with Bill Gannon. That was the go out there, all right. Wouldn't be now, of course.

EROL DAVIS

You'd Better Come and Get It

Alma Gannon

Bill Gannon, ex-policeman and hotel proprietor,
arrives in Julia Creek with his family

TRAINS CAME THROUGH JULIA CREEK during the war, taking troops and munitions to Cloncurry and on to Darwin. They couldn't feed the troops on-board, so what they used to do was have a meal time at a certain spot. One such spot was Julia Creek. The catering was done in the railway yards.

Dad was told to shut the pub when the troops came in. At first he had to shut only for the Negro trains – they ran separate trains for them sometimes – but eventually the hotel had to shut for all troops, black and white.

On the footpath outside the bar, Dad kept empty casks. Next to

the bar was the spirit room, and next to that was our private lounge. At both ends of the lounge were wooden louvres. After the Negro troops finished their meal, the first thing they'd do was come over to both pubs, and when they found nothing doing they'd just sit on the casks. I'd be on the bed near the louvres, my eyes close up, and the louvres open only so-much. They couldn't see me, but I could see them. I've never heard such musical rhythm. They'd start: one fellow would sit on a cask and he'd thump the side and work up a tempo; another fellow would be on another cask; and another would join in and do a shoe shuffle. The rhythm those fellows had was terrific. But Dad kept coming in and checking that I didn't have the louvres open.



I WAS BORN IN CLONCURRY and my mother and father had the Gilliat Hotel at the time. They weren't in the hotel long. I don't know when they went to Gilliat, but I know when they left: I was one year old when I went to Julia Creek in 1925.

Dad had the lease on the Julia Creek Hotel when we first arrived in town, the one on the corner near the railway station. He ran that until he had his own hotel built in 1929; not the small hotel that's still in the main street, but a double-storey hotel in the front street. I'm not too sure, but I think it was a fellow by the name of Hammond who built it. Dad had that hotel up till 1932 when it burnt down.

BILL GANNON was one of the publicans in Julia Creek. His was the up-market pub; all the graziers stayed at Gannon's.

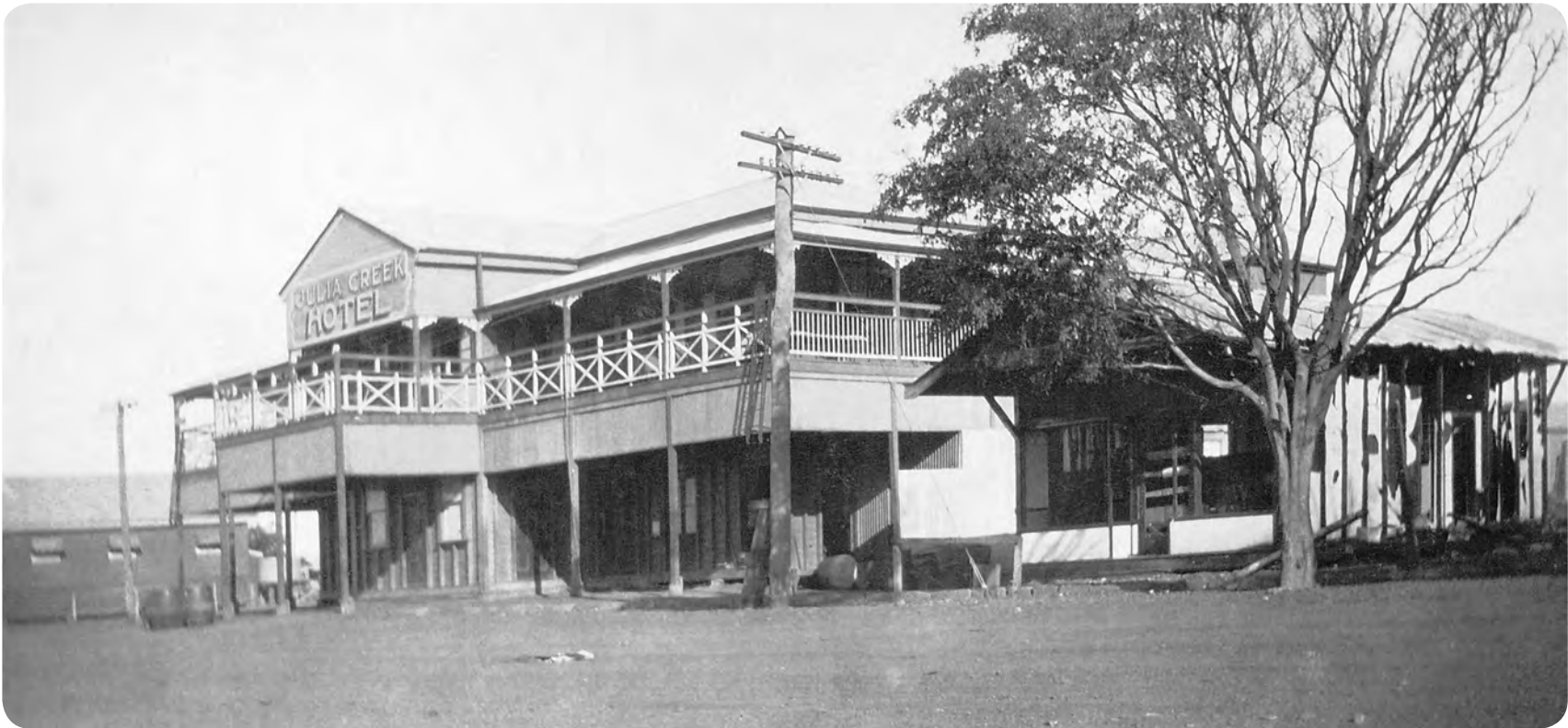
Like everybody else in business, he was there to make money and he was quite happy to sell us young fellas a beer. You tried to be a little bit discreet about it. If you went in under-age (21 was drinking age then), you got down the corner out of the way.

I remember going into Gannon's, under-age, and having a drink. Bill knew who I was and how old I was. As long as I didn't make a nuisance of myself – drank my beer, caused no trouble, didn't speak unless I was spoken to – he was prepared to serve me, take my money.

HERB WILDER

Right: Alma
[Alma Gannon, GA37, ca 1938]

Below: Julia Creek Hotel as it would have looked when Bill Gannon leased it in the mid 1920s. Burnt down 1/1/1931. Photo taken from near railway station.
The unidentified building on the right was replaced a few years later with Roy O'Sullivan's buildings. On the left, partly cut off, is Samuel Allen's store, previously run by J.W. Sanphy.
[Dadie Dawes, DW14, ca 1929]



I WRITE ON THE BANK of the McKinlay River, 470 miles west of Townsville. I came 460 miles by rail and for the rest I have zig-zagged between five stations. At the hour I am awaiting telegrams.

I came down here by the river because it is quiet. The township of McKinlay is back there off the Diamantina channels. It is a treeless country and the landscape is now maize-coloured, the soil dry and cracking, and where it is stirred on the roads it is crumbly. Soon it will be dusty. There is dryness everywhere, save in the narrow water channel in front of where I sit.

I can hear crows cawing incessantly. Nearer the town, hundreds of rose-breasted cockatoos¹ fly about in flocks, picking up dry seeds of grass. Earlier in the day a great flock of corellas, making half an acre of lovely white on the brown soil, led me out on the plain, and as I neared them they flew in a great cloud, with the morning sun glittering on their outspread wings as upon a mirror. Maybe 10,000 birds were there and I wished I had a camera, but somehow these pictures of western bird life never portray the glorious brilliancy, the sheen of the sun, and the loveliness that is observed in the living scene.

When I walked away from the town just now, there was a big mob of cattle passing over the downs at the back, and an old waggonette, the country vehicle of old times, came in to get rations at the store. The turnout was truly of the back country: the swags on top of the load tied securely; the tucker box at the back; some sticks of firewood in front of the high seat; a shovel and an axe stuck upright against the side rail to which were buckled many pairs of hobbles; and the billy cans and a bucket, one within the other, tied on the tail board beside the tucker box.

Mr Straighthair came over from the mob. He wore leggings of leather, and his long-necked, rowelled spurs tinkled on the boarded floor of the store. He enquired about tobacco and sauce. A hat sat jauntily on the back of his head, with his fair, dry hair, ill-controlled by comb or brush, beneath. His cotton shirt was open at the front, notwithstanding the chill of the morning, and his hands were rough and hard. When he had helped to stow the new-bought stores, he unhitched his horse, and with his bridle rein on his arm, accompanied the driver to the hotel.

There they met Mr Straighthair's friend who had come from some neighbouring place, and they foregathered jocularly. The friend, by way of cheerful greeting, cast reflection on the chastity of Mr Straighthair's mother, and swept his hand as if to tip his hat off. But Mr Straighthair ducked lithely and was beyond reach. Laughing, they breasted the bar.

There are two hotels in McKinlay: Giles' Union Hotel, and the Federal Hotel (at which I stayed), kept by Mrs Burton, whose father, John Absolom, was a pioneer business man in these parts 40 years ago.

McKinlay is a dry, country town. I mean dry in rainfall and not in the prohibition sense. The earth is dry. The vegetation consists of parkinsonia acacias planted here and there, and in this good season

showing green. There is very little attempt made to enclose homes by either wire fence or pickets, and the rubbish heaps everywhere tell of a country that imports all foodstuffs, save meat, from some other part. Milk cans, butter tins, jam tins, and around the camps where drovers had rested, tins of expensive foodstuffs, including asparagus. "Try some of this 'ere asparrowgrass", says one drover.

Now that wool is looking up and solid, why not go in for a bit of town planning in well-to-do McKinlay?

I had a yarn with A.T. Powne, the storekeeper. He came out here as a lad when the rail terminus was at Homestead. He has prospered and was recently home to England on a trip. Whilst at McKinlay I also met the old-time warrior of the road, Williams the carrier, looking very well.

The business folk all seem prosperous. There are two stores, A.T. Powne's and A. Butters' (where Mr Straighthair got supplies), and there is a good saddler named Mackay. I had a chat with the constable in charge of the district, one Jensen, who is, and who needs to be, a capable man among stock. Recently there have been some cases that make interesting reading among sheep men, and these men have praise for this constable: a good-looking, quiet sort of chap who comes from about Maryborough.

McKinlay is 48 miles from Gilliat. A motor lorry runs between, carrying mails. Passengers fare is 30s, exactly 7½d per mile. I came through in the night, sitting on the front seat of the lorry, and it was very cold. All along the way, at the turnoff tracks to properties, there are little dove-cote mailboxes of galvanised iron on blocks 4 feet above the ground.

The driver, who is also the contractor for the mail service, is popular on the roads and I may describe him by quoting a man whom I once asked regarding another: "He's the obligingest cove I ever did see" – and so is this mailman.

All the needs of Gilliat are supplied by Mr Bill Gannon, storekeeper and publican, with whom I had a yarn and from whom I tried to buy some pet sheep. Most of these wayside business places are goldmines. Anyway, the Gilliat place was cleanly and well-kept.

I came on to Julia Creek the same night, some 20 miles by a cattle train. I stepped out of that and camped alongside a rail truck by the woodshed until I awoke with the sun shining. Then I adjusted my boots, shook the dust from my Pitlochry rug, removed the deadbeat appearance attached to my circumstances of the night, and crossed to the hotel in time for a kindly greeting and a cup of tea.

"Well, Mr Line, how's Prairie looking?" It is good to be known when you land in a strange place.

Julia Creek is a busy place, the centre of a fine sheep district, and very prosperous. Yet, years ago this country was not regarded as of much value. The ground was dry and terribly open and cracked. No one thought anything of it. Now and then you'd see a herd of Eddington or Dalgona cattle on these great plains, but never in any numbers. Nowadays however, the land is transformed and stocked with sheep. The

sheep trampled the soil, filled up the cracks, and sweet pasture grasses grew. Today it is a wealthy land.

Julia Creek mostly fronts the railway in a long street beginning and ending in the plain. The land is level – so level that the water from the flowing bore at the railway station just spreads out over the plain, not in any channel or going anywhere in particular, save where furrows have been made to conduct it. It is hot water, and the bath is warm and pleasant these cold mornings.

Looking from the balcony² – for the hotel has two storeys – you gaze away south or west and you see nothing but the grassy treeless plain away to the skyline. On the east, a few miles away, there are scattered trees on a watercourse, and beyond that the plain again.

The railway has a big elevated water tank and I am thinking the town is supplied from this. Beyond, over there half a mile, and among some garden trees, there is a homestead; and nearer the line a shearing shed where contract work is done by Mathews, who owns the homestead and the selection of 16,000 acres. In all directions around, the country is held in selections of 10-20,000 acres.

Julia Creek is a place of motor cars. I have seen only one horse team, and people look at this and regard it as something of a curiosity.

All the landscape is green. There was 7 inches of rain here in April. It is Mitchell and Flinders grass everywhere.

Alongside the railway station are the trucking yards and dip. This is the 'clear' line for cattle. All going south must be dipped here. This is all more or less farcical because the town cows go across the line and all about, and they could pick up ticks and carry them south. Ticks, however, are never very serious in downs country. It could only be by a combination of circumstances favourable to their life that ticks could be carried south from here.

The Julia Creek baker, who is named Kaeser, supplies all the railway towns, camps, stations and selections as far as Cloncurry by means of the railway, which carries his loaves to all needing them.

On my way home to Prairie from Julia Creek, past Nelia, Nonda and Maxwellton, the country is level and almost treeless, and may, once in 50 years, be under water.

By the way, on the railway it is 'up' to Julia Creek and 'down' to Hughenden, although from Nelia east to Hughenden the line follows the Flinders River upstream for 150 miles.

ALONG THE LINE (JR CHISHOLM)
North Queensland Register
16 June 1924

1. Galahs.

2. Along The Line was probably standing on the protruding balcony of the Julia Creek Hotel (opposite) when he described the scenery south of Julia Creek. His description tallies with the photo on page 307, though that photo was taken about 10 years later, and by then the Julia Creek Hotel had been burnt down and replaced.

17 June 1929—The new hotel is almost ready. It will be known as “Gannon’s Hotel” and has been built to the order of Mr Bill Gannon by Messrs Hammond and Sons, building contractors of Townsville, from plans prepared by Mr J.G. Rooney, architect, also of Townsville. Mr Gannon will open the hotel on the 19th inst and it is expected the wheels of the business will be working smoothly when the country comes to town for the annual race meeting.

Gannon’s Hotel faces the railway station and has a frontage of 137 feet. It is very modern in its conveniences and no point of comfort has been overlooked. On the upper floor there is a balcony all the way around, 10 feet wide in front and 9 feet

at the sides and back. The 23 bedrooms have electric light and water and are pleasantly furnished with silky-oak bedsteads, duchesses and wash stands. The six bathrooms have hot and cold water services for showers and plunges, and there are separate bathrooms and lavatory for casual visitors who are not boarders, such as travellers passing through. The lounge has a cane suite. The dining room is bright and spacious and is well-furnished. It has three large electric fans for the dog days. There is a modern island bar with two washers for glasses.

The local branch of the Queensland National Bank will have its offices in the building, and Mr Roy Hampton will have a hairdressing saloon

and billiard room there. The proprietor, with a foresight of wet seasons and black mud, has had the hotel yard well-gravelled.

The business pioneers of our township evidently did not dream that Julia Creek would ever arrive at its present point of development, as many of the business contraptions erected only a few years ago are already a blot on the town’s appearance and an encumbrance on valuable property.

It is pleasing to note that Mr Gannon has a vision of the future progress of the town.

I am confident that in 10 or 15 years’ time, Gannon’s Hotel will still be spoken of as one of the most comfortable and up-to-date hotels in the West.

Opposite: Alma in tub, on the balcony of Gannon’s first hotel.
“...the nursemaid put me in the tub to have my bath.”
[Alma Gannon, GA13, ca 1928]

Below: Gannon’s Hotel in Goldring St, opposite the railway station. Built with the studs exposed on the outside walls. Roy Hampton rented space at the right end of the building for his barber shop and billiard saloon. At the other end was the Queensland National Bank.

Above the barber shop is a ladder hanging from the balcony, a common feature of hotels of that era. It provided a means of escape from the top floor in the event of fire.

[Alma Gannon, GA10, ca 1930]





You can see three of the Gannon kids playing around the entrance to our first hotel. That'd be Billy standing outside the door, and Ivy and Olive. Ollie was born in 1916, Bill 1919, Ivy 1921, and I was 1924.

It was wonderful being the daughter of Bill Gannon, hotel owner. We lived upstairs. Ivy and myself had a nursemaid at the beginning, because Mum and Dad were very busy. My first memory is running around the verandah with nothing on. I was only about 3. The story was that the nursemaid put me in the tub to have my bath. I did something that she didn't like and she smacked me. I didn't take kindly to being smacked, so I got out of the tub with not a thing on and said: "You bugger!" and took off round the balcony till Mum heard the commotion and intervened.



On Thursday morning last, Gannon's Hotel went up in flames. At 3 a.m. residents of Julia Creek were awakened by a loud explosion and cries of "fire". Volunteers immediately secured the fire brigade reel and hoses. Despite working under tremendous difficulties, they eventually saved the kitchen, servant's quarters, all out-houses, O'Sullivan's new buildings, and Hudson's new Julia Creek Hotel. Little could be done for Gannon's Hotel itself as the flames had too great a hold.

At the eastern end of the hotel was a barber shop and billiard saloon and it was here the fire was first noticed. The saloon was unoccupied except for a billiard marker. At the opposite end of the building, in the sample room, the Queensland National Bank had a branch. Manager Don Stevenson was quickly on the scene and was successful in removing most of the valuable papers. The bank's books were locked in an iron safe and it is presumed these will be intact when the safe is opened.

Luckily for the town, only a light north wind was blowing. The railway yards and buildings on the south side of the hotel were at no time in any danger.

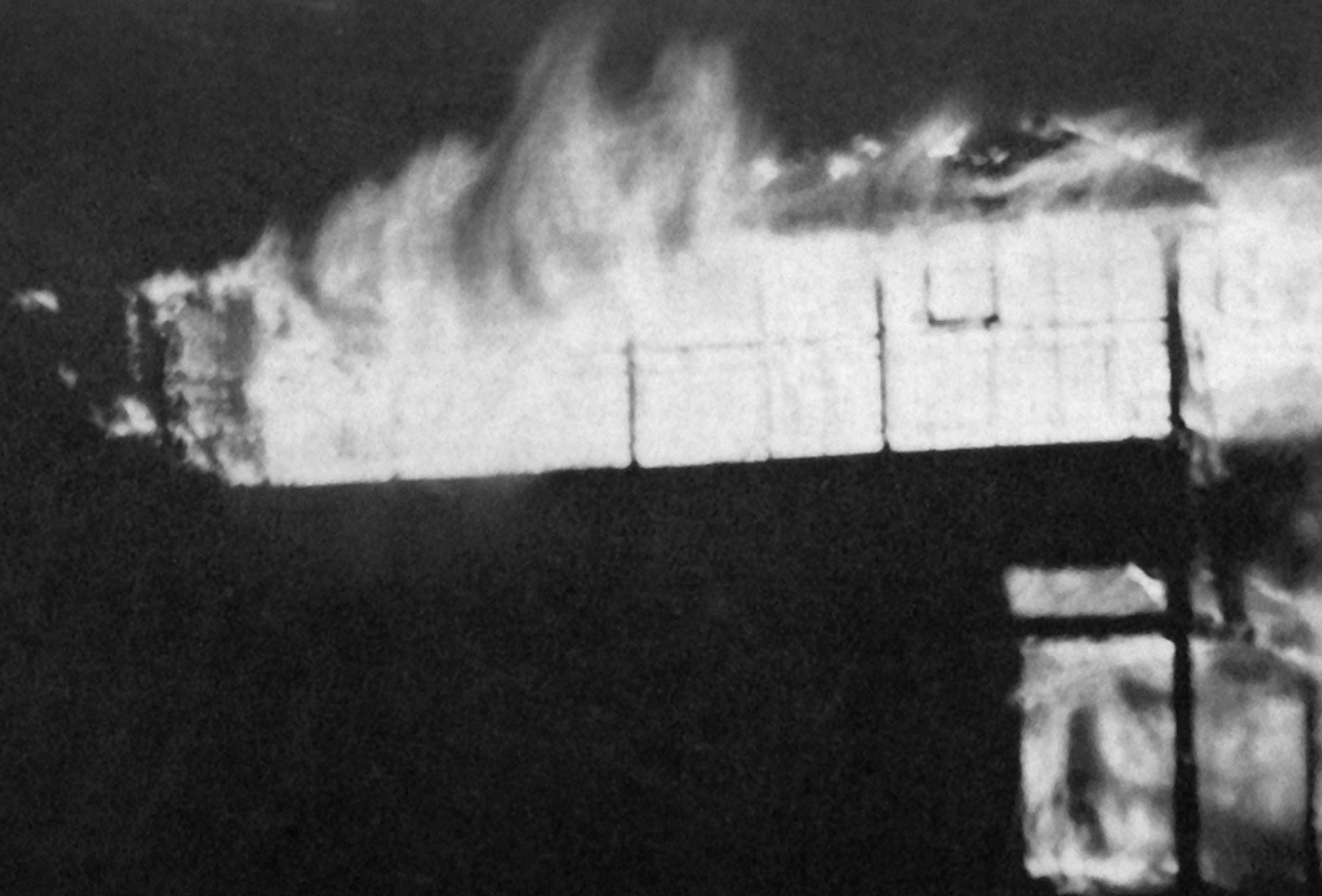
The hotel took quite a long time to burn and the boarders in most instances saved all their belongings. At the time of the fire the licensee, Mr. Bill Gannon, and his wife and family were visiting the south on a short holiday and were not expected home until the next Sunday. Miss May O'Donnell was in charge of the hotel.

The hotel was only erected and opened in July 1929 and was a splendid building, costing, we believe, in the vicinity of £12,000. It was considered one of the most up-to-date hotels in the North-West. The furnishings and fittings were comparable to any hotel in Brisbane and it seems a great pity that a hotel such as this should be destroyed by fire.

Particulars of the insurances are at present unknown owing to the absence of the licensee, but from information at hand it is evident the licensee will be a big loser.

Mr. Peter Dawes, Cloncurry barber and leviathan of the turf, who was burnt out in the Post Office Hotel fire in Cloncurry, was lucky he was not in another blaze. He had made arrangements to go down and take over the barber shop and billiard room and was only awaiting the return of Mr. Gannon before doing so.

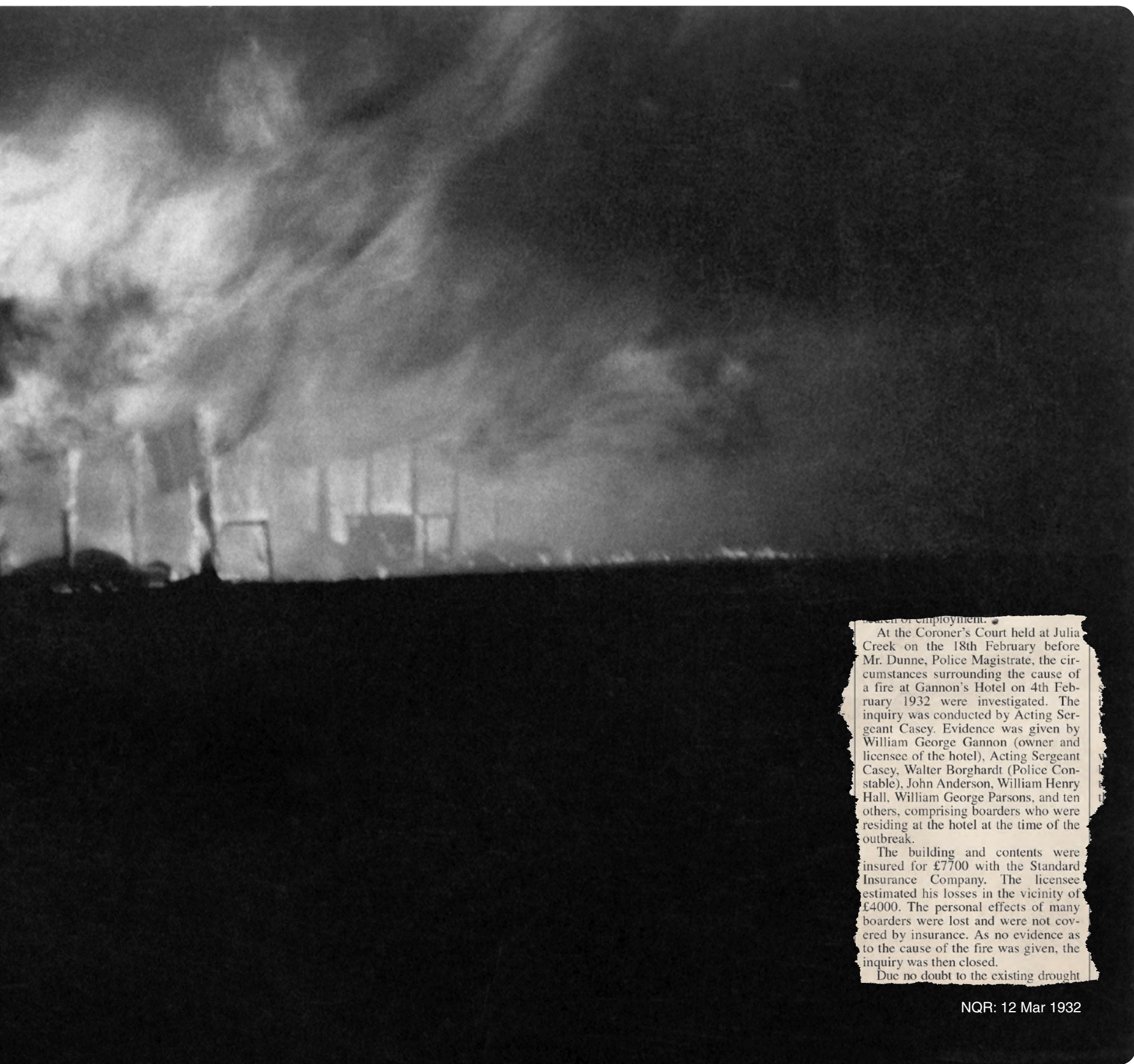
The origin of the fire is a complete mystery and so far no light can be thrown as to the cause of the loud



Above: Gannon's Hotel on fire, Goldring St, Thursday morning, 4th February 1932.

[Alma Gannon, GA06]

"That's a very good picture. I don't know who took it. We weren't in town. You can see the upstairs burning. The Queensland National Bank was in there too, downstairs. And I think there was somebody else renting office space, but I can't remember who." (Alma)



Search of Employment.

At the Coroner's Court held at Julia Creek on the 18th February before Mr. Dunne, Police Magistrate, the circumstances surrounding the cause of a fire at Gannon's Hotel on 4th February 1932 were investigated. The inquiry was conducted by Acting Sergeant Casey. Evidence was given by William George Gannon (owner and licensee of the hotel), Acting Sergeant Casey, Walter Borghardt (Police Constable), John Anderson, William Henry Hall, William George Parsons, and ten others, comprising boarders who were residing at the hotel at the time of the outbreak.

The building and contents were insured for £7700 with the Standard Insurance Company. The licensee estimated his losses in the vicinity of £4000. The personal effects of many boarders were lost and were not covered by insurance. As no evidence as to the cause of the fire was given, the inquiry was then closed.

Due no doubt to the existing drought

NQR: 12 Mar 1932

13 February 1932—It was my unpleasant duty last Thursday to report a brief outline of the fire which completely gutted Gannon's Hotel in the early hours of that morning. Travellers from near and far have at all times spoken in excellent terms of this fine hotel. As to the cause of the loud explosion which may have been the originator of the fire, we are at a loss. The feeling in general is that some person has ventilated a grievance. It is not yet known whether Mr Gannon intends rebuilding, but no doubt application for a temporary bar will be applied for in the meantime.

While on the unfortunate incident, it will be remembered that some time ago the council decided to form a volunteer fire brigade which was readily responded to by a number of energetic townsmen. A request was made to the council for the erection of

a fire alarm bell and other various necessities, but at the time the council advised they could not see their way clear to assist us in any way, the result being the brigade became disheartened and eventually was dissolved.

Having an unlimited supply of water at our command, I can state without fear of contradiction that had we had an alarm bell when the explosion took place – and the alarm given – Gannon's Hotel would have been standing today. Council, who could not see their way to outlay approximately £30, has lost three times this amount in lost rates.

I understand the business section of the town propose getting together to discuss the advisability of forming a new fire brigade, and at the same time asking the council to have an alarm bell erected in some suitable position. Other matters, such as more

equipment, will also receive attention.

As a result of the above fire, a safe, property of the Queensland National Bank, suffered damage. The day following the fire, the bank recommenced business in a vacant shop in O'Sullivan's buildings and the burnt safe was removed with much difficulty to the new premises.

On Sunday night an attempt was made to open the safe, but it was soon learnt that the job required the use of oxyacetylene plant. Mr Tommy Guest¹ was summonsed and it was fully five hours before the door was opened. Books were a little charred and several documents slightly scorched, but the notes and silver were intact.

A new safe has been received and business is again in full swing, although the officers of the bank are not altogether in their stride just at the moment.

1. Tommy Guest had a garage in Coyne St and later in Burke St (page 404).





That's the remains of our first hotel. The hotel's in the rubble. At the time of the fire we weren't in Julia Creek, we were in Brisbane on holidays. One of the workers was looking after the hotel.

On the far right you can see the girl's quarters. It wasn't burnt. Our whole family lived in that little place after the fire because we had nowhere else to go.

Below: The site of Gannon's Hotel in Goldring St, after the fire on 4 February 1932.

From left: Julia Creek Hotel,
Roy O'Sullivan's building,
Gannon's Hotel kitchen (with chimney),
wash house (behind and to the right of kitchen
with a small square window visible),
girl's quarters on far right (partly cut off).
[Alma Gannon, GA03, 1932]



The much discussed land sale was held at the Court House this morning when there was a very large attendance, among whom were noted many country residents. The sale commenced at 11 o'clock in the forenoon and the usual terms and conditions were explained to prospective buyers. Bidding started with one of the main blocks in the town, directly opposite the Post Office, and after much spirited bidding it was knocked down to Bill Gannon at £1760. Every allotment offered was knocked down far above the upset price with the exception of three which were sold at the upset price of £10. Following is the

NQR: 29 Mar 1930

THAT'S THE HOTEL STAFF, except for us Gannon kids in front: that's me, that's Ivy, that's Ollie. I think the one with the frizzy hair behind Ollie is May Sedatree. I think that was her name. She had beautiful hair. I can't bring any other names to mind except Darkie, the man standing near the post wearing a hat.

Our laundress must be there somewhere, Lindsay Stevenson. She married Jerry Francis, the cook. Jerry was with us for years. He used to hand out biscuits from the kitchen window to the kids who came around after school. Although the kids thought Jerry was doing it on the sly, Dad knew about the giving away of biscuits. He instigated it. There were kids in Julia Creek during the Depression who Dad felt mightn't be getting enough to eat, and Dad told Jerry that after school the kids could have a couple of biscuits.

JERRY FRANCIS at Gannons, he used to make beautiful biscuits, those big round ones. Alma Gannon would come back to school after midday meal with as many biscuits as she could hold in her hand and she'd pass them around.

The first Gannon's Hotel was built with a barber shop. A bloke named Tommy Ellen was the barber when we were kids. If you were taking messages or went to the barber shop and Jerry saw you walking past, you got a biscuit.

JENNY BYRNE

Below: Staff of first Gannon's Hotel.
From right: Alma, Ivy, Olive, May Sedatree.
Others are unidentified except for Darkie,
the man wearing a hat near the post.

[Alma Gannon, GA11, ca 1929]

Opposite: The new Gannon's Hotel.
Morris ute out front.
[Alma Gannon, GA12, late 1950s]

"That was our Morris. That's the one we used to go down the baker shop to get the bread in." (Alma)



I WENT TO JULIA CREEK STATE SCHOOL for seven years. You could only go to Scholarship. To do secondary education you had to go to either Townsville or Charters Towers, the nearest high schools for boarders. I went away to St Anne's in Townsville when I was about 12 and I went through to senior. The war was on when I finished.

I came home and worked in the hotel. We had staff, of course, but if we were short, well, I had to fill in. I did everything, including floor polishing. It wasn't easy because there was no such thing as electric hoovers. You got down on your knees and polished. Boss's daughter and all – I'd be down on my knees polishing the floor.

Father Devereux¹, the Catholic priest, he used to eat in our dining room and he was always in a hurry coming to breakfast. We had a mat at the front door and I used to polish underneath it. Father came bowling in one morning, put one foot on the mat, swung the other foot through the doorway, and the mat slipped from under him. He complained to Dad: "Bill, tell Alma not to polish under the mat" and Dad told me not to polish there. Suited me – less work.

Dad allowed all the ministers to eat at the hotel with no charge. The Anglicans, the Presbyterians and the Methodists, they only held services once a month, whereas the Catholics had a presbytery in town and Father Devereux came to the hotel for meals every day. He and Dad became very friendly. Dad wasn't a church goer, but when Father went out to visit the stations – he'd be out, say, a fortnight at a time – he'd come to the bar door before he left and he'd say:

I'm off Bill. You'll look after them, won't you?

She'll be right, Father.

Being my first notes since the festive season, I regret to report that the 1932 Christmas will go down in history as the quietest and most peaceful Christmas in this district for many years. A few wise residents of the district who had managed to save a little out of their year's income (the art of doing so I would like to study) ventured forth to the coast for a few week's rest, while those who remained had ample opportunities of studying the various antics of the weather.

A sports meeting was held on Boxing Day and was fairly well attended, considering the times. After the talkies on New Year's Eve, a dance in Eckford's Hall ushered in 1933 most solemnly and peacefully.

Quite a gloom was cast over the district on New Year's Day when it was learned that the infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Sneyd had passed away in the early hours of the morning at Matron Needham's Private Hospital. Much sympathy is extended to Mr. Sneyd, our town chemist, and his wife in their sad and sorrowful loss.

Gannon's new hotel on the Post Office corner is now completed and business is once again in full swing. The building is certainly an acquisition to the town and has completely filled up what used to be a big vacant gap in the heart of the town.

NQR: 14 Jan 1933



1. For other stories of Father Devereux, see page 638.

DON'T TALK ABOUT BOYFRIENDS. I had no boyfriends. Every other girl had one but I didn't. I had to make my own fun. Not that I minded. Everything that was on in town I went to. But Dad had one proviso – no loitering. He was very strict about that. I'd be at a dance in the School of Arts, diagonally across the road, and if I wasn't home in two minutes after *God Save the King* was played, Dad would be at the door of the hotel waiting. He could hear *God Save The King* from Eckford's picture theatre too. I was allowed five minutes to walk home from there. He liked us to have a good time – I went to all the dances – but he had very strict rules. It was just that Mum and Dad didn't have the time to supervise us like other mothers and fathers, because they were at the hotel all the time working.



Mr. and Mrs. W. Gannon, Julia Creek, with daughters Olive, Ivy, Alma and son, W. J. (Bill) of the A.I.F. missing since fall of Singapore.

When my brother was killed in the war – Bill died in Borneo – Mum became depressed. She wasn't well. Bill was a boy of the town. He'd more or less lived his whole life there. People would come into the hotel and commiserate with Mum, which was lovely of them, but it affected her. After a while Dad decided that we would go away. Too many memories. He leased the hotel for three years to Alex Dawes, the brother of Peter Dawes, and Mum and Dad moved to Brisbane. I went with them. In 1948, at the end of the lease, they went back to Julia Creek. They stayed a few more years and then left for good.

I only returned twice to Julia Creek from Brisbane. The first time to tell my parents I was getting married, and the second time to help them move.

15 September 1939—In the Summons Court¹ at Julia Creek, William George Gannon, Licensed Victualler, pleaded guilty to furnishing a false income tax return for the year ended 30th June 1938.

Mr Philp, Prosecutor, stated that the return for the year in question was prepared by the defendant from records kept by himself. This disclosed a net income from personal exertion of £1126, and from property £149, total £1275.

As a result of an investigation, it was found that defendant's income for the year amounted to personal exertion £3071 and from property £138, total £3209. The tax assessed on the figures submitted in the return was £114/4/4 but the defendant should have paid £516/12/7.

The Tax Commissioner was of the opinion that the defendant must have been aware that the return considerably understated the income earned, particularly as there was evidence of an under statement of income amounting to approximately £13,000 over a period of years.

Mr Vic Faithfull for the defendant, stated that defendant was not a bookkeeper and this had accounted for the understatement of income.

Mr Philp pressed for the maximum penalty. Defendant was fined £100 and ordered to pay 6/- costs. It was further adjudged that the defendant pay to the Commissioner of Taxation the sum of £600.

30 November 1945—Mr Bill Gannon has leased his hotel business for three years to Mr Alex Dawes from Cloncurry. Mr Dawes is no stranger to our

town having managed his brother's shop (Peter Dawes Store) in a very pleasing manner to all.

Mr Gannon, wife and family, intend leaving on Tuesday, the 4th December for Brisbane where they will in future reside. Many friends wish the Gannon family every success and happiness in their new home, and the best of luck to Mr and Mrs Dawes in their new venture.

24 February 1951—Miss Alma Gannon left for Brisbane by last night's mail train and will make preparations for her marriage to Mr Brian Maloney in that city on April 4th.

The local woolscour came into prominence last week when a parcel of wool scoured at the works sold for an Australasian record figure of 364d per lb. This wool came from Rosevale-Byramine, the property of Mr Richard Magoffin. The record breaking line was 6 bales of AAA.

Mr Max Burns has returned to Julia Creek after holidays spent in Brisbane and Sydney. Max reports having watched the American professional tennis troupe while in Brisbane and he saw the third cricket test played in Sydney. He returns to Brisbane again at the end of this week to do further business in connection with his large earthmoving plant.

27 December 1952—The weather for this week has been hot. There is no other way to express the condition. The temperature has topped 100 degrees every day and there has been much discontent. Stock owners would welcome good rains right now to set the

Mitchell grass, and to strengthen their flocks ready for the monsoon rains of January and February that will mire sheep not strong enough to cope with boggy downs. A short shower fell on Sunday, but there was nothing in it except an increase in humidity to add stickiness to our complaints.

The Government dentist arrives from Cloncurry on January 13 to carry out his duties at the hospital. He will be here until the 16th. This is an opportunity for townspeople to visit the dentist in a town where there is no dentist.

Mrs B. Maloney is on a visit to her parents (Mr and Mrs Gannon). Alma, as she is known universally here, has always been a favourite. The hellos came from all sides when she arrived. She returns to Brisbane mid-January with her parents who are leaving this town permanently. There is no necessity to state that the Gannons will be missed in Julia Creek. We will be sorry to see this family depart.

Mr Henry Benson, Ambulance Superintendent in Julia Creek for many years, returned to spend Christmas with his friends, the Gannon family. When Henry lived here it was a set invitation from the Gannons that 'Bennie' have Christmas dinner with them. After a severe illness he is back again for another Christmas. It was pleasing to see the happy greetings extended to Bennie from all sides when it was known he had returned. He was overwhelmed by his western friends ready to open their arms to him after his absence. We hope that he is greatly improved by his visit and feel sure that nothing but benefit can come of it.

1. A/44902, 13/9/1939, Qld State Archives.

WHEN SOME PEOPLE THINK OF JULIA CREEK they go: “Uhhh...” like that. My children for instance. But when I think of the Creek I remember a happy time in my life. I don’t recall any bad things about Julia Creek.

Now you know all my secrets, what else do you want to know? We’ll run through some of the photos if you like, and I’ll tell you about them.

The Department of Public Instruction train came out once a year for a week. We did cooking, just cooking, on the train. Didn’t do any bookwork except what we had to write about recipes. There’d be a proper teacher come out with the train and we’d learn how to make this and that. We always wore something over our hair for hygiene.

I’m on the right in the middle row. I don’t remember any other names except Enid Parsons in front, second from the right.



[Alma Gannon, GA41, ca 1935]

I’VE ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN as a bit naive – about everything. I don’t know much now, but I knew even less then.

Anyhow, Dad bought a prize bull to service his cows. See, there wasn’t a dairy in Julia Creek in the early days – the dairy came later on – and Dad thought it a good idea to have his own milk supply. At the time of our first hotel we only had two cows, but then he bought more, and a bull as well. They were about to be unloaded from the train and Dad was going over to the cattle yards to have a look at them:

Dada, can I come?
You stay here, Alma; you
don’t want to come.
I do. I want to see the bull.

My brother said he’d look after me, so we went to the cattle yards. Out came this blasted bull and immediately he mounts a cow. I’m up on the rails: “Dada, what’s he doing?” Dad looked at my brother and said: “Bill, take her home”. That’d be 70 years ago, but I remember it clearly.

THAT’S NORMIE DOWNEY and me going to a fancy dress.



[Alma Gannon, GA34, ca 1934]



[Alma Gannon, GA35, ca 1935]



CHRISTMAS DAY AT DAD'S HOTEL the table was set the full length of the dining room. It was very festive, done up with grog and linen serviettes. Anyone who had nowhere to go for Christmas dinner, they'd be sitting on the verandah at the front of the hotel and Dad would go out and say:

Have you eaten yet?

No.

Well, you'd better come and get it.

His only stipulation was that nobody could come in without shoes – and shoes could be in short supply. One year a couple of mates took turns at dinner. When the first one finished he took off his shoes and gave them to his mate so that he could go in.

Dad was a wonderful fellow. Few people realise half the good he did.



*Gannon's Hotel
Xmas Dinner Table.
No Charge to anyone for this meal.*



Below: Obituary for Bill Gannon (died 17 December 1973).

[Source unknown]

The sudden death of William George 'Bill' Gannon in Brisbane on December 17 last was a shock to relatives and friends. Mr Gannon was born at Wanga Wallen, South Queensland, on July 12, 1891. At the age of 19 he joined the Queensland Police Force.

He arrived in Townsville on the Wodonga on April 1, 1911, proceeding to his first station at Selwyn. He was sent on to Hampden, later known as Friezland and then as Kuridala. Mr Gannon was subsequently transferred to Bedourie.

On a visit to Birdsville he met Olivia Amanda Philp. They were married in Laura, South Australia, on July 22, 1914. Mr Gannon was transferred to Gilliat police station in August 1914, spending 12 months there before going to McKinlay for five years.

In 1919 he resigned from the police force to take over the Gilliat Hotel. In 1925 he bought the leasehold of the Julia Creek Hotel, earlier removed from Charters Towers. Later he built the first Gannon's Hotel opposite the railway station in Julia Creek. This was opened in June 1929 and destroyed by fire in February 1932. The second Gannon's Hotel was built opposite the Post Office.

After almost half a century in the McKinlay Shire, Mr Gannon sold his business to Samuel Allen & Sons in December 1963. In Brisbane he continued to engross himself in business and family interests and was a true example of the head of a closely knit family. An only son, Bill, predeceased him during World War 2.

Left to mourn Mr Gannon are his wife and three daughters, Olive (Mrs Ced Hely), Ivy (Mrs Tony Bowtle) and Alma (Mrs Brian Maloney), eight grandchildren and one great grandchild.

...and this will be forgotten for some time yet.

There was an auction sale on Saturday conducted by the Australian Estates Co. Ltd. and some of the property of the Gannon family was disposed of. There was a good attendance and the bidding was brisk at all times.

The Gannons left on Monday last by mail train for Brisbane and there were many friends at the station to bid them goodbye. No doubt they felt a little sad to sever their connection with the west where they have spent so many of their years. They have gone permanently and it is certain that the 'Creek' will not be the same without them. We hope they find plenty of interest and happiness in the capital city.

Mr. and Mrs. Holloway have leased Gannon's Hotel and took over control on Monday. These people have had some previous experience in this work and it is obvious already that they will give good service. We trust they achieve success.

Mr. Paul Faithfull has gone along to South Molle Island just off Mackay for a short holiday before he takes up his appointment as school teacher in Cloncurry. Paul has been training in Brisbane during the last two years and so the new job will not be difficult.

The mail carriers struck some diffi-

NQR: 24 Jan 1953

FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION
TO BE HELD AT GANNON'S HOTEL, JULIA CREEK
ON SATURDAY 10th JANUARY, 1953
AT 11.00 a.m.

Acting under instructions from W. G. Gannon,
the following will be offered : —

1 only 110 volt LIGHTING PLANT complete with TWO SWITCH-BOARDS, 5 h.p. LISTER BENZINE ENGINE DYNAMO, GLASS BATTER JARS and quantity of fittings, bulbs, etc; 1 only 54 inch CEILING FAN; 4 only 32 inch CEILING FANS; 1 POLISHER; 1 VACUUM CLEANER; QUANTITY TOOLS; QUANTITY PAINT; 1 only 1/2 h.p. MOTOR; 13 EARTHENWARE JARS AND ACID; 2 TRICYCLES (child's); 2 ELECTROLUX FRIDGES; 1 KITCHEN SAFE, 3 COTS with FIBRE MATRESSES; 1 PRAM; 1 CHILD'S COMMODE; 1 DOLL'S COT; 1 DOLL'S PRAM; 1 GENT'S BIKE; 2 PETROL IRONS; 1 TOASTER; 1 ELECTRIC IRON and CORD; 1 PELICAN ROCKER (child's); 1 HEATER and CORD.

For further particulars apply to: —

LIONEL WALL,
Auctioneer

JULIA CREEK
'Phone 88

CA: 09 Jan 1953

Opposite top: Bill Gannon Snr.
[Alma Gannon, GA45, ca 1920]

Opposite bottom: Christmas setting
in the dining room of Gannon's Hotel.
[Alma Gannon, GA26, ca 1950]

Below: "Me, Ivy, Olive. I was never in the middle of photos, always at the end. We stood where our ages were."
From left: Alma, Ivy, and Olive Gannon
[Kath Gerahy, GeK13, ca 1936]



Old Hortie



GRACE HORTON (née Keenan) was born in 1900 and married Thomas Horton at an unknown date before 1920. They adopted a child, Sydney. Council cemetery records show that on the 19th May 1919, a 7-month-old infant by name of Sydney Thomas Horton died in Julia Creek and was buried at the cemetery. It is assumed the infant was Hortie's adopted son. She lost her husband six years later.

a well-filled purse of notes.
The death was reported from Sydney last week of Mr. Tom Horton, well known as a shearing contractor about here. By his death Julia Creek has lost one more of its identities.
A shooting accident occurred lately when William Gillett, a lad of 16 years

NQR: 16 Feb 1925

Hortie ran a cafe in Goldring St, probably from around the time of her husband's death. Because of the cafe, she made her first appearance in the *North Queensland Register* on 21/12/1929:

Mrs Grace Horton of the Austral Cafe has found it necessary to add further additions to her premises. Since the invasion of Peters Ice Cream in these parts, Mrs Horton has been kept particularly busy catering for the wants of her many patrons, and at the present time she has a fine display of numerous novelties in readiness for the festive season.

MRS HORTON: Didn't she have the fruit shop? Dirtiest bloody place in Julia Creek it was.

JOHN ADAMS

I KNEW OLD MRS HORTON from the time I was 3 years old. I knew her when she was in the front street. Later on she moved around not far from Max Burns' place in Burke St.

We always called her Hortie. She was a lovely old lady. You'd go round there at Christmas time – that was the only time you ever saw cherries – and Hortie would get two cherries on their stems and she'd reach over and say: "There, you've got a pair of earrings".

DOT DOWNEY

MRS HORTON: I knew her well. She used to have a cafe. Whenever she got sick and went to hospital, Mum used to run the cafe for her. I loved that, because after school first port of call was the cafe for a sundae. In those days you had a sundae with all the silverware: silver trays, silver receptacles. Did this for about three or four days and then I wouldn't touch sundaes. Got sick of them.

HAROLD WALTERS

HORTIE: OH JESUS, do I remember old Hortie. She was a good friend of ours. A very good friend. She had a cafe in the front street, and a sister living with her, Annie.

The walls of the cafe dining room were covered in racehorses. Her husband must have been something to do with horses. Out the back of the cafe was the kitchen, and off to one side she had a tiny room where she lived. How she lived in that filth – well, not exactly filth, but everything was just chock-a-block. Behind that in another little room she kept her fruit and vegies. She could go in there and pack all the orders, what people wanted.

IVY BURROWS



Below: Goldring St taken from the railway station. Sanphy's Store is on the left of the hotel. A similar photo taken six months later is on page 275.

A good description of the buildings in Goldring St, and the only other photo I came across showing the front of Hortie's cafe, is in Gordon Lavarack's story on page 180.

J.R. Chisholm, a writer with the *North Queensland Register*, might have taken this photo. He travelled through western Queensland in May 1924 and stayed at the Julia Creek Hotel. The subsequent newspaper article describing his journey, and his visit to Julia Creek, appeared in the NQR of 16/6/1924 (see page 237).

The small shop beside Sanphy's store is Hortie's Austral Cafe, and out the front is the chinee apple tree which made such a lasting impression on the children who played among its branches in the 1930s. Several people described this tree in vivid detail (see next page) – but no one had a photo.

In December 2008, when this book was in its final stages and I was checking to make sure I had left out nothing of importance, I was looking at this photo deciding whether to include it. At that stage it had been left out. Two reasons:

there were other similar photos already in the book; and I only had a photocopy, which wasn't of good enough quality for reproduction. The original was in the John Oxley Library and they wanted big dollars for a high-quality digital scan, so, at the time, I opted for a photocopy.

Hortie's chapter, this chapter, was the very last one I put together in late November 2008. The chinee apple tree was fresh in my mind, and while staring at the photocopy... *Jeez! There's the chinee apple tree.*

I was straight on the phone to the John Oxley Library to order a digital copy on CD, never mind the cost. If I wanted Hortie's tree I'd have to pay for it. I'd also have the old Julia Creek Hotel, men walking from the hotel to the station to meet the train, Sanphy's store and several other unidentified stores in the front street, but it was Hortie's chinee-apple tree that I really wanted, and for which I happily forked out \$23.80 – the only photo in this book that had a cost attached. Every other photo came gratis, courtesy of the people I interviewed.

[John Oxley Library, image 163876, 6/5/1924]



Outside Hortie’s cafe was a large chinee-apple tree,
a favourite of children when it was bearing fruit.

HALF THE KIDS in Julia Creek climbed Hortie’s chinee-apple tree. Saturday morning was the shot. It’d be full of kids getting these nice ripe chinee-apples.

NORM DOWNEY

MRS HORTON, I remember her. Out the front of her shop was a big chinee-apple tree and the kids used to climb it. Hilda Wilder, she was like a monkey. They used to call her Hilda Monkus, and she’d climb it. She’d be right up in the top branches throwing chinee-apples down to the kids below. Mrs Horton would come out and she’d be ropeable about the kids up her chinee-apple tree.

She had a couple of rooms that she used to let out, y’know. There was one doctor, a Doctor Ralston¹, he came to Julia Creek early on and he had a room at the back of Mrs Horton’s place. Well, he might have been a doctor, but he was struck off the roll before he got to Julia Creek. The problem was drink. Still, if anyone broke their leg, snakebite, or anything like that, the first person they’d call on would be Dr Ralston.

KATH GERAHTY

MRS HORTON HAD A CAFE just down the street from us. She had one of the biggest chinee-apple trees in front of her cafe that I’ve ever seen. It used to go over the roof.

Why they’re called chinee-apples is because the Chinese use them in their dishes. They’re not an apple, although they are a little bit apple-ish inside if you’re talking about a soft, rotteny sort of an apple – but bitter. You see Chinese people collecting them around the outskirts of Townsville still today. They’re about the size of a big cherry; they’re green, then they go yellow, and then they’ll go red. When they go red, that’s the ones we called snotty-gobbles. Not bad eating. We used to collect them and bake them; but the real green ones, ooh, give you a gut ache.

We’d get into Hortie’s tree stealing the apples. Dick Cooper’s billiard room was next door, and this old bloke who was always sitting out the front would tout on us: “Hortie, they’re up your tree”. He was a pensioner; he had a humpy near one of the bridges, but he used to sit out the front of the billiard room most of the time. Hortie would come out: “Come on down, I know youse are up there”. We wouldn’t move, we’d stay low and hide. You could do that because it was a big tree and came right out over the skillion part of the cafe. She’d have to get the hose and

wet us before we’d come down. There wasn’t much water pressure in Julia Creek, but there was enough to get us out of the chinee-apple.

I don’t know what happened to Hortie’s tree. Maybe it got the white ant into it and they had to cut it down. It was immediately out the front of the cafe.

ALBIE WILDER

THE chinee-apple tree was gone by the time of the war; and by the end of the war, so was Hortie’s cafe. It burnt down on 14 November 1944:

Regret to report that about half-past 9 o’clock Tuesday night a fire broke out in Grace Horton’s cafe situated in Goldring St. The fire quickly spread to Mr Dick Cooper’s billiard room and also to the private house owned by Samuel Allen & Sons, and occupied by Mr and Mrs Dwyer and family (railway). All three buildings and contents were completely destroyed, except for a few personal belongings of Mrs Horton’s. Only the twisted iron and a few charred pieces of timber were left of Cooper’s billiard room and Mrs Horton’s cafe – the oldest cafe in the town. Mrs Horton was the proprietress of the Austral for 25 years or more.

Luckily there was no heavy wind blowing at the time of the fire as more damage could have occurred. Willing hands saved the big store owned by Samuel Allen and Sons on the corner. If this had caught, the Railway Hotel kept by Mrs Edwards would have been in great danger. Many hotel boarders packed their ports ready to move out. Our sympathy goes to all those who were unfortunate in losing their homes and belongings.

Mrs Horton was taken to hospital. Many friends wish this popular lady a speedy recovery to good health.

[CA: 17 Nov 1944]

Ivy Burrows remembers the aftermath of the fire:

HORTIE’S CAFE GOT BURNT DOWN when I was only a little kid, and when that happened – ooh, my parents brought Hortie and her sister to live at our house. Christ, they took over the bloody place. Ended up selling fruit and vegetables from a spare room behind the kitchen, what Mum used to call the sitting room. Never used. Hortie more or less took that over and was selling her fruit from there. All the mail-run country people used to get their orders off Hortie.

She had an apron, not too clean looking, and she used to keep diving inside the pockets. And she used to have a full-time fag in her gob. End up with an ash as long as the bloody cigarette. I’ll never forget that. She’d talk to you with this half-lit ashy thing smouldering out of the corner of her gob.

1. Kath’s memory of Dr Ralston being struck-off, rings true in light of several mentions he has in the *North Queensland Register*.

Dr Ralston was the first doctor to set up practice in Julia Creek, opening a surgery in Burke St in April 1929. On 11 June he appeared in the Julia Creek Police Court on a complaint that he threatened to do bodily harm to one Les

Long. The doctor didn’t make an appearance, and in his absence was ordered to keep the peace for a period of six months and to enter into a surety of £25 in default one month’s imprisonment.

In another case around the same time, Charlie Byrne (the butcher), and Joe Kaeser (the baker) sued the doctor on account of goods

sold and delivered, but not paid for. In both cases verdicts were given against the doctor.

His last appearance in the *Register* was in January 1931, by which time the town had enticed a real doctor to the town with the promise of an annual salary of £600. The *Register* provides the details of the new doctor’s arrival:

“Dr Hogg, the newly appointed medical officer for this district, arrived today [7/10/1930] per car and was met by representatives of the Provisional Hospital Committee. In conversation with the doctor, his first impression of this town is most pleasant and he anticipated he will be thoroughly satisfied with his appointment before many weeks have elapsed.”

Hortie ended up going over the road selling her fruit. She rented a house across the road because there was getting to be fights. Hortie's sister took over the kitchen and Mum reckoned that wasn't right: "Can't do anything in my own kitchen".

She lived with us for... it seemed like years, but I suppose it wasn't that long. Would be going on close a year though, that she was with us.

IVY BURROWS

HORTIE wasn't over the road from Ivy for very long. In March 1945, Ivy's father went into partnership in the O-K Store with Bert Peut, and the Burrows family moved out of their house and lived behind the store. Hortie moved back into the Burrow's house from which she'd been evicted.

Behind the house, across the lane in Goldring St, Kenny Kaeser's father had a bakery:

MRS HORTON HAD A CAFE in the front street just along from our bakery. The cafe burnt down when I was a kid and she started selling fruit from a house in Burke St. Where our bakery was in Goldring St, Hortie's house was directly over the lane. She lived there with her sister Annie Keenan. Old Hortie had been married, see. Her surname was Horton.

Hortie used to give me 10 bob a week for cutting up apple cases after school. She'd get me to cut them in half and she'd repack them with fruit and vegies for people on the mail runs. I used to be swearing all the time cutting the apple cases – the saw was that blunt I had to rub fat on it to make it slip through a bit easier, and swearing helped.

Besides sawing the apple cases for Hortie, every morning I went to George Jaques¹ the butcher, for Annie, Hortie's sister. Annie would get up at 5 o'clock, light the fire, get the kettle boiling. Grace, she'd sleep in a bit. I'd come over and Annie would give me a piece of bread and butter and a cup of tea. Then I'd go to the butcher's for her; do the messages. Every morning she'd get steak or gravy beef, something like that. Everyone ate meat for breakfast in those days, mostly.

KENNY KAESER

OLD HORTIE, she was the chief supplier of fruit and vegetables to my father and his shearing team. She'd get around all huddled up with a cigarette in her mouth. She operated out of a house in the main street. The whole house was just a mess – bags and boxes of fruit everywhere. Nothing in order. I owned her house for a while. I bought it and did it up. Two or three houses west of the present ambulance station.

TOMMY JESSUP

HORTIE not only supplied produce to townspeople and shearing teams, people on properties also bought from her. Merle Flewell-Smith was on Balootha in the early 1950s. She remembers the wooden cases, the leather apron, and the grime:

OUR FRUIT AND VEGETABLES came out on the mail and we usually got them from Old Hort, that's what she was known as. She was a very old lady, she was stooped, and she sold fruit and vegetables from the verandah of her house. It was all wooden cases stacked up. Her clothes weren't what you'd call real clean, and she always had... it was like a carpenter's leather apron, and she'd be digging in there for money. She was pretty shrewd y'know.

MERLE FLEWELL-SMITH

A younger generation described the Hortie of the 1950s in more vivid and earthy tones:

HORTIE USED TO WEAR this daggy old apron. She'd shuffle along in old slippers, wearing this dirty, once-was-white apron, and inside the apron she'd have her money and her cigarettes. She'd puff puff puff, cigarette always in her mouth. As soon as it was finished she'd take it out, put another one in, and light the second from the first – all day long. She'd go through a packet of cigarettes in about two hours.

ISABEL FLEWELL-SMITH

WHEN I FIRST remember Hortie she used to be in the house two doors down from the ambulance. It had a verandah on it with wire netting around. You went through the gate and she'd sell you fruit and vegetables from the verandah and from one particular room inside the house. She had this apron and she'd have all her money in it – and her tobacco. Anytime you saw Hortie she'd have this rolled cigarette hanging out her mouth, and she'd be coughing and spitting and smoke getting in her eyes, and all the while she's ratting around in this big old apron trying to get your change. She was cunning. She never exposed how much money she had.

Y'know, if too many of us kids went over there at once, she'd hunt us off. Only one allowed in at a time: "You other kids get outside!" One at a time was enough for Hortie.

RAY GODIER

1. See Jaques' story, page 221.

MY MOTHER'S MOTHER and Grace Horton's husband were brother and sister. To me, she was Auntie Grace. She was an eccentric old lady and lived with her sister Annie.

Mum used to send me to Auntie Grace's to buy fruit and vegies. I never had a list. You didn't go, like people do now, and have a big shop. When you went, you might only get a couple of potatoes and tomatoes.

She had special customers. You used to get the best fruit from Auntie Grace (always kept in her bedroom under her bed) if you were in favour. Everything else was basically in one little room that was the shop part, and around the verandah.

Like a lot of older people in that time, Auntie Grace never went out. At least I never saw her go out. Everyone went to her, including close friends like Mrs Shaw, so I suppose there was no need for her to leave the house. And if there was a need, Mum would send over my sister or myself to do the errands: go to Dawes' shop, Kaeser's baker, the butcher. Because we were family, we were trusted to do those jobs for Auntie Grace. And it was always business like. I don't remember going there just to talk; she wasn't that sort of lady. I was there to get the fruit and do the messages. I never used to sit and talk to her.

My sister and I probably went to Auntie Grace's every day. We passed her house on our way to school, and if we weren't buying fruit or running messages, we'd be chasing goats from underneath her house. My grandmother had 20 or 30 goats, and they'd get let out each morning and were supposed to be locked up each night. They knew Auntie Grace's as a kind of second home, and every single day they'd get in under her house. Our job was to go and muster them and lock them up. My sister and I used to be on opposite sides of the house trying to get them out: throwing stones at them, throwing words. We weren't supposed to swear but we did.

I don't really remember a lot about Hortie. I remember she smoked. She always smoked and she always rolled her own durries. When she'd give me change she'd rumble around in her apron pocket for ages, amidst a haze of tobacco smoke, before she found the coins she was looking for. She was never without that apron, a heavy leather apron with a big pocket in the front, and in that big pocket... God knows what was in there. Her whole life I think. You never knew what might come out of that pocket.

TITCH COLEMAN

DEATH FOLLOWING A STROKE

Quite a gloom was cast over the town at the passing of Miss Ann Keenan at the hospital in the early hours of Tuesday morning. Ann was well known and highly respected, both in Richmond and the Julia Creek district, and was the beloved sister of Mrs. Grace Horton. Deceased always seemed to enjoy good health and rose early on Saturday morning to meet the train to see the Sisters of Cloncurry Convent passing through Julia Creek. However, Ann took a bad turn and went to lie down, but she fell and never reached the bed. She had suffered a stroke. Her sister, Mrs. Grace Horton, soon had Dr. Davies to assist. The doctor lost no time in getting Ann to hospital where she received the best of medical attention, but it was soon seen the patient was sinking. She passed away on Tuesday morning with Mrs. Horton at her bedside.

Deceased was 63 years of age and lived many years in Richmond. She devotedly nursed her mother until the time of her death whereupon she came to live with her sister Grace. Deceased's kind and loving nature won for her a host of friends. Her life was full of doing things for other people. She was a great worker for the Roman Catholic Church and was organist for many years. She taught many children to sing hymns and was always willing to play the bridal march for weddings. The altar at the church was always a credit to Ann who would walk miles to get fresh flowers for decorations.

The funeral took place on Wednesday at 10 o'clock, the cortege moving from the Church after Father Devereux held divine service. The funeral was largely attended and many floral tributes were sent. Ann leaves a sister, Mrs. Grace Horton, to mourn her great loss, to whom we extend our sincere sympathy. Their only brother was killed in action in World War One.



There Hortie,
buried without stone,
sans plaque, no name.

Council records told me your whereabouts:

*Horton, Grace Mary
Adult
Died 1960, aged 60
Religion: Roman Catholic
Burial Plot: A141.*

That's you, Hortie.
Sixty years condensed to five lines of council records
and these six pages.

Titch told me why no one could show me an image:

*I don't ever remember seeing a photo of Auntie Grace
and I'd be surprised if there ever were any. She didn't have
children so she had no need for a camera or for photos.*

*What I can remember is that she was a tiny shrivelled-up
old lady. That's why I was surprised when you said she was
only 60 when she died. Everybody seems old when you're
a child, of course, but to me she was always older than 60.*

Punched into a slice of council metal,
your grid reference,
your only marker, A141,
lay rusting on the brown cemetery soil above your bones
when first I came looking.

Did anyone mourn your passing?
Or were you like Miss Rigby:
"buried along with her name; nobody came".

I'm certain that nobody came with sepulchre;
though council came with their numbered piece of iron,
the same piece that, still today,
sits on a rough mound of new concrete
in front of a council-supplied cross.

As I stood in front of that cross,
framing this photo,
waiting for the shadow to form a pleasing aspect,
a song spun words in my head:

*"Well, I looked at the granite markers,
Those tributes to finality, to eternity,
And I looked at myself here,
chicken scratching for my immortality."*

The writer sought immortality
in the vinyl scratchings of her songs.
Hortie, to keep alive your character,
I can't offer vinyl or granite,
only toner on ephemeral paper.



Above: A simple white cross and a concrete mound,
put in place by the council, mark Hortie's grave at
the Julia Creek cemetery. The small brown object
on the concrete in front of the cross is the
original grid-reference marker.
[Guy Burns, GK065, Aug 2003]

Opposite: Kathleen 'Chookie' Graham at the back of
Hortie's Austral cafe in Goldring St. Chookie
(see family tree page 658) was working
for Hortie at the time.
[Gordon Lavarack, LG07, ca 1935]

"Chookie died years ago. Ended up a compulsive
alcoholic. We owned a cab in Townsville from
1960-65, and in that era we used to drive her.
She was chronic. Sad really, cos she was
a pretty girl, eh. Could sing beautifully.
(Nookie Guest)



Blue Birds and the Garden of Roses



Throughout the years, Julia Creek had a number of refreshment rooms, milk bars, cafes and canteens (the names are interchangeable) catering to the travelling public and the local townspeople. Grace Horton's Austral Cafe, near the railway station in Goldring St, was positioned to capture customers from both sets of trade, and in the mid 1920s was the first to appear. At the railway station itself, Jim Norton opened a refreshment room. A few doors to the west of Mrs Horton was Tony Lucas' cafe¹, which later was run by Nick the Greek (Tony Lucas was also Greek). Nick Vamvakaris changed location to Burke St in 1939 and built the Garden of Roses. And during the war Bill Mathews built a hall opposite the Post Office and operated a milk bar within. It died after a short time, but was revived in the 1950s under the names Corner Cafe, Dawso's, Lafferty's and others.

Milk bars bloomed and withered, changed names and changed owners as men and women with business hopes brought continual renewal. One young man with hopes was Charlie Corrigan²:

Julia Creek was awash with money in the early 1950s during the wool boom. Friday and Saturday

nights the two pubs overflowed with drinkers, people queued for the pictures, and the only cafe in town, Dawso's, you couldn't get a seat. Fagan Stainkey and I decided that Julia Creek could support another cafe so we built a new one in the main street called the Mayne Milk Bar...

Charlie's hopes soured in a year or two and he moved on. The building Charlie helped construct still exists, though not as a milk bar. It morphed into the Blue Bird Cafe, the second of that name in town, and ran through several owners, some of them Greek (cafes and Greeks are a recurring duo in Julia Creek) until it folded in 1974.

Blue Bird as the name of a cafe had a 40-year history in Julia Creek, beginning in 1934 when Bert Burrows built the first Blue Bird. A few months later, newly married, he settled in with his wife.

A photo of the first Blue Bird is printed below. It was taken by Rita Byrne on Sunday 21 May 1939. That morning, after Mass at St Abigail's Catholic Church, Rita walked around town taking photos of buildings³. At noon (the shadow parallel to the edge of the awning falls directly south and thus tells the time) – at noon Rita stood on the footpath in front

of Gannon's Hotel, pointed her camera north-west and captured a bluebird for posterity. Notice that the cafe's name isn't complete; a drawing of a bluebird substitutes for "bird". The owner's number, *Phone 48*, is on the right of the awning; his name, *B. Burrows*, on the left. The owner himself, or his wife, has the door open as an invitation to come in for a snack, a cold drink, or lunch.

Off photo, right, is the Post Office. The little shed, left, belongs to the butcher shop owned by Rita's father, Charlie Byrne. The large house in the background, "one of the loveliest homes in Julia Creek"⁴, belongs to Bill Davis, teamster.

What is it about the words "blue" and "bird" that make them so becoming for the name of a cafe? *Blue Bird Cafe*. The name sings when spoken. *Austral*, *Mayne Milk Bar* and *Dawso's* sound tuneless in comparison. And the name of the only cafe operating in Julia Creek during the years of my visits while researching this book – *Mum and Dad's* – is utterly without tone.

If I was allowed one alteration to modern day Julia Creek, it would be to return to its one cafe a piece of nomenclatural history – Blue Bird.



Below: The first Blue Bird Cafe next door to the Post Office.
[Rita Byrne, FR27, 1939]

1. Gordon Lavarack, page 180, recollects making ice cream for Tony Lucas.
2. Charlie's story is on page 346.
3. See page 191, 223, 678.
4. Kath Gerahty, second column, page 371.



A Short History of Julia Creek Cafes

Grace Horton's Austral Cafe

Opened in Goldring St in the mid 1920s. Burnt down 14/11/1944. More details: page 250.

Railway Refreshment Room

First appeared in April 1929 between the station and Goldring St. The first owner was Jim Norton who sold out to Les Stadhams. It burnt down on Easter Monday, 13 April 1931. At an unknown date before the war it was replaced and operated by Bert Burrows, who also had the Blue Bird. Mary Winton¹ remembers working for Bert in both. The refreshment room operated into the 1950s and possibly later.

8 April 1929—I note that we are to have a refreshment stall at the railway. Mr Jim Norton is the possessor of the above stall and judging from the amount of travellers passing to and fro, he should have no cause to regret his venture.

13 July 1929—Mr Jim Norton, refreshment room keeper, advises me that he has been successful in

obtaining an Auctioneer's and Commission Agency licence. Mr Norton has only been in our midst a few months, but through his most genial disposition and straight forwardness he has gained many friends.

12 April 1930—Mr Jim Norton, who for the last 12 months carried on the business known as the Railway Refreshment Room, has now disposed of same to Mr Les Stadhams, a well-known identity of the Gulf. Mr Stadhams intends making alterations to the present building which, when completed, should certainly meet with the requirements of the travelling public. Mr Norton will remain in this district to carry on his commission agency and forwarding business.

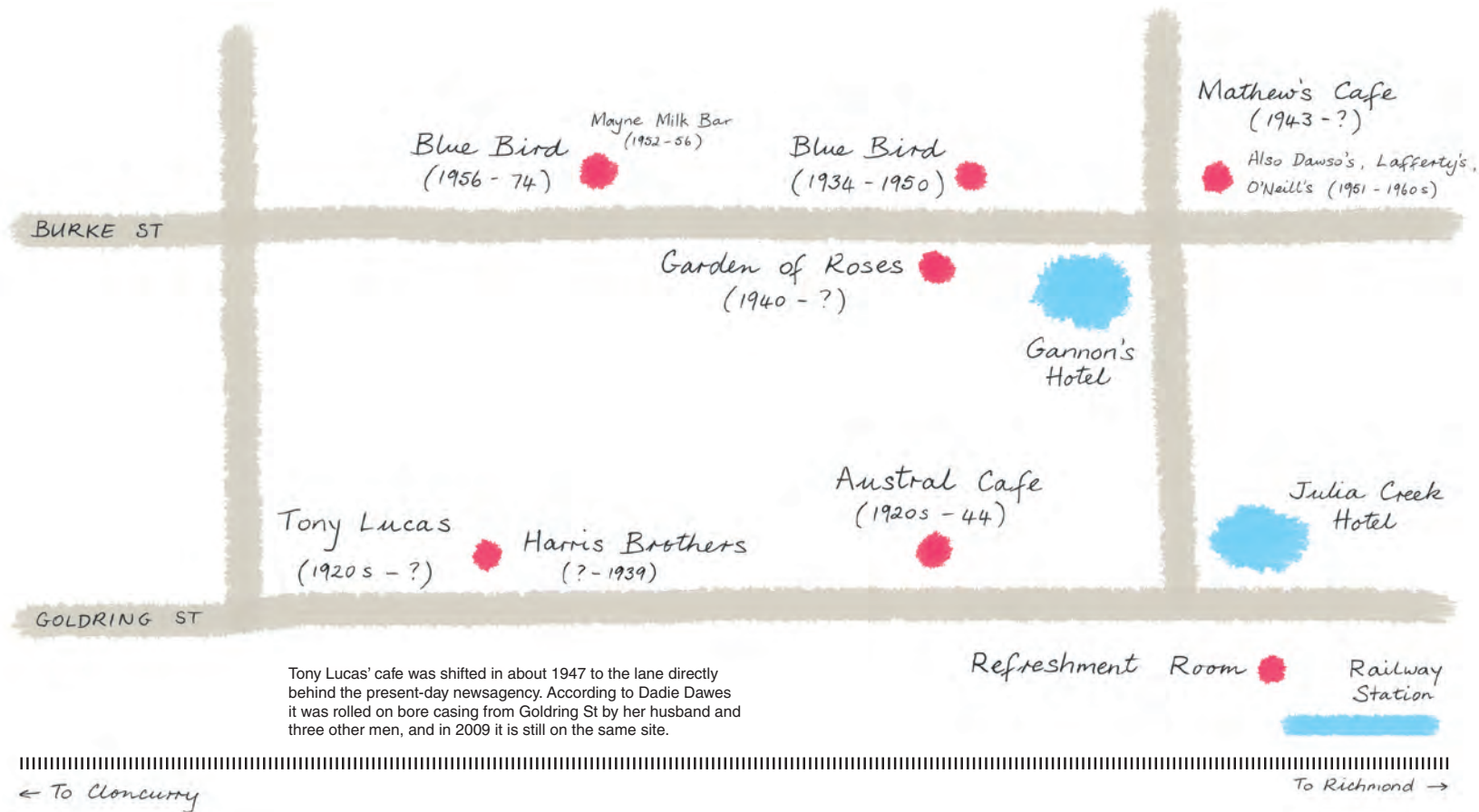
18 April 1931—An incident which caused some excitement over Easter occurred in the early hours of Monday morning when the Railway Refreshment Room was completely demolished by fire. From all accounts the fire had been burning quite some time before being noticed. Mr Stadhams and son were the only occupants and it was not until the flames were leaping through his bedroom door that Mr Stadhams

realised the building was alight. Father and son made the only possible escape through the side bedroom window and immediately raised the alarm. Crowds from all parts of the town soon gathered, but owing to the low pressure of water nothing could be saved. Although insured for £400 (but costing more than double that amount), Mr Stadhams will undoubtedly be a heavy loser. The origin of the fire is unknown.

At all times the refreshment room was a cool and favourite spot for train passengers and the public in general. Its absence will certainly be felt.

29 January 1943—Our railway station canteen is again open. This should prove a great comfort to our military troops passing through as large numbers of them can often be seen wandering the streets in search of food and cool drinks (our town has two ice works and can supply ice and cool drinks at all times). At one stop, soldiers report having paid three shillings a bottle for soft drinks. When asked the reason for the high price the reply was: "There is a war on". The war is also on in Julia Creek, but cordials are sold here for 9d a bottle from both factories.

1. See page 382.



Mathews' Milk Bar

On Monday 7/4/1941, Bill Mathews, a shearing contractor, opened a hall across from the Post Office on the site of the present day Civic Centre. In January 1943 he opened a milk bar in the same premises. Mathews sold the hall to Les Peut in 1947. The milk bar section may not have been operating when the sale took place, but it began life again in August 1951, seven months after "the only cafe in town", the Blue Bird, burnt down. From then on it went by a number of names - Dawso's, Lafferty's, Corner Cafe - as it changed owners through to the 1960s. More details: pages 317, 397.

29 January 1943—Mr Bill Mathews arrived home from Sydney and has opened up a first-class milk bar, with soft drinks and fresh fruit for sale. Being so near the school this should be a great boon to the children and also will be an added attraction to our town.

9 March 1951—The cafe beside Mathews' Dance Hall has changed hands and been taken over by Mrs Dawson to whom we wish every success.

17 November 1951—The Corner Cafe and Dance Hall have passed through new hands. Mr Roy

Hampton, well-known and popular townsman of Julia Creek, has purchased the property and intends to improve it. There will be a reading room available at all times and an alcove for the convenience of strangers to use as a resting place during their stay in town. This is definitely an acquisition for Julia Creek and we must congratulate Mr Hampton on his enterprise.

13 October 1956—The cafe which has been conducted for some time by Mr Kevin Lafferty has changed hands. The new owner, Mr Terry O'Neill, will be entering into occupation next month.

<p>FRANK BYRNE JULIA CREEK GENERAL MOTORS HOLDEN SALES AND SERVICE TRANS-AUSTRALIAN AIRLINES PORTA-GAS 24-HOUR TAXI SERVICE Telephones 55 and 56</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Blue Bird Cafe = = Julia Creek</i></p> <p>P.O. Box 64 NICK ROBOTIS (PROPRIETOR) TELEPHONE 54</p>		<p>S. T. & P. M. WILKINS DRAPERS MEN'S AND LADIES' OUTFITTERS JULIA CREEK P.O. Box 38 Telephone 68</p>																											
<p>GODIER BROS. ELECTRICAL TOWN AND COUNTRY WIRING REPAIRS AND APPLIANCES We Service all that we Sell JULIA CREEK P.O. Box 107 Telephone 122</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td> <p><i>Grills</i></p> <p>T-BONE STEAK AND EGGS \$1-20 T-BONE STEAK AND ONIONS \$1-30 STEAK AND SPAGHETTI \$1-20 STEAK AND MUSHROOMS " MIXED GRILL \$1-30 SAUSAGES AND EGGS \$1-20 HAM AND EGGS " PORK CHOPS " PORK CHOP AND EGGS \$1-40 BACON AND EGGS \$1-20 <i>Served with Chips and Salad</i></p> </td> <td> <p><i>Salads</i></p> <p>HAM \$1-20 CHEESE " CRAB " <p><i>Light Refreshments</i></p> <p>SANDWICHES—PLAIN OR TOASTED</p> <p>HAM 20 c SPAGHETTI " CHEESE " EGG " TOMATO " BAKED BEANS " BISCUITS " TOAST 15 c <p>HOT DRINKS</p> <p>COFFEE (White or Black) 20 c MILO " TEA 15 c BONOX 20 c <p>FRUIT DRINKS—Cool and Refreshing</p> <p>ORANGE PINEAPPLE LEMON 10 c BOTTLED DRINKS, SMALL " BOTTLED DRINKS, LARGE " TARAX CANNED DRINKS "</p> </p></p></p></td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p><i>Sea Foods</i></p> <p>FRIED FISH \$1-20 FRIED FISH AND EGGS \$1-40 GRILLED FISH \$1-20 GRILLED FISH AND EGGS \$1-40</p> </td> <td> <p><i>Sweets</i></p> <p>FRUIT SALAD AND ICE CREAM 50 c</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>G. 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Box 39 Telephone 90</p> </td> <td colspan="2"> <p><i>Hot Meals on Toast</i></p> <p>ASPARAGUS 80 c BAKED BEANS " SPAGHETTI " SARDINES " GRILLED TOMATOES " POACHED EGGS " FRIED EGGS " SCRAMBLED EGGS "</p> </td> <td> <p>JULIA CREEK AMBULANCE GET YOUR TICKET IN THE HOLDEN STATION SEDAN ART UNION TICKETS—£1 EACH AVAILABLE EVERYWHERE</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>PETER DAWES UNIVERSAL PROVIDER MEN'S, LADIES' and CHILDREN'S WEAR TOYS - FANCY GOODS - NEWSAGENCY HELENA RUBINSTEIN COSMETICS JULIA CREEK</p> </td> <td colspan="2"> <div> <p>WILMUT'S FRUIT and VEGETABLES GROCERIES BYRNE STREET JULIA CREEK Telephone 23</p> </div> <div> <p>JULIA CREEK HOTEL (Opposite Railway Station) JULIA CREEK CLEAN ACCOMMODATION and HOSPITABLE SERVICE JULIA STREET JULIA CREEK Telephone 75</p> </div> <div> <p>GANNONS HOTEL - MOTEL BYRNE STREET JULIA CREEK SELF-CONTAINED UNITS or STANDARD HOTEL ACCOMMODATION Telephone 3</p> </div> </td> <td> <p>G. O. HARRIS CORDIAL MANUFACTURER BURKE STREET JULIA CREEK Telephone 45 P.O. Box 29</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>CRAWFORD MOTORS CHRYSLER DEALERS JULIA CREEK Telephone 130 After Hours 113</p> </td> <td colspan="2"></td> <td> <p>TERRY'S FOUR SQUARE STORE CAN SUPPLY ALL YOUR GROCERY AND FOOD REQUIREMENTS BEST PRICES IN THE WEST Telephone 93 JULIA CREEK</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>JULIA CREEK BUTCHERING CO. ARE ALWAYS AT YOUR SERVICE BURKE STREET JULIA CREEK Telephone 11</p> </td> <td colspan="2"></td> <td> <p>J. & I. KAESER BAKERS GOLDRING STREET JULIA CREEK Telephone 28 P.O. Box 10</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>N. L. 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First Blue Bird Cafe

Built in 1934 and operated by Bert Burrows. He sold to Mrs Flo Watson in 1943 and she ran it with her son Ronnie. Kath and Frank Byrne (brother and sister) took over in 1946 and they sold to their cousins Lucy, Jenny, Rita and Joan Byrne in 1947. Three of the Byrne sisters pulled out in 1949, leaving only Rita and new business partner, Frank Forde (Rita and Frank later married). The Blue Bird burnt down in August 1950.



Bird for service and cool drinks.

11 January 1946—Mrs Flo Watson has sold her Blue Bird Cafe business to Miss Kath Byrne and Mr Frank Byrne. We wish brother and sister every success in their new venture.

13 June 1947—Miss Kath and Frank Byrne have sold their Blue Bird Cafe business to the Misses Lucy, Jenny, Rita and Joan Byrne. The business will change hands on 30th June and we wish the Byrne sisters the very best of luck.

14 April 1949—Miss Rita Byrne and Mr Frank Forde have taken over the Blue Bird Cafe and have put in extra fittings. They have made quite a nice change and the shop is looking up to date.

19 August 1950—The Blue Bird Cafe was destroyed by fire early this morning, the outbreak occurring at about 1 a.m. The cause of the fire is unknown. The building was owned by Mr Fred Hickman and was rented by Miss Rita Byrne and Mr Frank Forde. The building and contents were insured. This was the only cafe in town.

22 December 1934—Despite the fact that the seasonal outlook is bad, the town still continues to go ahead in the building line. Building contractor Herb Wilder is now putting the finishing touches on Mr Bert Burrows' new cafe in Burke St next to the Post Office. Mr Burrows hopes to be well-established in the Blue Bird by Christmas.

20 April 1935—A wedding of much interest to the town was solemnised at the Church of England by the Rev. Norton. The contracting parties were Miss Mavis Turner and Mr Bert Burrows, both of Julia Creek. After the ceremony the happy couple entertained a number of guests, principally close friends and relations, at a sumptuous wedding breakfast held at the Blue Bird Cafe. A beautiful wedding cake occupied a central position on the table and many speeches were given. All wished the young couple long life and prosperity.

Mr and Mrs Burrows are now settled down in their new home, the Blue Bird Cafe, Mr Burrows being the proprietor. We wish the newlyweds all possible joy and happiness for the future.

16 February 1945—Mrs Flo Watson of the Blue Bird Cafe arrived home on Sunday after holidaying in Sydney. Mrs Watson will be pleased to meet old and new customers, so call at the Blue

Second Blue Bird Cafe

Began life as the Mayne Milk Bar in about 1952 on the site of Chummy Shaw's house in Burke St. Fagan & Elsie Stainkey and Charlie Corrigan were the instigators. Became the second Blue Bird Cafe in about 1956. Closed in 1974 when Harry Liaros was the owner. More details on pages 297, 352, 459, 733.

24 March 1956—The Mayne Milk Bar has changed hands and will be under new management early next month. Mr Frank Byrne will be the new proprietor as of April 1.

24 Aug 1957—The Blue Bird cafe, which was conducted by Mrs Gladys Cook, has been sold to Mr Hughes who is continuing the business.

Opposite: Menu with 1974 prices. [Harry Liaros, LH06, ca 1964]

Nick Robotis owned the Blue Bird in the 1960s and sold to Harry Liaros who retained the same menu until he closed the business in 1974. The menu was printed before 1966 (the year Joe and Iris Kaeser sold their bakery), and it provides a comprehensive snapshot of business life in Julia Creek. Four of the businesses feature extensively in this book (Peter Dawes, the two hotels, and

the baker) and four of the people named have their own chapters (Mannie Sills, Norm Downey, Jumbo Harris, Pat Wilkins).

From top left: Frank Byrne was nephew of Charlie Byrne, the butcher. He ran the original Blue Bird with his sister in the 1940s. From the mid 1950s, with two of his brothers, he operated a garage in Burke St (see photo page 231) that previously had belonged to Lance Lewis.

The Godier brothers were Bill and Frank, uncles of Ray Godier.

Julia Creek Butchering Co was owned by Ard Cooney. Charlie Byrne had it originally and ran it until about 1948. It became Champneys & McMahon during the 1950s and they sold to Ard in the early 1960s.

The pharmacy, across the road from Gannon's Hotel, was owned by Graham Uhlmann (see page 586) until 1964.

Terry's Four Square Store was run by Terry O'Neill. It was on the north-west corner of Burke St and Quarrell St.



Above: Rita Byrne (left) and Lucy Byrne in front of the first Blue Bird Cafe. When the photo is reversed and enlarged (right), the reflection in the window above the word "confectionery" shows the words "Garden of Ro...", the cafe directly across the street. [Rita Byrne, FR22, ca 1948]

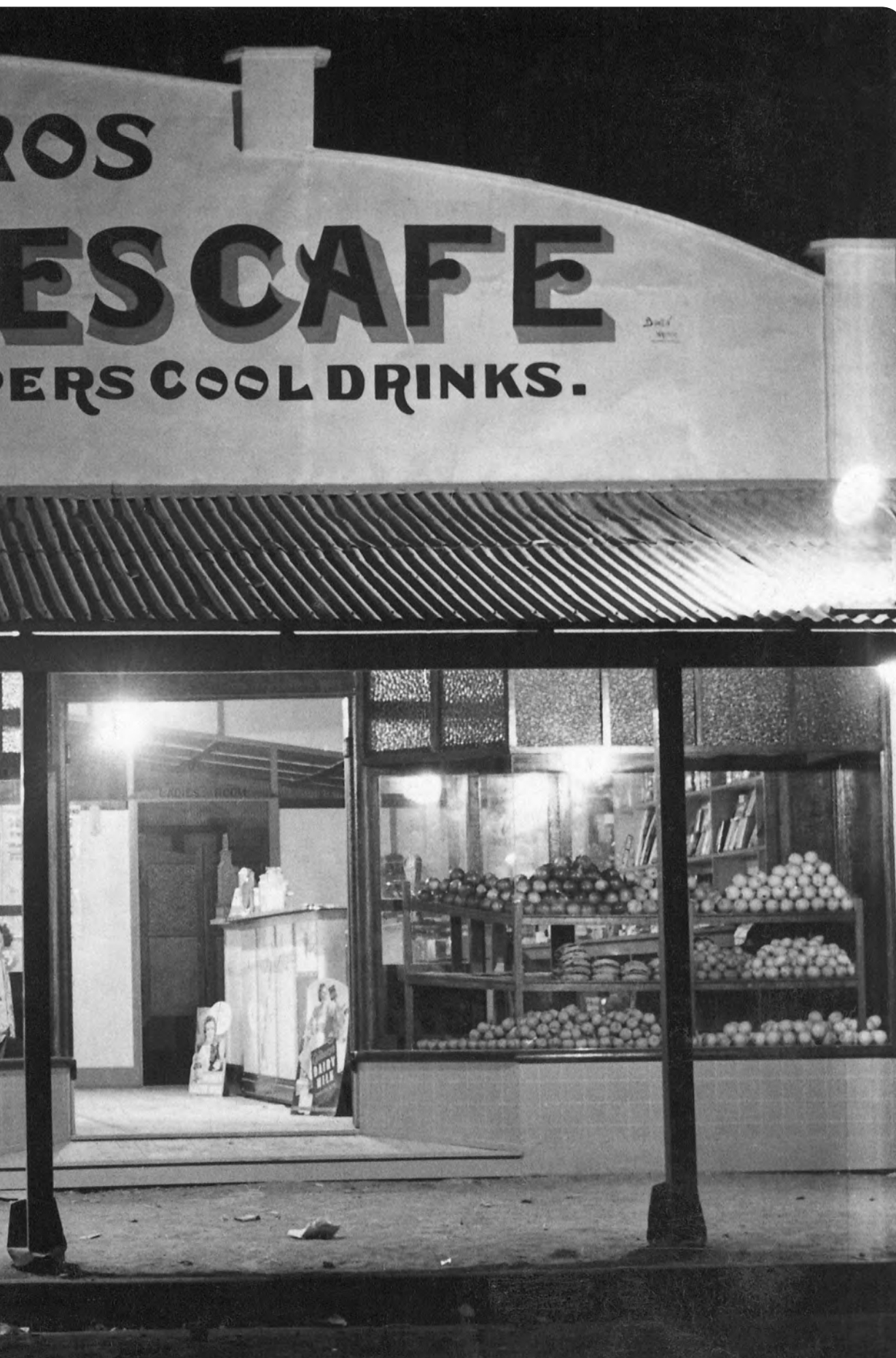


Left: Bert Burrows. [Alma Gannon, GA31, ca 1940]

Below: Flo Brennan (left) and Doreen Fry in their waitress uniforms, with Gladys Cook (owner, right) outside the second Blue Bird Cafe. [Lionel Fry, FL06, 1956]







THE Garden of Roses cafe was alongside Peter Dawes' store. Two Greek brothers built that. Oh, it was a lairy thing when it opened up.

BERNIE FOSTER

I USED to work in a cafe in the front street – the Garden of Roses it was called – owned by the Harris brothers, Nick and Tony. Except their name wasn't Harris, it was Vamvakaris. They were Greeks and they just put "Harris" on their sign instead of their proper name.

That photo's not the original Garden of Roses which was in the front street, it's the new one in Burke St. I never worked at the new one very much except on a Saturday night. I had a job at Gannon's Hotel when the new Garden of Roses was built, but of a Saturday night after the pictures when the cafe got busy, I always went back there to give Nick a hand.

Actually it was old Nick that gave me... y'know that to get into the army you had to have a reference? Well, it was old Nick who gave me a reference so I could join up.

I don't know when Nick and Tony left Julia Creek or what happened to the Garden of Roses – whether it was sold or whether it burnt down.

LIL GERAHTY

BALLY KAESER was the baker in Julia Creek. Had his baker shop in the front street. Used to be old Nick the Dago too, in that front street; a Greek. I was in his cafe this night, and Albie Kaeser, Bally's son, came staggering in (Albie drank a fair bit). Nick was in a skiting mood: "I was born in da Ga-reece, I was bred in da Ga-reece". Albie piped up: "Yeah, and if you don't clean your bloody kitchen – you'll die in the grease".

REG FICKLING

I USED to work for Nick in the Garden of Roses cafe. That was my first job away from Dad's bakery.

Nick, he was Greek. I think they might have interned him through the war years. They ruined that poor man.

BETTY KAESER

Left: Garden of Roses Cafe, Burke St, between Peter Dawes' Store on the right and Gannon's Hotel on the left. The building was originally built by Herb Wilder in September 1934 for Roy Hampton and began life as a hairdresser (see page 461). Nick and Tony Vamvakaris (the "Harris" brothers) took over from Hampton in December 1939 and converted it to the Garden of Roses Cafe.

Despite it being "a lairy thing" as Bernie Foster describes, the cafe was short lived. The reason was not Nick's internment as an enemy alien (Betty is incorrect in assuming that Greeks were interned; they were on our side), the reason was just the opposite – Nick Vamvakaris enlisted at Julia Creek on 10/5/1941 (Q109549). His brother Tony probably continued on in the cafe, but I suspect it went out of business sometime during the war.

The last mention of the Harris brothers in the *North Queensland Register* is on 4/7/1941. A patriotic concert had been held the previous Friday in Mathews' Hall "and Harris brothers generously donated the supper".

The Garden of Roses was demolished in August 1951 and replaced by the Australian Estates building (see NQR 1/3/1952, page 554).

[Rita Byrne, FR17, 1940]



Left: "Dad was called Worshipful Brother; dressed up in a suit and apron, gavel in hand, he'd call them to order." Acting Sergeant Arthur Casey at the Masonic Lodge, Julia Creek. The small plaque on the front of the table says: "Rothwells Ltd, Lodge Furnishers, Brisbane Australia" [Joff Casey, CJ14, ca 1930]

Below: The Julia Creek Masonic Temple, north-east corner of Burke St and Mathews St. The steps faced west. The bell in the background belongs to St Abigail's Catholic Church, which is just out of view on the right. The Church of England was on the left.

Freemasons meet as a Lodge not *in* a Lodge. The terms Masonic Temple and Masonic Lodge have now largely been replaced by Masonic Centre or Masonic Hall. [Joff Casey, CJ03, ca 1930]

"During the early part of the week we had the pleasure of a visit of distinguished visitors in the persons of the Most Worshipful Brother W.H. Green, Grand Master of the Masonic Order of Queensland, accompanied by the Very Worshipful Brother W.H. Darker of Brisbane who arrived here on Sunday night and were met by the Brethren of the Julia Creek Lodge. During their stay here the visitors took the opportunity of inspecting the Julia Creek woolscour." NQR: 30 Jun 1928



Shines in the Night, Missy

Joff Casey

Died March 2006

Acting Sergeant Arthur Casey is transferred to Julia Creek

MY FATHER WAS ONE OF THE INSTIGATORS in establishing the Masonic Lodge at Julia Creek. The Lodge was built after we arrived, on the north side of Burke St opposite the police residence. Underneath was where they sat for their dinners and their entertainment; upstairs was where they had their meetings. Dad was called Worshipful Brother. Dressed up in a suit and apron, gavel in hand, he'd call them to order. I can't recall how often they had meetings.

There's the old furphy about Masons and the billy goat: "Oh yes, the Masons ride the billy goat"; so some of the larrikins used to run with sticks around the building, clattering on the palings, and say it was the goat bunting the walls.

Next to the Lodge was the Church of England. Mum and Dad and the Anglicans were responsible for building that. Bishop Feetham came out from Townsville to consecrate the Church, and I was confirmed there. I used to play the organ for church if I wasn't on duty at the exchange. Church wasn't every Sunday, it would only be when the minister came out from Richmond or Townsville – but Dad always saw that I was off duty, didn't he.

I HAPPENED TO BE BORN in Mackay General Hospital, 23 June 1915. My mother's name was Maggie Ann Graham. Dad was Arthur Casey, just plain Arthur Casey. He was the constable in charge of Eton police station just outside Mackay. My older brother Arthur was born in January 1913, and I have a younger sister Pat. She was born in 1929. There was quite a difference between our ages.

About 1918 a cyclone hit Mackay. My earliest memory is of people coming into the police station for shelter, coming in their drays, their homes razed. My brother and I watched the School of Arts, which used to be in front of the police station, go up like a pack of cards. I remember the roof blowing off.

There were numerous transfers in Dad's life – Tallebudgera, Coolangatta, Moorooka – and we had numerous schools to go to. I started going to school at Eton, but they used to send me home because I wasn't quite old enough. That's me; always had to be different – I was the one who ran away to school.

I can't remember how long Dad was at Mackay, but I do remember that by the time we moved to Julia Creek in 1926 he was senior constable. How I can remember the year: my piano went with us and it's been with me ever since. I've still got it. It was bought in 1925 and I'd had 12 months' tuition on it before we left for Julia Creek.

We went up by train and I distinctly remember putting my head out of the window and seeing images of homesteads floating above the horizon. Mirages. Yet apart from shimmering homesteads, the land was bare.

I started grade 5 in Julia Creek. Mr Dodt was the headmaster and then Mr McIvor came. I used to play up on him a little bit. Do you want to hear a story? Mr McIvor asked me to bring him a glass of water. Downstairs they had two huge canvas waterbags: one would be soaking with Epsom salts, sterilising the bag, and the other would be the drinking water. I brought up a glass from the Epsom salts one, gave it to him and went to my seat. I can still see him taking a sip of water; he just put the glass down and never said a word.

Miss Clytha Murphy, she came as a school teacher and taught us country dances. And then we had young Jimmy Parsons.



Above: Joff, Pat and kewpie doll. Pat is sitting on a tea box, her favourite chair whenever she prepared morning tea for Tracker George.
[Joff Casey, CJ05, 1931]



Above: Julia Creek State School students, 1927.
The school can be seen, left background. The
photo was taken in the bough shed¹.

[Joff Casey, CJ06, 1927]

Front row, from left:

1. ?
2. Coral Eckford
3. ?

2nd row:

1. Jackie Mathews
2. Billy Gannon
3. Jim Eckford
4. ?
5. Olive Gannon
6. Lucy Burrows
7. Edna Eckford
8. ?, 9. ?
10. Ivy Gannon
11. Betty Murray.

3rd row:

1. Jimmy Downey
2. Wilder (?)
3. ?
4. ?
5. Jean Fidler
6. Glen Murray
7. Horton?
8. ?
9. Moller
10. Singh?

4th row:

1. Dadie Eckford
2. Marj Smith
3. Joff Casey
4. Fidler
5. Ivy Edwards
6. Lucy Byrne
7. Thelma Pedersen
8. Arthur Casey
9. Bernie Fidler
10. H. Burrows.

1. For a brief description of the bough
shed see second column page 404.



Come 1928 there were three of us sat for high school entrance exams, which turned out to be the last year they had them. It then became the Scholarship. Dadie Eckford and I passed. The girl who failed, her name was Ivy Edwards. From then on I went to school in Charters Towers and stayed with my grandmother. I think Dadie also went to Charters Towers, to a convent, St Mary's.

Dadie's people had the picture show, a big tin place. On the picture night, Saturday night, I'd go over and play the pianola all the way through the film. I'd put the rolls on top and it didn't matter in what order they were played. It might be a tragic scene and I might be playing a jazzy tune, but no one minded. I also helped in the little confectionery and drinks counter at interval.

In the early days it was open-air and canvas seats. One night when I wasn't playing the pianola, my mother and I were sitting in the canvas seats and who should I hear baaing but my pet lamb. I had to go and bring her in next to me to keep her quiet. She knew where I was and followed me from home.

In 1929 Mr Eckford built a combined theatre and dance hall¹ to replace the old theatre. We used to have dances there. Prior to that our dancing was in the School of Arts. People would be decorating with crepe paper, making hyacinths and other flowers, putting up streamers. We had little concerts. Bobby Flores' father thumped out music on a gum leaf², and when my piano arrived I played along.

We'd always go around to watch the footy on a Sunday. The shearers would come in on the weekend and join with the locals to make a team. For my own sport I played tennis and basketball. Of a morning, Thelma Pedersen and I would rise early and put up the tennis net and go for a walk down to the bore drain while the net dried out – there were heavy dews – and we'd have tennis before school. At basketball I was always goalie. I was so tall it was no trouble for me to throw the ball in. And we had vigoro.

1. See photo page 189.

2. Playing music on a gum leaf is done by holding each end of a leaf between thumb and forefinger, and with lips pursed, blowing across the leaf so that it acts as a vibrating reed. The gum leaf was used by Aborigines to copy bird calls, but can be used to play tunes.

Statistical Return Julia Creek State School – 1928

...Three pupils sat for the High School Entrance Examination in November, two being successful. I regard this as satisfactory as these pupils were not selected but comprised the whole of the upper class in the school. This is the first occasion on which pupils from this school have qualified for admission to a secondary school...

D. JAS McIVOR
Head Teacher

novelties in readiness for the festive season.

Mr. T.L. Guy, well-known bandmaster in North Queensland who has been engaged by Eckford's Pictures for the past three months with his two sons, leaves here this week for Townsville. The Julia Creek audience has greatly appreciated the classical music and popular items so ably rendered by this orchestra as accompaniment for the pictures, and with their departure will regret the return of the pianola.

It is also understood that Mr. Eckford has made arrangements for Hoyts' travelling talkies to show two nights here sometime in January. There is no doubt both nights will be well patronised. Many folks in these parts have heard much about these talkies and will want to avail themselves of this opportunity. The opening night will be looked forward to with interest.

There is no doubt if one wishes to

NQR: 21 Dec 1929

GEORGE RYAN was Dad's blacktracker. He was great. He'd go out with Dad if there was any tracking work, otherwise he worked around the police station. My little sister Pat was toddling at the time, and away they'd go to bring the goats in, Pat holding George's finger. He was accepted around town, but if he went to the pictures he'd have to stand at the back. The only thing we had to worry about, if Dad wasn't there, was that the Julia Creek larrikins might take George and get a few beers into him.

Then he married Ethel. I think she might have worked on Dalgonally. I'm not sure how they met. For the wedding, Mum contacted the dark ladies around the district and they brought cakes and simple gifts, and Dad talked to the men. They came in from the properties in their sulkies: Raven and Rosie from near Nelia, Ted and Nellie, and of course there was George and Ethel. They were all Aborigines.

Dad married them at the police station. We put a party on outside in the afternoon, and as it turned to evening we lit the carbide lights. I went around and asked what they wanted: soft drinks and things like that, and when they went out the door I remember throwing rice over them.

They had their own little quarters just away from the police station. Ethel, she'd come in the house to help Mum with the cleaning and washing. She came from a property where she had to wait on the table, and she always wore lovely white frocks.

Before they were married, Dad wrote away for the engagement ring, a red ring, and we used to say to visitors: "When you leave make sure you comment on the ring". Ethel would reply to them: "Yes, lovely ring; shines in the night Missy". That was her favourite reply: "Shines in the night, Missy". It was a coloured stone set in a proper gold ring. She was very proud of that. Dad wrote away for it to Angus and Cootes in Sydney.

George and Ethel never had any children. It's a bit hard to put age on Aboriginal people, but I think Ethel was past it. She was a lovely girl.



The young folk held a house party at the Presbytery. Dancing, singing and games took up the evening. All present had a splendid time.

George Ryan, the well-known black tracker, passed away at Julia Creek last week. George was employed at the police station for many years.

Our local ambulance is doing some

George wasn't often mounted, but if the horses were frisky, Dad would make him ride them to the creek and back again, at the double, to take some of the frisk out of them.

ON THE BACK VERANDAH of the police station, Pat would sometimes make morning tea for George. You'll find she's using a tea box as a table. The tea used to come in boxes. Pat's got my tea set which I had when I was a child – my very proud possession from when I was a little girl. I took it to Julia Creek and she used to play with it. There's a kewpie doll on the left.

You can call that photo: *Pat and her kewpie doll enjoying morning tea with George the Tracker.* There you are!

I don't remember seeing my tea set after Julia Creek. Like a lot of things that never came with you when you transferred (the police department only gave you a certain allowance), my tea set was dumped or given to somebody. The piano would be the only thing we took to Julia Creek and brought back.



Above: George Ryan with Jim Eckford (boy) beside the Julia Creek Police Station.
[Dadie Dawes, DW62, 1926]

Opposite top: Ethel Ryan, wife of Tracker George, dressed for an outing. Ethel is sporting a handkerchief and handbag, stockings, and wearing her engagement ring that "Shines in the night, Missy".
[Joff Casey, CJ01, ca 1930]

Opposite bottom: Arthur Casey (left), George Ryan, and Constable Herrington, outside Julia Creek Police Station. "Dad's stripes: he must have been Acting Sergeant then. No goats under the house – a wonder!"
[Joff Casey, CJ02, ca 1930]

Below: "Pat and her kewpie doll enjoying morning tea with George the Tracker." In her story (above), Joff is not quite correct when she says a tea box is being used as a table. The tea box (upside down on the right: "Packed in Ceylon, 5 lbs") is being used as Pat's chair. The table is a "Liqueur Highland Whiskey" crate from John Devar & Sons, Distillers, Perth, Scotland. Joff's father obviously liked his whiskey.
[Joff Casey, CJ06, 1931]





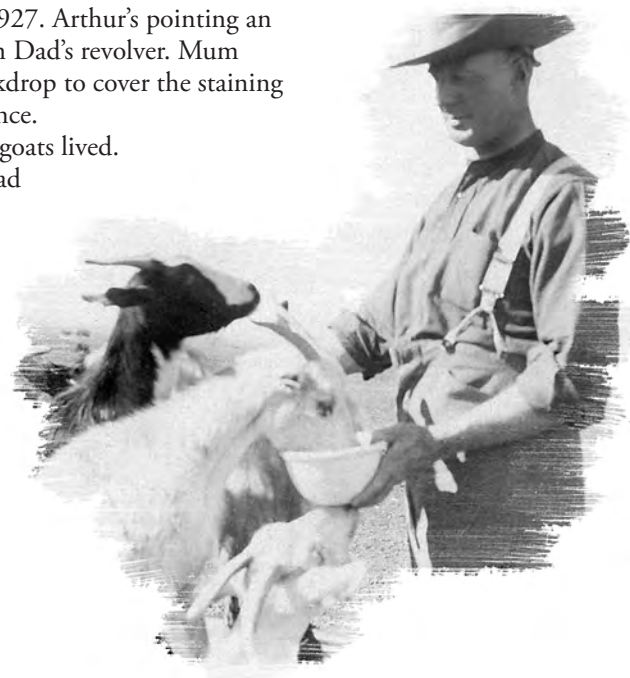
That's outside our police residence in about 1927. Arthur's pointing an empty gun. A real one though; it would have been Dad's revolver. Mum thought it was a good idea to have the tartan backdrop to cover the staining on the walls. The house needed a lot of maintenance.

Underneath the house was where the blessed goats lived. Dad was a good one on these Saanen goats. He had at least half a dozen for the milk.

I remember worrying Christ out of Ethel: *Where do kiddie goats come from?* – and she said from under the dirt. And there we were, Arthur and I, digging up the goat pen looking for kiddie goats. Teenagers and still not educated. Never knew the real answer until I saw one born down near Bally Kaeser's baker shop.

Left: Joff and Arthur about 12 months ago. Look out! Arthur's got an old revolver. 4/10/27.

Joff and Arthur Casey outside the Julia Creek Police Station, with a tartan backdrop hanging from an open window to cover the stains on the walls.
[Joff Casey, CJ08, 1927]



Above: Joff's father, Arthur, feeding his goats behind the Julia Creek Police Station.
[Joff Casey, CJ15, ca 1930]

Below: St Barnabas, Church of England, south-east corner of Mathews St and Coyne St, facing west. Joff's father was one of the instigators in the building of this church. It opened in November 1927. The Masonic Temple is off the photo on the right.
[Joff Casey, CJ04, ca 1930]

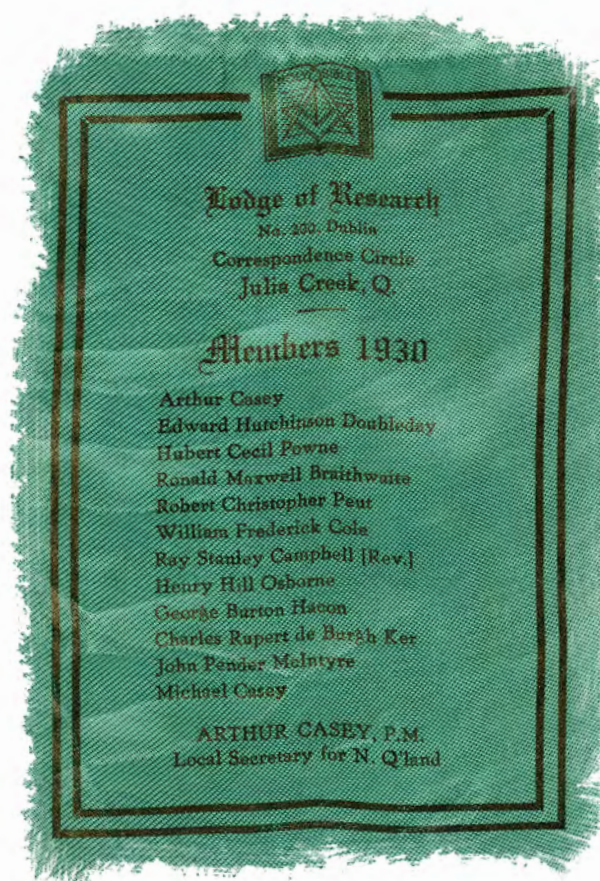


Right: List of Masonic members 1930, printed on green silk.

Arthur Casey, Edward Doubleday
Hubert Powne, Ronald Braithwaite
Robert Peut, William Cole
Ray Campbell (Rev), Henry Osborne
George Hacon, Charles Ker
John McIntyre, Michael Casey.

John McIntyre was the nephew of the explorer, Duncan McIntyre.

[Joff Casey, CJ09, 1930]



JULIA CREEK. April 14—On Friday night last, despite the threatening weather, a large body of citizens met at the School of Arts, the occasion being to show their respects and appreciation to one of our most popular young ladies, Miss Lily Stout, who for the past two years has held the position of telephonist at our local exchange. Owing to some worn-out rule of the Department, which specifies an age limit, she has had to terminate her engagement. Much comment could be levelled at the Department for their action, but as the above occasion was not for this purpose this grievance will no doubt be aired elsewhere.

During the early part of the evening, Mr. Victor Faithfull, in a few well-chosen words, presented our "Hello Girl" with a wallet of notes on behalf of the subscribers of the district, at the same time wishing her success and happiness in her future life and hoping that she achieves prosperity as easily as she won popularity during her term on the exchange. Dancing was indulged in until the early hours of the morning.

NQR: 25 Apr 1931

WELL, I CAME BACK to Julia Creek from Charters Towers High School and got a job. I was put on as telephonist at the Post Office. I took over from Lily Stout [see article, left]. You sat at the board and a lever would fall down; might be number 36 ringing. You'd put the plug in number 36, you'd have your earphones on, and you'd say: "Number please" and they would say who they wanted. A lot of calls were party-line calls to properties. For the party lines you might have several properties connected to the one pair of wires, and each property had a special code. The code letters we used were I, S, H, N, D, B, A, U, V. Each letter stood for a certain ring code. Someone might have wanted the Elliott's on 22-I (this is just an example). Well, for 22-I you put the plug into number 22 and you'd give two rings. Another property on the same party line might be at 22-S, and that would be three rings; H would be four rings; N was a long and a short; D a long and two shorts, and so on. That was how you did your coding.

Outside the Post Office we had a public phone. I think it cost tuppence – put the money in a little slot. That would ring through to us and we'd make the connection for whoever was calling.

I was telephonist from 1931 till Dad was transferred in 1932. He went to Kingaroy. My mother wasn't a very well lady at the time of Dad's transfer and she went to doctors in Brisbane. I came down to be with her and eventually I went nursing.

I had a good life in Julia Creek.

It never weighed heavily on me at all, really.

Life's a ball when you're a child.



Below: Julia Creek Post Office with 4-horse hitching rail out front, a few years after Joff worked there. The road sign reads:

Julia Creek, Speed Limit 12 miles
Richmond 103 miles
Kynuna 76 miles
Gilliat 18 miles.

The hitching rails and Gilliat sign were gone by 1951 (page 704); and the next year the Richmond sign had fallen to the ground (page 201).

[Kath Gerahty, GeK05, ca 1940]

the season and conditions much more favourable.

News has been received that Acting Sergeant Casey has been transferred to Kingaroy. Sergeant Casey, with his wife and family, proposes leaving here in about two weeks' time. Having been stationed here for the past six years, and being possessed with a courteous and obliging disposition, his departure will leave behind many staunch and true friends who freely express their congratulations on his promotion and good wishes for the future.

On Friday last the local Committee

NQR: 10 Sep 1932

The Order of the Boot

Julia Creek crime fighter, Arthur Casey, takes a statement¹ from Mr Garrity after a fracas

Fred Garrity

I AM A COMMISSION AGENT and reside with my wife and family at Julia Creek where I have lived for the past 10 years. I know a man named Roger Roy O'Sullivan.

In September last, O'Sullivan criminally defamed my wife and myself during the time I was conducting an auction sale. In consequence, I took action against him and he was committed for trial to the Circuit Court (criminal sitting) in March 1931 at Cloncurry.

CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

The Complaint of Frederick Henry Garrity, of Julia Creek, Commission Agent, made this 23rd day of September, 1930, against Roger Roy O'Sullivan.

FH Garrity states on oath:

I AM A COMMISSION AGENT carrying on business in Julia Creek. On 20 September 1930 I held an auction sale at my auction mart at Julia Creek. I was selling goods which were seized under a Warrant of Execution by a bailiff of the Magistrates Court at Julia Creek. I was requested by the Bailiff to sell on behalf of creditors. The sale commenced at 10.00 a.m. O'Sullivan arrived immediately after the sale commenced.

I was selling three lolly jars when O'Sullivan arrived and bids were being made. O'Sullivan said, addressing the public: "Don't bid for these. I can sell them to you for half the price new". I said to him: "I don't want any interruption from you". O'Sullivan said: "I can't understand people buying this trash".

He was silent for a while and then he said something which I did not catch. I said to O'Sullivan: "I have asked you before not to interrupt. Please go away". He replied: "You are only a bloody fucking bludging bastard and an imposter. You are living on your woman and prostituting her". As I commenced to sell, O'Sullivan interjected again. I then went on with the sale.

Shortly after, Sergeant Casey came to the sale. O'Sullivan commenced to abuse Sergeant Casey. It was approximately 10.30 when the Sergeant arrived and O'Sullivan's abuse continued until about 11.30. The sale closed about 11.55.

I inferred from O'Sullivan's words to me that my wife was a prostitute and that I was living on the proceeds of her earnings. The words used by O'Sullivan are detrimental to me and my business.

On advice, I did not proceed with that case.

To: Mr V.F. Faithfull, Solicitor
Date: 28 November 1930

SIR – Regarding the O'Sullivan case, your client Mr Garrity has not yet called on me. Meantime, I have reconsidered the matter. After reading again the judgement of Chubb in Rex vs Hamill (1903) I am of the opinion that your client must proceed under Sec. 686 of the Criminal Code, if at all. In the language of Mr Justice Chubb in the above case: "Redress by civil action is open to your client, and I have an intense objection to assist the redress of private grievance by operation of the criminal law".

The Crown is averse to the criminal law being used to redress private grievance. Therefore, I shall not present an indictment and am notifying the witnesses who have been bound over that the Crown does not require their attendance.

Yours faithfully,
Crown Prosecutor, Cloncurry

progress
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n

Fracas at Julia Creek

One Man Shot, Another Severely Injured

A little excitement took place on Thursday night last at 9.30 o'clock when two residents, Roger O'Sullivan and Fred Garrity, had a quarrel and then a brawl. Garrity had two ribs broken by the order of the boot – so it is alleged – as well as facial and other internal injuries. O'Sullivan received a 32 calibre revolver bullet through the stomach, traversing upwards towards the heart.

The affray started shortly after O'Sullivan arrived by train from Townsville way. On meeting Garrity a row occurred, with the consequences both men were injured to such an extent that the services of Dr. Hogg were called upon. After he attended the injured men the Cloncurry Aerial Ambulance plane was phoned to take the men to Cloncurry hospital. Dr. Hogg considered that O'Sullivan's wounds would not prove fatal.

CA: 07 Feb 1931

Mr. Fred Garrity, who for the past 11 years conducted an agency business here, leaves by tonight's train for the coast where he intends to re-enter business at an early date. Mr. Garrity, having disposed of his interests to Mr. Fred Hickman, has decided to give the western climate a spell for at least a few years. During his sojourn in Julia Creek, which has been spent in building up his agency business, he was an ardent and conscientious worker for the race club and the Chamber of Commerce, and in fact he has been instrumental in achieving many benefits for this district through his personal representations. Mrs. Garrity, who has at all times been of a wonderful assistance in her husband's achievements, will follow on in a few days hence having been detained to finalise business matters. I feel sure the community of this district join me in extending to Mr. and Mrs. Garrity and family the best wishes and continued success in their new venture.

NQR: 21 Oct 1933

1. SRS 5309/1 Box 7, Qld State Archives.

Subsequently, on several occasions when I met O'Sullivan he said to me that when he could get me in a quiet place he would bash my brains out. Because of those threats I was afraid that if he got an opportunity he would kill me or injure me in any way he could.

On the night of the 5th of February, 1931, I was in Goldring St, Julia Creek, speaking to Dr Hogg in front of Gannon's Hotel. There were a number of people about and I saw O'Sullivan standing in the hallway of the hotel, about 12 feet away from where I was standing. O'Sullivan walked over and said to me:

What about your case, Garrity? When are you going on with it?
Go away, I don't want to talk to you.
No, you bastard. You can't go on with it, can you. They've stopped it.

I again told him to go away. O'Sullivan then said:

Are you married to that woman you are living with?
Certainly I'm married.
You are only a bludger, you bastard. You are bludging on her. I'm going to knock your bloody brains out before I leave. Come out of the way of these witnesses.

He indicated a direction towards his block of land between Gannon's Hotel and Julia Creek Hotel and started walking. I walked in the same direction for several yards and stopped and said: "This is as far as I am going tonight". O'Sullivan turned and rushed me and aimed a blow with his clenched fist. I could see he was in a wild mood and I believed he would carry out his threat to cause me injury. I had a 32-calibre revolver in

my possession and when he made the blow at me I drew the revolver and fired at him point blank. He stopped for a moment and came at me again and seized me around the throat and commenced to throttle me. He is a much stronger man than I am and he forced me to the ground. He kicked me in the ribs, the stomach, and about the head.

I next remember being picked up by Horace William Downey and two other men and taken home on a lorry. I was later attended to by Dr Hogg and treated for fractured ribs and other injuries. I am suffering a good deal of pain in consequence of the injuries I received from O'Sullivan.

At no time did I give O'Sullivan any provocation for assaulting me, and I have not ever assaulted him or threatened him. I consider I was entitled to fire at him under the circumstances, to protect my life and person from injury. The revolver in question was not used by me previously and was not licensed. It was fully loaded in five chambers when I drew it on O'Sullivan.

I give this statement free and voluntarily and no inducement, threat or promise had been made or held out to me in connection with it.

Signed: *FRED GARRITY*
Witnessed: *ARTHUR CASEY*

Fred Garrity, in the "Unlawfully attempting to kill" case below, was probably acquitted. I was unable to trace any documents that gave details of the trial, if indeed the case did go to trial. For a photo of where the fight took place see p243, which shows the JC Hotel, O'Sullivan's building, and Gannon's Hotel (burnt).

JULIA CREEK, March 17—At the Police Court, Julia Creek, Frederick Henry Garrity appeared on remand with unlawfully attempting to kill one, Roger Roy O'Sullivan. Sub Inspector McCarthy appeared for the prosecution while Garrity was represented by Mr Vic Faithfull, solicitor.

Acting Sergeant Casey told the court that on the night of February 5th, he went to Garrity's house and saw him lying on a bed being attended to by Dr Hogg. He was bleeding from the head, face and arms and seemed unable to move.

"What happened? You are in a terrible state."

"I was outside Gannon's Hotel talking to Dr Hogg when O'Sullivan came up. He kept provoking me and I tried to prevent trouble and told him to go away. He kept on at me and then attacked me, so I shot him in self-defence."

On arrival at Gannon's Hotel, Sergeant Casey went upstairs to the Commercial Room where he saw Roger Roy O'Sullivan. He was sitting on the floor and was being attended by Dr Hogg, who had preceded the Sergeant from Garrity's house. O'Sullivan had a wound on the left side underneath the heart which was bleeding slightly. About 4 p.m. the next day O'Sullivan was removed by the Aerial Ambulance to Cloncurry.

At about 9.30 a.m. that day Sergeant Casey accompanied by Constable Cooke went to Garrity's home in Goldring St. He was lying in bed.

"I am continuing inquiries into the shooting of

O'Sullivan last night. Constable Cooke has found a revolver near the spot where it is said to have taken place. He would like to show it to you."

Constable Cooke handed Garrity a revolver and he examined it. Constable Cooke asked the defendant:

"Is that the revolver you used on O'Sullivan?"
"Yes."

Sergeant Casey took a statement from Garrity [reproduced above] which he typed in Garrity's presence and read to him.

Mr Faithfull told the court on behalf of his client, that Garrity had resided in Julia Creek continuously for a period of 10 years and was a peaceable and respectable citizen. O'Sullivan was regarded in Julia Creek as quarrelsome and a bully, and was reputed to be a fighting man of some ability.

Dr J.B. Hogg stated on oath that after dinner on the night of February 5th he was speaking to Garrity in front of Gannon's Hotel in Goldring St. They were standing outside the main entrance of the hotel on the kerb. After conversing for a few minutes, O'Sullivan walked out of the hotel and came up to them. They both began to call each other names. O'Sullivan was in command of himself and was laughing, teasing, and baiting Garrity. He said: "Come over here where there are no witnesses and I will do it now". O'Sullivan walked towards the Julia Creek Hotel. Dr Hogg put his hand on Garrity's shoulder and said: "Come out

of this and don't get into a row". Garrity shrugged his shoulders and walked off in the same direction as O'Sullivan, out of the doctor's sight.

Not more than a minute later the doctor heard a noise like a cracker and heard O'Sullivan call out: "I am shot" or "He has shot me" or both. The men struggled back along the footpath till they were opposite the entrance of Gannon's Hotel. O'Sullivan had Garrity on the ground, striking him with his knee and his fist. Then he saw some men pull O'Sullivan away. Garrity was lying flat on his back in the gutter. O'Sullivan went back and stamped once in Garrity's stomach. O'Sullivan then went away with the men.

The doctor heard O'Sullivan calling for him from the entrance of the hotel. He went in and found a wound near the front end of the seventh rib which appeared to be a bullet wound. O'Sullivan remained under his care and treatment until the next afternoon when he was taken to Cloncurry Hospital.

Dr Hogg examined Garrity the same night. He had bruises and abrasions of the scalp, face, ears, neck, right arm and forearm, left hand and left side of the back. He had three teeth loosened, some bruising of the stomach and one or more ribs broken on the left side at the back. Garrity remained under doctor's care and treatment till the 10th February.

Constable Cooke also gave evidence, after which accused was further remanded.

Fettler Runs Amok

JULIA CREEK, October 3—A terrible tragedy occurred about midday on Wednesday on the Great Northern Railway just beyond Julia Creek. A fettler named Thomas Connolly ran amok and shot a ganger named Thomas Boland and another fettler named Harry Stein. He then picked up Boland's dead body and placed it on a trolley, and piling sleepers on it turned the trolley into a funeral pyre. Connolly then shot himself, dying soon afterwards. Stein is in hospital in Cloncurry, but it is believed his condition is not critical.

The three men mentioned, and another named Roy Butler Thrower, comprised the Eddington gang. Their headquarters were at Eddington Siding about 8 miles beyond Julia Creek. The gang had worked on their length, in towards Julia Creek, and knocked off for lunch at a point about half a mile from the Gunjoola woolscour which is a couple of miles from town. They lifted their pump car off the line and spread a fly over it to shelter them from the hot sun. There they had lunch.

After lunch Boland, Stein and Thrower dozed. Stein and Thrower received a rude awakening.

They heard a shot and saw Connolly with a revolver in his hand. He had shot the ganger, Thomas Boland, and death must have been instantaneous. Stein was shot as he attempted to rise, and he fell back with a wound in the right side a little above the hip. Thrower rose and made off. "Don't go, it's your turn next" said Connolly. Two shots were fired at Thrower, but they missed their mark. Thrower ran for the woolscour half a mile distant to report the affair to the police at Julia Creek.

With Thrower gone and Stein lying helpless, Connolly lifted the body of Boland onto the pumper, heaped sleepers onto it, and set the whole lot on fire. Then he turned the revolver on himself.

On the receipt of Thrower's message at Julia Creek, Acting Sergeant Casey and Constable Borghardt and Dr Hogg set off by motor car for the scene of the tragedy. Stein was found in an hysterical condition and was taken to Julia Creek Bush Nursing Home. The pump car was burning fiercely and in the flames was seen Boland's body. There was a bucket of water handy, and with this and some sand, the flames were beaten down sufficiently to

permit the burning body to be pulled away. The body was badly charred and was unrecognisable.

About 25 yards away the unconscious Connolly was found bleeding from a wound in the forehead and another over the heart. He was examined by the doctor and carefully placed on a truck for conveyance to hospital, but he died before reaching the scour.

Stein was taken to Cloncurry Hospital on Thursday and is reported to be doing well.

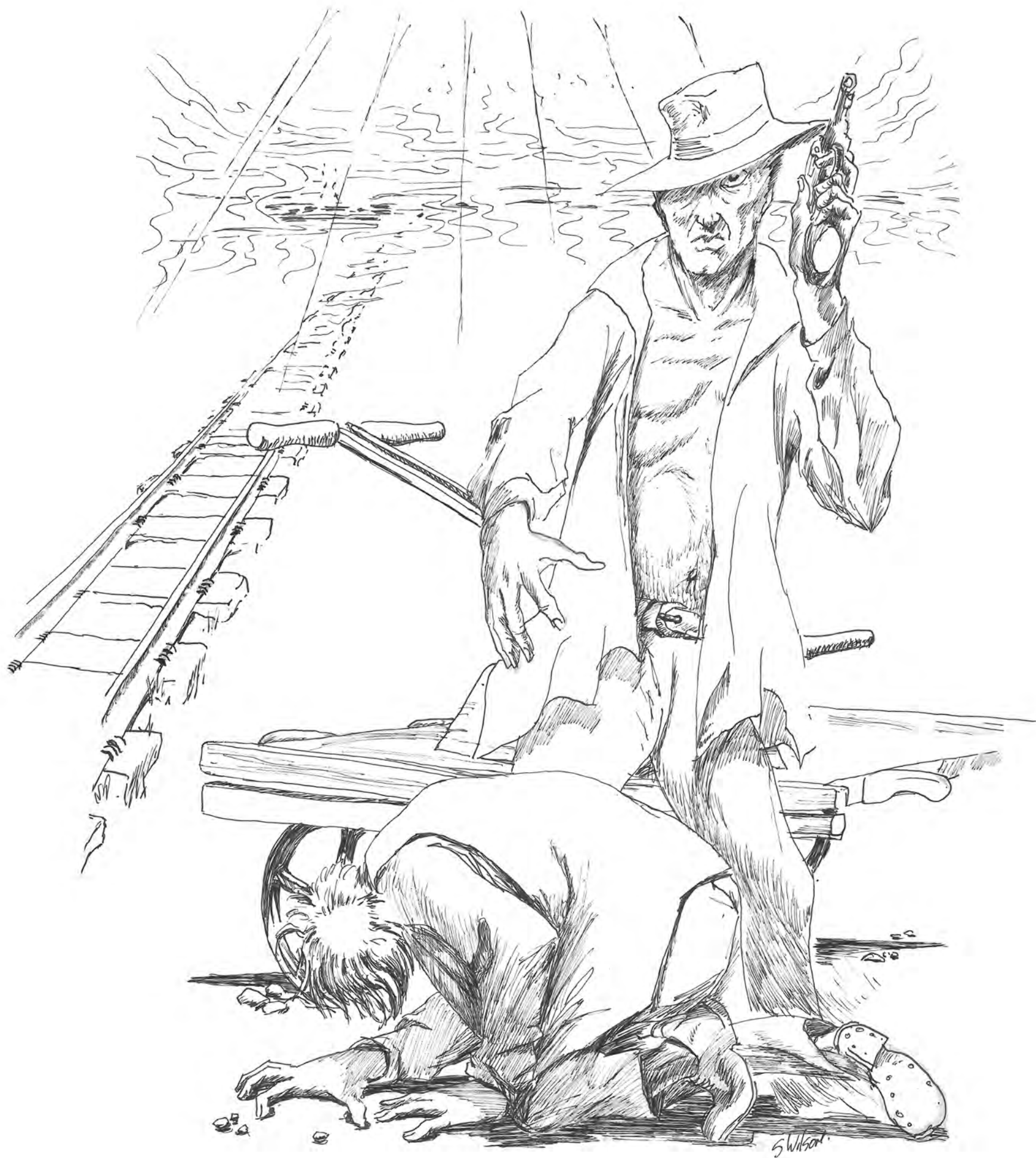
Thomas Boland was a married man, 59 years of age and a native of Ireland. He leaves a widow but no children. Thomas Connolly was a single man about 51 years of age, believed to have been a native of Warwick. The funerals take place at Julia Creek this morning. This dreadful happening has caused a sensation in the Julia Creek district, for both men were respected members of the community. It is stated Connolly had been a little strange, but there was never any indication that he ever contemplated such terrible actions. It is clearly a case of a man having run amok.

CA: 03 Oct 1931

Below: Julia Creek Police Station (left) and residence, corner of Mathews St and Burke St, as they would have looked when Arthur Casey was Acting Sergeant. The residence was later set on high blocks. In between the two windows is a sign that says "CPS Office" (Court of Petty Sessions).

[Kath Gerahty, GeK11, ca 1940]





Below: Shearers (looking like the Beverly Hillbillies) on their way to Garomna. Photo taken from in front of the railway station, looking west along Goldring St. Beside the railway line, poles carrying the telegraph line to Cloncurry disappear into the distance.

On the right is the Julia Creek Hotel where, three years earlier, One Chop had a beer before giving himself up to police. The two anecdotes (right) are typical of the stories told to me about One Chop. The real story is over the page.

There is a man beside the car in the middle distance talking to the driver. Outside the hotel a group of men are yarning. Two men, one with his hands in his pockets, are chatting, and a dog stands nearby waiting for his owner. Under the tree in the foreground are two men and a horse. An image of a small western town bubbling with life. The train has probably just arrived or departed.

Across the street from the hotel is Sanphy's Store (the sign above the car in the distance reads "Sanphy's Store" when the photo is magnified). Before this building became a store it was the first Julia Creek Hotel¹. Around 1915 a new hotel was built (the one pictured here) and the old hotel became Sanphy's Store. The store was remodelled at an unknown date, and then demolished in 1925² and replaced with the one shown on the far left of the photo at the bottom of page 236.

[Geoffrey Browne, BG11, Nov 1924]

1. See page 290.

2. NQR: 2/2/1925

YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD about One Chop Usher. I heard the story at Julia Creek when I was a kid. These two blokes were drunk. Apparently they were on the bank of the creek and they had a blue. One Chop picked up an axe and chopped the other bloke's head off, put it in a sugar bag and took it to the police station. Told the copper he'd just killed his mate, to which the copper responded: "Go away and sober up". So One Chop emptied the head out of the sugar bag to convince him. That's what I heard. It happened before my time. I don't know whether it's true or not.

GORDON LAVARACK



One Chop Usher

**Charlie Francis loses his head
'with one chop' from Usher**

THAT WOULD probably be shearers, with their swags and all the rest of it, coming out to Garomna to a job. And that's the Top Pub. That's where One Chop Usher... evidently there were two fellas drinking inside and they were a bit drunk. One challenged the other bloke to a fight. They went out near the wood heap where Usher was able to grab an axe and cut the other fellas head off – with one chop.

GEOFFREY BROWNE





A COMMON Julia Creek story I heard while researching this book concerned One Chop Usher, a man who supposedly decapitated another. I did not come across any reports in the *North Queensland Register* or the *Cloncurry Advocate* of such a murder, and I became convinced that One Chop was a rural legend, a myth of Western Queensland. To prove my theory, during a trip to Julia Creek in 2005 I intended to ask locals in other small outback towns whether they had heard the story of One Chop.

But my theory was wrong. One of the last people I chewed the fat with for this book, Don Dewar, brought up the story of One Chop and showed me a single page (all that remained) of an undated letter to his mother, written by an unknown person who was obviously in Julia Creek at the time of the murder:

... You may not remember Dan Usher cutting old Charlie Francis' head off with an axe. It was after the races. I know I was not very old. Tom Quilty's bullocks had just come into Julia Creek to be trucked, and Dan Usher was the camp cook. He was camped with Quilty near the creek. Anyhow, Quilty and Usher had a falling out and Usher crossed over the creek and camped with Charlie Francis and together they consumed a bottle of rum.

Quilty and some others were in the pub when Dan walked in from the camp and had a few beers. The police sergeant was there (somehow I think it could have been Joff's father) and Dan said to him: "You'd better go down and collect old Charlie Francis. I just chopped his head off". They never took any notice of him, but he kept on about it until finally Quilty said to the Sergeant: "Hop in the car and I'll drive you down. I think he means it". Old Charlie was there all right, with his head joined to his body by about an inch of skin.

Anyhow, if the time is suitable and my health holds out okay, I'll come up for the bangtail muster. A lot of people who'll be there would have known your father and mother...

The "Joff" mentioned in the letter is Joff Casey. Her father was Acting Sergeant in Julia Creek from 1926-32. But given that the murder occurred in 1921, the writer of the letter is incorrect in thinking that Joff's father might have been the policeman dealing with the matter.

However, the letter did give me enough information to confirm the story. Once I knew the name of the victim I looked for him in the Queensland death records to find the date of his death, and that enabled me to do a thorough search of police archives and newspaper stories around that date.

Usher was acquitted of the murder charge, unjustly I believe. As Sub-Inspector O'Connor writes: "The witnesses called are mostly men with no fixed place of abode and there appears an inclination to favour the accused".

The Commissioner of Police¹
Brisbane
25th July 1921

SIR – Referring to my telegrams of 15th and 23rd instant, I have the honour to report that as far as can be ascertained, the man Charles Albert Francis, who was killed at Julia Creek on the night of the 13th ultimo by Daniel McCourt Usher, was a single man, a shearer by occupation, about 45 years of age, about 5' 10" in height, about 18 stone in weight, very dark complexion, believed to have a dark strain in him. He had been about the Cloncurry and Julia Creek districts for at least seven or eight years, and although there were no papers found amongst his belongings it is believed he was a native of Bogga Billa, NSW. His description answers that of a man of same name since enquired for by telegram on behalf of his sister residing at Goondiwindi.

Daniel Usher, aged 30 years, a drover and station hand, a native of Croydon, Queensland, and single, had been camped close to Francis on the bore drain about 2 miles from Julia Creek township for some weeks prior to the 13th instant. Francis camped in a tent by himself and had a sulky close by, and Usher camped in a tent with a man named Bovey and another man named George Dalley. Crouch, Keating and others were camping in bough sheds round about, and all close together.

On the morning of the 13th instant, Francis and Usher went into Julia Creek township early, followed later by Dalley at about 11 a.m. The others remained at camp. The three men met in the township and had several drinks together. Francis left for the camp, riding, at about 4.15 p.m., taking a fair quantity of rations with him as well as a bottle of rum. Usher and Dalley followed later, also riding, and arrived at the camp about 5.30 p.m. Apparently, all three men on returning to camp were fairly sober. Some of the men in camp had some of the rum taken home by Francis, but this has mostly been denied.

About 5.30 p.m., when Usher is said to have stated his intention of going out on horseback to try and find a plains turkey (he had in his hand a single barrel, breech-loading gun), Francis came out of his tent and accused Usher of taking his rum, and called Usher a bastard, and used disgusting language with reference to Usher's mother. Usher denied taking the rum. Francis approached Usher and struck him several times and they got into holds. At this time they were abusing each other and calling each other vile names. The gun fell from Usher's hand and was picked up by Francis who threatened to use it, but apparently he made no attempt to do so. Francis was an active man of about 18 stone in weight and Usher is only between 9 and 10 stones in weight. Both men continued to abuse each other in the vilest language, Francis frequently directing his language to Usher's mother whom he had never seen.

The row appeared to subside and the two men were a few yards apart when Usher was seen to suddenly pick up an axe, which was lying near the camp woodheap, and chop Francis on the right side of the neck towards the back. The latter fell on his face and appeared to die instantly, this occurring about 6 p.m. Dalley then rushed for a horse with the intention of going for the police, but Keating called out to him that he had better take Usher with him. He did so, both riding.

ONE CHOP USHER: two mates (good mates, but very drunk) were camped north of town at the dam on the creek. One fella had this axe and said it was sharp, but the other bloke reckoned:

Not all that sharp.

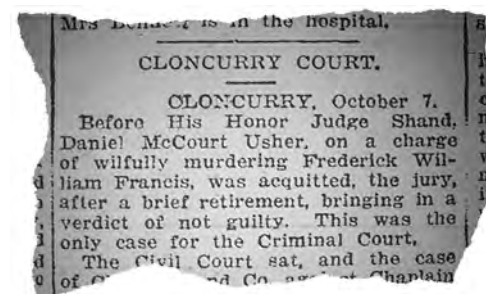
Sharp enough to cut your bloody head off.

Bullshit.

Well, put your head down there on that block.

So he did – and bang! Both of them were drunk. It was back in the real early times of Julia Creek.

HAROLD WALTERS



NQR: 10 Oct 1921

1. SRS4190/1/272-257N, Qld State Archives.

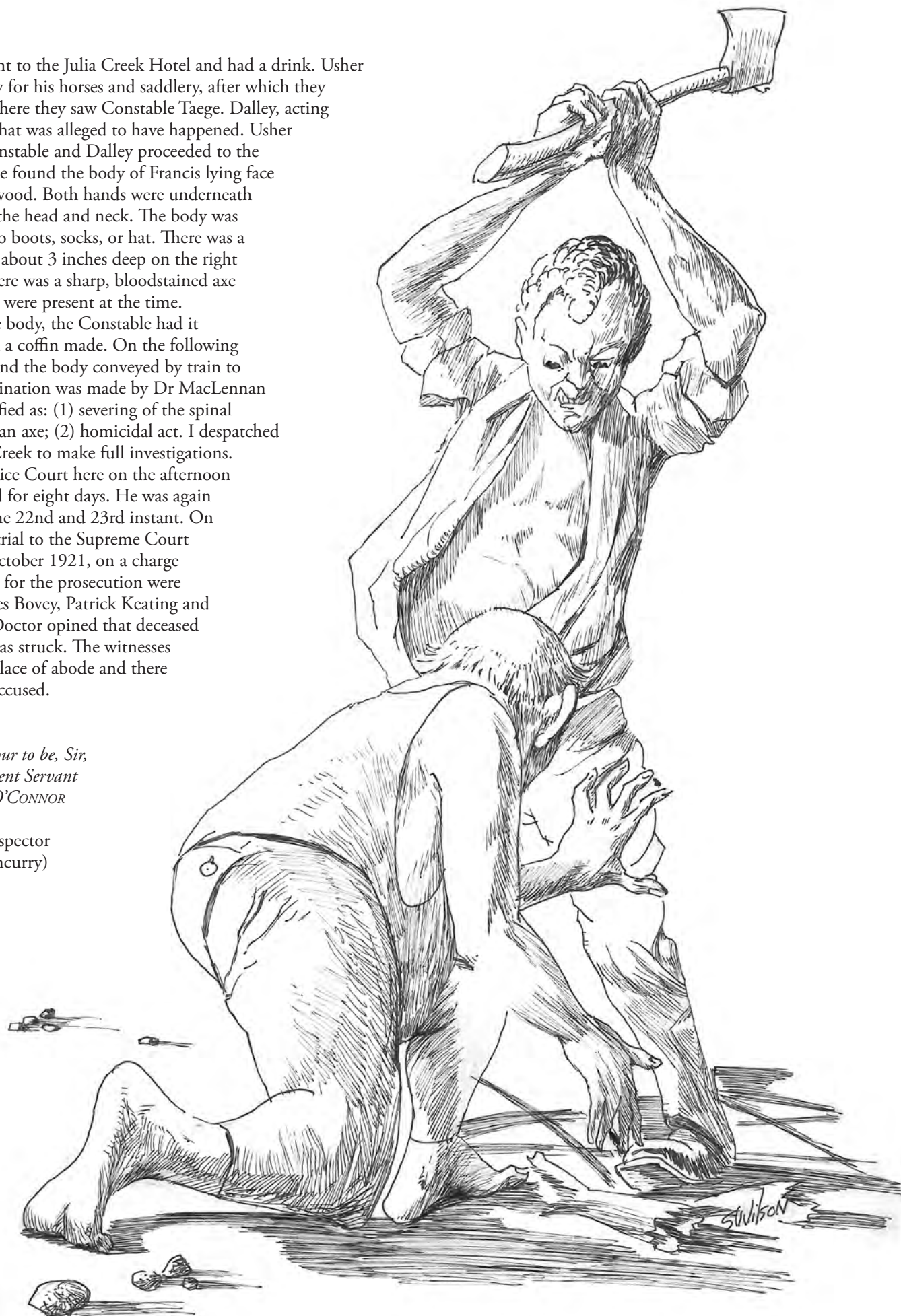
On arrival at Julia Creek they went to the Julia Creek Hotel and had a drink. Usher made out a receipt in favour of Dalley for his horses and saddlery, after which they went to the police station at 8 p.m. where they saw Constable Taege. Dalley, acting as spokesman, made a statement of what was alleged to have happened. Usher was placed in the lock-up and the Constable and Dalley proceeded to the camp, where, on arrival, the Constable found the body of Francis lying face downwards and across two pieces of wood. Both hands were underneath the body, and blood was underneath the head and neck. The body was dressed in a flannel shirt and pants, no boots, socks, or hat. There was a fresh wound about 5 inches long and about 3 inches deep on the right side of the neck towards the back. There was a sharp, bloodstained axe lying close beside. Keating and others were present at the time.

After a careful examination of the body, the Constable had it conveyed to Julia Creek where he had a coffin made. On the following night, the 14th, he had the prisoner and the body conveyed by train to Cloncurry where a postmortem examination was made by Dr MacLennan on the 15th. Cause of death was certified as: (1) severing of the spinal column and spinal cord of neck with an axe; (2) homicidal act. I despatched Senior Sergeant McNamara to Julia Creek to make full investigations.

Usher was brought before the Police Court here on the afternoon of the 15th instant and was remanded for eight days. He was again brought before the Police Court on the 22nd and 23rd instant. On the latter date he was committed for trial to the Supreme Court to be held at Cloncurry on the 5th October 1921, on a charge of wilful murder. The witnesses called for the prosecution were Constable Taege, George Dalley, James Bovey, Patrick Keating and Dr MacLennan. In his evidence the Doctor opined that deceased was in a stooping position when he was struck. The witnesses called are mostly men with no fixed place of abode and there appears an inclination to favour the accused.

*I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your Obedient Servant
W. O'CONNOR*

Sub-Inspector
(Cloncurry)



Pam Faithfull

VIC FAITHFULL, PAUL'S FATHER, was from a large Cloncurry family and his brothers all had strange names like Hedly and Folliard. Of all the Faithfull brothers the only one I really knew was Follie. He lived in Cloncurry and I knew his children because I played tennis with them. Follie had a holiday house on Magnetic Island and Paul used to talk about going there for holidays as a little boy. In later years Follie retired to Magnetic Island and died there. But as for Vic, I never met him. All I know is that he virtually fell apart when his wife died. He spent a short time with his cousin, Joey Mathews, on Hilton Park, and then he boarded with Rita Byrne and Frank Forde. From then on, things pretty much went downhill.

Vic was married in about 1929 at St Abigail's in Julia Creek. He married Ann Baxter. She'd gone out there as a lady's companion, or something like that, and that's how she met Vic. They had a stillborn daughter first. In 1932 Paul came along.

Paul did all his primary school in Julia Creek. In Sub-Junior he went to Nudgee as a boarder and was there five years. He did Senior twice – he stayed back to play football. After school he went to teacher training college. He finished his training and was holidaying on South Molle Island with friends when he got word that his father had passed away. Paul didn't make it to the funeral. They were able to contact him in time, but Father Devereux made the decision that

because it was summer they couldn't wait. Both his parents are buried at Julia Creek.

Vic worked as a solicitor right to the end. As Rita tells it, when his wife died he became a workaholic – and almost an alcoholic. On his way home he'd go from his office to the pub for a drink, and often she would have to escort him the rest of the way.

Soon after Vic died, Paul was transferred to Cloncurry. That was his first posting as a primary school teacher. I met him playing tennis. He joined a tennis club and I happened to be in that club. He was only in Cloncurry six months and then he was transferred to Julia Creek for 18 months and then to Kajabbi. He was teaching at Kajabbi when we married in December 1955.



Just Bloody Do It!

The son of Julia Creek's only solicitor becomes an athletic champion

Paul asked Father Devereux, the Catholic priest in Julia Creek, would he perform our wedding ceremony. Father Devereux had been a close family friend to the Faithfulls. He'd been executor of Vic's will. But Father Devereux refused because Paul was marrying a non-Catholic. When I say he refused, he just didn't answer our letter. And that was as good as a refusal.

All his life, his whole life, Paul was a very committed Catholic. If we went on holidays – wherever we went – the first thing he'd do would be to check out where the local church was so that we could go to Sunday Mass. No matter where, he never missed Mass. We'd be 5 miles from Cloncurry on my parents' property, visiting them for Christmas, and if there was a storm he'd make sure the car was on the church side of Middle Creek, halfway to town, so as to be certain to get to Mass on Sunday.

I was Church of England and I've never changed my religion even though I've reared four Catholic daughters, taught for 15 years in a Catholic school, and attended Mass more regularly in the Catholic Church than I have in my own. To me, being a Christian is more important than the variety. But Father Devereux thought differently. There was a reluctance... well, he just didn't answer Paul's letter.

When we didn't hear anything we approached Father Brill in Cloncurry. And he didn't have any problems. He knew I was a Christian; he played bowls with Dad. In those days if Catholics married a non-Catholic there was a general consensus that they didn't marry in front of the altar. Well, Father Brill dispensed with all that and we had a normal Catholic wedding. He was that sort of progressive person.

After we married we went to Millwood, a small farming district west of Toowoomba. There was no opportunity at Millwood for Paul to race – no athletics as such – so he played rugby league and rugby union. In 1956 he met a fellow who was thoroughly involved in foot racing. Soon after, they started an athletics club in Toowoomba and we moved there a few years later.

Paul was extremely modest. He never sought accolades for his athletic achievements, he just set

monotonously slow on most trains.

Mr. Victor Faithfull, who had practised as solicitor here for many years, passed away on Sunday last. It was a great blow to his many friends, and our town will be the poorer for the loss of his profession. His son Paul was holidaying on South Molle Island and is now returning to look after his father's affairs. There was some difficulty in communicating with Paul owing to his isolation from the coast.

The cortege moved from the Catholic Church after divine service by the Rev. Father Devereux. Mr. Faithfull, who had been President of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. for many years, was given a soldier's funeral.

Our sympathy goes out to his son Paul in this great loss of his last loving parent.

The superintendent of the Q.A.T.

no serious damage was done.

Mr. Vic Faithfull has advised that his son Paul, who attends St. Joseph's College, Nudgee, has won the cup for the best open athlete for 1951. Paul surprised by winning the 100 yards, 220 yards and broad jump, then being second in the 440, 880 and mile. We congratulate Paul on his effort.

Last Wednesday night no pictures were shown owing to some trouble with equipment. Miss Rita Byrne, however, took the opportunity to hold a dance and this was quite a success. A. B.

NQR: 22 Sep 1951



CA: 18 Nov 1929

NQR: 31 Jan 1953

his mind to do something. I remember one of his favourite sayings, his response to athletes who complained about the number of training repetitions he set for them – “Just bloody do it!”

PAUL PASSED AWAY IN JANUARY 2005. Eighteen months before, he went to see a doctor about a pain in his back. It was diagnosed as cancer. He felt some urgency to go back to Julia Creek. He'd never known the full story about his sister, and he didn't really know the final resting place of his parents. Their graves were unmarked.

While he was still reasonably healthy we organised an extended trip. We booked a motor home and were planning to visit Magnetic Island and see his Uncle Follie's grave. Paul had a lot to do with his Uncle Follie. Then we planned to go to Julia Creek and Cloncurry.

We never thought he'd beat the cancer, but he seemed to be holding his own. And then out of nowhere came all sorts of secondaries – brain tumours and cancer in the bones – which involved Paul in a lot of radiation treatment. His condition deteriorated, so we flew to Mount Isa, hired a car, and had a five-day trip rather than a three-week trip.

We spent two days in Julia Creek. The sole purpose of going back was to locate the graves of his parents and to put headstones on them. Shirley Eckford had done all the ground work for that.

Going back to Julia Creek was closure for Paul – to revisit his home town one final time before he passed on.



Queensland runner, Paul Faithfull, wins 'Gift' sprinting classic

Queensland schoolteacher Paul Faithfull added his name to the growing list on the honor roll of the Macksville Athletic Club when he won the Macksville Gift on Monday.

Faithfull took out the Gift's £200 first prize when he narrowly, but convincingly, defeated last year's Gift winner Bob Baker of Goulburn, a 'machine' finish.

Another schoolteacher, Walsh, of Glebe, was

Coir, international who

wards young Craig as a champion of the future.

"He has everything that makes a middle distance runner," he commented.

Mr. Bowring said if the youngster persisted with his training he would test any middle distance runner in Australia.

Boardman 3 (P. Lawson, penalised 1 yd.), 12.6; No. 6, P. Faithfull 1, C. R. King 2, E. Butters 3, 12.8. FINAL: P. Faithfull 1, R. J. Baker 2, J. Walsh 3, time 12.6.

Above: Cutting from a Macksville newspaper.
[Pam Faithfull, FaP05, 1957]

Opposite: Vic Faithfull.
[Pam Faithfull, FaP01, ca 1920]

Below: Paul Faithfull, right, winning the Macksville Gift.
[Pam Faithfull, FaP08, 1957]



Them Goats Won't Pull That

Herb Stainkey

Stories from the Shaw and Stainkey families¹
tell of goats, goat teams and tough men

WHEN MY BROTHER ALF AND I first had the billy goat team – 14 goats hitched to a waggon – we lived in Richmond. We carted wood for the town at 15 shillings a load, about 30 cwt altogether. We also carted water for the town; three casks of water with 50 gallons in each cask. We were paid two shillings a load for that. We only yoked six billy goats to pull the three casks of water, but we yoked 14 goats for the wood as it was a lot bigger load. The wood came from 6 miles out of town. We'd go out in the morning and come back in the afternoon. Only on Saturdays and Sundays did we cart wood because it took us all day and we were still at school. Carting water only took a few hours so we could do that in the afternoons during the week.

Things were very hard in those days and it was a struggle for a family to live. All the money we earned went to our mother. Just a little bit came back to us as pocket money.

Some of the goats in our team were pretty strong. One of them in a competition pulled 9 cwt 27 lbs on his own. Sand was weighed out and put on the cart. He pulled it a certain distance and the organisers called out: "Stop and give another goat a chance", but there wasn't another goat could even move it, so we won. We also won the cart race and the saddle

race. Twenty-two goats were entered for the two events and we had to draw for places. My brother Alf drew in the first 11 and I drew in the second. We won both. Alf got a saddle as prize for his race, and I got 10 shillings cash for mine. Then they had to get up a race for the other children – as Alf and I were the champions – to give them a chance at a prize.

Dad was a blacksmith and wheelwright by trade. He built the goat waggon for us the same as a horse-team waggon. Exactly – with the two shafts, the draw rods, and the crop-sticks behind the goats to keep the chains apart. The shafters had britchens on, and when we sang out "whoa" they used to prop-in just like horses and pull the whole team up.

We could call the billy goats any direction we wanted. Didn't have to lead them. We could sit on top of the waggon and sing out "Wee waa back" and they'd come over, and "Gee off" and they'd go the other way. Sing out "Whoa" and they'd stop. You could go along the road just like a bullock team.

It took us a long time to break-in the leaders. The near-side leader was exceptional; we could call him anywhere. We tried for years to get another goat like him, but we couldn't actually find one as smart. The off-side leader used to answer, but he wasn't nearly as good as the near-side leader.



OUR FAMILY MOVED FROM RICHMOND when I was about 14. We went to Winton. Most of our belongings were shifted with the goat team. My mother and father went in a buggy with two horses, but us kids – myself and four brothers and a sister – had most of the stuff on the billy goat waggon. At night we camped in tents beside the road. Fourteen miles out of Richmond we were held up for a week, caught by rain, and then we started on again. It took us three weeks to get to Winton, doing 12 to 14 miles a day.

Three miles out of Winton a crowd of people came to see us. They'd never heard of such a big goat team. They were quite excited. Getting along the streets in town we had a terrible job. People were wanting to take photos and were singing out "Whoa". And that's what the team did. Reacting to the sound, the leaders used to prop-in and stop.

There weren't as many goat races in Winton as there were in Richmond. We won the races just the same – the saddle races – but we didn't do any competition scratch pulling; although one time we made some money that way. We used to cart groceries from the railway goods shed to the store, Gaughan and Young. We were at the goods shed this day with six goats in the team and a ton of stores on the waggon. My father was with us at the time. A chap out from the city said to him:

Them goats won't pull that.

Yes they will. We've got two goats in the team could shift that by themselves.

The city chap bet a certain amount of money. We unhooked the other four and left these two goats in the harness. They pulled it 5 yards. The chap looked at them and said: "Well, there's seven goats here – the six in the team and myself". Star and Garter were the names of the two goats; named after the hotel in Richmond that gave them to us when they were very young.

We wouldn't part with any of the goats. We kept them all until they passed away. We didn't want nobody else getting hold of them.

Alf and I were the first that had the team. The younger ones took it over after we went out to work.



Above: Harry Stainkey, Herb's father, builder of the goat waggon and harness.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST24, ca 1920]

Stainkey Family

- ↪ HARRY ♥ ROSE
 - ↪ Alf ♥ Nellie
 - ↪ Harry ♥ Dot Downey (sister of Norm)
 - ↪ Hazel ♥ Garney Evans
- ↪ Herb ♥ 1920 Mabel Shaw
 - ↪ Fagan ♥ 1942 Elsie
 - ↪ Trevor
- ↪ Emily
- ↪ Bill
- ↪ George
- ↪ Joe

1. The stories of Herb Stainkey, Alf Stainkey, and Mabel Shaw come from a tape recording made by Fagan Stainkey in the 1970s. The recordings are now with Fagan's son, Trevor Stainkey.

Opposite: Alf & Herb Stainkey's goat team at Winton. Fourteen goats hitched to a load of wood in front of Gaughan and Young's store.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST03, ca 1907]

Shaw Family

- ↪ MARTHA ♥ 1891 HARRY SUTCLIFFE
- ↪ CHUMMY ♥ 1898 CLARA
 - ↪ Mabel ♥ Herb Stainkey (see left)
 - ↪ Johnny ♥ 1928 Violet

I WAS BORN IN HUGHENDEN IN 1893. Alf was the oldest and I was the second oldest. Emily was next to me. My other brothers were Bill, George and Joe.

From Hughenden we went across to Aramac and Clermont for five years, and then when I was about 7 we came back and lived in Prairie. I started going to school in Prairie, then we went to Richmond where we had the goat team.

My father built a house in Richmond made of bulrushes on the roof and split timber on the walls, lined with bag inside. The bulrushes came from artesian bores. They last donkey's years if they're done properly. Like a thatch; same as they do with the grass roofs they used to build in England.

In the bulrush house we had an open fire for cooking: two posts in the ground and a rail across the top. Wire hooks hung down to boil the water. When the coals were ready, well, you put some underneath the camp oven and some on top of the lid. A camp oven was a cast iron thing with three legs on the bottom and a lid on top. All the roast meat, cakes and bread; everything was made in the camp oven. The bread was set at night. It used to rise overnight. In the morning you put it in the camp oven and let it rise again. Then you'd put coals on top and underneath to cook it. Very good bread.

It was from Richmond that we moved to Winton in 1907 with the goat waggon. One time I went back to Richmond from Winton, 160 miles by pushbike. Alf and I, we left at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It was winter, very cold, and we had no blankets with us, only a bit of tucker, a waterbag, and a billycan to make a drop of tea. We got within 50 miles of Richmond and lay down in a drain for a bit of sleep. It was that cold we pulled grass over the top of us; Flinders grass, soft. We woke up and had to set fire to the grass to get our hands warm. Our waterbags were frozen and we couldn't get a drink, so we got on our bikes and landed in Richmond just about sunrise.

I was 14 when I got my first job – on Eddington Station. They had 110,000 sheep and 25,000 head of cattle. Every morning I got up

at half-past 4 and rounded up 80 head of horses to have them in the yard by daylight. It was about a mile square, the paddock, and I just followed the fence around and cracked my whip. When daylight came all the horses headed into the yard, they were that used to it. There'd be trouble if they weren't in on time.

Same thing every day: get the horses, bring the cows in, go for the killers, collect the mail to take to the outstations, wash the buggy harness and grease it, wash my own saddle and grease it, wash my saddle cloth out.

There was plenty to do. You were kept going all day.

I started off at 10 shillings a week. I was there 12 months before I got a rise of 5 shillings. I stopped another 12 months, then I left Eddington and went to Marathon. They had 25 musterers on Marathon, and 100,000 sheep. Mustering took up six months of the year: shifting stock from different paddocks, lamb marking, sorting the wethers from the ewes. They shored once a year for six weeks. Twenty-eight shearers shored roughly 2000 bales, maybe a few more. About £18 to £20 a bale, top lines.

I learnt to shear on Marathon. The manager gave me a learner's pen. I shored at Marathon, Maxwellton, then Eddington. The three stations followed each other. One company owned all of them. I was only a learner at Marathon; got up to about a hundred. Shored up to 120 at Maxwellton and 130 at Eddington. A gun shearer would be shearing up to 200.

All my brothers learnt to shear. Shored all different places, wherever we could get in: Richmond, Hughenden, Winton. Then we went out on our own, contract shearing. Four of us brothers shored and the other brother classed. We had our own plant – four stands we had – and the engine. We moved the plant on a motor lorry. The only fellas we employed were a few picker-ups and wool rollers.

When we weren't shearing we used to cut logs. We were cutting sleepers for the railway and we were very new at the game. There's an interesting yarn about our cutting. You had to bore into the tree with a brace and bit to see that it was sound before you felled it. Bill, he was boring the trees and marking them for us to cut down. We'd been cutting in the morning, and in the afternoon Bill came back and he says: "Hey, Herb, there's somebody else cutting over there. All the fallen trees are only just cut today". But it was the ones we'd cut in the morning. Bill was going around in circles.



Above: Herb Stainkey.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST29, ca 1913]

THE STORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SHAW, SUTCLIFFE & STAINKEY FAMILIES

Prepared by Vern Lever-Shaw

JOHN WILLIAM SHAW SNR, "Chummy", born September 1875 at Huddersfield, Yorkshire, married Clara Ann Day (born 1876 at Almondbury, Yorkshire) in June 1898. They had two children, Mabel Freda and John William, "Johnny". Together with the adopted youth Billy Lever, the Shaw family migrated to Australia on the SS Dorset.

Harry Sutcliffe, a dairyman at the Wall Bank dairy farm at Sale, Manchester, married Chummy's sister, Martha, in 1891. The Sutcliffe family with their two children, Doris and Annie, migrated to Australia on the SS Orama. The Sutcliffes had been nominated to Australia by Chummy's wife, Clara.

Herbert Stainkey married Chummy's daughter, Mabel, on 9 February 1920 at the Methodist Church in Cloncurry.

The three families became entwined by marriage and their land dealings in the Julia Creek–Richmond area. The following is a brief history of the three families.

1912: Chummy Shaw arrived in Australia with his family on 21 April and began business at 552 Queen St, Petrie Bight, Brisbane, as a barber/tobacconist. Billy Lever-Shaw worked as the soap-boy and general rouseabout. The family lived in the residence above the shop.

1914: The Sutcliffes arrived in Brisbane on 6 July aboard the SS Orama. Harry had suffered badly from bronchitis in England and was told to seek warmer climes.

Chummy had been watching the loads of baled wool go past his shopfront to the ships moored in the Brisbane River at Petrie Bight, and decided that wool was where the future lay. He lodged a ballot application for a grazing lease.

Chummy won the ballot – a 25,026 acre Grazing Homestead Lease, GH 2982, north of Julia Creek. The Shaws and the Sutcliffes left Brisbane to take up the lease. The property, which became known as Maria Downs, was named after one of Chummy's sisters who had stayed in England.

1916: Harry Sutcliffe applied for, and won, his own grazing lease whilst working on Maria Downs as a sheep hand for Chummy. The lease (GH 3805, south of Julia Creek) was approved for a 28-year term at an annual renewable rental of £134/04/08. Harry named the property Huddersfield, after his hometown in England.

1917: Billy Lever-Shaw made application for GH 4161, a property of 22,012 acres known as Woodlands. Chummy arranged the application through

Billy to overcome the restriction that a person was only allowed to apply for one parcel of balloted land.

1918: Alf Stainkey (Herb's brother) won GH 4306, a property near Richmond. He named it Rose Downs, assumed to be in honour of his mother.

1920: Herb Stainkey married Mabel Shaw in the Methodist Church at Cloncurry.

1921: Herb and Mabel Stainkey had a son, Herbert John Fagan, their only child. Fagan (as he was known) married Elsie Pollard in the Holy Trinity Church, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, in 1942. In 1950 they moved out to Julia Creek to work on Alf Stainkey's property, St Elmo. Not being content with the arrangement, they moved into Julia Creek where Fagan worked as a mechanic for Max Burns until he started his own garage. The Mayne Milk Bar next door was run by Elsie. When their children reached school age they sold up and moved to Charters Towers. Fagan developed the successful Mexican Caravan Park.

1923: Billy Lever-Shaw allegedly was coerced to accept £500 to transfer Woodlands to Chummy's son, Johnny.

1924: Harry and Martha Sutcliffe left Huddersfield and moved to Townsville.

1925: Johnny Shaw, transferred Woodlands to his brother-in-law, Herb Stainkey, for £7000, a profit of £6500 in two years.

Clara Shaw won Fairlea, a property of 19,530 acres adjoining Woodlands. The story is alleged that two parties, Clara Shaw and Tom Dalling, contested the ballot for Fairlea and Tom Dalling won. However, Chummy told him it wasn't good land as it regularly flooded. Dalling forfeited the property and the lease was subsequently registered to the second contestant, Chummy's wife Clara.

1926: Maria Downs sold by Chummy Shaw to Joe Stainkey. Clara Shaw moved into Charters Towers and lived at Taraville in Church St. It was a further 20 years before her husband, Chummy, joined her permanently in Charters Towers. Chummy preferred the bush and stayed on Fairlea.

1928: Johnny Shaw married Violet Haughtey. Violet was the daughter of the Charters Towers Police Sergeant and met Johnny through her parents when the Shaw family came to town. After they married, Johnny and Violet went to live on Fairlea.

Chummy wasn't paying his son a wage (board and keep only, as he was wont to do), and when Violet began questioning this aspect she fell out with both Clara and Chummy, which resulted in her moving back to her parents in Charters Towers.

She returned to the Julia Creek area after Johnny was employed at the woolscour. They lived in town at 28 Mathews St. Both were frugal. House maintenance was non-existent and the house fell into disrepair. Gossip said they both slept on the floor for many years after their bed collapsed. Johnny eventually became a wardsman at the Julia Creek Hospital and worked there until he retired.

It has been said that Johnny "was a lovely man and quite a character".

1929: Herb Stainkey sold Woodlands to Eric Cribb from Ipswich for £14,500. With the proceeds, Herbert and Mabel purchased a house at 116 Leckie St, Kedron, in Brisbane. They went on a voyage to England in 1930 with their son Fagan and Mabel's parents, Chummy and Clara. On their return, Mabel, who preferred the city, remained in the new home at Kedron to raise their son. Herb went back to shearing to earn an income and was absent for long periods.

1930: Harry Sutcliffe died at age 61 and was buried at Townsville. His wife, Martha, and daughter, Nancy, moved back to Huddersfield.

1946: Chummy Shaw moved to Taraville, Charters Towers, to join his wife.

1954: Clara Shaw died aged 78 and was buried at Charters Towers.

1957: Chummy Shaw died aged 82 and was buried alongside his wife. Chummy was a particularly stubborn man, addicted to smoking, and in his final years was moved to Eventide in Charters Towers. One evening he accidentally set alight his mosquito net and suffered third degree burns from which he didn't recover.

1965: Martha Sutcliffe died aged 93 and was buried at Townsville. She had a very different personality from her brother, Chummy. She was gregarious and kindly.

1982: Johnny Shaw died and was buried in the Julia Creek cemetery.

2003: Violet Shaw died in the Julia Creek Hospital aged 99. She died childless.

We used to get 1/6 a log. I think the contractor got five shillings and he used to pay us 1/6. The logs had to be 7' 9" long and clear of sap. We cut 20 to 30 a day, crosscut saw by hand, and barked them and just left them on the ground. The carter came around and snigged them out of the bush with horses; snigged them to a place where he could get his team. Then he loaded them on his waggon and took them to a railway siding. The logs went to a mill where they'd get two sleepers out of each one.

Only in the slack time when there was no shearing did we cut sleepers. Mostly we followed shearing and that's how we made our money until we drew a selection outside of Richmond, Rose Downs. Even then we continued with the contract shearing to pay for the first mob of sheep to put on the place.

Rose Downs was 10,000 acres, 24 miles out of Richmond. We drew it bare; lived in a bulrush humpy like the one Dad had built in town. The place was burnt out the first year we were there. There was no grass left after the fire, only a little bit near a creek that ran through the property. Just enough to keep the horses going. We had no sheep at that time; we didn't even have it fenced.

Before we got the lease for Rose Downs we had to ring fence it. To get it fenced we carted posts 30-odd mile, from 8 mile the other side of Richmond and then 24 mile out to Rose Downs, on a table-top waggon drawn by 14 horses. We carried around 200 posts each load.

We ring fenced about 6 to 8 miles, I should say, at 160 posts to the mile. All crowbar and shovel. Gidya posts cut with an axe. Later on we subdivided and added more fences as we got sheep on it.

We bought our first lot of sheep in 1919 – 900 ewes. We only paid half a crown a head for them. They were old ewes and we got them cheap.

Right: Rose Stainkey (wife of Harry Stainkey)
after whom Rose Downs was named.

This photo has several interesting features. It mimics a studio photo, but I suspect it was taken on Rose Downs. If you look closely you can see that Rose is standing on a dirt floor. Behind her is a backdrop to hide the interior of the house, with what looks like a bamboo pole at the bottom.

Notice Rose's quite large, masculine hands, and the equally masculine wrist watch worn outside the sleeve. Was it a special watch that she wanted to highlight? Her dress is plain, her hair roughly brushed into shape; a woman in humble circumstances readying herself for a portrait as best she could.

[Trevor Stainkey, ST12, ca 1920]



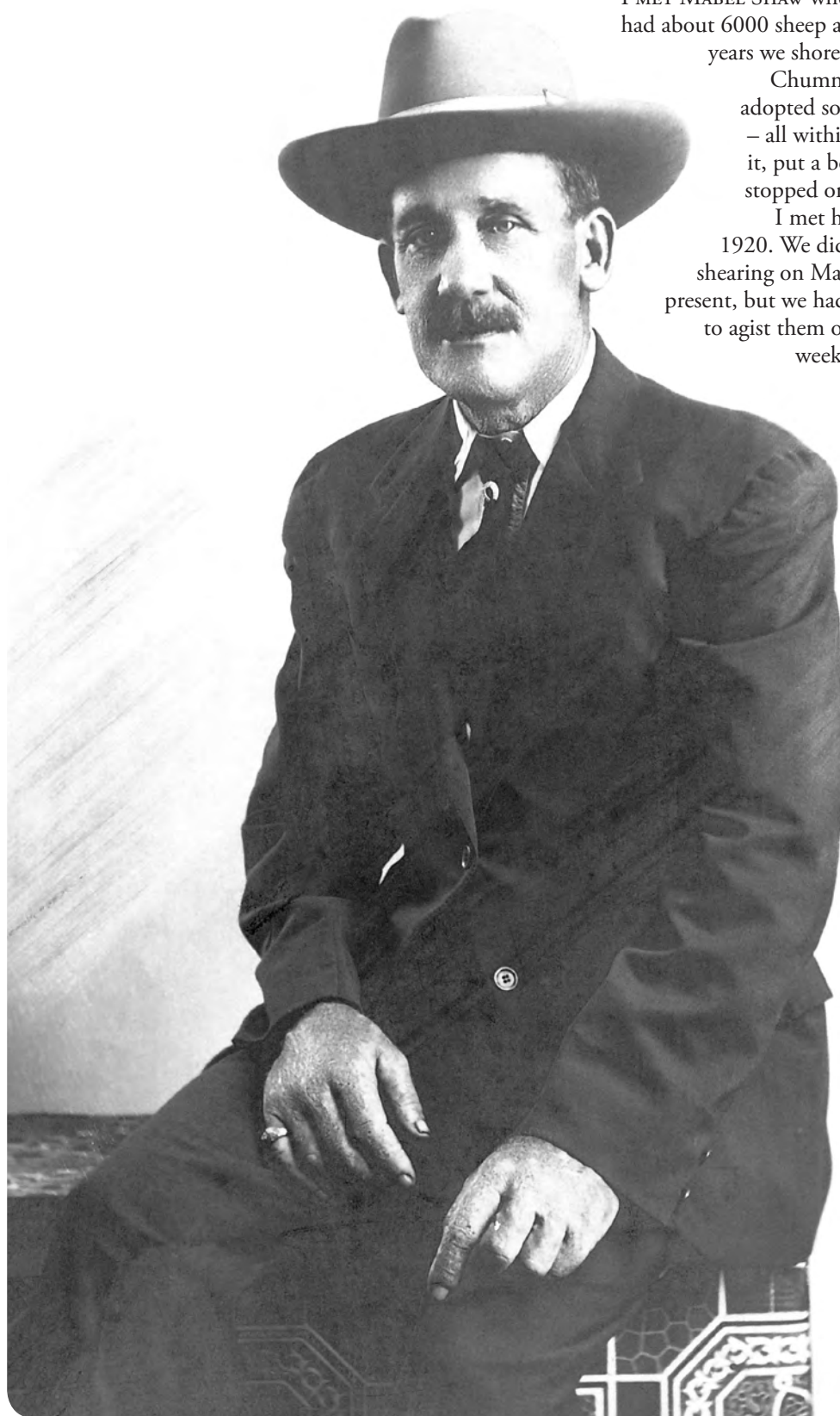
I MET MABEL SHAW when I went to shear on Maria Downs for her father, Chummy. He had about 6000 sheep and he had his own shearing shed with four stands. For a good few years we shored Maria sheep.

Chummy was pretty fortunate. He drew Maria Downs first; then his adopted son, Billy, won Woodlands; and then Chummy's wife drew Fairlea – all within a few years. He had Fairlea at the last. Put a good homestead on it, put a bore down on it, and a shearing shed and one thing and another. He stopped on Fairlea until he left the land.

I met his daughter, Mabel, when she was 17. I was 25. We married in 1920. We didn't see much of each other before we were married, just when I was shearing on Maria. When we got married Chummy gave us Fairlea for a wedding present, but we had to work it off. He also gave us 2000 wethers, but he wanted us to agist them on Maria (his property) and he wanted me to work for him (£2 a week) instead of paying agistment. I wanted to go with my brothers contract shearing and put somebody else on Maria and pay *them* £2 a week, but Chummy said no, he wouldn't have it. He reckoned someone else wouldn't work as hard as I did. So I said: "Well, take the sheep back". I didn't want them. We had a bloody row and Mabel and I left Fairlea. We moved back to Rose Downs.

Chummy was tough, I tell you. He was a tough man. Before we had the row I'd been working all week for him, dawn to dark, and Sunday he says: "I'll take you down to Punchbowl fishing". That's on the Flinders River near the Fairlea fence, see. And when we got our lines ready to go fishing he adds: "We'll take some wire, a brace and bit, and we'll put up a wire gate while we're there". We never done no fishing at all. Was bloody sundown when we finished the fence. Bugger that. I wasn't going "fishing" anymore with him.

One time while we were still on Fairlea, Chummy was bringing us some flour and sugar from Maria. He crossed the Flinders with a buggy and two horses. It was dark when he left the river and he had about 9 miles to go, following the fence and aiming for the light at our homestead so as not to get lost. Mabel and I went to bed and turned the light off, not realising he was coming. He lost the fence in the dark and got out of the buggy to look for it. Found it all right, but when he found the fence he couldn't find the buggy. So he went back to the fence and walked towards the house. He got there at daylight. I rode back 6 miles and the buggy was only 30 yards off the fence. The horses were still in harness. They'd been standing there all night.



Left: Chummy Shaw.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST11, ca 1920]

"Where the name Chummy came from, was 'new chum'. English, see, in the outback, and a bloody idiot. You see the tiny horseshoe on his tie? That's got diamonds all the way round it." (Trevor Stainkey)



After a couple of years, Chummy offered us Woodlands. We said we'd take it as long as we paid for it and were left on our own. We didn't want any more gifts with strings attached.

We stayed on Woodlands from about 1925 until the end of 1929 when we sold out to a fella named Cribb for £14,500, with 6000 sheep and a few cows and horses. We didn't get the whole amount because we partly financed the sale ourselves. As security we had a second mortgage over the property. We went to Brisbane and bought a house at Kedron¹.

Chummy was going on a trip to England and we decided to go with him. It was in England we got the bad news that Woodlands had been taken off Cribb by the bank. The bank held the first mortgage. When the property was sold, not enough money was left over to cover our second mortgage. We got done out of £6500. Completely ruined the holiday and cut it much shorter than it would have been.

Cribb never made good the money.



1. Jim Birch mentions this house. See top of page 618, second column.

The weather needs no commenting upon as the past week has been one of continuous, glorious cool weather. This week is race week and folks from near and far are flocking into town. It is anticipated that the races will eclipse all previous meetings. The nominations are of outstanding quality and the weather is ideal. The only thing lacking is that our Committee has not yet ventured into erecting a grandstand, which would make Julia Creek race meetings second to none in this district.

Country as well as town folks will be well catered for in amusements. Eckfords have been fortunate in securing some very special high-class moving pictures. There will be the usual race ball, and a grand concert by the juvenile section, with a dance and tasty supper to follow. Proceeds will be in aid of a shelter shed at the school. Three days of races, and super attractions at night, means that Dad will have to come forth with the cheque book and forget, for the time being, the present state of the wool market.

Not only have we numerous attractions for the races, at the moment the town is decorated with all sorts of calico signs advertising the wares of southern business houses who evidently make it a practice of being present at race meetings of any distinction. These vendors are allowed to sell at all hours, while our local storekeepers are compelled to close their doors at the appointed time. Further, and the most amusing part about it, the public flock to these vendors for their wants, and no doubt pay inflated prices for what they could get locally of the same quality – if not better.

Woodlands, a property in this district owned by the Stainkey brothers, has been sold to Mr. Cribb of Eurimpy. I understand the price received is looked upon as a record for the district.

NQR: 06 Jul 1929



Photograph of John W^m Shaw (Sen)

Founder of

Maria Downs, Julia Creek
26,000 acres 1913

Woodlands, Nelia 1915
23,000 acres

Fairlea, Nelia 1915
28,000 acres

Ronald Plains, Richmond
16,000 acres – approx 1928
[1928 is written over 1914]

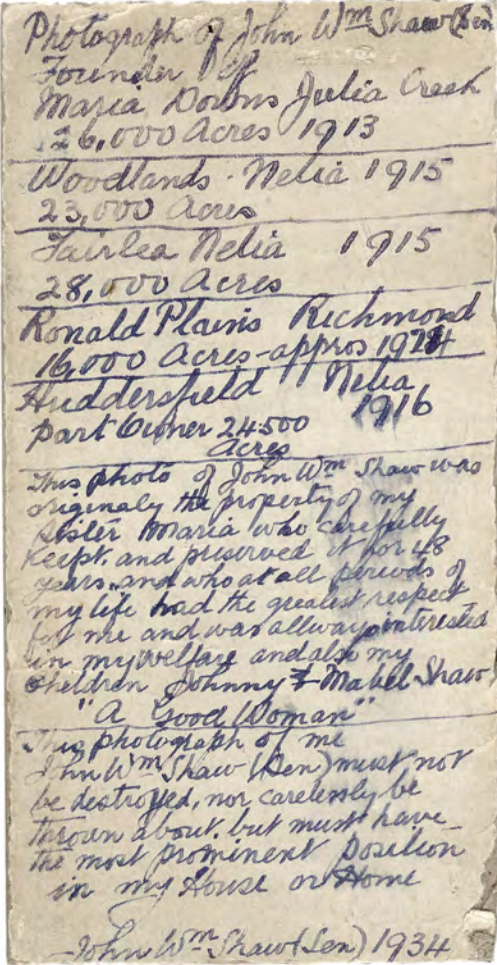
Huddersfield, Nelia
part owner 24,500 acres, 1916

This photo of John Wm Shaw was originally the property of my sister, Maria, who carefully kept and preserved it for 48 years, and who at all periods of my life had the greatest respect for me and was always interested in my welfare, and also my children, Johnny and Mabel Shaw.

"A Good Woman"

This photograph of me, John W^m Shaw (Sen), must not be destroyed, nor carelessly be thrown about, but must have the most prominent position in my house or home.

John W^m Shaw (Sen) 1934.





Opposite, left: John William Shaw, aged 9, later known as Chummy.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST16, 1884]

Opposite, right: On a piece of paper kept with the photo of himself aged 9, Chummy described the photo and listed his properties. Some of the property dates given by Chummy are different from those given by Vern Lever-Shaw (page 283).
[Trevor Stainkey, ST20, 1934]

Left: Stainkey family on their cruise to England. From left: Fagan, Herb, Mabel. The photo is not what it seems. The decking and ocean are actually a painted backdrop.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST47, 14/9/1930]

Mr. John William Shaw was born in Huddersfield, Yorkshire, England on September 18, 1875, and when he died recently at Charters Towers where he had been living in retirement, he was in his 82nd year. Shrewd by nature, he was forthright and vigorous when occasion demanded it. A desire for travel and thirst for enquiry led him into the pastoral and wool production field in North-West Queensland.

Until he and his wife, son and daughter sailed from England in 1912 he was a barber. In Australia he continued at his trade until 1914 when he drew the Maria Downs block of 25,000 acres. Later Woodlands was acquired, and when Mrs. Shaw was the successful applicant for the Fairlea block, the total holdings of the family comprised 80,000 acres. Mr. Shaw sold Maria Downs in 1924 and several years later disposed of Woodlands. About that time he purchased a residence in Charters Towers. Mrs. Shaw resided there until her death in September 1954, while Mr. Shaw continued in residence at Fairlea, managing the property until it was sold some nine years ago.

The maximum number of sheep owned by Mr. Shaw and his family amounted to 15,000. Participation in the wool boom of 1950-51 did not fall to his lot, and in the days before the boom, a top line of greasy wool realised only 10d per lb. Low prices, depression, drought, fire, pestilence - Mr. Shaw knew them well.

A son, John (Julia Creek), and daughter, Mabel (Mrs. Herb Stainkey, Brisbane) survive their parents, together with a grandson, Fagan Stainkey, and four great grandchildren, all residents of Charters Towers.

It is not easy to describe the quality of men like J. W. Shaw. In breadth of outlook he was one of those men who were a little bigger than the rest of the race. Something has gone out of the country with the disappearance of his particular type.

Boy, did my brothers eat 'em **Alf Stainkey**

WE LOOKED AT A MOB OF SHEEP owned by Harry Stevens, but they didn't suit us. They were supposed to be six-tooth and they were full-mouth, see. I said to Harry:

They're no good to us.
Well, buy me weaners then. What'll you give me for 'em?
Ah... a pound a head.

Harry gave us 10 days to shift them, but we took delivery straight away.

We were coming along the road. I went ahead 2 miles with a horse and buggy – an old buckboard – and I pulled up on this bit of a gidya hill. The sheep were coming behind and I could see a big blue storm in front. Before the camp was a gully the sheep had to cross and I thought: *50 points and that gully will come down and we'll never get them over.* Sure enough, it started to rain. I walked back 2 miles to help with the sheep and got them to the gully. Had to throw some in to get them started. We got them to the other side and into a break. Georgie came over to me and said: "You sure you're on a hill here? The water's getting close to the break". Anyhow, it didn't get up to the break. What I didn't know was that the gully was flowing on both sides of the hill.

That night it rained 4 inches, and the next morning when we got up we were on a bloody island. We couldn't get the sheep away, so we stopped there all day. We went to the bloke on the next property, Fred Propsting on Barando, and asked would he sell us a bit of flour. He gave us a pound. Luckily, redbeaks¹ were nesting and we collected their eggs to make pancakes. And boy, did my brothers eat 'em; eat 'em as fast as I could cook 'em.

The next day we marched the sheep off to the second crossing of the gully and made a bridge. Cut down two long gum trees and prised them into the water from one bank to the other. It wasn't very far across, about 16 or 17 feet. Then we cut stakes and laid them sideways over the gums – making a bridge, y'see. Pulled a lump of wire from a fence and twisted it around the stakes. When we got the bridge together, we put a calico break on each side as an alley for the sheep to run between. And we pulled up grass so that their feet wouldn't get caught in the gaps. You could pull it up real easy and dirt would come with it. We rammed the dirt and grass in between the stakes.

From the gully it was five or six hundred yards to the river which was running 12 foot deep, and too wide to cross with a bridge, so we went to see Fred again and borrowed a boat.



We made two yards near the river: a little wee pen close to the bank and a much bigger yard further back. We filled the little pen out of the yard. Two of us were catching sheep from the pen, and two of us were in the boat. We'd grab a sheep from the pen, push it down the bank, and heave it on board. Didn't matter if they were standing up or laying on their backs, long as we got them in. We had a fly sheet we threw over the boat so they couldn't jump out. Then we'd row across the river to a third yard on the other side.

That evening we had half over, and the next day the other half.

When the mob was yarded on the "good" side of the river, we still had the buggy and horses on the wrong side. We took the wheels off the buggy and put them in the boat, and then laid the buggy sideways and tied it down. I swam the horses. Next day we set off for Rose Downs.

We floated 2800 sheep across that river. It took about 80 trips. The biggest load we counted was 42. Afterwards we reckoned we'd never go back that way again – but we did.



1. Probably the swamp hen; it has a bright red beak.

Castles in the air **Mabel Shaw**

ICAME FROM ENGLAND TO BRISBANE on the SS Dorset when I was 12. I came with my mother and father, my brother Johnny, and my adopted brother Billy Lever. Took us seven and a half weeks. It was April 1912.

Father had a barber's business in England and a tobacconist shop adjoining it. He used to get a penny ha'penny for a shave and threepence for a haircut. Mother used to tend to a small shop. She sold umbrellas, new umbrellas, nothing else *but* umbrellas. They saved what they could. I was told they had about eight hundred and odd pounds when we arrived in Australia after they'd paid the fare. We didn't know anybody in Australia that would emigrate us. Nobody.

My father paid full fare out here for his whole family, and when he retired he never drew the pension. Like he said to me on occasions: "I don't owe Australia anything".

Father bought a business at Petrie Bight in Brisbane, a hairdressing and barber's business like he had in England. From his shop window he used to see wool waggons rolling past with bales of wool on, and he thought: *That's where the money lies in Australia*. But he didn't know a thing about sheep, and so at night, twice a week, he attended tech to learn about wool and wool classing.

Then there was some land coming open at Julia Creek – balloted – and he put in for one. Got one first time he tried. He sold his business and we went to live in a house at Paddington for three months while we waited for his sister, Martha, to come from England. When Martha and Harry Sutcliffe arrived with their family we got ready to leave, together with another family, the Sweeneys. As far as I remember that was their name.



Left: The Shaw family before leaving England.
From left: Chummy, Maria Shaw (Chummy's sister,
after whom Maria Downs was named), Johnny, Mabel,
Billy Lever (adopted son), Clara.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST09, ca 1910]

Opposite page: Group of Julia Creek identities at Eddington waterhole.
Back row from left: Alf Stainkey, Norm Downey, Garney Evans (on shoulders),
Harry Stainkey (Alf's son, married Norm Downey's sister, Dot), Roy Stainkey.
Front Row: Vince Blanch, Horace Downey (Norm's father), Paul Faithfull.

Norm thinks that the white patch over his father's right eye is a piece of cotton wool, put there to protect an already bung eye from being further troubled by flies.
[Dot Stainkey, SD02, ca 1950]

On the way, the women folk broke the journey at Charters Towers for three weeks till the men arranged accommodation. When we got to Julia Creek all the school children were on the platform at the station to meet and greet us. I'd say the day we arrived was about the time war was declared, 1914. There was a hotel near the station and a few other buildings. I myself thought the hotel was our house where we were going to live. It was just like a big house and I thought it was to be our home.

The men folk had readied a small hut in Julia Creek for when we arrived, but there were three families. We would never have all fitted into it, so some of the men had to camp outside. The hotel proprietor was real good; he found rooms for the women folk. Mr Scott his name was.

We were in Julia Creek, about... oh, I suppose a month. Say a month.

The men folk bought some horses from Townsville and a waggon from Manfred Downs. We were all excited, ready to go out to Maria Downs, this sheep property. Well, it wasn't called Maria Downs then. My father named it Maria after his sister, his favourite sister back in England.

It would be about October when we arrived on Maria. I wouldn't say it was real hot, but the wet season was starting to work up, and with it the discomfort of heat and mud. I disliked it from the day I arrived. From the very hour I arrived I never liked it. I never liked the life at all. My mother was the same. She moved to Charters Towers in 1926 when we sold Maria to Alf and Joe Stainkey. She went without my father; and even though he owned sheep properties for 20 more years, she never came back.

I think it took us about a week all told to do the 31 miles from Julia Creek to the gates on Manfred Downs where you go through into Maria. Father didn't know a thing about horses. Even Uncle Harry who'd had a farm in England – but a farm in England's far different from a farm out here – I doubt if he knew anything about a horse, no more than Father did. But anyway, it took us about a week, and when we got to the property Father said: "Well, this is it". We stopped near the only improvement, a bore head and a bore drain. I was sent for a bucket of water and saw something surprising – a big snake, the first I'd ever seen. I got the water and went back to the others. We camped under the waggon. That was our home for a month.

We weren't the only ones without a home. Arthur Paine on Burwood never had a home. I don't think any of our neighbours had homes at the start. Burwood, Wyaldra, Auckland Downs, Argyle: they were all drawn around the same time, those blocks. Resumptions off Manfred Downs after it was cut up into small selections. A big resumption.

Right: Julia Creek Hotel, north-west corner of Goldring St and Julia St, before it became Sanphy's store. This is the hotel that Mabel thought was to be her home.

In 1908 when the railway came through (and Julia Creek came into existence) this building was moved into town from the Cobb & Co staging post near the dam site about a mile north of town. Today there is a stone crossing at the site of the dam.

Mr Sanphy demolished the hotel in 1925 and replaced it with a store (page 274). By the early 1930s Samuel Allen & Sons had a much larger store on this site.

Matilda Alice Graham, the woman who gave a bread recipe to Mabel's mother (see over page), is the only person identified. She is the woman on the porch with her hand around the pole. The man next to her is probably her husband, John Graham, and the

two girls in front are almost certainly her daughters Grace (right) and Gladys, who later married Roy Hampton.

This photo is thought to be dated around 1915, as on 16 November of that year J.F. Scott transferred the lease to E.D. Clifford. A more accurate date might be obtained from when the motor cycle, LM454, was first registered.

Other interesting aspects of this photo are the wooden spoked car wheels, and the 6-horse hitching rail. The pub obviously expected more customers than the Post Office, which 30 years later, and with Julia Creek having a much greater population, needed only a 4-horse hitching rail (page 269).

The Australian flag in the photo is in the possession of Dadie Dawes. [Dadie Dawes, DW40, ca 1915]





Our waggon was our home until the men folk bought a tin hut in Julia Creek from a Mr Pether. "Humpy" we used to call it – a tin humpy. It was pulled down and brought out to Maria. However, when they got it built they could see that it wouldn't keep three families, so the Sweeneys moved away and Mr Sweeney went to work with the railway.

Three and a half years we poked along in Humpy. We got a proper house then – "Big House".

When we first lived in Humpy the women folk didn't know how to bake bread. Mrs Alice Graham in Julia Creek sent out instructions. Whether my mother followed them correctly, I don't know. She put in a whole packet of yeast. It was terrible bread, but we had to eat it because we had nothing else. One batch, the little pigs ate it all. They ate every bit of it. Mr Scott, the hotel proprietor, he sent out two or three loaves with the mailman to tide us over. After that we started sending to Cloncurry for bread. It was like a rock when we got it, it was that long coming.

About 3 miles from Humpy was where the mailman made his deliveries. Always the night before, once a week, we prepared to go and meet him. He had a coach, something like a Cobb & Co style.

After I'd been on Maria about six weeks, I felt I wanted to go somewhere. The men said they were taking the waggon to Julia Creek to get supplies and I begged to go, saying I'd do the cooking for them. We saw the mailman pass us on his way home to Julia Creek. He passed us again on his next trip as he was coming back – and we still hadn't got to town. It took us nearly a week as I remember. The trouble was the men catching and managing the horses. They weren't used to it.

Whenever we went into Julia Creek we never went without a load. You'd have to take something in no matter what it was, even if it was just a stack of wood to give to someone. You'd have to put something on that waggon. Father was very particular about putting the waggon to good use.

*Dear Auntie
I have not time to write a
letter this time so I sent
you a Photo of our Mail
Coach. That is what we
look forward to seeing on
mail days. It was taken before
we was here but it is still the same*

*Love
from
Mabel*



Uncle Harry and his family stayed with us on Maria about two years, until he drew a block and named it Huddersfield after the town in Yorkshire where he was born. Some people tried 50 times and didn't get one; but, like my father, Uncle Harry drew a block of land the first time he tried.

Johnny, my brother, he attended school at Julia Creek for a short time, and later at Charters Towers. He went away while we were living in Humpy. My mother didn't want to send him, but my father said he had to have some education.

My own education finished before I got to Julia Creek.



Left: Johnny Shaw.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST06, ca 1920]

Opposite: Mail coach on the Maria Downs-Julia Creek run. The initials H. W. D. stand for Henry William Donnelly, who appears on the 1921 electoral roll as a mail contractor.

Mabel Shaw's writing (opposite top) on the reverse of the photo.

[Trevor Stainkey, ST36, 10/12/1913]

OLD BILL SMITH,
 he came to Maria from Manfred Downs.
 He'd been on Manfred all his life practically.
 He was only a young man when he started there
 and when they broke up Manfred he had nowhere to go.
 Father said he could come and work for us on Maria if he liked.
 And he came.

Old Bill was very fond of Billy Trousers, a white cockatoo.
 No matter if it bit him,
 he'd say it was the boys that irritated it.
 He liked the bird,
 and if he was a bit off colour it'd perch alongside his bed
 and keep him company.

Other than filling the copper,
 bringing the wood into the kitchen and making the tea,
 Bill didn't have many jobs.

He used to drink his tea cold
 and when the men came to the kitchen
 he'd throw it out and leave the room.
 He couldn't stand others being in his domain;
 he just couldn't stand them.

I think Bill went a bit funny.
 I remember him saying,
 when I bathed Fagan, when he thought I couldn't hear,
 "What's she going to do wi' child?
 Must be going to drowned him".

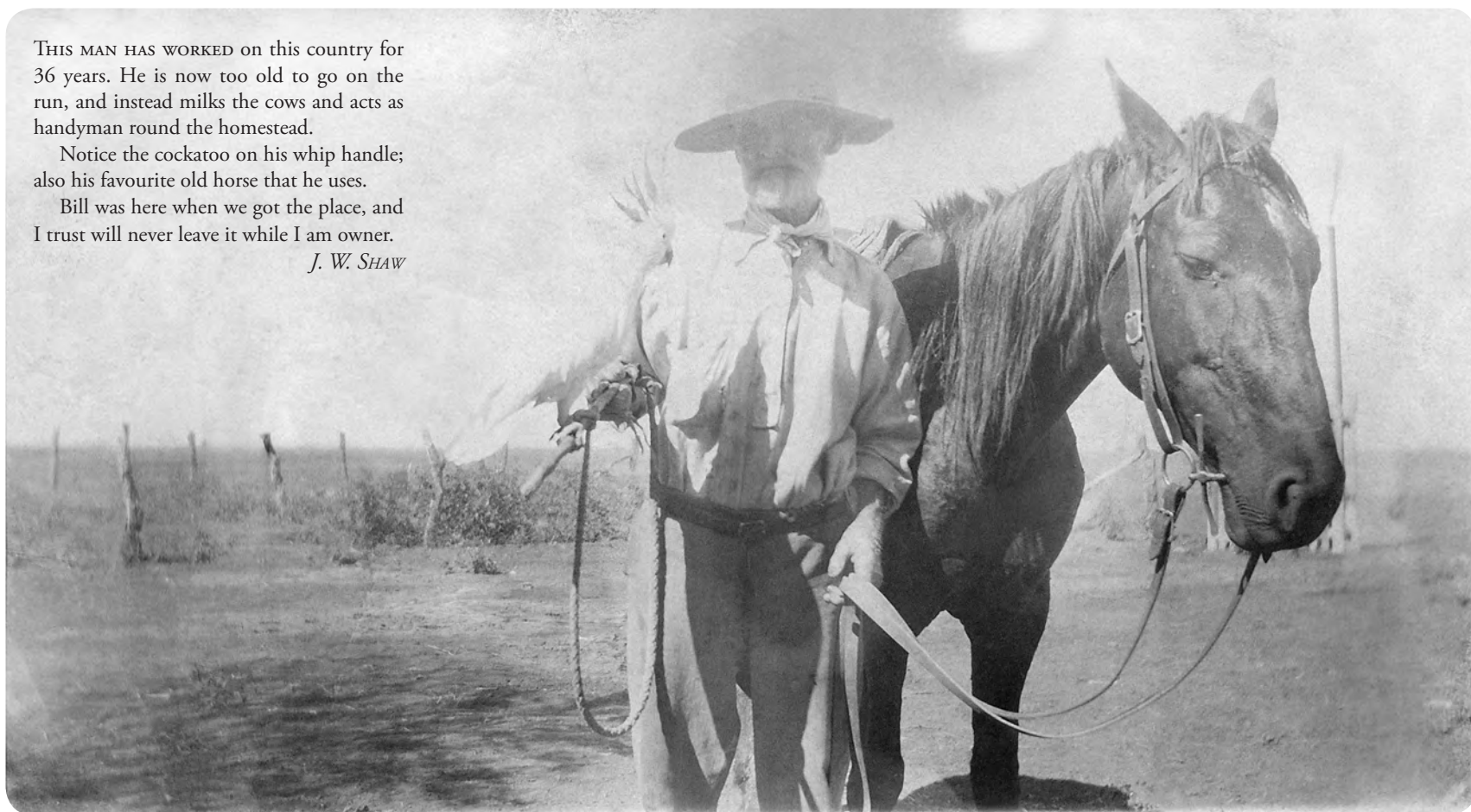
Bill was about 70 when he came to us. He stayed until he died at 83.

THIS MAN HAS WORKED on this country for
 36 years. He is now too old to go on the
 run, and instead milks the cows and acts as
 handyman round the homestead.

Notice the cockatoo on his whip handle;
 also his favourite old horse that he uses.

Bill was here when we got the place, and
 I trust will never leave it while I am owner.

J. W. SHAW



*a friend, and I trust will
 while I am owner J.W. Shaw*

ALTHOUGH I SAID I NEVER LIKED the life on Maria,
 I did enjoy parts of it.
 Going to the bore for my bath
 I used to sing at the top of my voice.

And I was always building castles in the air, y'know:
 what I was gonna do when I got some money,
 what I was gonna do...



Right: Mabel (with baby's dummy
 in her hand) and son Fagan.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST25, 1920]

Opposite: Bill Smith on Maria Downs with
 his favourite horse and his cockatoo, Billy
 Trousers, perched on his whip handle.

On the back of the photo Chummy Shaw
 wrote a few lines about Bill.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST44, ca 1920]

Women know women **Elsie Stainkey**

MY HUSBAND, FAGAN, was a bloody good motor mechanic, and it wasn't very long after we came to Julia Creek, maybe a year or so, that he went to work for Max Burns. I remember Dew Drop Inn, that double-storey house of Max's beside the workshop. We were sitting on the grass at the front of the house: Max and Mrs Burns, Fagan and I, this traveller (a stranger to me), and somebody else. I got the shock of my life. I hadn't been long in Julia Creek – a Brisbane girl, very sheltered. Boy, did I have my eyes opened.

We're sitting there, I didn't know what was going on, and Mrs Burns came out with: "I'm not playing second pussy to anybody, Max". I was real embarrassed because I'd never heard anybody speak like that before. I thought: *Crikey, what the hell have we got into*. Mrs Burns was quite nice, but she was straight forward like that. I rather liked her.

I didn't like Max. I didn't like being propositioned. Max offered me a bed, more or less. I had a feeling. I knew the wife of the previous mechanic¹. She wasn't rough, but I think she could have been persuaded – y'know what I mean? Women know women. I had a feeling that Max put it to her. She was a nice sort of a girl, but I thought...

When Max found out that Fagan was a mechanic, he offered him a job and Fagan accepted. Max had a flat that he rented out. He came to where we were staying and said to me something like: "I always offer a flat to my mechanic – and to his wife". The implication was that the flat was there and it had its compensations. Well! I'm a woman, and even though I hadn't been around I knew when things were put to me and when they weren't. I looked Max straight in the face: "Listen to me, Mr Burns. My husband might be working for you, but by God I'm not. I live in my own house with my own family". I thought: *You old so-n-so*. He was always very pleasant to me after that; don't get me wrong. He never said a word out of place. He was just trying it on I suppose. He was a man.

I WAS BORN 4 SEPTEMBER 1921 IN BRISBANE. I went to a state school at Woolloowin and started at a dressmaking shop when I was 13. When I was 15 I went out with a girl from work and we met a few boys. Fagan Stainkey was one of them.

Fagan's family had been on a property they owned outside Julia Creek called Woodlands. They shifted from there to Brisbane when Fagan was 10. He had to be educated, and it was an excuse for his mother to get away from the bush.



Above: Dew Drop Inn, the Burns' residence in Burke St, before it burnt down in 1954. The "second pussy" conversation happened on the lawn at the front. On the right is Max Burns' Julia Creek Engineering Works, now the Town & Country Club. [Joy Burns, J41, ca 1952]

Opposite, top: Fagan & Elsie Stainkey, Brisbane. [Elsie Stainkey, SE02, 1942]

Opposite, bottom: Fagan Stainkey's garage, Burke St, soon after construction (there is no sign writing). Plume petrol bowser in front. This building became the Blue Bird Cafe (the second one of that name), and later, Ray Godier's Four Square Supermarket. [Trevor Stainkey, ST05, 1951]

Anyway, I met Fagan and he pestered me about going out till I said yes. But Dad said I wasn't to go out with boys till I was 16. Some time later, damn it all, Fagan came knocking at the door. I thought: *Holy cow!*

I came to see if you'll go out with me.

I'm not allowed to go out with anyone till I'm 16.

So we used to meet on the quiet.

I must have been 16 when we went on a cruise down the Brisbane River, because Dad knew I was going. It was a little steam ship. I was always interested in mechanical things: steam trains, motor engines, ball bearings. Loved them. When we got to the wharf this great big steam engine's throbbing. I was fascinated. Fagan told me all about it – and I was gone. 1942 we got married in Brisbane.

1. Betty Rickertt; see p514.

I was a bad asthmatic and the doctor said I should be living in a dry climate, so when Fagan's uncle, Alf Stainkey, said he had a job for Fagan on St Elmo, 12 miles from Julia Creek, we went out. We only lasted a week. We realised we couldn't live on a property. I couldn't stand the animals being hurt – too soft hearted – and Fagan couldn't ride a horse because of his bad leg. And all they talked about was shearing sheep and fixing trucks. I thought: *This is no life for me; I'm a city girl.* We went into town and lived with Uncle Alf. That was 1950. We were living in Uncle Alf's house, and later we bought it.

Soon after we arrived in Julia Creek Fagan said to me: "The local kids haven't seen Santa this year. Put together a Father Christmas suit and I'll dress up". He went around Julia Creek with a feather duster and talcum powder for snow. Everywhere he went they gave him a drink. Santa went through the train – he was pretty full by this time – and held it up for 30 minutes while he sprinkled snow on the seats and put the feather duster up the ladies' legs. Fagan could be a bit of a scallywag. And he was a drummer. He used to beat the drum at dances while Mossie McDonald played the piano. God we had some fun on those Friday nights. The ringers would sit outside, three or four of them, and I'd say:

Why don't you come in and dance?
We can't dance, Mrs Stainkey.
Well, come in and I'll show you.



They came in and I taught them.

One night Max asked me to dance. I was so used to taking the boy's part – they used to watch me when they were learning – that I'd lead without thinking. Max got me up to dance and the first thing he said was: "I lead!" I'll never forget that night.

MAX ALWAYS WORKED WITHIN THE LAW and he was very clever with books, but I'm afraid he did Fagan out of some money and that's why Fagan left. Max asked him to take a vehicle to Karumba. Max must have sold it to a customer; that was one of the ways he made money. Fagan was to get so much for going – but nothing was in writing. When he came back he received his normal wage: no overtime, nothing extra. He said to me: "I'm not working for Max any longer. I don't like the man".

Fagan left Max and built his own garage in the main street, diagonally across from Lance Lewis on a piece of ground that belonged to his grandad, Chummy Shaw. When the garage didn't pay we opened a cafe in part of the building, what we called the Mayne Milk Bar. It was small at first, but later on we extended it.

We sold the cafe to Frank Byrne in '57 and moved to Charters Towers. I'm not too sure of the precise date. It's confusing now. I'm a bit old and it's a long time ago.



‘There was a tree that had a kind of gum. Ooh, they liked that gum.’

MRS SHAW was one who had a lot of goats. She lived at the far end of town near the hospital, her and her husband. They didn't have any family, so the goats were their family.

She was good friends with my great auntie, Grace Horton, "Hortie", who had a fruit shop at a house in Burke St. You went to the house and bought your fruit from the front verandah. If you had a kid that was sick, Auntie Grace kept you so-many oranges. If you didn't have a kid that was sick, you didn't get those oranges. Everybody got their special thing.

Mrs Shaw was a great walker. She'd walk from one end of town to the other, from her place to Hortie's, to help out with the groceries. But only of a night time; you rarely saw her in the day.

Johnny, her husband, he didn't mind being seen in daylight. It was his job to do the shopping. He had a push bike with two sugar bags: one for his stuff and one for her stuff. Half a loaf of bread for himself and half a loaf of bread for her. If he ran out of bread and borrowed some from her, he had to pay it back. They were just that kind of people.

After Johnny died, when Mrs Shaw had to do her own shopping, there were adults in Julia Creek who didn't know who she was. She'd walk down the street in the daytime and they'd ask: "Who's that old lady?"

She was such a funny old identity and in magnificent health up until she had a stroke about 15 years ago. She had a stroke and completely lost it.

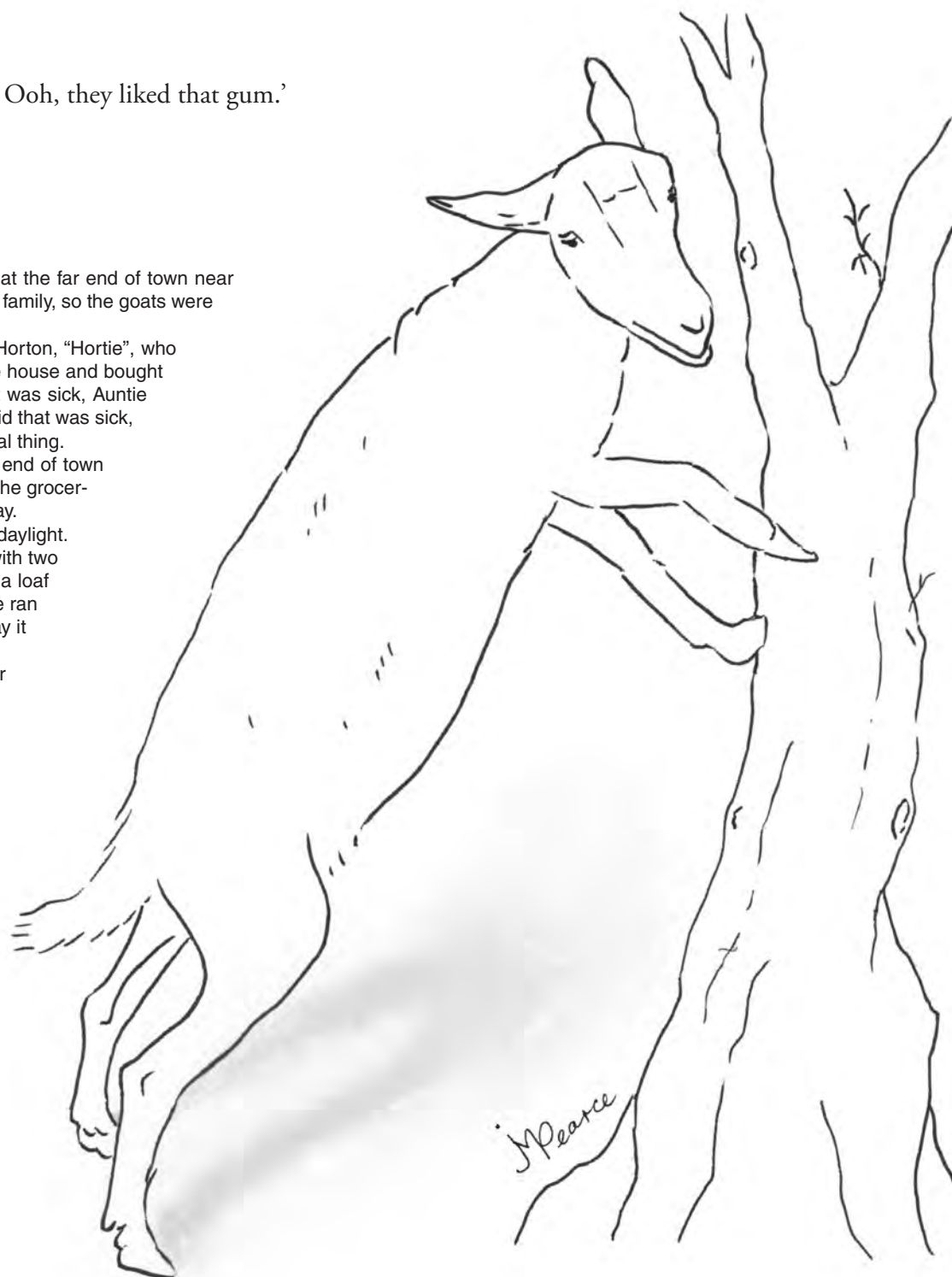
TITCH COLEMAN

Y'KNOW, when I first went out to Julia Creek in the late 1940s, even back then Mrs Shaw was elderly. At least I used to think she was. I'll always remember Mrs Shaw – drove everyone crazy with her goats.

Occasionally you'd see Johnny and her shopping together. He's carrying a sack across his shoulders, they do the shopping, and then they walk home. He's got the lead and she's following.

According to what you hear they lived on nothing. They had money but they didn't spend it.

PAT WILKINS



The goat woman Mrs Violet Shaw

Died 27 Sep 2003

JUDY BURROWS: Yes... Mrs Shaw. I can see the house she lived in where the louvres were always closed right down. I can see her. I can see her. She was sort of an old bag lady. There was a gypsy look about her, shawls and... You never knew much about Mrs Shaw, she was a real recluse. She ventured out and got her mail, but she didn't talk much. Probably wouldn't talk to you even if she was still alive.

GUY: I think she's still out there.

J: Mrs Shaw? No, she was old in the 1950s. But anybody over 30 was ancient when I was a teenybopper. Old Mrs Shaw, she couldn't be alive.

G: I think she is.

J: Really? I hope so. And I hope you can go and see her.

11 Aug 2003

GUY: Who's that? [pointing to photo, right, of Mrs Shaw]

MRS SHAW: I think that's Mrs Foster. She had goats, too.

G: Mrs Foster? That's you – that's Mrs Shaw!

MS: No... no... [chuckles]

G: I took that photo two days ago, remember?

MS: Well, it doesn't look like me. I'm not that old.

28 Aug 2003

OLD MRS SHAW? Yeah, her and Johnny. Christ Almighty! I knew Johnny had gone, but she's still alive, y'know. I asked about her when I was out there at Easter time. I went past her house. I was talking to Eileen Ryder and I said: "Old Mrs Shaw, is she still here?" Turns out she's permanently in the hospital. They've got a room just for her.

One time there, her goats and our goats went walkabout together. Y'sort of knew it was coming because they didn't come home in the afternoon. They'd be a mile out of town and you'd have to go and get them. Next day they'd be 2 mile out of town. And next day – you wouldn't see them; they'd gone and they wouldn't stop.

Mrs Shaw's herd and our herd joined up – and a couple of other herds. They must have communicated and away they went, straight through fences. They had it worked out how to get through them. Anyway, we tracked them down about 10 mile out of town and Mrs Shaw and I drove the mob back to Julia Creek.

It was funny when we were bringing these goats in. When they got over the railway line they knew where they lived. They could smell home. Mrs Shaw's turned right, towards her place; and Mrs Foster's and Mrs Mann's and the others turned left into town.

JOHN ADAMS



Above: Mrs Violet Shaw, Julia Creek Hospital.
[Guy Burns, GK101, 26/8/2003]

YOU CAN CALL ME the goat woman. I really liked the goats. They liked me too. I had about a dozen. They were like pets: Robin and Bluey and Crooked and... Crooked got her horn stuck in a tree and we had to cut it off. Ahh... jeez she was nice. Good milker. Over a quart of milk every day, and only a young girl.

Every morning I used to go with my goats right across the creek. There was a tree that had a kind of gum. Ooh, they liked that gum.

I only went with my own goats. Other goats went out another direction. Every day after I had breakfast, I'd leave my goats down the creek and I'd come home and do my work. They'd come home, always every day at 4 o'clock.

Sometimes somebody would come to my house and I would give them goat's milk. I never made goat's cheese, but I did make goat's butter. It was the time of the war and you had to have ration books, y'know, for sugar and butter. I made some goat's butter. I was going to the doctor and I said to him:

Open your mouth and shut your eyes.

Ah, goat's butter. Have you got much? Can I have some?

Yes, you can have some.

Johnny and me, we ate goat. Very good. Johnny, he knew how to do it. He didn't shoot them, just cut their throats.

Johnny was born the same year as me, 1904. When he arrived at Julia Creek as a boy he went out to his father's place, Maria Downs. His father also had Fairlea. Johnny was on Fairlea when he married me in 1928.

1940 he started at the scour where they put the wool through the water to get it nice and clean. He worked on the feeder. That's where Johnny worked. All pulled down now.

Sometimes I used to work at Peter Dawes' store, at the counter with the dresses. For a little while I worked at Gannon's Hotel. Not barmaid, I was housemaid.

In Julia Creek, Johnny and I lived all the time in the same house in Mathews St. See, Harry Mathews had a property near town, Hilton Park, and they named that street Mathews St. Shaw St they named after Johnny's father.

Somebody asked Johnny:

Have you got any children?

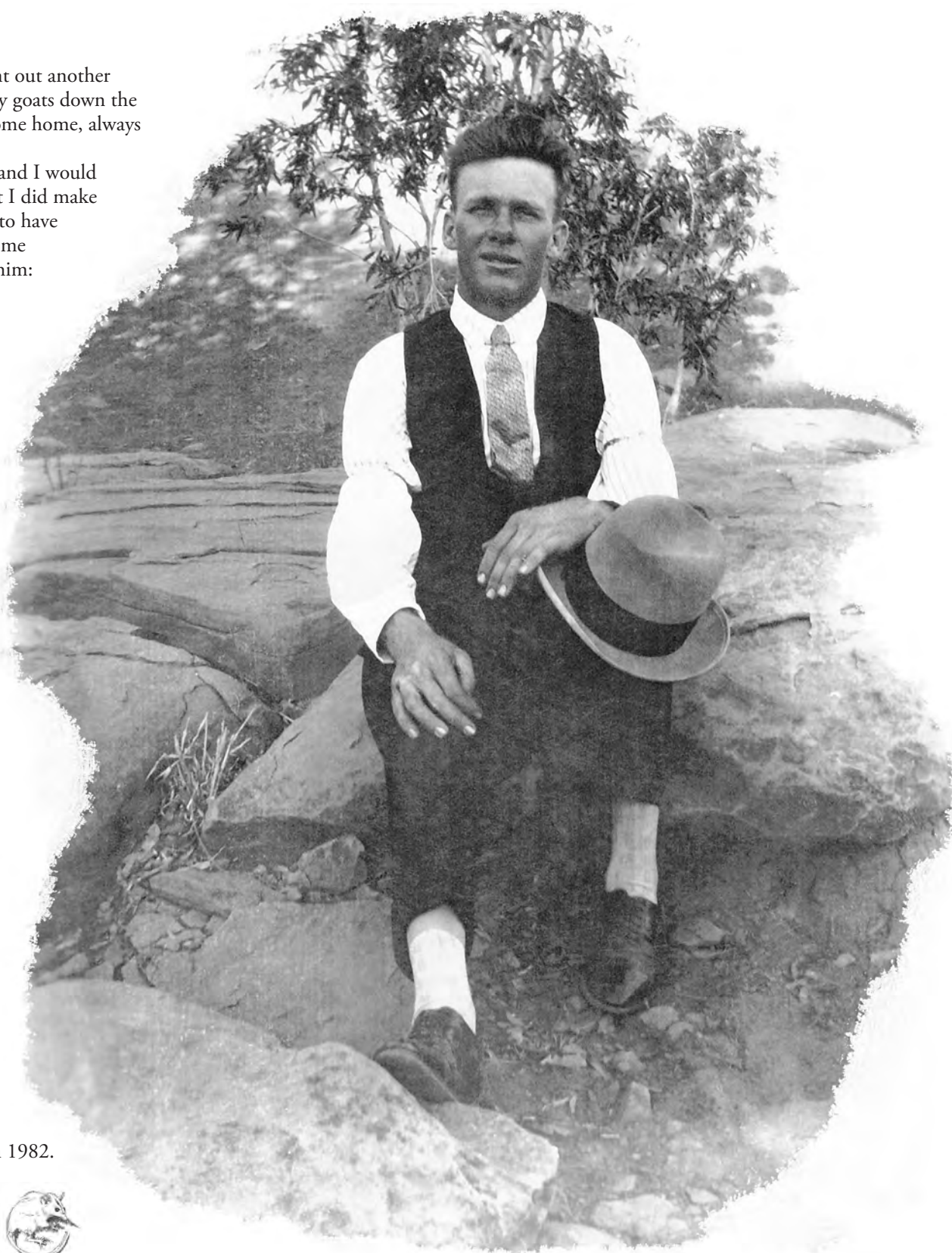
Yeah, I've got about a dozen.

Where are they all?

Ah, they're probably down the creek.

He was talking about our goats.

Johnny's gone now. He was buried at the cemetery in 1982.



Above: Johnny Shaw, ca 1925
[Trevor Stainkey, ST45]

Mrs Shaw was born 31 August 1904. She died in the Julia Creek Hospital on the morning of 27 September 2003, at 5 a.m., a month after my visit. At 99, she was the oldest person to have lived in Julia Creek.

Opposite: Mrs Shaw's wedding invitation (and envelope) sent to Mrs Herb Stainkey (née Mabel Shaw).
[Trevor Stainkey, ST08, 1928]



I USED to run Violet Shaw messages for threepence a week, just before the war. We lived on the corner of Mathews St next door to the Shaws, and she'd call out to Mum:

Mrs Walters?

Yes, Mrs Shaw?

Is Harold there?

Yes.

Would he go up to Peter Dawes and get me half a pound of butter?

It'd be about 108° in a canvas waterbag and I'd have to go and fetch the half pound of butter. No sooner home: "Mrs Walters? Could Harold get me half a pound of sugar?" Ghrrrr!

HAROLD WALTERS

WHEN we got very busy at Gannon's, Mrs Shaw used to come up and help out. Used to push her bike to the pub with a straw hat on her head. She lived in a Queenslander-type of house, but it wasn't on high blocks. And old Johnny – oh, a funny couple they were. Each bought their own meals. She'd buy her couple of sausages and Johnny would buy his couple of chops.

IVY BURROWS

VILEY SHAW, she helped old Hortie with the fruit and vegies. She had a battered, square port about so-size. Took it everywhere. You could bet your life when she left Hortie's it was full. She always took home plenty of rations for herself. Mum used to go and help Hortie too, that's how I heard the story. She'd go crook at the amount of stuff Viley went home with.

MARY WINTON



THESE GOATS arrived at Yorkshire, 23 mile from Julia Creek. I was head stockman. We didn't know whose they were; they came up along the creek sending the dogs mad. We put them in a yard and started ringing town. We reckoned they'd have to be town goats, nobody else had any. Found out they were Mrs Shaw's, so we kept them in the yard overnight.

Mr Shaw rode out on a pushbike the next day and walked the goats back to town by foot. It was 3 miles to the Yorkshire boundary fence along the particular road he went back on. I gave him a hand down to the gate under stern instructions from my father: "Make sure the goats get past the boundary gate". We left Yorkshire in 1955, so it was before that sometime.

KEITH COLEMAN

THIS TOWN used to be just full of goats. Every family had goats. Our family had goats. They were just part of life. Old Mrs Shaw, the lady up the hospital, she had a lot of goats. She used to go away with them, shepherd them to where she wanted, rather than get hers mixed up with the others.

RAY GODIER

I KNEW MRS SHAW because we used to get her over for Christmas every year. She had nobody, she had no children. Y'know how you feel sorry? We were real good friends. She used to tell me stories. I'd sit and listen for hours and I wouldn't get my work done. She was so nice.

I remember Mrs Shaw having goats. She used to take my youngest boy for walks: "Mark's coming with me to see the goats". And away they'd go. I'd be watching them go down the creek.

It was lovely to see people like the Shaws. They were so like... like your own parents, eh. I was kind of a daughter to them. They had no children of their own. That was sad, but she was always happy, Mrs Shaw.

ESME STOKES

22

THE NORTH QUEENSLAND REGISTER, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1938.

GAROMNA, A PASTORAL PROPERTY IN THE JULIA CREEK DISTRICT.

MANAGED BY MR ULICK BROWNE.

THAT'S THE OLD SCOUR. That's before the new boiler was put in, I'd say. You're looking from near where we lived on the north-east side of the scour. The line to Cloncurry is on the other side of the buildings and Julia Creek's a couple of miles behind you.

When the old fella went out to commission the new boiler in 1934, it was installed on the left of those stacks in an extension of the boiler room. Later on, when Edkins Marsh bought the scour from the Julia Creek Woolscouring Company, they extended the boiler room out to the right and put in a gas engine. To make the gas they burnt charcoal. The gas engine drove the scouring plant via a long shaft from the boiler room through into the main building.

BERT BRISBANE

THERE USED to be a woolscour in Julia Creek where the cattle yards are. About 2 mile out they had this dirty great big woolscour. You'd send in all the daggy stuff, and it'd be put through the scour and come out ready to put into clothes. Today, they just buy wool as it is. Whoever buys it, scours it.

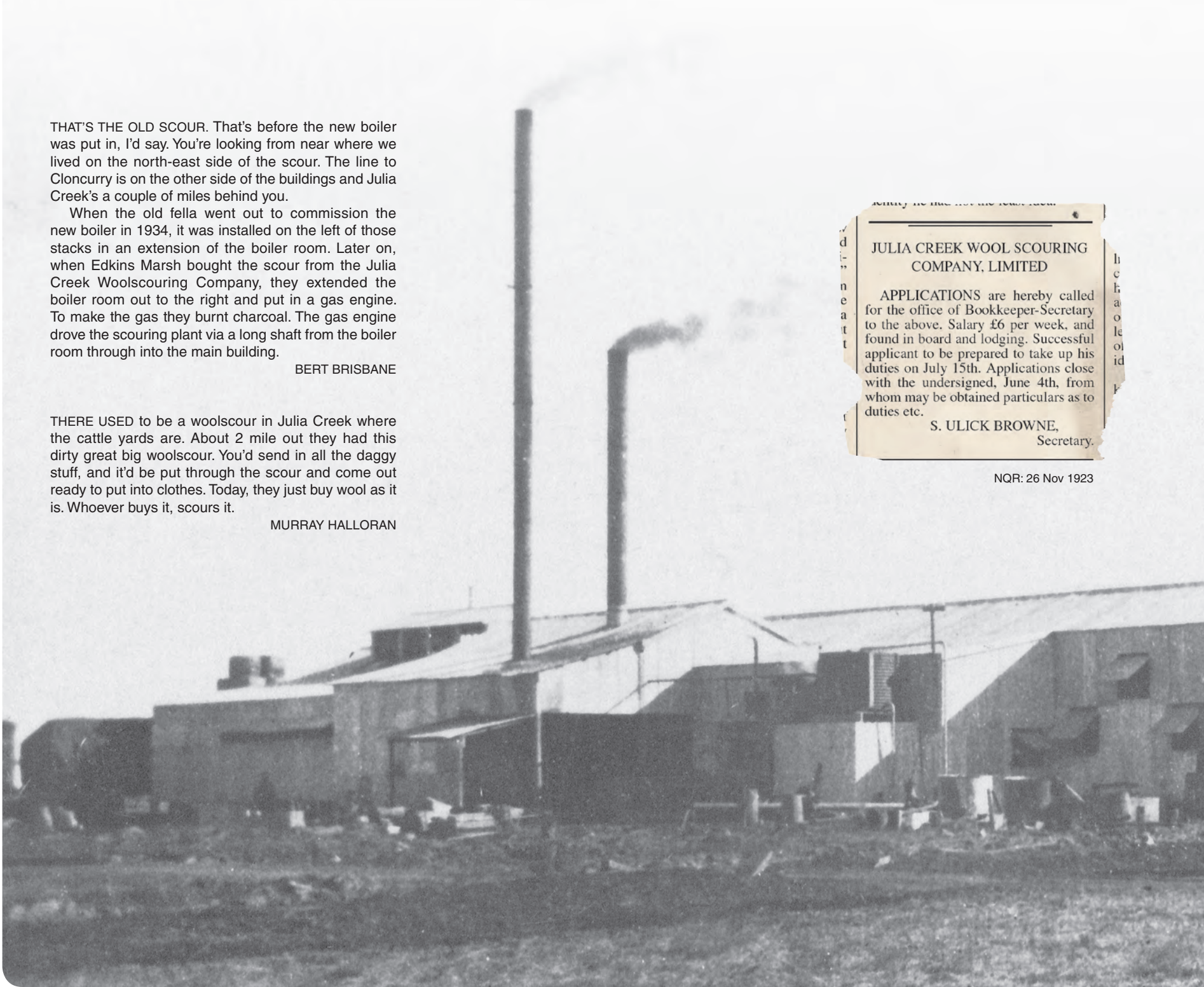
MURRAY HALLORAN

JULIA CREEK WOOL SCOURING COMPANY, LIMITED

APPLICATIONS are hereby called for the office of Bookkeeper-Secretary to the above. Salary £6 per week, and found in board and lodging. Successful applicant to be prepared to take up his duties on July 15th. Applications close with the undersigned, June 4th, from whom may be obtained particulars as to duties etc.

S. ULICK BROWNE,
Secretary.

NQR: 26 Nov 1923



As Dull as Dishwater

Roderic Browne

The Browne boys, and a cousin, reminisce about their days on Garomna

IT WAS A BIG PIECE OF DAD'S LIFE, really, the woolscour. He was one of the instigators. Ted Doubleday, Bert Powne, Fred Hickman, Mick Byrne – there would have been half a dozen men who worked on it to bring about the Julia Creek Woolscouring Company. Their theory was, in the beginning, that if they scoured the wool it'd be lighter and cheaper to rail because the dirt and grease were out of it. But the railways struck a new rate for scoured wool; they said the value was higher. How bloody ridiculous.

Originally they bought a brand new machine imported from England, a Hall's machine, and that was installed in buildings purchased from Toorak Station. (Toorak had an old woolscour that was dismantled and moved to the new site.) It did wonders. It never put a foot wrong you could say. They had no mechanical problems with it whatsoever. Business increased, and they had so much wool coming in that they couldn't handle it with one plant, so they bought a second one. When they went on the market they found out there were engineers in Mascot, Sydney, who were making woolscouring plants. I happened to be at

JULIA CREEK WOOLSCOURING CO. LTD.

TENDERS are hereby called for the following:—

- (1) Pulling down of buildings at Toorak Scour and re-erection with alterations and additions at the new site one and a half miles west of Julia Creek.
- (2) Cartage of building material and machinery from Toorak Scour to the new site.
- (3) Erection of building comprising two rooms and kitchen.

Plans and specifications may be obtained on application to Mr. Fred Hickman, Julia Creek. Applications for tender No. (1) must be accompanied by a deposit of one pound, to be refunded when the documents are returned.

Tenders close December 5th, at 12 Noon.

The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

NQR: 26 Nov 1923

boarding school in Parramatta at the time and I actually visited the factory; I saw that second plant being built. My cousin Rawdon was working at T.H. Hicks and my father buzzed me up and said: "If you go over there you can meet Rawdon". And so, one Saturday, we went right through the factory together.

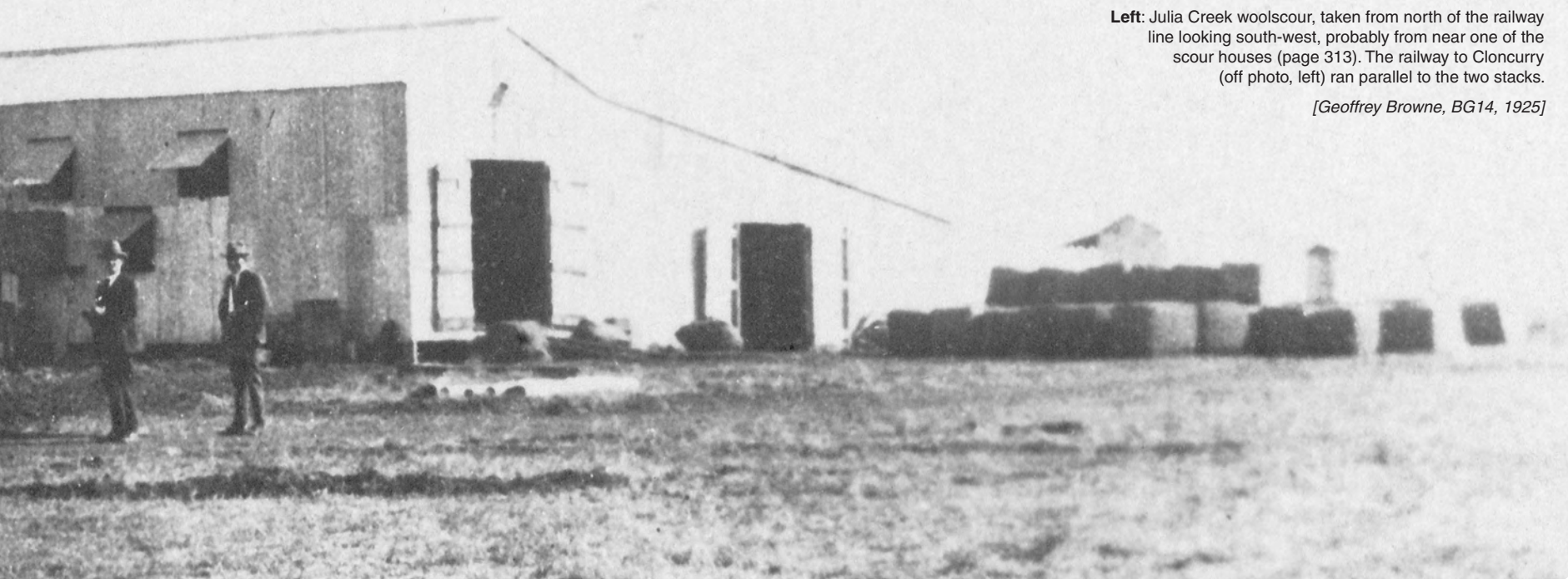
Eventually the plant was shipped and railed to Julia Creek and an engineer came up from Hicks to install it. They installed the new plant but it was a different system. The process of scouring sounds simple – wool goes into water and it goes out – but it's easier said than done. They struck all sorts of mechanical problems with the new plant, and instead of making money they lost money. They had to modify this and they had to modify something else. It turned out a real bloomin' headache. They had dryer problems, which are fatal with scoured wool. If the wool doesn't come out dry you're really in trouble.

My father said to me in later years: "Y'know, what we should have done was to buy another Hall's machine from England and we would not have had the problems that we had with the Hicks' machine".

The English machine had been well and truly tested over many years.

Left: Julia Creek woolscour, taken from north of the railway line looking south-west, probably from near one of the scour houses (page 313). The railway to Cloncurry (off photo, left) ran parallel to the two stacks.

[Geoffrey Browne, BG14, 1925]



THAT'S MY MOTHER with, as you can see, a baby in arms. I think it'd be Geoffrey. That would have been taken about 1925. And that's Mr Scrimshaw – Scrimmy we called him. I've forgotten his first name. My father employed him to fellmonger the skins that came off the ration sheep – the killers for the homestead – and off other dead sheep they found. That meant he would, by a certain process, remove all the wool off the pelt. Killers were not always cleanskins, they had a bit of wool on, y'see. They'd skin them and dry the pelt. Wool in that country, being so dry, it didn't go mouldy and it lasted a long time; though you had to dress the skins with a solution of arsenic to keep the weevils away or else there'd be little bits of skin amongst the wool, and that was no good.

The skins might have been stacking up in the woolshed for years. Then Scrimmy came and fellmongered them. He lived at the woolshed doing that for ages and ages. That was the cheapest way to get the wool off, otherwise you'd have to shear it. Fellmongering seemed the easiest way to go.

It was a foul job. Scrimmy soaked the dry skins till they went rotten – "green" as we called it – and put them on a rack. He had a special device made out of hoop iron with a handle each side; he raked the wool off with that. It was a filthy, dirty, stinking business, and when he finished it was pretty smelly sort of wool. Then he sent it to the scour to have the grease and dirt removed – and the smell. I don't know whether dead wool is even marketable now.

There was no telephone at the woolshed and Scrimmy didn't have a car. If he needed something he hung a bag on a high wire. We could see it from the homestead and Dad would drive over. It was only about a mile. We used to run it as kids.

One afternoon, probably on a Sunday afternoon, my father came with his camera and we drove to the creek a few miles away. That was our... like people go to the beach, we went to the creek. Scrimmy's wearing a tie. He's put a tie on because my mother was there.

Men would do that in those days. I doubt whether they'd do it today.



Above: "Scrimmy", Monica Browne, and son Geoffrey, at Horse Creek, Garomna. [Geoffrey Browne, BG15, 1925]

MY FATHER WAS OPERATING GAROMNA in 1915. He came on it in 1915, first stepped on the property. I remember he told me it took him two to three years to really get the place going because the fencing had to be done, and other improvements. Finance was a problem too, y'see.

The reason he went there was because of Grandfather. It happened this way. Grandfather was in Sydney at the time and he saw a litho, a printed lithograph, that Julia Creek land was going up for public ballot. If you could put up a certain deposit – I have no idea what it was in this case – you could apply. Well, in September 1914 he won the ballot. It wasn't just one block; it was 11 or 12 blocks went up. These were resumptions off Eddington Station, an enormous holding owned by the North Australian Development Company.

When he won the ballot, Grandfather went out to take possession of what they called a "grazing homestead". You had to live on it. There was none of this putting a manager on and then going back down South; that was prohibited.

I don't know whether Grandfather inspected the property before the ballot. I can't remember anything ever being mentioned. But anyhow, he went out there and because there wasn't a house on the property, he bought one from Charters Towers and had it railed out.

My Uncle Vessie,

Dominic Sylvester, but the family always called him Vessie, was working on a property not far from Julia Creek and he came over to erect the house.

He stayed a couple of years,
something like that,

to give Dad a hand to get started.

My grandfather was booked into a hotel,
and Vessie went in,

(once a week he used to go into town)

and the story that I got –

Vessie got in there one morning and asked the publican

"Have you seen my father?"

"Come to think of it, I haven't seen him."

Went to his room and they found him dead.

He'd only been out there a few months.

At that time there was a war, and my father was in Egypt. He was injured, and to his utter dismay the army discharged him as being unfit for further military service and he was shipped back to Brisbane. He was only there something like a month or two when he got a telegram from Vessie to say that his father was dead. The two of them made arrangements to meet halfway, at Townsville, and together they buried Grandfather. That was in August 1915.

My brother Geoffrey reckons it took a week to bring his body to Townsville, but it wasn't quite that long. It probably took four days; about all you'd want, too, when you had a body in that hot climate.

The property was left to my grandmother. If my father could have bought the property he would have, but he didn't have the money. He managed it for his mother until 1922 when he had enough money to buy her out. Around that time he also bought Malham. Both properties were around 20,000 acres, 10 miles between boundaries.



The illustrations of station fellmongering show the Julia Creek Woolscouring Co's Fellmonger, Mr R.R. Scrimshaw, at work on a small parcel of skins at a station in the district. The method adopted is as follows. A grassless place is selected, such as a sheep yard, which is swept clear of dust. Water is the next requirement as the skins have to be soaked in tanks and later sweated in heaps covered with old wool-packs. Expert care is wanted to keep the skins from overheating or drying out and at the same time promote the sweating process.

When the skins come "on" they are thrown across the "beam" and the wool stripped away. The wool is then spread out to dry as shown. The whole process is very

simple and at the same time is an instance of better business by which the woolgrower reaps his full proceeds from skins which are notably profitless compared to the shorn fleece. Also, any dead-wool crutchings or other fag-end lines, instead of being sold in small butts or left to rot, can be sorted and the whole lot later worked in with the main lines of wool at shearing time.

It is surprising to anyone who has not seen it done, the amount of high-class wool there is in even the shabbiest mixed line. This is what the dealer and repacker works on, and the fact that these firms grow and wax fat, buying, sorting and reselling wool that is given the grower by providence, should provide its own lesson.

NQR: 24 Aug 1925

JULIA CREEK WOOL SCOURING COMPANY LIMITED

THIS COMPANY desires to notify Woolgrowers that it has secured the services of Mr. R.R. Scrimshaw, whose abilities as a Woolclasser are well known throughout Queensland and New South Wales. He is also thoroughly familiar with the requirements of the buying end of the trade, having done a large amount of work for such firms as Wright and Bruce, of Botany, and Messrs Hannaford's, wool buyers and repackers of Sydney.

He is now prepared to undertake Fellmongering, Re-classing or General Wool Sorting on grower's account, and is in a position to advise as to the treatment of any odd lots of wool which may accumulate between or during the general shearings.

He will be transported to and from his work, with necessary fellmongering plant, by our company at employer's expense and is prepared to batch at the shearing shed if required.

Those interested, are advised to write our Secretary for further particulars.

Our charges will be moderate, as we naturally expect to receive a large proportion of this wool for later treatment at our Works.

Yours faithfully,

S. ULICK BROWNE.

Director, Julia Creek Woolscouring Company

NQR: 01 Jun 1925

DAD MARRIED Monica Little in 1918 in Brisbane. I was the first born – in Stanthorpe, 1919 – and was 3 months old when I arrived on Garomna.

Water came from a bore on the adjoining property, Innisfail Downs. 1890 that bore was put down. In 1924 my father put down his own bore, and a few years later he got finance to move the course of the bore-drain to run nearer the homestead to provide water for a vegetable garden. At the same time he dreamed up a plan for a swimming pool – a pool in the middle of a bore drain right beside the house.

Lance Saunders was working there at the time. Lance was a teamster. He could handle horses and he used to do general station work. He and an offsider, jackeroo George Rothpletz, built the pool with a horse team, using two scoops and a plough. The plough ripped the soil and the scoops cleaned it out. All done by horses. They just kept ripping and scooping until it

tors have almost completed their runs for this year.

A basket party was held at Garomna on Sunday, November 1. Swimming was indulged in during the afternoon in the swimming pond, and dancing and music were the features of attraction at the homestead at night. The group had a most enjoyable time and returned home about midnight.

On Sunday last, a party of bathers visited the Punchbowl to cool off in the swimming hole and returned home on Sunday night. The Punchbowl swim-

NQR: 07 Nov 1936

got deep enough. Then they ran the bore water in one side and let it out the other. The idea was to bring in fresh water so it wouldn't stagnate.

My father started a fad all over the area. Lots of people built them. Ours was 25 yards long, 12 yards wide and 6 feet deep, with a platform and a spring board. It would have been finished about 1928 or '29.

On a hot day we used to race over there and dive straight through the top layer of water, which could be quite hot, to get to the cold water on the bottom. If friends had a free day and weren't doing anything, they'd come out for a swimming party. No one minded getting into the water.

We learnt to swim in that pool. Around the edge the water was not so deep and we'd take a plunge. We taught ourselves. When we went away to boarding school we learnt the proper way and I was quite a good swimmer at school.



Shearing operations are practically in full swing about this district at the present time. The United Graziers are at Auckland and will shortly commence at Garomna and Eddington. Numerous lorries and waggons laden with wool can be seen daily unloading at the local railway and it is also anticipated the scour will commence operations this week. By all accounts the management of the scour expect a record season this year, and judging from the results of the previous year's sales, when they were fortunate on many occasions to top the sales with wool treated through this scour, the wool growers may rest assured of equal and similar good service this present year.

Saturday night saw the opening of the Garomna Dramatic Company. The company held their first performance at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Ulick Browne. I understand Mr. Browne is one of the leading actors. Quite a large number, so I am advised, comprised the audience and many beautiful fancy costumes were witnessed. By all accounts everyone appeared to have enjoyed themselves throughout and it was well after midnight before the last car wended its way home, tired and happy.

NQR: 03 Aug 1929

1. Tony Lucas' cafe in Goldring St. See Gordon Lavarack's description on p180.

WHILE I WAS GROWING UP we'd go into Julia Creek probably once a month. I didn't really like going to town to tell you the truth. I was always pleased to get home again.

The best part of town was what we called the Dago Shop;
the Italians with a cafe in the railway street¹.
They were either Italians or Greeks;
they all got rolled into one.
We'd go in and have a lemon squash.
They'd mix it themselves in a great big glass.

The last bit of road into town came up from the creek
and swept past the railway yards.
The railway was an impressive operation.
Steam engines, as you know, had to have water.
At the railway yards there was a great tower,
a water tower,
and on top was a big cooling device made out of mesh
with water dribbling over it.

The idea was to cool the hot bore water before they filled the steam engines. I remember coming to town and seeing the tower and the cooling device on top. The tower seemed to dominate everything, just by the position it was in.

Opposite: Garomna swimming pool. Adults from left: Fred Hickman, Bob Cook, Rowie Heussler, Jack Heussler, Mrs Hickman, Ulick Browne. Browne children from left: Nevill, Ulick, Roderic.

[Geoffrey Browne, BG21, 1929]

Below: Wool being carted to Julia Creek railway. Taken from the balcony of the Julia Creek Hotel, looking south-east. On the right is the watertank described (above) by Roderic. Harry Mathews' homestead on Hilton Park is behind the tank; in the centre is the shearing shed. [Dadie Dawes, DW35, ca 1935]



I WORKED FOR MY FATHER when I left school. I was 17 and I offside for Jim Horton on the... God Almighty! Where'd you get that? I was there. I took that one. That's a delver team. See, only a small number of horses: two, four, six... eight horses. That'd be for delving the drains; cleaning the bore drains. There's Punch, White Punch. He was the near-side leader, the one that had more intelligence than the rest of the team rolled together. I worked that delver team.

My father bought them from a chap named Jimmy Eaves. Jimmy was out at Mt Cobalt, a mining town, and he had this team and a heavy dray, carting for the mine until it closed down. Then he came looking for a job, any job, on the station. He came with the dray and harness and horses and my father bought the whole lot from him. Dad was always looking for horses, so he bought that team and gave Jimmy a job. He worked there for years.

JULIA CREEK NOTES

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

JULIA CREEK – With the present unsatisfactory financial times existing, it is pleasing to note the Julia Creek Woolscouring Co advises a reduction in scouring charges to 1¼ d per lb. net of scoured wool as from the 1st. December. The company is enabled to make this reduction due to the fact that a reduction has been obtained in employees wages and an increase in working hours from 44 to 48 hours which comes into force on the 1st December. The full benefit of these concessions is being passed on to the company's clients.

With regard to the obtaining of railway sleepers on which matter there has

NQR: 25 Nov 1930

JULIA CREEK WOOL SCOURING CO. LTD

The Julia Creek Woolscouring Co, Gunjoola, desires to notify Woolgrowers that we intend starting scouring in April and therefore can assure intending clients that there will be no delay in treating their wool. Those who have studied the results of the sales must realise that they could not do better than entrust their wool to us for treatment. We have topped the last three sales in Brisbane; and consistently throughout the season have realised highest market values for the different lines of wool.

Do not be led astray by interested persons who assert broadly that it does not pay to scour. Compare the average price per lb. of scoured clips with greasy. Do not be sidetracked by a flattering price for six bales of super greasy; compare total net proceeds based on average prices.

Though we are in the scouring business, we are not cranks on the question of whether or not to scour: personal opinion must always play a large part.

Our object in advertising thus is to explain that the Julia Creek Woolscouring Co is offering unexampled facilities for the treatment of your wool.

NQR: 03 May 1926

GOD! I DIDN'T KNOW these photos survived. That's Jim Horton and the fireplough team. We're just starting off. The year would have been 1936, I think.

It gives you a good idea of the team: horses in rows of four, and then as you got to the leaders they reduced down to two. The leaders were specially trained. Jim could control them just by word of mouth.

That was soon after I left school and I was on top of the plough, on the hood that covered the provisions and all our other gear. I got on top of the hood and took that photo. I was the offsider at the time.

IN 1937 MY FATHER BOUGHT A NEW FLOCK. The worst of the Depression was over. We had little stock at that time because most of them had died. Miles and miles of dead sheep. That's one thing sheep are good at – dying.

We went down to Emerald and bought a couple of train loads of sheep. We were two nights as drovers on a train.

At the end of 1937 I left Garomna. My father said: "I think it's better if you leave home. It's no good sticking around home all your life". I was able to secure a job at Bourke in NSW and so I went to Sydney and out to Bourke. I was there for just on two years.

The war then burst on us. I enlisted in September 1939. We were designated 6th Division, 18th Brigade, and we did our training at Ingleburn out from Sydney.

One afternoon in April 1940 they trained us into Darling Harbour and we got on the ferry and went round under the Sydney Harbour Bridge. There was the



Queen Mary, anchored just adjacent to Taronga Park Zoo on the north side. That was Saturday afternoon and by Sunday morning we were moving down the harbour followed by hundreds of small craft, amongst them my cousin Rawdon. As we went down the harbour we left in our wake a great mud streak; the propellers must have been close to the bottom bringing up all the mud.

They followed us for miles, right out past Sydney Heads to the ocean. Plenty of swell, but it was comparatively calm, so a favourable morning. It was a sterling sight.

Eventually all the small craft dropped off except Rawdon. He was the last one. He fell in behind, in the wash of the propellers, until they put on a few revs and he dropped away. We could have been 4 miles out I suppose. On deck were just about all the chaps who could cram in, and we gave Rawdon a mighty cheer when he turned and headed home.

AFTER THE WAR I WENT BACK TO GAROMNA and made arrangements with my father to go contract fencing. All the fences that he and Uncle Vessie put in 25 years previously needed to be reconditioned. That black soil has a habit of healing. It cracks in the dry and heals in the wet. Posts get pushed out of mother earth, fences lean over, wires get loose. It takes a number of years for that to happen and then there's a repair job. The posts have to be rooted out and resunk, and the wires have to be strained otherwise they're not effective.

My brother Geoffrey and I operated as a team and did the fences on Garomna. After that I went with an experienced man, Dick Byrne¹, a brother of the adjoining property owner, and we repaired the fences on Malham. I worked with Dick for a year and then he said: "You don't need any advice now, you can go on your own". I was fencing for just over two years.

FARMING IS ALL ABOUT RELIABLE SEASONS of rainfall and prices. There were good seasons from 1915, when my father arrived on Garomna, till 1926 when there was drought over a wide area. Ten years of drought and depression impoverished my father. Both happened at the same time. It was almost like clockwork. It cost him money to sell his wool. It didn't even pay the expenses of producing it. He couldn't store it – he couldn't pay the storage costs – so it had to go, regardless. Instead of making a profit he made a loss. His debt became larger every time he sold wool.

Depression just about faded Garomna right out. Many years there it was as dull as dishwater.

I left the west in 1951 during the wool boom. The boom allowed my father to pay off his debts. First time, really, he'd had a bob in his pocket.



Above: Truck and post hole digger, 1948.
Chev truck with posthole digger
being operated by Roderic Browne.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG38, 1948]

Opposite top: Eight-horse delver team on Garomna,
photo taken by Roderic. See text for details.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG19, 1936]

Opposite bottom: 28-horse fireplough team on Garomna,
photo taken by Roderic. See text for details.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG25, 1936]



1. Brother of Mick Byrne, see family tree p222.

JULIA CREEK NOTES

June 21, 1954—The old woolscour which operated for a period of 30 years until six months ago, has been closed down. It was originally built by the Julia Creek Woolscouring company in 1923 and later was acquired by Edkins, Marsh and Co. Ltd. Most of the components parts, with the exception of the two scouring machines, boiler and a suction gas engine, were sold by public auction last week. This was the last woolscour operating on the northern line.

The sale was well attended and the demand for iron was very keen. Firewood, tools and small lines attracted brisk bidding, but was in buyers' favour and some bargains were obtained. Houses fetched fair prices. Taking everything into consideration it was a good sale.

It is a pity to see the woolscour being pulled down as it will be a great loss to the district and no doubt later on we will very much regret letting it go.

NQR: 21 Jun 1954

AUCTION SALE **AUCTION SALE**

JULIA CREEK WOOL SCOUR
Account Edkins Marsh & Co Ltd

On WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, commencing at 9 a.m. sharp
We will offer in suitable lots the entire scour comprising:
Approximately 38 building or portions of buildings for removal, including a large quantity of roofing iron, timber etc.
Scales, Shafting, Rod Iron, Generators, Electrical Gear, Engines, Piping, Pumping Equipment, Tramlines, Trolleys, Packs, Belting, Motor Truck, Firewood, Charcoal, Tools and Furniture of all descriptions, Office Equipment etc.

CATALOGUES AND FULL PARTICULARS AVAILABLE
ON REQUEST.

Scouring Machines if not sold previously by tender
will also be offered.
Light Refreshments Available

THE AUSTRALIAN ESTATES CO. LTD
JULIA CREEK – AUCTIONEERS – Telephone 4, 73, 92

NQR: 12 Jun 1954

Some tough people **Rawdon Greene**

Died early 2005

ROY HAMPTON HAD THIS LITTLE SCHOOL in Julia Creek – not a real school, a betting joint – in between the two pubs in the street that came up from the Post Office to the railway line. Part barber shop, part billiard room, part gambling den. They played a lot of pool – particularly pool – as a cover I suppose. It never seemed to worry the police.

Saturday night and Sunday night was Hazards¹: you went in and they had a board – heads and tails I think – and you put your money on the heads or the tails. It was divided into four and you could bung your money down. I'm a bit hazy now how it went.

Shearers were earning four and five pounds a week, sometimes more, and they'd come in with a cheque. Well, it wouldn't be long before Roy had it all.

The shearers, they were the thirsty ones. I've been at Gannon's pub on a Sunday morning, talking to the constable standing at the door near those kegs, and in they come for a drink. "G'day constable!" It never shut. Well, I never saw it closed or any objection to it being open. I didn't drink, but the point is you could – at any time.

Bill Gannon was a big man, an ex-policeman. Oh, very big man; fine bloke. If you gave him a bit of cheek he'd pull you across the bar. Yes, he ran a proper pub. There were some tough people around Julia Creek.

I WAS BORN IN MELBOURNE, 26th of November, 1917, but my parents lived in Tasmania. My father was a farmer at Irishtown, just out of Smithton. I was about 3 when we left there. We came to an old family home where my father was born – and where his mother was born – *The Grange* at Wangaratta. My father took it over after his mother's death.

Some time after, he decided to move on and get into a different type of work than what *The Grange* offered, so he bought a place at Boggabri. I was 7 when we moved there. He bought 7000 acres on the Namoi River, about 5 miles from Boggabri. Beautiful bit of water, wonderful fishing grounds. I went to a public school for two years, and was then sent to Geelong Grammar as a boarder.

Things got tougher over the years and misfortune came. In 1929, well, the tail fell out of everything. Finally, through a bad contract, my father was left more or less destitute. By 1932, actually the beginning of '33, his whole thing collapsed and he had to file his schedule for bankruptcy. We came to Sydney in what we owned: a 1924 model Dodge and what we could put in it.

Julia Creek comes into the story at the end of that year. My uncle, Ulick Browne, who was involved very much with the scour at Julia Creek, came down to a woolscouring firm in Mascot. In those days the suburbs around Mascot were the home of woolscours, tanneries, fellmongering and the rest of that industry. He got me my first job actually – work was pretty thin for boys in those days – with an engineering firm, T.H. Hicks, as an apprentice working on scour machinery. A pound a week. It was pretty good pay. I was messenger boy, I learnt how to file papers, I worked on the machinery; and I did foundry work – all sorts of interesting things.

Hicks designed and made woolscours. They knew all about it, and they set to work for Uncle Ulick on

1. See page 172 for a description of the rules of Hazards.



We in these parts very seldom get the opportunity of seeing many thousands of bales of wool stacked in one heap, unless, of course, we are fortunate enough to save sufficient to enable us to visit the southern capitals. The opportunity is now right at our door in the yards of the local scouring company about two miles from the township where about 7000 bales of wool are awaiting treatment and the works are at present taxed to their limit. The management, realising the position, have taken the matter in hand and it is their intention to immediately install a new and most up-to-date duplicate plant.

For the past nine months the works have been operating on three shifts a day, and despite the pressure on their services little or no time has been lost in the way of breakages as it has been management policy to give special attention to the machinery at every opportunity. That the scouring standard has been maintained can be judged by the recent wool sales when wool treated by the scour secured very satisfactory prices.

NQR: 24 Oct 1933

at the Julia Creek Scour.

The new plant at the scour is very nearly completed and when the work of erecting is finished, the scouring will be speeded up to about twice the present capacity. It will then be one of the most up to date plants in Australia.

Since my last notes a wedding of considerable interest took place here.

NQR: 08 Sep 1934

a design quite different from the existing scour at Julia Creek. They were manufacturers: so, righto, they welded it, riveted it, and machined all the parts. Everything was made by Hicks. They took 12 months to get it ready. Then it was shipped to Julia Creek by rail and one of the head fitters went up to install it.

Until Christmas 1934 I worked at Hicks making the woollscour, and then they offered me a job at Julia Creek. I went out as a scourhand to learn scouring. I had nothing to do with installing the equipment. It arrived at the end of '34 and when I got there in '35 it was already in place.

Two young cousins met me at the train station at Julia Creek and showed me around. For a bit of humour they suggested I put my hand in the water coming out of the ground. I'd never seen an artesian bore. I got quite a shock: it was 140°. Young Ulick and Geoffrey thought it was a huge joke.

I went out to Garomna, the property owned by Uncle Ulick, and worked as a jackaroo until the scour started. I was expected to saddle up and do whatever was around. At that stage the scour wasn't operating. They'd work for so-many months and process the wool on hand, then they'd have a spell until more wool came in. That's the way it went.

Opposite: Roy Hampton's Billiard Saloon (and SP betting joint) in Julia St: *Hairdresser, Tobacconist, Fancy Goods*. In the distance is the Julia Creek Hotel. The small building between saloon and hotel was the staff quarters. Photo taken from Gannon's Hotel, corner of Julia and Burke St, looking south.

[Dadie Dawes, DW16, ca 1950]

Rawdon's recollection of Hampton's billiard saloon was triggered when I showed him this photo. "I want this picture" he told me. Given that the events Rawdon describes were 70 years in his past, his memory is pretty good. However, this particular building was not finished until December 1939, three years after Rawdon left Julia Creek. But his memory is not altogether at fault. Hampton operated a series of billiard rooms from the time of his arrival in Julia Creek in 1929: first in the original Gannon's Hotel (1929, page 238); next in Burke St (1934, page 661, top); and finally in Julia St (1939, opposite). Maybe, as Rawdon remembered, Hampton had a billiard saloon in Julia St a few years earlier as well.

Two other photos of this building appear herein: GeK06 (ca 1940, page 661, bottom) which has different signwriting from the one opposite, and BB10 (ca 1950, page 397) which

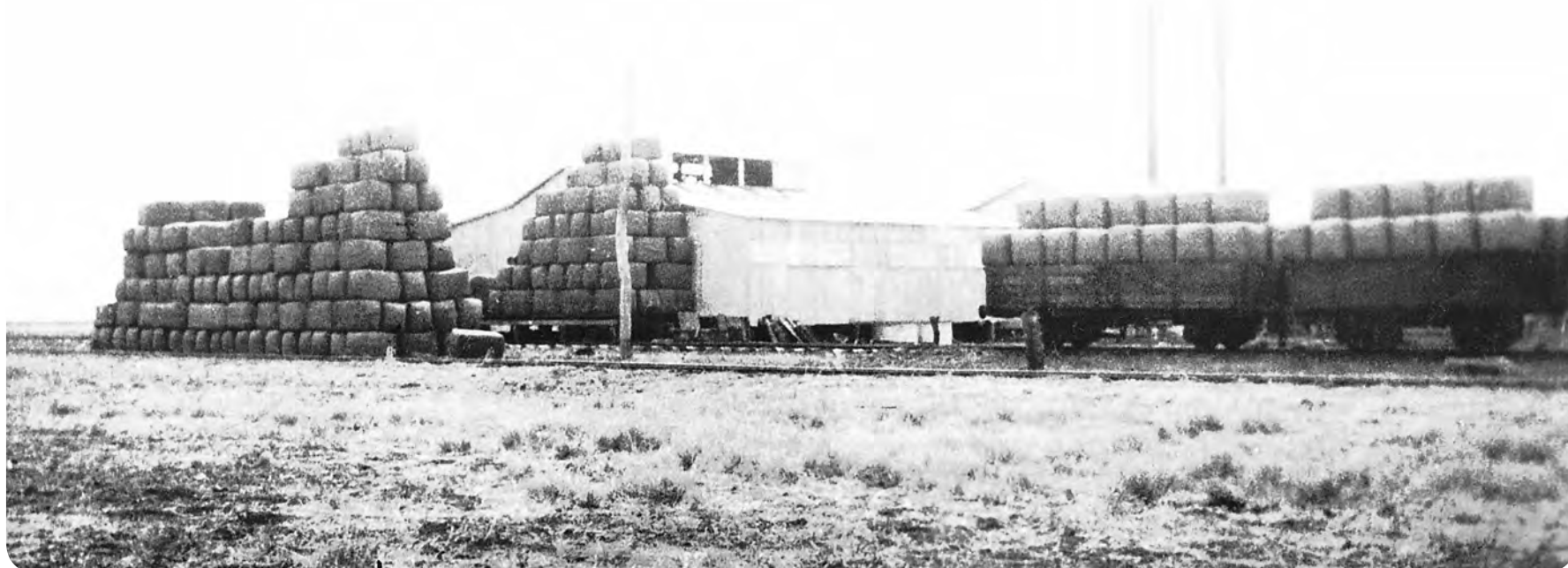
has the same signwriting.

The date of the change in signwriting comes from the *North Queensland Register* of 04/02/1950: "Mr Lance Lewis and Roy Hampton have taken advantage of the presence of a capable signwriter and their large striking signs have been freshened up. This repainting makes the appearance of the buildings much more interesting".

The cows belonged to Bill Gannon (Alma Gannon remembered her father's cows, page 247, bottom). Tommy Jessup also remembered Gannon's cows. "Cows on the road – that was typical. There were always Gannon's cows all over the road in Julia Creek. My mother was one of the campaigners to get the town fenced. She kicked up a hell of a stink with council. Used to ring the shire clerk in the middle of the night to come and get the livestock out of our yard. One o'clock in the morning she'd ring him up: 'I can't sleep and you're not gonna sleep either. I want these animals out!' She was not very popular, my mother."

Bottom: Bales of wool outside Julia Creek woollscour during the 1925 railway strike.

[Geoffrey Browne, BG13, 1925]



I was three or four weeks on Garomna before I moved into a little tin hut at the scour. My room mate was a chap called Clarrie Timbs. He was a woolpresser – and pretty wild. He was six foot four, couldn't read or write, but he knew about horses. He'd ridden all the tracks from Darwin to Adelaide; 12-month trips with cattle. He worked days and I worked nights. About five or six men worked at the scour. It varied. They came and they went.

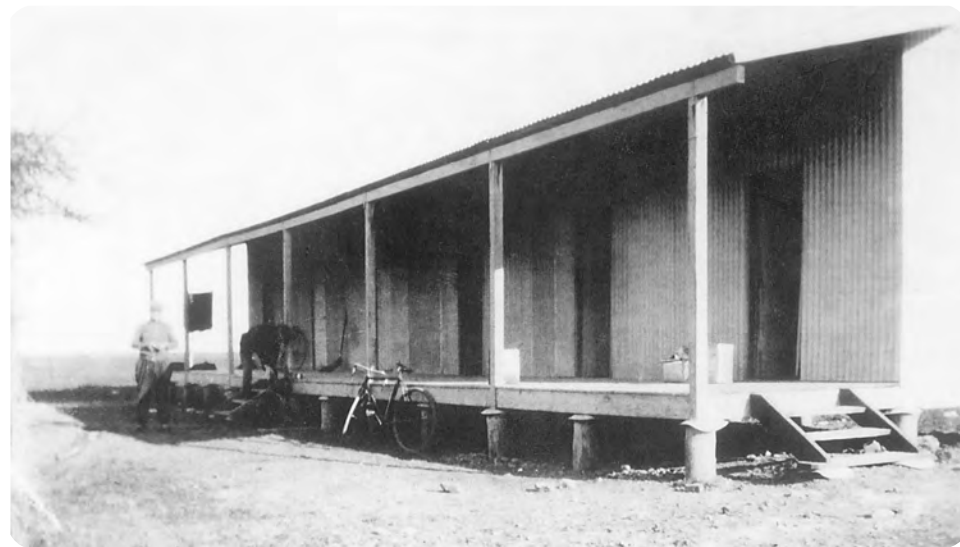
We had a swimming pool at the scour: a hole on the bore drain 40 feet long, 20 feet wide, 6 or 8 feet deep; springboard and all. The bore drain went in and it went out, just like the pool on Garomna.

My job at that time, on the new machine, was taking wool from the blower and putting it into the upstairs bins – rooms with no doors, just walls. We'd push the wool inside. Two other lads with me were doing the same thing. All the wool from a particular property was separated from other wool and it went into a bin. When the presser came for that property's wool, well, he'd drag it from that property's bin.

Things became a bit different.

They went back to using the old machine, not the new one,
and I moved on to loading the wool;
undoing the bales stacked outside
and dropping the fleece, using a spike, into the feeder-tanks.
I worked on that and I liked it;
though I still bear the scar where a bale hook hit me.

I spiked the wool, I learnt to feel the wool,
the raw wool "in the grease",
and to get amongst the stations and know them.
That was good, and that was my job.



I was on a boy's wages at 2 guineas a week and a feed, but the other two doing that job were men, on men's pay.

Our crew was two men on the feeders, a man looking after the washing, a foreman (who was the boss woolman), an engine driver, and a presser baling the wool. In the evenings we gathered in one of the huts and chatted or played chess. We were good friends and I got on well with them.

THE JULIA CREEK WOOLSCOURING CO. LTD.

ANNOUNCE that they now have Two Scouring Units in Operation with other extensive improvements assisting towards an Ideal of Good Service at Moderate Cost.

Much more scouring is done in the excellent waters of Western Queensland than throughout other woolgrowing areas. Thriving wool dealers in cities, operating on commission for wool buyers, buy the cheaper lines and have them scoured, testifying to the profits available from scouring. We offer Growers a similar, moderately-priced service.

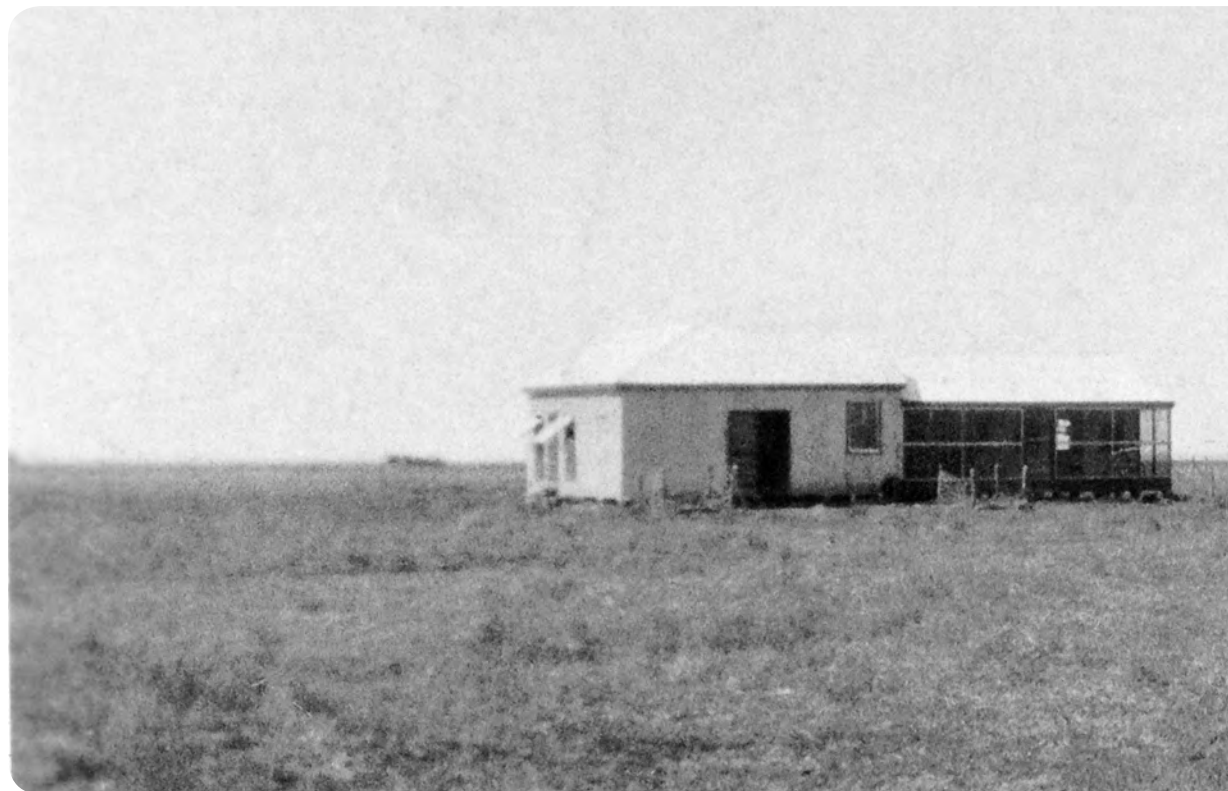
The Matter deserves more searching analysis than is commonly given to it.

We can supply all relative information, and appreciate visits from wool-growers and others interested.

Consignment: Gunjoola, QNR

Postal Address: Box 56 Julia Creek

NQR: 29 Dec 1934



Bill Brisbane and the boss, Waldron Taylor, lived in the two houses at the scour. Mr Taylor was the manager and a true wool man. He knew about wool – he'd been to Bradford. He always looked after me because he was a friend of the family. He'd known my father and Uncle Ulick in the war, fought beside them in the same unit. When he was invited out to stations I was always included.

On one occasion when we went to a cricket match, there was a king of an aboriginal tribe present and he was wearing a breast plate. I borrowed it and umpired in that. He was a station hand. He came in a ute, sitting in the back with the wife of someone. I think the mother-in-law was in front, but the wife had to sit in the back with the king. He sat one side and she sat the other with a bar between them. She said "the bar of colour".

Opposite: No. 1 hut, west of woolscour.

"Hut for the men on shiftwork and other day work. Old Bill, standing on the left, was bale marker. That's my bike leaning up against the verandah."

[Rawdon Greene, GrR02, 1936]

Right: Bungilmonabocca, A King of the Gulf. Aboriginal man with breast plate. "Bungil" worked on Bezuma and Dalgona in the 1930s.

[Margaret Netterfield, NM01, ca 1935]

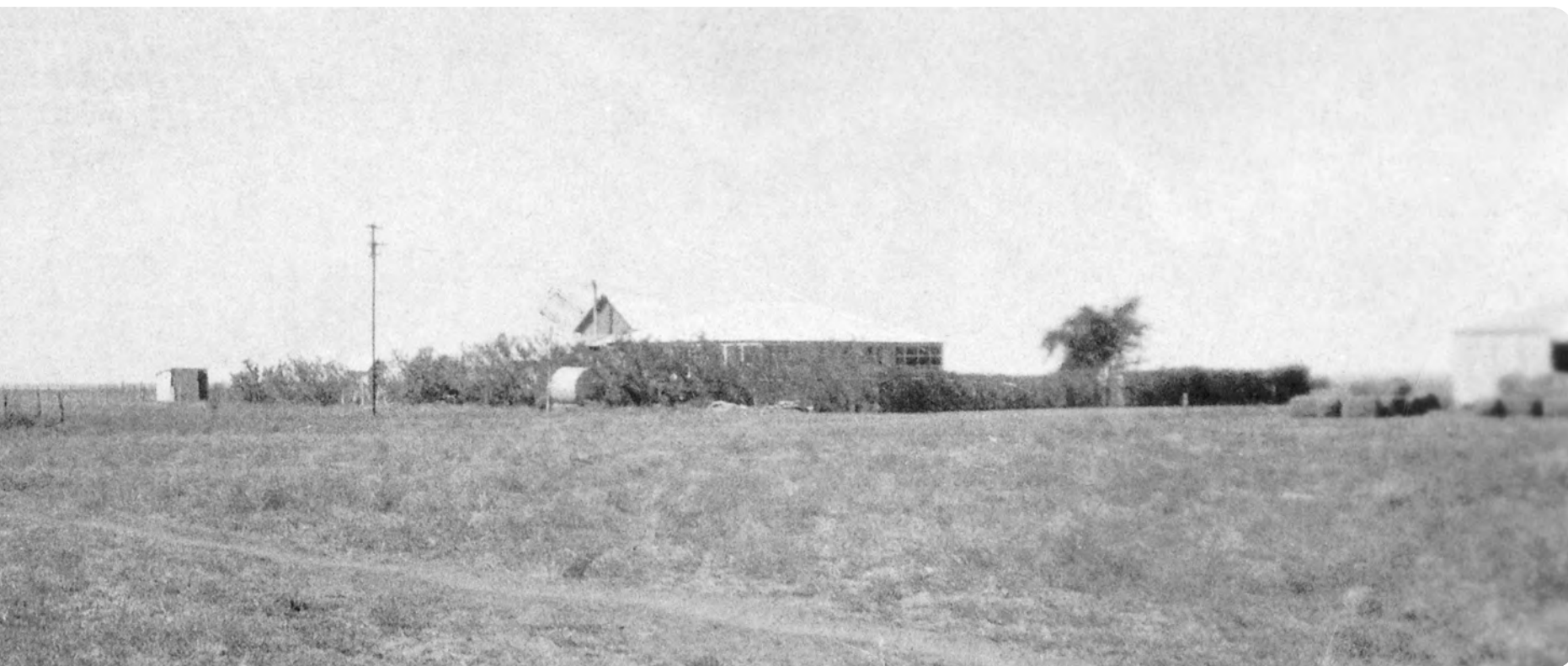
Below: Looking north from woolscour. Kitchen

(Rodie was cook) and men's quarters on left, Waldron Taylor's house on right. Scour behind photographer. Bill Brisbane's house off photo on left.

[Rawdon Greene, GrR01, 1936]

THAT'D BE one of the old fellas that wore the plate. I knew an old fella like that at Millungera. On his plate it used to have "Jimmy Boredrain, King of Millungera". He wore it by choice. I don't know how it started or why, but only special blokes owned them. There were several old fellas on Millungera with plates. They were real proud of them, oh yeah; real proud to wear that plate. They used to polish 'em up and all, eh.

BILL FORTUNE



I worked through till Christmas '35. Clarrie Timbs had gone and Nugget Stanley came in his place. But Nugget wasn't my room mate; he lived a couple of doors down.

Things altered round a little when Nugget came. He was about five years older, and sort of looked after me. Taught me to stand up for myself; taught me to box.

I came back to Sydney just before the scour shut for Christmas. I spent six weeks in Sydney and did nothing. I lived on my earnings.

I went back to Julia Creek in January. This time I was off the feeder and on the board, washing the wool and cleaning the tanks. All the scouring tanks had to be washed: emptied, cleaned, and new soda put in, especially if inferior wool had gone through. For instance, if you did the locks – the dirty wool – well, you didn't go and put AAA's in after them. You cleaned the muck and mud out, and then you put the AAA's in on a nice clean tank.

The end of that season I came home to Sydney and stayed.

WOOL GROWERS

Your clip will sell at its absolute value when treated at Julia Creek Scour because:

- (1) tried and trusted experts supervise the work;
- (2) our artesian water has uncommon scouring properties;
- (3) results prove that wool treated by us always attracts the best competition of buyers.

Consult us about blending suitable small lines in order to induce keener bidding

Postal address: The Julia Creek Wool Scouring Coy, Ltd, Box 14, Julia Creek

Consign wool to *Gunjoola*.

NQR: 18 Nov 1929

Opposite: Letter to Rawdon from Edna Eckford. The book mentioned in the letter is *Nothing Prepared Me!*

Below: Tennis at Julia Creek in the 1930s, in Coyne St to the east of original Shire Office, about where the council buildings are today [2009]. Nearest player is Edna Eckford. Her partner is unidentified. Far court from left: unidentified man, Fred Bennett (local accountant before Jamie Burns), Alf Jenkins (first Health Inspector), Guy Hardgraves (Bank teller, Queensland National Bank).

The tall house behind the courts is where George & Jean Jaques lived. The smaller building on the right is Mrs Shaw's house, still standing in 2009. Phyllis Williams lived in the house on the far left. Phyllis, according to Harold Walters (bottom of page 400), was the red-light lady of Julia Creek. [*Dadie Dawes, DW54, ca 1935*]

I NEVER HAD ANY PROBLEMS with Julia Creek. It was all good. We played a cricket match once, girls against the boys, and we had to take our opposite's name and wear each other's clothes. I was given Edna Eckford's – she wore my clothes and I wore hers. We're about the same build. I was going to bat left-handed, but they woke up and I had to bat right-handed. They made me play opposite to what I normally would. And I had to bowl right-handed too.

All the men had to use a stump for a bat, but the women used bats and played conventional cricket. We were all kind of upside down. The men were handicapped – and the women beat us. But it was a fun match. Afterwards, all the men paraded through the town on an old ute. It was the sort of thing that you don't get in cities. Everybody was part of it and we were all good mates.

I joined the tennis club and we played on a Saturday or a Sunday. It was damn hot on the clay court. There were five or six of us: three of us from the scour, a few girls and one or two others. Freddie Bennett was a good player. I wasn't the best player by any means, but I had my own racket and I played and I enjoyed it.

I'd forgotten there were two courts. I thought there was only one. The fellow in the middle looks like Fred Bennett. That'd be Fred all right; he had a crook leg.

Ollie Gannon used to come to the scour on Sunday mornings in a Buick and take Fred and me to church. We went along mainly for the ride in the Buick. It was Bill Gannon's, a 1934 ute. Once, when the Sunday train was in, Ollie was looking at the train and she ran straight into a truck. Bill's Buick was out of action for two months. He had to send to America for parts.



Thornleigh
Blackall Qld. 4472
12th July, 2003

Dear Rawdon,

I was so pleased to receive your Christmas card dated 10-12-02. I apologise for the long delay in replying. The year 2002 was not a good year for me. Late in October 2001 I went into hospital for a gall stone operation. Nothing to it they said, you'll be out of hospital in a few days they said. I believed them, but something went wrong and I was in hospital seven weeks.

I was told when I came out of hospital I could no longer live on my own, so I now spend six months with my son Tom and daughter-in-law Wendy at Thornleigh and six months with my daughter, Meldie, and her family on Austral Downs in the Nth. Territory.

I am well now, just need to go back to a hospital every three months for blood tests. My wings have certainly been severely clipped. I miss my independence but my children and grandsons are very good to me. Old age, Tiger, has finally caught up. How are you moving with the times?

I often think of you and our lovely carefree days at Julia Creek. I spent the happiest days of my life in that little bush town. I think the last time I saw you was ice skating in Sydney, before the war, a long time ago. Faith Smith from Julia Creek was with us, and your sister with her friend were also there. I was not sure but I thought your sister's friend was your girlfriend.

You wrote to me during the war. I think you were in Singapore and then I seemed to lose touch. They were dreadful, frightening days.

The "Garomna" Browne boys are scattered, as most of those old families are. One of the Browne boys, Geoffrey, came to see me at Caloundra several times. I enjoyed his company. We went through old photos and old times.

My sister Coral died in Charters Towers in 1993, Meldie died in Brisbane in 1994 and my brother Jim died in Julia Creek early in 2002. Our family has dwindled down to just Dadie Dawes and myself. Dadie Dawes and her large family now live in Townsville where the boys are in business.

I started to do the Eckford history before I left Lansdowne. I found it very interesting and had gone as far back as the Danish-Scottish connections, then my husband, Rod died and I just lost interest. I picked it up again but did not have the same interest. You have sent me a lot of interesting pieces for which I am very grateful. There are always so many missing pieces. I had no idea there were so many Eckfords in Australia.

Shirley Eckford, Jim's wife, has been gathering information for some considerable time now so we keep in touch and trade. Since my book came out I have been in touch with a lot of old Julia Creek friends. Some I have not heard of for many years. Some have called in to see me, others have phoned.

My memories of the last great war are still very vivid, and now we are talking war again. Old enemies become friends and march off side by side to fight another war.

Well, my dear old friend, we are in our twilight years now. I hope they are happy years for you. Julia Creek seems so long ago.

Take care and keep well,

Sincerely,

E. Daw.

Saturday night was picture night – and that was definite. We walked into town. We always walked in, two or three of us. We'd pay our money, go in and sit down. Everyone looked at you as you came in. The seats were the old deckchair type. Aborigines, they sat on benches down the back. They were accepted and they came in, but they didn't actually sit in deckchairs. They weren't around the town. I never saw Aborigines round the town. They came in with stockmen from neighbouring stations.

Joe Eckford from the picture show used to put up his posters around town, but we never saw any. The goats ate every poster within reach, standing on their back legs to get at the paste. And if you left groceries in a vehicle, rice and potatoes and newspapers, the goats would have it in one hell of a mix when you saw it next time.

During interval we'd go outside for a leak under a pepper tree. We'd walk out of the pictures, all the men, and be saying to each other: "This is where the big knobs hang out".

After the pictures we went to the Blue Bird Cafe for a really good steak and eggs. Round about midnight Saturday, when the shearers and everybody else were in town, there was always someone at the Blue Bird. That was part of the fun. You'd get a dozen people in there. Didn't cost very much, but y'know, they made their living. An Australian couple ran it¹, whereas round the other street near the railway line was a Greek cafe.

So many memories...

There was something about Julia Creek.

I can't explain it. I never felt it anywhere else.

We used to say:

If you've been to Julia Creek you'll always go back.

Well, I haven't been back yet.

I was in Townsville five or six years ago
and I thought of going out,
just to have a look around and say hello to it, but...
going back, it's never the same;
and maybe I'll leave it the way it is.

Now I've got to the stage medically, well,
it'd be quite a problem.

It was a happy town.

Only thing is... I felt there was no future there.

That's probably it.

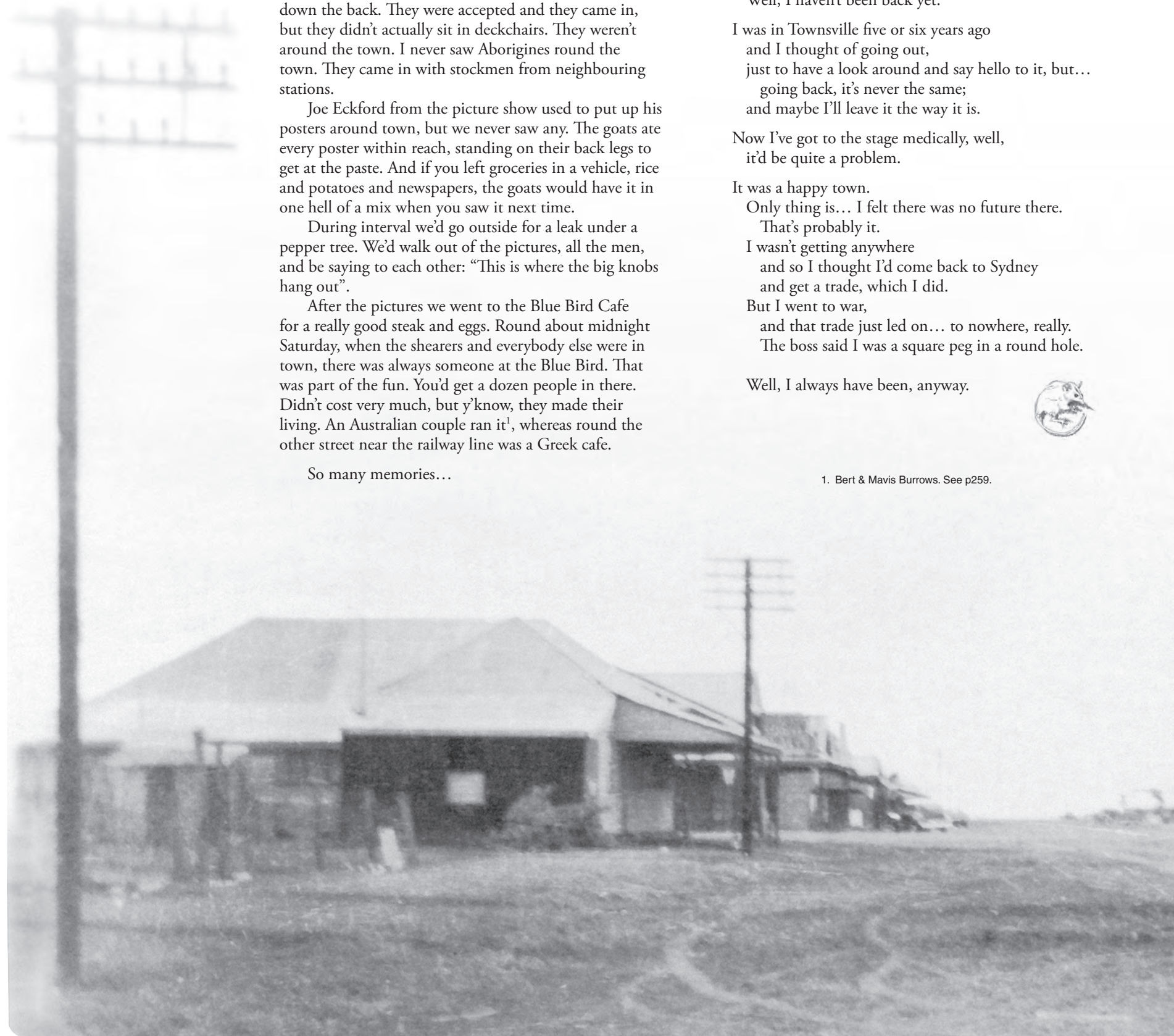
I wasn't getting anywhere
and so I thought I'd come back to Sydney
and get a trade, which I did.

But I went to war,
and that trade just led on... to nowhere, really.
The boss said I was a square peg in a round hole.

Well, I always have been, anyway.



1. Bert & Mavis Burrows. See p259.





Left: Rawdon.
[Rawdon Green, GrR03, 1941]

Rawdon had a passion for the Julia Creek woolscour. When I met him outside Sydney in his retirement village, the kitchen table, the lounge room floor, and most flat surfaces in his small unit were covered with diagrams, sketches, photos and books related to the scour. It was a wonderful jumble of information he had gathered, but I knew his infirmities would prevent him from putting it together in a coherent form. Death intervened soon after my visit. Rawdon's woolscour passion and his memorabilia are now dissipated.

I spent two days with Rawdon. Before I left, he asked me would I go to the scour site on my next visit to Julia Creek and step-out measurements for him and take photos. And that's what I did.

Rawdon – this Garomna chapter with it's information on scouring (see next page), mostly sourced from your documents, is dedicated to you, mate.

Below: Burke St, Julia Creek, looking west, taken from in front of Eckford's picture theatre. On the left is the Qld National Bank. Gannon's Hotel is behind the bank (only the roof is visible). From right: Mathews' Hall (on the site of the present Civic Centre), Post Office (across Julia St), vacant block, original Blue Bird Cafe, Charlie Byrne's butcher shop.
[Dadie Dawes, DW15, ca 1941]

Mathews' Hall did not exist in Rawdon's time. It opened on 7/4/1941 and the event was described in the *North Queensland Register*.

A gala night took place on Monday when Bill Mathews' new hall was opened. Mr Mathews gave the hall free of charge and the proceeds from the Dance and Euchre Tournament went to the Ambulance.

Although the weather caused a postponement of the affair from Friday to Monday, the hall was well-packed and dancing continued till early in the morning. The hall was gaily decorated in red, white and blue, and the orchestra – consisting of Adelia Thompson (piano), and Messrs Leslie Thompson (drums), Frank Norton (saxophone and violin) and N. Langtree (trombone) – was at its best.

The lucky door number was drawn by Roy Hampton, and the raffle of a double Easter egg was won by Mrs Bally Kaeser.

The dance was a success socially and financially, and the Ambulance should greatly benefit by the result.

Mathews' Hall went through a succession of owners: Bill Mathews (1941-47), Les Peut (1947-51), Roy Champneys (1951), Roy Hampton (1951-55, run by Mrs Dawson), Kevin Lafferty (1955-56), Terry O'Neill (1957). It was demolished in the 1960s to make way for the Civic Centre.



A Short History of Woolscouring



SOON AFTER white settlement in Australia, wool became an attractive product. It could be produced cheaply, was in demand, and could stand the rigours of the long sea voyages to overseas markets. English woollen mills had traditionally accepted only clean wool, and this practice had been imported to Australia. One way to clean wool was by *sheep washing*, either by dunking the sheep in a creek or by spraying them with water.

Sheep washing was not suited to Australian conditions. Lack of water was the main problem, and it was also difficult to keep the wool free from dust and other impurities between washing the sheep and shearing them. By the 1840s the popular choice was to wait until *after* shearing to clean the wool. This was known as scouring – freeing the wool from dirt, vegetable matter and lanolin.

Wool fibre is covered in lanolin, a grease that is soluble in hot water. Early methods of washing wool relied on cold water, but cold water was not effective, removing only the foreign material but not the lanolin. Scoured wool, with the lanolin removed, was preferred by the woollen mills and weighed considerably less than greasy wool. The reduction in weight was a real benefit when wool had to be

transported long distances by waggon, with fees charged by weight. Scoured wool weighed as little as half that of untreated wool. However, the reduction in weight, which was one of the original purposes of scouring, did not lead to a reduction in transport costs because Queensland Railways increased the rate for scoured wool (see page 3 below which shows railage for scoured wool as 147/3 per ton; greasy 118/9 per ton).

The earliest method of scouring was known as the *pot-stick* method. This involved washing the fleece in a pot of hot soapy water, after which it was drained and left in the sun to dry. The pot-stick method gave way to the *hand-box* method: the wool passed through a series of boxes arranged in a line. In the first set of boxes the wool was washed in soapy hot water; in the second set it was rinsed clean. After this it went into a spin dryer, before being spread on racks to dry in the sun.

The hand-box method required a degree of skill, and led to the rise of professional scourers who followed the shearing season around the various stations, much as the contract shearers did. Their skill came from knowing how much time the different types of wool required to be cleaned properly. Too much cleaning could damage the fibre, making

it unworkable.

Manual scouring was labour intensive, and by the late 1870s stations were experimenting with mechanical scouring.

In 1877 a mechanical sheep-shearing machine was patented by Robert Savage and Frank Wolseley. These steam-driven clipping machines began to appear in shearing sheds from the mid-1880s. They allowed for a quicker shear and a larger clip due to their ability to shear closer to the sheep than manual clippers.

Mechanical scouring followed mechanical clipping. After the wool was unbaled (it always arrived baled at the scour) it passed through a series of tanks filled with hot water and detergent, where the dirt and grease were removed by agitating the wool with mechanical forks. Between the tanks a set of rollers squeezed dirty water from the wool before it entered the next tank. Once washed, the fleece was rinsed. Five tanks were common: two for washing and three for rinsing. The wool was dried by spinning in a cylinder or by blowing hot air through it. The dry wool was blown up to bins in the upstairs wool room by a large blower and stayed there until baled. A steam engine drove all the machinery using shafts and belts.

Edkins, Marsh & Co, Ltd,
(Head Office: ILFRACOMBE)

WOOLSCOURERS

at

ILFRACOMBE, TALMOI,
JULIA CREEK and CARRAR

Wool railed to Julia Creek
Woolscour should be consigned
to Woolscour, Gunjoola Siding;
to other scours—Talmoi, Carrar
or Ilfracombe, as the case
may be.

Telephones:

Ilfracombe	No. 1
Julia Creek	No. 24
Talmoi	Maxwelton No. 6
Carrar	Richmond No. 3

TO WOOLGROWERS

(upon whose support we are dependent)

we present our Compliments
and this little Book

OUR fundamental object has been to convince you that it is more lucrative to scour your wool than send it away in the grease, and a careful perusal of the figures quoted on page 3 should, we think, satisfy the most sceptical that our contention is correct.

The example quoted is but one of many cases where it would have been much more advantageous to scour the whole clip.

Without losing sight of the main object of this Note Book we have endeavoured to supply scraps of information which will make the book one of handy reference, and if we have succeeded in interesting you in any way we shall consider ourselves fully repaid for our work.

Yours faithfully,

Edkins, Marsh & Co. Ltd.

WHY Send Your WOOL to
MARKET in the GREASE
and LOSE Money?

Our advice is to scour your whole clip – work out your average price and we feel you will be well-pleased.

It is possible to profit by scouring even the cleanest lines, because the cost of treatment is considerably more than recouped by the value added to the scoured wool. Freight and marketing savings are large, owing to the reduced weight of scoured wool – the waste, dirt and grease being removed. Good scouring will often lift an average greasy wool into one of the higher types.

In support of our contention that scouring pays, we submit the following figures as having been realised from a grazier's flock, portion of the wool from which was scoured at our Julia Creek Works.

This grower despatched the very best of his ewe's fleece direct to market, in the grease, and his top price was 15d. A line of 89 bales sent to the scour lost 47% weight in treatment and the scoured product was appraised at 32d. A full test is shown on page 3.

Some scours were also involved in fellmongering, the process by which wool is removed from the skins of dead sheep. The skins were soaked in bore water, hot enough to allow proliferation of bacteria which attacked the skins leaving only the wool. The entire process for dry skins took between 10 and 14 days (fresh skins only took between one and two days), with the wool, once scoured, being as good as that shorn from live sheep.

The money needed to set up a woolscour was substantial. As a result, scouring moved away from individual sheep stations to a central location near a town. The buildings for the Julia Creek woolscour, for example, came from a scour on Toorak Station.

Most scours were in cities, but in Western Queensland three factors contributed to the rise of woolscours. First, the railway gave easy access to the Brisbane markets (all the woolscours in Queensland, except one, had facilities to load wool directly onto railway waggons). Second, hot artesian water was ideal for scouring and was readily available. And third, wool grown in Western Queensland was relatively easy to clean, as it

contained mainly dust with very little seed or burr (a common condition in the southern states).

By 1900 there were five woolscours operating in Western Queensland; at Charleville, Longreach, Ilfracombe and two at Barcaldine. Within the next few decades several others joined them including Blackall, Winton, Richmond, Maxwellton and Julia Creek.

Scouring prospered during World War I, but then the industry went into long term decline, apart from a temporary recovery during the 1930s and 40s.

Following World War 2, the western scours began to close. Maxwellton, Hughenden and Richmond were gone by the end of the 1940s. The wool boom of 1950/51 further undermined the industry: prices for greasy wool were so attractive there was little incentive to scour. Drought followed the price boom and led to the closure of the Winton, Barcaldine, Charleville and Julia Creek scours. Ilfracombe closed in 1966, leaving only the Blackall scour operating. It ceased operations in 1978. Today, none remain in Western Queensland, other than the reopened Blackall scour which operates as a tourist attraction.

Scoured at Julia Creek

SCOURED –	£	s	d	£	s	d
Price realised on 1187 lbs of clean wool, being yield per ton @ 32½d. per lb.				160	14	9

Less Charges:

Scouring @ 1½d. per lb	8	0	9
Packs, 5½ @ 6/3 each	1	13	4
Railage to Townsville			
Jetty at 147/3 per ton	3	18	0
Shipping, Port Fees, Cartage & Stacking			
5½ bales @ 8/5½ bale	2	5	8
Broker's Charge @ ¼d. per lb.	1	4	9
Selling Commission @ 1¼%	2	0	2

Nett Return				141	12	1
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GREASY –

Price realised on 2240 lbs of greasy @ 15d. per lb.				140	0	0
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Less Charges:

6½ Woolpacks @ 6/3 each	2	0	7
Railage to Townsville			
Jetty at 118/9 per ton	5	18	9
Shipping, Port Fees, Cartage & Stacking			
6½ bales @ 10/2½ bale	3	6	4
Broker's Charge @ ¼d. per lb.	2	6	8
Selling Commission @ 1¼%	1	15	0

Nett Return				124	12	8
--------------------	--	--	--	-----	----	---

3.

The foregoing example in which the nett return in favour of scouring is £16/9/5 is just one of many cases pointing to the profits made by scouring.

UNIQUE RECORDS

Ilfracombe Woolscour: Wools treated at Ilfracombe topped consecutive series of wool sales in London, Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne.

Talmoi Woolscour: Tarbrax wool scoured at Talmoi holds the record for wools sold at auction in Australia.

Julia Creek Woolscour: Wools treated at Julia Creek secured the three highest prices paid for scoured wool during 1939-40 appraisal season: Oxtown Downs 34½d., Hilton Park 34¼d., St Elmo 34¼d.

Year after year, wools scoured by Edkins, Marsh and Co. Ltd., have topped more series of Brisbane and London wool sales than all the rest of the woolscours in Queensland put together.

4.

SCOURED WOOL

A question often asked is, "Why is so little of the Australian wool clip scoured before marketing?" Only 4 percent of our production is scoured before export, and the reason is precisely that the majority of buyers prefer their supplies in the greasy state, particularly fleece and bulky skirtings.

Wool in its natural greasy condition (and bulk) retains its individual character and can be sorted by the manufacturer exactly as he wants it: fleece by fleece, and for skirtings, piece by piece. The wool can afterwards be scoured to a condition most suitable for the particular processes of manufacture it is about to undergo. On the other hand, notwithstanding the high standard of woolclassing on the stations, a small percentage of wool will be classed incorrectly, and as it passes through the scouring process will be blended with better class wool and become impossible to separate. Manufacturers prefer their wool, therefore, in the unscoured state which allows them to sort and scour as they see fit.

There are, of course, many well-prepared scoured wools forwarded from country areas. Most renowned are the scoured wools of Western Queensland. The wools grown in the vicinity of Julia Creek, Richmond, Ilfracombe, and a few other places, lend themselves to scouring, and when quite free from vegetable fault wash up very attractively. Certain buyers look to the Brisbane market for these scoured specialities and the demand is usually keen. When the Russians first operated in Brisbane they practically confined their attention to scoured wools. They were pushed to high prices by Germany and France, but continued to obtain the bulk of the speciality scoureds.

The most recent boom in scoured wools occurred in March 1928 when scoureds in Brisbane sold to 51½d, and many lots realised between 48d and 50d. Growers had been watching Russia's activities, and to them the time appeared most opportune to market scoured wools. Supplies consequently increased.

At the next sale after March 1928, Russia was out of the market and scoureds dropped in price about 4d per pound. Since then Russia's purchases have been largely greasy wools, great weights of which, before shipment, have been sorted and scoured on its account in the capital cities.

NQR: 07 Dec 1929

*J. G. Horton
Teamster
with his near-side
leader "Punch";
approaching a gateway.*



Opposite: Jim Horton's fireplough.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG26, 1949]

Geoffrey's note on the back of the photo:
"Comet fireplough operated by Jim Horton.
Sold in 1949 to Max Burns. Tractor 120 HP Cletrac".

Geoffrey is not quite correct. The Cletrac is not
visible. What is visible is a Britstand C14 scoop.
The Cletrac would be behind the scoop.

Below: Jim Horton on Garomna.
[Ulick Browne, BU06, ca 1930]

Drown it in treacle **Geoffrey Browne**

Died 8 May 2007

DAD NEVER DROVE A HORSE TEAM, he employed Jim Horton. Jim was the professional and he did a lot of work on Garomna. I think Dad and he had an agreement – he was more than just a teamster.

Jim was born under a waggon and spent his whole life in the bush. He worked the fireplough for us and he'd also go out contracting for other properties. He'd be away six or seven months and when the work was finished he'd go into Julia Creek and hit the booze, ending up silly as a chook at the stockyards, sleeping it off in a small tent-affair. When he sobered up he came out home. He was married, too, with a large family, but they never came with him. He never spoke much of his family.

After the war I met Jim in Julia Creek and he'd had the guts to give up grog completely.

Jim did about a thousand miles of contract ploughing a year. He had an incredible ability to judge a mile. I remember a friend of ours, Eric Netterfield, he was managing a property that Jim ploughed, and he told me: "Well, I checked up on this bloke. I drove around the job and it measured exactly what he had on the invoice".

Depending on the country, Jim had up to 40 horses at times. I used to go with him and horse tail – round up the horses. I'd unyoke them around 4 in the afternoon and take them to water, staying there till it was almost dark so they'd get a good feed and settle down easily. Back near camp I could smell damper being baked. As soon as I was allowed off the horse I used to drop the saddle, race to the fire, cut off a great slice of damper and drown it in treacle.

I learnt how to handle horses from old Jim; how to act responsibly on a job. At a halfway stop – we were taking wool into Julia Creek – I asked for a drink and he gave me a tin pannikin of water. I drank half of it and threw the rest on the ground. Well, he just blew up. "If you can't drink it, put the bloody stuff back in the tank!"

Another thing was the axe. Once when I was breaking camp, the midday camp, I forgot to put the axe on the fireplough and copped a sermon. "Look, the axe is life. You can kill a beast, you can split the carcass, you can cut wood to cook it. You can survive with an axe."

The first thing I put onto the blinkin' waggon after that was the axe. That... and water.

In the late forties, Max Burns, your grandfather, pulled Jim's fireplough to bits. Max went on holidays and left all his earthmoving equipment – I think there were two or three Cletracs and also a scoop – left them parked near the horse yards while the wet season was on. When he came back in the new year he got the equipment running again and asked me if he could have the fireplough. It wasn't really for sale – who would have bought it? I'm not sure he paid me anything; he might have ploughed a track for me. Anyway, Max hitched it to one of his Cletracs, but it was too powerful and the plough got pulled to pieces. Bryan Fels (he bought Garomna later on) told me the wreck is still near the railway line.

In the front of the plough you can see a single wheel, like a steering wheel, that lowered or raised the point. Two similar wheels in the rear, they lowered or raised the back, the cutting edge. Jim ploughed thousand of miles with that machine. The reason it's covered over is because it carried all his equipment: his swag, the water and harness, those sort of things; the whole bit. It was the only shelter he had, y'see. That was his home.

WHEN I CAME BACK TO GAROMNA after the war I asked Dad to buy a tractor. Lorries and tractors were new on the scene and he said he wouldn't, so I bought one and rented it to him. The tractor soon put an end to the horses. We still had about 200 head when I took over the property, and sadly, the only place that would take them was the knackery.



GAROMNA WAS NAMED after the island of Gorumna in Galway Bay, Ireland. My grandfather, Sylvester John Browne came from that area.

He won Garomna in a ballot but he never lived there. When he arrived in Julia Creek there was no development at all on Garomna except for one fence that went through it, and a humpy. He stayed in town at the old pub fronting the railway line.

Grandfather bought a house from Charters Towers. They had stacks of miner's houses going for sale cheap and he was able to buy one and have it knocked down and railed to Julia Creek. It was made of silky oak – the walls, the floors, the ceilings – the whole lot was silky oak. His son Vessie erected the building; you can see the props holding up the walls during the building stage. The humpy's on the left. Uncle Vessie was about 18 at the time, and it was while he was erecting the house that his father died at the Julia Creek Hotel.

Somehow Dad ended up with the property. That miner's house was the home my mother was brought to after they married in 1918. They added to it; put on a wide verandah and a kitchen. That was the start of what eventually became the main house.

Mum used to have Aboriginal girls helping in the kitchen. They were wonderful, really; such happy people. And the men, as stockmen, were terrific – if you could keep them. They were nomads and they didn't like the Julia Creek country; not enough trees. They always like to have a spell under a tree to "get away from boss". On the Downs they didn't have anywhere to hide. The last of them on Garomna were gone before the war.

They were a clever people. They knew the country and they survived in it, and for that we should respect them. I've always said the worst thing that happened to Aborigines was white people.



PETS WERE PART of my growing up. We had pigs. Pigs were marvellous pets. If we shot a pig and there were piglets about we'd bring them home. They bond with you. Call out "pig pig pig" and they go "oink oink oink" and race up and put their head between your legs. They're clean animals if they've got plenty of room: they pee in one spot, they dung in another. They might get into mud – but that's to cool off.

Pigs, lambs, joeys, and a couple of house cows. We had chooks as well. No goats – except one. When he was erecting the house, Uncle Vessie had a goat for his milk supply. There's a photo of him wearing a fancy hat while milking. Vessie went to England to join up in the First World War and ended up with the British in India where they wore insulated hats to deal with the heat.

The people in Julia Creek, they had goats galore. The main supply of milk to Julia Creek was goats. I remember Doc Hickman – a friend of Mums – if Doc ran out of milk to put in the tea she'd go to the back door and call the goat into the kitchen. It was the best way before refrigeration. But we preferred dairy milk. It was a bigger supply. You could keep a few people going on goats but if you had three or four men working, and the household, you needed quite a bit of milk.

Occasionally, a few Julia Creek goats came our way and took up with the flock. They stood out like a beacon. I've seen town goats as far out as Malham, another property we had, a good 15 miles out towards Yorkshire Downs. We didn't want goats amongst the sheep – their hair usen't to mix too well with the wool – so we'd eat them unless the owners claimed them first. You can't tell goat meat from mutton, it's exactly the same. We called them "drought mutton" because they were better foragers than sheep.





Goats were a minor nuisance compared to rats and cats. I remember one rat plague when the four of us were still at home. Where the corrugated iron of the wall met the floor in the butcher shop, there was a gap and the rats used to get in there. We closed all the gaps except one or two and we'd be waiting for them with butcher's knives, ready to cut their heads off; or we'd get a stick and play hockey with them. We were brutal, really.

The number of rats was incredible. You'd go out at night and there'd be a swarm of them. They'd turn up unexpectedly, and just as suddenly they'd be gone.

Cats were the next problem. They built up with the rat plague, y'see. With the rats gone they had nothing to eat and they'd claw the gauze wire to get at food in the house. Rather than shoot them, because that was expensive at one shot per cat, I rigged up a gas machine. I had a 44 gallon drum with a hole near the top where I could put a hose. The drum was supported at the bottom with a big enough gap to let cats get at the bait and I had a rope connected to the supports so that I could trigger the trap. The cats came in – they were just starving – and as soon as there were as many as could fit inside, I pulled away the supports and the drum fell, trapping them. Then I connected the hose to the exhaust pipe of a car. It was a humane way of destroying them. I got three barrow loads of cats. It's hard to believe, isn't it; these poor devils that had built up after the rat plague.

Opposite top: Sylvester Browne with Maureen and Ulick Snr.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG40, ca 1902]

Opposite bottom: First Garomna homestead. Ulick Snr is standing where a passage was later on, when additions were made.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG01, 1917]

Top: Vessie Browne milking a goat on Garomna.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG02, 1915]

Below: Vessie Browne, returning to Garomna homestead on a tree trunk and a prayer.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG04, 1919]



I have fonder memories of Julia Creek than plagues.

Going to town meant getting dressed up.

It meant Tasmanian apples, fresh from the mail train.

We could actually contact Tasmania
and get a case of apples sent to Julia Creek.



It meant the talkies:

Shirley Temple was my favourite.

Oh boy! She was about my age.

Lovely!

And it meant ice cream.

I can remember the first ice cream I had;
ice cream so cold I got an immediate headache
gulping it down too quickly,
trying to cool off in the 110° heat.

We bought ice cream from Mrs Horton.
She had a big electric device,
an enormous thing for cooling.

The only cooling we had was done by nature:
charcoal cool rooms and Coolgardie safes
kept cool by evaporation.
Cool, mind, not cold;
put butter on the table and it turned to oil.
It was quite depressing.

Hortie,
she sees me eying the lollies,
and when Mum looks away she comes over:
"Take one"
Texas Chews. Yes, Texas Chews were nice.

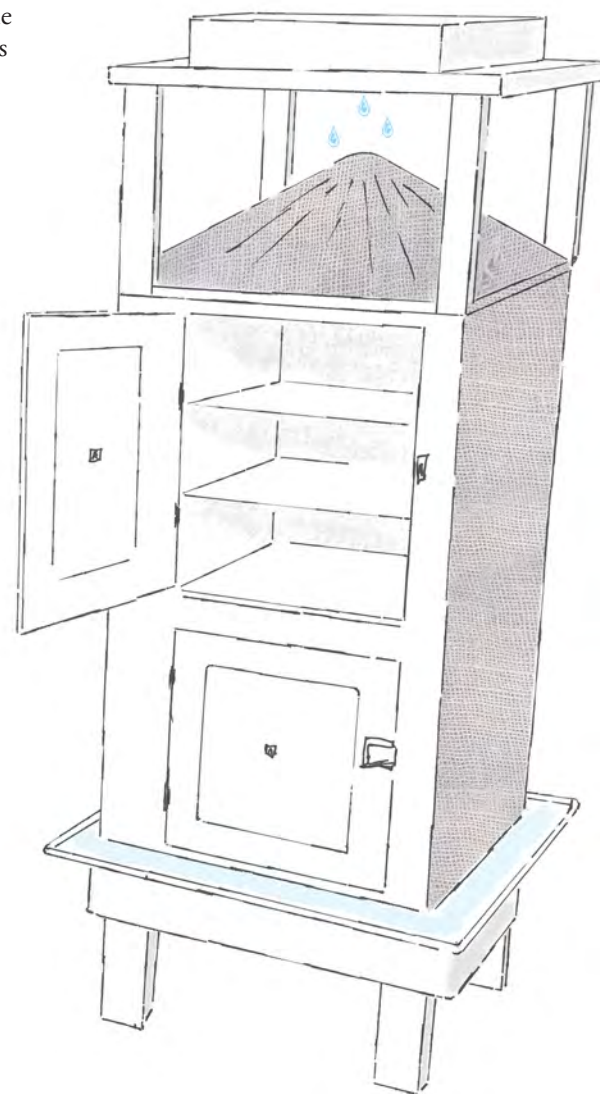
She told me after the war
if she'd been less generous she'd be wealthy;
but I don't believe that.
She was wealthy in sly smiles of children.

In the early days we didn't get much fresh fruit. There were no refrigerated waggons for the railway. We just had the basics like potatoes, pumpkins, onions. You could get those from Hortie or Mrs Sills, or even the Chinaman.

Refrigeration arrived for us in 1935 when Electrolux came out with a kerosene fridge. It changed the whole west. It was the biggest change in the bush that's ever been. Before that we had a device, parts of which were heated by a primus sort of thing, and when it got to a certain stage you reversed the hot end and frost formed. I remember that well: I licked it and my tongue stuck. Pulled a bit of skin off.

We had a charcoal cooler; charcoal around a centre area with a door for access. Square all the way down, about as high as a man. Bigger than a modern day fridge. It worked like a waterbag. You wet the charcoal and as the water evaporated it cooled. We also had a Coolgardie safe which had sugar bags joined together. There was a tray of water on top and the sugar bags hung down to another tray at the bottom which collected the water. The water evaporated as it moved down the sugar bags, cooling but not refrigerating whatever was inside.

Ants were a bit of a problem with the Coolgardie, so Mum put a jug of milk – boiled milk, you couldn't keep fresh milk – on a little stand in the water at the top of the safe to keep the ants away. One day I was trying to reach the darn thing and spilt the milk into the water. Within an hour the milk was stinking, gone rotten. Milk flowed down the bags too, so the whole lot had to be pulled down and the bags cleaned.



Right: The Coolgardie safe was a cabinet for keeping food cool by the evaporation of water. It had a hessian cover with a tray of water on top which dripped slowly onto the hessian to keep it wet. Only a slight breeze – and a supply of water – was enough to keep food cool. They were usually kept on the verandah. The tray at the bottom had a dual purpose: it caught the water as it seeped down, and stopped ants from crawling up.

The particular safe that Geoffrey describes ("Mum put a jug of milk... on a little stand in the water at the top of the safe to keep the ants away") might have lacked the bottom tray, or maybe the ants were able to crawl around it.

I WAS ABOUT 16 when I finished school in the early part of the war. I had three older brothers who joined the services, but labour was scarce out west and I was told I'd have to stay and help Dad. Within six months I'd driven him round the bend and he gave me a one-way fare to Brisbane. I had a brother in the army, two in the air force, and I thought: *I've gotta be different*. So I joined the navy.

The war had a terrific effect on those men, y'know. Roderic had been in the army for six years by war's end. He was in the Middle East. Oh God, what those blokes went through. He was 20 when he joined up and at 26 was still at war with the enemy. Simple as that. Ulick was piloting Lancasters, doing the same sort of thing but from the air. He wrote a letter home: "I went out a boy and came back a man". He had his 21st birthday bombing Kiel Canal in Germany.

What those fellows went through is hard for us to imagine. When they came back they just wanted to chase a few dreams. They hadn't lived a young person's life; they hadn't grown up slowly. When I joined the navy I grew up quick, within three weeks. I never regretted the intense discipline, but you did grow up pretty damn quick.

After the war we followed our separate yearnings. I returned to Julia Creek and managed Garomna and Malham, two 20,000 acre properties, largely on my own for about six years.

Dad contested politically the State seat and also the Federal seat. He lost, he didn't win either of them, but he did set a change because at the next election both seats were claimed by the Country Party.

In 1953 we had a lot of rain on Garomna and Dad thought it was a good year to sell. He gave me the chance to buy, but... I am the wrong colour for that part of the world. I wasn't comfortable in that environment. None of the Brownes were. Australia was settled by northern Europeans coming into a tropical, subtropical environment. You look around the equator and what colour are the people? Black, olive, brown. Why? Because of where they live. That's the reason I couldn't stay – I was the wrong colour. I'd go south for a holiday every two years and when I got back it'd take me two weeks to get acclimatised to be able to go out and work.

Mum and Dad retired to Toowoomba. They wanted to live in a place where it was cooler. Actually it was too dash cool for them in the end.

I HAVE A PLEASANT AND PERMANENT reminder of Julia Creek. I've still got the dent in my head. I was on Malham, our other property, mustering cattle. The horse I was riding pelted me off, and as he cantered away he kicked me right on top of the head. Didn't knock me out, but I was pretty dazed. After tea that night I had a bad headache and blood was still coming out of the wound so I thought I'd better go to the hospital. The matron said to me: "I'll get the new nurse in to have a look at it". The new nurse came in and stitched me up. I was quite happy putting up with the pain with this lovely girl, Barbara, attending me.

A few days later the wound became infected and she gave me antibiotics. That was the start of it. I came into Julia Creek more often after that. The accident was in 1951. We married in '52 and sold up and left Julia Creek in '53.



Mr. S. U. Browne, Toowoomba, returned to look after his station property Garomna whilst his son Geoff left to spend holidays in Brisbane and Sydney, and also spend some time with his mother in Toowoomba. Whilst away Geoff will wed Miss Barbara Milburn who was for some time a nursing sister at the local hospital. The happy young couple intend making their home at Garomna Station.

The wedding of Miss Ivy Gannon to Mr. Anthony Bowtle will take place

We have been instructed by Mr. S. U. Browne to offer his property for sale

BY PUBLIC AUCTION at THE WOOL EXCHANGE, BRISBANE on

FRIDAY 27th MARCH, 1953, AT 11 A.M.

"GAROMNA"

SITUATED: South-East of Julia Creek, with boundary 2 miles from Township, Trucking Yards and Dip, Woolscour and Aerodrome. Homestead 10 miles from Julia Creek, connected with Continuous Telephone Exchange and having a weekly mail service. There are almost daily air-services on the Townsville/Mount Isa route. The property is South of the tick line.

AREA ETC: 38,243 acres in two portions, 4 miles apart and joined by a stock route.

"Garomna" G.H. 15364 Hughenden, 18,221 acres. Rental determined for the second period at £161; and "West Malham" G.H. 15365, 20,002 acres. Rental £167; the Tenures being 28 years from 1/1/38. The lessee has the right to apply for extensions 7 yrs. prior to the expiry of the Lease.

COUNTRY AND RAINFALL: Open Mitchell Grass Downs, with Coolibah along Julia and Horse Creeks.

"Garomna" was an Eddington Resumption, and an average of 17 ins. of rain has been recorded over 38 years, having been worked by the present owner for that period. The portion known as "West Malham" was bought in 1921 and the leasehold tenure of the aggregation can be regarded as absolute for one holder.

WATER: A flowing bore sunk in 1924 running 7 miles of drain, waters "Garomna." This is fitted with a pumphead for emergency operation. Permit to sink another artesian bore has been granted, the necessary casing is on hand, a site picked and drains surveyed. Natural water in Horse and Clarence Creeks lasts five months. "West Malham" is watered by a controlled cemented artesian bore sunk in 1941 and natural water in Julia Creek lasts six months.

IMPRVTS: Shearing accommodation for 17 men, 8 roomed Homestead with necessary outbuildings. Bore water laid on. Sheep and Horse Yards subdivided into 10 paddocks, all fencing recently re-conditioned. "West Malham" has a boundary rider's hut, with sheepyards and two cattle or sheep holding paddocks at the bore 10 miles from the Homestead. All principal fences on both portions are cattle-proofed with barb.

PLANT: 6-Stand Cooper Shearing Plant installed in 1950 with 7 h.p. Lister Engine, Ferrier Woolpress and Scales. Homestead equipped with Aga Stove and 32 volt Electric Light.

CONDITIONS OF SALE: These provide that the property be offered: – (1) For Cash, (2) On terms which can be ascertained from the auctioneers.

REMARKS: One of the picked properties in the Julia Creek district for sheep and cattle; "Malham" being a noted fattening depot. Dingoes have never been known on this property. Improvements have been well maintained, and excellent rains have fallen over the whole of the property, which at present is in first class condition.

We take no responsibility for any errors or omissions in the above particulars, which are subject to revision or withdrawal without notice.

For further particulars please apply:
THE AUSTRALIAN ESTATES CO. LIMITED
(Incorporated in England)

AUCTIONEERS

BRISBANE



THE DEVICE that Geoffrey Browne licked and to which his tongue stuck (right column, page 324) was an icyball, a small refrigeration system marketed to homes without electricity. It was manufactured in the 1920s and 1930s. The unit used a water and ammonia mixture as the refrigerant, had no moving parts, and allowed any small heater to charge the unit. David Keith patented the idea in 1921, and in 1928 licensed the manufacturing rights to Crosley Radio Corporation in Cincinnati. They sold more than 100,000 Crosley Icyballs in the United States before discontinuing manufacture in the late 1930s.

In Australia, Edward Hallstrom manufactured refrigerators based on the same principle as the Crosley Icyball. After reading an article on refrigeration, Hallstrom studied patents and experimented in a makeshift laboratory in his backyard. He quickly saw the possibilities of kerosene-powered refrigeration for outback stations. At that time stations relied on the Coolgardie safe and the charcoal cooler, both of which provided only a limited amount of cooling. In 1923 Hallstrom produced his first refrigerator, a chest-style model run by kerosene, which he sold in the outback himself.

The icyball system converts heat into cold by using a mixture of water and ammonia as the refrigerant. It consists of two metal balls: a hot ball and a cold ball that are joined by a pipe. The pipe allows ammonia gas to move in either direction. In use, the hot ball is heated (typically by a kerosene burner) while the cold ball is kept in a tub of cool water. Then the hot ball is submersed in the same tub of water. The condensation and evaporation of the ammonia, as described below, causes the temperature of the cold ball to drop below freezing.

The cycle starts with a mixture of water and ammonia in the hot ball. The cold ball (empty at this

stage) is submersed in cool water, while the hot ball is heated gently, causing the ammonia to boil out of solution. Ammonia has a much lower boiling point than water and is driven off first – but only if the heating is done slowly. Too high a flame and the water will boil as well, contaminating the ammonia that, alone, should liquify in the cold ball.

During heating, the ammonia gas fills all the empty space in the hot ball, in the tube, and in the cold ball. Because it is a closed system, the pressure gradually rises as more heat is applied. Eventually the pressure reaches the point where the ammonia begins to liquify in the cold ball – at around 250 psi (about ten times the pressure in a car tyre). Any gas will liquify more easily if it is colder, and that is the reason the cold ball is kept in water. However, the ammonia brings heat with it from the hot ball, and this heat will cause the cold ball (and the water in the tub) to get hotter, making it more difficult for the ammonia to liquify. In operation, the manufacturer's instructions say to replace the water if this happens, or to feed a steady stream of cold water into the tank.

In summary: the hot ball is heated, ammonia is boiled out of solution, the pressure rises, and finally the ammonia liquefies in the cold ball (because of the high pressure and cool temperature). In this state the cold ball is said to be charged.

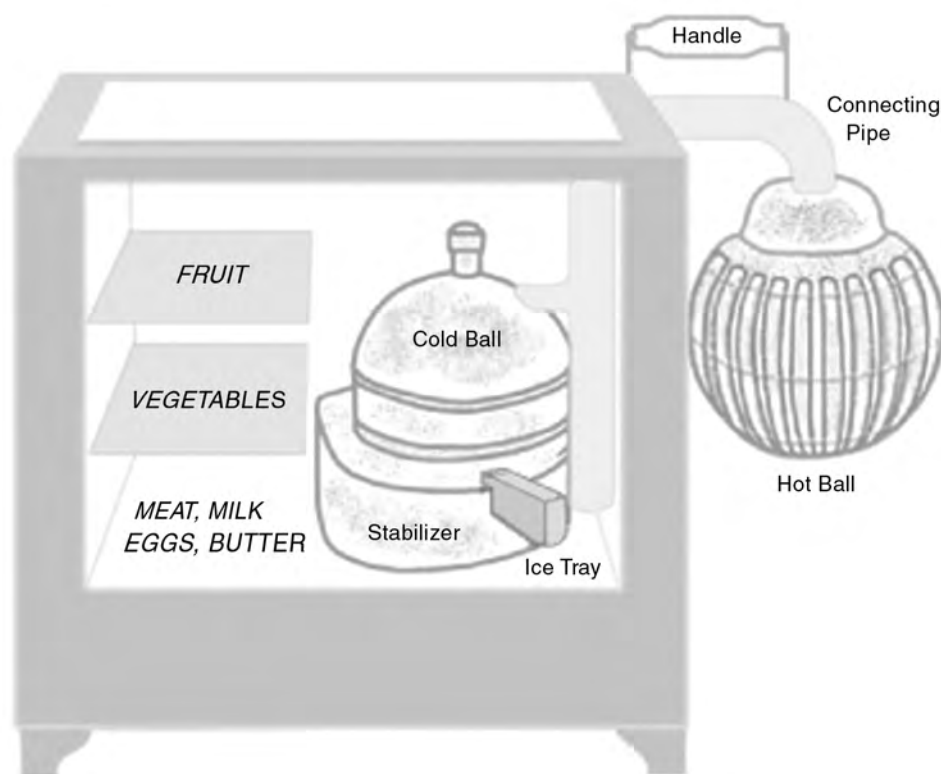
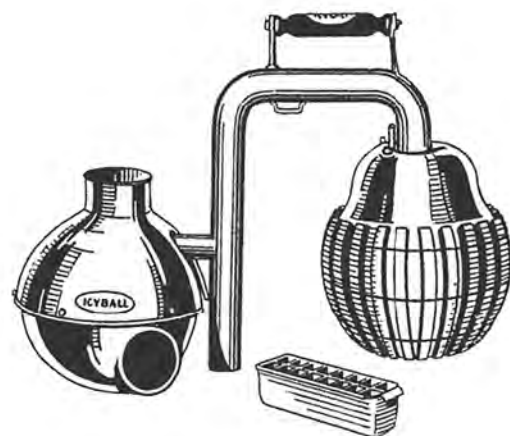
When the cold ball is fully charged, the heating is stopped and the positions of the hot ball and cold ball are reversed: the cold ball is taken out of the water bath and the hot ball replaces it. Because the hot

A Short History of Icyballs

ball is now being cooled, the pressure in the system begins to fall. When the pressure in the cold ball falls far enough, the ammonia starts to evaporate (it has a boiling point of -28°F ; it was only the high pressure that was keeping it liquid), and when that happens the cold ball begins to freeze. After several minutes it will be cool to the touch and is then placed on what is called the stabilizer inside the refrigeration cabinet. The stabilizer is filled with antifreeze solution and has two functions: first, it supports the cold ball; and second, because it is in close contact with the cold ball it absorbs most of the cooling effect, which it slowly releases over several hours.

The cooling effect of the icyball system is very similar to what happens to LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas) when it is allowed to escape from a gas bottle. LPG is forced into a bottle under high pressure, and remains a liquid inside the bottle as long as the pressure is maintained; but if the LPG is allowed to escape, the outlet valve becomes very cold. If water vapour is present, ice will form.

Other examples of cooling caused by a liquid evaporating are the cooling effect when perspiration evaporates from skin; and a canvas waterbag which cools when water evaporates from its surface. The icyball takes the process one stage further: it forces a gas to become a liquid by increasing the pressure (it does this by heating); then when the liquid evaporates, it cools whatever it is in contact with.



Right: *Instructions and Care and Operation* adapted from the Crosley manual. The heading and drawing were taken from the front cover.

Opposite left: Drawing of complete Icyball unit. Cold ball on left, hot ball on right. A handle for lifting the unit is on top of connecting tube. The circular hole at the bottom of the cold ball is the freezing bay into which a specially designed ice cube tray, shown at bottom, could be inserted.

Opposite right: Cross section showing the cold ball sitting on the stabilizer; hot ball outside. The heating of the hot ball, referred to as *charging*, is performed with the unit removed from the insulated cabinet. After the charging operation is complete and the cold ball begins to freeze, the unit is moved to the cabinet by using the handle.

Food items that needed most refrigeration, such as meat, milk, eggs and butter, would be placed at the bottom of the cabinet. Fruit and vegetables and other less perishable items would be near the top. And if the family wanted ice cubes, the ice tray was inserted in the freezing hole in the side of the cold ball before it went into the cabinet.

Below: A Crosley refrigeration cabinet with icyball.

"I think we may have had one of the earliest home refrigerators. It was a low chest type of thing with a top lid and a metal ball on the side. Every morning Dad took the ball and placed it on a primus stove for an hour or more to heat it up. He then replaced the ball and it would give us refrigeration for 24 hours. It always intrigued me how something which was heated could give us ice chips in our milk – but it did."

(Nookie Guest)



1. Place a tub of water on a stand in a convenient location for heating. Fill to a suitable level with cool water before submerging cold ball.
2. Submerge the cold ball in the tub of water, with the hot ball outside the tub.
3. Place a stove directly under the hot ball, leaving a space of about half of an inch between the bottom of the ball and the top of the stove.
4. Light the stove and adjust the flame such that its tips just touch the bottom of the hot ball.
5. Heat the unit slowly, so that at the end of 90 minutes – and not before – a drop of water placed on top of the connecting tube under the handle will sizzle, turn white and boil. This is the sizzle test. The whistle is an additional signal which operates towards the end of the heating to remind you to make the sizzle test.
6. Turn off the flame and remove the unit from the heating position. Place the hot ball in the tub of water with the cold ball outside. Leave the unit in this position until the tube above the cold ball becomes cool or slightly below room temperature. This should require from five to ten minutes.
7. Place Icyball Stabilizer in bottom of cabinet so cold ball will fit in it when unit is in operating position.
8. Place the unit in the cabinet with the hot ball outside and the cold ball resting in the bowl of the Stabilizer.
9. Fill the ice tray with water to be frozen and slide the tray into the freezing tube as far as it will go.

Tub Water – The water may be left in the tub and used for subsequent heatings, although the cooler the water the better the results will be. In very hot weather, or where cool water is not available, it is often worth while to change some of the water in the tub 20 minutes before the heating is complete. Where convenient, best results will be obtained by running a small stream of cool water into the tub while the hot ball is being heated. No part of the cold ball should ever be allowed to stand above the surface of the water when heating. Doing so will reduce the cooling effect.

Whistle – The whistle is adjusted at the factory and will blow towards the end of the heating to remind you to make the sizzle test.

Heating – Never have the flame hot enough to satisfy the sizzle test in less than 90 minutes, or you will not obtain best cooling results. Aside from that restriction, any type of stove or heat can be used if the heat is regulated. A slow rate of heating is very important and may require a little practice; but after a few trials you will be able to regulate the flame so that the unit will not be heated in less than 90 minutes. If heating

THE CROSLEY ICYBALL



The Crosley Radio Corporation
Cincinnati, Ohio, U. S. A.

takes more than 90 minutes, the efficiency of the unit will not be affected. A low flame will often take two hours or more.

Stabilizer – The Stabilizer need never be moved after it is installed, except for cleaning in and around it. After the liquid in the Stabilizer has become chilled, it will hold the box cold and increase the hours of refrigeration of the Icyball.

Ice Tray – The ice tray may be used to freeze ice cubes or frozen desserts, but the best results will be obtained if cool water is used in the tray, or if the dessert to be frozen is allowed to become cool before placing in the tray.

Be sure that none of the liquid is spilled when the tray is being inserted into the ball, or the tray may become frozen fast to the ball making it difficult to remove.

General Advice – The unit should be reheated (charged) whenever necessary; more often in hot weather than in cool weather. Best results will be obtained by charging the unit in the morning (when the water in the tub is cooler than at any other time of the day). When it is charged at this time, the unit will be most efficient during the hottest part of the day.

While the unit is cooling the cabinet, the hot ball will be warm, because the heat from the cabinet and the ice tray is being transferred to the hot ball and thence to the air.

THERE'S NOT A TREE IN SIGHT. But that's the country – that's Garomna.
Yes, not a tree in sight.

When I was much older than in that photo, I had a pet kangaroo that I reared myself with my mother helping me. The way I got her: I was out, shot a doe, went up and the joey was in her pouch still alive. So I pulled her out and all I had to do was kneel down – I knew this – open my shirt up and she dived straight in as if it was a pouch. I got on my horse and rode 12 miles home.

You had to bend their head down and put a finger in their mouth to teach them to drink the milk. In no time they'd be drinking from a bottle.

In the cold winter get a singlet,
sew the bottom up and open the other end.
Just go to her,
put your hand over her back for a start,
and she'd dive straight in.
You'd hang her up inside the singlet beside the fire.
She'd be as happy as Larry in her artificial pouch.

They make good pets the kangaroos, but only the does. The bucks don't make a good pet because they're a bit aggressive. They might have a go at you, fighting you.



Not a tree in sight Nevill Browne

We had tutors on Garomna and did school by correspondence. My mother instilled into the tutor or governess that they weren't allowed to belt us, so we learnt to be cunning but not much else. I was mostly interested in what was going on outside, that was the trouble. If there was shearing I'd get time off to muster. I was very interested in the horse work. I loved that. That's the main thing I remember as a child, riding. I used to ride a lot – and used to get chucked off a lot, too.

Strangely enough,
when I went back to Garomna after the war
I made Dad very envious: I rode a vicious root.
Dad could never ride a root, he'd always get chucked off.
And that was the case with me until my war experience.

So I said:

“I know why you can't stay on.

You always disciplined us to ride with a straight back.

If you try to ride a root with a straight back you'll be tossed off.

You've gotta ride it with a humpty back.”

Dad was always a disciple of: “You must be straight backed”.

Left: Ulick, Nevill and Geoffrey Browne
with a pet kangaroo on Garomna.

[Geoffrey Browne, BG20, 1930]



Dad was on the shire council for about 20 years. They never had chambers, as the council say, they only had an office. In the days before the council moved to Julia Creek they held the council meetings in the hotel lounge at McKinlay. Dad would drive over in his Hupmobile, the first car he ever owned.

I can't remember getting about in the Hupmobile, but I remember going into Julia Creek in our next car – an old-timer Dodge, open with a cloth hood. Then we got a Falcon Knight. It was six-cylinder, something better than a Dodge, and very quiet.

The last car I can remember choofing around in was the Chev utility. We used to sit in the back on chairs, Mum and Dad in front, us boys acting like galoots when we thought they weren't looking, and getting bumped about and coughing dust all the way to Julia Creek.

We had to dress up very smartly to go to town, done up like sore toes. My mother was very rigid about dress. Today we'd stand out like a Christmas tree, dressed as we did then.

It was a family outing. We never mixed with any of the townsfolk, just went round the stores with Mum and her shopping. We'd have an ice cream. If we were going to the pictures we'd get in there just on sunset.



me and 4 sons

Those are wheeler bikes:
 an old pram wheel on a stick
 with a bolt and a bit of grease.
 We had to make our toys (we didn't have any others).

I thought of the design and I made one.
 Ulick and Geoffrey, but not Roderic,
 adopted my idea.
 Roderic didn't bow to my profession.
 He didn't want one; he was older.

They had a petrol tank,
 with gears at the top and a throttle.
 Just make believe, not connected to anything.
 And mine had a mudguard on it.

You can see Geoffrey is making a noise.
 He's still got his engine running.
 See the look on his face?
 You can see by his lips:
 Brrmm, brrmm, brrmm just like a car.
 And mine's going too.
 We are all making a noise.
 You gotta make the right noise.

I don't know why, but we ran with them. You'd think a young boy would get all the exercise he wanted just roaming the downs, wouldn't you.

When you were running along with a wheeler bike you had to be careful that you had it to one side. If you had it in the middle and you ran into something it'd just about go right through you. I remember Geoffrey used to get caught on a regular basis. He wouldn't keep it to one side.

Opposite top: Councillor Ulick Browne at the wheel of his Hupmobile at the McKinlay Hotel after attending a council meeting. Chairman Allison standing on the right.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG03, 1920]

Opposite bottom: "Me and four sons."
 The Browne family on Garomna, from left: Roderic, Nevill, Ulick, Geoffrey, Monica.
[Ulick Browne Jnr, BU01, ca 1929]

Below: Ulick, Nevill and Geoffrey on Garomna with their wheeler bikes. Geoffrey has left his engine running, meaning that he is creating an engine sound by sticking out his tongue and blowing past it with his lips together.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG22, ca 1929]



I DIDN'T GET VERY FAR ADVANCED at school because every state has a different curriculum. Bloody stupid, because when you go to another state you have to go back a year to catch up. One year at Southport, one year at Kings, three years at All Souls. My father shouldn't have changed my schools. He didn't know. He thought that because he went to Kings, an expensive boarding school in Parramatta, his sons should go to Kings. I was there when the Sydney Harbour bridge opened, but Dad couldn't afford to keep me there. Wool prices controlled everything – and prices fell.

I went back to Garomna after I finished at All Souls, but only for a short time. I tried to join the air force but couldn't get in. They said my scholastical ability was not up to scratch. I didn't know very much at all, really. So what happened was: when the army knocked me back I went to my grandparents at Labrador. One of the masters at the Southport school tutored me on the air force curriculum and I was eventually accepted in 1940.

I was a wireless operator/air gunner during the war, based in Australia. Ulick rose higher in the air force than I did: he was on Lancasters, flying bombing raids out of England. But battle-wise, I still hold the key, shooting down a float plane. The Japs occupied every island they could find north of Darwin and one of them was Dobbo, south-west of New Guinea. Dobbo wasn't big enough for a strip so the Japs put in fighter float planes. We nicknamed them *Daves*. We called the bombers girl's names, and the fighters boy's names. And I got a Dave.

Towards the end of the war I applied for leave to help Dad do the shearing – and I got it. I was on Garomna when they dropped the atomic bomb. The Yanks dropped the atomic bomb and the war was over.

Dad would have set me up as a manager but I didn't like the country, I didn't like the climate – too hot. And I was married. I met my wife in Southport and we married in Brisbane when I passed the wireless/air gunner's course in 1940. I was only on Garomna for a short time after the war.

Around that time, Dad got an inheritance of £6000 from a family member and he wanted to buy a property away from Julia Creek. He bought a place – well, he thought he bought it – at Kyneton, in Victoria and he sent me down. When I got there I found out the deal was off. Dad said to buy a similar place. I didn't want to buy a place with my three brothers because something said in my mind it wouldn't work out too healthy. The £6000 was divided into four pieces and I bought a place near Yarram. It was mostly bush and rabbits, rabbits by the millions; absolutely riddled in rabbits. No grass was growing. It was bare as a badger. I bought it cheaply in 1945 and I've been here ever since.

THE SAD PART ABOUT COMING TO YARRAM was that our first child was drowned in the dam just over there.

Drowned one day.

I was doing a job up the dairy.
I dairied here for three years for a start
and then we went over to sheep.

John was three.

It was the saddest thing that ever happened to me.

Very sad thing that happened.

It hasn't left me; I still keep thinking about it.

Really, it was my fault.

I was working on something.

Y'know how you get concentrated on what you're doing?

Well, that's when he blew off;
just sort of walked away.

I had a whole lot of people out here helping me to try and find him. They looked around the dam and saw these little foot marks. The police were out too. Then they started to drag the waterhole with a tool, dragging it back and forward. A bloke came in and he sized up the situation, whipped his trousers off and walked into the dam; grabbed him, pulled him out. They carried out resuscitation – no worries – but he was in there for too long. It's a thing that's always hit me, losing John...



WHAT WAS THE BEST THING about Garomna? I suppose riding horses and having kangaroos as pets. I can't say I liked much else; I can't say there's anything that draws me back with any elasticity. I like this place. That's why when I sold it three years ago to a neighbour, I asked whether I could stay on and rent the house. This house, even though my wife's no longer here, is full of an old man's comforting memories – and memories of John, unfortunately.



Above: One of the last horse-drawn waggons loaded with Garomna wool on the way to Quarrell Siding a few miles east of Julia Creek.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG05, 1923]

Opposite: First load of Garomna wool being taken to Quarrell Siding by truck: a Leyland with solid-rubber tyres. The truck could take three loads a day; a horse team only one. Photo taken on Innisfail Downs.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG12, 1923]

Woof!

Two men on an intruder
pose while Ulick Browne Snr
distils a moment.

A leg rests on a wooden box,
"Texaco – The Texas Company".
What's inside? Oil? Kerosene?

A waterbag behind;
a toolbox underneath the tray;
three flimsy, knotted ropes restrain two tons of wool.

A visit to neighbours on Innisfail Downs
with the first Garomna clip hauled by lorry;
a hard-nosed, one-eyed Leyland
carting nineteen bales to Quarrell Siding three times a day,
against the horse-team's one.

On solid rubber.
On *wet* solid rubber.
Wet, at just the height a dog can swing his leg.

Two canine paws
betray an enquiring sniff at the far-side rear wheel.
Again the intruder will be scent-marked.



Making mud balls Ulick Browne Jnr

HAVING A BABY IS NOT EASY. The blacks used to do it okay in the bush, but white women, if they had the dough or relations, they went to a city. When Mum felt she was nearly due to give birth to me she went south to her mother and father. I was born in Brisbane, without a doctor, at a private house in Viliers St, New Farm. In those days the doctor would come to the house, but seeing as I was the third, well, I suppose Mum thought she would be pretty right. That was April 1924.

HORSES I CAN REMEMBER. My father was a real horse man. He'd grown up in the days of the horse. He knew everything about a horse and he wanted us to get started early because he was convinced, and I reckon it's true, that if you didn't get on a horse as a child you would never be able to ride, not properly, not what my father meant by riding. We learnt to ride practically as soon as we could walk.

Mum was a city woman, frightened of every animal on the property, and she didn't know anything about catching horses. I'd wake up in the morning and everyone'd be gone – I had no trouble sleeping as a kid – so I'd ask my mother to help me catch a horse; but she couldn't. I remember I got a horse into the yard, a mare called Nancy. I climbed on a kerosene tin to put the bridle on and she moved her head to the other side. I got down, shuffled the tin around, reached up with the bridle, and again she moved her head. I was exasperated – with Nancy *and* with Mum. She couldn't help me, y'see.

MUM ALWAYS RECKONED our house on Garomna was back to front because everyone entered at the back and came in through the kitchen. They'd park their cars near where that photo was taken and walk along a passage of natural slate stones between the large rainwater tanks and the exterior bathhouse.

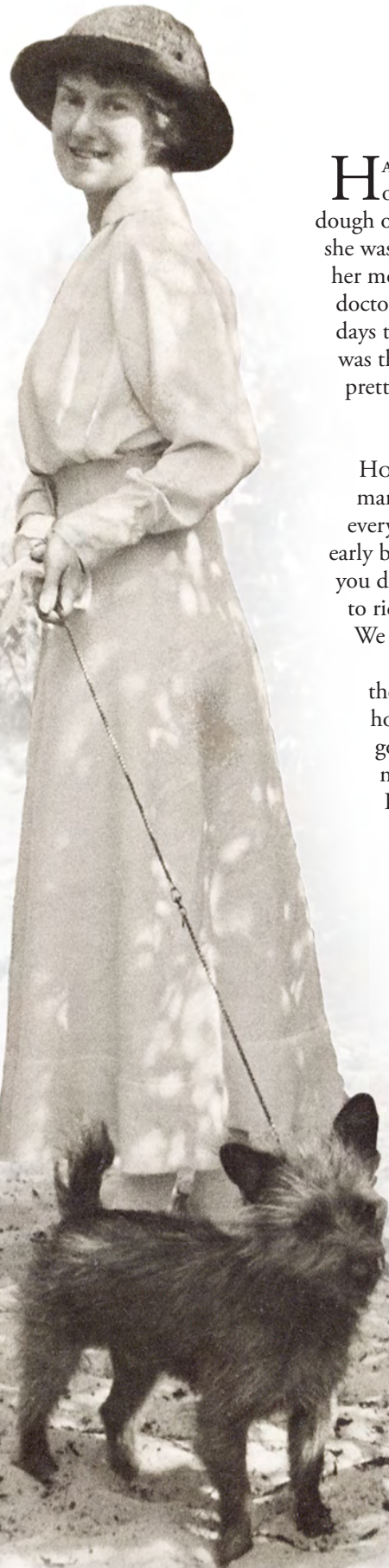
Two guest rooms, a kitchen, a dining room and a back verandah. Out the front, Mum called that the lounge. It was open with fixed bench seats all around the outside, and it had a garden round it; and it had a thatched roof with a large coolibah tree growing through the thatch in which a magpie pair regularly nested. We used to put coolibah branches up there over wire netting to keep the sun off. The lounge was a big open space, the coolest place in the house in the summertime.

As you entered, you went into an area that we called the back verandah. The part behind the two tanks – that was the kitchen. Quite a big kitchen; it went right across the back. To get drinking water we had to come out from the kitchen to the tanks and fill up a big jug. On the right was an outside bathroom.



*Me with Rub.
Southport*

July 1914.



See the skillion above the tanks? See the chimney? That's where the stove was, stuck in there in a little alcove. I think the idea was to keep the heat out of the rest of the house. It didn't work very well – that was the hottest side of the house and the kitchen made it even hotter. When the sun got round after midday it was shining on that wall; it would come right in the kitchen.

Mum did most of the cooking on a wood stove. After the war they had an Aga cooker. Marvellous. They work on coke. You just put the coke in and they'll outsmart any other stove, even today. But, of course, you can't get the coke.

That's an algarroba tree on the left, a beautiful tree that came out in flower. Behind the algarroba is the guest room window. Further left was Bon Posi where the jackaroos and our tutors lived. We had tutors for a while before we went away to school.

Bon Posi was a hut, 15 foot square I suppose, and all one room. Two people could sleep in there. The only windows it had were prop-up ones on a hinge – no glass windows – and you'd prop them out with a stick to let air through and provide light. The whole hut, roof and walls and everything, was corrugated iron, including the windows. When you went in it was completely dark; but you opened the windows. Bon Posi we called it – "good position".

When we were children, on the other side of the house was a sort of verandah and that's where us four boys slept – one of those wire stretchers each. Winter and summer we slept there. The verandah had a skillion over it, but down one side was lattice. When a thunderstorm came through you got woken because the rain used to beat right in.

Opposite left: "July 1914. Me with Rub, Southport."
Monica Little before she married Ulick Browne Snr.
[Ulick Browne, BU03]

Opposite right: Ulick Browne Jnr in uniform.
[Ulick Browne, BU02, April 1944]

Below: Garomna homestead at the time it was sold by the Browne family. Gate at front leads to the back door past the bathhouse on the right. Cars would have parked near the gate when they arrived. There was a verandah on the northern wall (left side of photo). The large tree is an algarroba.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG36, 1953]



When it rained it was a big event, it was a rare thing, and we went out and mucked around in the slosh making mud balls. That's me on the left, inside the garden fence beside the homestead. The homestead was on the right. In the background there's a gully. That's Clarence Creek just starting to flow; you can see a strip of water. When it flooded the water came up right under the house. It never actually came in, but it'd lap at the floor boards underneath.

My father, he had the camera ready and he snapped it off. He must have taken hundreds of snaps in his time; made it his business to have the film ready for the camera when it was needed.

There'd been thunderstorms. Stinking hot weather and you get a rainstorm and you could charge out in the mud. It was a great relief.

We made mud balls like you make a snowball; you just roll them up. Looks like we made some of the mud balls on my head – I seem to be pretty well covered. At the beginning you can roll the balls easily because the mud's sticky (if you're driving along in a car or a bicycle it sticks to your wheels and it'll actually stop you moving, stuck above the mudguard). But after it's been raining for a good while the mud becomes too slippery.

Geoffrey hasn't got much of a mud ball, has he. He couldn't get it to stick together and we wouldn't help him. You can see he's looking anxiously at the ground, jealous of our mud balls.

That photo's just typical of bush kids on a station. You have to make your own world. You'd go the main part of the year and never see any other children. Odd occasions there'd be a party thrown somewhere with other children, but to me they were strange beings. We led an isolated life. It was dictated to you whether you liked it or not. We were only 10 miles from Julia Creek but those few miles separated us from other kids like hundreds.

We didn't go into Julia Creek very much. Probably not more than once a month if the weather was right. We used to buy bread from Joe Kaeser. Six loaves of white bread – doubles I think they were – and we'd have them in a great big bin at home. The bakery was down towards the woolscour end of town, near the railway line.

I can remember at an early age being given the job of feeding chicks. Dad used to buy day-old white leghorns, sent out on the railway from

Charters Towers. We'd get them in a box and they'd have to be reared. I'd feed them on rolled oats – let them out in the morning and sprinkle rolled oats: "chook chook chook". When they were very little that's about all you'd give them. I'd crush it up and they'd peck at it with their little beaks. Having no mother they had to be coaxed a bit.

At night, to keep them warm – the chicks usually arrived in winter – I'd throw a woolpack over the top of their box, and over that, sheep skins. Sometimes some of them would get trampled in the night and be suffocated. In the morning when it became sunny, I'd take the dead ones out and make sure the rest had water.

Up until 1933 I was on Garomna just about all the time. I didn't start correspondence till pretty late. I think I was about 7 before I did any schooling.

The first proper school I went to with other children was at Southport State School. I was put in a grade amongst younger kids still playing kiddie games and I'd grown out of that. It was quite embarrassing being two years behind other kids my age. That was in 1934. We were living at Southport with grandmother. We went there for a holiday and I attended school there for a short while.

Then we left to live the rest of that year in a flat in Townsville. We moved there to be a bit closer to Dad who was on Garomna. He used to pop down from Julia Creek by train sometimes and see us. Nevill stayed at Southport and went to Southport School, but Geoffrey and I went to Townsville and stayed with Mum. Roderic was going to a boarding school in Sydney.

I went to a state school in Townsville for a while. They had a discipline thing at the state school and they'd cane you for anything. Even if you smiled they'd cane you. It didn't matter what – they'd just belt the hell out of you. I didn't last too long there. I got into trouble and had a bit of an altercation with one of the teachers, so Mum pulled me away from that and put Geoffrey and I in a Roman Catholic convent. That was the best school I ever went to, taught by these nuns. They were marvellous; different altogether to the state school. That was my first real education I suppose you could say. But I was horribly behind.

Opposite: Ulick, Roderic, Geoffrey and Nevill Browne playing mud balls after a storm on Garomna.

Geoffrey's caption: ...*That year we had 25 inches* was written long after the photo was taken and is incorrect.

In 1928 Garomna had only 7 inches of rain (see rainfall graph, page 340).

[Geoffrey Browne, BG18, 1928]

Taken from the steps of the new verandah in 1928. Wet season. That year we had 25 inches. Note gully outside the fence.





The next year Geoffrey and I went back to Garomna and did correspondence. Nevill joined Roderic at Kings in Sydney. In 1936 we all went to All Souls, except Roderic. He'd finished school by then.

In April 1942 I turned 18 and went to Townsville to join the air force. I picked that because I reckoned there was no future unless we had an air force. I wasn't a very robust sort of a bloke and I hoped I could survive flying planes. In the army, all they were going to do was shoot you up.

I wasn't accepted until January '43. I was too light for my height. To

give you an idea, I was 5' 11" and 8 stone. Finally, I went to Brisbane and said to the air force: well, either you take me or I'll go in the army.

I got my wings, as they say, on Wirraways¹. I could fly an aeroplane and I could do the navigation. In January '44 I headed for England as a trainee fighter pilot. When I got there they didn't want fighter pilots, they wanted bomber pilots, so I remustered and got onto Lancasters at the end of March '45. The war in Europe was just about over by then and I only had the chance to fly seven missions over Germany, piloting Lancasters.

On the Trail of the Browne Brothers



ON MY FIRST TRIP to Julia Creek in November 2001, searching for stories for this book, I arrived on a Saturday morning and checked in at Gannon's Hotel. I'd just come from the motel at the western end of town where I'd been rebuffed:

*Have you got a room for a couple of nights?
You broken down? No one stays two nights
in Julia Creek. We're full anyway.*

So Gannon's it was. I booked a room and wandered along the main street. Outside the newsagent were three old fellas sitting on a bench yarning: Mannie Sills, Bryan Fels and Stumpy Malone. Looking back now, I couldn't have had a better introduction to Julia Creek when I asked them: "Any of you blokes remember Max Burns?" Of course they did, and I filled two hours of tapes with memories from half a century ago.

Ulick Browne's name was mentioned in that very first interview with Bryan Fels: "Stumpy and I both sold our places this year and retired. Stumpy used to be on Crendon out towards Kynuna, and I was out the other way on Garomna. Ulick Browne owned Garomna."

Like the black soil of Julia Creek in the wet, Ulick is the kind of name that sticks to you, and it came up regularly in the years that followed. But Ulick had left Julia Creek in 1953 and no one I met knew anything of the family's whereabouts.

My first clue came from a newspaper article in the *North Queensland Register* (28 March 1952):

Mr S.U. Browne, Toowoomba, returned to look after his station property, Garomna, whilst his son Geoff left to spend holidays in Brisbane... Whilst away Geoff will wed Miss Barbara Milburn who was for some time a nursing sister at the local hospital. The happy young couple intend making their home at Garomna Station.

The 1954 electoral roll listed their details as:

*Browne, Geoffrey Stawell,
Garomna, Julia Creek, fencing contractor, M.*

*Browne, Barbara Kathleen,
Garomna, Julia Creek, home duties, F.*

I couldn't find Geoffrey on the 2003 roll, but Barbara was listed with a Caloundra address – a nursing home. I assumed Geoffrey was dead. When I rang the home and asked to speak to Barbara, she said I could visit her if I wanted. We made a date. At the home, one of the staff members showed me to where Barbara was sitting.

Poor Barbara. Lost in the fog of Alzheimer's, but with wit enough to tell me firmly that her husband was definitely *not* dead.

The matron confirmed that Geoffrey was alive and living locally and she rang him on my behalf. Geoffrey and I spoke briefly and I was invited to come to his small unit near Buderim and talk about Julia Creek. We did more than talk. Geoffrey was the custodian of his father's photos; and better yet, he said he had three brothers and a cousin. Together, their stories made possible this chapter on Garomna.

When I next saw Geoffrey, Barbara was dead. To stave off loneliness, he insisted that I stay the night in his unit and talk about Julia Creek. I received the same warm reception from Geoffrey's three brothers and his cousin Rawdon. I have wonderful memories of them all. Roderic and I drank beer in his backyard on the outskirts of Townsville while we yarned and watched the kangaroos grazing the lawn. Rawdon just *had* to take me on a tour of his retirement village and show me the "men only" workshop that had been recently set up. Ulick treated me to lunch at Yarram and an afternoon of stories; Neville to a home-cooked meal and a bed.

I knew the five men felt a tiny sparkle brighten their lives for the short time of my visit, but I received the greater benefit. I had the pleasure of meeting five men with strong connections with Julia Creek. Men who went willingly to war and who outlived that war, and went on to outlive their wives. Each ended up living alone – lonely old men who embraced me and my Julia Creek questions, glad that someone wanted to see their precious black and white photos and listen to their life story.

This chapter was the first I laid out when I started putting this book together in July 2006. To Rawdon, Ulick, Roderic, Nevill and Geoffrey – I hope it is to your satisfaction.



1. A general-purpose military aircraft manufactured in Australia 1939-46, used for training.

The atomic bombs late in '45 finished off Japan and saved a lot of lives. I know they lost a lot of people in the two bombed cities, but that would have been nothing against the loss of life had the war gone on. They would have fought like little demons to avoid surrender.

I was in the air force just on three years. I was discharged in December 1945 at Brisbane and got a job as a station hand on a property out in the western district of Victoria. Nevill had come down too. He bought a property at Yarram. I met up with him and gave him a bit of a hand for

a while. Then I went contracting with a tractor until I bought a grazing property in 1950 at Ensay, East Gippsland, with finance through Dalgetys and the Soldier Settlement Commission.

Below: Ulick, Roderick, Geoffrey and Nevill.
Taken in Toowoomba at Christmas.
[Geoffrey Browne, BG33, 1925]



short period.
We have been advised that the property known as Garomna, owned by Mr. Ulick Browne, has been sold to Mr. Peter Bell of Longreach at approx. 11/- an acre. Mr. and Mrs. Browne were amongst the pioneers of this district and we owe a lot to these two enterprising people. They were both untiring in public work and they worked hard for the town and district. Both took a keen interest in the C.W.A., the Red Cross, the bush nursing scheme, and all patriotic work. Mr. Browne was a keen member of the Graziers' Association, and for many years was chairman of the local branch. We wish them every success in their new home.

NQR: 12 Dec 1953

After the war, Geoffrey and Dad were running Garomna, and with burgeoning wool prices and good seasons, Dad was finally able to pay off the property. He had been there over 30 years.

Decline followed the boom, but in 1953, when Garomna received 17 inches of rain in the first two months, my parents took advantage of the good season and sold out for 11 shillings an acre. They went into market gardening in the Toowoomba area, but it didn't work out. At the end of Dad's life they were visiting me at Ensay.

we'd have to wait till late in the afternoon before they'd move again. In the winter it was all right, but winter only lasted a couple of months.

Dad lost a beautiful dog one time, and I lost one as well – died for want of water. It got away from me when I was getting in some killers. You could do nothing about it. Accidents happen and they die very quickly. Just about all of us have had that experience.

Garomna was a mean, mean place in summer; particularly, as Dad used to say, after the sun had been down to Rockhampton and was on its way north again. That was the hottest time of the year, after Christmas, and that's when we got most of our rainfall, from December to April. If we didn't get the rainfall in that period, we missed out.

I NEVER WENT BACK to Julia Creek or Garomna. I didn't see that there were great opportunities.

Dad had been there all those years and he was a real battler. I mean, okay, we went to boarding school, but that money was supplied by grandparents. It was really a battle. We could always eat the sheep – we lived on them – and we had a vegetable garden, but that required watering with bore water and the garden didn't do too well because there was too much soda in the water.

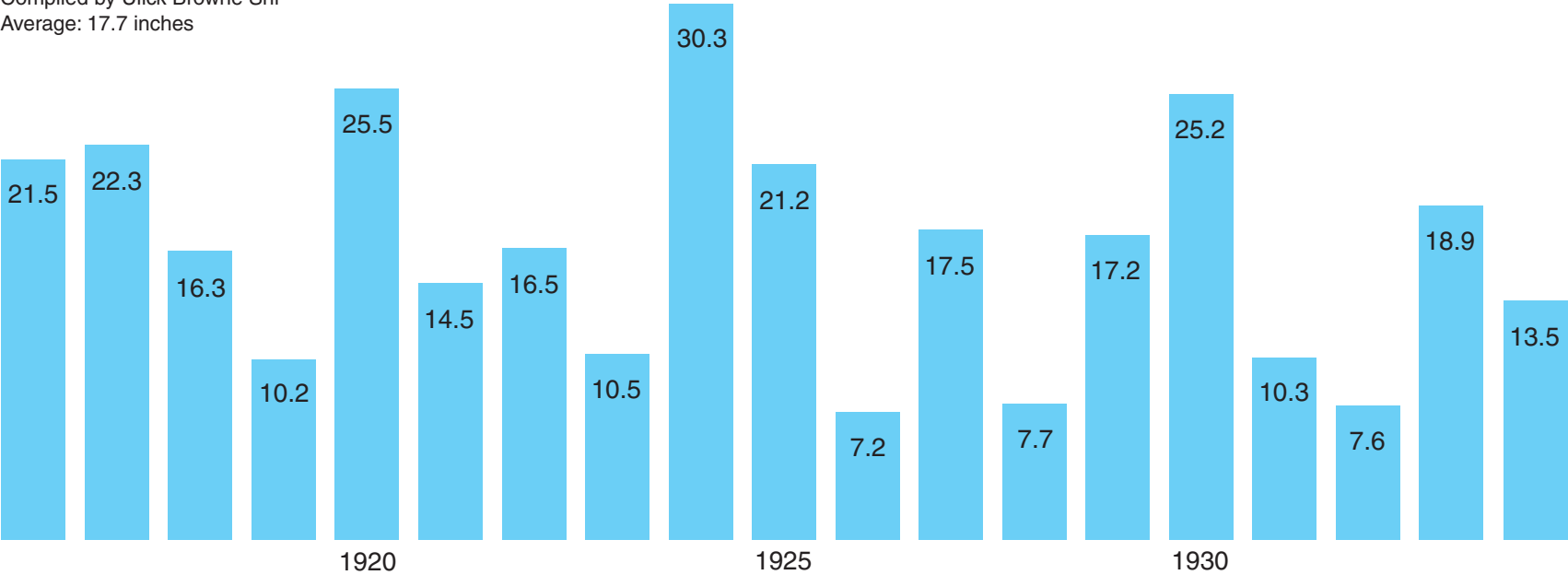
We were certainly never children of wealthy graziers. We had no money to buy anything extra – any spare money was used on the property. We rarely got presents, and if we did get them it was most likely from grandparents. It was just a dismal life in many ways. My mother didn't like it at all. She had red hair, brought up a city girl, and she wouldn't venture outside. She'd get terribly distressed in the heat of summer.

It wasn't much fun in summer. After 9 o'clock in the morning you couldn't drive the stock. They'd just stop and you couldn't move them. If they found a bit of shade you couldn't get them away. We'd wake at 2 o'clock in the morning and go out to muster the paddocks. We'd be in the paddock ready to bring them together at daylight, to get them somewhere by 9 o'clock, otherwise they would just stop and



Garomna Rainfall

Compiled by Ulick Browne Snr
Average: 17.7 inches



Below: Children of the Depression beside the Julia Creek State School practising for a concert which was probably held in Eckford's Hall. Mrs Hickman was the organiser.
[Dadie Dawes, DW43, ca 1930]



	Lily Burrows	Biddy Wilder		Dadie Eckford (married Peter Dawes)
	Lucy Byrne	Billy Gannon	Mrs Hickman	Violet Norton
Mickie Hudson				Olive Gannon
	Lily Gerahty	Norm Downey	John Pedersen	Thelma Pedersen
		Alma Gannon	Ivy Gannon	

Children Of The Depression



PREVIOUS CHAPTERS covered Julia Creek's beginning, told the story of pioneer grazing families in the surrounding district, and introduced some of the families in town who ran businesses. The following chapters relate the experiences of children whose childhood spanned the years between the boom of the 1920s and the beginning of the war, difficult times to be sure, but times that do not appear to have made lasting scars on the children – judging by their attitude as adults when I spoke with them 70 years later.

Julia Creek shrunk in upon itself during the Depression, forced by scarcity of money to rely on what could be achieved locally rather than buying products from outside. Teams carrying wool reappeared on the roads, displacing motor transport that had become common in the 1920s:

During the past week quite a number of horse-drawn teams laden with wool have been witnessed pulling into the railway yards. One particular selector in the district is, I understand, calling tenders for the conveying of his wool this season by horse team, as no reduction in the price of benzene and oils has been experienced. It certainly appears that Old Dobbin is going to be given preference, despite the fact that transport by team is slow. Nevertheless, the wool gets to its destination and at a much cheaper rate than motor power¹.

Goats provided meat and milk (cow's milk, if required, could be obtained from a dairy near the woolscour), and the town's first horticultural show² in September 1932 proved that vegetables could be grown in the arid climate despite "the rather pessimistic idea that prevailed regarding the use of bore water for growing vegetables and flowers in the chocolate soil".

Eckford's picture theatre and hall were the centre of entertainment in Julia Creek in the years before the war. Apart from the occasional function in the School of Arts building, there was no other suitable venue. Children's fancy-dress balls (opposite), and school concerts and adult cabarets (right), all found a home in Eckford's Hall.

Children might have walked to school in bare feet and come home a little hungry, but the overall impression from photos, newspaper articles, and speaking with people who lived through the Depression, is that the times, though tough, were not as difficult for the people living through them as later generations imagine. Lacking our modern comforts and conveniences, and with a scarcity of jobs and money throughout the hard years of the Depression, the people of Julia Creek had as a counterweight a surfeit of an uncommon commodity – community.



JULIA CREEK CABARET

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

On Friday night at Julia Creek, the social event of the year took place in Eckford's Hall. The Church of England Cabaret, which was the effort of a committee of church ladies, could well be described as an outstanding success. About £60 was taken at the door. Ninety-six persons booked seats at private supper tables and about 250 adults sat down to the dainty supper provided. The Merry Maker's Jazz Band from Richmond supplied their usual bright music for the dancing. Special mention must be made of the way Mr. Charles Armstrong, the drummer, brightens up the music. He is really a tradesman at his job and would be an acquisition to any jazz band.

Mrs. Pedersen had charge of the ballet items and Mrs. deWarren provided accompaniment on the piano. Mr. E. H. Doubleday of Consentes made a very efficient Master of Ceremonies and did not call dancing to a halt until 4 o'clock on Saturday morning.

The programme was as follows:

Look Here Comes a Rainbow - ballet;
Jingle Bells, The Wedding of Mickey Mouse - juvenile ballet;
Sylvia - Miss Olive Gannon;
Leetle Mr Baggy Breeches - ballet;
The Parisienne Waltz - Edna Eckford;
Finale - full company.

The cabaret opened with a waltz, after which came the opening chorus by the ballet. The finale, Pierott Dance, by the full company was well applauded and was repeated. Dancing then commenced and continued till the early hours with all attendees having a most enjoyable time.

Everyone who helped make the evening such a great success are to be complimented for their efforts. Mrs. Pedersen and Miss Olive Gannon deserve particular credit for the way they trained the ballet.

1. NQR: 30/5/1931.

2. NQR 17/9/1932, page 177.



Above: Start of a men's bicycle race in front of Gannon's Hotel. The only man identified is Jim Eckford (Dadie's father) standing directly under the 'T' of 'HOTEL'. In the street in front of the bikes is a silent cop, a traffic control device.

The photo is undated, but there are two possibilities:

1. It was taken in December 1932 or January 1933 before bicycle racing "met with a sudden death" (see newspaper article of 21/1/1933, opposite). However, the start line in this photo is in front of Gannon's Hotel, not Hudson's Hotel as in the article; and the Qld National Bank in the

background was not completed till July 1933 (page 175).

2. There might have been a resurgence of interest in bike racing, which means the photo was taken after January 1933 (when Gannon's Hotel opened) and before March 1940 (when the Qld National Bank was refurbished; see photo bottom of page 663).

[Dadie Dawes, DW02, ca 1935]

Drawing opposite: Bike race on Saturday 26 November 1932, as described in the article 3/12/1932.

1. Julia Creek Hotel
2. Brother of Bernie, page 591
3. Father of Ivy, page 635
4. Photo and story, page 214
5. Sister of Betty, page 212



Bicycle Racing in Julia Creek

26 November 1932—One of our sport’s dealers, Lance Lewis, promoted a children’s bicycle race last Saturday. There was quite a turnout of bikes and some looked as if their day was well and truly passed, but the owners did not think so. Young Charles Thompson proved an easy winner, with Fred Hudson and Mannie Sills pedalling a great race for equal second place.

Bike racing has turned into quite a craze now, which from all accounts will become most popular, even with the fair sex. I understand that a weekly programme will be held. This Saturday there are two races for men, and races for women and children.

Lance has taken opportunity of the craze and landed a few nice racing bikes, which proved a good investment for him. A few months ago it was necessary to send away for a tyre patch, but today you can secure a brand new bicycle of any brand or colour.

3 December 1932—We are experiencing some very hot weather this week, the thermometer registering 119° Tuesday and 120° Wednesday. There have been some small storms but none in the town area.

Saturday afternoon saw the organising of the first men’s bicycle race and quite a crowd congregated at the starting point in front of Hudson’s Hotel¹. No less than 10 nominations were received. The track was down Goldring St, around to Coyne St, back round to Kaeser’s corner, and home to the starting point, a distance of about 2½ miles. None of the riders being in training, the task proved very strenuous and some were compelled to pull out. Fred Baxter just beat Tom Foster² home, with Ben Burrows³ running third.

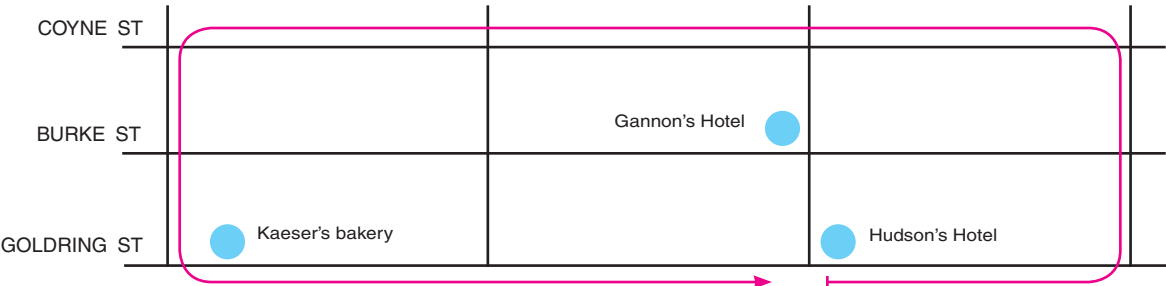
After a great performance in the boys’ race, Fred Hudson came home ahead of Charles Thompson, the third boy being two minutes behind. The ladies’ race proved an easy win for Mickie Hudson⁴, with Edna Kaeser⁵ second.

At the end of the old buffers’ race, won by Lance Lewis, quite a few of the men looked as if they’d pedalled a wee bit too hard. They could not control their legs when dismounting and had to get a good rub down.

This week’s series of bike racing will be held on Sunday morning so as not to clash with the school children’s breakup, which is to be held on Saturday.

Gannon’s new hotel on the Post Office corner is nearing completion. The past few days the carpenters have been busily engaged putting the finishing touches here and there. The new building, although not by any means the same dimensions as the late hotel in Goldring St, is nevertheless conveniently fitted up and is certainly most conspicuous. The time should not be too far distant when it will be opened for trade.

21 January 1933—Just prior to the Christmas holidays, particularly keen interest was taken in bicycle racing and agents had a busy time writing orders for new bikes. For some reason or other the once popular sport seems to have met with a sudden death from lack of interest. It seems a pity to let this interesting attraction go out of existence.



Hot Hard Money

Charlie Corrigan

**‘With the burden of Max’s women
came a millstone of pounds’**

THEY WERE BUGGERS OF KIDS, Max’s kids, eh. We were going somewhere one time and they never had a motor car. Richmond, going to a ball, and they never had a car. There was a brand new Mayflower on the floor of Max’s garage and Donny just went and took it. Oh shit, wasn’t there a ruckus about that – but it never went back on the garage floor.

Another night we were going to Richmond for a dance and I had a 5-ton International truck loaded with people. We couldn’t fit them all on, so the Burnses took the Mayflower. Just out from Maxwellton the Burnses are not far in front of us. The Mayflower is a very small car and here it is sitting on the road, bucking, and everyone’s standing round. As soon as we

stopped we all got off the truck, lifted the front of the car and pushed it back. They’d run over a beast which was kicking and bellowing underneath the car.

Donny was like Max – he was a goer and he was always very generous. He usually supplied all the petrol. We’d say to him:

Here’s my share of the petrol, Donny.

Nah, don’t worry about it.

That must have cost Max like hell, his kids and their mates racing round in cars and Max supplying all the fuel.



I WAS BORN IN HUGHENDEN on the 1st of November 1931. One little point of interest: when I was six months old I was carried from Hughenden to Kynuna on a pillow on the saddle of a horse. Dad was a drover. There was a drought on and he had to shift his plant to Kynuna because it had recently rained there. That's when my horse riding started. Not many people had cars them days. Very few cars around in the Depression.

Our home was considered to be Winton but I went to school lots of places: Winton, Hughenden, Prairie. I had very poor schooling actually. During the war when almost all the men were away, I was taken out of school to help Dad, or the council would come along and want us boys to do various jobs. When I was 13, someone came to school one day and said to me:

You're the new telegram boy.
I don't wanna be a telegram boy.
Well, that's just too bad. You're a telegram boy.

So I went over to complain to Mr Veness who was *the* man in Winton. He was the valuer, the insurance agent, the stock and station agent – everything. I went in and said:

Mr Veness, I don't want to be on telegrams. They're only paying 7/6 a day.
Now you listen here son; our soldiers are dying for
eight bob a day. You go back to work.

That's the only sympathy I got off Mr Veness.

When I finished school in 1946 I went droving with Dad for a while and then we went fencing. We always followed money. And it was always hot, hard money: yard building, fencing, sitting on tractors.

In 1950 I bought a truck and went on the main roads for a while, building the new road from Winton to Cloncurry. Out past McKinlay the work stopped. Each financial year they'd allow so much money for a job, and when the money ran out the job finished until the start of the next financial year. That's how I ended up in Julia Creek. It was the first place I settled for any amount of time. I went there to get my truck serviced when I was 19, nearly 20. Max Burns had an engineering workshop at the western end of town, newly built, and I left my truck with him to get some work done.

months without beneficial rains.

The tennis club held a meeting one night of last week, when Miss Joy Burns was appointed Assistant Secretary. Mr. Max Burns was appointed Captain and was placed on the selection committee. A team will be going to Kynuna on Saturday to play against a team from that centre and will then journey on to Winton to meet that town's team on the Sunday. After winning against Richmond and Hughenden recently, our team is confident of continuing the winning sequence.

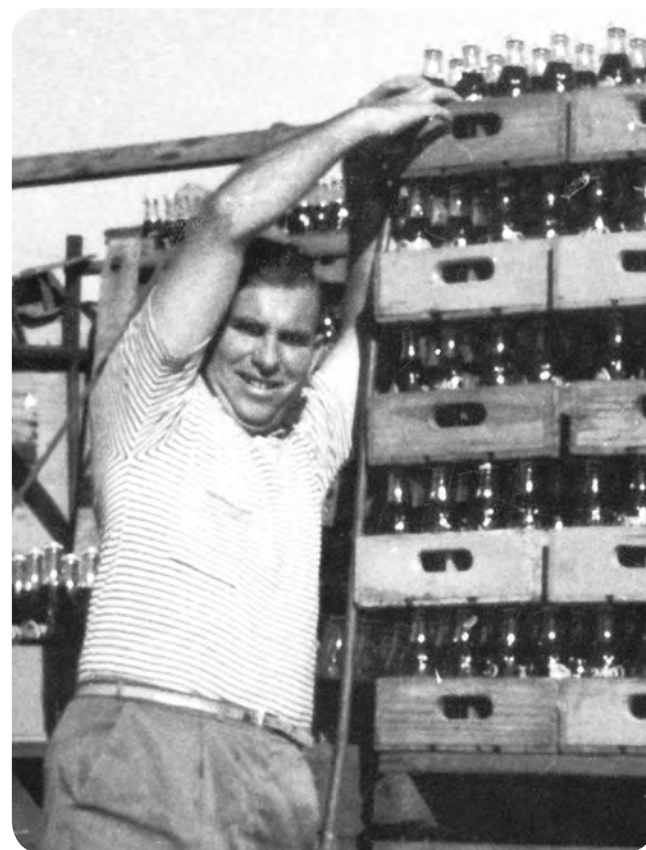
Mr. Max Burns has an ambitious programme ahead. McKinlay will bring a team across a week after the Winton match. Then there will be a trip to Cloncurry a fortnight later and Mount Isa a little after that. The Mount Isa scalp is the object of all this tennis and it is expected that a strong team will go to that centre to bring about the defeat of the all-conquering Mount Isa team.

Return matches are in the offing from Richmond and Hughenden and last

Max and I, we got talking. He said to me: "If you ever want a job, come and see me". But I'd been working for myself a fair while and I didn't want to be just one of the boys. I carted a few truckloads of stuff for him here and there, but I don't think any money ever changed hands.

I became friends with the Burnses pretty quickly. In small towns there are only so-many people. I was a tennis player and I soon got to know Max and his daughter, Joy. Max was captain of the tennis team and Joy was the secretary. I never made the team, I wasn't a good enough player.

Joy and I hung around together for a while, though I was never in town much because I was either on a truck or a dozer earning a living. Donny and Max's other kids they just went to the till and took a handful of money. I didn't have the luxury of a father to keep me. I had to earn my living.



Above: Charlie delivering soft drinks in Charters Towers.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST26, ca 1970]

Opposite: The Burns family, from left: Mal, Barry, Marj, Joy, Max, Don, Butch
[Guy Burns, GB08, Dec 1949]

Below: Tractors waiting for repair at Max Burns' Julia Creek Engineering Works, where Charlie took his truck to be repaired.
[Erol Davis, DE24, ca 1954]





Above: Harry Goundry reversing a tractor and spinning the rear wheels in the dirt outside the Julia Creek Engineering Works.
[Ron Dau, DR22, ca 1953]

"Mrs Goundry was about 70 and all the station owners called her Mum. She was terrific. She'd go inside the homesteads and come out with cups of tea and scones and all sorts of things." (Ron Dau)

Below: The workers' van (on Toorak) – a Marmon-Herrington truck with ex-US army troop carrier behind. Willys jeep in front.
[Bill Burrows, BuB13, ca 1955]

At one stage I went tanksinking for Max – well, in a funny way. See, I knocked around with his kids. He knew me, he knew how I'd perform. In Julia Creek everyone knew everything about everybody else. But I didn't really want to work for him cos he was a bit tough to work for in quite a few ways. He wasn't the sort of bloke to linger and yarn about business. He only told you what you needed to know. He put a lot on the fellas. Once we got established on a site, Max was never there much at all. If something went wrong he wasn't to be found; he'd be out making deals.

Anyway, Max said to me: "What about going with Harry?" This Harry Goundry and his mother turned up in Julia Creek. He was a Pom and somehow or other he became partners with Max in a small tanksinking plant. I worked with Harry for about six months I suppose, till he got on his feet. I couldn't have stood him for much longer, he was such a ditherer. He couldn't stay out. He'd be on a tractor three hours and he'd come in with a headache for a lie down.

I considered Max my boss and Harry my student. Harry couldn't drive a dozer when I started with him. He was learning. It doesn't take long to learn to drive a dozer. However, to drive a dozer is one thing, to operate it is another. You've got to know how to handle the scoop and you have to get a feel for how much the dozer will pull.

Harry had his 67-year-old mother with him, out there on the blazing plains near Nelia in an ex-army caravan with the temperature inside so close to 110 it didn't matter. We lived in a caravan behind a Marmon-Herrington Ford, a 3-ton truck. It was bloody hot, eh, in that tin caravan where Mrs Goundry was living. Well, that's what I lived in too, but I hadn't come straight from England to Nelia.

Mrs Goundry did the cooking. She'd make this Yorkshire pudding cooked in a big dish. It'd be full of water with a small bit of food on the bottom and the crust floating on top. You'd get a spoon and dig through the pastry and the next thing you'd have all this water. She was killing us with the food.



I remember one job with Harry and his mother – we were working for Dick Magoffin on Ardbrin, digging tanks on the side of a bore drain to give it extra capacity. The bore drain was about 3 foot wide and a foot deep. What we were doing was putting down a series of small tanks 10 or 12 foot deep, 30 yards long, 15 yards wide. We made small openings in the bore drain so that water could trickle into each tank and fill it slowly. Probably take two months to fill each tank. You wouldn't want the water rushing in – the drain downstream might dry up.

Just the two of us (and Harry's mother) were on Ardbrin with the one dozer. The work didn't stop. We worked round the clock, two shifts of 12 hours. But Harry wasn't pulling his weight and we were only shifting two-thirds of the dirt each day that we should have done. As Harry was learning we were getting better.

Dick Magoffin... aah, he was a character, a real character. A talented man and well-educated. He could sing, he could play musical instruments, but the old bottle of rum had him¹. I'll tell you one little story about him quickly. I went to a dance at Nelia. Dick was there drinking, singing, and playing the saxophone – or some darn thing – and he decided to drive home to Ardbrin, sloshed. Drink driving wasn't of much concern back then. If you were under the influence and the copper saw you, he might take your keys and say: "Come back when you're sober" but that's about all. Dick leaves the dance this night and gets in his Dodge utility. We could hear his motor roaring and roaring. What happened: the railway crossing at Nelia was 2 foot of cinders with guide posts on either side. Dick missed the crossing and had the Dodge up against a guide post trying to drive against it, his back tyres spitting out cinders. Fairly buggered his tyres. We had to stop him – and he thought he was nearly home.

1. For other stories about Dick Magoffin see pages 374 and 569.

ONE TIME, MAX BOUGHT AN AMBULANCE vehicle from Richmond, an old International, about a 1938 model. He brings it to Julia Creek and cuts it off at the back and makes a ute out of it. It was a bomb. The fuel tank was a 12-gallon drum hung under the side on a chain. I was heading out to Nelia – this was when I was with Harry Goundry – driving along the road and this damn ute stops dead. So I lifted the bonnet. No petrol. There was a little pipe that you had to suck to prime the motor. When I sucked, nothing was there. I went to look in the tank and it had fallen off. But that's how the roads were – corrugations a foot deep. That Nelia road was the worst I've ever seen in my life.

I had a spare drum of petrol, so I connected a siphon hose from that to the motor. Went back about 3 mile, found the petrol tank, hooked it up and got going again. Not very far along the road the tail shaft fell out. Somebody stopped to help and they took a message to Julia Creek. Donny comes out in a Blitz with a crane on it. He backed up to the front of the ute and managed to poke the crane straight through the windscreen.

You should have heard Max when I took his ute back. I'd pretty near buggered it and Donny had finished it off.

I worked for Max only on that Ardbrin job and a couple of other jobs around Nelia. I never worked for him before and I never worked for him after. From Ardbrin I came back to Julia Creek and that's when I went with Harry Stainkey and Pat Luhrmann – 1952. They had tractors, too, and I used to run their plant for them in the season. When the season was off I'd work in town. They had the mail contract from the railway and all the town carrying. I did that. If there was nothing else to do I ran the Shell Depot for Harry and worked in his garage, the garage that had once belonged to Lance Lewis until he sold it to Harry and moved to Townsville.



IN 1952 A NEW POWER HOUSE was being built in Julia Creek. I don't remember how it was, but I went working part time for a fella named Ray Svensson, an electrician. Les Wellington and I both worked for him. We done wired Julia Creek, Les and I, all the house wiring. We didn't do the hospital, and we didn't do the two pubs, and we didn't do Peter Dawes, but that's about the only ones we didn't do. Les and I wired the whole rest of the town. Then I used to work in the powerhouse. I always worked that way. Whatever was to be done, I done it.

Then Ray got drowned¹. As soon as he got drowned his wife went off with this other bloke named Jan Gluszyk. Henry we used to call him. Lowest of the low. He worked for Peter Dawes.

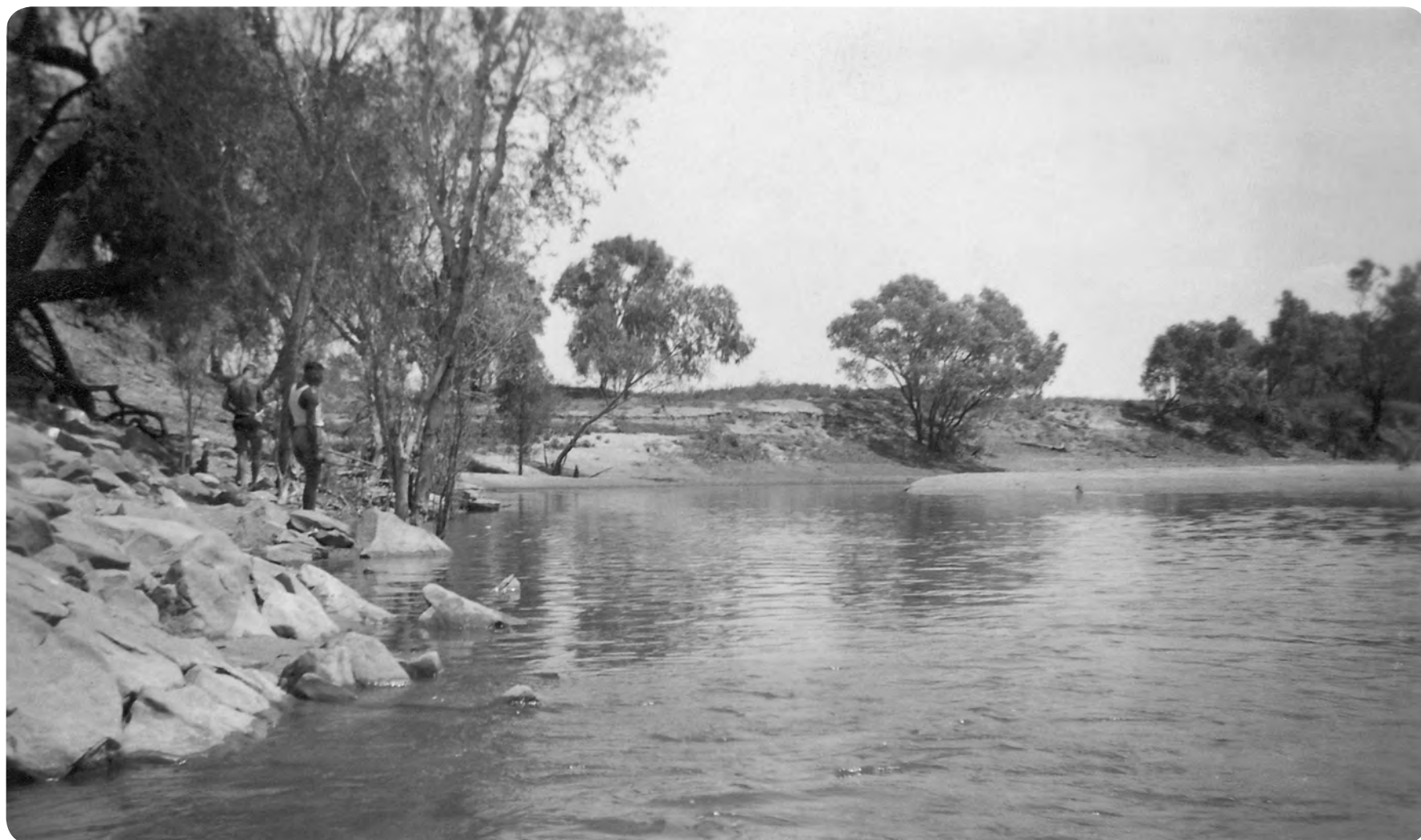
Gladdy, who was Ray's wife, wasn't the full quid. She wasn't mad, but she was very eccentric. She married this Jan Gluszyk and everyone started talking. But there was nothing suspicious, because I was there. I was there when Ray got drowned.

We went out swimming, not intending at the Punchbowl, but upstream or downstream. The Punchbowl is just a waterhole of the Flinders. The river flows over a high stone crossing and drops about 6 foot. It's all great big boulders. When it's running the turbulence is unbelievable. We went out for a drive. That's what you used to do those days, go for a drive and look around. Ray and I are standing on the bank

and Henry's out on the crossing. I yelled out to this stupid Henry: "A fella got drowned off a horse trying to cross here"². Anyway, next thing Henry's in the water and he's in big trouble, caught in a stopper wave. No way could you go in and bring him out. It don't matter how strong a swimmer you were, if you got in there you couldn't do anything.

On a fence were these great long saplings, on a floodgate, and I said to Ray: "Watch him while I grab one of these saplings". It would have taken me only a minute. Damn it all, when I came back here's Ray in there with Henry. They're both in this thing. So I shouted out to Ray: "I'll take Henry first and then come back and get you". Henry got hold of the stick and I dragged him to the bank. When I went for Ray he was gone. He may have hit his head.

There was nothing suspicious. Nothing. I thought I could save both: *Well, Henry's been in there the longest, I'll bring him out first*. I never dreamed that anything would happen to Ray. He was nearly 6 foot: strong, well-built, 26 or something like that. I'm just sorry that I took the wrong man. It's haunted me ever since that I brought the wrong man out. If I could've – after Gluszyk picked up with Gladdy, after the death – I would have done anything to hang the mongrel. I hated this Gluszyk after. Ray and I were really good mates, y'know. Oh, jeez it knocked me about.



1. Ray's daughter tells the story of the drowning, page 751.

2. Jimmy Edwards, 1939, page 737.

PUNCHBOWL WASN'T THE ONLY PLACE with a waterhole. If you didn't want to drive 28 mile to the Punchbowl you could go to Eddington about 14 mile out. Mainly we went in the Burns' vehicles. If we needed a truck we took mine; but yeah, we mainly went in their vehicles.

It was no fun just a few going. We all got together and went in a group to have a picnic, go for a swim, play cricket or rounders. What we called rounders was like baseball. You'd throw the ball up yourself and hit it and run to the bases. Everyone brought tucker. There was no grog though. I'm not saying that people didn't drink, but not our group. None of us drank alcohol so we never took it with us. Didn't need to. We were silly enough without drink.

Dances were a big thing in Julia Creek. At Dawson's Hall, where the Civic Centre is now, we had dances nearly every Friday night. Dawso's Cafe was on the corner and at the back of it was the hall. If it rained before a dance, people would come barefooted so as not to muddy their shoes. We had a hose, a tub of water, and a stool at the front steps. They'd sit down and hose the mud off their feet, wash and dry them, and then put on their clean shoes ready for the dance.

Everyone got dressed up. No drunks, no bums, just young people doing their young people thing. Afterwards we'd go to Dawso's and buy 10 bob's worth of fish and chips – a hell of a big feed – and head down to Burns' place around midnight. Into the kitchen, put the fish and chips on the table, turn the kettle on for coffee, and everyone making a racket amongst the general hubbub. Then Mrs Burns would get annoyed and tell us to shut up or get out.



Poor Mrs Burns. She never had the house to herself. Now I don't care who she is, every woman must get sick of having people in her house every day and every night. Especially our group, the noisy young people.

As well as the Friday night dances there'd be half a dozen balls a year, and dances at other towns. Myself, Fagan and Elsie Stainkey, Betty and Mossie McDonald – a carload of us would go. Sometimes we provided the music. I'd known Mossie for years, since the time he lived in Winton. Mossie played the piano, Fagan the drums, and I did the emceeing. We'd go to Kynuna, McKinlay, Gilliat, wherever dances or balls were on in our area.

Opposite: The Punchbowl, west of the rapids below the crossing. Svensson's body was found 250 yards downstream.
[Bill Beutel, BB13, 1950]

Top: The Burns' house, *Dew Drop Inn*. Max's engineering workshop was on the right.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV24, 1951]

Below: "A carload of us would go." On the Julia Creek-Kynuna road. Benny Burrows, left, in 1948 Ford Super deluxe; Mossie McDonald in VW.
[Bill Burrows, BuB04, ca 1955]

who was 78 years of age.
The only cafe in Julia Creek has again changed hands and has been taken over by Mrs. Dawson to whom we wish every success in her venture.
There is a lull in the dancing. One held Friday night was poorly attended. Pictures seem to be extra popular and always seem to attract a good crowd.
The stork has been visiting our town

CA: 09 Mar 1951



CHARLIE CORRIGAN was a partner with Elsie and Fagan, I think, when the Mayne Milk Bar first started up. Garney Evans was in there at some stage as well, but I can't remember when.

It was more or less getting going when I first started to work there in 1953. I was on the side nearest the Post Office. On the other side, taking up more than half the building, was the garage. Later on the whole lot became the Blue Bird.

Charlie was working there as well, serving behind the counter. I was the waitress. It was mostly just a milk bar, so there wasn't much cooking going on. Mainly drinks and milkshakes we sold. I was only there a short time. Doreen Fry came after me, when it was the Blue Bird, and so did Flo Brennan.

Charlie didn't leave on the best of terms. There was a bit of friction with the Stainkeys somewhere along the line. I can't remember exactly what it was all about, but I do know the partnership dissolved in unfriendly circumstances.

HAZEL BRAZIER

355,000 head. It is to be hoped that no future drought will cause the 1952 stock-movement record to be broken.

The long and severe drought period, the removal of 355,000 livestock from the district – and the loss of a similar number – has affected business activity here adversely. A canvass of business houses reveals that drapery stores, the barber and billiard saloon, the fruiterer, and cafes and hotels all show a reduction of approximately half the normal business. The garages show a great decrease, but repairs have doubled due to the bad state of the roads in this dry period. Shearing contractors have little further work for this year. The storekeepers have not been affected as yet owing to the extra activity of droving plants, but from now on business for them is expected to recede. Earth moving work is becoming scarce on account of the grazier's commitments to agistment expenses. It is expected that business activity will deteriorate progressively until substantial rains fall and the stock return. Dismissals of employees have taken place but not to any marked extent in the town. However, lack of work is...

NQR: 04 Oct 1952

JULIA CREEK WAS AWASH WITH MONEY in the early 1950s during the wool boom. Friday and Saturday nights the two pubs overflowed with drinkers, people queued for the pictures, and the only cafe in town – Dawso's – you couldn't get a seat. Fagan Stainkey and I decided that Julia Creek could support another cafe so we built a new one in the main street called the Mayne Milk Bar, opposite Harry Stainkey's garage. I was a third partner with Fagan and Elsie.

Fagan and I, together with Ted Webber who was a carpenter in Julia Creek, we built the milk bar out of timber salvaged from a house¹ that Fagan bought from Chummy Shaw. Actually, Fagan had already built a garage on the site and we just extended it for the milk bar. The garage went defunct after a few years and the whole building became the Blue Bird Cafe.

The most popular time was after the pictures. People would order tea and coffee and toasted ham sandwiches. It used to be a mad rush to see who would get in first to get a table.

About 1952 I went into the Mayne Milk Bar. I got out of it at the end of 1953. Two years I was in it at the most.

1. See photo page 618.



AFTER 1952 THE WESTERN ECONOMY was sinking and I could see problems ahead for Max. His plant was starting to not have proper maintenance. I knew the people who were working on it: “Max won’t spend any money”. When sheep were moved out of the Julia Creek district in vast numbers during the 1952 drought¹, that’s when tanksinking died like everything else. Money became scarce. But that didn’t stop Max spending. He was a generous fella, spending what turned out to be other people’s money on the golf club, on the Catholic convent, on a trip to the Olympic Games, on women. Max liked to show his money. At a party, at a social gathering, I’d see him buying women fancy drinks. Some of the women he flirted with never had anyone spend money on them like Max did. The local men couldn’t compete.

Mrs Burns was different. She was an everyday person. She never played on her wealth, whereas Max could get “oity-toity” if he was with the right people. But not Mrs Burns. She was never a snob. She was the same woman no matter where she went.

Marj had lots of stress with Max, the way he used to carry on with other women. And she was starting to put on weight. Before that she was never skinny, not like Joy, but she wasn’t a real big woman either. With the burden of Max’s women came a millstone of pounds.

Your grandmother had a lot of heartache, eh. Lot of heartbreak.



Opposite: Stainkey & Evans Mayne Milk Bar and Fagan Stainkey’s garage. When Charlie left the milk bar, Garney Evans bought his share. The whole of this building became the Blue Bird Cafe in the mid-1950s, named after an earlier cafe which burnt down in August 1950 (NQR 19/8/1950, p259). In 2009 the building housed Godier’s supermarket.
[Flo Brennan, F08, 1954]

Below: Marj and daughter Joy, probably in Brisbane.
[Guy Burns, GB39, 1954]

1. See p780 for details of the 1952 drought.



Jodhpurs, Shirt & Trousers

Pat Chardon

Happy days on Franchar Downs

I USED TO LOVE to dress up and go to the races, go to balls, enjoy my life, but around home it was always jodhpurs, shirt and trousers – and off we'd go to the mustering. So it was exciting when the races came around: two days of races and two nights of balls in Julia Creek and the same in Richmond.

I was born in Townsville in 1926 two years after my brother Frank. My parents were on Franchar Downs, Maxwelton. Dad went out there in 1914. He drew the property, then he got another 7000 acres of additional area off Clutha Station. We ran 8000 sheep and 60 head of cattle on 27,000 acres.

Franchar Downs is 30 miles from Maxwelton on the north side of the Flinders, and a similar distance from Nelia. It's 62 miles from Richmond and 54 from Julia Creek. I grew up there and did correspondence school right through. Frank was sent to boarding school in Charters Towers for the last three years of his schooling, but I was needed on the property. I worked all day and did correspondence at night. No governess, just learnt from books. Mum used to help a little bit. Dad was fairly good at maths so I sailed through that pretty well. I went to about grade 9. It was a hard way of doing it, but I managed. I seemed to get it all done.

There are lots of things in your mind at a young age, aren't there, and some of them stay. Horse riding would be one of my first memories. Dad put me on a horse as soon as I could sit on one. And I have lots of memories of my brother. We were great mates, good buddies. No other playmates in the area – not at all – except each other. Hardly saw another child. We'd go fishing, my brother and I, together. That was a hobby we loved.

We had good neighbours, but miles apart. I'd ride 18 miles to Clutha Station for the mail, and packhorse the groceries home. We weren't on the mail run, not for many years.

We only met new people when there was a race meeting. Five months, three months, whatever the time between races, that's how often we socialised. The CWA meetings, we always went to those. I was in the Younger Set as I grew older. They were a wonderful lot of ladies in that group. Hmm... happy days.





Opposite top: Pat, 16 years old, dressed up at the Nelia races.
[Pat Chardon, PH01, 1942]

Opposite bottom: Franchar Downs homestead. Frank & Pat on steps.
[Pat Chardon, PH06, ca 1930]

Right: Pat in chaps, with Comet and Jewels, on Franchar Downs.
[Pat Chardon, PH02, 1943]

I loved the life on Franchar. I knew nothing else. We used to get great big Singer sewing-machine boxes full of groceries, and sack bags of pumpkins and potatoes, six months' supply at a time. Yet it was a hard life with just the four of us. We had no outside help on the property – Frank and I were the workers. And when Frank was at boarding school, *I* was the worker. Shearing was done by Tom Jessup from Julia Creek. He used to bring out about a dozen men.

We went into Nelia or Maxwellton eight or ten times a year. There was a little store in Maxwellton but they didn't sell a lot of things, not as much as Mr Brennan did at Nelia. We used to take Joan Brennan¹ to the races when we started to grow up. She wasn't allowed out with anyone else. Mrs Brennan would say to me:

Pat, are you going to the races with Frank?

Yes.

Would you mind calling for Joan?

Not at all.

There'd be five of us in the Mercury: Mum and Dad, Frank, Joan and I. We adored Joan. My brother Frank partnered her for her deb.

We had an accident going to the Julia Creek races one time. Two leather ports were tied on the luggage carrier on the back of our Ford Tourer, and my brother put a hessian bag over them to keep the dust off. The heat from the exhaust pipe caught the hessian alight and burnt the lot. We didn't notice till Mum said she could smell something burning. We got out to look and everything was gone. Dad's suit, my brother's suit, our ball frocks – everything. We had nothing left and Dad said:

We're not going home, we're going to the races.

What're we going to wear, Dad?

What we've got on.

Mum bought me a frock from Peter Dawes' store; just an ordinary looking dress it was. A friend in Julia Creek lent me a black-taffeta evening frock for the ball and I had a whale of a time. The fire was forgotten.

1. Joanie is the author's auntie.

Right: Joanie Brennan at the Julia Creek races, in front of Pat's Mercury.

[Pat Chardon, PH11, ca 1950]

Opposite top: Jessup's shearing team on Franchar Downs.

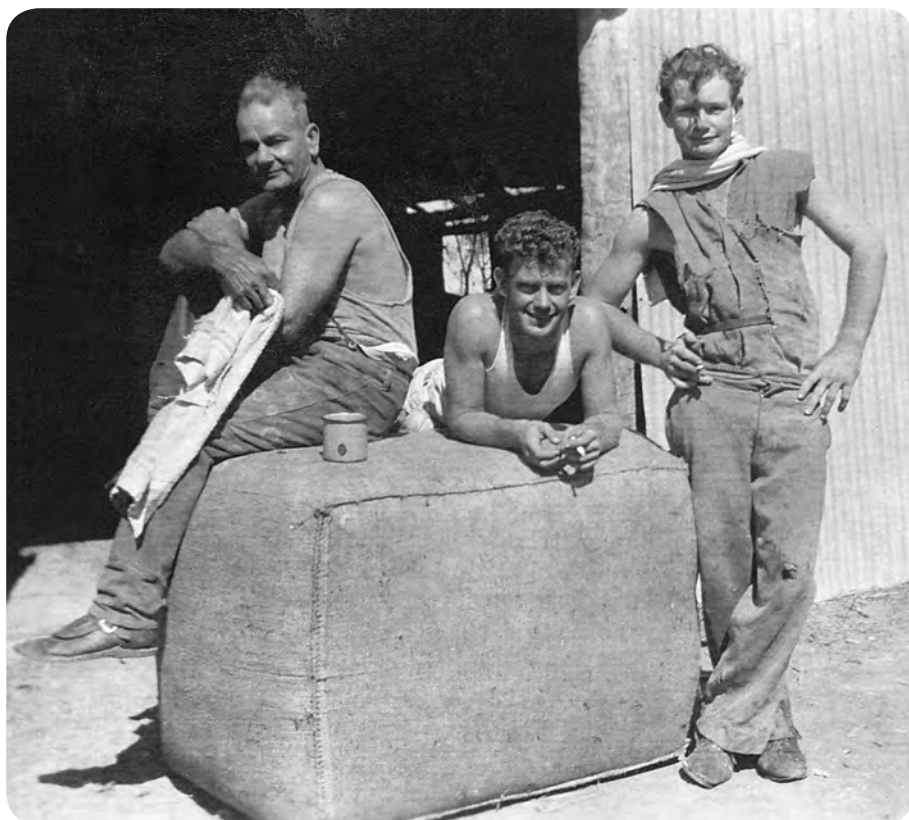
From left: Bill Ellis, Billy Prior and his unidentified brother.

[Pat Chardon, PH15, ca 1950]

Opposite bottom: Pat sitting on the running board of a Ford Tourer, and Ethel, her mother. The luggage rack on which the Chardon's luggage caught fire as described above by Pat, can be seen at the rear. Photo taken on Bethel Station, via Maxwellton.

[Pat Chardon, PH07, ca 1932]





BEFORE HE WENT out to Julia Creek and did wool classing there, my father, Tom Jessup, was a woolclasser in Brisbane. He branched out into contract shearing in Julia Creek. That's all he did up till the time he retired and came down to Noosa.

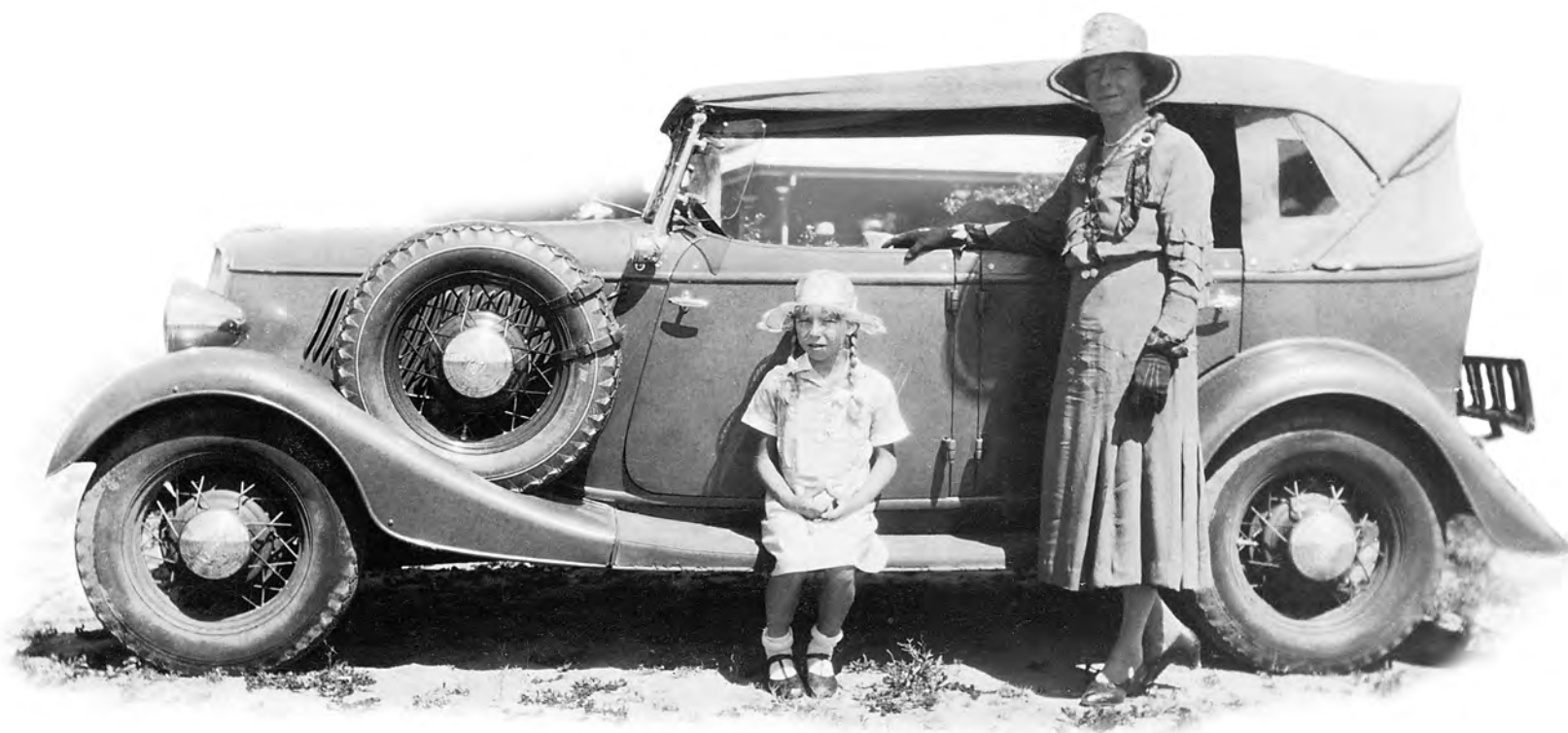
When was he born? Bugged if I know. I'm not good on this history stuff. It's on his tombstone if you want to have a look. He died about 10 years ago and is buried in Tewantin.

He arrived in Julia Creek just before the war as a single bloke. He would have been very young: 16, 17. Because he was in a vital industry he didn't have to go to war; they kept him shearing.

There was a group of maybe five or six shearing contractors based in Julia Creek over the years: Arthur Fayers, Jack Jensen, Bill Mathews, Frank Godier, Mannie Hardy, and my father. The average team would have been a dozen men. Most shearing sheds employed about six shearers, and by the time you bring in all the extras there's about a dozen to a team. On occasions you get 10-stand shearing sheds which increased the numbers. That was about the biggest you got out Julia Creek way.

Dad's territory was from south of McKinlay up to the Three Ways. Maxwellton was the cutoff point going east. He didn't get as far as Richmond. So he covered that whole area, even down to Kynuna. He was very successful and lived a comfortable sort of life. Had 10 weeks a year holiday in the south. He retired in the early sixties, and for about a year or so I worked beside him. I took over his contracting business when I was 22 and stayed in it 10 years.

TOMMY JESSUP



I MET BILL PEHRSON in 1950. This handsome young teacher from the state school in Maxwellton came over to me while I was cranking the Mercury outside the Maxwellton store. The battery had gone flat so I was cranking the car trying to start it.

May I help?

No thank you very much, I can manage myself.

I had grown up independent. We got together when Bill and another young chap from the Post Office came out to Franchar shooting pigs. We were engaged in 1951 and married in December 1952. After we got married Bill was transferred to Gayndah.

DAD DIED on Christmas Day 1957. Frank then managed the property. He rang me and asked would I come home, would Bill and I do the bookwork at Franchar, but we were quite happy where we were, so we didn't.

Below: Bore on Franchar Downs.
From left: Frank Snr, Frank Jnr, Pat.

[Pat Chardon, PH12, ca 1930]



I THINK BACK and sometimes ponder how different my life could have been. When I was 17, during the war, I wanted to go to Townsville nursing, but my father said: "You're not going there amongst the Yanks. You wait till you are 21". That's what it was like those days; you waited till you were 21. It was a bit hard. I'd have loved to have been a nurse. Mum was a nurse. Dad probably didn't want to lose a worker.





BEFORE JUMBO HARRIS bought the cordial factory, people by the name of Dickfos, they used to own it. And the interesting part of that was, they made all the ice in the floor. They had these big containers which dropped into holes in the floor, with freezing pipes in there to get it cold. They used to pull the blocks out and saw them up. They had... like an ordinary wood saw, a band saw, with a motor on it. They'd saw all the blocks up, chuck them on the truck, and go around town delivering the blocks for the ice boxes. That's all we had then. Vividly I remember the ice boxes as a kid.

RAY GODIER

Above: *You and I with goat cart at Illistrin.*
Jenny (left) and Dot Proudfoot,
60 miles from Cloncurry.
[Dot Dickfos, DD01, 1931]

Opposite: Dot handling a colt on Dalgonaally.
[Dot Dickfos, DD05, ca 1945]

Mentor, lover and best friend **Dot Dickfos**

MY DAD, LIKE A LOT OF SOLDIERS coming back from the Great War, couldn't settle down into ordinary town life. He went to a property out past Goondiwindi. Mum was cook and that's how they met. She was a year older than Dad and she had a little boy, Arthur, from a previous marriage. Arthur was 10 years older than me, and eight years older than my sister Juanita, "Jenny".

I was born Dorothy Proudfoot on the 29th July, 1923 at Charters Towers. In the early years of my life my family travelled around the outback country of North Queensland. My father worked on sheep and cattle stations – fencing, yard building, general outstation work. We never really lived in towns much. We usually lived in a boundary-rider's hut at a bore or a windmill. The job was to look after the stock in that area, keep the water supply going, repair fences, and anything else that had to be done. Sometimes we would be at the one camp for weeks, sometimes months, depending on the job. Dad did whatever work he could get. And when he couldn't get work he went roo shooting and sold the skins.

When I was about 5, Dad got a job on a sheep station called Joykin, 25 miles from Maxwellton siding across the Flinders River. At the time of getting the job we were camped 3 or 4 miles out of Richmond on a waterhole. Our family owned a two-horse buggy and a three-horse flat-top dray. That was our only transport for years and years. Mum drove the buggy, Dad the dray. Arthur rode; and when Jenny and I were old enough, we did too.

Tents, camp gear, horses, goats for milk and meat, about a dozen chooks in a cage slung under the dray (we had to catch the chooks the night before moving), a couple of dogs, sometimes a cat, and a baby roo – that's how we travelled to Dad's new job. At 8 or 10 mile a day it would have taken us a week or two to get to Joykin from Richmond. The horses and goats followed along behind.

My first memories, in the late 1920s, come from Joykin. Rutherford Armstrong emigrated from England and took up the land. He built what he called the "Grass Hut" on the bank of the Flinders River. It was supported by big upright poles, gauzed all round instead of walls, with a heavily thatched roof and a kind of black rubber over the levelled-off dirt floor. For quite some period of time we lived in that hut.

When we left Joykin we went to Maxwellton Station, 6 miles west of Maxwellton siding. Gradually we were making our way west. By 1931 we were 5 miles out from Cloncurry at the 5-Mile, a camping place down river from town. I remember someone giving us two lambs. That night Jenny and I put them under a carbide drum – too young to know that carbide was toxic – and next morning they were dead.



We moved to Clonagh Station when I was about 10. It was a dry time and we had to dig a “mickerie” in the bed of the river. You dug till you struck water, then covered the hole with a sheet of galvanised iron. The sheet of iron kept things from falling in. It was not nice water. It always had a metallic-looking film on top, even in the tea. One night we heard a rushing, crashing noise. It had rained up river – and down it came. Washed away the galvanised iron, our buckets, shovels and all.

There was a bloke on Clonagh named Percy Clark. I’ll never forget Percy. Several years later I met him again and he wanted to marry one of the Proudfoot sisters. Either one of us would do.

From Clonagh we moved down the Cloncurry River and onto Dalgonally, and that’s where we stayed. 1933 it would be, because we were there during the drought of ’34 and ’35, camped at an outstation called the 40-Mile. I remember when the drought broke: we got 777 points of rain on the 7th of the 7th, 1935.

We put in a big part of our childhood on different areas of Dalgonally. It was where we grew up and finished our schooling. I didn’t leave until I got married.

Mr Frank Farley managed Dalgonally. He managed it until he retired in 1937. He and his wife Ella and all their seven children treated us like their own. We had the best times of our young lives with the Farleys. The big homestead had long verandahs, lots of bedrooms and a piano. No one could play music; instead we hid behind it and played hide and seek.

Dick Farley, about 17, would take us out on the truck. Leapin’ Lena we used to call it. The truck had no hood, no doors and no seats; just a flat-tray and the driver sat on that, and we all stood or sat behind him. Dick would drive to the open claypans and race around in circles at 30 mph, top speed. We all fell over, but we never fell off – and never told Mr Farley, or “Daddy” as we called him.

The three older Farley girls had wild reputations. They’d go to Julia



Creek – not much more than a couple of pubs and a dance hall – and drink and play up and tell us all about it when they got home. I think most of what we learnt about life we learnt from them.

At one stage Dad was running the burr camp. Mum did the cooking. Nagoora burrs, about the size of an almond, all bristles, were a pest and they played havoc with the wool industry. They grew along waterways. Gangs of five or six men – out of work shearers, broken down ringers, swagmen – were employed to cut the plants before they seeded. After breakfast the gang took lunch and a hoe and walked the waterways, cutting every burr plant they saw.

All this time Jenny and I did correspondence. We started school together, and in seventh grade we finished together. If I played up, Mum would say to Jenny: “Go and get the strap”. Jenny would dawdle around the dray, taking her time while Mum had a smoke and cooled down. After a while Jenny would come back and school would go on.

If the ringers were mustering, we forgot about school. We could do schoolwork any old time. And then it was always a rush to finish the assignments before mail day. The teacher would write on our work in blue or red ink, but mostly in red. I had to draw a map of Ireland once and I sent this map, never a clue where Ireland was. He sent it back: “It might be a map of Ireland, Dot,” written underneath in red, “but an Irishman wouldn’t recognize it”.

Not once in our lives were we with other kids in a schoolyard.

Below: The Proudfoot camp on Dalgonally.
A-frame tents at the back are bedrooms;
open-air tent at front is the living area.
[Dot Dickfos, DD02, ca 1934]



ARTHUR CAME HOME ONE WEEKEND with a new Dalgonally ringer. He was Brisbane born and had been working on Wyoming, a station near Charleville. With a couple of packhorses, he and another bloke worked their way up to Dalgonally. He was 10 years older than me, good looking, with wavy brown hair and blue eyes. I couldn't remember his name. Jenny said it was Dick *Dishcloth*. It was 1939.

Whether or not because of me I can't be certain now, but Dick quit working for Dalgonally and came contract fencing with Dad. At that time we were camped at Maiden Bore, and for a time there was a bit of rivalry between Dick and Billy Gillespie, a nice-mannered boy, tall and skinny. Billy was the son of one of the Gillespie brothers, earthmoving contractors who arrived at Maiden Bore to build a turkey's nest, a small dam built on top of the ground, shaped like a donut and usually with a windmill close by. I didn't pay much attention to either Dick or Billy. I was 16 and Mum and Dad were pretty strict – and always around.

In September 1939 war was declared and all the eligible young men on Dalgonally went into Julia Creek to enlist. Arthur and many others went off to training camps in New South Wales and Victoria. Dick was rejected due to a medical problem.

Some months later, Arthur returned to Dalgonally on pre-embark leave before going overseas. He was a machine gunner in the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion and was at campaigns like El Alamein in the Middle East. I have a tiny record, a recording made of Arthur by a street vendor in Cairo. He sent it back to Mum and Dad, but now it is not very audible.

Arthur was in the army until the finish, fighting the Japanese in Borneo and New Guinea. The malaria he contracted in New Guinea troubled him for many years afterwards.

DICK AND I GOT ENGAGED in June 1940. Stores sent out catalogues in those days and we had one from Angus & Cootes, jewellers in Sydney, so we sent to them for an engagement ring. For our wedding in November 1941 we again bought mail order: a knee-length dress in ivory crepe for me, and a pale green one for Jenny. Mine had a pocket at the top with "Victory" embroidered across it. Quite appropriate for wartime, but for the wedding we stitched a white flower over it.

By now Mum and Dad had a car, a Willys Knight, a sort of tourer sedan. Dick had one similar, a Buick. A few days before our wedding, Dick and I drove the Buick to Sedan Dip, 3 miles from our camp, where an old fellow had a dilapidated store and a telephone. We wanted to make arrangements for our wedding in Julia Creek. It rained. Going home we bogged the Buick, so we walked the rest of the way and left it behind. Next day a black stockman gave Dick £20 for it. We were leaving Dalgonally anyway, and wouldn't be needing a car any longer.



The first thing I did in Julia Creek was go to the church and be christened. Then we went to the Top Pub to get ready. Dick's best man for the wedding was Billy Gillespie, his rival from Maiden Bore.

Mum had made arrangements with the people in the Blue Bird Cafe for a cake and a reception, set up outside on the verandah. It was only a small reception, about a dozen people. We didn't know anyone in Julia Creek then.

We spent our wedding night in a small room near the laundry at the Top Pub. Next morning we caught the train to Townsville. I cried all the way to Nelia; Jenny cried all the way to Dalgonally – sisters who'd never been parted before.

Dick and I had a couple of days in Townsville before going to Brisbane to meet his family. Then it was back on a train and out to where Dick had worked previously, Wyoming Station.

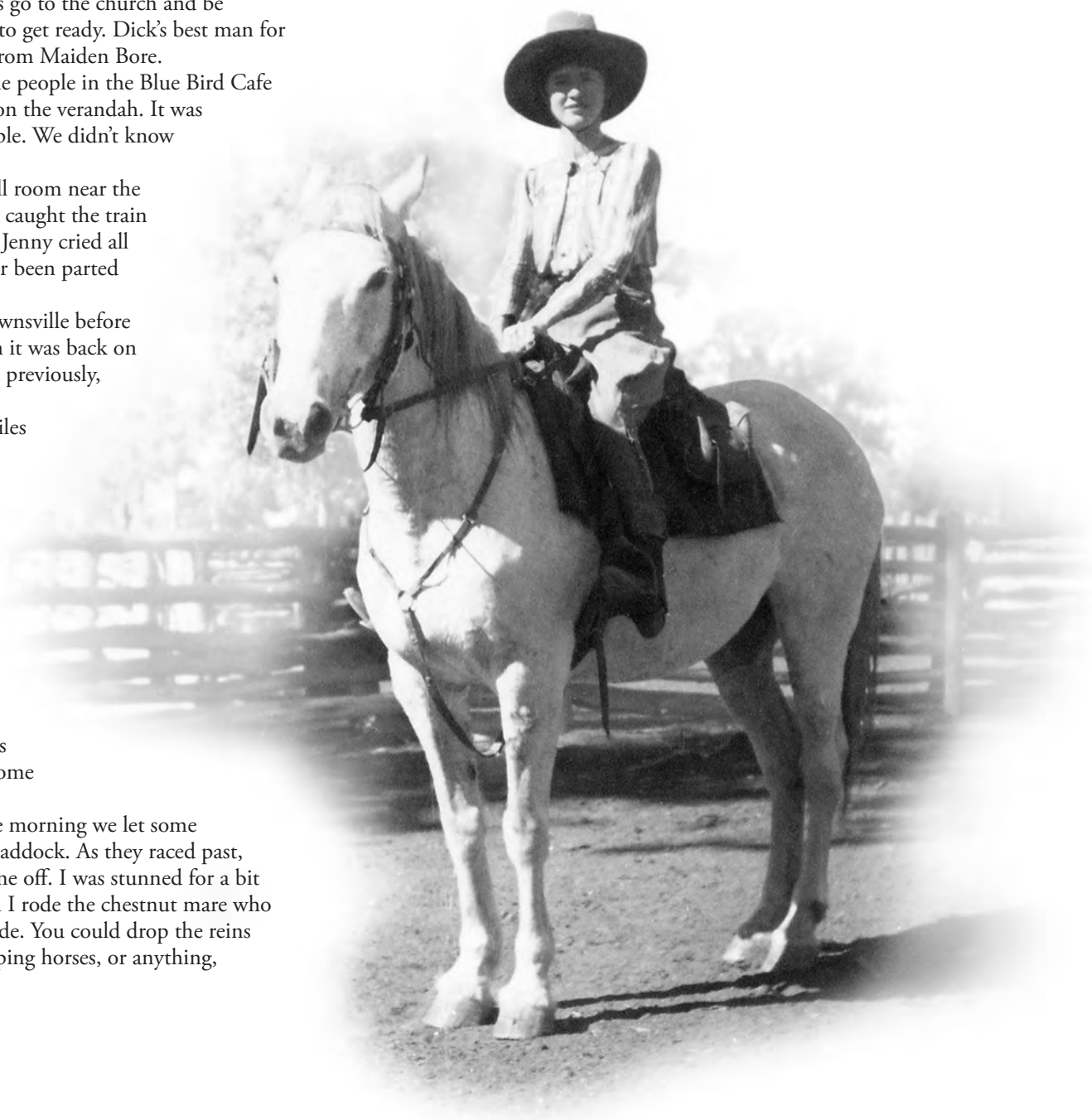
Wyoming was a fairly big place, 20 miles to the furthestmost boundaries. We rode the boundary every day. Fences had to be repaired, waters checked, and sheep looked after. It wasn't unusual for a woman to be working with horses; not in those days. I got 30 shillings a week and that was big money. Dick got £2/10 and that was top money.

The owners had another block 30 miles away, and if Dick was busy, my job was checking the other block. All up it was a 70 mile ride. I had to leave early to be home by dark.

I had a few busters on Wyoming. One morning we let some horses out of the yard to take to another paddock. As they raced past, this mare I was riding bucked and threw me off. I was stunned for a bit and got on a quieter horse. Mostly though I rode the chestnut mare who threw me. She was the best horse I ever rode. You could drop the reins and she wouldn't move. Not storms, galloping horses, or anything, would shift her.

On the morning of the wedding we farewelled our friends at the homestead: Alex Affleck the manager, a couple of ringers, cowboys, cook, and black laundress. Alex said if we didn't make it to Julia Creek he would perform the ceremony on the station.


The road was very boggy and the 50 miles to town took most of the day. Tommy Graham, the mailman, was heading to town with a few shearers on board, and he came across us bogged. They pulled us out and travelled along in front of us till we got to town.



Opposite left: The Proudfoot family car on Dalgonally, a Willys Knight with wooden-spoked wheels.
[Dot Dickfos, DD09, ca 1935]

Opposite Top: Dot (17) and Dick (27), Gum Creek, Dalgonally.
[Dot Dickfos, DD07, 1940]

Above: Dot Dickfos, Wyoming Station, via Charleville.
[Dot Dickfos, DD06, ca 1942]



Arthur was coming home on leave in March 1943, before being sent to Borneo and New Guinea, so we went to see him. Julia Creek put on a big party in the hall in honour of the fighting boys who were home. After a couple of weeks Arthur went off again, and Dick and I went back to Wyoming. But we didn't stay long. We went to Joykin, the property I mentioned before. It was a remote little place, very quiet. Too quiet. We decided to move to Julia Creek. Dick got a job at the woolscour about a mile out of town. That job only lasted a few months.

In Julia Creek we became good friends with Herb and Elsie Fickling and their children: son Clarrie¹, daughter Cynthia and son Reg. Herb was Common Ranger. He was looking after a couple of race horses belonging to station owners and he let me ride them on the racetrack early mornings. One sports day in Julia Creek I was best lady rider. This didn't sit well with the girls whose parents owned stations, especially that catty Miss Betty Markwell, who said I only won because Herb Fickling was the judge.

Another good friend of ours was Rex Halloran. His parents owned Flers about 20 miles out of town. Everyone loved Rex. He was one of those people. He and Cynthia Fickling had a bit of a romance at one stage, but he married his childhood sweetheart Bub Elliot from the station next door to Flers. Rex died fighting a bushfire² not long after he was married.

Early in 1945 Dick landed the Nelia mail run. He would be away a couple of days taking the mail out to the properties over the Flinders and Saxby Rivers. It was not a good job, so we went back to Dalgionally, fireploughing with draught horses and making roads around the fences. We lived in a cottage next to Mum and Dad near the homestead. Two cottages side by side that the RAAF had built during the war. Mum and Dad had been living for a long time in a boundary rider's hut at the 40-Mile, right on the edge of Dalgionally. They were pretty old by this time, and were happy to leave their buggy and dray rotting at the 40-Mile and move into a more comfortable cottage.

I became pregnant. Our six years of carefree life changed after the birth and I never rode or worked on Dalgionally again, though we still lived there for a time.

...recovery.
Private Arthur Proudfoot has arrived home on leave looking very well. His mother and sister Dot were in town to meet him, and after a short stay the three left for their home at Dalgionally.

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Wall (Lindfield) were visitors to town to meet their son Lt. Lionel Wall. They spent the weekend in town. Lieutenant Lionel is looking in the pink and will spend extended leave at home.

There is no doubt all our returned lads and lassies can be safely voted as looking tip-top.

Don't forget to come along to the Baby Show on March 13.

CA: 12 Mar 1943

...of points...
The town seems extra quiet after the big monster sports held on Saturday 26th. The sports were an outstanding success and great credit is due to the committee who worked so hard to bring about such splendid results. People came from near and far to attend the sports and gala dance held at night. The announcers did a good job and the wisecracks were much enjoyed. Many events caused great interest. The 100 yards open championship was won by Mr. Donny McDonald, 75 yards by Mr. Bill Orr, married ladies race by Mrs. B Cook, and the old buffers race by Mr. Tom Fry.

At 4 p.m. it was a pretty sight to see the ladies taking part in the grand parade of horse and horse events. The prize for the best on parade went to Mrs. Dickfos. Other riders were Miss Betty Markwell and Miss Pat Chardon. Best gent prize went to Mr. Rex Halloran. We congratulate all the runners and lady riders who came such a long way to help make the sports a wonderful success.

Regret to report that Mr. Jim Pars...

CA: 02 May 1947

For Thou hast taken my delight
And hope of life away,
And bid me watch the painful night
And wait the weary day.

ANNE BRONTË

In 1949 Dick got a job with Lance Lewis in Julia Creek and we rented a house in town. Lance had the dealership for the new Holden. Dick was still working for Lance when I went to Charters Towers for the birth of my second baby. When I got back – it was just before Christmas 1950 – Dick said: “I just bought the ice and soft drink factory from Neville and Gloria Peut. Welcome home”. So with a little baby two weeks old, we moved into premises behind the factory. It was the Crystal Ice & Cordial Factory. Ice was very important in Julia Creek. Not too many fridges, but a lot of ice boxes.

We made slab ice and soft drinks. Big bottles like the beer bottles of today. Hundreds of bottles a week: lemonade, lime, sarsaparilla, raspberry, pink ones, green, orange, lemon, ginger ale. It was a good business. There were not all the Cokes and carbonated soft drinks like now. When those came in they ruined a lot of cordial factories. We sold soft drinks to hotels, cafes, race meetings, stations, and to the fettler camps along the line between Hughenden and Cloncurry; and large slabs of ice, two at a time, packed with sawdust in a box like a tea chest.

It was hard work running all the equipment. The freezing machine had to run 12 and 14 hours a day to make, and keep, the ice. For a good while we had a man to help us with the work.

Out the back we had a pit in which the ice was made. I suppose there would be 10 or 12 slabs in the pit, easy. You hooked into the slabs and lifted them out with iron things like tyre levers, and then you cut the ice with an electric saw. There was the bottle-washing machine and the bottling machine. You had to mix up the essence and pour it in each of the bottles. I never did that. I did the paperwork, the phone work, put the labels on the bottles one at a time, washed the bottles and kept everything clean. Sometimes I would be washing bottles until 11.30 at night.

ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF 1956, my sister left her husband and four children. Bill Triffett was a bad type and drank a lot. One night Bill came to our place with a rifle. We were on the verandah and he demanded that I tell him where Jenny had gone. He went back to the pub and kicked up such a fuss the police were called. Every now and then after that he would come into the factory and buy a bottle of soft drink. But he never drank it. He just tried to find out if I knew anything about Jen.

Later that year we sold the factory to Cynthia and Jumbo Harris³ for £50 a month to the amount of £3000. That was the end of 20 years of my living on Dalgionally and in Julia Creek. Dick and I thought we'd had enough of the west, and of Bill Triffett coming in every time he got drunk, so we drove to a new life in the city. In later years we came to deeply regret that decision.

At Newstead, in Brisbane, Dick got a job at James Hardie & Son's fibrolite factory. They made, and still make, roofing materials, wall panels, big and small drainage pipes. But Dick got sick of the city, never was a city person, and after four years in Brisbane we went to Mount Isa. He had a job in the mines for 21 years. I was involved with the local races and the women's auxiliary of the RSL.

In his retirement, we realised that Dick's increasing medical problems were similar to those of other people who had worked with asbestos. A specialist confirmed our suspicion, and that was the beginning of the end. He died on the 29th January 1989, the end of 50 shared years with my mentor, lover, and best friend.

Another business in the township has changed hands. The Crystal Ice Works & Cordial Factory, operated for some years by Mr. Dick Dickfos, has been sold to Jumbo Harris who took over this business as from December 1.

NQR: 15 Dec 1956



Opposite and above: Dot and Dick Dickfos.
[Carmel Fickling, FC05, ca 1945]

1. Clarrie's and Reg's stories are on pages 616 & 621.
2. Rex Halloran's story begins on page 759.
3. Cynthia Fickling married Jumbo in 1952.

Gerahty Family

- ↪ CECIL ♥ MYRTLE PARKER
 - ↪ Cecil
 - ↪ Kath ♥ 1938 Nugget Stanley
 - ↪ Lil ♥ John Somers
 - ↪ Bill
- ↪ DIGBY ♥ Mary Treeves
- ↪ EMILY ♥ 1913 1. HERB CHRISTIAN WILDER
 - ↪ Herb Julius ♥ Kathleen
 - ↪ Herb “Herco”
 - ↪ Claude “Cooee”
 - ↪ Emily “Biddy”
 - ↪ Hilda
 - ↪ Clive
 - ↪ Albie
 - ↪ Don
- EMILY ♥ 2. PERCY “MICK” SKINNER
 - ↪ Pat

- MARY TREEVES ♥ 2. FRED HORNUNG
- ↪ Jack (mail contractor)
 - ↪ Stanley (grocer)
 - ↪ George
 - ↪ Hilda ♥ Bill Winton
 - ↪ Mary ♥ 1953 Bert Brisbane
 - ↪ George
 - ↪ Henry ♥ 1955 Isabel Flewell-Smith
 - ↪ Ivy
 - ↪ John “Choco”
 - ↪ Elizabeth “Tootie”

Opposite: Lil Gerahty (holding her Christmas book) and Kath (holding the umbrella in dispute) at Manfred Arms Hotel.
[Lil Gerahty, SL01, ca 1928]

1. The Manfred Arms Hotel was on the Flinders River crossing near Manfred Downs. Tom Quilty, in the introduction to one of his poems in a book titled *The Drover's Cook*, tells some of its history: “Fifty miles north of Julia Creek on the road to Normanton stood Manfred Hotel. At one period it was owned by Richard Nicholl known as Dick the Dog. He died and was buried near the hotel. In its last five years it was owned by Miss Olive Underwood. It was closed in 1938.” Tom Quilty and Miss Underwood aren't just passers-by in this book. The story of their adulterous relationship, their “curious capers”, is told via court records on page 644.

Kindness Itself

The Gerahtys, Wilders and Wintons

Kath Gerahty

Died May 2005

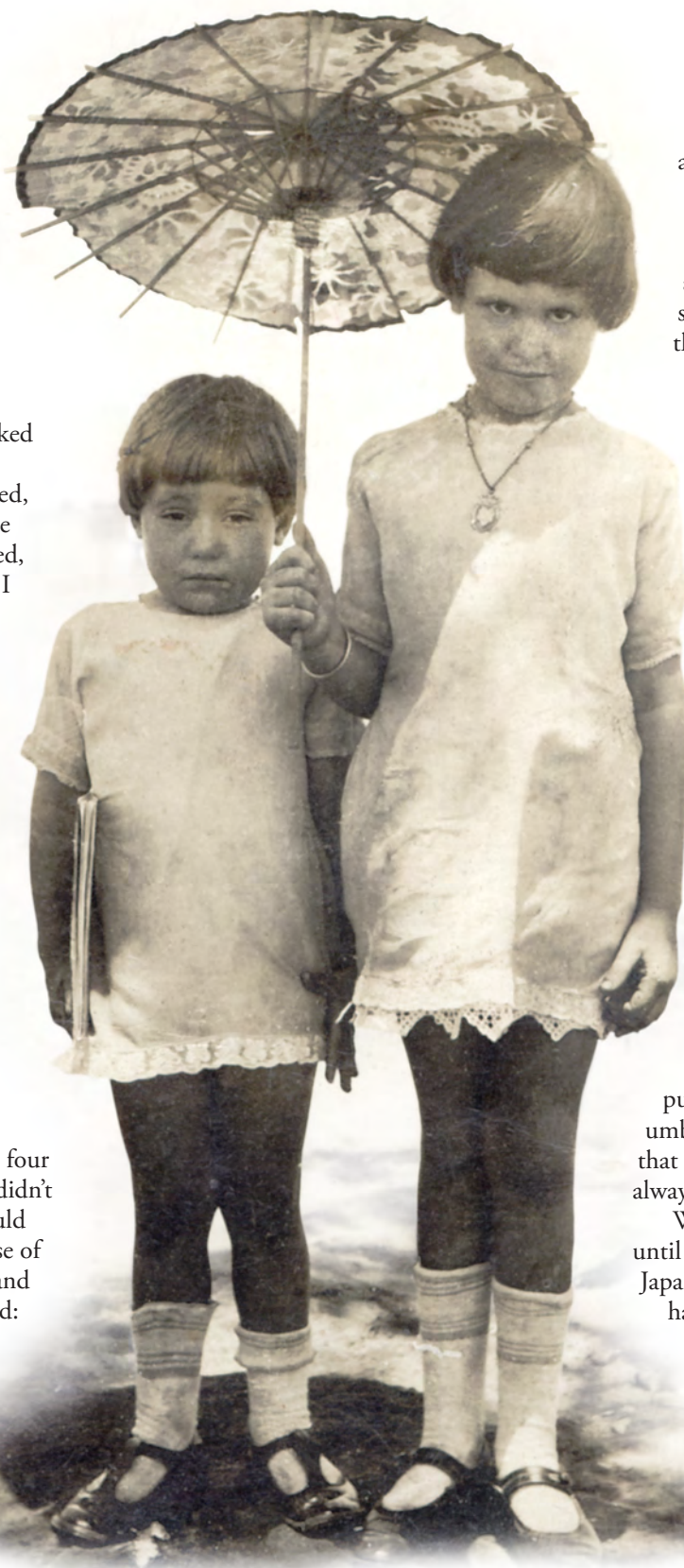
MY GRANDFATHER PARKER – that’s my mother’s father – bought the Manfred Arms Hotel off a bloke called Dick the Dog¹. Now don’t ask me his real name because I don’t know it. Every time Mum talked about this bloke she called him Dick the Dog and I never ever got to know what the gentleman’s name was.

When Mum finished her boarding school education she went back to Manfred and worked at the hotel for her father. Dad was a fencing contractor working on stations around Manfred, and that’s where he met Mum and that’s where they got married. When Grandfather was killed, around 1916, the hotel passed to my parents. I lived there until I was nearly 7.

There was no town at Manfred, just the hotel. Our companions were mostly picaninnies. The dark lady who looked after us, Mary was her name, she lived at the Aboriginal camp on the river bank in a shanty made of timber and tin. “Black Mary” had two little girls. I think she had a little boy too, but I can’t remember much about him.

The black kids never wore a lot of clothes and Grandma reckoned it wasn’t right that little girls, or little boys, didn’t put clothes on. Nothing for little picaninnies to have no clothes. So when the Afghan came on his camel, she’d buy a roll of floral material, cretonne they used to call it, and she’d make dresses for me and my sister and Mary’s two little picaninnies; all the same, the four of us. Mary used to walk us to the river – we didn’t live far from the Flinders – and Grandma would make out that she couldn’t tell us apart because of the dresses, each with a frill around the neck and a sash around the middle. She’d shake her head: “Oh, those four little girls. I can’t tell the difference”. And two as black as ink and two little white ones.

Black Mary had a store of native folklore. Whirlywinds were common at Manfred. They’d swirl and roll, move around and go anywhere, picking up grass, leaves



and dust. They could be huge. Mary told me to point a finger at it if I saw one coming towards me and it would veer away. I’d see the Aboriginal kids squealing and running about, pointing their fingers at a whirlywind so that it wouldn’t hit their shanties – or them.

The Afghan and his camel train used to come to Manfred regularly. He’d have all these goodies on the back of his camels in big cane baskets. Lots of people came in from the properties to have a look at what the Afghan had. Word of mouth it was, that the Afghan was at Manfred. I still remember him wearing his turban and his long... I used to call it his nightshirt, his long shirt. Mum would be there, buying whatever she needed for herself or the hotel, and anything she thought would be okay for a Christmas lolly stocking.

We always got a book for Christmas and it was usually *The Girls Own Annual*, and it was thick. But we never got much else, other than a lolly stocking with toys and games in the top part, and in the foot, lollies.

One Christmas morning we gets up. Lily had a stocking with an umbrella in it. I spotted the umbrella and I claimed it – *my* lolly stocking. Lily put up a fight. It was *her* lolly stocking and *her* umbrella. One of my aunties told me years later that I should have had a hiding every day, that I always wanted what somebody else had.

Well, Lily and I fought over the umbrella until one side was ripped. It was made from Japanese plastic-paper-looking stuff; paper that had been waxed over. Very pretty, but you can’t tell that from the photo. Mum said to share it, but neither of us wanted to share that umbrella. She took a photo. We’re both standing there; Lily holding her Christmas book, and me holding this darn umbrella that’s ripped on one side.

I WAS BORN IN CHARTERS TOWERS in 1919. Three of my family were born in Charters Towers: my brother Ces, he was the oldest; then two years later there was me, Mary Kathleen (but I was known as Kath); then my sister Lily.

Mum and Grandma taught us school. We had chairs and a little table and we had school at Manfred. But when Dad got a big fencing job on Fort Constantine, he decided to sell the hotel and move to Cloncurry so that his three children could go to a proper school.

I was happy amongst the dark children at Manfred. They were our companions and we played with them – and wonderful people, too, the blacks – but when I went to school in Cloncurry and saw all these white children, I felt uncomfortable and created a stir. I clung to the bannister, screaming and kicking, and they couldn't get me up or down the stairs. They told Mum to go home and leave me to the teachers. Miss Calem, she came and told me I could sit near her and I could help her teach. All the baloney. But still and all, it worked. I quietened down. I was the teacher's pet, or so I thought.

In 1928 my mother was having another baby – brother Bill – but he was only a couple of weeks old when Mum got septicaemia and died. She left four little kids; the oldest was 10 and the youngest was a baby of a couple of weeks. My brother Bill – an aunt came and took him. She said she would take the new baby and rear him.

That left Dad with three children, and if he'd moved into Cloncurry to look after us he would have had no money coming in. His job was on Fort Constantine, yard building, fencing, fixing windmills, things like that. He spoke to his sister, Hilda Winton, about what to do. She was a stepsister really, a child from a second marriage. Auntie Hilda had five children of her own, but she decided that she would take the three of us.

So, in 1928 we went to Julia Creek to be with Auntie Hilda. Dad stayed working on Fort Constantine and other stations. He supported us and came to see us, but he never lived or worked in Julia Creek, he was backwards and forwards from Cloncurry.

I left Julia Creek in 1950, that's how long I stayed. It was a wonderful little town and I still have only fond memories of living there.

WELL, THERE WERE EIGHT CHILDREN in the Winton house in Coyne St. It was a special house, two houses built as one. What happened: there was a mining town called Kuridala out towards Mount Isa, and when they closed the mine all the houses were put up for sale. Grandfather Hornung (Auntie Hilda's father), he went out and bought two houses, put them end to end and added a verandah on three sides. The house was quite large. We used to sleep... there was my sister and me and Mary Winton, the three of us slept in a double bed; the boys were on the verandah; and the baby slept in the cot. Grandfather Hornung had a room to himself, as did Auntie Hilda and Uncle Bill, though Uncle Bill was hardly ever home, he was a drover.

The dinner table in the Winton household was nearly as long as this dining room and kitchen combined. It had to be, to fit everyone in. Grandfather Hornung sat at the head, and the children all sat round. You never spoke a word – only to ask if you wanted something. If you wanted the salt and the pepper you'd say: "Salt and pepper please" and someone

would pass it. No jumping up from the table, no talking out of turn; nothing like that. As regimented and reserved as mealtimes were, they lost some of their formality – and we thought we were made – when Auntie Hilda brought home a tablecloth printed with pink roses.

Auntie Hilda bought bread from Bally Kaeser if she had enough money, and if she didn't, she'd make it. And she'd make jam. I longed for the day when I could have bread and butter *and* jam, because we were allowed bread and butter, or bread and jam, or bread and syrup, but you couldn't have two spreads together. We didn't even ask, we knew we couldn't have it. Things were rather tough. We never had meat other than goat, and we never had milk other than goat; yet we always had food – we had lots of goats. Even now I imagine that I can smell goat when I see goat's milk.

Butter came in a tin about so high, a 7-pound tin. By the time you got near the bottom it was smelly, there was no way of keeping it properly. Auntie Hilda had a hole dug in the shade under the house. She'd put the tin of butter in the hole and then bits of charcoal all around it. Then she'd cover it with a wet bag. It was remarkable how cool it kept. Eventually, of course, it got smelly (that's why she kept it outside in the hole) and she'd use it to make brownies, a cake with sultanas and currants and spices in it. We used to think brownies were marvellous.



GRANDFATHER HORNUNG worked at the woolscour. He was a windmill expert too; he'd go out and fix windmills. And to earn extra money at home he made iceboxes and sold them to the town people. Around the outside of the iceboxes he put charcoal, held in place with wire netting covered by hessian. He'd go over to the coalstage with a bag, picking up pieces of charcoal of the right size. The inside of the iceboxes he lined with tin. Wasn't like a refrigerator, it wouldn't freeze, but you could put things in it and they'd keep lovely and cool.

He was a stern old man, very strict about children behaving themselves, and we were frightened of him. There was no such a thing as playing up because he'd put a stop to it straight away. And if you wanted to have a fight you did it when he wasn't watching. But I can remember once being very sick and I went to his bedroom where he was lying down reading. I stood in the doorway so he'd notice me, and he said:

What do you want, love?
I feel sick.

He got up and came over. He was kindness itself.

GRANDFATHER HORNUNG won Tatts in 1937, but he didn't live long after that to enjoy it¹. He left half his money to his son, Jack, and half to Uncle Bill. He wouldn't leave it to Auntie Hilda, his own daughter, because he said she'd give it away.

1. Fred Hornung died 6/2/1938 and is buried at the Julia Creek cemetery.

for the first time this year.

The good news that Mr. Hornung senior has drawn a big prize in Tattersall's Sweep reached Julia Creek a few days ago. The news was conveyed to him on Bunda Bunda where he is working. He could scarcely believe his good luck. Mr Hornung is a hard working citizen and very careful. We are all pleased at his good fortune and pleased to see it come to our centre.

We understand that Mr. Sneyd our chemist – and a keen golfer – is contemplating going to Cairns. He will certainly be missed.

THERE WAS A FAMILY AT THE BACK OF US called Murrays. Mrs Murray, Auntie Hilda and Auntie Emily (that's Albie Wilder's mother), they'd put chairs in the laneway between the two houses and they'd sit and gossip after tea, while all their kids, and there were plenty of us kids, played rounders. Rounders was a bit like baseball – three bases and you hit a ball with a bat. When it got too dark for rounders we sat in a ring and the bigger boys told ghost stories. I'd be too frightened to get up and move by the time they'd finished: "And the dead men will come and get you if you play up". They'd frighten us to pieces, all in good fun. Then when it started to get real dark Auntie Hilda would say: "C'mon kids, home to bed", and we all went home.

Every Saturday we hoped that Auntie Hilda had enough money to send us to the pictures so that we could see what happened to Rin Tin Tin and the woman he saved from being run over by the train. Rin Tin Tin – the dog who could do anything. We sat in the front on forms; girls one side, boys the other. Why, I don't know. We were more interested in Rin Tin Tin, the darn dog, than trying to have a romance with a boy. That came later on when we were allowed to sit in the canvas seats.

Up the back was where the Aborigines had to stand. They didn't congregate with us – or weren't allowed to. And really, they had the best position in the house.

WHEN I LEFT SCHOOL, after Scholarship, the headmaster tried to help Dad get me into St Gabriels in Charters Towers as a boarder. He suggested that I be a working pupil. Some of my jobs would have been to wait on the tables and help wash up. But Dad objected; he wouldn't entertain the idea.

So then I had to find a job. They had what they called the Cottage Hospital¹ in Julia Creek. It was a house that they'd turned into a hospital. It had two rooms upstairs, one for the men and one for the women, with two beds in each. Downstairs was the quarters for Sister Needham. Doctor Hogg was the name of the doctor.

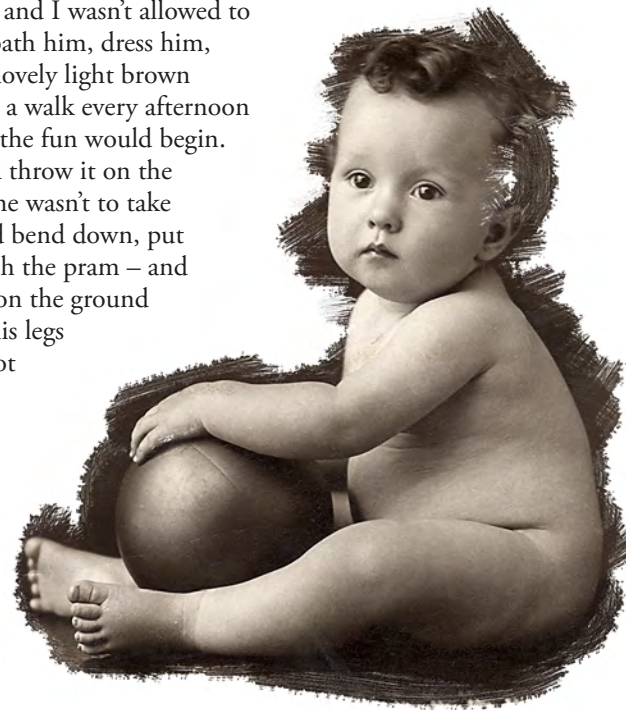
Sister Needham wanted someone who was interested in a nursing

profession. I wanted to be a school teacher, really, but that went by the board, and at 14 I went to work for Sister Needham. She was a tough lady too; she worked me really hard for the 10 shillings a week I earned.

One day we had a falling out and I decided that I wasn't going to be there any longer. She came round to the house that night and said she wanted me to stay till I was 17 and then I could go to Charters Towers for training to be a nurse. I refused. She'd got my back up.

I had no job then until I went nannying. There were people in Julia Creek by the name of Davis. He was a teamster, Bill Davis. He had one of the loveliest homes in Julia Creek. His daughter Tibby had a little boy and she wanted someone to mind him because she used to dressmake. I applied for the job and I got it.

Malcolm², I have to say, was allowed to do pretty much anything he liked and I wasn't allowed to chastise him. I used to bath him, dress him, comb his hair – he had lovely light brown curls – and take him for a walk every afternoon in the pram. Well, then the fun would begin. He'd pull his hat off and throw it on the ground. Tibby told me he wasn't to take his hat off outside, so I'd bend down, put it on his head, go to push the pram – and the next thing the hat's on the ground again. He'd be kicking his legs and carrying on. It all got too much. I wanted a job that paid better and that maybe I could advance with.



1. St Joseph's Private hospital in the CWA cottage, Burke St.
For more details see Note 1, page 393.

2. Malcolm's story is on page 726.



Opposite: "Mum got septicaemia and died."
Kath's mother, Myrtle.
[Lil Gerahty, SL08, ca 1924]

Left: "He was a teamster, Bill Davis.
He had one of the loveliest homes in Julia Creek."
The Davis home at 29 Coyne St,
owned in 2009 by Billy Ryder.
[Malcolm Dewar, DM07, ca 1935]

Above: "Malcolm, I have to say,
was allowed to do pretty much anything he liked."
Malcolm Dewar, Kath's charge when she was 14.
[Malcolm Dewar, DM04, 1933]



Above: "Don't think I'm drinking beer in that photo, it was ginger beer."
 Julia Creek girls posing with beer bottles at Eddington waterhole.
 From left: Kath Gerahty, ?, Lucy Byrne, Thelma Pedersen.
[Kath Gerahty, GeK17, ca 1937]

Bill Gannon was looking for a waitress. I went to see him and told him I'd never been a waitress. He said that was okay and gave me the job. I still remember how much he paid me – £3/6/4 a fortnight – and I had my own quarters. I was branching on 17. I worked at Gannon's Hotel for ages, all through the war.

Sunday was our day off. If anyone had a truck – there was a bloke called George Regan and he had a truck – we'd go for a picnic out to Eddington. We'd bring along the food and the homemade ginger beer. Don't think I'm drinking beer in that photo, it was ginger beer. I've got to impress that on people. When my daughter saw that photo she said to me:

Ha! You told me you never drank in your life. What's that in your hand?
 Homemade ginger beer.
 We've only got your word for that, Mother.

We'd eat, talk, and everyone would go for a swim. Some of the boys might go fishing. Every Sunday something was on. We always went somewhere.

Opposite: "I was the captain and goalkeeper for years."
 From left: Lil Gerahty, Olive Gannon, Rene Triffett (daughter of Tassie, blacksmith), Gladys Young, Myrtle Kaeser (daughter of Bally, baker), Hilda Wilder, Shiela Triffett, Kath Gerahty. This photo has a professional look and was probably taken to accompany the newspaper article (opposite), though it did not appear with the article.
[Kath Gerahty, GeK16, 1937]

Below: "I worked at Gannon's Hotel for ages, all through the war."
[Kath Gerahty, GeK07, ca 1940]



CLONCURRY HAD A BASKETBALL TEAM and Richmond had a basketball team. Everyone had a basketball team, but Julia Creek didn't. We decided (we all got together; we were 16, 17, 18), we decided to form a team. One of the women in town knew how to play and she took us under her wing. We used to go to Richmond, Hughenden, Winton, all over the place playing basketball, and we were darn good. An old lady we called Ninny would come with us. Her name was Lindsay Francis, married to Jerry the cook at Gannon's. She became our chaperone. You weren't allowed to go anywhere much by yourself at 17. Well, I suppose you could if you wanted to, but no one really defied their parents. So we'd take Nin. Oh, and when I think back, she was a Briton. She'd sit in the front seat of the lorry next to the driver and put up with our shenanigans without complaint.

The old lorry... nobody had cars. We'd all put in a couple of shillings for petrol, and crowd on the back of the lorry. Sometimes the footballers would come too.

I was the captain and goalkeeper for years. We won lots of games. Won a championship once; we beat everybody. Even when I had a baby (my eldest daughter Gail), I still played basketball. She'd come with me as a little toddler, or someone would mind her.

And then I decided I'd take on the umpiring. Well, I got into more strife than Speed Gordon¹, being the umpire. Especially when the big games were on. I used to call it as I saw it.

I often wonder what became of all those basketball girls.

COACH OF THE SUMMER.

A team of basketball players left for Cloncurry on Sunday morning and returned early Monday morning, tired but victorious. The match was keenly contested and a brilliant display by both teams resulted in a win for Julia Creek, the scores being 11 goals to 8. The visit was thoroughly enjoyed by the girls who are looking forward to more inter-town competitions. The Julia Creek team consisted of Misses Kath Gerahty, Gladys Young, Olive Gannon, Myrtle Kaeser, Sheila Triffett, Rene Triffett, Hilda Wilder and Lil Gerahty (emergency).

NQR: 07 Aug 1937

1. Speed Gordon was Australia's version of the adventure comic strip Flash Gordon in the 1940s and 50s. The Australian papers changed the title because to call someone "flash" in Aussie slang meant they were possibly showing off, even a little effeminate. It wasn't long before politicians, and Kath Gerahty, were getting into "more strife than Speed Gordon".



THE DANCES AND BALLS WERE EVERYTHING. Girls got a new dress for a ball. After the races, all we could talk about was going to the ball that night. They were big time and everybody went. You missed out on something if you didn't go to the balls. You danced till 3 o'clock. Many a time I went home to the quarters, changed out of my dance clothes, got into my work clothes, and started work at Gannons at 5 o'clock in the morning. You just danced. You didn't ever want it to finish.

For my deb I asked Mrs Wilkins to make a new dress for me. She owned a little dress shop¹ and I was friendly with her. I said to Wilkie:

My deb's coming up, Wilkie, and I need a dress.

Well, you buy the material and I'll make it.

She decided she'd make it a bit different from the normal dresses. It had a cape collar with frills on it. Didn't charge me anything either, which was good because I never had a lot of money.

Three people judged the Belle of the Ball at my deb. You didn't have to raise any money; they judged it on how you behaved, how you were dressed, who looked the nicest. And they chose me. I didn't get a tiara or anything like that, just a sash they pinned on. Then I took the floor with my partner. We danced and everyone joined in. And that's all it was. It was no big deal being Belle of the Ball, yet it was an honour.

WHEN I FIRST SAW NUGGET at a dance in Eckford's Hall I thought he was the biggest lair that ever had two legs given to him. He could dance, there was no doubt about that, but he used to lair too; he'd show off. That's how I felt about it. In spite of that, I was hoping he'd ask me to dance. You sat along the wall and you had to wait for the boys to come along and say: "May I have this dance, please". That's how they asked you. I was hoping he'd come over and ask me, but he didn't until the dance was nearly over. He had manners and he spoke nicely. We danced. I thought to myself: *He can show off as much as he likes* (I didn't change my view that he was a show-off), *but underneath it all he's a good bloke*. Bill was his name, Bill Stanley, but they called him Nugget.

There was a chap named Dick Magoffin² and he used to play the saxophone at the dances. And he could play it. One night we were doing the Pride of Erin. Nugget kicked his leg in the air, lairising again I reckon, and came down with a crash and a big white patch on his back. They used to put boracic acid, or boracic something on the floor, and it was white. He's lying on the floor with the wind knocked out of him, and this mad Dick Magoffin comes over, lays next to him, and continues to play the saxophone while everyone dances around them. I didn't think it was funny. Didn't think it was funny at all:

Are you going to get up?

I'm too winded. I'll stay here a bit.

Dick Magoffin only encouraged him: "Don't get up Nugget. I'll lie here with you and play". Never missed a beat either. So I had to turn on my heel and walk over and sit on the side. Somebody said to me: "I don't blame you Kathleen. He was drunk and couldn't even stand up". But Nugget never drank. Lairised, but never drank.

Above: "And they chose me."

Kath, Belle of the Ball, dressed for her deb.
[Kath Gerahty, GeK14, ca 1936]

Right: "They used to put boracic acid, or boracic something on the floor, and it was white." Kath had a good memory. After talking to her I came across an old packet of ballroom powder in the Mondure Hall (Max Burns' early stomping ground). The powder was white, as Kath remembered, but was she correct about the boracic acid? The label's "special chemical preparation" gave nothing away, but in the book *Practical Mechanics For Boys* (J.S. Zerbe, 1914, available for download from gutenburg.org), there is a recipe for ballroom powder:

- hard paraffin (1 pound)
- powdered boric acid (7 pounds)
- oil of lavender (1 drachm)
- oil of Neroli (20 minims).

A drachm was one-eighth of a fluid ounce (a *teaspoon* measure is close to one drachm), and was divided into 60 minims. A minim is approximately one drop. So the recipe for ballroom powder requires a pound of wax, a teaspoon of lavender oil, and 20 drops of Neroli oil (which comes from the flowers of the Seville orange).

As for the 7 pounds of boric acid, it's other name is boracic acid, exactly what Kath remembered from nearly 70 years previously.



1. Footnotes are on the opposite page.

IN THOSE DAYS, a boy would come over and ask you for a dance, and if he said: "Will you save the medley for me?" (that was the formal asking), you knew that he wanted to walk out with you to take you home. I was at a dance and Nugget came over. By now I'd seen him a couple of times at dances. I was friendly with his sister and she was always singing his praises, telling me what a wonderful man he was, and telling him what a lovely girl I was. Our romance was half her doing, I think. We had a dance and then Nugg said: "Will you save the medley for me?"

He walked me home to Gannon's Hotel. Bill Gannon told all his girls that he didn't want any men hanging round the quarters. If they walked you home that was all right, but there was no hanging around. You said goodnight and went into your quarters. And you didn't dare disobey Bill Gannon, I can tell you that. Nugget said goodnight and gave me a peck on the cheek. He went home and I went into my room.

Another dance came up and he asked me if I'd go with him. He asked me to go to the pictures. It just sort of blossomed from there. I was only 19 when I got married, a month off being 20. Really, you could say I was 20. I was married in 1938.

Nugg bought me a lovely engagement ring. We had to send away for it because there was no jeweller in Julia Creek. We had a catalogue that had pictures of engagement rings and a card with holes in it. You measured your finger in the holes. We picked out a ring that had two hearts and a diamond in the middle. It didn't cost a lot of money, but it was a lovely ring, really nice.

So we announced our engagement. The Younger Set of the CWA gave us a little party. You had to bring something to the party (everyone used to buck in) because... well, nobody had a lot of money, let's put it that way.

We decided we'd get married at the end of the year, in the December. I said: "It's no good us getting married if we've got nothing". And Nugg said: "Well, I've got £50 in the bank". Fifty pounds was considered a fair amount of money, without being rich, and I had £25 myself, but we didn't think it was enough. We'd have to wait till Nugg started in the shearing industry the next year. We both wanted to get married, but it was sensible, y'know, that we not rush into it.

Nugget loved a horse. He loved racehorses. Come Melbourne Cup day he said to me: "There's a horse I like in the Melbourne Cup, Kath, and it's at long odds. If I put a pound on it I can win a hundred." I told him to back it to come last, because if it was 100:1 it wouldn't have much of a chance. Lo and behold if it didn't bob up³.

We married in Julia Creek on the 19th of December at St Barnabas, the Church of England, thanks to the money the horse won for us. We held the reception at home.

NUGGET IN HIS YOUTH was a butcher. He served his apprenticeship in Richmond with old George Jaques⁴. George's son, also called George, had a butcher shop in Julia Creek till just after the war when he moved back to Richmond. Sometime during 1950 young George decided to sell out of his Richmond business and he asked Nugget would he like to buy in. Nugg was pressing at the scour and we didn't have much money. George offered us good terms: whatever money we had plus so much a week. He had a liking for Nugget. My husband was no angel – he liked to gamble, he liked a racehorse – but he didn't drink and he didn't smoke. He was a clean living fellow, really, and George liked him. We talked it over and decided to give it a go; to leave Julia Creek and move to Richmond.

THE BEST PART OF JULIA CREEK as far as I was concerned was the companionship. Everybody seemed to be your friend. The Kaesers (Bally Kaeser was the baker), they had all these children, yet Mrs Kaeser was ready to do anything for you. And if you wanted to go somewhere, there was always someone who would help.

My memory may be dim about a few of them, but I've never forgotten the people who lived in Julia Creek. If you wanted a friend, well, there was always one waiting around the corner. That's my fondest recollection of the Creek.



The wedding of Mr. Bill Stanley and Miss Kathleen Gerahty took place in the Church of England, Julia Creek, on Monday the 19th December, the Rev. Brother Russell officiating. The happy couple left by Monday night's train for the South and Tasmania where the honeymoon will be spent. We wish the happy couple every success in their future life.

Contractor Mathews is busy

NQR: 31 Dec 1938

is able to burn so easily.

Mr. Bill Stanley has purchased a butchering business in Richmond and has transferred his home to that centre. Mrs. Stanley and two daughters will leave this week to take up residence in Richmond. We cannot afford to lose such good citizens who are always ready to assist in the progress of the town. Mr. Stanley has been Chairman of the State School Committee for many years and has done an excellent job. As the recently transferred Mr. McNickle put it: "Mr Stanley has the knack of getting things done without creating any dissention." We wish Nugget good luck in his new venture and feel sure that he will give Richmond the benefit of his personality and energy.

Miss Ivy Gannon, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gannon, writes from London where she has been d...

NQR: 05 Aug 1950

1. On the right of the (not yet built) O-K store. See photo page 636. The Wilkins' story is on page 654.

2. Richard Magoffin's father, see page 569.

3. The horse that Nugget backed must have been *Catalogue*, an 8-year-old trained by Mrs A McDonald. It started the 1938 Melbourne Cup at 25:1. The SP bookmakers in Julia Creek may have offered longer odds.

Two interesting facts came from *Catalogue's* win (three, if you count Kath's story about being able to marry Nugget sooner). Mrs McDonald was the first woman to train a Melbourne Cup winner, and since 1938 no other 8-year-old horse has won the Melbourne Cup.

4. See page 221 for the Jaques story.

A Julia Creek boy joins the army, tastes his first beer, and goes bad

WELL, I WAS BORN IN TOOWOOMBA, 26 January 1923, the son of William John and Doris Barbara. The old fella was working with the PMG at the time. He was a linesman, moved around. We were living in some little whistle stop and Mum went to Toowoomba to have me.

Dad was studying engineering of some sort to improve his prospects, and he landed a job in Brisbane with Babcock & Wilcox, the boiler crowd. Things got real crook during the Depression. Babcocks didn't have a job for him anymore, so he was doing roadwork, cracking rocks. Anyhow, Babcocks offered him work in Julia Creek to help commission the boiler for the woolscour, the new one they were putting in. That was his caper, so righto, away he went to Julia Creek and did the job. While he was there it became permanent and we got word to pack up and leave Brisbane. That was about 1934. I was 11.

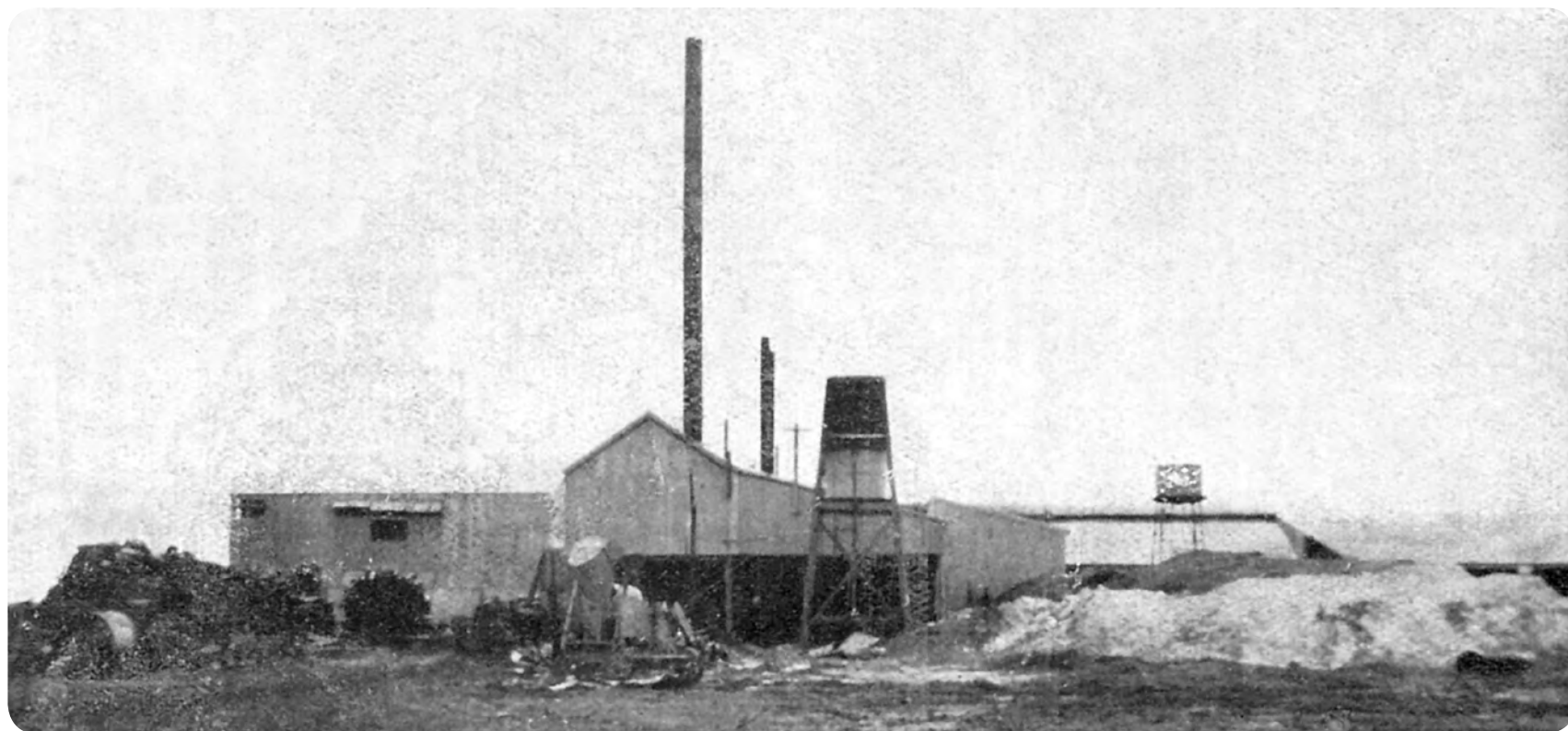
Mum and the three kids – Maris, Jim (deceased) and myself – went to Julia Creek. John wasn't born yet. We went by train from Brisbane. Thursday night we got on in Brisbane and we arrived in Townsville about 5 o'clock Saturday morning. The train for Julia Creek left a few hours later with the whole tribe of us perched in this three-berth compo – sleeper compartment. There was only one passenger train a week. The

Flies – ha! Bert Brisbane

mail train used to run most days, 42-up from Townsville and 19-down from Mount Isa, carrying passengers, general goods and the mail, but the compo was only once a week. I can remember brewing ginger beer on the compo and having to feed the ginger beer bug. I fed him ginger and sugar every day. There's not a lot else I remember. We got into Julia Creek very early Sunday morning.

Flies – ha! I remember the flies. We had to wait for this chap from the scour to come and pick us up, George Bligh. His sister was married to Waldron Taylor, manager of the scour. While we waited we stood on the ground at the end of the station (there was no platform or anything fancy like that) and what has stuck in my mind are these black flies as the sun started to come up. We were hoping – touch wood – that our house at the scour was gauzed. And she was. So inside, at least, we had no flies.

There were two plants at the woolscour and six or eight blokes to operate it. Apart from Dad, there was the yard gang, an engine driver, a shift foreman, two feeder men and one bloke in the wool loft. In the new plant the wool was taken up to the loft by an elevator. The bloke up there put it in its right area so the wools from different properties didn't get mixed. In the older plant the wool was blown up to the loft by a blower.



Wool arrived at the scour by train. The yard gang – this is about four men – they'd unload it, put it onto a rail trolley holding about six bales, and push the trolley down to the shed for storage. Each day the manager worked out a list of what wool he wanted scoured for that shift. If your wool was ahead of mine, well, you'd get scoured ahead of me; but not necessarily – the order also depended on the quality. The best-quality wool went in early to stop it getting grubby; dirtier wool from a different property went in nearer the tail end; and the rough stuff, it came in last.

When you started a shift you filled the main scouring tank with hot, clean, bore water and loaded it with soda ash and soap powder. We're talking about a long tank; 30 feet the first one. The next two were shorter. At the bottom of the tanks were plates drilled full of holes to let the sediment through.

The feeder bloke put the wool into the first tank. He'd bring his bale of wool to the feeder, tear it open, and push the wool onto the moving floor of the feeder. Just before the wool gets to the tank, an elevator with spikes lifts the wool up-n-over and into the tank. A series of plates working together pushes the wool along. They move continually in a kind of circular motion: along the tank, then up out of the tank, then down again behind the wool, forcing it through the water. At the end of the tank the wool goes through rollers to squeeze the water out. And the whole process happens again. This happens three times: three tanks in a row. When the wool goes through the last roller it drops into the dryer. It comes out of the dryer into the blower, and up she comes to the top floor – I'm talking about the old plant now – and gets put into bins ready for the presser. If there was a shortage of bins they'd throw a cover over the wool that was already there, and then stack the next line on top of it. The presser's job was to press the wool into bales and make sure the bins were just about empty at the end of the day. And so she goes. I suppose we'd scour anything up to 30 bales a shift.

When you had a change of line – say you went from AAA to AA – the foreman threw a wool cap into the dryer. That wool cap went through at the tail end of the AAA before you started on the AA. When that wool cap came out in the loft you knew it was a new line of wool, it had to go in a different bin.

On the newer plant the system was the same till it got to the end of the dryer. There's no blower for this bloke. The wool goes up to the loft on an elevator with hooks on it – grabs the wool, takes it up and dumps it. The fella up stairs has to shift it manually. In the older process with the blower, the loft had four bins, four big rooms they were, and the wool was blown straight into whichever room.

I DID ALL MY SCHOOLING at the Julia Creek State School. Fourteen I left. I didn't do Scholarship; headmaster give me away before that. Out at the races this race meeting night, Charlie Byrne said to Harry Nelson, the headmaster:

Any likely lads at school you want to be rid of?

Yeah.

Cos I want a butcher boy.

Nelson nominated me. He wanted me out. End of me education that was. I stayed with Charlie Byrne for... ah, wasn't long, about six months.

Charlie was a fairly big lump of a man, a well-built bloke. There was Charlie, me, Ostie Norton and Bosie Byrne; he was Charlie's son. Ostie was slaughterman. He'd go in of a morning to cut up the orders and then go down the yard for the killing. I'd come in and collect the orders and deliver them in time for breakfast. Very early deliveries because of the heat. After the deliveries I'd have breakfast with Charlie in his house next to the butcher shop. Then I'd ride my bike around town for a couple of hours visiting all the old sheilas, getting their meat orders, collecting the money, and come back to the shop to organise the paper work.

We weren't the only butcher shop. There was another one in the front street, a bloke from Richmond, George Jaques.

After I left working for Charlie I went to the scour. I was on the feeders, a boy on a man's pay. If there wasn't a full crew, Dad might be driving, looking after the steam boilers. Sometimes they couldn't get drivers – you had to have a ticket to drive a boiler – so Dad had to do it. Wood had to be loaded in the firebox, turned over, gauges checked, that sort of thing. When he wasn't driving he'd be somewhere around, because if anything went bung it was his job to fix it. Wood for the boilers came from around the Curry and from out over the Flinders, over the Punchbowl, out that way. Cloncurry stuff came by train; other stuff came by road. Old coolibah.

Opposite: Julia Creek woolscour, "Gunjoola", from an article in the *North Queensland Register*, 16/12/1939. [Dadie Dawes, DW59, 1939]

Below: Bert's workmate, Bosie Byrne, at Charlie Byrne's butcher shop. [Rita Byrne, FR34, ca 1945]





Mr. Jim Brisbane will be handing over the lease of the Julia Creek Hotel to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Brisbane, on the 1st of May. Bill and his wife successfully conduct the Crystal Ice Works & Cordial Factory, assisted by their son Bert. The Brisbane family is well known in this district having lived here for many years. Two sons, Jim and Bert, went to the last war. Many friends wish the family the best of luck in their venture into hotel business.

Congratulations go to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Byrne on the safe arrival.

CA: 28 Apr 1950

Misses Edna and Coral Eckford are as clerk-typiste. Miss Brennan is from Nelia.

Mr. Bill Brisbane and his family have taken over the lease of the Julia Creek Hotel and will dispose of their cordial factory at the beginning of July to Mr. George Peut.

Misses Edna and Coral Eckford ar-

NQR: 13 May 1950

I TURNED 19 IN JANUARY 1942 and I thought it was time to join the army. I had no special reason for doing so. I wasn't called up, I volunteered. I jumped straight into the AIF. Dad enlisted too. He joined the Militia, even though he was old enough to have had more sense. But he joined, and went away to camp in Townsville. The Militia were like the Reserve; they didn't go out of the country. And they did a good job.

I was back at the scour after the war as a feeder man. Dad was still there as engineer. One day he came home and told us:

We're gonna buy the ice works.

Are we? Okay – if that's the way you want to go.

And we did. We bought the Crystal Ice and Cordial works from a bloke named Jack Ahern¹. Dad and I both worked there making ice, making soft drink, making more money than at the scour. We had it well-organised: start early, delivery the ice, close the pits down and freeze it all again, come home and have breakfast, then start making soft drink. Made them all: sarsaparilla, ginger beer, ginger ale... you name it, we made it. Sugar, water and essence. Carbonated. We had a machine into which we fed gas, and out the other end came the carbonated bottles. We scrounged the bottles. Went out to the cockies after the shearers had been through. They drank the big bottles of beer and we'd go out and collect them. We couldn't afford our own bottles; that all come later on after we sold out.

The day we had the problem with the plant, I was there. The engine didn't actually blow up; that newspaper story's wrong. All that happened was the crankshaft broke. So what we did, we borrowed Harry Stainkey's tractor and connected it by belt to the flywheel of the engine – that part of the crankshaft was still okay. When Harry wanted his tractor back, we bought an old Fordson and used that for ages till we got a new crankshaft made.

rains and became impassable.

The local ice works had the misfortune to have its engine blow itself to pieces on Thursday, just three days before Christmas. It looked as though Julia Creek would have a hot Christmas with no ice in the town, but folks rallied round to see what could be done. Mr. Stainkey offered his tractor as replacement engine. With sundry other loaned items and different men hopping in to give a hand, everything was in order by Saturday afternoon. Mr. Brisbane and his son Bert stayed up late into the night making ice for Christmas Day.

The Ahern family have returned

NQR: 31 Dec 1949

IN 1950 WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY to go into the Julia Creek Hotel. My brother Jim and his wife were leasing it from Samuel Allen and they asked us if we wanted to take over. After we went into the pub we sold the ice works to George Peut. He thought it was a good idea, so he bought it and put his son Neville in it. Dickfos took over after him.

I was head "barmaid" at the pub. We had a couple of waitresses, couple of housemaids, cook and a laundress. Why we got out of the pub: what happened was my wife-to-be, Mary Winton, made a fuss. The laundress quit, the cook quit, and we couldn't replace them. There was nobody else to do the work so Mary was doing it all, and she got sick. She went to the doctor and he told her to get out of the pub. So we left the pub in 1952 and bought a house.

We didn't leave Julia Creek initially. I got a job with Lionel Wall, driving the mail, the Iffley mail. Go out Sunday and come home Monday. I was with Lionel 12 months.

In October 1953 Mary and I came to Townsville. We got married a month later. We never got engaged, we couldn't afford the ring.

1. The cordial works had these owners over the years: Darcy Lavarack, Jack Jensen, Jack Ahern, Bill Brisbane, George Peut, Dick Dickfos, and Jumbo Harris.

THE BEST THING that ever happened to me at Julia Creek was the day I joined the army and I had my first beer. I was over at the station. A bloke from the sheds was waiting for the train and the damn thing was late:

Seeing as you're going away, Bert, to join the army, come and I'll buy you a beer.

I don't drink beer.

Well, it's time you started.

We walked over to old Ma Cummins at the Top Pub and had a pot of beer. And from then I went bad. I was drinking plenty by the time I got back from the war.



Opposite: Bert, first day of leave in Brisbane.
[Mary Winton, WMa02, 1942]

Below: The Julia Creek Hotel as Bert would have seen it from the railway station just before he tasted his first beer.
[Dadie Dawes, DW33, ca 1955]



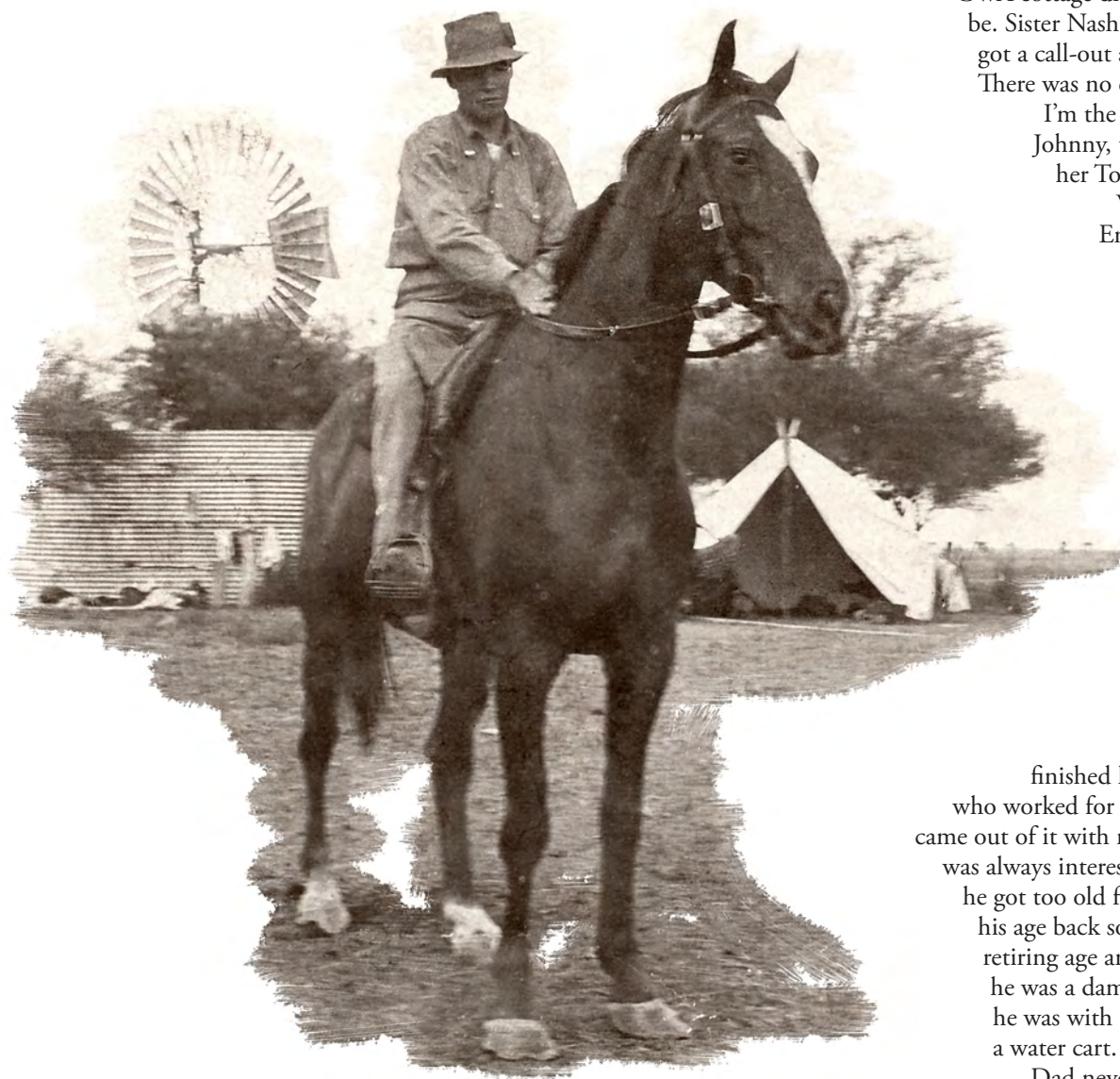
My father was a drover **Mary Winton**

Died 16 May 2007

I WAS BORN IN JULIA CREEK. I don't know any more about it. All I know is I was born in Julia Creek in 1925. As far as I'm aware there wasn't a hospital then, and I should imagine I would have been born at home with the help of Sister Nash. She was a bush nurse who lived on the top floor of the CWA cottage directly opposite where Lavarack's ice works came to be. Sister Nash was noted for being a Florence Nightingale. If she got a call-out at night time, off she went with a hurricane lamp. There was no electricity in Julia Creek.

I'm the eldest, then Georgie, then Henry, then Ivy, then Johnny, then Tootie. She was Elizabeth, but everybody called her Tootie.

When I was born, Mum was living with her sister, Emily Wilder, in Goldring St beside Kaeser's baker shop. But before I tell you about me, I'll tell you about Dad. See, he was a drover; he was never home. All through the Depression my father was a drover.



Above: Mary's father, Bill, in front of his droving camp, Julia Creek area.

[Mary Winton, WMa04, ca 1925]

Opposite: Winton family. From left: Johnny 'Choco', Mary, Tootie, George, Hilda, Henry, Ivy.

[Mary Winton, WMa01, ca 1940]

contractor.

A mob of 650 Iffley fats in charge of drover Bill Winton is due at the trucking yards within a few days, followed by a similar mob in charge of drover Herb Fickling.

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Horace Downey on the arrival of twin daughters at Charters Towers, all doing well

NQR: 09 Jun 1934

The last trip he did during the Depression, finished him as a drover. He got nothing out of it. The men who worked for him got paid, but my mother told me that Dad came out of it with nothing. Then he worked on Wyaldra Station. He was always interested in the land because that's what he knew. When he got too old for the land he worked on the railway as a navvy; put his age back so he could get a job. He owned up when he reached retiring age and they let him work for another 12 months because he was a damn good worker. After he finished with the railway he was with the council in Julia Creek watering the streets with a water cart.

Dad never stopped work till he developed cancer. In those days you never talked about cancer. You never mentioned the word. It was a taboo word. He was in dreadful pain and he complained about his legs all the time. He'd get me to rub them. I told him he had arthritis, but I knew he had cancer. The doctor called me aside and said: "Do you realise what he's got? He's not going to get through it". We didn't tell him, but that's what he had.

It was the first time he'd ever been into a hospital. He died in Townsville in 1966 and he's buried there. After that, Mum went back to Julia Creek, to our house in Coyne St, but she, too, died in Townsville. I had her cremated so we could take her ashes back to where she wanted to be – in Julia Creek.

I DON'T KNOW WHEN we moved to our Coyne St house. My grandfather Hornung was a real handyman; he could turn his hands to anything. He bought four cottages from Kuridala, a mining town further west, and put them together – two for Auntie Emily and two for Mum. They became houses with two hips. It made them quite big houses, really. The one beside Kaeser's baker shop was Auntie Emily's and it didn't get any further improved. Ours in Coyne St, Grandad put a verandah three ways round it and turned it into a great big house. If you come back from the Town & Country Club and turn left, and at the next street turn right – not the first house, the second house in on the right – that's where we grew up.

I can remember terrible nightmares in that house as a young child. I was a beggar for nightmares. One night, for some reason or other, Mum had me in her bed and the door was closed. I woke up from a nightmare really frightened. Hanging up behind the door was this damn fur coat and that frightened me even more. I thought it was a bear. So I'm getting out of bed and I'm heading under the house to hide. That's my earliest memory, and that was in our Coyne St house.

No trouble at all to amuse ourselves. We had a big yard at the back with high netting on the fence to keep the fowls in. Albie Wilder, this cousin of mine (we were more or less reared as brother and sister), he was always good with his hands, so we built a cubby house in the fowl yard. I tell you what, it wasn't too bad. We had a whirlywind go through the town that blew roofs off people's places, but our cubby house stood up. Never got knocked down because we were under a Parkinsonia tree. I think that's what saved it.

During the past week or two we had quite a few experiences with dust storms and whirlwinds. On Friday last we witnessed one of unusual force which happened to strike O'Sullivan's building on the south-east corner. Many sheets of iron were lifted off the roof and blown against the dining room wall of Hudson's Hotel causing much damage thereto. The wall of Sallen's Store also suffered slight damage as the result of flying sheets of iron. The boarders of Hudson's Hotel, who happened to be enjoying their midday meal, suffered considerable shock from the terrific blow. Fortunately, all escaped without any injury. The whirlwind madly continued on and, apart from several kerosene tins being relocated between neighbours, no further damage has been reported.

NQR: 11 Nov 1933
Hudson's Hotel is the
Julia Creek Hotel.



In those days Julia Creek only had a primary school. There was no secondary school; that came later. When you passed Scholarship, if you wanted more schooling you had to come away to the coast. I came to St Pat's. Others went to St Mary's in Charters Towers, places like that. You had to come away to get a secondary education.

Harry Nelson was the first headmaster I remember. The next one was Arthur Cann, a real disciplinarian. But before Cann we had Billy Bragg. Six weeks before breakup, Nelson went away and Billy Bragg came out in his place. He was a young fellow and he had his girlfriend with him, which

in those days, remember, was not the done thing. But nobody took much notice of it.

Billy Bragg was the one who took us to Eddington in Bill Blanch's sanitary cart. We took all the pans off and everybody's sitting on the back, feet hanging over the side, as many as could fit. The rest of the time with Billy Bragg we were preparing for a concert. The best concert we ever put on was in his time.

I tell you what I do remember about school. We used to love it when it looked like rain because we were allowed to take lunch. Other than that, we walked home for lunch. You walked home and then you walked back. But if it looked like rain, Mum would give us a cut lunch and we could stay at school. We thought that was absolutely marvellous, staying at school at lunchtime.

This chappy I mentioned before, this Arthur Cann, he turns up to take over the school. "Hands up those who went to the pictures last night." This was on a Thursday, meaning Wednesday's pictures. Up went my hand, and I got into trouble. Saturday night you could go to the pictures, but not Wednesday night. You had homework to do during the week. So when I got home I told Mum:

We're not allowed to go to the pictures anymore Wednesday night. Why?

Mr Cann said we can't.

I'm running this house. He's not telling me what to do.

We all still went to Wednesday's pictures. At the pictures, over in the two front corners, sort of pushed out to the side so they didn't interfere with the people at the back, were forms for the boys and girls. We weren't allowed to sit in the canvas seats, that was one of Eckford's rules. And girls weren't allowed to sit with the boys – that was another rule. Boys had to sit on one side of the hall and girls on the other. For drinks we used to buy a big bottle of soft drink for a zack¹, one bottle between us. And you didn't take a glass with you either; we all swigged from the one bottle.

1. Sixpence

My first job was at the refreshment room at the railway station. It was just a room. If it was 10 foot square that was about the end of it. Only person in there was the girl making the tea and sandwiches. Flaps lifted up and the customers stood outside and drank their tea. Bert Burrows owned it. His wife said to me:

Mary, do you want to do the tea?
Oh, all right.

I remember the pay was 25 shillings a week, which was good dough in those days before the war. I didn't have to work much, only for the mail trains coming through.

Bert also had the Blue Bird Cafe and I worked there for a while, and then for Mrs Flo Watson when she took it on. There was only the one waitress and Mrs Watson. Your busiest time was after the pictures.

I was in the Blue Bird one day when Jim Parsons, the shire clerk, sent for me:

Would you like to come and work in the council?
I can't. I didn't do commercial.
You can learn. Typing is only practice.

I had done an academic Junior and I didn't know the commercial subjects. However, at that time in Julia Creek the nuns had a bit of a convent and they taught the commercial subjects: dressmaking, things like that. I went there to learn to type. I didn't learn shorthand because Jim Parsons said I wouldn't need it.

After enlisting and going away during the war, I ended up back at the council office. Then I went into the Top Pub with Bert Brisbane, my husband to be, and from the pub we came to Townsville in 1953. It was my idea to leave Julia Creek because there were only a few openings for kids when they got to working age. Everybody's gotta work and I suggested to Bert we come away where the kids could get an apprenticeship when the time came.

NOTHING ABOUT JULIA CREEK sticks out from the rest, except that I did have a very happy childhood. It was. It was a terrific childhood. It was a good place for children to be reared. Fewer motor cars in those days. We played out in the streets at night. You can't do that in a city.



Above: The Railway Refreshment Room where Mary worked. "If it was 10 foot square that was about the end of it." Flaps on three sides opened out to serve customers. Ben Burrows (brother of Bert,

the owner of the refreshment room) is on the left. The other man is unidentified. Mary also worked at the Blue Bird Cafe (opposite).
[Ivy Burrows, B124, ca 1948]

It is with regret that we have to report that the Roman Catholic Convent is closed and that the Sisters of Mercy left for the South on Tuesday morning. This is a sad loss to our town as their many pupils show great talent with music, singing, and commercial subjects.

CA: 09 Jul 1943

Very hard in them times **Herb Wilder**

I WAS BORN IN JULIA CREEK in 1931 in the CWA building. They held meetings there and it had a bit of a medical centre and a nurse who helped look after pregnant women. If you cut your finger you went to this nurse's station. No hospital in Julia Creek then.

My father was a building contractor. When I was about 6 we went out cutting house stumps for a house he was building. One of the trees was hollow with some bush honey inside. Naturally, we had a lick of this bush honey. There must have been something in that honey because we all got sick. I had a taste and I survived. My father, for some unknown reason, didn't.

After Dad's death his mother looked after us till we left school. Mum had to go away looking for work. There wasn't all these wonderful things available for widows and unmarried mothers, you were on your own. Wages weren't good and you had to watch your money to survive. Mum would visit us when she could and we'd visit her, but it was my grandmother, Emily, remarried to a fella by the name of Mick Skinner, and living in a house full of her own children and relations (Pat Skinner, Uncle Albie, Uncle Donny, Auntie Hilda and her couple of kids, and Cooe and I) – it was my grandmother who looked after us. Very hard in them times.

I started school and I finished school in Julia Creek. Just after the war I went nippering on the railway: boiled the billy and kept the tools together. They had different coloured flags to restrict the speed of trains and that sort of thing, and I had to walk so-many yards along the line and stand this green flag up. I was only there for a couple of years. It was hard to live on a 16-year-old's wages and pay your way. As a nipper you'd get two or three pound a week, but if you went to the shearing sheds you could double that and

get meals and lodgings thrown in. You didn't get any extras in the railway, so that's why I left.

There were more people around Julia Creek then; there was plenty of activity. Every Friday night they had a dance, and every now and then they had their balls. Of a Saturday night you wouldn't get into either one of the pubs. Men would be spilling out on the footpath, beer being handed out to them. They'd be real packed. There were four or five shearing teams around Julia Creek; that's 50 or 60 men at least, just shearers. And the railway, in the steam train days, God knows how many men they had.

But there was no future for a young person in Julia Creek. The only work was at the woolscour, the railway, and in a few shops. Other than that there was not much permanent employment, it was all seasonal: shearing and droving. If you married and settled there, well, you'd be all the time away from home chasing work; and if your children wanted a trade or apprenticeship when they grew up, it wasn't there for them. I decided it wasn't the place for me, and like other people I wandered away. I married in Mackay in 1954.

Having said all that, when I got married I went back to Julia Creek to work for my uncle Mick Lander, Mum's brother, carpentering. It was willy-nilly, running here, running there, and I thought: *This is no good to me*. So I took a job in the railway as an engine cleaner and got stuck into books, learning, trying to get out of Julia Creek again, looking at the weekly notices, looking for a good depot. I passed the fireman's exam in 1955, and in 1957 with the closure of the steam sheds I came to Townsville. I've been here ever since.



the town the windows so attractive.

Despite the fact that the seasonal outlook is bad, the town still continues to go ahead in the building line. Building contractor Herb Wilder is now putting the finishing touches on Mr. Bert Burrows' new cafe in Burke St next to the Post Office. Mr. Burrows hopes to be well established in the Blue Bird by Christmas. Mr. Wilder will then go on to a new residence for Mr. George Peut at the western end of Goldring Street and when completed this building will greatly improve the appearance of that end of the town.

Mrs. Grace Horton is making extensive inside improvements to her refreshment room in Goldring Street which will help her to cater for the public in a more efficient manner than heretofore.

NQR: 22 Dec 1934

for themselves.

The death of Mr. Herb Wilder, one of our carpenters, came as a shock to everyone in the town and district. He and his men were working on Winslade at the time and it is thought that they drank some water that was impure and all got ptomaine poisoning. His companions eventually recovered, but owing to Mr. Wilder having a weak heart and also having suffered from ptomaine poisoning a short time prior to this, the strain proved too great and he passed away on Tuesday night. He was quite a young man being but 23 years of age and had lived all his life in Julia Creek. He leaves a wife and two small children to mourn their loss.

Mrs. Lance Halloran left by Monday night's train for a holiday of six months, portion of which will be spent in Cevlon.

NQR: 27 Feb 1937

Right: Blue Bird Cafe, Burke St, next door to the Post Office. Built by Herb's father (also named Herb) in 1934. Herb's grandfather was yet another Herb – see family tree, page 368, to help avoid confusion.

On either side of the word "Cafe" are drawings of a bluebird. The writing on the left says "B. Burrows, Prop", and on the right "Phone 7". See page 256 for the history of this cafe.

[Kath Gerahty, GeK04, ca 1940]



Ptomaine poisoning (see NQR above) is an outdated term no longer in medical use. Ptomaines are formed when protein is broken down by bacteria. It was once customary to classify all food poisoning as ptomaine poisoning until it was discovered that ptomaines are not the problem – the human gut can completely neutralize them. Instead, it is the toxins produced by bacteria in food that may cause illness. Sometimes, as happened in the case of Herb's father, the illness results in death.

Donald Do d'Dinner **Albie Wilder**

Died 6 Feb 2009

WE LIVED IN GOLDRING ST next to Kaeser's bakery in a house that came from the mining town of Kuridala. That's our backyard and that's the house. See how the middle's up and down in a valley? It's actually two houses put together. Dad and my step-grandfather, old Fred Hornung, did that. Over on the right you can see a part of the bakery. That stick on the left, that was our see-saw and merry-go-round all in one. It was just a post in the ground with a piece of timber across and a spike down the middle. We'd get on it and spin round-n-round or go up-n-down.

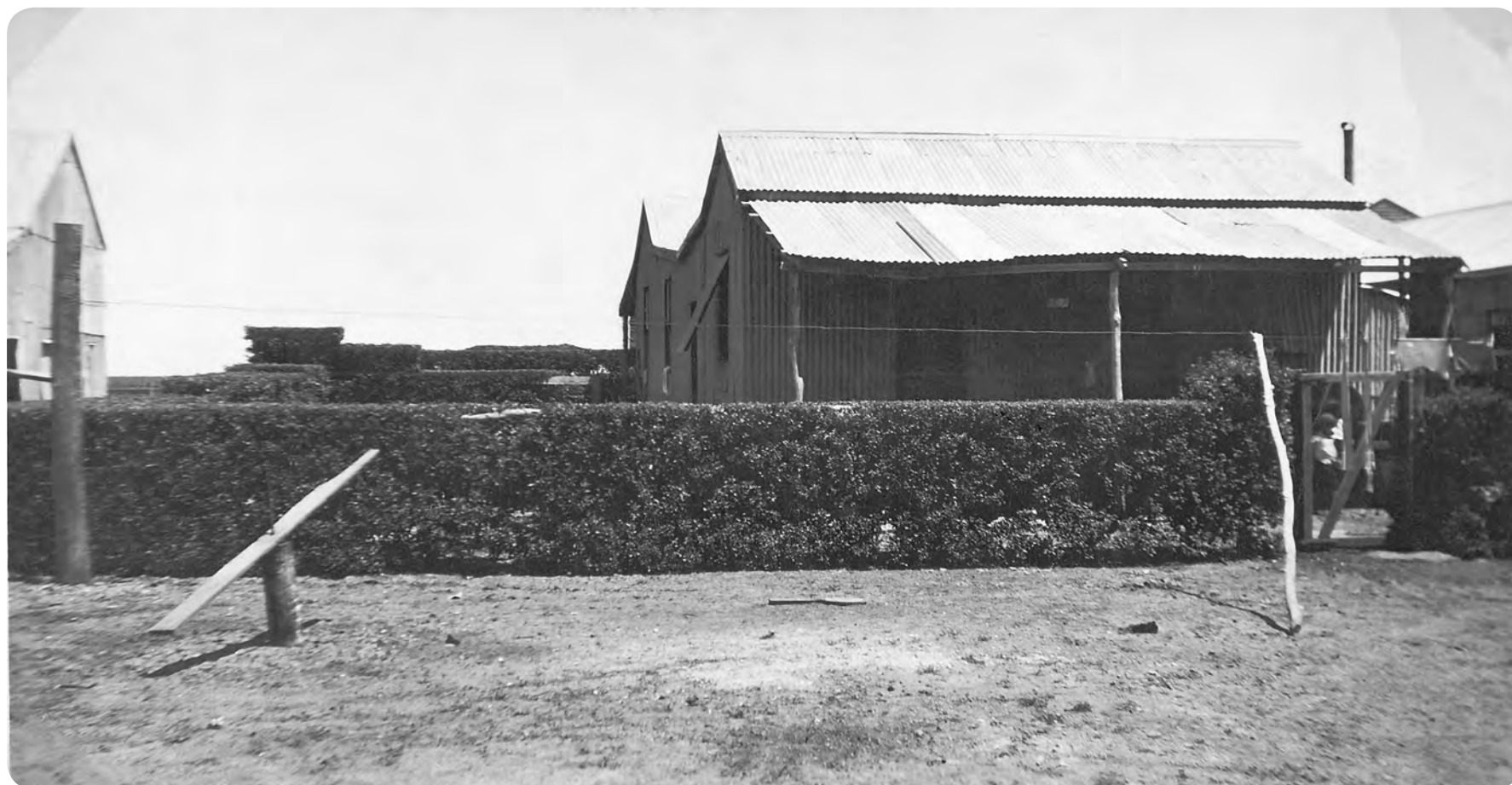
Mary Winton and I were playing on it one day and she wouldn't get off – and I wanted her to get off. I had a tomahawk in my hand: "Get off or I'll cut ya!" And still she wouldn't get off. So I aimed to go close, but I got her on the foot. It's a wonder she didn't tell you about that. Anyway, the evil deed was done on that stick. The other stick on the right, that's the prop for the clothes line; you can see the wire.

The front of the house was the same as the back, except it had beds on the verandah. We used to get under there as kids; the verandah was three steps off the ground. From the front gate to the door there was a hedged walkway. It was a saltbush hedge that went all the way around the house. On the corners, and on both sides of the gate, Clive built it up like a rampart. It was his job to keep it trimmed.

As you walked in the front there was the main bedroom on one side, a lounge on the other, then you came through a passageway to two more bedrooms, and then the dining room. Beyond that, right at the back, you were in this great big kitchen the full width of the house. You can see the stove's chimney sticking out above the alcove on the bakery side.

When you wanted a bath you went out to the wash house in the backyard through the gate in the hedge. You can't see the wash house, it's off to the side. And of course, further down the back was the thunderbox.

All us kids lived in that house. There was five of us, then there got to be six, and then there got to be Pat.



I WAS BORN ON THE 24TH JULY 1925 in Charters Towers. And the reason for that was: the family was living in Julia Creek, but when one of us was to be born Mum always went to the Towers. Mum and Dad met there. I think they came to Julia Creek around 1913 or '14 and more or less used it as a base. Dad was a teamster, drover, fencing contractor. Mum used to go with him until there were too many kids. After 1922, when Herbie and Biddy started school, she stayed in town.

Dad would work at anything. When the council couldn't get a dunny carter to empty the pans he took that on for a while. He didn't have much schooling behind him and couldn't read or write, but he was learning. Towards the end he could write his own name.

He was Common Ranger when he died. I'll tell you what happened to him.

He was on Mick Byrne's property, Wallacooloobie, woolpressing. There's a lever with a pawl on it that drives a ratchet mechanism. You push on the lever and the pawl presses the wool down. He had it just about down and the pawl broke; the lever sprang back and hit him under the heart. Well, he was quite sick for a while there, and he decided that we were all going to his brother's place for a holiday, a milk farm out from the Towers.

At the Cape River a fella was bogged – it was all sandy roads. Dad had no tow rope so he gets out and helps push. He was a big powerful bloke. When we got to his brother's place he felt tired and went to have a lie down. They got tea ready and then Mum tried to wake him. He was dead. His heart was strained too much by pushing the car, plus the damage from the accident on Wallacooloobie. He's buried in Charters Towers. I was three. 1928, yeah.

Mum was left with all us kids: Herbie, Biddy, Hilda, Clivey, myself and Donny – six kids. And then Pat, seven kids.

She married Mick Skinner soon after Dad died. Mick was a navvy. He'd work at anything, anything at all – a bit like Dad. He started a little fruit shop in Julia Creek and did all right in that. They called him Mick, but his name was Percy. He was a good bloke, too; treated us really well. It couldn't have been too long after Dad died that he married Mum because Donny was only a baby in arms. Eventually they had Pat, their only child. He's a half brother, Pat. He's a Skinner and we're all Wilders.

Above: Albie's parents, Emily & Herb Christian Wilder.
[Albie Wilder, WA08, ca 1915]

Opposite: Wilder home in Goldring St, taken from the backyard looking south. Bally Kaeser's bakery, right; Clive's hedge-rampart on the skyline, left.
[Albie Wilder, WA15, ca 1930]



That's Donny and my sister, Biddy. Well, Emily, but Biddy she was known as. When Donny was little, Joey Kaeser from next door at the bakery used to tease him:

And what's your name, little fella?
Donald Do d'Dinner

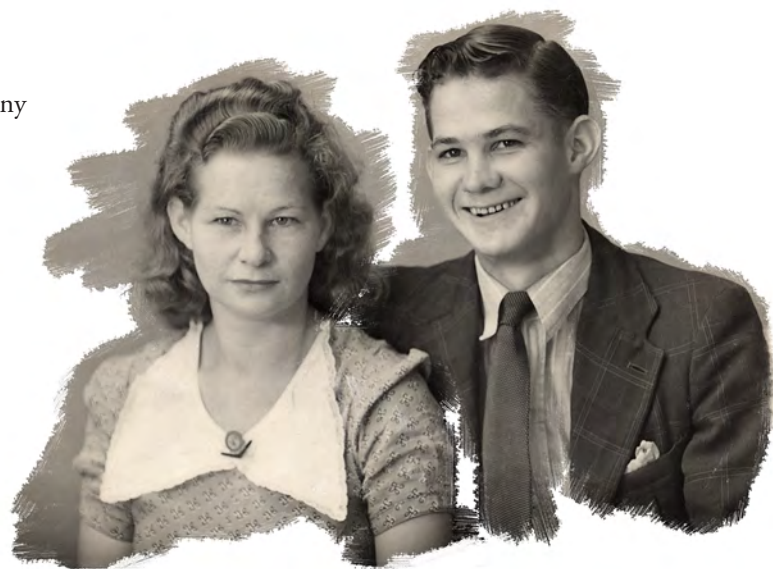
Donald Stuart Skinner. He always claimed himself as a Skinner even though he was Dad's son, and a Wilder. Mum said to Mick:

He's only little; we can change his name to Skinner.
No, he's not mine. I'll look after him, but his name is Wilder and he deserves to keep it.

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS I can remember about Dad is his car when he was the Ranger. It was one of those rag-hood models, a 1924 Dodge. My one recollection of that is when Mary Winton and I were toddlers; we hid in the car and did a round with him on the common. I also remember Dad having a harness shed in the backyard with all his droving gear hanging from hooks. We used to go in there and swing on the horse collars. One day this horse collar broke and down we came. I wouldn't have been much older than 3.

We never had shoes as kids, and our feet cracked and bled with the cold weather in winter. I'd go out to the scour, playing, and bring home lanoline, the grease scoured from the wool. Mum rubbed it into my feet. By jeez, it fixed them up.

Jimmy Brisbane and I used to sneak into the scour and play amongst the machinery when it wasn't working. His father had a job there. We'd climb inside the dryer at the end of the scouring tanks and crawl up and down the chute. We'd come out upstairs where the wool was, in these big rooms about the size of this house. The scoured wool was blown up through the chute; all fluffy-white stuff banked in a heap, ready to be bailed by the presser on the next shift. It looked just like snow. The electricity in it tickled hell out of you. You'd dive in amongst the wool and your hairs would start standing up on your arms.



Above: Biddy and "Donald Do d'Dinner" Wilder.
[Albie Wilder, WA04, ca 1946]

Below: Some of the Wilder boys and their relations.
From left: Don, Pat Skinner, Clive,
Herb (Albie's nephew), Albie
[Albie Wilder, WA09, ca 1935]



TWO BROTHERS, JIM AND JOE ECKFORD, had the picture theatre. Joe was the one who went round town and put the posters up. You'd say to him if you saw him in the street:

What's on at the pictures tonight?

Two goodies – a Cowboy and Anothery.

Joe took your tickets as you went in the door. Anyone throwing their bumper away – the cigarette butt – he'd pick it up and put it out. He had a tin of them, and when he wanted a smoke he'd get this needle, pick out the tobacco and fold a cigarette. And the old bugger had money. That's Dadie Dawes' uncle.

The pictures, well, we only got a go at them every so often. As you went in the door you bought your ticket. Inside there was a counter selling lollies, peanuts, and little bottles of soft drink. Or, if you wanted to, you could go down the back and get big bottles. They only had little bottles at the counter. Down the front near the screen, over this side were the boys, and over that side were the girls. And it was funny: as soon as the lights went out you'd see heads going across. Then you'd see Jim Eckford. He'd be out the front with a torch, shining it round: "Get back to your seat!" And he'd chase the boys back to where they were supposed to be.

We had a pet cockatoo that went to the pictures with us. He'd fly ahead and sit on the fence, waiting till we caught up. Sometimes he'd come in and other times he'd stay outside. He talked like a thrashing machine. I'd come home after school: come up the back lane, open the door, throw my school bag in, and he'd sing out: "Albie's home, Albie's home. Get the goats Albie, get the goats". Get the goats – that was my job. And of course, Mum would know I was home and tell me to get the goats. We had him a long time. He was still there when I left Julia Creek.

I was out getting the goats once near the coalstage, and being a kid curious, I pulled up. We used to play around the coalstage; climb it sometimes and have high jinks. Here's this swaggie and he's cooking sausages. They used to jump off the train during the Depression and get in underneath the piers of the coalstage and camp. They were like flies, leaving the train in swarms before it got into the station. I hadn't seen too many sausages and I was standing there gawking, drooling. He said to me:

Hey kid, can you play draughts?

Yes mister.

Well, it's your move first. If you don't get out of here I'll cut your bloody head off.

I thought I was gonna have me a game of draughts and a sausage. I never went back near the coalstage for a while after that swaggie frightened me.

ESSIE SILLS USED TO GO AROUND JULIA CREEK delivering fruit and vegetables in a horse and cart. There was even a Chinaman gardener in opposition. Fancy having gardens in Julia Creek. Essie's garden was over on Hilton Park, but the Chinaman's was in town; quite a little farm affair, growing everything. As you were going out to the cemetery along Julia St, you turned left into Coyne St and the Chinaman was down a bit on the north side. He used to hessian bag his lettuce to break the heat. He made a little frame, only so-high, and stretched a bag over it. Hose the bag, and that kept the lettuce cool. He'd come around with two cane baskets over his shoulders. As soon as he picked them up he had to start jogging; that was the only way he could carry them.

Over the road from the Chinaman lived a Japanese fella, Harry Kamada. He was the laundry chap, and the two of them were always squabbling. Harry had wooden steps over his fence – step step step – instead of a gate. One day coming home (I didn't know the difference, being a kid; I thought they were all the same race), I said to Harry:

Do they have these steps in China?

You bludy bustid! You calla me a Chinaman. I not bloody Chinaman...

And I off. That night I was looking around to see if Harry was after me because he'd already been in strife in Julia Creek. He was in love with this... I'll probably think of her name in a minute... but she was married. There was another bloke involved too. They had a fight and Harry pulled out a dagger and into him with it¹.

...eme works.

We in these parts endeavour to keep our name on the map, the latest development being a stabbing affray which occurred here on Monday last. It appears that Harry Kamada visited a private house where Ernest Rumbold was lodging, and after heated words a struggle commenced. It is alleged Rumbold was getting the better of his assailant when Kamada attacked Rumbold with a knife. Both victims being considerably knocked about made straight for Sister Needham's Private Hospital just across the street. Dr. Hogg and Constable Borghardt were at once summoned and it was found that Rumbold's condition was most serious, while Kamada appeared to be suffering only from facial injuries. He was taken to the watch-house and arrested on a charge of inflicting grievous bodily harm, and the following morning appeared before Mr. Jim Parsons and Mr. Fred Hickman, J.P.s, charged as above.

Walter Borghardt, police constable stationed at Julia Creek, stated he received a phone message from a Mrs. Emily Skinner who resides in Goldring St, Julia Creek. He proceeded to a house occupied by Mrs. Gertrude Hall and saw fresh blood stains on the floor and on the front steps. It appeared as if a fight had just taken place. On the floor was a butcher's knife, a blood-stained pair of bloomers, and pieces of an earthenware teapot. From there he went to the hospital and saw Kamada on the verandah. Kamada's shirt and trousers were saturated with blood and he was bleeding from a wound over the left eye and his face was cut and bruised. On entering the hospital he saw Dr. Hogg attending to Rumbold who had several stab wounds. He later took Kamada to the police station and asked him how the fight started. Defendant said: "I had an argument with Rumbold for kissing Mrs. Hall and I threw a teapot at him and we then had a fight. I got very excited and lost my temper as Rumbold said he was going to kill me." Defendant said he would not sign a statement as he wanted to see a solicitor.

After formal evidence was given by Constable Borghardt, the defendant was allowed bail of £100 (one surety of £50 and self of £50), to report every morning at 10 o'clock at the police station.

Rumbold's condition is much improved although it is believed he is not yet out of danger.

NQR: 01 Oct 1932

...esent ridiculous prices.

During the past week the Police have been kept busy meeting incoming trains and have arrested 16 unemployed men who have not paid the fare. With the recent increases in the cost of living and reduction in wages I am of the opinion that special "jumping the rattler" trains will have to be scheduled to cope with the demand.

A general meeting of the members of

NQR: 22 Nov 1930

1. Kamada's story is on page 392.

AT THE AGE OF 12 I was in the Cloncurry Hospital for three months with rheumatic fever. It affects your heart. It leaves it with a murmur and it's weakened. When I came out of hospital I had to keep away from sports. I wasn't to get excited, that was the thing.

Around that time a new head teacher arrived, Arthur Cann, and he was a horrible old turd. I was halfway through fifth grade, just back from hospital, and this old bugger used to belt hell out of me because I couldn't get the grip of learning. It wasn't long after Cann arrived that I left school, although I did go back for two weeks when the education train came out. One carriage was for the girls and one for the boys. The girls learnt dressmaking and cooking; the boys learnt tinsmithing, woodwork, how to make chairs, and things like that. The two carriages parked on a side line just down a bit from our house. I went to it twice, the second time only because I liked woodwork. I'm pretty sure I'd left school by then.

My first job was with Bert Pollard. He was the undertaker and I was going to do an apprenticeship with him as a builder of coffins. Oh, he had the foulest mouth going, and his girls were just as foul-mouthed. He used to talk with them any old how. He says to me one time there: "Go and find that fuckin' spanner. I told you not to lose the bastard". And I said to him: "Look, I've had enough of you. I don't have to put up with your swearing. I'm not one of your kids you're talking to now". I left and got a job at Jaques' butcher shop.

Charlie Byrne had a butcher shop in the main street, and George Jaques had the other one in the front street. At the time I was getting 15/6 a week. All my other mates from school were in the shearing sheds getting two and three pound a week and their keep, so I said goodbye to the butcher trade and went out to the sheds. And from there I joined up.

I was down at the Gabba camp in Brisbane when they told me: "You're out". They gave me a little slip of paper saying: "Temporarily medically

discharged" owing to heart whatever-it-was. That was on the 24th March 1942. I came back from Brisbane and I went into the shearing sheds again. I wasn't in the sheds long; the heat got too much for me. I came to Townsville and got tangled up with the Americans, their Fifth Air Force. I was attached to them during the war.

It was in Townsville I met my wife and we got married in '46. I've been back to Julia Creek several times since, but never to live.

I LIKED THE FREEDOM we had as children in Julia Creek. You played here, you played there, you weren't frightened, you could go out and leave the house unlocked, you could come and go as you were able to – or let.

Different nights we'd be at our place or at the Winton's, singing songs around the piano. On moonlit nights we'd get out and play Crows & Cranes, Drop the Hanky, or Red Red Rover. With Crows & Cranes there were two rows of children and there'd be one child calling. She'd sing out "Crrro..." then change it to "Cranes". The Crows ran off and the Cranes had to catch them.

We had good times playing those simple games; and we had good times at the fancy dress balls, too. Mrs Pedersen organised them. She had this Grand March and she'd parade us round-n-round in Eckford's Hall.

Below: The "Travelling Domestic Science Instruction" train.
The only children identified are Marie Kaeser (far left)
and Albie (second from right, standing).
[Albie Wilder, WA18, 1938]



That's Clive in fancy dress. He went as a swagman. In the background you can see a miniature waggon. Another brother, Herbie, he used to yoke that waggon to the goats. He had all the team stuff, the bridles and yoking gear, and he'd go over to the railway with a team of four goats and cart cinders around town. People put cinders in their yard for when the ground turned muddy during the wet. Herbie went to old man Tracey; he had a grocery store:

Do you want any cinders Mr Tracey?

Yes, Herbie, how much a load?

Herbie told him so-much.

How many loads you want, Mr Tracey?

Oh, you keep bringing them and I'll let you know.



But there must have been some misunderstanding, because Herbie loaded up every bit of cinder he delivered to Mr Tracey and brought it home and spread it around our place.



I was in the Grand March as a baker boy one year, carrying a tray full of little buns and wearing an outfit with "Baker" on it and "Eat More Bread". Bally Kaeser made the buns and the other kids were stealing them off me. I wasn't selling them; the mickie loaves were just advertising his bread. Mickies were a little bread roll. If Bally had dough left over he'd make balls out of it and put them in the oven. All us kids would go to the bakery after school: "Ya got any mickies today, Bally?" and he'd hand them out.

Above: Albie's brother, Clive, as swaggie, on his way to a fancy-dress ball. Herbie's cinder-carrying billygoat cart in background.
[Albie Wilder, WA10, ca 1927]

Left: Albie as baker boy, holding a tray of mickie loaves. The writing on his cap reads "Baker" and on the front of his tray "Eat More Bread".
[Albie Wilder, WA05, 1937]

Bally Kaeser was a little nuggety bloke about so high and he had a big belly on him. He'd often get drunk and come home singing in German. He had a whole heap of daughters, but only three sons: Joey, Albie and Kenny. The two older boys were going off to war and Bally's drunk one night, feeling depressed and saying to Joey: "You're going over there and you'll be shooting your cousins".

Bally made excellent bread. You'd go a long way before you'd find any better. In those days the stores didn't handle bread; you couldn't buy it from them. You had to go to Bally and get fresh bread from him; or if he had stale bread he'd sell you that at a cheaper rate – or give it to you. There was a heap of us Wilders and we wouldn't have known much about bread other than Bally Kaeser would bake a bit extra and pass it over the fence to Mum:

But I've got no money, Mr Kaeser.

That's all right. The goats will be getting it if you don't take it.

We were poor, yeah. We'd come home – you know how kids come home today and ask for a biscuit or an orange? – we'd come home and we'd ask Mum: "Have we got any crust of bread?" And if there was, we'd get the dripping (it was real black) and put it on the crust and sprinkle salt and pepper on it. That was our afternoon special.

We knew we were poor, yet we were quite happy. Never really wanted for anything. We grew vegetables and had our own goats. Still, we never had the things that others had. There was no money for shoes a lot of the time. I'd go to school barefooted. In the winter out there, as I've mentioned, it was very cold and my feet would be cracking. Lanolin helped, but I remember Mum giving me two shillings to go to AJ Smith's and buy a pair of sandshoes because my feet were that bad. Two shillings would also get you a pound of butter – a pat of butter – and a dozen boxes of matches.

Two shillings would get you a lot, those days.



Below: At the saltbush hedge in front of the Wilder home, Goldring St. Standing, from left: Bally Kaeser, Mick Skinner, Mrs Elizabeth Kaeser, Emily Wilder (Albie's mother, at this time married to Mick Skinner). Front: Clive Wilder, Joey Kaeser.
[Albie Wilder, WA21, ca 1939]





Above: Julia Creek lads next to George Regan's truck at Eddington, acting as if they are drinking beer. Standing, from left: Eric Blanch, Billy Gerahty, Laurie Crawford, ? Front: George Winton, ?, Albie Wilder.

"We used to go out to Eddington waterhole to have picnics. The men put in two bob for the soft drink and petrol, and the women made the cakes. There was no alcohol in amongst it. We were just kidding that we were drunk." (Albie Wilder) [Albie Wilder, WA07, ca 1940]

Below: Peter Dawes' hawker's van, Julia Creek area. Clive Wilder is in the middle. [Albie Wilder, WA24, ca 1940]

"Peter Dawes had a shop in Burke St. He sold a lot of things, but we never had much money and we thought his prices were pretty dear.

"He was a cunning old bugger. He had a hawker's van and he'd go out to meet the ringers, shearers, and drovers, and get their orders before they got to town and spent their money somewhere else." (Albie Wilder)

"Peter Dawes, well, he earned his money I suppose, but they used to call him 'Dear Peter'. He'd go out as far as Sedan Dip, meet the drovers there and get their orders, and then come back to town and make up the order and take it out to them – if they weren't coming to town themselves. All that sort of thing. He was called 'Dear Peter' because he was so bloody dear with his prices." (Reg Fickling)



Harry Kamada knifes Ernest Rumbold in love tussle over Mrs Hall

Four Pieces of Broken Teapot



ALBIE WILDER was a boy of 7 when Harry Kamada, the Japanese laundry man in Julia Creek, knifed Ernest Rumbold. The incident made such a strong impression on Albie that 70 years later he was able to recall enough details to enable me to find original documents.

The Wilders lived next to Kaeser's bakery in Goldring St. Mrs Hall, the woman the fight was over, was a neighbour who lived across the lane in Burke St. She was friends with Albie's mother, and on the morning of the fight had walked across the lane to take a phone call in the Wilder home. The call was from Harry Kamada.

For small town Julia Creek the story of the fight would have been big news; more so in the Wilder home because of the indirect involvement and the close proximity. I imagine that when Albie returned home from school on Monday afternoon, the blood-letting that happened across the lane in the morning would have been well-discussed.

I have reproduced the story, below, because it is more than just a fight. Primitive instincts show their hand (racism, and the recourse to fists and knives rather than words) and blend with finer instincts of honour and fair play. From the start Rumbold had the advantage. He was a much stronger man,

30 years younger than Kamada. He could have walked away at any time, "but I stayed because I was enjoying the fight", and because Kamada was "of an alien race". Kamada could have walked away too, but chose to prolong the fight by baiting his opponent, and ended it by introducing a knife.

The wounds inflicted on Rumbold were serious. In Dr Hogg's words: "I think he would have died from those wounds had he not received medical attention". But Rumbold refused to give a police statement, and during the initial court proceedings shied away from accusing Kamada of stabbing him: "I make no direct assertion that Kamada stabbed me".

The psychology is fascinating. Here is a man who pummels another and enjoys it; who could have died because of the injuries he received in return; and then chooses not to cooperate with the judicial system in prosecuting the person who stabbed him: "I think he was justified in doing so in view of the injuries I inflicted on him". Rumbold's sense of fair play, no less instinctive than his descent to violence, urges him towards magnanimity.

Because of Rumbold's reticence to give evidence, the police were unable to proceed against Kamada. In a letter dated 5th December 1932 to the Officer in Charge of Police, Cloncurry,

the Registrar of the Circuit Court writes: "I am in receipt of advice from the Department of Justice, Brisbane, that it has been decided not to present an indictment against Kamada in connection with this matter".

But what was all this about? There are no police statements or court transcripts from Kamada, so his version of events is not known. Answers by Mrs Hall and Rumbold to certain of the prosecutor's questions give the best indication of the root cause. Mrs Hall: "Rumbold stops at my place with my husband's permission. There is nothing wrong between Rumbold and I, or between Kamada and I". Rumbold: "The remark to which I took exception was not one about kissing Mrs Hall. That remark was never made".

The prosecution knew what was going on. Kamada had feelings for Mrs Hall (almost certainly unrequited because of his age and race) and may have seen Rumbold kissing her. That hint of impropriety was followed by jealousy and confrontation from the older man, and was met with aggression from the younger man, who, when he had time to reflect, succumbed to fair play and maybe even compunction. This is more than just a fight. This is the Tristan and Isolde of Julia Creek. As Albie Wilder remembered of Kamada: "He was in love".

Magistrate Court Proceedings¹
Julia Creek,
13th October, 1932

ERNEST RUMBOLD on oath states: I have known the defendant Harry Kamada for five or six months. On Sunday the 25th September, 1932, I slept at Billy Hall's place. Billy Hall is the husband of Mrs Hall. I was staying at Mrs Hall's house by permission of her husband.

The next morning at about 9.30 a.m. I received a message, in consequence of which I went to see Kamada at his house in Coyne St. He treated me to three or four drinks of whiskey. I remained there 20 minutes. I had visited his place previously and it was an ordinary visit. I then went back to Mrs Hall's house.

Kamada came to Mrs Hall's house about 10 minutes later. He and I sat on the edge of the bed and talked. It was a friendly conversation until Harry passed some remark that I took exception to and I abused him. A teapot was beside him and he hit me between the eyes with it. The teapot broke.

Witness looks at Exhibit 3. "I think they are the parts of the teapot with which he hit me."

I started hitting Kamada with my fists, hitting out as often and as hard as I could. He tried to take his own part. I knocked him down four times and then knocked him out of the doorway onto the ground. He came inside and said he'd had enough. He washed his face at the washstand and he passed some other trivial remark. I took the remark as an insult at the time; it was offensive to me. We grappled and we both fell on the floor. I got up and realised I was bleeding from two wounds in the side, losing a fair amount of blood. I said to him: "I think you stabbed me Harry". I did not see anything in his hands. I left the house and walked to the hospital.

Witness looks at Exhibit 1. "I recognise that knife. I saw it at Mrs Hall's house. It was used as a bread knife. I did not see it while the fight was on."

In answer to questions by Mr Vic Faithfull (solicitor acting for Kamada): I do not drink much. I had three or four whiskeys at Kamada's place that morning. I do not remember what he said to me at Mrs Hall's house, but it was after some remark of his that I called him a Japanese bastard. The remark to which I took exception was not one about kissing Mrs Hall. That remark was never made.

Kamada had the teapot in his hands when I called him a Japanese bastard and I expected him to retaliate in some way. When the teapot hit me I struck him with my fists and he fell on the bed. When I let him up off the bed his face was covered in blood. From a pugilistic point of view I used my fists to best advantage and he had no chance with me. I knocked him through the door twice from punches. Both times I could have got away, but I stayed because I was enjoying the fight. When he tried to come inside the second time I held him near the door and said to him: "Don't you think you've had enough?" He said: "Yes". He walked over very quietly to the washstand. While he was washing his face he made use of a common remark, something about me being an Englishman². I hit him again and we started to fight. That was when I realised I was bleeding from two wounds in the side.

Apart from the stabbing (if those injuries were inflicted on me by Kamada) the remaining injuries inflicted on me were not sufficient to send me to a doctor. I make no direct assertion that Kamada stabbed me. At the time I was stabbed he was covered with blood and I do not think he could have seen what he got hold of. Assuming that he did stab me, I think he was justified in doing so in view of the injuries I inflicted on him. Up to that time I had the best of the encounter and I was giving him a good hiding.

From the time I called him a Japanese bastard until I went to the doctor, no one else touched him. If, as you say, he had two black eyes, a cut over the left eye, was bleeding from mouth, nose and ear, had one tooth knocked out and had other injuries, I gave them to him. If Kamada had not been of an alien race I would not have carried on as far as I did.

1. SRS 5309/1 Box 9, Qld State Archives.

2. Pommy bastard?

I am 24 years of age. I know Kamada well. He is a man a little over 50 years of age. At the time of the fighting I was much stronger physically than Kamada. He had no chance of protecting himself against my assault with his hands only. Any injury he inflicted on me was in self defence.

I cannot give any reason why Kamada became hostile to me except that I called him a Japanese bastard. I refused to give the police a statement. I have told the court all that happened that day.

DR JOSEPH HOGG ON OATH STATES: I know Kamada and Rumbold. I was called to St Joseph's Private Hospital¹, Julia Creek, at about 11.30 a.m. to see Rumbold. He was in a serious condition: he had a bruised lump over his right eyebrow; a cut over the roof of his mouth; a cut on his left forearm; skin off the knuckles of his right hand; and three chest wounds, clear cuts made by a sharp instrument. The chest wounds were serious and likely to cause permanent injury or death. Each of these wounds penetrated the chest wall. The wound on the right had penetrated the lung. The one on the left side under the nipple had penetrated the pericardium, I think. It would be dangerous to make an examination of a wound like that to make sure it had penetrated the pericardium. I think he would have died from those wounds had he not received medical attention. There is a likelihood of there being permanent injury to Rumbold's health.

I saw Kamada on the same day. He had two swollen bruises over his left eye; a cut over his right eye; a tear at the juncture of the right ear with the cheek; a wound on the left upper lip with a tooth underneath missing and one beside it loose; slight tears at both corners of his mouth; his nose was broad and full of blood clots; and his whole face was red and puffed.

Kamada walked away after being examined. Rumbold was detained in hospital for three weeks.

GERTRUDE MARY HALL ON OATH STATES: I am the wife of William Hall and I reside at Burke St, Julia Creek. I know the defendant Kamada. I know a man named Ernest Rumbold.

Rumbold was staying at my place on the night of Sunday, 25th September, 1932, and the following morning he had breakfast there. While I was at breakfast Mrs Skinner² called me to her house to attend to the telephone. Kamada spoke to me on the telephone and asked me would I send Rumbold over. I returned to my house from Mrs Skinner's and told Rumbold the message. He finished his breakfast and went in the direction of Kamada's. He came back to my place in about an hour.

Sometime after Rumbold returned, Kamada arrived. Rumbold, Kamada, two children and I were there. Kamada walked in, picked up my eldest boy, sat on the bed with him and gave him some lollies. Kamada and Rumbold then went outside and talked together for about half an hour. When they came inside, Rumbold sat on the edge of the bed and Kamada was talking to him. I was standing at the dresser. I did not take any notice of what they were talking about.

HARRY KAMADA had his laundry in a small shed that Dad owned across the lane behind our butcher shop. Dad had a stile³ built over the fence to get to Harry's laundry, and when there was a ball on I'd see the young fellas climbing over the stile coming to pick up their laundered clothes from Harry.

JENNY BYRNE

HE WASN'T A BAD BLOKE actually, Harry Kamada. This is before the war. I used to visit him. He made model planes out of paper, like kites. Across the road was a Chinese gardener. They didn't like one another at all.

Old Harry the Jap was interned during the war, and when they took him away they reckoned he sang out: "Japan win the war! I come back here and kill all of you".

GORDON LAVARACK

Rumbold was about 4 feet from Kamada and looking towards the doorway when Kamada pelted the teapot at him. I did not see where Harry got the teapot from. It was not my teapot; it was a strange one to me. Kamada had something under his arm when he came to the house. It would be something about the size of a teapot.

I grabbed my boy to get out of the house. The last I saw was Rumbold and Kamada wrestling on the bed. I did not stop to watch them. I stayed away from the house until Constable Borghardt came. When I returned, there was blood about the floor and some broken crockery.

I know the knife, Exhibit 1. It is my property. I use that knife for cutting bread. I used it that morning at the breakfast table. That knife would be somewhere amongst the things on the table that morning. I had not finished cleaning up the table, I was cleaning the dresser.

In answer to Mr Faithfull: I am a married woman residing with my husband and family. My husband is working on Cabanda Station. Rumbold was previously employed on Cabanda, but is now camping in the backyard and having his meals with me. Rumbold stops at my place with my husband's permission. There is nothing wrong between Rumbold and I, or between Kamada and I.

Both of them were at my house on the Sunday night prior to the fight. We were all in the house talking. Kamada left in the early part of the evening after an hour or so, but he returned a few minutes later. He said he would tell Billy, meaning my husband, when he saw him. Rumbold said: "Go away, don't be silly". Kamada lit a cigarette and walked away. Rumbold and Kamada parted friendly.

When Kamada came the next morning I had just finished breakfast. He was quite friendly; he did not appear to be excited or offended over anything. I did not hear the words "Japanese bastard" used that morning. It is quite possible for Rumbold to have said something to Kamada to cause him to throw the teapot without my hearing what was said.

I have known Kamada about 12 months and I have found him to be a quiet and peaceful citizen. He has often lent my husband money and brought food to the house. He has been very fond of my children. He often brings them lollies and little presents and he frequently takes my eldest boy for walks down the street. Through his friendship with the children he can practically come and go from my house as he wishes. My friendship towards him was really on account of the children. I never had any fear at any time of entrusting the custody of my children to Kamada.

I have known Rumbold three or four months. Before the fight he was a very strong young man to look at. He is much younger than Harry Kamada.

Mr Faithfull made an application for a dismissal, but the Police Magistrate committed the defendant to stand trial at the next sittings of the Circuit Court to be held at Cloncurry on a date to be fixed.

Unlawfully doing grievous bodily harm.
Harry Kamada, 55 years

The case of Harry Kamada has been committed for trial at Cloncurry in the year 1933 on a date to be appointed. The defendant has been admitted to bail himself in the sum of £50, with Charles Stewart Byrne, butcher of Julia Creek, as his surety in a similar amount.

The witnesses bound over are Constable Walter Borghardt, Ernest Rumbold, Dr Joseph Hogg, Mrs Hannah Donnelly and Mrs Gertrude Hall.

- Exhibits are:
1. Knife
 2. Lady's bloomers
 3. Four pieces of broken earthenware teapot.

Acting Police Magistrate,
13 October, 1932.

1. Saint Joseph's Private Hospital, also known as Sister Needham's hospital (see NQR 1/10/1932, p387), was in the CWA building in Burke St (see photo p705). Kath Gerahty worked there for Sister Needham (p371) not long after the Kamada fight.
2. Albie's mother, Emily Wilder.
3. The "step step step" of Albie Wilder (p387).

Doctors and funerals Cooee Wilder

CALL ME COOEE. I was born in Townsville, 22nd July 1935 at Burwood Private Hospital. I've got a brother, Herb, four years older, and he was born in Julia Creek. The reason I was born in Townsville, I'm not that sure.

My father was a carpenter, built a lot of houses in Julia Creek. Herbert Julius Wilder. He died before he was 23. I was only about two. My mother had to leave us to go and find work because there was no dole or government assistance, you had to work for money then. My grandmother, Emily Skinner, reared Herb and I as well as all her own children, though most of them had left home by the time I arrived.

My father was born in Charters Towers but grew up in Julia Creek; went to school there. And I did all my schooling in Julia Creek too, what little I did. My grandmother was blind from around the age of 50, and me being the youngest and the only one still at home, I became her eyes. I did a lot of things for her at the expense of my schooling: lit the fire, boiled the kettle for a cup of tea, did all the shopping. Just various jobs around the place. I only had a fourth-year education.

Because my father had been a carpenter, my grandparents got me an apprenticeship as a carpenter with Ray Mobbs. At that time wool was worth a lot of money and station people were modifying their homes. We were working around Oorindi, but my heart wasn't in it. I only lasted 10 months. Then I went to the shearing sheds as a general rouseabout, picking-up wool, penning-up sheep. Just on seven years I was in the sheds. I became a shearer towards the end.

Every weekend I'd come in to Julia Creek and we'd go dancing or drive out to the Punchbowl. Just our small group, not doing anybody any harm. The only harm we ever did was flog the gelignite and the detonators off Max – he had them for his earthmoving – and take them out and throw them in the waterholes. We didn't blow up buildings or anything. You cut a piece of fuse and you put the detonator onto it. Then you put a hole in the gelly with a screwdriver, put the detonator in the hole, and light it. The gelignite was like a sausage, about 12 inches long and an inch and a quarter in diameter. Blow up big – bloody big! Made an awful big splash in the waterhole. After a few times no one would hold them:

Here, hold this while I light the fuse.
Stuff it. I'm not holding it.

Ended up we threw them in the glove box. Only had to get a decent knock and the detonators would have gone off.

JULIA CREEK WOULD HAVE BEEN a pretty miserable place without the pictures or the dances. I'm fair dinkum. What was there to do for young people? For dances we'd go to Kynuna, McKinlay, Cloncurry, Nelia. Cloncurry had the Post Office Ball where they had phones at each table and you could ring somebody for a dance.

You never got dressed before you went, there was too much dust on the way. We'd go to a turkey's nest when we got there, have a wash, put our clothes on, and that was it¹. We went as far as Richmond a couple of times, but we didn't seem to enjoy it there.

Pictures twice a week.

Cowboy shows and bloody horror movies.

Used to frighten the shit out of me when I was young:

Dracula Meets the Wolf Man,
The Beast with Five Fingers.

Walking home afterwards...

(well, running home,
it was black as a dog's guts;
no street lights in Julia Creek)

... running home along the laneway
at the back of Gannon's where the goats camped,
they'd move or let out a bleat:

They're after me!
and I'd run all the harder.

My poor blind grandmother would be feeling her way to the door,
(she'd hear me calling from the lane)

and I'd fly past her.

She'd say to me:

"What's wrong with you?"

"Aw, the pictures scared me."

"You're not going to those pictures again. You stay home and..."

But I'd still go the next week.

The theatre was open air. If it rained, and nobody was sitting in the chair in front of you, you'd pull it over as a cover. The chairs were only canvas and very light; just pull it over.



1. See drawing on page 487.

THE FIRST TIME I SAW MAX BURNS I had a cart full of manure. I used to go and get manure from the cattleyards with a cart and billy goat. Max pulled me up and pointed to the cart:

How much would one of those things be worth?

Hmm... Nothing – if you can't catch the goat.

That'd be 1948 and I was about 13. Max and his clan arrived in town, but I had nothing to do with them for a fair while. I wasn't in that clique of Choco Winton, Donny Burns, Benny Burrows and Lionel Fry, until the night I was in Dawso's Cafe by myself and they all turned up. I thought: *Hello, these bastards look like they want to start a blue.* And that didn't concern me too much because I didn't mind a blue. Anyhow, they invited me to go with them to the Burns' house at the end of town. I didn't go that night, but about a week later I did. We had record players and we used to buggerise around.

CHASE WILD WOMEN? The women weren't too wild, mate, and they were as scarce as rocking-horse turds. Early fifties, y'know, and not long after the war. There was a shortage of lots of things, women included. Most Friday nights someone tried to hold a dance – you could meet girls that way – but holding a dance depended on who was around and if Mossie McDonald was available to play the piano.

Below: Cooe and his Julia Creek mates outside the Burns' two-storey home, *Dew Drop Inn*. From left: 1. Choco Winton (partly cut off), 2. Lionel Fry, 3. ?, 4. Benny Burrows, 5. Shirley Gluyas, 6. Cooe Wilder, 7. Hazel Dennis?, 8. Joy Burns, 9. Henry Winton, 10. Isabel Flewell-Smith, 11. Pat Skinner. [Joy Burns, J24, 1953]



On Friday nights, no dance on, our group would go to the billiard room in Mrs Burns' black Mayflower. She was always kind to our group; she had a soft heart for us young people and let us borrow her car. But she was firm about being careful with it.

We're at the billiard room having a game, paying our money, and Doug Wilmot decides to turf us out. He wanted to gamble, see, play kelly pool. "The Menace" we called him. Doug was a real smartie, a gambler, worked as a steam engine driver at the woollscour, and he was running Roy Hampton's billiard room. We said to him: "Y'got three tables and there's no buggie here. We're playing billiards". Well, Wilmot got hold of Reggie Fels and had him in a headlock. Wilmot was a well-seasoned bloke, forties or so, and we were only kids really, 17 or 18. I'd seen a bike tyre on the footpath when we came in, so I put it over Wilmot's neck and reefed back on it, and with that, Wilmot let Reggie go. We jumped in Mrs Burns' car parked out the front. Wilmot came out of the billiard room, picked up a big rock that kept the door open, and threw it at us as we drove off. He missed – luckily. I'd rather have had another run-in with The Menace than have to explain to Mrs Burns how her car got dented.

Another thing that comes to mind about the Burnses was when their double-storey house at the end of town burnt down. I heard noises like crackers going off, exploding, and I looked out towards the west and here's all this smoke. I didn't live more than a hundred yards away; just came along the back lane and there it was. They didn't have a proper fire brigade in Julia Creek. The council had a couple of hoses, that was about the limit. By the time they got the hoses ready the house was gone. They just let it burn. Nothing they could do about it.

I went to the telephone exchange at the Post Office to ring Donny. I think it was Pattie Pattison on the switch – if it wasn't her it was Carmel Fickling, because they both worked there – and I told her: "The Burns place is on fire. I got no money on me, but I know Donny is at Nelia and he's probably at the Brennan's residence." Bigger me dead, I got him on the phone. He wouldn't believe me, so one of the girls cut in – they were eavesdropping – and told him about the fire. He came from Nelia to Julia Creek in about 45 minutes on that terrible road with all those grids. And grids weren't flat like they are today; you had to go up and over every one.

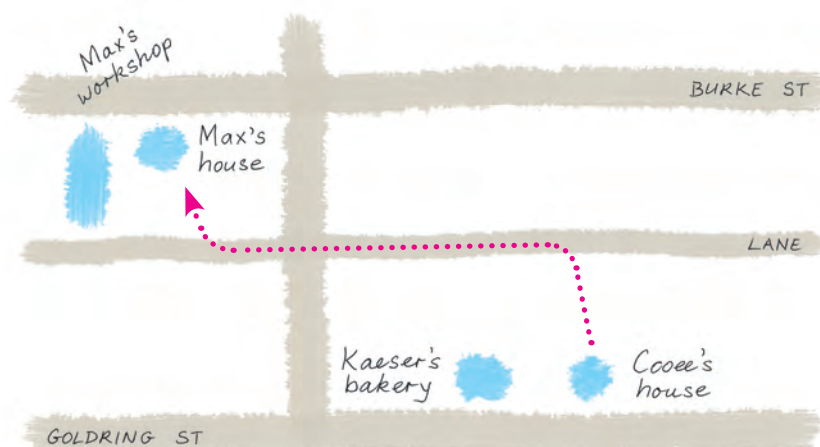
I REALLY MISS MY TIME with the Burnses. They made an indelible mark on my life. And I'll never forget the good times in Julia Creek; they'll never rub out.

It all came to an end in 1964 when I left. I was a guard on the railway and the railway was closing up. Not so much the stations, but the depots. Julia Creek was a staging post for coal and water; it had a coalstage. The engines would come from Hughenden, where they took on coal and water, and they could make it as far as Julia Creek. The engines would pull up beside the stage and fill the tender with coal. What happened: the big diesels were introduced and there was no coal needed. That's why the depot at Julia Creek was closed down.

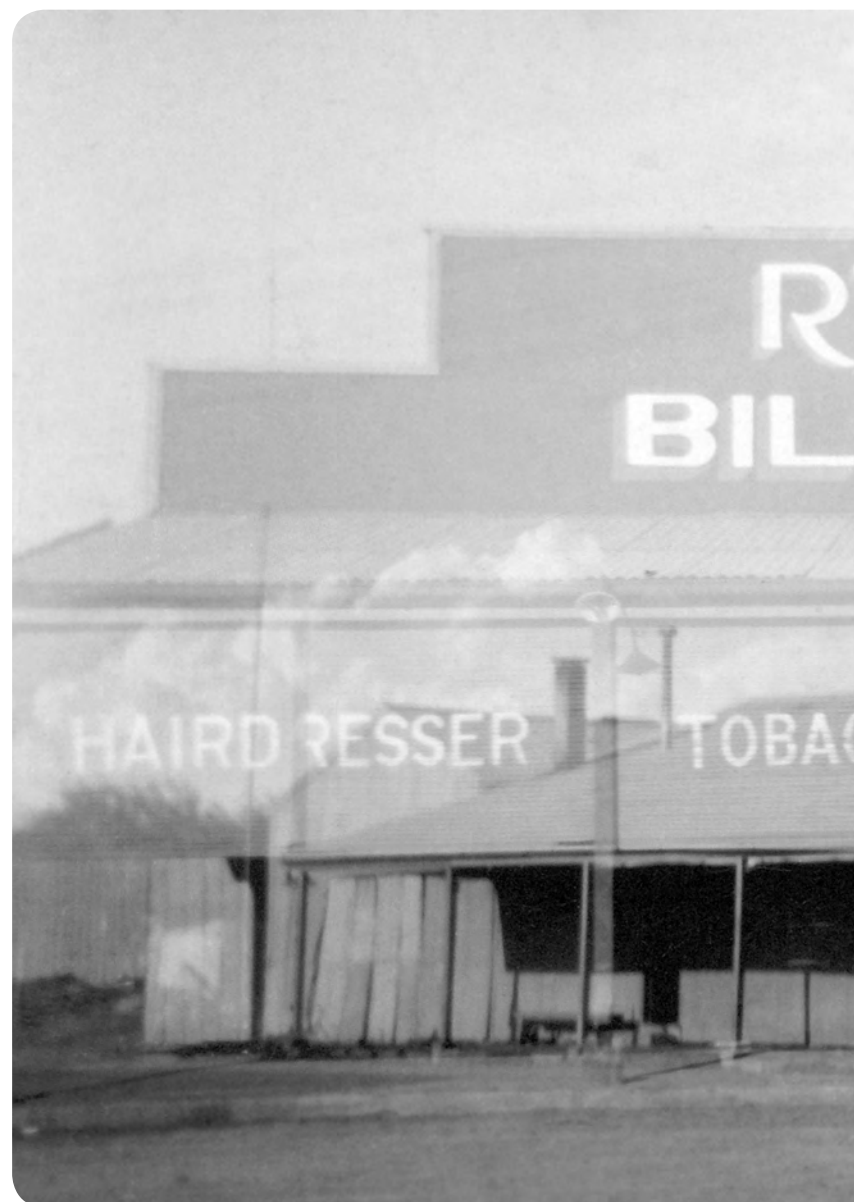
See, we had 70 men. There was a railway depot at Julia Creek with 10 train crews, each with a driver, a fireman and a guard. That's 30 men. And you had the shunters, the porters, the cleaners – all of them, the backup for it. When they closed the depot, there were very few railway people left.

I had a house in Julia Creek. I built it with my limited carpentering knowledge, and I wasn't too frightened to go and ask somebody if I was stuck. I ended up selling it in 1964 for £2000. Just couldn't get rid of anything. Nobody wanted a house. So you come to the coast and start all over again.

It was good times in the 1950s. The only things we went to were births and weddings; now it's only doctors and funerals.



"just came along the back lane
and there it was"



Below: A building of mystery.
[Bill Beutel, BB10, 1950]

Clouds appear to float around a hairdressing sign as Bill Beutel (one of Max Burns' tanksinkers) leans against a post in front of Roy Hampton's Billiard Saloon in Julia St. The photo is a double-exposure. The billiard saloon with its white lettering, tall support posts, and Bill, belong to one photo; the bicycles, small support posts, two-humped building, and car turning at the Post Office corner from Julia St east into Burke St, belong to another. But what is that other?

When the image is enlarged, to the left of the lower word "saloon" the blurry words "Mathews' Hall" can just be made out on the superimposed image with the two humps; and to

the left of "billiard" is a rectangular sign, slightly paler than the surrounding fascia, that says "cafe".

Mathews' Hall (actually a hall *and* cafe for most of its existence) was across the road from the Post Office on the site of the present day Civic Centre. In the *North Queensland Register* of the 1950s the hall also went by the name of Peut's, Champneys', Hampton's, Dawson's, Lafferty's and O'Neill's (see page 317), and at an early stage of gathering information for this book, I thought there were several halls and cafes in Julia Creek. I had no recognizable photos of any of them, or a clear indication of where any of

them were, until the murky letters "Mathews' Hall" emerged from this photo under computer magnification. It dawned on me that the various halls and cafes of 1950s Julia Creek, including what was sometimes called the Corner Cafe, were actually a single entity situated over the road from the Post Office. Once the name of the building was confirmed, I was able to recognize its distinctive shape elsewhere.

Although it does appear in other photos (pages 317, 489, 707), in none of them does Mathews' Hall feature on its own. It remains, for me, a building of mystery as it is below, always in the blurry distance or ghosted by double-exposure.



Harold Walters

Died 18 Apr 2007

I USED TO WORK FOR CHARLIE BYRNE at his butcher shop. Two and six a week he paid me for helping out in the morning till about 8 o'clock, and again in the afternoon. Cleaning-up boy, making sausages. I'd be about 12, I suppose, at the time.

Richie Parker was one of the butchers with Charlie. He used to do the slaughtering at Charlie's slaughter yards a couple of mile out of Julia Creek. The killing pen... well, the beast went into a bail, a bit like what they put them in when they're milked. Then Richie stood on top to peth him. You put the beast into the pen, and what Richie used to do, he'd mount a series of steps – about half a dozen – and he'd peth the beast. He had a cold chisel welded onto a piece of waterpipe and he'd drive the cold chisel down into the back of the neck of the bullock. That would hit the nerve there and the beast would drop.

Same with a kangaroo. When we shot a roo the first thing we did was grab it by the two ears and sever the spinal cord.

This particular time Richie said: "Bring that roan one up here". So I pushed it up, locked it in, and he gave it a whang and down it went. But the beast snorted and threw its head back. The pipe hit Richie under the chin and knocked him out. Here I was: couldn't drive a truck, 2 mile from town, and Richie out cold with a massive lump of congealed blood under his chin, and a beast that, if I didn't do something about it, would be useless. I knew I had to look after the bullock first. I cut its throat as best I could and then I poured a pannikin of water over Richie. He kept saying: "Under the seat, under the seat". I ran to the truck and under the seat was a bottle of rum. He plastered himself with three or four good nips and we came back to the Creek and he went to see the doctor. A couple of other blokes went out to the yards and they skinned the bullock.

Richie would always peth the bullocks. He never shot them because of the brains. Out of his butcher shop, Charlie sold everything bar the bellow.

Everything Bar the Bellow

Harold remembers how to peth a beast
but almost forgets his mother's name

I'M HAROLD KEITH, and my father was John William – "Jack". He married... Oh Christ... my mother of course. I'm trying to think of Mum's maiden name... ahh... Spence – Elizabeth Spence.

I was born in 1925, but I wasn't born in Julia Creek. I was born in Kuridala which was a mining town outside Cloncurry. My grandmother had a hotel there, the Railway Hotel. Two dining rooms: one was for the notables of the town and the other one was for normal blokes, the workers. Mum and Dad used to run it. Dad was the licensee because Grandma Walters, being a woman, couldn't have a licence. The mines petered out when I was about 3 and we went to Julia Creek. 1928 I think it was. My grandmother and my brother Jack went to Townsville to live. I stayed in Julia Creek with Mum and Dad.

When Gran sold out, the hotel wasn't demolished, it was taken down and transported to Cloncurry where it was renamed the Oasis.

Dad had had a gutful of hotel life. Not so, Mum. She was a terrific caterer. From what I can remember her telling me, the hotel copped all the trade from the Kuridala mines. It was nothing for Mum and Dad at half-past 11 at night to serve every miner going on shift with an aluminium pot

Below left: Lennie Thomson ("Splinter") and Buck McPherson, outside Charlie Byrne's butcher shop, Burke St, where Harold worked as a young lad.
[Rita Byrne, FR29, ca 1945]

Below: Oasis Hotel, Scarr St, Cloncurry.
[Carmel Bulley, BC14, June 1951]

Opposite: "Those newspaper stories, they were written by my mother. She used to write the Julia Creek Notes for the *North Queensland Register*. The payment was terrific. Every six months they'd send her a packet of stamps." (Harold Walters)



of beer for threepence. They'd clean the bar, and then the shift coming off would have a pot of beer. That's how my parents existed.

Another thing Mum did was prepare cut lunches for the mine workers. She knew that Tommy Jones had bread and jam and didn't want butter, and somebody else wanted bread and butter and didn't want jam. I've heard her say that she prepared, at times, anything up to 200 lunches.

I think Mum wanted to box on as a hotelier. They went to Winton and had a look at a hotel, but Dad said no. He was more interested in horses.

Dad was a wonderful horseman and owned a lot of racehorses. In Julia Creek, many many times he had anything up to 10 racehorses in training.

Ours was a reasonably big block of land in Julia Creek, and in the backyard we had some stables and a mini-track to exercise the horses. I can remember one Sunday morning, Dad had a horse in training called King Rusco and he was setting it up for the Nelia Cup. I went down and mounted him by climbing on the K-wire netting fence – he was about 15 or 16 hands high – and went for a bit of a jog. Frankly, I couldn't ride at all. Somebody came around the corner in a car, and King Rusco took the bit in his mouth and away he went. Dad, I can still visualise him on the verandah singing out "Fall off!" as I'm going around trying to look for a soft spot. I eventually fell off and the old man raced across and grabbed the horse first, then he came back to me. I was okay; just a bit of stuffing knocked out.

Racing was in my father's blood, there's no doubt about it. There were a number of places that had race meetings – Julia Creek, Cloncurry, McKinlay, Gilliat, Nelia – and Dad used to handicap most of those. Practically all of them really, because he knew most of the horses, most of the owners. They'd ring him and say: "Would you handicap this programme". But see, racing dwindled during the Depression and meetings were held less frequently. I don't know exactly what happened, but Dad's working with horses petered out and he became a shift boss at the woolscour. After we lost our home to fire, he finished up in the railways as a fettler.

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an inch of rain.

The Julia Creek State School Project Club held its first annual meeting on Monday. This club is under the supervision of Mr. Arthur Cann, head teacher. A number of townspeople were in attendance and they were surprised at the progress made by the children. The poultry projects were inspected at the childrens' homes in the morning. Highest mark went to Ann Brabazon with 83.5 marks. Harold Walters came second with 79.5 marks. Then followed Norman Whiting 78.5, Valerie Ahern 77.5, Eric Blanch 70, Noel Peut 69, and Gloria McCarthy 69.

During the afternoon a meeting conducted by the children, with Harold Walters as chairman, was held in the school room. This was well attended by both children and grown-ups. Every praise is due to those responsible for the splendid work of the Project Club. The work already accomplished is commendable.

A small lot of

for a few weeks.

Julia Creek had a bad fire on November 27 when the residence of Mr. Jack Walters, situated in Mathews St near the Church of England, was destroyed in a short space of time. It looked as if the residence on the north side of the house would also be enveloped in flames, and so endanger further buildings, but a change in the wind spared one, or even two more buildings from being burnt. There were a great number of assistants at the fire but the flames could not be subdued.

The local wool scour has closed

has just been completed and is an asset to the town and district.

Advice has been received that Master Harold Walters, aged 14, chairman of the Julia Creek State School Project Club, has been invited to attend the Brisbane Show as a guest of the Royal National Show Committee. This honour is extended to students of outstanding ability. As 25 members only are selected throughout Queensland, Master Walters is to be congratulated. The Julia Creek Project Club has been in operation for about 18 months and has made good progress.

Amongst the visitors to town during

We are in receipt of advice that Harold Walters, who sat for a postal exam with others at Julia Creek, was successful in obtaining first place, thus securing for himself a position in the local Post Office. We congratulate Harold on his good pass and wish him every success. From enquiries made, Harold is taking up duties at the Post Office in the near future. He was educated at the state school, Julia Creek.

Christmas Day was fairly busy in

official Post Office bike. I did have a bicycle for delivering telegrams, but it was my own, bought from Lance Lewis. Eventually, with an increase in telegram traffic, we reached the particular number required and the Post Office hired my bike from me for 2/6 a week to save them providing one. Thank goodness, too, because the type of bicycle the PMG had, with thorn-proof tyres, was one of the heaviest bikes you could find. It was an effort to pedal it, let alone deliver on it.

Just after the war started I absconded from the Post Office to join the armed forces. I blew through to Brisbane while I was on leave and jacked my age up. I was only about 16, but I was a fairly big lad and I could have easily passed for 18. I gave them a false name – Hawker. See, if you were employed in essential services like the Post Office you were given a manpower card and you were restricted to that type of work. You weren't allowed to join up.

First of all I tried to enlist in the air force but they wouldn't have me, so I tried for Petty Officer (Wireless) in the navy. In those days, Morse Code was the chief means of communication in the services and I had to do a few tests. Being young and a bit exuberant, I raced through the Morse Code – showing off. The examiner didn't know what was happening when I got on the Morse key. He smelt a rat; realised I'd had training somewhere. They got my real name out of me and I was shown the door. I was manpowered back to Julia Creek as postal clerk. They wanted me in the Post Office and that's where I stayed. If I hadn't gone back I would have been arrested. They could do lots of things during the war.

The Post Office more or less forgave me for running away, but all along we had our differences. Every three months my application to be released for military service was reviewed and every three months I got a letter: *Sorry, can't let you go*. Later on I joined the Naval Reserve and the Volunteer Defence Corps and became an Acting Sergeant, all the time while working in the Post Office.

I was about 16, I'd say, when I was sent to Prairie. I don't know who cried the most, my mother or I. From Prairie I went to the Selheim Military camp and I was there for over 12 months working as 2IC.

In 1942 I was transferred back to Julia Creek. Coming home from Selheim I got permission to travel on a Yankee troop train and I made friends with some young fellows who flew Flying Fortresses. They were just young Americans, a couple of years older than me, who'd been thrust into the war. From time to time, when they got R & R, they'd come to Julia Creek and spend a bit of time. We always had a spare bed or two on the verandah.

That went on for two or three months, and then I never heard any more of them until the Coral Sea battle. I happened to be in the Julia Creek Post Office when a Flying Fortress appeared overhead and did a victory roll. It was these beggars. You can imagine what a Fortress would be like in a victory roll. The Post Office was made of timber and I reckon the walls just about touched. Everybody raced out into the street to watch this massive plane flying low over the downs.



Above: Harold.
[Harold Walters, WH03, ca 1950]

SATURDAY AFTERNOONS I pencilled for Roy Hampton. Dad used to work there too. Sergeant of Police, Tom Brennan, he used to say to me:

Whaddaya doing Saturday afternoon?

Playing billiards.

Make sure you are – around about 3 o'clock.

That's when we'd be raided.

Three SP bookmakers operated in Julia Creek: Uncle Roy, Jack Cramp and Bluey Baker. Roy was pretty well-heeled and I used to pencil for him on the weekends for three quid. He had tremendous connections – agents in McKinlay, Nelia, all those places. They phoned their bets through and Roy paid them commission of two bob in the pound. I'd go back on Sundays and do the books, the win and loss statements. Settle up with the punters – and with Sergeant Brennan.

Brennan had £5 on the winner of the last race in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane – one bet with each of the three bookmakers. We never actually saw his money, and it wasn't on a particular horse, it was always on the winner. His wife came down to collect one Sunday morning and Roy told me to give her £15. She queried the amount: "Tom said it was supposed to be 20". And Roy said: "Might have been – if your husband actually put his money down".

Brennan also got a kickback from the pubs: a dozen bottles of draft beer. He was always looking for handouts. My cousin, Chookie Graham, she leased the Julia Creek Hotel with her husband, and they used to pay Brennan's tariff, and because of that they could go for their life. But Bill Gannon wouldn't pay and he'd be harassed. Brennan would come to the Post Office at about quarter to 10 and sit on the steps, and at 10 o'clock¹ he'd walk over and close Bill down.

It was commonly known around town that Brennan was on the take.

I had a number of Post Office transfers after Julia Creek: Richmond, Maxwelton, Cloncurry. In 1951 I transferred back to Julia Creek as Acting Postmaster. Keith Hutchison² took over from me in 1952.

HAS ANYONE MENTIONED PHYLLIS, the red light lady? As well as the obvious services she offered, she'd take in the old fellas who were down in life and get them on their feet again. I remember she had a soft spot for Jim Tierney³. If you turn that tape machine off, I'll tell you a story. [I turned off the recorder, but I still had my ears switched on.]

Several of my mates and I went around to Phyllis' place one night. She lived at the outskirts of town, near Mrs Shaw in Mathews St:

Whadda you fellas want?

Um, well, we wanna know... um...

C'mon, don't beat about the bush.

Um... How much for...

Ten bob.

Uhh... we've only got five.

Well then, come back when you've got the rest.

Just then she looked around the group and recognised me. "Harold Walters! I'll tell your mother when I see her next." Well, that somewhat dampened my enthusiasm. For the next several weeks I was in a panic, worried she might carry out her threat.



1. Queensland did not have the "6 o'clock swill" of the southern states. From 1923, hotel closing time in Queensland was 8 p.m. During the war, closing time was extended to 10 p.m.

2. Keith's story is on page 705.

3. Stories about Jim Tierney start on page 460.

Julia Creek Races

(By J.M.)

Arriving home full of spirits on Friday evening I announced to my household I was going to the Julia Creek races at 1 a.m. and would have a few hours rest. Was soon in the land of Nod, to be awakened at midnight and told the taxi was waiting to take me to the train. It was cold and I was sorry for making rash promises. However, I joined our party at the station: Joe Twible¹ of *Cloncurry Advocate* fame, Private Jack Purtell on leave from New Guinea, and Ted Anderson.

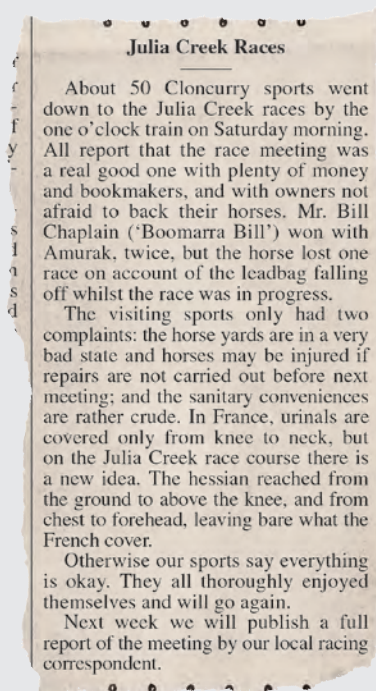
The train was crowded and we had just enough time to squeeze into a four-seat compartment. As the train went along, Ted decided to do a flying fox act by climbing up onto the luggage rack where he lay on his chest with legs hanging down. He did not look too comfortable, but it gave us more room.

I was telling a fellow passenger about this on my return journey and he said: "Oh yes. Last week two women did the same and one had her legs..." but that is another story.

We had all but dozed off when Jack Purtell yelled out: "Someone pinched my *wong*". (*Wong* in Fuzzy Wuzzy means money.) The carriage was in darkness so we could not see who the culprit was. By striking matches we found his *wong* beneath the seat and all was well.

We were a sorry lot. The only refreshments we had were inside of us, a-la-camel. Revellers in the next carriage had been more sensible and we listened to the corks popping. Now and then a dead marine would hit the earth outside the train.

We arrived at Julia Creek about dawn and made for the nearest pub to try and get a room. The hotelier told us, however, we could not even get a shakedown to change in. Away we went to the next place, Gannon's, where we were told by that genial host we might get a room if we waited three months. As we had no desire to stay even three minutes at the hotel unless the beer was on, we went and found an old friend, George



CA: 01 Sep 1944

Rosenskjar who has a saddler's shop. Here we were able to dispose of our luggage.

By this time we were hungry and cold so we made for Mrs Edwards' railway hotel. We were met by that charming young hostess and were soon seated before the best repast ever. What a wonderful service – good meal, excellently cooked, and splendid ministrations by a pretty waitress.

Like giants refreshed we sallied forth into the streets crowded with visitors. Cloncurry was in strong force: the owner of Five Pence wore a red cardigan and an expectant look; Boomarra Bill sported a broad tie, a surcoat of nigger brown with ringer boots of the same hue, and a ton of confidence in the Cloncurry horses.

I left my party and wandered round the town and was surprised to see nice homes with green lawns. The architecture of these homes was refreshing after the old style of two rooms and back skillions that go to make up the majority of Cloncurry dwellings. Curryites would be well-advised, post war, to visit Julia Creek and copy these styles of homes.

Another thing that surprised me

was Lance Lewis' Service Station which is equal to any I have seen, even in big towns. Marvellous range of stock, well-presented. Why not, Cloncurry garage men?

An excellent lunch by Mrs Edwards, and then to the race course per boot, led by Jack Purtell. Jack usually walks 28 miles per day on route marches in New Guinea where he has just come from on leave. It's a mile and a bit to the course and we enjoyed the march over the loose downs in the heat.

We were encouraged by Jack with the promise of beer at the course, but when we arrived the beer had not. When it did, it consisted of bottled ale at 6/- per bottle. I resolved to obtain and drink water, but of water there was none. Neither was there shade or rest for man, woman or beast; not a seat, not a log, not a stone, not a tree. What a place. The appointments at the Julia Creek race course are the most primitive in the Commonwealth and a disgrace to any civilised club. This club has been in existence for over 20 years and surely the public, who make the sport, are worthy of some consideration. No attempt even to provide a place for women and children to rest or change. My sympathy went out to the mothers with little ones (and there were quite a number) who put in a hot afternoon on the downs with nowhere to have a wash or change.

There is one thing about the Julia Creek Race Course appointments – everything is equal. There is not much of anything: no bell to denote weigh-in or weigh-out; no flags to advise the punters of protests; no bell to warn that a start has occurred or that a winner has been okay'd. In the case where a winning horse slipped his weight, it was fully 10 minutes before the public woke up to the fact, and by that time some punters had torn up their tickets on the second-placed horse. The yards are a menace to horses, being in a disgraceful state of repair. Last, and not least, the sanitary arrangements would not be tolerated anywhere but Julia Creek. The men's convenience, which faces the road from town and over which all traffic must pass, has a WC minus

'The appointments at the Julia Creek race course are the most primitive in the Commonwealth and a disgrace to any civilised club'

a door. And the latrine, enclosed with old torn hessian, covers the person from head to chest and from knees to feet – but not the private parts. What about it Mr Health Officer?

Apart from the appointments, the course, and the programme, was good. It was grand to see 11 acceptors for the first race, and a great race it was. The next also was a good race and everyone was on their toes. The racing was very good right through, with the Cloncurry horses on top.

It was bad luck for Boomarra Bill to lose the race when his horse, Amurak, slipped his weight. Had there been proper supervision by the stewards this would not have happened. Part of a steward's duties are to see the horse properly saddled, as a tricky owner could throw a race easier this way than by pulling a horse. However, on the whole, it was a good day as far as racing goes, and everyone seemed to have plenty of cash.

There was a big attendance of the fair sex and some pretty costumes that would have graced even Flemington. I am sorry I am not able to give a description of these, because nothing pleases the fair ones more than to read about what they wore.

I met a friend of long standing, that Beau Brummell² of amateur riders, Jack Walters³, neat and active as ever. Jack is handicapper and starter for the Julia Creek Club and he certainly did his part credibly. Meeting Jack brought back memories of the good old racing days and I could see him bringing home horses like Kurgan, Royal, Crown Scholar and others in many stirring finishes.

And so back to town per hoof. When I got to the railway line I sat on a sleeper block and thought of the time over 30 years ago when I walked from Julia Creek to Cloncurry, of which some day I may describe⁴.

CA: 08 Sep 1944

1. Editor of the *Cloncurry Advocate*.

2. Beau Brummell (1778-1840) is credited with introducing and establishing as fashion the modern man's suit worn with a tie.

3. Harold's father.

4. I scanned the *Cloncurry Advocate* from the date of this article until the paper folded in 1953, but was unable to find the account of JM's walk from Julia Creek to Cloncurry.

An old man gazed on a photograph,
In a locket he'd worn for years;
His nephew then asked him the reason why,
That picture had caused him tears.
"Come listen" he said, "I will tell you, lad,
A story that's strange, but true;
Your father and I, at the school one day,
Met two little girls in blue.

Refrain

"Two little girls in blue, lad,
Two little girls in blue.
They were sisters, we were brothers,
And we learned to love the two.
And one little girl in blue, lad,
Who won your father's heart,
Became your mother; I married the other,
And now we have drifted apart."

"That picture is one of those girls" he said,
"And to me she was once a wife;
I thought her unfaithful, we quarrelled, lad,
And parted that night for life.
My fancy of jealousy wronged a heart,
A heart that was good and true –
For two better girls never lived than they,
Those two little girls in blue."



Above: Marie Kaeser (left), Dorothy Guest and Nookie, in front of Tommy Guest's workshop, Coyne St. Tommy Guest's house is on the right.
[Nookie Guest, GN03, ca 1933]

"From the first year I went to school I was mates with Marie Kaeser. Her father had the bakery in the front street. Marie and I went to several fancy dress balls together. It was a big thing for kids. There wasn't a lot of other stuff for kids to do in Julia Creek."

"In that photo, taken beside our house in front of Dad's garage, we were *Two Little Girls in Blue*. My sister's poked in there between us, as Lady Pompadour. Mum made the costumes." (Nookie Guest)

Two Little Girls In Blue

**Julia Creek's Eastern Princess
battles trachoma**

Nookie Guest

EVERY SUMMER towards the end of the school year I'd leave Julia Creek and stay with one of my relatives on the coast. Sometimes it was with Auntie Ellie at Home Hill; sometimes with Auntie Dinah who lived on Harveys Range; or sometimes I stayed with my grandmother in Townsville. See, I had trachoma as a little girl. Trachoma is a scum that grows over your eye. A lot of Aboriginal children have it these days. Flies and dust, apparently, cause trachoma, and there were plenty of both at Julia Creek.

Around the time I started school, Mum and I went to Townsville and stayed with my grandmother. Every weekday morning for three months I used to go to Dr Bennett, an eye doctor on Charters Towers Rd, to have bluestone treatment¹. He had a gadget like a large toothpick with which he folded over the top eyelids. Then he painted this bluestone stuff directly onto the eyes. It used to burn like hell.

The bluestone didn't work, so Dr Bennett operated to remove the scum. It was a daytime thing. I wasn't in hospital overnight or anything like that. I remember coming out with both eyes covered by a bandage around my head. Two or three days I had that bandage on, and then I went back to Julia Creek.

I've only lately found out that I've got a fair amount of scar tissue on my eyes as a result of that operation.

It was after I had the operation that I went to the coast every year – the doctor's recommendation – to get away from the dust and the flies.

The effect trachoma has on you is that you can't look up at sunlight; you can't handle glare. That photo shows me dressed as an Eastern Princess, and you can see that I'm looking down. My mother hired that

costume from Brisbane. It was beautiful. It was a school fancy dress.

The school had a fancy dress night every year in Eckford's Hall. You'd deck out in all the gear and put on makeup in preparation for the Grand March. We'd practise marching in the schoolyard for weeks before. On the night, we'd assemble in the supper room on the side of the hall and settle into our places: you had to be behind this person and beside that person. Then the pianist would start the music – I can't remember who played the piano – and in we'd go: march march march. It seemed to go on for about an hour.

The Grand March was a big deal. You went in two-by-two, and then two went this way and two went that way. You came round and you went back up. Each time you came round, the row got longer. You finished up with eight or ten across. That was the Grand March. It was held at night and the families were the audience, seated on slats all the way around the edge of the hall.

During the latter years of my school days... You would have heard of Mrs Pedersen? She was a fantastic lady, heavily involved in community things. She was also pretty talented and she used to arrange a cabaret² in Eckford's Hall with tables for people to sit at. A group of kids would be selected from school and she used to train them to do certain dances. I was in it one year.



*Elma Guest,
age 6 years*

Left: Elma Guest, age 6 years, in an Eastern Princess costume hired from Brisbane.

[Nookie Guest, GN07, 1933]

1. Copper sulphate.

2. See page 343 for a newspaper cutting about Mrs Pedersen's cabarets.

I cannot see the sheep market getting much brighter.

Mr. Tommy Guest, motor engineer, has engaged contractor Herb Wilder to build an uptown shop next to the Bank of N.S.W. and when this shop is completed it will be one more step to making Burke Street the principal business street in the town. Mr. Guest still intends to carry on with his motor works in Coyne Street as well.

Messrs Magoffin and Co. Ltd. of Rosevale have just landed three very high class stud rams from the Haddon Rig Stud. These rams, or really two

NQR: 28 Jul 1934

DODGES, BUICKS, they were the two top notches, but the Chev and the Ford were the main ones. Lance Lewis had the Chevs, and Tommy Guest around in Coyne St had the Fords. When the Holdens came in, Lance got the Holden agency as well.

MANNIE SILLS

Below: A load of sheep skins in front of Tommy Guest's garage in Burke St. The skins were taken from dead sheep during a drought and sold for sixpence each. The building later became Peter Dawes Store.

[Dadie Dawes, DW29, 1934]

Opposite: Nookie's father, Tommy Guest. [Nookie Guest, GN01, ca 1965]

Opposite: School breakup, back of School of Arts building. The two children identified by arrows are Jim Eckford and Olive Gannon. [Dadie Dawes, DW08, 1924]

THE REASON OUR FAMILY came to be in Julia Creek was that my father, after he learnt his trade as a motor mechanic in Townsville, decided it was time to "go west young man". And that's what he did. He went into shearing sheds and maintained the shearing machines and any other machinery on the stations where he worked.

Around the same time that Dad went west – in 1925 – my mother also went west. She was 19 when she started work at the Julia Creek Hotel for Bill Gannon. At that stage he had not yet built his own hotel. Somehow Mum and Dad got together and I was born on 11th December 1926. There's only me and a younger sister.

Dad had a garage at the western end of Coyne St, second from the corner. Our house was next door. On the corner block, one jump ahead of a humpy, was a little cottage – and you'd be surprised who lived in there. We used to hear Mum and Dad talking about it at the dinner table, and we used to hear the kids talking about it at school. Sometimes blokes would come there and they'd fight, or they didn't want to pay, or she might have been in a cranky mood and didn't want to service them. They'd have a blue – strong language and whatnot – and Dad would go over to the garage and start up all the engines so we couldn't hear. That saved him calling the police when the language got really rough. I don't know if the lady was married, but there was no permanent man there, only men who visited.

MR McIVOR WAS HEAD TEACHER when I started school, and I think he was followed by Mr Nelson, a lovely man. And then came Mr Cann, a real so-n-so. He came from a place called Ogmores, and there wasn't

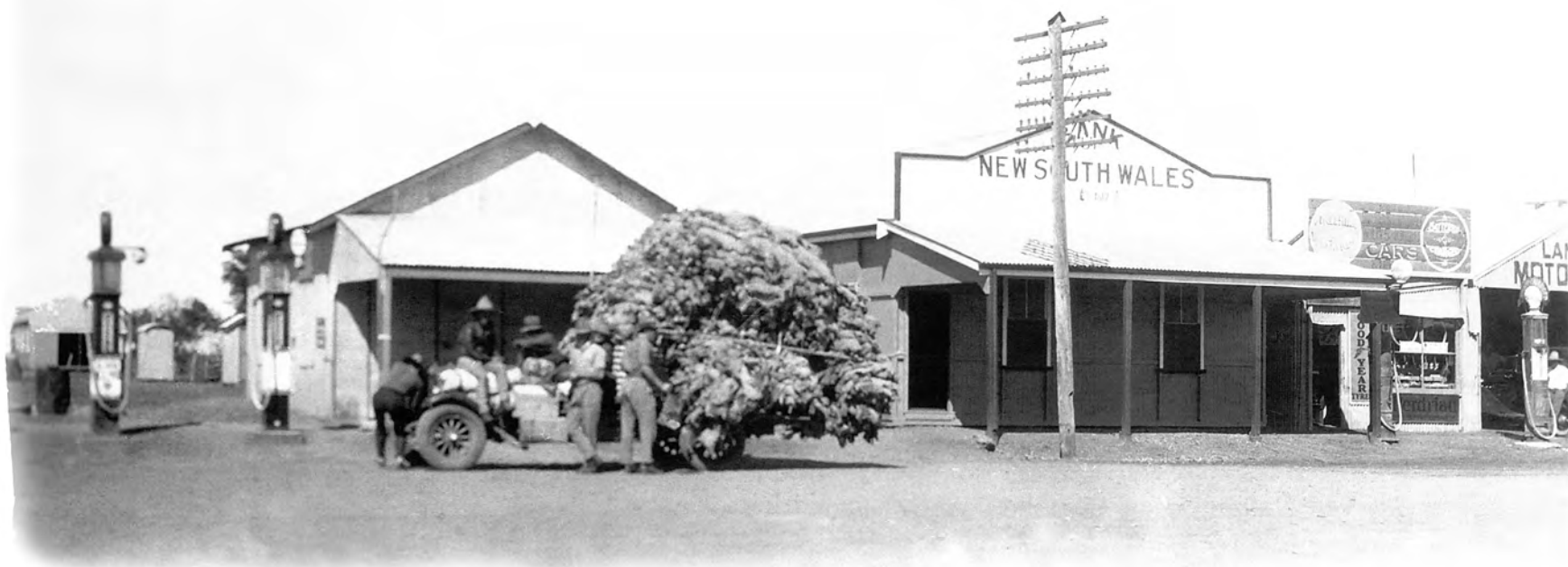
a day went by that he didn't ram down our throats how good the Ogmores school was. Many years later I used to pass the Ogmores sign driving home (it's north of Rockhampton) and I'd think to myself: "I'll go in there one of these days and have a look at that rotten school".

The Julia Creek State School was up on high blocks and completely enclosed with gauze. Before we went into the classrooms, two of the kids stood at the top of the steps and shooed away the flies. Underneath the classrooms, between the uprights, there were forms that we could sit on to have our lunch. It could get quite hot under there, so we used to have our lunch in the bough shed. That was a cooler spot, a little bit away from the classrooms. It was just four posts in the ground with a corrugated iron roof and a row of parkinsonia trees around the outside. On hot days the parkinsonias cooled the breeze as it came through – what little breeze there was.

We only had tank water to drink at school. You couldn't drink water from the taps because it came boiling hot straight from the bore. There were tanks on either end of the school building and one in the bough shed. The water in the bough shed was cooler than in the other tanks because it was shaded.

Sometimes on a hot day a kid would have a spare threepence and he'd go over the road to Eckford's ice works. Every kid in the school was his mate when he came back to the bough shed with a block of ice and proceeded to break it up.

I remember we had trouble at school from corellas turning the football field to a sea of white. We couldn't hear to do our schoolwork because of their screeching. Harold Walters, one of the bigger boys, it was his job to pelt a tin of stones at them to get them on their way so we could go back to having school.



Every year, just about, the North family blew into town with their travelling carnival. Their children came along to school for two or three weeks and played havoc with the local marble players. When the carnival moved on we had to replenish our stocks. We were no match for the Norths. Even their girls were champs.

Breakup day at school was a real celebration. There'd be sporting activities and lots of eating and drinking: huge trays of sandwiches and homemade cakes, and as much lemon or raspberry cordial as you could guzzle, finished off with lashings of watermelon. I've never tasted watermelon like it since. Before leaving to go home, each child was given a small bag of boiled sweets.

About mid-week, magazines and comics arrived at the newsagent. You had to order them or you missed out. The mothers would take home the *Women's Weekly* and the *Women's Mirror*, while the kids – those lucky enough to be allowed comics – gathered in the alley beside the newsagent to have an early read and to stickybeak at what their mates had. If the rest of us hung around long enough, and the owners were in a good mood, you might score a comic on a few minutes' loan.

Most families had a billy cart: a pine box mounted (usually) on worn-out pram wheels. We didn't have a billy cart, so I borrowed the one from the Winton family across the street. I'd pull it behind me to one of the soft drink factories, Eckford's or Lavarack's, to cash empty bottles. Another way for kids to earn money was collecting newspapers. You had to keep them clean and laid out flat. When you thought you had a good lot, you rolled them together and tied them up and sold them to Charlie Byrne, the butcher, for tuppence a pound.



Did I have chores? Did I ever! You weren't supposed to do it but everybody did: when new sleepers were being fitted to the rails they were stockpiled beside the line. Anyone with a truck – and we had a truck – could go out and knock them off. A hobo named Mike Connelly, he was friendly with Dad, he always seemed to know the right time to come. He'd jump the rattler and turn up at our place just when the sleepers were in. Mum would feed him, and Dad would give him a few bob for helping with the sleepers. Then he'd be on his way again. I used to hate the sight of the man because every time he arrived it meant I'd be given the job of lugging chopped-up sleepers. Our house was high set and the stove was upstairs – upstairs! I had to carry the wood up those bloody stairs on my arms, and stack it in a recess off to the side of the stove. If wet weather was imminent, I'd put some in the bathroom as well. What didn't fit in the bathroom I stacked under the house.

DAD SOLD THE GARAGE in 1936 and worked for Lance Lewis until he went to Hughenden in 1940. We moved to Hughenden when Dad got an offer.

I remember the night the man came, and I remember the man – Arthur Lowe. Arthur came to visit us one night with a proposition. Us kids were told: "You go to bed" while the grown-ups talked business. Dad was offered the opportunity of going to Hughenden as the Ford agent and that's why we ended up leaving Julia Creek.

For reasons I don't know much about, Dad found himself in court when he sold the garage. It cost him a lot of money – not that he had a lot of money to start with. I think he arrived in Hughenden with not much at all. He started again, virtually from scratch.



Hungry For A New Face

Nita Crawford

Mum, Ted, Nita and Laurie Crawford, accompanied by a drunk and a waterbag, arrive by ship and train from Victoria

IT'S JUST LIKE YESTERDAY TO ME. It's funny that, isn't it. The mail train came through once a week and it was a social event because you saw the people who stayed on the train and you saw the people who got on and off. And it was somewhere to go. Don't forget there was not much to do in Julia Creek. Whatever happened was like a social event. The mail train came in about 5 or 6 o'clock of a Monday evening from Mount Isa and there were always interesting people on it. Kids like us were just hungry for a new face, to see someone else. It was an isolated community so we'd go over to the mail train to see faces.

When the boys went to war they all went on that mail train. Everyone was crying on the platform. The boys had gone – the girls hadn't joined up at that stage, but we did later on – and then the girls were gone too. There was hardly anyone left. It was quite extraordinary.

Opposite: Nita in Cloncurry.
[Nita Crawford, CN06, 1941]

Below: Burke St looking east. Buildings from far right: Mrs Wilkins drapery store, Cameron's O-K Store, Lance Lewis garage, Bank of NSW, Peter Dawes Store, Garden of Roses Cafe, vacant lot, and Gannon's Hotel. In the next block in the distance is Eckford's picture theatre. There are two shop awnings on the left. The closest is Charlie Byrne's butcher. Further along near the truck is the Blue Bird Cafe.
[Dadie Dawes, DW17, ca 1945]



I WAS BORN IN DUNKELD in Victoria, at the foot of the Grampians, 1922. My Dad was a Light Horseman in the First World War. When he came back from the war he married Mum. He was allotted a soldier settlement block north of Bendigo, about 120 acres, and that's where we grew up. All the time on the farm he was very sick; gassed during the war.

He never liked cows – us kids milked the cows – he was more a sheep man. One year he went north, shearing with friends. He wrote home that the pea bush was so high they couldn't see where they were riding. He loved the warm dry climate (the weather suited his bronchitis) and he never returned to Victoria until he was in his seventies.

Mum sold the farm and up we came to Queensland. That would have been at the end of 1936, beginning of '37. Ted had just left school the year before, Laurie was still at school, and I had just finished school. I had a cap and gown for music from ALCM – the Associates of the London College of



Music. After four or five years when you passed your exam you had a cap and gown, it was your honour board so to speak. Not that it ever did me any good. Julia Creek didn't acknowledge anything like that.

We left Melbourne on Christmas Eve. Coming out of the heads we were all seasick – 480 passengers on the *Canberra* and only 40 down for Christmas dinner. When we got to Brisbane we weren't allowed off the boat because of a polio scare. Infantile paralysis was bad then and they wouldn't let us off. We went up through the Whitsundays to Townsville, still on the *Canberra*. That was our first feeling of the tropics and it was magic: balmy air and dolphins near the boat. It was January. It was just beautiful.

We disembarked at Townsville. Mum was horrified. She'd never seen anybody without a singlet on before, and here we were at this boarding house and these fellows – they were workers I suppose – just in their shorts. That was the first of many shocks for Victorian people coming north.



Then we did the long trip to Julia Creek. Dad was waiting for us – we hoped. On the way out on the train we saw a camel team, a long thin string of camels, and we thought we were in the wild west. That really got us. I was only 14½ and I was impressed. I can still picture it: me looking out of the train window at a stream of camels.

It took us two and a half days to get to Julia Creek and all we had for water was a waterbag. It was a goods train which stopped at every siding to take on or relieve itself of freight. The mail train, the one with decent passenger facilities, only went once a week and we couldn't wait a week in Townsville. We sat in a carriage at the rear of the train. The only other occupant was an old drunk. On and off he'd wake up and have a drink of cold water or a swig of hot rum and go back to sleep. Just Mum and us three kids, and a drunk, and a waterbag. Can you imagine? For two hot January days we lived for that waterbag on the back of the train.

We got to Julia Creek in the afternoon. Dad had booked us in at the hotel near the railway line. Now my Dad, well, he was an ex-soldier wasn't he. He'd get on the rum now and again, and he wasn't there to meet us. I can say that now because he's been dead many years.

We went to the hotel with thoughts of a bath after days on the train, and out came scalding bore water. You had to let it cool off before you could get in. So we waited and waited. That was our introduction to Julia Creek.

Next day we moved into a flat. We were quite close to the hotel, a bad place to be with Dad the way he was, but anyway... We were in the flat for a few months and then we rented a house right on the outskirts of town, an old corrugated iron place. For the rest of my time in Julia Creek that's where I lived.

Dad worked in the shearing sheds and Mum worked at Gannon's Hotel in the laundry. She had to work because Dad was out in the sheds. You have to understand that our groceries were on tick until Dad came home. If he came straight home with the cheque, all right; but if he didn't, then we still owed money. So Mum went to work.

Like Mum, I worked at Gannon's too. My first job was housemaid and waitress combined. Bill Gannon put me on and he expected me to work like a grown up, like an adult. I was only 14 and I physically couldn't do the hard work of scrubbing verandahs on my hands and knees, plus the



long hours of waitressing. I'm a small person. The only time I've had a bit of weight on was in the army. After two or three weeks I got the sack.

Then the Franzmans were looking for someone to work for them at the Nelia pub. I helped look after the kids. They were a Catholic family so the kids kept coming. And I was also the waitress. I'd don a black satin blouse and skirt that Mum made me, and a white apron, and I'd go and wait on the tables in the dining room. I was shy, very shy. It was agony.

I didn't work in the bar – though I used to have to clean the bar, especially after a race meeting. Five o'clock Sunday morning I'd go in and clean up the pig trotters, boiled pig trotters. The bones would be there from the night before. The men had them with their beer and just tossed them on the floor. The race meeting would be on a Saturday, and at night the bar would be full of men drinking beer and eating these pig trotters. It was a well-known treat for race day.

The hotel quarters where I stayed had eight rooms with two single beds in each of them. Nothing on the floor, just bare boards. That was the hotel accommodation. It was made of galvanised iron, just like a shearing shed. Can you imagine how hot the rooms were? Now and again I'd have to clean up, sweep them with a broom – I was also the Franzman's housemaid.

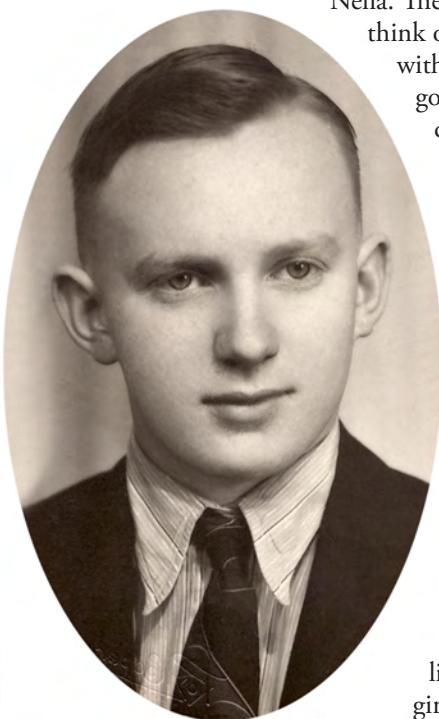
IT WAS MR FRANZMAN who more or less put me in for the Queen Competition. I was 17, 18 maybe, I wasn't very old. I was the only girl that age for miles around. There was nobody else. It wasn't like being in Julia Creek where you had more people. Nelia, you might go days and not see anyone walking about other than at the railway. There weren't a lot of people around Nelia.

They wanted girls to raise money and they asked different ones. Mr Franzman said he'd give me a hand, sponsor me to some extent, and that I could probably get men at the bar to donate. That's how I became involved and that's where most of the money came from – the bar patrons. Of my own accord I would never have entered. I had agonies of shyness, no confidence in myself at all. When I look back now, I suppose I was as good as anybody else, but in those days I didn't think so.

LAURIE MUST HAVE BEEN in grade 7 when he ran away from school and came to Nelia. The teacher was giving him a hard time; he was a real bully. I can't think of his name¹. I can see his face. Big overbearing man he was, with glasses on. Laurie left a note for Mum to say where he was going, and he took his little bank book that children had in those days. He did all the right things. It was terrific what he did, riding his bike from Julia Creek to Nelia in the heat of early summer. Only bush roads, no bitumen in those parts, nobody around. He arrived in the afternoon, his face all burnt. Poor Laurie; he was in tears when he got there, he was only a kid. He was coming to me, his big sister.

Mr Franzman made up a job for Laurie, gave him a job of packing groceries. Thanks to Mr Franzman's generosity, Laurie had a job and got paid for it. He might have been with me a couple of months and then he went back to Julia Creek and worked for Darcy Lavarack, carrying ice around the town for people's ice boxes. No fridges. People had an ice box and it was filled every day with a block of ice. The next morning the ice would be delivered again.

I was at Nelia for a couple of years until Mr Franzman sold out to the Tunnys. He went into a hotel in Cloncurry and he asked me to work for him, so I went. The Franzmans were like family to me – well, I lived in the quarters – but I was their girl, sort of thing. I helped with the babies as they came along.



1. Arthur Cann, head teacher in 1938.

Opposite: Julia Creek Hotel, the one Nita and family booked into on arrival in Julia Creek.
[Kath Gerahty, GeK03, ca 1940]

Left: Laurie Crawford.
[Nita Crawford, CN09, ca 1940]

JULIA CREEK NOTES

The Ambulance Queen Competition was finalised last Friday night when the Coronation Ball was held. The three Queens, Miss E. Riley (Julia Creek), Miss D. Tracey (McKinlay), and Miss Nita Crawford (Nelia) collected £147/7/1, £50/10/9 and £35/4/- respectively.

A most spectacular ceremony was witnessed when Mr. Bill Allison, Chairman of the Shire Council, placed the Royal Cloak and Crown upon Miss Riley the winner. All three girls made a splendid effort for this most deserving cause and as a reward received ten percent of their gross amounts. The Ball was a success financially and socially, and credit for the sumptuous supper is given to Mrs. Jack Walters and her helpers. The money raised will go a long way towards the purchase of a new car for the Q.A.T.B. which is urgently needed. Any further donations, small or large, will be gratefully received by Mr. Henry Benson, Superintendent.

Town and country folk alike are playing a most pleasing part in the purchase of War Savings Certificates and other War Loans. Continuous efforts are being made by the Red Cross Comfort fund, C.W.A. and other organisations. Approximately £180 has been received to date for the Lord Mayor's Bomb Victims Relief Fund. We hear and read enough about the hardships being borne by those in Britain who form the front line of our defense. Comparing the peace we still enjoy should be sufficient to urge us to give all possible assistance to our friends across the sea. Mr. Jim Parsons, Shire Clerk, will acknowledge any donation.

CA: 08 Nov 1940



Above: Lil Gerahty in Townsville.
[Lil Gerahty, SL07, 1943]

Opposite: Nita, 16th Ack Ack Battery, Townsville.
[Nita Crawford, CN08, 1943]

I JOINED UP FROM CLONCURRY. Lil Gerahty and I enlisted at the same time. Everybody did. The boys were gone, you had to do your bit. Australia was in dire straits in those days. It was adventure, too, I suppose. There we were out west: *Oh well, we'll join up.* Of course, we didn't know what we were in for. How could we? Just country kids, naive. We didn't know a thing.

We volunteered for AWAS – Australian Women's Army Service – and then we waited. You didn't go straight in, you had to wait until you were called up. For a long time they wouldn't call the women folk, and then when they did, things had got very serious in lots of places and they weren't prepared for us. We didn't have uniforms for at least a couple of months.

When we first joined up in Townsville we were camped at Jimmy's Lookout, near a swamp. Every morning we had to go out and route march for a certain length of time. It was a standard thing for girls and boys. For the first two months we did that in civilian clothes, trailing through this swamp in our civvies. No one in Australia was ready for what happened.

Lil went to Group Headquarters somewhere and I ended up at Ack Ack Headquarters. We've been friends ever since.

During the war Mum and Dad were asked by the Presbyterian Church if they would look after a hostel in Brisbane for service girls on leave – army girls, navy, air force, all of them. Mum always was a church person. She was a real lady, my Mum, not by title but by the type of person she was. She and Dad were asked to go down and look after Wairoona Hostel, and they did. Mum became the housekeeper; and Dad – there were extensive grounds – he became the gardener and odd job man. The hostel was a beautiful old home at Highgate Hill. It's still there now. I see it changed hands not so long ago.

So my parents went to Brisbane and that was the end of any of us Crawfords ever being in Julia Creek. Laurie went down with them and joined up with the air force as a cadet. Just as he came out of his training the war ended.

ONCE YOU'VE LIVED IN JULIA CREEK you're part and parcel. You've made everlasting friendships. There's something about the place that still urges me to go to reunions in Brisbane whenever I can. There are people there I know, some I don't.

My memories of the Creek go a lot of ways.

I remember riding on bikes with Rene Triffett
and... who was the other one?

Their father was the blacksmith in Julia Creek...

Dorrie!

I met Dorrie in later years at the reunions.

Riding our bikes on those bloomin' dirt tracks
going out to some station.

Nearly died, trying to get there and back again.

We went to everything that was on:

balls, dances, sing-songs, pictures.

Wednesday night and Saturday night were the pictures
and you wouldn't dream of missing them.

The billboards went up in the morning;
by afternoon the goats had them eaten.

If you didn't look at the posters early
you didn't know what was on, did you.

Wild and woolly nights roller-skating in the picture theatre.

None of us could skate properly;
we'd fall over, get up and go again.

The Byrne family, they were a large family.

Rita and Jenny

and the two boys, Bosie and Paddy,

we all seemed to be the same age.

I virtually lived with them.

Over you went to the Byrne house and had a sing-song.

Didn't matter if you could sing or not,

we knew all the songs.

You didn't wait for an invitation;

it was open house, you just arrived.

It was a wonderful way of life.

At the time we thought:

Aah, nothing happens in Julia Creek,
but when you look back, what a life we had.

It was such a... they were such...

What can I say? Hard people?

Not hard – that wouldn't be right.

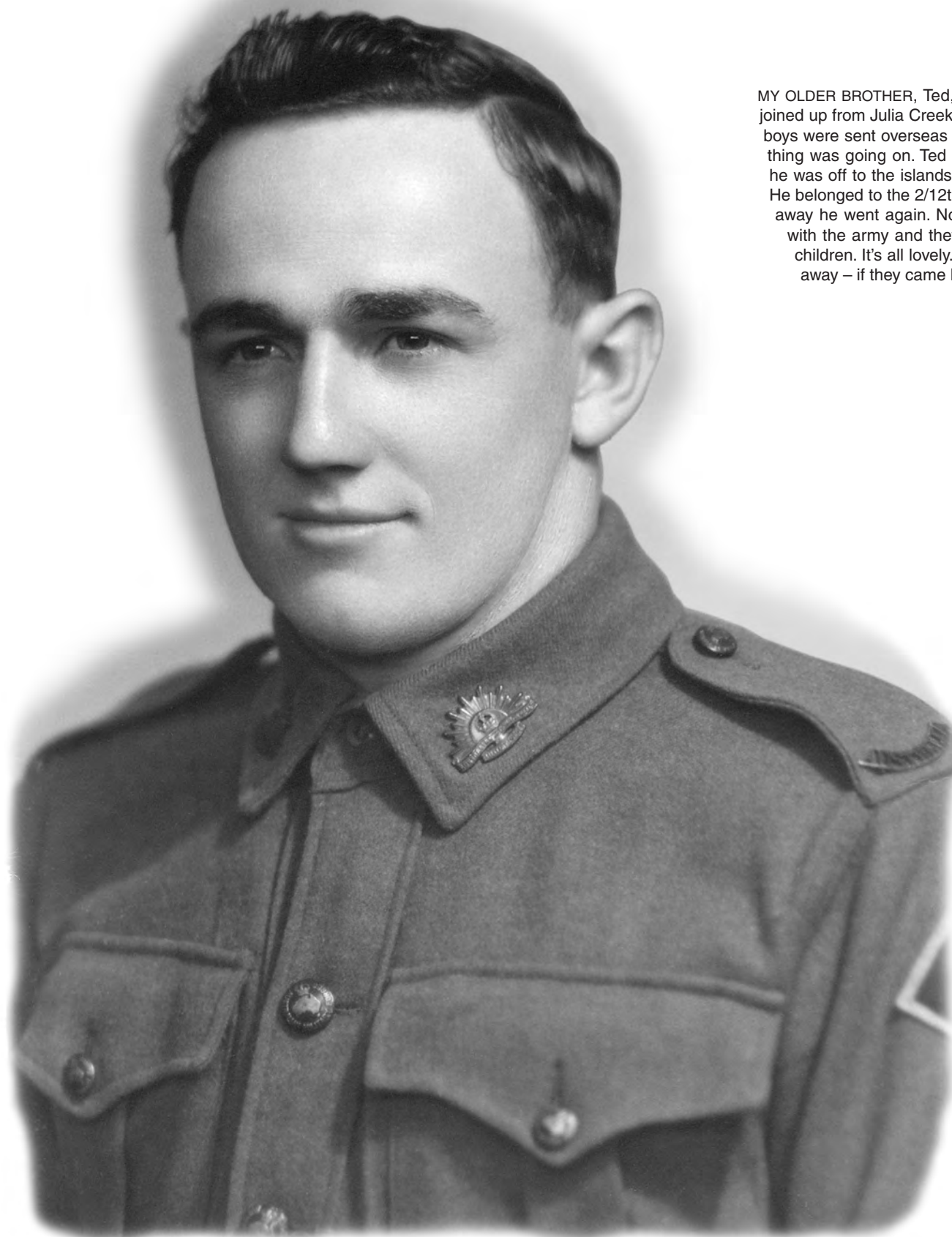
How can I put it?

Coping with the Queensland west was something I felt was always bigger than me. I always felt that I wasn't able to handle the heat and the flies and the dust like the locals. I never actually felt I coped with the type of place Julia Creek was. For country kids from Victoria to go up there was a big thing. I was fair-skinned and for years never knew – saw all these brown kids – never knew that I wouldn't tan.

I was never as tough as those Julia Creek kids.



To
The Byrnes Family
with
Love & Best Wishes
Nita.



MY OLDER BROTHER, Ted, like Jimmy Roberts and Paddy Byrne, he joined up from Julia Creek and went to the Middle East. Most of those boys were sent overseas because the Middle East was where everything was going on. Ted came back to Australia, and the next thing he was off to the islands where he was wounded on Shaggy Ridge. He belonged to the 2/12th in the 7th Divvy. They patched him up and away he went again. Nowadays they're gone three or four months with the army and they're back home greeting their spouses and children. It's all lovely. It wasn't lovely for our lot. They were years away – if they came back at all.

NITA CRAWFORD

Opposite right: Pte Ted Crawford,
'C' Company, 2/12th Battalion
[Nita Crawford, CN04, ca 1941]

Opposite left: Jimmy Roberts.
[Nita Crawford, CN05, ca 1941]

Left: Paddy "Irish" Byrne.
[Nita Crawford, CN03, ca 1941]

BYRNE, Athol Leo QX11993:
Called Irish or Paddy. At
his home Burke St., Julia
Creek, 31st January 1971.
Just 49 years.

The War Years

**'There was hardly anyone left.
It was quite extraordinary.'**

3 JUNE 1939—On May 26, Colonel Hoade and Captain Tansing held a meeting in the School of Arts to ascertain if sufficient recruits would be forthcoming to form part of a battalion to be drawn from Longreach, Winton, Hughenden, Richmond, Julia Creek and adjoining districts. The response at Julia Creek was very good and the meeting was attended by 25 persons. Afterwards a number of men joined up.

Prior to this meeting, Mr Ulick Browne of Garomna drove Colonel Hoade and Captain Tansing to the woolscour where they addressed a meeting of workers and management. The cooperation of employers is most essential and in the majority of cases was forthcoming. The men will be required for Home Defence only.

16 SEPTEMBER 1939—Julia Creek township was roused to enthusiasm on Sunday morning by the return of the troops from their training in Townsville. The contingent of soldier boys who went away two weeks ago look fit and well. Julia Creek is proud of them, and we know all that is expected of them will be done. The township had a quiet appearance whilst the boys were away on militia duty and several businesses were short handed, but now that they have returned it will make a difference.

30 SEPTEMBER 1939—The Julia Creek branch of the Graziers Association held its meeting on the 23rd September and amongst the resolutions carried was the following: "That we circularise our members re giving any black wool or other oddments of wool to the Julia Creek branch of the Red Cross. That the wool be left at the scour and when sufficient is in hand that it be pressed and sent away in the name of the Red Cross".

A Military Ball is to be held in Eckford's Hall on the 6th of October when a good attendance is expected. The dance is well-advertised with posters, and there will be good music and refreshments. The cause is such a worthy one – the funds are to be used for Red Cross purposes – that it does not need much advertising.

Several recruits have been training every Sunday at the local sports ground, showing their enthusiasm and desire to get fit should they be required at any time. Seeing the boys in khaki gives the town a military appearance.

23 DECEMBER 1939—The raffle for the Red Cross Fund was drawn last week and was won by Jack Jensen, Julia Creek. The amount collected was £7/1/- which is a very creditable effort. The prize, donated by Mrs S.U. Browne of Garomna, was four roosters.

It will be a nice Christmas gift for Mr Jensen. Mrs Browne's generous gift is much appreciated and will help to swell the funds of this most worthy cause.

27 JULY 1940—On Friday 12th July the local branch of the CWA held a war rally day in Eckford's Hall and made over £200. The CWA (Julia Creek) sends an individual monthly parcel to AIF men from Julia Creek serving abroad; and further, they give a gift to every person going from Julia Creek to enlist. It is a case of a worthy institution involved in a worthy cause and we feel sure that the gifts are warmly appreciated.

The CWA ladies are to be congratulated on their splendid loyalty and service to those who are fighting for their country.

4 JANUARY 1941—Christmas was fairly busy in Julia Creek and, as usual, it was very orderly. Business trade was on a par with former years. Country people came to town to buy their wants for the festive season. Everyone enjoyed themselves in spite of our many troubles. We all look to the future with confidence and we hope that the new year will be a brighter one than the one we are about to leave behind. Farewell 1940 with all its war troubles, and good luck to the British Empire in 1941.



CHARCOAL GAS

The Minister for Defence has notified the public that plans have been made for the substitution in "an emergency" of Charcoal Gas units on Military Transport equipment in Australia.

Why Wait For This "Emergency"?
Any handy man can now make his own efficient gas plant to operate Tractors, Trucks, Cars or any kind of spark plug stationary engine – from the crude oil drum type to the latest design.

A good gas plant can be made out of odds and ends for a few shillings, so simple is the principle. Our set of easily understood drawings and complete instructions, which cost £1, shows you how to do the job in a practical way and the engine is not altered. You can drive on petrol or charcoal at will and **SAVE 90% IN FUEL COSTS.** Send now.

F. MAHER
NELL ST., SYDNEY





THE AIF IS MARCHING

There's a fellow in the limelight
who is always talking fight
How he'll put an end to England
and her people over night
But the lion's tail is wagging
and the 'Roo' is on the hop
And they'll teach this painter fellow¹
that this row has got to stop.

We're marching on, marching on
From a land in the southern sea
There'll be no more heiling Hitler
No more Berlin on the spree
For the AIF is marching, with its cry of liberty
So keep your chin up, Mother England
We're marching on to victory!

We will teach him we are ready
that this world is wide and free
That our men are brave and steady
and we're fond of liberty
We will paint these vivid pictures
with our bird men in the sky
Till he roars "Mein Gott, you stop it, ja!"
but then he'll hear this cry.

Chorus

For the AIF is marching, with its cry of liberty
So keep the Barrel Rolling², England
We're marching on to victory!

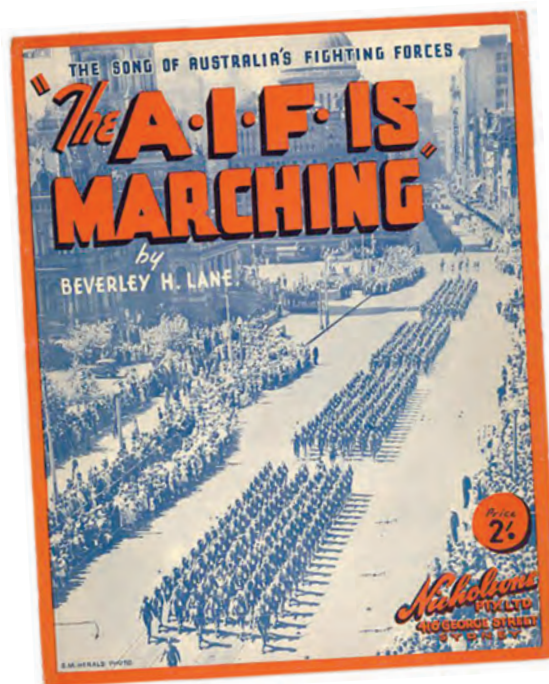
24 JANUARY 1941—Many friends gathered at the railway station last Friday to bid farewell and Godspeed to Lance Bombardier Bill Gannon. Bill has been home on final leave before leaving with the AIF. We wish him happy days and a safe return.

28 FEBRUARY 1941—It is good to see more young lads answering the call to defend their liberty and country. During the week a large crowd said their goodbyes to Messrs Les Triffett, Ray Hayden, Len Thomson and Scotty Marshall who have joined the AIF. We must strive to do all in our power to make their lives comfortable and happy in their military surroundings.

News has been received of Bill Gannon from Malaya, and from Lionel Wall, Henry Baxter and Bob Baxter who are in the Middle East.

2 MAY 1941—Anzac Day was observed with a gathering at Eckford's Hall. Mr Allison, Shire Chairman, presided. During his address he appealed to the young men of the district to do their bit to support those gallant lads across the seas. Mr Vic Faithfull expressed great pleasure to see such a gathering of town and country people on this great day and was supported by Mr Ulick Browne who spoke most feelingly with reference to the part our boys are playing in the Greece campaign.

During the musical concert many old and popular songs of the Great War were rendered. Miss Olive



1. Hitler wanted to become a painter, and in his early twenties worked as a painter in Vienna for a short time.
2. "Barrel Rolling" refers to the song *Roll Out the Barrel* which became popular world-wide during the war. The song was also popular among soldiers, regardless of their nationality.

Gannon brought the singing to a close with *The AIF is Marching*. The musical items were accompanied by Mr Frank Norton on the piano.

Although the war has been going on for well over a year now, it is hard to realise such a thing in this peaceful countryside. But with the appearance of casualty lists, the war is being brought closer to our doors. The sad news that a Richmond lad, Ronnie Spragg, was killed in action in Greece was a shock to many in this district as Ronnie had often visited here. Deepest sympathy is felt for his relatives who must have the consolation in knowing that he died doing his duty.

ARE CORSETS ESSENTIAL?

AUCKLAND, 15 March—Is corset-making an essential industry in war time? A New Zealand Military Appeal Board was told that all women, young and old, wear them, and some men. The case arose when an Auckland corset-making firm sought the postponement of military service for an employee on the grounds of public interest. But, after the following dialogue, the Appeal Board ruled that corset-making was not an essential industry:

Chairman: What are corsets?

Appellant: Women's wearing apparel.

C: It can hardly be claimed that the manufacture of corsets is in the public interest.

A: They are essential.

C: Do all women wear corsets?

A: Yes.

C: Young and old?

A: Yes.

C: Is it not a fact that some men wear corsets also?

A: Yes.

C: Do not women merely wear corsets to keep up their stockings?

A: The garments have more uses than that.

C: What would happen if the output of corsets was cut down? I could understand the alarm of stout ladies, but would slim ladies worry?"

A: Yes, they all wear them.

Although the appeal was dismissed, the board said that the employee would not be called up before June.

The board's ruling has left New Zealand's womanhood unmoved. According to Auckland fashion experts, fashions have changed so rapidly in recent years that many girls have never felt the embrace of whalebone. Girls who are now wearing the loose-cut military uniforms of the Women's Auxiliary War Services find corsets unnecessary and undesirable. For instance, women mechanics in the National Service Corps cannot work in them. Many girls in New Zealand offices gave up corsets, it was stated, when they ceased wearing stockings as an economy measure.

13 JUNE 1941—Between 20 and 30 lads left for the Selheim Military Camp last Friday. Several of these intend joining the AIF from camp. It is gratifying to see such a response to the call for duty from a small district. There is a job for every able-bodied man to assist the war effort.

Last Thursday night Mr Eckford held a skating carnival and dance as a send off for the boys going into camp. A good crowd was in attendance and the talent among the local skaters was surprising. Trophies, donated by Mr Eckford, were distributed as follows:

School girls: Joan Byrne

School boys: Clem Foster

Gents: Mr Bosie Byrne

Ladies: Miss Faith Smith

Mixed: Miss Joan Byrne, Mr Bosie Byrne.

Dancing continued until the small hours of the morning with a euchre tournament for non-dancers.

With the constant appeal for more voluntary assistance, we should realise that unless War Savings Certificates and War Bonds receive more attention the contributions will become compulsory. We cannot all go to fight but we can help equip our boys and put them on a level footing with the enemy. Do you belong to a war savings group? If not, do not hesitate – join one at once. Every shilling means so much and helps to keep the enemy from our shores.

The monthly meeting of the CWA Younger Set was held on Tuesday night. The effort this year has been poor on account of the lack of interest shown by many of the local girls. However, the few who are still keen want to increase the war work and are doing knitting.

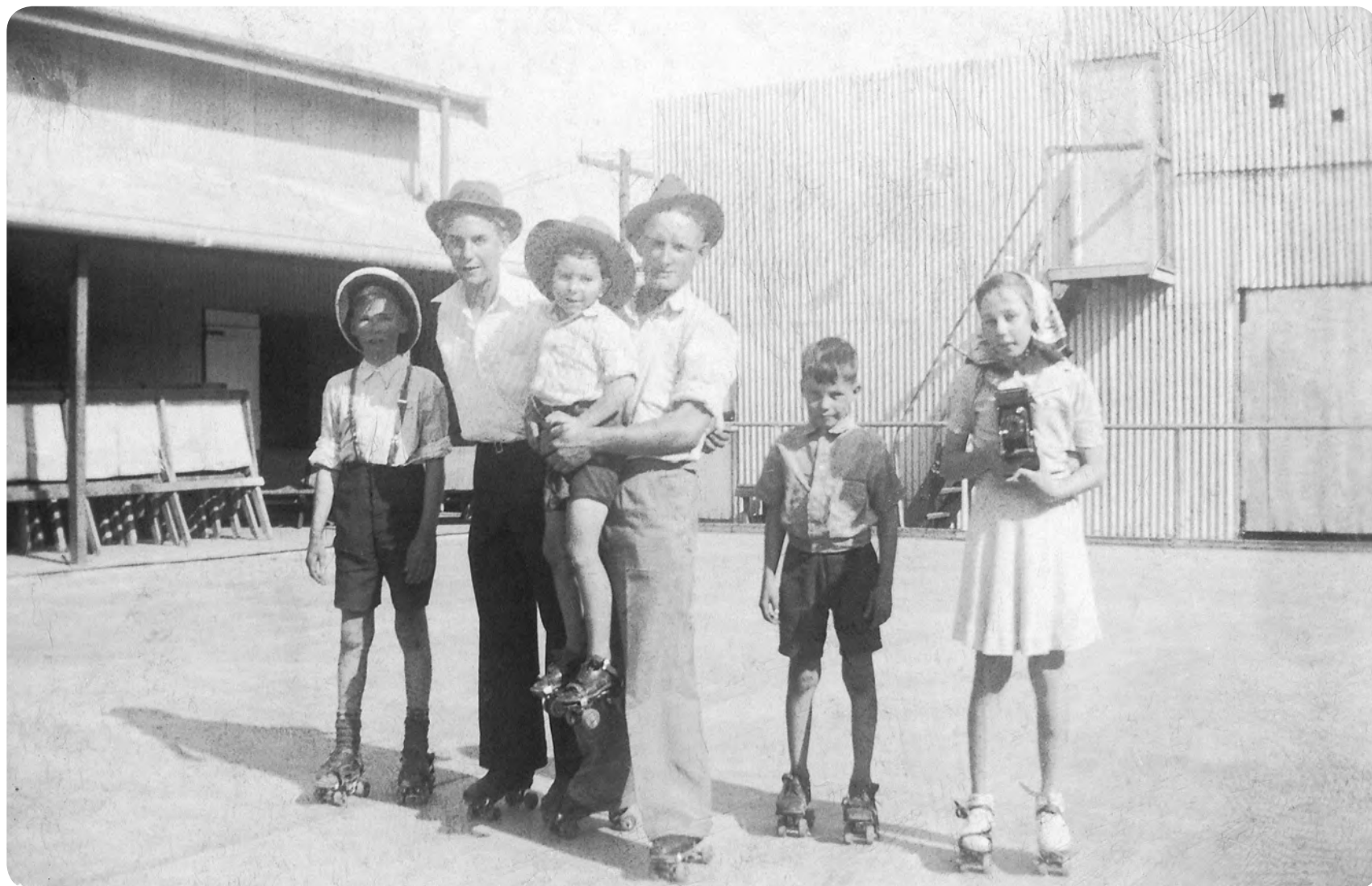
Opposite: Bob Baxter.

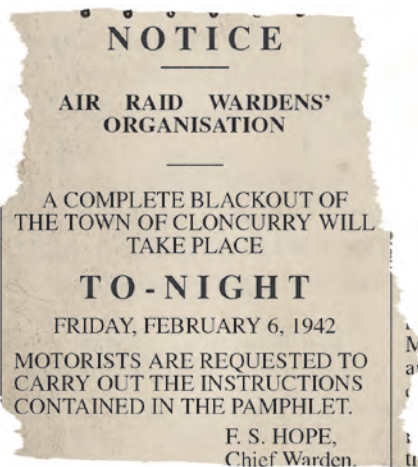
[George Baxter, BaG01, ca 1940]

Below: A few of us skating at Eckford's rink.

The rink was opened on 16 Sep 1940. The two men are Clarrie Fickling (left) and Ben Burrows Snr; girl on the right with the Box Brownie is Joan Byrne. The three boys are unidentified. Taken from inside the open-air picture theatre looking north-west to the projection room which fronted Burke St. On the right of the door at the top of the stairs are two black squares: projection holes. On the left are canvas chairs for the pictures.

[Carmel Fickling, FC18, ca 1941]





CA: 06 Feb 1942

18 JULY 1941—Three more recruits for the AIF left Julia Creek during the week. They were Sgt John Pedersen, Sgt D. McInnes, and Patrick Byrne. Their many friends gathered at the station to say au revoir and good luck, and a lot of those friends are hoping to join the recruits before they leave for overseas.

Opposite: Three Julia Creek soldier-boys on bicycles. From left: Les Triffett (KIA), Donny Ryan, John Somers. *[Kath Gerahty, Gek02, ca 1941]*

Below: John McPherson (awarded the Military Medal), Jimmy Roberts, John Somers (right). The boys are near Charlie Byrne's butcher shop (left of photo). Across Burke St is the Garden of Roses cafe on the boys' left, and Lance Lewis' Garage on the right. *[Rita Byrne, FR21, ca 1941]*

8 JANUARY 1943—Congratulations to Mrs McPherson on the good news that her son has been awarded the Military Medal. He is the first lad from this district to receive honours in the field. John Angus McPherson is a native of Richmond and is 21 years of age. He is the son of the late Mr McPherson. His many friends wish him the best of luck.

Quite a gloom was cast over the town when the sad news was received that Private Leslie Triffett was killed in action on December 22. Leslie was a popular lad and came to our town when quite young. He was 26 years of age at the time of his death. The flag flew at half-mast from the Shire Hall. At Eckford's picture show all stood for one minute in silence in honour of our hero. His eldest brother, Private Ted Triffett, is a prisoner of war. To his sorrowing parents, sisters and brothers, his many friends extend their sincere sympathy.



An announcement is expected soon by the Ministry of Supply regarding the 400 producer-gas units ordered for experimental purposes. Australia must consider alternatives to petrol for transport power, assuming the possibility that supplies may be severely reduced or cut off. The advantages and disadvantages of producer-gas transport can be summarised thus:

- Charcoal can be manufactured in Australia for about £3 a ton, a quarter of the pre-war price of petrol.
- Sixteen lb of charcoal is the equivalent to a gallon of petrol. Taking charcoal at £3 a ton, the producer-gas cost equivalent of a gallon of petrol is only 5d.
- The producer plant increases the cost of the vehicle by more than £70 and the weight by from 5 to 10 cwt.
- The fuel is heavier and bulkier than petrol, leading to reduced carrying capacity.
- Unless special adjustments are made, speed will be slower; and in any event, starting time is longer.
- More attention is required on account of clearing out purifiers, filters, grate and ashpan. Engine wear may be more severe.

Producer-gas is an attractive fuel for farm tractors and road vehicles in country districts, but for vehicles making frequent short journeys with frequent stops it does not show to advantage. The capital cost of fitting producer-gas equipment to a light lorry is about £100, but this could be reduced appreciably by the adoption of standard designs.

NQR: 20 Jan 1940

29 JANUARY 1943—Our railway station canteen is again open. This should prove a great comfort to our military troops passing through as large numbers of them can often be seen wandering the streets in search of food and cool drinks (our town has two ice works and can supply ice and cool drinks at all times).

At one stop, soldiers report having paid three shillings a bottle for soft drinks. When asked the reason for the high price the reply was: "There is a war on". The war is also on in Julia Creek, but cordials are sold here for 9d a bottle from both factories.

Regret to report news of another sad death, that of Private Willie Munro who died of wounds. He was

better known as 'Texas' Munro and was employed at the local scour before he enlisted. He was a very popular lad. It is pleasing to note that his mate, Corporal Tom Fickling, was with him when he was called upon to pay the supreme sacrifice.

5 MARCH 1943—Many received a shock during the week when they attended the Court House to collect their petrol ration tickets. Private cars are practically forced off the road, their allowance being one gallon fortnightly, whilst other cars are reduced proportionately.



[Mossie McDonald, M02]

WHY BUTTER IS RATIONED

CANBERRA, 6 June—From Monday last, every person in Australia was rationed to half a pound of butter a week. "E" coupons in the new ration book will be used for butter. Towels, sheets, pillowslips and certain types of tablecloths and soft furnishings are also couponed. Clothing coupons must be used for these items of household drapery. This extension of rationing in food and clothing was announced on Sunday by the Minister for Trade and Customs, Senator Keane.

"Australians may query why butter rationing is necessary when our supplies have always exceeded our requirements," said Senator Keane. "The fact is, urgent demands are being made on our butter at a time when our output has dropped slightly because of necessary manpower being diverted to essential war production. Supplies must be maintained for Allied fighting men in Australia. Britain is urgently in need of butter and we cannot ignore this need. Britain must have all the butter we can spare her. No Australian will complain of the half-pound ration per week when Britain survives on two ounces per head weekly, only a quarter of our ration. Our contribution of butter will only help Britain maintain her meagre ration — no more."

Senator Keane pointed out that the average consumption of butter per head in Australia has been about 10 ounces per week but the ration of half a pound per week will be ample for health and nutrition.

Under butter rationing, he said, farmers who made their own butter have a particular responsibility. They must collect coupons whether they give away, sell or exchange butter. Every farmer realises the importance of his role in Australia's war effort. He is now a vital cog in the rationing machine, an essential weapon of war.

NQR: 11 Jun 1943



7 MAY 1943—I regret to report that Mr Alex Cameron, well-known storekeeper and Casket agent in the O-K Store, is closing his business. Alex is an old Digger and intends joining in war work. He will be a great loss to our town. Here's wishing Mr and Mrs Cameron the best of luck.

Congratulations to four of our local ladies – Misses Mary Winton, Maris Brisbane, Edith Pollard and Hazel Hammond – who volunteered to enlist and are now anxiously awaiting their call-up.

28 MAY 1943—On Tuesday night in Mathews' Hall a most enjoyable farewell dance was held in honour of our four young ladies who have received their call-up: Misses Mary Winton, Maris Brisbane, Edith Pollard and Hazel Hammond. During the night Mr Jim Parsons (shire clerk) in well-chosen words said he was indeed proud to compliment these young ladies in volunteering their services to such a good cause. He wished them good luck and Godspeed. The singing of *Auld Lang Syne* brought the pleasant evening to a close.

Samuel Allen's store is closed and the large building and private dwelling are for sale.



Above left: Mary Winton.
[Albie Wilder, WA13, 1943]

Above right: Maris Brisbane.
[Edith Mann, MnE10, ca 1945]

Below: Clive Wilder and his mother Emily.
[Kath Gerahty, Gek01, ca 1941]

I WAS working at the council when I joined up – Maris Brisbane's brilliant idea, Bert's sister. She said to me one day:

Let's join the army.

But we're not old enough.

Well, when you turn 18 we'll join. Your birthday comes first and I'll put my age up.

If your parents signed the forms you could enlist at 18 which is exactly what we did. I can

remember my birthday fell on a Sunday that particular year, 1943. The very next day, Monday, we sent for the papers to join up. Her birthday was not till December so Maris put her age up – and got away with it. About five of us girls joined up. The boys were gone already. I would say Julia Creek was the most patriotic little town you'd ever come across. All the boys and the girls that were available, joined.

MARY WINTON

1 OCTOBER 1943—Quite a gloom was cast over our town on Saturday when the sad news was received that Sapper Clive Frederick Wilder was killed in action in New Guinea on the 13th September. Flags from the shire council and CWA cottage flew at half mast all day. At the picture theatre all stood for one minutes silence to honour another one of our heroes who has been called upon to make the supreme sacrifice.

Clive was 22 years of age. Born at Charters Towers, he was the second son of Mrs Skinner and the late Mr Herbert Wilder. He came to Julia Creek with his parents when quite a young lad and received all his schooling at our state school. Possessed of a bright and happy nature he was well-liked by all who knew him. He was a good horseman. His many friends will always remember this smiling youth riding his favourite horse over the downs. Clive was a good son who heard the call of his country. To his sorrowing parents, sisters and brothers we extend our very sincere sympathy in their great sadness.



Clive was born on 1st August 1921. He enlisted on 5th March 1942 (QX30056) and joined the 2/25 Infantry Battalion. In July, the battalion was in New Guinea preparing for the advance on the Japanese base at Lae.

The advance commenced on the 11th and Lae was captured on the 16th. The 2/25 was the first battalion to enter the town – but without Clive, who was killed in action on the 13th. He is buried at the Lae War Cemetery, grave BC7.

23 JULY 1943—Regret to report that Mr and Mrs George Peut have received the sad news that their son Private Leslie Peut has been wounded in action. We sincerely hope it won't be of a serious nature. To his grieved relatives we extend our sympathy.

24 SEPTEMBER 1943—After 20 long months of waiting, great was the happiness in the home of Mr and Mrs Bill Gannon when they received on Thursday a letter card from their only son, William, stating that he was safe and well, a prisoner of war in Singapore. Bill is a fine type of young manhood, being a splendid footballer. He is a very popular young lad and it is safe to say that the telephone rang all day from his many friends asking if the good news was correct. Let's hope it won't be long before we see Bill reunited with his family.

5 NOVEMBER 1943—Last Friday the flags from the council office and CWA cottage flew at half mast when the sad news was received that Sgt Keith Glasgow was killed in action in New Guinea on the 17th November. At Eckford's picture show on Saturday night all stood for one minute's silence in honour of the young hero. Keith carried out the duties as overseer on many stations in the Julia Creek district before joining the forces. Some time before leaving he married Miss Mary Fairburn of Malvie Downs. To his sorrowing widow and relatives we extend our sincere sympathy.

7 JANUARY 1944—1943 will go down in history as Julia Creek's quietest Christmas (that is, of course, if 1944 is not worse). The shops had very little to offer to entice the public. In most cases Christmas Dinner did not include ham, dates, figs, lollies or other luxuries. Santa Claus was also missing from many homes as parents were unable to purchase toys.

31 MARCH 1944—The Grand Concert held in Eckford's Hall on March 24th was a great success. Door takings were £30. The stage was artistically decorated with flags. After the opening march played by Mr Frank Norton, Mr Harold Walters (announcer) gave a suitable address to the audience and said that owing to war conditions the costumes were not what he would like them to be. However, what was lacking in quality would be made up with quantity. The items were as follows:

1. Solo song sweetly rendered by Miss Stella Norton.
2. Mr Harold Walters witty joke.
3. Community singing: *Tipperary Boys, Roll Out The Barrel, Nursie Sarah*.
4. Mr J. Lowman and Miss Stella Norton were both in fine voice singing *On A Wing And A Prayer*. They were clapped until they returned to sing the chorus again.
5. Solo by Mr Tom Willats was well-rendered and enjoyed by all. Tom had to give an encore.
6. The dance by Miss Jenny Byrne was done in grand style, dressed in overalls. Jenny showed she is just as good as ever on the toe.
Interval of 15 minutes.
7. The next item was the Alabama Sisters, Miss Jenny Byrne and Miss Stella Norton dancing the *Blackout Canter*. This brought the house down.
8. Community singing.
9. *Down on the Farm* was well-rendered by the company: Misses Jenny Byrne, Stella Norton, Marie Kaeser, Joan Byrne, Audrey Kaeser and Hazel Stainkey.

Harold Walters thanked all for their attendance and said the Younger Set should indeed be pleased with the splendid results. The hall was cleared and dancing went on till midnight when all made their way home, tired out but happy. Proceeds go to the boys serving in the forces.

THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE

5 MAY 1944—The following was the programme for the 29th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli, 25th April 1915.

- 09.40 a.m: Muster of soldiers and scouts on school ground.
- 10.00 a.m: Anzac parade of soldiers, ex-soldiers and boy scouts at Post Office.
- 10.15 a.m: March to the cemetery, saluting the flag at McKinlay Shire Council Chambers.
- 10.30 a.m: Cemetery. Military respects to departed comrades after their graves have been put in order. Laying wreaths.
- 12.30 p.m: CWA dinner for old soldiers, men in uniform and their ladies.

At sundown when the flag was lowered, the wreathes were brought from the cemetery and placed on the stage. Lieutenant Ulick Browne called everyone's attention to the Honour Shield, a splendid piece of work made by Mr Henry Benson, bearing the words: "Their Name Liveth For Evermore". In the centre is a photo of the late Pte. Leslie Winston Triffett and the names of all the fallen heroes of our town.

Public observance in Eckford's Hall at 8.45 p.m. On stage were Warrant Officer Jones, Mr Pat Byrne, Mr Vic Faithfull, Lt. Ulick Browne, and Captain Waldron Taylor who read the honour roll:

Henry James Baxter
William Lindsay
Peter Cribb
Harry Walter Harris
Leslie Winston Triffett
Keith Glasson
Norman Frederick Babb
William Melville Munro
Lloyd Miners
Clive Frederick Wilder

One minute's silence. *The Last Post* played by Mr Langtree. Patriotic solo, Mrs Norton. The first resolution read by Quartermaster Sergeant Vic Faithfull, president Local Diggers:

On the 29th anniversary of the immortal landing on Gallipoli, this meeting of citizens of Queensland expresses its unalterable loyalty to the Throne and Empire and its admiration of the magnificent heroism, self-sacrifice and endurance of the Sailors and Soldiers and Nursing Sisters of Australia and New Zealand who on the first Anzac Day, and throughout the Great War, conferred a glory on Australia and New Zealand that will never fade.

Solo Miss Stella Norton, Mr Will Edwards. Duet Misses Wilma and Mairi Dhu. The Second Resolution read by Lt. Ulick Browne:

This meeting voices its heartfelt sympathy for the relatives of those who have died and for those who have suffered on behalf of the Empire. Rest assured: those who have fallen and those who have survived the perils of War will ever be remembered with gratitude by the people whose hearths and homes and free institutions they voluntarily went forth to save.

Solo Mr Edwards, Mr T Willats, Mr Taylor. Community singing: *Anzac, Pack Up Your Troubles, Keep The Home Fires Burning, Tipperary, Somewhere in France With You, Swinging Along The Road To Victory, There'll Always Be an England*. Solo Mr Edwards, Miss Mairi Dhu. Hymn: *Abide With Me*. Never was there such a crowd seen in Eckford's Hall. All singers were heard at their best.

30 JUNE 1944—The Roman Catholic Church on Monday 19th June at 4.30 p.m. was the scene of a very pretty wedding. The Church was artistically decorated for the occasion. Dainty kneeling chairs were draped with streamers and satin bows and white satin cushions.

The Reverend Father Devereux joined in bonds of holy matrimony, Lilian Gerahty (second daughter of Mr Cecil Gerahty and the late Mrs Gerahty) to John Michael Somers, AIF (only son of Mr and Mrs Patrick Somers). The charming bride made a pretty picture as she entered the Church on the arm of her father who subsequently gave her away.

The bride was attended by the bridegroom's youngest sister, Miss Mary Somers. The bridegroom wore AIF uniform and was assisted by Mr Bill Ryder, AIF, who also wore uniform. During the signing of the register, Mrs Arnold sweetly rendered *I'll Walk Beside You*.

The reception was held at Eckford's Hall where Mrs Kath Stanley, the bride's only sister, assisted by the bridegroom's mother, entertained 85 guests. The hall was decorated with blue and white streamers and large white bells. The table was laden with every conceivable delicacy, pride of place being given the handsome two-tiered wedding cake made and decorated by Mr Bally Kaeser, the baker.

The wedding cake was handed round by the bridegroom's three sisters. Numerous congratulatory telegrams were received, the chairman busy reading same. The presents received were costly, including many valuable cheques. After the singing of *For They are Jolly Good Fellows*, Mr Bill "Nugget" Stanley thanked the Rev. Father Devereux and three lusty cheers were given by the guests. A most enjoyable dance went on till the train arrived, when a happy band of well-wishers gave the young soldier and his AWAS bride a grand farewell at the railway station. The bride looked very smart in her uniform. The couple left to honeymoon in Townsville. Both will later rejoin their units.

6 OCTOBER 1944—Quite a number of our lads serving in the forces who have been spending leave at home depart on Monday night's mail to rejoin their units. They include Pte. James Parsons, Cpl. Tom Foster, Sgt. George Sills, Pte. Jim Roberts and Pte. Ernie Hill. With the departure of these bright lads many of our young lassies will be kind of lonesome.

Sapper Joe Mathews, accompanied by his wife, arrived home on a month's leave and is staying at the home of his parents, Mr and Mrs Harry Mathews, Hilton Park.

Left: John Somers and Lil Gerahty.
[Rita Byrne, FR26, 19/6/1944.]

Opposite: Olive Gannon's wedding party outside the Queensland National Bank across the road from Gannon's Hotel. From left: Darkie, Ray Ward, Alma Gannon, Olive Gannon, Cedric Hely, Bill Gannon.
[Alma Gannon, GA43, 25/11/1944]



1 DECEMBER 1944—On Saturday 18th November 1944 a wedding of wide interest took place in St Barnabas Church of England, Julia Creek, when Olivia Gannon, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs Bill Gannon, was joined in holy matrimony to Sapper Cedric Hely, AIF returned, son of Mrs K. Hely, Rockhampton.

The graceful bride, who entered the church on the arm of her father, was frocked in water-wave organdie cut in late-Georgian style with trimmings. The tightly fitting bodice was relieved with fine lace.

The bride was attended by her sister, Alma, who looked charming in a full-length frock of pink floral organdie, richly embroidered on bodice and sleeve. A pink coronet and veil were worn to match. The duties of best man were ably carried out by Lt. R. Ward, AIF returned.

As the only brother of the bride is a POW it was the wish of the bridal couple to have a quiet reception

at the home of the bride's parents. The party was received by Mrs Gannon, mother of the bride. After the usual toasts, a toast was called for dear ones who were unavoidably absent: Mrs Hely (mother of the groom), nurse Ivy Gannon (sister of the bride) and William Gannon (brother of the bride), prisoner of war in Borneo.

The happy couple left by plane for the south where the groom will rejoin his unit.

8 DECEMBER 1944—The CWA ladies are holding a dance and toy stall on the 15th December and are working very hard making toys of all kinds. Funds go towards Christmas hampers for our lads serving in the forces. So roll up and buy joy toys for the children and have a good night's dancing.

Quite a gloom was cast over the town on Wednesday night when the sad news was received by Mrs Tom Kelly that her nephew, Sgt. Norman Whiting, was

killed in action in the south of England. Deceased was well known, and his smiling good nature won him a host of friends.

Born in Townsville 20 years ago, he was the eldest son of Mr and Mrs Frank Whiting. He came with his parents to Julia Creek and lived here for many years, attending the state school. Norman was always a smart lad and passed his Scholarship at the Cloncurry Convent. He then went to Abergowrie where he finished his education. He returned home and worked with his father as a carpenter, soon becoming his father's right hand man and helping construct many buildings in Julia Creek. When Norman became of military age he joined the air force and was no time in receiving his wings.

On Wednesday night at the Eckford picture show all stood for one minute's silence in honour of another one of our young heroes. The school, shire council and CWA flags flew at half mast.



22 DECEMBER 1944—Pleasing news that Mr and Mrs Gannon have received another letter from their son William stating he is well. It was signed W.G. Gannon, Prison Camp, Borneo.

Business in town is fairly quiet. The beer restrictions force the hotels to remain closed most of the time, and rationing of other commodities prevents the grocer and draper from giving their customers the attention they would like to. With confidence in our leaders and fighting men, we who are left at home can only hope that before another Christmas is with us peace has come again to the world.

To our many soldier friends both in and out of Australia we extend the compliments of the season and sincerely hope they are back home soon. To those who have lost loved ones we offer sincere condolence.

3 MARCH 1945—Don't forget to roll up for the Picture Benefit for Limbless Soldiers to be held at Eckford's picture show on the 16th April. Mr Ulick Browne has donated a sheep to be raffled. Tickets are being sold by Miss Alma Gannon.

13 APRIL 1945—At the spacious home of Mr and Mrs Hutton on Sunday night, a happy farewell party was held prior to the departure of their eldest son, Leading Seamen Frank Hutton R.A.N. During the evening, songs, dancing and games were enjoyed by all. The charming hostess served a dainty supper.

Leading Seaman Hutton has had some very unhappy landings, and although badly burnt in the last attack he has come out all right and is well enough

to carry on with the good work. Mr and Mrs Hutton have another son in the army, and their youngest son intends leaving with Frank to join the navy. A shower of good wishes goes to these three lads – the Fighting Hutton Boys.

20 APRIL 1945—The picture benefit for Limbless Soldiers held in Eckford's Hall on the 16th April, proved an outstanding success with a profit of £72/11/6 from donations, the pictures, the auctions of fowls, and the raffles of bridle and sheep. The bridle was won by Mr Roy Hutton, and the sheep went to Mr Charlie Hayden. Great credit goes to the two young ladies who organised the raffles, Miss Alma Gannon and Miss Meldie Eckford. Nice work girls.

29 JUNE 1945—Last Saturday night at the Eckford picture show, all stood for one minute's silence in honour of Private Howard Neilson AIF who was killed in action, another young hero who has been called upon to make the supreme sacrifice. Howard was a Townsville lad where his parents live at present. He was a painter by trade and painted many homes in Julia Creek during his 12 months here. Deceased was well-liked by all who knew him.

6 JULY 1945—We feel very proud of one of our local lads. At a welcome at Buckingham Palace given to repatriated troops, the first Australian to whom the King spoke was Warrant Officer Ted Triffett of Julia Creek who spent 15 months with Italian partisans. Guess Ted's thoughts were: *This was worth fighting*

for. Ted is the second-eldest son of Tassie Triffett, the town blacksmith. Mr and Mrs Triffett have resided in our town for many years.

20 JULY 1945—The town is quiet and we find it difficult to remember the days when our local lads were not in the fighting forces. It is impossible to mention all those of whom we constantly hear news. All the lads are anxiously awaiting the day when they can return to their old town and have happy reunions. Though it is a long time since many of those familiar faces have been seen in Julia Creek, none of us will forget what those boys are doing for us.

27 JULY 1945—It is most regrettable that two of our lads in the AIF have been wounded in action. One is Private Doug Willats and the other Private Len Thomson. These boys are both among the youngest members to join the army from this town and their many friends wish them a speedy recovery. To their parents we offer sincere regrets. Mr and Mrs Tom Willats are at Millungera; Mr and Mrs Alfred Thomson now reside in Townsville.

DURING THE WAR, Bill Gannon used to sit beside the wireless every night, getting the names of those missing in action. His only son, young Bill, went away to war and was captured in Malaya; became a POW. He died over there. Broke old Bill's heart when that happened.

GORDON LAVARACK



NQR: 19 Aug 1944



Opposite: Lance Bombardier William John Gannon, QX17342, at camp in Brisbane.
Died of illness, Borneo, 17 June 1945.
[Alma Gannon, GA28, ca 1940]

Below: Julia Creek group at Redcliffe during the war.
From left: unidentified man, Alma Gannon, Tom Foster,
Jimmy Roberts, Jenny Byrne, Bob Peut.
[Alma Gannon, GA 30, 1942]

"That's us taken at Redcliffe when I went for my first holiday to Brisbane in 1942. My sister Lucy was already there working on the exchange, and my brothers and a whole lot of other Julia Creek people were all based in Brisbane, so I went for three weeks.

I went home to Julia Creek and it was a couple of years later, 1944, that I went back to Brisbane and joined Lucy."
(Jenny Byrne)



24 AUGUST 1945—From the first broadcast that the Japanese were prepared to accept the Potsdam terms, until days after the acceptance, this little town like every other corner of Australia, celebrated right royally. The first burst of celebrations, however, have passed over and everyone awaits news of our prisoners who have had little or no contact with home since the fall of Singapore. We also await the return of all our local lads who are serving in forward areas. Until these things are realised, peace cannot fill our hearts and minds.

Julia Creek celebrated the first news of peace with dancing and singing and an ad hoc procession. The news on Friday night was transmitted throughout the town by the sound of car horns reverberating through the night air, by the ringing of bells and the blowing

of sirens, and with songsters and musicians on motor lorries adding to the rejoicings. All met as if by mutual understanding at Mathews' Hall where the news was further celebrated well into the early hours of morning.

The rejoicing lulled a little, and all waited expectantly for the news of Japan's signed acceptance of the peace terms. When it finally came through on Wednesday 15th August, the townsfolk set to preparing for a procession to celebrate VJ day. With only a few hours in which to prepare Julia Creek's victory parade, a demonstration unequalled by anything previously seen here was put forth. Every available motor car, lorry, trailer, bicycle, pram and billy goat cart was thrown into the effort and all were creditably decorated by their owners. The procession was led by

Constable Kevin Goan on his motor bike. Then followed three sedans owned by Messrs Lewis, Gannon and Stainkey respectively, representing Victory, Freedom and Peace. Each was most artistically decorated to represent these three achievements which are the birth rights of our nation. A mobile orchestra comprising a piano, saxophone, piano accordion, magic flute and mouth organ, helped increase the gaiety of the parade.

Space does not permit an individual description of every vehicle in the grand parade, but each owner deserves the highest praise for his or her cooperation and enthusiasm. And congratulations to everyone who donned fancy dress and sang and danced on top of lorries and cars as they wended their way through the cheering crowds. The procession finished in the



main street where singing and dancing went on for some time after.

An account of this gala day would not be complete without mention of Mr Moran Byrne, recently discharged from the RAAF, whose untiring efforts made the demonstration so successful. Thanks to Mr Byrne's unbounded enthusiasm with his loud speaker – and to Mr Lance Lewis who released this employee for the job – Julia Creek certainly proclaimed VJ Day in a fitting manner. At intervals, day and night, Mr Byrne toured the streets with his loud speaker system advising people where and when celebrations would take place. During the victory parade he drove to the main points in town and announced the owners of the various vehicles and details of their representations.

That night a Grand Victory Ball was held in

Eckford's Hall. Rollicking music was supplied by Miss Marie Kaeser (piano), George Jaques (drums), J. Smith (saxophone), and Bill Tracey (piano accordion). Dancing continued until after 4.00 a.m.

Thursday was Children's Victory Day and they congregated at the school grounds to compete in various branches of athletics and sports, including bicycle racing. Most of the little ones got a silver coin of some denomination, and all were happy.

Everyone met at the sports ground on Thursday night to witness the end of Tojo¹. A huge pile of firewood had been stacked in the centre of the grounds and an effigy of Tojo was laid to rest on top of the stack. The Boy Scouts, under the keen supervision of Jim Parsons, were responsible for the monster fire. For hours the very young, the very old, and all

ages in between, danced and sang around the blazing pile. The evening was completed with a dance in Mathews' Hall.

Below: At the Julia Creek football field preparing for a parade. Possibly the VJ Day celebrations, though this is uncertain as the photo is undated. The article mentions "a mobile orchestra comprising a piano" – and a piano is visible behind the cab of the truck. The house in the distance belonged to George & Jean Jaques.
[Carmel Fickling, FC10, undated]

1. Hideki Tojo, Japanese military leader and Prime Minister 1941–44. He initiated the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. After Japan's surrender he was tried and hanged as a war criminal.

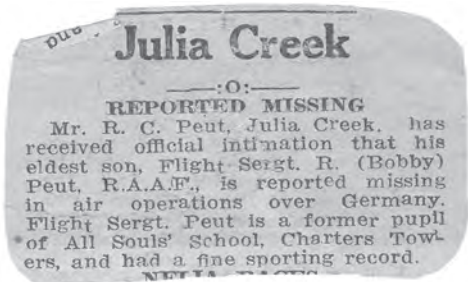


21 SEPTEMBER 1945—The chief interest now is centred on the long lists of names of released prisoners who have endured hardships and atrocities at the hands of the Japanese since the fall of Singapore. The names of many boys who have lived or worked in our town and district have been noticed and it is hoped that many more familiar names will yet appear. Privates Chas Taylor and Victor Anderson, who worked with the local council prior to enlistment, have been located at Singapore and Thailand.

Everyone looks forward to reunion with the lads who have endured harsh treatment at the hands of the Japanese. To those who have not yet received word of relatives or friends who were known to be in Japanese camps, we trust that good news will soon be their lot.

2 NOVEMBER 1945—On Sunday evening, 28th October, a reception took place at the CWA cottage in honour of Private Chas Taylor, who for the past three and a half years has been a member of the ill-fated 8th Division imprisoned in Japanese hands. Private Taylor's experiences have been many and varied and from all accounts he is a very fortunate man to be alive. During imprisonment he spent many months on the construction of the Thailand Railway. After conversing with these ex-POWs, can any Australian tolerate soft treatment for such barbarous creatures as the Japanese war chiefs? Surely not.

At the reception a toast was made to the King. Then in a few, but sincere words, the guest of honour was welcomed. As Mr Taylor was not feeling the best, a response was made on his behalf by Mr Bill Gannon who stressed that it is the duty of every Australian to see to the future of every returnee. Mr Vic Faithfull spoke on behalf of the 1st AIF and paid tribute to the gallant 8th Divvy and all comrades in arms. Mrs J



NQR: unknown date

Parsons spoke for the mothers of our town when she thanked Private Taylor and all members of our forces for the way they have endured hardships and risked their lives for their loved ones. She briefly mentioned that our appreciation to our boys must not terminate at receptions. As well as material assistance, these boys need our kindness, understanding and friendship.

Following the addresses, an entertainment section took place. Vocal items were rendered by Miss Alma Gannon, Mrs A. Kaeser, Messrs Jack Jensen and Bill Gannon. Misses Pat and Dot Downey contributed a tap dance. Their father, Mr Horace Downey, demonstrated his version of the *Sailors Hornpipe*. These items were intermingled by community singing.

A dainty supper was served by the untiring workers of the CWA, after which Private Taylor was presented with a pile of notes. All wish Private Taylor everything of the best for the future.

11 JANUARY 1946—At midnight on Christmas Eve the Roman Catholic Church bells rang for the first peace-time Christmas for six years. Father Devereux PP celebrated midnight mass. Although the night

was very hot, the attendance was one of the largest seen in the Church. The crib was well-arranged by Merle Hampton and the Misses Rita and Kath Byrne. The choir sang sweetly after a short sermon. Father thanked everyone for the great attendance and spoke of being pleased we were living in peace time again. He wished all a very happy Christmas and the best of luck in 1946.

Last Monday night in Eckford's Hall, the English Church held their annual "Old Year Out and the New Year In" Ball. Miss Marie Kaeser's orchestra supplied bright music. At midnight all joined hands to sing *Auld Lang Syne* leaving the war years to fade away with the coming of peace in 1946.

30 NOVEMBER 1946—A 30 mm field piece has been presented by the military authorities to the local shire council. The gun was captured by the 26th Battalion and now carries proudly the names of some of our own soldier boys who were attached to that battalion: Tom Foster, Ernie Hill, Mannie Sills, Arthur Ennis and Les Hutson.

14 MARCH 1947—We feel very proud to see one of our local lads, Sergeant Norman Leslie Downey, QX43786, awarded the Military Medal. Norman assumed the duties of Signal's Officer for his Battalion in Bonis Peninsular and maintained communication to all units over a front of 8000 yards during advances. Norman forestalled the enemy by the installation of alternative communication and was often under fire. His actions contributed much to the success of the operations of his Battalion group.



Left: Norm Downey's citation for his British Empire Medal (see also page 206). The article dated 14 March 1947 was incorrect in stating Military Medal.

Opposite: Flight Sergeant Robert Henry Peut, 434148, Air Gunner, killed in action 30th August 1944, North-West Europe.

Bob's Lancaster (LM583) took off from RAF Waddington at 2031 hours on the night of 29th August to bomb Königsberg, Russia. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take off and it did not return to base. Nineteen aircraft from 467 RAAF Squadron took part in the raid and three of these, including LM583, failed to return. The aircraft and crew were lost without trace.

The names of the crew are commemorated on the Memorial to the Missing, Runnymede, Surrey, UK.

Photo taken in the lane behind Gannon's Hotel, looking east towards Julia St and Roy Hampton's Billiard Saloon. [Alma Gannon, GA22, ca 1940]

NAME	DOWNEY, Norman Leslie						
Award	B. E. M.	Reg. No.	QX 43786	Rank	SGT.	Service	A. M. F.
Recommended by Governor-General on				24/6/46.			
Promulgated in London Gazette on				6/3/47.	G. H. File A. M. F.		O/A 41(2)
Promulgated in Commonwealth of Australia Gazette on				6/3/47.			
Citation (G. H. File A.M.F. O/A 41(2))	Distinguished service of high standard BONIS PENIN SULA.						
Insignia received from London	25/9/47.	PN LONDON.	12/2/48.	G. H. File	L/120.		
Insignia presented by	Registered Post,						
At	-	On	2/12/47.	G. H. File	R/P D/292.		
Address of recipient on presentation date	Box 14,						
	JULIA CREEK. QUEENSLAND.						
Remarks							
Other Awards							



Below: Trailers and equipment on Burns' tanksinking campsite.
Near No. 1 Tank, Rosevale.
[Neville Hamilton, HaN14, 1948]

"This is on the first dam we did on Rosevale, near the Yorkshire road. This looks like when we just arrived there. We cleared a camp site with the scoop. We had Christmas on the second dam. I'd say that photo was taken from the mound of the tank, about 200 yards away.

That's our van in front. It was made of masonite: dark green on the bottom and light green on the top.

Behind our van is the workers' van. The men slept in the front. See the chimney? There was a wood stove inside the workers' van, and we always pulled up close to it because my wife, Margaret, did the cooking for the men.

And the black lump behind – that's where Max pulled up. That's his van and that's the one that got burnt. See how close it is to the workers' van? Bill Kirk was burning letters and they came out the chimney. With that strong wind blowing over the downs – well, Kirky reckoned a burning letter set Max's van alight.

The white tank is the fuel tanker, and next to that... I forget what that stuff was that was stacked under the tarp.

Right on the other end of the photo, that's our little Overlander. She's an 18 cwt ute. That's the one my wife used to drive. It had disk wheels on the back and spoked wheels on the front. She was a real oldie, but she used to pull that green van all right."
(Pat Luhrmann)



YOU MAY HAVE HEARD THE STORY about the three holes in the ground ("Well, well, well") – well, this chapter is a story about *two* holes in the ground, the men who put them there, and the reason why. It's the first of four chapters that tells the story of *Max Burns – Tank Sinker!* through voices of the men and women who had some connection with Max and his tanksinking. It's also a story about Rosevale, and a tribute to its manager for 30 years, Leo Hennessey.

Max's tanksinking career divides into five intervals:

1940-46: *The Beginning* (Biloela, Rockhampton, Clermont, Charters Towers);

1947-48: *Gaining a Reputation* (Clio and Rosevale);

1949-50: *Consolidation*;

1950-51: *The Boom*;

1952-59: *The Decline to Bankruptcy*.

Max bought his first tractor on the 8th October 1940 while on a farm near Biloela. During the war his equipment was requisitioned by the army and Max helped build an airstrip at Rockhampton. He moved to Clermont with his machinery, supposedly to escape war work, and contracted all around that area, gradually moving further north to Charters Towers.

In 1947 Max built several ovals at All Souls (three of his sons were boarders), but before he started work on the ovals he went tanksinking for Pop Hogarth on Clio, a job that extended over almost two years, including interruptions as other work came along (such as the ovals at All Souls, and tanks on Rosevale and Byrimine).

*Trailers and equipment on
Burns tanksinking campsite.*



Max Burns – Tank Sinker!

His work on Clio established Max’s reputation as a tanksinker. His work on Rosevale and Byrimine cemented that reputation and allowed him to accumulate “one of the most extensive dam-sinking plants under private ownership in Australia.”¹

Max had an extraordinary income in 1947 and 1948, the first two years of his serious tanksinking. To put his earnings into perspective, in those two years alone his declared taxable income was equivalent to 100 years of basic wages. It wasn’t as if Max had a special gift for tanksinking. The explanation is prosaic rather than prophetic. My grandfather didn’t foresee, or plan, for future wealth; he just happened to have the necessary equipment in a time and place where that equipment was able to be used to lucrative advantage – the Julia Creek district in need of permanent water for stock, at the moment when war restrictions were being removed and the Federal Government was encouraging water infrastructure through generous tax benefits. In other words, Max accidentally fell into money by being at the right place at the right time with the right equipment.

But he was unprepared for the influx of cash, and blew the opportunity for lasting prosperity. By the time he completed the Rosevale tanks at the end of 1948, his tax liabilities were of such magnitude that he would *never* be able to pay them – unless he paid them up front. He chose not to do that, and instead embarked on an extravagant lifestyle, the result being that his financial demise was sown even before he reached his financial peak. I date his inevitable decline as beginning in 1949; his peak earning years would have been the wool-boom of 1950-51.

Max was aware of his tax liability and may have had an inkling of his impending fall many years before its actuality. He desperately needed his income to remain high, and in a series of ads in 1949 in the *North Queensland Register*, he sought two million yards of earthmoving. His competitor, Morty Knuth, playfully responded by placing an ad twice the size of Max’s, seeking four million yards.

WANTED

TANKSINKING: Wanted 2,000,000 cubic yards of Tanksinking. Book early. Graziers, save taxation. Apply Max Burns, Julia Creek.

TANKSINKING

Wanted 4,000,000 cu. yds of tanksinking. Largest plant in Queensland. Book early graziers. Save taxation. Apply:— M. J. KNUTH Box 104, TOWERS TOWERS.

NQR: 02 Apr 1949

1. See NQR, 18/12/1948, page 438.



Tanksinkers were on the prowl for work in the year before the wool boom, but competition breeds lower prices. Max attempted to circumvent that difficulty by price fixing. He was quite open about it (see ad, right). He was not so open about his relationship with Bill Kirk of Tambo. The ad implied that Bill was a separate tanksinker from Max (Tambo is 450 miles from Julia Creek).

In reality they were partners, as evidenced by a sign on the side of a caravan (right).

And it is unlikely Bill Kirk was an equal partner. Max never had an equal partner in his several business partnerships; he was always in sole control. Bill Kirk would have been on wages, working for Max, and being told what to do.

The chance of success of Max's attempted collusion with other tanksinkers would have been remote. Tanksinkers were an independent breed of men and were unlikely to sit down together and discuss business. In



TANKSINKING

WESTERN QUEENSLAND TANKSINKERS' UNION

OWING to excessive rise in machinery costs, the following prices for tanks have been agreed upon by Western Queensland Tanksinkers' Union to operate as from October 1st.

20,000 yds & over.....	2/6 per yard
10,000-20,000 yds.....	2/9 per yard
10,000 yds & under.....	3/- per yard

The above prices have been agreed upon to enable first-class jobs to be done for graziers; to ensure that the best earthmoving machinery money can buy will remain in the industry; and to eliminate cut-throat competition that has ruined tanksinkers in the past.

All Tanksinkers still outside the Union can make application for membership to Secretary, and are asked to co-operate in setting a fixed price from October 1st.

MAX BURNS, Julia Creek, Sec.
BILL KIRK, Tambo, President.

NQR: 16 Sep 1950

conversations I had with two of Max's earthmoving competitors¹, neither could remember price-fixing deals.

Under the pressure of a mounting tax liability, which in mid 1950 would have been approaching \$2,000,000 (in 2009 dollars), Max needed more work and he needed to keep the price up². Having just made the big-time, I suspect that Max knew as early as the Rosevale tanks of 1948 that his days as a tanksinker were numbered.

1. Bill McKay and John Kirk.

2. And keep the price up he did. In 1948, in return for one hour's basic wage, Max would move one yard of dirt. In 2002, Sandy Rohn (an earthmover in Winton), was willing to move 10 yards of dirt for one hour's basic wage. Sandy would have charged about \$70,000 for a tank like the one below. The price Max charged was around £6000, a thousand week's of basic wage, equivalent to \$600,000 in 2002 dollars.

Sandy runs two front-end loaders with 3.5 and 5 cubic metre buckets, and in 2002 was charging \$1.10/cubic metre (slightly bigger than a cubic yard). Working around the clock (4 men, 2 x 12-hour shifts), he could build a 10,000 yard tank in three days. Each machine moves 100 yards an hour, about the same as Max's equipment.



THE BEGINNING has been covered in the first chapter of this book. *Gaining a Reputation* is dealt with in this chapter. *Consolidation* is the 15 months after Rosevale, all of 1949 and into 1950, when Max and Marj were full-time tanksinking and had no home other than a caravan. I haven't specifically put together a chapter about this period of their lives; details come through here and there from other stories.

The Boom is introduced by Isabel Flewell-Smith, who, as a 12-year-old in early 1950, accompanied a convoy of men and machinery from Brisbane to the Julia Creek area. Max had decided to build a homestead on Balootha, and a house and workshop in Julia Creek. Alan Flewell-Smith (Max's brother-in-law and a carpenter) was asked to do the building work, and came north with his family as part of the convoy.

Freddie Holznagel introduces the second part of *The Boom*. In October 1950 Max placed an ad for tractor drivers in the *South Burnett Times*, the paper that served the area around Wondai where he grew up. More than 50 years later I was able to meet the three tanksinkers who responded to the ad, and I spoke with them of their experiences with my grandfather.

The Decline to Bankruptcy begins with a story from Jumbo Harris and ends with one from Billy Ryder. Max's time as a tanksinker had effectively finished when Billy worked for him. When a tanksinker employs 15-year-old boys to operate earthmoving machinery, and expects them to camp under trees, the end cannot be far off.

TANKSINKING IS A MAN'S JOB, and in these chapters I want to document the job's masculinity not only by the stories the tanksinkers told me, but by using big photos of big bulldozers digging big holes in the ground. I have included lots of photographs because the men themselves took lots of photographs – and kept them. I felt privileged when I turned up at a tanksinker's home, after phoning first and agreeing upon a time, to be greeted with a head full of memories and a table, bottom-draw, or album full of photos. To a man, they were apologetic about the quality, warning me not to expect too much, and were surprised that anyone was interested in seeing them. In one instance (Freddie Holznagel) I was met with an apology because of his lack of photos:

I used to have photos myself of all those things, but I was at some little place staying in a pub for a couple of nights, and I left a suitcase in the room with all my photos, all brand new clothes. When I came back it was gone. I asked the bloke who owned the pub: "You haven't seen any suitcase belongs to me?" He shook his head. Someone had knocked it off. I had my tanksinking photos in that suitcase and they got stealed, y'see.

In most cases, I'm certain I have been the only person, other than the owner, who has shown any real interest in these tanksinking photos since they were taken in the 1940s and 50s. You look at the originals – the Box Brownie, 2" x 3" originals – and all you see is a scratched, cracked, black and white photo of a bulldozer or a hole in the ground. No wonder the photos have remained neglected, and no wonder they are likely to be discarded on the death of the owner. Children and grandchildren are going to toss most of the tanksinking photos that appear in this book when Dad or Grandad

passes on. Thus my feeling of privilege – and responsibility – when I saw these images for the first time. I felt compelled to preserve them.

In some cases, the photos I have chosen for this book have required a reversal of the aphorism "a picture is worth a thousand words", becoming, in effect, "a picture *needs* a thousand words". Some types of pictures may be able to talk, but not tanksinking pictures. Bulldozers and holes in the ground are poor storytellers. They don't articulate their tales in an appealing way, which is why for certain images in this book I have tried to enter the picture, walk around inside, ask it a few questions, and return with its story – with help, of course, from the original owner.

MY GRANDFATHER DIED IN 1979, but two of his competitors from the 1950s, Bill McKay and John Kirk (page 773), were still alive when I started this book, and I was able to visit them and talk tanksinking. Bill impressed me no end when he showed me his original tanksinking notebook, with drawings and calculations for every tank he ever built. Bill being a "boss tanksinker" and not just a worker, his story has been placed at the head of this chapter.

For the reader who knows little about how tanks are made, and who wants to learn, I would suggest reading the first page of Joe Azzopardi's story (page 557) in which he describes the ways Max would cheat when building a tank. As part of the story there is a sketch of a tank's construction. Now that particular picture *is* worth a thousand words.



Opposite top: Sign on the side of a caravan:
Burns & Kirk, Earthmoving Contractors, Central Queensland.
[Robin Burns, R44, 1951]

Opposite bottom: No. 1 Tank, Rosevale, partly filled with water.
The fence was built by Norm Wilson.
[Neville Hamilton, HaN07, 1950]

Below: The turnoff to Rosevale from the Kynuna road.
[Guy Burns, GK70, 2002]



Two Shillings a Yard

Bill McKay

In an elegant book, Bill preserves
a piece of tanksinking history

YOU SAY MAX BURNS WAS YOUR GRANDFATHER? Well, the only time I ever met Max was when Leo Bode and I bought two cars from him, a Dodge and a Vanguard. I'd heard about him; he was our tanksinking competitor around the Julia Creek area, and he was selling cars as a sideline. Leo and I went to Julia Creek and bought these two cars, and afterwards we had lunch at his place. Mrs Burns made us lunch.

I WAS BORN IN 1914 IN BERRIGAN, NSW, and I migrated to Western Queensland in 1936. I went out as overseer on Eulolo for Collins White & Co. One year I was there they shored 80,000 sheep at Eulolo. In 1939 I was sent to Strathfield, and I had to look after another place, Beaudesert, at the same time. Bodes, they owned Percol Plains in between Beaudesert and Strathfield, and I used to shortcut through their country.



Young Bode, Leo Bode, the son, he was mechanical minded, he wasn't horse minded, and he was the one who talked me into tanksinking. So we went tanksinking. Bode & McKay. That'd be the end of '48.

Leo's father was the bloke who started us off. He bought a Cletrac crawler – just the one – and a scoop and a ripper. We never looked back. I hadn't driven a crawler till then, but I wasn't long in learning to operate it.

Always worked day and night. We had plenty of work; we were never held up by not having a job. Kept going all the time. As soon as we finished one place we moved to another. There weren't many dams just after the war, because before that they only had horse teams. Why a sudden boom came on: putting down a dam was a tax deduction. The graziers were being encouraged by the government to look after their water supply.

In the beginning we charged two shillings a yard. Two shillings a yard shifting dirt. Within a few months we bought a second tractor. Ended up we had a truck, four Cletracs (each with a scoop), a ripper, and four or five men working for us. I remember the names of most of the fellas. There was... whatsiname...

Ah, what was his name?

He was a mechanic,
a qualified mechanic more or less.

Ah...

Jesus, hold on; I'll forget my own bloody name...

Ah...

He's dead now...

Eric! That's him!

We only worked five years tanksinking, from 1948 to 1953. About '53, that's when Leo and I gave it away and put on a manager, Ray Simpson, who ran the plant for us. It went on for another three years I suppose, still as Bode & McKay, until the business folded. We didn't sell it as a going concern, we sold it in bits. We sold the workshop – we had a big workshop – and we sold the caravan and the other machinery. I took a tractor and a scoop.

There was plenty of money in tanksinking, but the thing is, I wasn't real mechanical minded. I'm more stock minded, cattle minded, sheep minded, horse minded. That's why the tanksinking finished.

At the time we gave it away, all around that Julia Creek-Winton area, I'd say the graziers wouldn't be needing much more water storage. On a lot of places we put in four or five dams. We could have kept going, but it would have meant shifting further out, going up north to the Gulf country.

I've still got the book where I kept all the records. It's all written down. I did the calculations for every tank we ever did; how many yards, how much it cost. When I retired to Townsville I brought that book with me. I'll get my son to bring it over so you can have a look.



BILL'S SON did bring over the tanksinking book to the retirement village in Townsville where his father lived, and Bill and I spent most of an afternoon going through it together. It was a book neatly laid out in clear handwriting and ruler-drawn diagrams; every page as elegant as the one reproduced here. If ever a Tanksinking Hall of Fame is built in Western Queensland, Bill's book would be a prized exhibit.

Woodstock is a property 60 miles west of Winton. From the figures given, it appears that the contract was for a 20,000-yard main tank (Bill calls it a dam) and a 1000-yard silt tank. Completed tanks were never exactly the contracted size; they would always be slightly different. A finished tank would be measured, the size calculated, and that's what the grazier paid for. The price per yard for small tanks up to 10,000 yards was 2/6; over 10,000 yards the price reduced to 2/. If the contract wasn't on a yard rate, the price was £5/hour for the use of the machinery.

In addition to the main tank and silt tank, four other items are listed. A "turkey nest" is a small above-ground tank, fed from the main tank by a windmill. Water from the turkey's nest fills nearby troughs (stock-watering points controlled by float valves). Turkey's nests were not always included. If they weren't, as in the original Rosevale dams put in by Max Burns, stock had to be allowed down into the tank to get water, and that would cause erosion problems. To prevent that, a turkey's nest would normally be a part of the contract. The tank and turkey's nest would be fenced off from stock, which would only be allowed access to the troughs.

Of the remaining three items, "Clearing Sight" is the site clearing work that was necessary before digging could commence. "Installing Fluming" and "Wing" are explained on page 557.

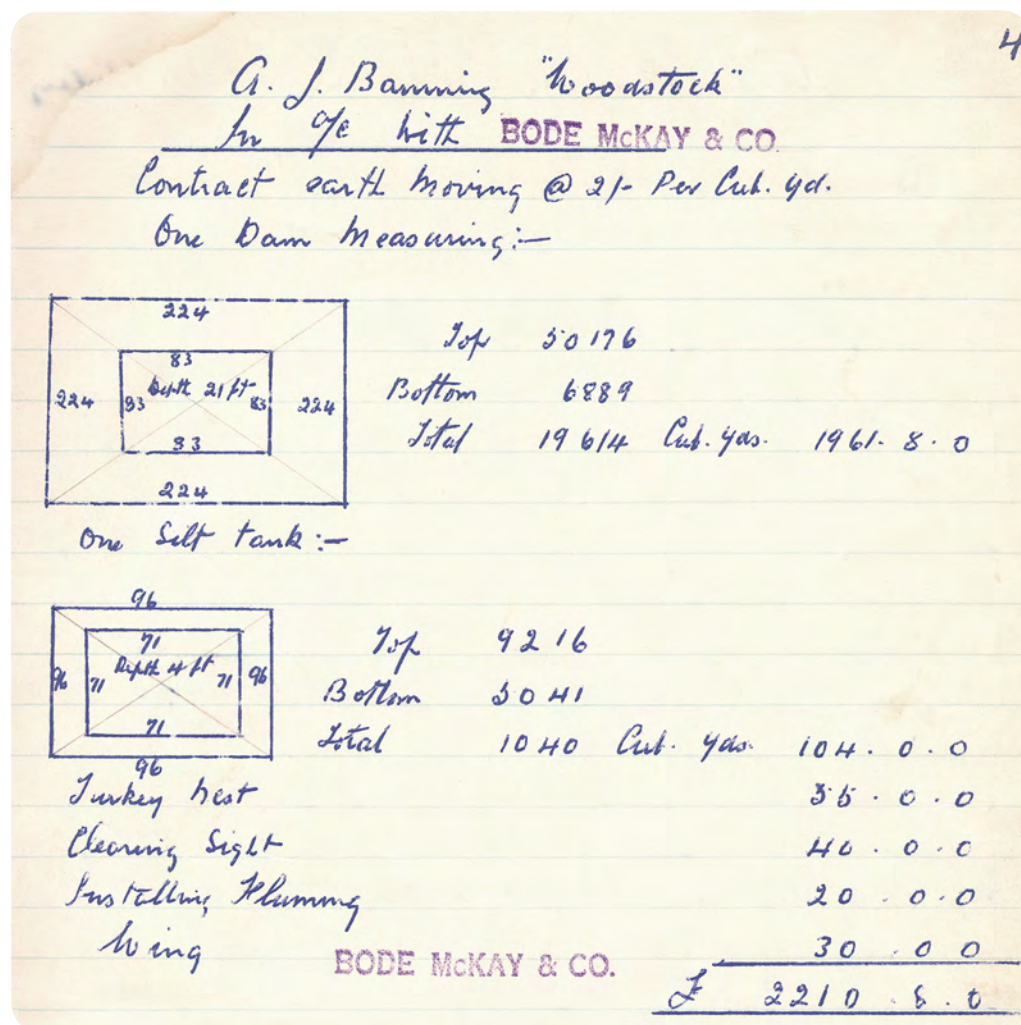
Bill's drawing shows the plan view. The main tank was 224' square at the top (T), 83' square at the bottom (B), and 21' deep (D). The formula for calculating the volume (V) of a tank in cubic yards, when the dimensions are in feet, is:

$$V = D/81 \times (T^2 + T \times B + B^2)$$

This formula explains Bill's entries next to the plan of the main tank. "Top 50176" is the top measurement squared ($50,176 = 224^2$), and "Bottom 6889" is the bottom measurement squared ($6889 = 83^2$). But something is missing. What Bill has not shown is how he calculated his "Total 19,614 cub. yds." It comes from the formula given above. Plugging in the numbers:

$$V = 21/81 \times (50,176 + 224 \times 83 + 6889)$$

In pre-calculator days, and working with five figures (as Bill did) this was not a trivial calculation. But Bill should have worked to six figures to get the best accuracy. If he had done so, the answer would have been 19,614.8 cubic yards. Rounding up to 19,615, Bill could have charged the owner of Woodstock for an additional yard, which would have meant an extra two bob in Bode-McKay's pocket. And as Albie Wilder told me (page 390): "Two shillings would get you a lot, those days."



Opposite: Bill (left) and Leo Bode.
[Bill McKay, McB06, ca 1950]

Above: Bill's invoice for a 20,000 yard tank with turkey's nest, on Woodstock.
[Bill McKay, McB02, ca 1950]

Below: A part of Bode & McKay's tanksinking plant: a Cletrac FDE towing a ripper.
[Bill McKay, McB05, ca 1950]



My Father's Shoes

Rosevale: Australia's northern-most sheep stud and the site of Max's two biggest tanks

Christine Hennessey

Died 24 Jun 2007

TWO GIRLS ON HORSES. Look at our hats, the little hats that our mother made. Ugly and Blaze were the names of the horses. I'm on Ugly and Val's on Blaze. The two horses would take us down to the bore drain and they'd stand in the middle of the hot water and wouldn't leave. We had to get off in the water or just sit on them until someone rescued us. I wouldn't have been 8 because I'd gone to boarding school by the time I was 8. I was maybe 7, so just before the war. That's up on the Cloncurry River, on Byrimine, a property managed by my father but owned by the Magoffin family, the same family that owned Rosevale.

I'm sad when I think how Rosevale is now, our homestead falling down. I loved Rosevale, loved the west. I remember the first day I was allowed to go and get the dairy cows on my own. I was about 5, I guess, and I ran and caught Ugly. She was too big for me as you can see. I used to stand on a box; carried a box around with me and got on her that way.

Although we did have toys and dolls I can't remember any. Our play was with the animals. On Rosevale, animals were our playmates.



MY FATHER WAS LEO HENNESSEY. He enlisted when he was 16 and went to the Great War. He had a very bad time over there and came back a sick man with lung damage. He drew a soldier-settler's block in partnership with Ted Taylor and they started growing cotton and wheat near Dalby. Unfortunately, the crops didn't survive and they had to walk away from it. Somewhere along the line he met James Magoffin who offered him the job managing Rosevale in the late 1920s. When James Magoffin died, his son Richard¹ became the owner.

Dad was managing Rosevale when I was born. I probably should have been a boy, but even then I doubt if I would have been good enough for my father. No child of my father's could have kept up to his high standard of managing stock.

My mother went down to Brisbane to have me at the end of 1932. Two months later she went back to Rosevale. It was a drought year, it was in the Depression, things were dreadful. They were destroying lambs, hitting them on the head as they went through a gate. Mum was so upset she wanted to turn around and go back to Brisbane.

Opposite: Chris (left) on Ugly, Val on Blaze.
[Chris Hennessey, HC01, 1939]

Right: Leo Hennessey.
[Chris Hennessey, HC23, ca 1920]

Below: Rosevale homestead with
Dunlite 32-volt wind generator.
[Chris Hennessey, HC36, 1962]



1. See Magoffin family tree p568.

I have one sister, Val, a bit older than me, born in 1930. I don't remember any other playmates until boarding school. Before that, we did correspondence for a couple of years and we proved two right larrikins for the poor governess. She'd call us into school and we'd hide in holes out in the paddock, holes covered by sheets of corrugated iron with soil on top. My poor mother gave up on correspondence and sent us to the Presbyterian Girls College in Warwick. Mum had come from there and she took us down to start us off; by train through Winton, Rockhampton, Brisbane and then to Warwick.

School wasn't a happy situation at the start because Val and I were a pair of little ferals. We were. We were absolute ferals. Didn't know how to

play with a ball; didn't have a clue. School was our first experience outside the isolated world of Rosevale. We hadn't been anywhere. My father was a sick man and my mother was almost deaf without her hearing aid, so we had very little social activity. We knew the neighbours next door at Quambetook and Ardrin, Dick and Margaret Magoffin, and were on friendly terms with them, but that was about the extent of our socialising.

Until I left boarding school I was very happy. As a child, Rosevale had been the centre of my world; as a young woman it was dreadful. I felt the isolation. After I left school I might have had only half a dozen outings a year. For a young woman that was not enough. I badly wanted to get a job, yet at the same time I was worried, frightened of moving away. I did



correspondence courses: bookkeeping, typing and shorthand, with the thought that sometime I might get a job. Nothing came of that. My sister went away; she did nursing. She had a year at home and she went nursing. I didn't. I stayed at home waiting around to be married.

I wanted to help around the property but my father said no, the men were there to do the work. I know I resented his attitude because I wanted to be involved. On a smaller property a girl might have been allowed to help, but on Rosevale, no. I worked mainly in the house. I was allowed to work a little bit outside, but not much.

Dad talked a lot about why he did things in certain ways. I wasn't allowed to work with the men – I was too protected – but I went with

him in the car. He'd say: "Now, you see those sheep? They're moving slowly, that's because they're in poor condition. When you see them with their heads up, moving quickly, they're in good condition". He'd talk about when to move paddocks, when to start hand feeding, when to move to agistment. All those things for me were completely absorbing, yet I couldn't play much part in it. You might see something and you're thinking: *No, that shouldn't be done, this should be done*. It was hard for a manager's daughter and for a manager's wife, because back then you didn't have the authority to make decisions.

My father managed Rosevale and Byrimine for more than 30 years. He was a good man, I absolutely adored him, but ooh, very much an authoritarian. Very strict – I would never say a word back to him. Disciplined and overly conscientious I guess. He rarely left Rosevale. He loved it there, it was a big part of him. He had virtually no outside social life, and he didn't want it even though he had good friends in the district.

For the last 10 years of Dad's life he was very sick. He had emphysema and could barely draw a breath. Whenever he left the property he'd have an oxygen cylinder in the back of the car and someone had to go with him because he wasn't supposed to be on his own.

My mother took a secondary role on Rosevale, she doesn't come into it very much. She was a shy woman, her deafness a big handicap. She didn't communicate. She was hard to talk to because of her hearing.

I MARRIED TOM FORSTER in 1958. Tom had worked on Rosevale for about two years as a jackaroo. After we married he became the overseer and then took on as manager when my father retired. Dad had been on Rosevale such a long time that he had total say who was to be his successor. I remember Gordon Magoffin saying to Dad (Gordon was the son of Richard; the property had come down to him): "I knew you'd have somebody lined up to take over". Gordon and my father were very happy with Tom's management.

We stayed on Rosevale for four years after we married. One day Gordon rang and asked Tom if he'd like to manage a property near Winton. Gordon wanted to move all the stud operations from Rosevale to Lerida, a property he'd just bought. I said no, I wasn't going. I was happy at Rosevale. I'd made friends and I wanted to stay, but Tom wanted to go. I don't know... he might have looked on Rosevale as my father's place and didn't want to try and fill my father's shoes. People talked about Rosevale and my father in the one breath. I do know that Tom's mother rang me and said: "You have to follow your husband". Anyway, we went.

Tom was manager of Lerida for 33 years, about the same length of time that my father managed Rosevale. He was conscientious and thorough in a different way from my father; a real gentle type.

And as for my father's shoes... well, Tom fitted into them very easily.



Left: "On Rosevale, animals were our playmates."
Chris, Val, and Tippie the kelpie.

[Chris Hennessey, HC15, June 1936]



Just the musterer **Norm Wilson**

Died 30 Dec 2006

registered at 85 points.

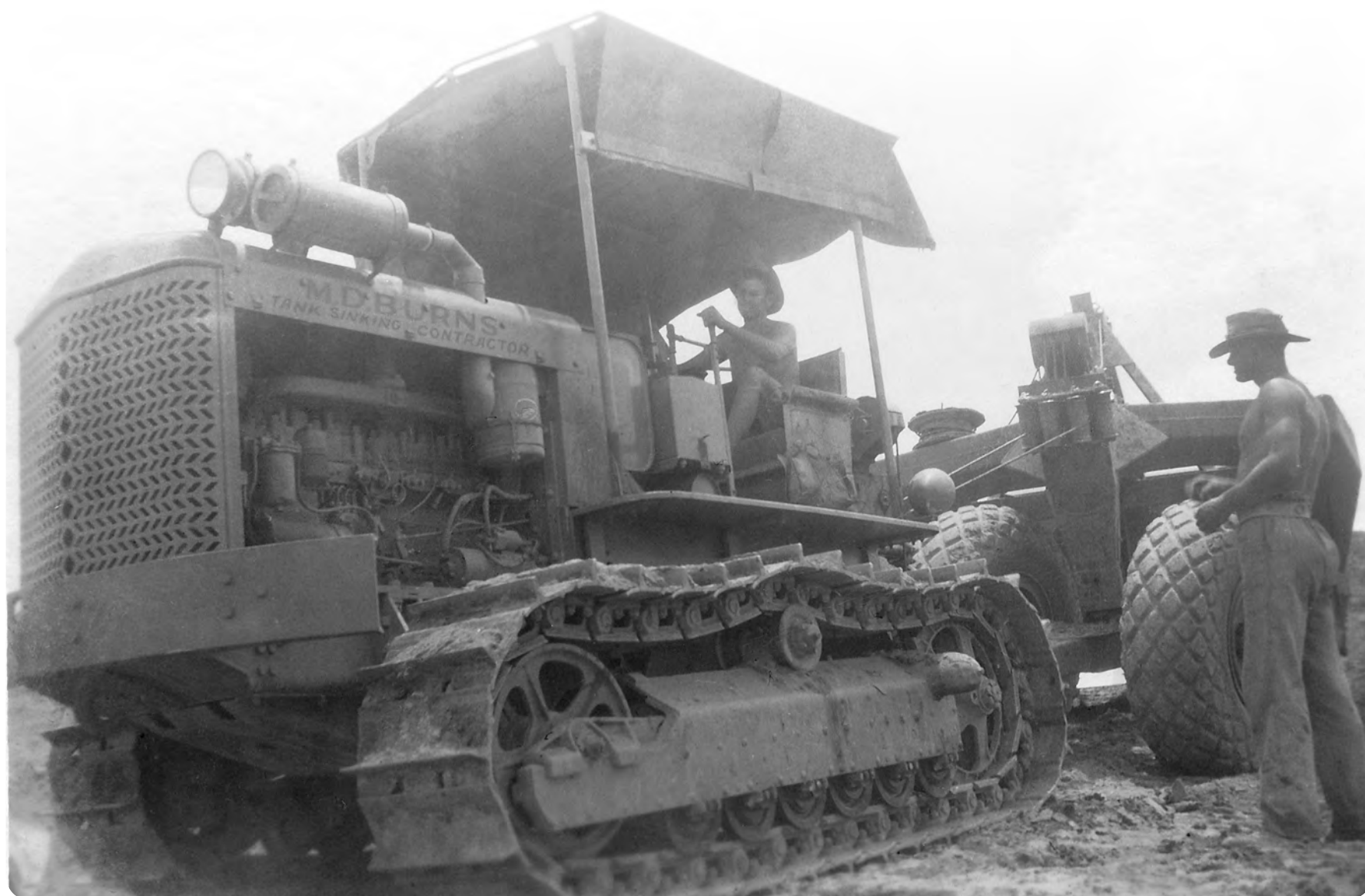
Mr. Max Burns, who perhaps controls one of the most extensive dam sinking plants under private ownership in Australia, is at present operating on Rosevale building two enormous dams holding about 12,000,000 gallons of water each, and thence he goes to Mr. Richard Magoffin's other property, Byrimine, to build two more such dams. With his huge tractors and scoops, worked by competent drivers, Mr. Burns expects to complete each of these young lakes in three weeks.

During the week the Council brought a lorry-load of bombs from just outside

NQR: 18 Dec 1948

JUST AFTER THE WAR the government made all sorts of concessions for improvements to properties, and that led to a big upsurge in tanksinking. Melrose Dick who owned Rosevale, he had a thing about dams – he didn't need too much encouragement from the government – and he got Max to come onto Rosevale and put down two tanks. It was hot, droughty country. Bore drains dried off in the summertime. The flow of water from the bore stayed the same, but evaporation reduced the level in the drains and they'd shrink back. If the water shrank back far enough it might cut off a paddock. You couldn't get more water out of the bore (though some people tried, by illegally cutting the top out of the bore) – so they built tanks and dams to create a permanency.

I was the overseer on Rosevale when Max started on the two tanks. The equipment was big time. I personally had no involvement other than the construction of the fence and the concrete spillway below the fluming outlet. I remember Leo Hennessey wrote the £6000 cheque for that big tank. It was 60,000 cubic yards so you can work out how much per cubic yard Max was charging. It was big time, big money – a big cheque for a big project.



If the sheep wanted a drink they were allowed in the tank. We didn't bother fencing it off to stop them getting in. Coming back out, 10 pound heavier with a gallon of water in their bellies, they'd have to spiral to some extent because the banks were pretty steep, about three-in-one.

Max put down the tanks without spillways. It was natural for me to follow on and complete the job because I'd done that sort of thing before, and it was something to do between stockwork. You had to have a spillway on the outlet of the fluming otherwise the water rushing from the pipe would cut away the bank and make a great chasm. We bought the cement, we found the rock, we formed the rocks into a rough shape and we fine-tuned it with a cement mixer – an offsider and me. I'd say it took us several weeks.

We ended the spillway where we did, and not at the very bottom, because the water level was never expected to be any lower than that. The fence was for dividing paddocks. There'd be one on the other side too. I brought in loads of lancewood rails and gidya posts on the truck and I erected those fences. See, I had a roving commission for quite a period; did what I thought needed doing.

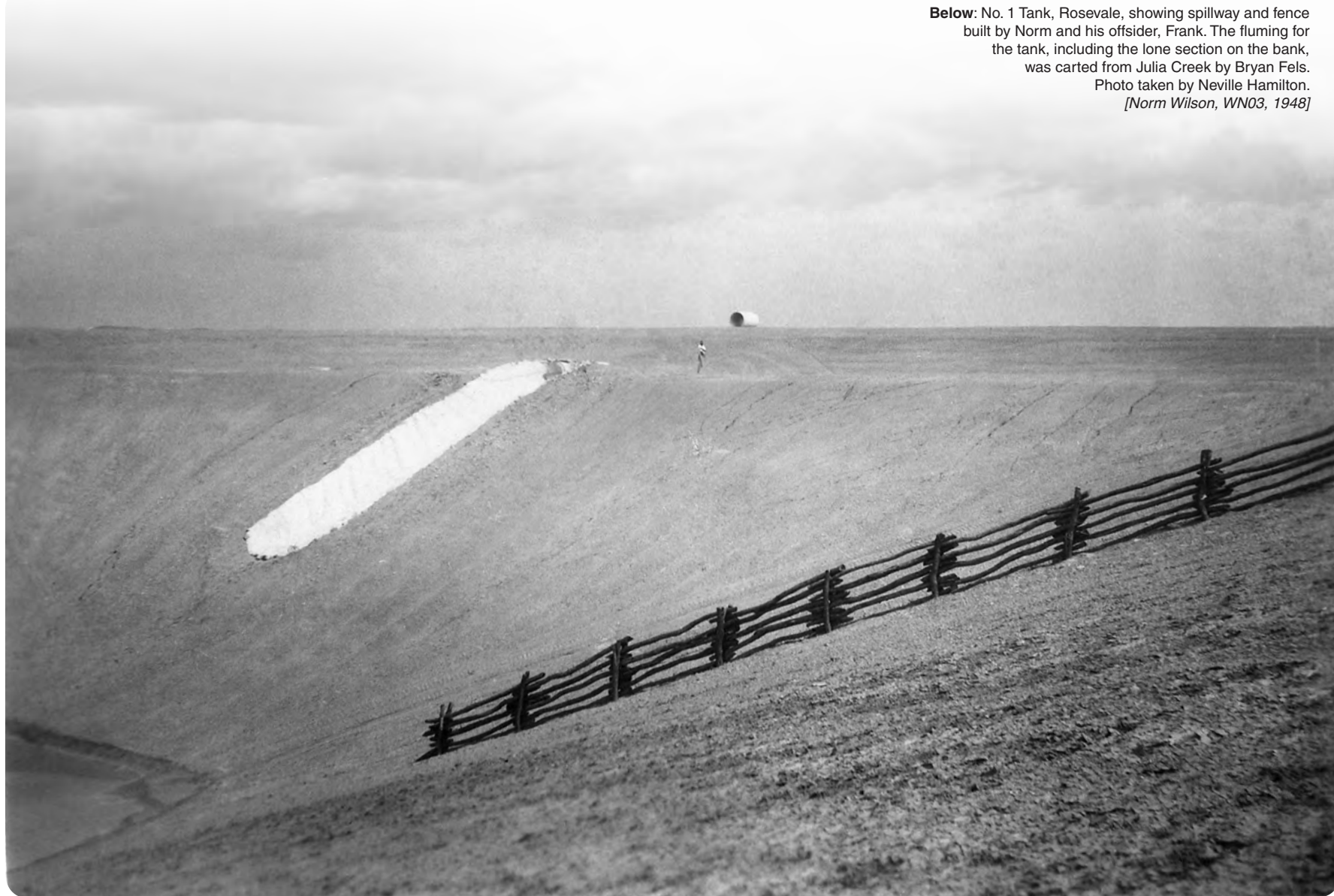
Max did a good job on those tanks; they were really something to see. And I was very proud of my work on the fences and the spillway. Still am.

Opposite: *MD Burns, Tank Sinking Contractor.*
Max's Cletrac FDE and Britstand C14 scoop,
building No. 1 Tank, Rosevale. The man driving
is probably Pat Luhrmann (see below);
the man standing is Norm.
Photo taken by Neville Hamilton.
[Norm Wilson, WN05, 1948]

"Margaret reckons that's me driving that tractor,
and there's every chance it could be. It's not Alec Crowley
and I don't think it's Cecil Willis. Cecil was a bit older than us.
I think it would be me. I really do.

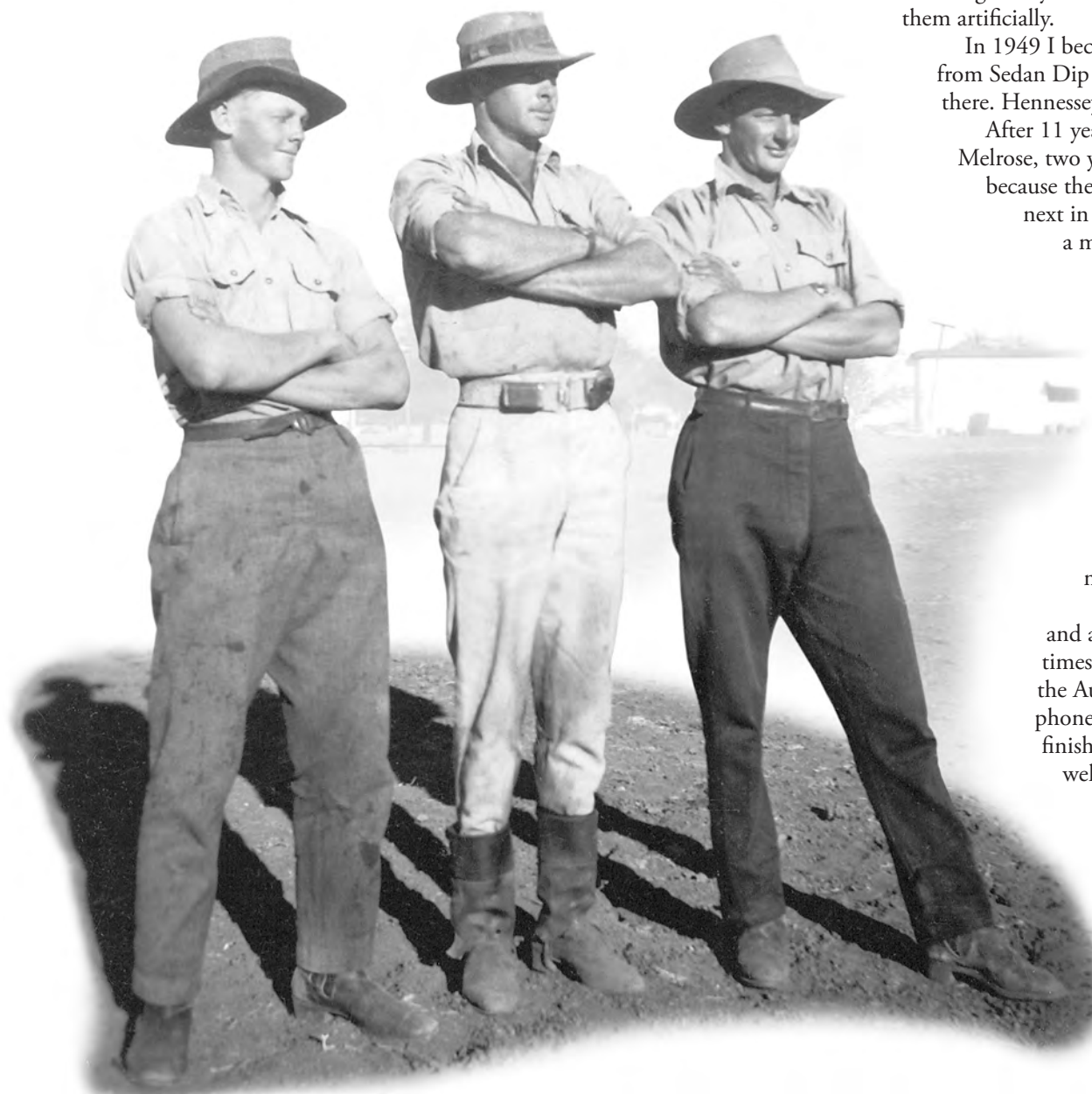
"It's one of the older-style FDEs (120 horsepower they were),
and if that's on Rosevale it'd be No. 1 Tank. See the edge
of the fuel tank in front of the driver? And the battery box?
See the clip on the bottom that holds the battery box down?
On the older FDEs you undo each end and lift the battery box off.
The newer FDEs had an air tank under the battery box
because the steering brakes were air-boosted. This one doesn't,
so it's one of the older model FDEs, the original ones Max had,
the ones we used on the first tank over near the Yorkshire road.
The second tank was closer to the Kynuna road." (Pat Luhrmann)

Below: No. 1 Tank, Rosevale, showing spillway and fence
built by Norm and his offsider, Frank. The fluming for
the tank, including the lone section on the bank,
was carted from Julia Creek by Bryan Fels.
Photo taken by Neville Hamilton.
[Norm Wilson, WN03, 1948]



I WAS BORN IN ROMA, July 28, 1928. My father was a fencing contractor. Somehow we ended up in the city and I went to a state school in George St beside Parliament House. During the war, when I was in Sub Junior, they closed the school for fear of Japanese bombing. I joined a quasi-government thing called the War Damage Commission for two years, as office boy, messenger, junior clerk and so on.

My grandparents had dairy farms at what was then the outskirts of Brisbane; one at Oxley, one at Sherwood. I had that rurally background (I romanced the idea of being a stockman) so I went to Dalgetys to see what was on offer. I got a job on Melrose, between Longreach and Winton, working for Richard Magoffin – Melrose Dick. I went out by train when I was 15. My only memory of that trip was the goat's milk west of Rockhampton, my first introduction to goat's milk on porridge.



Within two years of being on Melrose I was the overseer. There was a big labour shortage in the war years and I moved ahead faster than I might have otherwise. A couple of years later when I was 19, Richard saw fit to get me to Rosevale, to his sheep stud, as overseer of the flock sheep. Harry Denman was already there and Neville Hamilton arrived a few months later. There'd be perhaps one other stockman, plus a housemaid and cook. Mr Hennessey was the manager.

It wasn't very often we got away from the station in those days. There weren't the attractions from so many quarters like today, so we didn't look for them. You didn't know to look for them. We weren't used to lots of entertainment anyway.

Dr George Moule from the Department of Primary Industries spent a year or so on Rosevale introducing artificial insemination. Rosevale had these big stud rams, rams so big that they'd go to mount a ewe and couldn't do the job. The ram would keep trying, but eventually he'd give the ewe a butt and go away and hide under a tree. So they used to take it from them artificially.

In 1949 I became manager of Byrimine, a property upstream from Sedan Dip on the Cloncurry River. I had my 21st birthday there. Hennessey was the actual manager; I was the sub-manager.

After 11 years with the Magoffin company (four years on Melrose, two years on Rosevale and five years at Byrimine) I left because there was nowhere further to go; Hennessey or his next in line would always be in charge. So I struck out to a management job on a place called Harrogate, near Richmond, where I stayed for five years.

THE LIKES OF LEO HENNESSEY and Richard Magoffin, they are the pastoral industry those people. They're the industry, they're the pastoralists. It's in their blood, they just... have it. Richard was president of the Queensland Graziers Association, and at the most impressionable age in my working life, my adolescence, he was my mentor.

Leo Hennessey was the same. I grew to respect and admire him for his knowledge of stock. Three times at the one wool sale during the boom he broke the Australian record. I was talking to Leo on the phone from Byrimine and I congratulated him. When I finished he said to me: "Yes, I won the world record as well, at the London sales".

Although prices were down the following year, we again topped the London sales with AAA wool shorn on Byrimine. When I say "we" – I was the sub-manager on Byrimine. It had nothing to do with me, really. Leo was the studmaster and the credit was due to him. I was just the musterer.



Q'land wool U.K. record

LONDON, February 16, 1951.—
Wool drawn from a Queensland clip that made the Australasian scoured wool record in Brisbane on Tuesday created a new London scoured price record to-day.

The London record-maker was a lot of 12 bales of super spinners, 70s quality, branded JM/Rosevale, which realised 371½d. Aust. per lb.

This wool is from the Rosevale clip of Mr. R. Magoffin, Julia Creek. The Australasian record established by scoured wool from Rosevale, in Brisbane, was 364d per lb. for six bales.

The new London record exceeds the previous best price of 363d. Aust. per lb.

Australian wool offered to-day was the best seen in London this season, according to the Committee of London Wool Brokers, and attracted the full force of spot market competition.

Prices were from 2½ to 5 per cent. dearer than last week.

SEASON'S HIGHEST

A REPORT from the Committee of London Wool Brokers states that the best of the offering of scoured merinos at the London wool sales from January 12 to 23 comprised a consignment branded JM / ROSEVALE / BYRMINE from the north-west of Queensland.

It had been scoured at Julia Creek and was suitable for the specialty trade. The top line was 26 bales of 74s quality which sold for 183½d.—this season's highest price for scoured wool. Nineteen bales fetched 180d., 18 bales 178½d. and 17 bales 177½d. The broken realised 175½d. and 175d. and the bellies 163½d.



Above: Spillway on No. 1 Tank (see previous spread for a distant view), built by Norm and his offsider Frank. The words "Thank Christ" at the bottom of the spillway were inscribed by Norm. At the top is the outlet of the fluming with a non-return flap to prevent water flowing out of the tank after it fills during a flood.

[Norm Wilson, WN04, Dec 1948]

"We used 105 tons of rock and 5 tons of cement, we two fellows, to build that spillway. We dug the rock out and loaded it on the truck, and then we had to unload it and put it in place. The rock was handled twice before it found a bedding for itself; all done by hand by me and this station-hand fellow. And when we finished, way down the batter at the bottom of the spillway, I inscribed in the cement "Thank Christ." (Norm)

Opposite: Neville Hamilton (left), Norm, and Gordon Magoffin on Rosevale.

[Norm Wilson, WN02, 1948]

Over page: The completed No. 1 Tank. The truck is the one used to carry the 105 tons of rocks that Norm mentioned above.

[Norm Wilson, WN01, Dec 1948]

Photo taken by Neville Hamilton, who wrote on the back:

*The first of the cement
about to be put into position.
Frank, Mr. H. and Norm are
at cement mixer.*

LARGE WATER TANKS IN THE FAR N. WEST

Two large water storage earth tanks have been laid on Rosevale (a Magoffin property) in the Julia Creek district. The total measurement of the two tanks is 122,000 cubic yards.

When Mr Richard Magoffin was in Townsville on Tuesday to chair a meeting of the Grazier's Association Cattle Committee, he gave details of the two tanks to a "Register" representative.

"The larger tank" said Mr Magoffin, "is 66,000 cubic yards and the smaller 56,000 cubic yards."

"The larger tank will impound 11,000,000 gallons of water and the smaller 9,000,000 gallons", explained Mr Magoffin.

When sinking the larger dam a depth of 47 feet was reached. For the smaller, the depth was 40 feet.

The tanks are from 8 to 9 miles apart, one on Julia Creek and the second on another stream. It is estimated that the water will fall about 12 feet per year.

"This will give us an assured water supply for four years" concluded Mr Magoffin.

Dried black mud of an ancient sea,
Flat to the horizon.
Treeless, waterless, featureless:
The essence of the Julia Creek downs country.

A moonscape with a man-made crater;
A thirsty "young lake" waiting for the first rain
to pour through the fluming.

Three men are mixing cement:
"In that photo, there'd be me, the offsider,
and the manager, Leo Hennessey.
On the right is the truck we carried the rocks on."
Norm was working from memory,
unable to distinguish who was who;
the original image too small¹
to make distinctions between men.

When enlarged,
the detail preserved since 1948,
locked in gradations of silver, is revealed.
The boss, fully clothed,
and flanked by two shirtless underlings,
attends to some fine mechanical detail.
Clothes and physique allow further discernment:
on the left is the skinny offsider in shorts;
on the right, the sturdy overseer in longs.



The overseer wears a wide belt on a brawny body.
 Turn back a spread – and another –
 to see the big-buckled man with a hint of Rhett Butler.

I rang Norm yesterday².
 He asked me did I know he had but a few months to live.
 I remained silent while he continued to speak,
 and thought I heard a tear in his voice:
 a lament for his big-buckle days on Rosevale.

Today, Norm rang me to clarify some aspects of his story.
 I was immersed in this image, staring at liquid crystals,
 conjuring craters from young lakes.
 He wanted to know when the book would be finished.
 I knew what his question meant,
 and my answer would have to be: *Not in time*.
 But I didn't say that.
 Instead, I hinted that among his Christmas reads for 2006
 would be a draft story³ of his cherished Rosevale.



2. 26 Nov 2006

3. Norm died 30 Dec 2006. He did receive the draft before he died, minus this spread.

Some good digging **Alec Crowley**

Died 29 Aug 2009

CLIO? YEAH, I DID CLIO IN 1949. Went over there from Rosevale, tanksinking with Max. A little old fella, Pat Hogarth, owned it. He bought an aeroplane, Tiger Moth; got a big hangar built for it. He learnt to fly it when he was 72. He got this instructor to teach him to fly. Just something he wanted to do at 72 years of age.

We completed one of the tanks for Hogarth and Max was measuring it. Hogarth was looking at the figures. He said to Max: "Now listen – there's a government surveyor in Winton. I'm going to bring him out to measure this job to see how your figures compare with his". Pat Hogarth didn't trust Max, see. Well, that's business. A fair bit of money was involved. He'd spend money that old Hogarth, but he wanted to pay for what actually came out of the ground.

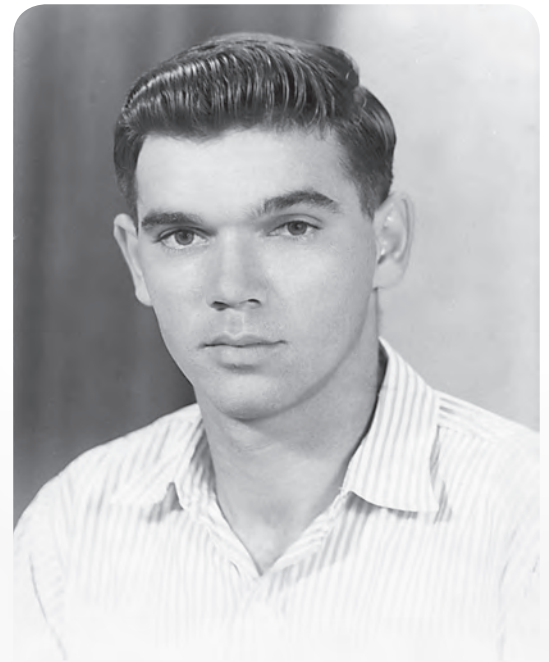
The figures were right, no worries. He paid Max's figures. There was only a few yards difference. No ill feelings. I don't know of any others that checked on Max, but old Pat did, anyhow.

ON THAT BLACK SOIL DOWNS around Julia Creek you can average it out at 3 feet of black soil. That was sea-bed; that was the old black mud when the sea was there. Below that you get into shale. There was some good digging in that shale; very good digging. Occasionally we struck sandstone. We used explosives then. Max was the powder monkey.

Max's youngest son, Alan, was almost killed once when we were trying to clear sandstone. He was about 3. We came across a slab of rock four times as big as this room. We bored underneath it with an auger and Max placed the charges. They were set to go off, they were smoking. Young Alan – he'd been playing around the site – he came over the bank. Max yelled at him but that had no effect, he was too young to understand. Max didn't seem to know what to do except yell. While he was carrying on, Pat Luhrmann got Alan out of the road just before it went off¹. Would have killed him all right – Alan was going down into the tank. That was on Rosevale in one of those big excavations. I was there when it happened.

They were good kids, Max's lot, but we complained to him about them coming over to the tank. You wouldn't get over a thing like that, would you, if you ran over them. They used to hang on the back of the scoop. See that knob at the back? They'd hang on there, feet dangling underneath, having a ride.

1. For Pat's version of the story, see p452.



Above: Alec Crowley
[Alec Crowley, CR12, 1947]

Opposite: FDE Cletrac and Britstand C14 scoop on Clio, a year or so before Alec started working for Max. The knob that Alec mentioned, where the kids dangled from, is at the back.
[Joy Burns, J62, Dec 1947]

Left: Mal (left) and Alan Burns ('Butch') on Clio, playing around a Britstand C14 scoop.
[Joy Burns, J57, ca 1949]



1925 IN CAMOOWEAL I WAS BORN. My parents were working on stations. Mum was cooking; Dad was working cattle, mustering.

We went to Charters Towers when I was about 6. Dad bought an orchard, a 30-acre paddock, about a mile and a half west of the Post Office. I was a fairly big lad – and boy, there was some work for me. We had goats and we had our own vegie garden.

I went to school in Charters Towers, Central School. Used to walk in and used to walk home. It was worse than a concentration camp that school. It was. The headmaster was a psychopath. Ooh, big red fella, and he used to flog two or three kids every day. You'd get half a dozen cuts on a winter's morning and all the tips of your fingers went hard and you'd just cry with pain.

I got to fifth grade. I'd had enough. I went out working on Lolworth Station north of Pentland; station work, stockman. Lovely young fella was managing there. Good family I got in with. I stayed three years the first time. Ten years later I went back as head stockman for nearly four years.

First time I got on a tractor was 1946 with Knuth. An International TD35 – 35 horse power. I was building dams with Morty Knuth on Corea Plains, south of Homestead, but first we had to clear the site as there were quite a few trees. You had hell's own job of clearing the timber; you had to get the rope up the tree as high as you could. Bloomin' headache trying to pull a tree over like that.

I ended up going with Max Burns when I saw an ad in the paper in late 1948 asking for drivers on Rosevale. I sent a telegram enquiring about the work. The people on Rosevale took the message over the phone and sent it out to Max. He gave me the job.

I flew out to Julia Creek in a DC3 with TAA and they stopped at every town on the way. When I got to Julia Creek I went straight out to Max's camp. There was Cecil Willis (he was the foreman), Pat Luhrmann and his wife, and Max and Marj. Max never got on a machine, he was just looking on. Marj did the cooking. Some other men came later; about a month or six weeks later.

We did two big jobs on Rosevale, 65,000 and 55,000 yards. Took us about a month each of actual working, but due to holdups with rain we were there longer than that. If it rained overnight you couldn't go in the tank until it dried out. It would be too slippery.

When I was with Max he had two Cletrac FDEs and two Britstand C14 scoops. In my time I've seen a lot of plant, talked to a lot of people, and those scoops were number one. They were easy to fill and easy to tip. With some of the other scoops, when you pulled the tipping lever you'd hear the motor start to work a bit harder, but not with those Britstands. They tipped the load out – 14, 15 tons of dirt – real easy.

We had names for the FDEs. When I was there they were called Cecil and Pat. Naming them makes it easier. Instead of Max saying:

That FDE needs greasing and refuelling.
Which one?

If they have names, well, you just go straight to the vehicle: "Fill Cecil with fuel".

When we got mobilised after Christmas, when all the other fellas turned up, we used to work three shifts: midnight till 8 in the morning, 8 till 4, then 4 till midnight. There was no down time, you serviced



the machines during your shift: fuel up, grease up, look for anything... well, you were always looking for anything broken or needing attending to or needing adjustment.

The new fellas often broke the wire ropes that controlled the scoop. You had one lever for tipping and another lever for moving the bowl up or down to change the depth of cut. When the bowl was full you pulled on the lifting lever which lifted the bowl off the ground. The lever's lying horizontal, just to your right, and you pulled it up towards you. An arm on the scoop did the actual lifting. It was about a metre long I suppose, this arm, and it had a lot of pulleys at the very top which gave it the leverage to regulate the up-and-down of the bowl. New chums sometimes wouldn't lift the arm high enough, see, and because of the way the arm worked, if they went over a bump the rope could snap. And then they wouldn't know how to thread a new rope through all the pulleys. They'd have to come and get someone to help them. You might have knocked off at midnight, had a bath, cleaned off all the dust, and they'd come up and get you to fix the broken wire. Max didn't like that. None of us did. But Max never used to get out of bed – one of us had to.

I forget how many thousand feet of wire rope Max bought from an army sale. Before long the new fellas went through nearly all of it. Those broken ropes became the reason for my eventually leaving Max.

Nelia Ponds, Yorkshire, Garomna, Isabel Downs, Clio – and there's another one in there somewhere – we were on all those properties after Rosevale. Didn't do anything real big. Yorkshire we did a couple of sizeable jobs.

It was '49 I finished up. We were on Dagworth, the Waltzing Matilda place near Winton, doing a job there. All these learners were wearing out brake linings and breaking ropes through bad operating. Max called us together and said we had to pay for it. I wasn't going to be in that, I wasn't breaking any ropes. I told Max I'd finish up if I had to pay. My mate, Bert Richards – good operator, too – said the same. We never did any more work. I sent word to Mort and he came and picked us up. I started work with Morty Knuth again. Ended up I was earthmoving at Lawn Hill for quite a number of years.

I wish I was back at Lawn Hill. I was working on contract and really enjoyed it. They supplied everything: all spare parts, fuel, grease. They bought that little truck for me. I was real happy there.



Right: Alec's mate, Bert Richards.
[Bert Richards, RB01, ca 1950]

Opposite: Alec's 1953 Chev on Lawn Hill Station.
[Alec Crowley, CR20, ca 1955]

Below: No. 2 Tank on Rosevale that Alec helped build in 1948.
 The woman walking at the water's edge is Chris Hennessey.
[Chris Hennessey, HC32, 1962]



I WAS BORN in Charters Towers in 1923. I started driving tractors out around Hughenden, those places, after the war. I learnt to drive with a bloke named Herrod, then I got a job with Morty Knuth. After I left Morty I went with Max Burns. That was Alec's idea. He wanted to go somewhere else and he asked me to go with him. We were pretty good mates.

There was me, Alec, Cecil Willis... must have been about six of us. We were working around the clock, we'd go all night. Max was there too, knocking about. I never saw him on the machines but he was there. His wife was with him in the caravan.

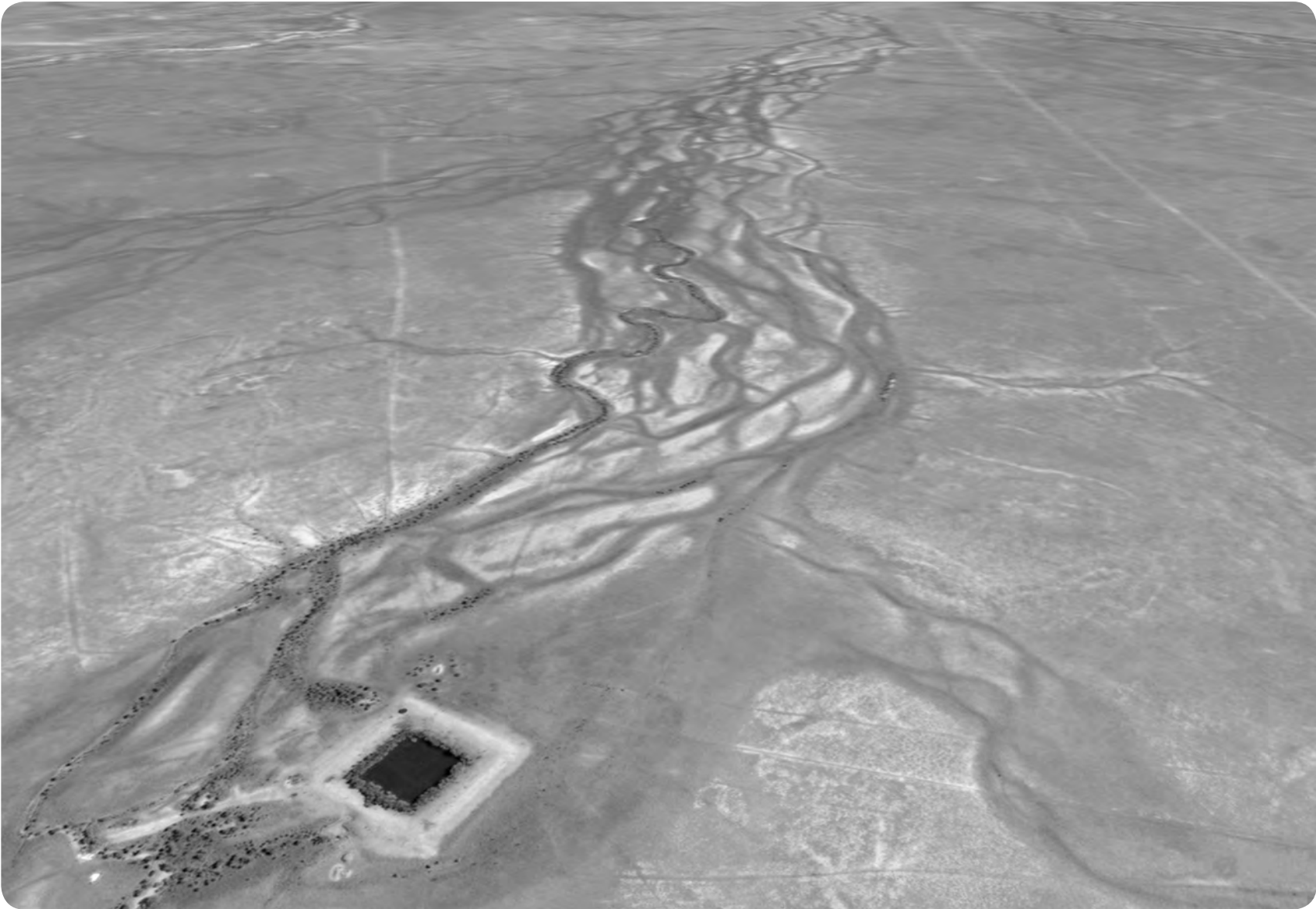
I was getting a pound a day and so much a thousand. You'd make a good bit of money. If the machinery broke down you still got paid the pound a day.

I wasn't with Max long. I don't think it was six months. Alec wanted to go – there was some trouble over the ropes – and we were mates so we both went.

BERT RICHARDS

Died ~ 2005





Opposite: No. 1 Tank, Rosevale, the largest tank built by Max Burns, as seen from a height of 3000'. His drivers on this job were Alec Crowley, Pat Luhrmann and Cecil Willis. The tank was finished around October 1948. When newly completed it was 310' square at the top and 50' square at the bottom, with a 1:2¾ batter and a depth of 47 feet.

The tank fills in flood-time from Julia Creek, the tree-fringed watercourse on the left, flowing north towards the town of Julia Creek. Flood waters are directed into the tank by a wing wall, the white scar jutting out about 500' from the south-west corner of the tank.

Cutting diagonally across the top right of the image is the Yorkshire road.

The position of the north-east corner of the tank is 20° 59.92' S, 142° 3.87' E. Some day I hope to erect on that spot a bronze plaque in memory of my grandfather and the tanksinkers who built this tank.

Right: A page from a book published by Britstand showing Max Burns' tanksinking equipment (top) and No. 1 Tank on Rosevale (bottom), with Norm Wilson's spillway, Leo Hennessey's jeep, and above the jeep the lone fluming pipe carted from Julia Creek by Bryan Fels.

This book was Alec Crowleys for about 50 years until he gave it to me in 2002.

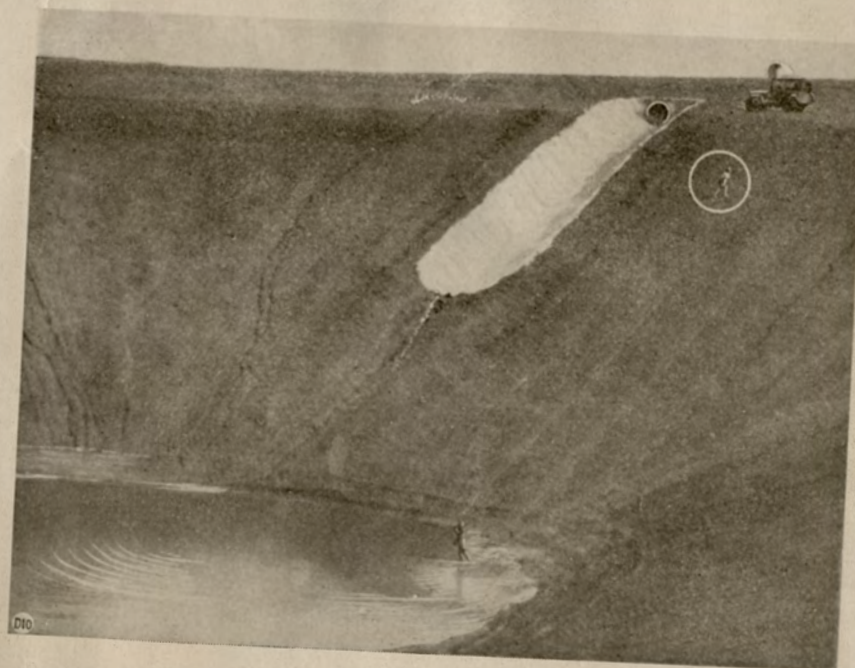
There is a small discrepancy between the figures quoted in the book (65,000 cubic yards, 52' deep) and those quoted in the *North Queensland Register* of 12/3/1949 (66,000 cubic yards, 47' deep, see page 441).

The newspaper figures are probably correct.

When I visited the tank and took the top measurement, each side was 310'. Assuming a depth of 47' and a batter of 2¾, the bottom dimension can be calculated as 50'.

These figures give a capacity of 66,200 cubic yards.

Note the ripples on the water – the person at the bottom is throwing stones.



Modern Tanksinking plant was used to sink this 65,000 cu. yd. tank in North Queensland in 24 working days. Shown in the lower photo, where good comparison is given by the figure in the circle, these tanks are 52' deep with batters of 1 to 2¾ and are calculated for the water requirements of a possible 4 years of drought conditions.

A pound a day, a pound a thousand **Pat & Margaret Luhrmann**

MAX'S TRACTORS, THEY WERE GIANTS IN THAT DAY. There were no big tractors in Julia Creek until he went out there with those FDEs. The councils never had anything that big. They were monstrous things to us because we were used to little D2s.

I first went out with Max in 1948 just after the wet season. We went onto Pop Hogarth's place, Clio, and put some big tanks down. Cecil Willis was there with me. We did three, maybe four of the bigger ones. But the biggest tanks we built were on Rosevale, about 60,000 yards each. Quarter mile around the excavation and half a mile around the bank. Richard Magoffin owned Rosevale, and a bloke by the name of Hennessey was the manager. Another Magoffin owned Ardbrin, next door, and Max did work there as well. He worked that whole area till he more or less got the big jobs done. He didn't have the equipment for the small jobs when I was with him. Later on he employed Harry Goundry and bought smaller tractors so that he could take on turkey's nests and the small jobs.

Why they wanted large capacity dams – actually, it was more the depth they were after – was to reduce evaporation. Wind blowing across a dam in that flat, dry country tends to blow the water away if there aren't decent sized banks. The deeper you dig, the higher the banks can be. We used to go down 25-28 feet on the small tanks, and 50 feet or so on the large ones.

Max picked a site where he reckoned the tank would fill quickly after rain, and at the same time, when it did become full, that the water could still get away. We never built them across a watercourse because they'd be

washed away in the next flood. It was always off to one side.

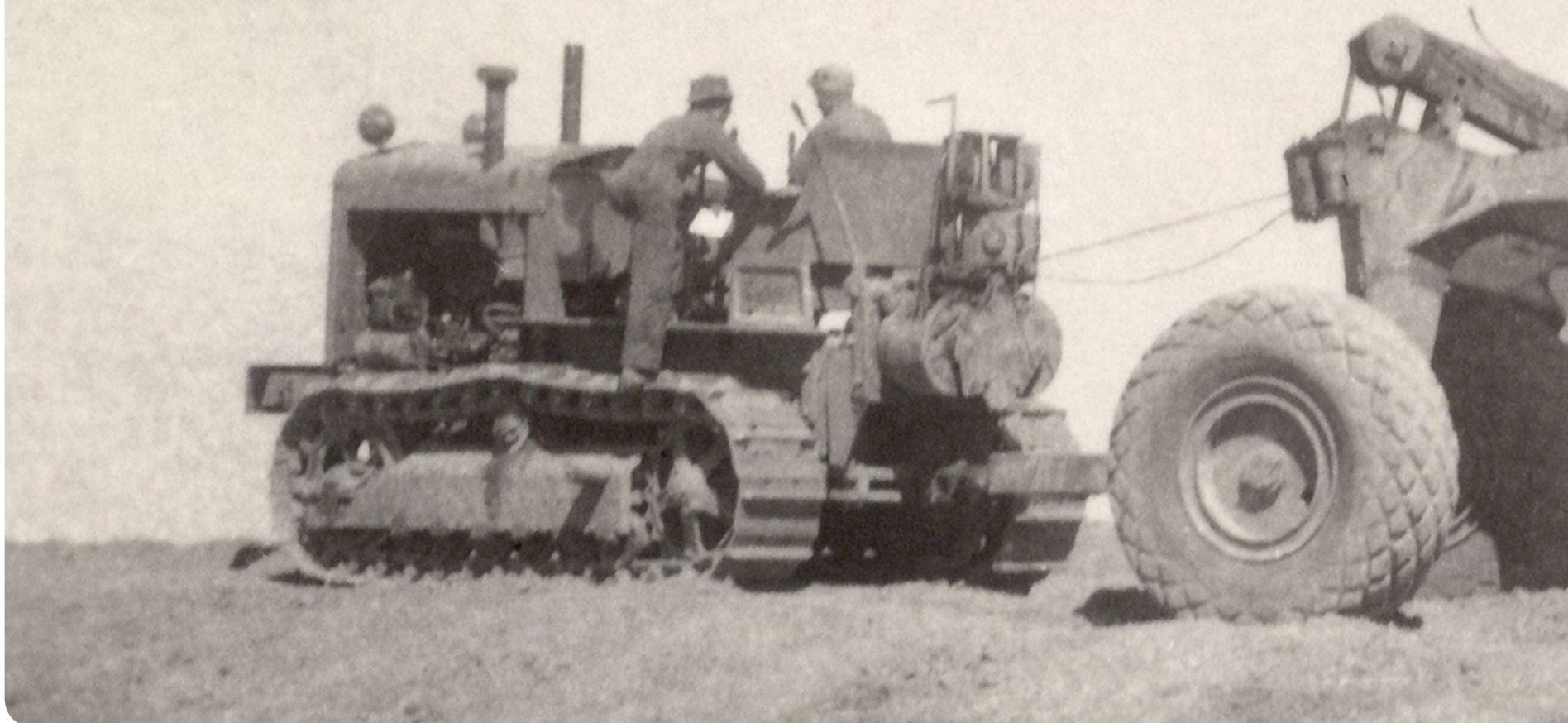
First thing, you measured a square on the ground. Max aimed for a batter – how steep the inside of the tank was – of three-in-one. That's about the best those tractors would do. Even then, when you got well down and the scoop was real full, you'd have to go out the corners. Cecil used to form the batter because he was an experienced driver. Once he had it right, well, you just stayed on the same tilt all the way to the bottom. I know with one dam – I think it was when Alec Crowley first came to Rosevale – the batter wasn't three-in-one, so we spent two days cutting it down, making it steeper.

Max could calculate the batter by the bottom measurement in the tank. Say it was 300 feet along the top; then it would have to be a certain amount along the bottom. He knew by the bottom measurement whether you had a three-in-one batter. He was particular about the corners, too, because if they weren't clean, if they were full of dirt, that's less water the tank will hold.

To work out the size of the tank when it was finished, you'd measure the top, the bottom, multiply by the depth and divide by some other figure and you'd get so-many thousand yards¹. The tanks never measured exactly what they were supposed to be – we might knock a peg over and it might go back in a different place – but they were never out by much.

A pound a day and a pound a thousand, that was the best pay I got with Max. And he supplied the food. Willis and I could shift a thousand

1. The formula for the capacity of a tank is given on p433.



yards a day with the one tractor. It was reasonable money in those days. Max would go to a site and say: "Right, this is 20,000 yards" and we'd know we'd be paid 20 quid plus a pound for every day we were there. If we weren't working we only got seven quid a week.

I was with Max four sides of three wet seasons. During the wet he'd find a place to park the plant and I'd work in Julia Creek with the council. Max never worked through the wet; he didn't want to get caught with rain. You can't scoop, or even move, when that black soil is wet. You just pump the water out the best you can, then wait for it to dry. It doesn't soak away, that's why tanks are so good in that area. Luckily Max never had much trouble with water when I was with him.

Below: Working on No. 1 Tank, Rosevale.
Cletrac FDE towing a Britstand C14, a 14-yard scoop.
The identification of the men is uncertain.
[Neville Hamilton, HaN06, 1948]

"I think that'd have to be Cecil Willis driving. And the bloke in overalls is probably Max. That particular tractor was one of the first FDEs Max had. Take notice of the two headlights on it, the single air-breather (the pipe on the left), and the single exhaust.

"Max always referred to the scoops as 14-15 yard scoops. Over the tailgate at the back of the scoop you can see a dark triangle sticking up, and I think that's what they called a 'hungry board'. They welded an extra sheet of metal across the back of the scoop to stop dirt falling out. That was the 15th yard, the extra yard."
(Pat Luhrmann)

I WAS BORN IN 1925 in Forbes; well, Eugowra actually, NSW. Dad was on a wheat farm at Eugowra with his brothers. A big drought was on, apparently, and when I was one year old Dad packed up an old Chev and worked his way north through the western districts. In 1939 we ended up in the Atherton Tablelands, sharefarming at Ravenshoe.

I enlisted when I turned 18, the war was hotting up, and they sent me out to Charters Towers.

MARGARET: I was born at Winton, way out west, in 1926. We lived in Winton for five years, and then the family went to Townsville. I had bad asthma, I was in and out of hospital all the time, so Mum sent me to Charters Towers. She reckoned the drier climate would help me. I did get a lot better there. And that's where I met Pat. We got married in 1946, in September, after Pat came home from the war.

Margaret was asthmatic. When she had our first baby she was sick all the time and the doctor said: "You oughta go further west". We headed out to Hughenden, booked into a hotel. The only job I could pick up was navvying. One of the fettlers was leaving a job at Olio on the Hughenden-Winton line, so I went to Olio working on the railway, chasing lizards. I was navvying there for a few months.

One day this bloke come past with earthmoving gear and a new tractor. I went over and had a yarn. It was Max Burns.

Need a driver?

Have you been on a tractor before?

Yeah, but not big ones like that. I've driven plenty of little ones, snigging timber.

Well, I'll put you on the list.

I thought that'd be the last I saw of Max. A couple of days later he was coming back through Olio and he came to see me: "If you're still interested in that job, come out and have a go at our tractor". Max said that Margaret could stay at the hotel he owned in Charters Towers. I didn't like the idea of going bush and leaving Margaret in Charters Towers, but then I got to thinking – a tanksinking site would be a bad place to be stuck if she had an asthma attack.



MARGARET: I had a nice little flat upstairs at the hotel for three or four months. I had a gas stove, a bed, and a kitchenette sort of thing. I don't remember much else about the Commercial Hotel, to tell you the truth. See, I was too sick and I had a little baby with me. But I remember Marj Burns vividly, oh yes. She took me out to Clio a couple of times to see Pat. In those days it was all dirt roads and she'd fall asleep driving. She'd stop, get out, put water on her eyes and blink a couple of times, then get back in. It was a long way; we were driving day and night. We didn't stop.

With all the driving – Pat on Clio and me in Charters Towers – Max came to the conclusion that it wasn't really working out. He seemed to me a very quiet man. The most words I ever spoke to him were about the caravan: would I come out if he bought a caravan. He'd pay for it and we could pay him off. We had an Overlander truck and I used to drive that, so I said: "All right, I've got this Overlander, that'll pull it". That's how I came to be tanksinking for nine months with Pat and a 6-month-old baby.



At the start, when I first went to Clio and did those dams for Pop Hogarth, I can't remember anyone except Cecil Willis and myself. Alec Crowley, a straight-talking fella from Charters Towers, he came later, more or less when we got the two new FDEs for the Rosevale job.

Cecil and I worked 10-hour shifts on Clio. One of us would start at 2 o'clock in the morning and work right through till midday. The second bloke would go on at 2 in the afternoon and he'd work till midnight. Max liked to give the tractor a couple of hours spell between shifts, let the oils cool down. If it looked like rain we'd work 12-hour shifts; we'd work right through. Between shifts we did the refuelling, servicing, and any welding that needed to be done. In the mornings we had half an hour for breakfast and we might grease the smaller nipples on the scoop if it was very dusty.

We used to change shifts at the end of jobs. That was a bit hard at times. If you did a small dam and went onto a big one, you might change to the early morning shift. Well, you'd be on that shift till the big one was finished. But it didn't worry us. Nothing seemed to worry us.

We only had the one ripper. The tynes could go down 3 feet if the soil was suitable – and if the tractor could pull it. You'd rip it all up, cross rip it sometimes if it was very hard, then you'd take the ripper off and hook on

the scoop. Get back on the scoop and clean out the ripped ground, then onto the ripper and rip some more. A continuous cycle, that's how we sunk the tanks. Did it all by yourself.

The best we measured was a thousand yards a day. That was with a single scoop and tractor. You wouldn't do that much every day; different things happen. When we did smaller dams, 20,000 yarders, we weren't there long at all.

Max brought out a fella named Bill Kirk to finish the bottom of the tanks because the bottom area was too small for the 14-yard scoop. Kirky had a TD9 and a 3-yard scoop, and he used to go down and take out the bottoms.

We used a drum of diesel a day for the three months we were on Clio. Max had a jeep and he'd tow the tanker into town and get fuel, or we'd get drums out on the mail lorry, or the station would bring so-many drums.

THE BIGGEST TANKS I PUT DOWN WITH MAX were on Rosevale. Before we started work on a tank, Max always tested it for rock and sand. He had a borer – an auger on a one inch pipe – and he'd drill down, lift it out, take the bit off, and he'd get an idea of what was down there. If it was rock or sand he tested somewhere else. Rock slowed the work and sand leaked. Max must have missed this particular rock. We were down about 15 feet in the second tank on Rosevale, and here are these layers of rock coming in. The ripper couldn't break it out, so Max says: "I'll fix this". We got all the dirt off the top and around the sides while Max got the borer and loaded three holes with dynamite. I was still ripping and taking out what I could, the loose stuff, and he said to me:

I'm just about ready to let this go.

Well okay, I won't bother taking the scoop to the top.

I'll leave it here and load the rock straight in.

So I got down behind the tractor. Max lit the charges – and here's his son, young Alan, he's just coming over the brow of the dam from the camp. Max was yelling out: "Go back". Little Alan didn't have a bloody clue; he didn't know about the dynamite. There was only one thing to



do – go for me quoit. I ran up and grabbed him and got over the bank just before... boom!

It was while working on that second tank that Max lost his caravan. He and Marj had gone to the Towers. They were always going somewhere: station do's, races, business. I was having a weekend off with Margaret and the baby and we were on the way to Julia Creek. Behind us we saw a big pall of smoke coming from the direction of Rosevale:

Jeez, that looks close to our camp. Didn't leave the fire going, did we?
No, I don't think so. Bill's there. It'll be right.

Kirky said it was well and truly ablaze when he first saw it. He was burning letters in the wood stove in the kitchen, and he reckoned that some of the burning paper must have come out the chimney and landed on top of Max's caravan. Max lost everything.

IN MY EARLY DAYS WITH MAX, before he bought trucks to carry the tractors, Cecil and I had to walk the tractors between jobs¹. Max would go ahead in the jeep, and Margaret would drive the Overlander towing our caravan. They'd get there long before we did. The scoop was hooked on behind the tractor, and the ripper was behind the scoop. You'd drive to the next site poking along in third gear at 2 or 3 mile an hour. That was the best they'd

1. See photo bottom of page 505.

Opposite top: Commercial Hotel, Charters Towers, when owned by Max Burns.
[Dawn Flewell-Smith, DF34, 1947]

Opposite bottom: Max's plant on Clio, several months before Pat started with Max.
[Dawn Flewell-Smith, DF56, 1947]

"I can swear to this because I remember that's how it was. That's the Britstand scoop on the left, and the tractor is a single air-breather FDE. The canopy came and went.

Sometimes the supports would crack and we'd just pull it off. Next is the Britstand ripper and the Le Torneau scoop. You can see how the scoop operates. That bar across the top slides through that pulley and that's what raises the bowl up and down. On the right is the TD18 International. It's got a dozer blade on it. That's the one Max sold when he bought the two new FDEs.

In front on the left is Max's caravan. Max camped in that van; and Marjorie, when she came out. It had a canvas top. Pulling the van is a Marmon-Herrington. That long low tank between the van and the Marmon, that was our watertank. Next is the fuel tanker, and then our caravan

do. You never drove in top gear cos you'd flog hell out of the tracks – and they weren't cheap.

Max would take us back in the jeep to get the two long caravans, semitrailer type vans that he'd bought ex-army. One of them was his, and the other one was for the men. We slept in the front part. Down the back was the workshop and in the centre was the kitchen area. We cooked our own meals. Whoever was off-shift cooked for the other fella. When Margaret came out, Max supplied the tucker and she cooked it for us...

MARGARET: ...on a wood stove inside the van. I got a pound a week for feeding all the men, including Max if he had meals with us. Not flash cooking: stews, fried curries, chops and eggs, things like that. The station always supplied the meat. When we went on a station to put a tank down, they killed.

I don't remember making cakes or anything. And I didn't have to make bread; the mail lorry used to bring the bread. If Max wasn't going to town, vegetables also came out on the lorry. George Sills would send them out.

In the afternoons I used to have time off. I'd go to the van and do a few chores. Our van was a reasonable distance from the dam site, but the kitchen caravan, where the men lived, was always close to the dam. The men didn't want to be a mile away driving the tractor back and forth. Sometimes we parked together to make it easier for me.

(before we got the little green van) pulled by another Marmon. Max's Deluxe Ford Ute is in front, the one we used to go backwards and forwards to the Towers in." (Pat Luhmann)

Below: *The Chuck Wagon* (writing on back of photo) behind a Ford Marmon-Herrington. This is where the workers stayed and the place where Margaret did the cooking. It was used up till about 1956. Below and to the left of the cockeyed chimney, the sign near the door says: *Max Burns, Earth Moving Contractor, Western Queensland.* [Robin Burns, R12, 1950]



MARGARET: To wash clothes I'd drive to the nearest bore. The artesian bores, they're hot water, y'see, so it was no trouble to do the washing in them. Take the baby and do the washing. Somewhere near the bore there was always a fence and that was my clothes line. I'd wait there till the washing dried – it took no time at all for that to happen – and then I'd bring it home.

I didn't only have to wash clothes – I had to wash my husband. We had a big tub in the caravan. Pat would come in at midnight after his shift, covered in dust, and all I'd see were his eyes and his lips. He'd pull his clothes off and put his head and arms over the tub and I'd wash his face, shoulders and around his body. Then he'd get into the tub and wash himself. It was a fair-size tub; biggest washing tub you could buy.

Max used to come in and have meals with us, until Marj came out with young Alan. Marj and I didn't do much talking. I was very shy. I really was. I never talked to anybody much. When I first went to Julia Creek they called me a snob because I didn't mix. But I just couldn't.

Marj took over the cooking for the men after I left tanksinking in early 1949. Quite frankly, her and I had a little tiff. Something was said to me and I retorted to her what I wanted to say. I was such a hot-headed little bugger in those days. I just said to Pat: "I'm leaving, I'm going to town". So I packed up and took off to Julia Creek.

Opposite: Margaret used the bores for washing, but there were other uses for hot bore water.

Tanksinkers could stop to boil the billy while moving between jobs.

From left: Bob Pulley, Ivor Matsen, ?, and Cecil Willis.

Max's tanksinking plant is in the background.

From right: Leyland with Cletrac FDE on back (above Bob's head); and Marmon-Herrington towing workers' van.

[Merv Brand, BM13, 1950]

Below: Ron Dau having a scrub-up.

Margaret washed her husband inside their van, but others were less fussy. Ron describes the situation: "No bastard showered. We washed in a bit of a tub outside. There was some framework at the back of the van for a shower but I never used it, and I never saw anyone else use it either."

[Erol Davis, DE28, ca 1951]



I WAS WORKING FOR LANCE LEWIS at his garage in Julia Creek during the 1949-50 wet and he offered me a permanent job. Next time Max rang I told him I was thinking about not coming back. It'd been on the cards for a while. Margaret was living in Julia Creek with the baby, and I was nursing a sore thumb which had been injured on a wire rope from one of Max's tractors. He got a bit snakey and mentioned things he'd done for us – bought the caravan for instance. We'd paid for it though. I told him about my thumb:

I want to put in for compo.

No, buggar ya. You didn't report it to me straight away.

Well, in that case, I'm definitely not coming back.

That was really the only dirty thing he did, until a few weeks later a copper came around:

You work for Max Burns?

Yeah, I did.

He says you stole welding gloves and welding goggles. He found them in your port.

See, I'd left my port out there with my work clothes in it. I hadn't decided to leave at that stage. I explained that to the copper and I said to him: "The port's still there. If I was gonna pinch Max's stuff I'd have brought it with me".

WORD GOT AROUND how much money Max was making out of tanksinking, and others wanted to have a piece of it. Leo Bode and Bill McKay started up around Winton, and the Kirk brothers, John and

Archie, were having a go on Iffley. How I started off earthmoving: I'd been working for Lance Lewis for 12 months and I met Harry Stainkey. Harry owned Belgravia, just out of town. I was at a Christmas party in 1950 and he said to me: "If I buy a tractor, will you come and work it? I'll supply the tractor and scoop, you supply the labour, and we'll go halves". It suited me. We became Stainkey-Luhrmann.

Mr. Harry Stainkey and Mr. Pat Luhrmann set off for Brisbane by plane on Sunday. They will be purchasing a diesel truck while in the southern capital and will bring this home by road.

NQR: 14 Jul 1951



WITH THOSE BIG DAMS on Clio and Rosevale, Max fell on his feet. Wool was booming, the graziers had money to spend, and the biggest tax deductions were fencing and water improvements. And they certainly needed the water, there's no doubt about it, because they were dependant on bore drains and the bores were going back.

Max was skiting one day after we'd finished the dams on Clio: "Look, here's the price of the tractor". He'd borrowed £10,000 off the Commonwealth Bank in Charters Towers and he showed me a cheque from Pop Hogarth for the Clio work. Whether it was the full price or not, I don't know.

Cecil and I shifted about 6000 yards a week on Clio. At two bob a yard, that's 600 quid a week Max was earning. Well, Cecil and I earned it. Max was there a lot of the time, but I never saw him up on a tractor to be honest.



Party hats, piles of bottles,
and a folding paper bell
in the shade of a scrappy canvas awning.
Tanksinker's Christmas on Rosevale.
One spare seat shows where the photographer sits:
Alec wants a snapshot and Cecil obliges.

Fifty-five years lapse
before anyone asks to see the photo.
Who'd be bothered with a small cracked image,
torn and bespotted?
I was, and Alec said: "You keep it".

Wipe away the grime,
banish the blemishes through digital magic
(leave one major flaw for character)
and the moment comes alive.

Young Malcolm wants his photo taken next to Mum.
Margaret, feet in the dirt,
turns just enough to be in profile,
(her tiff with Marj still to come).
Husband Pat, across the table, sips a beer.
Alec toasts the camera
with a glass in his right hand;
after all, he wanted the photo.
Donny is tucked away behind Max,
who squints at the camera emotionless.
And Joy, Box Brownie between her legs,
fixes her hair or paper hat.
Maybe she scowled: "I'm not ready yet!"
but Cecil clicked anyway.

What an insufferable place to live and work,
bald under a fearsome December sun.
If you ask me, Max deserved every penny
of his £600 a week.





Above: Tanksinker's Christmas on Rosevale.
From left: Mal Burns, Marj Burns, Margaret Luhrmann,
Pat Luhrmann, Alec Crowley, Don Burns, Max Burns, Joy Burns.
[Alec Crowley, CR25, 1948, Cecil Willis photographer]

Great bloody excitement **Bryan Fels**

Died 15 October 2006

IKNEW MAX WELL. Oh God yeah. He said to me one day – he had the agency for Ferguson tractors, see, and for Dodge trucks, the bigger ones, 3-ton and 4-ton trucks – and I went into his garage one day and he said: “A man buys one of these Ferguson tractors, he drives it away and I won’t see him again, or the tractor. But when he buys a Dodge truck you can bet he’ll be back in two or three weeks; there’ll be something wrong with the bloody thing”.

And he was pretty right too. They were like that, those Fergy tractors. They just go and go. They were a great little vehicle. I drove one for years. Beautiful tractors. Powerful little buggers for the size of them. Put a set of chains on the back wheels and they’ll go through mud and slush; they’ll go anywhere.

Before they built up the streets in Julia Creek you couldn’t drive after rain like you can now. In wet weather you’d get bogged, no trouble at all, and somebody with a Fergy would have to come and pull you out. It’d be nothing to see a couple of cars stuck in the big waterhole between Gannon’s and the Post Office. They’d try to get through and they couldn’t, see. They’d be stopped there. The same thing further down near the O-K Store. Two or three cars bogged in there sometimes, even trucks. With an inch or so of rain you might possibly get along Burke St in a car, but if there was 2 inches you’d need a Fergy.

No such thing as bitumen. From Julia Creek to Charters Towers, there was no bitumen. If you were going to Townsville you’d leave at 4 o’clock in the morning and you’d get there late at night if you were lucky.



WHEN I FIRST CAME UP HERE I was working on Clutha Station, out from Nelia, for three months. That'd be the end of '46. They used to have races at Nelia. Always a good race meeting. And the dances were really good too; a big crowd. Joe Tunny had the pub. The fellas played two-up outside after the race meeting. Anyhow, a Christmas tree came on at Nelia and a great mob arrived. Where all the people came from, you wouldn't believe. Then it rained. No bitumen, no four-wheel drives, people got stuck there. Joe Tunny put on a breakfast next morning for 120 people who couldn't get home.

After Nelia I went out to the Territory for a while. I came back in '47 and did a bit more station work. Then I worked with my brother, Joe. He was a carpenter. At the end of the year we bought George Peut's mail run and took over the running of the Kynuna mail for a couple of years. We had two trucks: a 3-ton Chev and a KS5 International with a 22-foot McGraw semitrailer. The Chev used to do a short run from Julia Creek to Carum and back, same day. The semi did the Kynuna run. Leave Julia Creek at 11 on a Sunday morning, camp at Kynuna Sunday night, and return Monday.

There were five or six mail runs from Julia Creek. We'd load up Saturday at the railway station. Everything came in by train. Sunday morning we'd do the rounds of the stores – Peter Dawes, Mrs Horton, George Sills, the O-K Store, Kaeser's bakery – and pick up the orders going out to the properties. Then we'd line up at the Post Office with the other mail contractors to pick up the mail bags. The mail was supposed to leave at 11 o'clock. When you collected the bags you were supposed to be ready to go.

The mail ran Christmas Day one year. It didn't make any difference. Every Sunday the mail went out.

WE BOGGED three 4WD wedding cars in Burke St in May '59 and I'm fairly sure we borrowed a tractor from Max to pull them out. I had a 1942 Army Chev with chains on the back wheels, and still it bogged. Choco Winton did the dirty work. I didn't do it myself because I was involved in being married. Titch [the bride] was carried into the church so her wedding dress wouldn't get muddy.

KEITH COLEMAN

Opposite: Bryan on his Ferguson TEA-20, a tractor purchased from Max Burns.
[Bryan Fels, FeB01, 1951]

Below: Bedford truck bogged in Burke St being towed by Bryan's favourite tractor, a Fergy. Taken from the O-K Store looking to Roy Hampton's house (behind the Fergy). Chummy Shaw owned the red-roofed house on the right. After being stripped of timber, Chummy's house became the Mayne Milk Bar, then the second Blue Bird Cafe. In 2009 it was Godier's supermarket.
[Ivy Burrows, BI19, ca 1950]

"Chummy owned some houses in town and took us in of a weekend to paint them. That was our weekend in town – painting houses battleship grey with red roofs and white ridge-capping. I remember that, yeah." (Jim Birch)

"The house on the right is where Godier's supermarket is now. Clemie Foster lived in the other one when I first remember it. Then it used to be Roy Hampton's. Later it was sold to the council and turned into a doctor's residence and surgery. Dr Pegg, he was there; Bradfield before that. You'd go in the gate and over on one side was the surgery and the rest of it was the residence." (Ray Godier)



Do I remember the goats?
 Julia Creek was full of them.
 Mrs Mann had goats and Mrs Shaw had goats.
 They all had their goats.
 After milking them of a morning
 they'd let them out of the yard,
 and away the goats went all along the back lanes.
 They always seemed to get together
 and head out in one mob to feed.
 Used to go right along the creek and all over the place.

About 5 o'clock they'd come home again.
 Five or six would go in here,
 a dozen go in there.
 Marvellous what they used to do.
 They knew; they'd go to their own house.
 Now and again the goats took off
 and went way up the creek towards Bodell.
 Sometimes they'd be gone for a couple of days.
 Jim Tierney, a bloke with a wooden leg,
 they'd ask him to look for them.
 He'd go out the next morning, following the creek,
 tracking them towards Bodell.



Tierney had a horse;
used to ride it downtown.

The only one who ever rode a horse around town.
Tie it up where the paper shop is now;
tie it up to the post.
Go in and get the paper and his groceries;
down to Kaeser's for a loaf of bread.

When Jim brought the goats home
people would be outside looking at them.
You'd hear Mary Mann (she had a voice that carried):
"Goats are home, the goats are home. Here come the goats!"
There'd be great bloody excitement in Julia Creek.

THAT'D BE JIM TIERNEY with a wooden leg. We used to do a bit of droving together, Jim and I.

This one trip we went over to Boulia, see, and were bringing sheep back. Jim, he used to drink like a camel and he got full at McKinlay. He had steel hinges in that leg, hinged in the knee, and mucking around drunk at the McKinlay pub he broke the bloody hinges. He had a spare set in the waggonette at Julia Creek, so I rode in the 60 mile, got the hinges and rivets, took them back to Jim, and put them in for him.

He's on Jerry, probably. He had Jerry and McGinty. They were old amblers, but they could travel.

JIM BIRCH

Below: "Tierney had a horse; used to ride it around town."
Burke St buildings from left:

- Gannon's Hotel (silent cop in the road on the right);
- Roy Hampton's *Billiard Room and Hairdresser* (after alterations it became the Garden of Roses in 1940);
- Drapery (the wording is indistinct, but I think it says *Mrs Wilkins Drapery*);
- Peter Dawes Store: *Storekeeper... Newsagent*;
- Bank of NSW;
- Lance Lewis (curved fascia, left of pole);
- Alex Cameron's general store, showing the word *drapery*. This building was the O-K Store.

[Dadie Dawes, DW47, ca 1939]



MAX WAS BUILDING TWO BIG DAMS on Rosevale the year I started on the Kynuna mail. He asked me to shift some fluming and that's when I first met up with him. The concrete fluming arrived in Julia Creek and someone had to move it off the train. I suppose Max was busy, or he might not have had a truck big enough at that stage. If the fluming was left laying around for two or three days, that would cost Max money; the railway would charge him demurrage. So he got me to bring it out. Each one was 4 feet in diameter, 8 feet long, and I think they weighed half a ton. We just rolled them off the waggons and onto the semi, eight lengths at a time. When I got to Rosevale, I backed into a gully near the dam site and rolled them off.

Not long after Max finished the Rosevale dams I pulled up there with the mail. It had been raining; the first rain since the dams went in. Leo Hennessey was the manager and he said it looked like I wouldn't get through to Kynuna. He was right. I went on for about 2 miles and the wheels clogged up and the trailer spun out. I walked back to Rosevale. Hennessey had an army jeep and he said to me:

How about coming for a run with me in the jeep?
Where to?

I want to have a look at those new dams
and see if there's any water going in.
It's a bit boggy. Reckon we'll get there?
We will in the jeep – it'll pretty much
go anywhere.

So we set sail in the afternoon and drove to one of the dams. Hennessey got out of the jeep and I could see the smile on his face. Water was just pouring through the fluming, coming in full bore. And he said to me: "There's four years' water there. I won't have to worry about water for another four years". Would have been, too.

to all graziers.

The weather for the past week has been stormy with scattered good falls. Rosevale topped the list with 308 points, though several places missed out altogether.

The town common is looking nice and green which is a help to the town goats and also to the local dairy. Some of the stock routes are in fair order

NQR: 05 Feb 1949

MAX WAS THE ONLY ONE AROUND if you wanted a good-sized dam put down just after the war. Actually, he did one for me when I bought Garomna. He'd just come in from Burwood with his turnout. I had asked Pat Luhrmann if he could do it and he said: "Well, I can't just now. Max Burns is on his way in; you might be able to catch up with him". Which I did.

Max and I went out on a Sunday afternoon. It was spitting rain. Monday morning they brought the gear out and made a start: Billy Ryder, Vince Fickling and your father. It rained Monday and Monday night. Down it come. They had a little jeep with them and they tried to go to town but they couldn't get out. So they walked to Quarrell Siding and caught a train to Julia Creek from one of the navy huts.

They finished that dam in early 1957. It was a 10,000 yarder on Horse Creek and cost me about £1000.

IN 2001 I SOLD GAROMNA and retired here in Julia Creek. Someone said to me one time:

You sold out, eh. Where're ya going? Down the coast?
No bloody fear
Well, where then?
Oh, just around the corner in Goldring St.

There's nothing in cities for me. It's only a day's run from here to Townsville if you really wanna go. And no way would I live or drive in Brisbane. Well, I wouldn't drive in Townsville now. I used to, one time. If you want to live in the city you oughta go when you're young, I reckon.



Opposite: One of the 4' x 8' fluming pipes that Bryan delivered to Rosevale for Max. In the background on the right is a small part of Max's tanksinking plant: a Cletrac FDE (with canopy) towing a Britstand C14 scoop, and behind them is the workers' caravan. The truck in the centre, with a kite-hawk above left, is Bryan's.
[Bryan Fels, FeB02, 1948]

Right: Bryan Fels at No. 2 Tank, Rosevale, in front of the fluming which he carted from Julia Creek in 1948.
[Guy Burns, GK51, Sep 2002]

Below: Bryan had the Kynuna mail run in 1948-49. From left: Bryan, Reg Fels (nephew of Bryan) and Arthur Gibson in Goldring St. Nephew Reg gets one more mention in this book (page 396) when *The Menace* puts him in a headlock.
[Bryan Fels, FeB03, 1948]



The sky fallen in? Neville Hamilton



RICHARD MAGOFFIN¹ was very water conservation conscious. He wanted dams on Rosevale in case his bores slackened off. They had two flowing bores and about 70 miles of boredains, but that wasn't enough; he wanted dams.

I was there a few months before Max Burns arrived. What I remember about the two tanks Max put down was that they were 110 yards square on top and half a mile to walk around the outside. Magoffin was worried about getting plenty of depth, so Max had the smaller tractor at the bottom digging them deeper. It was too small for the big tractors to operate in that little area so they put a small tractor in there².

Max completed the tank near the Yorkshire road first. In the second tank, the one nearer the homestead, they had a bit of trouble; they struck a lot of rock and had to use explosives³. Those two tanks were the biggest in the area at the time.



I GOT THE JOB ON ROSEVALE through the employment section of Dalgetys in Brisbane. They had a woman working there who did the station employment – Mrs Herford. She was known as Mrs *Hereford*. A funny old thing; I don't think she would have been further west than Laidley, the other side of Brisbane. She had no clue what the conditions were like in far western Queensland. Why they put her in the employment agency I'll never know. Anyway, the Magoffins were big clients of Dalgetys and I got the job through her. That's how I ended up on Rosevale in 1948 at the age of 19. I went there as a second-year jackeroo and ended up at 21 as the overseer, flock and stud overseer. I started on £4 a week and when I finished in 1957 I was getting just under a thousand pound a year. Leo Hennessey was the manager, and there was Norm Wilson, Harry Denman and two station hands.

Ask Harry about the delving. He'll tell you – he used to delve the 70 miles of drains. Before Harry took over the delving I did it with Gordon Magoffin, Richard's son. We had an army Blitz with a pole across the front that stuck out a yard on each side. We hooked a chain on the pole and

pulled the delver behind the Blitz.

A lot of people in the district reckoned Leo Hennessey was strict, but his workers stayed there for years and years so he couldn't have been too bad. He was fair and had a first class knowledge of stock. He wasn't a very social fellow, Hennessey, and he didn't encourage vehicles, no. I think it was eight months before I went to Julia Creek the first time. We'd go to town a couple of times a year at most. It was a rare sight for the people of Julia Creek to see the Rosevale mob, as more often than not we'd go to Kynuna or McKinlay or Winton.

We went to Julia Creek one time – the Hennesseys and some of us fellas – and the old mailman, George Peut, took on a surprised look and said: "Christ, what's happened out there? The sky fallen in?"

Rosevale used to top the Longreach sales every year against the southern and local studs. We'd load the rams on the truck and take them down to Longreach for the sales. Christine Hennessey would often come along. One hundred percent of the success was due to her father. Marvellous man.



1. "Melrose" Dick. See family tree, p568.

2. Bill Kirk operated the small tractor, a Cletrac BDH. See second column, p452.

3. See Pat Luhrmann's story, second column, p452.

Opposite: No. 1 Tank, Rosevale, under construction;
Cletrac FDE pulling Britstand C14 scoop.
[Neville Hamilton, HaN02, December 1948]

"I'm quite proud of that photo. Y'see, the tractor was moving.
It's not as if it was stopped, I had to time it to the split second.
Any later and the front of the tractor would have been obscured."
(Neville Hamilton)

*Taken from inside the
planning when the tank
was in its infancy.
Taking the first scoopful
after the ripper has finished*

Opposite top: Neville at the Longreach Show. Taken by
Queensland Country Life photographer Darcy Croft.
[Neville Hamilton, HaN10, 1952]

Below: Christine Hennessey in front of the Rosevale wool truck on the way
to the Longreach Show with Neville. Swag and two ports above cabin.
[Chris Hennessey, HC10, 1952]



ROSEVALE MAKES HISTORY

By Our Special Representative, Wallace Hennessey.

ON an erratic market, 442 rams averaged £27 8 when 552 were auctioned by Mr. W. R. Kenny for the Longreach Ram Sellers at the annual Longreach Ram Sales on April 30.

*Grand champion ram at the 1953-
State Sheep Show, offered by Strathdarr
stud, changed hands at 250 guineas with*

"Where it says in the newspaper article [highlighted below]:
In 1951 at the Sydney Sheep Fair, 2600 guineas was paid, it
was actually £3200. Mr Hennessey himself told me the price
when he came back from Sydney." (Neville Hamilton)

Twenty-four from Wanganella Estate were passed in.

Then came the sale of the day! Mr. Richard Magoffin's Rosevale stud, Julia Creek, which is under the management of Mr. L. V. Hennessey, was founded in 1933 with Haddon Rig and Bundemar stock at a cost of £25,000. In 1951 at the Sydney Sheep Fair 2600 guineas was paid for a Haddon Rig special stud ram. Julia Creek seemed a most unlikely place for the establishment of a successful merino stud, but working closely in co-operation with the Agriculture and Stock Department's sheep and wool officers, Mr. Hennessey has developed a strain suited to local conditions. The Rosevale rams created great interest at these sales in 1951. None was offered last year on account of drought. This year the 1951 drop rams were as well grown and as well presented as any in the yards. Messrs. W. J. Parker, Monsraven, Julia Creek, and W. Brabazon, Clarafeld, Julia Creek, made a duel of the bidding in which Mr. Parker was successful, taking a pen of two at 62½ guineas, pen of four at 60 guineas, and two pens of 10 at 50 guineas, thus establishing a flock ram record for Longreach. The 27 made £1496/5/-, an average of £55/8/4.

Burenda draft of 1951 flock rams was as good as any this Boonoke blood

Plenty of sheep, plenty of money **John Pickersgill**

TOORAK AUCTION SALE

The Australian Estates Co. Ltd. Julia Creek; The New Zealand Loan & M. A. Co. Ltd. Cloncurry; and H. P. Veness & Co. Pty. Ltd. Winton, under instructions from the owners of Toorak Station, will offer for sale by Public Auction at Toorak Homestead on

— THURSDAY, 17TH AUGUST 1950 —

Commencing at 10 a. m. sharp on that date the following
LIVE STOCK, BUILDINGS, PLANT, MACHINERY & FURNITURE

The following sheep in suitable lines :—

- About 9,650 Ewes, shorn March/April 1950, these include about :—
- 4,600 Clio bred ewes, 30 per cent. of which are January/February and October 1944 drop, and October/November 1943 drop.
- About 35 per cent. are March/October 1945 drop, a few are 1946 drop, with 15 per cent. older than October/November 1943 drop.
- 1,350 Ewes four, five and six years old, mixed marked.
- 3,700 Ewes seven years old, Toorak bred

NQR: 07 Jul 1950

THAT NEVILLE HAMILTON ("Hammie") and meself... they threw open Toorak. That was a fairly big place; they cut it up. Hennessey was there when I was talking to Hammie and I said: "I wouldn't mind a stab at drawing a block off that Toorak place". "Neither would I" said Hammie.

They were cutting it up into sizeable units – run six, seven thousand sheep. And it wasn't big money you paid to go in for it either. Hennessey heard us: "Ah, you want a go at Toorak? I'll have a word to Mr Magoffin about it". He did. Both of us put in for a block each. There were only seven others in the bloomin' ballot and neither Hammie or I could draw it.

Richard Magoffin (he had plenty of sheep, plenty of money), he stood to us for the sheep. They were fair men. They would do that if they thought you were capable of handling it.

I WAS BORN IN GYMPIE, 1929. Dad was a railway fettler. We lived at Woondum, a railway siding south of Gympie. During the war it was a busy line. They moved a terrific amount of stuff and it was difficult to get into the secondary school in Gympie; so, because of that, I left school during the latter part of the war. There's no such thing as Woondum now; they pulled the station out.

I went along that line after I left school and worked on a dairy farm. My brother-in-law had a share farm at Durong about 40 mile from Murgon in the thick of the Burnett district. Dairying was a good thing during the war, there was a big call for the product: milk, cream, butter.

After the dairying I went to work for a fella by the name of Arthur Langmore. He had a short-horned cattle stud on the Darling Downs called Prospect, and another property at Longreach. I worked with him for three months on his Downs property and it was dry the whole time. He transferred me to Mt Victoria, his Longreach property. Sheep and cattle. I worked for three years on Mt Victoria, from '46 to '49, then I was at a mustering camp near Quilpie for 12 months.

Left: Three lads outside the butcher hut on Rosevale. From left: Harry Denman, John and Roy Pickersgill. [Neville Hamilton, HaN15, 1950]

Opposite: Roy Pickersgill (left) and Harry Denman acting the goat at the homestead dam. Harry holding one of Roy's smelly socks. [Harry Denman, DH01, 1950]

"That's the little dam at the homestead. The artesian water flowed from the borehead into this little dam. A windmill pumped water from there into a high tank that supplied the homestead. It was all bore water on Rosevale." (John Pickersgill)



I got the Rosevale job through Dalgetys in Brisbane. You'd go to Brisbane and you'd look up the agents: Primaries, Wilcox & Carson, Dalgetys, Goldsborough Mort. They all had an employment department. Property owners would call in once or twice a year. They might go to Dalgetys and have a talk to Mrs Herford; thank her for getting them their labour. She was employed by Dalgetys exclusively to find labour for rural properties, including Rosevale. She's one who didn't charge. If you went to the other agents in Queen St, they might charge 10 bob if they got you a job; but no, if you went to Mrs Herford, you didn't pay and you got the pick – if you had a name. If you had a name and a reference, well, you were right.

You get experience through your travels. You get a bit of a reputation and you can get a pick of the jobs. If you were on Mt Victoria with Mr Langmore for three years, you got a reference from him and your name got known. Anything good kicking around, well, you got it. There wasn't a great deal of experienced labour about after the war, and there was a big demand for it. You were never without work.



Rosevale wanted a cowboy and a station hand, and my brother Roy and I, we applied. Roy was keen to get out west. He was working in Ipswich at a woollen mill. He didn't like it very much and when the opportunity came at Rosevale he took it.

We got the jobs on the spot through Mrs Herford. I didn't fill in any forms, I just went to her and said:

I'd like a job.
Where were you working?
Mt Victoria.

She knew Mt Victoria well. They had an account with Dalgetys. She kept asking me questions:

How long were you there?
Three years.
And your brother, what can he do? Can he milk, ride, kill?

Yes, yes, yes. And we got the job on Rosevale. Dalgetys paid our train fare up there, too.

I'll tell you a story about Mrs Herford and Leo Hennessey. He'd been through three or four cowboys in 12 months and was getting a bit annoyed. He thought she wasn't giving him good quality stuff, that she was sending him these duds. He sent her a telegram: "Send us a cowboy and repeat order every month". I heard she got offended over that. But not as offended as she would have been if she'd heard you call her Mrs *Hereford* – which we all did.

Roy and I travelled together on the train, through Townsville and out to Julia Creek. That would be 1950. It was raining when we arrived, so it would have to be February, March. George Peut was the mail-run fella. He'd call in at Rosevale once a week, about Sunday lunch time on the Kynuna run, and unload whatever he had: shearers, supplies, petrol – and Roy and John Pickersgill.

LEO HENNESSEY WAS A GENUINE MAN. I liked him and I liked Rosevale. It was a good place to work, and fair. You worked with responsibility and you were recognised for it. To a certain extent, Hennessey treated all his workers like overseers. It was very efficiently done. You knew your work, you had your responsibilities – those you were capable of handling – and you went out and did your job.

I was a station hand. I did all types of station work: sheep mustering, windmills, fencing. And I'd do the boundaries. Not on a horse, in an army jeep.

Prior to the wool boom, in the hard times when wool sold for very little, Hennessey ran Rosevale more or less on his own. When the money came into the wool, the stations employed. There was Gordon Magoffin (the owner's son), Neville Hamilton, Harry Denman, Roy... myself is five... and one more; that'd be six. The ratio at that time, generally, was a man, say, to every 5000 sheep. Now they'd be running Rosevale with a manager and one offsider – and it would be part time at that.

Rosevale looked after their men pretty well. They worked you, but they looked after you and gave you a good feed. We never cooked. The station cook prepared meals for everyone, inside and out. There'd be inside and outside eating. Outside (meaning us, the workers) had their meals in the kitchen. Inside had theirs in the dining room. All the properties were like that. It went to extremes in my view. When I first went there you called the manager Mister and the overseer Mister. That was unnecessary. You don't get any of that now, it's all Christian names; the class distinction's gone. But at that time they were the monied people – big demand for their wool, for their beef – and they put on airs.

Alcohol was never encouraged. Come Christmas time Hennessey would get a case of lager: "Righto boys, come up and we'll have a drink". Other than that it was a dry property. I'm sure that no one would have stopped us drinking if you were able to do your work, but we had the idea, Hammie, Roy and I – Harry Denman less so – that you didn't bend your elbow to excess.

We didn't go to Julia Creek very much. We might have gone twice in 12 months when Hennessey lent us the truck. There weren't many privately owned cars at that time so we didn't have much choice. I was used to the solitude anyway.

Hennessey didn't go to town any more often than us. He was never a man to socialise. He would go in mainly to buy provisions or pay debts.

You had 45 miles to travel to Julia Creek.

You left, say, at 7 o'clock after breakfast
and you didn't get in there till about nine,
a couple of hours run.
You wouldn't be too fast.

First thing, you'd get a haircut,
you'd have a few drinks,
make a bit of whoopee,
skylark around the place a bit,
go into a cafe for a feed,
and do a little bit of shopping.

You might have a go at Hampton's billiard table for a while
and your day would be out.

That was our time in town and that was about the score of it.

To chase young fillies in town – that would have been the go – but a fella was so accustomed to station life we never worried about women too much. If you went to town and you wanted a woman, well, you'd go for one of those bad women at the end of the street. I suppose they would have been available in Julia Creek.

Women were restricted in numbers, but there were always oodles of men. A droving trip would finish or a shearing shed would cut out and there'd be 10 or 20 extra men in town – so many men, there was no woman for me. A fella might be lucky, if he was good-looking and very jolly slippery, but I don't think it took place very often.

DR MOULE WITH THE MOUSTACHE ON, he came to Rosevale from time to time to study artificial insemination. He was in the Department of Primary Industries. He'd come along and fix the poorer-quality rams so they couldn't lamb the ewes. Cut the string from the testicle to the penis

and take out part of the cord. We'd put the fixed-up rams in with the ewes as teasers – we'd raddle their chest so that when they jumped on a ewe we'd know which ewes were ready to be served. We called it raddle. We made it ourselves. You'd crack it in pieces (it was like chalk) and grind it, wet it, put your hand in it and rub it on the ram's chest. He could jump on a ewe, but he couldn't do anything except make a mark.

Then we'd artificially inseminate the marked ewes with semen from the top-quality rams. I didn't think very much of the way we were getting the semen. We did it with a battery: one probe up the backside and the other in the spine to complete the circuit. We'd get it like that. The conception rate was only about 30 percent, so we were doing them over quite a bit. They may have perfected it later on. Anyway, Moule started it off.

IN THAT GOOD SEASON OF 1950 there was a rat plague on Rosevale. Bush rats everywhere; the native bush rats. Then came the cats – enormous numbers of them – and the foxes. But not as many foxes, because when a fox eats a rat the hair forms a ball in his belly and he'll wither away.

Foxes were one of our sports.

The mustering horses were always full of bloom,
in good condition,
and if we came across a fox we'd chase him.
Of course the fox
(you're going a fair pace),
he can dart over at right angles
and you'd be lucky to catch him.

Hammie and I had a way of getting a fox.
One of us would go ahead
and one of us would follow behind.
As soon as the fox took his turn, well,
the one behind was right on him again.
You're pushing him
and within three or four hundred yards he's cowed.
You'd be able to get your fox:
shoot him or hit him with a stirrup iron.
Sometimes you'd leave him cowed.
It was part of the sport.

We'd chase a few pigs.

Catch them straight off the horse:
grab hold of their legs before they turned around.
We were young and quick and agile.

I LEFT ROSEVALE JUST AFTER CHRISTMAS, 1950, and I went into a shearing shed and learnt to shear. I got up to 160 a day. Wasn't bad going for only three months shearing. Melrose was the first shed I did, in February, and it was hot, above 110°. By jingo you felt it. I did another shed and then I came back to Rosevale and crutched.

I went to the Northern Territory after the sheds and did a bit of shooting for two years. Then I came back to Gympie. Roy was getting nowhere, so we clubbed together and started farming. We're both successful farmers.



Ten ton o'petrol, please **Harry Denman**

THAT'S ME ON TOP OF THE DUNLITE – the Rosevale generator. I recognise myself from more than 50 years ago. Bloody high up there, y'know. She was tied down, pulled out of the wind of course. Wouldn't be up there without it being tied down, it'd take your head off. Probably got up there to see if it needed greasing. Or it might have been the wire. There was a lever with a wire connected to the tail. You pulled the lever to turn the tail out of the wind, and sometimes the wire came off or broke. You had to get up there and do a bit of maintenance occasionally.

It was just a propellor on a generator. The electric cable went into a shed to charge a bank of 16 storage batteries, 2 volts each, to give us 32-volt power around the homestead. The batteries were made of thick clear glass – you could see the acid and the plates and all the insides. Every time it rained we had tarps out everywhere catching clean water for these batteries, and then we put the water into demijohns. There were quite a few demijohns at Rosevale, big old crock ones that we'd find out in the paddock, some with cane baskets wrapped round. In the old days I think they had rum or whiskey in them. They were perfect for keeping distilled water.



Demijohn

Above: Harry on top of a Dunlite 32-volt wind generator, Rosevale, taken by Neville Hamilton from the homestead water tank. The white building is the shearing quarters, and beside it is the 10-stand shearing shed. See page 435 for a photo of the wind generator in relation to the Rosevale homestead.

[Harry Denman, DH04, ca 1953]

In the shed next to the batteries was a little switchboard. You could either switch to the Dunlite to charge the batteries, or to a diesel generator. If there was no wind, or they were using a lot of power in the house, Hennessey would put the generator on. The generator was right beside the homestead. He came out one day and said to me: "That generator's driving me mad. I want to silence it". Most of those big diesels were very noisy; they just had a straight pipe for the exhaust. His theory was: if you took one big noise and broke it down into a couple of thousand little noises that would overcome the problem. And I said: "You're mad". Not to his face of course, to myself. He would have gone crook if he'd heard me.

What he did: where the exhaust came out through the wall, he asked me to dig a hole about a foot deep, and round enough to put a 44 gallon drum in it. The drum was sealed and it had a fitting that attached to the end of the exhaust pipe. Then he got me to punch about 27,000 holes in this drum, all the way round with a little punch. And when he started it up it went phht, phht, phht, phht, phht. I was amazed.

I WAS BORN AT STONES CORNER, Brisbane, 1928. Went to school at Buranda and didn't like it. My brother was dux of the school and I was the chump. He went to school and I didn't. I used to go off with a fella by the name of Charlie Cockerell. He had 30 or 40 horses that he hired out, and he also bought and sold cattle. He might buy a heap of old milkers at Beaudesert. Instead of going to school I'd tear up there with him in a sulky and a couple of saddle horses and help him bring the milkers to Cannon Hill sale yards. That was much better, more interesting than going to school.

I failed Scholarship. The situation was clearly explained in my report card: "If Harry had come to school for the other half of grade 7, he'd have had no trouble passing". I just hated it. Hated every day of it.

My first job was in the war years, working for the local paper man, collecting money and frightening all the old sheilas to get their two bobs off them. Then I got a job at a place called Wedge Welders, Upper Roma St, building bulkheads for barges and water purifying tanks for the armed forces. They gave me a bad time. They kept putting young blokes on and kept promising apprenticeships, but none of us were getting apprenticed. So in the end I got out. I don't remember how I got out because it was a restricted industry. It was war years. Some jobs you couldn't leave. If you didn't come to work they came to get you and all sorts of things. But I did get out of there and I went from the fat to the fire. A mate said to me: "Come and work at Hancock and Gore". That was a huge sawmill, massive sawmill in those days. I got in there – and I couldn't get out. Towards the end of the war the rules were changed so that nobody under 18 could be held in restricted jobs any longer. I was at the head of the queue waiting to give my notice.

I left the sawmill and went bush; worked with wheat and dairy and pigs. Jeez, I worked. Skinny as a racing duck. I put in two years and I

thought: *There's gotta be something better than this.* Came back to Brisbane and went in and saw Mrs Herford, a motherly lady who was at Dalgetys. She handled all the stations and the farms, and she got me the job on Rosevale. I was 18 or 19. Got on a train on Thursday, sat on this train till I got to Townsville on the Saturday, and out to Julia Creek on the Sunday. George Peut was the mail contractor¹. He had a big old International semi and he used to run between Julia Creek and Kynuna; delivered the mail and stores on Sunday on the way out, and came back on Monday.

You got off the train in Julia Creek on a Sunday morning. You got on the mail truck – prior arranged by Mrs Herford – and if you were lucky, and there weren't too many passengers, you got to ride in the cabin. If you weren't lucky you were stuck on the back with all the booze and food and whatever else George was carting. Sitting on the back of a semi on those dirt tracks was pretty bloody hair raising. All those creek crossings were just gullies.

I had no contact with Rosevale before I got there. When I arrived in the middle of 1948 there were no jackaroos, only station hands. Whoever was the most reliable, or senior, station hand met you at the truck, tried to make you welcome, took you over to the men's quarters and said: "Well, there's your home". Galvanised iron, two or three rooms, no lining, off-the-ground wooden floor, and army cots. You had an army mattress and one of those army-type beds. That was it.

Below: "George Peut was the mail contractor."
George Peut and three children in front of his International
mail truck. Location uncertain, but probably in Julia Creek.
[Dadie Dawes, DW63, ca 1950]



1. Harry is mistaken about George Peut being the mail contractor when he first arrived in Julia Creek. George had sold the Kynuna mail run to Bryan Fels in December 1947.

George took it over again around 1950 and operated the run until his death in February 1954. Harry would have remembered George from these latter years.

I met Leo Hennessey the next morning. He never rushed out to meet anybody. Station hands came and station hands went. Hennessey actually managed Rosevale and Byrimine.

Seven pound a week and my keep, that was my pay, and the award read clearly: "For whom there is no limitation of hours". Hennessey could come over Saturday afternoon and say: "We're mustering Mia Mia at 4.30 tomorrow morning. Breakfast at 4. You, you and you". In normal times you didn't work Sunday – but you always worked Saturday. There was no such thing as having Saturday off, it was just another work day.

You got up in the morning and you'd eat half a dozen mutton chops, a plate and a half of rolled oats. They had one of those four-oven Aga cookers. On top of the four hot plates – each 16-18 inches across – were insulated covers like big ice cream lids to keep the heat in when the plate wasn't being used. They were made of shiny metal and hinged so you could lift them up. They'd stand upright on their own, slightly back. Beautiful stove, English stove, with its own hot water tank. The only thing was: it ran on coke and you had to screen the coke to get the clinker out of it. Wood was at a premium out there and it was easier and cheaper to get a truck load of coke every now and then. It had to go through a cracker thing. That was a job for one of the "cowboys" as we used to call them. He's the learner, the poor bugger that has to do the killing.

I landed at Rosevale a cowboy, a raw recruit. When you're a learner you don't know crap from clay, and they teach you to kill a wether and dress it. So, you do the killing. You hygienically put the carcass in a sugar bag that you hope has been washed after the last killing, and you bring it up on the neck of a horse and hang it in the meathouse. Next morning you break it up with a fine-tooth handsaw, saw him down the middle, chop him up, do all you have to do. The cowboy also does the milking, gets coke for the stove and the wash copper, and any rouseabout work around the homestead. They were my first jobs on Rosevale.

I progressed to all types of horse work. When we were shearing, say, there'd be certain station hands who worked at the shearing shed all the time, certain ones who worked the yards, and certain ones who mustered and worked in the paddocks. I was one of the paddock hands; I mustered and tended to the stock.

There were between 50 and 60 saddle horses on Rosevale running wild in one of the paddocks. Six weeks before shearing time they'd bring them in and you'd run off the horses you wanted. If you were doing paddock work for two months, you might have five or six horses; another fella doing yard work might only want two or three horses. You've gotta clean up their mane and tail, cut their feet, get them civilized, and then work them till they're nice and hard, ready for mustering.

I did paddock work. I'd go out and bring in so-many sheep. And there was a trick to that. Hennessey might say: "Go out to Mia Mia paddock and bring in eighteen hundred". Ever tried to count eighteen hundred sheep running past you through a gate, a dozen deep? You'd try to ease them through slowly, get an idea of the first hundred; two hundred if you could, all the better. Then you'd count: "one hundred, two hundred" hoping they were bringing them steadily on. You'd get quite good at it in time.

The least number of sheep we had was 20-odd thousand. It went up to 35,000 when we had a huge lot of full-grown wethers from Byrimine Station on agistment.

Another of my jobs was delving the bore drains. When I first went

there they used horses for delving, about a dozen Clydesdales. Then Hennessey bought a Blitz and we modified it. We put an extra bumper bar across the front and bolted on a 6" x 6" piece of timber, long enough to stick out over the middle of the drain when you were driving beside it. The timber stuck out about 3 feet I suppose. Off the end of the timber hung a chain. You pulled the delver from one side or the other. The delver was a v-shaped thing with wings 12-14 feet in length. As you pulled it along the drain it worked like a grader without wheels – it rolled the mud out both sides¹.

I used to offside for Hennessey when he first started delving the drains with the Blitz. It didn't take him long to train me, so then it was my job. I might go delving a couple of times a year, a fortnight each time. The idea was to get the drains as clean and as narrow as possible so the water would run further. If you let them spread out and swamp-up with duckweed, you lost water by evaporation. I might do odd drains, or I might do several of them one after the other. Hennessey would say to me: "You'd better do so-n-so drain". That's all he'd say and away I'd go. I'd been doing it for years, I knew exactly what to do. Nev Hamilton took over the delving after I left.

A COUPLE OF TIMES A YEAR at the most I got off the station. I'd go to Julia Creek on Friday and come home on the Monday. I used to live in the Railway Hotel and drink in Gannon's. That way, if I got kicked out of Gannon's I had somewhere to sleep. It was all beer. I'd drink beer until I couldn't stand up at night and then stagger home to the other pub. I'd have a shower and a feed and stagger back again. Invariably by then I was fight fodder for somebody. It was just over-indulgence in alcohol.

Hennessey didn't allow the workers on Rosevale to have alcohol, so me and an Irishman named Pat used to send away to Stewart Homes Supplies in Brisbane and order a case of assorted wines and whiskeys. We had the mailman clued up. When he got just past the horseyards, but still out of sight of the homestead, he'd ease off and Pat would grab the case and plant it. Hennessey would have got right up us if he'd known, although he had his drink – overproof rum, broken down with sweet sherry. He'd see me coming past the homestead and give me a hoy: "When you unsaddle, come in and have a spot". Those were his words: "Have a spot". It was usually around shearing time and he'd want to know something. It didn't happen very often. I'd go to the homestead. He'd be sitting in his squatter's chair on the verandah and he'd say to me: "Grab yourself a spot" and I'd grab a glass. He wouldn't turn a hair if you filled it to within a whisker of the top – but you only got offered the one. If you sat on the verandah and yarned for an hour and a half with him you never got another drink. Only got the one. He'd have a couple, of course. He was entitled to, he was the boss.

And I could understand his point of view about alcohol because he had two daughters, 50 miles from town.

ROY PICKERSGILL CAME TO ME ONE DAY. He had two little zebra finches in his hands with their heads sticking out. On the top side of the homestead near the borehead there were lots of parkinsonia trees, scrubby looking ones. Late one afternoon Roy hid in there, sneaked up and caught these little redheads. After he caught them and showed everybody, he let them go. I tried it. I couldn't get within 20 feet of them. They'd be there with their heads under their wing, asleep, but I couldn't catch them. Roy must have had reflexes like a cat.

1. See p606 for a photo of a delver in operation.

and wages £162.

Three high-priced rams were unloaded here one day last week and were bound for Mr. Magoffin's property, Rosevale, near Kynuna. The average price was 500 guineas and the highest price paid for the best was 650 guineas. These well-bred animals came up from the famous N.S.W. stud of Haddon Rig. Accompanying the rams were 200 stud ewes.

The death occurred recently of Mrs. George Sills at the local hospital.

NQR: 02 Jul 1949

long, bakelitey-looking rod with a brass tip on it wired back to the same machine. The rod went up his bum. From another part of the machine you put a needle into his third loin chop and that's how you got your circuit, see. One person would have the ram's pizzle in a test tube. We'd turn this machine on for so-many seconds and the old ram would quiver. We'd turn it off for so-many seconds, turn it on again and he'd ejaculate in the test tube. Then you'd get it under a microscope, a drop of it on a slide, and you'd count how many heads without tails, and how many tails without heads, and work out how fertile he was. And they were quite fertile. It's just that they couldn't perform because of their size.

Ewes only stay on heat for a few days. You can't tell with sheep. You wouldn't have a clue which ewes were ready, so we used "mickies" to tell us. Mickies were second-class rams that had been through a vasectomy operation. Apart from that, they were horny young buggers and they rooted like rattlesnakes. They were home-brewed rams bred on Rosevale, not the expensive stud rams, and they all had some fault with their wool. Hennessey would say to us: "We need six new mickies" and he'd go through these young rams. "This fella – his wool's a bit too strong, we'll use him." Another one might have some other failing, but they were all physically fit – and good at rootin'.

WE USED TO ARTIFICIALLY in-seminate the Rosevale ewes. The stud rams were hopeless at mating, so we'd take their seed. Put them up on a table. Can you imagine heaving one of those big bastards up on a wool-rolling table and holding him down? You had to be gentle with him, he was worth a lot of money.

You had a 6-volt battery connected to a machine, and a

Then you "whistlecock" them – do a vasectomy on them. You grab a nice big handful of testicle and open up the back of the purse – cut down the back of each nut. There's a very conspicuous white tube in there and you grab that with the forceps, nip it either side, put a bit of sheep dip on him and turn him loose. They could do everything but put ewes in lamb.

When Hennessey was ready, we put the mickies in with the ewes he was going to breed from. But, before we let them loose, we painted raddle on their chests: sticks of blue and red chalk, 6" long, about an inch in diameter, pulverised into a powder and mixed with engine oil or clean mutton fat. Every ewe that the mickies covered was marked by the raddle from the mickie's chest. You knew then which ewes were on heat. You wouldn't know otherwise.

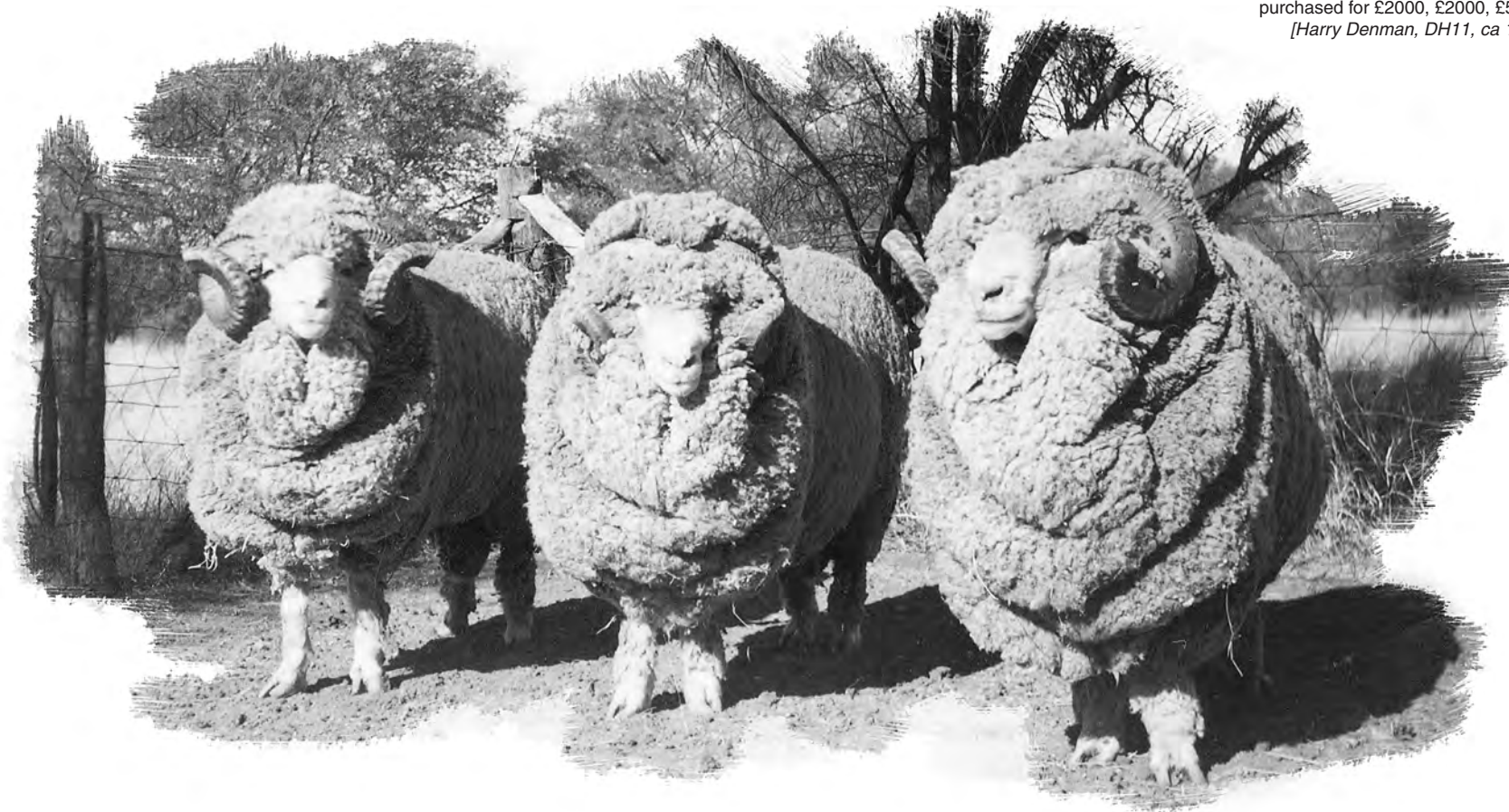
In the morning you drafted-off the marked ewes and put this artificial vagina – I think that's what they called it – straight into the ewe. You had a little miners' light and you looked inside. Way up in there was a fold of skin – we called it the mouse's ear. To insert the sperm you had a test tube with a bend in it and a rubber mouthpiece. And this is where you learnt to be really careful. You'd – "fffttt" – suck up so-many cc's and gently blow it in. Another one in lamb. And that's how it went... but you made sure you never sucked back too hard.



Above: A stick of blue raddle.
[Guy Burns, GK209, 2005]

Right: Shirley & Harry Denman, outside their cottage on Rosevale. See p476 for a photo of the cottage.
[Harry Denman, DH05, ca 1953]

Below: Stud rams on Rosevale (not the rams referred to in the newspaper cutting) purchased for £2000, £2000, £5400.
[Harry Denman, DH11, ca 1953]



If I HAD MY LIFE TO LIVE AGAIN I would never take a woman out there. Pretty lonely for a woman. Shirley, she was 18 when we got married. I was 23, I think. I told her before we went to Rosevale: "Look, we'll go out there, and if you're not happy..." Because she had absolutely no idea of what she was letting herself in for. I thought she was brave, taking it on at 18. When I said that I only went to town twice a year, Shirley only went to town twice a year too, though she did go with the Hennessey girls a few times.

I didn't meet Shirley out there, I met her in Brisbane. I quit Rosevale in 1950 and came home to Brisbane for 12 months. Girls seem to attract young blokes and I took a liking to Shirley. We got married in 1951 and went back to Rosevale. Had a cottage all to ourselves at the back of the homestead. Neville Hamilton wrote to me in Brisbane about that cottage. Said they were moving the hut at Back Bore, about 10 miles from the station, in close to the homestead, and if I wanted it he would hold it for Shirley and me.

That's us on the verandah. Look at me: flash hairdo, fit as a fiddle, all of about 9 stone. A real lair.

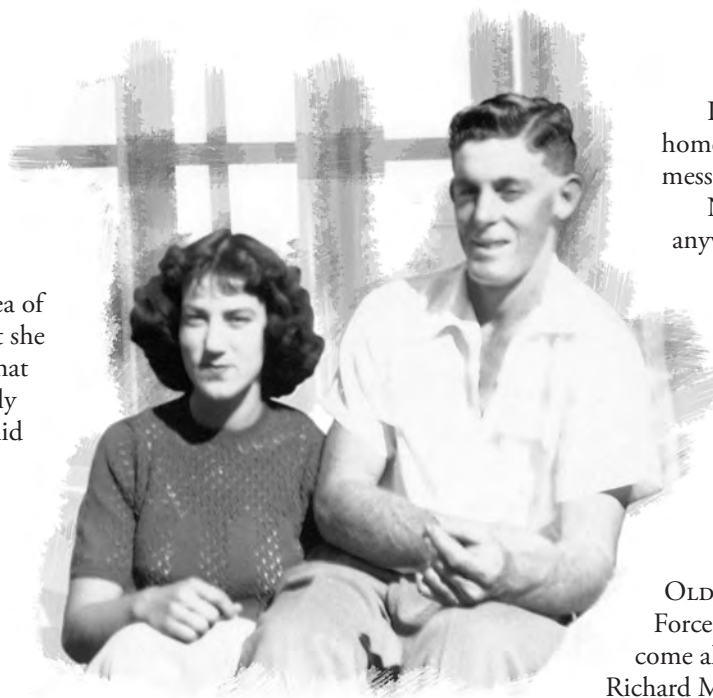
Shirley and I bought our stores from Tommy Pattel at Kynuna. You could buy a ladies petticoat from Tommy, or a saddle blanket. He sold everything. His store was across from the Blue Heeler pub, just slightly up the road. As soon as I walked in the door he'd hand me a tin opener and a can of herrings in tomato sauce; those big tins of them. I'd sit outside on his verandah, tear the top off, and eat these bloody herrings. Yeah, herrings. I've always been a fish person.

Tommy would send Shirley little treats with our stores. He'd send out a few packets of biscuits with a note (we hadn't ordered them): "I thought Shirley might like these".

At one stage we were on Byrimine Station on our own. Hennessey left us there for several months. We were just minding the place until they finished the dog netting. The dingoes were so bad that Hennessey took all the sheep off, except for about 100 killers kept close to the homestead. It was a pretty lonely life I can tell you. Just the two of us – plus the wells, the windmills and a few sheep. That's all there was. I had to climb the windmills and service them regularly, and that worried me. Shirley couldn't drive. If something happened, if I fell off a windmill, she wouldn't have been able to go for help.

Every now and then some stray would lob in to Byrimine. We'd get the "sky pilots", the travelling priests. They might run a thousand mile circuit and you'd have to put them up for the night, feed them, entertain them. They were all right, they were trustworthy, but a lot of other fellas walking round the bush weren't.

Back on Rosevale our first baby was born. Born premature with the cord around its neck and nobody knew what to do. Strangled. I had to ring the ambulance in Julia Creek and they came scarpering out. They got there, and they were very sorry that they couldn't have been any quicker.



I never saw the baby. Well, saw it at the homestead when it was born. It was a slippery little mess then. It was only 7 months.

No, it's not buried at Julia Creek. It's not buried anywhere. They said to me later: "We got rid of the baby for you". I forget their actual words. I was so distraught I didn't care. They probably just put it in the bloody incinerator. I dunno. They never told us. They did some pretty rugged things out there those days.

We left Rosevale when Shirley got pregnant again in 1955. She didn't want to be in that situation a second time.

OLD HENNESSEY HAD A STRONG PERSONALITY.

Forceful – y'know what I mean? Shearers would come along and say: "Hello Dick". That was to Mr Richard Magoffin who owned the whole caboodle. But to Mr Hennessey: "Hello Mr Hennessey". The manager was getting higher esteem from these fellows than the owner.

For most of the time I knew Hennessey he had a rollie in his gob. He used to roll them funnel shape. He was an artist at it. All the tobacco was near the end, and where it came into his mouth it was virtually nothing. He had a thin scar on his lip from cancer. They chased cancer right down his neck. He went to Brisbane to a specialist. He wasn't a poor man and he could afford those sort of operations. They cured it, they cut it out or did whatever, but he wouldn't stop smoking. He smoked a pipe from then on.

He was an honest boss, more honest than a lot of them. He didn't bullshit to you. If he had something to say to you he said it. He was the straightest bloke I ever worked for. Probably the toughest, too, now that I think about it. Mean as catshit. Here's an example. In the Blitz, pulling the delver on normal running, I was getting 3 or 4 mile to the gallon. On really heavy going I was only doing one mile per gallon. You could have driven a jeep or utility to town for a couple of gallons, but no, he wouldn't let us. There was never any: "Oh, you blokes have done a good job. Why don't you take the jeep and have a weekend in town?" None of that. It's not as if petrol was in short supply. It was standing round under trees everywhere, tilted to one side with logs under the drums to stop water getting in. He'd ring up and say: "Ten ton of petrol please" and out would come a mail truck full of petrol.

If there were races on we might get into Kynuna once every Pancake Day. Or if there was voting. That was a good thing. We had to go in and vote. That didn't come round very often either. Most people today wouldn't work in the conditions we worked in.

All up I was seven years on Rosevale. I didn't get any further than being a station hand. Had I been single I might still be out there. It was the loss of a baby that brought me home.

When Shirley and I returned to Brisbane, I decided never again to get on a horse. The only horse power for me would be under the bonnet. I said to her: "That's the last time I'll be leaving the end of the bitumen". And that's what happened. I never again went bush.



I beat him to the prize **Tom Forster**

I WAS BORN IN HUGHENDEN in July 1937. At that stage my parents were managing Vuna, a property near the railway siding of Whitewood, outside Corfield. They left there in 1946 and went back to the family property at Gracedale, Maxwelton, because Dad's two older brothers had died from various things. Dad was next in line so he went back and took over the management. The family firm was called Thomas Forster and Co after my grandfather.

My father was Neil Forster and my mother was originally Florence Hamilton. Her mother was the daughter of Captain Norman who sailed to the Gulf to meet up with either Burke and Wills or the search party for Burke and Wills. Normanton and the Norman River are named after that Captain Norman. I have one brother and one sister and they're younger than me: Richard and Patricia.

The family property at Gracedale was actually my grandfather's. Old Tom Forster drew the block in 1897. It was a block off Cambridge Downs which was a big property in the Richmond area. He and a partner – I think it was Pegler, but I'm not sure – they drew two or three blocks there and put them all together and called the whole place Gracedale. After not very many years my grandfather bought his partner out and became the sole owner. He married Grace Pegler from the Quilpie area. They had four sons and a daughter. My father was third of the four boys.

My grandfather died in 1937, the year I was born. Murray, his eldest son, died a few years later; and Les, the second eldest, died in a vehicle fire in 1946. There were these things called gas producers that they put on vehicles when there was petrol rationing. They burnt coke and produced a gas. You started on petrol and then switched over. Les and his mother, and her mother, I think, were going into Richmond for a race meeting. They had bags of horse feed on the back and somehow or other it caught alight from this gas producer. Flames were licking in the windows on both sides.

The whole car became totally engulfed by fire and Les got so badly burnt trying to get the two ladies out that he didn't make it.

After that was when my Dad went to manage Gracedale. Dad was the next oldest after Les, so he became the manager.

The Forsters owned two other properties: Trivalore, which was 20 miles or so from Gracedale, and another block north of Nelia called Euthella. A branch of the Forster family still owns the three properties. Dad sold his share to two nephews in about 1965 because the property was so far in debt. He gave my brother and I the option of whether we wanted to continue in the partnership, but we couldn't see, at that stage, how the partnership was ever going to survive. So we decided we'd leave it to our father to make a decision; and he decided to sell.

I didn't specially want to go back to Gracedale because, with so many family members as partners, it was getting to the stage where there were just too many in it. Murray and Les, my father's two older brothers who died – had seven children between them, plus their wives, and they all became shareholders. But the biggest problem was the death duties that were applicable in those days. With the death of old Tom and his two sons in quick succession, then Tom's wife soon after, four lots of death duties piled up. A really horrendous debt, and it virtually broke the family partnership.

Opposite: Chris Hennessey at the Longreach Show.
[Neville Hamilton, HaN10, 1952]

Below: Tom's grandparents, Grace and Thomas Forster, on Gracedale. Thomas is on a horse, and Grace is posing on a Russell Standard horse-drawn grader. The wording on the grader reads: *Manufactured by Russell Grader Manufacturing Company, Minneapolis Minnesota.* Caterpillar purchased the Russell company in 1928.
[Harry Forster, FH02, ca 1910]



MY EARLIEST MEMORY WOULD BE FROM VUNA. There was an abandoned steam engine on Vuna with big wheels on it. My brother and sister and I used to play inside the furnace. Every year we painted it. We'd mix up a big batch of ash and water and paint it with a new coat of "paint". I imagine – I never really knew – I imagine the steam engine had something to do with driving the bore-drilling gear when the bore was sunk.

I went to boarding school at Toowoomba when I was 9. They put me on the train at Corfield. I went to Winton, transferred to a Brisbane train, and from there went to Toowoomba. There was an older boy who lived on the other side of Winton who went to the same school. My parents knew his parents, so when I got to Winton he was in charge of me.

I spent 10 years at Toowoomba Prep School and Toowoomba Grammar. I went originally in 1946. We had four-term years. Christmas holidays and mid-winter holidays were of reasonable length, long enough to be able to go home, but the other two short ones were only a week. For a lot of kids who came from far away, like me, it wasn't feasible to go home, so on quite a few occasions we stayed on at school for the short breaks. We had a wonderful time because they'd take us to the pictures, and we got proper food for that week instead of boarding-school food.

I left school in September '55. I became a jackaroo on the family property and worked there for the remainder of the year. Gracedale was about 50,000 acres and we ran about 10,000 sheep. Part of it was actually timbered sandy country – about 10 or 12 thousand acres – which was used solely for cattle. We ran cattle, not sheep, on the sandy country. There were two homesteads: my family in one, and a cousin and his wife in the other.

Then in 1956 there was a shearer's strike and I ended up in the shearing sheds for nine months learning to shear. It taught me a really good lesson – I learnt how to work at a young age. Work was never a problem for me after those nine months.

The main goal when you became a shearer was to shear a hundred a day. It took me several months to learn how to shear that many. I was left-handed, y'see, and that made it more difficult. It also made me more determined. I had seen another guy – actually it was Norman Wilson who was shearing in the same team as me – and he was shearing left-handed. On a straight line of shearers, that throws the whole line out. He's back-to-front to everybody else; he's in the other blokes' road all the time. Typically, a left-hander was shoved up the far end of the board by himself. Although I was left-handed, I was determined I was going to shear right-handed. Which I did. And I assume that might have been one reason why it took me a bit longer to get up to speed because it wasn't my preferred hand to work with. But once I got to shear a hundred, I could shear a hundred any day.

We were considered scab labour during the strike and things got quite nasty in Richmond. Fortunately, we never went to town much, and if we thought anything nasty might happen we didn't go to town at all. It was as simple as that. We just stayed at home.

I worked on Gracedale for the rest of 1956 and then I went to Rosevale in April 1957. My father reckoned that I needed to see other people's ideas, to learn from somebody other than himself. Mr Hennessey had a reputation of being a pretty good sheep man, so Dad secured a position for me on Rosevale.

Mr Hennessey was the manager. He was still vitally involved in all the management decisions and he was still the boss, but he had stopped physical work because of illness, and he was only supervising the rest of us, really.

Bruce Rigby was the overseer when I arrived, and there was a jackaroo and a couple of cowboy gardeners. The cowboys did a bit of everything. If they weren't cowboying or gardening they were working as ringers. Gordon Magoffin was the owner.

We probably went into Julia Creek once a month. It wouldn't be for anything social (Kynuna was our social centre), it would be if we needed groceries, or car parts, or if we needed to see Australian Estates about selling sheep. Anything to do with business we used to deal with Australian Estates. I can still see Vic Kelly, the manager, a little old fella with sandy, reddish hair (originally red I suppose) that was turning grey. I remember he drove a Chrysler Royale when they first came out. He was one of the first out there to own one. We used to think what a big flash car it was that Kelly drove. We all called him Kelly. I don't know how many years he was in Julia Creek.

THE BEST PART ABOUT ROSEVALE was the boss's daughter, Chris. I remember her as a good-looking young thing. She took care of the bookwork and might have drawn a small wage. And she used to help outside a bit, though not very much. Her father wasn't keen about girls being involved. She used to go to sales with whoever was taking the truck full of rams; she got around a bit that way. And of course we went to Kynuna for dances. It was the closest town, only 30 miles away. There'd be five or six of us in her father's Humber Snipe.

The dances in Kynuna were very popular. A one-man band would come from Julia Creek and play the piano, the drums, and the mouth organ all together on his own – Mossie McDonald. We used to have some wonderful times at dances in Kynuna.

There were always plenty of jackaroos and ringers from Kynuna Station. There were a heap of young people around in those days.

My romance with Chris began at the Kynuna dances. I'm not sure when. I suppose within six months of me starting at Rosevale. Chris probably had a boyfriend, but I didn't know about him. If she did, I beat him to the prize.

I remember the first time we held hands was in the front of the Humber outside the Kynuna dance hall. Chris used to get sick in those days. Everyone used to tell her it was from nervousness, but it turned out to be a neck injury from falling off a horse. She'd often get sick when we went anywhere, and this night she was a bit off colour. She was sitting in the car and I went out and sat with her. And for a while I thought: *Will I try and hold her hand or won't I*. Eventually I did, and that was where it all started.



We married on the 12th December 1958. It was all planned ahead: there was no one living in the old cottage at the time, so we cleaned it up before we got married, sanded the floors, painted it, made a few cupboards out of kerosene cases, and when we came back from our honeymoon we moved straight in. If you come to the front gate of the old homestead, the cottage is directly behind, about 150 yards.

ROSEVALE, IN ROUND FIGURES, was 70,000 acres and carried 20-25,000 sheep. There was Gordon Magoffin the owner, Leo Hennessey manager, and Bruce Rigby overseer. Then there were two jackaroos (I was one of them), ringers, and a cowboy gardener. A jackaroo gets his washing and ironing done; a ringer has to do his own. Also, the jackaroos dined with the manager and his wife. The ringers had a separate dining room adjacent to the station kitchen. They ate separately.

The jackaroos didn't have any control over the ringers, not really. They both had separate duties and both reported to the overseer. We all did the same jobs. A jackaroo is really a trainee manager, whereas a ringer is one of the workers. All this terminology – overseer, jackaroo, ringer, cowboy, station hand, rouseabout – can get confusing. In the real old days, the ringer was the shearer who regularly shored the most number of sheep every day. He was the ringer of the shed. But then the term became a bit loose and a ringer referred to a station hand who never got any further than being just a ringer. He would remain a ringer his whole life. He was never regarded as management potential. A ringer, nowadays, is not necessarily a shearer, and I'm not quite sure how the connection between shearer and station hand was ever made.

Roly Desailly was the senior jackaroo after Rigby left, and so he was virtually the boss of us young fellas. You could say he was the overseer,

but I don't think he was ever paid as such. He left before Chris and I got married and I inherited the job from him. Once we were married I was officially appointed as the overseer. Mr Hennessey retired in 1960 and he recommended to Gordon Magoffin that I be promoted to manager, and Gordon agreed.

We left Rosevale at the beginning of 1963. Gordon wanted to move the stud to Lerida, a property he'd just purchased near Muttaborra. See, at Rosevale there was the stud and there was the flock. In the early 1930s Mr Hennessey bought rams from NSW and started the Rosevale stud; he got everything going. Over the years the stud grew alongside the flock. Gordon's idea was to divorce the two so that he could spend more time and money developing the stud in slightly better country. And it *was* slightly better country down there. It didn't look a lot different, but we did notice – for whatever reason – that stock always held on better at Lerida at the end of a dry year than they did at Rosevale.

Chris and I were given the option of moving to Lerida and managing the new stud, or staying at Rosevale and someone else managing the stud. The decision was a bit difficult. I think Chris wanted to stay on Rosevale, but I assumed that her father would have wanted me to carry on the good work with the stud that he'd done for so many years. We chose to move to Lerida and we bred rams for all the Magoffin properties: Melrose, Byrimine, Lerida and Rosevale. They also owned a property called Tonkoro, near Jundah.

There were good reasons for moving the stud. All that north-western country is regarded as marginal sheep country because it has summer rainfall only. Once you get further south, say from Longreach south, particularly Blackall south, you start getting into both winter and summer rains. Still basically summer rainfall, but quite often winter rainfall as well. And that more southern country produces different herbage. Julia Creek,



Richmond, Hughenden, all that area is mainly Flinders and Mitchell grass, which, although they're edible, are inferior to the legumey-style grasses further south.

As you go north, the dicier it becomes for a stud. The wool clips are lighter and the lambing percentages are lower. They're really the two main things. For every 1000 ewes on Rosevale, we thought we were doing pretty well if we lamb-marked 600. Occasionally we might get one particular paddock, or a good year, where we did better and we'd get 700. But when you get down to Blackall, from those 1000 ewes you'd expect 900 to 950 lambs – reared. Part of it is because of the greater likelihood of twins.

It's basically what goes down the sheep's neck that controls it all – the feed's better. Plus the climate's a bit kinder and there's more timbered area down south, more cover. The sheep don't get as hot, they don't get as stressed.

I CONSIDERED THE PRICKLY ACACIA A PEST. And I think Mr Hennessey would have too, by the time he left. What happened was: it's actually a South African fodder tree, that's why it was brought to Western Queensland. It was spreading quite rapidly in the 1950s, getting progressively worse. There were a lot of wet years and the seed really got going. Although cattle spread it faster, sheep will also spread it – not quite as quickly – but sheep definitely spread it. Some people are of the opinion that only cattle spread prickly acacia, but that's not true.

What happens is the stock eat the seed pods. If they're not fully digested they pass through both sheep and cattle and come out the other end just softened a bit. Once that happens, if conditions are right, it germinates very easily. In the good seasons they keep spreading, and it gets to the stage where you almost can't manage the property effectively.

Wet seasons were not the only reason for the spread in the 1950s. Stock transport was just starting to come in. Driving along a main road it wasn't uncommon to see a prickly acacia tree that had come up because a seed had fallen out of the stock transport.

I don't think anyone cared too much about prickly acacia in those days, that's why it spread so quickly. No one did anything much about it. You'll find there's lots of places even now that don't do anything about it. They might have only one or two trees on the main road going through their property. You'll see them get bigger and bigger and the owners don't bother to cut them out. Eventually they spread and become so thick you can't muster the paddock. You have to revert to what is done in a lot of

THAT'S HENNESSEY'S CAR, a six-cylinder, 1948 Super Snipe, on the back of that truck. His daughter Chris, Neville Hamilton, and somebody else were going to Winton and the engine mount broke. I had to go out and disconnect the bumper bar so I could get the back wheels on the tray and close the tailgate. Luckily there was a dry gully with just the right slope. I reversed the truck into the gully and drove the car onto the tray and tied it on as best I could. Drove home immensely carefully because Hennessey would have sacked me if his car had fallen off.

Soon as he bought the Super Snipe, he didn't have it 10 minutes but he had to send to Brisbane to get special spanners to pull the jets out of the carburettor. Then he bought thin, mean jets and put them in... well, I put them in, with him breathing down my neck. Then he went for a drive and came



back: "Terrible!" Every time he went out it was the same. I suffered it for a time, until one day I was feeling bold and I said to him: "I've got a Morris utility down in Brisbane, a little four-cylinder, 8-horsepower thing. If you want the economy of that you should buy one of them". It took me a while, but eventually he let me screw the original jets back in. The car was good as gold.

He nearly gassed me in that Snipe. The exhaust



Above: Forest of prickly acacia in the Julia Creek area. Before their introduction the view would have been clear to the horizon.
[Guy Burns, GK141, 2005]



Hoop Mitchell grass

Opposite: The cottage in which Tom lived after he married Chris Hennessey. Harry Denman and his wife were the first to live in the hut after it was moved from Back Bore in 1951.
[Chris Hennessey, HC40, 1962]

Below: Leo Hennessey's 1948 Humber Super Snipe, the car in which Tom first held hands with Chris, and in which Harry Denman was almost gassed. Photo taken by Neville Hamilton.
[Harry Denman, DH10, ca 1953]

other timbered country – use water traps to trap the stock because you physically can't ride through it. Also, prickly acacia chokes out the grass because the country becomes shaded. I am familiar with one particular property north of Lerida where the prickly acacia was so bad that virtually no grass grew under the trees. It was just a clay pan. I think it's because of the shade. Grass just doesn't like growing in shade all the time.

Prickly acacia is a good stock feed. It would be great if you could have them just as a scattering of trees, but you can't. They're just a menace.

pipe went over the diff. We'd been to Kynuna to a dance: my wife and I in the back, him and his wife in the front. He's burning along and I'm asleep. When I got home I was vomiting – and I wasn't drunk. I couldn't understand it. Next day he's getting right up me:

*If you want to drink like a man you'll
have to learn to hold it like a man.
No, I wasn't drunk. I nearly died in
that car from exhaust fumes.*

We jacked it up and got under it. There was a hole in the exhaust pipe where it went over the diff, right under the back seat. It was channelling fumes into the car. It nearly killed me. Full of booze, too, of course. I could have just slept through it and died in that car.

HARRY DENMAN

I WAS A BIT DAUNTED, I suppose, when I first went to Rosevale. I'd never faced the situation of going to somewhere new. Basically, I think that should be the practice for any young person on the land. You've gotta get out and learn from other people's experiences and learn different ways of doing things. Not to say that your father is necessarily wrong, but simply to get a different perspective on every angle of management and how things are done.

I learnt just about everything I know about stock – sheep management particularly – from Mr Hennessey. He was the studmaster and classer on Rosevale, and although he didn't do much physical work, he gradually taught us jackaroos what to look for and how to class sheep. I'd grown up on a sheep property, but I never had anything to do with selecting rams. I was only ever involved with mustering, drafting, and doing the general stock work. Cheap labour. Kids, see.

Hennessey ran Rosevale pretty strictly. He kept us young fellas well under control and you didn't dare step out of line. We all had great respect for him. He spent a lot of time in the house because he was very sick, but every day he would get in the car and drive around, checking on what we were supposed to have done. We knew he'd check our work so we did it properly. In that situation it doesn't take very long to work out that his way is the way you're going to do it.

It would be difficult to find someone as good all round as Leo Hennessey. An excellent stockman, horsebreaker and studmaster. Astute, good at anything to do with stock and their management, thorough and diligent. Widely respected, very much so. Yes, he was a top man. Absolutely top man.

Rosevale and the stud were Hennessey's life. And that lifestyle became mine.



Above: Obituary photo of Leo Hennessey reproduced in *The Pastoral Review*, November 1964.
[Chris Hennessey, HC17, ca 1955]

Below: A load of wool crossing bore drain just in front of homestead. 1930 – Leo Hennessey's writing on back of photo. Added at a later date: *About the last horse-drawn load from Rosevale.*
[Chris Hennessey, HC24, 1930]



L. V. Hennessey

An appreciation by John Lewis¹

IT COULD BE SAID the career of L. V. Hennessey, who died on 12th October [1964], soldier and stud-master, spanned the years in pastoral life from the buggy days to the arrival of the aeroplane.

Born at Blackall, 18th May 1897, the son of a police magistrate, Leopold Hennessey received his early pastoral experience on Paradise, Eulolo and Essex Downs. He was a sub-overseer on the latter property and just beginning his stud-sheep experience, when he enlisted for service in the AIF on 3rd August 1915, at the age of 19. He embarked at Brisbane in the troopship *Wandilla* on 31st January 1916 as a member of 14th Reinforcements to the renowned 5th Light Horse Regiment. The theatres of war in which Trooper Hennessey served included the Sinai and Palestine campaigns.

Like many a man with spirit and ambition whose progress has been interrupted by war and injury, he took a little time to rehabilitate himself to civilian life following his discharge in 1919. After a spell of wool sorting and wool classing, he and a friend named Taylor worked together at various strenuous enterprises including cattle dealing, tanksinking and a contract to break in 80 horses.

About 1925, Hennessey applied for, and got, the managership of a property somewhere on the Condamine, but it was not his niche. "I stayed long enough to break in a dog" said Hennessey. In 1926, with his dog and his growing experience, he was appointed by the late James Magoffin of Melrose (near Winton) to the management of Rosevale, a property of 70,000 acres in the Julia Creek district. Magoffin

liked the man and his work, and twice raised his salary in the next two years.

Upon the death of James Magoffin in 1928, Richard Magoffin succeeded to his father's estate. He and Hennessey quickly formed a bond of mutual respect and friendship, a bond that was to grow closer over the years. Hennessey's knowledge of stock and wool, his enthusiasm (almost boyish at times), and above all, his gift of leadership, seemed to complement Magoffin's financial far-sightedness and carefully planned improvements, to make the perfect team for their day. Richard Magoffin's opinion of Hennessey: "A gifted and painstaking studmaster; a wonderful manager".

In 1934, Richard Magoffin purchased Byrimine, a 90,000 acre Cloncurry property. The intention was to make his holdings drought-proof by providing each with relief country, and to give Hennessey additional scope.

Another absorbing interest was the Rosevale stud, which began in 1933. Hennessey had been long dissatisfied with the quality of the flock rams available in the south at that time. The Rosevale stud was founded primarily to breed rams for the 300,000 acres of Magoffin holdings, comprising Melrose, Tonkoro and Wooroona.

I was associated with Leo Hennessey from 1931 to 1942. I got to know him very well in those years; his best years, from a medical point of view, since his soldiering days. I had many long talks with him while we battled for grass and water on drought-stricken stock routes; looked after sheep on agistment

country; on long car drives; and on his veranda at Rosevale. He avoided formal gatherings, but relaxed easily among friends. He talked with a sense of the dramatic, and had such a ready grasp of the descriptive phrase – often exaggerated for emphasis – that one would think him a writer. A thoughtful man dedicated to his work, he was always ready to talk about breeding and station management. He was a man of simple tastes with a streak of austerity in his nature; and he had an enviable knack of inspiring loyalty and quelling dissension. But for all his friendliness, there was no mistaking who was in charge when there was work to be done. His unmistakable air of authority, quick thinking, and a quiet, but resonant voice left no doubt of it.

From modest numbers, Leo Hennessey built the Rosevale Stud to over 4000 sheep by 1961. How well he succeeded is instanced by the keen demand for Rosevale bred rams in the northern districts. He was never able to catch up with the demand for Rosevale rams, though he produced up to 700 annually.

The soundness of his judgment as a breeder is reflected in prices paid for Rosevale wool. This wool several times topped the London sales, one lot of 12 scoured bales bringing 371d in 1951, a London record at that time.

Immobilised by 1961, he bought a home unit at Camden on the Brisbane River's Hamilton Reach. When he died at Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital, Leopold Victor Hennessey had completed almost four decades of management, and his work had linked the lives of three generations of Magoffins.

1. Edited version of an obituary in the *Pastoral Review*, p31-32, Nov 1964.



*A load of wool crossing
bare drain just in front
of homestead. 1930.*



Above: Beven and Isabel on Balootha.
The shed in the distance is where
Stacey Brand and Bill Nelson camped.

[Isabel Flewell-Smith, I16, 1950]

Isabel Flewell-Smith

MUM AND DAD WERE MARRIED in Murgon in 1927. I think they had to get married. At the time, Dad was working as a carpenter at the Kingaroy aerodrome, helping his father. That's where they were working together. After a while, whether at Mum's insistence I don't know, Dad broke away from his father and went to Cloyna.

My first memory is living in a railway house at Cloyna and listening to dance music from the hall across the way. My older sister, Merle, used to sit on the front steps and tap her toes. Mum would say to me: "Come back inside; you're not to hear that" and she'd shut all the windows and doors while continuing to warn me: "You mustn't listen to music".

I was too young to go to school at Cloyna, although Merle went to school there. I started school at Wooroonden when I was about 6 or 7. My younger brother, Beven, was enrolled too, even though he was only 4, to make up the numbers so we could have a teacher.

Cloyna had a butcher shop and it had a blacksmith's (Mum's cousin). We used to go there a fair bit. It also had a church, a fish and chips shop, and a grocery store owned by Albert Marks. Dad used to talk to Albert quite a lot, and that's how he heard about the farm.

Albert offered Dad a half share in a farm at Wooroonden. So Dad left carpentering, after we were all born, and he went dairy farming. I can remember going with him on the tractors, walking round the farmyard, watering the lucerne paddock, Mum and Merle milking the cows, Dad taking the cream cans down to the farm gate. We were always with Dad, Beven and I.

The Wooroonden farm was more or less a failure, and Dad had to pick vegetables and fruit to bring in a bit of money. Eventually he sold his half share and went back to carpentering.

Then, when I was about 12, Uncle Max asked Dad to build a homestead on Balootha, and a garage and double-storey house in Julia Creek.

Dogs as Friends, Brolgas to Feed

Max asks his brother-in-law to build a homestead, a house, and a workshop



Above: Hazel and Alan Flewell-Smith on their wedding day.

[Isabel Flewell-Smith, 107, 1927]

Uncle Max had married Dad's sister, Marj Flewell-Smith. I can remember going to their house at 34 Macdonnell Rd. Max worked around Julia Creek most of the year, but he had a house at Redcliffe for the times when he wasn't tanksinking. He was always out in the yard at Redcliffe, doing things around the garden. He loved gardening.

Right: Max's house at 34 Macdonnell Rd, Redcliffe. Isabel's parents, Alan & Hazel Flewell-Smith, near gate.

[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV31, ca 1955]



Uncle Max had a boat too, at that time, with an outboard, and he used to take us out fishing. He was nice.

Right: Max's boat full of kids at Woody Point.

Max had several blocks of land at Woody Point, and on one of them was a shack near the beach where the Burns family spent Christmas of 1947. From left: Isabel, Butch Burns, Barry Burns, Beven F-S, Mal Burns.

[Joy Burns, J56, Christmas 1947]



Early in 1950, Mum, Dad, Beven and I went to Julia Creek. Merle stayed behind in Murgon because she had a job. We travelled up in a green caravan. It was a bus converted into a caravan and it belonged to Uncle Max. Not as big as the buses nowadays; about half the size of that. It had bunks at the back, a little kitchen in the middle, and the driving area up front – all in one.

Right: The green caravan that took the Flewell-Smiths to Julia Creek. On the left is Neville Sheehan, on the right Stacey Brand, and in between are the Flewell-Smiths: Isabel, Beven, Hazel & Alan.

[Ivor Matsen, MI03, 1950]



We were part of a convoy of trucks coming up from Brisbane. There was Max, Stacey Brand, Nev Sheehan, Ivor Matsen, Bob Pulley (I remember he always wore white overalls), and Cecil Willis. Bob Pulley and Cecil Willis were tanksinkers who'd been with Max previously; but the others, including Dad, were new hands. We weren't with the actual tanksinking crew, we were just driving up with them. Stacey Brand came in the caravan with us. He was to be Dad's offsider.

It was a long slow trip and we were held up a couple of times by flood water, first at Barcaldine and then at Longreach.

Before we got to Julia Creek we stopped at a property outside of Kynuna for a couple of weeks. I have an idea the men built a tank. When we left there we continued on with just Stacey.



Above: The green caravan crossing the Thomson River in flood, north of Longreach.
[Merle Flewell-Smith, N09, 1950]



Below: On Belford Station. Bob Pulley posing on a Cletrac FDE with a Britstand C14 scoop behind. Beven Flewell-Smith, like most 10 year-old boys, is dreaming of being a tractor driver one day.
[Merle Flewell-Smith, N09, 1950]

I remember pulling into Julia Creek and complaining to Mum what a stinking place it was. All I could smell was goat. Everybody had goats. When we lived in town later on, I remember most people having one or two; some might have had half a dozen; but one lady, Mrs Foster, she had a whole herd. Stinkers as well – billy goats. You could smell them before you could see them. Boy, were they on the nose. She used to let her goats out during the day and they'd return home at night. Occasionally they'd go walkabout and be away three or four days. Come back, and their udders would be bloody-near dragging on the ground – and the milk no good. She'd have to milk them for a couple of days till it came right.

Below: Hazel cooking on the outside stove on Balootha, while Beven saws a piece of timber beside the tin lean-to. The green caravan would be near where the photographer is standing. The man behind Hazel is probably Stacey Brand.

[Isabel Flewell-Smith, I14, 1950]

We didn't stay in Julia Creek that first time, we drove to Balootha and lived in a lean-to on the side of the green caravan. You can see the tin lean-to in the photo. It was near the bore drain. No fans, no electricity. I don't think we had a meat safe either. We had corned meat. Only when the station manager killed did we have fresh meat.

And that's Mum's stove – a wood stove sitting on kerosene tins – where she did all her cooking. She cooked out in the open. Once, without Mum realising, gidya bugs got in the stew and we chewed on them. Yuck. Little grey beetles about the size of your thumb – and they stunk.

Opposite top: Isabel feeding Charlie. Note the prickly mimosa in the background, which features in Stacey Brand's story of the grasshopper plague (page 500).
[Isabel Flewell-Smith, I15, 1950]

Opposite bottom: Taken with Bill Barker's two dogs, the day after we arrived here. Isabel and Beven on Balootha, beside the green caravan.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV50, 1950]



I was about twelve on Balootha
and I did school by correspondence.
Lessons came out by mail, three months at a time.

No playmates except Beven.
Together we went paddling in the bore drains.
We had dogs as friends, brolgas to feed.
We had a grasshopper plague
and couldn't see 20 feet in front of us
there were that many grasshoppers.
And we had a rat plague:
chased them with sticks,
killed them for fun,
and to feed to the brolgas.
We'd watch, fascinated,
as the fat lump spiralled down the skinny neck.

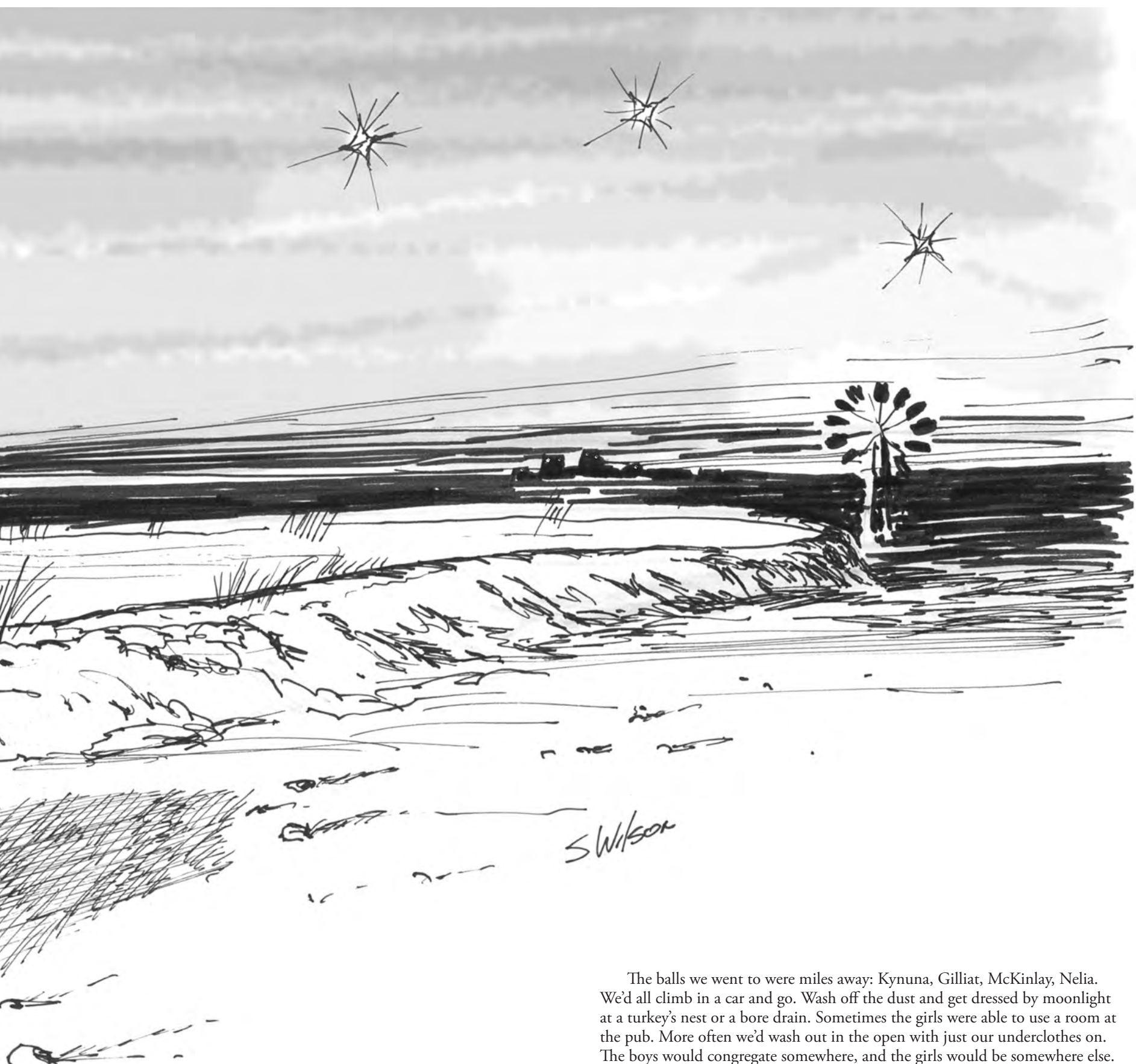
We were on Balootha only as long as it took to build the
homestead. Then we moved into town to build Max's house and
garage. We were still living in the caravan. Must have been a
couple of years we lived in that green caravan – on Balootha and
in Julia Creek – until we rented a house in Coyne St.



As a teenager in Julia Creek, I thought there was nothing much to do. It might have seemed like that at the time, but when I look back... we played tennis, we had cricket competitions. There'd be a cricket team from north of town, from south of town, a team from Nelia, Maxwellton, the town side – about eight teams altogether. Uncle Max was a good cricketer and played in one of the teams. He'd be dressed in his whites and one of those cloth caps with a peak. When he played sport he was dressed exactly as he should have been. Spared no expense that way.

We had an outdoor picture theatre. It was cooler without a roof. Remember, you get terrible heat in Julia Creek. If it rained you'd get under the canvas seat in front of you and continue to watch the movie. Norm Downey had four changes a week and it was always "A Cowboy and Anothery".





The balls we went to were miles away: Kynuna, Gilliat, McKinlay, Nelia. We'd all climb in a car and go. Wash off the dust and get dressed by moonlight at a turkey's nest or a bore drain. Sometimes the girls were able to use a room at the pub. More often we'd wash out in the open with just our underclothes on. The boys would congregate somewhere, and the girls would be somewhere else. If we wanted to put on lipstick, we'd go into the toilet of the pub.

Next morning, come back to Auntie Marj's and sleep the rest of the day.

A ball was when you had a real band and got dressed up. A dance was music from a gramophone or Mossie McDonald. You wouldn't get the out-of-towners coming to a dance.

Every Friday we organised a dance. We'd go up to Dawso's (she had a hall and a cafe): "Can we have the hall tonight? We're gonna put on a hop for the Ambulance". We'd book the hall, tell everybody in town, and offer Mossie a few bob for playing the piano. Afterwards we'd tell Dawso: "We didn't make anything tonight, Mrs Dawson".

The ambulance got theirs, but Dawso didn't get hers.

Dawso's dance hall and cafe were beside one another, on the corner near the Post Office. The cafe was first owned by Bill Mathews, then Mrs Dawson, then the Laffertys.

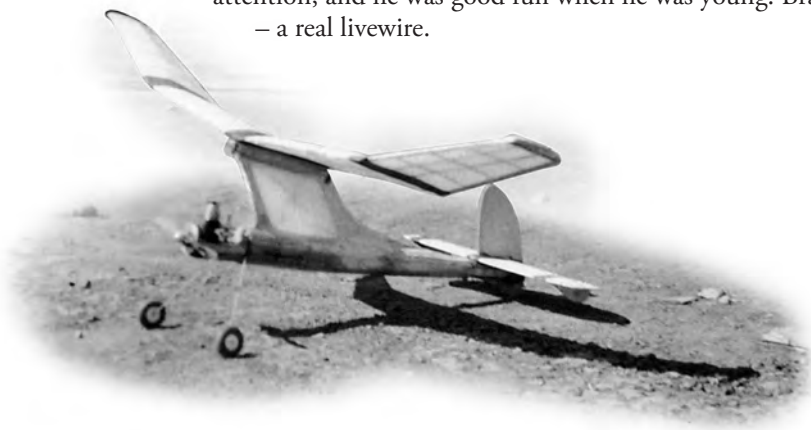
Anytime a girl got pregnant in Julia Creek – y'know how small towns develop sayings – well, we'd say it was Lafferty's milkshakes: "You've been up at Lafferty's having a milkshake!" The cafe has been torn down now and replaced by the Civic Centre.



Although I was several years younger than the others in my group, age was no barrier. Most weekends we'd go to one of the waterholes; just fun-loving young people going fishing and swimming; Choco Winton, Benny Burrows, Cooee Wilder, Claudette Green, Joy Burns, Donny Burns...

I was very friendly with the Burnses, especially Joy and Don. Joy worked for her father in the office. Actually I did too. I was dog's body: took the mail for posting, licked the stamps. We used to go for walks in the late afternoon, Joy and I. Walk for a couple of miles out of town and back again, talking all the time.

I can't remember what Don was doing, except flying model aeroplanes. He made them from kits and flew them. We called him Foghorn. He had a loud voice and it carried well. He liked to be the centre of attention, and he was good fun when he was young. Brash – a real livewire.



Opposite: Isabel sitting on the fence between Dew Drop Inn and Max's workshop.
[Isabel Flewell-Smith, 105, ca 1955]

Below: Looking north-east along Burke St, Julia Creek, taken from near the O-K Store. Buildings from left: Blue Bird Cafe, Post Office, Mathews' Hall and cafe (later Lafferty's).
[Ivy Burrows, B127, ca 1950]

Above: One of Donny Burns' model aeroplanes outside the workshop.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV16, 1951]

Above right: Young people of Julia Creek. From left: Cooee Wilder, Choco Winton, Isabel, John Brisbane, Donny Burns.
[Isabel Flewell-Smith, 127, ca 1953]



DONNY, your old man, he was a foghorn. I didn't like your old man, I'll tell you now. He was sort of... well... half mechanic, half blah-blah – half talk. He'd come out to a dam site and start talking and taking over. I never really got on too good with your old man. He'd come out and muck around, climb on a dozer now and again. Never stayed long.

I christened him *The Foghorn* – blowing off all the time.

JOE AZZOPARDI

WE USED to take Donny's model aeroplane to the other side of the workshop and fly it. Donny used to do the flying. Just go round and round. He had two cords with a piece of timber in between and controlled it with his wrists. It had a motor. You'd start her up and she'd take off by herself. You had to keep her flying till she run out of petrol, and then glide her in.

One day the cords broke and we lost her for a while. Took a bit of finding; she went bush.

LIONEL FRY



DAD FINISHED MAX'S GARAGE AND HOUSE IN 1951. I'll always remember Uncle Max and Auntie Marj living in that double-storey house. Dew Drop Inn, as they used to call it. They were the first ones in town with air conditioning. The family might not admit it, but they were considered well-off, the upper-crust, the monied people of Julia Creek. That was the outside impression, more or less.

I was often in the house with Marj – talking with her, seeing her come and go – because she bought eggs from me. I remember her cooking, washing, and playing golf and tennis.

At the back of the house Max had a beautiful vegie garden. He had a sprinkler system set up and it was going all day long. He'd come in from gardening, or from golf or from work, hungry, and start cooking. He loved cooking up steak and onions with Holbrooks sauce as gravy – for himself. Marj did the cooking for everybody else.



Through Max's work there were a lot of visitors at Dew Drop Inn. One time Max invited a radio announcer from 4LG Longreach – Mike O'Regan. Auntie Marj said he must have had some type of VD, because she reckoned she caught it from him off the toilet seat. I was in the house the day she came back from the doctor. She probably got the VD from Max, but she blamed this Mike O'Regan.

Now Marj could get angry with Max. She used to give him what for – and oh boy, did she give it to him that day. She let fly at Max for inviting O'Regan into their house, and Max just sat there and took it. I was there. I shrank into the woodwork.

The real trouble started between Max and Marj when she got tired of him and his... lady friends. Edna Barker, married to Bill Barker, the manager of Balootha, she was the first one I knew about. Marj always called them bitches. "That bitch!" was Marj's favourite saying. The first time I ever heard that word used for a person, not a dog, was by Auntie Marj. "That bitch!" That's just how she used to say it. She did put up with a lot though. From a family point of view she had a hard life. There was always tension when Max was around. I don't think they spoke very nicely to one another from what I can remember. There didn't seem to be much affection between the two of them.

To me, Max seemed a sly person. He was a good businessman, but he always seemed a bit sus. A handsome man. I think he was a charmer with the women, even when he didn't have a lot of money. Just one of those men that women take to. I don't know whether he was so popular with the men. Can't remember him having men friends, actually.

THE DAY OF THE FIRE, I WAS AT HOME IN COYNE ST. I heard this horrible crackling. I'll never forget that noise. Raced out and there's flames all around Uncle Max's house. We lived just one street away. Max had hundreds of pounds of expensive photography gear inside and he knocked the gauze down and went in to get it. Everybody came from miles around to watch. They lost everything. Marj had to buy a change of clothes from Peter Dawes.

After the fire, Max was having a bath in our bathroom. His bookkeeper, the German man, Huller, came over with the insurance papers. Marj took them into the bathroom, leaving the door wide open, saying:

Max, I've got the insurance papers.

Well, you can forget that. I let it lapse.

I've never seen a more crestfallen woman than Marj.

I KNEW Mike O'Regan very well. I used to advertise my pictures on 4LG. Ring up Mike every Friday morning and give him the programme. God he was popular; he was good. Had a terrific memory, a great personality. Didn't mind a beer on a hot day either. I drove through Longreach once on holidays. Went to the 4LG studio and took Mike to the pub. We had a drink together.

The RSL got him to come to Julia Creek once to emcee our annual ball. Before the ball started there was a sideshow with a boxing tent. Mike entered the ring to earn a few bob and got a black eye. We had to clean him up. A bit of a rogue, but a nice bloke.

I don't know whatever happened to him; wouldn't have a clue. He just disappeared. Worst thing that ever happened to Longreach.

NORM DOWNEY

ONE TIME 4LG suspended O'Regan for six months; some problem on-air. He had to fill in time, so Max employed him to sell cars on commission. It amazed me how people would flock to buy vehicles from Mike just because he was 10 years on 4LG. He was like God. He was magic. To be successful selling things you have to create an image that the product, or the seller, is fantastic. Television has taken over now, but in the old days it was radio.

Max invited O'Regan to stay in the house. He was supposed to be there by himself, but he had a woman with him. The fact is, him and his woman took over the house. Mum got right up Max over that, and we had to move O'Regan to the Top Pub. After the suspension, back he went to 4LG.

BARRY BURNS



Above: "That bitch!" Stephen Wilson's preliminary sketch of the night Marj caught Max in bed with a lady friend. The completed drawing, and Marj's story, are on page 55.
[Stephen Wilson, *WiS15*, 2007]

Opposite top: Donny Burns, Jill Burns, Mike O'Regan in front of Max Burns' Stinson L5.
[Guy Burns, *GB110*, ca 1957]

Mike O'Regan lost his celebrity status through alcohol. In the 1960s he married the station mistress at Stamford (on the Hughenden-Winton line). He left there in 1966 and, as Norm Downey says, "just disappeared". I was unable to trace him any further.

Opposite bottom: Claudette Green, Joy Burns and Isabel on the west side of Dew Drop Inn. Note the air conditioner mentioned by Isabel. The photo was taken from Max's workshop, now the Town & Country Club.
[Joy Burns, *J22*, ca 1953]

Dad built another house for Uncle Max on the same site as the one that burnt down, but it was low-set. He did other work around town as well: the powerhouse, the golf club, the Presbyterian church, plus a few houses. After the house building dried up, he gradually gave away working for himself and took on council jobs, especially after he got sick. He developed sugar diabetes when I was 18 – the year I married Henry Winton in Julia Creek – and he had to take things easy. Actually, he was in hospital on my wedding day, and was only allowed out for the ceremony.

In 1965 Henry and I moved to Townsville. Mum and Dad left Julia Creek soon after we did, and went to Newry Island, just outside of Mackay.

Dad used to tell me that if he lived till 65 he'd be very happy. One particular week when he was 65, he was in his workshop under the house. He did a lot of craftwork with wood. I remember him with a home-rolled cigarette in his mouth, sitting there talking through his gums. Well, he did have false teeth, but I never saw them in. He went around gummy. Dad didn't believe in filling teeth. If a tooth was bad it came out; and if any others looked like having fillings in the next couple of years, they came out too. The same with Mum. She lost her teeth very early.

Anyway, this particular week he was feeling pretty good; he was really happy making things. That's the week he collapsed and died of a heart attack. Auntie Marj came from Brisbane for the funeral.



Opposite top: Merle Flewell-Smith.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV17, 1951]

Opposite bottom: Shearing time on the Halloran property, Narollah. From left: Murray Halloran, Bill Nelson, Rex Halloran. Taken the year Rex died on Narollah in a fire.
[Joanie Halloran, JH059, 1954]

Below: The Presbyterian Church, Julia St, built by Alan Flewell-Smith; one of his several legacies in Julia Creek.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV20, ca 1960]

FLEWELL-SMITH. — Allan William. — Passed away Townsville 8.10.71. Aged 65 years. Husband of Hazel, Father, Merle (Mrs. W. Nelson, Yandina), Isabel, Mrs. H. Winton, Townsville Beven, Julia Ck., Brother, Douglas, Stanley, Keith, and Marjorie Burns, Grandfather of Eight. May he Rest in Peace.

Courier Mail: Oct 1971



Didn't mind the loneliness Merle Flewell-Smith

BALOOTHA WAS CATTLE. It was a cattle station. I lived there for two or three years in the early 1950s. While I was on Balootha I had two children born at the Julia Creek hospital.

Balootha was pretty lonely. There was only Bill and I and the kids. We didn't see many people, other than those from Etta Plains, one station further out. As they'd come and go we could see them drive past, not far from the house. And there was Haddington closer in. We only saw Haddington people when we went to Julia Creek, which wasn't that often. Once a month I suppose – unless it rained. Then we didn't go anywhere. The roads were dirt and we couldn't go to town when storms were about.

I went to Julia Creek because of Mum and Dad. They'd already been out there with that convoy of trucks, to build a house on Balootha and a house in town for Uncle Max. They came home to Murgon for Christmas 1950, and when they caught the train back to Julia Creek I went with them. We were the first train through after the floods of January 1951.

Almost straight away I met Bill Nelson. He was working on Balootha when my parents were there the year before. That's how he got to know them. And when they shifted into Julia Creek after Uncle Max's house was finished, Bill came to town one day to see them – we were all living in a caravan – and that's how I met him. We married in January 1952.

Bill left working on Balootha after we married and he worked for Dad, carpentering in Julia Creek. We went onto Balootha again when we heard that Max was looking for a manager. Bill said to me: "Why don't you go and ask Max if we could have the job?" Bill sort of pushed me, so I went and asked Uncle Max and he said yes. Out we went to Balootha to manage the place.

Life was very basic. No phone, not even a party line. That only came as far as Haddington, the station closer to Julia Creek. Haddington had a party line and they could ring people. We couldn't.

I remember the polio epidemic was on when we were managing Balootha. There were cases of polio in Julia Creek. And I remember electrical storms and the Mitchell-grass fires they started. Bill had to try and put them out. I went to bed by myself one night while Bill was fighting fires, and next morning he still wasn't home. I started to worry, because Rex Halloran was caught in a bushfire not long before and had died. Rex was Bill's best mate, and his brother, Murray, wasn't far behind.

BATTERY WIRELESS, kerosene refrigerator, carbide lights: that's Balootha in my memory. We usually had a couple of carbide lights. Carbide in a cylinder, and it had water in it too. Sat them on

the kitchen table. If anyone felt like reading a book, they'd sit at the table and read.

Carbide came in lumps, 12-gallon drums of it. Must have been manufactured I'd say. Water dripped onto the carbide, which made a gas, and you lit it. You added a little bit of water – there was a screw you adjusted so the water could drip slowly – and then the gas formed and you lit the burner at the top. If you let too much water through it would bubble and gurgle – glmp, glmp, glmp – and the light would flicker, go out, and come back on again. One night I got that jolly frightened with the "glmping" I threw the light outside. I thought it was going to explode.

Maybe once a month we'd go to Julia Creek. There was really nothing much to go in for. We had a standing order for bread from Kaeser's, and fruit and vegies from old Hortie. The mailman would collect our order, plus anything that came from Townsville on the train, and bring it out.

Every wet season for three months we were stuck fast. We knew approximately when the wet would start so we prepared for it. We'd work out what we needed for three months and send an order to Townsville. If we happened to run out of anything, Bill would ride to Haddington and they'd get on the line. Whatever we asked for would be dropped by plane.

I QUITE ENJOYED LIFE on Balootha. I could have stayed longer. It was a quiet life and I was contented. The loneliness never worried me. I didn't mind the loneliness. I still don't mind it, now that Bill has gone. I've always been used to being quiet. Never been one for going out that much.

But why I didn't learn to drive I do not know. Never thought about driving. Bill never worried about teaching me either. Way out there and not being able to drive. Still don't. I can see, now, how silly I was not to learn to drive.



Iron Lung Taken To Julia Creek

Following a serious outbreak of poliomyelitis at Julia Creek, a doctor and two nursing sisters, together with an iron lung from the Townsville General Hospital, left for Julia Creek aboard the Inlander on Tuesday afternoon.

Another suspected case of poliomyelitis was reported today. This brings the total cases in the area to two positive and four suspected. The doctor who has been in the township since Wednesday



All Her Memories

The demise of Dew Drop Inn, a 'lovely two-storey home'

DAD BUILT THE ENGINEERING workshop and the double-storey house next door, Dew Drop Inn. Auntie Marj named it that (a fancy style of Do Drop In) because everyone just seemed to drop in and see them all the time. That's how it got its name.

MERLE FLEWELL-SMITH

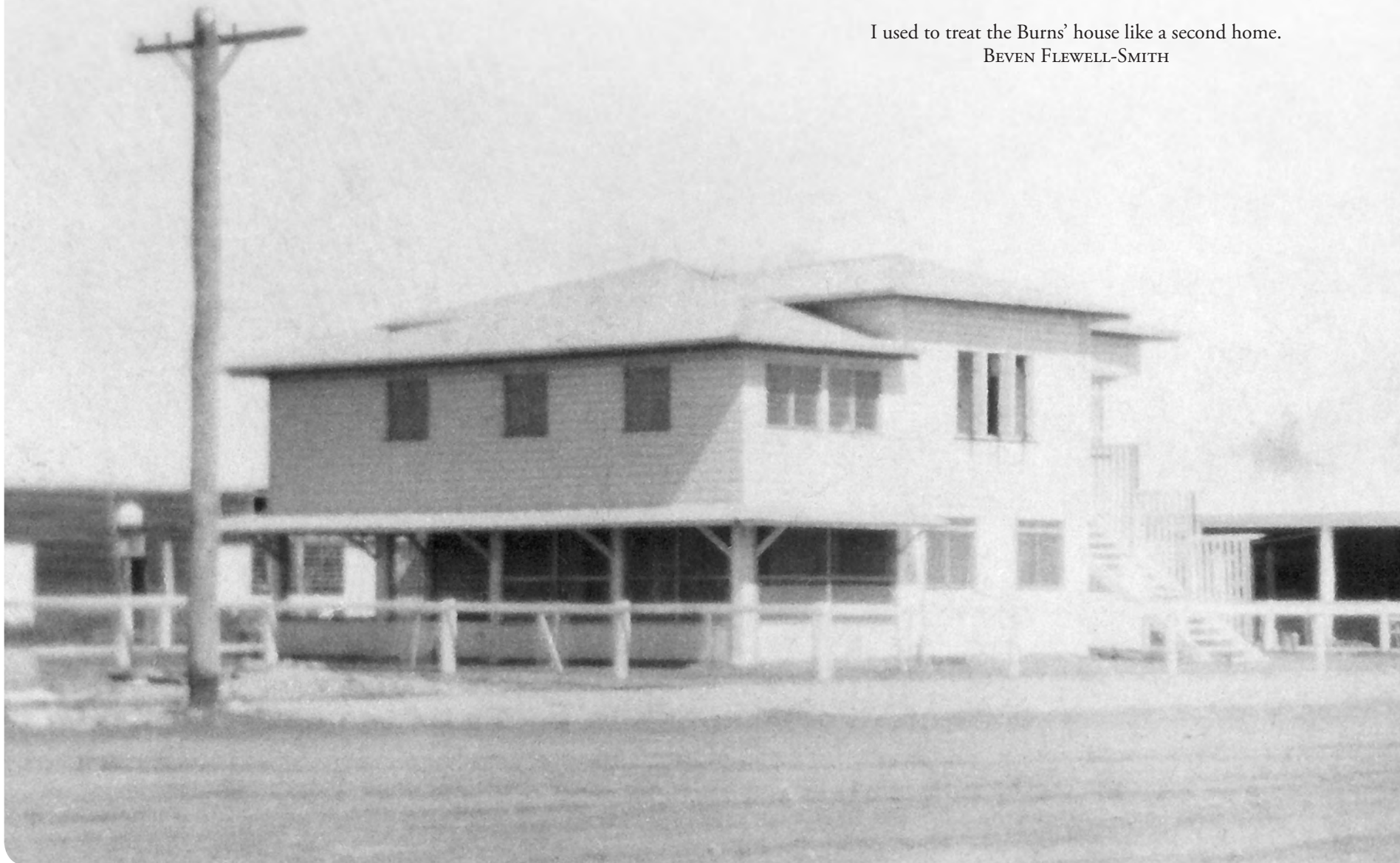
WE'D ALWAYS BE DOWN there at Dew Drop Inn. It was a pretty friendly sort of place, a meeting place for young people. Marj'd be there. The whole town went down to have a look at the fire. There was nothing they could do.

LIONEL FRY

I WAS MANAGING a place out here for about seven years, Dalkeith, out along the Kynuna road, and that's when the Burns' house got burnt down. We saw the smoke on Saturday afternoon. We saw this bloody big smoke. We were 30 mile out by road, and we looked out from home in the afternoon – oh, I don't know, would have been 3 o'clock I suppose – and I said: "Somebody's getting burnt out in town". It was Max's house going up.

BRYAN FELS

I used to treat the Burns' house like a second home.
BEVEN FLEWELL-SMITH



IT WAS ONLY A NEW PLACE. The fire started upstairs, that's for sure. Lionel Wall and I were one of the first to see it. It was the weekend, and for some reason I was driving around with Lionel. He was tied up with the town carrying and that sort of thing. There was a fire at the Burns place so we went and had a look. The whole town turned out eventually. If it had been downstairs we probably could have got a hose and done something, but being up top, and not having much water pressure...

There was no fire brigade, only an old truck the council had for pumping out slop water. All the bath water and slop water used to go into tanks in those days. There was no septic. The slop water from the commercial places, like the hotels,

gone for a time.

On Saturday afternoon Mr. Max Burns' lovely two-storey home was burnt to the ground. People had to stand by and nothing could be done as the water main was not in that street and the hose supply could not cope with the flames. Mr. and Mrs. Devries and Mrs. McPherson occupied the top storey and Mr. and Mrs. Burns the lower part. No one saved anything.

Word was received during the week that Mr. Jim Parsons passed away at his home in Brisbane. For many years Jim was Clerk of the McKinlay Shire Council and he resided in McKinlay and Julia Creek for many years. Our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Parsons.

NQR: 6 Nov 1954

went into underground tanks which were pumped out and taken away to be dumped. Just the commercial places. All the houses in Julia Creek, the bath water was let run into the backyard. For a pub, there'd be too much water with 20 or 30 people bathing; there'd be water and slop everywhere. So the council had this slop truck with a small centrifugal pump on the back.

Lionel and I got to Max's house and we went to get the slop truck. But when we got back to the house, we realised we'd have to use an extension hose; and with such a small pump the water coming out the end would be only a trickle, so we gave it a miss.

Max was just arriving when Lionel and I came back in the truck. He went in and got a bag from the bottom part of the house; valuables of some sort. Something that he wanted to get hold of very badly because Sergeant Frank Purtle wasn't too keen about him going in.

REG FRY

Below: Dew Drop Inn and Max's Julia Creek Engineering Works. The house burnt down 30/10/1954.

[Isabel Flewell-Smith, 120, ca 1953]



THE HOUSE WE HAD in Julia Creek was burnt down. The people who lived upstairs accidentally burnt it down. It was a double-storey house. They lived upstairs and we lived downstairs.

They had some sort of cooking utensil on the table; like a frypan it was. She went out and forgot to turn it off. It was coming on summer, blazing hot, and you know those winds that blow. It just went up like a... The fire cleaned up the house all right. It was a mess.

MARJ BURNS

MRS BURNS WAS A NICE LADY. A big lady, real down to earth, and she always welcomed you. Soon as you walked into that house you got a welcome. I think they were the first to install electric air conditioning in Julia Creek. It wasn't like the evaporative ones with a big blower outside that you see now; this was a proper compressor type.

The house burnt down... I think it might have been a Saturday afternoon about 5 o'clock. We were wrackin' around Dawso's cafe and saw the smoke. We didn't go down the main street, we came out of Dawso's and ran down the laneway behind the Post Office. Nothing we could do. By the time we got there a bucket brigade was going, but...

The next morning, Max was standing near the garage and I went over. As I was walking along I saw a few two bobs in the dirt and I handed them to him. "Don't worry about it, John. Don't worry about it."

JOHN ADAMS

I REMEMBER MRS BURNS. We always called her Mrs. She was a lady. I reckon she was good. I got on well with her all the time. Old Max, I didn't know how to take him. He used to be a bit moody, whereas Mrs Burns was always in a good mood.

We used to go around to that double-storey house and talk: Joy Burns, Henry Winton, Cooee Wilder, Lizzy Flewell-Smith, sometimes Choco and Donny. We'd all be there.

PAT SKINNER

I can remember Marj was a big woman. I can remember that.

MANNIE SILLS

IT WAS 1954, the day of the race meeting at Nelia. We'd gone to the Nelia races. The woman who lived upstairs had the first of those cookers with the electric coil elements, before the frypan came out. It was like a frypan,



but the element was an open element in the lid. The woman put it on top of the cheap laminex they had in those days, like compressed cardboard.

Ten minutes the house was gone. Bang!

We came home pretty quick – 45 minutes. Wasn't too bad for 42 miles of corrugated dirt road. The house was gutted by the time we arrived. All over. Not insured.

Mossie McDonald was one of the blokes that saved the workshop. There was only a driveway between the house and the workshop, where oil and grease was stored, and Mossie helped move it all.

BARRY BURNS

EVERYBODY WENT TO A FIRE in Julia Creek. I think it was Marj who asked Max did he get the cash out – Max had a fair bit of cash in the house – and he said: "Yeah, it's right".

NORM DOWNEY

DEW DROP INN WAS OPEN HOUSE for anybody that wanted to go in and have a cuppa tea. You had to toe the mark. There was no drinking. None of us drank, none of us smoked.

I was working out of town when it burnt down. I know when I came in, Donny was in a hell of a state. As soon as I got to town he came around and said: "I'm in trouble if I can't find the pistols". I had this war souvenir, this Japanese 7 mm pistol which Donny had borrowed to muck around with, and I think he had a few other revolvers in the house. He wanted to look through the wreckage before the police did.

I didn't think there was anything suspicious about the fire. The police might have been suspicious – they always are – but I wasn't. They had too much in there, especially Mrs Burns. She had all her memories in that house.

CHARLIE CORRIGAN

WE HAD JUST LEFT THE CARAVAN, the workers' van, the long one of Max's that we brought in with the tanksinking plant when we came to town, and we were down at the pub, the Julia Creek Hotel. We'd just got there actually; we'd only had a couple of beers. We raced straight up when we heard. By the time we got from the hotel the house was well-ablaze. It was roaring. Fire coming out the windows and doors. You couldn't get near it.

We went over to the workshop to get the office gear out, and somebody said to grab the tyres and stack them over on the flat. It was bloody hot work, eh. We saved the workshop – it didn't go – even though the house was right alongside of it. In 15 minutes the house was on the ground. It was nothing.

RON DAU

I WAS THERE, right alongside the policeman, when the double-storey place burnt down. This policeman kept saying to poor old Max:

How'd it start Max? How'd it start?
I'm not interested how it started. How am I
gonna put the bloody thing out?

PAT LUHRMANN

ANOTHER THING THAT COMES TO MIND about the Burns was when their double-storey house at the end of town burnt down. I heard noises like crackers going off, exploding, and I looked out towards the west and here's all this smoke. I didn't live more than a hundred yards away; just came along the back lane and there it was. They didn't have a proper fire brigade in Julia Creek. The council had a couple of hoses, that was about the limit. By the time they got the hoses ready the house was gone. They just let it burn. Nothing they could do about it.

I went to the telephone exchange at the Post Office to ring Donny. I think it was Pattie Pattison on the switch – if it wasn't her it was Carmel Fickling, because they both worked there – and I told her: "The Burns place is on fire. I got no money on me, but I know Donny is at Nelia and he's probably at the Brennan's residence". Bugger me dead, I got him on the phone. He wouldn't believe me, so one of the girls cut in – they were eavesdropping – and told him about the fire. He came from Nelia to Julia Creek in about 45 minutes on that terrible road with all those grids. And grids weren't flat like they are today; you had to go up and over every one.

COOEE WILDER

I'M SURE that when the house burnt down it was Nelia race day. All of us young fellas were at Nelia. It was a good place to go. There was a pub and no policeman. It was after the races were over – from memory – and word

came that the house was on fire. I can remember Donny taking off, and I'm pretty sure it was a Vanguard he was driving. It was 42 miles to Julia Creek from Nelia, all dirt road, and it didn't go straight down the railway line like it does now, it wound its way around properties.

Donny got home in some fantastic time. Whenever anyone said they'd been along that road in a fast time – "But not as fast as Donny done it".

KEITH COLEMAN

THE TWO-STOREY PLACE BURNT DOWN and Max said: "No one'll ever live on the top side of me and burn me out again", so he put up a single storey in its place.

It was upstairs the fire started. I know, I can tell you, I saw it myself. I was actually there. Not in the house, but at the workshop, the building next door. There was nothing we could do because there was no fire brigade in Julia Creek. All I could do was get the machinery away in case the workshop went up as well. The cars that were parked nearby, and anything else valuable, we moved as quickly as we could.

We just had to stand and watch it burn.

Don was at the Nelia races. Drove back in a grey Vanguard ute. They reckon he came from Nelia to Julia Creek, 42 mile of flat country, in 45 minutes. I remember him sitting on his haunches outside the workshop, not making a sound, just looking at the fire. Now and then he'd draw his finger through the dirt and make a shape.

EROL DAVIS



Opposite: Marj Burns ("I can remember Marj was a big woman") hanging out the washing at Redcliffe while on holiday.

[Isabel Flewell-Smith, I23, ca 1952]

Below: Midnight Sun ("No one'll ever live on the top side of me and burn me out again"), the low-set house Max built in place of Dew Drop Inn.

[Guy Burns, GK068, 2003]

I WAS HAVING a cup of tea with Mrs Burns, sitting downstairs in the kitchen. A Saturday afternoon, and we were getting ready to go to Nelia for the race meeting. A couple of people lived upstairs, but they weren't there at the time. We looked up and there was smoke coming out of the top part of the house.

Burnt to the ground. No fire brigade, just had a hose coming out of the main. It was a fire brigade hose, but no engine or pump. Bugger-all water pressure. We didn't get anything out of the house, it was too quick.

Max had a long caravan, a part of the tanksinking plant, and they lived in that after the fire. About six or eight weeks from the time it burnt down they were living in a low-set place they rebuilt. It's still there, the low house, next to the Town & Country. My wife's sister owns it now.

CHOCO WINTON



Charlie! Charlie! Stacey Brand

Died 1 Jul 2007

I'LL TELL YOU WHAT THAT PHOTO IS. I was there. See this finger of mine? See what shape it is? I nearly chopped off the top of it getting rocks for the cement foundation of Max's workshop in Julia Creek. I was lifting a big rock and went to put it down on the side of the tray. Plonked the bloody thing on my finger. Fifty years later the finger's still bugged. The tip's just hanging there, see.

Before we started on the workshop, Max had us building a homestead on Balootha, his cattle property. Actually, I was real happy going out to Balootha. I've always been a horseman and cattleman – or trying to be. It suited me down to the ground, ringin' with the station hands. We had to wait a month or more before any building material arrived, so I went ringin'. By jeez, that was the life for me. I'd rather be ringin' than carpentering, any day.

While I was at Balootha the rat plague was on. And that's how it came about that we tamed Charlie the brolga. At night time we used to catch rats that were hiding in cracks in the ground. We were camped right on the borehead at Balootha, and what we did: we'd fill a drum with hot water and tip it down the cracks and they'd all fly out. We'd be after them with sticks. In the morning we took the dead rats across the plains a little bit, three or four hundred yards away from where we were camped, tipped them out, and these brolgas used to down them. But there was one little

bloke – you could tell he was only a young one – he wasn't allowed to hang around. For some reason the other brolgas had it against him. The old blokes used to chase him all the time.

We thought that wasn't fair, me and the two Flewell-Smith kids, so we kept one or two rats separate for this little brolga. We'd walk across the plains and yell out: "Charlie! Charlie!" and we'd throw a rat in the air – this was to start with. Throw another one, then walk away and Charlie would come over and get it.

You wouldn't believe it, but within a fortnight we could call Charlie from camp and he'd come and take food from our hand. Just like that he'd come in. Soon as you yelled out "Charlie!" he was there like a rocket.

He got that way in the end,
the table in the hut was just inside the doorway,
and I used to sit right there near the door,
that if I was eating a bit of meat
and called out "Charlie!"
he'd take it from my hand
without me even getting up from the chair.
He got that quiet.

Below: Bill Beutel next to the Leyland, stopping for a smoke while gathering rocks for the foundation of Max's workshop. Stacey took the photo before he plonked a rock on his finger and bugged it.
[Bill Beutel, BB12, 1950]



NOW, THE WET SEASON of 1948-49, that's what I was going to tell you about. I suppose you know that Max owned Balootha, and that Mr Flewell-Smith built the house. But did you hear how the timber got there?

Max was bringing the Leyland to Julia Creek and he got stuck at Charters Towers; the roads were out between Charters Towers and Hughenden. He said to me – I was working for him on those big Rosevale tanks at the time – and he asked me would I go and get this Leyland. So, okay, Max rolled a 10-ton jack inside a towel and a pair of overalls, put it under my arm, bought me a ticket on TAA, and I flew to the Towers.

I collected the Leyland and went up through Townsville and Innisfail to Ravenshoe. And when I got to Ravenshoe, Max had lined up 12 tons of timber to build that house.

Before Ravenshoe, at Milla Milla, I picked up my brother. He was 14 years old, working at the butter factory, and I asked him to come to Julia Creek with me. We loaded the timber and headed off.

About halfway along the Hahn Highway, between Ravenshoe and Hughenden, there's a lot of swampy country. We were sailing along and down she went. We were bogged. We had to unload every stick of timber and use the winch on the back of the Leyland to winch ourselves out, and then winch all the timber close to the truck. Three days we stayed there. Very little tucker until a station bloke came along and gave us a big lump of fresh meat to go with our one loaf of bread. We cooked the meat on a shovel.

On the fourth day, after the timber was on the truck again, we arrived in Richmond.

Five days in all: three days bogged, a day to Richmond, and a day from Richmond to Julia Creek. We got to Max's workshop with the timber. And that's the timber that, sometime later, built that house.

PAT LUHRMANN



Above: Balootha homestead nearing completion. Built in 1950 by Alan Flewell-Smith and Stacey Brand.

[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV11, 1950]

Below: The Flewell-Smiths on Balootha. Isabel and Beven holding pups; Hazel feeding Charlie.

[Isabel Flewell-Smith, I13, 1950]



After the rat plague came a grasshopper plague.
 Me and the two kids,
 we used to walk around outside of an afternoon.
 I'd knock off work,
 before sunset, like;
 look at the horizon,
 look around.
 You could see the plague, like storm clouds coming up.
 They were so thick,
 that when they got within a mile
 you could hear them roar, there were so many millions.
 The plains turkeys and broilgas, they just gorged on them.
 We had bats made,
 and as they were going past we'd into them.

One night they settled on Balootha
 and I went with the kids to have a look.
 In the cow paddock where we kept the milking cows
 and the quiet night horse,
 were some straggly trees – prickly mimosa.
 The grasshoppers swarmed on them;
 branches hanging limp with insects,
 hanging like bunches of grapes.
 Next morning the trees were stripped bare.

Opposite top: Lennons Railway Hotel, Barcaldine, where
 "cashed-up" Cecil Willis and Bob Pulley stayed.
[Neville Sheehan, SN11, 1950]

Opposite bottom: On the way north after crossing the flooded
 Thomson River near Longreach. Vehicles from left:
 KBS5 International loaded with fuel drums and spare parts;
 Flewell-Smith caravan; Austin A40 ute; Blitz towing the
 caravan where the "two young blokes" Ivor Matsen
 and Neville Sheehan camped.

Max (in the foreground) is tipping his hat. He's holding a movie
 camera under his left arm. The other people (from left) are:
 Beven, Hazel and Isabel Flewell-Smith in front of their van;
 Mick O'Brien, Ivor Matsen and Stacey Brand
 standing on the Blitz.
[Merle Flewell-Smith, N02, 1950]

Below: Grasshopper plague on Balootha.
 Writing on reverse of photo:

*This was taken one afternoon when
 grasshoppers flew over and blotted out the sun.
 Beven under a bush trying to kill some.
 The leaves on the bush are grasshoppers.*

[Merle Flewell-Smith, N21, 1950]



I WAS BORN IN CHILDERS, 1930. Dad was a stockman, come ringer. When I was 2 he decided to move to North Queensland to the sugar cane. Settled at a little place called Miriwinni between Innisfail and Cairns. Finished up with five kids.

I went to primary school at Miriwinni, then I went to Gatton College for two years: 1945 and '46. I went back home and started work in the Bank of NSW in Cairns. I was there until I couldn't put up with it anymore – seven weeks. I told the boss: "I'm finishing. I can't cop this, locked up all the time".

I worked in sugar for a season, and then went down to my Uncle Normie's place near Murgon. Starting from Murgon you go along the Proston Rd, you go past a little place called Byee, you go past Billy Beutel's farm¹, then a road branches off on the right, Brand Rd, to Normie Brand's farm. That's where I was staying when I met Alan Flewell-Smith. They were great friends, Uncle Normie and Alan. Always at each other's places.

Christmas Day 1949, Alan and his family came over for dinner. He asked me would I like a job helping him erect a house and engineering works in Julia Creek, and a homestead on Balootha, all for his brother-in-law, Max Burns.

And that's how I came to be in Julia Creek.

To start the story off: when the day came to leave, Alan picked me up from Uncle Normie's and we set sail. Just me and the Flewell-Smiths: Alan, Hazel, and their two kids. We got to Dalby the first night and went out of town about a mile, to a bit of spare dirt, and camped. Alan had a caravan. I camped on the grass with my swag.

Next morning we met Max and his men coming up from Brisbane. They had an Austin utility, a 4 x 4 Army Blitz, and a KBS5 International truck loaded with drums of fuel and crawler tracks that had been repaired in Brisbane. Cecil Willis drove the truck, Max and two young blokes were in the Blitz, and Max's brother, Bob, drove the utility. I think Bob Pulley



might have been there too. A bit further west, I wouldn't be too sure, I think we picked up Mick O'Brien.

It was still the wet season. Those roads over the western plains, when the black soil gets a bit wet it's just like glue. It sticks to everything. You finish up with tyres an extra 3 inches in diameter. We struggled into Barcaldine and couldn't go any further. The roads went under water. So all of us, except for Cecil Willis and Bob Pulley, camped at the showground. Cecil and Bob, they were cashed up. They stayed at the pub across from the railway.

We were stuck in Barcaldine for two weeks; and in Longreach, the next town, for a further week because we couldn't get over the Thomson. It was about 4 miles wide. Immediately the water level dropped, we set off again.

1. Bill Beutel's story is on page 524.



We passed through Winton. The town seemed to be clad in nothing but rusting ripple-iron, which made the place look pretty rundown and ancient to us townies. One of the young boys, the blondy-headed bloke who came from Brisbane¹, he said to me: "Look at those old buildings. It looks like they've been there ever since they were built". I thought that was comical.

Belford was the name of the station where everybody met. Out from Kynuna. Not only our group coming from the south, but fellas from other areas too; fellas tanksinking for Max. They were starting work again after the Christmas layoff, repairing the machinery that had been parked on Belford over the wet, and getting it mobile again. We spent two or three weeks on Belford. When the machinery was ready, the Flewell-Smiths and I started for Julia Creek, leaving the tanksinkers to their work.

We were nearly two months getting from Murgon to Julia Creek. What got me when we arrived there in May were the dirt streets. Not a skerrick of bitumen; well, not that I remember. And, as at Winton, everything looked old. Didn't appear to be anything that was new. It seemed to me that Alan might get a lot of work in town. But we didn't hang around. We went straight out to Balootha to build Max a high-set homestead.

1. Ivor Matsen. See page 507.

Opposite top: Shed on Balootha where Bill Nelson and Stacey stayed.
[Merle Flewell-Smith, N18, 1950]

Opposite bottom: Bill Nelson and the Flewell-Smiths at the Flinders River near Balootha.
From left: Bill, Beven, Hazel, Isabel, Alan.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV13, 1950]

Below: Burke St, Julia Creek, after rain, taken from near the O-K Store looking east.

From left: Blue Bird Cafe, Post Office, Mathews' Hall and cafe (double roof).

From right: Garden of Roses Cafe (may have been another tenant at this stage), Gannon's Hotel. Eckford's picture theatre is in the distance behind the telephone pole.
[Merle Flewell-Smith, N13, 1950]



On Balootha there were the Flewell-Smiths, myself, Bill Nelson, and the manager, Bill Barker. The Flewell-Smiths lived in their caravan; Bill Barker in the old homestead (if you could call it that); and Bill Nelson and I in that shed. It was about 200 yards east of the homestead. We camped on the left hand side. In the middle were trucks and old tractors and various other things. Behind were the stockyards.

Hazel cooked for the five of us on an old stove outside their caravan. Summer, winter, that's where she used to cook. One night she was making a stew. Every now and then she'd come out of the van and give it a stir. In between stirs, while she was inside, a couple of gidya bugs ended up in the



stew unnoticed – until we came to eat them. Holy God! They were putrid. Stink, absolutely pong.

The same could be said for the artesian water on Balootha, which had that sulphur smell to it. If you left it a few days the smell disappeared and it was really good drinking water then. So we had seven or eight kerosene tins in the hut, standing in a row like tin soldiers. As one got empty we'd fill it up and put it at the end of the line. You'd slowly work through the lot. Might take a couple of days to get through them. By

the time it came to drink the one on the end, it was quite good water. But it was terrible stuff to drink straight from the bore. You had to let it cool off and allow the gas to escape.





When we finished the new homestead towards the end of 1950, we moved into town. I know I was in Julia Creek before the end of that year because I remember the Flewell-Smiths went back to Murgon for Christmas and I stayed behind.

In February 1951 I went home to Miriwinni for my 21st birthday. By this time we were just starting to build the engineering shed, and Max was talking about putting on an apprentice to help George Rickertt, the mechanic. George was a heavy machinery mechanic and he was going to run the workshop. We had already built a small shed at the back – open-air with just a roof on it – and George was working in there until we got the big one completed. I said to Max: “I’ve got a young brother just out of his Scholarship. He might be interested”. I told Merv when I got home and he *was* interested: “Yeah, yeah, yeah”. We flew to Julia Creek together.

While I was in town I lived in one of Max’s caravans. For about nine months, I suppose, I camped on the western side of the engineering works while it was being built. Alan would be on the ground cutting the timber, and I would be on the top putting it together as he passed it to me. We swapped places when the roof was ready to go on (being the offside I always had the hardest job), and I remember handing up to Alan every sheet of iron that went on top of the framework.

MERV AND STACEY BRAND, two brothers who came to Julia Creek to work for Max Burns, they used to come over and play cards. I remember Stacey, the older one. Oh yeah... he... [laughing]... he asked me to go out with him once. I was about 15 and we were playing cards and he said something about taking me to the movies:

*Oh, you’ll have to ask Mum.
Why?*

*I’ve gotta ask Mum cos I’m too young.
You’d be 18.*

Ya reckon?

Yeah, bet ya anything you like.

*Well, if I’m 18, you’re married
with three kids.*

Or something like that I said to him. He thought I was joking about being 15.

CLAUDETTE GREEN



I used to drink a bit with Max's workers when they came to town. Cecil Willis, he was a bloke who – "I am the foreman" – one of those sort of fellas. He and I got on really well together. Drinking mates. Anybody that didn't know Cecil, I'd introduce him as: "Foreman for Max Burns on the tanksinking plant". And out would come Cecil's chest: "My shout!"

Cecil slept in my van when he was in town. A very heavy smoker. Used to wake up once or twice a night and wouldn't be able to get back to sleep until he'd had a smoke. The only bloke I've ever seen like that.

I went on site a few times to give Cecil a hand to move the tanksinking plant. If he only had a close move he'd overland the tractors. But if he had a fair way to go he'd load them on trucks; and with all the vehicles – three trucks with crawlers, two caravans, the workshop and the jeep – they'd want a few more drivers, so I'd go and give them a hand.

One time, after helping with a move, I returned to Julia Creek on the Mack. It was a big bugger. It could carry two crawlers at once: one of the FDEs and the little BDH, that's how big it was. There were people in the front, so I had to sit just behind the cab on the tray – right where the dust swirled around and piled up. I copped so much dust I was choking. I couldn't get Ces to stop because I couldn't reach over to belt on anything. Ces might have been a mate, but when we finally got to town I said to him "You bastard!" and I went crook. I would have punched him, too, if he wasn't Max's foreman.

I ALWAYS GOT ON WELL WITH MAX, but I found him a bit distant. I got the impression I wasn't good enough for him to talk to, though that might have been the wrong impression. When we were doing the concreting for the engineering works, he was slipping into it beside the rest of us; he didn't mind getting his hands dirty with the boys. And he paid good wages. I was getting £8 a week and tucker. I had no complaints, really.

I suppose I was a year with Max all up. By then I reckoned I'd been in Julia Creek long enough. Although, if he had said to me: "Would you like a permanent job on Balootha?" I would have said yes straight away. I loved working with horses and cattle – station life – more than anything.

The workshop wasn't finished when I left. The outside was completed, but there was still the inside to finish. Alan and I were doing the counters.

What caused me to leave: I had a bit of a falling out with George Rickertt. Over dogs, see. I had a dog given to me from a ringer on Etta Plains, near Balootha. A little pup, half-grown. George brings his full-grown dog to work one morning and it comes over to my caravan and gets stuck into my pup. So I give this dog of Rickertt's a bash with a stick and it runs off yelping. George comes over to me: "Don't you ever touch my dog again". The same thing happened another morning and George threatened me: "I've warned you!" Before he let go a punch I whacked him. That was the end of it then. I couldn't stay and work in that environment. I went home to the coast and worked in timber. Never went west again.



Opposite top: Stacey Brand.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV07, 1950]

Opposite bottom: Erecting the framework for Max's workshop, now the Town & Country Club.
From left: Alan Flewell-Smith, Erol Davis, Stacey Brand (swinging a hammer).
The bumps on the western horizon behind Alan are the woolscour buildings.
[Bill Beutel, BB15, 1951]

Below: *The Train*. Overlanding on Belford Station (moving between jobs, but not on formed roads).
Cletrac FDE towing two Britstand C14 scoops, a 5-tyne ripper and a fuel tanker.
[Robin Burns, R10, May 1950]



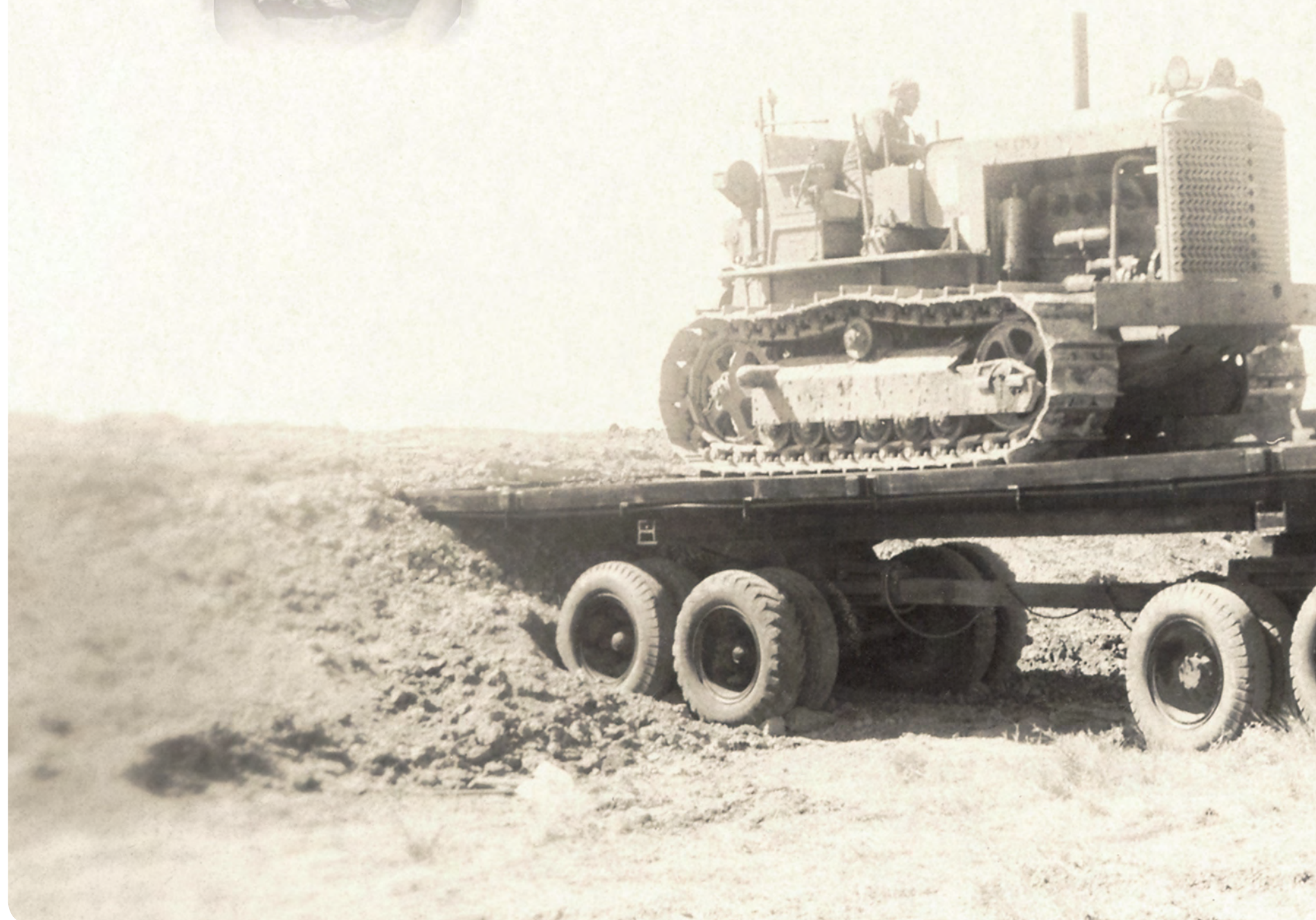


Left: MD Burns Tank Sinking Contractor.
Ivor sitting on the track of a Cletrac FDE.
[Ivor Matsen, MI01, 1950]

Below: Loading a Cletrac FDE on a Leyland truck, Belford Station. The method of loading a crawler was to pile earth behind the tray (in this case the wall of the tank was used) and drive the crawler over the dirt and onto the tray.

The man directing the loading from the bonnet of the truck is indicating that the crawler has come far enough.

[Robin Burns, R15, April 1950]



Rrrmph... rrrmph... rrrmph... Ivor Matsen

AMONGST ALL HIS VEHICLES, Max Burns had an old diesel truck. Might have been a Leyland. It had character, that Leyland. To start it on a cold morning, one of the boys would call me over. He'd undo a flap on the manifold and then soak a piece of cotton rag in petrol. He'd light that – "Righto, turn it on" – and while I cranked the starter motor he'd shove the burning rag into the manifold. Rrrmph... rrrmph... rrrmph... she'd go. You'd see smoke rings puffing out the exhaust pipe. Eventually the diesel would cut in and the motor started.

When it was cold, y'see, we had to preheat the combustion chamber.

Some of Max's machines might have been old and hard to start in winter, but he certainly used to look after his equipment. And he was a stickler as to how the dozers were to be driven. He made it quite clear the way he wanted me to drive. I had to stand up so I could see what was in front and what was coming behind.

I remember him saying to me: "You can't sit down and drive, you gotta stand up". The only time I sat down was to put my foot on the clutch or the brake.



LOADING F.D.E. ON LEYLAND
BELFORD. APRIL 1950

I WAS BORN IN GYMPIE IN 1929. I went to school in Gympie for all except the last six months. Dad joined the air force then, in 1939, and we moved to Brisbane.

After the war, Dad worked in the sales side of UK & Dominion Motors. He knew the manager of the spare parts section, and one day he came home and said: "Do you want a job in spare parts?" So I started work at UK Motors.

UK & Dominion had two divisions. Both had showrooms in the Valley, but totally different setups. The UK Motors division sold motor vehicles: Rolls Royces, Bentleys, Rio trucks and Austin cars. The Dominion division sold earthmoving equipment. That's what Dad was selling, and that's how he got to know Max Burns, because Max bought a couple of dozers off him.

I was a real fidgeter at that stage, a bit like Dad had been in his younger days. As I was growing up he had a lot of jobs and couldn't settle down. We lived in Wondai, Murgon, Pomona. We shifted around a lot. Dad could see me becoming restless at UK Motors, and he said to me one night in early 1950:

A friend of mine, Max Burns, is looking for blokes to drive tractors out west. You interested?
Oh yeah, wouldn't mind.

A few days later, Max came to the counter, introduced himself, and said if I wanted to come west with him I was welcome. And that was it. I went out in a truck with Neville Sheehan. Neville was an apprentice mechanic at the time, in his final year. He worked for Dominion on heavy machinery. I don't know how Max got onto him. I presume he visited the workshop at Rocklea where Nev serviced tractors.

Neville and I were in a 4 x 4 Blitz towing a caravan. Nev did most of the driving. The van was like a trailer with a canvas top, and that's where we slept on the way north. We weren't by ourselves. There were several other men and vehicles, and some of Max's relatives. Took us a month to get there. We spent a week at the Barcaldine showgrounds and a week or so at Longreach because of floods. It took us such a long time that Max gave us an advance on our wages so we could buy food.

I think it was Belford, near Kynuna, where we started tanksinking.



Opposite: Tanksinking camp on Belford with Cletrac FDE in foreground. Vehicles from left:

- Max's caravan (facing left, partly cut off)
- Truck and mobile workshop (facing right, behind Max's van)
- Fuel tanker (in distance)
- Cletrac FDE towing two Britstand scoops (in distance)
- Portable welder towed by KBS5 International (facing away)
- Workers' caravan (facing photographer)
- Flewell-Smith caravan
- Ivor and Neville's caravan towed by Blitz

[Merle Flewell-Smith, N08, April 1950]

Below: Tank on Belford nearing completion. Two Cletrac FDEs towing Britstand C14 scoops.

This photo was taken by Bob Burns, Max's brother. A few months later, with backing from Max, Bob had his own tanksinking plant working around the Tambo area.

[Robin Burns, R11, 25 May 1950]

There were three big tractors: two had scoops and the other had the ripper. Neville and I didn't do any scooping, we did the ripping. We were paid £5 a week (in my case: in cash, in one go, just before I left) and for that £5 we worked about 80 hours. Apart from any driving, if there was mechanical work to be done, Nev and I would do it. Nev was the mechanic and I was his offsider. Sometimes we wouldn't get to bed till fairly late, and then at 4 a.m. I'd be woken up by one of the fellas: "C'mon, you gotta do some ripping". And if it wasn't one of the fellas, it was bloomin' Neville waking me. We were supposed to take turns ripping, y'see, but how many times he came to me and said: "I can't do the ripping this morning. Can you do it for me?"

The tractors worked from 4 in the morning till midnight. I think there were two sets of drivers on 10-hour shifts. The boys started at 4, they'd stop and come in for breakfast, and while they had breakfast Neville and I did the servicing: put in the fuel, grease, that sort of thing.



TANK NEARING COMPLETION 25/5/50

At different times I was tractor driver, mechanic and cook. We all took turns at cooking. Max said to me one morning – I was staying in his van, down the back near the tail gate; he was right up the front in the office section – and he says to me: “I’d like some mutton chops for breakfast”. A sheep had been killed just the day before and it was my turn to cook. So I go looking for these chops. And there they are, still on the carcass hanging over the gantry. I had to cut the chops out of the damn sheep before I could cook them.

I can’t really tell you much about Julia Creek itself because I only went there once. Max asked me to go in with him to collect a vehicle that had been serviced. We hopped in a jeep and off we went. I wandered around town while Max went about his business. We met at a certain time and then drove the two vehicles back to camp.

And I only ever went to a homestead once, the time Max and I shot a movie. He dug a small hole – a model of a tank – filled it with water and put flour on top so the water would stand out from the surrounding dirt. He climbed onto the bonnet of the jeep and used a movie camera to make out it was an aerial shot of a completed tank. “Now, I want you to make a movie of me introducing myself to the property owner.” So, while Max walked up to the homestead and shook hands with the owner, I was getting it down on film.

I was with Max a matter of three or four months. Didn’t even put in a full winter. For one thing, I wasn’t used to the bush. I just got homesick I suppose, more than anything else.

Max was real crooked on me for leaving. Maybe he felt slighted because I left so soon. He probably had told Dad it was a good job and he’d look after me. Anyway, he went crook for a bit, hoping I’d stay, and then he said: “C’mon, I’ll take you into Julia Creek”. I flew home in a DC3.

Later on he told Dad: “That silly bugger. He would’ve made a good driver too”.



Opposite top: Cletrac FDE towing a 5-tyne ripper, one of the tynes down. This is the setup that Ivor would have been operating.
[Neville Sheehan, SN07, 1950]

Opposite bottom: Cletrac FDE and tipped-over Britstand scoop on Belford. From left: Beven Flewell-Smith, Cecil Willis, Isabel Flewell-Smith.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV04, 1950]

Below: MD Burns Tank Sinking Contractor.

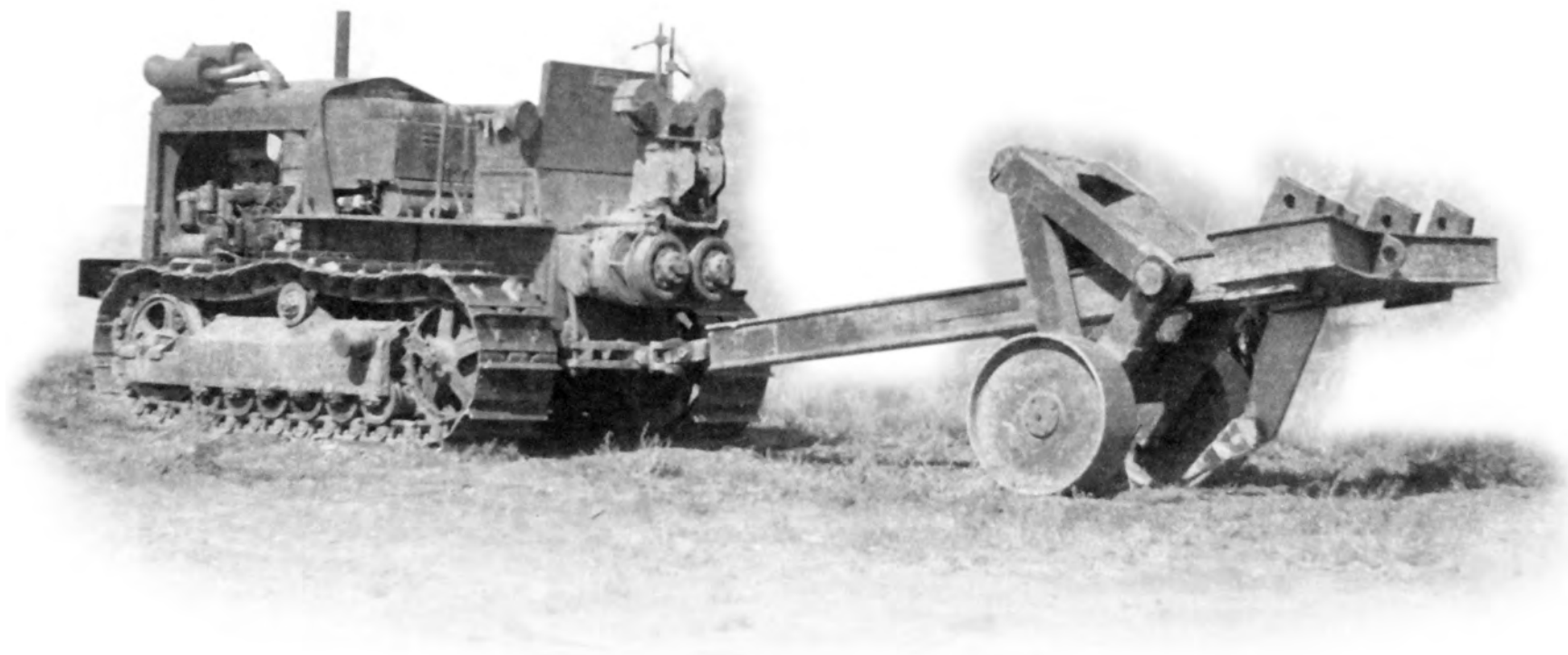
Four men with white cups having smoko (black tea with sugar) beside a Cletrac FDE. Ivor’s cup is on the crawler.

From left: Alan Flewell-Smith, Bob Pulley, Ivor, Cecil Willis.

Notice that the track is missing from this side, and Bob Pulley is holding what looks like some mechanical part in his right hand. The FDE is being repaired.

[Neville Sheehan, SN15, 1950]





IT WAS EASY to tip over the scoops. Often you'd do that because it was pretty steep – three-in-one batter inside the tank. You had to be careful. You could save it if you let the blade down straight away to dig into the dirt, but if you weren't quick enough they'd keel over.

To right them, if you were near the top, you kept dragging until you came to the top of the bank,

and then, most likely, the scoop would tip back on its wheels by itself. Otherwise, you had to get a wire rope and pull him back on his feet with another machine. Let him land quietly on his feet again. Real easy.

It often happened, especially at night time. Then you'd have to get somebody out of bed to help.

FREDDIE HOLZNAGEL

TYPICALLY, a scoop would tip when you were scraping the batters. If the dirt was loose on the batter, the scoop would slip and tip over. They weren't real easy to tip if you watched what you were doing, but it could happen. I rolled two or three over. It all depended on the angle.

As we made the tank deeper, we kept scooping the bottom, not the batter. You had four corners and you

just kept scooping out the bottom and keeping it square, keeping it in shape, keeping the corners clean if you could. That was the biggest problem – keeping the corners clean. But sometimes if the batters weren't steep enough you'd scoop coming down, to bring them into shape. That's when I tipped them; when I was coming down trying to clean out the corners.

PAT LUHRMANN



He wasn't a bad bloke **Neville Sheehan**

I WAS BORN AT HAWTHORNE, a suburb of Brisbane, in 1927. I went to Morningside school. I was a good little kid – I'm not skitin' – cos you were frightened of your parents in those days.

When I turned 15 I got a job with Dominion Motors at Rocklea. I worked there on tractors for a fella, Edgar Stoddard. It was during the war. It was a dirty job, but I never knocked it back and I always did what was asked of me. I did anything.

I was studying to be a motor mechanic, diesel mechanic. I didn't actually get to the apprenticeship stage. In those days you didn't worry about apprenticeships too much. As long as you could do the job, that's all they were concerned about.

Dominion Motors used to send me out to different properties. If Dominion sold you a tractor and it broke down, they sent out a mechanic and an offsider to repair it. Your clutch might be gone. Well, we'd come to your property and repair your clutch because it was cheaper than bringing the tractor to Brisbane.

I never went as far as Julia Creek for Dominion, but George Rickertt did. I knew George real well. I went to his place a couple of times for a meal, but I never saw him out west. He was a good mechanic. Dominion sent him to Julia Creek to do work for Max Burns; and then, when Max decided to build an engineering works in Julia Creek, George ended up working for him. Max was probably thinking: *This is no bloody good paying fellas to come from Brisbane; I might as well employ my own mechanics and do the repairs with my own men.*

I'd been with Dominion about eight years when I first met Max. March 1950 he came to pick up a tractor. He must have been talking to Edgar, because Edgar called me over: "Come here, I wanna see you for a minute". He took me aside:

Would you like to go and work in the bush?

Yeah, why?

This bloke is looking for a young fella to help on the maintenance.

I always liked the bush, so I didn't need much asking. The next day we left Brisbane. Max was in an Austin utility, I was in a Blitz with Ivor Matsen towing a caravan, and there was one other vehicle. I hadn't had much experience driving – I'd never been outside Brisbane before – and here's Max leaving me for dead. He'd have his arm out the window, head down, arse up, trying to get me to speed up.

Max was a cluey old bugger, y'know. It was so hot going out west that the petrol used to vaporize and the engine would cut out. He told me to get a wet rag and wrap it around the carburettor. "Now when it cuts out again, just damp that rag." Away we went.

We picked up some others near Dalby, and a bloke at Roma, Mick O'Brien, and from there we went through to Barcaldine in the rain. We were held up at Barcaldine, and at Longreach, for a couple of weeks. We couldn't get across the rivers until the water dropped.



That photo with everyone who came on the trip was taken on a station near Kynuna. Some of those people didn't stay very long; they went on to Julia Creek. The rest of us started tanksinking. There was Bob Pulley, myself, Cecil Willis, Mick O'Brien and Ivor, working two 10-hour shifts, with two tractors going all the while. The only time the machines stopped, other than the four-hour break at midnight, was to be greased, oil-changed and refuelled.

I rarely bothered going to Julia Creek. I never went to town unless there was a reason; and for me, drinking wasn't a reason. I never used to drink much. Might have a couple of beers. I'd go in – and bang! – I was out again. I was quite contented on site.

Eight or nine dams I would have worked on while I was with Max. I wasn't with him that long. He wasn't a bad bloke. For instance, the few times I went with him to Julia Creek,

I never paid for nothing. He'd shout the beers, he'd pay for the meals. He'd do all that. If you got into any trouble he was always there to help. But when you got on the dozers again, he was the boss and you were the worker. Not a bad boss, but he was the boss. I didn't have a great deal to do with him, really. He would come and go. You wouldn't know when he was going to turn up. He had a busy sort of a life getting the work, going from this place to that place to see who wanted dams built.

Max paid me in cash when I finished up and I didn't know how much it was going to be. The only bloke that knew exactly every hour was Mick O'Brien. He'd finish his shift and write down the hours.

I didn't argue with Max when he handed over the cash. Turned out to be a few hundred pounds. It was good money.



Opposite top: Inside Dominion Motors, Rocklea.
[Neville Sheehan, SN03, 1950]

Opposite bottom: In front of Flewell-Smith's green caravan. Neville Sheehan (left) with Box Brownie, Ivor Matsen (right), and the Flewell-Smith Family: Alan, Beven, Hazel, Isabel.
[Isabel Flewell-Smith, I10, 1950]

Below: On Belford, in front of Cletrac FDE. From left: Hazel F-S, Mick O'Brien, Neville Sheehan, Isabel F-S, Bob Pulley, Beven F-S (on tractor), Ivor Matsen, Stacey Brand (on tractor)
[Isabel Flewell-Smith, I12, 1950]



I don't want to discuss it **George Rickertt**

Brrr, brrr... brrr, brrr... brrr, brrr...

Hello.

Yes, hello. I'd like to speak to Mr George Rickertt.

Speaking.

My name's Guy Burns. I'm putting together a story about my grandfather, Max Burns, and his time in Julia Creek. I wonder if you'd mind if I asked you...

Max's grandson, eh? Well, we didn't part on very good terms, old Max and I. He almost caused my marriage bust up...

ICAME OFF THE LAND ORIGINALLY. Sheep country. I enlisted in 1942 as a mechanic and was sent to New Guinea. Came back from there and went up to Morotai Island in the Dutch East Indies, heading for the landing at Balikpapan, but I didn't make it. The Americans dropped those two bombs and that finished the war.

Around about 1946 I went to UK & Dominion Motors and worked as a diesel mechanic. I joined them when they first started up, over down opposite the General Hospital in Brisbane. Then they got into a factory at Rocklea. On one side were the tractors, and on the other side were the cars, jeeps and trucks. It was a huge building, a munitions factory during the war.

I was mechanicing at Dominion, overhauling Cletrac crawlers. I used to pull them down to the last bolt. Neville Sheehan was my offsider. I'll never forget one day, after an overhaul, I told Nev to fill the transmission with oil. He didn't check the plug, which was still on the tray underneath. Four gallons of oil drained straight through onto the floor.

I didn't have much to do on the brand new Cletracs. All I did was oil them and check them over. They arrived from the US fully crated, ready to go. As a matter of fact, one bloke who worked at Dominion as a labourer – Lofty we called him – he and his family used to live in the crates. They were made of Oregon pine. Huge things. You could walk around inside them. Lofty nailed a few of the crates together and called them home.

Max bought his tractors from Dominion and I used to service them. When he wanted an FDE overhauled, or if there was a major breakdown, he got in touch with Dominion and they'd send me to Julia Creek. I'd fly out with a tool box. Max used to pick me up and we'd go to the dam site. I'd fix the tractor in the dirt. No offsider. Max's blokes would have to help me. That would have been from '47 to '49, sometime in that period.

The first job I remember doing for Max was on Clio. Pat Hogarth owned Clio and he wanted a lot of dams put down. The fella who was tanksinking there previous to Max, Hogarth hunted him off. He couldn't get down. Sandstone beat him. He couldn't get through it. Max came on the scene with these big Cletracs, and Hogarth told him that if he could get the sandstone out of this particular dam, he could do all the other dams too. Well, Max shifted the sandstone with explosives, and then he put a rope round the chunks and pulled them over the bank.

Clio was where Max started in a big way. He became the biggest tanksinker in Western Queensland when he was in full swing. He had the



Left: George Rickertt holding a nut that fixes the rear drive-sprocket to the axle on a Cletrac FDE. The rear drive-sprocket and nut can be seen in the bottom photo on the opposite page.
[Guy Burns, GK116a, 2003]

Opposite top: George and Betty Rickertt.
[Guy Burns, GK116d, 2003]

Opposite bottom: Cletrac FDE outside the tin shed behind Max Burns' workshop. The Cletrac has its tracks removed for repair.
[Bill Beutel, BB02, 1950]

most machinery. And he built a good dam, a bloody nice dam. I never saw him on a tractor though. He might be walking around, but the times I was on site he was never driving.

Max worked his crawlers 20 hours out of 24. Never stopped them except for servicing. Later on, when I started working for him full-time, he always had a spare one sitting in the shed in Julia Creek. If one of the working machines broke down they'd bring it in for repair, and the spare would temporarily take its place. At the end of 12 months the spare went into camp and Max bought a new FDE and put it in the shed. That's how he worked. Always had one spare.

They never used to give much trouble those FDEs. They were pretty good machines. That's all you could buy those days. You couldn't get the Cats. The Cletracs were about the only new tractor you could buy, straight after the war.

They were pretty simple things. They didn't have multiple clutches. You couldn't steer them like you could the Cats, Inters and Allis-Chalmers, which were more manoeuvrable. On those, each track had its own clutch. When you pulled back on one of the steering sticks, one clutch disengaged while the other track kept going, and the crawler would shoot around. But with the Cletracs, turning was done on a differential basis. They had a band each side of the diff – like a brake band that was hooked to the steering sticks – and that just slowed the track; it didn't completely stop being powered. You'd have to really sit on the Cletrac sticks to turn them. They weren't real good at turning. That was the thing that was against the Cletracs. But they were easier to maintain. On the other makes, to repair the steering clutches the whole machine had to be pulled down.

Around about the end of 1950, I suppose, Max offered me a job. He offered me good money to go to Julia Creek, and I went. It was cheaper for him to employ me on £25 a week than to pay Dominion to fly me out every time his tractors needed servicing.

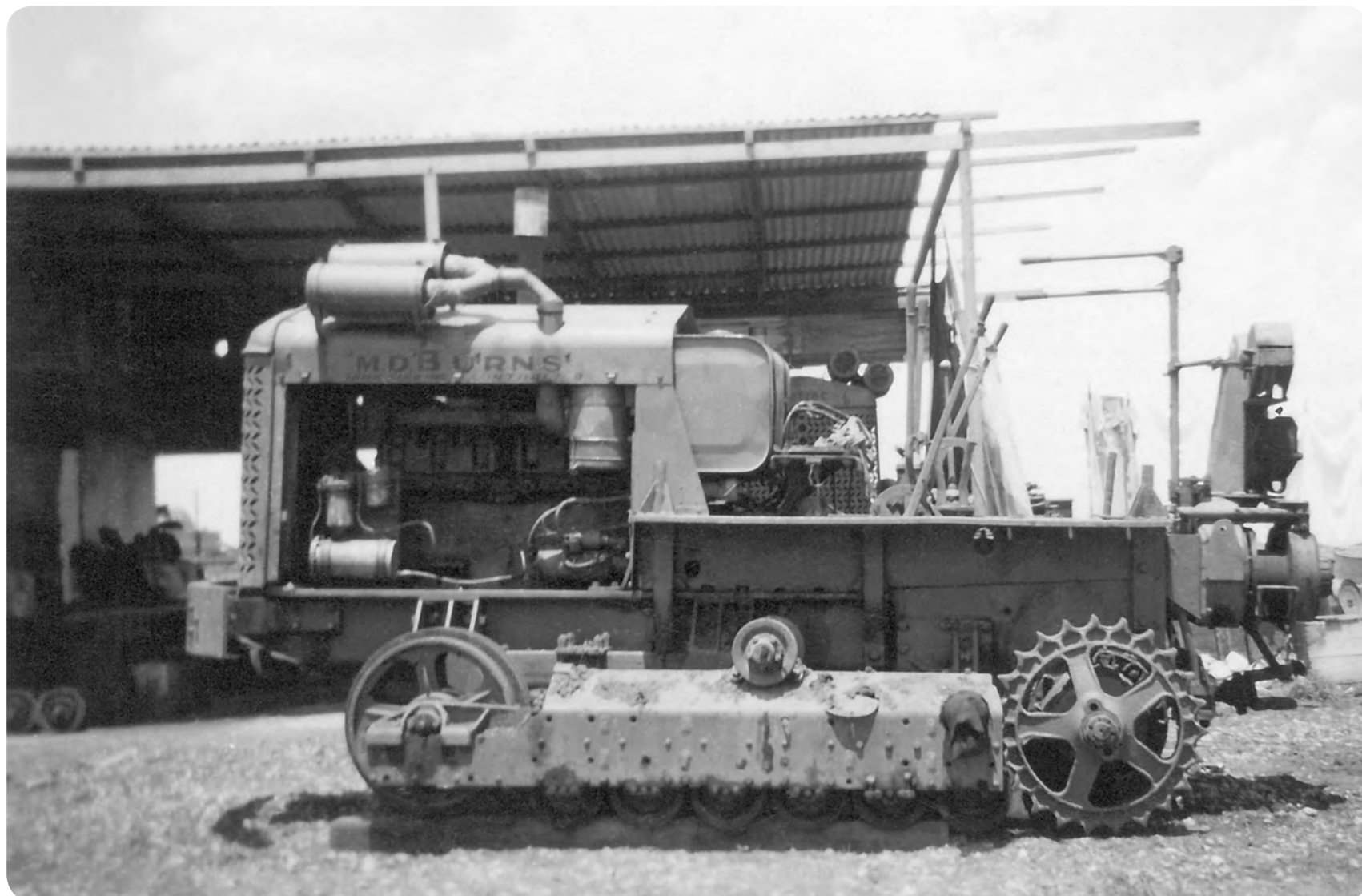
Betty and I drove out in a Morris. We picked it up new for Max in Rockhampton. A little Morris with two fold-up seats in the back and a canopy over the top. A bit like an Austin. Very much like an Austin.

Max reckoned there'd be a house, a car, and a workshop, but when we arrived in Julia Creek there was nothing except the house, a rented galvanised house that Max supplied. I was conned. There was no workshop – it hadn't been started – just a bit of a tin shed barely large enough to drive a tractor under. And I never had a car either. Max sold the Morris as soon as I got to Julia Creek.

I only stayed with Max a year or so. We couldn't get on. It was because of him I left – and I don't want to discuss it¹.



1. Marj Burns was happy to discuss it. See page 55.





Above: Writing on the left-side door of the Mack pictured opposite.
[Guy Burns, GK216, 2002]

*Our past dams still travel with us
from afar
Tis the dams that we have made
Make us what we are.*



AT THE HEAD of chapter LXX in *Middlemarch*, George Eliot wrote:

*Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
And what we have been, makes us what we are.*

My grandfather was an unusual tanksinker, a keen reader of the classics. I have in my possession a notebook of 138 pages filled with handwritten quotations, four or five a page, from books he'd read. The quote above is not included, but I'm sure Max read *Middlemarch*, was taken by the quote, and paraphrased it in the words painted on the left-side door of one of his Mack trucks.

In 2002, when I was visiting Julia Creek gathering stories, Billy Ryder took me on a short tour outside the town to show me several of Max's abandoned vehicles. The sign writing on the doors of the Mack (opposite) was in particularly good nick, given that the paint had been exposed to the weather for more than 40 years. On the left door was Max's paraphrased quote from George Eliot, and on the right door were two versions of Max's business ads. As the later version decayed, it allowed an earlier version to show through.

Max's interest in the classics did not stop at writing quotes in a notebook and on truck doors; he named three of his crawlers after the Romantic poets Milton, Shelley and Byron. It was such an incongruous juxtaposition, the literary and the earthy, that I was propelled into a daydream of exactly what sort of man was my grandfather. I recalled what Wilf Compagnoni had told me¹:

The problem was – and why tanksinking became his downfall – it didn't challenge him to any great extent. He wasn't that interested in it, except as a way to earn money. Max had abilities and talents that were really never developed – that couldn't be developed while he was an earthmover.

Max was no ordinary tanksinker. To accommodate the contradictions of poetry and earthmoving, I needed to let the spirit of my grandfather infuse me. And what better place than sitting behind the wheel of one of Max's vehicles with poetry on one side of me and *Max Burns, Earth Moving Contractor* on the other.

I'm my grandfather's grandson. After a morning sitting in his vehicle under a cloudless Julia Creek sky, tanksinking and poetry (in a limited way) *did* come together.

Left: Writing on the right-side door showing a newer sign painted over an older one. A mock-up of the newer sign is shown above the image (on the right). A mock-up of the original sign is on the left.
[Guy Burns, GK217, 2002]

Opposite: One of Max's left-hand-drive Macks, abandoned on Hilton Park in 1959.
[Guy Burns, GK64, 2002]

1. See page 38.

Max's Trio Poet-Cletracs

*Our past dams still travel with us from afar
Tis the dams that we have made make us what we are.*

Crawlers grunt! Upwards haul the Britstands full;
Fourteen yards of prehistoric clay.
Pistons thump! Overwhelm Earth's central pull;
Away with dirt and wretched rock, away!

Milton snorts and rips across the grain of slope;
Byron shapes the batter, one in three;
Saddled with a novice, *Shelley* snaps a wire rope:
Max's trio poet-Cletracs, FDE.

A string-line straight horizon circles grass of Mitchell yellow,
Beneath a vacant, full-term pregnant blue;
Abandoned there, a left-hand Mack, poor broken, flaking fellow;
A testament to dust – and life anew.

Past dams still travel with them, though a blur;
Ripped and scooped black soil forms earthen banks;
Those welcome structures made them what they were:
Dirt movers, drowned in dust, sinking tanks.



Like a Silly Bastard

Freddie Holznagel

Died June 2006

Three lads from the South Burnett
respond to Max's ad for grader drivers

Below: Freddie Holznagel driving a new
Oliver FDE on Chatsworth Station.
[Erol Davis, DE07, 1950]

Opposite: Milton, one of Max's Cletrac FDEs
outside the Julia Creek Engineering Works.
The tracks have been removed
in preparation for maintenance.
Three words can be made out:
Milton (stencilled on the front bumper)
...*trac* (part of *Cletrac*, under the headlight)
and *MD Burns* (under the two air filters).
[Erol Davis, DE30, 1950]



QUITE TRUE. Max named the Cletracs after poets all right. When I first worked for him on Chatsworth I said to one of the old hands:

What's the idea of all this?

Well, you're on Milton. Max has named them after the great poets.

We had three Cletrac FDEs on Chatsworth: Byron, Shelley and Milton. Max replaced them with Olivers as they wore out. That's me driving a new one. I know it's new because I can tell by the cleats on the track – no marks. Max allotted that one to me. I don't know what poet he named it after, but I just called it Oliver.

The Olivers came out in Australia in 1951. They bought out the Cletrac company and they changed the name. They didn't change the machine, only the name. Before that it was just Cletrac. Later on the name changed again, and the FDE became the OC18 – the Oliver Cletrac 18.

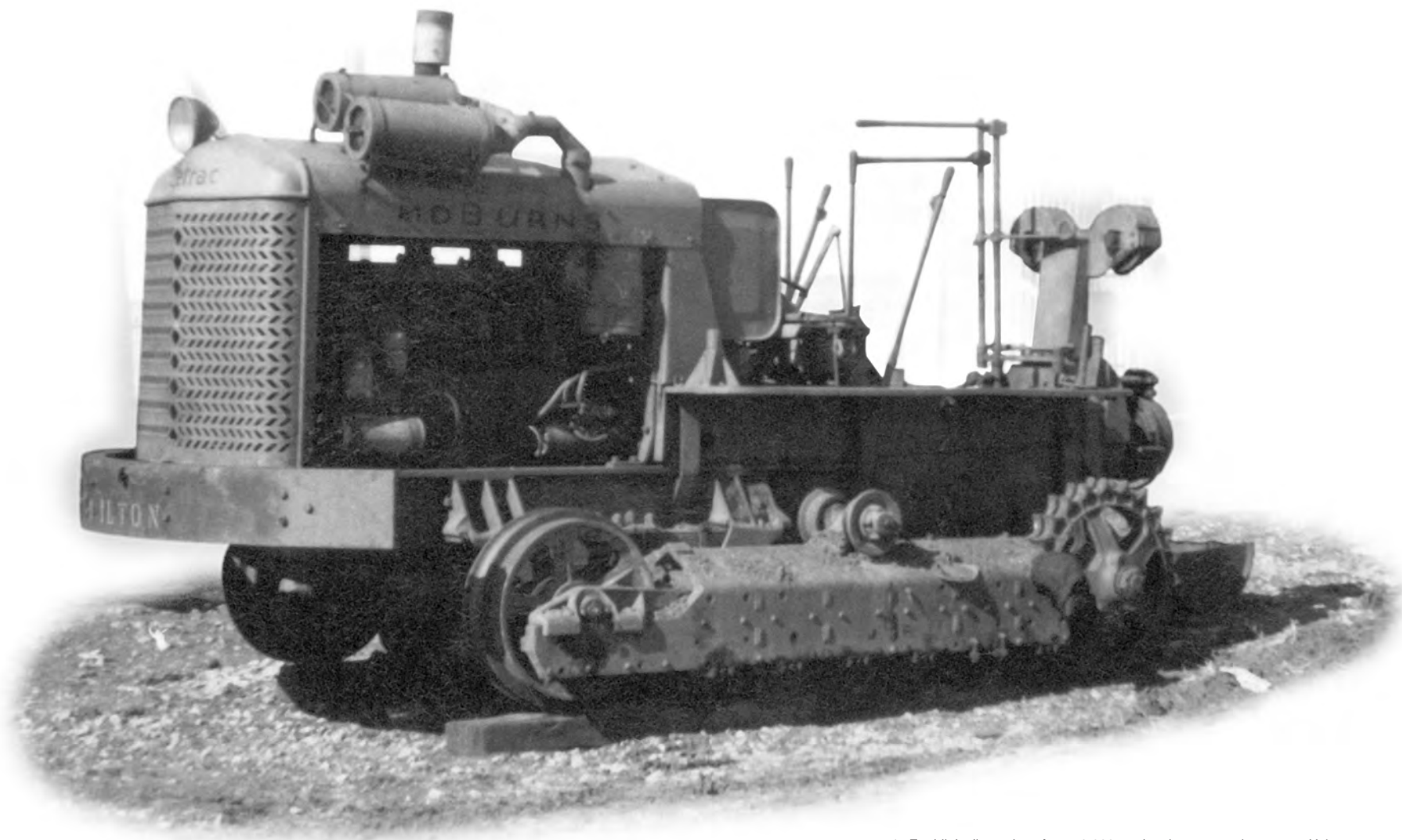
In that photo of me on Chatsworth, I'm driving out of a tank onto what they call the table. There's a lot of work to finish off a tank, to

make it look nice and neat. I used to have photos myself of all those things, but I was at some little place staying in a pub for a couple of nights, and I left a suitcase in the room with all my photos, all brand new clothes. When I came back it was gone. I asked the bloke who owned the pub: "You haven't seen any suitcase belongs to me?" He shook his head. Someone had knocked it off. I had my tanksinking photos in that suitcase and they got stolen, y'see.

The manager of Chatsworth was Harry O'Neil. We put down 11 tanks for Harry: three at 20,000 yards, two at 50,000 yards, and a few smaller ones. They're big holes in the ground, 50,000 yarders: 310 feet square on top, three-in-one batter, 68 feet square in the bottom¹.

Max didn't come out to Chatsworth very often, but he was there when we finished. He and I were the last to leave. He said to me: "You go down to the homestead and collect the cheque for all the work". Two bob a yard, plus you gotta charge for clearing, you gotta charge for all sorts of things. Twenty-odd thousand quid! Harry O'Neil gave me the cheque and then he said: "This is for doing a good job" and handed me big heaps of quids to buy casket tickets for the fellas. We never won a thing.

I used to get on well with Max. I liked him and he paid well, no worries about that. The only trouble was: like a silly bastard I never went back. I flew home for my brother's funeral and never returned to Julia Creek.



1. Freddie's dimensions for a 50,000-yard tank are not quite correct. Using the figures he quotes would yield a tank of 60,150 yards capacity.

I WAS BORN IN MURGON on 4th December 1921. Paul Holznagel was my dad. Eleven kids. Our family had two farms, two blacksmiths shops, two general-carrying trucks, and two roads named after us. The farms were on red soil right beside Barambah Creek. Merlewood was the name of the district.

I was on the farm from 1936, when I finished school, to about 1950. Then I went with Max Burns for a bit more than 12 months. From '52 to '57 I had Bjelke-Petersen's earthmoving equipment. Anything else you want to know?

Yes, I knew Bill Beutel. Byee, where the Beutels lived, was only a mile up the road. I ran into Billy somewhere. He'd seen an ad for dozer drivers and he said:

Hey, listen Freddie, I got a job for you – tanksinking. Whereabouts?

Julia Creek. This bloke comes from Mondure, Max

Burns. I got another fella, too – Erol Davis.

Yeah, I'll come along.

Max, Billy, Erol, me – we all came from the same general area in the South Burnett. I knew of the Burnses, though I didn't meet Max till I went out west. His father had something to do with building the Mondure Hall. I had a fight there one night. Actually, I had a fight in nearly every dance hall I went to. I'd be at a dance and some mug would try to take my girl, so...

Hardly ever went to a dance without a brawl.

Anyway, we packed up, hopped on a train at Murgon, and the three of us went via the inland track to Julia Creek. Sometimes we'd be waiting at a station:

Where's this train going?

Emerald.

That'll do.

Took us a fair while to get to Julia Creek. Stopped at lots of places just to have a look: Emerald, Longreach, Winton. We were in all those towns.

I'll never forget we pulled into Emerald and booked into the pub. Milo Frawley was the publican. He had so many thirsty old-timers wanting plonk and different drinks, that, of a morning, early, he'd rattle a bell to let them know he was open. They were like cows coming in for milking. That used to amuse me.

We went through to Cloncurry where Max was supposed to pick us up. When we got off the train we found he wasn't in Cloncurry, he was in Julia Creek. We headed back and got off at the Gilliat because Max had to come through there to get to the job on Chatsworth.

Behind the bar at the Gilliat was a crocodile hanging on the wall. I asked Ted Malone, the publican:

Where'd you get this?

Oh, just over there.

So I go over to the window looking. "About a hundred mile further than that!" He was a funny old bastard, Ted. Buy a beer, you had to buy him one too. He'd never shout back.



Left: Sign on the highway between Murgon and Goomeri marking the turnoff to Holznagel Rd, named after Freddie's older brother, Bill.
[Guy Burns, GK083, 2003]

Opposite page: Tanksinkers' smoko. From left: Max, Erol Davis, Cecil Willis, Bill Beutel, Bob Pulley, Freddie Holznagel. Max's caravan behind.
[Bill Beutel, BB17, 1951]

Below: The Eddington Hotel at Gilliat, a popular stopping point for Max's workers. Freddie, Erol and Bill were picked up by Max from here, their first day on the job, though this is not a photo of that particular day.

The International truck parked outside belonged to Max. Freddie (see opposite) describes evicting Cecil Willis from the driving seat of this truck.

[Bill Beutel, BB04, 1950]

We were sitting outside the Gilliat when Max pulled up. He didn't know what we looked like, so he called out:

You must be the blokes I'm looking for.

You Max Burns?

Yeah. Hop in the front with me.

I got in the front and the other two got in the back of this... what was it... a little Austin A40 ute. Erol and Bill were the gate openers as we drove to Chatsworth.



We had eight or so men on site: Erol Davis, Billy Beutel, Bob Pulley, Ces Willis; and then there was one dark fella, Arthur Davis, and one bloke with a big dog, Ron Dau. Plus the drunken cook.

We had to have that many men because we worked three eight-hour shifts. Two bulldozers going all the time pulling 14-yard scoops. Say I knock off at 4 o'clock in the afternoon; well, the next bloke who comes on works till midnight. You get that used to hearing machines working night and day, you just wake up, have a feed – cook's gotta feed you before you go on – and out you go. It became automatic.

We got paid 12 quid a week and keep. If we weren't working we still got paid. It was good money. I couldn't have made that much anywhere else.

No one was the boss. We all knew what to do and we did it. Cecil Willis tried to be, but I soon toned him down. I gave him a bit of a touch up the day we went into Julia Creek¹. Very seldom did we go to town; wouldn't be once a month. We were running low on fuel and somebody had to drive in and bring out a load of diesel. This time we all went: "It's time we had a couple of days off". Cecil drove the whole way. You ever sat on the tray of an International truck for three hours on those dirt roads from Chatsworth to Julia Creek? Bugger Cecil sitting behind the wheel and us being thrown around outside. Make him get in the back. So when we loaded up and were ready to leave Julia Creek I said: "Hey, you'd better hop on the tray. I'm driving this time, Cecil". He didn't want to move, so I touched him up a bit. He got on the tray.

That was the time Bob Pulley got off at McKinlay. He didn't want to wait until Julia Creek, he wanted to stop at the first pub: "I'm getting off here. Pick me up on the way back".

Ooh... poor old Bob. Silly gambler, heavy drinker. Whiskey. He'd drink that whiskey like water. I'll never forget once in Julia Creek, him and I went to this game of Blind Poker at Roy Hampton's. We played till daylight, y'know. Started in the early evening and Bob's got his whiskey beside him. He'd bet empty-headed – ooh, big time. He done a lot of money. I forget how many quid he lost that night. Hundreds.

The proceeds from the door takings for the race ball were £83.
Mr. Arthur Lowe was called during last week to make two flights in his Tiger Moth aircraft. He was called to Dimora in the Maxwellton district to transport a patient to the Julia Creek Hospital. Mr. Max Burns also chartered Mr. Lowe's plane to return to Chatsworth Station in the Boulia country. This was a long hop but it was carried out safely.
The cricket on Sunday was interesting when Julia Creek played the Sedan Club

NQR: 25 Nov 1950

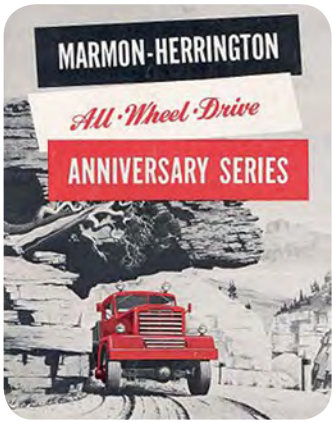


1. It is interesting to compare different versions of the same event. Bill Beutel and Erol Davis tell their versions at the bottom of page 525.

Where we slept and ate while tanksinking was in a caravan towed by a Ford Marmon-Herrington. Sleeping quarters at the front, kitchen at the back, chimney for cooking. It was 57 feet long. I remember that because I measured it myself.

That's the caravan. I was driving it that day. It was my job to drive that old thing when we shifted camp. Wet weather sets in at the end of the year and you can't tanksink, you gotta get out. We were shifting into Julia Creek with all the gear, trying to beat the wet. There's a crawler behind, pulling her out after she slipped off the road.

She was a good old truck, but she was years old.



Opposite, top: Marmon-Herrington and workers' caravan in Burke St, coming in before the wet. It is uncertain if Freddie was driving, as the date is not known definitely. Mossie McDonald thinks it was around 1950. The shadow is Mossie's.
[Mossie McDonald, M08, ca 1950]

Opposite, bottom: A newspaper report of the fight Freddie listened to on his last night in Julia Creek.

Below: Marmon-Herrington and workers' caravan being pulled backwards onto the road by a crawler. Freddie turned too tightly into a bend and the caravan ended up in a ditch.
[Erol Davis, DE06, 1950]



IT WAS COMING ON CHRISTMAS when we knocked off tanksinking in '51. We brought the plant in; brought it in through the Gilliat and parked it in Julia Creek near Max's garage. I stayed in the caravan, offside in the workshop for George Rickertt, Max's mechanic.

George always had a cigarette in his gob. Every couple of minutes he'd be rolling a fag. Too busy making rollies to see that Max was hanging round his wife. George was servicing the machinery; Max was servicing the missus. I knew. I was there. I don't know if others knew what I knew – if there were rumours, people never said anything to me – but Max was tracking this Betty Rickertt.

I was offside for Rickertt right up until I got a telegram from Dad to come home. My eldest brother was pretty low in the Wondai hospital. I was grading the airstrip at Julia Creek when I got this telegram. It was November 1951, the day of the Tommy Burns fight. I remember listening to it on the radio, my last night in Julia Creek. Next day in comes this Dougie DC3 and I flew to Brisbane and went home. I saw my brother in the Wondai hospital, but he only lasted a couple of days and he was gone. He died on 24th November.

I left home after the funeral and went to Brisbane intending to catch a train back to Julia Creek, but I ran into a mate and he talked me into staying. I was stupid. I should have caught the train. I did nothing in Brisbane.

After that, I was five years tanksinking and scrub pulling for Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Not on his Kingaroy property; out west past the Darling Downs. That's where my suitcase full of photos was pinched.

I was dozer-driving in New South Wales too. Me and a few others were clearing the catchment area for the Warragamba dam, the water supply for Sydney.

I went out west again in the 1980s
up around Normanton,
working for Mick and Joy Malone on Inkermann.
I'd stop twelve months out in the bush, y'know,
living in a caravan by myself,
eating by myself,
never going near a town.
I'd get tucker and fuel sent out.
But when I camped near the homestead,
Mick wouldn't let me eat in the caravan;
I had to eat with them.

Mick and Joy left Inkermann
and I don't know where they got to.
They used to write to me every year;
send me a card.
They reckoned I was a top grader driver
and did a good job.

I've been bulldozing all my life. I love that way of life,
that kind of work. Just love it.



INCIDENTS IN MONDAY'S BIG FIGHT

Tommy Burns lands a right to Don Johnson's head in their fight at Sydney Stadium on Monday night.

Tommy Burns fends off Don Johnson after having been hit by a left hook.

BURNS OUTPUNCHED AND OUTFOUGHT DON JOHNSON

SYDNEY, Nov. 12.—Former national welter-weight champion Tommy Burns outpunched and outfought Don Johnson in one of the most gruelling fights ever to be staged at Sydney stadium, to-night. Referee Bill Henneberry stopped the fight two minutes 30 seconds after the start of the fifth round. Earlier in the round Johnson had been hit by a right hand from Burns.

Sands Defeated In Year's Most "Savage" Fight

NQR: 17 Nov 1951

Toonk toonk toonk toonk toonk

Bill Beutel

Died 31 Dec 2007

I SPENT MANY A HAPPY HOUR in Julia Creek, gambling and playing pool at Roy Hampton's saloon. We left there one night and took some of Roy's stools. It was a fair walk to Max's workshop at the end of town where we were staying. We had some beer from Gannon's with us, and every few minutes on our way home we'd sit on the stools and have a beer and a yarn. Next morning I had to load Roy's stools into Max's jeep and take them back.

I went to Julia Creek with Erol Davis and Freddie Holznapel. He was a pretty wild boy, Freddie. Loved three things: fighting, drinking and bulldozers. Got turfed out of Gannon's one time and threatened to get a bulldozer and flatten the place. Next thing, we hear him rumbling up the main street. Nothing came of it. Someone must have calmed him down.

Freddie wasn't a bad little bluer, though he had a strange attitude. We'd walk into a pub and be having a drink. After a while he'd turn to the bloke next to him:

Who's the best fighter in this pub?
That bloke over there. A bloody thrashing machine.

Freddie would go over and front him:

I've heard you like a bit of a blue?
If it's pushed on me.

Generally they'd end up mates, drinking together, but they might end up brawling. I knew how Freddie worked. He'd talk to the bloke. Try to niggle him into throwing a big punch. I'd watch the bloke stewing; and all the while I'd see Freddie setting up his feet in case he went too far. If the bloke let go a haymaker, Freddie would be all set: bang, bang, bang, straight in the stomach. He never fought in the ring, but he was a smart street fighter. I said to him one day in a bar:

What's your idea?
Well, him and I were gonna clash sooner or later. I'd rather sort it out up front.

GARAGE,
HUSTON & SONS, Wondai.

WANTED — Two farm lads, machinery minded, to learn Tractor driving with largest Tank Sinking Plant in Australia. Wages £12/10/- per week and keep; fares paid. Wire MAX BURNS, Welwyn, via Cloncurry.

WANTED — Married couple for share farm — For particulars apply J. J.

South Burnett Times: 19 Oct 1950.
Note: 'Welwyn' should read 'Selwyn'.

Below: Erol Davis and Freddie Holznapel in front of an Oliver FDE.
[Erol Davis, DE10, 1951]



MY PARENTS WERE ON A LITTLE FARM outside of Toowoomba when I was born. There were eight of us. The farm got a bit small, so my father bought a bigger place at Byee in the Wondai area. It was a thousand acres, just across the road from the Byee Hall. It was a dairy and grain farm: corn and wheat, that type of thing. We moved there in 1941 when I was 14.

I was friends with the stationmaster at Byee and he had one of those little pumbers. If there were no trains running he'd lend it to us. Sit the girls around the outside with a few of us blokes pumping, and we'd go to Mondure for a dance.

There always seemed to be a fight at dances. You'd get a bit of a biffing and a black eye, and then you'd give it away. If you flattened somebody, there was no kicking on the ground. You let him get up again – if he wanted to – or you'd shake hands and call it quits. It was more a bout of honour in those days. Freddie was referee a few times. Not many blokes wanted to fight Freddie.

I worked on the farm till I decided to go with Max Burns. He advertised in the *South Burnett Times* for tractor drivers. Three of us went together. I didn't know Erol Davis, but I knew Freddie. Over the years, before I went to Julia Creek, I had quite a bit to do with him.

We travelled out by train. At one of our stops, the publican was a bloke called Milo Frawley. He had a memorable sort of name and he had a memorable nose. Freddie said to him, straight to his face: "I wouldn't mind having the threepenny bits that could be stuffed into that nose of yours". Nice thing to say to a publican with a big snoz, eh. Got us thrown out of the joint.

We overshot Julia Creek and got off at Cloncurry. I remember the Curry because it was so hot in the bar I took my shirt off and when I looked around it was gone. Somebody pinched me shirt. Freddie was all for fighting. The fellas around the bar reckoned they knew who it was, but one of them warned us not to go near him:

He's mad that bloke. He'll hit you with anything. Haven't you got another shirt?

No, it's the only one I got.

Listen, I'll go upstairs and get you one. Save you a lot of trouble.

And this fella (I didn't know him from a bale of wool), gave me a shirt.

Twelve pound ten a week sounded great money in Max's ad, but bloody awful money for the hours we put in. We worked twice a day at one stage: eight hours on, eight hours off, round the clock. If you were on the morning shift you'd have to front up again at night. For months on end there'd be no days off, no going to town. There'd be just one day like the next. The tractors never stopped. They came in for refuelling, that's all.

I'd never seen dozers driven the way we drove them – standing. We all stood up. It was easier that way. You could use the weight of your body on the control levers, the high levers that came up to your hip. You might sit for a while, but mainly you stood. Sitting, the levers were very heavy to pull; standing, you just transferred your weight on them.

Apart from the three of us who came up together, there was Cecil Willis (the foreman), Bob Pulley, and two other blokes. Freddie got stuck into Cecil one time; gave him a bit of a thumping. We were sitting on the back of the truck and Cecil was driving. It was a rough ride, it was dusty. Fred, he pounds on the roof. Cecil pulls up:

What's the trouble?

Your turn in the back. One of us is driving now.

I'm the only one driving this truck.

If you don't get out, I'll drag you out.

So Freddie gave him a thumping. He reckoned we were all working for the same boss, sharing equal time on the dozers, so we should be sharing the driving as well. When we got back to camp Max said to Cecil:

What happened to you?

Oh, I got into a bit of trouble in town.

I don't know why Cecil didn't dob Freddie in.



Above: Bill Beutel at Murgon before going to Julia Creek.
[Bill Beutel, BB20, 1949]

Below: Byee Hall, across the road from the Beutel farm.
[Guy Burns, GK024, 2003]

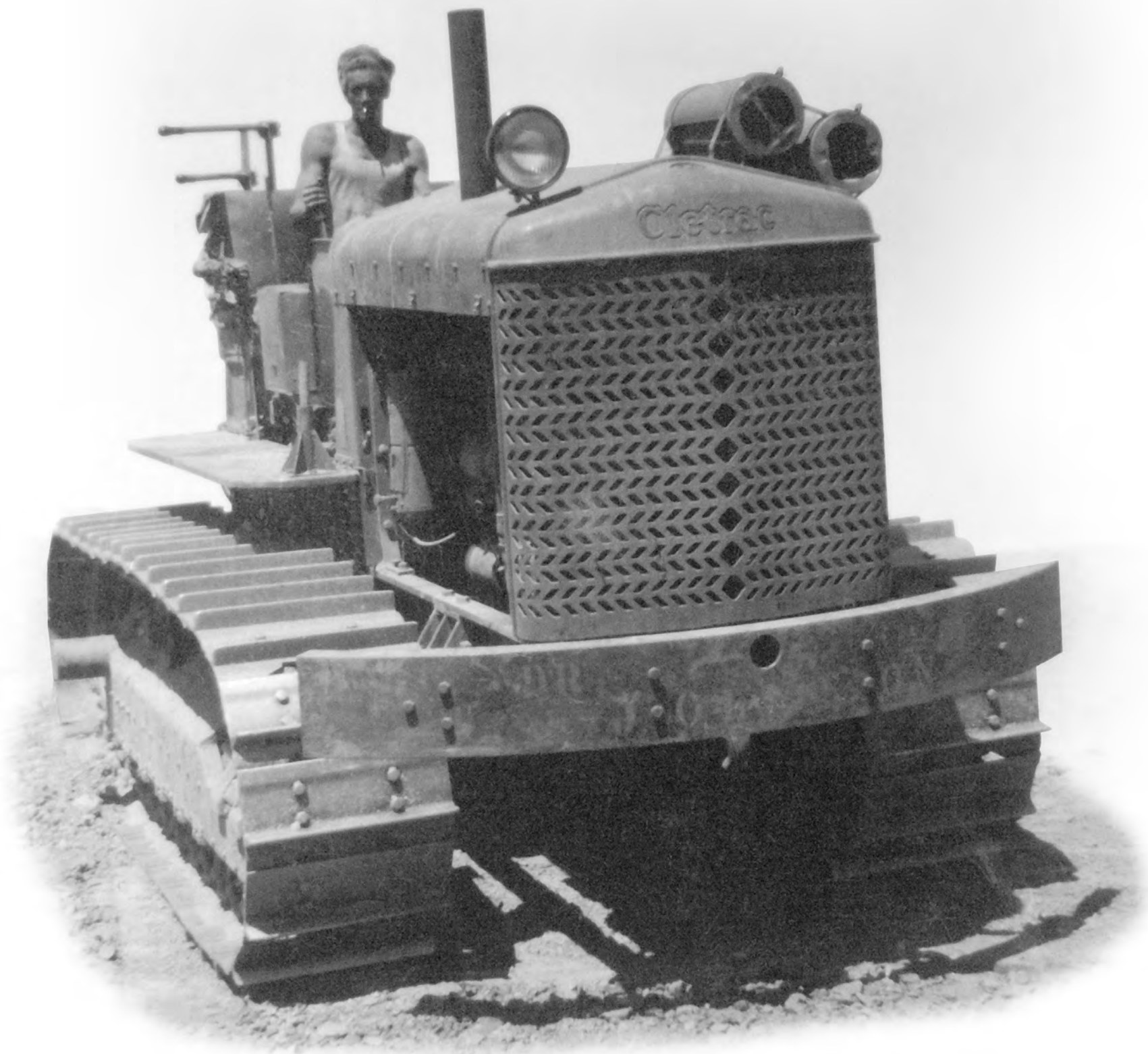


FREDDIE KING HIT Ces Willis one time, because Ces wouldn't get out and let him drive the Inter. We'd been to town for a bit of a session. Max said that only Ces was to drive and old Ces stuck with it. Freddie wasn't a boxer, really, just a king hit man. He picked his mark and blackened Cecil's eye, but nothing came of it. Cecil stayed at the wheel; he wouldn't get out.

EROL DAVIS

BOB PULLEY, of all the blokes with Max, he'd been with him the longest. And every year when the tanksinking finished he did the same thing: he'd go to Sydney and buy all the you-beaut clothes – and always run out of money. Spend his fare and all. Max would say to us: "I'll get a wire from Bob shortly". Sure enough, a telegram would arrive: "Ready to return, please send fare".

Max would wire the money and Bob would be on the next plane, dressed to the nines in his Sydney you-beaut gear. They became his work clothes. He'd cut the trousers into shorts. After a while the seams split and the edges frayed and he'd just have a lap-lap: a flap in front and one behind, which he tucked under his bum because the dozer seat would be that bloody hot. He was a larrikin, our Bob, in his lairy shirt and pants.



I was pretty lairy too. That's me in Julia Creek with Erol Davis. I used to wear bell-bottom trousers with wide waistbands. Spent countless pounds on tailor-made trousers. I think those particular ones sported six buttons across the waistband and 30-inch bottoms. Like sailor's pants.



Opposite: Bob Pulley driving a Cletrac FDE.
[Erol Davis, DE08, 1951]

Above: Erol Davis (left) and Bill Beutel outside Gannon's Hotel.
Photo taken looking east along Burke St. Eckford's
picture theatre is visible between the two men.
[Bill Beutel, BB21, 1950]

on the coast.

Mr. and Mrs. Max Burns and daughter Joy returned to Julia Creek on Sunday after some time away in the south in Gayndah and Redcliffe. Max is supervising the construction of a new garage at the end of town on the west side and this will be a welcome addition to Julia Creek.

On Saturday, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Wal-

th,

NQR: 21 Apr 1951

At the end of 1950, over the wet season break, we moved into Julia Creek. Most of us tanksinkers helped build Max's garage, but Freddie went with the council. He had no option. He'd go to one of the pubs and still be there next morning – come staggering home anytime. I remember Max telling him: "You're a good worker on site, Fred, but you're no bloody good to me in town". Fred came back tanksinking when we went bush again.



Above: Camp men working on the Burns' garage. Erol Davis is putting a bag of cement into the mixer. The other men are unidentified.

[Isabel Flewell-Smith, 122, 1951]

SEE ALL THESE BLOKES? They're Max's tanksinking fellas and they gave us a bit of assistance with the foundation. But only Alan Flewell-Smith and myself actually worked on the building. A couple of new Australians also gave us a hand; and a fella from Cloncurry, he was looking for work, so Max gave him a job too.

The cement mixer belonged to the Julia Creek council. We bought all the cement from them. By the time we put in all the rocks for the foundation it was about a foot thick. We filled it up with concrete by hand, wheeling it around by wheelbarrow. Then we put a 4-inch timber floor over the whole lot.

STACEY BRAND

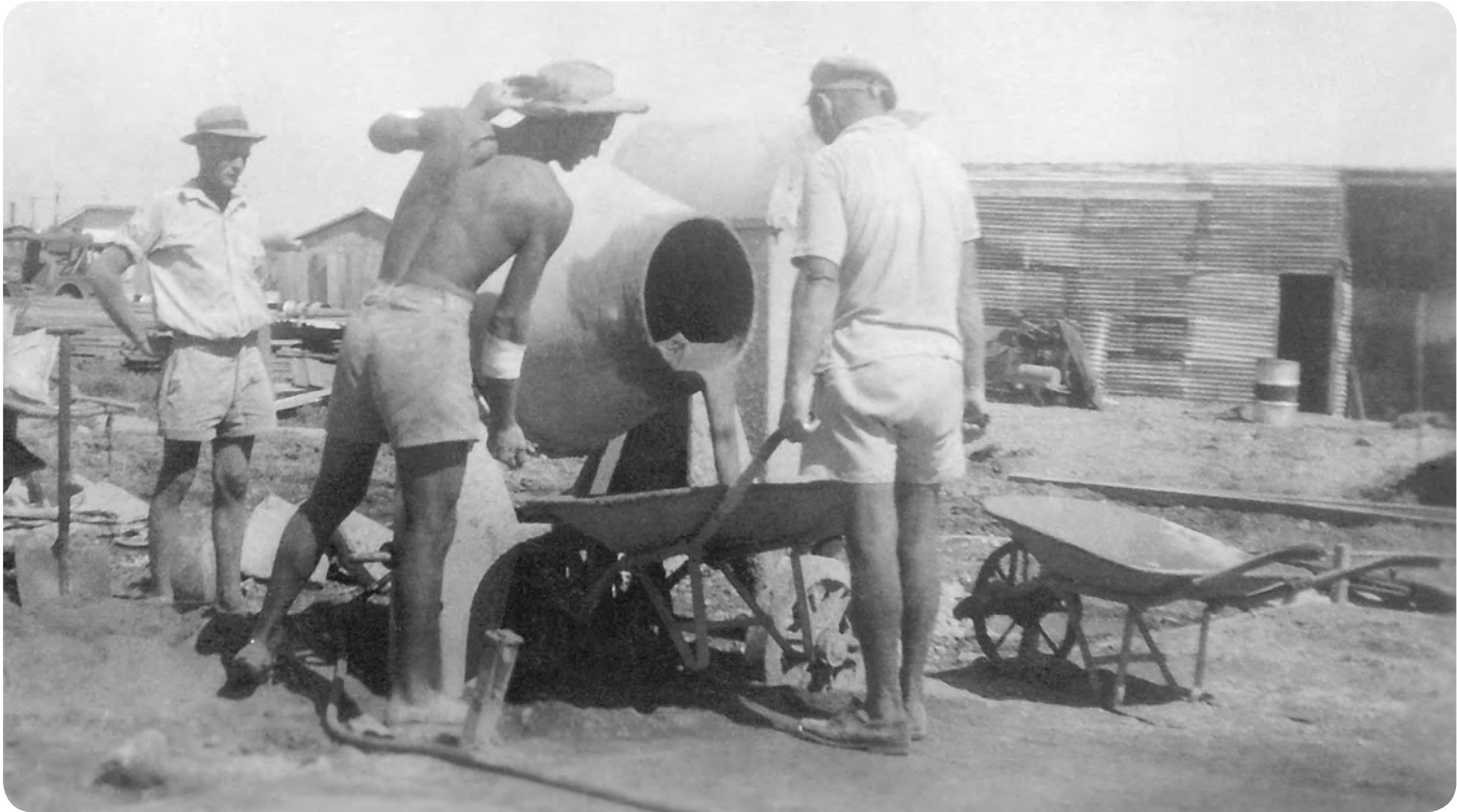
JULIA CREEK NOTES

—O—
The Julia Creek woolscour is in operation and men are working on the electric light plant. The Australian Estate brick building is going up fast, and Mr. Max Burns' buildings are almost completed.

Sergeant Cooke with Mrs. Cooke and daughter Iven left by car for Hughen-

CA: 14 Sep 1951







Opposite top: Erol Davis supervising, while Bill Beutel and Freddie Holznagel mix concrete for the foundation of Max Burns' Julia Creek Engineering Works. Original workshop in background.
[Bill Beutel, BB16, 1950]

Opposite bottom: Levelling concrete. Max Burns watering and Freddie Holznagel adding a new load of concrete to the foundation. Behind the unidentified man with the shovel is the kitchen where Hazel Flewell-Smith prepared meals; and on the right, partly cut off, is the Flewell-Smith humpy with Hazel (or Isabel) sitting inside. In the background is the original workshop.
[Bill Beutel, BB05, 1950]

Above: A better view of the Flewell-Smith kitchen and humpy. Bill Beutel (left), Beven Flewell-Smith (right), unidentified man in middle.
[Bill Beutel, BB07, 1950]

Below: Dew Drop Inn and the Julia Creek Engineering Works, now the Town & Country Club. Both buildings were completed in 1951. Max's KBS5 International at right.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV15, 1951]



NQR: 23 Jun 1951



WHEN I LEFT JULIA CREEK I never had a choice. I was sacked. Differences with the cook (one of Max's in-laws, Hazel Flewell-Smith) while we were in town between jobs. We had our meals in the tent part of the Flewell-Smith humpy. Hazel said I'd done something or other, and Max reckoned I'd better finish up.

I wasn't sorry. For me it was just another job. It was interesting, but it wasn't a real great job. Around the time I left we were moving off a weekly rate and going on contract. Max was paying threepence a yard, to be split amongst all the men. Bloody hard work and long hours.

Conditions weren't too good. We didn't have a lot of washes. It was just face and hands sort-of-business until we came to a creek. Never lost an opportunity then. Pretty rough overall, I tell you. Trying to sleep in the van in the middle of the day when it's 105°... well, you just gave up and grabbed a length of canvas and laid under a gidya bush – and there weren't many shady ones of those. You'd be restless and sweaty all afternoon, and then you'd have to front up and drive a tractor that night. I remember heavy eyes, lids that wanted to drop shut, and dousing water over my head to try and stay awake.



Above: Finished tank with corners cut out ready for measuring. Unknown location.
[Bon Dau, DR17, ca 1952]

The dimensions of this tank can be estimated by using the man as a reference. This gives the following approximate dimensions:

Depth: $D = 20'$
Length of side at top: $T = 150'$

Length of side at bottom: $B = 50'$

Using the formula: $V = D/81 \times (T^2 + T \times B + B^2)$
gives a volume of 8024 cubic yards.

The largest tanks Max built were on Rosevale. They were 47' deep and 310' on each side, giving a volume of 66,000 cubic yards, eight times the size of the above tank.

And if it wasn't blistering, it was arctic. Around about dawn in winter when that sun was just breaking – and other times when the southerly wind picked up – bloody hell it'd be frigid. Then snap! One of the wire cables breaks on the scraper. And when it breaks you have to get rid of the broken piece, knock out some cleats, and thread a new cable through a great series of pulleys. Your hands are stiff with cold and you're getting grease and shit all over them.

A year done me. I was quite happy to give it away. I never had any desire to go back to driving tractors. Although... we had a funny old tractor on the Byee farm, a Field Marshall, a one cylinder job. She was a beauty. I wouldn't mind hearing her thump again: toonk toonk toonk toonk toonk.



I'd go over it again Erol Davis

I'LL TELL YOU HOW GREEN I WAS when I first went out into that country driving tractors for Max Burns. It was the end of 1950, the year we came in from Chatsworth Station to Julia Creek. Max sent Stacey Brand and myself to Balootha to get a killer. We arrive in the afternoon and herd the beast into the yard. Out comes the rifle – crack! Down he slumps, cut his throat. Whoosh – cut the ears off. Mugs me says to Bill Barker (he did the job):

What did you cut the ears off for?

Helps them bleed more.

It wasn't his beast, it was the neighbour's. Take the ear-mark off, y'see. That's how green I was.

Below: Some of Max Burns' tanksinking plant (about 75%), probably on Chatsworth. From right: Cletrac FDE towing fuel truck, Blitz towing a caravan, FDE towing a Britstand scoop, mobile workshop (white vehicle with an open back), various other unidentified machinery. [Bill Beutel, BB19, 1950]



WHEN WAS I BORN? 11th January 1930 at Goomeri, in a little private hospital in the South Burnett. My parents owned two properties, both soldier settlements. Nearly all the farmers around that area were returned servicemen. Roughly about 600 acre blocks, fairly hilly in some places. Some good farms and some not so good. Ours, unfortunately, not so good because it was on light sandy soil with no real permanent water. Dairying was the main income then.

Part of my growing up and schooling was in the war years. We had an air-raid trench at school, a five-piece, zigzag trench. We'd do our drill: came out of class, march in formation, and crouch in the air-raid shelter. We carried identification badges too; a little brass tag with our name on it.

I finished school at the age of 13. There was plenty of work around. My problem was not finding work, it was dodging it: ring-barking, fencing, ploughing, scrub falling, milking cows. There was always work. In fact, they chased you to work, really. Wages were about 17/6 a week.

Max Burns wanted tractor drivers. I think he advertised in the paper for two, but he said if there were three he'd accept three. It suited me to get amongst tractors. We couldn't afford one on the farm, and here was an opportunity to learn. I rode a push bike from home to Murgon, a distance of 23 miles, to see someone who Max had organised to talk to us. There was Freddie Holznagel, Bill Beutel and me. We went out to Julia Creek by train in October 1950.



It took us a jolly long while to get to Julia Creek. Being the youngest of the three, I had to do more or less what the older two wanted, and they wanted to take their time. I think it took a fortnight. We stopped at Emerald, stopped at Longreach – had a look around both places – stopped at Winton, and from Winton on up to Hughenden and then out to Julia Creek. Bill and Freddie buggered around so much that I got disgusted. I just wanted to get out there and get going. I had no money – or not much.

Did Freddie say we went to Cloncurry? No, no, we wouldn't have gone that far out of our way. Although... wait a bit... we did. We did go there. The year I started with Max he was tanksinking in the Selwyn Ranges at the end of the rail line out from Cloncurry, so we might have gone there to catch hold of him. Then he advised us to wait at the Gilliat. He collected us in an Austin A40 ute and took us to Chatsworth Station.

Max was levelling an airstrip. He'd already cleared it with a little bulldozer, and I sat beside him in a Mack truck, cleaning up the strip with four or five steel waggon rims towed behind. That was my first job before I started tanksinking.

I think we put down a dozen or so tanks on Chatsworth. At that time it was owned by Australian Estates, the same company that owned Millungera, north of Julia Creek, where we also did quite a bit of tanksinking. Chatsworth was rough country, and often you couldn't go the full depth. See, once you got away from the black-soil downs of Julia Creek you got into the hard, sandstone country. Around the Julia Creek area – Nella, Nonda, even Kynuna – you could go down 40 feet in the ground and you might strike a few floating rocks, but you didn't strike sandstone. Once you strike sandstone you may as well pack everything up. You couldn't get through it; not in those days with the machinery we had. I don't remember real bad sandstone on Chatsworth, but there were a lot of big floating rocks. One thing was certain: once we got to solid sandstone we couldn't go any deeper.

We used to work eight-hour shifts using three FDEs, two of which would be working all the time. We'd get up at half-past 4 and go till half-past 12. You'd have breakfast and lunch of course. Then you'd knock off for the rest of the day and start again in the morning. Ten days to a fortnight to do a 20,000 yard tank. I suppose we did 15 or 20 tanks a year.

Probably a dozen different men worked for Max during the time I was with him. A few came and went, but not a great number. Arthur Davis, Cecil Willis, Bob Pulley, Ron Dau, Freddie and Billy. Usually there were five or six of us on a job. Sometimes we had a cook, though generally we cooked for ourselves. Food came out on the mail trucks from Kynuna or Julia Creek.

Max only came on site once a week, once a fortnight. He was the one who did the groundwork, laid out the tank. He talked to the property owners and worked out where it was to be, what size it was to be.

We rarely had any alcohol in camp. Might have a few bottles at times, but that's all. Mostly go dry. When I first went out there, Max had one carton of beer in his caravan – Allsopps. He kept it cool in a kerosene fridge. Allsopps came from England. It wasn't a nice beer, at least I didn't think it was.

A couple of the older chaps, given the chance, they liked to go to town and grog-up. Bob Pulley would drink anything. Beer preferably, though he didn't mind a rum. Max used to say: "Bob's skin gets dry. You gotta take him to a pub now and again".

THAT COUNTRY is supposed to be the home of the Min-Min light. Now, I put in a lot of hours working at night on those tractors:

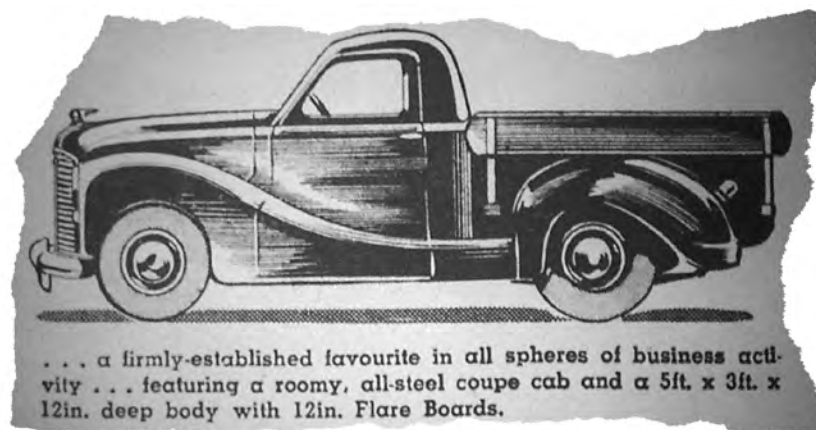
Many a time I saw dogs.
We called them dogs those days,
not dingoes.
They'd come around at night
and I'd see them in the lights of the tractor.

And I saw an awful lot of meteorites.
We use them today to refract radio signals
as they come through the earth's atmosphere.
It's only momentary,
might be one second, ten seconds;
enough to get short-wave voice through.

But Min Mins...

The only time I ever saw what I thought was a Min-Min was the night the dark chap, Arthur Davis, stopped his tractor and walked up to the one I was driving and shook me: "Min-Min, the Min-Min! I'm going to bed". And that's exactly what he did – he went off to bed.

That Min-Min turned out to be the spotlight of a kangaroo shooter.



ARTHUR DAVIS was a nice fella, eh. He came from Cloncurry. Bloody good butcher. The best. He was a beauty. Have 'em killed and skinned in no time at all.

And a good cook – though he stuffed up a damper one time and hoicked it outside. One of the fellas shot a galah and put it beside this damper: "Arthur, that damper you made must have been something terrible; it killed that poor galah". For a while, Arthur thought he was fair dinkum.

I gotta tell you another story about Arthur. One night I was ripping and he was on the scraper. Only the two of us working. It was early evening.

Ripping wasn't really a part of my job. I only did it to get on the dozers – a young fella keen to have a go.

To rip, I'd go down the batter and up the other side

a certain distance, then up over the bank, turn around, and come back down again to do the next strip¹.

I was driving out of the tank after a run and here's this light moving across the paddock. I thought: *There's no road over there*. I stopped. I'm watching this light getting closer and closer. It's like a motorbike: one big bright light hooning across the downs. A hundred yards from the dam wall there was a fence, and it looked as if this light was sitting on top of the barbed wire, bouncing up and down.

I did a couple more runs and the ripping was finished. I went back to the van. A few minutes later Arthur comes in. "Bugger it. I'm not staying out there; that Min-Min's frightening me."

MERV BRAND

Opposite top: Ad from *South Burnett Times* of 31 August 1950 showing an Austin A40 ute, similar to the one in which Erol rode to Chatsworth.

Opposite bottom: Chatsworth.
[Flo Brennan, F28, ca 1950]

Below: From left: Merv Brand, Arthur Davis, Ron Dau, in front of Cletrac FDE with engine cover removed, showing a Hercules diesel motor.
[Erol Davis, DE23, 1951]

1. See page 542 for photo of Merv ripping.



Every year during the wet season we took the machinery into town for maintenance. The wet season was from just before Christmas to, say, early February. An early December finish and a late February start, weather permitting. We'd bring the machinery to town and spread it around Max's garage for the motor mechanic to strip, a chap by the name of George Rickertt (Don Devey was the mechanic after him). One wet season I stayed in Julia Creek, but mostly I came home to Goomeri.

MAX WAS A PRETTY GOOD BLOKE as far as I was concerned. I had no grizzle about him. He paid well: a fixed wage to start with, but later on so much a yard. If we had a good run we could make £25 a week each. I felt Max was fair minded, good to get on with, good to work for, and a good head for business. That's why I can't understand why he let himself slip into bankruptcy.

He was a fairly quiet man really, though a good one for telling stories. A very knowledgeable man, a very handy man. Once when I was ripping, a huge stone lodged in between the two wheels of the ripper and busted the axle. I'd say the axle was nearly 3 inches in diameter. Max had a workshop on site, so what he did: he ground off both pieces, welded them together, and kept welding until he got the axle built up to its correct size. It worked a treat.

I was with Max from October 1950 to December 1954, with one year missing. I wanted to get a job in town that year. I worked for George Peut all of 1953, driving trucks for his mail-carrying business. In 1954 I was back tanksinking.

All in all, I'd go over it again if I had the chance.



Above: Geo. L. Peut, Carrier, Julia Creek.
George Peut (left) and Erol, with a load of Kalmeta wool.

[Erol Davis, DE01, 1953]

*Erol William Davis,
b/o. Max Burns, Julia Creek.*

Ex. 36484

OIL TRACTORS ONLY

Chairman of the Board.

No 9143

Second Class



Internal Combustion

Certificate of Competency

"THE INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT OF 1951."

To

Erol William Davis.

This is to Certify that you have satisfied the Board of Examiners that you are duly qualified to be the holder of a Second Class Internal Combustion Certificate, i.e., to take charge of any Internal Combustion Engine or Engines (other than Winding Engines), whose area of cylinder or combined area of cylinders does not exceed two hundred and twenty-five circular inches, in the State of Queensland, under the provisions of "The Inspection of Machinery Act of 1951."

Therefore this Certificate of Competency is granted to you.
Dated at Brisbane this *sixteenth* day of *November*, 1952.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to the Chairman of the Board.

Chairman of the Board.

[Erol Davis, DE31, 1952]

Note: Erol spelt his name as "Errol" until 1957 when he discovered on his birth certificate that his name was spelt "Erol".

She was gonna explode **Merv Brand**

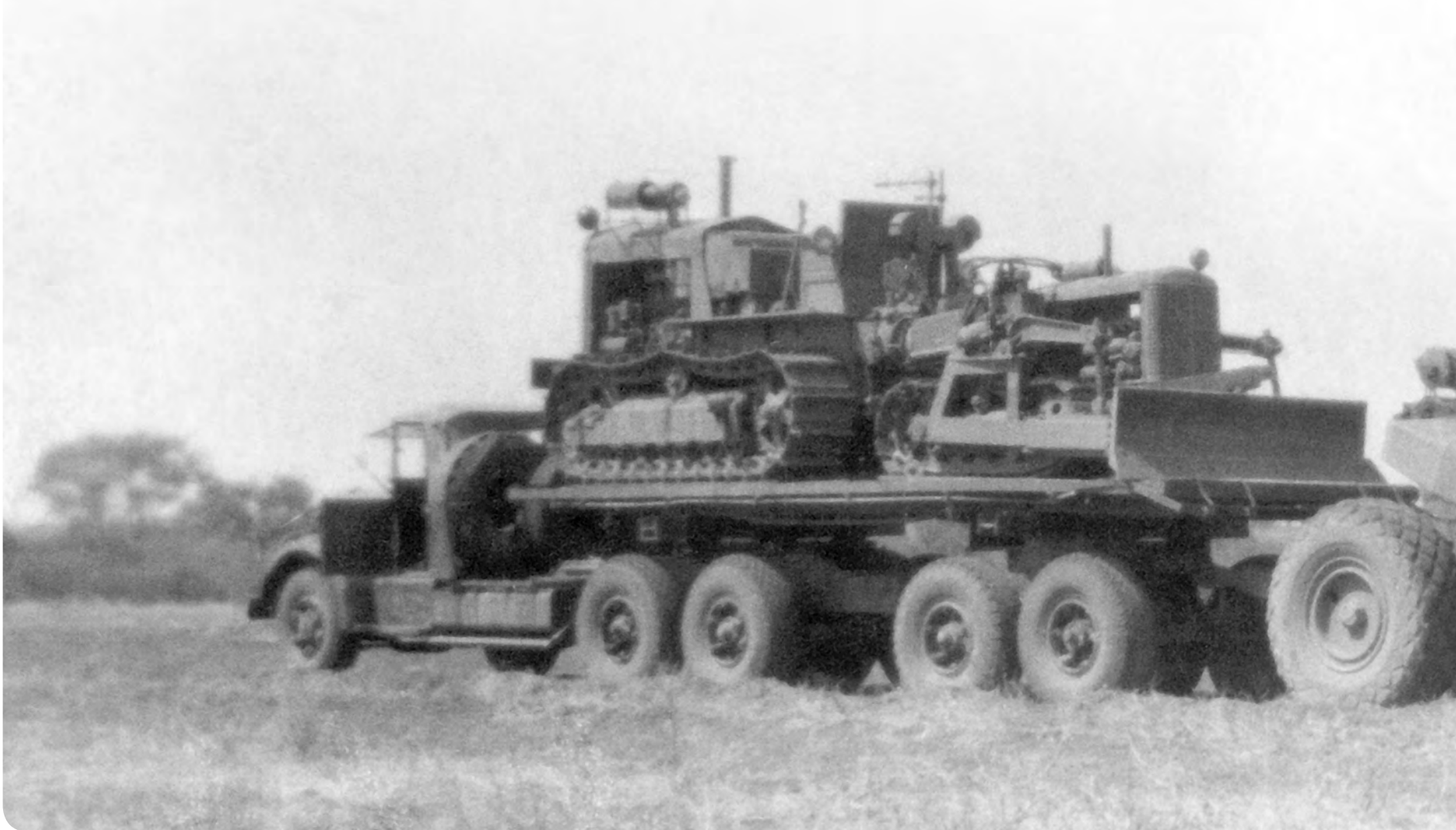
I USED TO DRIVE SEMIES 'N THAT, y'know, for Max. I used to drive all over the place around Julia Creek and I was only 15. Even drove the semies through town. The cops never chipped me. Never once did they say anything to Max, or to anybody.

I could already drive when I went to Julia Creek. I learnt at 12. With Max, I started off driving the jeep, and then I got promoted to one of the Blitzes. Went on the Marmon-Herrington for a while, towing the workshop, then I had a go at the left-hand-drive Mack.

I moved a lot of gear with that Mack and never had any problems – except the once. The governor used to let go; and when the governor lets go, the engine over revs. The boys had told me it would blow up if that happened. I didn't know that “blowing up” meant, at worst, that the engine might throw a piston through the block. I assumed it would explode. This day I'm driving the Mack with Judy beside me (Bob Pulley's bull-terrier bitch), two crawlers on the trailer, and a Britstand scoop and portable welder towed behind. We were shifting camp, poking along in low gear, and I was the last vehicle. Anyhow, the governor lets go and the Mack

starts taking off. I tried to change to a higher gear and I couldn't. She's roaring, stuck in neutral. We slowed to a stop and I'm thinking: *If they reckon she'll blow up, I'm not gonna be here when she does.* I grabbed Judy and took off across the paddock, waiting for this thing to go bang. By this time the others realised something was wrong. Bob Pulley came back and explained: “Well, what ya have to do is put it in the highest gear ya got, drop the clutch and stall the motor”. I was only a learner. I thought she was gonna explode like at the pictures.

While I was working for Max he bought a new Oliver FDE. It was sent from Brisbane to Charleville on the rail, and Cecil Willis and I went to pick it up. My job, as we drove along in the Mack with the Oliver sitting behind us on the tray, was to lift any low-slung power lines or telephone lines over the top. It was a bit hair-raising at times. I used to get underneath the wires with a long stick and lift them up as Ces drove along. I'd walk along the track of the crawler till I got to the end, lifting these wires as the truck moved forward. Ces would be there barkin' at me: “C'mon, hurry up”. It was a hell of a job, especially with the power lines.



I WAS BORN AT BABINDA on the 6th June 1936. Dad worked on a cane farm at Miriwinni. Five in the family: Gloria was the eldest, then Stacey, Les, then me. Jeanette was the youngest. My first year of school was at Tingoora in the South Burnett. Dad sent the family there during the war when the north was evacuated. The rest of my schooling up to Scholarship stage (I never went to high school) was at Miriwinni.

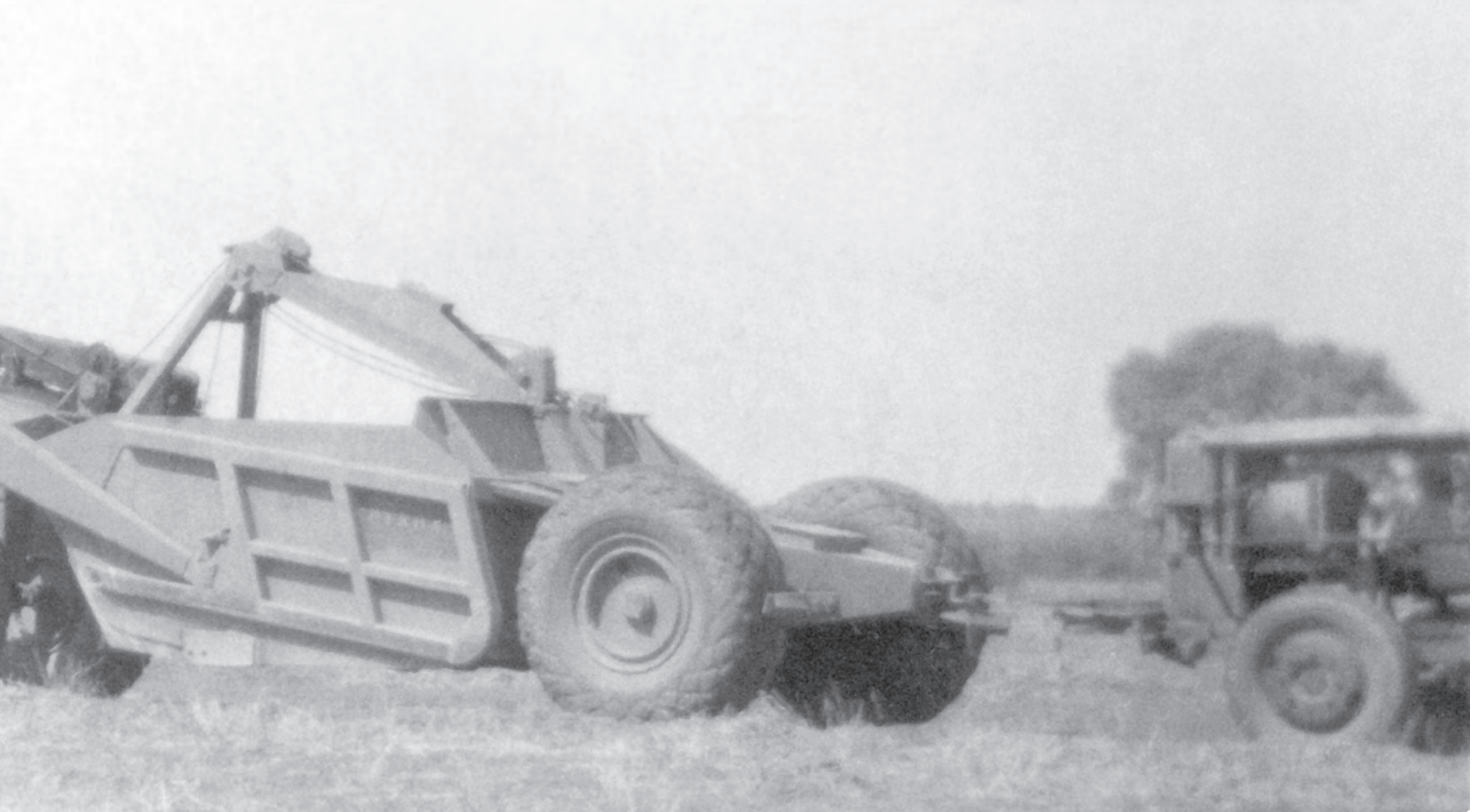
I finished school in 1950, around the same time that Stacey went out to Julia Creek. He came home the next Christmas and said he had a job for me with Max Burns. We went out together in January 1951. Flew from Cairns to Townsville, stayed overnight in Townsville, then flew to Cloncurry and caught the train back to Julia Creek.

Right: Merv Brand.

[Merv Brand, BM17, 1951]

Below: Mack truck as driven by 15-year-old Merv. Cletrac FDE and BDH on tray, towing a Britstand C14 scoop and portable welder (partly cut off).

[Merv Brand, BM11, 1951]



I started off working with George Rickertt. The workshop was still being built, so we were mostly in a shed out the back. Had a roof but no walls. I was supposed to do an apprenticeship, but George didn't like me. I'll never forget, he said to me one day: "Go and get me a crescent". I just looked at him:

Crescent? What's a crescent?
Bloody shifting spanner.

If he'd said shifting spanner I'd have known, but he said crescent. I didn't know what a crescent was. George told Max I'd never make a mechanic, so that was it – Max sent me tanksinking. I wasn't in the workshop very long, only about six weeks. All I did while I was there was wash parts in kero.

Max had three tractors: one for each scraper and one for the ripper. The machines worked round the clock. Six operators working three eight-hour shifts. I worked 12-hour days, sometimes 14-hour days if I ripped at night, though for a long time after I started I didn't go on the tractors ripping because I was grease-monkey and rouseabout. I had to fuel-up and grease the machines when the boys came in for lunch or smoko. And I serviced the trucks. Every time we shifted camp to the next job, even if we only did 50 miles, I'd check the diffs and gear boxes.

There were six blokes in the tanksinking camp besides me: Ces Willis, Bob Pulley, Freddie Holznagel, Erol Davis, and Billy Beutel. Arthur Davis came along later. I can't remember any others. They were a good bunch of fellas, and they took turnabout doing the cooking. All but Ces. He never did any. He was the boss – and a cranky old bugger. The only bloke in camp I couldn't get on with. If anything went wrong he always picked on me. My bloody fault cos I was the youngest. No one got on real good with Ces.

WE HAD A BLOKE with us, he come from Miriwinni – Stacey Brand. He helped build Max's workshop. His young brother, Merv, he came out too. Young Merv wanted to learn to drive, and I was the only bloke that would let him on a machine. Only daytime to start with, not night time. I'd sit beside him and show him a little bit, y'know. He picked it up all right. He was a good young kid, only about 15 or 16.

FREDDIE HOLZNAGEL



Bob Pulley was 2IC. He was all right, Bob. Actually, he was a pretty good bloke. Never got up me. But that Ces, he was always up me, and Bob would be on my side.

Same with Freddie. He was on my side and he looked after me. It was Freddie who started me on the tractors by getting me up on the ripper. Ces didn't mind me being on the ripper – it gave the other blokes a spell – but he wouldn't let me get on the scrapers. I never actually did any scraper work, apart from a couple of times that Ces didn't know about when Freddie let me have a go. Not that Freddie would have been worried if Ces had found out. Very few blokes were game to take Freddie on. He didn't mind a scrap.

Freddie liked his few grogs too. Well, most of the boys did when they got into town and ended up in one of the pubs or in Roy Hampton's saloon. Freddie taught me how to play pool at Hampton's. I spent a fair bit of time playing pool in there because the boys would be at the pub and I was too young to join them. Well, I used to have a couple of soft drinks. Drank a hell of a lot of soda squash at Gannon's, waiting for the boys to finish drinking.

Probably about once every six weeks we came into Julia Creek. Mostly if we were passing through from one job to another. We'd call into the workshop and have repairs done on the machines, have a night in town, and then head off again to wherever we had to go.

The boys on the machines, they were on contract getting something like threepence a cubic yard between them. If I remember correctly, I think the best we did was 20,000 yards in five days. They were making pretty good money: 20, 30 quid a week. That was in a good week. Sometimes they might go a few days when they wouldn't work at all. They'd be shifting camp and they wouldn't get anything.

Tanksinking was all right. It was good. I liked working the machinery and driving the trucks. I thought I was made. The apprenticeship wage was £1/18/6 or thereabouts, and here I was getting five quid a week and me keep. The boys had to feed me, that was part of the deal. Max paid my wages and the boys fed me.

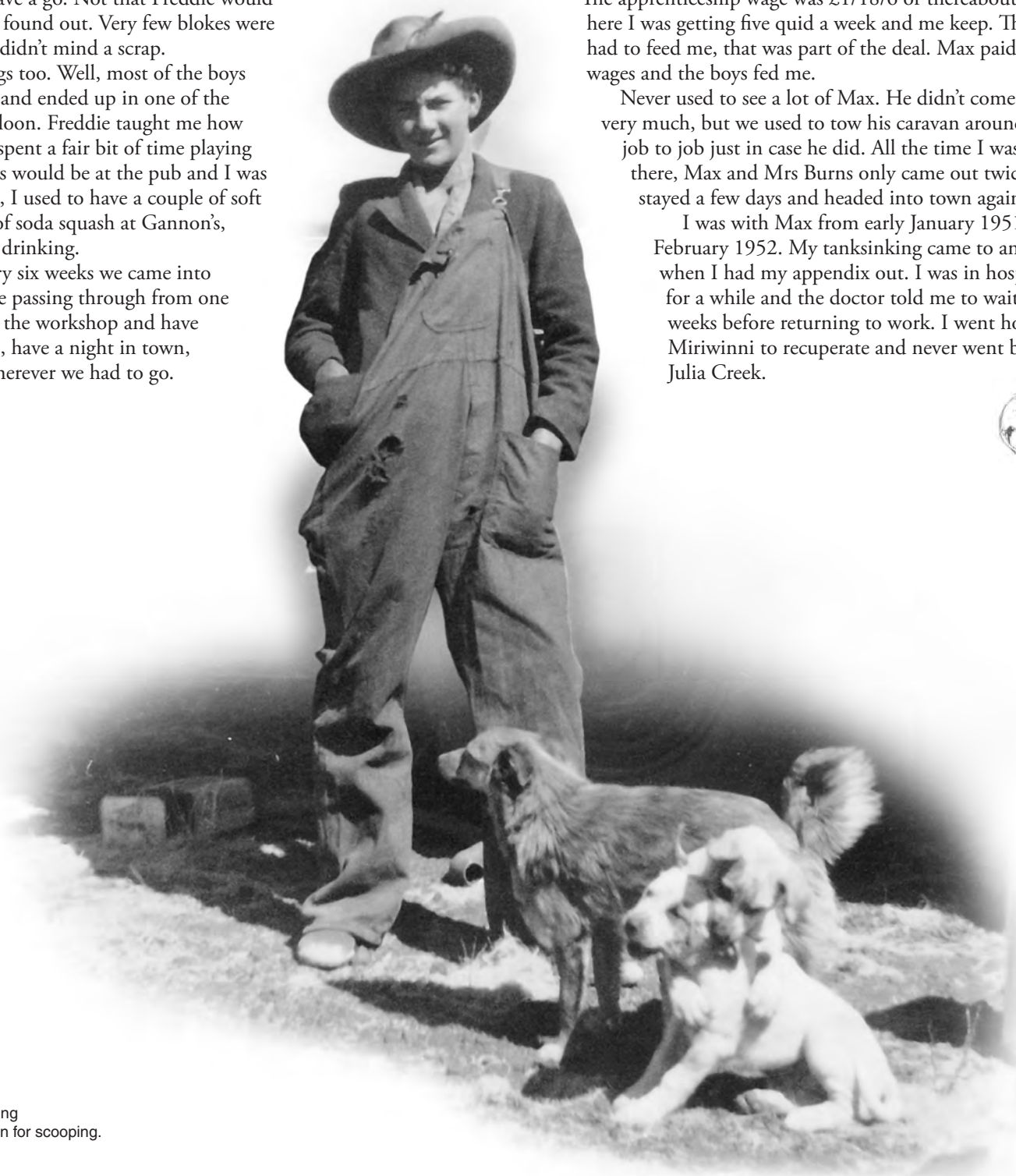
Never used to see a lot of Max. He didn't come on site very much, but we used to tow his caravan around from job to job just in case he did. All the time I was out there, Max and Mrs Burns only came out twice. They stayed a few days and headed into town again.

I was with Max from early January 1951 to February 1952. My tanksinking came to an end when I had my appendix out. I was in hospital for a while and the doctor told me to wait six weeks before returning to work. I went home to Miriwinni to recuperate and never went back to Julia Creek.



Above: Merv in tanksinking gear with Joy Burns' dog, Buttons, and pups from Bob Pulley's Judy.
[Merv Brand, BM12, 1951]

Opposite: Merv standing while driving an FDE, ripping a tank in preparation for scooping. Fluming inlet is visible at the top.
[Merv Brand, BM15, 1951]



The flashest drunks in town **Ron Dau**

I HAD MY 21ST BIRTHDAY ON MILLUNGERA inside an earth tank, driving a dozer and pulling a scraper for Max Burns. Sixth of June 1953. I can remember that particular birthday because I wasn't drunk to forget it. There was some talk of getting grog brought out for the occasion and Harry Goundry said: "Ooh aye. Git soum lemonaird and we can arv sharndies".

Shandies? Harry was a funny bugger, eh. A pom. A partner of Max's I think. He wasn't working with us, but he was in the same general area. He only had a BDH and a little four-yard scoop, that's all he had, and he was doing smaller jobs. Harry put down a couple of little tanks and we put down four or five big ones. We were on Millungera a fair while.

When Max came out on site – he would do that now and again when he wasn't expected – he'd yarn with the men, and he might whinge about something being loose, being broken. If there was a loose nut or a frayed wire rope he'd see it 50 yards away. He had a sense of humour in his strange little way:

Breaking a few ropes, I see.

Not really, Max. We haven't been breaking any ropes.

Look at that tank. Looks like a bloody porcupine.

He'd see a few wire ropes sticking out the wall and he'd go crook.

Max reckoned he couldn't afford canopies. It's hard to believe, but we stood all day on those crawlers without shade. At the end of one job we came into Julia Creek and some old sheila said jokingly: "Max has got all aboriginals working for him now". Our skin was always burnt black, eh. That's why I've got skin cancer today.

We all got on well with Max. If you were at Charters Towers on the grog and you ran out of money, he'd wire 20 quid, an advance on your next pay. Twenty quid was a fair bit of money then. Max was pretty good like that.

Sometimes it wasn't really an advance, we might still have a bit in the kitty. He might not have worked out our pay at the end of a job – if he hadn't measured the tank yet – so he'd give us a wad of money as part payment: "Will that be enough?" That got us away. His accountant worked it out later.

I was with Max about five years on and off. He was all right. You had to admire the bastard.



Above: Ron driving an FDE towing a Britstand C14 scoop.
[Ron Dau, DR11, ca 1953]

NAMBOUR, 6TH OF JUNE 1932, I was born. I got to about grade 5 at school. Finished when I was 13. I was at that age when I knew everything.

I went butchering at Mondure for a few months, and then I went ploughing for three or four different farmers. They had all sorts of tractors: Case, Allis-Chalmers, Fordson. No real big ones though; not like Max had.

When I was 18 I joined the Reserves and was busting to go to Korea. We used to train two and three nights a week. I was under 21 and needed Dad's permission for overseas service, but he wouldn't sign the papers. He wanted me to join the police force. Then he saw an ad in the South Burnett Times for tractor drivers with Max Burns. Dad wrote for it, got the reply, and I finished up going out to Julia Creek.

The first job was near Nelia. I looked at these dozers and thought: *How in the hell am I gonna drive these big buggers?* The fellas said I wouldn't have any problem. After three or four hours I was going quite well on them.

There were five other blokes working with me on these tanks and I can remember the names of most of them: Erol Davis, Arthur Davis, Bob Pulley and Cecil Willis. Cecil was supposed to be the foreman, but he didn't make any decisions, not really. We made decisions for him. Pretty much we were all on equal footing.

The work never stopped. There'd be two machines in the tank 24 hours a day, and sometimes there'd be three: two scooping and one ripping. Between shifts the machines wouldn't even have time to cool down: just fuel them, grease them, and back in the tank again. There wasn't much sleeping done. If you got two or three hours sleep a day you were lucky.

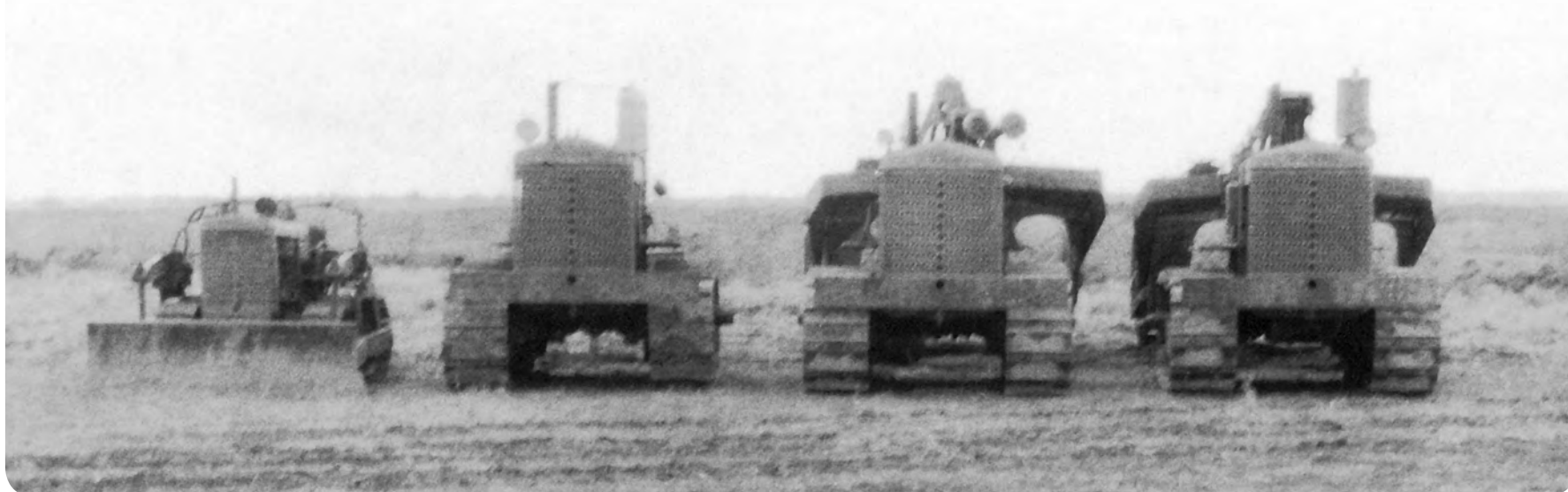
Max had four Oliver-Cletrac FDEs: three on the job and a new spare one in town. One time he brought the new one out. I think we put a thousand hours on it in no time at all, a couple of months. It only stopped long enough to get the tank full of diesel. Max found out and he said: "Hey, wear out these old bastards first" and he took it off us again.

Each scoop was doing about 150 yards an hour on a good run. One time we did an 8000 yard tank in two days. We were in a hurry wanting to get to town. Everybody was dry. Barely got the gear off and we were loading it back on again; the job was finished. We were on fourpence a yard split between all of us. Work that out for an 8000 yard tank... more than 20 quid each. Good dough in the fifties for two days' work.



Below: Max's crawlers. From left: BDH, FDE with ripper, and two FDEs with Britstand scoops.
[Ron Dau, DR05, ca 1953]

Above: Ron.
[Ron Dau, DR23, ca 1955]



We shared the cooking amongst ourselves. The station supplied the beef, but the owner always told us: “Make sure it’s on the right side of the fence” – meaning the neighbour’s side, not his. Arthur Davis did the butchering. He was good at that.

Other than beef, the rest of our food we paid for ourselves, and I reckon we paid for half of everyone else’s too. The fellas working in Max’s garage in town were tapping into our camp account, the account for our tucker from Peter Dawes’ shop. I was in town doing some work at the garage and this fella said to me:

If you want some tucker, just charge it up at Peter Dawes.
Whaddaya charge it up to?
Camp account.

That bloody camp account. Jeez, that was rugged. They used to be big bills, eh. They used to frighten me. We were well-paid, just the same. The couple of times a year that we came into Julia Creek we always wore good gear and white shirts. Wherever we went we were the flashest drunks in town.

Max and I blued about that camp account. “It won’t happen anymore”, but it went on and on. If we blued and left, Max was always able to talk us back because he talked well and he paid well. He could talk his way in and out of anything. I pulled out once and went into Gannon’s: “I’m never going with Max Burns again”. But he saw me, poured a few beers into me, and later on – yeah, I was back tanksinking.



Left: Maintenance on a Cletrac FDE.
Ron Dau (left) and Arthur Davis.
[Erol Davis, DE26, ca 1952]



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M. D. BURNS

per

W. J. Miller

All dust and mouth **Ted Sweet**

WHAT MADE ME COME TO AUSTRALIA was the fact that the weather in England was so bloody awful. It was always raining. I liked sunshine and I thought: *Where in the world is the sun shining?* So I went to Australia.

1949 I landed in the port of Melbourne off the *Empire Brent*. It was about September. I worked at various things: in a factory making gates, driving end loaders, driving timber trucks and various other mechanical animals. I went on a dairy farm for a while. Pretty stupid when you think about it. I worked on a dairy farm in England for my old man, and then I go and work on some other dairy farm in Australia. Everything's much the same except the temperature's different. The contrast wasn't enough, so I left the dairy for the wide open spaces. Wherever – it didn't matter.

I had a little plan in mind to go from the bottom end, Melbourne, and work my way up to a place called Butterworth in Malaya. I got as far as Brisbane and I couldn't find a job. The plan was falling apart so I decided I'd better leave that alone. I went to Western Queensland where I took on thinning timber and cutting firebreaks. I always enjoyed the open air.

I was at the Prairie pub and I met this fella Erol Davis. He said if I was looking for work he had a job for me with Max Burns. Early 1954 I think it was. I couldn't be too precise about the dates, that's the only thing. My poor old memory's been dragged in the dirt and got a bit tattered.

I remember the morning we pulled in at the Julia Creek Railway Station. We went straight around to Max's double-storey place. Max was sitting at the table having breakfast, when in we walked. He was the sort of bloke who didn't make a lot of fuss. "Righto – check the oil, check the water, check the tyres. Make sure the car's full of petrol and I'll be ready." So we did all those things while Max had breakfast, and then we hopped in his Vanguard and away we went, swags chucked all in the back.

We lived in a long caravan, some type of ex-army vehicle. The Silver Cigar we called it. Five or six of us used to live in that. There was enough room at the far end for the men to eat, and in the middle was the kitchen. No cook. What we used to do was nominate one of us as cook. He also had to buy the tucker for that week.

I'd never driven a crawler before I took up with Erol. "Well," he said, "all you do is push that button to start the machine; and those two levers, they steer it". I can't remember the name of the place we were working, but I was all eyes and ears as far as machines were concerned. I loved big machines.

Max had four Cletracs: one with a ripper on, two with scoops attached, and one spare. That was the setup. But I reckoned Max was headed for trouble when I saw the state of the machinery. We were trying

Right: Setting up Max Burns' tanksinking camp, ca 1952, a little before Ted's time with Max.

Rear: Workers' caravan – the *Silver Cigar*.

Directly in front of van, from left:

- KBS5 International (facing left),
- Willys jeep,
- Ford Marmon-Herrington (facing right)

Front from left (facing away from camera):

- Two Britstand C14 scoops,
- Cletrac FDE crawler with ripper
- Cletrac BDH.

[Ron Dau, DR08, ca 1952]



to cobble things together; and really, it was a lost cause.

One time we were in the middle of this bloody godforsaken flat and every one of the bulldozers was out of operation for some reason or other. We put a handwritten notice on each machine and lined them up: “repairs to tracks”, “repairs to scoop”, repairs to so-n-so. Then we cleared out and drank ourselves silly on hot rum.

I remember we pulled up at the Gilliat, all dust and mouth. Teddy Malone was the publican. He was a wild bugger, and so was his wife. We used to call her the Downs Tiger. The Gilliat had a long bar, used to face west. Ted’s at one end of the bar and we were at the other end, chiacking and shouting our mouths off, hoping that Max wouldn’t find us any time soon.

The average-sized tank I did was 25,000 yards. Ten days all up for a tank that size. We’d have two machines operating if we could, but three was better: one man full-time on the ripper, and two men on the scraper. That way you always had broken, loose soil that you could bore into and scoop out.

One of the best things about tanksinking was when we saw storm clouds gathering and we weren’t quite finished. We’d push up a wall of black soil in front of the fluming inlet to hold back the first water until we were ready to let it flood in. I did that a couple of times.

I saw one of those Cletracs bolt one day. Something locked. You would have thought the end of the world was coming. It screamed. You’ve never

heard nothing like it. The only way to stop her howling was to dig the scoop in the dirt as deep as she’d go until the crawler slowly stalled.

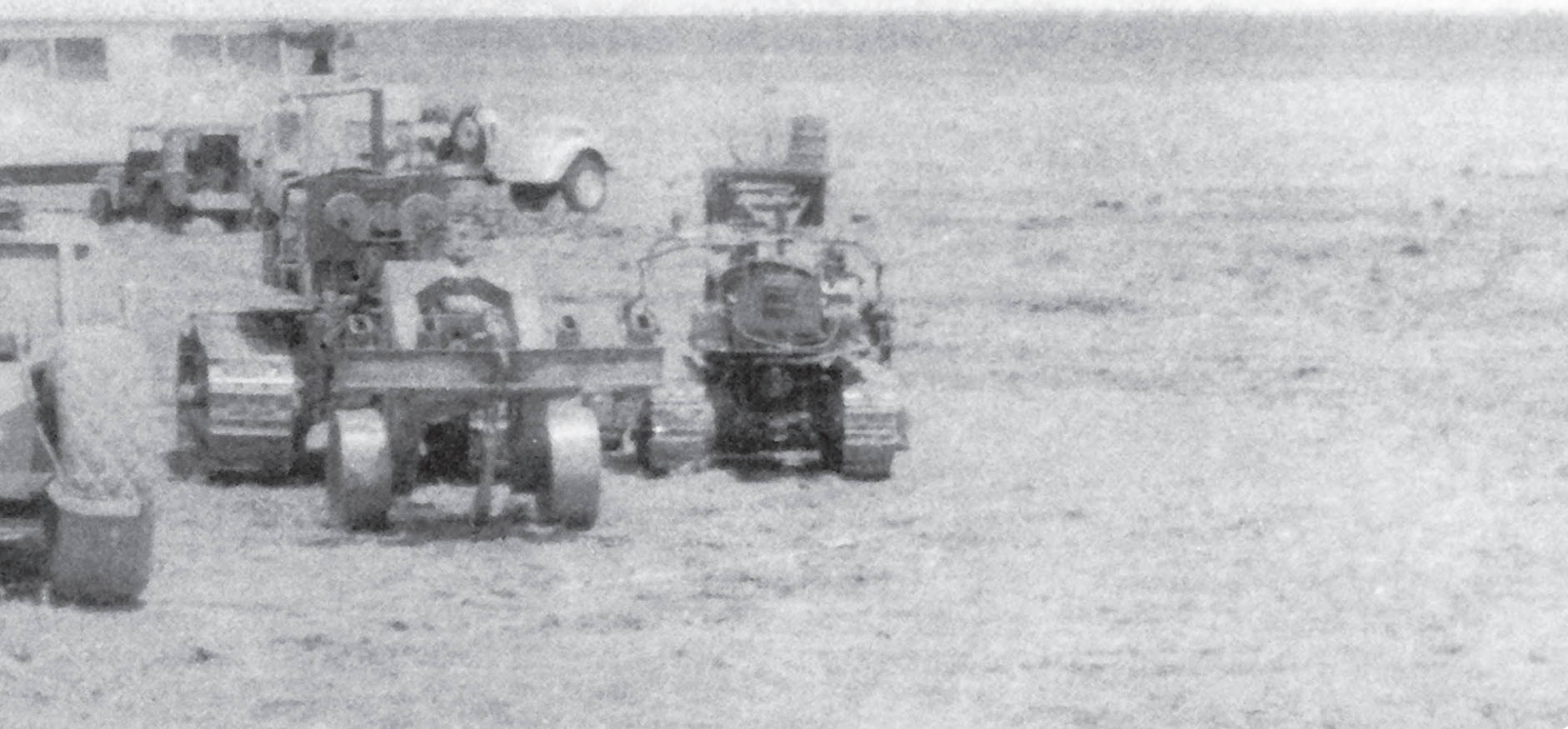
The Cletracs were, in my opinion, very good machines. The new models were what they called the OC18s – Oliver Cletracs. They’d just reached the 18 series when I was with Max.

NOTHING I EVER DID WAS IMPORTANT, to my way of thinking. Tanksinking with Max was worthwhile at the time, that’s about as far as I’d take it. We weren’t empire building, we were just supporters. If we could leave an improvement, that’s what we did. Most blokes would feel the same.

Six months at least I was with Max. He came across to me as: *To hell with everything, let’s get on with it!* Dot the i’s, but don’t cross the t’s too particular. There were no formalities like contracts. Oh God no. You took it as read. If he said he was paying so much a week, that’s what happened. It was a drifter’s dream, really. As long as you were prepared to work – and I was, because I enjoyed what I did – he always had a job for you.

Max owed me almost 300 quid when I left; quite a lot of money for those days. I booked into the Whitehorse Hotel here in Charters Towers with my new bride. I’d booked into the hotel and planned the honeymoon, but I didn’t have any funds. If Max didn’t come good I was in trouble.

Anyway, Max came good and I went for my honeymoon.





Left: Maintenance on an Oliver FDE, Toorak Station. From left: Peter Flynn, Bob Lennox?, Jumbo.
[Bill Burrows, BuB05, ca 1955]

Below: Camp on Toorak. Vehicles from left:

- Mack truck (in distance)
- Marmon-Herrington truck and workers' van
- Water tanker
- Willys Jeep
- KBS5 International truck
- Fuel tanker

[Bill Burrows, BuB09, ca 1955]

Opposite: Jumbo's soft drink logo.

"He was a multi-talented man, Jumbo. We had no recording of the *Last Post*, and nobody with a trumpet, so Jumbo would climb up on top of the roof of the Post Office and play the *Last Post* on a saxophone. Now, there's not too many towns that can boast about that for their Anzac Day march. (John Kaeser)



Jumbo Harris

Died ~ 2003



A Dusty Dry Old Job

Jumbo: road maker, tanksinker, cordial manufacturer

MAX HAD A LOT OF MACHINERY. Three FDE dozers; they were big machines. He also had a small BDH tractor, two 14-yard scoops, two Mack trucks, a Thornycroft, a Ford 4-tonner to pull the fuel cart, and a Marmon-Herrington with our caravan on the back. We camped at one end of the caravan and ate at the other. The Marmon was a very long job. As a matter of fact, every grid we went over we used to belly it. You'd get half the caravan across and then she'd belly on the grid. The Marmon was 4WD and we just kept dragging until the back wheels of the van were mobile again.

And there was one more truck: our workshop. We had everything in that: compressors, drills, welders, tools and God-knows-what.

I was running Max's plant in 1955-56. Joe Borg and me. You won't find him under that name though, it's just what we called him. I think his real name is Azzopardi. There were two or three young chaps, too. Be about five of us all told.

Sometimes we worked around the clock. We had lights on the crawlers and we used to work nights. I didn't push night work because the drivers were always getting into strife, and most of the time I'd be out of bed fixing things and getting very little sleep. So I decided to stick to daylight hours, from when we could first see in the morning till we couldn't see at night. Max would wander in occasionally to see how we were going.

We might have built a turkey's nest or two, but it was nearly all tanks. Mainly 20,000 yarders. We could finish those in about a week with two blokes scooping and one of the young fellas ripping. One tank was 50,000 yards. Part way down we struck a bloody great stone and we had to grub around it. Held us up for quite some time moving this stone out of the way so we could do our runs. Be about a month for the 50,000 yarder.

Max used to charge two bob a yard for the bigger tanks. For a 20,000 yarder that's 40,000 shillings... £2000 for a week's work. Max must have made a hell of a lot of dough when he had his plant going.



Mr. Harold Walters, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Walters, will arrive at an early date to take over duties as postmaster. Harold is a locally grown boy and started at the Post Office here as a telegram boy.

Mr. H. Harwood of Northern Road Constructors, has tendered for street works in Julia Creek as follows: formation, drainage and metalling of Allison Street (£3,271/8/-), bitumen surfacing (£1,396/13/4), kerbing and channelling, reconditioning of footpaths, etc., (£10,590/1/-).

NQR: 08 Sep 1951

I WAS BORN IN INNISFAIL, 1925. Dad was a cane farmer. The farm was fairly small, so in the slack season when I wasn't helping Dad I worked with a road maker, Huey Harwood, driving bulldozers. In 1951 Harwood got the job of upgrading the streets in Julia Creek. They weren't properly made as far as roads go. They were flat and unshaped, so we built up the camber and put drainage in, and that took us a couple of years. There was hardly any bitumen involved. The streets were still gravel when we finished, except for one or two.

I married Cynthia Fickling in Julia Creek in 1953. We came back to the coast when the Harwood job finished and I worked in a sugar mill. I didn't care for that. The wage was small compared to what I'd been earning with Harwood. After a year or so I got in touch with Max Burns and went back to Julia Creek. I knew Max from when I was out there the first time. He had the Julia Creek Engineering Works, a double-storey house next door, and a tanksinking plant. He was always looking for drivers. I rang him and he offered me the job of running his machinery.

I drove the bulldozers, that was my main job. Before we started work on a tank I'd measure up, I'd lay out the tank. The way I squared it: y'know an ordinary metal toolbox? I'd take the square off that by sighting along two of the sides. One of the young fellas would plant sticks where I told him and then I'd step it out. Away we'd go.

Never had a cook. We did that ourselves, except for a few weeks when Joe's girlfriend camped with us. And we didn't wash too often either, only when we went to a bore. Feed a bit of wire through your shirt, hang it over the bore, and the hot rushing water cleaned it for you.

Generally speaking, I got on real good with Max. I did think he was a bit self-centred and a little on the hard side. He was a cunning bugger in business. We always got our pay – we had no trouble like that – it's just that he was a cunning bugger and always had the right end of a bargain. I remember one tank we put down, it rained before we could measure it. A couple of feet of water was in the bottom and Max said to me: "When you take that stick down, push it in as far as you can". The measurement was supposed to be taken from the bottom, but Max wanted me to push it through the mud to make the dam seem deeper – bigger and more expensive.

I enjoyed tanksinking. It was something I really liked. But it was a dusty, dry old job driving an FDE crawler, and we were completely exposed to the sun. We had no canopy for shade. That was the main reason I gave up that type of work. The tank I left on, we were about three parts finished when I had the cordial factory offered to me. Dick Dickfos, the chap who owned the cordial factory, was a good mate of mine:

The factory's for sale and you've got first offer. Do you want it?
If it'll get me out of the sun.

It was the Crystal Ice & Cordial Works. There were busy times and slack times. During the slack times I worked for the council, grader driving, and that made for some long days. Eight hours on the grader, and then well into the night at the factory making soft drink and ice. When things got busy again I'd stay at the factory full-time. Generally I had a couple of lads helping me.



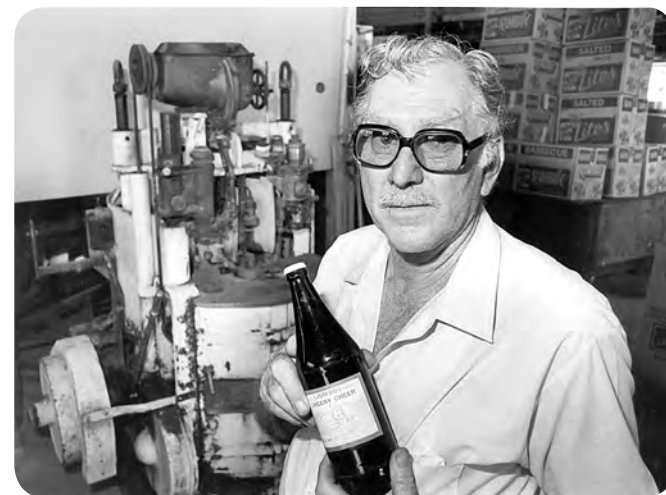
THE LAST TIME I manufactured soft drink was about 1984. Coca Cola and Pepsi came through the west around that time and bugged up all us little fellas. After that I was just an agent.

I retired from the factory and came to the coast in 1990. I liked the life at Julia Creek but I didn't want to retire there.



Above: Cynthia Fickling.
[Carmel Fickling, FC21, ca 1954]

Below: Jumbo holding a bottle of Cherry Cheer in his cordial factory just before shutting down.
[Jumbo Harris, HJ03, ca 1984]





JUMBO'S WORK with Huey Harwood in the early 1950s was not the first attempt to improve the conditions of the streets of Julia Creek. Just before the war, the town gained its first strip of bitumen from the railway to the cemetery, along Julia St and the Old Normanton Road. In the words of Norm Downey: "...so we could always bury somebody if they died in wet weather".

Below: *Boiling-up for the first bitumen road.* The image above, of a man stirring the bitumen, is from a similar photo taken at the same time.

[Dadie Dawes, DW36, 1939]

Bitumen is being heated in three cauldrons, insulated by stacked rocks on three sides. Under each cauldron is a wood fire, kept stoked from a stack of wood visible through the truck window. Hot bitumen is gravity fed out of each cauldron via a pipe, which is fitted to a spigot at the bottom. The pipe feeds bitumen into the tank on the back of the truck. The pipe sits on a stump, on top of which is a rock to insulate the stump from the hot pipe. The bitumen has to be kept hot, so there is also a wood fire under the tank on the truck. You can see the smoke.

The cauldron on the left has just been emptied and the end of its pipe sits in midair. A pipe is only put in place when the cauldron is ready to be emptied, otherwise it would be in the way of stoking the fire. The other two cauldrons are ready and waiting; the man on the right is stirring his, keeping it at just the right consistency.



30 OCTOBER 1922—What is described by the city engineer, Mr Morton, as the most revolutionary step taken by the City of Melbourne Council in overcoming the dust nuisance – by the creation of a dustless road surface – is the purchase of an asphalt-mixing plant at a cost of £9500 from the Geiger Co. of California.

By the use of this mixer, which will be delivered in five months, the council will be able to lay what is claimed to be the most perfect road surface known. It is smooth and resilient and cannot be worn away by ordinary traffic. The new machine will manufacture two kinds of road material. The first is sheet asphalt, consisting of cement, tar and sand of varying degrees of fineness, mixed in revolving dryers and laid at a temperature of 350° Fahrenheit. The road is ready for the heaviest traffic half an hour later. For this surface a proper base is essential – either concrete for heavy traffic, or macadam for secondary or lighter vehicles.

The chief advantage of the new machine, however, is the second road material, a mixture known as asphaltic concrete, consisting of coarse blue-metal "nuggets" bound with tar and sand to form an extremely durable composition impervious to surface water. The rapidity with which the machine mixes the ingredients, and the comparative cheapness of cost, makes the process an ideal method of road laying.

8 FEBRUARY 1930—Glorious weather has prevailed since writing my last notes. Every day rain has fallen in the district, being rather heavy on occasions, and I am unaware of any selection not having received fair rain.

A Fearful Mess

Fish from the sky and the Burke St morass make way for a 'dustless road surface'

One may judge how the weather has been when I state we have had over 15 inches this month. There have been many selectors receiving as much as 4 and 5 inches in one fall, and although this appears wonderful to some, the selectors do not wish to see it fall in such great quantities until the stock are much stronger. Still, we are contented to put up with it, no matter in what volume it falls.

At the moment the creek on the outskirts of town is running level with the top of its banks and the main road leading to Richmond is impassable. The railway bridge over this creek is just above water level, and people on the opposite side who wish to cross into town have many anxious moments.

Having had such great rains during the past week the town streets are practically untrafficable, yet one or two motorists seem to delight in tearing along the roads and causing damage, to say nothing of the damage they do to their own cars.

The sanitary contractor has had a worrying time during the past few days. Even a horse drawn vehicle would have much difficulty in getting about, owing to the state of the roads.

Saturday's train, which was due to arrive here that afternoon from Richmond, did not arrive until late that night, being several hours delayed through flood. It is held up in Julia Creek indefinitely owing to flood waters at various places between here and Cloncurry. Fortunately, the passengers are not subject to any great inconvenience as they have sleeping accommodation and a buffet car attached. It is not known when this train will depart or when we will



receive another from Townsville.

Since the rain, grass has sprung up in places where one would think, prior to the rain, that grass would never grow again. And with the grass come the flies, here in swarms, and their companions the mosquitoes. What with flies and mosquitoes, washaways and mud, the life of a westerner in some eyes is unenviable, but for the hardened residents of Julia Creek, these annual conditions appear as mere trifles.

8 NOVEMBER 1930—Owing to the recent rains, communication by road with outside places has become impossible as all creeks and gullies are flooded. I understand there are no less than six wool teams on the road between here and Brinard who are having considerable difficulty, and who, I believe, are playing havoc with the condition of the road. Once the creeks again become crossable, motorised transport will undoubtedly meet with trouble. The roads are in a deplorable state owing to the wool teams cutting them about.

In a similar but thoughtless vein, as soon as the rain ceases many town motorists seem to find amusement in ploughing about in their motor vehicles, not only causing damage to their vehicles but more especially to our streets. I think this is a matter that should be brought before our council. Action should be taken to prevent such unnecessary damage to public thoroughfares.

16 JULY 1932—I understand that a deputation of citizens propose waiting upon the shire council to ascertain whether council employs a Traffic Inspector, and, if so, does he reside in the town area. Judging from the number of prosecutions during the past few years – one in total – it is unlikely such a person exists. Too late will be the hue and cry when one of the Julia Creek speed kings, who seem to find pleasure in using Goldring St as a race strip, become involved in a deadly accident.

17 DECEMBER 1938—Julia Creek township expects, shortly, to have bitumen roadworks started from the railway station, down Julia St to the end of that street, thence along Byrne St and onto the Dagonally road as far as the cemetery.

11 FEBRUARY 1939—The council has again started work on the bitumen road running from the railway station, along Julia St, and then in a westerly direction. Work was held up for a short while on account of the roller coming to hand. This arrived a few days ago and operations are now in full swing.

THE ONLY BIT of bitumen in Julia Creek in those days went from the railway station, past both pubs, past the Post Office and down to the cemetery, so we could always bury somebody if they died in wet weather.

NORM DOWNEY

15 JULY 1939—The Main Roads contract to bitumenise Julia St, and then down Byrne St, has just been completed and is an asset to the town and district.

20 APRIL 1940—The new bitumen road is a favourite spot for the goats who make best use of this hard, dry area in wet weather.

20 OCTOBER 1951—Mr Huey Harwood is here in charge of the Northern Road Constructors, which will give us new cambered streets. We should have much activity in this direction in a short while. Some of the plant has arrived.

17 NOVEMBER 1951—We have had real summer weather this last week and the days have been hot. The wind comes from the south, but on occasions varies by swinging in from the north. Smoke and dust haze hang on the horizon, constant as a curtain, unaffected by wind from any direction, and depress landholders and townfolk alike. There feels no moisture in the air. It is hoped that very soon some storms will be experienced in the district.

There is much activity about town: builders and electricians are at the power house, and carpenters are working on the Australian Estates building next to Gannon's Hotel. Roadworks have been in progress for some days. Northern Road Constructors has their entire plant on the job, gravelling and making an impression in Burke and Quarrell Streets.

2 FEBRUARY 1952—The road contractors have commenced gravelling Allison St. This will bring on a much-needed improvement which will be appreciated both in wet and dry times. There is a great deal of work ahead for Northern Road Constructors, under the control of Mr Huey Harwood, and this will proceed for many months.

1 MARCH 1952—Employees of the local branch of the Australian Estates Co. Ltd. have now become ensconced in their new offices – impressive for Julia Creek – and are supplied with quarters on the top floor of the building. The inside layout has been planned to make working in our tropical area as pleasant and congenial as possible.

Work still continues on street construction. Most of the east-west streets now have their gravel strips in place, which were tested during the small amount of rain recently. The gravel carried the traffic well. The north-south streets are now being gravelled, and when the whole of the contract is completed we should all be satisfied with the result.

The tennis players are going out into the country for a match on Sunday. This will take place at Balootha, the cattle property of Mr Max Burns. It is a long time since these social matches between town and country have been played and it is pleasing to see them revived. The enthusiasm for this game is coming from Messrs Max Burns and Bill Barker.

6 SEPTEMBER 1952—The council has agreed that the garden plots in the centre of streets may be allotted to citizens residing nearby if desired. The Australian Estates Co. have already made application for such a plot, and no doubt this will be a lead for others. There is a possibility that some competition will be created in this way and the advantage gained will be shared by all.

Northern Road Constructors is giving the streets of Julia Creek the final touches. It looks as if the town streets will be satisfactory for some time into the future – except for the fine dust which comes from the newly formed gravel strips and is blown into shops and houses.

21 FEBRUARY 1953—For the past week we have experienced heavy rains in the district and also good falls in town. The streets of Julia Creek are still very soft. Goldring St, in the section near the railway station, resembles a lake.

Towards the end of the week the rain eased off somewhat and we are hoping to have fine weather for a while. The rains have done a power of good and the season is now assured. There is a great body of Mitchell grass all over the district.

Up till Thursday afternoon we had several trains held in Julia Creek. Whilst they could get back to Townsville, they could not go forward to Cloncurry. The stranded trains were the means for Julia Creek people to obtain cheap fruit and vegetables that were commencing to perish.

In spite of the heavy and constant rains we have been able to have pictures at the open-air theatre twice a week. At times, people have had to seek shelter under the awning. The energetic proprietor, Norm Downey, has made extra seating available to accommodate the stranded train passengers, and has generally improved the picture show by having a soft drink bar inside the theatre. This is well patronised on picture nights.

13 MARCH 1954—The weather for the past week has been hot and steamy with rain at different periods. Last Monday night we had over 70 points. This brought the total for Julia Creek to over 26 inches since the start of the year. The streets are no sooner dry than there is another downpour, turning Goldring St into a sea of water. The council pumps this out



from time to time.

Messrs Arthur Lowe and Lionel Wall, our local pilots, are being kept busy and are a great boon to those wanting to move around. We are grateful for their assistance and cooperation in the present crisis, when all traffic by rail and road is at a standstill.

15 MAY 1954—There has been a blustery southerly wind blowing for the past week which brings with it a great deal of dust. Very distressing to housewives, especially those living on the north side of the streets where they feel the full blast of the wind. Some of them have been watering the street in the early morning and late afternoon to keep down the dust. It is good to see people with civic pride who take an interest in their town.

16 MARCH 1957—The roads are in a fearful mess. Every depression is filled with water. Bad drainage, or obstructions in the drains, fail to allow the water to get away fast enough, with the result that stagnant pools in the main street would be sufficient for a water jump at any equestrian show. In consequence, the mosquito will be a constant menace for the next month or six weeks.

The road between here and Kynuna had almost dried out last Saturday week, when Mr Moles, manager of Crendon Station 70 odd miles from Julia Creek, set out with Mrs Moles and their two young children to attend the pictures. On the way to town they ran into heavy rain and became bogged on several occasions. Eventually they abandoned the car and arrived at Julia Creek at 3 a.m. Sunday morning – on foot.

23 MARCH 1957—Hot and humid conditions existed for the greater part of the week and distant thunderstorms nightly arched the heavens in the north. The rain at the weekend filled every puddle hole, and young boys spent their leisure time catching the small fish that abounded in the puddles and flowing gutters.

I RECOLLECT there being a lot of fish in the gutters after rain. When the gutters stopped running, they turned into mud holes along the side of the road, just small pools of water. You'd get in there and scoop up the fish, catch them in your hand, put them in jars, take them home. About an inch long. That's all I remember about them – that we used to go around after the rains and catch tiny fish in the gutters. Julia Creek being Julia Creek, so dry most of the time, where in the hell did those fish come from?

TOMMY JESSUP

13 JULY 1957—Most of the 77 points of rain that fell last weekend were absorbed by the arid ground, except in Burke St. To the annoyance of residents living opposite, a lake formed, 100 yards long by 7 yards wide, clearly demonstrating the need for more roadworks and regular flushing of the drains.

5 JULY 1958—The first half of last week was typical summer weather, but on Wednesday night clouds obscured the moon, and at daybreak on Thursday,

lightning lit up the northern sky followed by rolls of thunder. Before breakfast, drizzling rain set in and continued for almost 24 hours, amounting to 89 points. The rain made a perfect mess of our streets. The main thoroughfare, Burke St, became a morass. The same amount of rain in one decent shower may not have been noticeable, but the continual drizzle converted the streets to a quagmire. Crossing over at any street corner was an ordeal.

31 JANUARY 1959—The Main Roads Department has advised the council that the planning of the bitumen strips from the hospital to Allison St is almost completed. This will mean a bitumen strip along Burke St, from the hospital at the eastern end to Allison St at the western end.

28 FEBRUARY 1959—Approval has been given for the formation, drainage, and bitumen surfacing of two, 12-foot wide strips in Burke St between Allison St and the hospital at an estimated cost of £25,464.

23 MAY 1959—Preliminary work on the bitumenising of Burke St has commenced. The excavated earth is being used to fill in the depression lying on the southern side of Goldring St near the railway marshalling yards. In the wet season this area had served as a training pool for youngsters, a wading pool for canines, and the perfect breeding place for mosquitoes and tadpoles.

30 MAY 1959—The light drizzle that commenced early last week was followed by more constant rain towards the close of the week yielding, in all, 259 points. It was steady soaking rain widespread throughout the district. Motor transport, other than tractors and four-wheel drive vehicles, became immobilised. Excavations in Burke St, in preparation for its bitumenising, added to the chaotic conditions. Traffic was limited to wading pedestrians.

18 JULY 1959—Burke St is being transformed. The gravel from the quarry is gradually filling in the excavations, and machines and men are levelling it. One part will be sealed with bitumen, the other part will be heavily gravelled. When Burke St is completed, the nightmare of glutinous mud, which previously formed the thoroughfare, will only exist in memory.

17 OCTOBER 1959—Bitumenising of Burke St has been completed and a vast improvement has been effected. Pedestrians, once they get on the formed street, should have clean walking during the wet season.



Opposite: Almost completed Australian Estates building, Burke St, next door to Gannon's Hotel.
[Ivy Burrows, B14, 1951]

Above: The lake that formed in Burke St, July 1957.
[Genny Ensor, EG04, 1957]

AFTER a good downpour in Julia Creek, there'd be fish, y'know. One night she'd rain, and next morning you could watch for perch. In Julia Creek, in the main street, we used to catch these fish. Kids getting fish in the gutters. Whether they rained down I don't know. There was always conjecture about that – how fish came out of the sky.

FRANK FAYERS



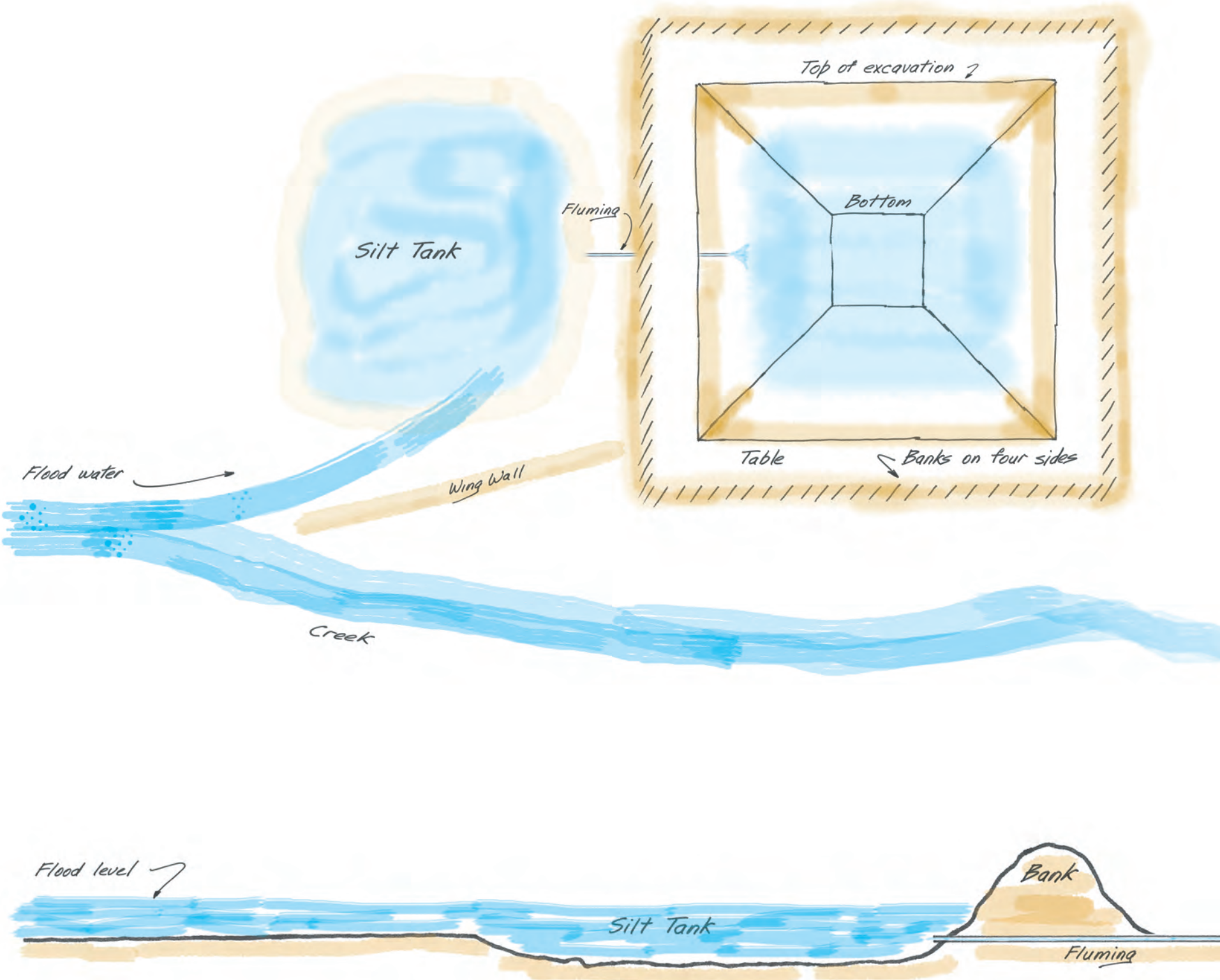
ONE DAY ON GAROMNA, I noticed baby fish flopping around in the mud and water after heavy rain. I collected two different species and placed them in spirits to preserve them. I was about to go to Brisbane on holidays and I planned to take them to the curator of the museum to find out what species they were and how did they get onto Garomna's normally dry paddocks.

It was commonly believed by people in the west, that such fish were sucked up by a storm in the Gulf and dropped on the downs. That this was just a myth was pointed out to me by the curator: had anyone ever found fish on the roof or in their water tanks?

It turned out the fish were Spangled Perch and Central Australian Jew fish, fresh water species whose eggs had been washed onto the paddock in a previous flood, and which could live in the ground for years.

When they hatched after the next heavy rain, they would flip-flop over the downs until they reached a creek or river, where they would mate and lay more eggs, which just might end up being washed over the downs during a subsequent flood. That's how the cycle continued.

GEOFFREY BROWNE



ANATOMY OF A TANK

A plan of a tank is shown at left; a side view, below. The capacity of such a tank can be calculated from the formula given on page 433. The formula shows that for a tank 20' deep, an increase in the table height of only 2' (as Joe describes, right, when cheating for Max) would increase the capacity by 10%. The grazier would be overcharged by the same percentage.

1. When flood water overflows the bank of the creek, it flows into the silt tank.
2. The wing wall is made of earth and rocks, 'stone-pitched', so it is not easily washed away. It directs flood waters into the silt tank.
3. The silt tank, typically 7 or 8 feet deep and around a thousand cubic yards in capacity, allows sediment in the flood waters to settle out.
4. The cleaner water near the surface of the silt tank, drains through the fluming pipe into the main tank.
5. Water coming out of the fluming splashes onto a concrete runway which descends into the tank. Without the runway, the incoming water would severely erode the earth wall. The fluming usually has a floodgate (a one-way flapper) on the outlet to prevent water draining backwards. This could happen during a large flood if the water level in the tank rises higher than the fluming.

Don't cheat on this one Joe Azzopardi

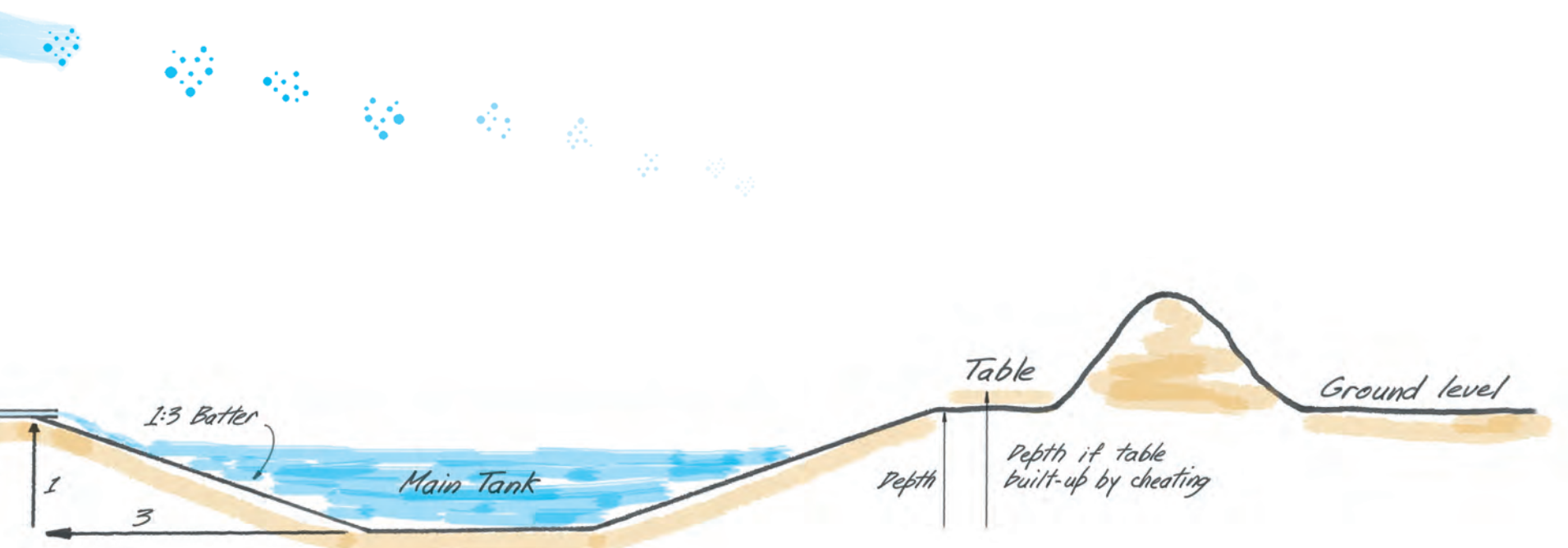
THE GOVERNMENT HAD A SHEEP STATION near Julia Creek called Toorak, and we did some tanksinking there. Max told us before we went: "Don't cheat on this one". See, when you build a dam you can cheat. Max got paid for how big a hole we dug below ground level; how much water it would hold. We always built dams near a dry creek – not right in the creek, just beside it – and when the creek flooded during the wet, the overflow filled the dam through a big pipe in the dam wall, through what they call the fluming. If you measure from ground level down to the bottom of the dam, and do some calculations, you can work out how much water the dam will hold. The dams we built were pretty much all the same – 20,000 yarders – but if it worked out at 19,000, well, that's what Max got paid for.

The dirt that came out of the dam, we dumped that 10 or 20 yards away and formed a bank on four sides. Between the edge of the dam and the bank, we called that the table. It was supposed to be at ground level. However, if instead of building the bank higher you spread some of the dirt on the table and made the table higher, you're cheating, because the depth of the dam was measured from the table down to the bottom.

Come measuring time, when the cocky was walking around the table with Max, inspecting the dam and taking measurements, he never suspected that the bit of ground he was standing on inside the bank was a bit higher than the ground *outside* the bank; he thought the hole was deeper than it really was. That put extra money in Max Burns' pocket, and it was all profit.

We didn't try it on Toorak because a government bloke would come out with a theodolite, taking measurements all over the place and he'd be wanting to know why the table was higher than ground level. But we cheated on other jobs – though we were very careful. You had to really roll the table flat, make it compact, make it look natural and convincing. I got pretty good at it.

I learnt a few dirty tricks like that from Max.



IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EARLY IN 1955 that I met Jumbo Harris. I was working in Babinda in the cane farming area, driving timber tractors and dozers, and he said to me one day:

How about coming to Julia Creek?

What's in Julia Creek?

I'm working for Max Burns. He can't get drivers out there. All no-hopers. How about coming out? It's good dough.

And that's why I went to Julia Creek, because Jumbo asked me. Two years: 1955 and all of 1956.

I drove out on my own in a little Austin A30. The bitumen stopped at Charters Towers, and from there I had 400 miles of dust and dirt road. I met Max in Julia Creek at his engineering works and I asked him what he wanted me to do. "Get the plant ready."

I started on the Ford Marmon-Herringtons and got stuck into it. All Max's gear was in a mess. None of the self-starters worked; every truck had to be hand cranked. I'd worked in a Ford garage, so I was pretty handy at fixing that sort of thing. Max sent away for self-starters and I put them in.

There were four of us fixing the machines. Jumbo was our welder, Bob Lennox was our diesel fitter (Bob taught me a lot on diesel motors), and then we had that Harry Goundry, a real Pom. He helped a bit on the lathe work. He was a machinist. We called him Oilcan Harry – always looking for the oil can.

Harry and Mrs Burns were partners – Burns & Goundry – some sort of tax dodge for Max I'd reckon. They had their own earthmoving plant; a little dozer to build turkey's nests. I remember Mrs Burns as an earthy sort of woman. She didn't muck around, she'd tell you off real quick.



Took us a month before we got Max's plant to move. By the time we finished working on the trucks they started as they should have – push a button (no keys on them those days) and away they'd go.

Max had three FDE crawlers for the actual tanksinking, and he had a little BDH dozer for putting in the fluming. Two of the FDEs pulled scrapers, the other one pulled the ripper. Jumbo was a crack driver on the FDEs. He cut the batter, the slope on the inside of the dam. Sideways he'd cut the batter; make it nice and smooth. I was learning how to do that.

Sometimes we worked at night. It was a bloody long night, I tell you, especially if it was a cold night. You had to wear a balaclava and gloves or the wind would go right through you. And during the day you burnt with the heat. You were out in the open on the FDEs; there were no cabins.

Below: Tanksinker's camp, unknown location.

Vehicles from left:

- 1941 Ford Marmon-Herrington towing workers' van, with Joe's camp bed in front. On the left of the bed is an open port acting as a wardrobe. There is a second camp bed, right foreground.
- Joe's 1955 Austin A30, NAH 068
- Water truck (directly behind Austin)
- Mobile workshop (at back)
- Willys-Overland Jeep Truck
- Standard Vanguard

[Joe Azzopardi, AJ02, 1955]



WELL, HARRY GOUNDRY was an Englishman and he came out to Julia Creek and he was very ambitious. He worked for Max and he wanted to run his own plant. So Max helped him out and I became Harry's partner. He had this little plant and Max used to get him work. I think he used to do the... not the tanks themselves, the turkey's nests. He made a lot of money, but I never saw any. It all went to Max, y'see.

Goundry and I fell out. It's funny, really. No, it's not funny, it's just bloody stupid. He put some nasty rumours around; not about me, about Max, and I took exception to it. When it all blew over, Max and Harry shook hands – Oh, wonderful mates again, y'know. Goundry came over to me and said:

Marj, I want us to be friends.

No way. You're finished Harry. I don't want anything to do with you.

But I did stay friends with his mother. She lived with us for months and months. Then she went to Brisbane and worked there for a few years. After that, back she went to England.

MARJ BURNS





Above: Oliver FDE towing Britstand C14 scoop, coming across rocks while tanksinking on Nonda Station.

[Ron Dau, DR02, ca 1952]

Below: Max Burns' tanksinking plant. Marmon-Herrington (far left) pulling workshop; fuel truck behind. NR Mack (foreground) loaded with Oliver FDE and Britstand 5-tyne ripper, towing water truck.

[Joe Azzopardi, AJ03, 1955]

Occasionally we'd hit rock. That was the end of the dam usually. Abandon everything and go and find another spot. So, prior to starting, Max always spent a couple of days at the dam site drilling with a post-hole digger, putting extension pipes on it and drilling deeper and deeper checking for rocks. If he didn't find any, Max would okay the dam.

As well as driving the FDEs, most of the time I did the cooking. No one wanted to cook except me. They were useless bastards. We'd have bread, potatoes, tin stuff, and a leg of roast. Plenty of mutton about in that country. I'd go and find a sheep: kill it, skin it, cut it up, cart water, go and look for wood. We had a wood stove inside the caravan.

Before I came west I was only earning £15 a week, but I earned up to £35 tanksinking for Max, working seven days, 12 hours a day. That was big money.

Max's paymaster was a big German bloke with a moustache, Fred Huller. We called him Groucho. He lived in the back of the workshop in Julia Creek. He was a funny bloke. Always had a girlfriend, some old rattle bag. They'd stay three or four months and then he'd put them on the train. I asked him one time:

Why don't you get married, Fred?

Ooh, what! Git married? Don't have to buy dairy farm to have glass o'milk.

That's how he was, old Fred.

Sometimes of a Sunday when the Inlander came in – it was a big day when the train arrived in Julia Creek – I'd go to the station to see who got on, see who got off. One day this girlfriend was leaving and Fred's there saying goodbye: "Hooray, luv... hooray". And from another carriage his next girlfriend is getting off. Fred told us later: "Fortor finish". He reckoned it was a photo finish that day; one going and one coming.



A BALDY-HEADED bastard was the manager for the paperwork side of Max's business. Some German – Huller.

TED SWEET

FRED HULLER, a big man of German descent who'd lived in South Africa, he was Max's bookkeeper for ages. Very tough man in business, even in everyday life. Sort of fella you'd expect to be in the Foreign Legion.

He was a real gin jockey; chasing gins. Never married that I know of. We thought he might have been in the country illegally. He never wanted to get involved in anything where names were written down. He was much older than me and wasn't my style of person at all, y'know.

CHARLIE CORRIGAN

HULLER was a helpful old bloke. If you wanted anything done in the line of bookwork, he'd help you. He was all right. Max had his finger in a few different pies, which probably kept Huller pretty busy.

JOHN ADAMS

DO I remember Fred Huller? He was Max's accountant. Cunning old bloody German. He used to come to the pictures on a Wednesday night. I always had the Cowboy and Indian one first, the support picture, and then the good picture second. Fred would come at interval and only pay half fare, see. That's the way I charged. You only paid for what your saw.

So one night I stuck the good picture on first. Fred came along, paid his money and sat down. Well, didn't he complain. I told him to go and get stuffed. "You lousy bastard" I said. "We should be charging you full price no matter what time you come in." From then on he came early and paid full price because he didn't know when I was going to put the good picture on.

He was a terrible man, old Fred. I thought he was, anyway. He put it over me a few other times too, in relation to fuel I'd sold to Max.

NORM DOWNEY

HULLER was a big man. After we left Julia Creek he came a few times and had Christmas dinner with us in Brisbane.

MARJ BURNS

MAX WAS A TOP BLOKE. I liked him. He treated me good. He didn't bother me much while I was working. One thing about him though: he'd never look you in the face. He wouldn't sit down and have a yarn. Talking to him, he'd be walking away from you. It wasn't that he was busy, it was simply his nature.

The year I left, Max came back from the Olympic Games with a television, the first television I'd seen in a house. He switched it on to show us. Nothing happened. There was no TV signal in Julia Creek. But that was Max – game to be first in.

I should have stayed with old Max. He didn't want me to leave, but I married a nurse from the Julia Creek Hospital, Peggy Chapman, and that finished my tanksinking.

Before we left Julia Creek, Peggy came out on site for two or three weeks, cooking. One of the blokes objected; said no, he wasn't going to pay her to do the cooking. Max just took the money out of his wages anyway.

Peggy didn't stay long. Tanksinking was no place for a woman.

The day we left Julia Creek it was raining. The dirt roads were impassable, so we loaded the car on a goods train to Charters Towers, on an open waggon, and sat in the front seat: Peggy, myself, an Australian terrier – and a crocodile. I had a baby crocodile in a box. Not a dead one, a live one. I caught him in the Norman River at Normanton. When we got to the station at Charters Towers the stationmaster looked in the box and poked this little croc with a pen. Well, the croc grabbed it and wouldn't let go. I left the station with a baby crocodile holding a pen in its mouth.

I didn't have him long. I put him in a room at Dad's house on the farm, but he got out of the box and disappeared through a hole in the floor. Beside the house was a gully, and I reckon he followed that gully all the way to the river, and once he got in the river he would have swum out to sea. They can survive them bastards, eh.



Below: Peggy Chapman in the sleeping area at front of workers' van.

Photo taken from kitchen at the back. Kerosene fridge on left, probably a Westinghouse. Cooking was done on a wood stove (the 44 gallon drum behind and to the right of fridge).

In between fridge and stove is the kitchen table.

[Joe Azzopardi, AJ10, 1956]



Planting bloody pineapples **Bill Burrows**

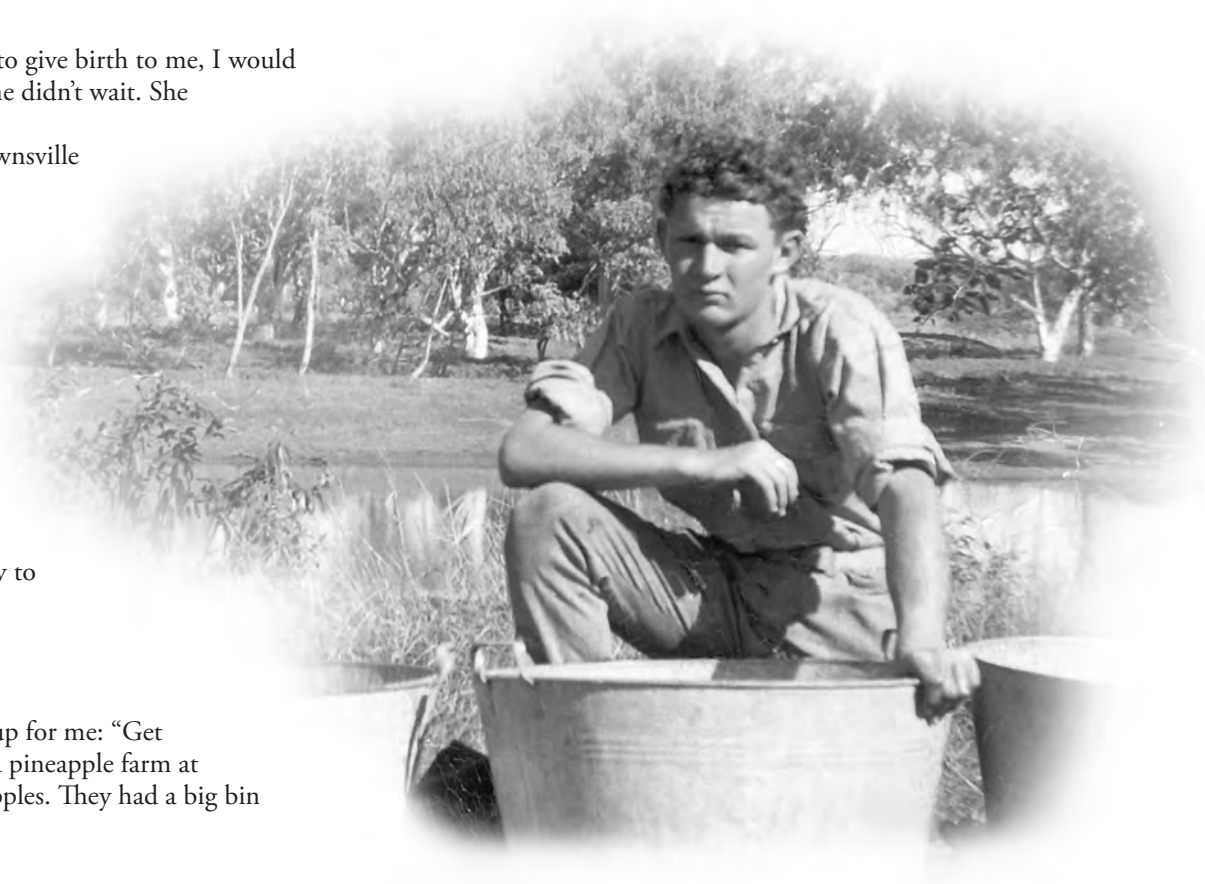
IF MUM HAD STAYED IN JULIA CREEK when she was due to give birth to me, I would have been the first baby born at Julia Creek hospital. She didn't wait. She went to Charters Towers to have me in August 1939.

Apart from the last year, when I went to school in Townsville and Charters Towers, I did all my schooling at the Julia Creek State School. Grade 4 I finished, when I was 13. Then I worked with Norm Downey at the soft drink factory and picture theatre: cleaning the theatre after it was used, making soft drinks, washing bottles. Norm had his own cordial factory. Used to make soft drink and sell it at the picture show, as well as to others.

I got to know the Burnses through my older brother Benny. He knocked around with Donny Burns and I used to follow them around town. Benny and Donny were good mates. They were about five years older than me. One Christmas they were going on holiday to Redcliffe, to Max's house, and I wanted to go:

Can I come with ya?
No, you can't.

Nobody wanted me to go. Only Donny would stick up for me: "Get ya gear ready". The Burnses had a house at Redcliffe and a pineapple farm at Caboolture. All I can remember is planting bloody pineapples. They had a big bin on top of a truck with all these pineapple suckers in it.



Opposite: On Toorak, ready to shift camp. A left-hand-drive Mack with Oliver FDE and Britstand ripper on the tray. This would have been the setup when the plant was bogged and Joe Azzopardi walked the FDE off the side.

[Bill Burrows, BuB07, 1955]

Above: Bill Burrows at work behind three washing tubs.

[Bill Burrows, BuB03, ca 1955]

BANKRUPT CALLED AND SWORN

[The Official Receiver suspects that Max bought a pineapple farm in his son's name as a tax dodge. Max, trying to make out that the farm is definitely his son's and not his, so as to avoid the Official Receiver taking it, claims he had little to do with the farm apart from the original purchase.]

MR MOYNAHAN: In the particular year we're now dealing with, 1952/53, you bought a property at Caboolture which was purchased in trust for your son Donald --- I bought two properties. One of them myself, and the other was bought for him.

There were two farms at Caboolture. One is known as the Caboolture farm and the other is known as the Glass House Mountains farm --- Yes.

They're adjoining --- No, they're about 6 miles apart. The Glass House Mountains farm was purchased in your own name --- That's true.

And in fact, you held that farm up until the time of your bankruptcy when it was transferred over to the Official Receiver or passed into the Official Receiver's hands --- Yes.

Who got the fruit of the harvest from the Glass House Mountains farm --- I got what was on it.

The other farm known as the Caboolture farm, you purchased that as a trustee for your son Donald Douglas --- That's right. To become his when he was 21.

Did you get anything off the Caboolture farm --- No, it was no good. All right for a poultry farm.

What was the price paid for the Caboolture farm?

Was it £1900 --- Something like that.

What was the basis of the financing of this purchase --- I think we borrowed most of the money from the Commercial Bank at Caboolture; something like £1300 I think.

A bank account was opened in the name of your son, on which you operated as trustee. That's correct, isn't it --- I don't think I ever drew a cheque on it.

Well, you were the only one who was operating on the account --- My bookkeeper may have had authority to operate on it, I don't know, but I never drew a cheque on it.

What was the idea of the purchase of this farm for Donald --- It was only a home. It was called a farm, but the only piece of land that was any

I went tanksinking for Max around 1955. The blokes wanted someone to drive the jeep while they shifted camp from Grenada Station, north of Cloncurry. They wanted a dogsbody; someone to do this and that. I made cups of tea and did the cooking – feeds for the blokes going on shift, feeds for the ones coming off. And I used to drive the crawlers, until I ended up burning out too many winches. Instead of having them on or off I used to half-ride them, like you can burn out a car clutch if it's not all the way in. So they took me off the crawlers. Only a couple of months I was driving.

There were five of us that I can remember. Joe Borg [Azzopardi], Jumbo, Peter Flynn, one other chap, and myself. The boys, Jumbo and all them, they actually paid my wages, not Max. I think I was on 10 pound a week.

We worked on Toorak, we worked on Carrum, and we put silage down for Bob Lord on Kilterry. Dug big holes and Bob filled them with sorghum. It was a trial thing. He'd cover it over, and in a few years time he'd come and unearth it as stock feed.

On my last trip with the tanksinkers (wet weather had set in and tanksinking had finished for the year) I remember Joe Borg spinning an FDE on the back of a semitrailer and walking it over the side, straight onto the ground. He had to. We hit a thunderstorm and the whole train was bogged down to the diffs, just outside of Kooroorra on the Kynuna-McKinlay road. Joe drove an FDE off the side so he could tow everything out. Would have been only 3 or 4 feet to soft mud, but still it was a fair drop, and a good feat the way he spun the crawler on an 8-foot bed and then inched it over the side till he got to a balance and it started to tip. He braced himself between the seat and the fuel tank – his back against the seat, his feet against the fuel tank – wedged himself in and just let her slip into the mud. It's still clearly in my mind today how he did that.

Only the one year I was with Max. I ended up leaving after Joe spun the FDE and pulled us out of the mud.



good was the one I had. It was a home for him when he came to Brisbane.

What area was it --- 10 or 12 acres.

The Caboolture property has never been transferred to your son from you as trustee --- It should have been done when he was 21.

But it has never been done --- No.

In fact that property still remains in your name as trustee for your son Donald Douglas --- That's probably right. We were a bit lax on that. It ought to have gone to him when he was 21.

You always regarded the Caboolture farm as your own --- No, the Glass House property was mine, but the other had nothing to do with me.

Aren't you in the habit of showing the Caboolture farm as part of your assets --- That's quite possible as far as my old bookkeeper was concerned. He used to do a lot of odd things. But I never

regarded it as an asset of mine. Never.

Isn't it a fact that you, at all times, showed the Caboolture farm as an asset of yours in your balance sheets --- If you say it's on the balance sheet, it must be written there. I wouldn't know.

You're not suggesting, when it comes to business matters and business dealings, that you're a complete simpleton, are you --- No, but you don't know my old bookkeeper. He made the original entries, and it was not until some considerable time later that I told him differently; that the Caboolture farm was Donald's. Had everything drifted along normally, there would have been no bankruptcy, there would have been no trouble. The family would have got their share.

I don't quite follow you on that statement --- I would never have gone back to Donald and said: "The Caboolture farm is mine, not yours". We just

simply regarded it as his, and that was that. As you say, the book records are entirely different. Had things proceeded without bankruptcy, the Caboolture farm was his and it would have remained his. I wouldn't have stepped in to take it, irrespective of what the books said.

Were the two properties later rented to a man named Roon --- Yes.

In all the business dealings with Roon, you were the one who handled all the dealings --- I couldn't say that I was. I had little to do with it. It was left to young Donald and the bookkeeper. I took no interest whatever in it, beyond planting some pineapples one holidays.

MAX & THE OFFICIAL RECEIVER
17 August 1961

I'd had enough of driving dozers **Choco Winton**

I WAS BORN IN JULIA CREEK IN '36. My parents came here in about 1914. Dad was a drover, droving from the Gulf Country down to Mt Howitt Station. I went to the state school and got as far as grade 5. Actually, I had just started grade 6 and a bloke by the name of Arthur Lowe offered me a job, so I took it. I was 14.

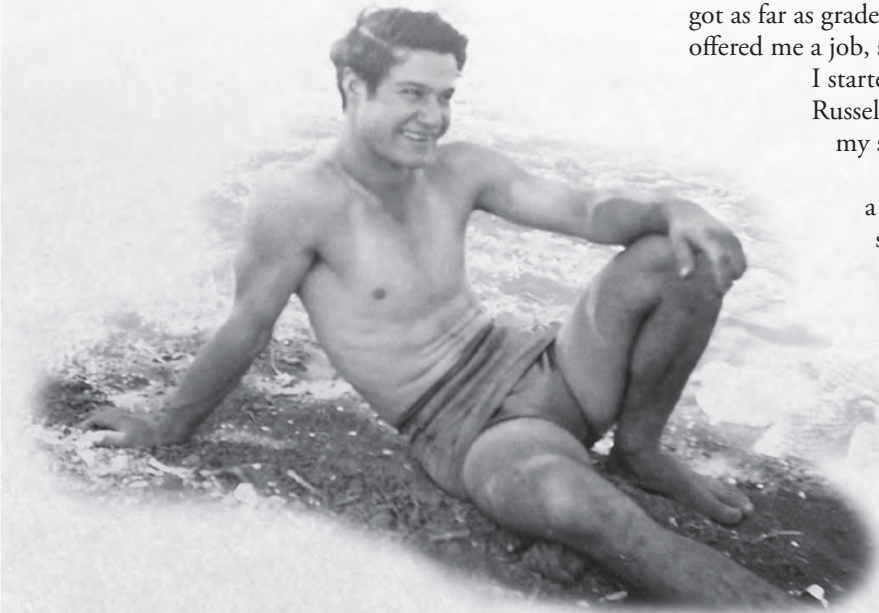
I started as an apprentice motor mechanic with Arthur in 1950. He sold out to Russel Batt in 1954 and I got my pay in one hand and the sack in the other. That's my story anyway, cos that's what I reckon happened. I went with Max Burns then.

When Max first came here – be the late 40s to my knowledge – he built a 60,000-yard dam out here at Rosevale on the Kynuna road. I would have started with him about 1956. He wanted a mechanic for his garage. He already had mechanics, but they mainly worked on his earthmoving plant. There were two of us working in the garage, and two others: Barry in the office and Fred Huller the bookkeeper. Max was mainly travelling around getting work, coming and going, or out with the tanksinking plant.

Max had the Ferguson tractor agency. And he sold cars – Chrysler, Vanguard – and serviced them. Sometimes he'd drive them up from Brisbane, sometimes they came by rail. Mainly he got cars in when people ordered them. Just a couple of cars here and there.

I left working in the garage and I went out tanksinking for Max. We had two machines and maybe four fellas. Now and again there'd be a cook. My wife was cook for a while.

I did about 12 months' tanksinking and then I pulled out and got a job on the council. I'd had enough of driving dozers.



'Adam' bomb John Adams

DAD WAS IN THE ARMY when I was born. Until I was about 3, at the end of the war when Dad came home, Mum and I lived in the CWA cottage. The cottage was straight across from Jumbo Harris' soft drink factory. Actually, Jumbo didn't own it then and I don't know who did. Jumbo had it later, in the 1950s.

I was at school in Julia Creek till... it would have been grade 6. If I'd stopped another year I'd have done Scholarship, but I would have been the only one in the class. The teacher said I'd have to join with seven or eight students in a lower grade and I said: "Like hell". So I went out working. I think I was about 13, 1955.

First job was with Max Burns in the workshop. Barry Burns was looking after the office side, Donny Burns did the mechanical side, and Jumbo was in and out, running the plant. If Jumbo brought in the machinery for service I'd give him a hand: grease all the nipples on the tracks, change the oil, that sort of thing.

Jumbo taught me how to drive Max's jeep. Every now and then I'd load rubbish in the jeep and Jumbo would say to me: "Righto Bomb, take that out to the dump". And away I'd go, kingpin of the world.

Bomb was my nickname. The "Adam" bomb was a big story when I was young, and since my name was Adams, I became "Bomb". Didn't take

is a pity that here are not more of these events.

Mr. and Mrs. Max Burns, and sons Don and Barry, are making preparations for their departure for Melbourne and the Olympic Games. Mr. and Mrs. Burns have a soft spot for hitch hikers so their cars and caravan should have their full complement on arrival in Melbourne.

Whilst engaged on duties at the Max Burns Engineering Works, Master John Adams received a nasty blow when the tyre he was inflating tore away from the wheel of a vehicle. After receiving medical attention he was allowed to go home for rest and recuperation.

NQR: 27 Oct 1956

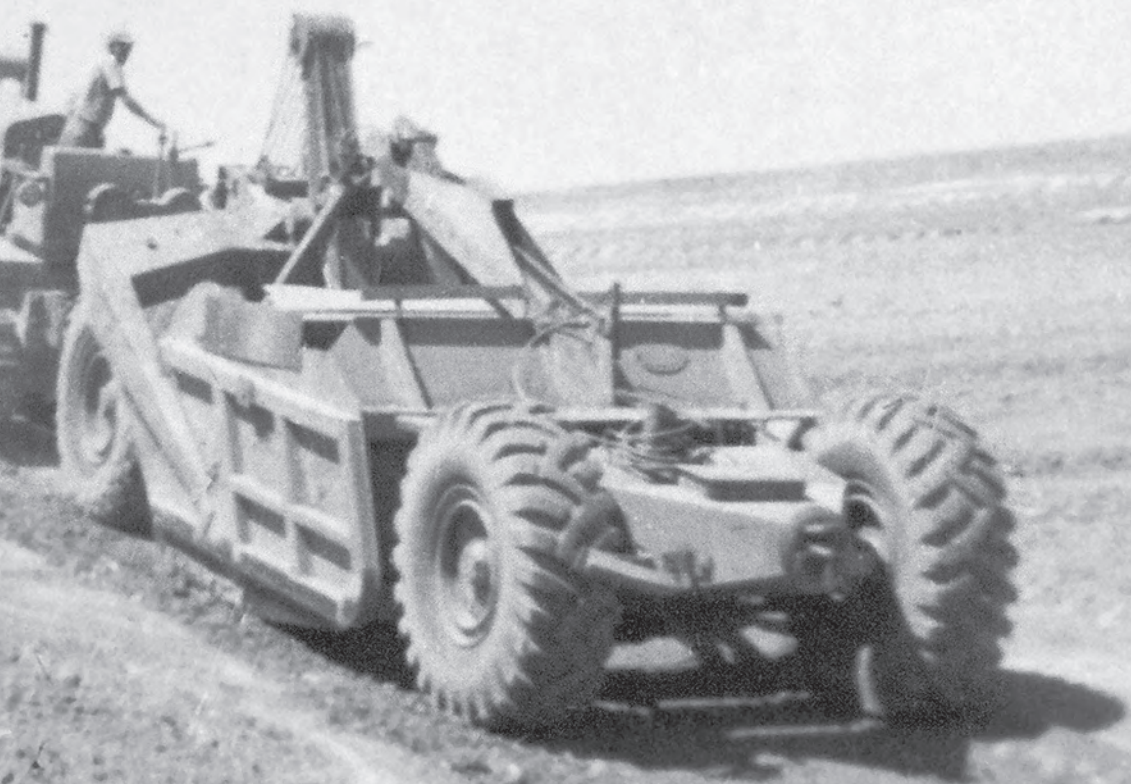
much in those days to get a nickname.

Probably within a couple of months of starting in the workshop I was on the tractors. Donny'd say: "Come on, we're going to such-n-such to pick up..." A tractor might have broken down. We'd go and put it on the back of a truck and bring it in for repair. Once I'd had some experience with the different tractors and trucks around the workshop, I went out on site.

The first dam I went on, there was myself, Jumbo, Choco, Joe Borg, and Donny. Jumbo was the foreman. Choco might have been the mechanic doing the repairs. I was the youngest, so I was rouseabout and cook. Don't know how I got that job, as I wasn't the best cook around.

Occasionally I did a bit of ripping. Jumbo would wake me in the middle of the night: "We need some ripping done". I didn't do much scooping. Jumbo and Joe mainly did that.

I was about a year with Max, I'd say. Why I left was because I didn't get an apprenticeship, so I went and worked for Ernie Brazier as an apprentice oxy-welder, panelbeater, spray painter. Things can get a bit tough trying to do trade correspondence by yourself with no one to help you. Not that I was ever that bright at school, but I was never that dumb either. I could work most things out, but not that trade stuff. Paid bugger all too, y'know, as a first year apprentice. So in the end I thought: *Stuff this*, and went and got a job in the woolsheds. In '59 I came to Townsville.



Opposite: Choco.
[Judy Burrows, BuJ02, ca 1955]

Above: On Ardrin. Choco driving an Oliver FDE,
towing a Britstand 14-yard scoop.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV38, 1956]

Cold in that jail, too **Billy Ryder**

I WAS DRINKING OUTSIDE THE GATES of the Julia Creek State School, across the road from the picture show. Drinking and smoking near the fence with a few mates. We had a carton of beer and a bottle of rum. Both coppers pulled up. Sergeant Jack Gabriel grabbed the bottle of rum and smashed it against the post. Then he took the carton of beer: "Billy, you get the keys out of your car and walk home". So I gave him a bit of cheek – and he locked me up, the bastard. Cold in that jail, too. The wind was blowing, and no blankets and no bed in there. I had to lay on the floor. He let me out at 4 o'clock in the morning:

Billy, you want a tea or coffee before you go home?
Nah. I don't want no tea or coffee.

I was still half-pissed when he showed me the door: "Billy, I don't want to see you down here again".

That was coppers in Julia Creek in the 1950s.

I WAS BORN IN TOWNSVILLE in 1941. I lived in Charters Towers before I came to Julia Creek. I was 5 years old when I came here. Did all my schooling here.

Dad was a mechanic in one of the garages in Charters Towers, and I think he was also cutting sleepers. When we came to Julia Creek in 1946 he was doing mechanic work for Lance Lewis. Dad worked for Lance for some years until he went out on his own. It wouldn't have been too long he was with Lance; Dad liked working for himself.

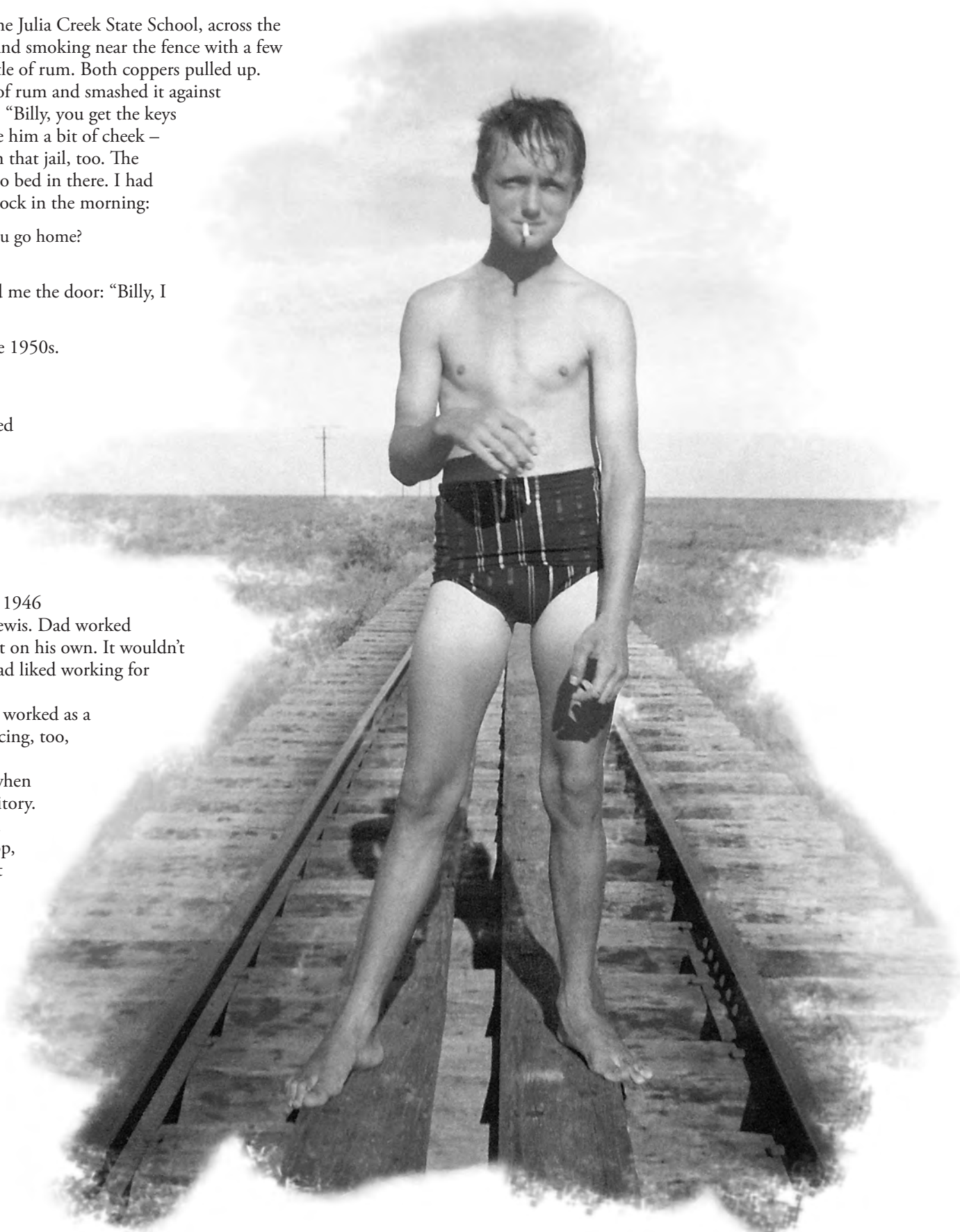
We went to the Gulf in '56, and Dad worked as a mechanic on properties. He did some fencing, too, though not much, just a bit.

We were heading out of Julia Creek when we went to the Gulf, heading for the Territory. But Dad got offered a job of foreman and mechanic with Max Burns in his workshop, so we turned around and came back. That would have been '56. Dad only worked for Max the one year – 1956.

Right: Billy, the year before he went tanksinking with Max.

[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV35, ca 1955]

"That's Billy Ryder. Look at the cigarette hanging out its gob. And he still smokes today; still got one in his gob. That would have been taken at the third rail bridge from Julia Creek. It was the main channel. It filled up when it rained and that's where we used to go swimming."
(John Adams)



As well as needing a foreman mechanic, Max wanted blokes for his tanksinking plant, so Vince Fickling and myself signed on. Vince was the same age as me; we were at school together. We were only 15 when we went with Max. That was our first time driving crawlers. We learnt on the job.

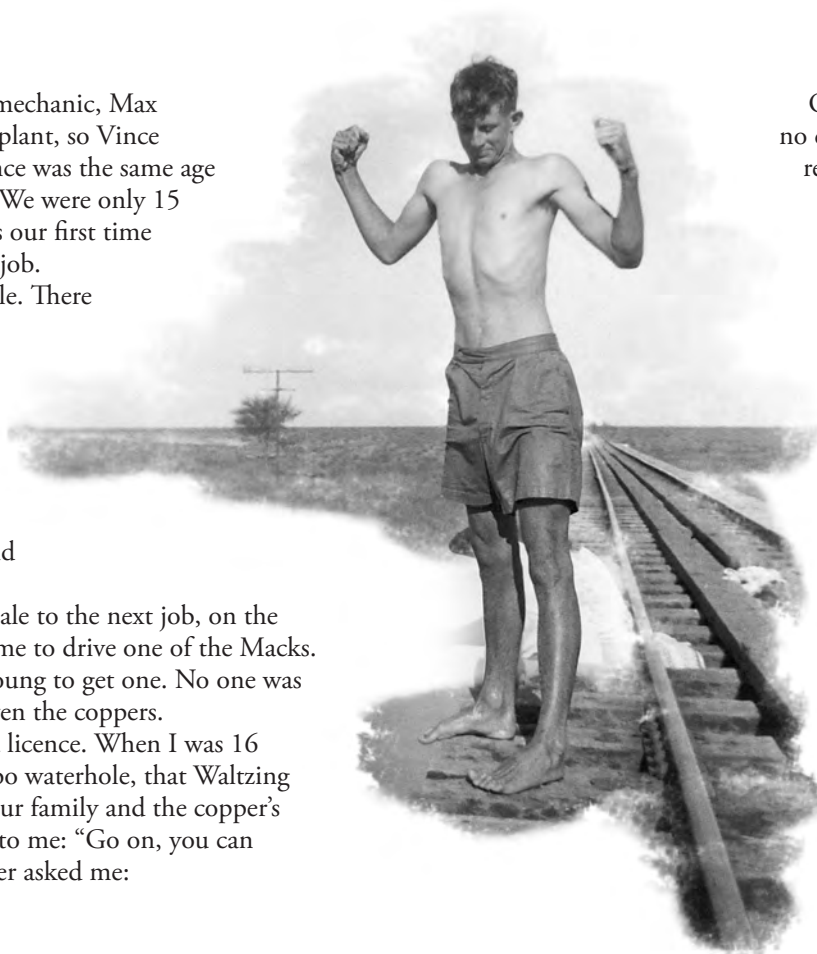
Our first tank was on Langsdale. There were six men in camp and we kept the crawlers going round the clock. Two of the crawlers pulled scoops and one pulled a ripper. Four-hour shifts I think we were doing. Four hours on, four hours off. Max would come out now and again and have a look around.

When we shifted from Langsdale to the next job, on the other side of Richmond, they got me to drive one of the Macks. I didn't have a licence. I was too young to get one. No one was bothered by that back then, not even the coppers.

I'll tell you about not having a licence. When I was 16 we were going fishing at the Combo waterhole, that Waltzing Matilda place over near Kynuna; our family and the copper's family all in the one car. Dad said to me: "Go on, you can drive". On the way back this copper asked me:

Hey Billy, you got a licence?
Yeah, I got one.

About three months afterwards I bought a motorbike with a side car, and I thought: *Bugger it, I better go and get a licence.* Went up and saw the copper. He just smiled and shook his head. Didn't ask me any questions, just wrote the licence out.



On that Richmond job I mentioned, there was no caravan for us to camp in. Max might have reckoned it wasn't worth the bother to take the van all that way for a small job. Most of the tanks we built for Max were 20,000 yarders, but some at Richmond were only little ones on bore drains. They weren't real big. Whatever the reason, we didn't have the van with us. The foreman, his offsider, Vince and me – only four of us on that job – we all rolled out our swags under a tree. No tent. We slept out in the weather. Took it in turns to cook over an open fire. It was a rough old camp at Richmond.

Vince and I only had a short stay on that job. The foreman and his mate went to the pub nearly every day getting on the grog. Us two young fellas, we were on our own doing all the work – but not getting all the pay – so we pulled out and got a ride into Richmond and caught the train home. We told Max we were quitting when we got to Julia Creek.

I wasn't with Max very long, probably six months. Might have been twelve. I don't know how he got on after Vince and I pulled out. Those other two blokes would have had to forgo their beer and get on the tractors.

At the end of 1956 Dad and I went to McKinlay for a year, and then we came back to Julia Creek. Been here ever since.



Above: Vince Fickling standing on the edge of the third railway bridge, taken the same day as the photo of Billy (opposite).
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV36, ca 1955]

Left: Billy with the Mack truck that he drove to Richmond in 1956, and which was abandoned on Hilton Park in 1959 when Max went bankrupt. The paintwork on the doors is still in good condition (page 517).
[Guy Burns, GK061, 2002]

Conversation between Beven Flewell-Smith and the author, 13/10/2002, about the photo, left:

Billy Ryder? Nah... that couldn't be Billy.
Yeah, that's Bill. I spent a day with him.
Holy bloody hell. That's a recent photo?
Just a few weeks ago.
Holy hell!
Whaddaya mean holy hell?
He was thin when I last saw him. He's like me now.

He'd Fight His Radio

Kynuna Dick, 'a most rotten school captain' yarns about his mate Ernie and an eggliifter

Richard Magoffin

Died in Sydney, 5 May 2006

MAX BURNS WAS AN AFFABLE CHARACTER, I can remember that much. Friendly and straight dealing. He had a reputation for good work.

I first recall his machinery at All Souls. I did nearly all my schooling at All Souls, 11 years of boarding from 1946 to the end of 1956. The second year I was there, Max put a dent in the roof of the dormitory. He was using explosives, blowing rocks while putting in the ovals.

A year or two later he built two huge tanks on Rosevale. We lived next door on Ardrin, and a part of Ardrin was called Khorassan, run as an outstation. Some time in the 1950s Max sunk a large tank on Khorassan right in the middle of the property near the homestead, almost as big as the ones on Rosevale. It was the homestead dam. Over the years the fluming cracked and a lot of silt got in, and the dam would have silted up considerably by now, but at the time I was impressed by the meticulousness of the work – the batters I think they were called – how deft and accurate the slopes were.

Magoffin Family

RICHARD ♥ ?

- ↪ RICHARD (Jillie Dick)
 - ↪ Richard (Ardrin Dick) ♥ Margaret
 - ↪ **Richard** (Kynuna Dick)
 - ↪ David
- ↪ JAMES
 - ↪ Richard (Melrose Dick)
 - ↪ Gordon



I WAS BORN IN CLONCURRY IN 1937. At that stage my parents were on Brinard, a property not far from town. They sold Brinard when I was about 18 months old and we moved back to Ardrin, 50 miles south of Julia Creek, where Dad grew up. Mum's family were on Quambetook, neighbouring Ardrin, and I guess that's how they met. My parents were Dick ("Ardrin" Dick) and Margaret.

My father, well, he was the third Richard Magoffin in a row. I'm the fourth. My grandfather, "Jillie" Dick, took up Ardrin in 1909, having first of all been at Rosevale. He sold his share of Rosevale to his brother, James, and moved across and formed a new station at Ardrin about 15 miles away. Grandfather died in 1942 and my father took over the management.

In the course of one buggy trip from Rosevale to Ardrin, my grandparents got caught in a thunderstorm. Grandmother caught a chill and never recovered from what they called "galloping consumption". She was taken home to Charters Towers and died there in 1913. She's buried next to one of her sons, David, who was brought all the way back from Sydney. As a result of that – David and my father were good mates – Dad always said: "Wherever I die, plant me there. Don't cart me cross-country". He died with \$40 on him at the rear door of the Town & Country Club in Julia Creek. We couldn't bury him just there; instead, to mark the spot, we went back to the Town & Country after his funeral and drank the \$40.

Dad liked his rum, or any alcohol really. The whole western downs worked on rum, and in times past, rum and opium. The opium was cheap, floating in through the Gulf, but property owners used the more expensive rum. Oh yes, a lot of rum drunk.

One time my father was Santa Claus at Kynuna. Had a Christmas tree, y'see, and Dad was Santa Claus. He gets on the grog afterwards, he's plastered, and we set off towards home. Normally we turned off at Rosevale and drove through to Ardrin. Mum and I both know we've gone past the turnoff and we're trying to tell him. "No, no, it's further along." I think we might have seen the lights of Julia Creek before he's finally convinced and turns back. He pulls up at Rosevale after midnight, gets out of the ute, and while he's stumbling around in the dark, Leo Hennessey's dog bites him. I'll never forget that. I don't think Hennessey's dog ever bit anybody. Leo comes out, puts Dad behind the wheel (Mum couldn't drive), and we set off again. He misses the culvert across a bore drain. Into the drain we go and up the other side. He stops and gets out to be sick. I'm only 12, but somehow I levered him into the back of the ute and drove home.

Dad died in 1966. He was 60. You won't find his headstone in the Julia Creek cemetery because it's here with me, waiting to be repainted. The inscription was painted on; it was fading. I've been a long time getting it done and it's just sitting there.

Left: Dick Magoffin and Leo Hennessey inspecting sheep on Rosevale. Dick, the visitor, is wearing a tie. [Richard Magoffin, MaR03, ca 1950]

Opposite: Max Burns' tanksinking plant at work on Khorassan: Oliver FDE towing a Britstand C14 scoop. [Beven Flewell-Smith, BV41, ca 1956]



EVERY YEAR we went to Ardrin for Christmas. Dick and Margaret Magoffin owned Ardrin. Margaret was a delightful person, but they both were party people, drinking people; the drink was there. Our Magoffins, Richard (of Melrose) and son Gordon, the owners of Rosevale, were totally different. Chalk and cheese. Our Magoffins were teetotalers, the Ardrin Magoffins enjoyed a drink.

CHRISTINE HENNESSEY

DICK MAGOFFIN was a smart and talented man, but the grog got the better of him. In those days they mostly drank rum. If you drank beer it was warm – there was no refrigeration – so they drank warm rum instead. That was pretty much the thing.

My father, for instance, he always drank rum. He wasn't an alcoholic by any means, but he always had a rum at night. If he went to a pub in town where the beer was cold he'd have a beer; otherwise he'd have a rum, or two rums, in the evening before tea. That's just the way it was done.

The generation before me always had a bottle somewhere in the truck or the car. Just about anybody could produce a bottle of rum, if the need arose, from under the seat.

TOM FORSTER

MY MEMORIES OF GROWING UP ON ARDBRIN, above everything else, are of horses and horsemen. I rode a horse when I was only young, and did a man's work, too, when I was only young. Apart from draught horses and the odd pluffer (crossbreed), we mainly had thoroughbreds. A couple of them had been brought up on the bottle as poddy foals and they were quite cheeky; they really could buck. Just full of devilment – no malice. One particular horse was 18 hands, a massive animal. His nickname was Big Bill and the ringers wouldn't ride him. One morning, fresh home from boarding school, four of us ready to muster, I saddled Big Bill and got on. He threw me off at the rails right in front of the cart shed. Fifty yards away he threw me again near the bore drain, much to everyone's amusement. It was another 300 yards to the homestead, and just as I was dismounting to open the gate he deliberately pelted me off again. Three times in no more than 10 minutes. Big Bill just stood there and eyed me. He didn't run away, he wanted to see me made a fool: a "welcome home from school" trick. Only the first few minutes he played up; the rest of the day he was like a rocking horse.

Being an only child, my friends on Ardbryn were the the Aboriginal house maids, the cooks and the ringers. My siblings all died at birth. RH factor it was called; blood incompatibility. Usually only the first child lived, and in my family that's what happened. There were three others, but they didn't survive.

This was my situation as a child: isolated from most of the world in many regards, and amongst genuine people. And with only adults around me, I learnt one thing fairly quickly: anything I heard inside the homestead I didn't repeat outside, and anything I heard outside I didn't repeat inside. Once people knew that I could keep my mouth closed, well, I learnt a lot.

Everything that bush people had to learn, I learnt: droving, shearing, crutching, general stockwork, cooking. Always cooking. As a youngster I spent scads of time in the kitchen with the cook. And when my father sent me out with the drovers as a spare man – unpaid, see – it wasn't very long before they cottoned on. Invariably, a few days into the trip, they'd hand me the pots and pans.

During my early days in the Julia Creek district there were hardly any trees. I'd be out riding and it would be just one vast yellow plain of Mitchell grass. You could look out and see for miles. A few mimosa bushes might be struggling beside a dry creek bed, but they were pretty harmless. In fact, they were good stock fodder.

The prickly acacia was a different thing altogether. It was initially welcomed because it provided feed and shade, but nobody guessed it would take over at the rate it did. It was never, to my knowledge, on Ardbryn, and very few on Khorassan; only where a creek ran in from Proa.

When I left school I was 19. I went to Khorassan and ran it for the first year or so on my own. Very isolated. I had a radio but no telephone. Well, not for quite a while.

I was not just on Khorassan. I managed my aunt's property at Quambetook for some time as well, from 1964 through to 1970. Then I went away to Charters Towers and became a teacher and minister of



WHEN I FIRST went to All Souls, Richard Magoffin was a prefect and then he became school captain. A most rotten school captain we thought, because he wanted to straighten the school out. He brought in the system that if one kid mucks up, gets caught out of bounds, the whole class gets punished.

Pulling grass was the main form of punishment. Prior to Richard becoming school captain, any kid, for any misdemeanour, the prefects would say to him: "Okay, go and get me an armful of grass", and you had to go and pull it by hand, by yourself. The school was overrun with spear grass, tall grass. But when Richard was school captain he brought in the system whereby if one kid misbehaved the whole class had to get out there. And to a large extent that was how the grounds were kept tidy.

From the kids' point of view, Richard was a bastard of a school captain. Before him we had a lovely time; I think I spent more time out of bounds than in bounds.

TOMMY JESSUP

"Twenty One," love to all Richard 1958.

religion. I sold Khorassan in 1978, but Ardbryn was still run by my Uncle John well into the 1980s.

In the years when there was just Dad and I running Khorassan, he would muster the boundary of a paddock in a ute, using the sound of a 303 to hunt the stock in front of him, and I would muster the centre of the paddock on a horse. One day we're over in the far corner and heading home. It's 5 miles diagonally across, but Dad had to drive 8 miles around the boundary – and I arrived a few minutes before he did. He leant out the window: "Richard, if I ever have to come back for a second life, the one thing I don't want to be is your poor bloody horse".

Another yarn from Khorassan was when Slippery Ferguson and I had to jet the sheep, about 6000 of them, in makeshift pens. The only water was in this dam your grandfather put down, 200 yards away. We didn't have a windmill then – this is pioneering – so Slippery and I rolled two 44 gallon drums to the water's edge and bailed them full of water. I don't know how we ever did it, but we rolled them up the batter to the top of the bank and let them loose on the other side. We used the two drums of water to jet the sheep and then did it all again. A lot of work.

Sheep *were* a lot of work, and they supported a lot of people. At one time, half a dozen men would have had various jobs on Ardbryn: boundary riders, ringers, teamsters. There have been times since when the only person on the property was a caretaker – or nobody at all.

The large number of workers required for sheep had a downside: the whole area changed over from sheep to cattle because of the cost of production. The result was a lot less employment. Of course, other factors such as drought came into it, or cattle boomed, or sheep went bust, or wool properties closer to the southern markets paid less freight; but basically, the cost of production was the reason.

WHEN I WAS AT SCHOOL and came home on holidays, particularly the midwinter holidays of about six weeks, the cowboy on Ardrin would go on a bender in Maxwelton. I'd cop all his jobs: catching the horses before dawn, milking the cows in the chill winter wind, killing the sheep. Pretty miserable chores. I can understand why he wanted a break.

Here... take that. Sometimes it's the small things that tell you a lot about people.



The setting for what follows is Richard's *Matilda Exhibition* at Ky-nuna. During the tourist season Richard staged a one-man show telling the "true" story of Waltzing Matilda. I stayed with him for a week in 2004, doing odd jobs in return for a feed. After the evening performance he prepared tea for himself and whoever was staying with him.

Richard is at the stove flipping eggs: drinking while he smokes, smoking while he talks, talking while he cooks. He hands me a greasy eggflifter.

That's a memorial;
better than any headstone.
He was a retainer of ours for many years;
an alcoholic.
He's the one who used to go on a bender every winter
and I'd have to take his place as the cowboy.

There's nothing on his grave in Julia Creek,
but I use that eggflifter every day.
He fixed it fifty years ago with the handle of a fork.
Every day I use it;
it works very well,
the best eggflifter I've got,
and every day I think of my old mate, Ernie Taylor.

I don't know a lot about where he came from.
He was just my friend
and I didn't ask a lot of questions.
For years he wanted to go back to Sydney,
to his sister,
but he never got past the Maxwelton Hotel.

Going on 30 years he was with us.
His working days ended on Khorassan;
his living days, in Townsville Hospital.
We paid to bring him back.
Nothing except a number marks his plot;
yet every day somebody remembers him.

There are wonderful stories about Ernie and I've turned him into other characters. You'll find a verse of mine called *Smith to the Rescue*, about the adventures of a fellow called Smith. It's really Ernie.

But *Ernie's Eggflifter* – I still have to write that poem.

Right: Ernie Taylor's eggflifter.
Richard never did get to write the poem
about Ernie's eggflifter; he died 5/5/2006.
[Guy Burns, GK033, 2005]

Opposite: Richard Magoffin.
[Richard Magoffin, MaR02, 1958]

Every year Ernie went on his six-week bender while I was home from All Souls. No grog was allowed on Ardrin except for what my father drank, so Ernie went to Maxwelton. He gave all his money to the publican, and when the money ran out the publican sent him back, still in *delirium tremens*. He couldn't work for three or four days. To ease him down, my father rationed out two rums a day: one of a morning, one of a night. I can still see Ernie teetering to the landing between the homestead and the kitchen, to the steps in the middle, from where Dad poured rum into Ernie's trembling glass. Back he'd go with his hooch, back to his room.

When I was a youngster I was cruel to Ernie.
Once I laid a series of bells;
tied them onto his bed,
so when he moved in his stupor everything clanged.

Coming out of the horrors he'd fight his radio:
"That bastard from 4LG!"
I'd be standing outside,
peering through the French door at Ernie cussing the announcer:
"You fucking mongrel; I'll kill you, you bastard!"
And he'd knock the radio right over sometimes.

One day he sees a reflection in the windows of the French door.
He fights himself,
a sozzled palooka,
and puts his fist through the glass.
Blood goes everywhere.
I meet the ambulance driver part way to Julia Creek
and transfer my addled, gory passenger.

Next morning I ring the hospital:
"How's Ernie?"
"He's gone to Maxwelton."

Little people leave big memories.



Taylor, Ernest
Died: 14th Oct 1963,
Townsville
Age: 74 yr
Religion: C of E
Buried: plot A169
Julia Creek

[McKinlay Shire Council cemetery records]

Follow the flags to the flowers Jenny Pearce

GUY AND I HAD ALREADY CYCLED 2000 kilometres through North West Queensland in 2004 when we were approaching Richard Magoffin's home and museum at Kynuna. Richard is famous as a balladist and bush poet, and most evenings he put on a show, "Sunset, Sizzle, Soup & Song", during which he cooked bush tucker and told the story of Waltzing Matilda in song and verse. We were heading there so that Guy could ask him about his early life, to feature as a chapter in this book. Richard was easy to find. An assortment of colourful signs ("Follow the Flags to the Flowers", "Don't Miss Matilda Expo") decorated the fences along the highway or were tied to lonely posts planted in the paddocks.

Richard's big red barn was a picture. Beside a large sign proclaiming *Magoffin's Matilda Expo*, three Australian flags danced to the tail wind that had pushed our bikes to Kynuna. Petunias, geraniums, pansies, daisies, each in flower and vibrant colour, formed a potted white line directing us to the entrance. Green bushes and trees behind them added to the spectacle. It was a surprise to see such a flourishing garden in this arid climate, a garden that Richard constantly tended and watered. We saw nothing else like it in our outback travels.

We parked our bikes and pitched our tent for free in his backyard with his four dogs running about¹. We booked into his show for that evening.

The next day, Richard told Guy the story of his childhood on Quambetook and Ardrin. He might have taken a liking to us, or he might have seen us as cheap labour. Whatever his reasons, he asked us to stay a few days and do some work for him in return for free meals and campsite. His offsider, Craig, was the odd-job man, but extra work needed to be done in the yard and in the theatre, and he also needed help with his computer. We ended up staying a week.

Richard had his own view about the origin of Waltzing Matilda and backed it up with a museum display of old photos, historic objects, and odd dust-covered bits and pieces from another era. Well worth the \$3 entry fee.

Our host was one of the memorable characters of the West. Although a loner and intolerant of tourists, there was something appealing about him:



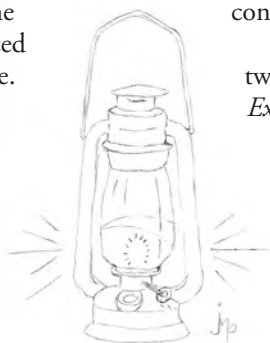
1. Richard's dogs were pure-bred kelpies. He called them the Kelly Gang: Ned Kelly, Honey Kelly, Danny Boy Kelly, and

Nellie Kelly. While we were there, Nellie gave birth to pups Bonny Kelly, Molly Kelly and Shaun Kelly.

a sadness, a kindness. I liked his sense of humour. The title of one of his books is *Laugh Your Way Through Queensland*. Reading it, the laughs come easily. And he was a talented man. He wrote of his personal experiences with Aussie bush characters in a sensitive, realistic style tempered by humour. He put words together with a natural flow and rhythm. Richard was a fair-dinkum bush poet.

I enjoyed my stay at Kynuna. I washed the pots and pans each morning, after the show the night before; I dusted and swept the museum and theatre; I picked flowers from the garden and placed them in vases; and I helped Richard prepare for his performance. Every night I attended without tiring of it.

Of all his ballads my favourite is *From the Lanterns*, and after I told him it was my favourite he featured it in his show several times. But before he first introduced it to his show we had to make preparations. There were three old lanterns hanging from the rafters in the museum. He asked me to get rid of the cobwebs in them, and then, together, we hung them on nails in places of his choosing. He pointed,



while I climbed the chair. When the lanterns were in position he set up a spotlight, ready for the performance that night.

During the performance he turned off all lighting. The audience sat in darkness and anticipation. A switch was thrown and looming shadows filled the walls, cast by the spotlight trained on the lanterns. And then, in his resonant baritone voice, Richard quietly recited *From the Lanterns*. Soft light and eerie shadows had created an atmosphere of contemplation and reflection. It was very moving.

The day we left he gave me a copy of each of his books, two copies of his CD, and some souvenirs of the *Matilda Expo*. To me, they are treasures.



Opposite top: One of Richard's many signs tied to a "lonely post" along the highway leading to Kynuna.
[Jenny Pearce, PJ02, 2004]

Opposite bottom: Richard Magoffin outside his *Matilda Expo* at Kynuna.
[Jenny Pearce, PJ01, 2004]

I am sitting, thinking, writing, by the bright electric lighting
At a worn and weathered table in the ancient station store,
And as I sit and ponder, my eyes, attracted, wander
Down a row of lonely lanterns from an era gone before.

As I look at them I reckon that they somehow seem to beckon,
And my mind in recollection to that bygone era rolls:
As I sit and look upon them, I see history written on them
In the cracks on gloomy glasses and the rust upon their bowls.

Through the cobwebs on their handles and the rust upon their mantles,
I can see unknown people with long forgotten names,
And the folk remembered dearly are reflected smiling clearly
In the glint of chimney glasses in those old and dusty frames.

And as sharp as this reflection, is my vivid recollection
Of the people and occasions that these hurricanes recall;
For those years now recollected are as clearly now projected
As the never-ageing shadows of the lanterns on the wall.

Bewitched, my mind meanders to those open green verandahs,
Where everyone was welcome those many years ago:
I can see the women darning and the menfolk smoking, yarning
In the mellow, soft and yellow light of lowly lantern glow.

And I see the happy greetings at the hack and picnic meetings
When the lanterns lit the dances in the crowded little halls;
And I hear the Charleston ringing and those distant voices singing
And I see the lanterns swinging on the corrugated walls.

Though I was just a nipper when these lanterns used to flicker,
They have shone tonight with visions of forgotten yesterday;
As these fancies fade asunder, in silence now I wonder:
I can see the rusty lanterns, but the people – where are they?



An impression of an evening
with Richard



Above: The Julia Creek baby boom after the war. None of the children are identified. Women from left:

- Gloria Roberts
- Maude Fry (sister of Vince Fickling Snr)
- Elsie Fickling (wife of Herb, Common Ranger)
- Cynthia Harris (wife of Jumbo)
- Francis Fickling (wife of Clarrie)
- Dot Dickfos
- Woman at the far right is unidentified.

[Carmel Fickling, FC19, ca 1950]

Palmy Days

Julia Creek in the 1950s



ABABY BOOM, A WOOL BOOM, A TANKSINKING BOOM – Julia Creek was a great place to be after war's end. The drought of '52 sort of bugged things for a couple of years, but other than that – yeeeha! – the town had the feistiness of a rodeo bull kicking its legs in the air. It was common to have 400-500 children at the Christmas tree¹; Rosevale captured the Australian record for wool, and then the world record in London²; the local football team won the Western Zone competition³; and tanksinker Max Burns employed dozens of men and made millions (in 2009 dollars). The town bustled with two cordial factories, three banks, and queues half a block long for the pictures:

It was fantastic running a picture show in the fifties. It was good. I remember we played *The Greatest Show on Earth* with Jimmy Stewart, that circus picture. At 7 o'clock – the show didn't start till 8 o'clock – at 7 the queue was from the picture theatre down to Gannon's Hotel, waiting for us to open the doors.⁴

Sooty railway men worked the steam trains; tanksinkers rumbled into town smelling of diesel, with throats as dry as the dams they'd just finished digging; and shearers, flocks of shearers – or so it seemed to the townspeople after a shed cut out – the shearers gathered in mobs around the two pubs like thirsty sheep around a water trough:

Of a Saturday night you wouldn't get into either one of the pubs. Men would be spilling out on the footpath, beer being handed out to them. They'd be real packed. There were four or five shearing teams around Julia Creek; that's 50 or 60 men at least, just shearers. And the railway, in the steam train days, God knows how many men they had.⁵

Golf, in abeyance since the Depression, gained a huge following. A nine-hole course was built (courtesy of Max) and a decent clubhouse erected.

Julia Creek had been no stranger to aircraft – the first Flying Doctor flight⁶ was from Cloncurry to Julia Creek in 1928 – but after the war, flying (dare I say it) took off. Arthur Lowe, Lionel and Alec Wall, Don Burns and Lew Ryder all had aircraft based in Julia Creek. The enthusiasm was such that in the reliability trial around Australia in 1954, of the six Queensland aircraft entered (out of 27 in total), three came from Julia Creek (article, left).

Of course, amidst the excitement were disappointments: wool boomed for only a few months; tanksinking, along with tens of thousands of sheep, died in the '52 drought; and in 1953 the woolscour closed. And there were tragedies. The town electrician drowned at the Punchbowl, and the postmaster's son was killed in a car accident in Burke St.

Boom and bust, excitement and disappointment – the fifties were Julia Creek's palmy days and the remaining chapters document the effervescence.



NQR: 3 Jul 1954

1. Christmas tree, NQR: 27/12/1958, page 196.
2. Wool record, page 441.
3. Football win, page 593.
4. Norm Downey, page 208.
5. Herb Wilder, page 383.
6. First Flying Doctor flight, page 157.

A Likeable Rogue

Joey Mathews

Four Julia Creek golfers talk about Max,
his philandering, and his game

IT WAS A BIG PLUS FOR THE JULIA CREEK AREA when Max Burns came west with his tractors. In the old days, I recall that people with four horses and a big scoop dug dams that took a long, long time.

People had been completely dependant on bore drains for watering stock, but the artesian system started to ease back because of overuse. As the large properties were cut up for closer settlement and carried more sheep and cattle, people realised they needed to build water facilities. Max was the answer to that need. When he started in Julia Creek he was giving graziers an example of what water storage could do for their stock. I don't recall anyone else tanksinking. I think Max was the first.

He was a likeable rogue, a likeable bastard. He was admired, coming into a little town like Julia Creek and doing something that no one else had done. Up until the end of the war, quite a lot of the roadmaking and all the fireploughing – earthmoving in general – was done by Bill Davis, Jim Horton, and others with horse-drawn vehicles. Imagine Bill Davis having to yoke up 34 horses; how long that would take him and an offsider. Then doing a day's work and having to drive the team 5 miles to water. Hobble the 34, prepare tea, and then up and at it again at daylight in the morning. What Max brought in was revolutionary. Nobody used tractors to delve bore drains or sink tanks till Max came around.





I WAS BORN IN 1922 IN CHARTERS TOWERS. I wasn't born in Julia Creek, there was no hospital. Expectant mothers had to go to Charters Towers or Cloncurry. I was the only surviving child from three marriages. Dad's first wife died in childbirth in 1915. His second, my mother, died having my brother. Then he married a widow – someone to look after me I suppose.

I went to Julia Creek when I was a month old. I started school there, sat for Scholarship there, and then went to Nudgee College in Brisbane for four years. Didn't get home but once a year in July. It took four days by train. Not much of the three-week holiday was left after eight days' travel was taken out.

1939 I finished school and started work in Julia Creek for F. A. Hickman and Co as a minor partner. My dad bought me a share in the business. Fred Hickman was the boss, I was the Co. We were the stock and station agent in the railway street. People sent their wool in and we consigned it for them. And we unloaded cattle.

The railway street used to be the number one street in Julia Creek. Jaques' butcher shop, Hickman's, a couple of cafes, Stout brothers had a garage near Kaeser's bakery, Sanphy's store was near the Top Pub, and AJ Smith's had a big grocery store on the corner of Quarrell St.

Up until 1932, Bill Gannon had a hotel in that front street. Somehow or other it burnt down and he moved around into Burke St. He drew a lot of businesses when he moved. Peter Dawes opened a store just down from Gannon's, and a bit further along was Lance Lewis. But Lance was already there. He opened his garage in Burke St in 1928 or '29.

In 1941 I joined the army and in 1945 I left. All my earnings from the army went to pay off Dad buying me into Hickmans. The next year one of our agencies, Australian Estates, wanted to open their own branch in Julia Creek and I was offered the job as manager. I stayed with them only about 12 months. They liked to move people around, and it looked as if I was going to Charleville to a bigger branch. But Dad took pretty sick, so I resigned from Australian Estates to help him manage Hilton Park.

Dad came to Hilton Park in 1914. It was then about 15,000 acres and quite close to town, but when I started to co-manage the property I bought two other blocks to add to it: Hilton West in 1945 and Belgravia in 1954 (which I bought off Harry Stainkey). That gave me 40,000 acres. I sold out in '74.



Above: Joey, from a photo of the Julia Creek football team. See page 593 for the complete photo.
[Nora Fayers, FN01, 1947]

Left: Tipping the scoop on an uncompleted 40,000 yard tank on Spreyton Station. The scoop, referred to as a "Tumbling Tommy", held 3 yards of dirt.
[Don Dewar, DeD06, April 1953]

On the back of a similar photo, Don Dewar describes work at another tank on Spreyton Station: *This tank is being put down by Charlie Lamont. It is 40,000 yards and is estimated to take up to 2½ years to complete. He was half finished in May 1953.*

As a time comparison: Max Burns with his tractors and 14-yard scoops could sink a 40,000 yard tank in under three weeks, at a cost of £4,000.

in which its affairs have been handled at all times.

Quite a fever has developed within many of our prominent citizens, both town and country, who have, after a short practice, become keen golf enthusiasts. A national sport has within no time become popular. Up-to-date links have been laid out and several matches have been recently played between local opponents.

Stock agents report dull business

NQR: 22 Nov 1930

cess in their final match in Townsville.

The Julia Creek tennis enthusiasts are still playing at the weekends and both tennis courts are kept in order. There is talk of golf being started again at Julia Creek.

Ifley trucked some speved cows

NQR: 26 Jul 1947

Below: Opening day of the original Julia Creek Golf Club. None of the people have been identified.

[Joff Casey, CJ12, ca 1930]

THE FIRST GOLF CLUB was formed in Julia Creek in 1930. It was partly on the common, but most of it was on Hilton Park. Golf died during the war years, and afterwards most of the new people in town were unaware that a golf course had ever existed at Julia Creek. So what they did, they formed a committee: Ard Cooney, Bob Smith and Max Burns. They were the chief instigators of the new golf course in about 1948.

For the first few years the clubhouse and drinks servery was a tin shed. Actually two tin sheds: one on the north side of the railway line near the Richmond road, and another one on the south side, across the line behind the lengthsman's quarters. Max and Ard Cooney were the main ones pushing to replace the sheds with a proper clubhouse, which was eventually built 500 yards south of the line.

Golf became Max's passion. In the early 50s he used his own machinery to lay out the course. He became a damn good golfer – and a hard player. He wouldn't drop a stroke off his score, but he'd stand on somebody else's ball when it was in the rough, or he'd know where it was and wouldn't tell the bloke. Prince, his Alsatian, used to pull the buggy around, y'know.

The course itself had a few problems. It straddled both sides of the railway, and the channels of a creek ran through the middle. After rain it was difficult to play golf and negotiate the channels at the same time. Not much could be done about the creek, but the greens were moved to be all on the south side of the line. I suppose the committee's wisdom told them it was not a good thing to have trains running through the fairways.

and the atmosphere of gay abandon suited the occasion.

On Sunday the golf competitions were won by Mr. and Mrs. Max Burns, quite a family affair. This is the first win for these two new and enthusiastic recruits to the game, but we feel sure it will not be the last. On Sunday next the season will close and the presentation of trophies will be made at Bob Smith's property, Baroona, by the patron, Mr. Bill Gannon.

Last Friday at the school, the kiddies played their first game of vigoro. thanks

NQR: 25 Oct 1952

this respect.

On Sunday last there was a social match at the golf course between the Town and Country teams. There was a good attendance despite the heat of the afternoon. As is usual on such occasions the game was not taken too seriously and all enjoyed the afternoon. The course, we understand, has to be shifted for next season to keep it on one side of the railway line only. No doubt this will require a good deal of labour, but the golfing fraternity have a happy knack of handling anything a little difficult. Possibly, with the valuable assistance of Mr. Max Burns' earth moving plant, the work may be simplified.

NQR: 28 Nov 1952



MAX WAS A CHARMING BLOKE, and I'd say popular, well-respected. But he was tough in business. Fred Huller was Max's hatchet man. If your account was overdue it wasn't Max that got onto you, it was Fred. If you went in to do a deal you had to pass Fred's beady eyes. I wouldn't say he had authority; Max delegated. I remember a couple of times my account was overdue and a call came that I was wanted at the office. I dutifully went over and Fred told me the account, "which you must have overlooked", was to be paid immediately.

Max put a dam down for me on Hilton Park in '57 or '58. It rained like hell one night and filled it, and Max hadn't yet measured it. I had to take his word how deep it was. We couldn't get anywhere near it to measure even the top. Max gave me to understand that he wanted, that he *needed* the payment. And I took it that he did need the payment. That was my first indication. We didn't know then that Max was on the edge. Rumours fly around; sometimes they're close to the mark, sometimes they're not. When I heard that Max was bankrupt, to me it came as quite a surprise.

I never met him again after he left Julia Creek.



Below: Golfers Esme Boyd (left) and Barbara Browne (a nurse who married Geoffrey Browne of Garomna), at the Julia Creek Golf Club near where the Richmond road crossed over Julia Creek. This is the "tin shed" – the clubhouse and drinks servery referred to by Joey. The railway line running through the course is visible in the background

[Geoffrey Browne, BG31, 1951]

mented on the splendid conduct of the children.

The finals of the Julia Creek Golf Club championship over 36 holes, in conjunction with the Cooney Trophy, were played on the links on Sunday. Gusty, windy conditions, which were bad for golf, prevailed early in the day. In the A grade championship, Max Burns with rounds of 75 and 76 defeated Bob Smith 12 and 11 to again become the club champion. Dot Smith won on a forfeit in the associates' A grade championship from Marj Burns who had not returned from Brisbane. Barry Burns was the winner of the men's B grade championship, whilst Joe Kaeser defeated Frank Purtle by the narrow margin of 1-up for the C grade championship. The Cooney Trophy was won by Barry Burns who played excellent golf with a 64 nett. Attendance on the links every Sunday is growing and golf is again booming.

The steaks served out at the barbecue at night were truly juicy. A tape recording instrument, made available by Mr. Joe Mathews, was an innovation in the clubhouse and people danced to music broadcast from the machine. Speeches delivered and songs rendered by members of the audience were replayed and created much enjoyment.

Over the 12 months ended June 30

NQR: 07 Sep 1957



A fatal mistake **Ard Cooney**

I THINK I FIRST MET MAX BURNS in the Australian Estates office in Julia Creek. He and Vic Kelly, the manager, were great mates. I always got on well with Max. He seemed a bloody smart man to me. Bugged if I ever thought he'd go bankrupt.

We started this golf club in Julia Creek, originally in a little tin shed. We built that shed, that's where we started off. We used it for probably three or four years. There was nothing there when I came in '45.

It was as a nine-hole course between Joe Mathews' fence and the Richmond road. Max was in it from the beginning. He was one of the main members in the club. He knew exactly what he wanted and he had a lot of input. Over the years the club got a bit of a go on, and one of Max's relations, a building contractor, can't think of his name¹, he drew up plans for a proper clubhouse. Good deal for... I think it was £1500.

Max did the grading for the clubhouse and for the entire course. I remember he built up the 9th green to about 8 foot high. All that type of work he did absolutely free of charge.

Max, Bob Smith, Jumbo Harris, Lionel Wall, Graham Uhlmann, Jim Parsons (the shire clerk) – every Sunday we played. Any competition,

they'd all be there. Gladys and I used to drive in 36 miles. We wouldn't miss our golf – Christ! There'd be a lot more people than what's in that photo, God yeah. We had a solid 25 or 30 members. Quite a few women too: Jim Parson's wife, my wife Gladys, her sister Dot Smith, Shirley Wall, Marj Burns. Eight or ten women.

He was a bloody good player, Max. He didn't miss too much golf. We met in Brisbane somewhere along the line and there was a big turnout on at Nudgee Golf Course for visiting country golfers. Max was playing off 4 in Julia Creek, but the handicapper said to us: "No use playing off a handicap like that. You blokes have never seen green grass on your course. I'll put you on 20". Max said: "We're a bloody certainty". We run into these blokes from Nanango and they were both off 22. The bastards parred the course. We never got near them.

Just before Max went bankrupt and left the district we made him a life member. He was pretty well-liked, a good mixer, and he always had an entertaining yarn. I thought he was a real smart operator. But he was that bloody smart he thought he was smarter than the income tax people – and that's a fatal mistake.



4 February 1950—The golf clubhouse¹ has been commenced and there now remains only the walls to be set up. As soon as the material is available the building will be completed without much delay. The golfers are to be congratulated for their keenness, and it looks as if a further successful season will be experienced again this year.

9 October 1954—The 1954 golf season is drawing to a close after a record year in the number of financial members – 76. The very attractive clubhouse, surrounded by lawns and ornamental shrubs, has been built at a cost of £2000. Visitors from other centres describe the clubhouse and links as very creditable for a small town. The town's social life is centred around the golf club and some very nice social evenings are spent there. Next year's membership is expected to reach the hundred mark.

The final of the club championship was played on Sunday last and was won by Max Burns, who surprisingly defeated last year's champion, Bob Smith. At the 13th hole, Bob conceded victory when Max

was in the winning position of being 7-up with five holes to play.

The associate's championship went again to last year's winner, Dot Smith, who defeated Marj Burns. The B grade was won by Mr and Mrs Joe Mathews, two promising players.

14 April 1956—The 1956 golf season in Julia Creek opened in delightful weather, but the attendance of members was disappointing. The course was good for so early in the season. A welcome half inch of rain settled down the soil and made only a small growth of grass, which was easily graded off.

This year the greens have been made larger and are now standard size. Causeways have been built over the three watercourses and are a great help in getting buggies around the course. Much credit is due to the enthusiastic new president, Mr Ard Cooney, who did considerable work on the course and was ably supported by Alex Wall and members.

The new 9th hole, a mound of earth 10 feet high with a large green on top, proved to be a challenge

for players and is now one of the features of the course. Thanks must go to Max Burns for his work in building this mound.

Now that the season has been officially opened the club is looking forward to fees rolling in. It is now four months since the annual general meeting and there are only 24 financial members.

22 November 1958—The annual general meeting of the golf club took place on Sunday. Mr Ard Cooney in his presidential address referred to the status of golf in Julia Creek, the increased membership, the healthy condition of the club's finances, and held out hopes for good games and fine companionship in the coming year.

The president welcomed Mr Max Burns to the select few who had been made life members of the club. Mr Burns appropriately thanked the president and members for the high honour given to him. His services, he stated, had been rendered more with the view of assisting a valued amenity in the district than with a view to self-aggrandisement.

1. The original tin shed. See photo previous page.

Opposite: Julia Creek golfers out for a Sunday game.

Back row from left: 1. Lionel Wall, 2. Eric Netterfield, 3. Ard Cooney, 4. Max Burns, 5. Bob Smith, 6. Mat McLeish.

Front row, women: 1. Gladys Cooney, 2. Shirley Wall, 3. Dot Smith, 4. Marj Burns. Children: Suzanne Cooney, ?, Sally-Anne Smith.

[Joy Burns, J09, ca 1952]

Below: Players in front of the clubhouse working the 9th hole.

From left: Ard Cooney, Patrick Jamie (holding sand grader in his left hand), Ray Godier and Troy Clarke.

The mound was considerably higher in Max's time. The sand green was kept oiled, and was graded before each putt to allow the player a clear path to the hole.

[Ray Godier, GR04, ca 1970]



There's nothing there but a paddock now, just a paddock.
But it used to be the best party place in town. If people went
anywhere to a gathering it was to the golf club.

BOB LORD

MAX MADE a bloody mountain on the 9th hole, right in front of the clubhouse. And of course everybody went crook. They couldn't get onto the thing. They'd hit the side of it and the ball would roll down again. Once Max left Julia Creek they got rid of it.

NORM DOWNEY

THAT MOUND at the 9th hole, they might have cut it down a bit, but it was still reasonably high in my time – about 3 feet.

RAY GODIER

IT WAS like a turkey's nest, but no hollow. Probably about 10' x 10' on top, sandy, and you had to try and land a golf ball on it. They waited till Max left town before they knocked some of it off. They didn't wipe it completely, but they wiped most of it.

BEVEN FLEWELL-SMITH

23 April 1955—At the annual general meeting of the Julia Creek Golf Club a large representative attendance of members was present. The president, Mr Max Burns, referred to the early history of the club (1949), in the days when a kerosene tin full of ice drinks on an open plain was the only thing to represent a clubhouse. In six years, he said, the golfers had built themselves a facility worth £3000. The club was now almost free of debt and had a good country course, and splendid lawns and shrubs.

It is little wonder that Julia Creek has the most progressive golf club in Western Queensland. The associates are very active and doing a great job. The course this year is the best it has ever been and is now 72 par. Several traps have been installed for this year's Cooney cup, as well as a new flagpole and flag, a new handicap board and a coming-event board. Membership is expected to reach near the hundred mark this season. It is a mighty achievement for six years.

The following officers were elected: patron Arthur Paine, president Max Burns, treasurer Vic Kelly, senior vice president Ard Cooney, handicapper Harold Mitchell.

Last Sunday the golf club played a stroke event. Most golfers are still out of form, with the exception of Ard Cooney and Max Burns who played considerable golf in the south during the off season. Max Burns won the event with a nett 70, having played one under par for the second 9 off the stick. Mrs Burns and Pat Monchong tied for associates.

3 September 1955—Last weekend golfers from all parts of North-West Queensland assembled in Julia Creek for the Cooney Cup. The visitors were given an official welcome by club president Max Burns and captain Bob Smith. Representative teams from Mt. Isa, Hughenden and Cloncurry all competed for the trophy. The cup is probably the biggest inter-town competition in Western Queensland today, involving a distance of over 500 miles between players.

The following golfers represented Julia Creek: Bob Smith, Max Burns, Harold Mitchell, Barry Burns, Alf Mayo, Joe Kaeser, Dot Smith, Marj Burns and Gladys Cooney.

Eighty-four golfers hit off the tournament and some of the best golf seen here was played over the weekend. With its four water hazards, visitors found the Julia Creek course rather difficult and at least 10 dozen golf balls were left in a watery grave.

The cup was again won by Julia Creek, 10 strokes clear of Cloncurry who put up a mighty fight. Hughenden was next, 30 strokes away, followed by Mount Isa 10 strokes further away. Best aggregate over 27 holes for members was Max Burns, Julia Creek. The stroke event was won by Barry Burns.

THERE'S A LITTLE PLACE called Eulo in between Cunnamulla – where I was born in 1914 – and Thargomindah, and that's where I started school. I went to Nudgee College in '27 and '28. Boarding, teaching, tucker – the full works for £25 a term. Went home from Nudgee and cut scrub for my father. Then he financed me into a place at Cunnamulla and I was there for five years. Wasn't going any good (only two good seasons out of five), and then Auckland Downs came on the market. The old man said I should sell out of Cunnamulla and buy in at Julia Creek. And that's how I come to be 36 mile north of Julia Creek in 1945.

I bought Auckland Downs with 15,000 sheep and 250 head of cattle, a motor car, and plenty of horses. The whole lot for £22,000, all borrowed off the National Bank.

Thirty years later, in 1974, we had a bloody big wet. Eighty-two inches of rain in four months. Merino sheep, they won't stand that sort of weather. Didn't get bogged or drowned or anything, just laid down and died. Blood-thirsty mosquitoes, buffalo flies and Christ-knows-what sucked all the blood out of them I think. I joined 9000 ewes and only had 6000 left after the wet. I reckon all the ones that died were the ones that had lambs, so I sold all the sheep and moved into cattle. For a few years I toyed with the idea of selling out, and then a bloke came along and offered me \$6 an acre and another \$100 a head for the 2000 cattle. I sold out in June 1979.

I BOUGHT SOME CATTLE one time, years ago, off a fella named George Ryan. Outside Georgetown, 600 head. Vic Kelly and I went up there at the end of '55 before the wet. Once the wet starts in that country everything stops. I gave Ryan an advance of £4500 towards paying for the cattle and he had to deliver them into a yard near Millungera. His son-in-law and a couple of blackfellas brought them in. I said to Max: "I've got a mob of cattle coming down here; you interested in them?" Max had a look: "Yeah, I'll buy them". He got someone to take them over to Balootha. Anyhow, it was only about a month, six weeks later, that he rang me one day and said:

There's a bloody mess here. Three policemen – and one bloke's a detective – they reckon some of the cattle you sold me are stolen. What're they gonna do? They've taken them. They can't do that.

So I got onto my solicitor. They can do it all right. You can't get a restraining order against the police. They'd been to see Vic Kelly and they wanted to know where was that fella Cooney who bought those stolen cattle. They thought I was involved. Ended up I became a Crown witness. Eighteen months it took to get to court. Not guilty.

I thought the whole setup was a bit strange. A man sells cattle that aren't his, but he's found not guilty of stealing them. Then it dawned on me – who owns the cattle if George Ryan didn't pinch them? They came up with the startling figure that I owned 30 or so. The rest went back to the owners.

When Max said the cattle were stolen I gave him back his money plus 2/6 a week agistment, which settled the whole thing. He never lost a penny, but I did. I should have sued Ryan for my loss.

I WAS GONNA TELL YOU some other tale, but it's gone right out of my mind. Bloody terrible thing when you get old. Make sure you watch out for it.



CATTLE THEFT CHARGE

Grazier To Stand Trial

MAREEBA, September 27.—A case which occupied the attention of Mr. J. C. Dillon, S.M., in the Court of Petty Sessions here this week was that of George Henry Ryan, 46, grazier, who appeared, on remand from Georgetown,

MAREEBA, September 27.—A case which occupied the attention of Mr J. C. Dillon, S.M., in the Court of Petty Sessions here this week was that of George Henry Ryan, 46, grazier, who appeared on remand from Georgetown on a charge of having stolen a heifer from the Van Rook Pastoral Company near Julia Creek, between January 1, 1955, and June 30, 1956. Ryan pleaded not guilty. At the completion of the evidence Ryan was committed for trial at the Circuit Court at Cairns, starting on October 14.

Ardie Reginald Cooney, grazier, resident at Auckland Downs, Julia Creek, told the court that he saw Ryan at Ironhurst, Georgetown, in October 1955, following a discussion with a stock agent named Vic Kelly at Julia Creek. During an inspection of about 300 cattle on October 19, 1955, Ryan told him there were quite a few different brands amongst the cattle, but they were mainly *W tent R*, Ryan's brand. Cooney agreed to purchase 3000 head at £9 a head and was to pay a deposit of £9000, £4500 of which was paid in 1955. They were to be delivered in three mobs beginning as soon as possible after the wet. There was only one delivery of 598 head in June 1956. Cooney said he re-sold these to Max Burns sometime in June 1956 and they were delivered at Balootha, Burns' property.

Cooney said that he first saw the 598 head on the road at Bunda Bunda Station, before Max Burns inspected them. There were cattle in the mob that were not there when he inspected them at Ryan's, and there were cattle missing that should have been in the mob. He had been told by others to take "a good look at the cattle" and he did. The cattle were in good condition and pretty hairy; too hairy to see if they were overbranded or blotch branded. He could not see anything wrong with the brands and had no reason to suspect any of the brands on the cattle had been interfered with. He had no guilty intent on taking cattle from Ryan that were not Ryan's to sell, and he had bought cattle from Ryan before without any trouble. When he sold the cattle to Burns, he was not suspicious about them.

Cooney said that he had been in the sheep business all of his life and cattle were only a sideline. He had a few cattle on his property, but the most he

would run would be 500. In respect of the 368 head taken possession of by police at Balootha, Cooney said he refunded Burns his money a month or so after the police action.

Malcolm Douglas Burns, owner of Balootha Station about 70 miles from Julia Creek, told the court that some time after June 1956 he inspected a mob of cattle at Crowfels, an outstation of Millungera. The price suited him, and so did the cattle, so he decided he would buy them. It was agreed that they be delivered to Balootha. He purchased 595 head, as nearly as he could remember. When he took delivery, the brands were difficult to see as the cattle were hairy. He had to depend on the integrity of the agent and the seller. He was present at Balootha when the cattle were cross-branded with the hourglass brand. He did not see anything irregular about the original branding. After the cross-branding they were let out into the open run. They would have been there anything up to two weeks before the police arrived.

Eric Granville Malone, manager of Balootha, said that he took delivery of 598 head of cattle in June of last year. He did not remember seeing anything irregular about brands on the beasts when he was cross-branding them. About September 1956 he had a conversation with police sergeant Chandler at Balootha. The cattle were mustered and Chandler clipped them and examined the brands. There was *W tent R*, *WA dot*, *H nought G*, and *E diamond L*. The chief brand in the mob was *W tent R*. Malone said 368 head were taken possession of by the police.

Malone said he was 25-years-old and had been in the cattle game most of his life.

Edwin Peter Chandler, police sergeant, said in evidence that on September 14, 1956 he went to Balootha. During the following four days a number of cattle were mustered and placed in the yards and put through a crush. He clipped the hair around the brands for closer examination. He took possession of 368 head. Chandler told the court that one head of these cattle was a bally Hereford heifer, the subject matter of this proceeding. The heifer was later conveyed to Dotswood Station near Mingela, as one of 368 head. A photograph, said to be that of the heifer, was tendered to the court. The heifer was also

produced in court, and amidst much bellowing was admitted as evidence.

Chandler said that on November 22, 1956, he saw Ryan at Georgetown police station. He told Ryan he was making investigations about a theft of cattle from Van Rook, Miranda Downs and Strathmore stations. He told Ryan that he had information that he (Ryan) was involved. Chandler said that Ryan said: "Well Ted, I knew this had to come some time. How bad is it?"

Chandler went on, saying that he told Ryan that his son, George Phillip Ryan, admitted being sent by him to steal cattle from Strathmore Station, along with several others. Chandler said Ryan stated: "Well, I can see you know a lot about it, so I may as well tell you. I did send the boys up there to make a couple of raids, but I haven't got much to show for it now".

Chandler said he told Ryan he had taken possession of cattle at Balootha: 231 had been identified as being stolen from Strathmore, 16 from Van Rook and 24 from Miranda Downs. The cattle had the hour glass on the off-shoulder, but the brands had been changed from Strathmore *pintpot*, the Van Rook *crown* and the Miranda *WA dot*, to *W tent R*, *XL5* and *E diamond L*. Chandler told the court that Ryan said to him: "I'm not doubting that the ones you've got there are the ones I sold to Cooney, and he sold to Burns".

Chandler told the court that the brand *W tent R* was registered in the name of Ryan.

Chandler said Ryan admitted to him he had contracted to sell Cooney 3000 head at £9 per head in October 1955, to be delivered at Auckland Downs, Julia Creek, by April 1956. Asked where he expected to get 3000 head, Ryan replied: "I thought I'd be able to pick some up".

Chandler, continuing, said that on January 29 this year he received a phone call from Ryan. He later met him. Ryan said: "I have been thinking about this case and you've got me pretty well sewn up. My only chance is to square it off with you". Chandler said Ryan offered him £800 to "water his statement down a bit". He told Ryan to forget about it. He was not interested.

Walter Gordon Thomasson, manager of Van Rook Pastoral Company, said that mostly Herefords ran on Strathmore Station with a sprinkling of Shorthorns. He said he had seen the bally heifer mentioned in the charge and would say she was about 2½ years old. To his knowledge, the company had never sold any stock to Ryan. Thomasson said he would place a value of about £9 on the heifer.

This concluded evidence for the prosecution. Ryan pleaded not guilty and reserved his defence. He was allowed £100 bail, with a surety of £100. Mr Dillon remanded Ryan in custody on other charges until October 30.

Nobody ever said... Dot Smith

Died ~ 2005

I THINK MAX PUT THE HARD WORDS ON any attractive woman that he ever came near. He was well known for it. Lots of people used to say it. I know I've said it myself. He was charming, likeable, a rogue in business – a rogue in everything. He was, y'know.

Max was a bit of a party boy. Marj wasn't. They were as alike as chalk and cheese. I wondered how they ever got together. How did she ever get him? Nobody ever said: How did he get her? Everybody always said...

Marj was completely the wrong person for Max. There's no way in the world it could have been a happy marriage, there was no rapport between them. I think his womanising ruined the relationship long before they got to Julia Creek. Marj wasn't prepared to get out of the marriage and look after herself and the kids. I know I wouldn't have been, not back then. They only stayed together for the family. Perhaps she was a different woman before I knew her. I see her as a bitter woman. Goodness knows

what Max had done to her to make her that way. She was let down by Max so many times, and possibly by some of her women friends, that I always had the feeling she didn't like anyone very much, men or women. That's why I rarely had anything to do with Max – other than being his golf partner on occasions – because of Marj's... Not that I ever blamed her. She looked at every woman with suspicion. She had a thing about it. If Max was friendly to a woman... I don't know what made her think... but Marj would assume that *she* was in it too. She gave Max a hell of a time. But you can't blame her. He was, as I said, a womaniser.

I seldom ever played golf with Marj. She wasn't bad at golf, but by jeez she was a fiery person. Was she what!

I was never at her house, she was never at my house. Town and country didn't mix very much. The people on the land didn't have much in common with the townspeople.





Above: Julia Creek Golf Club Associates Championship Cup donated by Max Burns. Won in 1953-54 by Dot. [Guy Burns, GK071, 2002]

Opposite: Ball at the Julia Creek Golf Club. From left: Dot Smith, Dr Geoff Bradfield, Marj Burns, unidentified, Rita Byrne, Max Burns. [Lionel Fry, FL01, ca 1955]

Right: A-Grade Championship Cup. [Guy Burns, GK072, 2002]

Winners:
1949 – R. F. Taylor
1950 – R. N Smith
1951 – R. F. Taylor
1952 – T. C. Wilson
1953 – R. Smith
1954 – Max Burns
Both cups were being stored at the Julia Creek Railway Station when photographed in 2002.

I CAME FROM CUNNAMULLA. We had property in the area. My sister Gladys married Ard Cooney and they went to Julia Creek. I went up to visit them and got married myself. I met Bob Smith in Julia Creek just after the war. We married in 1948.

Bob was in a bank at Herberton before the war. When he enlisted he said he wouldn't go back to the bank, so while he was away at war his father bought Baroona Downs for him, about 14 miles north of Julia Creek. His father had property. All of his brothers, they all had property.

My husband was an excellent golfer. When he was in the bank up in North Queensland he got down to a handicap of two. In Julia Creek after the war he was on 5. Maurie Taylor was an excellent golfer too. They went around the Julia Creek area together and worked out where to put the holes to make for an interesting course. Some of the holes were on one side of the railway line, some on the other. If a train was coming, you had to wait for it to go before you could cross over.

We had a lot of support from the council for the golf course. It was like this – Mat McLeish was a councillor and he was a golfer. Gladys Cooney, my sister, she was a councillor for many years, and a golfer. Eric Netterfield, he was a golfer, and also Jim Parsons, the shire clerk. They all wanted a golf course.



11 December 1948—Last Monday two TAA planes left Julia Creek with capacity loads of passengers. The reason for the good bookings was the Bob Smith-Dot Foote wedding in Townsville. Ard Cooney missed Monday's planes owing to insufficient seats, but chartered Arthur Lowe's Tiger Moth next morning and winged it to the coast, not so speedily as TAA, yet just as surely.

1 November 1952—The golf on Sunday was a special occasion since it was the official closing of the season. A competition was arranged for the afternoon's golf and this was close going between Vic Kelly and Gladys Cooney as one pair, and Dot Smith and Sergeant Frank Purtle as the other. With a tie resulting, a further two holes were played and the latter pair prevailed after much exciting play and plenty of good humour.

After the golf concluded, all golfers and visitors went to Baroona, the property of Bob Smith (captain of the club) where the presentation night was celebrated. Bill Gannon, as patron, presented the trophies. Amongst the associates, Dot Smith had

the honour of receiving most trophies for the season, and amongst the members, Lionel Wall.

The night's entertainment took the form of dancing, card playing and musical items. Jollifications and entertainments concluded at a time approaching dawn on Monday. It was a fitting finish to a pleasant season's golf.

15 September 1956—Under adverse windy conditions the finals of the golf club championships were played over 36 holes on Sunday. Some excellent cards were returned considering the conditions and the pressure of championship play. In the A grade championship, Max Burns playing solid golf defeated Bob Smith, 9 and 8, to become club champion for 1956. Harold Mitchell playing excellent golf won the B grade championship from Dr Bradfield, 8 and 7. Joe Kaeser defeated Joe Mathews, 2 and 1 for the C grade. Kaeser, who was down four with eight holes to play, really turned it on over the last few holes.

Dot Smith once again proved her ability by defeating Marj Burns, 6 and 4, to become associates

A grade champion for the fourth successive year. In the B grade, Gladys Cooney defeated Iris Kaeser.

During the evening the captain of the club, Max Burns, announced the winners. The club president, Bob Smith, praised the various winners and stressed the fine spirit of sportsmanship that was shown by each and every player during the championships. Next Sunday over 54 holes the Shirley & Lionel Wall Shield for members begins.

3 May 1958—The results of the ballot for the election of Chairman and eight members of the McKinlay Shire Council have been announced. Among those elected are new members Mrs Gladys Cooney and Messrs Downey, McMahon and Telford. This is the first occasion on which a female candidate has joined the ranks of councillors in the McKinlay Shire Council. Her election with the second highest number of votes indicates her popularity and the thoughts of those who voted for her – that women have a right to take their place in local government affairs. Her services should be of great value to all.

Terrified of that pedal machine

Graham Uhlmann



Above: Julia Creek Golf Club's A Grade Championship Cup, 1950s. [Guy Burns, GK72, 2002]

Right: Geoff Bradfield's graduation. [Robyn Bradfield, BR02, 12/12/1952]

Opposite: The stamp of H.G.E. Sneyd copied from the reverse side of a photo. Sneyd was the chemist in Julia Creek from 1931 to 1937. One of his sidelines would have been film processing. [Joff Casey, CJ16, ca 1930]

BEFORE JULIA CREEK I'D NEVER PLAYED GOLF. I think it was Dr Geoff Bradfield and Jumbo Harris who got me interested. In that part of Queensland it's still light at 8 o'clock and there was always someone in town who wanted to have nine holes in the evening after work. It wasn't for competition, just for relaxation. No green fees because there was no grass. We played on graded fairways. They used to drag a lump of metal – I suspect it might have been a length of railway line to get the weight – and they'd scrape it across the surface to take off the weeds that grew during the rainy period. You couldn't play during the wet. We used to say: "You stick to this country in the dry and it'll stick to you in the wet". Terrible bloody stuff in the rain, that black soil.

After the wet we saw lots of snakes. You'd play the first couple of games of the season and you'd see these tracks, some of them 3 inches wide. Jeez, there were a lot of snakes.

I WAS BORN IN BRISBANE IN 1932. I became an apprentice pharmacist and finally got through in 1952. After two or three years, I sold out of the business I was in and went north looking for somewhere to go. At that particular time there was a company called Drug House of Australia. The manager in Townsville told me there was an opening for a pharmacist at Julia Creek. A doctor out there, Geoff Bradfield, was running a pharmacy on the side to supply pharmaceuticals and prescriptions to the locals. He wanted to get out, to leave Julia Creek, and he also wanted to sell his pharmaceutical business at the same time. I went out there just on spec and stayed about 10 years. Two of my kids were born out there.

My pharmacy was in Julia St across from Gannon's Hotel. Right on the corner was the stock inspector, and I was next door on the way to the Top Pub. Roy Hampton owned the building and he lived behind the pharmacy. Roy had the SP joint in town. When he left, Norm Albrecht and Joey Kaeser – they had the bakery around in the front street – they bought him out and took over the betting.

Life was rough. Very rough. There was only one street that had bitumen, Julia St. I can remember arriving in town and it rained. I had a Ford Consul, a four-cylinder sedan, and promptly bogged right outside Gannon's, bogged right up to the axle. Only one fellow came out to give me a push. All the others remained seated: drinking, talking, enjoying themselves watching me. There was a marvellous sense of humour in that part of the world.

JULIA CREEK GETS DOCTOR

BRISBANE, January 31—The townspeople of Julia Creek, 1230 rail miles north-west of Brisbane, had a celebration recently when after five months without a resident doctor they received official word that a doctor would arrive this week.

The Health Minister announced that Dr. Geoffrey Bradfield had been appointed medical superintendent of the Julia Creek Hospital and would leave Brisbane on Thursday.

Dr. Bradfield graduated in medicine at the Queensland University under the Government scheme of granting fellowships to students passing the Senior public Examination, and had just completed his practical experience at the Brisbane Hospital.

Dr. Bradfield said last night that he was delighted to be going to Julia Creek, a township with a district population of 800 and a 23-bed hospital.

NQR: 06 Feb 1954



It was a fairly loyal town towards the pharmacy. I believe I was the first pharmacist in Julia Creek since a fellow named Sneyd before the war. There were a heck of a lot of people who wanted a pharmacy in the town and were willing to support it. But there also were a lot of people who still dealt in Townsville or Cloncurry. The chemist in Townsville, he might even keep their prescriptions on file for them.

It was always difficult to get a doctor out there. Always. And a pharmacist can't exist without a doctor. I remember Geoff Bradfield, Stuart Pegg, and then there was another one. Every doctor's got a personality and you hope they can work in with you and with the community, but that last fellow didn't. He wasn't very popular and only lasted a short time.

The doctors were employed by the hospital board and they had the right to private practice. They also had the best house in Julia Creek supplied to them free. Quite a good Queenslander-style thing.

Peter Dawes, as a store owner in a town without a pharmacy, he had been allowed to sell certain pharmaceutical lines as long as they weren't scheduled poisons. He wasn't particularly happy when he had to hand over all the Nyal preparations to me. I mean, I bought them off him, but we started off on a very tenuous relationship. It improved over the years.

WHEN I FIRST WENT WEST, Julia Creek was a pretty rough and ready sort of place. We couldn't have an electric stove, there wasn't adequate power. We had a kerosene stove, one of those pump up things. We did get an electric hot water system when I built my house, and the interesting thing about that was: we used it for hot water in winter and cold water in summer. The water that came off the bore head was too hot straight from the tap to shower under, which meant in summer we turned the power off and the hot water tank became a cooling tank. Which was great. Ah... nothing like a cold shower in Julia Creek in summer.

I remember having a tooth extracted. I went to Cloncurry because the dental car was up that end of the line and wasn't coming to Julia Creek for a few days, so I decided to go to Cloncurry to have this tooth out. It was bearable to have a tooth pulled, but I never dared have a tooth drilled. There was no electricity, and the dentist had one of those pedal drills. I was absolutely terrified of that pedal machine.

benefit of this centre

There has not been a practising chemist in Julia Creek for some years, and the need of a chemist has often been acutely felt. Mr. Graham Uhlmann, a pharmaceutical chemist from the south, has been surveying the township with a view to establishing a practice here. He has been able to secure a residence for his wife and family and is now engaged in the search for suitable premises to serve as a pharmacy.

The Cooney Cup weekend in Julia Creek was played

NQR: 18 May 1957

Early Chemists in Julia Creek

19 October 1929—Rumour has it that we are to have a second chemist business in our town. A few months ago Mr Griffiths from Charters Towers opened up in temporary quarters in Eckford's Hall until his new shop is erected.

14 December 1929—A considerable number of new buildings have gone up within the past month or two, including a chemist's shop under the banner of Cliff Griffiths, with Norman Clark, a Charters Towers boy, in charge.

29 November 1930—Mr Norman Clark, who has been managing Mr Griffiths' chemist business for the past 12 months, and who has now severed his connections with same, leaves by Tuesday's mail train for Charters Towers. I understand it is Mr Clarke's intention to enter into business in the southern regions on his own behalf. Mr Griffiths has taken control until a new manager is found.

17 October 1931—Mr H. Sneyd, who hails from Chermiside in the Brisbane district, has recently purchased the chemist business of Mr Griffiths. Both Mr and Mrs Sneyd have taken up residence in town and we trust their new venture will be rewarded with success.

14 January 1933—On New Year's Day, quite a gloom was cast over the district when it was learned that the infant son of Mr and Mrs Sneyd had passed away in the early hours of the morning at Matron Needham's Private Hospital. Much sympathy is extended to the bereaved parents in their sad and sorrowful loss.

23 January 1937—We understand that Mr Sneyd our chemist – and a keen golfer – is contemplating going to Cairns. He will certainly be missed.

20 February 1937—Mr and Mrs Sneyd left by Monday night's train for Cairns where he intends to continue his pharmacy work. Mr Sneyd has been in Julia Creek for the last five years and he will be missed by the people of the district. As far as we know there is no one to carry on as chemist in his place.

H. G. E. SNEYD PH. C. M.P.S.

JULIA CREEK.

27 July 1957—At the committee meeting of the golf club held on Sunday morning, Dr Geoff Bradfield, handicapper, tendered his resignation on account of his leaving the district to take a post-graduate course in England. The handicapper in a golf club is not always a popular person, but the doctor never lost his popularity. His duties were carried out without fear and without reproach, and the president, Mr Bob Smith, put voice to feelings widely felt when he said that the club was losing an invaluable member. Mr Ard Cooney will be the new handicapper.

In fine pleasant weather on Sunday afternoon the final 18 holes for the Peter Dawes Trophy was the main item of the programme. Dr Bradfield returned a good card, and when all the scores came in it was found that the doctor was the winner.

After the conclusion of the competition, the associates provided a sumptuous repast and the opportunity was taken to farewell Dr and Mrs Bradfield. The Peter Dawes Trophy, a leather satchel of fine workmanship, was presented to him by vice captain Ard Cooney, who in a happy speech reminded the doctor of the study ahead and visualised him walking down The Strand, the satchel crammed with heavy text books. In a light vein, Dr Bradfield suitably responded.

On behalf of members and associates, the president presented to the departing guests a silver

jug as a token of their esteem and as a reminder of many hours spent on the course at Julia Creek. The president referred to the good work that Dr Bradfield had carried out as handicapper. The president further expressed the wish that the doctor's studies abroad would be crowned with distinction, and that at some future date all would have the pleasure again of meeting the doctor and his wife on the local course.

2 November 1957—Golf in Julia Creek has had a really good innings and is the only sport, apart from tennis, that has consistently existed. Some of our new players, including Bert Hallam and Graham Uhlmann, are showing promise as golfers and with another year's practice will be hard to beat. We also have more active associates than ever before.

On Sunday afternoon in spite of terrific heat, a large number of golfers demonstrated that it takes more than heat to stop the game. Dry weather, poor sheep or cattle, the menace of foxes, dingoes and worms, are all forgotten for the afternoon, and instead, concentration is given to the hitting of a small white ball. After a four-hour battle in the heat, someone is acclaimed the winner and whether tired or dusty is elated to know that he or she has claimed the weekend trophy. Those not so lucky hope that *next* Sunday will be their day.

The morning was hot, and Max Burns, the captain, decided to lay in a stock of ice in a suitable container and to place this mobile bar halfway round the course for the benefit of those who became arid. The cold water was relished by all.

Although when the card was drawn the morning was oppressive, a cool breeze later on made playing conditions more favourable. Rain appeared imminent, but all players were able to reach the 19th hole before the storm broke. Ard Cooney and Mrs Bert Hallam were the winners of the mixed foursomes; Max Burns and Mrs Joey Mathews the runners up.

Word was then received that fire had broken out on Hilton Park, a property owned by our vice president, Joey Mathews. Golf and what-might-have-been were forgotten as all members rushed off to stem the outbreak.

19 December 1959—The committee of the Julia Creek Golf Club at the meeting on Sunday afternoon, elected Messrs Harold Mitchell, Bob Smith, and Graham Uhlmann as the programme committee for the 1960 season.

It was decided that the 9th green, the huge mound in front of the clubhouse, is to be reduced to a height of 3 feet. The same personnel will constitute the Disputes Committee and will also bring the rules of the club up to date.



More on Dentists

THE DENTIST from Richmond, he'd come to Julia Creek now and then. And of course we'd all be brought in the 17 miles from Osbert to go to the dentist. He had a wheel connected to a treadle and he used to pump the treadle to get the wheel turning, and that ran the drill. We hated going to the dentist. I don't know whether it was the drill or the noise.

Mum took me to Richmond once when I had a bad tooth: "Mr Bradley will pull it out". During the Depression I suppose it was. While Mum held me – you won't believe this – the dentist gave me a glass of Scotch and I downed it. He took the tooth out and Mum and I went back to the hotel. The Scotch was the anaesthetic because they didn't have a needle.

KATH BYRNE

My first wife was never happy in Julia Creek,
but I loved it.

It was quite a few years before I even had a holiday.
I just thought it was one big holiday.

I did a bit of hunting; nobody minded that.

We'd hear stories about a property being plagued by pigs in the waterholes.

Then (being the big game hunter),
you'd want to see if you could bag a crocodile.

There used to be crocs in the Punchbowl.

Not salties,
fresh water crocs,
but still quite big animals.

Grow as long as this table.

There was an electrical contractor in town,
fella by the name of Jim Weir.

Ran the power house as well.

He used to go out and have a look at generators,
things like that,

and he'd say to me:

"Would you like to come for a ride out to a property".

That's how I got to meet people.

Fridges were becoming available about that time,
but the cockies never offered you a cold beer.

It was always a rum.

In the middle of the hottest day in summer
you'd get offered a rum.

The homestead might have only the one fridge
and it'd be stocked with meat and perishables, not beer.

Y'see, it was all right for me.

I had contacts
and made friendships with people,
but it was no good for my wife.

She was busy with a couple of young kids.

I can see things now that I couldn't then.

It was a man's world out there, not a woman's world.

I don't know what it's like today.

When I left Julia Creek

I leased the pharmacy to a guy who was working for me.

I got a call from the bank manager one day:

"I think you'd better come back here, you might have a bit of trouble.

This manager of yours is thinking of opening up in opposition."

So I went back to sort it out and offered him the business,
but he didn't want to pay any goodwill.

He reckoned that since he had been working on his own for twelve months,
all the goodwill was his.

Eventually we came to an agreement and the pharmacy was sold.

I left Julia Creek in '64.

If it was up to me I would never have left

I enjoyed it so much.

Always did.

Opposite: Julia Creek Golf Club after being moved to a new site near the swimming pool. It was moved again, becoming the Combined Sporting Association building beside the grandstand on the sports oval. [Ernie Brazier, BE03, 1999]



Below: Julia Creek football team (right), and unidentified opposing team (left) at the Julia Creek football oval. Photo taken looking east. The house on the right of the team is where George & Jean Jaques lived. It does not exist today. The smaller house, partly cut off, is Violet Shaw's house, still there in 2009.

[Rita Byrne, FR38, ca 1948]

From right:

1. Joey Mathews
2. Harold Villiers
3. Les Peut
4. Vince Ahern
5. Wally 'Lofly' Thompson
6. Jimmy Roberts

7. Mike Foster
8. Bill Orr
9. Cecil Morgan
10. Gordon Grant
11. Paddy Byrne
12. Billy Cummins
13. Albie Kaeser

NO TRAINING – we practised the day before the game. This bloke was a railway worker, this fella worked on a property, this one at the scour; you wouldn't know where they were. They only came to town for a game of football. We never even had a coach.

VINCE AHERN



Umbrellas For Shade

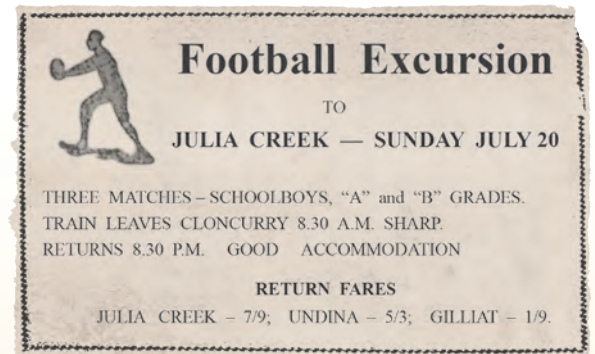
Bernie Foster

**Julia Creek wins the Rugby League
Western Zone title for 1947**

THE FOOTBALL FIELD IN JULIA CREEK ran east-west, goalpost to goalpost. I know, because the sun used to shine in my eyes late in the evening. We didn't have a club. We held meetings at Mathews' Hall where the Civic Centre is now. Half the team would be missing, working out of town. Even for training, half the team wouldn't be there.

We'd play Richmond and Cloncurry regularly. They were the two closest towns. Hughenden was twice a year, home and away. Normal times we travelled by excursion train – booked a couple of carriages. That was the best part of it. But a lot of times we went by car. There'd be a stream of cars leaving Julia Creek if we hadn't booked an excursion train.

Our supporters came along. Oh Christ yeah. The women would be on the sidelines holding umbrellas for shade.



CA: 27 Jun 1947



time of the year.

The Julia Creek football team journeyed to Mount Isa on Sunday to try conclusions with that town at football. At one stage the score was 17 to 7 in favour of Julia Creek; then with only 5 minutes to go the score was 22 to 20 in our favour. The final score was 27 to 25. It was a closely contested match and our team is to be congratulated on their win. They play the final match in Townsville shortly.

A meeting of the Julia Creek branch of the Graziers' Association of Central

NQR: 19 Jul 1947

the Cup for the first time.

HERBERT RIVER SUPERIOR

The Wilson Cup match saw Herbert River prove their undoubted superiority when they took the fixture against Julia Creek by 35 points to 5.

Julia Creek were unfortunate in first losing Don McDonald, the North Queensland representative, and later Albie Kaeser who was shaping well as halfback. Tries came at regular intervals over the closing stages and the Herbert River full back, after missing several conversions, wound up by converting six goals.

Herbert River played all over their opponents in the closing stages and this was due, no doubt, to the fine shape in which their coach and captain has his players. Playing last man down, the Herbert River captain knows his job and inspired his men to do better things.

Julia Creek's five points came from a try and conversion by Ces Morgan, the five-eighth. They were completely out-classed. Apart from Bill Cummins the full back, who showed great dash early, and Morgan the stand-off half, there was nothing outstanding amongst them. They were certainly disorganised through the loss of their star players, but their inclusion would have made no difference to the result.

NQR: 06 Sep 1947

of the blowfly pest.

The Julia Creek Football Club is advertising for three paid players for their league. The fee for each player will be £5 per week and the club will find suitable employment for each. It is hoped that these three will form the nucleus of a strong team to compete in the B grade matches for the season.

On Sunday night last, for the first time in nigh on a fortnight, we were serviced by the mail train and goods train from Townsville. The event was hailed with much joy and great bundles of mail

NQR: 25 Mar 1950

WHEN JULIA CREEK WON THE SEMIFINAL against Mount Isa in 1947, I was working with Arthur Fayers outside Boulia. Fayers played on that 1947 team. We finished work on the Friday night, got in his truck, drove to Duchess and caught the train to Mount Isa. Fayers played in that game. He played all that year.

Well, Julia Creek won the match and became the winners of the Western Zone. Mount Isa were as dirty as Christ. They weren't expecting to lose. They'd already booked the train for the final in Townsville. They used to have a big do after a game of football, but they were that crooked on us they didn't put on the spread until after our excursion train left.

So Julia Creek went to Townsville for the final against Herbert River – and they got beat.

I wasn't playing for Julia Creek that year, but later on I did. I played with Arthur Fayers. He played football till he was bloody 50 that Arthur. Ate raw eggs before each game. The Bootless Terror. Never wore boots except on the field – but he would have gone on without them if he was allowed to. Run all day. Never knock up, that bloke. This is what amuses me with footballers today. They do 20 minutes and they go off for a spell. You didn't get any spell in our day. You went from start to finish.

We bought in two players one year, Stan Crouch and Gordon Meredith, to boost things up a bit. Mount Isa was all paid players. We were lucky to beat them in '47. We didn't have any paid players that year. After our big win that's when Stan and Gordon came in. We guaranteed them so much a week and we found them a job. They had to work as well; they didn't just sit around twiddling their thumbs. Stan worked at the woolscour and Gordon was out in the sheds. They stayed a couple of years.

That Gordon Meredith, he was hard as nails. He was only a little fella; little halfback he was. He was a boxer as well. Stan Crouch – grog got to him in the finish. He was a good footballer till that happened.



Above: Julia Creek football team in blue-striped jerseys. Standing from left: 4. Arthur Fayers, 8. Don McDonald. Front row: 2. Henry Winton. [Bernie Foster, FB03, ca 1955]

"Julia Creek's colours used to be red with a white V, but the colours changed over the years. They went to blue with a white V (over page); then in about the mid-fifties they had blue stripes." (Bernie Foster)



Julia Creek football team
 Winners Western Zone 1947
 Absent: Mike Foster
[Nora Fayers, FN01, 1947]

Back row from left:
 1. Frank Byrne (Treasurer)
 2. Arthur Fayers
 3. Jim Roberts
 4. Billy Cummins
 5. Bill Orr
 6. Wally Thompson
 7. Vince Ahern
 8. Don McDonald
 9. Frank Jones

Middle row:
 1. Cecil Morgan
 2. Mick Taaffe (Manager & Secretary)
 3. Jack Cooper
 4. Albie Kaeser (Captain)
 5. Tom Foster
 6. Bill "Nugget" Stanley (President)
 7. Harold Villiers

Front row:
 1. Joey Mathews
 2. Bob Smith
 3. Les Peut
 4. Gordon Grant
 5. Joe Kaeser
 6. Paddy "Irish" Byrne

I WAS BORN IN 1931 AT MCKINLAY. Dad was the council overseer. Around the time I was born, the shire centre was moved from McKinlay to Julia Creek and Dad became the first council overseer at the Julia Creek office.

I was only 4 or 5 when Dad died, so I don't know how he came to be at McKinlay. I do know that he came from somewhere in NSW. I found that on his death certificate. And I can tell you that he was married on the 7th day of March 1910. That's on his marriage certificate. The groom was 25 years old and the bride was 16. As far as I know he was in McKinlay when he married Mum. They had lots of kids. There's stacks of Fosters, I tell you. Stacks of them. Eleven in all, and I'm the youngest.

I was 6 months old when we went to Julia Creek and I did all my schooling there. That school was full, eh. Every room was at capacity. A lot of kids went to school in Julia Creek in those years.

A headmaster called Whitby – I'll never forget the little bastard. I told him one time: "If I catch up with you when you leave this school..." He was a bloody mongrel. Arthur Cann used to give us the cane, but that Whitby... He stood you on the stool and hit you in the middle of the back and knocked you over the desk. Ooh, he was a real mongrel, that fella. I couldn't wear him.

I left school when I was 13 and I went to work for AJ Smith's in the front street. AJ Smith was pretty big with stores in those days. As well as the one in Julia Creek, he had one in Richmond and one in Cloncurry.

Ben Burrows was the manager for years until he left and opened the O-K Store in Burke St. When Ben left, Joe Smith, the son, he came down from Cloncurry and managed the store. Joe was my boss. Other than him, there was only Cynthia Fickling and me. Cynthia was on the drapery side.

Joe went around the houses and took the orders, and I had to cart all the stuff from the railway, bundle the orders, and deliver them. Joe had a little Whippet utility. He went and saw Tom Brennan, the copper, and got permission for me to drive it. Brennan would have said in his big gruff voice: "And tell Bernie – not too bloody heavy on the foot". He needn't have worried. The Whippet would only do 20 mile an hour flat out.

I was with AJ Smith's the day the war ended. I was only there about 14 months working six and a half days a week for £2/10. Went out to the shearing sheds with Arthur Fayers – working five and a half days a week – for double. Fayers was pretty new in town, but he was there before the war ended. He had three or four shearing teams going. I was with him for a long time.

The town is particularly quiet right now and there is no work offering anywhere.

At the present time the council's plant is busily engaged in laying the water along the streets that did not previously have a water main. The work is proceeding under the supervision of the overseer, Mr. George Foster. When the work is completed it will fill a long felt want for the residents of the northern and western end of the town.

Mr. and Mrs. Bert Burrows are now settled down in their new home, the Blue Bird Cafe, Mr. Burrows being the proprietor. We wish the happy couple all the joy and happiness possible for the future.

NQR: 20 Apr 1935

DEATH.

George Arthur Foster.

The death occurred in the Hughenden hospital on Tuesday last of George Arthur Foster, overseer to the McKinlay Shire Council. Deceased had been ill for some weeks and was on his way to Townsville to seek further medical attention when he took a bad turn and had to enter the Hughenden Hospital.

Born at Ben Lomond, New South Wales, 53 years ago, deceased came to Queensland as a young man. Fourteen years ago he was appointed overseer to the McKinlay Shire Council, which position he has held ever since. He was well-known and popular all over the McKinlay and Julia Creek districts and sympathy is extended to his wife and eleven children, 6 boys and 5 girls, who are left to mourn his loss. The eldest boy and girl are married.

CA: 05 Dec 1936

You know anything about sheds at all?

You get the shearers that shear 'em,
but before that,
to get the sheep in the pen,
there was a bloke called the *penner-up*.
And when they were shearing
you had the bloke to pick up the fleece;
he was the *picker-up*.
Then it's thrown on the table;
no, he wasn't called the thrower-up,
the picker-up did that.
Then the *wool-roller* skirted it,
the *piece picker* picked over it,
and the *classer* classed it
and put it in the bin ready for pressing.

The wool-roller,
he skirted small pieces of wool off the shorn fleece
and put them on a separate table.

The piece-picker,
he picked the clean wool from the dirty wool.
Clean wool went to *broken*;
dirty wool went to *pieces*.
Pieces were the rough stuff.
Broken were clean bits of wool
with all the rough stuff taken off the edges.

Out the back, in the bins, was the *presser*:
he put the fleece in the woolpress and pressed it up.
Then you had the *expert*:
he fixed the machines,
sharpened the tools for the shearers,
and so forth and what not.

I couldn't come at shearing. I went through the rest of it, but not shearing. I had a go and I wasn't real keen on it. Eventually I went pressing.

The first shed I ever did was around Boulia with Arthur Fayers. Galloping Ghan they used to call him. They also called him the Barefoot Ghan. Ah... he was a mad bastard. I tell you what I saw him do. We were at Datchet Downs, between Boulia and Dajarra, and he's walking backwards – straight into a lump of bore casing. It peeled the skin full off the back of his heel. It wasn't left hanging by much. So he got down with his needle and thread – shearers always had a needle and thread for sewing nicked sheep – and he just sewed it up, put a bit of tar on, and off he went. That's fair dinkum. I saw that happen.

Just after I was married in '54 I went with Tom Jessup. I stopped with him until young Tom, his son, took over. I went out with Roy Beauchamp well-boring then, in the sixties. I was with Roy a long time, six or seven years. In 1970 I finished the bore we were on, and then I went to Townsville.

JULIA CREEK WAS ALL RIGHT as far as I was concerned. A pretty good town. Work wasn't difficult to find when I started out as a youngster. You could get a job anywhere. The council was okay in the off season, but it didn't pay much. Same with lizard catching on the line – fettler in other words (they were always seeing lizards). Not much money in it, but you could always get a job. Labour was that short, you'd come home midweek between sheds, and next morning you might be out digging a grave.

In 1970 when I left, there wasn't much work around. And I wasn't looking. I had that one bore to do for Roy, and when I finished – that was it. I left. I just got sick of the west. Cold weather is what I didn't like about Julia Creek. Get up of a winter morning and those sou-westerlies went right through you. You'd be shivering and thinking you were never going to get warm.

And another thing I didn't like about Julia Creek was that headmaster. If you run into Whitby on your travels, tell him Bernie Foster's still looking for him!



Below: Julia Creek football team in blue jerseys with white V.
[Carmel Fickling, FC25, 1950]

Back row from left:

1. ?
2. Jim Holzheimer
3. ?
4. Bernie Foster
5. Les Peut
6. Pat Mathers
7. Clem Foster
8. Mick Campbell
9. Stan Crouch (paid player)

Front Row:

1. Joe Kaeser
2. Henry Winton
3. ?
4. Gordon Meredith (paid player)
5. Paddy "Irish" Byrne
6. ?
7. Harold Villiers



JULIA CREEK. FOOTBALL TEAM 1950

Football in the Early Years

8 AUGUST 1927—The handsome cup and set of medals donated by Mr Tom Kelly have given a great fillip to the football game this season. The final stages have proved very interesting and have evoked much enthusiasm. The Gilliat and Nonda teams were eliminated in due course, and last Sunday the Julia Creek team played McKinlay in the final. The visitors played with the wind in the first half and broke through a temporarily weak defence to score a try, which was not converted. In the last few minutes of the second half, Cain, of Julia Creek, scored a lucky try and the game ended in a draw. Among the forwards, Collings, playing for McKinlay, was probably the best on the field, while among the backs, Tom Jessup of Julia Creek was in a class of his own.

McKinlay supporters were present in force and helped to swell the large crowd. Although a few unfortunate people were stricken with a sort of war fever, the barracking for the most part was good humoured enough.

One got the impression that if referees are ever in short supply, Julia Creek could muster from the sidelines a modest dozen or so, while our McKinlay neighbours are in a position to supply them by the gross. They are amateurs of course, and not many have been farther on a football field than a line umpire will allow them.

The two teams will play off again for the cup at Gilliat on Sunday next.

6 JUNE 1931—Business in general is particularly quiet, and although this position is due to the Depression to a certain extent, I certainly think that the business folk of this town can share an equal part in this state of affairs. Their lack of interest and energy in offering enticements to attract country folk into town is very obvious.

It is to be hoped that this season some attempt will be made to revive football. Surely we have the goods in our midst. I certainly believe it is up to the business folk to get together and endeavour to revive the game that was so prominent in past years. It would certainly be to the mutual advantage of all concerned to have a football competition.

Right: Julia Creek football team at the 20 Mile on Alva Downs.
[Joanie Halloran, JH134, ca 1940]

Back row from left:
4. "Tiny" O'Neill
5. Barton
8. Jack Jensen.

Front row:
3. Dan Lynch
6. Arthur Halloran



4 JUNE 1932—The football club, in an endeavour to gain funds to enable them to keep the club in swing, propose holding a competition to select the “Nicest Girl in Town”. This should prove a most popular, but no doubt difficult task, for despite all of Julia Creek’s other shortcomings, we truly are favoured with a select variety of girls to choose from.

On Tuesday night last, a boxing tournament and dance was held in aid of the football club. The big attendance will no doubt considerably swell the coffers. The entertainment proved a success from all angles, and quite a few budding Dempseys came to light.

11 MAY 1935—Last Sunday a football match between the Scour and the Town resulted in a win for the latter by 18 points to nil. The scores were not a true indication of the game as both teams were fairly evenly matched and hopelessly out of condition. Julia Creek will be able to field a pretty decent team of representative players this season, providing the boys take an interest in the game and get themselves into condition with plenty of hard training. This year the players and supporters are taking a much keener interest in the game, and it is to be hoped that this interest does not wane. I feel certain that the players will do their part and get themselves into condition. Mr Peter Dawes has generously

donated a gold medal for the most improved player during the season. Every young blood should try and win the trophy.

Last night the Julia Creek football club, in conjunction with the Scour club, held a most successful dance in the School of Arts. The effort boosted funds to the extent of about £6 when all expenses were deducted. This was one of the most enjoyable dances held in Julia Creek for some time, and when the last dance was announced at 1 a.m. the crowd was reluctant to leave the hall.

The town is very quiet and very little work will be on offer until rain relieves the depressed state of the district.

25 MAY 1935—Last Sunday, and also the Sunday before, the town football team gave the Scour team two more hidings. On both occasions, the Scour thought they were unbeatable. Personally, I think the Scour will have to train in earnest if they ever expect to register a win. They have some very good individual players at the head, who will certainly represent Julia Creek at inter-town matches providing they are in condition, but they have a tail that needs a lot of sparking up. It is a team without combination. If they will only get together and take more interest in the game, they will give the town team something to think about.

The town team itself is far from a world beater, and there has been too much playing the man instead of the ball. Like the Scour team, they also do not train. If they are not going to get themselves into good condition they cannot expect to win inter-town matches, nor can they expect to compete in club matches without feeling tired and sore afterwards.

Next Sunday the married men will play the single men and a good game is assured. If all the experienced old buffers take to the field, the young ’uns are in for a hard game. The old chaps will be unlucky if they suffer defeat.

24 AUGUST 1946—On Sunday last a special train took three football teams, a basketball team, and a tennis team to Hughenden for matches against players from that centre. Players and supporters were along in invasion numbers. The scene at the Hughenden railway station was reminiscent of the pre-war days when excursion trains carried sportsmen in full force. Julia Creek played hard and keenly in all matches, demonstrating their great desire to win laurels for their home town.

The school boys’ match came first and the keen rivalry was good to see. Julia Creek won by 9 points to nil. The basketball girls improved Julia Creek’s position by giving a splendid performance, winning by 5 points to 2. The B grade footballers then clashed and Julia Creek again proved the masters, defeating Hughenden by 8 points to nil. The A grade game was very even, only one try scored during the match. Hughenden gained their only victory in this encounter and the scores were 13 points to 2. Tennis was last, Julia Creek claiming victory by 13 matches to 9. The games were lively and the scores were close.

It was a great day for Julia Creek and all were jubilant at the successful outcome of the clash with the bigger fish. It is expected that return matches will be played on Sunday, September 1st.

The tennis players are off to Cloncurry on Sunday to meet a team from that town and a vigorous tussle is expected. Our footballers go to Richmond to play on the same day.





Bryan: There's a lot about Alex Wall I could tell you, really. He was a wild man.

Maris: Aw, you don't put that in books. You can't say that.

Bryan: But he *was* a wild man. He didn't mind a bit of a punch up and that sort of thing.

BRYAN & MARIS FELS

Above: Tom's father, Alex Wall,
at the Julia Creek Races.
[Shirley Wall, WS04, 1954]

The Place with Two Trees

Tom Wall

Julia Creek's infamous bush pilot, Alex Wall, loses a leg and takes up bungee jumping

WELL, OTHERS HAVE ASKED ME where's my home town... and I have to think about it. Even though I did some schooling there, it's not Julia Creek, the place with two trees but one of them's a mirage – or so they reckon. To be quite honest, my home town is Queensland.

MUM MET THE OLD FELLA out past Malbon, past Cloncurry, while he was managing Agate Downs. Mum came from the coast, from Home Hill, and that's where Dad and her decided to get married. After the wedding they came back and lived at Agate Downs.

When I was due to be born Mum got on the train at Kuridala, near Agate Downs, and went to Malbon. At Malbon, trains ran east to the coast and west to Mount Isa. I was supposed to be born in Mount Isa, but I wasn't. Mum thought: *Bugger it, I'll go to the coast, to my own people*. So she went to Home Hill, and that's where I was born in October 1942.

Agate Downs was owned by Lionel, Dad's younger brother. Lionel borrowed money off his father, old Tom, to buy the property. Dad might have had a share in it, I'm not sure. Lionel went to war and a lot of things happened. He became a lieutenant. Dad, he was lined up for war too, but old Tom applied to get him out of the army so he could stay on the land. Dad was in Darwin ready to go, set to go in the Light Horse, when he got his discharge. He went back to manage the property.

Like all brothers, Alex and Lionel had a few rows. According to Dad, they had a big blue once on Agate Downs. Lionel was charging stores to the property account, but they were landing in his business in Julia Creek. He miscued once, and instead of being delivered to Julia Creek, a big Christmas order arrived at the Agate Downs homestead. It was Christmas all right, when all these goodies turned up. Old Tom, he kept his finger in the pie, and he came to see Dad about these accounts:

You're living pretty well out here.
How do you work that out?
All these bills for tucker.
Well, I've never ordered any of it.

Dad took old Tom into the store room. Plenty of salt, syrup, flour, sugar, tobacco and all that sort of thing, but nothing fancy. When it all came out, just after the war, that Lionel was charging stuff to the property that he shouldn't have been, Dad and Lionel had a bit of a set to, a bit of a blue.

And that's when the old fella left for the Territory to do some fencing.

Lionel was a bit of a character. He was cunning, he'd try and do you out of something on occasion. That happens everywhere. He tried to snip the old fella a couple of times – and he got away with it once. They had their arguments, and some of them got serious at times. The old fella was a pretty wild lad, and if he came into Julia Creek it would put Lionel on edge. Lionel could never be sure that if Alex got on the grog he wouldn't start remembering a few things, and there could have been a blue.

Mum used to say: "Never let the sun go down on an argument" – not that Alex and Lionel took her advice – but she was pretty right. Later on in life the two brothers were good mates.

WEDDING

WALL-MILBURN

St. Coleman's Roman Catholic Church, Home Hill, was the scene of a very pretty wedding recently and of great interest to the Lower Burdekin residents, as the bride's grandparents were among the first to settle in Home Hill. Aileen (Lana), youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Milburn, was married to Alexander Wall, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Wall, Lindfield, Julia Creek.

The bride looked charming as she entered the church on the arm of her father. She was frocked in white satin and lace, cut on classical lines, buttoned to waist at back, and fitting sleeves finished with satin buttons. Her embroidered tulle veil was held in place by a coronet of orange blossoms. She carried a bouquet of white posterity roses tied with satin ribbon. The only ornaments worn were a beautiful ring of crystals, falling to the waist, and a sapphire and diamond ring, gifts from the bridegroom's mother.

The wedding breakfast was held at the home of the bride's parents. The three-tiered wedding cake made by the bride's sister (Mrs. W. Whitman) stood on an embroidered cloth sent from abroad by Lieut. Lionel Wall, brother of the bridegroom.

On leaving for the honeymoon the bride chose a blue ensemble with black accessories. Their future home will be Agate Downs station, Kuridala, via Cloncurry.

CA: 07 Nov 1941

Those stories from the early years, I remember them mainly from Mum and the old fella talking. Actually, Mum was the story teller. The old fella never had much to say unless he had a couple under him. Now and then he'd say something, but he wasn't a bloke who would yap that much. Even though he had his moments – at home and out bush – he'd only say what was necessary. He'd have a yarn, but he wasn't real forward that way. But when he was flying planes – well, then he had a bit to say. Or when boxing, buckjumping at rodeos, or whatever else he got up to, he was a talker then. He could be outgoing, right enough.

WHEN DAD CAME BACK from the Territory, him and Mum bought the Malbon Hotel. I started school in Malbon. They were in the hotel for a couple of years and then we went back to Agate Downs. Dad was managing the place again, and I did school-of-the-air business until I got a bit unruly. Mum couldn't teach me and do the station work as well, so she sent me to a convent at Hughenden. I was there with the nuns for a while, getting a bit of God forced into me. From there I went to All Souls. The old fella said he went to All Souls, so I go to All Souls. That came to an end when he had a row with the headmaster. "Right, you're not going back there", and I'm thinking: *Bewdy! I'm not going back to school.* But we moved

into Julia Creek and I had to do another year, up to part way through grade 8, at St Joseph's Convent. Dad, he stayed working on properties.

Mum believed idle hands got up to mischief, so when school was out in Julia Creek a lot of my time was spent working, odd jobbing, or on the golf course caddying to get a few bob. They had a water trap, and we'd dive in and get a bucket of balls and sell them. Tuppence each we'd get. Tuppence went a long way them days.

When we got a bit of free time we used to knock around: go to a dance, the pictures, run into someone. Might go down to the cattle yards, we might see a mob of cattle coming in. We always had horses and we'd ride out to the common to help the drovers. Give them a bit of a spell. We'd tail the horses while they went to the pub.

There were a few goats around the Creek at the time. Everyone had a few head of goats. Anywhere there was shade in Julia Creek – and there wasn't that much shade – but wherever the shade was, no motor cars parked there because that's where the goats would be, and they'd walk all over your car. Anyone new in town, they'd park in the shade, and – tukka, tukka, tukka – these goats would jump up on the car and dance. Young goats. They'd like the sound of their feet on the tin, and they'd be playing and bouncing all over the car. They'd leap pretty high them young ones, just playing. Dance about and away they'd go.



Looking back now at Julia Creek, I sometimes wonder what the bloody hell I did do with myself. We'd ride a lot on bicycles, or, when we weren't going to school, we'd be out around the properties giving them a hand in the wool shed. When we got vehicles we'd go out to the Punchbowl on the Flinders. That's where we'd have parties. We put in a lot of time at the Punchbowl, and at Eddington waterhole, too. Those days there were lots of picnics organised. You had to do something.

I remember... ha! One night there, we came in for the pictures. I was working on Millungera and all us ringer blokes are in town, all half wild, all a bit cut, and the nuns chose to come. We're seeing this *Seven Commandments*. One part of it they said – I'll never forget it – "The good Lord said let there be light, and there was light", and this voice comes up: "And you could see for fuckin' miles". It was one of our blokes. The picture stopped, the lights came on, the nuns were horrified. Normie Downey, he's gonna throw us all out. We wouldn't say who said it; we weren't too bloody sure ourselves. Sergeant Purtle, he threatened the lot of us with the lockup. So we had to get out of town pretty quick, back to Millungera.

WHEN AGATE DOWNS WAS SOLD, around 1951, the old fella got a share and he bought into Harrogate. He was there for a few years and then he went to Lindfield, his father's property, helping out. He ran a tanksinking plant, an Oliver tractor with a Britstand scoop; and a fireploughing plant, a big old fireplough built in Charters Towers by Bob Leigh. He did fireploughing, tanksinking, and he did quite well out of that.

That's the old boy fireploughing with an Oliver BDH. You can see the track being cut behind the fireplough. I was trying to see... well, I'll be bugged... there they are, just faintly – see the two white lines between

him and the crawler? They're leather horse reins, breaking-in reins, and they were tied on to the air brakes. He'd hold them in his hands like he was driving a sulky. If he was doing a line and wanted to turn just a little bit, he'd pull the rein for one of the air brakes and that'd slow that track. Each track had independent brakes. He's sitting on a drum, steering by the air brakes. She's working, she's up to revs, but in a low gear. He'd line up something on the crawler with something way in the distance. He'd line it up and he could keep a good straight track.

The two wheels you can see are steering wheels from a Bren Gun carrier, one on each side of the plough. A big screw on both of them set the cutting depth; it moved the nose of the fireplough up or down. That photo would have been taken in the early 50s on Lindfield.

Opposite: In the mid-1950s, one of the activities for boys in Julia Creek of Tom's age was Ernie Brazier's Youth Group, which ran for about 18 months. Tom was the same age as the boys in this photo, but was boarding at All Souls when the photo was taken.

Back row from left: 1. Trevor Mobbs, 2. ?

3. John Kaeser, 4. Billy Dowling, 5. ?

Middle row: 1. Vince Fickling, 2. Billy Ryder, 3. ?, 4. ?

Front row: 1. Trevor Stainkey, 2. ?, 3. Robert Peet, 4. ?

[Ernie Brazier, BE04, 1954]

Below: Dad driving with reins on grader.

Alex Wall, fireploughing. He controlled the Oliver BDH with reins on the air brakes. The reins are just visible as thin white lines above and to the right of the drums on the fireplough.

[Tom Wall, WT01, 1952]



While Dad was on Lindfield he decided to learn to fly. Mum helped him with it. She could fly better than him – on paper – because of the studies. He learnt in Townsville; he joined the Townsville Aero Club. He had a caravan at Rowes Bay till he finished all his flying. The first plane he got was VH AZD, a Tiger Moth, and he had “Tally O” painted on it. He bought that plane off Lionel. Lionel was flying a lot younger.

Over the years Dad had three planes and more than that number of adventures. There was an old bloke around Julia Creek bore sinking – Ernie Emblen, that was his name, and he had a Riley car. He reckoned he could go faster in the Riley than Dad could go in his Tiger Moth, so they had a bet. They were out towards Kynuna. It was a pretty fair run into Julia Creek and the plane had to follow the road, that was one of the rules. As Dad was landing, the Riley’s big dust cloud was coming. By the time he put the plane in the hangar and got into his car, Ernie was in Julia Creek.

Technically, Ernie won. He got into town before the old man. The Tiger Moth, see, 80 knots was about flat out.



Below: Ernie Emblen's bore drilling plant (a Southern Cross No. 2) and his Riley car, near McKinlay.
[Kath Batt, BK16, ca 1950]

Above: Alex Wall's Tiger Moth, Tally O, VH AZD.
[Joe Azzopardi, AJ07, 1955]

BORERS TODAY, THEY'RE ROTARY. It was percussion those days. Rotary turns around; percussion is done with rope. You lift the drill, drop it, and as it hits you twist the rope and turn it.

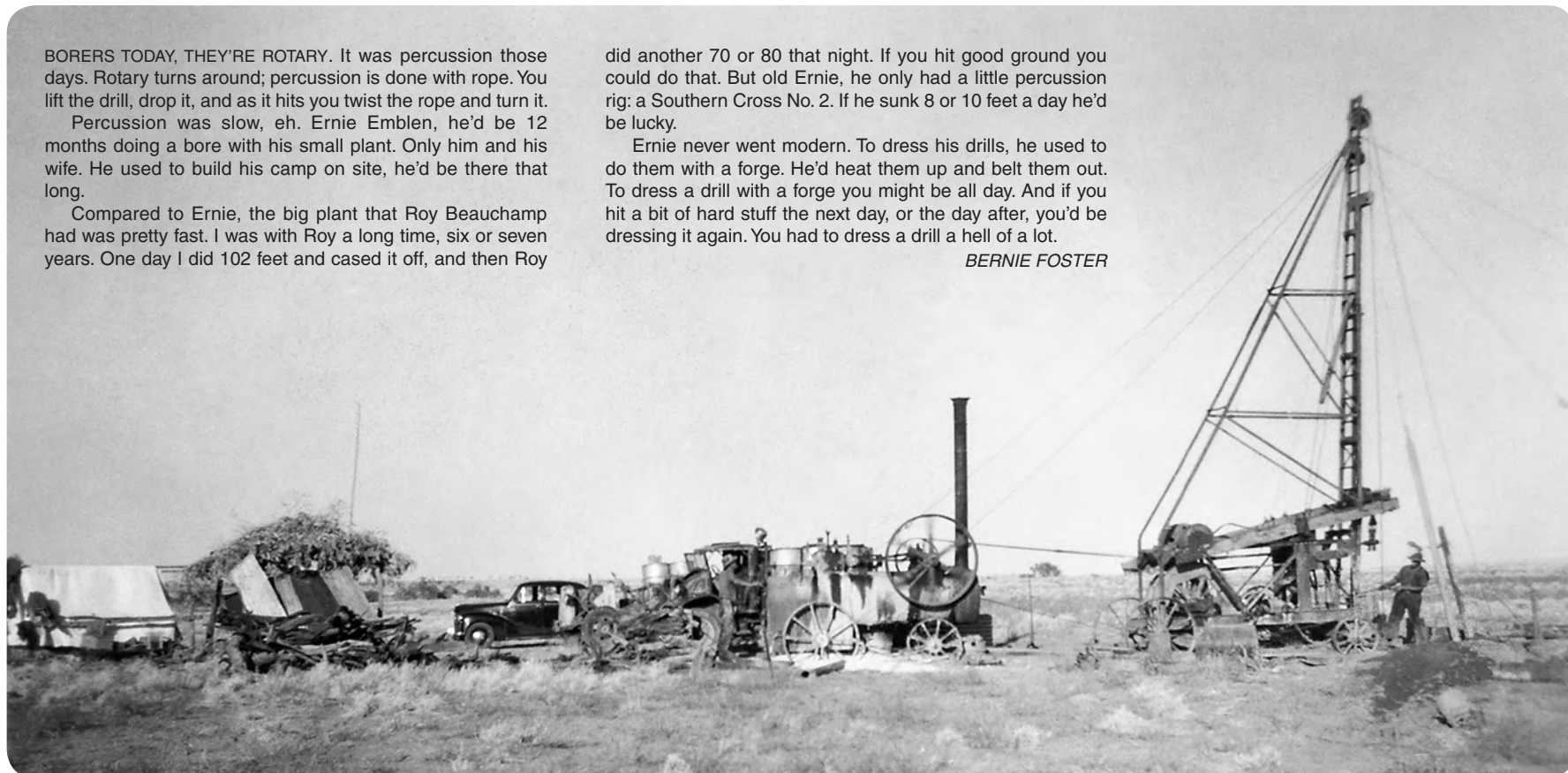
Percussion was slow, eh. Ernie Emblen, he'd be 12 months doing a bore with his small plant. Only him and his wife. He used to build his camp on site, he'd be there that long.

Compared to Ernie, the big plant that Roy Beauchamp had was pretty fast. I was with Roy a long time, six or seven years. One day I did 102 feet and cased it off, and then Roy

did another 70 or 80 that night. If you hit good ground you could do that. But old Ernie, he only had a little percussion rig: a Southern Cross No. 2. If he sunk 8 or 10 feet a day he'd be lucky.

Ernie never went modern. To dress his drills, he used to do them with a forge. He'd heat them up and belt them out. To dress a drill with a forge you might be all day. And if you hit a bit of hard stuff the next day, or the day after, you'd be dressing it again. You had to dress a drill a hell of a lot.

BERNIE FOSTER



Dad also had an Auster. It met its end just behind the cattle yards after he came in from a mercy flight. He landed and went up town. Kids were seen playing around the plane. Whether they were smoking and fuel caught fire, or the perspex windows focused the sun, or there was an electrical short – it was never worked out. In 20 minutes she was finished.

ALEX WALL, Lionel Wall, Lew Ryder, Arthur Lowe – all the fliers used to land near the cattle yards; or, if it was real muddy, out on the cemetery road. Hook the plane to the back of a ute and tow it to its hangar.

Sometimes you'd see planes parked in the middle of the street. It was breaking all the rules, but it was accepted because people in the district needed light aircraft.

That burnt plane is Alex Wall's Auster. I owned that aeroplane afterwards. Alex gave it to me and I built God-knows how many

go-karts out of it for kids in Julia Creek. He left it parked at the cattle yards on the edge of town with his cigarettes and matches on the dash. Kids got into it and started smoking and playing with matches and they burnt it.

I flew that Auster to Winton – before I learnt to fly, mind you – the day Alex was drunk and went to sleep. He got the plane in the air and he says to me, pointing: "Winton's that way" and he nodded off. I had to wake him up at Winton to land the damn thing.

CHARLIE CORRIGAN

in default one month's imprisonment.

On Sunday night, lights from a number of vehicles lit up the airstrip in order that local flyer Mr. Alex Wall, on a trip from Taldor station in his new Auster, could make a safe landing.

An inquiry into the cause of the fire which destroyed Mr. Wall's previous aeroplane on May 14, 1958, was held on Tuesday in the Court of Petty Sessions. After evidence was given by Mr. Wall and Mr. Herb Fickling, Council Ranger, the inquiry was adjourned to Cloncurry to hear the evidence of Detective Corbett who assisted in the investigation. It was revealed that no electrical equipment was on the plane, but the tanks contained a small quantity of aviation spirit. At the time of the fire, children had been playing around the plane and a boy was seen walking on one of the wings. Mr. Wall had parked his Auster plane on the town common a day or so earlier. Operators with several fire extinguishers attempted to quell the blaze but were unsuccessful, and in a short time the plane was a total wreck.

The burnt-out alternator at the power

NQR: 30 Aug 1958

Below: Alex Wall's burnt-out Auster, north of the railway line on the west side of town, looking south-west. Cattle-yard fence on left; remains of woolscour on skyline, right.

[Kath Batt, BK05, 1958]



Then Dad went to Brisbane and bought an Auster Auto Car. SPATS we called it – Southport Aero Taxi Service. One time he was flying to Millungera, taking tucker and mail out. Coming back to town, no radio, if he didn't have a vehicle at the strip he'd fly low over the house, rev her up and down, and you'd know that he wanted someone to go out to the hangar and meet him. The electrical mob, they're putting new wires in. They strung more wires after he left. On the way back he flew low – and hit the wires. Oh, Jesus! We thought he was gonna crash then. He got to the hangar and we could see the wire mark along the wing. It had let go; he had enough power to break the wire. SPATS was out of action for a month.

Occasionally he wouldn't get back from a flight till after dark. Anytime that sort of thing happened, people in town with a car would drive out to the airstrip and put their headlights on. Some would be at the touchdown end with their lights pointing down the strip, and the rest would be stacked along, lights across, to give him an idea of the length and width. The end of the strip they always left open in case he overshot or had to go round.

The end for SPATS came when a whirlywind hit him¹. He was taking off from in town and he put her in the dirt. The engine got turned right around in the frame.

He had a couple more planes after SPATS. One was another Auster and the last one was Lionel's Fairchild. He picked that up in Townsville and got just past Maxwelton, near a little railway siding, and the wooden propeller fell to bits. That was the only time he flew that plane. It ended up in Georgie Triffett's backyard in Julia Creek and that was where it stopped, that was the end of it.

The bankruptcy people sold AZD and I think they might have sold the Fairchild. AZD was kept in the hangar for a good lot of years. It went out of service, but he had a couple of spare engines for it and it was still a good plane.

I WAS 16 when I left school. I did a course on wool classing and worked for my father. He was a shearing contractor. I also took up photography, and as a sideline to the shearing I became the town photographer. Wedding photos and deb photos were pretty popular in those days. Anything in that line. My father had a tin shed in the backyard and he cordoned off a darkroom.

Somewhere I've got an aerial photograph of Julia Creek. I convinced Alex Wall to take me up. Alex I remember as a total drunk. Used to fly blind. He didn't have a very good reputation. He'd take off from Julia St – I think it was bitumen even in those days, the only bitumen road in town – and when he landed, he'd taxi the aircraft along Julia St to where

his garage used to be, opposite the old school house.

Anyway, I arranged to fly with Alex and told him I wanted to take photographs. "No trouble, Tom; no trouble. I'll take the door off to make it more interesting. You can lean out and get your photos that way."

Well, he took the door off and we're skimming down one of the backstreets near the old cattle yards. Next minute my seatbelt flies open and I couldn't get it to stay done up. Every time Alex saw me ready to take a photograph he'd bank the plane over – and all I could think of was the bloody seat belt which wasn't on properly.

TOMMY JESSUP

Opposite: Alex Wall's crashed Auster Auto Car, VH-KCA, (SPATS) at Julia Creek on the road to the cemetery, Saturday, 7 March 1959. Alex Wall was the pilot, Reg Fry and Keith Coleman were passengers.
[Reg Fry, FRe01, 1959]

Below: Another view of Alex Wall's crashed VH-KCA.
[Kath Batt, BK03, 1959]



1. A more detailed story of the crash is told by Reg Fry, opposite.

Adventures with Alex Wall

HOW THAT CRASH HAPPENED: Alex had a hangar at the airstrip and he wanted to take the plane from his garage in town out to the hangar. It was taking up too much room. Keith Coleman and I were passengers, along for a joy ride. The garage was in Julia St, over the lane behind the Post Office. We fuelled the plane and took it out onto the bitumen, the only bitumen road in town at that time, the road out to the cemetery. In the wet it was the only place you could take off from. Alex Wall, his brother Lionel, Arthur Lowe: in the wet all the fliers used Julia St as an airstrip. Alex reckoned it was okay to take off from there when it was dry, too.

We lined up ready to go. Alex gave it throttle and we started to roll. But a whirlywind got us. Doesn't take much. When you get a whirlywind like that, you've gotta fight it. It takes power to push through it. We slowed down so much that we couldn't lift off in time. Past where the swimming pool is today there was a gully, and in the gully were these guide posts on both sides of the road. It was a narrow road, and if we'd stayed on the ground the wings would have hit the posts, so Alex pulled back on the stick and jumped us into the air over the top of them. Then he had to bring it down. If he took it up, the plane would have stalled and we would have finished up nose diving. On the other side of the gully there was a sharp rise, and Alex more or less did a belly flop.

I was in the back. I'd undone my seatbelt before we hit and I got thrown out. Keith and Alex were in the front and they crawled out through a hole in the top. Keith got a busted nose. All Alex got was a busted pride.

REG FRY

NO WAY in the bloody world would I go up in an aeroplane with Lew Ryder. Same with Alex Wall. We were driving out to the Punchbowl one day. Next minute we hear this roar overhead, Alex's Tiger Moth above us. The wheels just lightly touched the roof of our car and up he went. That's the sort of pilots they were.

LIONEL FRY

I WENT UP with Alex Wall once and we could see kangaroos on the ground. He said: "I'll give you a good look" and he dropped it down. He went real low and you could almost touch the kangaroos as they hopped away.

But Arthur Lowe, he was a true-blue pilot, a fighter pilot during the war. Was no mucking round with him.

DOREEN FRY

THE AIRSTRIP AT JULIA CREEK? Anywhere from 150 miles that way to 100 miles that way. Anywhere flat they landed planes. Anywhere, on any bit of a track or a road. They used to land near the cattle yards behind the railway. The first bloke that landed here in 1928, the Flying Doctor¹, he landed right alongside the cattle yards too.

MANNIE SILLS

ARTHUR LOWE was a good pilot, an experienced pilot, but that Alex Wall, he used to do some fairly stupid things. I was stranded in Julia Creek once, and I asked Alex to fly me home. It was fairly wet and only a little narrow gravel airstrip. The Tiger Moth, they're pretty hard to control. They don't have independent braking; you gotta steer with the rudder. Coming down the strip we ran off the gravel into the black mud and stood the Tiger on it's nose. I remember seeing petrol dripping off the tank onto the engine and sizzling on the exhaust. Got out of there in a hell of a hurry.

We pulled down on the tail and had a look at the prop. One side was smashed right off. Alec said: "I've got another one in the shed. I'll go and get it and put it on and we'll have another go".

No way in the world I'd have another go. I got Arthur Lowe to come out and take me home.

ERIC SLACK-SMITH

I THINK IT WAS 1957. The Australian Rodeo Championships were being held in Longreach. Colin Hardy, my wife and two kids and myself hired Alex Wall to fly us there and back in his Auster.

Four o'clock in the afternoon, waiting to come back, Alex still hadn't turned up and I was getting a bit toey. When he finally turned up it was obvious he'd had a few too many and I was thinking: *This bloke's not capable of flying a plane.* Alex assured us he was all right and we took off.

Somewhere between Winton and Kynuna he said to Colin: "Y'see this gauge here on the dash. It's got two horizontal bars. They should be parallel if the wings are level. Try and keep them that way while I have a sleep". My wife put on such a turn that Alex didn't have to worry about sleeping.

By the time we got back to Julia Creek it was dark and he had to buzz the town for them to come out and shine the car lights down the strip. That's my experience with Alex Wall. Never again.

COOEE WILDER



1. See photo page 157.

IN '56 DAD BOUGHT DEBELLA. He borrowed some money – and some he had – and bought it off Jimmy Underwood. It's 70-odd miles north of Julia Creek. As well as running the property, he continued with fireploughing and tanksinking. Mainly fireploughing he was into. He did tanksinking only as they needed him. He never built any really big dams. The big dams, Max Burns used to build them. The old fella built a few fair-sized dams and turkey's nests where it wasn't worth Max's time to shift his plant. They coexisted quite okay, that way.

I was 14 when I started working. I went out to Debella with the old boy. Before the dingo fence came through, doggers like Tom Jensen, and others, earned a quid by trapping. But trapping was a waste of time. So when they got the dog fence up we tried to eradicate the dogs on the Debella side by aerial baiting. They'd hit the fence and follow it along. What we used to do: the old boy'd take the door off the Auster and we'd get these boxes of strychnine baits – they were in white paper, screwed up – and we'd fly along the fence. We'd be doing about 80 mile an hour I suppose, one wing down, and if any trees appeared he'd flick up the wing, just lift her a bit. I wasn't supposed to look ahead. Well, naturally you do, and all I could see were these gum trees. And he's up me: "Don't look at the bloody trees! Look at the fence. All you gotta do is rake them baits out". I'd keep raking the baits out, one eye on the trees.

When the box was empty he'd lift her up and fly level. I'd unbuckle, look in the back for the next box of baits, pull it over, take the lid off, get it ready to go, and buckle up again. Then he'd return to the place where he'd finished the last run. He'd grab hold of my seatbelt, give it a pull to see if it was tight

enough, and over he'd go – he'd lay it on its side again. I'd be hanging on, looking down.

Bait layin! I tell you what – it frightened shit out of me. I'd try to find an excuse to get on a horse and go bush. A bit older and I might have enjoyed the thrill, but at the time I was only a kid, 14 or 15.

Or delving bore drains – what a bastard of a game that was. Him and I had more fights on them bloody bore drains than up in that aeroplane. Debella was run down when he got it. He brought it back up and got the place running real good, but in the meantime... He'd be on the tractor and we'd get to a place where the drain had broken and formed a lake. I'd have to jump off and unhook the wire rope to the delver. You can still see the scar on my hand where broken wires cut right in.

Another time I'm working in the mud, and this thorn went straight through my hand – all the way through. Prickly acacia thorns can be 3 inches long. The old fella, he grabbed a pair of pliers: "Here, pull the bastard out and put a bit of kero on it".

I woke up after a while. When the delving part came along, I'd ring the next property:

Need a hand over there?

Oh, yeah.

Righto.

I'd have it lined up. When he was getting ready to delve, I'd be gone. I'd hit the scrub on a horse; go bush for a while. That was good. I got away with it a few times. He'd have to get someone else to go delving with him.

But no one would go in the plane with him after a ride along the fence. I was the only silly bugger who'd go with him. I didn't want to, but I went.

Terry O'Neill, will be entering into occupation next month.

Debella Station has been disposed of by Mr. Jim Underwood to Mr. Alex Wall of Julia Creek. The Underwoods will be leaving shortly for their new property in the Kimberleys.

Under summery conditions last Sunday, play continued for the second round over 18 holes of the Lionel and Shirley Wall Shield – a handsome trophy donated by two ex-members of the club, and played over 54 holes. The outstanding performance among some really good golf was Max Burns' nett 70, the best for the day. Barry Burns maintained his opening form and finished a close second with 71. Barry has established a beneficial lead of 11 strokes and it would be rather surprising if he were beaten in the last round to be played this coming Sunday. Mrs. Ard Cooney had the best card – a nett 68 – for the associates.

A novel trophy for the best nett over 9 holes was given by Dr. Geoff Bradfield. It is in the form of a silver tankard and entitles the winner to demand a drink from every member during the week he holds it. Max Burns won the tankard with a nett 33 on the first 9 holes – excellent golf, being one under scratch off the stick – and thereby becomes King of the Golf Club for a week.

General practice was indulged in --

NQR: 13 Oct 1956



first class condition.

Drilling contractor Ernie Emblen has commenced sinking a bore on Garomna the property of Fred Hickman and Bryan Fels. The depth reached at the present time is between 100 and 200 feet.

Last Saturday when Thomas Wall, aged 15 years, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alex Wall of Debella, was about to water his pony at a small waterhole on the property, a seven foot crocodile in the water startled the pony. Dismounting, young Tom seized a suitable stick and made the saurian vacate the waterhole. For a while it sought refuge in a hollow log until it had to make a hurried departure when the log was set on fire. In the more open country the lad bashed the crocodile until its resistance ceased. It was an extraordinary achievement for a young lad armed only with a stick.

The new railway timetable com-

NQR: 18 Jan 1958

DAD SOLD DEBELLA after a few years to Cecil Jensen and moved into Julia Creek. He bought this garage off Russell Batt. Mum was against it because he was a country man not a town man, and because he'd be too near the pubs. He got on the booze a fair bit.

Dad wasn't by trade a mechanic, he was a bush mechanic. He was a pretty smart man with tools: he could pull out a diff, a gearbox, a motor, and redo it in the bush and get it going. When he started the garage he was doing okay. He had the garage and the tanksinking business, as well as the fireploughing. It came to an end in the mid 60s, I'd say, when the old boy went bankrupt. A big heap of tyres arrived at the garage, Dunlop tyres. Theiss Bros were starting up, they had a lot of trucks, and he went into debt to get these tyres. They went missing. They never got to the garage from the railway station. And that was the rock he perished on. He threw the towel in, just a bit, at that stage. It put an end to his flying; put an end to a lot of things. They sold his plane, they sold his house, and then him and Mum broke up and he went to Normanton.

Mum moved in with Lew Ryder for a couple of years. Lew had been around our family a fair bit. He worked for old Tom Wall at one stage. Lew and his wife weren't getting on together; they were bluein' all the time. So Lew thought he'd move out and get a garage business going at Camooweal. He was one of those mechanics who could listen to a vehicle and tell you what was wrong with it. He could fix a motor car – or an aircraft. Didn't matter what was wrong, he could fix it.

Well, Mum went with him to Camooweal – and that caused a bit of static.

It worked for a while... but y'know, Mum always loved old Dad. When he was in Normanton he wrote a letter to her and she dropped everything. They got back together around 1970 and they were together for quite a while. But he got the wanderlust. They were still friends and still talking, but for some bloody reason he got himself another woman. Must have been the bore water in Julia Creek. Yeah, the old bastard, he could still get going at 80. I said to him:

You should settle down at your age.

Nah, I can't live with your mother.

LOSING HIS LEG, well, that's another story. What happened: the old boy had a job on the council; council foreman in Normanton. He bought a house in Normanton around 1970 after getting out of his bankruptcy. He pulled out of the council and was running barges along the Norman River, carting water from Normanton to Karumba (they didn't have enough fresh water at the time), and taking prawns back the other way to load on the semies headed south. It was a barge tanker, but during the '74 flood he wasn't using it as a tanker on the Karumba run, he was carrying building materials, cold stores and food. Trucks were getting to Normanton, but not getting any further. All the roads to Karumba were out. The only way in was aircraft or barge.

During the flood he'd go overland. He knew the country pretty well and he'd cut all the river corners. It was on one of those trips that he tied up to the only thing out of water, the Norman Bridge. As the barge was drifting back with the current, the rope tangled around his foot and yanked him off the barge into the water. He was between the barge and the bridge, with the rope tightening around his foot. He yelled out to this girl, his deckhand: "Put the bloody throttle forward! Put it forward!" She's panicking, she didn't know too much about boats, and by the time the rope slackened off and he pulled himself on board, the damage was done. His foot was hanging by a bit of flesh. The old fella reckoned he may as well cut it off.

The Flying Doctor took him to Mount Isa and his foot was sewn back on. It was never right. It was full of arthritis and he could hardly walk on it. He went back to work on the barge, but the vibrations gave him hell and he was contemplating pulling the trigger. Corn Beef Freddie talked him out of it: "Nah, you get somethin' done". He was a German migrant, this Corn Beef Freddie, a mate of Dad's. Freddie Hahn, I think his name was. No one talked Freddie out of pulling the trigger when *he* decided to shoot himself.

Dad went to Cairns for x-rays and they took the leg off just below the knee. He wouldn't come home for a few years till he got his leg right. He was still wanting to do things, so he had a foot put on it and bought a fishing boat in Innisfail and sailed it to Cairns. He was fishing commercially, mucking around, and this foot kept catching. It was no good to him doing that, catching on ropes, so he got rid of the foot and had a peg made up. They called him Peg after that.

In the Court of Petty Sessions, Cloncurry, 22 February 1951, Alexander Wall, 35, Station Manager of Agate Downs, appeared before Mr. J. P. Donlevy, S.M., charged on the complaint of Senior Sergeant V. J. Quinn, that on the 12th February, at Kuridala, he unlawfully used one roan bullock, the property of Claude Entriken, without consent of Entriken, and that on the same day at Kuridala he unlawfully used a cow and a bullock the property of Australian Estates Co. Ltd. without its consent.

The first beast bore the registered brand of the owner Entriken, the owner of O'Hara's Gap Station near Duchess; the other two beasts bore the brand of Chatsworth Station owned by Australian Estates Co Ltd.

The prosecutor in outlining the facts, stated that the three beasts were placed by Wall in railway cattle waggons at Kuridala at about noon on the 12 inst., and these cattle went forward by train later that day to Julia Creek to where they were consigned. In consequence of certain information received by police, they checked these two trucks of cattle on arrival at Julia Creek on the morning of the 13th inst. Constable Henry of Julia Creek made a check of the cattle and found that five beasts including the three the subject of this prosecution, were not described on the railway waybill. Later, defendant was interviewed at Agate Downs and admitted that he was aware at the time of trucking these cattle that the three beasts were not his property, nor the property of his brother Lionel Wall who is the owner of Agate Downs. He further admitted the three beasts were the property of Entriken and Australian Estates. Wall stated his reason for placing these three beasts in the railway trucks along with others that he was short of the number required to send to Julia Creek and picked them up to make up the required number.

Wall pleaded guilty to both charges and was convicted and fined £60 with 12/- costs of Court, in default three months imprisonment.

CA: 23 Feb 1951

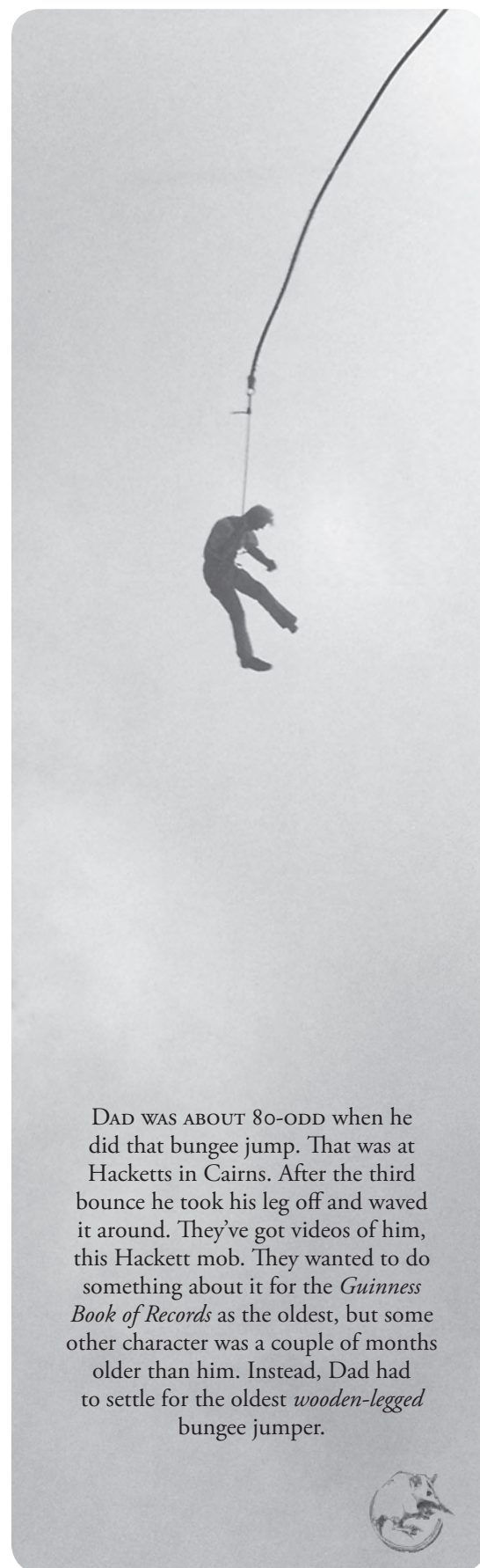
Opposite: An example of bore drain delving: Harry Stainkey on Belgravia. The trees in the background are of the type that have 3-inch thorns, like the one Tom pulled out of his hand with pliers. [Dot Stainkey, SD04, ca 1950]

THE OLD BOY, WHEN HE DIED, he was in a home. He had dementia. You'd go and see him and he was quite okay, quite reasonable talking, but the moment you walked out the door he'd forgotten you'd even been there. Dementia set in so bad at the end that he didn't know anyone.

Coming towards Christmas, one of the staff rang me and said he was failing. They said in another month he might go. Then they rang me and said he was gone. We all set sail for the funeral and seen him off.

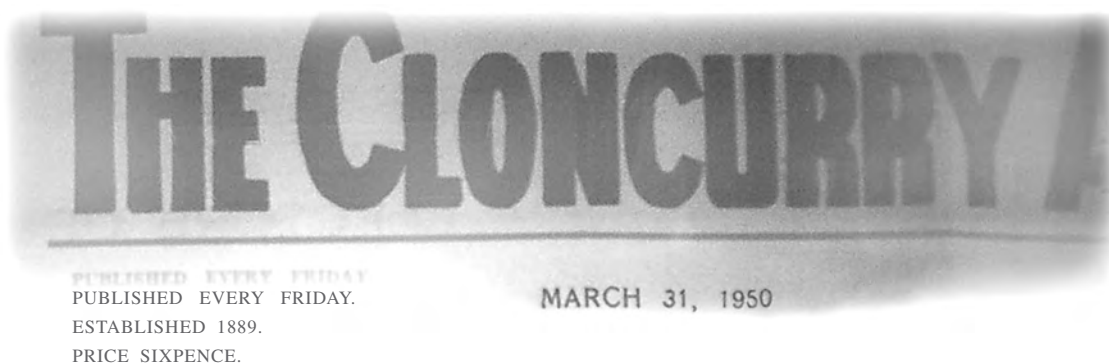
He died at Yeppoon, outside Rockhampton. He was born in Rocky and he died, more or less, in Rocky. He's buried at Emu Park. He looked at Emu Park and said: "When I die, that's where I'd like to be buried". He had it all set aside. We were gonna take him back to Normanton, but Emu Park was his wish, so, fair enough.

It was Boxing Day 1998 he died. He went to sleep Christmas night and never woke up. That was a bit sad, but if you gonna go, that's the way to do it.



DAD WAS ABOUT 80-ODD when he did that bungee jump. That was at Hacketts in Cairns. After the third bounce he took his leg off and waved it around. They've got videos of him, this Hackett mob. They wanted to do something about it for the *Guinness Book of Records* as the oldest, but some other character was a couple of months older than him. Instead, Dad had to settle for the oldest *wooden-legged* bungee jumper.





Sock Socked, While Ticker Ticked

WALL GETS VERDICT IN ASSAULT CASE

When you see the pseudonym *Boocie*, *Ticker*, *The Pope*, or *Sock*, the attachment is being made to one of the McNamara boys of Mt Tracey selection near Kuridala. *Boocie* is Lewis Michael, *Ticker* is Brian, *The Pope* is Owen, and *Sock* is Anthony John.

—X—

Alexander George Wall, manager of Agate Downs, Kuridala, called at the police station in Cloncurry on the afternoon of 19th January last and told Constable Magoffin that he had been assaulted the day before in the good old fashioned way, and for good measure had received a few blows across the back and one on the head from the handle of a stock whip. He named the McNamara brothers as the culprits, and as a consequence, Brian and Owen McNamara appeared before Mr J.P. Donlevy in the Court of Petty Sessions, Cloncurry, on the 2nd March charged with unlawfully assaulting one Alexander Wall on Agate Downs on 18th January 1950. Mr S. Johnson appeared for defendants. Senior Sgt. Quinn prosecuted.

Constable Joe Magoffin gave evidence of Wall calling at the Cloncurry police station on the afternoon of 19th January, 1950. He noticed Wall had his head bandaged, as well as having several large bruises across his shoulders. As a consequence, he went to Agate Downs on 20th January where Wall pointed out certain marks and blood stains on the ground. He examined the marks which indicated a struggle had taken place. He went to Mt Tracey homestead where he had independent interviews with defendants and their father, Brian McNamara, who told him he did not know how Wall got the cut on his head.

Wall in evidence stated: I am a married man with two children and live on Agate Downs property, Kuridala. I am manager of that property. On Monday 16th January, I visited Tunny's Post Office for mail, and while I was there I had a conversation with Boocie McNamara. An argument took place and he assaulted me. I had to defend myself. A few minutes later he called out to me, and when I went outside I saw him and his father. He again attacked me. I retaliated and knocked him down. He got up and walked away, but returned a few minutes later with Sock and Ticker. Ticker called out: "Wall you dingo, come out here". I walked out to where they were and their father also joined them from the car. Ticker said:

"What's the idea of hitting Boocie?"

"He swung a punch on me."

"Boocie doesn't owe you any money. I know he paid you."

I called him a liar and he swung a punch onto me, connecting the side of my face. I hopped into him, and after a bit he fell to the ground. Sock was behind me and I said to him: "You keep out of this". By this time Ticker had got to his feet and we carried on the fight. He fell to the ground again and said: "I've had enough". As I stepped back I received a punch in the ribs from behind. I don't know who struck me. It might have been either Boocie or his father.

I then sat on the bed on Tunny's verandah and old Mac sat on a chair a short distance away. Ticker, Sock and Boocie also came on the verandah and Boocie said: "Wall, you have been in this country long enough. You had better get out – and make it quick". Hearing this I said to Mac: "Well Mac, it has come to this – you had better shift all your stock out of Company paddock". This paddock forms a

portion of Agate Downs where McNamaras had been given permission 15 years ago to graze their horses. They had never paid any agistment fee. Prior to this occasion we had always been on very friendly terms.

On the 18th January, two days later, Kevin Nykiel and myself left the homestead on horseback to go to the paddock to see if Mac had shifted his horses. The paddock is about 12 miles wide by 5 miles long. We saw 13 head of horses belonging to Mac. We picked them up and drove them about a mile to the gate and put them onto Mac's property.

After that we sat down underneath a tree, about 15 yards from the gate, and had a smoke. Half an hour later Mac and three of his sons, Ticker, Sock and The Pope, came over from the direction of their home. I went over to the gate and spoke to Mac and said to him: "Are all your horses here?" He said: "No, there are five more away".

They were all seated on their horses. I said to him: "Well, go and get them" and they all rode through the gate. I said to Kevin: "You go with them and give them a hand to get their horses". I got on my horse and old Mac asked me where I was going. I said I was going to ride the boundary and he said he would come with me. We rode away together.

Mac and I rode the fence for about 5 miles and then we rode back towards the gate where we were going to have a feed. Soon after, the three McNamara boys Ticker, Sock and The Pope came galloping up and I heard Ticker say: "Wall, you dingo bastard, I'll break every bone in your body". I got off my horse. I could see there was going to be a fight and it looked like I might get a hiding. I bent down to take off my spurs so they would not hurt me in the fight. I only had one spur off when they vaulted from their horses onto me. After a few punches Kevin jumped in and pulled The Pope off. It was then I got a swipe across the shoulder from Sock with a kangaroo-hide stock-whip. Mac pulled Sock away. Ticker had a headlock on me and we rolled into a gully. Old Mac said: "Get up and fight fair". I said: "That suits me". We both got up and threw a few more punches. Sock came in and doubled the whip over my shoulders again and hit me on the head with the handle. I wheeled around to have a go at him, but I was dazed and fell over.

After a few seconds I got to my feet and I saw Sock riding away, still holding the whip. I went over to where my horse was tied to a tree, got on it and rode after Sock and snatched the whip from him. Sock fell off his horse. When I came back, The Pope made a grab for the whip and we had a tussle, which ended up that he had the thong and I had the handle. Then old Mac and myself rode to the waterhole where we boiled the billy and had a meal.

Next day I came in to see the doctor as I had severe pains in my head and the cut was bleeding freely. Dr Sutton put two stitches in my head. The stockwhip handle in court is the one that I was struck with. Mac always makes his own handles and this one looks like the ones he makes. Neither Kevin or myself

Opposite left: Alex, with wooden left leg, ready to bungee jump.
[Tom Wall, WT06, 1997]

Opposite right: Alex about to remove his wooden leg after the third bounce.
[Tom Wall, WT04, 1997]

had a whip in our possession that day. The assault on me was quite unprovoked. I have suffered blackouts since.

Cross-examined: I have been manager at Agate Downs on and off since 1935. I am Licensee and owner of the Malbon Hotel where I run a store. Boocie bought some household goods there. He was not a monthly payer, but he generally paid. He owed me 30 shillings. I sent accounts to him regularly, but he told me his father owed the money, not him. I hit Boocie after he hit me at Kuridala Post Office. I could not at all give any reason why the McNamaras should want to put me out of the country. I would not like to oblige them by leaving, as I have a property to look after.

David Harvey Sutton, Medical Officer of the Cloncurry Base Hospital, gave evidence that he was a qualified medical practitioner and that he had attended Wall on the 20th January and had dressed a deep cut over the left temple about 2 inches long. The cut was infected. He disinfected the cut and set it up. Wall was an outpatient for four or five days. His condition would interfere with his health and comfort for eight to ten days, maybe longer. Blackouts would be consistent with slight concussion, which could be caused from a blow from the exhibit (stockwhip handle).

Kevin Nykiel, employed as a stockman on Agate Downs Station, in his evidence stated that he was with Alex Wall in Company paddock when the three McNamara brothers rode up and one of them was yelling: "Wall you dingo b—, if it's fight you want we're here to give it to you". The three McNamaras jumped off their horses and attacked Wall who was bending down taking off his spurs. I pulled one of the McNamaras away. Wall and Ticker were fighting in a gully and Sock hit Wall on the head with the handle of a stock whip. Wall jumped on his horse and chased Sock. They struggled for possession of the whip and Sock fell off his horse. Wall returned with the whip and he had a further struggle with The Pope in which Wall gained the handle and The Pope gained the thong. I would class the whole episode as a cowardly and brutal attack. Wall gave the McNamaras no provocation to fight.

Brian McNamara, also known as Ticker, stated on oath that he was a stockman employed on Mt Tracey selection and he had known Wall for about 15 years and had always been on good terms with him.

On Wednesday the 18th we heard the sound of bells coming from the direction of the Company paddock gate. We rode over to the gate to see what was doing, and we found 15 horses had been put through the gate. Wall asked my father if there were any horses left.

(At this stage the witness is asked to speak out loudly, as if he was talking to the bullocks on his property.)

I told Wall I was going in to get the horses and Wall told me to get out of the paddock and called me a b—. My father told me to ride away and I did

so. When my father did not turn up in a reasonable time, Sock and Owen and I went looking for him. We meet Wall and my father riding along the fence in the direction of the gate. As soon as Wall saw us coming, he came straight at us. I got off my horse and Sock got off his too. Wall came straight over to Sock and threatened him, but I stepped in. I said: "Don't touch Sock, he's only a kid". We had a few punches and he fell backwards into a blackberry bush. Wall said: "Let me take my spurs off" and he bent down to take them off. We had another fight in the gully and someone sang out "Fight fair!" Wall had a headlock on me and was choking me. I got away and jumped onto the bank where we continued to fight.

My father told Sock to go home and he made to do so, but Wall came over and pulled a whip out of Sock's hand, knocking him off his horse. I galloped over and Sock jumped up behind me, double-bank. Wall chased us with the whip.

Cross-examined: I have had odd little rows with Wall, but nothing to speak of. Up until this incident we were good friends. Wall wanted to fight and there is no truth that we three brothers rushed him. When I rode up to Wall I could have said something, I don't remember.

Quinn: I put it to you, you said, "Wall, you dingo b—, I'll break every bone in your body".

Witness: Yes, I might have.

Cross examined: This evidence is not a result of my father and my brothers and myself putting our heads together. Kevin Nykiel and Wall are both telling lies. I know of no reason why Kevin should come into the courtroom and swear lies against me.

Quinn: I put it to you, witness, is it not yourself that is lying?

Witness: I came here to tell the truth, didn't I?

Well, that's what I'm doing. I ask the Court to believe me when I say that Wall and Nykiel gave false evidence against me and that I am the only one so far who has spoken the truth.

Owen Roe McNamara, also known as The Pope, gave corroborative evidence to that given by his brother Ticker regarding the alleged assault on Agate Downs. The fight was between Wall and Ticker only. Sock did not enter the fight or show signs of fight. If Constable Magoffin, Wall and Nykiel gave evidence that Ticker, Sock and himself had assaulted Wall, they were all lying when they said that. He admitted he could give no reason why they should all swear false evidence.

Anthony John McNamara, in evidence, stated on oath that he was 16 years of age, was known by the name Sock, and lived with his father and mother at Mt Tracey where he was employed as a stockman. He said Wall was not on friendly terms with the McNamara family. Wall had mobs of little squabbles with his father, but they were of no consequence. His brothers Ticker and Owen were lying if they stated they had been on friendly terms with Wall.

On 18th January he rode with his father and brothers to a gate on Company paddock where horses had

been put through. He saw Wall and another man there. Wall appeared friendly to all, but later there was a fight between Ticker and Wall. During the fight Wall had a head lock on Ticker and was choking his brother. He heard Wall say that he would choke Ticker to death, so he (Sock) entered the fight and pulled Wall off. He supposed Ticker inflicted a few of the cuts on Wall's head, but Wall could have cut himself when he fell into a blackberry bush. At no time during that day did he or his brothers carry a whip.

Cross-examined: Ticker is not called "The Fighting McNamara" although he could look after himself well enough. If my two brothers stated in evidence that I was not involved in the fight they would be definitely wrong. I could have hit Wall with a whip when I was pulling him off Ticker. I am serious when I say I don't know where the whip came from. It's not mine.

Lewis McNamara on oath stated: He was a grazier residing at Mt Tracey selection. At the Company paddock, after riding the fence with Wall, he met his three sons, Ticker, Owen and Sock. Wall rushed at Sock, but Ticker came between them. Ticker and Wall had a fight and together fell into a gully. Sock called out and told them to fight fair. They continued the fight up on the bank. Sock did not hit Wall at any time; he was never near Wall. He was quite sure his boys did not rush Wall.

The whip did not belong to him or his sons. Wall had the whip when they had a cup of tea together after the fight.

Cross examined: I have known Wall for 15 or 20 years and have always found him a good neighbour, but not always a good friend. I have never paid agistment fees for horses grazing in the Company paddock. I do not consider it a friendly gesture of Wall's to allow my horses to run in his paddock as I have done more for Wall by keeping the fence in order.

When I met Wall at the gate between Mt. Tracey and Agate Downs, Wall appeared sulky and did not even say "good day". He asked me were all my horses accounted for. I told him five were missing. When Wall and I rode the boundary together he never spoke to me, he was unfriendly. I saw my three sons riding towards us. They would be 30 yards off when Ticker and Wall started shouting and swearing at each other. If my three sons said they did not call out, they would all be mistaken. Not necessarily lying, just making a mistake. Wall jumped off his horse and started to take his spurs off. I could see there was going to be a fight. Ticker let Wall take his spurs off. Up until then no blows were struck, although they were all off their horses. Wall and Ticker started to fight. I had a ring-side seat at the fight, like I had at the Post Office. Owen and Sock stood by and did nothing. They took no part whatsoever in the fight. Wall never spoke to Sock. Sock was not threatened by Wall that morning. If Ticker said Wall threatened Sock he is making a mistake. Not telling a lie, just mistaken.

Wall and Nykiel would be lying if they stated Sock



hit Wall with a whip. The only whip at my homestead is a little boy's whip about 8 feet long. I do not even own a whip. If Ticker swore in evidence that Wall took a whip off Sock, it must be a new one of Sock's.

The family never discussed the case before coming to court. The boys may have discussed it themselves. Owen would be lying if he swore on oath that we discussed the case at least once a day. Sock would also be wrong if he said I discussed the case with him.

I did not have lunch with Wall although he offered it to me. I did not have a drink of tea.

Bench: You stated previously you did.

Witness: I meant I sat down while Wall had his.

(At this stage Bench asks witness to be definite in his statements as some were hard to reconcile.)

Cross-examined: Wall and Nykiel never showed any hostility before the assault. I cannot produce any evidence why they should want to come into this court and swear false evidence against my sons or myself.

In addressing the Court, Mr Johnson for the defendants asked His Worship to consider that the alleged assault, in which both parties took equal part, served no purpose, and asked that the case be dismissed.

Snr. Sgt. Quinn, for Wall, addressed the Court and asked that the facts as outlined by Wall and Nykiel be accepted as a true and correct version of what took place on Agate Downs property. He asked His Worship to regard the evidence of the defence witnesses with the gravest of suspicion. There was no doubt that their evidence was purely a concoction and a pack of lies. He was quite sure that His Worship would have no difficulty in finding that the assault was a most cowardly one and that the defendants swept down like a pack of dingoes and committed the assault as alleged.

In summing up, His Worship stated that he had the opportunity of both listening to and studying the demeanour of the witnesses in the box and he was quite satisfied that the evidence given by the McNamaras was a complete fabrication and unworthy of any credence. "I am prepared to accept the evidence of Wall and Nykiel. I am quite satisfied that the assault was cowardly and premeditated, and it appears the McNamaras could not get at him quick enough. It is hard to say what caused the brawl, but Wall had every right to protect himself on his own country and I have no hesitation in convicting the defendants and imposing the maximum penalty of £20 each, to include £13/17/0 costs of Court, in default three months imprisonment."

Mr Johnson asked for 14 days in which to pay the sum as he may wish to refer findings of the case to a legal authority in Townsville. His Worship acceded to the request.



I didn't like Julia Creek **Shirley Wall**

HOW I MET LIONEL: the Walls had this property, Agate Downs, out past Cloncurry in the Selwyn Ranges. My sister and brother-in-law were managing the property and I went out to help with the children. That was about 1947 and that's where I met Lionel. I think I had my sixteenth birthday out there. We got married in '48 and we went to live in Julia Creek.

He was an active man, into everything. He had a mail run and fellows working for him. They'd go right out and be away a couple of days. He was partners in McMahon & Wall Butchers in the main street of Julia Creek. John McMahon and Lionel took over Charlie Byrne's butcher shop. Lionel didn't do any work in there. His job was to bring cattle in from Agate Downs. And in Julia St, on the same side as Roy Hampton's billiard saloon, he ran a stock and station agency, arranging agistment and selling Austin cars and Ferguson tractors. If he went away flying, or on the mail run, I'd look after the agency.

Lionel started to learn to fly in '46. Alex and Lionel both learnt to fly, but Lionel was first, even though he was younger. In 1954 he flew around Australia in the Redex aircraft trial¹.

1. See NQR 3/7/1954, page 575.

and Mrs. Jack Walters.
Last Sunday night in Mathews' Hall a very pleasant farewell party was given by the ladies of the town for our lads in the forces who have been on leave. Dancing, singing and games took up the night. A dainty supper was served.
Lieut. Lionel Wall, in a few well chosen words, thanked all present for the enjoyable evening and said the lads would always remember the good times they had in the small town of ours. The music was supplied by Miss Marie Kaeser (piano) and Mr. George Jaques (drums). The evening ended with the singing of *For they are Jolly Good Fellows*. All had a splendid time.

CA: 02 Apr 1943



Below: Hangar built by Lionel Wall and Arthur Lowe. Lionel's truck at left. [Shirley Wall, WS01, ca 1954]

"Messrs Wall and Lowe's igloo is rapidly taking shape on the aerodrome and will soon be ready to take under its shelter the planes purchased

by this partnership. Already a dual-control plane is on hand which will be used to instruct ambitious youths in the intricacies of flying. Lionel and Arthur are very keen and have great plans in the melting pot which, in the long run, will be of considerable benefit to the district." (NQR: 9/8/1947)

Above: Lionel Wall. [Fred Edwards, EF01, ca 1940]

Opposite: Lionel Wall's Tiger Moth, VH-BIO, crashed outside Cloncurry. [Tom Wall, WT03, 11 March 1952]



WHEN GOLF CAME TO JULIA CREEK we became members. Lionel enjoyed golf. The country people used to come in for a game: Ard Cooney, Bob Smith, Mat McLeish, Jack Arden. A lot of business would be done over golf and at the club house after. Lionel might sell a tractor.

On our golf day you could bet your boots his father, old Tom, would ring up looking for him. Lionel would be getting ready for golf: "If that's Dad, tell him I'm not here". Tom Wall, the old bugger, would have a job lined up for him: "Where is he? I suppose he's down on that golf course".

After our first child was born in 1951 I didn't play much golf.

WE HAD THE STOCK AND STATION AGENCY for a good few years and then Lionel's brother, Alex, came to town. Lionel said: "Well, that's it for me, I'm outa here". He didn't think there was room in Julia Creek for him and his brother. They didn't get on too well. Plus, there wasn't a decent airstrip at Julia Creek and I think he was worried about getting killed in the plane. We left Julia Creek in 1955 to come to Townsville. Lionel flew down. I came in the train.

When I left I didn't have many regrets. I didn't like Julia Creek. We'd go to Nelia for the races, to Kynuna for the balls, to the pictures – all that was okay – but I don't have any really good memories. Lionel would often be away from Julia Creek working; and when he went flying, depending where he went, he might be away for days. I was happy to get out of that situation.

During his last years in Townsville Lionel used to mow a few lawns. He died on the 17th of January 1982 of lung cancer. It was a very short illness. He would have been 65.



...been hanging up.
...rainy weather will appear
with this warm change.

Last Sunday the golfers again gathered enthusiastically just at the edge of town and played competition stuff. The result was a good win for Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Wall who have both improved their golf since starting this season. The game continues to remain popular and there are many good trophies to be won before the season concludes.

The Department of Civil Aviation
...enclosing a copy of

NQR: 22 Jul 1950

a number of clothes.

Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Wall and two children left by the Inlander for Townsville, where they will now reside.

Mrs. Pat Luhrmann and three chil-

NQR: 12 Mar 1955

...commenced on Monday

Our well-known airman Lionel Wall had a miraculous escape from death when the plane he was flying crash landed and was wrecked. At 6.30 p.m. on Tuesday, Mr. Wall and a passenger left the Cloncurry airport in a Tiger Moth intending to return to Julia Creek before darkness set in. After becoming airborne, the plane climbed slowly and was seen to be losing height. Airport officials, who were watching the plane, saw it disappear behind a ridge and shortly after noticed a large cloud of dust rise. The alarm was raised, and the emergency airport fire tender, local fire brigade, ambulance, and dozens of cars set out in search of the plane. In the meantime, the Flying Doctor's Drover aircraft was prepared and took off and added to the search. The Moth was sighted by the pilot of the Drover and he directed the rescue party to the spot, about three miles from the airport. The Moth was found on the side of a rocky outcrop lying upside down. It is a complete wreck and can be written off; maybe the engine can be salvaged.

The two men managed to escape from the aircraft, and being unhurt save for a few abrasions, set out on foot for the airport. They were picked up by D.C.A. officials.

Lionel took up flying in 1947 and was taught by Mr. Arthur Lowe, a noted Air Force instructor. Both pilots are well known for their many mercy flights and for flying medical supplies and food to graziers during flood-bound seasons.

When one views the wrecked plane, the vision of Lady Luck sitting on the

CA: 14 Mar 1952



NORTHLANDER: ARTHUR LOWE, WELL KNOWN IN WEST AS AIRMAN

There is no better known personality in our North West than Arthur Lowe, of Julia Creek, whose service to outback stations with his aircraft is legion in the western country. In the wet season many Westerners on isolated pastoral properties would suffer privations but for this well-known airman.

Arthur Lowe was born in Sydney in November 1911 but he has lived long enough in North West Queensland to be regarded as a Northlander.

For a long period before World War II he was a motor salesman in the west. He joined the R.A.F. early in the war and soon acquired a reputation as a pilot. He became a flying instructor. Near the end of the war he transferred from instructing to a flight lieutenant with the 35th squadron based in Townsville, flying Dakota transports to the battlefields in the north.

After the war, Arthur Lowe settled in Julia Creek and established a motor business which he still conducts. His interest in flying continued and he acquired a Tiger Moth, and later went to England to purchase a Proctor and fly it home, to be used in charter work. He recently returned from a visit to England with a second Proctor.

Mr Lowe has found a demand in the west for his aircraft, particularly in the wet season. When road transport is impossible, Arthur Lowe lands his plane on district stations bringing medical and urgently required stores. In many cases he is looked upon as a guardian angel, ready to answer any call and bring urgent aid.

NQR: 30 Jan 1954



Right: Invoice to Murray Halloran from Arthur Lowe.
[Joanie Halloran, JH141, 1952]

Julia Creek 11.2.1952

Mr Murray Halloran
Flers Julia Creek

Imported Ford Consul Sedan,
Colour green, Eng. No. EOTA 18238,
tool kit complete.


Capital city list price including sales tax £1081/08/-

Freight & charges, Brisbane to Julia Creek £ 45/14/-
£1127/02/-

less booking deposit our trust A/C £ 50/-
£1077/02/-

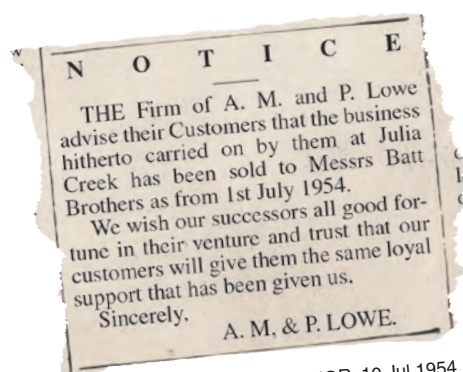
P.O. Box 71. Julia Creek, 11 2. 1952. TELEPHONE 96.

Mr. Murray Halloran
Flers Julia Creek No 5987

DR. TO A. LOWE.
MOTOR SALES AND SERVICE,
GENERAL COMMISSION AGENT,
AUTHORISED  DEALER.

To Imported Ford Consul Sedan
Colour Green Eng No EOTA 18238
tool kit complete
Capital city list price
including sales tax
Freight & charges Brisbane to Julia Creek
less booking deposit our
trust A/C

1081 8 -
45 14 -
1127 2 -
50 - -
1077 2 -



NQR: 10 Jul 1954

Opposite: Arthur Lowe's Tiger Moth, VH-ARP, air ambulance, outside his garage in Julia St. The garage was sold to the Batt brothers in 1954, and later, at an unknown date, to Alex Wall. [Shirley Wall, WS02, ca 1954]

"Arthur Lowe was another bloke with planes. He had VH-ARP. How I can remember that: we used to jokingly say "Arthur Rides Peggy". Peggy was his wife. Lew Ryder – he was a flier too – he used to joke about that." (Tom Wall)

28 May 1949—Mr Arthur Lowe, our local ambulance pilot, was called by the Cairns branch of that service early last Tuesday to fly to the assistance of a patient in the Cape York Peninsula, 60 miles north of Coen. Mr Lowe made the trip in his Tiger Moth and covered a distance of 1500 miles safely. Since starting his ambulance service, Mr Lowe has established a reputation of skill and reliability and we are proud to know that he has now been called from as far away as Cairns to handle a case.

The condition of our aerodrome is very unsatisfactory and residents from time to time have complained to the Department of Civil Aviation, but to date without result. The latest representation comes from Mrs Arthur Lowe. In her letter, Mrs Lowe wrote that cattle are cutting deep tracks across the aerodrome. In addition, there is a dairy close by and the cattle from that enterprise wander over the airfield at will. The letter continued: "a plane had been parked for the period of only one hour and when the owner came to continue his flight it was found that cattle had eaten a portion

of the fabric covering the wings. Fortunately an aircraft engineer was at hand and was able to repair the damage, otherwise serious mishap might have occurred to the plane".

6 October 1951—Quietly and with no banners waving, Mr Arthur Lowe came in for a landing here on Sunday afternoon after a plane trip from England of 11,000 miles. Julia Creek was in its most casual and docile mood on that afternoon and there was no welcome from her citizens for Mr Lowe. He might just as well have hopped in from McKinlay on one of his usual ambulance flights, instead of having flown 11,000 miles in a single-engined plane without a radio.

Arthur, a well-known flying enthusiast, went to England on a holiday visit with the thought of buying an aircraft, and when he faced difficulties in transport for the return trip he purchased a Percival Proctor. At Australia House in London he met Don Harris, a Sydney man who was also seeking transport, and together they made the flight by way

of France, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Lebanon, Iraq, Sharjah, Beluchistan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Malaya and Indonesia. On Saturday morning they crossed the Timor Sea to Wyndham and reached Darwin in the afternoon. Arthur said that he had made this hop so many times during the recent war that he did not consider it a difficulty. The last day's flying was via Daly Waters and Cloncurry to Julia Creek.

The 17-day trip was uneventful. They avoided Persia, refuelling instead in the Sheikdom of Sharjah. The most exciting incident occurred in Indonesia when the engine gave a little trouble and he was forced to land. He was standing on top of the machine when it began to rock. He called out to ask that the rocking be stopped and was told it was an earthquake.

The worst day's flying was that experienced today. It was very bumpy coming to Julia Creek from Darwin and the visibility was bad.

Arthur's flight was a great achievement and he has our congratulations.

Droving on-n-off Forever

Clarrie Fickling

Died January 2007

I WAS BORN IN LONGREACH IN 1926. June 1926. Dad did stock work, station work. Horse breaking mainly, and droving. He was a horse breaker on Maneroo Station, 28 miles from Longreach, when I came along. His name was Herbert Clarence, born about 1900. I couldn't be sure of the year. Elsie Mary was my mother. I'm the eldest, then Cynthia, then Reg.

I started school at Longreach, as did Cynthia. We uprooted pretty quickly though, and moved from Longreach to Winton. Didn't stay there long. My father was perpetually moving, looking for work during the Depression. He moved from place to place, always thinking it might be better somewhere else, and more opportunities. If I said we arrived in Julia Creek in 1935 I wouldn't be far out.

When I was old enough I used to go out with Dad on little droving trips from Julia Creek, a few days at a time. He was droving until he became Common Ranger in 1944. I think he took me along to fill a gap, save paying wages. Times were pretty tough those days. We never had much money – I never saw much anyway. But we survived and lived all right.

I went to work for Samuel Allen's, that store, that big one on the corner next to the Top Pub. I was a counter hand, shop assistant. Charlie Ahern was the boss. A fellow called Thompson, Les Thompson, he was the senior storekeeper. And we had a bookkeeper; Gladys Young was her name. About 18 months I was there.

I went with my father then, droving full-time. I always wanted to be with him droving. I was droving on-n-off forever after that. I got married in 1945 to a Julia Creek girl.

I'm not a story teller, really.



Reg Fickling Snr comes to town
'with a big wing of sons'

Fickling Family

- ↪ REGINALD WALTER ♥ EMILY
 - ↪ Reginald Cecil (1895)
 - ↪ Herb (1902) ♥ Elsie
 - ↪ Clarrie (1926) ♥ Pat Graham
 - ↪ Cynthia ♥ Jumbo Harris
 - ↪ Reg
 - ↪ Maude ♥ Tom Fry
 - ↪ Lionel ♥ Doreen
 - ↪ Jim (1907, twin of Vince)
 - ↪ Vince (1907) ♥ Kath Bird
 - ↪ Bev
 - ↪ Carmel (1937)
 - ↪ Vince Jnr
 - ↪ Bill
 - ↪ Edward

OLD MAN REG FICKLING came to town with a big wing of sons: Herb, Jimmy, Vince, another boy or two, and one daughter, Maude (she was a Mrs Fry), and they all came to Julia Creek at the same time, around the time of the Depression.

DADIE DAWES

...a cool change.

On Saturday afternoon last, at 4 p.m., a wedding was solemnised in the Roman Catholic Church by the Rev. Father Devereux between Clarence Fickling, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Herb Fickling, Julia Creek, and Grace May (Pat) Graham, youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Barney Graham. There were a great many friends to wish the happy couple the best of everything. The couple will reside in Julia Creek, as Clarrie has taken over his father's droving plant and Julia Creek is his centre for work.

Another wedding was solemnised.

NQR: 14 Apr 1945

Sunday's man train.

Last Sunday night Mr. Herb Fickling, Common Ranger, left by utility to inspect a mob of cattle being dipped at Sedan Dip. The cattle had not arrived by the time he turned up, and seeing storm clouds around, Mr. Fickling decided to look around for them. Subsequently the river came down and cut off his return to Julia Creek. Finding no place suitable to cross, he drove to Cloncurry and made enquiries about the road back through McKinlay. He was told he could get through without any trouble, so away he went. In the meantime storms came up and hindered his return in quite a number of places. He finally drove the utility back into the town on Friday around midday, looking none the worse for wear. Herb was very lucky. In all that long journey from Sunday to Friday he had to walk only six miles.

Mr. Lionel Wall had the misfortune to damage his plane when trying to land on the side of a hill on his own Agate Downs property, but not so badly that he couldn't return to town with it.

NQR: 19 Feb 1949



Two-stand-plantin' Jim Birch

I NEVER HAD MUCH TO DO WITH JULIA CREEK, just in and out. Never lived there. When I was in town, if I wasn't with the Triffetts or the Ficklings, I stopped at Gannon's. Many Christmas lunches I had at Gannon's¹. Anyone sitting round the pub on Christmas Day, Bill Gannon would take them in for Christmas dinner. Real good.

Gannon had some bonzer girls working for him. We'd sit out on the footpath of a night time, telling yarns all bloody night, y'know, after the pub closed.

How I came to stay at Gannon's: I was working on Oxton Downs with Jim Tierney and another old fella... I've forgotten his name. Well, we rode to town, tied the horses up behind the pub and went inside. They were drinking rum. I don't know why they served me – I was too young to drink – but I was drinking rum too. Sick as a bloody dog when I woke up in the morning in this strange room. Bill Gannon had put me there.

I didn't know where I was. I staggered outside onto the footpath and sat with two old fellas who were waiting for Bill to open up for the "dawn patrol" as they used to call it. They walked into the pub when Bill came out. He looked down at me:

Whaddaya doing out here?

I'm sick Mr Gannon.

Get yourself inside, son, and have some more drink.

I had a couple of mouthfuls of beer and went outside again to be sick. He came and got me, brought me back – he was an ex-policeman, a big bugger – sat me on the chair and we went through it again. Bill Gannon trying to teach me a lesson.

We came to be on good terms after that, and whenever I was in Julia Creek I always had room 3 at Gannon's Hotel.

1. See page 248 for a photo of Gannon's Christmas lunch.

Opposite: Herb Fickling's family.
From left: Cynthia, Reg, Elsie, Clarrie.
[Carmel Fickling, FC16, ca 1940]

Below: Gannon's Hotel.
[Ron Dau, DR21, ca 1952]



I WAS BORN IN KEDRON, a suburb of Brisbane, in 1924. My father used to work on the wharves, but he was also a coal miner in his younger days. I went to the Kedron State School. I only reached third grade. I got rheumatic fever when I was young and spent three months in the children's hospital in town, and three months at a convalescent home at Sandgate. When I got out I never went back to school. I left home when I was about 9 – I wanted to get away to the bush – and I went onto dairy farms.

People who Dad knew from the war years were managing a dairy at Kogan, out from Warra on the Darling Downs. I went out there and stopped a few years with them. I don't know how long I was there. It's hard to remember. If you add up all the time you've spent in different places you end up a hundred years old.

Anyway, I went from there to a place at Dulacca, near Roma and Miles, and from there I went out to Chummy Shaw's place, Fairlea, outside of Julia Creek. I had my 14th birthday on Fairlea. I was getting 15 shillings a week and he used to send 10 shillings back home to the family. The 15 months I was there I saved £15 – a pound a month.

Chummy had inlets onto the Flinders River. An inlet – a fenced-in laneway which allows stock to reach the water – is where the fence, which normally parallels the river, has a break in it. The fence turns at right angles and goes into a waterhole. When the river flooded it used to wash the inlets away and we'd have to re-fence them. We'd start early in the morning, boring the holes and putting in the posts, and then he'd say: "It's too hot to work in the middle of the day, boys. We'll run the wire in the moonlight". Chummy had us out day and night.

Even when he went to Brisbane the work never slacked off. He'd write out this bloody great list of jobs to do while he was away. And he'd feed us on bullshit. Another young fellow, a bit older than me, Claude Everingham, he was on the property too. Chummy used to say to us: "When I die I'll leave the place to Claude, and when Claude dies he'll leave the place to you". Being young and gullible we believed him, and we used to work like bloomin' navvies.

Our only time-off was when Chummy took us to Julia Creek. He owned some houses in town and took us in of a weekend to paint them. That was our weekend in town – painting houses battleship grey with red roofs and white ridge-capping. I remember that, yeah.

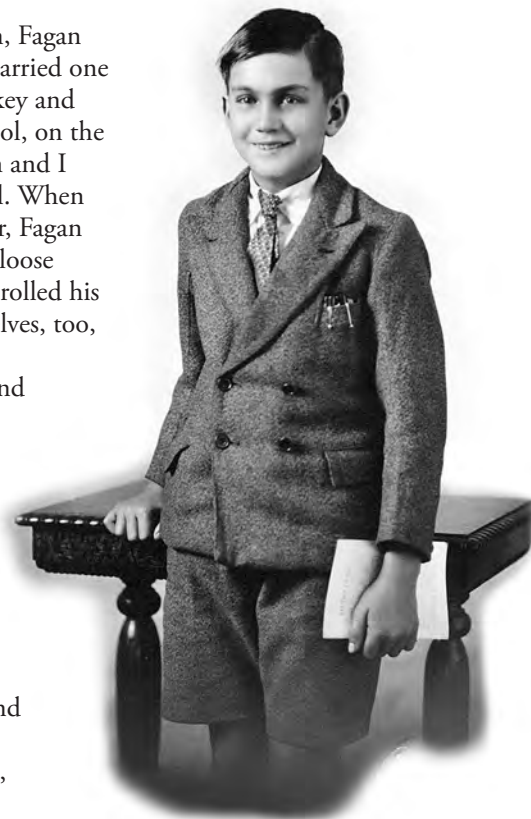
I met Chummy through his grandson, Fagan Stainkey. Chummy's daughter, Mabel¹, married one of the Stainkeys. She married Herb Stainkey and their house was opposite the Kedron school, on the corner, just down the road from us. Fagan and I were mates. I'd go to his place after school. When Chummy came down to visit his daughter, Fagan and I used to roll his cigarettes. He'd buy loose tobacco and put it in a treacle tin and we rolled his cigarettes for him. We kept a bit for ourselves, too, of course.

That's how I got to know Chummy and that's how I got the job on Fairlea. The government paid my fare out and gave me a pair of trousers, a pair of boots, a shirt and a hat. If I didn't stay six months I would have had to pay it back. It was a straw hat, too. I remember that. At Fairlea, Chummy had pet sheep around the house and every time I put the hat down, if I didn't look after it, they'd try and eat it. So I ended up painting it black.

In front of Fairlea there's a stockroute, and on the other side was Rockvale. For about eight months, might have been twelve months, I was sent in there every week by Chummy to get wethers to bring home for killers. I'm there one day and Stan comes along. Stan Maxwell, he was the overseer on Rockvale. He said to me pointedly:

Whaddaya think you're doing?
Mr Shaw sent me in to get the killers.
They're not Mr Shaw's sheep!
Yes they are. I've been getting them here for months.

That's the sort of thing Chummy used to do. It eventuated I got real pally with Stan, after.



1. For Mabel's story see page 289.

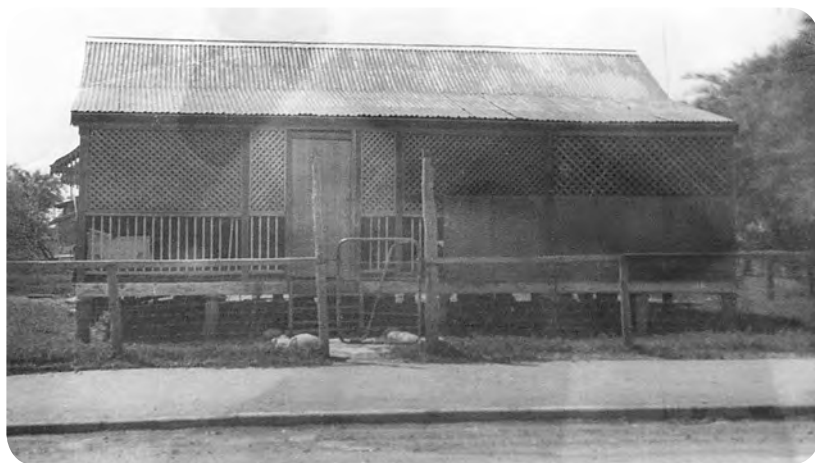
Above: Jim's school friend, Fagan Stainkey, on his 13th birthday.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST15, 19/9/1933]

Left: House in Burke St owned by Chummy Shaw, one of the houses that Jim would have painted.
[Trevor Stainkey, ST04, ca 1951]

House in Julia Creek, bought from J.W. Shaw and put up garage, then extended to make ½ cafe. (Fagan Stainkey's words on back of photo.)

In about 1952, Fagan Stainkey and Charlie Corrigan pulled down this house and turned the site into a garage and milk bar (the Mayne Milk bar, page 352). The garage and milk bar became the second Blue Bird Cafe around 1956. The site in 2009 is Godier's Supermarket.

Opposite: Jim (left) and Clarrie Fickling, in Brisbane. "Just the two of us, myself and Clarrie, came down to Brisbane on that trip. We stopped at my mother's place in Woolloowin."
[Carmel Fickling, FC13, ca 1946]



Another thing about Chummy: his daughter Mabel would send him up a case of oranges and it was my job to go to the mailbox, 3 or 4 miles away, and cart this stuff home. They had a big charcoal cooler. He'd sit there and count every piece of fruit we put in that refrigerator. I said to Pat Underwood one day (Pat had the mail run; the mail used to come out from Nelia):

He's a bit lousy this Chummy. Never gives you anything.
We'll fix that. Next time there's fruit coming, bring a sugar bag.

The fruit boxes were tied up with wire. They were nailed, too, but in case they dropped them they put the wire around so the lid wouldn't break off. Pat used to undo the wire for me, put some of the fruit in a sugar bag, and do the wire up again. Pat could work it real good. I'd go along the creek and hang the bag in a tree. When I wanted fruit it was there. Chummy didn't know any difference.

One thing about Chummy: although he never paid much money, I tell you what, he taught me a lot. He was a pretty smart man actually. Clever with his hands. He had his own blacksmith shop and he used to make short crowbars that he screwed together and carried around on his horse. He made those himself.

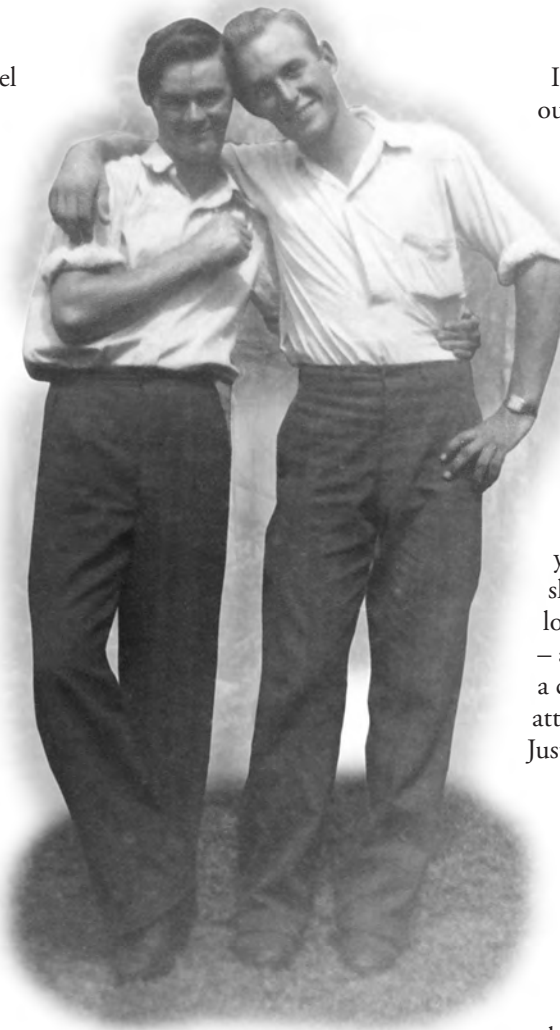
I got a bit homesick after 15 months on Fairlea and I came back to Brisbane. But I knew I wouldn't be staying too long. I ended up going back to Julia Creek and onto the Hickman place, Ponjola. I knew Fred and Dudley Hickman through being on Fairlea. Ponjola was just across the road and up a little bit.

Fred Hickman used to go to Brisbane pretty regular. He contacted my mother and came around to see me. He wanted a worker. And then after working on Ponjola, whenever I went into Julia Creek and didn't have any work, I'd go and see Fred. He had a stock and station agency and I'd go and see him about working on Ponjola again. It became a second home.

The Hickmans were another mob of Ned Kellys. I was shearing other people's sheep for the Hickmans. Dudley was the main instigator of that. What he used to do: when one of the neighbours was shearing, he'd borrow some of their woolied sheep. We'd shear them and put them back in amongst the shorn sheep. Sort of poddy dodging. Chummy Shaw and the Hickmans gave me a pretty good grounding in that sort of thing.

I was on Ponjola for only a few months. I'd see cattle going through, and I liked the idea of being on a horse, so I took to droving with Herb Fickling. Old Herb was a drover, and when I asked him for a job he had to write home and get permission off my parents – so I couldn't have been very old at the time.

At that stage, Herb's son Clarrie was at All Souls. He became a good mate of mine. He was a droving contractor and I used to work for him. They had another son who drove too, Reggie, and a daughter Cynthia. Over the years I used to stop with the Ficklings. They had a house in Julia Creek and I used to live there with them.



I did a season's droving with Herb, and then I went out to Dalkeith. Now it's called Kelloshiel, I think. I was off and on Dalkeith for about five years.

DIFFERENT TIMES I WENT SHEARING with Arthur Fayers. Went all the way to Boulia once, on the back of a truck in the middle of winter. Four of us.

Two old shearers who'd been on the rum for a week were waiting for us to arrive. They were Arthur's shearers. They'd been in town, drank all their money, and were waiting for the shed to start. I'd barely shorn one and a half sheep the next morning before these old blokes yelled out: "Scabby mouth!" A dog had bitten a sheep on the nose. With the dust and slobber it looked bad, and they reckoned it was scabby mouth – a fungus that sheep get round their mouth like a cold sore. I don't think there's any risk of disease attached to it, but shearers won't shear them like that. Just one of those union things. They called a strike and we had to go back to Julia Creek. I thought: *Well, that's the end of unions for me.* I never worked for a union again.

After the Boulia business, Franky Godier and I got together with a two-stand plant. We'd go out two-stand-plantin'. Put the plant on the back of a truck. It had its own motor and everything we needed – same as a shearing setup, but only two stands – and we'd go out crutching and shearing. Not only that, we used to pick up the wool ourselves and do our own cooking. Did everything.

The union got to be crooked on us. We'd shear on Sundays and they wouldn't. It didn't make any difference to us what day of the week it was. And they wouldn't shear cancered sheep. Sheep get cancer on the ears and nose. We just put a bag over their head and shored them that way. Thirty years before the New Zealand shearers came in and changed the whole shearing industry, Franky and I were doing things different, making our own little mark. And we got well-paid for what we did.

Do you know how a shed works? Imagine a shearing shed with yards outside. The sheep have been drafted into separate yards. Drafting – they separate the sexes, and the young ones from the old ones. Earmarks distinguish the age and the sex of the sheep and that's how they draft them. Most time they only draft three ways at a time: straight ahead, right and left. They'll pull all the wethers off, or all the ewes off. And then they'll run them through again and separate them by age: young wethers, old wethers. They know by the earmarks.

They draft because sheep have different wool. Young wethers have got different wool on than old wethers. The same as young fellas have got good strong hair and I'm going bald.

From the yards a race leads up to the *catching pens* inside the shed. Might be half a dozen catching pens. Two shearers drag out of the one pen. Each shearer pulls his next sheep out of the pen, and when he finishes the sheep it goes straight between his legs and into the *counting-out race* where

his tally can be counted. There's one of those counting-out races for each shearer. They shear till smoko, and then the boss of the board, or whoever's job it is, will count the sheep and write down each shearer's tally. Lunch time he does the same thing. You shear till smoko, you *count out*. You shear till lunch time, you count out again. Some have afternoon smoko – and count out. Others don't worry about it. Probably four times a day they count out.

Say you've got a line of wethers and you've finished shearing them; you've reached the end of the line. That's what they call a *cut out*. You've got a little pause then, while you *clear the board* – tidy up the wool – before you bring in another line, a new lot. The union blokes, if the next line wasn't ready, they wouldn't go down the yard, they'd just sit there and whinge about no sheep. Whereas the New Zealand blokes would go down and lend a hand to *pen up*, to bring the next line to the shed. They wouldn't sit on their backsides waiting for the sheep.

Out at Garomna one day, Bryan Fels' place, there was a mob of New Zealand shearers and one bloke did something he shouldn't have. Bryan told the shed boss to send him away. The other blokes never complained. But if they'd been unionists the whole state would have been on strike. Fair dinkum.

I left Julia Creek around 1956, the year of the big shearer's strike. Not because of the strike, but because my wife had a baby. I came to Brisbane and started working at the Roma St markets. I gave that away and did taxi driving for a while, not long though, then I went fencing. I was intending to go back to Julia Creek but the wife didn't want to go. I think she had a word to her brother, a building contractor. In those days the Housing Commission used to tender groups of 60 houses, and the builder had to have a fencer to fence the properties. That's how I started fencing. I was ready to go back to Julia Creek, but my brother-in-law said I should try fencing. Well, I tried it, branched out on my own, and ended up in the business for 25 years.

I GO BACK TO JULIA CREEK every year if I can, but this year [2006], because of Bryan Fels' funeral, I've been back three times. Bryan passed away on the 15th of October. I was talking to him only a month or so before and he reckoned he felt good. The next time I rang, his wife Maris said he was very sick in the local hospital. So even though I'd already been out there I said I'd come back.

I arrived home from my second trip on a Saturday. On the Sunday, Bryan's daughter rang and said he'd passed away. It was less than a fortnight from the time they discovered he had cancer until he died. It was very quick. I caught the plane to Mount Isa and went to Julia Creek for the third time to attend Bryan's funeral.

I still like going back because it's the heart of where I worked when I was young. When Bryan used to ring – we rang each other all the time – my wife would say I went to pieces. You get homesick. It's the country. It does something to you. Some of the backyards in Julia Creek, there's still bits of old waggons that have been there as long as I can remember. They just put a garden around them.

I took my daughter out one year and I said:

We're gonna find me mates. If they're not at Gannon's they'll be at the Town & Country. You watch. When I walk in I'll say: "G'day" and they'll say: "Whatcha drinkin?" They won't ask me where I've been or what I've been doing, it'll be: "Whatcha drinkin?"

I'll just sit down and join in as if I've never been away.



Left: The sign that welcomed Jim Birch three times in 2006.
[Guy Burns, GK067]

Opposite: Unidentified man with Herb Fickling's droving plant. Herb looked after his horses. Each of them has a leather protector to keep flies from their eyes.
[Carmel Fickling, FC07, ca 1940]



Kid sick and stay in bed **Reg Fickling**

prevention is better than cure.

Drover Herb Fickling is taking a line of sheep from Tarbrax to McKinlay, and his father, drover Reg Fickling, is expecting to make a long trip with a line of cattle from the Cloncurry district. Drover Jim Tierney is taking a line of 10,000 ewes from Rosevale to Byrimine Station on account Mr. Richard Magoffin. Drover Hansford is taking about 4500 sheep from Rosevale to Tonkoro, also on account Richard Magoffin.

Mannie Sills is seriously ill with typhoid and pneumonia in the Richmond Hospital and we trust that he will soon be reported as well on the mend. At the present time he is causing his parents and relatives much anxiety as regards his health.

NQR: 22 Apr 1939

WELL, AS FAR AS I KNOW, Dad¹ was a drover when I was born. Grandad was too, old Reg Fickling, my namesake. I think they both might have been droving at the same time. Dad was droving right up till 1944. The Julia Creek council advertised for a Common Ranger that year – after Uncle Vince, the previous Common Ranger, shot himself – and Dad put in for it and he got the job. He gave his droving plant then to Clarrie, my older brother, and Clarrie went droving.

That photo shows Dad's droving waggon, a five-in-hand waggonette. Three in the lead and two in the pole. That was his vehicle instead of a motor car. Boy-oh-boy, I just don't know how long Dad used that for. In 1935 that's how we came to Julia Creek. It's the body of an old Cobb & Co coach, y'know, with leather springs. Dad got a job droving a mob of sheep in the Depression time from near Winton to Julia Creek. Mum was driving the waggonette, five-in-hand, with Cynthia and myself on the seat beside her.

I was only five
and Cynthia would have been seven.
Clarrie was nine,
big enough to give Dad a hand with the sheep
while Cynthia and I bludged a ride on the waggon.
We had goats as well, following behind,
and fowls underneath, clucking in a net sling.

1. Herb Fickling



I THINK UNCLE VINCE actually had a nervous breakdown when he shot himself. He was out at the Punchbowl when Jimmy Edwards drowned. Not Wild Jimmy Edwards from Normanton, this other Jimmy Edwards. Him and Vince were pretty good mates. Vince couldn't swim and Jimmy was in the water. I don't know what for – a swim or some bloody thing. The Flinders was running. It goes over this bar of rocks at the Punchbowl crossing, then into the Punchbowl itself, a big waterhole. Anyhow, Jimmy was in trouble and all Vince could do was watch him drown¹. And that played on his mind. It wasn't but a few years later that he went out to the cemetery – he didn't want to cause anybody any trouble – he went out to the cemetery and – 'cckk' – blew the brains. He's buried there, yeah, not far from that turkey's nest in the photo.

Old Mr Dean made that turkey's nest. He had a contract from the council to build it. Away from the town on the north side there were long troughs fed from that turkey's nest. It was a stock watering point, that's why it was built. And where Dean took the dirt from, the hole he left, well, that became a swimming pool.

I helped, I suppose you'd call it. I wouldn't have been much more than 10. I used to play wag from school. Kid sick and stay in bed until the second bell went. You get first bell – get ready to go into school – and second bell was when you went in. When I heard the second bell, away I'd scoot in my pyjamas straight down to Deany. I'd be driving a scoop for the rest of the day, building the turkey's nest.

You had a two-in-hand, you had the reins, and you drove the team pulling a monkey-tail scoop, a scoop on iron wheels with two handles coming out the back. When you wanted to scoop up the dirt you lifted the handles to dig the blade in. Then you'd pull the handles down when it was full, and climb onto the turkey's nest and dump the dirt.

You can see the monkey-tail going up the bank. That's the monkey-tail scoop, yep. Behind the front scoop you can see another one. He's gone up the bank and he's turned – he's going back down after dumping his load.

Deany would be there with another fella. I just helped out after wagging school. They'd give me one of the teams and away I'd go. I'd have been in my pyjamas if that was me in the photo. Probably not me.



1. Vince Fickling's testimony at Jimmy Edwards' inquest is on p747.

I THINK I'M ABOUT THE ONLY ONE who used to get a holiday at the Julia Creek State School when the school inspector came around. Arthur Cann, the headmaster, didn't like me:

Fickling, you can have a couple of days' holiday now.
Good sir. Righto.

And off I'd go. The inspector was coming round and Cann was ashamed of me and didn't want me there. I got too old for the littler kids in my class. I used to bash them up too much. That's why they kept putting me into the higher grades, even though I wasn't learning. I never had much education. But I can count money – and bullocks, cattle, or anything like that. I can read and write okay for that sort of thing. I've got learning enough.

I left school when I was 12½. That would have been in 1942 when Dad took a mob of cattle from Grenada, north of Cloncurry, down the Cooper channels to Mt Howitt. I wanted to go with him, so I kept pestering Mum about leaving school...

C'mon Mum, let me leave school.
No, you can't.

...until she got sick of me asking and she said: "Well, if Mr Cann says it's okay, you can". So I ran all the way to school, no pushbike or anything, and called out:

Mr Cann!
Whaddaya want, Fickling?
Can I leave school, Sir?
Of course. For all the good you are here, you might as well.

I ran all the way back home and told Mum. She started crying. I don't know what for.

When I left school I went droving with the old man, and by the time I was 18 I had my own plant. I bought a sulky from Eddington Station when it was split up, and that became my droving conveyance, just large enough for a couple of swags and a bit of tucker.

Below: Mr Dean and offsider building the turkey's nest with a two-in-hand and a monkey-tail scoop. Water from the town bore filled the turkey's nest and was run off into long troughs for stock that grazed on the common. The resulting excavation (bottom right, partly cut off), became a dirt swimming pool.
[Dadie Dawes, DW41, 1939]



THAT'S PROBABLY DAD LEAVING JULIA CREEK to go droving – if it wasn't a Friday. He used to be superstitious of leaving to go on a job on a Friday. I remember he left on a Friday only twice. Once was with packhorses. The story I got was that his horse started to root and the saddle rolled, with him in it, and he fell arse-over-head and broke his arm. That was once. Another time when he left on a Friday he struck trouble with his waggonette. The cart horses, fresh, away they went. They took off at a gallop and the front wheel turned inside out – the wooden spokes gave way and the outside rim collapsed. That was two on a Friday.

Every time after that he'd leave on a Thursday afternoon or a Saturday. If he had no choice but to leave on a Friday, he'd pack up

Thursday and go out to the gate on the common, to what they called the 5-Mile. He'd go out there, turn the horses loose on the other side of the fence, and ride back into town. That way he'd made the start on the Thursday. Then he'd go back out next morning. He was happy then.

JUST LIKE MY FATHER AND GRANDFATHER I loved droving. It's the only way to have a decent look at a bit of country. You're behind a mob of bullocks for nine, ten mile a day, sitting on a horse's back. You've got plenty of time to look around.



HERB FICKLING used to be the Common Ranger in Julia Creek. The common was a piece of land close to town owned by the council. There might be 4 or 5 square mile of common. If you lived in town, or you were a drover, or you had horses, you were entitled to run those horses on the common for a certain amount of money – a penny a head a week, say.

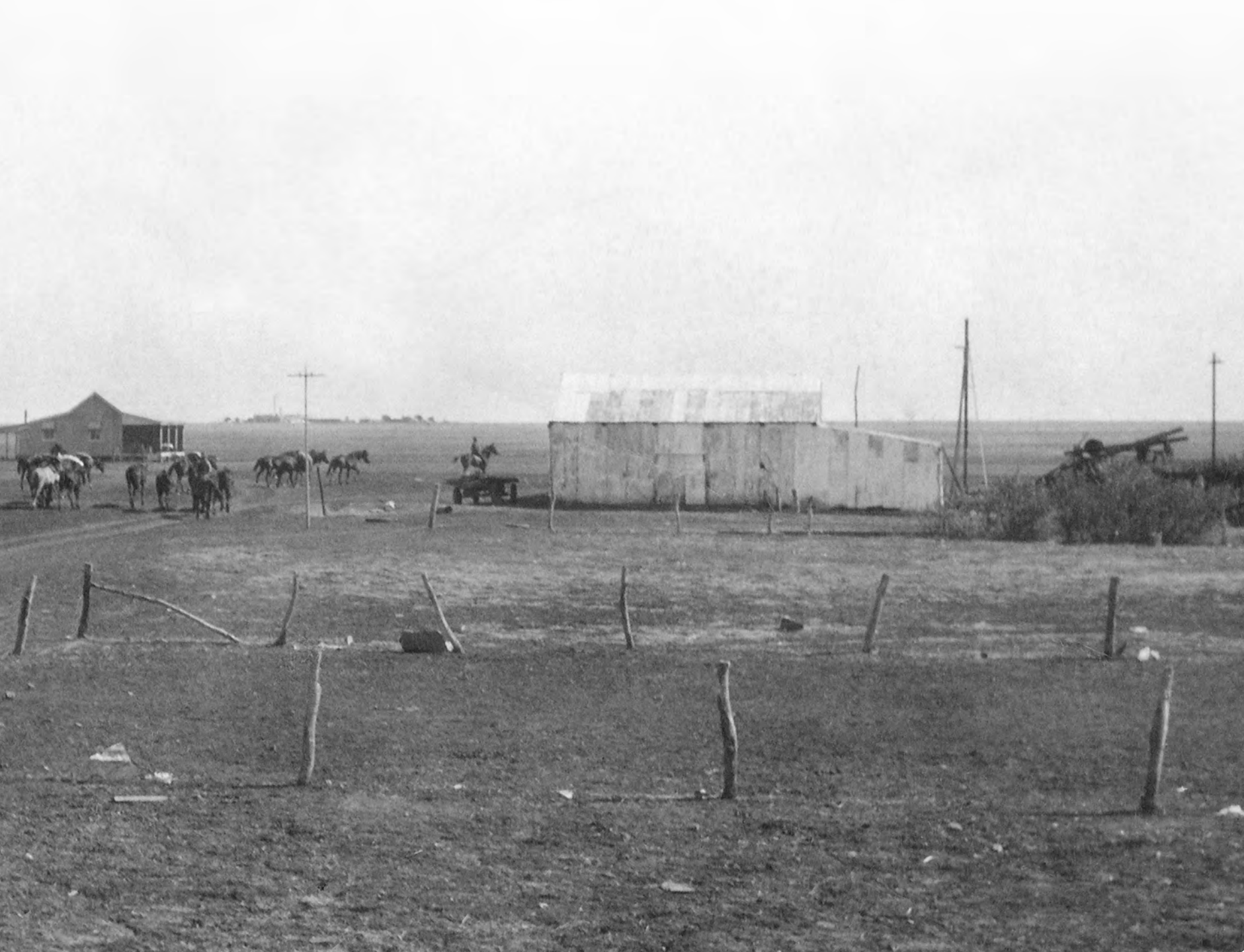
The Ranger was the fella who rode the fences – made sure they were in good order – and he stopped people from knocking off the horses. An unscrupulous drover in need of horses, especially if he was heading for distant places, he'd go and muster the common and take his pick. The Ranger had to keep an eye on that. He was also responsible for the goats and for the stock watering-points.

The Ranger was one of the townspeople. He just did his job and made the stock and water situation around town as good as it could be.

CHARLIE CORRIGAN

Below: Byrne St, looking west towards the woolscour, taken from Herb Fickling's front yard. Tassie Triffett's blacksmith shop on the right, Paddy Somers' house in the distance. Allison St runs across the photo in between the two houses in the centre. [Carmel Fickling, FC06, ca 1940]

"That would be Dad's plant of horses, moving out on a job. And that's the old blacksmith's shop, Tassie Triffett's. He was a blacksmith in Julia Creek in my young days. Beside Tassie's place was a spare allotment and we used to live next door, this side of the fence." (Clarrie Fickling)



A Short History of the Swimming Baths

14 November 1931—It is very common to hear complaints about the smell of the water in the mornings when one first turns on the tap. After the tap has been left running for a while it soon disappears. This, we are told, is caused by certain gases in the water which ferment overnight when the water is not being used. Surely there are sufficient opportunities to use water overnight. For instance, the feeling is pretty general on asking the council to erect a swimming baths somewhere about the recreation reserve. As we are blessed with a wonderful water supply we believe that swimming baths would be an acquisition to the town.

25 November 1939—The swimming baths at Julia Creek fill a long felt want and are well-patronised during the week and also at weekends. It is somewhere to cool off in the hot weather, and good exercise in the mornings, especially in summer. In winter the baths will no doubt have a lean time.

Tennis has been fairly quiet of late, partly on account of several of the players being away doing military duty, and of course the warmer weather always has a tendency for the easing off of sport generally.

9 December 1939—The swimming pool is very popular during the hot weather we have been having. A number of enthusiasts are seen at the pool every morning, and on Sunday afternoons a big crowd develops. A few go down and have a dip at

night time. It is a good way of cooling off.

7 April 1945—The second recommendation before the State School Committee was swimming baths. The advantage of having swimming baths was stressed by Mr Gannon. He suggested that something ought to be done to effect some temporary improvement so that the baths could be used by the local residents. He pointed out that they had not been permanently repaired because materials were not available and a loan could not be arranged for the outlay involved. A resolution was passed that an appeal be made to the McKinlay Shire Council to have the swimming baths put in order so that they might be used in safety by the public, and, at the same time, express appreciation for the work already performed in providing the swimming pool in the first place.

2 November 1946—As a result of further requests from the State School Committee, the shire council had decided to fully cleanse the swimming pool, and action would be taken to prevent further acts of uncleanness and hooliganism so that the pool would remain a healthy place of pleasure. If however this work was not appreciated and no respect was given to the improvement, the pool would be closed permanently.

We understand that the work involved will be completed at an early date to allow full use over the oncoming summer months. In regard to the new

cement baths, we are advised that a start on these is held up by lack of cement and other materials.

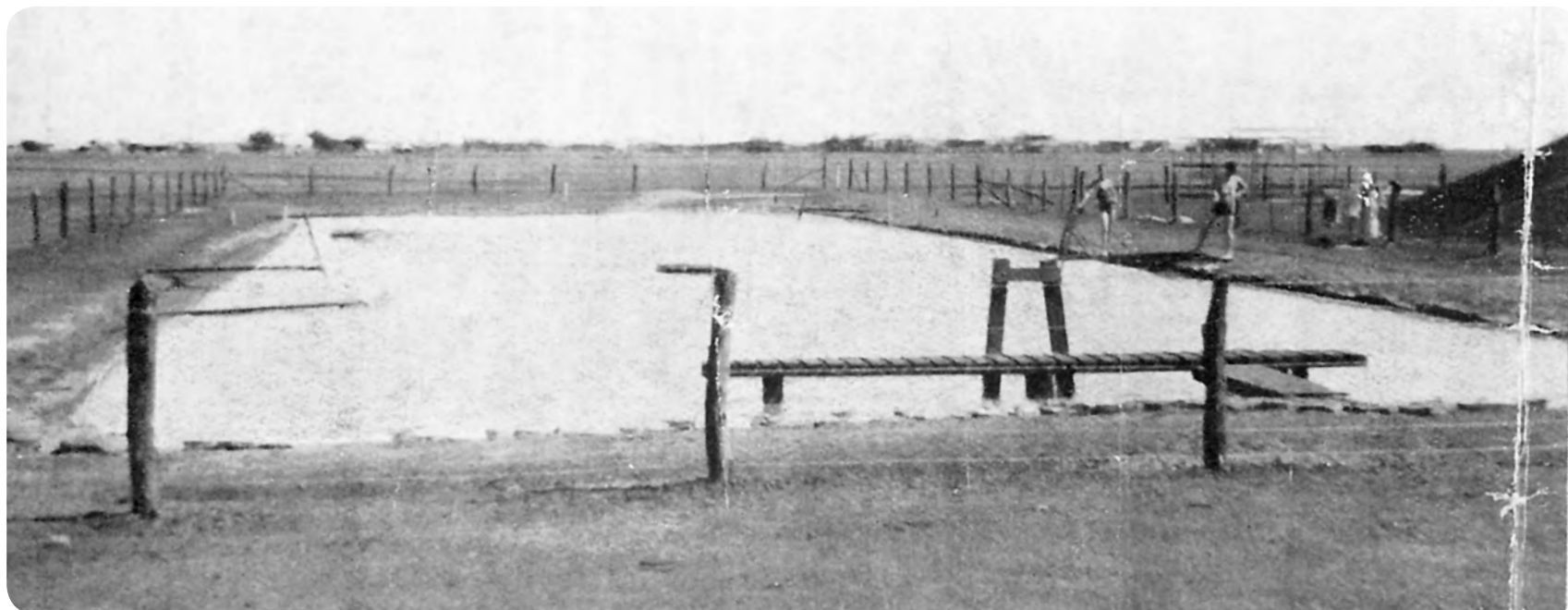
30 November 1946—It is noted that the swimming pool has been emptied and very little work is required to complete the job. We are informed that the pool will be ready in a short while.

5 March 1949—The Julia Creek Football Club held a swimming carnival in the pool on Sunday and gave a most enjoyable display to the public who lined the banks. We have some fine swimmers in our midst. The lads put forth a good show. The cream of the afternoon was when Nugget Stanley lost his French bathers. Just as well the pool did not run dry at that particular time. The women's race was a novel event between two contestants. One young miss, a much faster swimmer than the other, would swim a little way and then stop and wait for her opponent before continuing. In that way they raced the distance.

Opposite bottom: The swimming pool taken looking north, showing the water intake (bottom left) and turkey's nest (cut off, middle left).
[Rita Byrne, FR15, ca 1940]

Below: Unidentified people at the pool.
[Alma Gannon, GA08, ca 1940]





30 June 1956—The McKinlay Shire Council hopes in the financial year 1956-57 to lay down a swimming pool in the town of Julia Creek. Cost is estimated at £20,000. The dimensions of the pool will be 25 metres by 35', with a depth varying from 3' 3" to 7' 6".

1 February 1958—The final working plans and specifications of the Julia Creek swimming pool, estimated to cost £27,000, were approved

at the recent council meeting. For this work a subsidy of $\frac{1}{3}$ will be contributed by the State Government.

10 January 1959—The Shire Council anticipates that the new swimming baths will be opened before the approach of next summer. Parties of swimmers, meantime, are making full use of the cool water at the big waterhole on Eddington and the 5-Mile on Hilton Park.

Above: The dirt swimming pool soon after it was completed sometime in November 1939. The photo was taken looking south to Julia Creek. On the right is the turkey's nest, which Reg Fickling helped build. The dirt which formed the turkey's nest was excavated from what became the swimming pool.

At the far end of the pool on the right is the intake of water for the pool: a spray of water piped from the turkey's nest.

This photo appeared in the *North Queensland Register* of 16/12/1939. Dadie Dawes has an original cutting.

[Dadie Dawes, DW58, 1939]







Opposite: Carmel (left) and fellow workers at Gannon's Hotel. From left: Ivy Burrows, Esme Stokes, Sandra, Mrs Cameron, Mrs Catherine Fickling.
See page 695 for complete photo.
[Ivy Burrows, B106, 1952]

Below: Bob Peut's house in Byrne St. The section on the right was added after the Peuts sold the house in about 1945. Next door to the Peut's, on the right, was the Fickling home that was destroyed by fire on 15 Jan 1944.
[Noel Peut, PN01, ca 1940]

On Saturday morning at about 11 o'clock, great was the shock when smoke was seen to be coming from the government house in Byrne Street occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Vince Fickling and family. The fire fighters and reel were quickly on the scene, and although many worked with great skill and courage the building was totally destroyed. We understand the house was insured, but Mr. Fickling had no insurance on his furniture. In spite of the heat, many helpers rushed in and saved a few things. Mrs. Fickling and three children were in Charters Towers when the fire took place. The news to her will be a great shock. To Mr. and Mrs. Fickling we extend our sympathy in their sad loss. In these bad times furniture is hard to get and one has to pay the highest prices for same.

Great credit and thanks goes to all those who helped at the fire in saving the large home of Mr. Bob Peut next door to Mr. Fickling's. If this fine building had caught fire many buildings at the back would have been in danger as a strong north wind was blowing. Once again we say many thanks to the band of willing helpers in their splendid results.

We have been experiencing a heat wave since the beginning of the year. Saturday and Sunday last were the highest registrations, the mercury soaring to 114.8°. What it must have been in some of the galvanised homes in town one can only imagine. On Thursday m

CA: 21 Jan 1944

A lovely man, my father Carmel Fickling

DAD AND UNCLE JIM (TWINS), were born under a tree between Tambo and Blackall in 1907 and delivered by a black lady. Their births were registered in Blackall. Mum, she came from Charters Towers.

As far as I know, when my parents first met, Dad was head stockman on Corella Station outside Cloncurry and Mum was working there as a cook and housemaid. After they married they moved to Julia Creek where Dad got the job of Common Ranger. I was born in February 1937.

I was a naughty girl when I was young. I was terrible. Swear at the drop of a hat. My cousins Clarrie and Reggie, Uncle Herb's children who lived across the road from us in a high-set house, used to torment me and hang me out the window: "Say b—. If you don't say it we'll drop ya". That's how they got me to swear. And when I'd swear they'd laugh and think it was a great joke.

We lived in Byrne St behind the nun's convent¹, but one house down. Near our house there were a lot of spare allotments. The one to the west of us, Dad kept horses there. Aborigines used to come to that allotment and sit on the ground. There were even Aboriginal kings with the plates around their necks². They lived in little gunyas that Dad built. I don't know why Dad brought them in, unless, as Common Ranger, he did it for health reasons. Mum would cook them cakes wrapped in paper, and – yabber yabber yabber – they'd eat the paper and all.

In 1944 our house burnt down. We were in Charters Towers on a visit, and Dad was the only one home. He'd lit the stove in the morning – when he got out of bed I suppose – and went away to work. It was a windy day and it was thought that sparks from the chimney started a fire in a creeper at the back of the house. The whole damn house caught alight and we lost everything. I remember coming home and going through the ruins. Mum was looking for an engagement ring from Dad, looking for different things, looking through the charred mess.



1. There are two other mentions of the nun's convent in this book: by Mary Winton, and in a newspaper cutting, both on page 382.
2. For a photo of an Aborigine wearing a breast plate, see page 313.

After the fire, when I was about 7, we moved to a house next to Eckford's picture theatre. Mum used to mend the canvas seats. She made a bit of extra money that way. My sister Bev and I, we didn't have to pay to see the pictures. There was a big crack in the high tin wall of the picture theatre that formed our fence line. We used to lay on the ground and look up and watch the pictures for free.

Free pictures didn't last very long. Dad died in September 1944 and we moved away sometime after the funeral. We stayed in Julia Creek for a little while after Dad died, then we went to Charters Towers. Mum did washing and ironing for the army and for a hotel. We were gone about five years. I must have been going on for 12 before we came back to Julia Creek. Yeah, I was.

The day of Dad's passing I was at school. I came home from school to our house next to the picture theatre and there were all these cars parked outside. Mum was inside with relatives.

I can remember Dad before that, how sick he was. Mum took him to different doctors. He had this tumour on his brain, apparently, and in those days there were no such things as operations like we've got now. They could diagnose a tumour but they couldn't do anything about it. He went to doctors in Winton, Charters Towers, Townsville; none of them could do anything. They more or less said there was no hope.

He was such a gentle, kind man and I remember him vividly. He would never hit any of us. Sitting on a canvas easy-chair on the verandah with his feet up – he didn't get around that much – we'd run out to him if Mum was getting angry with us: "Dad! Dad! Mum's cranky". I can remember little things like that. And he'd say: "Leave them, Kath, they're right". That's as plain as day.

I remember him sitting in that easy-chair, poor fellow, when he used to get really bad with the pain. It would send him off. He'd take a turn and get angry. The brain tumour would change his mood. Dad knew he had a tumour and he was frightened of what it did to him. He'd say he was scared he would hurt Mum; that in the midst of a turn he might do something to her. Mum would say to me: "Go and get Uncle Ted". I'd run next door and Uncle Ted would come over to help Dad calm down.

I know it was a tumour Dad had – and that certainly aggravated his problems – but I think other things might have played on his mind as well. Jimmy Edwards, the fellow who drowned at the Punchbowl, he was Dad's

good mate. And then coming on top of that, a fire took our house. One thing and another. It could have all played on his mind.

My father's death is not a delicate subject in our family. Not really. It's quite open. I know why he did it – because of the tumour. He was in shocking pain. It happened in a council car. Dad was the Common Ranger in Julia Creek. Well, thinking about it now, I don't know if the car was ours or the council's. Either way that's where it happened – in a car – and that's what he did. He went out along the road with his rifle and shot himself in this blue... dark blue... navy blue ute.

That's what happened, and I think everybody who knew him knew why it happened. He just couldn't stand going on. He was in terrible pain. Terrific headaches. I can well imagine what it would have been like.

He was a lovely man, my father. After his death Uncle Herb took over as Common Ranger.



Mum remarried four years after Dad died and we moved to Charters Towers. That second marriage was an utter disaster. The bloke blackened Bev's eyes and nearly killed my mother. He was a carpenter. We had a terrible childhood with him. Bev left home and lived with an auntie to get away from the violence. While he was gone out of town for a couple of days, Mum just packed up and we went back to Julia Creek. She must have rang Mr Gannon and he said he'd have a job ready.

Mr Gannon took us all under his wing. He was like a father figure to me, quite strict. It was Mr Gannon who gave Mum the money to bury Dad, and he organised the subscription to raise money for Mum after Dad had gone. And it was Mr Gannon who gave her a job and a roof over our heads when we came back to Julia Creek.

ber in Eckford's Hall, so roll up.
The subscription list for Mrs. Vince Fickling and her three children will close shortly. Any kind person wishing to send donations, address to Superintendent Henry Benson, Ambulance Centre, Julia Creek.
Don't forget the school children fancy dress ball on the 3rd November

CA: 13 Oct 1944

For a while we lived in the staff quarters at Gannon's Hotel, and then Mum got the CWA cottage over the road from the cordial factory and we moved in there, up on top. The meeting room was underneath.

Mum worked for Mr Gannon at his hotel. She'd get up at 3 in the morning and do the washing in an old copper. Then she'd go back in the afternoon and night time to help with the cooking. I used to scrub the floors, clean the silver, and help with the washing up. I was still at school when I was working at Gannon's, only about 11 or 12. I worked there for two or three years and I remember saying to Mum: "I don't want to do this all my life. I'm not going to wash up and scrub floors..." and I was carrying on. We had to hands-and-knees scrub a big wooden verandah. It was long, too.

So I went to this red-haired fellow at Australian Estates. Vic Kelly I think it was:

Can I get a job here?
What can you do other than make cups of tea?
Couldn't you teach me how to type –
or anything at all?

He more or less laughed at me. So that was

the end of that idea. Eventually I got a job as a telegram girl. Wore these great big galoshes when it rained; there was no bitumen. I used to have to stump through the mud and slush with my bandy legs and long galoshes on. Then when I turned 14 I went on the exchange with Cynthia Fickling, my cousin. From 14 to 17 I was happy – happy as Larry at the Post Office with Cynn timer.

Ivy Burrows was another good friend. We had the time of our lives, Ivy and I. We'd go fishing, go to the Punchbowl to swim, or to the turkey's nest near town¹. We had concerts – I used to sing a bit in those days – and we'd go to all the balls. That was the thing; the dances and the balls. We loved to dress up in beautiful dresses and long gloves. I got Belle of the Ball once. McKinlay I think it was, I got Belle of the Ball. Could easily be a dozen young people riding on the back of a truck to get there. Dust! You've got no idea. We'd pile in the back of a truck and put blankets over the top of us to keep the dust off. It was delightful, sweet innocence.

I SUPPOSE I LEFT because I wanted a change. I'd say 1955. My sister Bev married in Julia Creek and moved to Charleville, so I went over there to be near her. I got a transfer to the Charleville Post Office. The postmaster used to call me "the Jillaroo from Julia Creek".

Apart from the fire and Dad's passing away, I have only happy memories of the little town where I grew up. Especially after we went back. When Mum remarried and we moved to Charters Towers, that three or four years was horrific. We had a terrible time. Just to get back to Julia Creek, even though we lived in one cramped room at the hotel, was pure, joyous freedom.

1. See photos on page 626, 635 and 653.



WHEN I LEFT SCHOOL I was about 14. I worked at the Post Office for a while as a telegram girl and then a job came up as a telephonist. I came home this day and said to Mum: "I'd like to put in for that". One of the Fickling girls had also put in for it – Carmel. The guy who was deciding who would get the job was friends with them and Mum said: "Oh, you won't get it". So I didn't apply. And Mum was right. Carmel got the job.

CLAUDETTE GREEN

Opposite: Carmel's father, Vince, in front of the ute in which he ended his life.

[Carmel Fickling, FC26, ca 1940]

married daughters in Townsville.

Quite a gloom was cast over the town on Wednesday 27th September at the sad passing of Mr. Vincent Fickling who was 37 years of age. Mr. Fickling, with his wife and young family, has been a resident of our town for many years. The deceased was well-known and highly respected by all who knew him and is the son of Mr. Reginald Fickling and the late Mrs. Fickling, and twin brother of James Fickling. At the time of his death he was in the employment of the Shire Council where he faithfully served for many years as Common Ranger. He was previously chairman of the local ambulance and also a member of the school committee. Although Mr. Fickling had not been enjoying the best of health lately, he was ready to help with functions held in town. The council, C.W.A. and school flags flew at half mast.

The funeral took place on Thursday at 5 p.m. The cortege moved from the home of his brother, Mr. Herbert Fickling, where the Rev. Bruce held service and read the last rites of the Presbyterian Church. The pall bearers were members of the Ambulance Committee: Messrs Stanley, Langtree, Hutton and Powderham. The funeral was largely attended and numerous wreaths and messages of sympathy were received.

The deceased was laid to rest next to his mother who predeceased him some three years ago. He leaves a young wife and three small children to mourn his loss: Beverley 12 years, Carmel 7 years, Vincent 3 years.

To his sorrowing young wife and family, his father and his relatives, many friends extend their sincere sympathy in their sad loss. Relatives attending the funeral were brothers Herbert, James and Edward, sister Maude, and cousin Bill Fry.

Two of Mr Fickling's brothers, Edward and William, are serving in the forces. Pte. Edward Fickling left to rejoin his unit after attending the funeral. The deceased's aged father, Reginald, is at present living in Winton.

Mr Allison, Chairman of the Shire

CA: 06 Oct 1944



Burrows Family

- ↪ NICK (Stationmaster 1920s)
- ↪ BEN ♥ Gertrude
 - ↪ Ivy (1932)
 - ↪ Benny (1934) ♥ Judy
 - ↪ Bill (1939)
- ↪ BERT (built first Blue Bird Cafe in 1934)

Left: Benny shearing with Charlie Tankard's team.
[Judy Burrows, BuJ04, ca 1954]

Opposite: Judy at the Tully show.
[Judy Burrows, BuJ01, 1955]

I WAS MAINLY at Julia Creek only at weekends – if I was shearing in the area. You met up with your mates when something was on. If I went to Julia Creek we'd go out together. Then you mightn't see them again for another month, six weeks.

In Julia Creek my best mates were Donny Burns and Benny Burrows. Benny only had two thoughts in life when we were kids: to shear 200 sheep a day and get a red-headed woman. I don't know what sort of woman he ended up with, but he shore the sheep all right.

JOHNNY WALSH

Bad Temper Weather

Two girls come to Julia Creek,
marry and stay

Judy Burrows

OH, LORDEE BE. I must have been about 16 when that picture was taken. It was at the Tully Show in 1955. They used to walk up to you and take your photo. Then you could go and look at the negative and buy the photo for four bob. They don't do that anymore.

Look at me – pretty and skinny. What a pity we have to get old.

I WAS BORN IN BUNDABERG. Mum had a little corner store and Dad had trucks. He worked on main roads. I can remember being on main road camps around Cardwell, working our way up north. We ended up on a farm around Tully and I did my schooling there. Then we went to Townsville to live.

In Townsville I worked with Doreen Fry at a fruit shop in the city. Doreen and I planned to go on the big working holiday around Australia. We went out to Julia Creek together to save money for our holiday; it was supposed to be good money out west. Only went there with the intention of saving money. That was my big thing, to save money to travel.

I went out to Julia Creek on the train. Must have been 1956. Never heard of the place before that. I opened my eyes and here was all this... nothing. I came from trees and lush green. Nobody had warned me there were no trees at Julia Creek. I was quite shocked. I'd never lived anywhere remotely like that.

Doreen got me a job at Terry O'Neill's cafe. He had a cafe-cum-store, right on the corner where the Civic Centre is now. A dance hall was next door, down towards the school. Terry put me on and paid me £4 a week and my board. I was saving my money to go on this big trip, but it never happened. Doreen met Lionel, I met Ben, and we married and stayed in Julia Creek. End of story. Stayed there for 29 years.

Ben was shearing with Charlie Tankard when I first met him. I think a group of us were at the pictures watching a Cowboy and Another. It was always a Cowboy and Another at Norm Downey's pictures. Movies they call them now. We went to the *pictures* – at the open-air theatre. Used to shiver in winter.

I can't remember when Ben and I got serious, we just sort of fell into it I suppose. I was a shy little thing. On our first date Colin Hardy came along. He and Ben knocked around together. I don't know whether Colin was lonely or just wanted to hang around with us to see what was going on. There was nothing going on though, we were very innocent.



We went to anything happening in Julia Creek, and always in groups. Even went to the railway station for an outing to see the Inlander come in. We did. We were desperate for somewhere to go. It was quite primitive.

I knew Ben for 18 months before we got married in 1958. He was the only guy I ever went out with, actually, so I must have started going out with him more or less straight away after I arrived.

About 12 months after we married we bought the town carrying from Keith Coleman. Might have been 10 years we were in town carrying. We went from that to the Normanton mail run. Then we bought Wicky Wilkins' drapery store in the 1970s. We still had that when Ben died in 1981. I kept the drapery for a while until I sold it to Keith Coleman. We went in a big circle selling businesses to each other.

Ben died at home in the house we'd built behind the drapery shop. I was talking to him after lunch and he wasn't feeling well. There'd been a rodeo at the weekend and he wasn't feeling real good on the Monday. The girl from the bank came over; he hadn't countersigned a cheque. This was about 3 o'clock just before the bank closed. So I said to her: "Well, you stay in the shop and I'll get him to sign it". We

had a long narrow hallway, and as I went inside I was singing out and yabbering right from the back steps. He was in our bedroom.

Y'know, this is strange:

When I got to the door I knew he wasn't just asleep,

I knew he was dead.

I don't know how, why or what.

I went over and felt his pulse

and then I ran,

crazy woman,

back to the shop.

Ben wanted to be buried at Julia Creek, and he is. I always told him that if I died in Julia Creek he had to bring me to the coast and bury me. I wanted to be where there was moisture. "Aw, you won't know. I'll just bury you here and let a tap drip on you". I was dried out and leathery and I wanted to be... I always hankered to get back to the coast, but Ben thought there was nowhere like Julia Creek.

I was his wife – but the Creek was his mistress. In some ways he was more attached to her than to me. Whether or not he was frightened... I used to say to him that he was frightened to leave, he was too frightened to make the break. He said he would never leave except in a box. And he got his wish. If he hadn't died, I think I'd have eventually abandoned ship and gone.

Ben was a good man, a good provider for his kids. He always said they



were going to have what he was never able to have. And he was a people person. He didn't need finery around him, he just liked people. I think the people had Ben. The people – and Julia Creek. But after he died I just couldn't wait to leave. As soon as that happened I knew I was gone. I had to leave, I didn't want to be there.

This is terrible. It sounds like Ben's death was my leg out. Somebody told me that if I stayed 30 years in Julia Creek I would never leave. I was there 29 years so I left. But not straight away. Like Ben, I was a bit scared to take off. I sold the drapery shop and the house, and stayed with the Colemans for a while. Worked with Jumbo, worked with the chemist. Stayed around.

My son James came home after Ben died, but when I left Julia Creek we all left together. My boys kept going back until – I knew it would happen – they grew away from the place and they weren't in it anymore. They were like the little boy who fell out of the boat: things had sailed on while they weren't around. Their mates had moved. Eventually they didn't go back at all. I left in 1984.

BEN LOVED THE CREEK, BUT I HATED IT. No, I shouldn't say I hated it. I hated the dryness and that north breeze. Aw, that north breeze used to nearly kill me. The heat, as well as the dust that used to blow in. Bad temper weather that was, really. I remember a fellow on the Normanton mail run, he'd say to me: "The north breeze is blowing, Jude. I won't hazard talking to you today". Ooh, I'd be an animal in that north wind. I was pretty fussy and house proud. When that north wind blew, or the whirlywinds, you can imagine the dust. Until I went to Julia Creek I'd never experienced anything like that.

Or the glare. All the buildings were white or cream or off-white. Except... I remember walking into Kaeser's bakery, a dark dingy little place facing the railway. I used to buy 'tin' loaves, those tall high-rise loaves. It was good bread, unsliced. I don't think sliced bread was heard of then. God, I'm going back a long way. The bakery was an old brown place. Never painted. I don't think it ever had any paint on it. Walk in there and it used to be dark. All the other buildings in Julia Creek were pale coloured, but that one wasn't – that was brown.

There wasn't much colour to Julia Creek. We did have a lovely green lawn and you could grow certain things – bougainvillea – but you had to work at it to get colour. I didn't realise the starkness of it all until I came back to the coast.

Another thing: we used to come away to Townsville and carry bore water with us because we couldn't handle the city water. I've never smelt or tasted anything in my life like that Julia Creek bore water, but when we went away we took it with us. If we were away a week – the water wouldn't last that long – as soon as we got back to Julia Creek we'd go to the fridge for a drink of bore water. That was the best, we thought.

Funnily enough, I can knock Julia Creek, but let a stranger knock it and I'll come down on them like a ton of bricks. Everything you wanted was there: bitumen roads, golf, swimming pool. Took a long time to get those things, but they were all there. And when I think about it, it was a

good safe place to live. Didn't do us any harm. Didn't do me any harm. People were friendly and... yeah, the people were the thing. The people were the backbone of Julia Creek. They were wonderful. You'd never meet anybody like those country people, Westerners, ever again.

Julia Creek was good to me; it was good to us. Ben and I worked jolly hard and it was good to us.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO RECOLLECT the day I left. I haven't been able to picture driving over the creek and leaving behind 29 years. I can't remember what my thoughts were. I don't even know whether... I probably shed a tear. I don't know whether I did or not. I must have.

I drove to Charters Towers and bought a business, a coffee shop. My last go working for myself. Then I decided I'd work for other people.



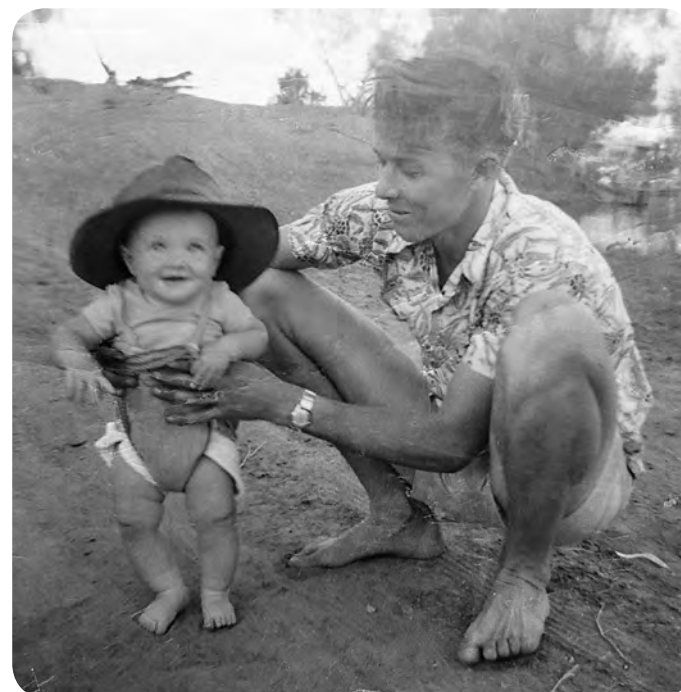
Left: Benny Burrows on his wedding day in Julia Creek.
[Ivy Burrows, BI30, 5/6/1958]

Below: Benny holding the author
(my father and Benny were best mates).
[Guy Burns, GB26, 1958]

"That's Ben. And that's you? Oh my God, you *are* a cutie.
That'd be Ben's hat on you." (Judy Burrows)

Opposite top: Ivy Burrows aged 16.
[Ivy Burrows, BI01, 1949]

Opposite bottom: Carmel Fickling and Ivy Burrows at the dirt swimming pool. Julia Creek in the background.
[Edith Mann, MnE13, ca 1950]



Cocking our legs up Ivy Burrows



I WAS BORN IN RICHMOND, November 1932, at the hospital. My mother was Gertrude Amy; my father, Benjamin Edward. He worked for AJ Smith who had shops in Richmond, Julia Creek and Cloncurry: groceries, haberdashery, nails, kerosene, everything. Dad started off with AJ Smith's in Cloncurry, then he managed in Richmond. He got transferred to Julia Creek when I was about 4. I lived there till I left in 1951.

I was the eldest. Benny was born 1934 and Willy 1939. I did my schooling at the Julia Creek State School. The three of us went there. I got to grade 7 but I didn't do Scholarship. The teacher and I, we didn't get on. He told me I had to go home and ask my parents permission not to sit the exam and I told him: "They said I could please myself". Of course, he made me go home and ask my parents. I came back and stood there and I said: "My mother said I can please myself".

I wouldn't sit the Scholarship exam. I was sorry afterwards.

I can remember my first day at school. My cousin Nick took me, and I went upstairs to sign in, or whatever it was they do. I took one look at the headmaster: "I don't like you" and I squeezed between the door and the wall and squatted there on my haunches. But I did settle down.

We had sports at school: rounders, running, that'd be about it. No swimming. We were never allowed to go to the turkey's nest or the dirt swimming pool that was beside it. A bore bubbled into the turkey's nest and water flowed from there into the pool. We weren't supposed to go near either of them, but if we went... no good one child going, it was always big bunches of you. We never learnt to swim. I didn't, anyhow.



Our main recreation out of school was going to the woolscour. Some of the kids, their fathers worked there. We used to borrow a trailer from Popeye¹. It was like a table top with car wheels on it. Popeye had a store in town, the one that became the O-K Store when my father bought into it. Popeye used to pick up his fruit and vegies from the railway with this trailer and we'd borrow it, push it up to the scour with all the little kids on top.

We used to take supper in billy cans for the fathers who were working at the scour. I can remember walking up at sunset, the sun going down, and coming home in the dark. We never went up in the daytime. We'd be there about an hour by the time the men had their tea and us kids played. Be about half a dozen kids or so.

Sometimes the scour would be working. I remember watching the mechanical arms dunking the wool in the water and watching the dried wool coming out of the blower upstairs. We used to play amongst the dried wool and have fun and games till everybody was ready to come home.

Would have been towards the end of the war, when I was 13, that Dad wanted to go out on his own, to leave AJ Smith's and start his own business. He started the O-K store in partnership with Bert Peut, a shearing contractor. Dad ran the shop. Bert didn't worry about it, he was a silent partner.

Popeye – I don't remember his real name – he had the building before Dad. Coming home from school we'd call in and say: "Popeye, ya got any specks today?" Specks were apples with spots, bruises. We used to pick them up on our way home from school.

Dad's store had big tin walls, big rafters, big displays on tables. On one side he had all his groceries, and on the other side he had materials, shoes, clothes. Up the back were the nuts and bolts, and kerosene tins stocked with groceries. Things in those days didn't come in packets like we see them today. Fruit for cooking – currants, sultanas – they came in little boxes. Half the time the boxes were full of weevils when we got

1. Popeye – probably Mr Powderham.
See CA 23/3/1945, opposite.



Mr. Powderham, who for some time conducted a very successful fruit business, has closed down and intends going into business in Brisbane.

Mr. Ben Burrows of Mathew's Store has removed his groceries and goods to the shop vacated by Mr. Powderham next to Mr. Lance Lewis' shop.

Congratulations go to another popular town, Mr. Clive

CA: 23 Mar 1945

Messrs. Peut and Burrows have handed over their O-K store to Mr. Clive Holland who is carrying on the business as a cash and carry store. Mr. Ben Burrows has been a storekeeper for many years in Julia Creek having managed a store for Mr. A. J. Smith prior to taking the O-K store. It will be hard not finding Ben behind the counter.

Mr. Jack Walters is very ill in the

CA: 06 Jun 1952

Opposite: O-K Store, Burke St. Mrs Wilkins drapery on right.

[Ivy Burrows, B126, 1950]

Below: Burke St shops, from left:

- Garden of Roses Cafe (cut off)
- Peter Dawes (*Est 1937, General Storekeeper & Draper, Mercery, Newsagency, Saddlery*)
- Bank of NSW
- Lance Lewis (*Established 1929, Motor Sales & Service, Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Vauxhall, Bedford*)

Photo dated by presence of Garden of Roses, built in 1939. The O-K Store is to the right of the photo.
[Rita Byrne, FR24, ca 1940]

them, so Mum used to bring them home, wash them, put them out on the washing trolley in the sun to dry, and take them back to the shop.

We used to work for Dad, us kids. We'd come home from school and go down the shed; put the potatoes in 4 lb lots, and bottle the kerosene from 44 gallon drums.

In the long run the store wasn't successful, not really. Dad went broke, I think, and walked away from it. I had moved from Julia Creek by then. Clive Holland went into the business. He may have paid Dad some money for it, I don't know. I never asked my parents about their business dealings.

Next to Dad's store was Lance Lewis' garage. Lance sold records and electrical things as well as cars. I'd go over there: "Any new records come in?" He'd sit down and put them on the radiogram and play them. I'd get my pick of what I wanted for two and sixpence. We had a wind up gramophone at home, last just long enough to play one record. When I left Julia Creek I ended up with a butterbox full of 78s, all from Lance Lewis.

Lance was a good sport. Matter of fact I said to him once:

How about adopting me. Ya got no kids of your own, so adopt me.

No thank you.

He didn't want me on his hands.

Two shops up from Lance was Peter Dawes' store. It was in two sections in the early days. On the right was a tiny newsagent area. A doorway led from there through to the main shop. They only really opened that small section of a Sunday when the papers came in on the mail train. It was only a pokey little section. You had to wait for somebody to come out before you could get in to get your paper.

What I remember most about the Dawes family is Peter, their eldest son, when he was only about 3 or 4. Lance Lewis, Peter Dawes and George Peut, they'd sit outside and yak. Young Peter would be playing nearby and Lance'd say:

Gawd, you're a little girl.

I'm not!

Yes you are. You're a little girl.

Young Peter would pull his daks down: "See, I'm not!"





WHEN I FINISHED SCHOOL I worked for Bill Gannon until I left the Creek. I got on well with Bill. I was treated like one of the family. Ivy Gannon – she was a nurse doing part of her training in England – if she sent home a parcel, there was always something for me too. I used to borrow her fur stoles to go to the balls.

I started off as housemaid and I ended up being waitress. I worked in the dining room: breakfast, dinner and tea. We had some dignitaries go through that dining room: Governor Lavarack¹, Neville Shute the writer. A lot of people like the bank Johnnys came in for meals, and the Catholic priest used to come every day. All the different ministers, no matter whether they were just a parson, a priest, a Callithumpian, or whatever they like to call them, nobody in religious orders paid for meals when they were in Julia Creek and came to Gannon's Hotel. He was good like that, old Bill. He was tough, but he was fair.

The Catholic priest, Father Devereux, he always liked two cups of tea. He was a good fella most of the time, but he was very bad-mannered in one way. When he was ready for his second cup he'd put it down on the table – tap tap tap – and I'd come over and fill it. He never used to say please, thank you, kiss my bum or anything. Anyhow, this one night was a very busy night and I'm doing the whole dining room on my own and – tap tap tap. I turned around and snapped at him: "Whaddaya think I am? A damn packhorse?"

Bill got to hear about it and he came to me: "Ivy, what's this about Father Devereux?" I thought I was in for it. I told him what happened. "Good on ya" he says.

We saw a lot of fights outside through the dining room window, but we'd never go near. It wasn't allowed. Mr Gannon, he was very strict in that way. He looked after his girls.

Jack Cramp, one of the SP bookies in Julia Creek, he used to have his meals at Gannon's and us girls would pester him on Fridays: "What can we put our money on tomorrow? Can we have two bob each way on such-n-such?" He'd give us a tip and whisper: "Don't you tell your parents".

I mean: two bob – Jesus, lot of money.

1. Sir John Lavarack was Governor of Queensland from 1946-57, and uncle of Gordon Lavarack (page 180).

I LOST OUT as Belle of the Ball because people voted for Miss O-K Store instead of my real name. Dress: pale blue with a big bow at the back and a sweetheart neckline.

IVY

I USED TO DO the waitress work for Bill Gannon at night with Ivy Burrows. Ivy and I used to wait on the tables. Father Devereux, ooh, I didn't like him. He was scary. If a spoon wasn't put in the right place he'd have something to say; he'd rouse on you. He was rude. If you didn't have the knife and fork put right he'd tell you straight away. He'd come in and you'd be on your best behaviour. You'd do everything spot on for him.

CARMEL FICKLING

The Grand Annual Catholic Belle of the Ball held in Eckford's Hall on Friday night was an outstanding success. Door takings amounted to £95. The hall was decorated with blended streamers that hung from three large hoops. The stage made a perfect setting with paper curtains and pretty background showing palm trees and beach scene. Mr. Ben Burrows in the ticket office gave out voting cards for the Belle of the Ball. These were collected and duly counted at 9 o'clock.

The Right Rev. Dr. Ryan of Townsville and the Rev. Father Devereux P. P. arrived and were escorted to the stage by the President, Mr. Joe Kaeser. Little Miss Ivonne Cooke, prettily attired, curtsied to Bishop Ryan and then handed each lady on the stage a fresh flower posie. The official party went to supper where a nicely arranged table and a very enjoyable buffet supper was served to all present.

Novelty dances were enjoyed until the emcee called order to announce the Belle of the Ball, won by Miss Patullo, a nursing sister at the Julia Creek hospital, with Miss Ivy Burrows a very close second. Both young ladies were loudly cheered.

Miss Patullo was escorted to the stage where Mrs. M. Taylor handed her

CA: 13 Sep 1950

"Little Miss Ivonne Cooke" was the policeman's daughter. See photo p701.

Roy Hampton was another bookmaker. He had a billiard room and a hairdressing saloon (only men's hair; Gloria McCarthy was the ladies' hairdresser). Roy, Monday nights, if there were no shearers in town he'd let us girls in. Had to lock the doors. If the copper saw us we'd be in trouble – no women allowed in the billiard saloon. We'd go in there wearing slacks, spreading out around the big tables, cocking our legs up. We used to play eight ball.

WHEN MY 18TH BIRTHDAY CAME I told Bill Gannon I was leaving. "I'm going." Nobody would believe me. I gave Bill three months' notice and just before I was set to leave I said:

Haven't you got anyone to replace me?

Was you fair dinkum?

I wasn't pulling your leg. I was fair dinkum all right.

Julia Creek had no life, in one way, and I wanted to see a bit more of life's variety. Most of our entertainment came from ourselves. We made the dances. We'd get together and one of us would go over to the exchange: "If you're talking to so-n-so on Millungera, ask them if they wanna come to a dance Friday night". Mossie McDonald, he used to play the piano and the drums. That's how we made our fun. If there was a dance at McKinlay or Kynuna I'd go to Bill Gannon and say: "There's a dance tonight. Can I put tea on early?" If the cook was agreeable, Bill would usually let me. I'd go round the rooms: "Okay, tea's ready. Get your backside into the dining room. I'm going soon". We'd all pile in the cars and away we'd go. Get home next morning half an hour late for serving breakfast.

I went to Townsville after Julia Creek. Worked in the railway for about two years on the Inlander when it was first introduced on the Mount Isa run. Before the Inlander I did a few trips on the old wooden train. Boy, you wouldn't believe it. It was a wood train in more ways than one – a wood stove and a tiny old-fashioned sink to wash up the dishes. And when the train tilted, the wooden seams used to open up on the sides. Then the Inlander arrived with very modern conveniences and I got transferred to that.

I HAD LOTS OF GOOD FRIENDS in Julia Creek. The Wintons had a big family, the Fosters had a big family, the Kaesers had a big family. We more or less lived in a little circle. It was an almost ideal place to grow up. You had your values. We had two black families, Fortunes and Hills, and they mixed with the rest of us. You saw how some lived richer than you, some poorer than you. Nobody had a lot of money and there was no stigma being poor.

I've passed through Julia Creek a couple of times since I left. Well... you just shake your head and say: "Did I live here?" At the time we knew nothing different. We just lived there and that was it. That was life.

year's pla,
A party was held on Sunday night in Champneys' Hall as a farewell to the carpenter boys working on the Australian Estates' building. These will be replaced by fresh men in a day or so. Miss Ivy Burrows took on the organising and all enjoyed the night's games and dancing, not forgetting the dainty supper which was prepared by the young ladies. Such friendly gatherings are appreciated by the young men since entertainment in these small Western towns is scarce.
The golf on Sunday was

NQR: 17 Nov 1951

Opposite: Father Devereux
[Carmel Fickling, FC03, ca 1950]

Right: Ivy showing her legs to the carpenter boys working on the Australian Estate's building (see photo and NQR 17/11/1951, p554). Ivy was on friendly terms with the carpenters who were working next door to Gannon's Hotel where Ivy worked as a waitress.
(Ivy Burrows, BI15, 1951)



Herb Fortune

WE HAD two black families in Julia Creek, Fortunes and Hills, and they mixed with the rest of us. Alma Fortune, she was in my class. Her family had a lot of nicknames. Monkey Fortune, he was the old man; and another one, a real skinny young fella, his name was Eagle. As a matter of fact, I was in Cloncurry one Easter talking to this dark fella at the bowls club and he mentioned something about Julia Creek so I said to him:

Did you ever know the Fortunes?

Yeah, I am one.

Gawd, I wouldn't have known. What about Eagle?

I am Eagle!

So we got to it and we had a great old yak.

IVY BURROWS

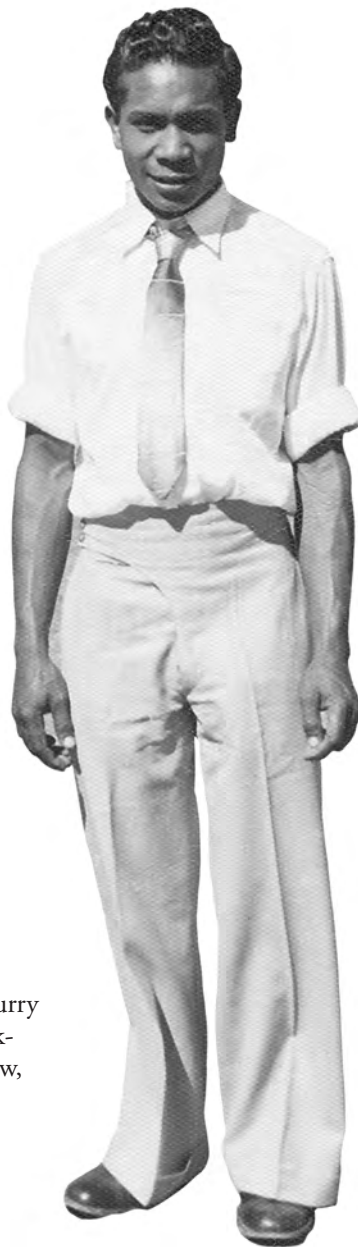
WELL, AT LEAST IVY REMEMBERED the bird bit right. She's talking about me. I worked in the bowls club in Cloncurry for nine years. I was president there for one part of it. My nickname's actually Galah. Not many of my mates are left alive now, but the few who are call me Gillie.

I don't know much about the early history of my parents. Mum's name was Ann Cecilia and Dad's was Jack, but he was known as Monkey. They reckon he could ride anything on four legs; that like a monkey he could hang on. He was only a little fella, but a very strong man for his size. You know those big anvils they used to have? They reckon he could lift one of those up to his chest.

Dad was working on Euroka Springs when Tom Quilty had it in the 1930s. He was a stockman just about all his life. Someone traced him back to a tribe outside of Croydon called *Tagalag*, but there's not much else I can tell you. Mum, she was cook and housemaid. Grandparents? I don't know who my grandparents were.

Mum moved into Julia Creek when I was a little bloke, and that's where I started school in 1945. I was only at school in Julia Creek for a couple of years, so my memories of it are pretty thin. I remember getting dressed up for a children's fancy dress ball. Mick, my brother, went as a cowboy, and I went as the jockey, Darby Munro. Someone else went as a packet of Kellogg's Cornflakes. Pretty rough-n-ready stuff. It's what they did in those days. I was a cornflakes' packet once, though I'd rather have gone as a jockey.

Donny Harbutt, Spud Murphy, Johnny Brisbane, they were all good mates of mine. We used to walk along the creek, go fishing. Once we were



Rough-n-Ready

Herb was a cornflakes' packet once, though he'd rather have been a jockey

sitting on this big coolibah branch and the bloody thing broke and we all landed in the mud. Wonder we didn't break our legs.

We made steamrollers out of empty soup tins. Punch holes in both ends, fill it with sand, put a wire through it, tie on a piece of string and call it a steamroller. You could join them together and have three side by side. We played cricket with a pick handle for a bat and an old tennis ball scrounged from somewhere. I never played tennis because Mum couldn't afford to buy me a racket. For pocket money I used to collect drink bottles and sell them to Eckford's cordial factory. Jim or Joe would give me a penny a bottle. When I got a dozen, well, that was a shilling I could spend.

Mum used to iron Father Devereux's clothes and that's how he came to know our family pretty well. She starched them with white stuff mixed with water. It'd make them real stiff and crackly. Father Devereux used to take Mick and I to the dairy on the back of his new Chev ute. Out near the woolscour the Blanches ran a few head of dairy cows. Father used to say Mass there for the workers at the scour and for the Blanches. Mick and I were altar boys. We used to do the Mass in town first, and then we'd go out to the dairy, maybe once a month. Not many people had vehicles in those days so I suppose it was easier for the priest to go to his parishioners.

First time I had a ride in a car was in Father Devereux's ute. I remember watching the brake lights come on – that fascinated me – and watching the dust turning up at the back. I liked that.

WE LEFT JULIA CREEK and went to Cloncurry in 1948 after Mum met Tommy Williamson. He was a shearer who used to shear for Tom Jessup. The Hill kids came with us: Mary and Phyllis, Alan and Freddy. They were the only other dark people in Julia Creek. They came to Cloncurry with our family because Fanny Hill broke up with her husband and was living with a bloke called Billy Bush. Mum just about raised those Hill kids. Old Fanny didn't worry too much about them.

The worst thing I remember about Julia Creek was when I got the cuts. I might have been a bit cheeky. Cornwell was the teacher and he had this little moustache, a bit like Hitler. He gave me six on the knuckles on each hand, and six on each leg. Twenty-four cuts with the edge of the ruler. Aw, mate – hurt! As soon as I got out for lunch I took off home and wouldn't go back. That's my worst recollection of Julia Creek. But most of it was a pretty good life, really.



Us coloured people **Alma Fortune**



MUM WAS FROM NORMANTON. We don't know for sure when she was born... we don't. We think she was born in 1914. She died in 1986.

One thing about Mum: she was always home when we were. She made sure she was there when we came home from school. We weren't allowed to roam the streets of Julia Creek. She always said: "If you're going somewhere you be back at a certain time or you won't go again". And we had to be back.

To support the family Mum took in washing and ironing and went out during the day to clean people's houses. Dad came in from Euroka Springs a couple of times a year and he might have thrown her a few bob; but see, Mum reared us kids. She reared us kids up all by herself. Dad never worried about us really. He just wanted to stop on the stations.

Mum brought us kids to Julia Creek so that we could go to school. She educated herself, Mum. Times were tough for... for us coloured people in the early part. We had to get on the best way we could.

I WAS BORN ON PALM ISLAND in 1934. Why Mum was there I don't know. She came back from Palm Island with Dad and me and my older brother Bill. We all went to Euroka Springs. I was just a baby. Mick was born three years later, and then after Mick there was Herbie and Lorna.

The Quiltys owned Euroka Springs. Dad was stockman and Mum worked in the house. My clearest memory of Euroka Springs is when Mick

got poisoned. Mrs Quilty would go around and poison the ants. Mick must have walked in it and licked his feet – he was a beggar for licking his feet. Anyway, he got sick. I was sitting at the foot of the bed and here he is frothing at the mouth and kicking his legs. I ran to get Mum. She and Mrs Quilty poured something down his throat to make him retch and that seemed to fix him.

It was after Mick's poisoning that Mum decided to move into Julia Creek and send us to school. We packed up everything, and when the mailman came we went in his truck. Mum was friends with the Wintons, and we stopped with them until we were able to get a house of our own.

I started school in Julia Creek in 1941. I think I only went to grade 7. I always seemed to get on okay at school. My skin didn't seem to be an issue in Julia Creek. People never said I couldn't do this or I couldn't be that because of my colour. I knew I was different, but it was never an issue, really.

When I left school I worked for Mrs Watson at the Blue Bird Cafe, washing floors. Actually, I used to do that when I was still going to school. I used to wash the floors before school in the morning. I suppose I was 11 or 12.

After the Blue Bird I went to Cloncurry and worked at His Majesty's Hotel. Mum and the other kids followed a bit later when she picked up with Tommy Williamson. He was a shearer she met in Julia Creek and they more or less got together and shifted to Cloncurry. By 1949 we'd all left, and that was the end of the Fortune family connection with Julia Creek.



Opposite: I was a flash old murri in those days. Herb Fortune at the Winton rodeo.

[Herb Fortune, FHe01, 1958]

Above: Alma's mother, Annie.

[Alma Fortune, FA02, ca 1980]

Right: Julia Creek students.

Back row from left: 1. Lennie Barry, 2. Lisle Hardy, 3. Benny Burrows, 4. Pauline Pollard, 5. Edith Mann, 6. Les Whitby (teacher), 7. Betty Hutton, 8. Noreen Godier, 9. Les Johnson, 10. Ken Kaeser, 11. Tony Jaques.

Middle row: 1. Claudette Green, 2. Mary Godier, 3. Joan Stevens, 4. Levina Beauchamp, 5. Alma Fortune, 6. Bev Kaeser, 7. Pattie Pattison.

Front row: 1. Billy Godier, 2. Barry Jaques, 3. Fred (Spud) Murphy, 4. ? 5. Cooee Wilder, 6. Mick Fortune, 7. John 'Choco' Winton.

[Edith Mann, MnE05, 1947]



Mrs Quilty's Po Bill Fortune

MUM TOLD ME SHE WAS 16 and working for Tom Quilty on Euroka Springs when I was born. On my birth certificate it's written that I was born in Julia Creek in 1931. But I wasn't – I was born on the bank of the Flinders River. My old dad gave me that information. And when I asked Mum, she was a little bit coy about it. The truck that was taking her into Julia Creek gave a rough ride and I was brought on quicker than I should have been. I was born beneath the boughs of a coolibah tree. As a matter of fact I've got a photo of that tree. It was the anchor of the flying fox that was used for taking people and provisions across the river in flood time. The flying fox was a big cage with a wheel on it which rolled along on a steel rope. The rope's still there.

Just about where I'm standing, that's where Dad showed me I was born. They call that the Manfred Crossing.

IN MY FAMILY THERE WAS ME, Alma, Michael, Herb and Lorna in that order. Dad's name was Jack, better known as Monkey or Monk. Mum was Annie. She was cook, housemaid, laundress – the whole lot – for the Quiltys at Euroka Springs. Dad was stockman. He actually looked after Euroka Springs when Tom Quilty moved to Western Australia. My father ran the property and Tom Quilty paid the bills.

Dad was born on a place named Oakland Park, north of the main road between Normanton and Croydon. Tom Quilty's parents, the owners of Oakland Park, reared Dad right from a little baby. See, these Aborigines were camped on a waterhole near the river just below the homestead. When they left, Dad's mother took him up to the homestead in a little coolamon and put him at the back door. From then on the Quilty's reared him, and it's very likely that they were the ones who gave Dad the name Fortune.

From what I can gather, Dad's mother was a full blood. And his father... well, every time I see the East Timorese on TV, that's where I reckon Dad's father came from. Mum was born in Normanton as far as I can make out. And I reckon there was Aboriginal blood inside her too. Both my parents were of mixed blood.

Mum and Dad were married on Palm Island. Alma was coming along (the next after me), and being Catholics, Mum and Dad had to get married. Palm Island was run by the Queensland



Government as the punishment island for dark people. It was just a normal community, but it had a section for "bad guys" if I can use that term. Dad was banished there, forcibly sent there in 1933 after a court decision. The old fella got mixed up poddy-dodging sheep. Quilty used to run sheep on Euroka Springs. He sold a mob of wethers to this bloke way up the Saxby River – Bunda Bunda I think it might have been. What Dad was told to do was take them up there, turn around, and bring them back. The bloke didn't get his sheep and I dare say he was upset. I got that story from Dad. I don't know the full strength of it, but whatever the reason, Mum and Dad and I ended up on Palm Island.

The Catholic Church on Palm Island was on a little bay away from the main mission. Dad was with a team of blokes, building a road from the mission to the church. In later years he used to talk a lot about breaking rocks and putting them into position where the road went round a headland. Tom Quilty may have had some say in getting us away from Palm Island and back to Euroka Springs, because he recognised in Dad a good worker and a good stockman.

I remember little bits of Palm Island, but my earliest distinct memories are of Euroka Springs. From the day you could walk you were given jobs: collecting chips to light the wood stove, bringing firewood in, carting water. Everyone worked; you didn't just sleep and eat. You had to earn your keep even though you were only 5 or 6. I had one of those... yokes we used to call them. A stick across your shoulder, and a piece of wire at each end with a hook dangling from it. Like the Chinamen used. You hitched the hook onto a bucket and carted water. Dad had one as well.

The Quilty girls were Irene and Doreen, and the Quilty boys were Rod and Pat. Then there was Mrs Quilty. "Tiger Lily" Dad used to call her. She was a real old bitch, eh:

Bee-ill!

Yes, Mrs Quilty?

You didn't empty my po this morning.

Yes I did, Mrs Quilty.

You come up here and I'll show you it's under my bed and you didn't empty it.

MONKEY FORTUNE was on Millungera working as a ringer when I was there in 1953. Come dinner time he sat right over to one side and he just asked for what he wanted – bread, meat, whatever – and my grandfather, Bill Davis, took it and handed it to him. He wasn't allowed to touch the food or sit at the table with the white stock blokes.

I remember a conversation that Monkey had with me, riding along, talking about "them black bastards". He didn't see himself as a black-fella; he aligned himself more with the whites. It always struck me that he set himself apart from the blacks.

DON DEWAR

I'd say to Mum (we'd be in the kitchen): "Mum, that old bugger's pissed in that pot again". That was one of my jobs: to empty Mrs Quilty's po. I used to take the po downstairs, pour it into a billy can, rinse out the po, and empty the billycan behind the country shithouse, 50 yards from the main homestead.

WHEN I WAS 10, TOM QUILTY sent me to a Hughenden boarding school run by the Good Samaritan nuns. It was my first taste of teachers. The nuns pushed me along a fair bit and I was in grade 4 after a couple of years. Didn't do me any good. I was promoted too fast, learnt bugger all, and by the time I was 12 I was back at Euroka Springs working with the old fella. Mum had moved into Julia Creek by that stage to try and get her kids an education. Alma and Mick were already enrolled at the state school, and then Mum set her sights on me. Somehow I had managed to avoid the classroom for all but two of my 12 years. No one was concerned about my schooling except Mum. Dad wasn't worried; and as for me, I was happier, by a long stroke, galloping around the flat than being educated.

But Mum got her way. In 1944 I started school in Julia Creek. I was only there eight months. Me and school didn't get on. Tom Brennan, the police sergeant at Julia Creek, caught me playing the wag once and got up me in his gruff voice: "Why aren't you at school?" He was gonna boot me in the behind, but he couldn't catch me.

About two and a half years I put it down as – the schooling I had. As soon as I found out I could leave school at 14, I was gone.

My first job was on Euroka Springs mustering with the old fella. He was involved in horsebreaking and all kinds of stock work. He was renowned for it – and for making his own gear. Greenhide ropes, hobble straps, pack bags, pack saddles – everything he needed for a packhorse he either made or repaired. Never drove a vehicle in his life, he always travelled by packhorse.



Even though he worked for Tom Quilty for years and never got a penny out of him, Dad was happy with the situation. Board and keep, the love of working with stock, living on the land – that was Dad's side of the deal. If Tom Quilty were alive today I'd have a go at him about it.

Dad left Euroka Springs around 1949 or 1950 and went over to Millungera. The overseer bloke there, Jack Sherwin, gave him a job. I was already on Millungera, working around the camps, and I used to get all my groceries, all my provisions, from the big Millungera store. I don't know if they charged Tom Quilty for the dried fruit that the storeman, Phil Woodhouse, used to stick in my pockets when I went to the store, but they certainly didn't charge me. Prunes, apricots peaches; Phil would stuff my pockets until they couldn't hold any more.

Dad stayed on Millungera right up until the mid 1970s when I went out and brought him home. By this time I'd been in and out of the army – two tours of duty in Korea – and various other jobs, and I'd built myself a house in Cloncurry.

Before he moved in with me, Dad used to get his pension cheques sent to Millungera. After he left there, they found a pile of cheques that hadn't been cashed. Dad never seemed to have much use for money.

He died in 1983. He's buried at Cloncurry.

Mum ended up with a bloke named Tommy Williamson. I think he was a Maori. She never remarried and never divorced. She moved to Cloncurry because it was closer to Tommy's work. She's buried near Dad. She died a few years after him, on the same day of the same month, though not the same year, that my eldest son got killed – 18th September.

I HAVE FOND RECOLLECTIONS of my eight or nine years on Euroka Springs. The homestead was in between two rivers, the Saxby and the Flinders. During a decent-sized wet we could catch fish galore. That's one thing that has stuck in my mind – good fishing in a choice of rivers. And another, of course, is Mrs Quilty's po.



Opposite: Bill under the coolibah tree at Manfred Crossing where he was born. Anchor rope for the flying fox mentioned by Bill is visible near the base of the tree.
[Bill Fortune, FBi02, 2000]

Top: Bill in military uniform, Brisbane.
[Herb Fortune, FHe03, 1951]

Left: "Yes I did, Mrs Quilty."
Bill in front of the kitchen on Euroka Springs.
[Bill Fortune, FBi01, 2000]

Creekites' Curious Capers

Underwood vs Quilty defamation case. 'Mr Cook – the busybody'

The much discussed case where Olive Underwood, a single woman of very presentable appearance, and daughter of the owner of Arizona Station in the Julia Creek district, proceeded against Lillian Quilty, wife of Thomas Quilty, owner of Euroka Springs Station, a neighbouring property, on a charge of alleged defamation, and claiming £1000 damages.

Both families are well known and have resided for many years in the district. Mr Hope, assisted by Mr Vic Faithfull, appeared for Miss Underwood, whilst Mr Quinn (barrister) appeared for Mrs Quilty.

Tuesday afternoon: Mr Hope addressed the jury and outlined the claim for £1000 for defamation. He said Mrs Quilty on divers occasions had said in the hearing of others that Miss Underwood had committed adultery with her husband, Tom Quilty, at the Julia Creek Hotel. She called Miss Underwood a common prostitute.

"Gentleman, the case is not a pleasant one, and it is a pity that it should be before the Court, but Miss Underwood must protect her good name. The scene of the trouble is in and around Euroka Springs Station, where friendship had sprung up between the parties. It is a pity that this is the result of that friendship."

Mr Hope said he felt sure when the jurymen had heard the evidence they would come to the conclusion that Miss Underwood had been slandered and they would bring in a verdict accordingly. Mr Hope then outlined the evidence that would be given and called Moses Cook, a grazier, who now is licensee of the Manfred Arms Hotel.

Mr Cook: "I have known both parties in this case for many years and have always been on friendly terms with them and have often visited their homes. I started work for Tom Quilty of Euroka Springs in November 1930. Quilty's wife resides there.

"I remember an afternoon in November. I went to the homestead from the shearing shed. I was getting ready for tea and heard Mrs Quilty say to her husband: 'You deceitful man! Bringing Jim Underwood here – and you carrying on with his sister'. She was referring to Underwood's sister, Olive.

"Mrs Quilty passed the above remark on several occasions. I heard her on two or three occasions during the month say that Miss Underwood was a prostitute and had slept with Mr Tom Quilty. She also said that she had caught her husband in bed with Miss

Underwood at the Julia Creek Hotel. And further, that while Mr Quilty was away in the middle of November 1930, Miss Underwood was living with him.

"Mrs Quilty said in my hearing, that rather than allow her husband and four children to be taken away from her by Miss Underwood, she would poison them all. She said those words when she was speaking to McDermott and I. That is all I heard."

In answer to Quinn: Euroka Springs is about 80 miles from Julia Creek. I heard Mrs Quilty refer to Miss Underwood as a prostitute. I do not believe Miss Underwood is one. I think she is a clean girl. I have never seen anything to alter my opinion of Miss Underwood. I did not broadcast what Mrs Quilty told me. I spoke to Quilty about what Mrs Quilty had told me, thinking he would have the statements suppressed. The conversation with Quilty took place on November 10, 1930. I consider this case should never have come before the Court.

Mr Quinn: Why did you come here to give evidence then?

Cook: I was subpoenaed to come here. I did not want to come, I was forced to come.

James Underwood of Arizona Station, Julia Creek, and a brother of Miss Underwood, gave evidence of going to Euroka Springs in November 1930 with Cook, Quilty and McDermott, and of Mrs Quilty calling out to her husband: "You hypocrite! Coming here with Jim Underwood, and you riding his sister". Witness said he still had a high opinion of his sister. He had heard the phrase "Tiger Lily" but did not know it referred to Mrs Quilty.

Thomas John Quilty, a grazier of Euroka Springs, and husband of the defendant, then entered the box. Mr Quinn drew attention to the fact that Mr Quilty need not give evidence against his wife. His Honour: "He can give evidence in a civil case if he likes".

Witness stated he had been at Euroka for some years, and in the district for 25 years, and had known Miss Underwood for nine years. Their properties adjoined, and the two families had been on friendly terms. He remembered the occasion in November 1930 when Cook, Underwood, McDermott and himself went to Euroka. His wife was there and as they walked up the stairs she called out several times: "You hypocrite! Bringing him here, and you riding his sister".

"We went up the stairs and she came to the door of the room and called out the same thing in a fairly loud tone of voice that could be heard 100 yards away.

"I said to Jim Underwood: 'You had better leave, Jim. I'll take you in my motor lorry'. We went a couple of miles and we ran out of benzine. I came back to the homestead and Mrs Quilty and McDermott were sitting on the upstairs verandah. Cook was sitting in the car which was under the verandah. I sat on the running board of the car close to Cook and we heard Mrs Quilty say: 'I will poison Tom and the children rather than let her be a stepmother to my children'. I know she was referring to Ollie Underwood. She spoke of Ollie as: 'That thing down the road who is nothing but a prostitute'. At other times she was continually accusing me of carrying on with Olive Underwood."

Quinn: When?

"At the Julia Creek races, 16 July 1929. There are others. On New Year's Day, 1931, she found some letters and we quarrelled over these letters in the presence of Cook.

"Mr Hope and Mr Cook say this case should never have been brought to Court and I think myself it would have been better out. I had a high opinion of Miss Underwood and still have a high opinion of her. She has not been lowered in my estimation. In my eyes, what was said about her did not damage her.

"I have chosen to come here and give evidence against my wife. She was broadcasting her story all about the district. If I am not loyal to my wife by coming here and giving evidence, it is not worrying me. I can please myself whether I give evidence or not."

His Honour then adjourned the Court until the following morning.

Wednesday morning: Mr Quinn said that for obvious reasons, which the gentlemen of the jury would understand, he would not ask Mrs Quilty to enter the witness box.

Mr Hope then addressed the jury in summation. "In this case, Miss Olive Underwood is suing Mrs Quilty for defamation. In a small community like ours, both parties are most likely known to the jurymen who, perhaps, had heard rumours of the case outside. Eliminate these from your minds. It is your duty to direct your minds to the evidence placed before you by witnesses and to give your verdict on the evidence alone. The defamatory matter has not been denied by Mrs Quilty, and it appears Mr Quinn is resting his case on the presumption that the defamation is not injurious to Miss Underwood." Mr Hope asked the jury to come to the conclusion that it was injurious. "When one reputable member of the community

defames another reputable member of the community an injury has been effected. In this case, defamatory matter – unchastity in a single girl – has been put about by a reputable married woman and that must carry some sting. There is little doubt the defendant has referred to Miss Underwood as a common prostitute in front of several persons. Is that a name a reputable married woman can call another woman and it carry no sting?”

Mr Hope said he was sure the jury would return a verdict for Miss Underwood.

Mr Quinn, in his address to the jury, said he was sure his Honour was pleased the case was fast drawing to a close. He invited the jury to shorten it more and return a verdict for Mrs Quilty without leaving the box. Mr Quinn said he did not wish to weary the jury with remarks of any length, but he would make a few observations that would assist the jury to a verdict without leaving the box.

“It is said Mrs Quilty has made defamatory statements concerning Miss Underwood, who says her character has been damaged. But Miss Underwood never went into the witness box, and you don’t know whether her character *has* been damaged. She said nothing to enable you to know whether she has a character that can be damaged.”

Mr Hope objected.

His Honour: “Mr Quinn has a perfect right to make that observation”.

Mr Quinn: “I am not suggesting that Miss Underwood brought defendant here to Court and no derogatory words concerning her have fallen from Mrs Quilty’s lips. But you are not in a position to say whether she can be defamed. She may be the most virtuous woman in the world, or the most abandoned for all you know. It is most unusual in a case of this kind for the plaintiff not to enter the box”.

Mr Quinn then commented on Mr Quilty’s appearance in the witness box. “It is the first time to my knowledge that a husband has belittled himself by giving evidence against his wife. He has proved false to those vows he took – to love, honour and cherish. Yesterday he said he got pleasure out of it. He said: ‘I can please myself’. He has come along here and supported a young woman against his wife who has borne him four lovely children. A man steeped in malice, venom and bitterness against his wife. I hope, gentlemen, he did get pleasure out of it, for I am sure it is the only pleasure he will get. I am confident you will not leave the box before giving your verdict for Mrs Quilty.

“Now, coming to Mr Cook. Quilty and Cook say they still have a high opinion of Miss Underwood, so where is the damage? There would have been no case, only for the mischief-making of old man Cook. Quilty would be reluctant to spread word of his dalliance, but Mr Cook – the busybody – must have told someone of his conversation with Mrs Quilty.

“I suggest there is some vile ulterior motive to this defamation case: to enable Quilty to injure his wife. Miss Underwood is only the cat’s-paw in this case, and she has allowed her name to be put on a writ to do Mrs Quilty an injury – or with some other ulterior motive. If they all did not want the case to come before the court, how did it get here?”

“Gentlemen, I am sure you will come to the conclusion that Mrs Quilty did not defame Miss



Underwood. And when you come to that conclusion you will give your verdict without leaving the box. Say: “In favour of *defendant*”. Put the emphasis on the word defendant to show your contempt for Cook and Quilty and take some of the pleasure out of them coming here.”

His Honour said it was his duty to explain the law to the jury and to make what observations he considered fit. He asked them not to follow his opinions unless they agreed. He then dealt with the law as regards defamation and said this was a case where a young woman had taken action against a married woman for making charges of misconduct.

“You will realise, gentlemen, it is a serious thing to accuse a young woman of misconduct, but the matter you have to consider is whether the action was

really brought on by the young woman to vindicate her character, or with some ulterior motive. A most extraordinary thing is for the defendant’s husband to be giving evidence against his wife. It may cross your mind that this is not really a case to recover damages. This case may have been an opportunity for the husband to publicly ridicule his own wife.

“The latest when defamatory words were spoken was in November 1930. The writ was not issued until March 4th 1932, a matter of 16 months after the defamatory words were used. Under the law you cannot get damages for defamation if you wait longer than two years. The law says act promptly, and this law has the smallest limitation on the statute. If it is a question of justifying one’s character, why wait? An experienced solicitor will always advise his client to be very careful of oral defamation. Sometimes, if there is more than defamation behind the case, the client will insist on proceeding even after being advised against that course of action – and this case actually reeks of such circumstance.

“To prevent ventilating and broadcasting, it is sometimes advisable not to bring these cases to court. Previously, the defamatory matter in this case was confined to three persons outside of defendant and her husband, but now it will be published in the press and made public to everyone.

“A peculiar feature of this case is Miss Underwood not being called to give evidence when she is asking for damages. She is perfectly entitled to refrain, but she does not give you an opportunity of judging what her reputation is. Personally, if the plaintiff does succeed, it will be the first case I have known where the plaintiff refrained from entering the box and where the plaintiff was successful.

“All of Mrs Quilty’s statements, if made, are defamatory. It is for you to say whether they were said in circumstances where they could cause injury. If you think Miss Underwood was damaged, then you can assess damages.”

His Honour explained there were four ways damages could be assessed: contemptuous damages, nominal damages, substantial damages and vindictive damages. He asked the jury to consider their verdict.

Without leaving the jury box the foreman of the jury returned a verdict for Mrs Quilty. His Honour then gave judgement for Mrs Quilty with costs against Miss Underwood. Mr Quinn intimated that his client, Mrs Quilty, did not intend to enforce the order as to costs.

CA: 17 Sep 1932

Above: Tom Quilty and Olive Underwood in Sydney. [QT03, ca 1940]

Below: Laurencic family.
From left: Albert, Frank, Mary, Elvira.
[Albert Laurencic, LA09, ca 1955]



Albert Laurencic

Died 31 Aug 2006

I WAS BORN IN SLOVENIA IN 1922, but Italy did occupy my land. They had occupied Slovenia in the war of 1914-18, so that's why I become an Italian citizen. Today is back Slovenia. I had three brothers and four sisters, eight of us. I was born Albert. Albert in Slovenia is Albert – is same as English.

I went to school in Miren. 8000 people in my town. When I finished school I was 13. I finish in grade 5 because they had exam in grade 3 and exam in grade 5, and I failed. One year back in grade 3, one year back in grade 5. As soon as I passed grade 5, I went out.

My first job was in plumbing. I come to Australia with a plumbing document, but it were no good except at Julia Creek. There they did pay me as a plumber. I did apprenticeship in Italy. Three years only I work as plumber because after that they call me in the army. I was 19½ when they call me in the army because of the war. I was fighting for Italy because I was citizen there. All four brothers in the war; only one died. My brother Stanley was in Africa, and another brother, Josef, he was prisoner in Africa by the British and was sent to England. The English did send him to Yugoslavia with Partisans to fight against the Germans.

A bad guy? I one of the bad guys, yeah. But just look now, when you come to say that – that's okay – but I was bad guy for the Germans too. I'm a Yugoslav. I went to Greece with Italian Army and I become a German prisoner. That's what is funny. I was German prisoner because we capitulated – September 1943 was Italian capitulation. We were traitors, more or less. Italy decided to surrender to the Allies, but Germans got us first.

For a start the Germans kept us in a camp on the island of Corfu. Then 30 of us went to each German infantry company to work for them. Was like in the army, but no rifle. Just hand them whatever they want; ammunition. I did that until the end of the war.

I walked home from Italy when the war finished, 350 kilometres like hitchhiking. There were Americans going up and down with the trucks. Jump on a truck, jump on a bus, no pay nothing. People there did feed you, they give you a piece of bread. Then the Yugoslav Partisans caught me. They only wanted to know where I come from, what I was doing. Luckily I had a little paper and this paper did save me. It had my name on it and birthdate. Just was a ticket, a pass to go from Serbia to Austria by train when I was sick before the war. The Partisans didn't need to ask many questions, they see my name. Was Italian name; was okay.

I had to stay 13 months under Yugoslav Army when the war finish and I didn't like it at all. After Yugoslav Army I was one year working in Italy on the road; building a road, shovelling bitumen.

After war, we were not Italian anymore. We were living in Italy, yeah, but we were not allowed to stay in Italy. Four brothers all in the army, and yet we didn't have the right to stay. Italy didn't want us. We displaced persons. We didn't have no... Yugoslavia – we could go there, but I didn't want to. I wanted to emigrate. No matter where, just go away.

No Fault With Julia Creek

The Laurencics from Slovenia, and three White Russians, 'go and see the Australia'

I met my wife in Naples, in '49. We were married in '49, 1st of December, while we were waiting for our papers in a transit camp. She came in the camp, working in the camp. A Lithuanian couple with two kids, they asked her if she would come in camp to look after their kids. That's where she met me. We had a boy born in Italy. The boy was 10 months when we come here to Australia. We had to wait in camp till 1951 and we come here.

There was no choosing Australia – nah, nah. I did all the papers to go to New Zealand, but the New Zealand immigration they ask me if I want to go to Australia. I just want to go anywhere, so long I go. By boat, by *Costa Bianca*. They were three sisters: *Costa Bianca*, *Costa Verde*, and another one. It cost nothing because we been assisted.

Migrants Ordered Back To Julia Creek Jobs

BRISBANE, November 3. — Eight migrants were to-day ordered by the Commonwealth Employment Services Regional director (Mr. E. Laws) to return to work at Julia Creek.

The migrants, seven Poles and one Ukrainian, had refused to work for the McKinlay Shire Council claiming that the climate was too hot.

They left their employment and travelled to Brisbane where they were interviewed by Commonwealth Employment officers. Mr. Laws warned the migrants that if they did not return to work at Julia Creek they would be turned over to the Commonwealth migration authorities.

Mr. Calwell had warned that migrants who did not honour their contracts would be returned to Europe.

No Excuse.

In his statement, Mr. Calwell said, "Heat would be no excuse for the release of any fit person from a contract to work where required in Australia for two years."

Mr. Calwell stated that more than 700 new settlers were working in North Queensland canefields under much more trying conditions, many for their second season. Many others were doing good work in Central and Western Queensland.

Migrants who completed their second season in the sugar cane industry would be released from their two-year contract he said. Mr. Calwell advised migrants who had been in Australia for 12 months to apply for naturalisation.

Passed 100 Mark.

The McKinlay Shire Chairman, Mr. W.M. Allison, said tonight that the migrants gave notice when the afternoon temperature passed the 100° mark twice within a few days.

"It was a dry heat, and not unduly severe," he said. Until then their work had been satisfactory and their behaviour had always been good.

Mr. Allison said the migrants had been doing pick and shovel road work for the Council. When they refused to work the Council cancelled an order for six more migrants.

"We want them if we are to complete our road construction programme, but only if they will stay," Mr. Allison said.

They send us to the sugar cane in Ingham because we were under contract for two years. That's the way it worked. We supposed to do whatever they tell us. After four months in the sugar cane, the sugar run it finished, and I was working for a while, about three weeks, in Townsville.

Christmas times they shutted the jobs, so I went to the unemployed office. They ask me if I want to go to work for the council in Julia Creek. I said I go anywhere, so long I got the work. That's all I wanted, just to work. I didn't like to sit down. I ask where it is, this Julia Creek, to show me the map.

the mail and some parcels from one shop to another with a little truck. He said: "You just hop on the truck and I will take you down. First we finish, and then I will take you where you want to go". Okay, he took me where there was an overseer, council overseer, and the overseer said: "There is a caravan; you can have that caravan". Was near the road in Coyne St.

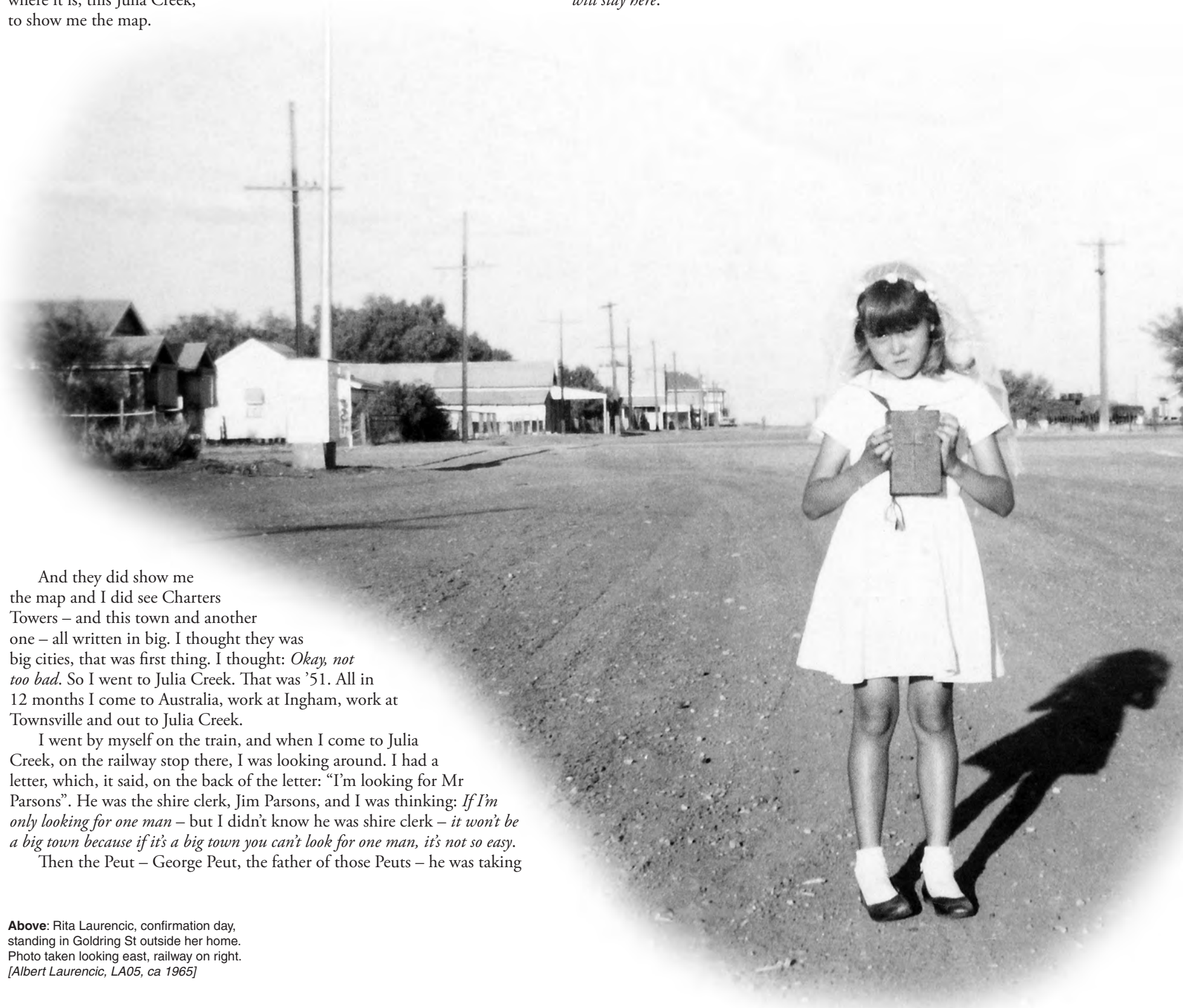
I walked towards the railway and I walked towards the cemetery. December, hot. On both sides there was no town, only two streets and a few houses and nothing else. And I thought: *This is no town. I don't think I will stay here.*

And they did show me the map and I did see Charters Towers – and this town and another one – all written in big. I thought they was big cities, that was first thing. I thought: *Okay, not too bad*. So I went to Julia Creek. That was '51. All in 12 months I come to Australia, work at Ingham, work at Townsville and out to Julia Creek.

I went by myself on the train, and when I come to Julia Creek, on the railway stop there, I was looking around. I had a letter, which, it said, on the back of the letter: "I'm looking for Mr Parsons". He was the shire clerk, Jim Parsons, and I was thinking: *If I'm only looking for one man – but I didn't know he was shire clerk – it won't be a big town because if it's a big town you can't look for one man, it's not so easy.*

Then the Peut – George Peut, the father of those Peuts – he was taking

Above: Rita Laurencic, confirmation day, standing in Goldring St outside her home. Photo taken looking east, railway on right. [Albert Laurencic, LA05, ca 1965]



The next day – yeah, the next day, because I think it was Sunday when I come in – Monday they took me to the workshop to get a pannikin and waterbag. I said: “I don’t want nothing. I got enough money, I can go back”. I didn’t want to stay in Julia Creek, it was too small. But anyhow, I did stay. I stayed there for 17 years.

My wife came in January, just after me. Peter Dawes, with a car, he come to the station and I come there with a pushbike. I said: “What’s going on?” I didn’t know they knew she was coming.

Peter Dawes give us a place behind his house, and my wife started

working for Mrs Dawes: cleaning, washing clothes, housekeeping. They had many kids. We lived behind Peter Dawes shop until Mary was born, ’53.

Through the church we made Catholic. We got married in Julia Creek. We already married in Italy, but in the church we’d never been. I think it was ’53. I got the certificate. Married at the church, but no drinking, no nothing after. Just two people in the church, two witnesses. Father Devereux married us. No photo. It was plain, just like talking to you now. We got nothing – no wedding photos from Italy or Julia Creek.

With the council I was working first on the water pipes doing many different jobs: loading sand, fixing the pipes in the ground. They were very easy-busting pipes and I said I could do it because I was doing same thing in Italy. I had to make clamps myself. I was all right to make them because I knew how. So I just made some clamps and they let me work. I had the push bike and went around with a pick and shovel on the

shoulder. Young, bare-footed, that’s the way it went.

I was on sanitary for two years, on the night soil. Night job. Soon as dark come on, you pick up the pans. You pull one out and you put in the clean one. They got the back lanes in Julia Creek between the streets. The rear door of the outhouse is right on the fence in the lane. Through the fence you just pull one pan out and put a clean one in. Where there was no lane you had to walk from the front yard right to the back. That’s when it was a bit of heavy work.

They’ve got a lid which you can clip on; but the way I was doing it, to be quicker, I didn’t worry about the lid, nah, nah. I had a handle, just a wire, $\frac{3}{16}$. Hook up one side here, one side there. They had a hole each side for a handle. Carry it and swing it up on the truck. And if I could have two pans, be better because balanced. I never been carrying on the shoulders because it can leak. I drove down near the dump, unloaded the pans and I went home. One man job. Couple hours.

I had the Blitz, a little truck. About 50, 60 pans on the truck. I think they were 5 gallons; and black, because they were covered with the tar. You don’t paint. Every so often you just dip in the hot tar and pull them out.

Next morning I went down again with another truck. I had two trucks because I picked up the rubbish too, all in the town. Dump everything in a trench. Just tip it out, wash the pan, and make it ready to go back in. I got so much for rubbish and so much for sanitary. It was subcontract.

Blanch, the old fella Bill, did the sanitary before me. He was walking like this... with stooped shoulders, and one man said to me: “See this fella? He was doing the same job as you. When you get older you will walk like this too”.

Two years I was on the sanitary. Then they give me the truck driving, carting gravel here and there. I left after seven years with the council, ’57, and went fencing with another fella, Hungarian. In Julia Creek they knew him for Sandy.

WITH ME, I CAN’T PUT NO FAULT WITH JULIA CREEK. It was all the time okay, always happy. There were friendly people around. I used to go fishing every weekend, more or less. They never bothered me if I went through a property, so long as I shut the gates, because I never been carrying the rifle, shooting this one, shooting that one. I went for fishing. If I didn’t work I went fishing up to Eddington, up to 10-Mile on Mathews’ property, up to Punchbowl. Yeah, plenty of times fish in the Bowl. Was about 50 yards across. Any kind of fish, but mostly cod. Afterwards they make the bridge. Then fishing was finished; it was no good anymore.

There’s a story why I left Julia Creek. When I come back to the council from the fencing, I worked on the sewerage.

When that finished they give me the job to look after the Imhoff tank – y’know, the sewerage tanks. And I’ll never forget: up on top there are electric wires, and I was with a big pole, cleaning. I touched a wire and the power went through the pole and into the water. Luckily was in the water – the pole – otherwise I wouldn’t be telling you story.

We left Julia Creek in ’69 and come here to Mount Isa. Never went back.



affect everybody.

The migrant workers, who had played truant for a few days down as far as Brisbane, arrived back on the job with the McKinlay Shire Council on Sunday morning. Julia Creek citizens are pleased that they chose to return here rather than go back to Europe, for the sake of civic pride if nothing else.

The library for the hospital, kindly supplied by the Red Cross of Brisbane, has been installed at the hospital and

NQR: 12 Nov 1949

We didn't know the English **Lena Akiloff**

MY PARENTS, THEY WHITE RUSSIANS, like when there was Czar; not Red Soviet Russians. They from Siberia. After revolution – was hard, and they run away from Russia and settled in China. They settled 1923 and then we moved 1947 to Shanghai. When communism start we moved to Philippines and we was living there in the tents, big camp, all emigrants from China. We only stay there for four months and Australia was start to asking people to come to Australia. We came, together with parents, because there was communism in China. We came with big boatload of people to Sydney.

When we came here, 12th of June 1949, we didn't know where we working. We already signed the contract for two years to work in one place. They started sending us to work in October. Before that there was coal strike. Everything was stopped and we was sitting in camps for months.

The last one was Greta Camp¹. Sophie used to push me, she said: "You go ask in office for work". She was too shy. When I went in they said they need girls, three girls. But was only two of us, so Mary said: "If you going, I'm coming with you". Sophie, she's my elder sister; and Mary Alabasheva the other girl, she came same city in China from where we were born; and she was born there too. We all know each other in Shanghai.

We could have said: "We don't want to go to Julia Creek" and then we have to wait another... I don't know how long. So I said to Sophie:

What's the difference where to work? We still have to work
in the same place for two years.

Maybe we better wait.

How long we have to wait? We been waiting already since June. Let's go
and see the Australia.

First we went to Brisbane. They sent us to Brisbane from Greta Camp.

Someone was kind to us and introduced themselves and gave us some money and some sandwiches, and they said: "You're going on this train". A council chap was came to meet us at Julia Creek. He said: "It's not that far where I'm going to take you", so he brought us to the hospital. Matron was kind to us: "Better go and have a shower". And after, Nora [Fayers] was kind and invite us for dinner. She was single. I was surprised when you said to me she is still in Julia Creek.

I couldn't wait till two years finish. Sophie was stay longer and she asked me to stay. I said: "No – no way. I can't. I'm going, I'm going *now*. I'm going to mother's – and after, I'll go somewhere else". I was just couldn't stay anymore. I went to Brisbane; my mother was living in Brisbane. I stayed there for couple of weeks, and after, I came to Sydney. I'm still here.

I DID COOKING AT THE HOSPITAL because Matron asked me. I remember Sophie, she said: "Cook something else. Change the menu". And I start to change the menu and everybody in hospital ask: "What's that?" I used to make Russian rissoles. Not the Australian round one, the flat one – flatter and much tastier. I did it my way, y'know. And then everyone liked it. I thought that was good and I started baking cakes.

We used to go to school. We didn't know

...of this time.
The hospital has the services of three foreign girls who have come from Shanghai. Since we have already about half a dozen migrants from Europe working for the Shire Council it seems that outside labour of this variety is necessary. Headmaster Mr. Bill McNickle has added these interesting pupils to his class and now has the task of teaching English to these three young ladies as well as men working for the council.
The local branch of the Red Cross

NQR: 15 Oct 1949

1. Greta is a small town on the New England highway 30 miles north-west of Newcastle. In late 1939, construction began on an army training camp south of the town, and during the war 60,000

soldiers passed through its gates.

In 1949, Greta Camp became an immigrant facility. It closed in 1960. Today, the only evidence of its existence are a few foundations and fences.



the English, that's why we have to learn from Mr McNickle. But we didn't learn much. Mosquitoes was biting us; we didn't have any electric fan; and after working such a hard day...

We used to go to pictures, we used to go to dancing. I ordered dresses from Sydney by catalogue. We had a great time dancing. Mary used to go, but Sophie, no.

HAVE I EVER been back to Julia Creek? You kidding? Waah! I wouldn't spend good money to go to Julia Creek. The heat. Heat, flies, sandflies and mosquitoes. We couldn't sleep at night. We had a mosquitoes' net but that didn't help at all. They got through the net.

Friend of ours, they went for a trip. They saw Julia Creek and sent me a card: "What a place. How could you stay there for two years?" I didn't have any choice. We could ask for change, but we didn't.

WHAT FOR YOU WANT all this information? What for you want all these details? You want to write a book, or what? And then who going to read all these stories?

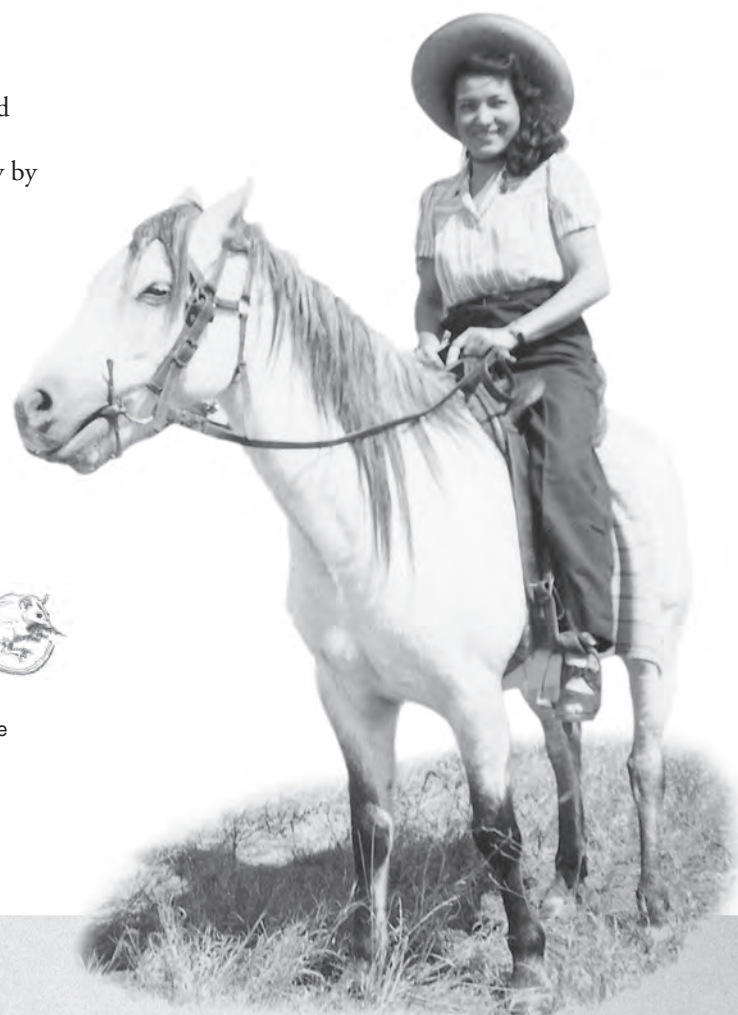
Opposite: Lena.
[Bernie Foster, FB06, 1950]

Right: Mary Alabasheva. Mary died soon after this photo was taken. She is buried at Richmond. More details are on page 690.
[Bernie Foster, FB04, ca 1950]

Below: Julia Creek Hospital domestic staff outside their quarters: From left:

- Mary Alabasheva (Lena's friend in Shanghai)
- Levina Beauchamp (married Bernie Foster)
- Sophie (Lena's sister)
- Norma McDonald (Mossie McDonald's sister)

[Ivy Burrows, B111, 1950]







Left: Carmel Fickling (left), Lena Akiloff,
and Ivy Burrows at the Punchbowl.

[Ivy Burrows, B103, 1950]

SYDNEY THOMAS WILKINS

BELOVED HUSBAND OF PATRICIA

Pat Wilkins

IN THE LATE 1940S WHEN I WAS LIVING IN BRISBANE, I went out to Julia Creek to have a holiday with my sister, Bernice. She was a nurse who was manpowered out there during the war years. She married George Peut's son, Les, and stayed. I ended up staying too.

I met Wicky Wilkins at a dance, around about 1949. We were dance mad. We danced every Friday night to Mossie McDonald's music. Wicky – no one ever knew him as anything else – was a wool classer before the war, but when he came back from the war he wasn't well enough to do that anymore so he worked in his mother's drapery business. Wick was in partnership with his mother; he ran the men's department.

Ivy Wilkins, Wick's mother, was a good dressmaker, a pretty clever old darling. She came to Julia Creek in the 1930s and opened a drapery. During the war she married a Mr Bradford and they went down south. They returned in 1946 and Ivy went back into the drapery business, first of all in the front street and later in Burke St.

in Julia Creek.
During the week a very cheery card party was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lance Lewis. Music and games took up the pleasant evening. The charming hostess served a dainty supper and all voted the night a happy one. We hope it will not be long before Mr. and Mrs. Lewis have another.
Our popular nursing sister, Bernice Keating, will say "I do" to soldier boy Pte. Leslie Peut on the 24th August at the Roman Catholic church. Mrs. Keating will arrive from Brisbane to be hostess at her daughter's wedding.

CA: 18 Aug 1944

Below: Wilkins' Drapery, Burke St, between what was (in the 1950s) the O-K Store on the left and Mannie Sill's fruit shop on the right. Ivy Wilkins had the shop built in December 1939. Wick and Pat, when they took over, had it extended to the size in the photo.

The lettering reads:
"Travel Goods, Mens & Boys Wear,
Fancy Goods, Ladies & Childrens Wear
Frocks & Millinery, Footwear"
[Keith Coleman, CK01, ca 1965]

Above: Part of the inscription on Wicky Wilkins' headstone, Julia Creek cemetery.
[Guy Burns, GK065d, 2003]





Above: Wicky and Pat Wilkins.
[Pat Wilkins, WP01, 1951]

Wick and I married in 1951 in Brisbane and after our honeymoon we returned to Julia Creek. Wick worked in the drapery, while I led a lady's life for 10 years until Ivy wanted to retire and gave me a chance to buy in. I bought her share in 1962. Wick and I never looked back.

We sold the drapery in 1974 to Ben and Judy Burrows. Six more years we stayed in Julia Creek, and then when Wick died I came back to Brisbane. There was no point in staying. My sister and her family were leaving Julia Creek – her husband had died four years before Wick – and I decided to leave too.

For the last two years of his life Wick was pretty sick. He had a month in Julia Creek Hospital before they sent him off to Townsville. He never got over it. He died of kidney trouble in Townsville when he was 66.

It was a wonderful life out west. You've just gotta be accepted – and I was, after a couple of years. I loved my time in Julia Creek. It was a good life.



Below: Pelaco poster featuring the *Mine tinkit* ("Me think") sales hook, remembered by Norm Downey as "Mine Fitted".

MRS WILKINS originally had her shop in Goldring St, in the same block as Mrs Horton's cafe but down towards Bally Kaeser's bakery. That was her first shop when I was a boy.

I was away for five years in the war, and when I came back she'd built this new shop with a residence behind it, right alongside the O-K store. It was a little place, very neat, and a nice residence out the back. Later on, Wicky and Pat ran the business. They never lived in the residence, but they renovated the shop and made it two or three times the size.

I used to buy my clothes from Wicky. He sold Pelaco shirts which were absolutely top-of-the-range. In their advertising, Pelaco featured a big blackfella called *Mine Fitted*, or somesuch name like that.

Wicky took your neck size. I was 16½. He'd send away and get a Pelaco shirt, 16½, and it fitted you. It fitted you around the belly, it fitted your arms, it fitted the lot. Beautiful material, and they lasted for years.

NORM DOWNEY



Mr. Waldron Taylor, manager of the woollscour, has just returned from a holiday in Townsville with the news of a record price of 34½d being paid for six bales of scoured wool sold on account of Mr. Joe Mathews, Hilton Park. We offer congratulations to Mr. Mathews. The scour is at present closed down but is expected to start again in a few days time when it should have a fair run.

The Amalgamated Builders are nearing completion of the building for Mrs. Wilkins in Burke St. Mrs. Wilkins is to be congratulated on her enterprise. It shows she has faith in our town. We wish her every success in her drapery business.

Messrs Harris Bros. are erecting a new cafe in Burke St. They have taken over what used to be Mr. Hampton's Billiard Saloon and the adjoining shop next door, both of which they intend to improve and make into a new building. The Harris brothers are at present established in a cafe in Goldring St.

Mr. and Mrs. Gannon and family left by train on Sunday for a holiday in Brisbane and Sydney. They expect to be away a few weeks. No doubt others will shortly be following their example of going to the seaside to enjoy the cool breezes.

A children's picnic organised by the Presbyterian Women's Guild was held at Eddington Waterhole on 11th November. The children, besides indulging in swimming and fishing, enjoyed ice cream, lollies and soft drinks, and each child received a gift. The party was a most happy one and it was after dusk when they arrived home in Julia Creek.

NQR: 9 Dec 1939

JULIA CREEK NOTES

JULIA CREEK, December 20—Christmas is very close now and all the shop windows are laden with beautiful toys and gifts of all shapes and sizes. Mrs. Ivy Bradford and her son, Wick, have set a standard of window-display as good as we are likely to see in a little western town. The delightful way in which the lovely items are presented makes the window-shopper want to stop window-shopping and start to buy. Ben Burrows at the O-K Store, Grant Bros (who took over A. J. Smith's two years ago), and Peter Dawes, have also arranged their goods very nicely. Julia Creek is justly proud of her shopping centre. It takes Christmas to really bring out the joy and beauty in the world, as well as the carefree holiday spirit in which we all, at present, bask.

The travelling dentist should have been here on Friday but did not turn up. He is now expected to arrive on Monday night's train.

Mr. Henry Benson gave a free dance on Friday night for the Ambulance – free in a sense.

NQR: 25 Dec 1948

Plenty of noise Mossie McDonald

I WAS BORN IN WINTON IN 1928. Dad used to work in the grocery store, Corfield and Fitzmaurice. I had two brothers, Clyde and Allan, and a younger sister, Norma. I was educated at the state school in Winton.

In 1944 we left Winton and came to Brisbane. Mum and Dad went into a corner store selling groceries: fruit and veg. Dad bought me a secondhand Chev ute – 1929 model it was – and Mum and I would go into the markets and do the buying.

How I first met Betty: my eldest brother Clyde came to Brisbane in 1948 with his bride-to-be. She brought along her sister, Betty, and that's how Betty and I got a romance going. We went out to Julia Creek and I started a job at the woolscour. Worked there for a few months and then I got a job at Peter Dawes' shop in groceries. Betty was already working in the newspaper section. After a few years service with Peter, I decided to join the railways and stayed for 10 years, right up until we left the west in 1963.

Our entertainment in Julia Creek was dancing. We tried to go to all the dances we could: Kynuna, Cloncurry, Nelia. We always enjoyed our trips away, dancing all night, driving home and getting ready for work next day. One Saturday we badly wanted to go to Richmond for a ball, but

none of our group had a vehicle in good running order. Saturday afternoon I went straight up to Byrne Bros and bought one, hopped in, filled it with petrol and away we went to Richmond. That was our first car.

We'd also go to Maxwellton for dances – though they didn't have a hall. They used to put floorboards down and erect tarpaulin all the way around for walls. We'd dance on the floorboards to music coming from a piano stuck at one end.

On big occasions in Julia Creek, such as race days, we got bands from

either Richmond or Cloncurry, but for the small Friday night hops the music was me. I'd take the front panel off the piano to make plenty of noise, and tie a bass drum to the chair; one foot working the piano pedals and the other belting the drum. I was a one man band. I used to take my drums over to Kynuna and McKinlay and play those places, too. It always went okay. I didn't get any complaints.

I took my drums to Sedan Dip one night and someone else carted out a piano. Sedan Dip was about 80 miles north-west of Julia Creek on the Cloncurry River, and every year they had a race meeting. A proper racecourse, but no buildings. We slept by the waterhole. And just like at Maxwellton the dance floor was out in the open, bits of flooring put together; and for light, a couple of hurricane lamps. Between dances, people sat in their cars parked around the dance area.

One night I played the piano in Richmond with a bloke called Charlie Armstrong on the drums. On a certain Friday night they had what they called The Clutha, a ball for the elite country folk. It was more or less closed, it wasn't open to the general public. Saturday night would be the public ball and that used to attract the best and biggest crowd. To have separate balls, well, I thought that was a little bit wrong for out in that area. Anyway, Betty and I caught the Friday afternoon train to Richmond, 19 down, and I played the piano. I was rostered on as guard for the 4 a.m. train back to Julia Creek (Betty slept on mail bags), and then we drove back to Richmond for the dance on Saturday night. That's how keen we were on dancing.

IT WAS 46 DEGREES IN JULIA CREEK the other day. I had 13 years of that and will never forget how hot it can get. I wouldn't want to live out that way anymore.



Left: Appreciation card sent to Mossie.
[Mossie McDonald, M01, ca 1956]

A note on the back of the card says:

Hope you get this okay, Maurie, and many thanks for your music. Was very good. Didn't hear any complaints, so that's the main thing. Hope you had a good trip home. All the best and many thanks for your help. Hope you can come again.

*Regards
Cliff Alford*

Above: Mossie at the piano in Brisbane.
[Mossie McDonald, M11, ca 1965]

Dad's face at the window Betty McDonald

Mr. Jim Eckford has been able to supply pictures for Wednesday and Saturday nights. This is the town's only amusement as there has been a lull in dancing.

Wide spread sympathy goes to Sgt. and Mrs. Ivan Cooke on the sad loss of an infant at birth. Pleased to report Mrs. Cooke is progressing well and will soon return to her home.

Miss Betty Beauchamp recently celebrated her 17th birthday with a picnic party at the Punchbowl. Fishing, swimming and games were enjoyed, as was a very sumptuous birthday cake carrying 17 candles. Betty received many good wishes and gifts. The party returned home in the cool of the evening after a happy day's outing.

The stork has been kept on the wing in our town. Births at the hospital are to: Cynthia Fickling (daughter) Mrs. Apple...

CA: 27 Feb 1948

JULIA CREEK WEDDING

McDonald — Beauchamp

The Church of England, Julia Creek, on Monday June 19th at 4.30 p.m. was the scene of a very pretty wedding when Ruby Georgina (Betty), second eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Beauchamp, Julia Creek, said "I will" to Maurice John, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. W. McDonald of Albion, Brisbane.

Mrs. Muir played the *Wedding March*, and during the signing of the register Sgt. Ivan Cooke in fine voice rendered *The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden*.

The pretty bride made a charming picture as she entered the Church on the arm of her father who gave her away. The bride's beautiful wedding gown was of rich white-silk lace worn over taffeta foundation, the tight-fitting bodice featured

CA: 23 Jun 1950

I WAS BORN IN CLONCURRY IN A LITTLE TIN HOUSE. My father, Jack Beauchamp, was out of work. It was the Depression times, and we lived away from the town, surviving on anything my father could catch: rabbits, kangaroos. To get a bit of money he'd chop wood and sell it; tried to get work that way. Eventually he got a job in Duchess with the railway (Duchess is a little place between Mount Isa and Cloncurry) and from that time on he was right.

At Duchess I had my first experience with dentists. They came out in a caravan and they didn't give you nothing for pulling teeth, they just yanked them out. Boy, no wonder so many older people are frightened of dentists. I never had any fillings in my teeth, the dentist just latched on and out they came. That was cruel.

Dad got a railway transfer from Duchess when I was 10, and that's how I came to be in Julia Creek.

In the middle of my last year at school in Julia Creek Mrs Dawes offered me a job helping her in the kitchen at the back of her shop. I can remember sneaking inside the shop and pretending that I was a service girl behind the counter, serving peas and beans. Mrs Dawes saw me and said: "Would you like to work behind the counter instead of in the kitchen?" So I got a job in the newsagency part at the front of the store and worked there for years.

Before I met Mossie and got married, I had plenty of boyfriends. I used to have fun, laying back in the canvas chairs at Eckford's pictures for a kiss and a cuddle. It was a good little spot for that sort of thing, the open-air theatre; you could see the stars. Made it more romantic. The only thing was: the Eckfords were up top showing the pictures and they could see what was going on down below.

I married Mossie in 1950 at the Church of England, St Barnabas, Julia Creek. The Eckfords gave us the hall, the Gannons gave us the beer. I can't remember what Mrs Dawes gave us, but we got something from her as well. Everything for the wedding was donated. After the wedding we moved to Brisbane. I couldn't take city life, so we went back to Julia Creek and we both worked for Mrs Dawes again.

Back in Julia Creek I joined the tennis club. Most Friday nights we put on a dance for the young 'uns; it kept them busy and the door money went towards buying a few tennis balls. That's when Mossie used to bang the piano — dismantle the front for a louder sound — and bash the drums to make dance music. Otherwise, apart from the pictures, there would have been no entertainment. Mossie played by ear. He couldn't read a note of music.

At the Friday night dances all the young people would be inside dancing, and all the oldies would be outside looking in. I know my father was. When I was a teenager he'd let me go to a dance, but he'd be there too, looking in from the outside. Many years later when I went to a Julia Creek reunion, one of my ex-boyfriends came over and asked me to dance. While we were waltzing he said to me: "Y'know, this is the first time I've danced with you where your father isn't staring at us through the window".

Dad staring. Yes, I can still see Dad's face at the window.



Above: Betty.
[Flo Brennan, F10, 1956]

MATILDA ALICE ♥ 1. MR SPENCE

- ↪ Esther ♥ Jim Sills
 - ↪ **George Sills ♥ 1947** Hazel
 - ↪ George
 - ↪ ...
 - ↪ Sylvia
- ↪ Elizabeth ♥ Jack Walters
 - ↪ Jack
 - ↪ **Harold Walters (1925)**

MATILDA ALICE ♥ 2. JOHN GRAHAM

- ↪ Barney ♥ ?
 - ↪ Kathleen (Chookie)
 - ↪ Grace (Pat) ♥ **1945** **Clarrie Fickling**
- ↪ Tommy ♥ Daisy
 - ↪ Joy (1929)
 - ↪ Delma
 - ↪ Shirley
 - ↪ Evelyn
- ↪ Gladys ♥ **1929** Roy Hampton
 - ↪ Merle Hampton ♥ **1947** Les Adam
 - ↪ Vicki Adam
- ↪ Grace ♥ George Young



Pop was a Barber

Vicki Adam

Roy Hampton, *The Claw*, was also an SP bookmaker, billiard-room proprietor, and 'a great one for buying things'

MY FATHER WORKED IN THE POST OFFICE at Julia Creek, and sometimes at night he worked on the telephone exchange. I could look through my parents' bedroom window, a big window facing the footpath on Julia St and Gannon's Hotel, and see Mum walk across with tea for Dad. Somebody had to be on the exchange overnight to answer the phone. He slept there on a canvas bed.

Just before my parents married, Dad was transferred to Gilliat. He rang from Gilliat and said he didn't want to get married; he wanted to call it off. Nanna told me the story many years later: "Your grandfather had to ring your father and tell him to get himself to Julia Creek for the wedding".

In her wedding-party photo Mum looks happy, doesn't she. She's smiling. But if you look at my father, he's not. He's not smiling.

My parents were rarely happy together.

Right: "Mum has an open-eyed, resigned look, and I think there's a tinge of sadness about her."

Merle Hampton (wearing a cameo pendant given to her by her auntie, Elizabeth Spence) and Les Adam.

[Vicki Adam, QV01, 20/10/1947]

Opposite: Wedding party outside St Abigail's Catholic Church, Julia Creek. From left:

Vince Ahern (groomsman)
Joy Graham (bridesmaid, bride's cousin)
Peter Dawes (page boy, in front)
Douglas Adam (best man, groom's brother)
Cathy Dawes (flower girl, in front)
Delma Graham (bridesmaid, bride's cousin)
Les Adam
Evelyn Graham (train bearer, bride's cousin)
Merle Hampton
Roy Hampton (bride's father)
Bill Orr (groomsman)
Gloria Roberts (bridesmaid)
Gladys Hampton (bride's mother)

[Vicki Adam, QV03, 20/10/1947]



CHRISTENING PARTY

At their spacious home on Tuesday, Mrs. Roy Hampton entertained many friends to a tea party in honour of the christening of her first grandchild. The long table was nicely arranged with vases of fresh flowers and was laden with many delicacies. Pride of place was the christening cake, made and artistically decorated by Mrs. Hampton. The cake was in the shape of a cot, this being iced in pale pink with blue flowers forming pillow and quilt. Mrs. Hampton was assisted by her sister Mrs. Jack Walters.

After the toast of the King and the singing of *God Save Our King*, came the toast of the infant Vicki Roylyn Adam. The infant looked very pretty in her dainty white christening robe. During the evening many toasts were made, the most important one being the infant's mother and her great grandmother, Mrs. Matilda Alice Graham. Community singing took up the remainder of the evening. A toast to the hostess and the singing of *She's a Jolly Good Fellow* and *Till We Meet Again* brought the happy event to a close.

CA: 01 Oct 1948

I WAS BORN VICKI ROYLYN ADAM. Roylyn is after Roy Hampton, my grandfather; the Lyn part is not after anyone.

Pop was born in Taroom in 1899, 15th April. I can't say anything about Pop's early history except that he and Nanna were married in Julia Creek. I think it was January 1929.

Their only child was my mother, Merle Hampton.

Nanna was born in Richmond. Not long after the rail line was put through from Richmond to Cloncurry, her mother boarded a train and found work in Julia Creek, and then went back to Richmond to get her children. That was Matilda – Matilda Alice Graham – my great grandmother. She was an early settler in Julia Creek.

Pop was a barber, billiard-saloon proprietor, and SP bookmaker. Nanna and I used to go into Pop's betting room in the afternoon with a billy of tea and a big tray of sandwiches. The betting room was tiny, as I remember. We'd walk from the back of Nanna's house, with all the sandwiches, into the back of the billiard room and betting shop. There'd be cigarette smoke everywhere. Pop died of lung cancer and I assume that's where the cancer came from.



Above: Vicki.

[Vicki Adam, QV10, ca 1956]

Below: Cameo worn by Merle Hampton for her wedding.

[Vicki Adam, QV18]

WEDDING

(Contributed)

ADAM — HAMPTON

Monday the 20th at 4 o'clock, the Roman Catholic Church was the scene of a very pretty wedding when Merle Lillian Ruth, only daughter of Mr and Mrs Roy Hampton of Julia Creek, was joined in Bonds of Holy Matrimony to Leslie Adam of Mount Isa. The church was artistically decorated and the dainty kneeling chairs were finished with satin bows. The Rev. Father Devereux PP officiated.

Master Peter Dawes (page boy) carrying a satin cushion, and Miss Cathleen Dawes (flower girl), preceded the bride to the altar. The smiling bride made a charming picture as she entered the church on the arm of her father to the strain of the *Wedding March* played by Miss Ann Keenan. During the signing of the register Mrs Albie Kaeser sweetly rendered the song *Ave Maria* and hymns.

The bride's beautiful wedding gown was of brocaded ivory satin made on classical lines. The full circular skirt fell gracefully to a long flowing train. Her embroidered veil was held in place with a lace heart-shaped halo finished with orange blossoms.

She carried a bouquet of velvet orchids and camelias intermingled with bridal ferns tied with satin bow and silver horseshoe.

For something old the bride wore a cameo pendant, the gift of her aunt, Mrs Jack Walters.



The bride was attended by three charming maids: Miss Delma Graham, Miss Joy Graham (both cousins of the bride), and Miss Gloria McCarthy. Best man was Douglas Adam, brother

of the bridegroom. Mr Vince Ahern and Mr Bill Orr carried out the duties of groomsmen.

The reception was held in Eckford's Hall, where Mrs Hampton, assisted by her mother (Mrs Matilda Graham) and her sister (Mrs Grace Young), received 400 guests.

The hall was decorated with streamers and white wedding bells, and tall vases filled with pastel-shaded flowers stood on the tables. "Bally" Kaeser baked the three-tiered wedding cake and added the artistic decorations.

Rev. Father Devereux, assisted by Mr Bill Stanley, was chairman, and during the evening they toasted the King and other usual toasts. Many solos were sweetly rendered, followed by community singing.

The guests enjoyed the sumptuous breakfast and the cool, easy-flowing ale. Many cheques and costly gifts were received by the young couple, and the wires were too numerous to be read. Never was there such a happy wedding.

Bright music accompanied the dancing until the arrival of the mail train, when a band of people gathered at the railway station to say cheerio to the happy young couple who left to spend their honeymoon in Brisbane. Mr and Mrs Adam will return by plane to spend holidays in Mount Isa with Mr Adam's mother.

CA: 31 Oct 1947

We have another new building nearing completion, that of Mr. Roy Hampton's barbering saloon, near Gannon's new hotel.

CA: 26 Nov 1932

I don't ever recall seeing Pop in his billiard room, but I do remember seeing him in the barber shop. He had a wooden brush with white bristles on it. Not a shaving brush; the type they used at the finish to brush off the hair, and he'd put powder on it and run it round my neck. After we left Julia Creek, Nanna

had it in the bottom draw of her dressing table in

their bedroom in Townsville. I used to open the drawer and see it and think... it was sort of a feeling of everything was all right.

My first memory of Julia Creek is of being in the backyard with the horse's barley. I've got a photo of that somewhere. Pop used to mix barley and molasses in a copper. We're standing near the copper and I'm holding out my dress. My brother's next to me – my youngest brother wasn't born – and Pop is just to my right. I remember that day because Pop said: "Quick! Come and have some barley before your grandmother sees" and we ate the barley and molasses. Nanna wouldn't let us eat it because it gave us the runs, but she'd know when Pop had given it to us and she used to rouse on him.

I don't think he gave that type of food to his racehorses every day. It always seemed to be on a Monday, the same time that Nanna was wanting to put the sheets in the copper (she did have a washing machine, one of those round things, but she preferred the copper) and she'd call out:

Roy, when will you be finished doing that?

I don't know why you want it Gladdy; you've got a good washing machine.

Just finish what you're doing, Roy, so I can use the copper.

Another thing about Pop: he liked to dress up. He'd wear white pants with braces, a matching shirt and a red tie – I'm pretty sure it was a bow tie – and off we'd go to a race meeting in his cream-coloured Humber Super Snipe.

Below: "Mr Roy Hampton is well-established in his new billiard saloon and hairdressing establishment in Julia St. It is a nice new building, being large and roomy, and we wish Mr Hampton every success in his new venture." (NQR: 30/12/1939)

Judging from the freshness of the signwriting, this photo was probably taken soon after the building was completed. The sign was repainted with different wording in February 1950 (see pages 310, 397).
[Kath Gerahty, GeK06, ca 1940]



WHEN I WAS A CHILD I'd go in and get my hair cut by Roy Hampton. It was Roy who offered my uncle a free haircut. My uncle, just after he left school, came to Julia Creek looking for work; came to live with us. He had no money, and he's walking along Burke St past the barber shop. Roy was out the front – he used to sit out the front on a form – and he asked my uncle if he wanted a haircut:

I'll come back when I've got some money.

Come on in now and I'll give you one on the house.

He was a nice bloke, Roy Hampton. Well, I reckon he was.

NOOKIE GUEST

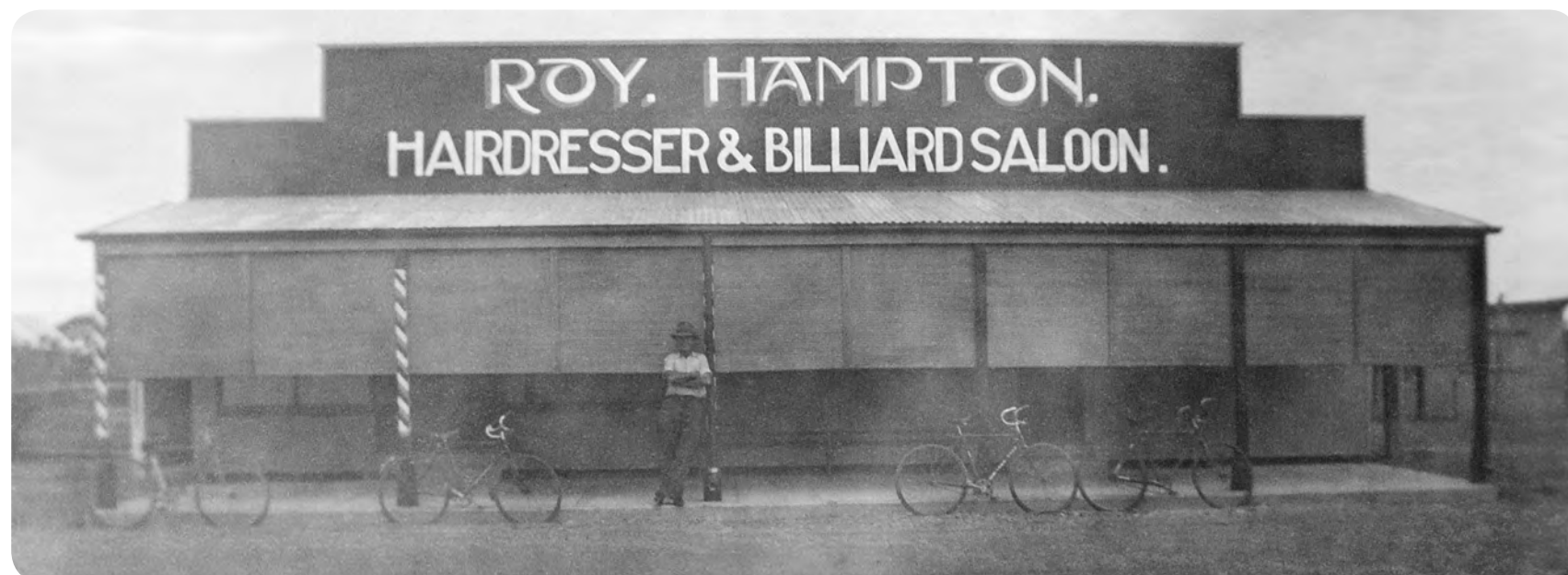
Above: Roy Hampton, Billiard Room & Hairdresser, Burke St, next to Gannon's Hotel. Built in September 1934. The signs which can be deciphered on the other buildings read, from left:

- Drapery
- Storekeeper, Newsagent
- Bank of New South Wales

Lance Lewis' garage is on the far right, partly cut off. Full photo is on page 461.

Harris brothers took over Hampton's hairdresser and the shop next door in December 1939, and converted them to the Garden of Roses Cafe (page 261).

[Dadie Dawes, DW47, ca 1940]



After Julia Creek we went to Nelia. Pop bought the Nelia Hotel. He suffered a stroke there and I remember we went to Julia Creek in the Humber for a doctor's visit. He'd been to the doctor and he had some tablets on prescription. I was sitting in the car waiting, watching Pop drinking beer in Gannon's Hotel. On the drive home to Nelia he started to shake (the combination of alcohol and tablets) and he said: "I can't drive the car, love". He pulled over to the side of the road and put me on his lap and said I'd have to steer. It was dark by the time we crossed the railway line into Nelia, and there were lights on at the hotel.

In 1955, soon after my younger brother was born, Pop sold the hotel and we moved to Townsville. We lived next door to Pop and Nanna.

In Townsville, Pop kept up his bookmaking activities – the legal side of it – and when he'd come home from a race meeting he'd hold his betting bag upside down over the bed and all this money would fall out. I was allowed to put it in order, ready for Monday's banking, and for my trouble Pop would give me a few silver coins.

I don't ever remember wads of money in his top pocket (like you say some people have mentioned), but I do remember money filling the pockets of his pants. He used to take off his pants and hang them up by the braces on the back of the bathroom door (I never saw him take off his pants, of course), and inside each pocket he had the biggest safety pin I've ever seen, pinned on top of the notes to keep them in.

He was a wonderful man, Pop – gentle, kind, never a bad word. I mentioned to Dad how wonderful my grandfather was, and why couldn't he be more like him, and he said: "Your grandfather was a mean, shrewd bastard. You don't know the side of him that I've seen". Dad had worked for Pop in the betting room in Julia Creek, pencilling, and he might have seen a side of Pop that I didn't know. Nevertheless, from that time onwards I didn't see eye to eye with my father.

Pop died in 1972 in Townsville and is buried there. Mum had died in Townsville the year before. She died fairly young. Her aorta tore and she was instantly dead. Nanna told me: "We had a cup of tea together the night she died. We'd only just gone to bed and I heard a noise like 'woooo' and I asked: 'Are you all right Merle?' and there was no answer. I got out of bed, turned on the hall light, and went into your mother's room. She hadn't even pulled the blanket up. I called out to Roy to ring for a doctor, but I knew just looking at her that she was dead".

My grandparents paid for Mum's funeral because Dad said he had no money (they'd split up by then). She's buried one aisle back from Pop.



THE HAMPTONS only had one child, Merle, and they doted on her. She was a bit younger than me and she had everything when we were growing up. The Hamp-
tons had money when others just had ordinary wages.

KATH GERAHTY

Above: Vicki's grandmother and mother,
Gladys and Merle Hampton.
[Vicki Adam, QV11, 1930]

Left: Ribbons won by Roy Hampton's
racehorse, Golden Flag.
[Guy Burns, GK200, 2005]

Births at the local hospital are : Mr.
and Mrs. Ernie Hill, a daughter; Mr. and
Mrs. Dick Dickfos, a daughter.

Mr. Roy Hampton's racehorse,
Golden Flag, died last week. He was
brought in from the paddock and it was
soon seen the horse was very sick, and
although everything possible was done
for the poor animal he failed to rally.
Golden Flag won many races in Julia
Creek, also the Nelia Bracelet and the
Gilliat Bracelet. No more will he carry
his blue and white silk colours to vic-
tory. Ridden by jockey J. Treverton,
Golden Flag was like Phar Lap – the
ladies' idol.

ROY HAMPTON, he was a great one for buying things. He bought a lot of property in Julia Creek.

DADIE DAWES

17 JUNE 1929—The new hotel is almost ready. It will be known as Gannon's Hotel¹ and has been built to the order of Mr W. G. Gannon by Messrs Hammond and Sons, building contractors of Townsville. The local branch of the Queensland National Bank will have its offices in the building, and Mr Roy Hampton will have a hairdressing saloon and billiard room there.

22 SEPTEMBER 1934—Mr Herb Wilder has made a start on Mr Roy Hampton's new billiard room² in Burke St.

26 SEPTEMBER 1936—Contractor Pollard is building a shop in the main street for Mr Roy Hampton, opposite the Blue Bird Cafe and adjoining his billiard saloon which, we understand, is to be let as a saddler's shop³.

27 NOVEMBER 1937—Mrs Roy Hampton returned home last Sunday from Townsville where she had been spending a short holiday. She was also buying furniture for her husband's flats which are being built opposite the railway station near the Julia Creek Hotel.

23 DECEMBER 1939—Building in Julia Creek has been very active of late and the new improvements make the town look much brighter. Mr Roy Hampton is now established in his new billiard saloon in Julia St⁴. We wish Mr Hampton every success in his new venture. Mrs Wilkins is established in her new building⁵ in the main street of Julia Creek. It is a very nice building and is a big improvement to the main street of our town. Other improvements are in progress and the carpenters are kept busy.

26 MARCH 1943—Mr Roy Hampton has bought the Queensland National Bank building⁶. The furniture was auctioned and sold like hot cakes, all bringing good prices.

9 FEBRUARY 1945—Mr Hampton, who purchased the National Bank Building some time ago, has made it into an up-to-date barber saloon.

29 MARCH 1946—Miss Gloria McCarthy, hairdresser, intends to return to Julia Creek and open up a beauty parlour in Mr Roy Hampton's barber saloon. So, ladies needing the latest sets and marcel waves call in and see Gloria.

14 FEBRUARY 1947—Mr Hampton is putting up another shop on his barber's shop site. This will be taken up by Miss Gloria McCarthy, hairdresser.

17 NOVEMBER 1951—The Corner Cafe and Dance Hall⁷ have passed through new hands. Mr Hampton, well-known and popular townsman of Julia Creek, has purchased the property and intends to improve it. There will be a reading room available at all times and an alcove for the convenience of strangers to use as a resting place during their stay in town. This is definitely an acquisition for Julia Creek and we must congratulate Mr Hampton on his enterprise.

1. The first Gannon's Hotel in Goldring St.

2. Top photo previous page.

3. It may not have become a saddler's shop. The top photo on the previous page shows the wording 'Drapery' on the building to the right of Hampton's hairdresser.

4. Bottom photo previous page.

5. Mrs Wilkins drapery was one door west of the O-K Store.

6. Photo, right.

7. Originally Mathews' Hall, on the site of the present-day Civic Centre.



I'LL NEVER FORGET ROY HAMPTON. My wife and I bought the Nelia Hotel from him. They used to call him *The Claw* because of the speed with which he grabbed money off the counter. He always carried a wad of money in case he ran into one of his punters and had to settle on the spot whichever way it was, win or lose.

I first met Roy on the phone, doing business between one betting shop and another. I had an illegal betting shop in Richmond, and Roy had a billiard saloon in Julia Creek, camouflage for his own illegal betting shop. He had billiard tables in the front and he also did some barbering.

When TAB came in, around the time we bought the hotel, the police were instructed to close the SP shops. They tended to turn a blind eye before then. The police knew it was going on; they just left it alone, mostly.

MOEY SCARR

ROY HAMPTON was an asset to Julia Creek. I think he married one of the girls Graham. He was a good fella, but I never bet with him. I was averse to betting because I had to work for my money; whereas the bookmakers, when you saw them round the town, they had a little pork-pie hat on, a white long-sleeved Pelaco shirt (a you-beaut, Rolls Royce shirt) tailor-made pants with white braces, and a bulging pocket full of money. I couldn't see myself working only to give my money to them, so I was not a gambler – though I did play billiards in Roy's saloon.

HERB WILDER

Above: Roy Hampton.
[Vicki Adam, QV09, 1947]

Below: Queensland National Bank, south-east corner of Burke St and Julia St. Reece Thomas on right (manager); other man unidentified. This building was previously the Commercial Bank of Australia. Another photo, after alterations in March 1940, is shown on page 174.
[Dadie Dawes, DW42, ca 1935]





for a week.

To mark the occasion of the engagement of their only daughter, Hazel Hardy, to Ernest Brazier, elder son of Mrs. W. Lenahan and the late Mr. G Brazier, Mr. and Mrs. Charles 'Mannie' Hardy of Goldring St, held a reception in Mathew's Hall last Friday night.

The many acquaintances of Paul

NQR: 06 Oct 1956

Still Hangin' Round

Hazel Brazier

MY FAMILY CAME FROM MCKINLAY from way back. My great-grandparents moved to McKinlay in the late 1800s. My grandmother, she grew up and married a local. Dad was wool-pressing. He was in the shearing industry all his life – Charlie Hardy, known as Mannie.

I was born in 1937 in Cloncurry because in those days that was the nearest hospital to McKinlay. Still is I suppose. I had two brothers: one older, one younger. The older one was Lisle and the younger one was Colin. They've both been dead now for quite a while.

Dad's mother died in 1945 and we moved to Julia Creek in '46. He felt there was nothing much in McKinlay for him anymore. I suppose he got a bit discontented.

I started school in McKinlay and finished my primary schooling in Julia Creek. I did my final year at St Gabriels, Charters Towers. 1952 I finished school, and for a while I went working at Peter Dawes' store; quite a while actually, about four years. I was on drapery, but if there was a customer to be served in grocery and no one was there behind the counter – well, I had to go over and serve them. Groceries down the back, newsagency on one side at the front, and drapery and chinaware on the other. Three or four staff.

Then I decided I would work for myself as a dressmaker, but I got sick of making clothes and not getting paid for them, so I went over to the Mayne Milk Bar and worked there for a little while. Elsie & Fagan Stainkey and Charlie Corrigan were in partnership in it. Sometime later, Mrs Dawes wanted me to come and work in the shop again so I went back for about four years.

I finished working in 1957, 12 months before I married Ernie, and helped him with his books. In those days you didn't work after you were married, most women anyway. It was just automatic. Once you got married – phsstt – you left your job and that was it. There was always plenty of work for young girls. When I left school I didn't have to stop and think: *What am I gonna do?* You just went and got a job.

It was 1953 when I first met Ernie, while I was working at the Mayne Milk Bar. I was on night shift. We stayed open till after the pictures came out of an evening. Sometimes it'd be midnight before we knocked off. Ernie was working across the road at Harry Stainkey's garage and often used to come in for a lemon drink, that was his favourite. This particular night he just... wouldn't go. He sat in the corner and he stayed there all night. I saw him looking at me and I thought: *This fella's hangin' round for something – me!*

When I knocked off he met me out the front and wanted to know if he could walk me home. After he'd been sitting there all night I didn't have the heart to say no. The next night the same thing; Ernie hangin' round again. I couldn't... what would he think of me if I said yes one night and no the next?

Forty-eight years later he's still hangin' round, isn't he.



THERE WAS a dance hall in Julia Creek on the corner near the Post Office. Anybody could hire it for a couple of quid. We played table tennis and held dances, things like that. The music used to come from a fella called Mossie McDonald playing the piano and beating time with a drum. Mossie and his wife were real good dancers and they taught us to dance. Betty did the teaching and Mossie played the music. They'd come along and do that for practically nothing.

Talking about the dances: this one particular fella, Tojo (that was his nickname – his real name was Colin, he was Hazel Brazier's brother), whenever Tojo was running short of cash, if he needed a pair of shoes or a coat, he'd put on a dance. Everybody would turn up:

*What's this dance for, Tojo?
Sandshoes!*

TITCH COLEMAN

Opposite: Hazel, Arcadia Beach, Magnetic Island.
[Ernie Brazier, BE09, ca 1955]

Below: Hazel and Ernie.
[Ernie Brazier, BE11, ca 1956]



No regrets **Ernie Brazier**

I WAS BORN IN ESSEX, ENGLAND, IN 1934. My mum and dad moved from London in the Depression days, between the two world wars. They had been in the sheetmetal business in London, but Dad was out of work; so Grandad bought a farm and they all moved to Essex. Then I was born. From that day onwards Dad reckoned I was a lucky star, because the same day as I was born he got a job.

We came out to Australia on a migrant ship in 1951. We went to Bathurst and were given jobs from there. I went to Footscray, had a job at Hack Motors. They're still operating: panel shop, paint shop, and so on.

Dad died at Christmas 1952, and some time later Mum met Bill Lenahan while he was holidaying in Sydney. Bill was one of the Lenahan's who owned Arizona Station, and he encouraged Mum to go west. We went out to Julia Creek in October 1953. Mum married Bill in '54 and moved to Arizona. I stayed in town.

Straight away Bill got me a job with Harry Stainkey. I was happy there with Harry. I couldn't wish for a better boss. He was great. He'd only bought the business six months before I went to work for him, from a fellow named Lance Lewis. I worked with Harry for about two years, but then he decided to sell to Frank and Maurie Byrne. Harry encouraged me

to go out panelbeating on my own, and until the sale went through he let me use the back of the shop. That was 1956.

After I left Harry I started up my own business in Alec Wall's shed, near the laneway behind the Post Office. He had a big shed, no cement floor in it though, and I started up in there. I was the first panelbeater in town. About two years I rented that shed, and then I bought a block of ground in what is now Hickman St and built my own workshop. But not without drama. I remember sitting on the back steps at Hazel's mum's place: "Gee whiz, look at that black sky out there". The storm clouds were vertical each side – clear as anything on either side – and blowing in from Normanton way. I had the frame of the workshop up, ready to put the roof on, and I was worried. I flew around to the block and got there in pouring rain and cyclonic wind. Completely turned my little Austin A40 around in the mud, and busted the building framework off the stumps. My best mate, Keith Coleman, offered to come and help me put it up again. I gave him a job for three weeks while he wasn't shearing.

Another year a whole section of the roof got blown right off. The iron flew across to Charlie Corrigan's house, bounced off that and went into the new swimming pool; cut right through the wire-mesh fence.



Left: Julia Creek Panel Works, Hickman St, paint shop on right, workshop on left, office in middle.
[Ernie Brazier, BE05, ca 1960]

I tell you what – I’ve got some stories about Julia Creek. One year we started off to go to a race ball at Kynuna and we never got there. Still haven’t been there. We were in Lisle Hardy’s¹ FJ Holden, five of us done up in our finest, the men in black suits. It’d been raining heavily. Two or three people said before we left: “The road’s okay, it’s good”, but they forgot to tell us about one little detour we had to make, and before we knew it we were in a bog hole. And there we stayed. Us men were out pushing at one stage while one of the girls roared the engine, but it did nothing except spray mud all over our suits. We waited there all night, telling ourselves: “Oh, the ambulance will be back soon, we’ll get a lift with them”. The ambulance car used to return to Julia Creek from Kynuna straight after the races. No, this time the ambulance decided to wait till the next morning.

The mosquitoes ate us alive.

I HAVE NO REGRETS about going to Julia Creek. I went there at 19, only out from the old country two years. It was a real experience, it shaped my entire adult life.

Hazel and I left in 2001, broke. We were still operating the business – just. After all those years in Julia Creek we ended up with virtually nothing. But I have no regrets.



Above: Ernie (in water) at the dirt pool with the youth group he started up.

[Charlie Corrigan, CC01, ca 1954]

Below: Not Ernie bogged (see story, left), but a similar situation. These people were on their way to Noranside, an outstation of Chatsworth. From left: Jacob Swift, Bill Burrows, Ces Cook, Harry Swift.

[Bill Burrows, BuB02, ca 1955]

“You could swim down there at the old mud pool. We had a diving board. A plank went out over the water that you could walk out on. Sort of a little bridge going out a bit; not right across. We used to swim in it a lot when we were kids. Ernie Brazier had a youth group for a couple of years and he’d take us swimming”. (Billy Ryder)

1. Hazel’s brother



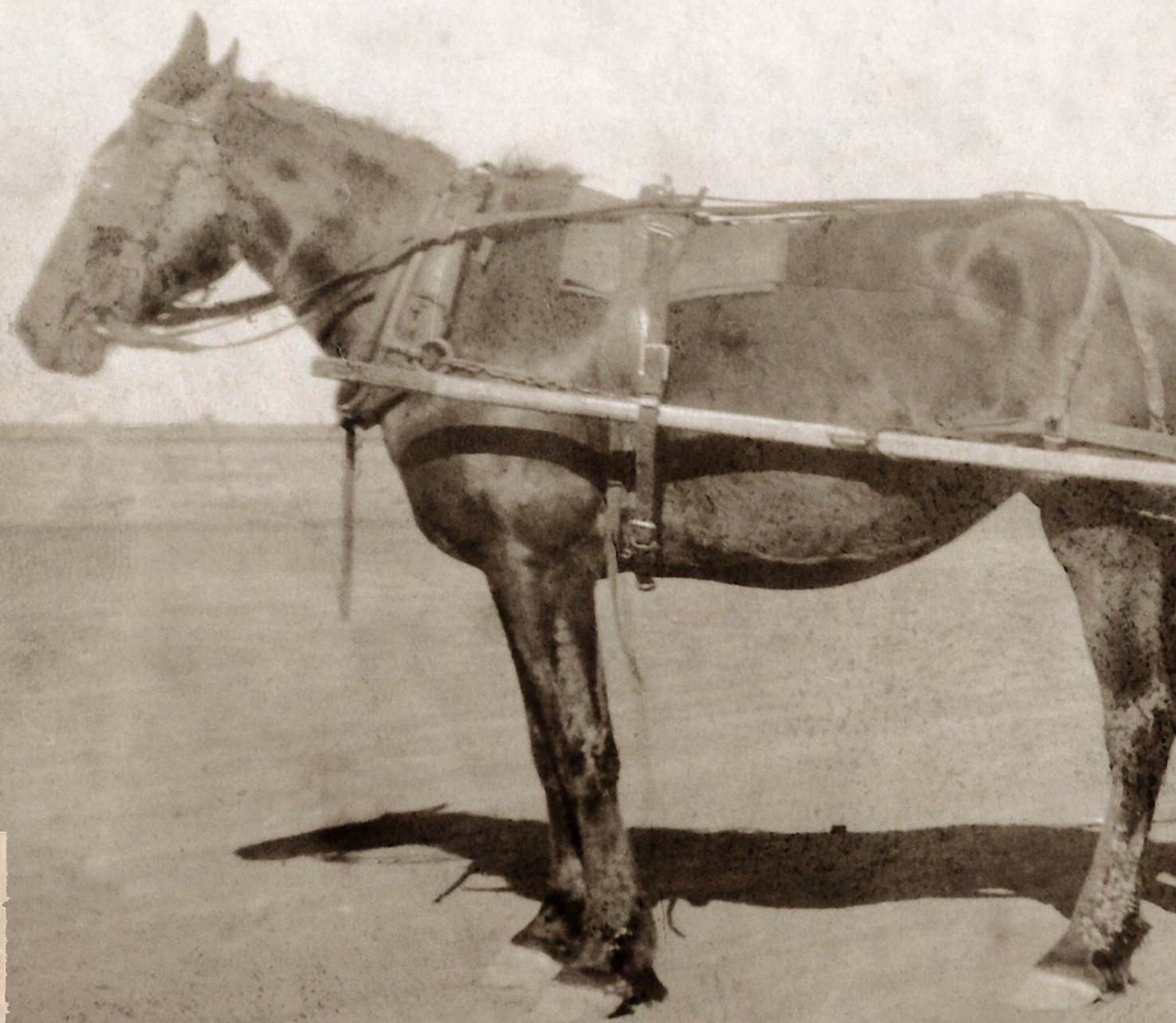
Henry Harbutt

ME, I WAS BORN IN JULIA CREEK, 21st September 1941. I think I was among the first born at the Julia Creek Hospital which opened only a year or two before. I vaguely remember Mum saying that.

From what my parents told me, they owned a dairy at Julia Creek with a few head of cattle, and Dad delivered milk around the town with his cart. He had the urn sitting on the back with a wet hessian bag to cool it, pannikin hanging down the side, and he would serve milk to the customers straight from the urn. That's what was done those days.

Both Messrs. Dalling Bros of Homeland, and Mr. Bob Harbutt of the local dairy, have just landed an Illawarra bull, each from the well-known Harrogate Stud at Maxwellton. These two bulls show a lot of quality and will certainly be the means of improving the herds at the two places mentioned. Mr. Harbutt also purchased four very good cows from the well-known Kamarooka Stud at Gilliat and before very long he should have a fine dairy herd together.

NQR: 14 Jul 1934



30 Cows Comes To Mind

Bob Harbutt starts a dairy in Julia Creek

When you look at the photo you can tell it's my father because he's got a cigarette hanging out the left side of his mouth. It wasn't always alight but it was always there. He'd light one cigarette a dozen times before it was finished.

We lived on the dairy, but I was too young to remember much about it. Our house was a lean-to type, made of galvanised iron. For the dairy herd a figure of 30 cows comes to mind, but I'm not sure. Where we brought the cows in, the races were made of timber.

Put the timber bail over the cow's neck to hold it in place, and then milk by hand. I can visualise going down to get a drink of milk straight from the cow. I'd go down with my little pannikin, squirt the milk in and drink it.

I don't really know if Uncle Joe was in partnership in the dairy. Dad never mentioned it. I think Joe came to give him a hand there at one stage, but I don't think Joe was actually involved.



Left: Bob Harbutt on his milk cart near the Julia Creek dairy.

[Carolyn Harbutt, HCa01, ca 1940]

Our dairy man, Mr. Harbutt, regrets that owing to no grass he is compelled to close down his dairy, but will endeavour to supply the hospital and infants. Later on when grass is plentiful he will only be too pleased to supply his many customers.

MY PARENTS SOLD THE DAIRY in 1945 and we moved to Winton where my sister Carolyn was born. She's seven years younger than me. Dad had purchased a new motor car in 1941 and we drove to Winton in that. I know he bought the car in '41, but I don't know if he used it for milk deliveries around Julia Creek or still kept with the horse and cart.

I have no idea why my parents sold the dairy; no idea at all why we moved to Winton. Dad never owned a dairy again. He worked on the main roads and he also worked on properties belonging to Dick Magoffin: Brinard and Ardrin. We left Winton in 1954, went to Charters Towers and ended up buying a



farm. We grew citrus and small crops; we had pigs. We didn't have cattle. Dad wanted to get back into having cattle again but we didn't have a big enough property for it. He also ran a school bus while he had the farm.

And then as time went on, Dad got a bit old for the farm. He sold the farm, sold the bus run, and worked at the picture theatre and the drive-in. A you-name-it type of person. He did whatever: put posters on the wall, cleaned, operated the drive-in, the gates and ticket sales. He actually died at the drive-in. He was 72. Wouldn't retire, wouldn't go on the pension. That was a no-no to go on the pension; that was a nasty word.

The Julia Creek woolscour is in full swing. Send your wool to the Julia Creek Scour to be well treated.

The local dairy owned by Mr. Bob Harbutt changes hands at the end of the month, the property being sold to Mr. Bill Blanch. Bob has successfully run the dairy for 12 years and always gave the public the best of service. He intends going for a short holiday before settling down. We wish Bob and his wife and son Henry the very best wherever they go; and good luck goes to Mr. and Mrs. Blanch in their new venture.

CA: 22 Jun 1945

MY SISTER, Alice, married Bob Harbutt and they had a dairy at Julia Creek near the woolscour. Weekends I used to go to the dairy and help separate the cream – sit there at the separator, turning.

I got bitten by a snake once. I would have been about 7, so that makes it 1939. Bob sent me to feed the chooks. He had a couple of 44 gallon drums with grain in them, and you'd get a bucket of grain and spread it around. Bare feet those days, and a snake got me on the second smallest toe. I picked up a piece of timber and killed it. Bob must have spotted

me walking backwards and forwards looking for the snake and wondered what I was doing. He came over, found out I'd been bitten by a snake, and drove me to the doctor in town. It was all okay.

Bob would come into Julia Creek and do his milk deliveries through the morning. Before he went home he'd come around to our place and wash out his cans. Any surplus milk he left with us. We were never short of milk.

GEORGE BAXTER



Dad died 13th September 1981 in Charters Towers. He died starting machinery at the drive-in theatre. Went to work, him and his little dog, picking up all the rubbish from the night before. Half an hour later they came and got Mum. He was dead. His mate drove in the yard just as he was pulling the cord. He had a machine to pick up all the rubbish, a rotary hoe thing with spikes on it, and as he pulled the cord that was it. Straight down. That was when I was 40. I was going to see him for my 40th birthday.

Mum stayed in Charters Towers for a couple of years and then she sold up and went down to Gladstone and stayed with Carolyn. She died three years ago in August 2002. Her ashes are buried with Dad. They're both in the one grave in Charters Towers.



Opposite: Bob Harbutt working on his new car.
[Carolyn Harbutt, HCa15, ca 1941]

Right: Bob and Alice Harbutt.
[Carolyn Harbutt, HCa02, ca 1940]

Below: The Harbutt dairy, about 2 miles west of Julia Creek near the woolscour.
[Carolyn Harbutt, HCa06, ca 1940]



SHIRE OF McKINLAY
GENERAL RECEIPT No 6915

Received by Cash from Mr Bob Harbutt
by Cheque

the sum of Two pounds Ten shillings
and pence, being for agistment fees
for 25 head of cattle from the 24th Nov until 20 Jan 1947

£ 2 : 10 : -

November 29th 1946
H. Fickling

Left: Receipt to Bob Harbutt for agistment.
[Carolyn Harbutt, HCa16, 1946]

November 29th 1946
Received from Mr Bob Harbutt the sum of
Two pounds Ten shillings, being for Agistment fees for
25 head of cattle from the 24th Nov until 20 Jan 1947.
Herb Fickling

To explain this receipt, dated a year or so after Bob Harbutt
sold his dairy to Bill Blanch and left Julia Creek, Henry
Harbutt (Bob's son), suggests that the 25 head of cattle
mentioned in the receipt were not a part of the sale;
they were cattle which Bill Blanch couldn't afford or didn't
want. Bob had nowhere else to put them so they were
agisted on the Julia Creek common until sold.

Below: The Harbutt milk cart driven by Joe Harbutt
(Bob's brother), plying for trade along
the streets of Julia Creek.
[Carolyn Harbutt, HCa04, ca 1940]



Syrup tins & roley-poleys **Myrtle Harbutt**

Harbutt Family

- ↪ Winifred
- ↪ Ethyl
- ↪ Joe ♥ 1927 Gladys
 - ↪ John
 - ↪ Myrtle (1932)
 - ↪ Donald
- ↪ Bob ♥ 1940 Alice
 - ↪ Henry (1941)
 - ↪ Carolyn

TOYS? WE DIDN'T HAVE SUCH THINGS AS TOYS. We only had syrup tins and out of them we made roley-poleys. And we made a few shanghais. They were about our only toys. A roley-poley is a syrup tin filled up with sand, a hole in each side, with a piece of wire through it brought up to a loop. You tied a piece of rope to the loop and you raced them. That was a roley-poley. That was what we had as toys. Pulled them behind you and raced them. Not every kid used syrup tins. If you wanted something bigger to pull, there were plenty of empty kerosene drums.

I WAS BORN IN CLONCURRY, 1932. My parents married in 1927. As far as I know Dad had always been around the Julia Creek area. Both his parents died when he was young and the children were adopted, I think, by people from Winton. There was Winifred, Ethel, Bob and John Joseph – my Dad, Joe.

After he married, Dad went droving with Tom Kelly. We didn't see Dad all that much, he was on the road all the time. I can remember my father only coming home occasionally when he finished a droving trip. The only time he was ever home with us, really, was when we were living on a station and he was working on that station. He'd be out working with the sheep of a day time while we stayed in the house.



Left: Children and their homemade toys at Julia Creek. Noel Peut and girl pulling kerosene drums.

[Noel Peut, PN03, ca 1932]

For a lot of my early childhood we were living on sheep stations. I think my parents must have been on a station close to Cloncurry when I was born because that's where Mum went to have me – at my godmother's place. People by the name of Reed. Mum didn't bother going to the hospital; didn't even bother to weigh me.

Johnny's my older brother. We started school together out on sheep stations with Mum as our teacher. Between baking bread and cooking for shearers, Mum tried to teach us. She had to do everything. Apart from what Mum taught us, our schooling on the stations was by correspondence. You got this brown envelope in the mail and you'd have a bit of writing and a few sums.

We moved to Julia Creek when I was about 7. I remember my first teacher. Mr Whitby – what year¹ was he there? And I remember Mr Cann; he used to like giving you the cane across your backside. Around about grade 5 was the highest I ever got to.

Before we moved into Julia Creek itself we lived at the dairy with Uncle Bob, a couple of miles west of town near the woolscour. I remember spending

Miss Kath Byrne arrived home on Sunday and has taken over the Blue Bird Cafe from Mrs. Flo Watson. Kath will be pleased to see old friends and new, so call at the Blue Bird Cafe when in town.

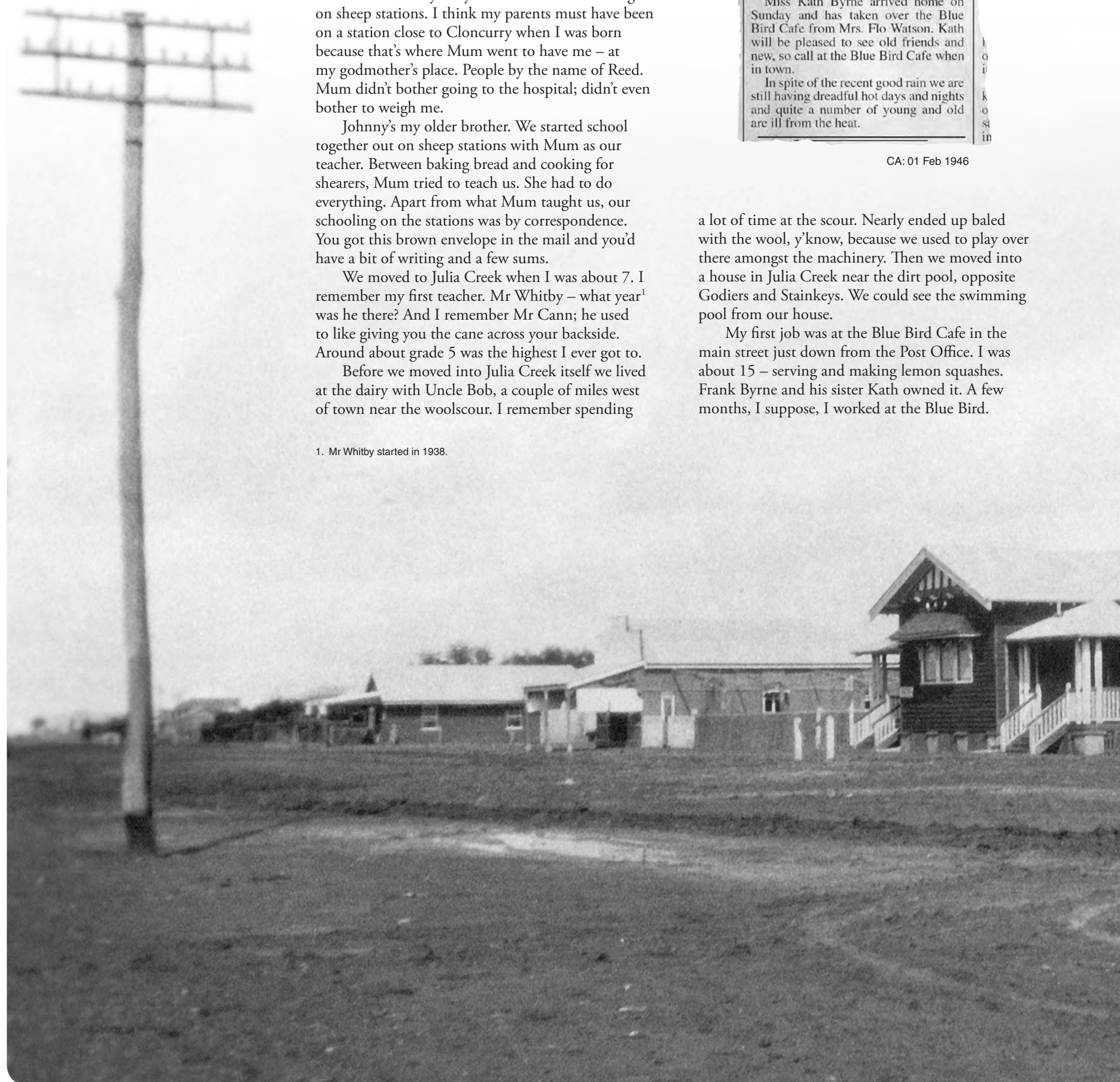
In spite of the recent good rain we are still having dreadful hot days and nights and quite a number of young and old are ill from the heat.

CA: 01 Feb 1946

a lot of time at the scour. Nearly ended up baled with the wool, y'know, because we used to play over there amongst the machinery. Then we moved into a house in Julia Creek near the dirt pool, opposite Godiers and Stainkeys. We could see the swimming pool from our house.

My first job was at the Blue Bird Cafe in the main street just down from the Post Office. I was about 15 – serving and making lemon squashes. Frank Byrne and his sister Kath owned it. A few months, I suppose, I worked at the Blue Bird.

1. Mr Whitby started in 1938.



Then I left the cafe and went to the Post Office. On the left side, the side nearest the Blue Bird, was the postal section: letter boxes and where you got served inside. The part on the right was the exchange. I worked in there on the switchboard. I wasn't at the exchange terribly long because they found out I was only 16 and I should have been older. So then I got a job at the hospital on the domestic staff doing the meals and washing up. I might have been at the hospital a couple of years.

Then we went to Brisbane. Johnny had become a successful jockey and he bought a house for my parents at Hendra and I started working at a cake factory in the Valley.

WHEN I WENT THROUGH JULIA CREEK the last time, when I was going out to Alice Springs and Ayers Rock about 15 years ago, we went through early in the morning. I wanted the train to stop for a couple of hours – break down or something – so that I could have gone and had a look over the town. I would have liked to find out what of our old house was still there.

er) and Mr. Moran Byrne.
 Congratulations go to Mr. and Mrs. Joe Harbutt whose son John, apprenticed jockey in Brisbane, rode his first winner on *Caution*. Mr. Joe Harbutt was a great amateur jockey himself and rode many winners. Friends wish his young son John the best of luck and hope he wins as many races as his dad.
 Flags flew at half mast on Monday: a wave of sadness was cast over the town

CA: 22 Feb 1946

many of the nice homes in the town at many station homes.
 Mr. and Mrs. Joe Harbutt, and daughter Myrtle and son Donald, left to make their home in Brisbane with their jockey son, John, who has purchased a very nice home for his parents. Harbutt family take with them the best of wishes from their many friends in Julia Creek.

CA: 08 Jul 1949

Below: Burke St, taken from near Eckford's picture theatre looking north-west. Buildings from right: School of Arts (cut off); Bill Davis' home in Coyne St in the distance; Post Office; original Blue Bird Cafe; Charlie Byrne's butcher shop.

Bob Harbutt's milk cart is stopped at the intersection beside the Post Office, going south along Julia St.
 [Carolyn Harbutt, HCa09, ca 1939]



Plenty of good friends

A pirate and the Blanch family come in from Selwyn and buy a dairy

JULIA CREEK'S A NICE QUIET PLACE. Plenty of good friends. I've had some good times here. Used to go fishing out to the Flinders, out to Manfred Crossing, over that way. McLeods Bore they called it. Very popular fish hole, very good cod hole, but they closed the bore down on it. There was a bore on the edge of it, used to run into a great big waterhole.

I was born in Selwyn, a gold mining place between Cloncurry and Boulia. 1925 I was born. Dad was gold mining over there. He was gold mining in Charters Towers too, y'know, in the boom days. Then he went out to Selwyn. He had the mail run from Selwyn to Boulia for a long time, after he got out of the mine. I can remember going on the mail run with him as a kid. Once a week he'd do that run.

When we first came to Julia Creek, Dad was working for the council on the sanitary. I had just started school when we arrived at Julia Creek. I did Scholarship and then I went to an agricultural college at Ingham for two years and did Junior. I wasn't there for too long. Just after the start of the war I joined the navy. I was 16 when I joined up.

I worked for Australian Estates for a few months when I came back from the war. They had a shop in the front street. Joe Mathews was the boss. I was in and out of the office taking cattle buyers around, that sort of thing. Australian Estates had bought the business off a chap called Fred Hickman. Fred was in town for years as a stock and station agent.

In the fifties, Australian Estates moved from the front street and built a double-storey brick place in Burke St, next to Gannon's.

At the end of '46 I went up to the Kimberley. I was Assistant Manager at Rosewood, right on the border between Western Australia and the Territory, 100 miles from Wyndham. Then I looked after Roper Valley, on this side of the border. I moved

from there to Euroka Springs north of Julia Creek.

I came back into town in '51 and worked for John McMahon at the butchers for a good while. I was serving. Chap called Kenny Cooney – Ard Cooney's nephew – took it over in the 1960s and I stayed on with him. Quite a number of years I was there. After that I went water drilling with Roy Beauchamp up to about 1970. Then I was on the council: truck driving, operating graders and loaders. Eventually I went ganger. I retired in '86.

I FORGOT TO MENTION that my parents owned a dairy at one stage. They lived at the dairy out near the scour. Bought it from a bloke Harbutt in '45. Dad delivered the milk by car, from big urns on the back of a ute with taps on them. Delivered to hotels, cafes, people around town. John, my brother, he used to do a lot of the deliveries.

About 1951 they sold the dairy and moved into town. Dad was getting too old.



Right: Eric Blanch as a Julia Creek pirate.
[Thelma Blanch, BT06, ca 1935]

Opposite top: Ted Blanch's plaque which sits atop his father's grave.
[Guy Burns, GK191, 2005]

Opposite bottom: Bill Blanch's headstone. In front is his son Ted's small rectangular plaque.
[Guy Burns, GK192, 2005]

...men who have resided in our town for many years.

Mrs. Bob Harbutt and son Henry left on Monday night for the South. Mr. and Mrs. Blanch and family have taken up residence at the dairy, recently purchased from the Harbuts.

The local picture show will be closed till August 4 owing to a break down in the machinery, but the young folk will be able to attend the many dances to be held on Friday and Saturday nights.

CA: 06 Jul 1945

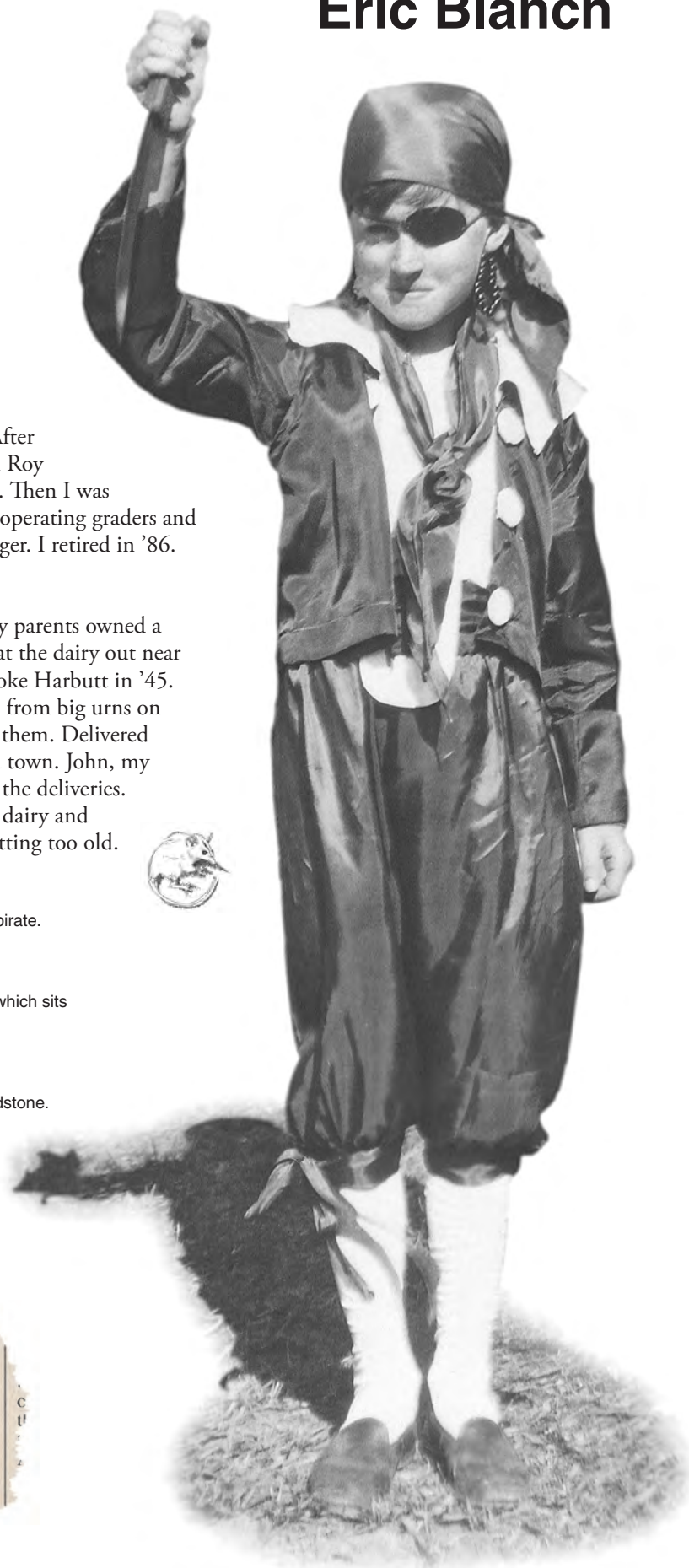
...scaps in a matter of nine weeks. The dogger received £10 for each of these scalps.

Mr. Bill Blanch advises that the dairy will be closed immediately and he is making arrangements to sell his dairy herd and plant. This is going to be a great setback for the townspeople and especially for the hospital.

The next fixture for the footballers is Cloncurry on Sunday but there is no

NQR: 07 Jul 1951

Eric Blanch



He made noises, didn't he **Dummy Blanch**

“**N**OW, DUMMY BLANCH came from a big family and they came in from the Selwyn area. I can remember him vividly when I started school in Julia Creek in 1930; he used to come and help. They had big charts with words drawn, CAT and RAT. He pointed to RAT and I deliberately said CAT and he gave it to me across the knuckles with the pointer. He couldn't speak, but he could certainly hear well enough.”

HAROLD WALTERS

Hey Dummy! So here you are.
Some said Townsville, one the Towers,
But Thelma –
She remembered, Dummy.
She said you were with Bill, home in Julia Creek.

Once I stood on your father's grave
and did not know you were under my feet.
When Thelma said: “Look for his father”,
Even then you were hiding,
As you often hid behind feigned deafness to escape torment.
And for a third time I returned.

Don't hide Dummy. I'm not here for cruelty;
I'm on my knees with brush and water
Clearing twenty years of caked black soil.



In Loving Memory of
My Dear Husband and Our Father
WILLIAM EDMUND
BLANCH
Died 8th Nov 1956
Aged 70 Years
R. I. P.



EDWARD WILLIAM
BLANCH
DIED 9-10-1985

And there you are: “Edward William Blanch”
Sitting atop your father's slab;
“Dummy” not formal enough for inscription,
Not respectful enough for family.
To brother Eric you were Ted:

“Partly deaf and dumb, y'know. More his speech than anything else. His hearing was all right, but speech... They had him to the doctors, but in those days they couldn't do anything about it and they didn't bother to teach them. He signed a little bit.”

You heard the taunts and teasing
and came early to acceptance:
No girl could be wooed with grunts.
Yours would be a life of inward musings and solitude.

“I didn't know how to talk to him. He made noises, didn't he. When you're young, when you've had nothing to do with those sort of people, they frighten you. You don't realise they are actual people. You think because they can't speak they're dumb anyway, in both meanings of the word.”

ISABEL FLEWELL-SMITH

Voiceless,
but you had hands that worked spanners and sparks;
Manly trades where hands could talk,
and yours spoke well:

“Ted Blanch – he was a mechanic, spray painter, general hand with Lance Lewis. Quite clever. A violent temper if you stirred him up – he'd chase you with whatever he had in his hand. When life got a bit dull, if Ted was working down the back of the workshop, we'd go along and give him a hard time just so he'd chase us. He was called deaf and dumb, but he wasn't deaf; he just couldn't speak. He was only a bit of a boy when he started out with Lance.”

HERB WILDER

Lance Lewis, kind and childless.
 Good mate, surrogate Dad;
 That constant of Burke St, staring from photos:
Established 1929
Lance Lewis
Motor Sales & Service
 You were 13 in 1929, Dummy;
 Was that when you started with Lance – at 13?

“You could say Lance Lewis reared him. Lance took him in hand and had him working about the garage.”

DADIE DAWES

A magistrate approved paying you below-award wages¹,
 But I think Lance would have kept you on anyway:
 Through the Depression,
 the war,
 the boom in wool,
 the move to Townsville.

“It’s the interesting characters who stick in your mind. Dummy Blanch, he worked for Lance Lewis as a mechanic. A remarkable man. I think a lot of his problem was he didn’t know how to speak, couldn’t get the words out. Us kids used to give him a hard time, y’know. He was the son of old Bill Blanch, the toilet man in Julia Creek who carted away the pans, but Dummy lived with Lance Lewis and Mrs Lewis. Even when they shifted to Townsville he was living with them. Lance used to be able to communicate with him; sign language, that sort of business.”

GORDON LAVARACK

Ivy Burrows remembers you warmly:

“The Lewises always looked after Dummy in Julia Creek. They never had any children, nah. They had Dummy; he was the child they never had. When they sold out, Dummy went with them to Townsville. He worked in a body building plant, welding. They lived across the road from my auntie, see, in Pimlico. They lived at 29 Park St.”

Jenny Byrne, near blind and deaf with age, was forthright and respectful:

“*Ted* was his name. Nobody’d give you a job in that condition would they. But Lance put him to work washing parts and taught him a trade. The Lewises took him on; they looked after him like nobody’s business. They built a high block house at the back of the garage and I think they had a room there for... not that we... no, we never ever called him Dummy. Mum would come out of her grave and box me ears even now if she heard me say that. To us he was definitely Ted. We wouldn’t be game to call anybody Limpy or Dumpy or any other damn thing.”

And Jenny’s husband Marty made an effort to be friendly:

“Last time I saw Teddy Blanch he was in Julia Creek. He was sitting in a car in the middle of Burke St and I went over and spoke to him. Oh Jesus he lit up. He thought it was marvellous. When the Lewises left the Creek they took Teddy with them. They had a big house in Townsville and they built in underneath for him. They gave him a separate flat downstairs.

Dadie Dawes remembers the happy times:

“When the Lewises went to Sydney or Melbourne on tour (they became quite wealthy) they’d take Ted Blanch with them and have him in beautiful clothes, suits, good hotels.”

in their new venture.
 Mr. and Mrs. Lance Lewis left by car on Saturday to attend the Charters Towers and Townsville Shows. Mr. Ted Blanch was a passenger with Mr. Lewis' car party, also to attend the Shows. Mr. Dave Kiddle is also a visitor to Towns-

CA: 09 July 1948

1. One of the applications was made on 8/11/1951 in the Industrial Magistrates Court (A/44903, Qld State Archives) though there were others before that date.

“Application by William Edmund Blanch on behalf of his son Edward Blanch for permit to work for less than the award rate by reason of his being both deaf and dumb. Adjudication: Permit granted for 12 months.”

Below: Lance Lewis’ garage, Burke St.
 Peter Dawes’ store, before its sign was painted, is at far left.
[Rita Byrne, FR11, Sunday 21/5/1939]



But others knew you only from a distance:

“He was deaf and dumb. Related to Matron Blanch; a brother. He could make noises n’t that – ‘Uuhh uh, uuhh uh’. Lance knew how to understand him.”

But did Lance understand himself?
James Francis Lancelot Lewis found solace,
from whatever it was he fled,
in a crack of rifle shot,
Pimlico, 13th May, 1971.

“Lance shot himself, eh. He got cancer. He lived in Park St for a long time. The Lewises, they never had any kids, they had that Dummy Blanch; more or less reared him. I don’t think he was a mechanic, mostly a grease boy. Well, Mrs Lewis – old Eedie – she took Dummy under her wing. Eedie come out of a fairly big family, see, one of the Ryders from Charters Towers. She was old Bill Ryder’s sister: Huey, Bill, Eedie, Lew... there’s stacks of them bloody Ryders, a mob of them. Lance wouldn’t have them in the yard, y’know. He reckoned ‘bugger em’. He used to chase ’em. Tough nuts some of them Ryders.”

BERNIE FOSTER

Dummy, it’s been a long search.
Some said Townsville, one the Towers:
“After Lance Lewis took his own life,
Dummy ended up in public care somewhere.
He might be buried at the Towers
because I think he went to Eventide.
Mrs Lewis couldn’t look after him by herself.”

But Thelma – she remembered, Dummy.
She said you were with Bill, home in Julia Creek.



Blanch Family

- ↪ BILL ♥ BELLA
 - ↪ Isabella (1911, *Tuppy*, Matron Blanch)
 - ↪ Alice
 - ↪ Eda
 - ↪ Ted (1916, *Dummy*)
 - ↪ Rob
 - ↪ Marcella ♥ 1949 Norm Downey
 - ↪ Eric (1925)
 - ↪ John ♥ 1952 Thelma
 - ↪ Vince



mos. are anxiously watching the preparations. There have been a few accidents in the district of late, Nurse Godier has her hand in plaster, the result of a fall. Mr. Ted Blanch sustained a severe sprain to his wrist whilst fitting a tyre at Lance Lewis' garage. Mr. Bob Harbutt had several stitches in his ear, the result of a fall from a horse. Mathews' Hall was gaily decorated

NQR: 04 Aug 1945

...thought would be comforts of citizens in this far north-western area. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis returned by last Wednesday's mail train after visiting Townsville for business and holiday reasons. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Stainkey also returned by Wednesday's mail from Townsville. They were in the city to negotiate with Mr. Lance Lewis over the purchase of his garage business here in Julia Creek. Mr. Stainkey has now completed the purchase of this business but will not be taking over for a few weeks. Coming on top of the purchase of the Eckford picture theatre, dance and the cordial factory.

CA: 13 Feb 1953

A torturous trip... a *torturous* trip **Thelma Blanch**

I CAME OUT HERE for three weeks to get to know the in-laws. Fifty-something years on I'm still here. I hated it at first. Hated Julia Creek for about three years. And then it grew on me and I wouldn't live anywhere else now. It's home, that's why I'm still here.

That first trip to Julia Creek was just to come up and meet John's family. He was working in Roma; I was working in Dalby. John was driving a truck and he'd come down from Julia Creek with a couple of mates following work. We met, and then he used to come from Roma on the back of a motorbike to see me on his days off – such dedication. He must have thought I was a bit of all right.

He was going back to Julia Creek and he asked me to come with him to meet the family. We weren't engaged, but we were serious. So I gave up my job and went with him to spend three weeks with his Mum and Dad. We came in his truck up through the inland. A torturous trip... a *torturous* trip. Summer 1952, January. It was hot! And the big coalstage was one of the first things we could see as we drove from Kynuna. Out of all the flat rose the coalstage. It was hot, it was the middle of the afternoon, and – y'know how you get that shimmer? – all of a sudden you could start to see this shape growing out of the downs, floating and shimmering. Yeah. It's stayed with me, that. Just piping along – nothing nothing nothing – and then you could see the coalstage start to form out of the heat haze.

I also have vivid memories of goats. If you went to have a sleep in the afternoon and didn't shut your house they'd come inside, forage around, pinch the potatoes.

And I swear to this day,
when it's wet...

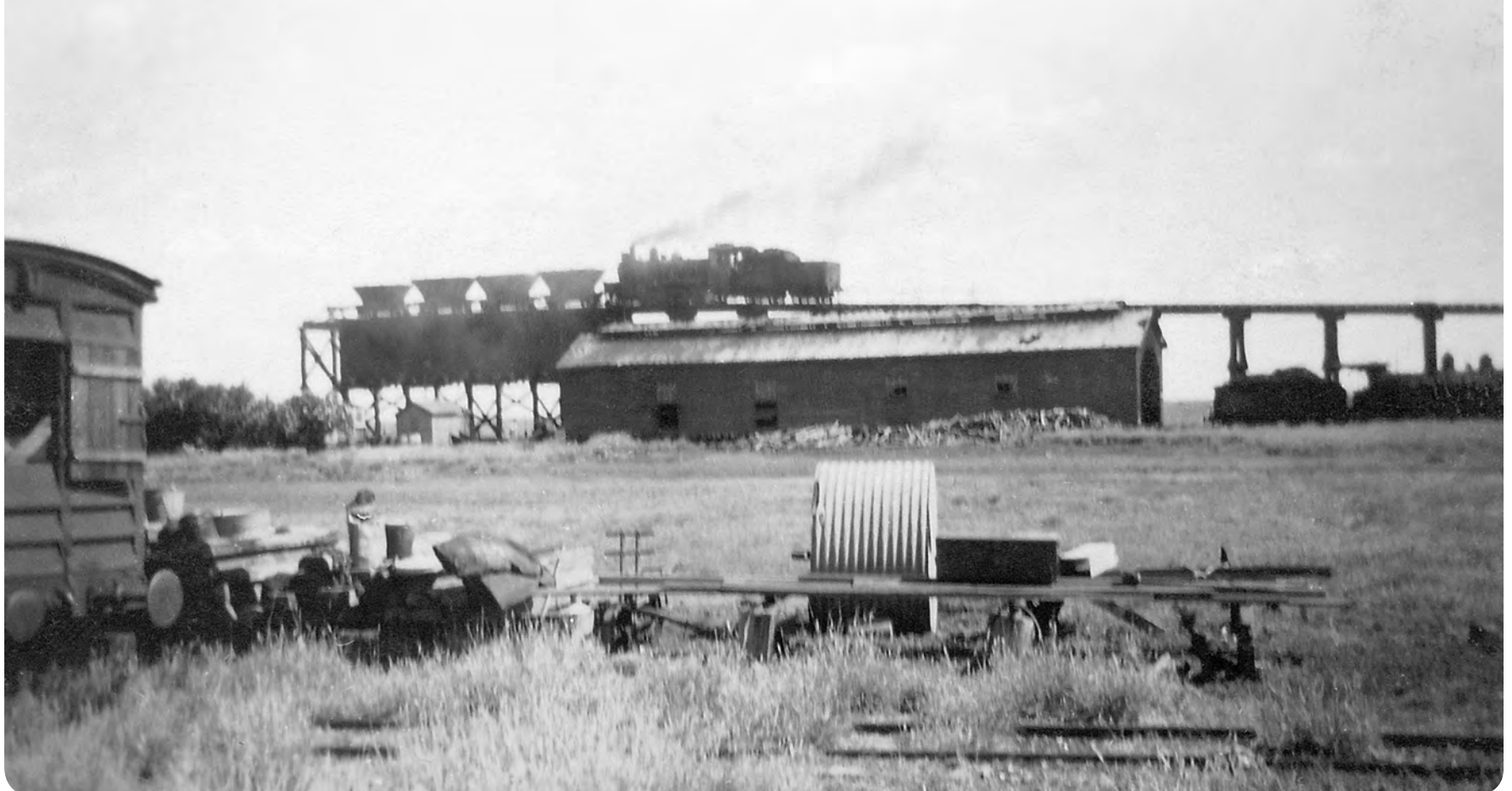
Y'know, up the end of this street,
that big shed where AJ Smith's was,
it was all dirt underneath
and that's where they camped at night time,
just a great mob of them.

And I swear you can still smell goat.
There's goat in the dirt.

I WAS BORN 5TH OF SEPTEMBER 1933 in Cunnamulla, but my parents lived in Wyandra, which is a little town between Charleville and Cunnamulla. My father was a painter and decorator and my mother stayed home and looked after... there were seven of us.

I went to school in Redcliffe, at Humpybong State School. We moved there during the war. Pretty well finished my schooling there. I think I went to about grade 7. Didn't have a lot of schooling those days unless you were rich – and we weren't. We lived about four streets back from the Redcliffe pier.

My father was a very itchy-foot sort of a man, y'know, and after the war, with the work he did, being a painter, he and the family went where the work was. We went out to Roma first, and then to Dalby where I met



John. I was cleaning in a hospital, which is basically what I've done for the whole of my working life except for a little bit of nursing.

When we drove up from Dalby we arrived right here. This house. This is where John's father and mother lived then, Bill Blanch and Bella. They had left the dairy and were living here in town. Their children had grown up and gone.

John parked the truck outside and we went inside and collapsed. I was inspected. Oh yes. Oh yes! I don't know if approval came straight away, but I think I grew on them. My mother-in-law was one of the old school: Irish descent, Catholic, boss of the... she was the boss. She grew to be a great friend. She really did.

It was supposed to be a visit, but I just stayed. I stayed here, in this house. It was open verandah then, with louvres across it, wooden louvres. I have lived other places in Julia Creek: next door when the house was there (Norm Downey's mother lived in that house at one stage); and across the road – that housing commission house – I lived there. Then when Bella died in the 70s we came back here. We inherited this house.

John and I got married in St Abigail's, the Catholic Church that's since been taken over to McKinlay. John drove the truck that took it over. We were married by Father Devereux, 1952 – 29th July.

Was it a shotgun wedding? Well... I could lie and blush and say that in those days we never did that sort of thing; but yes, it was. The children started coming along very soon after. We were getting married anyway, but it was moved up. And then my daughter had the hide to be premature, to make it worse.

There was a lady in town, Mrs H— (she's dead now), who would mark her calendar with wedding dates and birth dates. Honest

to God she did. The whole town knew because she was too silly to shut up and not say anything. She told people. Imagine the glee amongst the rest of us (who'd had to put up with the gossip) when it happened to one of *her* daughters.

All my kids were born in Julia Creek. I had four girls and then I had four boys. The first four came along in four years and three months – until I realised the cause. Then there was nearly three years between last girl and first boy.

I started work at the hospital about 1970. I was there for 23 years and I've been retired for 11. I'm enjoying my retirement. I know everybody in town, or just about everybody. We look after each other, the older people. If you don't see so-n-so for a few days you ring up. And the town is good to us, I'll have to say that. Council is very good to us. We get a big reduction on rates and we have HACC (Home And Community Care). I broke my leg a few years ago, and when I got home from hospital somebody came in and did my housework, a HACC person. The lady lives next door to me actually. If we need to go to the doctor or the hospital, we have a bus and the HACC lady will take us.

John died in 1989; cancer of the pancreas. He's buried out at the cemetery. John was always a truck driver or a grader driver. In his latter years he was overseer on the council. He was working for himself in the beginning and then he was working for – you might have heard of Borresens? – he was working for Keith Borresen driving stock trucks, carting stock all around the North West.

I'LL TELL YOU who you should talk to if you want to know about Julia Creek – Nora Fayers, my best mate. We worked together at the hospital and we've been mates ever since. You should speak to Nora.



Opposite: "And the big coalstage was one of the first things we could see as we drove from Kynuna."

Julia Creek coalstage, taken from the railway line looking south.

[Erol Davis, DE13, ca 1951]

"The coalstage was used to fill the tender of the steam locomotives – the little waggon behind the engine – with coal. That photo shows four coal waggons, what they called VJMs, being pushed to the top of the coalstage. They'd have to have a decent run up to get on top because it was pretty high. Coal came out of the bottom of the VJMs and filled a bin. When they wanted to coal an engine, they'd run it beside the coalstage and pull out a chute from the bin. They'd release a door on the bin and the coal slid down the chute into the tender of the engine." (Gordon Lavarack)

Right: John and Thelma Blanch.
[Thelma Blanch, BT07, 29/7/ 1952]



St. Abigail's Church was the scene of a very pretty wedding when Thelma Mary, daughter of Mrs. Barry, Brisbane and the late Mr. Barry, was united to John Blanch, son of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Blanch. Reverend Father Devereux officiated.

The bride entered the church on the arm of her father-in-law to the strains of the *Wedding March* played by Mrs. Les Adam. She looked charming in a jacket of velvet, showing long sleeves pointed over the hand and a high neck revealing a Peter Pan collar. The jacket was buttoned to the waist and fell into a pleated peplum. The skirt of silk net over taffeta made the finishing touches to a very pretty bride. Her tulle veil was of elbow length. The bride was attended by the groom's sister, Mrs. Norm Downey, and duties of the groomsman were carried out by Mr. Norm Downey. A sumptuous supper was prepared at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Downey. The thing that took the eye most was a beautiful three-tiered wedding cake which was decorated by Mrs. George Peut.

Visitors to town for the wedding were Mr. and Mrs. Eric Blanch, Mrs. Lorna Halloran, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Magoffin and Mr. and Mrs. Vince Ahern.

Early on Sunday morning a fire
troved



Above: Arthur Fayers.
[Nora Fayers, FN08, ca 1935]

The Everywhere Man

Arthur Cairo Fayers, the Galloping Ghan,
charms Nora, the Plate Thrower

Nora Fayers & Family

ARTHUR FAYERS was just an outrageous character. He did all sorts of work, whether it was fencing or post cutting or shearing. He never made much money because he was such a kind-hearted bloke.

It was some time in the mid 1950s I first met Arthur. I think it was at Nelia Ponds. Every year he'd be there doing the shearing for Evie Douglas. I called in one time looking for agistment country, and that's when I first had a chat to him. He spun that corny yarn about the cane – how he'd been working in the canefields around Ingham and someone told him that in the Bible it says that Cain killed Abel. And Arthur reckoned that's why he left: he was leaving the cane while he was still able. That's the

basis for one of my recent verses, *Cane and Abel*. A tourist was looking through the index of the book:

You've got a spelling mistake here.

What's that?

It should be C-A-I-N.

No, not that one. It's C-A-N-E. Read the verse.

Even though he was nearly 30 years older than me, I played football with Arthur. He played football to a good age. I was the lock and he was the second-row forward – with no boots. He was a tough bugger.

I think it was his daughter, Elaine, who phoned me in Charters Towers and asked if I'd speak at

her father's funeral. I'd written a few poems about Arthur, y'see. Quite a few people rang to prod me to get out there.

I began my oration by criticizing the organisers – namely the shire council and his own family. Now, that's an unusual way to start, but Arthur was an unusual person. I said: "Today it is most appropriate that Arthur should be lying underneath a railway tarpaulin. However, this one does not do him justice. It has two big holes in it and a lot of dirty smudges. Our friend, Arthur Fayers here, always insisted on pinching *new* railway tarpaulins". That's how I started. Arthur would have expected it.

RICHARD MAGOFFIN

Elaine: My first memory would have to be Dad dancing with me in the kitchen. He always used to waltz with me in the kitchen.

Joe: Mine would be going downtown, with me sitting on his shoulders, my hands on his head.

Elaine: I could probably only pick four vivid memories I've got of Dad. It's really hard; he was always away from us shearing somewhere, or fencing. He'd be away weeks at a time. I remember going to Belgravia with him, lying in the big wool bin and jumping on the wool bales. He must have been packing wool – y'know, pressing wool. We'd live on damper and meat while we were away. Plain food; stews that used to bubble by themselves.

Nora: Stop it! [laughing]

Elaine: No, that's true Mum. He used to have stews in the pot and there wouldn't be any fire going and they'd still be bubbling. But we survived.

Sharon: I remember Dad taking me out to the sheds for a weekend whenever he could. We'd camp out. I went along with him for years thinking he really liked me going. I used to go with him to Saxby, but I sort of wised up – I was the gate opener. There used to be, like, a hundred gates and I was his little gate opener. I worked it out in the end.

Elaine: There was the time he went to the doctor. He got staked in the leg with a piece of wood and he got this medicine in a blue bottle. It said 5 mls in water, twice a day. He'd drink it, see, after he had a

feed, and he got really sick. He'd say to Mum: "I feel so squarmish after I take that stuff". So he went back to the doctor:

Don't give me anymore of that blue stuff. Jeez it makes me sick.

What are you doing with it?

Well, I'm drinkin' it.

Christ Arthur! There's enough antiseptic in that to kill a brumby.

Nora: He was supposed to use it to bath his leg, but he was *drinking* it. The doctor told that yarn. Dr Flanagan his name was.

Elaine: One time he came home and I was sleeping with Mum. He stood at the doorway with a big overcoat on, and inside the pocket was a finger. He'd been out fencing and chopped off part of his finger; the top joint, wasn't it?

Nora: Yeah, the joint.

Elaine: All my young life I thought it was a false one. But Mum told me later, no, it was the real finger in his pocket.

Nora: He didn't want to part with it, I think he said.

Elaine: He left it in the pocket and when Mum did the washing...

Nora: He didn't mean to leave it.

Joe: Reckoned he wore it out drawing mudmaps, didn't he?

Nora: That's what he said. When he didn't have the top joint, people would ask what happened to it. He'd tell them he wore it out drawing maps in the dirt for greenhorns who wanted directions to go somewhere. He was one that always told so many stories...

Two wild sheep **Frank Fayers**

WHEN ME OLD MAN, ARTHUR CAIRO FAYERS, was asked how he got stuck with the name “The Ghan”, he would tell the yarn about this dark-skinned wog who was shearing for him and who asked him to be best man at his wedding:

Yeah, righto mate, I’ll be your best man.

Thanks Cairo. I knew you would, cos blood’s thicker than water.

Whaddaya mean?

Well, don’t tell any bastard, but I’m an Afghan too.

See, Cairo ➡ desert ➡ camels ➡ Afghans. And Dad reckoned that’s where he got the name Galloping Ghan from.

He was born in Sydney, lived in Sydney. He had big cauliflower ears and everyone used to think he was a pug, a good boxer, but he always said to them: “Mate, that’s from rattlin’ me head round in rubbish bins tryin’ to get a feed during the Depression in Sydney”. But the old fella, he never told the truth in his life I don’t think. It wasn’t that he was known to lie a lot, more his ability to kick the guts out of the truth until it was no longer recognizable.

I WAS BORN IN BOULIA in 1942. Dad was shearing and fencing mainly, all around that area, and then we shifted to Julia Creek. I was born in Boulia though. I’ve got my birth certificate there to prove it.

When I look back I think the first thing I remember is a telephone... on a wall. I can see the wall and I can see all the ducks flying away, y’know, up on the wall. And the phone. I used to climb on the sofa – “nnnnrrrwww” – and spin the old magneto. Yeah, I think that’s one of my earliest memories of Julia Creek.

My first memory of the old man was the day he pulled up in the yard with two young wethers in the back of the ute with their throats slit. As I watched him hang them in the shed, then skin and dress the carcasses, I asked him why he killed them. A few days later when I gave a presentation to my class mates, the teacher seemed quite enthralled as I retold Dad’s story about how two wild sheep had attacked him while he was opening a gate, and how he was forced to kill them in self defence. Whether the teacher and my classmates believed me I don’t know, but I was at the age when I accepted everything the old man told me.

Mum did a runner on Dad around 1950. I remember we were still in Julia Creek in ’49 because Valma, my sister, was in hospital out there, so the split must have been soon after. I don’t know why they busted up – and I don’t want to know. There’s so many yarns you don’t know who to believe and you just end up accepting it. I loved them both too much to believe that either one was at fault. I reckon they just came to a point where the glow from the old fire, which was dimming, finally went out. I was about 7 or 8 at the time and going to school at Julia Creek, but so that I could be between the two of them (Dad stayed in Julia Creek, Mum went to Townsville) they imprisoned me at All Souls College in Charters Towers. I’d spend one set of holidays with Dad and the other with Mum.

Mum eventually she got herself another man, remarried, and bore four daughters. The old fella remarried too. Married a girl MacDonald, Nora MacDonald from Charters Towers, and she became the mother of two of my eight sisters and one of my two brothers. And y’know, something about that has always puzzled me: how come my sisters have got three brothers and I’ve only got two?

Those eight sisters and two brothers may not be the only siblings I have. Dad once said to me: “If ever someone comes up to you and says: ‘Hey brudda, can you give us a smoke?’ give him one because he just might be related. You gotta understand,” Dad says to me, “necessity might be the mother of invention, but out in this country it’s also the father of an awful lot of half breeds”.

Fayers Family

ARTHUR ♥ 1940 BIDDY GODIER

↪ Valma

↪ Frank (1942)

↪ Lynette

↪ Danny

ARTHUR ♥ 1952 NORA MACDONALD

↪ Elaine

↪ Joe

↪ Sharon

now take up residence in Julia Creek.

The local entertainment committee produced a great Christmas tree heavily laden with gifts on Friday night at Peut’s Hall, to which the children came from miles around. The toys on the tree were by no means paltry ones, and Santa (our one and only “Chips”) with the very excellent help of his offsider (“Nugget”) did a great job in distributing them to the kiddies. The older children – from 10 to 14 years – were given lovely books with which they were well pleased. The tree, beautifully decorated with balloons, tinselling, and the colours of the many toys, was really a credit to the people responsible and the kiddies thought it wonderful.

After the presentations were over Santa wended his way to the hospital to see little Valma Fayers who is at present an inmate. Mossie McDonald then struck a chord and the dancing commenced with a spot-waltz for the kiddies. A very small couple, Master Billy Hodgetts and his charming partner Miss Sharyn Henry, were the lucky winners and received a box of jigsaw puzzles and a dolly’s set.

Mr. John Elliott had his first trip on

NQR: 17 Dec 1949

I wish the hell he hadn't told me that. My best mate in those days was a kid by the name Galah Fortune¹; him as black as a steam-train tender and me as white as the inside of a flour bag. We were known as the terrible twins, always in some sort of strife. Now that I look back and remember how close we were in nature and character, the black and white seem to merge into a grey area of doubt.

Talking about flour bags, I was in the baker shop one day and Bally Kaeser, the baker, caught me pinching a mickie roll. Bally made what we called mickie rolls and put them on the counter for the kids. We'd call them bread rolls today. When we came in for bread, to stop us from picking the guts out of the bread on the way home he'd give us a mickie roll – *always* give you a mickie roll – but this day I just took me mickie roll. Bally came out: "I saw you pinch that you little buggar!" and he picked me up and locked me in the room out the back where he kept the bags of flour. I didn't know too many swear words, but I knew "bloody" "damn" and "bastard" and I must have said them in every possible combination. And then the door opens and the old man is standing there. I died. He was out the back having a beer with them. And I think he was proud of me. Rather than whimpering like a puppy in the dark, I was giving Bally a verbal lashing worthy of any adult.

Dad was driving me out to a shed once and the truck broke down. We had to walk. It was something like 13 miles and I got there dying of thirst. I just wanted a drink from the waterbag, but Dad wouldn't let me. He gave me a little cup. He knew it'd make me crook if I went straight to the waterbag and gulped. But as soon as we got back to town he wrote a letter to the school about me being so brave, a little hero walking 13 miles.

Yeah, I just loved him because he always... he took me out shearing a lot. I did a bit of crutching n'that when he'd go out crutching. I used to go with him and rouseabout for him in the sheds: do the kill for the shearers, chop the wood for the cook, yard the sheep in pens, pick up the wool, help them stencil wool bales, run around the boards with the tar – anything.

For years he used to go up north, shearing around Karumba. He had a stand of 10 or 15 shearers, mostly Julia Creek blokes. As a matter of fact, Jack Godier and the old fella worked together for a while. Jack was running a team for Dad. Then they split up and Jack had his own team.

Dad was a tough bloke;
a barrel-chested shearer,
a fencer built like an iron bark stump;
a grid maker, bore-drain delver and bush engineer.
The old man worked at anything.

The income tax grabbed him at one stage of the game and took everything – what they could find. He went back to grid making, cutting telephone poles, crutching; anything he could pick up. Dad worked right up until he couldn't work any more.

Right: Vi Norton holding Ann Norton, winner of the first Julia Creek baby show. Frank won the "6 months and under 12 months" section. [Ann Norton, NoA01, 1943]



ANN NORTON CHAMPION BABY OF SHOW

The first baby show to be held at Julia Creek was conducted under the auspices of the Presbyterian Women's Guild, with Mrs. E. Dhu as promoter, and took place in Mathews' Hall on Saturday afternoon last.

Mr. E. H. Doubleday (Deputy Chairman, McKinlay Shire Council) officially opened the function and struck a note of humour when he stated it did appear to him as ludicrous to think that he, a bachelor, should be called upon to open a baby show.

The photographic section of 32 entries was suitably arranged on a table in the hall and caused much interest. These photos, which were classed in two sections, (a) tinted photos (b) untinted photos, were judged by Dr. Carter (Medical Officer), who stated his task was not made easy with the fine exhibits offering. His decision was as follows: Tinted Section, Baby Ken Ahern, 10 months; Untinted Section Miss June Fidler, two years.

The judges for the baby show were Matron Tuppy Blanch and Sister Hough and both stated their task had been most difficult and they found it hard to differentiate lovely specimens of childhood. The judges were presented with a beautiful bouquet each by Misses Mairi Dhu and Edith Mann. The prizes were awarded as follows:

Class A, three entries, six months and under: Ann Norton, five months, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Norton.

Class B, four entries, 6 months and under 12 months, Francis Fayers, Quarrell Street.

Class C, seven entries, 12 months and under 18 months: Joy Peters, 16 months, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. Peters, Quarrell St.

Class D, two entries, 18 months and under two years: Jill Jensen, 20 months, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. Jensen.

Class E, nine entries, 2 to 4 years, Gail Stanley, 3 years 3 months, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Stanley, Coyne St.

Champion Baby of the Show – Ann Norton.

The winners were presented with their prizes by Mrs. Dhu and the applause which met each award was evidence that the judges selection had met with the approval of all present. The prizes consisted of War Savings Certificates which had been generously donated.

The Stalls – cakes, sweets, jams, ice cream, soft drinks, artificial flowers – all under the supervision of Mrs. Mann speedily sold out.

Mr. Mann guessed the correct weight of the fruit cake and little Martin Lowman held the winning number in the basket of sweets.

Afternoon tea was served by the Presbyterian Women's Guild which body takes this opportunity to thank Mesdames Blanch and Hough and Messrs Doubleday, Parsons and Dr. Carter and others too numerous to enumerate here, who helped to make this function the grand social success all present agreed it was.

1. Galah's story is on page 640.

Towards the end he was with the council, driving the water truck around, watering all the roads, keeping down the dust. He was groundsman at the school. And he was managing the caravan park until they said: "Hey, you told us you were only 63 and you're 70-something. Ya gotta go". Because at 65 you had to retire and he kept putting his age down.

RICHARD MAGOFFIN WROTE A BOOK, *We Bushies*, and there's a poem, *Dunbydoo Dogger*: "Arthur Fayers is one of the stayers, he'll work from dawn till dark". And that one's based on a true story... well, as true as Dad's stories get. Clemmie Foster's wife had something to say to Dad and he gave her a bit of a mouthful. So Clem come around next morning wanting to have it out. The old fella filled up a waterbag and hung it on the fence:

Where's *your* bag?

Whaddaya mean?

Mate, this fight don't finish till it finishes and
you ain't gettin' any of *my* water.

The old fella told me that before the poem came out. Then Magoffin wrote the *Dunbydoo Dogger*. In the poem, Arthur hijacked the dogger and when they got to camp the dogger didn't want to stay. The waterbags came out and they parried and punched and fought till the sun went down. The

dogger ended up throwing the towel in: "I've had your dash hooking, I'll do your damn cooking".

The old fella was a bugger for shanghaiing people, that's fair dinkum. Some of the drunks and some of the coloured fellas, he had a habit of keeping them in debt. Get them drunk on a Friday night on their own money, then the next day: "I paid you last night in grog". They'd have to keep working for him because they had no money. But he'd do the right thing and feed the family. Take tucker out to the family.

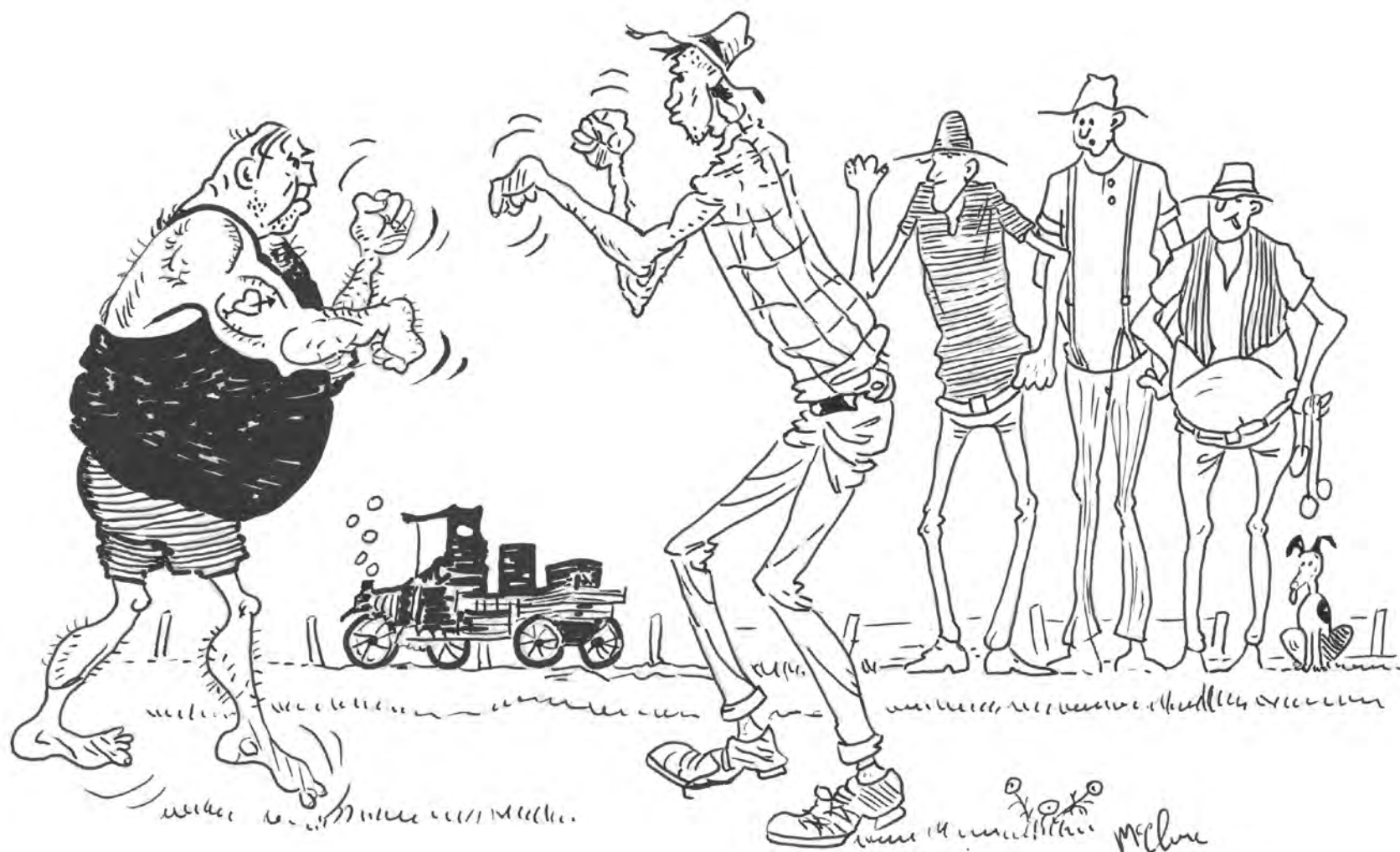
Richard Magoffin wasn't the only person to yarn about The Ghan. You hear the same stories from different people. Like this one:

A bloke is on the way into Julia Creek and passes a truck on the side of the road with its bonnet up. He gets along a bit further and here's Arthur running along, battery on his shoulder. He pulls up:

Ya wanna lift, Arthur?

No thanks mate, I'm in a hurry.

I've often heard that yarn. Now I'm not sure how many times the old fella got caught with a flat battery and had to run with it on his shoulder, but it must have happened more than a few times because I've met half a dozen chaps who reckon they were the one who offered the battery-carrying Ghan a lift. Or it could be that there's a mob of blokes out there who just want to jump on the Ghan's bandwagon. They all seem to want to get in on it.



Richard Magoffin When the Cook was the Dunbydoo Dogger¹

Now Arthur the Fayers
is one of those stayers
who'll work from the dawn to the dark;
He's a business-like man
is this Galloping Ghan
yet he's one who is fond of a lark.

Be it shearing, or clearing,
or bush engineering,
or fencing by day or by mile;
Any job he will take
if it pays a good stake,
this Arthur is quite versatile.

He will fill every pen
with reliable men
when bossing a general shearing;
But, if one or two short
he will quickly resort
to open and blatant cashiering.

For there's many a man
who has worked for The Ghan,
who has woken up out in the scrub;
After going to sleep
in an unsober heap
at the rear of a small outback pub.

I recall one occasion
on Dongadee Station
the Ghan made his only mistake;
When he got up and shook
and awakened the cook
he discovered the man was a fake.

For the cook shook his head
and he hiccupped and said,
"By crikey I'm wounded and sorry;
Now what pub is this?
there is something amiss,
how the heck am I here on this lorry?"

Said the Ghan, "It's no pub,
and we're hungry for grub,
so get out your recipe book;
Your brain's missed a cog,
but it's just from the grog,
and I'll now have you know you're the cook."

"I'm not your dashed cook
you cashiering crook,
I'm not yours to put on a hanger;
I don't get the joke,
you've got the wrong bloke:
Y'see, I'm the Gilliat Ganger!"

As the ganger, of course,
is the boss of the force
which attends to the permanent way;
The Ghan with a whine
took him back to the line
while we loafed for the rest of the day.

But early next morning
'fore piccani' dawning
bold Arthur was back with a cook;
When this man out-of-luck
rose and fell from the truck
all the team gathered in for a look.

"Can you cook?" asked a bloke
as he gave him a poke,
"Can you bash up an edible feed?"
"Course I can" said the man
as he sized up the Ghan,
"I can take on whatever I need."

"I've been a horse-breaker
and bush undertaker,
I've wandered from Croydon to Wagga;
But the job that I've got,
is the best of the lot:
I'm the Dunbydoo Syndicate Dogger."

"By the scent of your stink
you are honest I think,
but a dogger no longer you be;
It's time we were dining,
so you are resigning,
you're staying and cooking for me!"

"By hook or by crook,
I'll not be your cook,
I've gotta get back to me traps;
I'll flatten you first,
then slaken my thirst
and lay out the rest of you chaps."

He was quite a fair slogger,
this Dunbydoo dogger,
but the Ghan is a durable cove;
So we sat in the sun
enjoying the fun
while they punched and they parried and wove.

The fighting was keen,
though it wasn't too clean:
piledrivers and uppercuts foul;
They battled all day
till The Ghan had his way
and the Wagga man threw in his towel.

At setting of sun
the dogger was done
and he gasped as they staggered apart;
"I've had your dashed hooking,
I'll do your damn cooking
what time do you want me to start?"

And there's no need to say
how we all had to pay
for the meals *a la* Croydon *et* Wagga;
For there's few lived to tell
what misfortunes befell
when the cook was the Dunbydoo Dogger!

ARTHUR HAD BEEN all over the place. He was an everywhere man, and a "done everything" man, too. I knew him right through, at Boulia and at Julia Creek.

Going to a ball in Boulia, he was with his first wife, Biddy Godier, and he was all dressed up. He went into the hall and somebody said:

*Arthur, where's your boots?
Ah, Christ, I forgot to put 'em on. I don't
generally wear 'em.*

And there he was in a suit with no boots, his bare toes sticking out.

One part of it there, he had a couple of teams going. He lived in Julia Creek but he'd go down as far as Boulia with his shearing.

Arthur was always owing people things and borrowing things and not returning them. He'd take his shirt off his back to give it to you, but he'd pinch a shirt off someone else to make good.

ALEX GRIMSHAW



1. Poem and illustrations from the book *We Bushies* by Richard Magoffin.

WELL, BURNSY'S ONLY GIVEN ME a page or two to reminisce about the old man, and although I could go on repeating his yarns, I suppose it has to come to an end somewhere; and what better place to end than the last few days I spent with him before he entered into his final rest, his reward for a life lived well and full – and exposed. The Ghan never covered himself with whitewash. What you saw was what you got.

Dad was 82 when he died and that was in... Oh God, I can't remember the year he died, and I don't know when he was born, either, to be quite truthful. I can tell you all about his death though. My sister Elaine (Dad's eldest, to his second wife, Nora) rang me when the time was right, and me and the wife and the kids went out to Julia Creek to be with him in his final hours. And those hours went on and on... If he was going down he wasn't going down easy.

He spread the bulldust around almost till the last. A nun from the Catholic Convent walked in and asked:

How are you feeling, Arthur?

How would I be feeling? Here I am on me deathbed, never been to Church in me life, and yet God sees fit to send me a beautiful angel. How do you think I'd be feeling?

Then he really started to lay it on. Don't let anyone tell you that nuns don't blush. She didn't walk out of the room – she floated, believing she *was* an angel sent by God.

I was out there for two weeks when Dad was dying. They had him on blood thinning agents; his legs were just full of blood clots. I'd been talking to the doctor and he was stopping the blood thinning agents because you can only take them for so long. He said the next couple of days would be pretty rough. I asked him about Dad:

What's his chances?

None anymore.

So I said to the old fella: "I might stay for another couple of days; the doctor said it'll be a bit rough on ya". He pointed up: "That bastard up there has never given me an easy day in me life. Why should the next couple of days be any different? You go off home and come back and bury me. Plant me in the football field if you can, where I used to play the game. Don't want a priest and I don't want no church funeral. Anyone who wants to say goodbye to me can come to the football field".

And that's the way we did it, except we had to bury him in the cemetery. He wouldn't get in that bloody undertaker's car though. He didn't like the man: "I don't like him *now*; I'm not going to let him cart me around when I'm gone". We put him in his ute, eh.

Elaine and her husband organised the funeral. I knew Elaine could sing, but when she was in the middle of the football oval singing – all the people were sitting in the stands – there was something about her voice that day that brought tears to the eyes of nearly everyone there.

Best funeral I've ever been to.

It was Richard Magoffin who came along to do the eulogy and he said to us: "Where's the railway

tarp? You can't have a funeral for Arthur unless he's under a railway tarp". We went and found one and put it over the top of him because he was renowned for pinching railway tarps.

The coffin was open and people were dropping things in. One bloke came in with a big pair of fencing pliers. "I borrowed this off ya a couple o'years ago, Arthur, but you're gonna need them more than me because Peter's not going to let you through that gate. You're gonna have to get in through the fence somewhere."

When we finished at the football oval, and after everything that was needed to be said was said, we threw his coffin on the back of his old Datsun ute with the pall bearers sitting on top, and we drove him out to the cemetery and buried him.

When he got up to the Pearly Gates, the Ghan was banging, trying to get in. Peter came out and shooed him off. God had been watching all this, a bit puzzled:

What was that all about?

Bloody Arthur Fayers trying to get in. Thieving mongrel he is. C'mon Peter. You've gotta give him a fair chance.

So Peter went down to the gates and straight away turned around:

Gone! I knew it. Gone.

What: Arthur's gone?

No – the gates!

That was originally about wharfies, but I thought it'd do for Arthur.

SORRY, DAD, OLD MATE. I know you said you didn't want no priest speaking no words over you, but you never said nothing about your son quoting the Bible (Isaiah 57:1)...

Good people die and no one understands or even cares.
But when they die no calamity can hurt them.
Those who lead good lives find peace and rest in death.



MacDonald Family

- ↪ NORA ♥ 1952 ARTHUR FAYERS
 - ↪ Elaine
 - ↪ Joe
 - ↪ Sharon
- ↪ RUTH ♥ BILL RYDER
 - ↪ Ray
 - ↪ Loretta
- ↪ ESME ♥ 1. MR STOKES (2. Bill Ah Sam)
 - ↪ Mark
 - ↪ ...

Opposite: Frank Fayers and family at the Arthur Fayers Arena, Julia Creek. Arthur was instrumental in constructing the arena. From left: Stan (son), Frank, Melanie (daughter), Robert (Melanie's son), Richard (Melanie's husband) [Frank Fayers, FF01, 1986]

Below: Nora and Arthur on their wedding day. [Nora Fayers, FN09, 1952]



I threw a punch **Nora Fayers**

OH DEAR! HOW DID I MEET ARTHUR? Now, wait a minute... It was in Julia Creek. Well, see, Arthur was married before, and his wife left him. He had rented his house to my sister, Ruth, and he stayed there on weekends. I was working at the hospital and when I'd go to see Ruth I'd see Arthur there. That's where I met him. I thought he was very charming. He charmed me – yes he did. He'd walk me home to the hospital and he was very – how would you say it – flirtatious; he'd say charming things. Whether he meant it or not I don't know. He was always charming and that's how he won me.

But after we were married... ah, we used to have a lot of fights and they weren't so charming. Once I even broke my hand. He was coming in the back door and I was wild with him and I said: "Now I've got you". I hauled off at him but I got the door jamb instead, the wood, cos he bent down quickly. I had to go to the doctor:

Come in. What's happened Mrs Fayers?
I broke my hand.
How did you do that?
I threw a punch.
We had a fellow in here last week did the same thing.
Only men and boys throw punches, Mrs Fayers.

It swelled right up and Arthur wasn't even sorry for me. That was in the beginning of our marriage. I was a bit jealous.

ONE SIDE OF THE HOUSE, the end wall of the house, was covered with gauze and wooden louvres, and when Mum and Dad had a fight, well, my two cousins that lived with us, Ray and Lette, we'd vacate and go outside. The three of us'd line up right at the bottom of the gauze and watch. Mum'd stand at one end of the kitchen where the china cupboard was, and pull plates out. Dad'd stand at the other end. Plates would fly the whole length of the room, hit the wall where we were, and smash on the floor. So Dad reckoned: "Right!" He went up to Peter Dawes and bought Mum a new unbreakable dinner set. He got sick of buying new dinner sets because she'd just throw them around.

ELAINE FAYERS

I forgot about the plate throwing till Elaine reminded me just now. But it's true – he could make me wild. And it's also true that he was sentimental. We'd go to the pictures twice a week, Saturday and Sunday, and hold hands. It was very romantic. Sometimes we'd go during the week, but not often because the kids had to go to school. As they got older, and if it was a sad movie, he'd cry on one side, Elaine'd cry on the other, and I'd be in the middle.

I LIVED IN CHARTERS TOWERS, I went to school in Charters Towers, I was born in Charters Towers. It was 1928 and Dad was a cane cutter. He'd go away six months of the year up to Tully and all those places.

After I left school I worked at the Charters Towers Hospital as a domestic. Then I decided to go south with a girlfriend. We were both good mates and there wasn't much work around the Towers so we went down to Parramatta. We always worked at hospitals; that's how we got a live-in place.

I had a twin sister, Ruth, and she went out to Julia Creek and married Bill Ryder, young Bill Ryder's uncle. Before her first child was born she asked would I come out. I was 20 when I came here. I'm 75 now.

So I came to Julia Creek and got a job as a domestic at the hospital delivering meals for patients. I wasn't anything marvellous like a nurse, but I liked it. I always loved the hospital. Those years we were allowed to live-in.

I worked with three new Australians¹. They were on the domestic staff with us. They helped the nurses as well; they'd take any job. First when they came here they couldn't talk our English at all, but we gradually got used to each other. Sitting together at the table having our meals we'd get to know what they were talking about. "White Russians" we called them. They used to tell us there was a White Russia and a Red Russia. They didn't mean coloured – they meant Czarist and Communist.

One of those girls got a twisted bowel – Mary. They flew her away to Richmond and she died and is buried down there. The other two girls eventually left, but they were here for a while.

Matron Blanch, I think she was the one in charge then, she was a terrific Matron. We used to call her "Tuppy". Her brother lives here, Eric, and her sister-in-law, Thelma Blanch. We're pretty good friends, Thelma and I. She married Matron's brother, Johnny Blanch.

I was at the hospital for about three years from 1948-51 then I married Arthur and had three kids: Elaine, Joe and Sharon. When Elaine was about 5 I started work at the school as a cleaner, and later I went back to the hospital. They came and asked me would I like to have the job. I worked there right up till I retired.

ARTHUR'S FIRST WIFE, Biddy, she lived in Julia Creek. She was a Godier – Ray Godier's auntie. I had nothing to do with him then. Y'know how you see people and you just don't take no notice? They had four children: two girls and two boys, Frank and Danny.

Arthur and Biddy weren't happy, but he did think a lot of her. She might have been a bit like me. Sometimes he could make you wild. He could, y'know. But then she up and left. He was broken hearted about

it. I don't want to condemn her – they might not have got on. I suppose they didn't agree. He just – I don't know – must have got on her nerves. Some wives won't put up with it. He went away a lot, sometimes for two or three weeks at a time. I used to think: *Well, he's gone to work; this is what you've got; this is your life and you can't do anything about it.* But some wives might have got annoyed at the absence of their husband.

With four children involved, it must have been something serious for her to leave him, because in those days you stayed married for the kids, didn't you. You wouldn't leave – there'd be nobody to support you. She did find someone else and maybe that was the reason she left.

Arthur and her got divorced. They must have, cos I married him. In those days some of the churches didn't like to marry you if you were divorced. I was a Presbyterian and they just wouldn't marry us. Anyway, we got married at the Baptist Church in Charters Towers at Christmas 1952. Elaine was born in June. We went up north after the wedding, Cardwell and places, just cruising around, and we met an Italian cane farmer. Arthur had worked with Italians in the canefields when he was younger.

We came back to Charters Towers and then we had our big trip to

Boulia, which took us ages as there was no bitumen road. He'd get work over there. He shore from Julia Creek to Boulia, more or less straight away after we'd been on our honeymoon. He used to work a lot of shearing sheds and I'd camp in the quarters. Be a couple of years we were in Boulia. The eldest one, Elaine, was born in Boulia, but we'd often come back to Julia Creek cos my twin sister Ruth was here.

When Elaine got to about 3 or 4 the shearers strike was on. Work was difficult to find and that's why we went out to Ard Cooney on Auckland Downs. Arthur had known Ard a fair while and Ard said there was a job on the property if we wanted it. I did the cooking and Arthur did bore drains and shearing, that sort of work. We came back to Julia Creek when Elaine turned school age.

WELL, IT WAS AROUND that time that we went bankrupt. I have a feeling it was when Elaine was about 5. I don't know why they bankrupted him; we didn't have much to lose. That's the part I couldn't understand – y'know what I mean? Unless he didn't put in his income tax. I don't know whether that's got anything to do with it. We never had a home or anything. He worked hard and we always had food. "You're only poor when you can't put food on the table". That's what he'd say. If you can do that you're okay. But we never really had money. We weren't rich, we were just battlers.

We weren't in this house. This is the first house we owned. It took eight years before we moved to this house and I've been here ever since. Sharon, the youngest one, was at kindergarten when we moved here. She's 37 now.

Quite a gloom was cast over the town at the passing of Miss Mary Alabasheva in the Richmond hospital on Monday after undergoing a successful operation. Mary was employed at the Julia Creek hospital for the past two years and during that time this dainty little girl with her charming nature won for herself a host of friends and met everyone with a smile. Deceased was 24 years of age and was born somewhere in China and came from Singapore to Julia Creek in company with two other girls, Misses Lena and Sophie Akiloff. Mary took ill in Julia Creek and was attended by Dr Simpson. The Hospital Board flew the patient to Richmond and everything possible was done for Mary. Her friend Miss Sophie Akiloff was with her at the time of her death. Deceased was very well liked by the hospital staff and she will be greatly missed. Deceased was laid to rest in Richmond. Her people are at present in Korea and she has a sister living in Sydney. To her sorrowing relatives and her many friends we extend our sincere sympathy.

CA: 23 Nov 1951

returned to duty. Pleased to report that our popular matron, Matron Tuppy Blanch, has arrived home and has taken up duty at the hospital. It looks as if the hospital will soon be opened once again. It is badly needed. A most successful and enjoyable dance was held at Eckford's Hall on Easter Monday night, proceeds go to the English Church

CA: 26 Apr 1946

1. Lena & Sophie Akiloff (see page 650), and Mary Alabasheva.

WHEN RUTH AND I were children we lived at Charters Towers and there was an old cemetery. We used to go through it – it wasn't used then, it was an old one – and we'd read the poems. She always liked one particular poem, the one that's on her grave now. We were only children, but we remembered it. Before she died (she knew she was going to die) she asked if we'd put that on her grave.

Did you see the poem on Ruth's grave?
She always believed in that;
Something about kindness:
"I'll never pass this way again".

She died in the hospital here,
kidney trouble, and liver.

Even though she was poor,
really poor,
she'd see someone, some old fella,
and he'd want a feed, so she'd go and get him a feed.

She said to me:
"If that was my father walking around
I'd like someone to feed him".

She believed in that sort of thing;
that's the way she lived.
She didn't have much,
but if she could do a fine deed she'd do it.

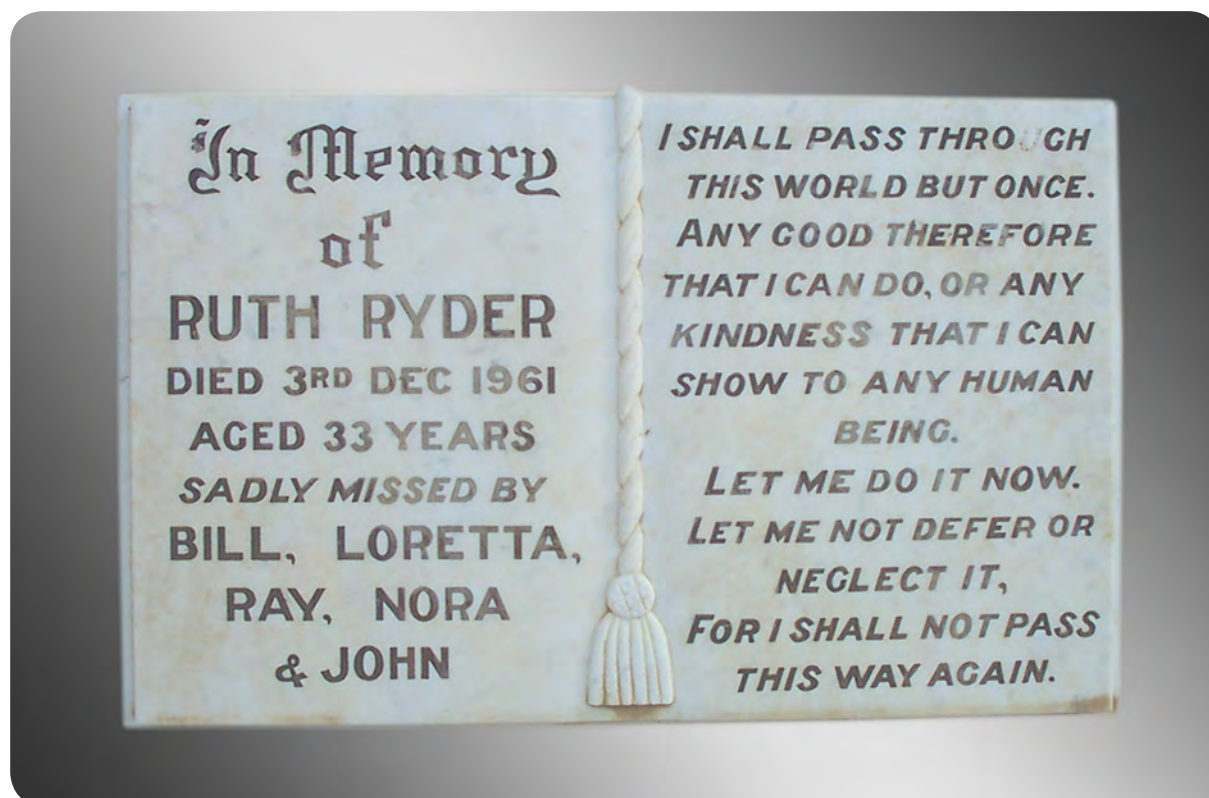
She would tell me she was going to die.
That was a terrible thing.
She had a premonition and she suffered.
It's awful to have that, eh.

She'd be sitting in the kitchen,
she never straight-out asked me to take the children,
and she'd say what she'd like them to have;
the boy and the girl.

It ended up we took 'em, y'know.
The boy followed us home from the pictures with his bike,
Ray was about twelve,
and Arthur turned around and said:

"Hey son, if you wanna come and live with us,
you just roll y'swag and come over."

And Ray didn't hesitate.
He was twelve and Loretta was ten.
They stayed with us until they got married.



ARTHUR LOVED HIS FOOTBALL. I remember him saying, looking at the photo of the 1947 team that beat Mount Isa: "Only three of us left"¹. He continued playing for a long time, well into Elaine's childhood. But when he was playing we didn't want to know him because he'd get carried away. I'd have Ray with me and he'd call out: "Go Uncle Arthur!" and I'd say to him: "Don't say Uncle Arthur; no, no, we're no relation".

One time the Julia Creek team was playing, but Arthur wasn't. He'd been sent off. He's standing on the sideline and a player from the other side makes a break with the ball and it looks like he'll score. Nothing was going to stop Arthur – he dived in and tackled him off the sideline and down this fella went. Arthur said he wasn't letting him get past. I don't remember the result, but the other side should have got a penalty try.

THE LAST JOB Arthur had was at the caravan park. He loved the people that turned up, and they all liked him. He'd get out the rubbish drum, turn it over, sit down and tell them stories in the afternoon. A lot of people used to say, once he retired: "Where did he go?" People came back and wanted to know where he was and what happened to him.

The council retired him from the park. He was older, much older than 65, because he was 60 for a long time. On his birthday the kids would ask:

How old are you Dad?
I'm 60.

And the next birthday he was still 60. His birthdate, in July 1911, was debatable. We always celebrated the 7th, but on his death certificate it says the 6th.

He was in his eighties when he died so he'd be well on 70-something when they retired him. I don't know why they did that; he was quite happy at the caravan park and he pleased the people. He didn't want to retire, he

was really... I'd say he was heartbroken actually. He'd go to the front door and keep looking at the caravan park. I'd say (I called him Dad when we were affectionate): "No Dad, don't look at it; don't worry about it".

I retired the same time, but mine was through ill health, through my heart. The doctor told me I'd be better off if I retired. It turned out okay cos we both retired together. He'd feel hurt, I think, if I went on working and he retired.

There was an age difference; not that anyone would notice it because he always carried his age well. He really did. He had good bone structure in his face. And he had a retentive memory, whereas me, I forget things. In five minutes I forget. I never found him that way.

DIFFERENT TIMES I was shearing with Arthur Fayers. He was a tough man. He'd shear with no boots on. If he cut himself while shearing he'd sit there and sew it up and put tar on it like you done a sheep.

And another thing about Arthur: when he left a place he always took a little bit extra with him. Like, if there was a new bed or a flash chair in the shearing quarters, it would be Arthur's when the shed cut out.

JIM BIRCH

Opposite: Arthur Fayers wearing the headgear he pinched from Vince Ahern. Arthur was a member of the Julia Creek team that won the Western Zone final against Mount Isa in 1947.

For full photo see page 593.
[Nora Fayers, FN03, 1947]

Below: Sign outside the Julia Creek Caravan Park that Arthur arranged to have erected while he was managing the park.
[Guy Burns, GK186, 2005]



1. The three were Arthur, Joey Mathews and Vince Ahern. See photo page 593.

HE WAS OKAY almost to the end. In the morning when he woke I'd always say to him:

Did you have a good sleep?
Not too bad.

Then we'd talk. But this morning he sat in his chair: "I'm just not well. You'd better ring the doctor". And that's how it started. He had a heart attack that morning and he just seemed to dwindle away.

The doctor was very good. He came straight out and took Arthur's blood pressure and said he'd have to go to hospital. He lasted about a fortnight. He never had any wait. It would have been terrible if he'd been crippled because he... he liked to get in a car and just go. He was one who'd never say where he was going. You'd never know; he'd just go out the door. How would you call it...? He just loved his freedom. He *lived* his freedom and he used to just go. And I didn't mind that, but I would have liked to know where. There'd be races on at Nelia and he'd be down there and I wouldn't even know.

He died in the Julia Creek hospital.

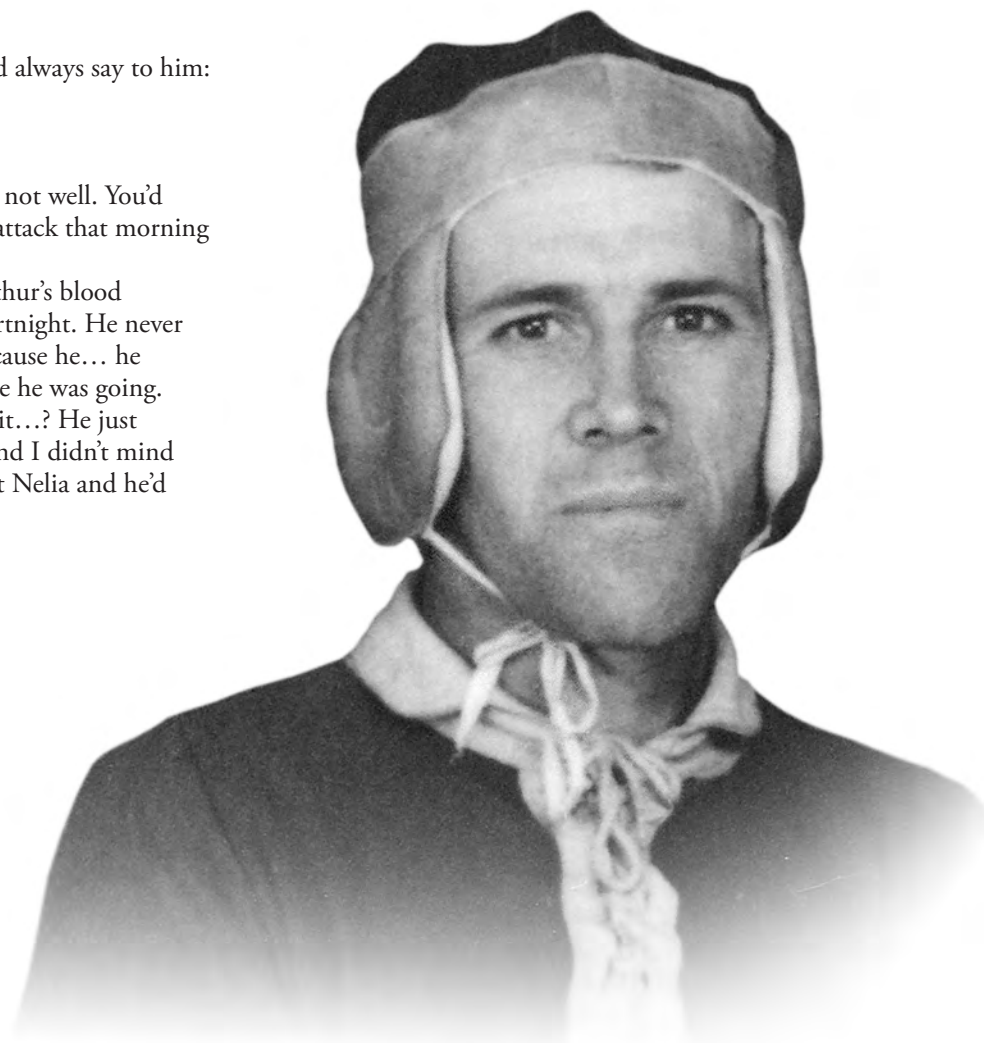
The funeral? Very big, yeah. It was a big funeral. We had it at the oval where they play the football. Well, he never really went to church and he said he didn't think he should go inside one dead if he hadn't been inside one alive. He'd rather be outdoors anyway. But they were good, especially the nuns. It rained the day before and they said if it was raining we could leave from the Catholic Church. We're not Catholic so I thought that was nice of them.

We had the Flying Padre come. He called it a celebration of Arthur's life. And Richard Magoffin came – he's the man who wrote poetry about Arthur. During the funeral we all sat in the grandstand, probably 200 people, a lot of people. Even the doctor came. That was nice. And his wife. After the service, we put Arthur's coffin on the back of his old orange ute, which Sharon still had, and when it came past this house his old dog jumped up with him.

We haven't done anything about a tombstone yet. I feel a bit bad about that. I do. I don't go to the cemetery, but if I do, when there's a funeral, it brings it back to me. When you first come to the cemetery, up this end are the Catholics, down there are the Presbyterians. There are Catholic and Protestant grounds. Why should that be? I get a bit annoyed with it actually. We're all the same; we're all God's children – if you believe in religion.

THERE'S NOT MUCH MORE I can tell you about Arthur. He wasn't a drinking man, he said it didn't agree with him. It gave him indigestion and he didn't like the taste. Sometimes he would have a drink and then he thought everybody hated him. He couldn't handle that. So I never had drink to put up with, thank God. He knew he couldn't drink. We couldn't afford it anyway.

If I got wild with him he'd go out the dump, and Bill Ryder would go out too – that's Ruth's husband – and they'd sit there and talk. "Whaddaya think of the MacDonald breed?" (That's Ruth and me; we're MacDonalds.) Bill would shake his head: "Ooh, I know what you put up with". But I did tame down. The Plate Thrower's gone. Just as well I suppose, or I'd have had a heart attack by now.



FAYERS ALWAYS WORE that head gear. Bastard of a thing was mine. I bought it and he pinched it, took it off me. He wore it all the time. It protected his ears. He used to put his head in places where a lot of people wouldn't have put theirs. He'd wear it every game. Headgear and no boots... well, he'd wear boots onto the field cos you weren't allowed to play barefooted, but once he got off the field he'd just throw the boots off. One of the toughest men I've ever seen in my life, that man.

VINCE AHERN

IT WAS AN INTERESTING TOWN them days, Julia Creek, and there were a lot of hard men. Arthur Fayers, he cut timber, built yards, put up fences; that's the sort of work he'd do. And he loved playing football. He was a tough man and a talked-about character. Used to train with a dog on the football field and go out past the turkey's nest, trotting towards the cemetery. When the dog was tired and knocked up, Arthur reckoned he'd had his training. And this dog was in pretty fair order.

TOM WALL



ONE NIGHT we were going to the pictures, me and my sister Ruth. Ooh... every time they were on we'd go to the pictures. There'd be a big queue up. You couldn't get a seat half the time, there were that many people around here then. Anyway, one of Ruth's shoes came off in the mud, right in the main street, and I started to look for it but she said: "Leave the bloody thing where it is". One shoe on, y'know, and we're going to the pictures, but no good looking for the other. The streets were terrible after rain those days. I used to wear nothing when it was like that... I mean no *footwear*. Shoes and thongs, if you wore them, they'd get bogged in the mud and you'd never find them again.

Why I came to Julia Creek – I followed my twin sisters, Ruth and Nora. Ruth came out first and got married, and we followed. We wanted to be near her. Nora came out next; might have been a year or two before I did. And we all stayed – here in Julia Creek.

First up I lived with Ruth and she got me a job at Gannon's Hotel. She took me to Mr Gannon and asked did he have a job for me:

How old's your sister?

She's 15.

Are you sure she's not 13?

No, Mr Gannon, she's 15.

I remember Ruth saying that. So I started work and they were nice people. I'd get up about half-past 5, have a shower and go straight to work. I'd start about 6. We'd knock off at 2 in the afternoon, come back at half-past 5 and be there till about 8. I was housemaid most of the time, though sometimes I was waitressing. I might be two days as a waitress. Ivy Burrows was a full-time waitress, but we all got the same pay.

Gannon's hotel was very popular – and clean too. Gannons were very clean; they'd make you do the work properly. Mrs Gannon (I called them Mr and Mrs Gannon) would have a white-lace handkerchief and go round all the ledges to make sure I dusted properly.

GRAND ANNUAL CATHOLIC DEBUTANTE BALL

JULIA CREEK, Sep 25 – The Grand Annual Catholic Debs' Ball held in Eckford's Hall, Friday night 21st September was an outstanding success. The hall was decorated with multi-coloured streamers and was finished with extra large balloons. The stage was arranged with chairs and pretty cushions. The decorations were the work of Miss Rita Byrne and Mr. Frank Forde.

At 9 o'clock the emcee Mr. Moran Byrne announced the arrival of the official party who were escorted to the stage. The party consisted of Rt. Rev. Monsignor McLaughlin, Father O'Brien (Richmond), Father Devereux P.P., Mr. and Mrs. George Peut, and Miss Rita Byrne (secretary). The emcee announced the names of each deb as they were presented by the matron of honour. The debs' march was well carried out with dignity and grace to the soft music supplied by Mrs. Bollman.

The first deb, Miss Esme MacDonald partnered by Mr. J. Aitkens, favoured a pretty frock of silk lace worn over taffeta foundation, featuring a high neckline with a yoke marquizette appliqued with lace; a tight-fitting bodice; and tiny puffed sleeves. The full skirt was draped with marquizette and was caught up with bunches of fresh flowers. Esme wore a large bow at back. Accessories were a string of pearls, white mittens, fresh flowers in hair, and bouquet of fresh flowers.

Miss Carmel Fickling was partnered by Mr. Terry O'Brien. This charming deb wore a lovely frock of broderie anglaise bodice featuring an off-the-shoulder neckline which had large scallops forming tiny sleeves that were caught up in drapery style; tight-fitting bodice showing a waistline peak at the back and front. The very wide skirt was of organdi over taffeta showing an overskirt of figured broderie anglaise that was caught up to one side with a large white organdi bow. The skirt, early Victorian style, was worn over a hoop. Accessories were a string of pearls, matching earrings, white organdi mittens appliqued with anglaise, and bouquets of fresh flowers.

Miss Joy Burns was partnered by Mr. John Crilly. The dainty deb wore a pretty frock of needle-run lace over taffeta foundation. The

I WAS BORN IN CHARTERS TOWERS on the 4th of September. I'm 70 this year [2003] so work out the year from that. I'm no good at numbers. I've got... well I had... two brothers and two sisters. Now, with Nora, there's just the two of us.

My father was a cane cutter up in El Arish, 10 miles from Tully, working away from the family while we lived in Charters Towers. Then he wrote to my mother from El Arish and said he'd like her to come up. Y'see, it was a lot on him: as well as the rains coming down nearly every day, he had to cook meals and wash clothes, so Mum and my brother and I went up there. Stayed for about two years.

Like I've explained, I came to Julia Creek to be with my sisters. When I was 20 I got married at the Hamilton Hotel over near Boulia way. Mr Stokes his name was and he was a shearer. Then I came back to Julia Creek. Later on I met Bill.

I don't say I'm an old timer of Julia Creek. I wasn't born and bred here 70 years ago. And I'm not a seen-around-town person. I don't like to be in things much; I don't like to mix with people. But I've always liked living here.

I've got five kids. There's two in Julia Creek: one home with me now, Mark, and my daughter over the railway line. Another son in Townsville, he reckons Julia Creek is the Sahara Desert and *North to Alaska*: he hates the summer and he hates the winter. But that's our life, it's what I'm used to. I wouldn't be happy with the bright lights of a city, they make me feel sick. I can't stand any big cities.

I'm a bit old now, Guy, to leave Julia Creek – not that I'd want to. Some people like to go and other people don't. Bill's always saying to me:

Ah, so-n-so's going to leave.

How do you know?

Oh well, they've retired, they'll leave.

Some don't leave. Some only leave because they're crook and they're nearer doctors on the coast. They generally move away then. But I like it here. You can sit back and relax. I like that. I wouldn't want to be in a place where you gotta lock up, where you have to peer from behind curtains to see what stranger's pulling up. No, I wouldn't like that.



CA: 28 Sep 1951

Opposite: Staff of Gannon's Hotel.
From left: Carmel Fickling, Ivy Burrows,
Esme, Sandra, Mrs Cameron,
Mrs Catherine Fickling.
[Ivy Burrows, B106, 1952]



Guy: What do you know about Esme, Nora Fayer's sister?

Hazel Sills: Esme, she still lives here; but honestly, I don't think you'll get a good reception. Bill and her don't invite anybody inside at all.

Guy: And who's Bill?

Hazel: Bill's been marvellous to her. Esme and her husband separated and she was left with five kids. Bill really took them under his wing. He does all the getting of groceries and everything, whatever she wants. George, my husband, used to sell fruit to her, years ago. She'd ring up – she'd talk on the phone to you – but he'd just take her order over and leave it downstairs.

Guy: I'll give her a ring and see what happens.

Hazel: I'm pretty sure you wouldn't even get a look in with Esme.

ast looking after his sheep interests.
 elf Miss Esme MacDonald left for her home in Charters Towers on Monday
 of after being in Julia Creek for several years. She has been employed during
 sa- the whole of that time at Gannon's Hotel and became well liked by all.
 m- Messrs Arthur Lowe and Lionel Wall
 sly have been helping the country folk
 d- during their temporary isolation on account of the wet weather. Mr Lowe flew
 l-
 is

NQR: 07 Feb 1953

Saddled With Lionel

Doreen Fry

I WAS BORN IN TOWNSVILLE in 1939 and my father was a barber. Mum was a housewife. Nine kids in our family. I went to school in Townsville and I finished about 1952.

I went out to Julia Creek in 1956 when I was 16. The idea was to save enough money to buy a motor scooter and tour Australia. My Auntie Agnes lived there. She was married to Percy Thompson who worked at the O-K Store. Auntie Agnes came to Townsville and asked me if I'd like to come to Julia Creek and I said: "Yeah, I'd love to". She got me a job with Frank and Joan Byrne at the Blue Bird Cafe.

Doreen goes bush and instead of seeing Australia sees Julia Creek

I met Lionel at the train station. He was the taxi driver. Auntie Agnes and I got off the train at Julia Creek and that's when I first saw Lionel. He drove us from the train to Auntie Agnes' place.

After that he tried to chat me up. He asked me to go to Richmond with Benny Burrows and Jill Brennan – your mum. So there we were, Lionel and I in the backseat of Benny Burrow's car going to the football, and Lionel sneaking his hand across to grab mine. That was okay though, because I ended up marrying him. Instead of jumping into a saddle on two wheels and seeing Australia, I ended up saddled with Lionel and seeing Julia Creek!



DOREEN WEST (FRY) FLO SWIFT (BRENNAN)

USED TO BE a lot of call for a taxi driver in Julia Creek. Harry Stainkey had the licence and I worked for him. That was when I had a broken arm and couldn't do anything else except odd jobs and taxi driving.

Only the one taxi in town. Used to get a lot of country trips, taking people out bush. Ringers and that. Didn't have meters; it was so much a mile. Everyone knew if you're going to a place called Dalgonaally

– 50 miles out – it was so much. I had nothing to do with the money. The passengers paid before they left. I was just the driver.

When Harry owned the taxi he used to have a Holden, the first ones that came out. Later on he sold the licence to his cousin, Fagan. When Fagan had it, he ran an Austin A70.

LIONEL

Left: Doreen (left) and Flo Brennan in their waitress uniforms outside the Blue Bird Cafe.

Flo's handwriting.

[Flo Brennan, F18, ca 1956]

Opposite: Max Burns' Julia Creek Engineering Works where Lionel was an apprentice mechanic. KBS5 International in front. This building was sold in 1961 by the Official Receiver when Max was declared bankrupt. It became the Town & Country Club.

[Erol Davis, DE19, ca 1952]

No one to help you **Lionel Fry**

WINTON I WAS BORN, 29th December 1936. Four in the family: Reg the eldest, then Joyce, me and Tommy. Dad was looking after a sheep property, Windera. We moved from there when I was a baby to Cremona, a property near Julia Creek. I suppose Dad was 10 years on Cremona, working for the Elliotts.

I went to school in Julia Creek – when I went to school at all. I only got to grade 4, and did that half a dozen times. Stopped with an auntie in town. 1949 I left school and went droving sheep and cattle for a couple of years, just around Julia Creek. Then I got a job with Fagan Stainkey and Max Burns. Started my apprenticeship as a mechanic in 1952.

Fagan was hiring the workshop off Max. He had his own business out the back, but it was Max who employed me. I didn't last long as an apprentice. A couple of years that's all. It got too hard. You were on your own with all the technical correspondence. Out there in those days there was no one to help you.

Max built the engineering works to maintain his machinery. Fagan used to do the repairs in a little area behind the workshop. Front part

was a showroom. Max sold Dodges, Plymouths, Vanguards, Mayflowers. Pretty big agency, yeah. Four or five cars on show. Later on they moved the showroom to the corner because no one could see the cars where they were, stuck in the front of Max's workshop on the outskirts of Julia Creek. It was all enclosed. You had to walk inside to see them. So they built a

house and a new showroom on the corner of Burke St and Allison St on the main road to Cloncurry.

Fagan was renting the workshop from Max and fixing Max's machinery. Not all of it. A lot of the repairs to the dozers were done out on the flat. But anything motor-wise, or too difficult for repairing on site, came into the workshop. Fagan and I, plus a couple of blokes that Max had, did the servicing. It was a general workshop, not just for Max's stuff. We serviced anything that Max sold. Cars mainly.

Joy Burns was in spare parts and Meldie Eckford was in the office. Fred Huller was there, too. He was

Max's accountant, a big German fella. No one had much to do with him, he was real quiet. Lived at the back of the workshop in a little room that Max built down there.

followed by January 295 points, and July 248 points.
A considerable improvement has been effected at the corner of Burke and Allison streets by the opening of the new show room erected by Mr. Max Burns.
Following representations by the United Graziers Association to the CSIRO a...

NQR: 18 Aug 1956



I was the Jack of all trades, as they say, and master of none. Went out to Balootha a couple of times – Max's property – and gave them a hand to delve bore drains and muster cattle. Down the spanners and go on a horse. You did a bit of everything when you worked for Max Burns.

Fagan quit working for Max and built a garage near the butcher shop with a cafe on one side. The cafe was only real small, just like a milkbar thing. In fact it was called the Mayne Milk Bar. Fagan ran the garage part, and a bloke called Garney Evans looked after the cafe. Later on they knocked a wall out and turned it into a cafe right through – the Blue Bird – and closed the garage down. The Blue Bird went through several owners: Frankie Byrne, he had it first that I can remember, then Dudley and Glad Cook, then Bluey Hughes, then a Greek bloke Liaros. It closed down in the seventies.

I had a good time in Julia Creek when I was young: knock around together with friends, go to the pictures, go to a dance. Where the Civic Centre is now, there was a dance hall and cafe. Mossie McDonald played the piano and belted a drum at the same time – thwack thwack thwack. Fagan would play the drums if he could get there. I don't know who organised the dances. It was just a known thing; a bit of a hop every Friday night in the hall.

I left Max at the same time Fagan did and went with him into his new garage. But I broke my arm in a serious way and was out of action for four years. Ended up driving a taxi, and mechanicing at the railway.

Doreen and I left Julia Creek in 1985.





Opposite: Fagan Stainkey's garage, Burke St. On the right is Stainkey & Evans' Mayne Milk Bar. In the mid-1950s the garage closed and the building became the Blue Bird Cafe, taking its name from the first Blue Bird, a few doors down on the right, which was destroyed by fire in 1950.
[Flo Brennan, F09, 1954]

Above: Lionel and mates at the 5-Mile waterhole on the Julia Creek common. From left: Tom Fry, Bill Burrows, ?, Lionel.
[Judy Burrows, BuJ03, ca 1955]

Still On the Merry-Go-Round

Edith Mann

A Julia Creek 'Hello Girl' tells of Grand Marches, goats and working on the exchange

WHEN I WAS BORN Mum and Dad had a little corner store in Townsville, at Pimlico, selling groceries: a little bit of this, a little bit of that. Mum loved it. While she was in hospital having me, Dad got an offer that he couldn't refuse, sold the store, and I don't think Mum ever forgave him. They went to Ingham and bought a fruit shop. Mum hated it from the moment she got there. My younger brother, Harold, was born in Ingham.

I don't know whether they sold the fruit shop or whether they just walked away. I never heard. Whatever happened, we left Ingham and Dad contacted Herb Fickling, a relation in Julia Creek. Herb was a drover and he said he'd find a job for Dad as a shearers' cook or a drovers' cook. So we got on the train in 1938 and we went west.

All my primary schooling was at Julia Creek. I was talking to Bernie Foster recently about the first head teacher I can recall, Mr Whitby, and Bernie said he hated him, couldn't abide the man. But I adored him. Mr Whitby liked singing, and he taught us all those old songs that I just love now.

We had sports days. We didn't have enough kids to have a football team *and* a netball team (we called it basketball), so we played football one day – girls and boys mixed up, tackling each other – and the next day we played basketball.

Something else I remember from school were the air-raid drills and the slit trenches in the playground. When the school bell sounded for air-raid practice we'd race out and scramble into these trenches.

It must have been my last year at school, I would think, before I had a pair of bought shoes. See, Dad did all sorts of things. His father was a saddler, his brother was a saddler, and although Dad himself didn't like saddling, he enjoyed working with leather. He always made my sandals; leather sandals, and I hated them (I get angry with myself now) because

every other kid at school had bought shoes and I had homemade sandals. Eventually I made enough fuss and enough noise that I got these new bought shoes. They weren't in new condition for very long. I remember we had a garden project at school. All the children's gardens were between the school and Burke St, out in that area. Billy Godier and I were digging together. I teased him about something and he threw the garden fork at me – right through my *bought* shoes. One prong went between two toes, and another prong cut a third toe. Forget the toes – my precious bought shoes!

Dad also made me a beautiful leather satchel; stamped my name into it. Everyone else had those bakelite ports and I had this awful homemade leather one – or so I used to think. I'd cherish it now.

Every year we had a fancy dress parade in Eckford's Hall – the Grand March. A lot of people put a lot of effort into dressing up. Remember the girl on the Ovaltine tin? That was one of my costumes. We'd start off by marching up the hall in pairs, then spin off either side and go round and join up in fours, then eights. We'd end up in one long line across the hall and then spin off again and do it in reverse. It was exciting. There were prizes for the best outfit. My mother was never a dressmaker, so anything I wore had to be very simple; but I always got dressed up and I always enjoyed it.



Above: Edith in fancy dress as the Ovaltine Girl, holding an Ovaltine tin.
[Edith Mann, MnE02, ca 1947]

Opposite: Edith and friends in Burke St, in between the Mann house (off photo, right) and the CWA building (left). From left: Coonie Cooke, Ivonne Cooke, and bare-footed Edith. The Cooke girls were the daughters of Ivan Cooke, policeman.
[Richard Cooke, CoR07, ca 1950]

I WAS BORN VERY EARLY IN 1935, 6th January; Harold in 1937, and Colin in 1940. I don't remember anything, really, until Colin. I don't remember very much before that. My first vivid memory is of Colin dying as a baby. I can remember his little coffin sitting on a table in our front room, and I remember Jessie Marsh from across the road picking me up and telling me to kiss him goodbye. He's buried at Julia Creek.

When my baby brother died, Dad was working for Wally Marsh out near Boulia. Dad was a shearers' cook for about five years. He wasn't home very much. You can't just toss it in, walk off and leave people in the lurch; you had to wait till the end of the season. Mum was a bit cranky about it, because he was so far away and difficult to contact, though he was able to make it home in time for the funeral. I remember Mum going crook: "You're not going so far away again". Well, he did for a while, but he ended up working at the woolscour, feeding the wool into the big machines to clean it. He was perfectly happy there.

Dad was a handyman. People used to bring him mattresses to repair; the old fibre ones. They'd bring them in flattened and hard and he'd wash the fibre – he had a big area out the back where he dried it – and then he'd fluff it up, stuff in extra fibre, and they'd go home with mattresses a foot high and all buttoned down.

One of Dad's other jobs was cooking at Dawson's Cafe on the corner across from the Post Office. Mum and Dad were both good cooks. That's how they first met. Dad was cook in the men's quarters on a station near Longreach and Mum was house cook.

Dad never drove a car – and he didn't like horses – so he rode a bike everywhere. When he was droving, all the bits and pieces would go on the horse and cart and Dad followed on his bike. He had a fixed-wheel bike and he rode that everywhere. Doubled me as a little kid; doubled me on the bar of the bike. Never had a car. Didn't ever want a car.

I'll tell you a story about Dad and his bike. Bill and Rene Fry came around to our place. They lived at Eddington Siding – Bill worked as a fettler out there – and they came into town to catch the train to go on holidays. But they'd left their cardigans out at Eddington. Dad said:

I'll get them.

You'll never get out there in time.

Yes I will.

He hopped on that bike and he treadled 12 miles to Eddington, got all the cardigans (they'd been put out ready to go; they were all on the bed) and as he came out of the house he could see the light of the train coming to Gilliat from the west. Pitch dark, and in a lather of sweat, he treadled back to town in time for the Frys to catch their train.

I never knew my Dad when he didn't have a bronchitisy-sort of cough and a cigarette in his hand. He wasn't ever without a cigarette. He kept saying he had asthma, but, I mean, you gotta be honest: his emphysema was caused by smoking. He left Julia Creek in 1957 and came to Springsure to spend some time with us. I was married then. He died in Springsure in early 1961.



CHASE GOATS! That was my entertainment in Julia Creek when I was young. Mum loved the goats. She liked animals, she was a farmer's daughter. And I loved the goats too. I'd grow attached to them. Ah... terribly. We had about 50 goats in a pen in the backyard. Fifty goats is a lot of goats to keep in a small backyard. A lot of them would be dried off and in kid, but a bit better than half, I suppose, would be milkers.

Blanches, for a time, had a dairy up by the woolscour, but it's pretty barren out there and cows didn't give a lot of milk. There was certainly none coming into town from the coast; the only cow's milk came from the local dairy. With the limited supply, and the expense, most Julia Creek people never tasted cow's milk. Goats survived on next to nothing and their milk was effectively free.

Mum and I milked our goats every morning. Before I went to school I'd be on my bike pedalling around town with a pint of goat's milk for Mrs So-n-So, and two pints for Mrs Somebody-Else. I might be wrong, but I don't know that Mum ever got any money for the milk. Sometimes a lot of goats were milking and we had plenty. Other times it was a bit hard to find enough for people who wanted it.

Every one of our goats was named. All 50, they all had names. My favourite goat was Bing and you can guess where that came from. She was Meggie's daughter. Meg had a kid and I called her Bing cos I was a bit of a Bing Crosby fan.

Harold and I used to play with the kid goats. We'd squat down and bend over to give them a flat back to jump on. I'd tap my shoulder and they'd hop on my back; then they'd hop from my back to Harold's and I'd run around in front of him. We'd go on like that. That was okay while they

were little, but goats get pretty big. Poor old Mum would be sitting on a stool, milking, and one of the playful kids, since grown into a big playful goat, would see a back bent over and try to jump on.

Of an afternoon the goats had to be put into the yard; got in. Most times they were pretty good and they'd come home by themselves. But a couple of times a year they'd go walkabout. All the town goats would. I can remember Mum and different people having to get George Peut's truck and bring them back from Kynuna way.

It was always a problem getting the goats home in the wet. They didn't like crossing flooded drains. Once I stood on a broken bottle and cut my foot – ooh, a bewdy – trying to get the goats across a drain full of water.

At the railway yards there used to be... I wouldn't know how many lines were there, but the goats used to cross all these lines to reach the common on the south side of town. I remember diving underneath the couplings between the railway trucks, chasing the goats, bringing the goats home. If the train started to pull away, I'd run crabwise to get out from under the coupling. Luckily the trains were pretty slow taking off.

Eating goat – now, that was a sore point. We did at times and I'll never eat goat again. Don't talk to me about eating goat. I loved the goats. They were my friends. I used to teach them to walk upright; hold a piece of bread and they'd walk along on their hind legs. They love to do things like that. They're very sociable animals, goats. They don't want to be locked away and forgotten about. And they don't want to be eaten either.



I FINISHED PRIMARY SCHOOL at Julia Creek and then I went to a boarding school at Longreach. I only stayed one term. I didn't like boarding school one little bit. Hated it. Probably missed my goats I suppose.

I came back to Julia Creek and I got a job in the office at the woolscour, answering the phone and doing up the charts for the greasy wool that came in and the scoured wool that went out. I was 14. Waldron Taylor was my boss.

I wasn't at the woolscour a great length of time because a Post Office job came along. I think Joan Byrne had been there and she left; that's how the job became vacant. I sat for the entry exam, passed that, and started as a telephonist. It was quite a simple exam, really, but there were a number of people who failed it.

Benny Burrows wanted to be a messenger boy and he sat the exam at the same time I did. There was one question I particularly remember – incorrect use of words: “He weighted while he wade the parcel”. I said to Benny:

What did you put for that one?
I think I put: He w-a-i-t-e-d
while he m-a-d-e the parcel.

He wrote “made” instead of “weighed”. Benny always beat me at school, but I knocked the socks off him in that exam.

I became a telephonist; a Hello Girl with Cynthia Fickling and Meldie Eckford. Only one of us worked at a time. We sat wearing headsets in front of a switchboard. It worked like this: for making local connections there were a hundred holes, called the jacks; and just above them were more jacks for the different towns – Hughenden, Richmond, Cloncurry. Above those you had a hundred little black doors (one for each jack) called the shutters, each numbered underneath. When somebody rang, one of those shutters dropped and exposed the number of who was ringing. You didn't hear it ring. All you heard, or saw, was a small clip jiggle around and the shutter would drop. You answered it – might be Peter Dawes, number 8 – by pushing the key forward on jack 8 and putting in the *back plug* so you

NOT THE LEAST REASON.
Mr. Ben Burrows, who passed his scholarship in the recent examination, has taken the position of telegram boy at the local post office.

NQR: 12 Feb 1949

could talk to whoever was calling. He'd tell you who he wanted – might be the Blue Bird Cafe, number 7. To connect to 7, you pulled the key back on jack 7, put in the *front plug*, and turned a handle to make their phone ring (we didn't have an automatic ring in the early days, we had to turn a handle). When they answered, 7 and 8 were able to talk to each other.

If someone wanted a trunk-line call, you got out a docket book and you booked the call for them. You asked who they wanted. All trunk-line calls went through Hughenden or Cloncurry; they were our trunk-line outlets. You booked the call with, say, Hughenden and you went into their queue. You might wait in their queue a fair while to get a call.

Calls were per three minutes. The person ringing might want a six-minute call. At the end of the six minutes you'd say: “Your time has expired, will you finish please”. We had little timer clocks.

You could make a phone call 24 hours. It was a 24 hour station; it was a sleep station. Whoever was on the night exchange – it was always one of the men, never one of the telephonists – well, he had to come on about 10 o'clock. Not too many fellas were keen to do it for the £3 extra they received. It was a sleeping shift; they had a fold-up bed and they could sleep. But they had to switch on the night bell so that it went off to wake them up when a shutter dropped. Sometimes they didn't hear the bell – or didn't turn it on – and there'd be trouble then, especially if the call was urgent.

The night operator worked from 10 till 6.30 and then a telephonist took over and she worked through till 2.30. The afternoon shift was from 2.30 till whenever the night operator turned up. Sometimes they were late. Most times they came early, half-past 9-ish, but if they were late, the girl never left until he arrived. Someone always had to be there.

SOMETHING WAS LOST when they got rid of the manual exchanges. You'd get a call from a property: “Have you seen so-n-so in town?” You might have seen the person in town – or you'd ask someone – and you could tell the caller. Or someone would ring in and say: “We're going over to so-n-so's place tonight. If any calls come for us, put them through there”. We scribbled a note, stuck it on the switchboard, and we put their calls through. When exchanges became automatic they lost their personal touch. But on the positive side, telephonists no longer had to endure problem callers on the other end of the line.

Bill Gannon, the publican across the road, was a pig of a man the way he used a telephone. He was really rude to everybody on the exchange. We'd put a call through to him by pulling back the key, turning the handle, and waiting for him to answer. And before he answered – every time without fail – he'd turn the handle at his end and ring in our ears. He knew exactly what he was doing, the old so-n-so.

Bill Gannon was fine when he was dealing with customers in his hotel; but oh dear, he could be a nasty man. I remember one day he booked a trunk call and he was well-down in the queue. If he rang back once about this call he must have rung back half a dozen times. In the end he abused me; he really told me what he thought of me:

I don't know what you think we're paying you girls for.
Not to take abuse from you, Mr Gannon.

I pulled the plug out and threw it down. I thought: Well damn you! He might have wanted his call, but all the other people wanted theirs too.



Above: Six-line telephone exchange at Nelia. The *back* plugs are labelled “answer”, the *front* plugs are labelled “call”.
[Guy Burns, GK074, 2002]

Opposite: Edith, Harold and playmates in the backyard of their Burke St home, looking south to back gate. Fred Hickman's house on left, Hardy's house on right.
[Edith Mann, MnE01, ca 1947]

We had one public phone outside. From 9 till 5 people booked their calls at the Post Office counter. After that they came to the window and pressed a buzzer. One old fellow, Rupert, an ex-policeman, he used to drive the Post Office staff mad. He was... well, an alcoholic, and the drunker he got the louder he talked. When he thought there was a problem in town to complain about, he either sent a telegram to the Commissioner of Police or he rang someone from the public phone. One time, three or four people were standing around waiting for their calls, with more coming all the time, and I kept pushing Rupert's nuisance call to the bottom of the queue. Anyhow, he came to the window. He's knocking, making all this noise:

I'm going to report you to the postmaster.
Good, Rupert, you do that.

He walked away grumbling: "Be no good reporting you to the bloody postmaster, would it". See, I was engaged to Keith Hutchison, the postmaster. My future husband was the boss.

Keith came from Proserpine and he applied for Julia Creek to get a promotion. When Keith arrived in 1952, Harold Walters was relieving and he went over to meet the train. I was at work when Keith came up the back steps and Harold introduced him to me. Off he went to his office.



The next day Pattie Pattison (granddaughter of Tassie Triffett the blacksmith), she was working on the exchange at that time and she said:

Gee, I don't mind the new boss.
Well, keep your hands off. I saw him first.

I decided to take the initiative. A carnival was in town in between Charlie Byrne's butcher shop and the Post Office, where Peter Dawes Park is now. They had horses, knock-em-downs, a chair-o-plane and a merry-go-round. I was on night shift and just about to finish work. Keith came into the exchange and I said to him: "Come and take me for a ride on the merry-go-round". Fifty-two years later we're still on the merry-go-round. We were engaged in January 1953.

REMEMBER *Fools Rush In?* – the picture about a girl who changes her mind on her wedding day? It came to Julia Creek just before Keith and I got married. The Reverend Hovenden, the celebrant who was going to marry us, he was at the pictures the same night we were. He looked around and eyed us up: "I hope you're taking note of this – fools rush in".

We married in August 1953, and that's why I left Julia Creek. Keith was transferred to Brisbane.



A hard-living town **Keith Hutchison**



Above: "Going to see Ede one time, there was several inches of water at the front gate." Burke St in flood, taken from Edith's house, looking across to the CWA hall. The hall is mentioned by several people in this book: Gordon Lavarack was born there, John Adams lived there, and Jenny Byrne played wog there, but this is the only photo.

[Edith Mann, *MnE14*, 1953]

Opposite top: "Well, keep your hands off. I saw him first." Edith looking through the window of the Post Office exchange.

[Ivy Burrows, *BI13*, 1950]

Opposite bottom: "The Post Office was a big employer in a small town like Julia Creek." Julia Creek Post Office; Erol Davis in front. The exchange where Edith worked was on the right.

[Erol Davis, *DE15*, ca 1951]

I WAS BORN IN BRISBANE and I started work in Brisbane. It was 1942 and I was 14. For about two and a half years I was a messenger boy delivering telegrams, and then I was accepted into the Postal Training School in Elizabeth St.

The Postal Training School was an eight-month course. At the end of it you had to sit for exams in Morse code, telegraphy and general postal knowledge. The Morse exam was in two parts: receiving 27 telegrams in 30 minutes, and the same for sending. You were judged on your capability, your accuracy, and your rhythm. You weren't allowed too many errors.

Then there was telegraphy: Technical Telegraphy, dealing with the operation of a Morse set, and Traffic Telegraphy, dealing with the sending and receiving of telegrams. And there was the Postal Knowledge exam. Once you passed all those you could be accepted as a postal clerk.

Another exam, what they called the Third Division Examination, entitled you to be promoted to senior postal clerk and postmaster. You could go right to the top with that under your belt.

Women weren't allowed to sit those exams. Not in those days. There was a stream for men and they could rise as far as they wanted, and a separate stream for women but they couldn't go very far at all. A woman could become a telephonist, but as soon as she got married she had to retire, she was out.

Only a certain number of students were accepted into the Postal School. In my course there were 26. Out of the 26 they would have picked 10 to become telegraphists and 16 to become postal clerks. The telegraphists stopped in Brisbane and the provincial cities, whereas the postal clerks were appointed anywhere in Queensland.

I was appointed to Emerald as postal clerk. I did three years at Emerald and then I got a promotion to senior postal clerk at Proserpine. From there I went to Julia Creek as postmaster. That was in 1952. I was 24 years of age. If you remember when King George the 6th died, that's when I went to Julia Creek – about two or three days before he died.

I went out by train: 42-up from Townsville. You left at one o'clock in the afternoon and you got to Julia Creek about half-past 3 the following afternoon. Twenty-six and a half hours it took. It was early February if I remember rightly, and very hot. In the old steam trains you just sat there and sweated; there was no air conditioning. And if you opened the window the soot came in.

We stopped at a place called Nelia about 40 mile down the track from Julia Creek. We got out there and they gave us an hour for lunch. They rang a bell at the end of lunch and you got back on the train and you kept on going. It was slow travelling. The trains didn't go very fast and they had lots of stops.

Harold Walters met me at the station. He was acting postmaster at the time. He took me to the Post Office and introduced me to my future wife, Ede Mann, who was working as a telephonist.

I arrived in the middle of the 1952 drought¹, in February, and for the next year virtually no rain fell. I asked one fellow how often it rained in Julia Creek and he said: "Aw, yeah, it rains here now and then". But then it *did* rain. Going to see Ede one time, there was several inches of water at the front gate.

All the time I was in Julia Creek I stayed at Gannon's Hotel, except for the last few months when Ede and I bought a small house just before we got married. I suppose four or five fellas boarded at Gannon's: the bank johnnies, the single fellas with a job. It was two to a room; you didn't have a room to yourself.

The publican said to me when I checked in: "Well, I'll only charge you £4 a week for your bed and your keep, but it really should be £5/12/6. That was Bill Gannon. He probably assumed I'd spend the other £1/12/6 at the bar.

There were quite a few fights around the pub, particularly on the weekends. The shearers would be in town on a spree. They'd come along to Gannon's with their thirst, and start

1. 1952 drought: see p780.

drinking. Keith Dunn, the barber, you'd see him walk past the Post Office of a Saturday morning as he went to work at Roy Hampton's barber shop. He'd be dressed in spotless white: white shirt and white pants. Limping home late that evening, the white would be speckled with red. He'd been in a fight and you'd see the blood dripping from him. They were a rough crowd at Julia Creek, but if you treated them right they were okay. I didn't have a great lot of trouble with them at the Post Office. If they were on the grog, well, some of them were a bit hard to handle then.

The Post Office was a big employer in a small town like Julia Creek. There was myself (postmaster), a postal clerk, two postal officers, a messenger boy, and three telephonists. And then we had... oh, must have been four or five mail contractors. One went right up to Iffley near the Gulf, another went to Kynuna, another to Millungera, plus a couple of others. The mail contractors were all good solid fellows. Hard living, of course. It was a hard-living town.

The mail train came into Julia Creek on a Sunday. A contractor brought the mail over from the railway station. George Peut did that. Then my staff sorted the mail and put it into bags ready for delivery by the contractors. If we'd had rain the contractors were in trouble. It was touch and go on those black soil roads after a heavy shower and you wouldn't necessarily know the road conditions 50 miles from town. There might not

have been rain in Julia Creek, yet it could be raining further out. So I'd ring somebody along the run and ask about the roads.

The contractor had to make an effort to get through. He couldn't just wring his hands and talk about the possibility of becoming bogged. If he came back and said the roads were not passable, well, he'd have to have a go the next day then.

Around the town there was no mail delivery. Everybody had private boxes. Town people got them at a reduced rate because the Post Office didn't offer a delivery service.

Other than working at the Post Office, there wasn't much for me to do, really. I did a few months work with Roy Hampton, pencilling of a Saturday afternoon in the SP betting shop at the back of his billiard saloon. People rang in and placed their bets. You wrote it all down and sent out an account of how much they won or lost. People weren't wandering in and out; we just answered phones.

Three of us pencilled for Roy: Les Adam (he was married to Roy's daughter), myself and another bloke. None of it was legal. There was an arrangement that when the police knocked on the door, Roy would be



the only one in the back room. I was never there, actually, when they were raided, but I heard stories about it. I suspect Roy had forewarning – from the police.

I played a little bit of football, but I didn't play much. I gave it away after we went to Hughenden, the time that Arthur Fayers got sent off. Arthur drove in 300 miles from out Boulia way. He got on the train with us to Hughenden – another 200 miles – and he was sent off in the first 10 minutes. He wasn't real happy travelling 500 miles for a 10-minute game. I wasn't too happy either. I only weighed 11 stone and they put me in the forwards. I lost a bit of skin and I gained two black eyes – and I'd hardly touched the ball. Back in my room at the pub I threw the football boots in the corner and that's where they stayed.

THE TROUBLE WITH JULIA CREEK was everything got hot. The floor got hot, the walls got hot, everything you touched got hot. It must be one of the hottest places in Queensland. I'd be sitting in the office – long pants, long-sleeved white shirt, tie – sweating away with no air conditioning

while trying to concentrate on the Morse line. Conditions were very bad that way. By the time 5 o'clock came, well, you'd had a good innings and you were pleased to finish.

It got cold too. It got down below freezing in winter.

And let's not forget the roads. The roads in Julia Creek were bad. In wet weather, if you were game enough to walk from the Post Office across to Gannon's, you'd be 3 or 4 inches taller by the time you got there because of the black soil stuck to your shoes.

One good thing came out of my time in Julia Creek: Ede and I became engaged. We sent to Angus and Cootes in Sydney for the engagement ring (and for the wedding ring). We were married in the CWA hall where the Presbyterian services used to be held. The reception was in Eckford's Hall: 300 adults and 50 children. Ede's Mum and Dad catered.

We went to South Molle on our honeymoon and then back to Julia Creek. But I had a little bit of health trouble and I wanted to get closer to the city. So, in November 1953, we left Julia Creek and moved to Brisbane.



Left: "The floor got hot, the walls got hot, everything you touched got hot."
Julia Creek Post Office.
Mathews' Hall, right.
[Rita Byrne, FR30, ca 1945]



WE USED TO PULL UP AT THE GILLIAT, moving between tanksinking jobs for Max Burns. Go in and see Ted Malone, the fella who had the pub. We were in and out of there for years and I never saw Ted completely sober. He had his little hide in the door of the fridge from where he got his drink, though he'd slip it back quick and lively if his wife came in. He was pretty quick on that.

His wife, she was known as the Downs Tiger. She never took much lip from anybody. Any bugger giving cheek copped a lashing from her tongue or her stockwhip, and she was pretty good with both.

Out the front of the pub the ground was covered with cinders so it didn't get muddy when it rained. This fella, Lew Ryder, he used to park his motor bike on the cinders with its back wheel up in the air on its stand. Once, when he was ready to leave, he revved it up – still on the stand – put it in gear, kicked it off the stand, and shot cinders inside the bar when he took off. But he wasn't fast enough. Mrs Malone was outside watching all this, and gave him some stockwhip across the arse before he got away.

TED SWEET

SHE WAS A RIP-ROARING PLACE in the early days, y'know, the Gilliat. Ted Malone, if you went past there and you didn't call in for a drink, he'd book you up for half a dozen stubbies anyway – and send you a bill. So you had to pull up and have a beer.

If you didn't pull up and you happened to break down a couple of miles further along, they'd let you sit there for a while (after they got word you needed rescuing) before they'd come out. But if you pulled up and had a few beers, they'd come straight out and get you. That was the law out west. You didn't ignore anybody. You just pulled up, said g'day, had a beer, and you got looked after.

Ted had this adopted daughter called Toby. He kept a "Toby" jug on the bar and he wouldn't give you any change. He'd put it in the jug. Tell you straight out: "Ahh, this goes to Toby".

I tell ya – I'm fair dinkum about old Ted booking up the stubbies.

NORM DOWNEY

A Short History of the Gilliat Hotel¹

THERE'S SOMETHING distinctly Australian about the Eddington Arms Hotel at the almost abandoned rail siding of Gilliat near Julia Creek. Its publican, 80 year old Grace Malone, has been running the bush pub for 40 years and is equally at home with graziers, stockmen, railway fettlers or with travellers just passing through. But, as for having a glass with her regular patrons, it's just not on. She is a teetotalter and has been all her life.

"I've been on the road droving and I've been out on stations cooking, but my life began in North Queensland at Mareeba where I was born. My father was manager on Lake Lucy Station, now Greenvale, out from Mt Garnet. I was my father's girl – his off-sider – and I liked nothing better than riding horses. I used to help Dad a lot with mustering. Housework wasn't my cup of tea and I'd do anything to avoid it. As a result, when I got married I couldn't cook. In

those days that was a disgrace for a bush-bred girl."

She married Ted Malone in 1926. Ted worked as a drover, teamster and stockman on cattle and sheep properties in Western Queensland and the Gulf country. Their eldest boy, Jim, was killed in 1943 when he was 16. He was rounding up sheep on a station near Gilliat when he was struck by lightning. Their three other sons today own or manage cattle stations in Western Queensland and the Gulf. The two girls live on the coast.

After droving, then managing Balootha and Euroka stations north of Julia Creek, her husband came back from a cattle-selling trip and told her he wanted to buy the pub at Gilliat. In spite of initial resistance – Mrs Malone had no hankering to be a publican's wife – they bought the Eddington Arms Hotel in 1948. In those days, Gilliat was a busy rail siding of between 200 to 300 people. Hotel hours were long

and the pace hectic, but she remembers those years with great affection.

"We had our heyday in the early 1960s when the new rail line was being put through and the town was literally bursting at the seams. The men used to be paid from the hotel every week. There would be a long line of fellows waiting to get their money when the accountant and bank manager arrived. The bank manager always had two guns, and paced up and down putting on a show.

"We used to go through 30 kegs a week. They were a good lot; they didn't fight or brawl even though there were so many customers they'd be spilling out on the road. Sometimes we'd have 300 to 400 people here."

Her husband died in 1966 and is buried at Julia Creek with their son, Jim.

Today, the population of Gilliat is down to 30 and all that remains is the pub and a handful of houses for the railway fettlers. With the railway station closed and pastoral properties in the district employing fewer stockman, only a handful of regulars and the occasional traveller keep the pub going. That she hasn't seen a large crowd at the hotel for more than two decades doesn't bother her.

A couple of years ago she considered putting the pub on the market. She is, she says, tired of the hurly-burly of hotel life. Neither is she interested in town life and hasn't visited Julia Creek, which is only 25 kilometres away, for close on a year. Instead, she is content to live life at her own pace.



1. Adapted from an article by Marian Dent in *Mimag*, Vol 3, 1987.

Eddington Arms Hotel at Gilliat

MRS MALONE, she was a tough old nut; christened the Downs Tiger because they reckoned she could strike like one. With her tongue mainly.

CHARLIE CORRIGAN

Opposite: Eddington Arms Hotel, Gilliat.
[Pat Malone, MP01, ca 1990]

ANYONE who wanted a rum and milk at the Gilliat, Ted Malone had a goat tied up outside the door. Always there. He'd pull this goat up and squirt the milk in. A lot of them old timers used to drink rum and milk early in the morning. Ted generally had one too.

JIM BIRCH

Below: Grace Malone behind the bar at Gilliat.
[Pat Malone, MP02, 1987]



The horses knew, eh **Stumpy Malone**

THAT'S A PODDY BULLOCK that Stumpy reared; fed him off a goat. Stumpy rode him round like a horse, that bullock, did what he liked with him. He was a beautiful quiet animal. He was too much of a pet to sell, so Stumpy left him with his poor, poverty stricken brother:

*I'll leave him here, you can have him.
Aw, thanks.*

And I didn't muck about; I sold the bastard straight away. Put him in the saleyards at Cloncurry. He topped the market for North-West Queensland, highest price paid outside Townsville. It was in the *Register* and Christ-knows-where. Stumpy, he was a bit sour on me. The bullock might have been Stumpy's pet, but to me he was big money. I think I got just over a thousand dollars. Must have been in 1966, after decimal. I got a wire from the bloke who bought him and he told me this bullock weighed just over a thousand pound wringin' wet – hot weight.

PAT MALONE

Below: Stumpy on his pet bullock.
[Pat Malone, MP07, ca 1966]

Opposite: An example of a delving team in operation (on Cremona); four horses on each side of the bore drain. The men are unidentified.
[Lesley Bode, BoL17, undated]



I WAS BORN IN SEPTEMBER 1932. I started off with nothing and had nothing given to me. Everything I got was through work. I managed Pialah up north of Richmond for nine years. I left there and did a few other things. Finally bought my own place, Crendon, 17 mile out of Kynuna going towards Maxwelton, and was there 20 years. In 2001 I retired to Julia Creek.

1939 WE FIRST CAME HERE. Dad was on Toorak for four years, horse breaking and driving the team. At the end of 1943 we went to Balootha: Mum and Dad; a sister, Shirley; and us three boys, Pat, Mick and myself. We had another brother, Jim, but he was killed at Eddington. Struck by lightning.

I did a few years of correspondence on Balootha, and that's about the strength of me bloody schooling too. Dad managed Balootha for Mrs Barnes. The homestead was just a shack on stumps about 2 foot high with two rooms upstairs and a sleep-out on one side with woolpacks around it. Us kids used to camp in there most of the time. To keep it cool we'd wet the bags every couple of days. If anyone came, they slept on the beds we had on the verandah.

Our fridge was a hole under the house, boarded up and dug in with charcoal. Had to keep it wet. If you wanted a cool drink you went under the house, lifted the lid and got it. I remember that as plain as day.

The house was right on the bore, pretty near. The bore drain ran down to what they called Dalgonaally Paddock, and the other way into River Paddock. It ran straight through our bathhouse, which was timbered inside. You could sit in there and have a hot water bath in flowing bore water.

Never had a windmill. We had a hand pump and a tank. Every night someone would pump water from the bore drain up to the tank. That was our water supply for the house.

I must have been about 10 or 12 year old when I did my first droving trip. The old fella and my two brothers took sheep from Balootha to Wensley while I drove the cattle. I was the boss cattle drover. The sheep would be over there walking along, and I'd be leading 80 or 90 head of quiet cattle. Came to Cabanda first night, Cremona the next, then somewhere else, and then we got to Alva Downs and walked them to Wensley.

After we moved the sheep and all those cattle to Wensley, Vestey's brought thousands of bullocks from the Territory and agisted them on Balootha, and also on Haddington, Ettra Plains and Kalmata. All the drovers camped in our shed. Billy Corrigan, Charlie's father, he was in charge of one mob. Our tobacco had cut out, so the old man went down and seen old Billy: "Any chance of gettin' some tobacco?" And he comes back with these two or three packs of loose tobacco, Talisman, which no one liked smoking. It annoyed the old man because some of the blackfellas in the camp (Billy, he had a mob of murries with him) were smoking Log Cabin. Talisman was like horseshit, that's what they used to say. No one was real keen on smoking it.

WE FIRST HEARD OF MAX BURNS when he was putting in the Rosevale dams. It was around the time we moved from Balootha to Euroka, around 1947.

Max's machinery was huge. I'd never seen anything like it and I don't think anybody else in that country had either, at that stage. But those old fellas with scoops and horses did a pretty good job too. They did build dams. Not to Max's magnitude of course. There were not a lot of dams in the west before the war, it was mostly bore drains.

Max was probably the first to bring big tractors to Julia Creek. People might have had small tractors like Fergusons – flat out to pull a bogged car – but up till the fifties it was draught horses that did most of the fireploughing and delving.

With a dozen horses, Dad and his team could do about 12 miles a day delving bore drains, and about 9 miles a day with 32 horses pulling a fireplough. That's what we used to average. Some days we might do 10 or 11, next day we might only do 6 or 8, but for fireploughing, 9 was about the average.

I can remember the old fella camped on Dalgona with the team, the first night out from Balootha. He camped at Spoonbill Waterhole, over 9 miles from the Balootha house, and we could hear the bells, plain as day, tinkling the next morning.

With 32 horses,
 (ten rows of three, and two in the pin close to the plough)
 the first day out they'd be pretty lively.
 Us kids would be up on the fireplough,
 screwing the wheel up or down.
 I can still hear the old fella bellowing:
 "Screw the bastard down!"
 trying to get the nose to bite so it'd slow the horses.
 They were beautiful horses;
 used to just poke along, a slow walk all day.

Come delving time,
 he'd have six horses on each side of the boredrain,
 (on Balootha we only used three each side,
 it was a small boredrain)
 and he'd come to a bend and bellow:
 "Yeee, whoa back!"
 and the inside ones would stand and wait
 while the outside six pulled the delver round.
 The horses knew, eh.

They say quarter horses are smart...
 but there's nothing smarter than a draught horse.



A DELVER is a type of plough that goes down a bore drain and the mud folds out on each side. We had eight Clydesdales in our team when I was a child. The two leading horses were two chestnuts, male and female. Dad would let the team out of the yard, and then he'd call them and they'd come over and stand in their places ready for harnessing. Nora was

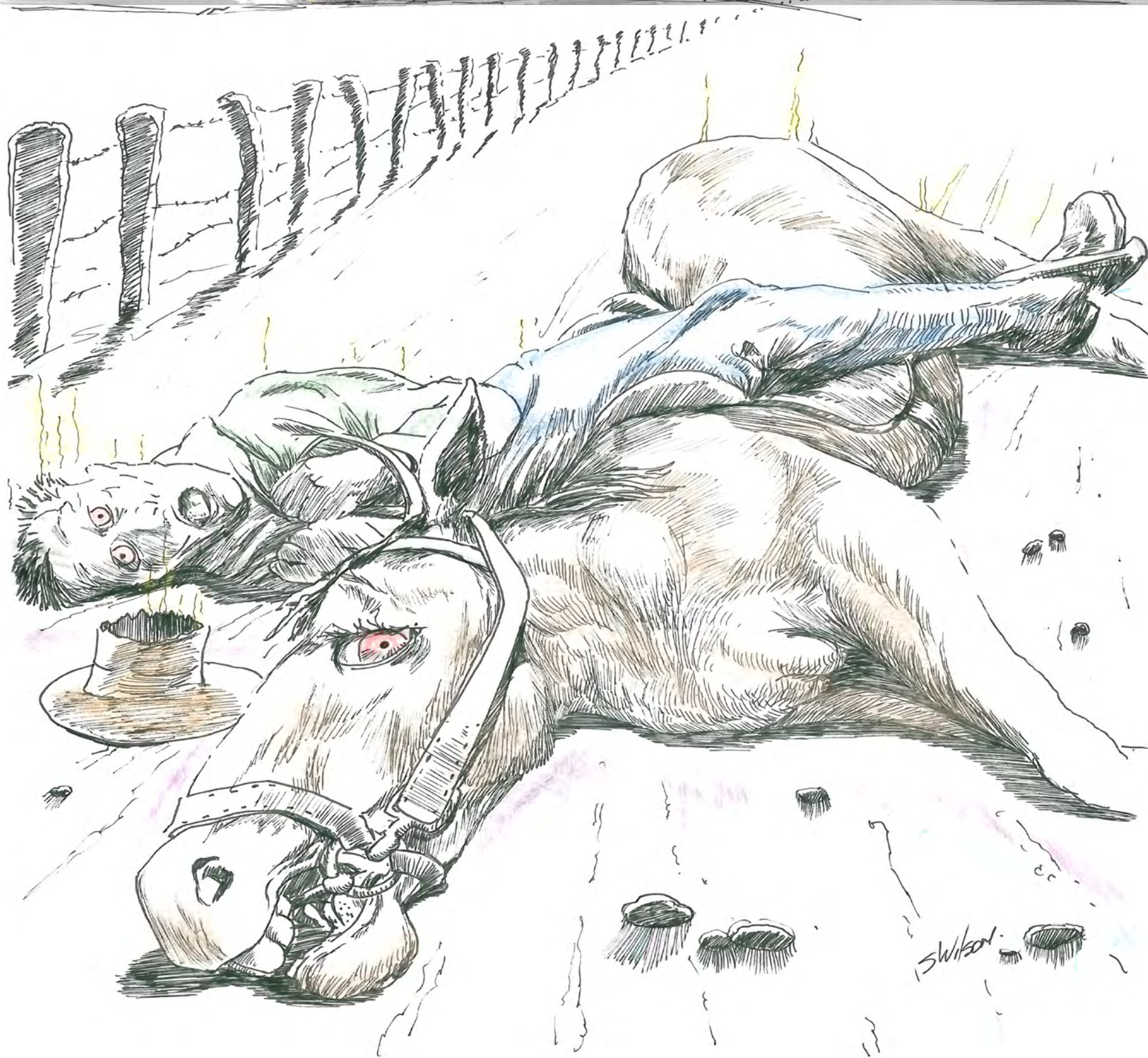
always the naughty one. She was a big black mare and she used to loaf if she could.

Dad would walk beside the team or he would ride, delving the drain, miles and miles of bore drain. He had a set of trees which he called the "dinner time" trees, where he'd always make for lunch. It would take him from 4 o'clock in the morning until he

couldn't see at night to delve the main drain. Then next day he'd delve all the branch drains. Now, with tractors, it's done in a matter of hours.

They were absolutely beautiful, the Clydesdales. Even now, whenever I see them my heart stops, they remind me so much of our team.

SHIRLEY ECKFORD



Jim Malone



a most enjoyable night.
Corporal George Sills arrived home on Sunday to spend leave with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sills. On Monday evening last we had a severe electric dry storm. The lightning was terrific. During the night rain fell yielding 49 points of rain.

CA: 19 Mar 1943

THOMAS JEREMIAH BRENNAN

I am a second class Sergeant of Police in charge of the police station at Julia Creek. At about 7 p.m. on Monday, 15th March 1943, I received a phone message from the Cloncurry police to the effect that a lad named Edward James Malone had been killed by lightning at about 4 p.m. that day at a place called Bindoorra. At about 8 p.m. I received a phone call from the 420 Mile, Cloncurry line, from a drover named Herb Fickling in connection with the death of Malone. I left Julia Creek at 8.15 p.m. by train and reached the 420 Mile where I was met by Fickling. He informed me that Malone, who was in his employ, was rounding up sheep on horseback near No. 6 yards on Eddington Station about 8 miles south from Bindoorra outstation. When at a spot about 200 yards from the droving camp, Malone was struck by lightning and killed instantly. The mare he was riding suffered a similar fate.

Fickling and I travelled by buckboard from the 420 Mile and arrived at the camp at midnight. I was shown the body of Malone. I examined the body and found singed hair on the head, eyelashes, brows and pubic areas. There was a distinct mark extending from the right side of the neck, down the chest and towards the thighs, and there were also marks inside the thighs. The clothes were severely ripped, particularly down the front. Fickling showed me a hat which he said Malone had been wearing. The top portion was missing, apparently having been torn away by the lightning.

I was then shown a dead mare about 200 yards from the camp and Fickling said it was the mare Malone was riding when struck. A saddle was still on the mare and showed signs of lightning damage under the left side. The mane in front of the saddle

had been badly singed and a mark about half an inch wide extended along the mare's back from under the saddle to butt of tail. I was informed that the mare had not been moved after being struck.

I took possession of the body of Malone and conveyed same to 420 Mile and thence by train to Julia Creek where it was identified by the parents of Malone. I was present at the morgue at 10 a.m. on the 16th March, when Dr Donald Carter performed a post-mortem. I am satisfied that Malone died as a result of being struck by lightning and that there were no suspicious circumstances.

Malone was aged 16 years and 22 days, employed as a drovers' hand, born at Charters Towers, and spent the whole of his life in Queensland. Deceased's parents are Edward Joseph Malone, station hand, and Grace Isabel, formerly Dunne.

Deceased's body was handed to parents for burial by Bert Pollard, local undertaker, and was buried in Julia Creek cemetery.

HERBERT CLARENCE FICKLING

I am a drover and reside in Julia Creek. On 17th February last, I left Julia Creek for Eddington Station to carry out contract mustering for the New Zealand & Australian Land Co. I had with me in my employ the following men: Jim Horton¹ as cook, Jim Malone aged 16 years, and my own son Clarence². We mustered 1370 cows in old Gilliat Paddock. After this was completed we commenced sheep mustering in the same country.

On the 15th March we were camped at No. 6 yards on Bindoorra outstation of Eddington. During the afternoon the cook, Jim Horton, discovered that the meat supply was bad. Just previous to 4 p.m.,

Jimmy Malone left the camp riding a bay mare to bring up some sheep to the yard to get one for killing. Just at this time there was a storm out to the south of our camp.

At about 4 p.m. Jimmy was bringing some sheep up towards camp and was about 200 yards away. At the time I was making hobble straps and I saw a severe flash of lightning very near camp. I heard my boy Clarrie say:

I seen Jimmy driving those sheep just before that clap of lightning and now I can't see him.

Clarrie went towards where Jimmy was driving the sheep and he called out to me: "Hey Dad, the mare's on top of Jimmy". With that, we ran across to where the mare was lying on the ground. She was lying on her off-side with the boy Jimmy still in the saddle in a sitting position. Both of them were dead. His hat was badly torn and the top part was missing. There were marks on his chest, and the hair on top of his head was singed. His clothes were ripped in pieces.

I pulled the body of the lad out of the saddle and carried it to camp. I then left for the 420 Mile railway siding and tried to get Julia Creek police on the telephone, but failed to get through. I then got on to Cloncurry police and advised them of the accident.

At about 10 p.m. the same night I saw Sgt. Brennan at the 420 Mile and reported the matter to him. Together we went to the scene of the accident. He took possession of Jimmy's body and brought it to Julia Creek.

I am satisfied beyond any doubt that the boy Jimmy met his death by being struck with lightning, and that no person was in any way to blame.

1. A story about Jim Horton is on page 321.

2. Clarrie's story is on page 616.

“THAT’S JAMES. That’s a lovely photo.
Mate, I couldn’t tell you where it was taken;
no, I’d be telling lies. He was born about 1927.”

[PAT MALONE, MP08, 1933]

HORSE AND RIDER STRUCK BY LIGHTNING

16-YEAR-OLD LAD KILLED

THE residents of Julia Creek and district were shocked when they learned on Monday evening that James Malone, the 16-year-old son of Mr and Mrs Ted Malone, of Toorak Station, had been struck by lightning and killed, writes our Julia Creek correspondent.

From the meagre details to hand it appears the lad was riding a horse near a cattle camp on Eddington Station when a fierce storm arose and after a vivid flash and crash of lightning it was found that both Jim and his horse were struck dead.

The unfortunate lad’s body was taken to Julia Creek for burial, the funeral taking place at 4 p.m. on Tuesday from the Roman Catholic Church, it being largely attended.

Jim, who was the eldest of the family, was a good son to his parents, was well-known, had many many friends, and was of a bright nature. To his sorrowing parents, sister and brothers, sincere sympathy is extended in their sad loss.

CA: 19 Mar 1943

WHEN I WAS ON DALKEITH the Malone’s were on Toorak. Ted Malone, he was the teamster on Toorak. I was mates with his eldest son, Jimmy; he was about my age. Jimmy took off one day on a horse and they didn’t catch up with him till nearly halfway to Winton. They wanted to send him away to school and he didn’t want to go.

Poor bugger ended up getting struck by lightning out at Eddington. He was out contract mustering with Herb Fickling. He went to bring some killers up to the camp and he got struck by lightning. Burnt all holes in the saddle and blew the flaps and the counter lining into little bits.

JIM BIRCH



Mother taught me **Pat Malone**

I WAS BORN IN THE RAILWAY NAVVY'S HUT in Julia Creek in 1930. The old fella was working on the line. He was a drover around Cloncurry, a worker in the rural industry in any shape or form, but if there wasn't any work, well, he'd do anything. I did my first year's ABC in Cloncurry at St Joseph's Convent. Anything I learnt after that, when the family went bush, was either roguery or mother taught me.

I think it was 1938 or '39 the old fella got a job driving a team of horses on Toorak, outside Julia Creek. We did a bit of correspondence on Toorak. Mum taught us. If we were home we schooled inside, but if we could see out the window and Dad was coming, we schooled outside. I remember Dad saying to me: "When you learn to canter bareback you can come out with me for the day", and that's what happened.

Toorak was a big place then. They had 500 miles of bore drain, and when Dad wasn't delving the drains he'd be out fireploughing. Whichever one of us kids was in front with the correspondence schoolwork, they'd get the week off to go as Dad's offsider. The others would have to stay and do schooling.

We stayed on Toorak until 1943. Dad then got a job looking after Balootha. I saw the biggest fires there I've ever seen on the downs; Mitchell grass fires that I would estimate were 45 feet in the air. We had some good times on Balootha. Used to fall off horses and do a lot of things, eh. It was about 40,000 acres. Only just a horse-paddock really, when you think that Toorak was cut-up into seven or eight selections, each the size of Balootha.

Short visit to Richmond

Mr. T. Parsons of the Eddington Arms Hotel, Gilliat, has disposed of his hotel to Mrs. E. J. Malone, an old identity of this district, and will be handing over during the next few weeks. Mr. and Mrs. Parsons will be missed from this centre as they have become popular with the public during their stay at Gilliat. Mrs. Malone and son Pat will spend a few days in Julia Creek before leaving for the Gilliat where she intends taking over the hotel at a later date. Many friends wish Mrs. Malone every success on her venture into business.

Anzac Day in Brisbane, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Gannon visited the war shrine and placed a beautiful wreath of white dahlias in honour of their only son Willie, while the...

NQR: 22 May 1948

In 1947 we left Balootha, and the next year my parents bought the pub at Gilliat. They thought there was a quid in it. Dad was probably looking for an easier job and more money coming.

In the early days, before they put the dip in at Julia Creek, Gilliat was on the main cattle route out of the Gulf. There was a dip near the town and from there they'd go down to Mt. Howitt, Quilpie and Charleville. They used to walk them right through. But when they put the stock route via Julia Creek, which made the trip a little bit shorter, that's when Gilliat began to die.

Gilliat was a small place like Nelia: just a pub, dance hall, Post Office and cattle yards. Before Dad bought the pub we used to walk bullocks to the Gilliat cattle yards from Balootha and Dalgongally. We'd get on the grog and have a whale of a time. The old man reckoned there was a quid to be made, so he decided to become a publican.

Gilliat boomed in the early sixties, when 400 men were camped nearby rehabilitating the rail and doing the bridges. We had a 4-ton waggon of stubbies delivered every week, plus spirits. We'd get it by rail, all 4 tons of it.

Mum was at the pub for 45 years. The old fella passed away in 1966 and Mum continued on until just before she died in 1993 in the Julia Creek hospital. That was the end of Gilliat.

The pub isn't there any more because, well, I buried it. It was old and it wasn't worth rebuilding. The Licensing Commission offered Mum a bit of money for it, probably more than she would have got on the open market, so she took the money and closed it down. The licence went to the Gold Coast. Then the council were going crook about it being a hazard, reckoned it was an eyesore, and I thought: *There's one way I can fix this; I'll just bury it.* My son-in-law, he had loaders and things, so we dug a hole and pushed it in. Some of the iron we used. There wasn't a lot of it we kept.

There's nothing left at Gilliat now, except a truck. If you see a truck parked there, that's Stumpy's old droving truck.



Below: Stumpy's droving truck at the site of the Eddington Arms Hotel, Gilliat.
[Guy Burns, GB95b, 5/9/2004]



There are memories here **Jenny Pearce**

I am staring at Gilliat
and grey struggling trees;
The earth, cracked and fragile,
is foreground to a straight horizon.
There's silence now, and stillness.

A feeling of history,
Decay and mystery.

A hotel stood for almost a century,
right on the spot where I stand.
Imagination brings to me
a publican,
stern and stout.

Her name was Grace,
This her living space.

Relics lay scattered.
A wooden dray, solid and heavy,
is half buried in the dirt.
A shed of iron, a lonely chair,
a rejected ute.

From another year,
There are memories here.

Below: The author's cycling camp at the site
of the Eddington Arms Hotel, Gilliat.
[Guy Burns, GB95a, 5/9/2004]



Oh dear I liked it **Myra Beach**

I WAS ABOUT 50 when I took up painting.
 I always had an interest.
 If I went to Brisbane or Sydney or Melbourne,
 first place I went to would be a gallery.
 I was fascinated with painting
 and every time I bought a book I'd buy a book
 about the old painters in Europe.

I was asked one day by Gladys Cooney,
 she was the first woman councillor in Julia Creek,
 we were friends,
 one day she said:

"Why don't you come and do art with me with the Flying Art School?"

Anyway, I did go one day.
 Oh dear I liked it.

We had a flying artist used to come, Mervyn Moriarty. He used to fly in – this was the 1970s – and we'd go to town and do art in Julia Creek. Sometimes there'd be eight or nine of us, sometimes about 20. It used to vary. Every second year he'd go to Richmond and we'd have him the other year. He'd only come out for two days at the most.



Almost a Memory, Myra Beach, 1991
 30 x 45 cm, pastel on Ingres paper.
 Gift from the artist to Mrs Grace Malone, publican,
 at the farewell evening, last night of trading,
 Eddington Arms Hotel, Gilliat.
 [Myra Beach, BeM01]

Myra and her husband were on Lands End Station
 from the time of their marriage in 1948 until they retired
 after their 50th wedding anniversary in 1998.





Left: Bill Davis standing on the steps
of his house at 29 Coyne St.
[Don Dewar, DeD04, 1953]

Below: Bill Davis' 38-horse fireploughing team
on J. Taylor's property, Werrina.
Bill is on his pony (possibly Betty)
with whip in hand.
[Malcolm Dewar, DM02, ca 1946]



Wee wah Roan wah Rusty!

Julia Creek's last teamster,
Bill Davis

Don Dewar

MY GRANDFATHER, BILL DAVIS, he always reckoned the lighter the horse the better it stood up to travel, to pulling the waggon. He used to work pretty long hours, spent a lot of time carting between Julia Creek and Millungera in the early days. Some wag set up a horse skull on the gate posts at Manfred Downs and wrote on it: "Here I lie driven to death by Day and Night Davis". That wasn't his nickname, though some of the blokes did call him Sardine Bill – not to his face – because wherever he camped there'd be a sardine tin. We used to have sardines and herrings in tomato sauce, and of course whenever we broke camp there was usually something like that left behind.

Bill had registered brands for his horses (3EH and TQ1) but he had another way of proving ownership. He'd get a certain-dated coin, a threepence or a sixpence, and slide it under the skin and it'd heal there. If he had to prove ownership of a horse he could say: "Well, it's got a 1937 threepence under the skin in the flank".

They were all named, Oh Christ yeah. How could you call a horse if you didn't name it? And the horse *knew* the name. If he called:

Up Jane!

Up Cloudy!

Up Billy!

they'd pull a bit harder. And if he got really serious while driving, then the tone of his voice would change and he'd say:

Wee wah Roan wah Rusty wah Rowdy!

and they'd get down and they'd really pull. Whatever names he called, those horses would hit the collar.



It was all voice command: start, stop, slow down... no, that's not right. There was no slow down, just start, stop, and really-get-down-and-pull. If they had to work hard they might only do that for 50 yards and he'd have to stop the team and give them a spell. A horse can't keep going like a tractor. The only places we really had to pull was when fireploughing through some of the creeks with silt in the bottom.

The team was nine horses long: two in the shafts closest to the plough, then eight by four. There's four horses in the lead, but there's only one leader and she's on the near-side, the side you get on a horse. When she moves this way she pulls on the horse beside her, and the next horse and the next horse. The four of them move together and the ones behind follow.

All the snig chains that connect the team to the plough, they're tied together so the team can't spread, so that the team moves as one. You have a snig chain on either side of the nine horses that are in a row. That snig chain is in nine pieces, but it forms one chain all the way through to the leader. Straps tie the snig chains together, say every two or three horses. At the back of each horse you have a wooden spreader which fits in the links of the chain, and that keeps the chains a certain width apart.

At a bend in the track the team went wide like a semitrailer turning a corner. They don't follow the bend, they have to go right out in the paddock to take the plough around. And you gotta keep calling them. "Yea, whoa back" was to come to the left, and "Gee back" was for the right. For a left bend, Bill would call: "Yea, whoa back, whoa back!" and keep watching the plough and calling as they took the plough around the bend. And then he'd call: "Gee back, gee back, *Gee Back!*" until they straightened up again.



BILL WAS BORN IN SPRINGSURE and I think it was in 1884. His parents had a hotel in Longreach. He used to offside carting water for the town. There were shearing contractors in the early days called Alloways, or something like that, and he used to press wool for them before he ended up at Julia Creek. He lived with his wife in a shed at Hilton Park, Harry Mathews' place. From what I know, this Harry Mathews let Bill buy a team off him. At one stage Bill went into lorries, but he was out of his depth with mechanical things. Trucks require more than just starting and steering, so he went back with the teams. He used to do the carting for Millungera. He always made his living through horses. Horses were his life and he was well respected for that.

I was about 5 when I first saw my grandfather. I never lived in Julia Creek, I used to go there only for Christmas holidays. He'd be caretaking a property while the owners were away. I think we were on Huddersfield and I used to ride with him to the mail box to get the mail and check the bore drains.

Where his house was in Julia Creek¹, in the early days he had another block at the back of that house where he used to bring his horses in and trim their feet and cut their manes. Well, he sold that to Tom Jessup the shearing bloke. On the west side was a bloke called Harry Ivers. He might have been retired because he used to make a lot of wooden toys for kids. When you stood in front of the house looking south, Mrs Wilkins' house was diagonally across the road. Hers was high set, like Bill's. Further down towards Julia St, on the same side as Mrs Wilkins, there was a Chinese gardener. He had the stick over his shoulder with a can on each end for watering his vegies.

Under the house, grandfather made ginger beer, that was the thing. I don't know whether he gassed it too much, but he used to put a bag over his head and arms when he went to get a bottle because they would sometimes explode. And he used to waterglass eggs. Submerge eggs in waterglass, a liquid that he made up, and it preserved them.

I WAS BORN IN TOWNSVILLE in 1937. Dad originally came from Ingham. He worked in the railway and he met Mum in Julia Creek. Mum was Bill Davis' daughter, Ivy Davis.

I went to school in Forsayth, Theodore, Cracow, then Brisbane Grammar School, and finally the agricultural college at Gatton. After I finished at Gatton I went to Julia Creek and spent some time with Bill to get more experience – and to help him out because he had trouble getting offsidiers. A couple of years I was out there, '53 and '55, from the end of one wet season to the start of the next wet season. When Bill finished the contract fireploughing, we worked for the Paine brothers until the wet season started. Then I'd go back home.

Grandad Davis was a bloke that never taught you anything, he just expected you to pick it up. He never said: "Look, this is the way you should do it..." or "The reason we do it like this is because..." You were just left to your own devices to somehow acquire the knowledge. We did about 900 mile of fireploughing each year. The biggest day we ever did was 16 mile. Some days, if it was really heavy going, we might only do 4 mile.

We camped on the open downs. What we had was hessian woolpacks

cut in a certain way so that with one peg, two pegs, three pegs, we could peg it out. The winds would tear you apart if you didn't have some protection. You'd put the corner into the wind, that's where you put your head, and you rolled out your swag on the rest of the woolpack. Once you were out of the wind it was no trouble at all to sleep. You slept in what you wore during the day (didn't have a bath too often) so that the next morning there was no changing clothes in the cold wind – you were ready to go.

Bill was first up in the morning, getting the fire going and the billy boiling. Then he'd call me for a cup of tea, and while I went looking for the horses he'd cook breakfast. I'd go for the saddle horses first, the ones we rode. They were hobbled and they'd be close by. The draft horses weren't hobbled and they could be anywhere. They might have been let go at night in a paddock of a thousand acres or more. Many a time I fell down sides of gullies and washouts because you're in the pitch dark, you can't see a thing. I'd be doing this at half-past 4, 5 o'clock. Bill would put a carbide light on the tucker box so I always knew how to find my way back. And I could see the morning star. I'd have an idea of where I was by the stars.

Horses run in different groups. There might be three in one mob, there might be eight in another. What you do is walk the downs and listen for the bells. Only the leaders of each group had bells, Condamine bells, and the others would be close around. Once you found them and started them off, they'd head for camp by themselves.

So that was my first job: to walk the downs and catch a hobbled pony, ride him bareback and bring in the other horses. By the time I got back it was maybe 6 o'clock, half-past 6, and Bill would have my breakfast ready. I'd clean up while he caught the horses ready to yoke.

I used to be amazed. Each horse knew when Bill picked up their winkers. I'd be watching, and as soon as he picked up a particular horse's winkers that horse would start edging its way through the mob. Every horse went in the same place every day – that was *his-size* collar, that was *his* position in the team. Bill would pick up three or four winkers at a time and when the horses came over he'd winker them. He'd catch the easy ones

first. With any horse that was hard to catch or looked like clearing out, what he'd do: he'd have a length of chain, half inch chain, with a ring on one end. He'd thread the chain through the ring and around the horse's fetlock. Bill called it a shin tapper – it would hit them on the shins if they tried to gallop away.

All the harnesses, 34 of them, would be set out in eight columns of four, plus the two shafters. The winkered horses would be brought up on the off-side of the harnesses – and woe betide any horse that stepped onto them. No horse belonging to Bill Davis would dare step on a harness. I'd yoke up the two shafters first, then I'd start on the pin horses. Bill only did the lighter harnesses because he was in his late sixties then. He'd do the leaders and the smaller horses while I kept working on the bigger, heavier draught horses. They call them the pin horses. They were always "in the pin". You had the leaders at the front – the smaller horses – and at the back were the heavy draughts, the pins. If we got stuck, like in a creek, and we needed heavy pulling, he'd call the pins. I never heard him call the leaders.

Before 9 in the morning we'd start the team and be gone off camp.

Cloud formation. We are not looking for rain unless we get a good downpour as light rains would do more harm than good to the dry grass.

Most of the graziers in the district are having their blocks fireploughed as a protection against bushfires. Mr. Bill Davis has his team of horses at work and has completed fireploughing on Maria Downs, Burwood, Wyaldra and Sunny Plains, and is now proceeding to Mr. Mitchell's property Carrum and from there he goes to Kellosheel and Dalkeith. Mr. Luhrman is busy with his fireploughing outfit and there are also other fireploughing tractors at work in the district.

Although the grass is drying off fast

NQR: 06 Jun 1953

1. See p371 for a photo of Bill Davis' house.

When you start a team you always call the whole team, you never just call one horse. You never call *Walker!* or *Rowdy!* or *Rusty!* – you just call the whole team. If he was fair dinkum, if they really needed to pull, he had a different tone of voice and he'd call them individually: "Wee wah *Cloudy* wah *Roan* wah *Rusty*". And when he adopted that tone they'd lean into the collar and pull. Normally the team just walked along; the chains were taut but there wasn't a lot of tension. Each horse wasn't down and pulling, they just walked. But when he really called them – when he called all these pin horses – Jesus Christ they'd go. They'd bury down and they'd pull.

What would sometimes happen with a new pin horse in the team, is that Bill might be up near the leaders and he'd call the pins. The old timers were used to it. They'd be right, they'd knuckle down and pull. But you'd see a new pin horse Bill was calling, and the horse would just look at him and think: *Bugger you. I'm down here and there's not much you can do about it.* What would happen then – Bill had me with a flapper and he'd say to me: "When I call him, whack him with the flapper". A flapper was a long stick with two heavy leather straps which smacked together and made a noise. Wasn't just noise though, it'd bloody hurt them. Oh yeah. Bill might call: "Wee wah *Rowdy!*" Bang! I'd hit this poor bastard on the rump and frighten shit out of him. He'd hit the collar and go. Winkers on, see; not knowing what was coming. He soon learnt.

Discipline was really strict. I never saw him cruel to a horse, but I tell you what, if a horse was playing up... Holy Jesus, a whip in Bill's hands was just a part of him. A long-handled whip, no cracker on it, and he could bring blood on a horse no trouble at all. If a horse was playing up and being silly, he'd sort it out. He'd ride up alongside the team on his little pony, this Betty, and with his long-handled whip he could discipline a horse on the other side of the team, four horses across, and not touch another horse, only touch the horse he was calling, the horse that was playing up.

Bill rode alongside the team, driving the team, calling the team. He might ride along for 20 minutes, half an hour, and not say a word. And then the next thing – if he's thinking about something else – the team comes to a stop. Bill would crack the whip and they'd get going again.

Below: Team again being unyoked.
Bill Davis unyoking Piebald leader "Sport".
Harness is laid out in rows and each horse
has its own particular place in the team.
(Writing on back of photo)

[Don Dewar, DeD04, 1953]



Another thing Bill would do: sometimes you'd get a new horse in the team and that horse wouldn't walk straight, he'd want to lay over on his neighbour. Bill would get a board, bang horseshoe nails into it, and tie it to the harness of the other horse so that the nails would dig into the new horse when he laid over.

All sorts of things used to go wrong. When you were yoking the horses I'm sure they could see through the winkers. This one slimy bugger, he'd gently put his foot on my foot. I'd be trying to push him off and he'd be leaning against me resisting. Ooh Jesus, I tell you what!

Another horse,
a pin horse, one of the last to be unyoked,
I'd just get the winkers over the top of his head,
(all the harness was off him)
and he'd grip the bit in his teeth – and bolt,
scattering the harnesses of the ones already let go
and dropping his winkers way down the paddock.

One day Bill got a rope,
tied it round the horse's neck,
tied him to the plough,
ripped the winkers off his head and stepped aside.
The horse hit the end of the rope and... thud,
it jerked him onto the ground.
Then he sulked, didn't want to get up.

Bill asked me to get a cup of water
and I was wondering:
"What's he want a drink of water now for?"
He got the water and poured it in the horses ear.
Well, Holy Christ!
Just like a dog can't stand you blowing in its ear,
a horse, if you pour water in its ear,
will hit its feet running.

The horse only did that a couple of times more.
He was very tentative how he took off after that.

NEARLY ALL THE FIREPLOUGHING was along boundary fences. Your neighbour does a track, you do a track, so that if there's a fire coming you can burn in between the tracks and that gives you a break of maybe 1 or 2 chains. Being close to fences caused some problems, the main one being if we hit wire. Emus, roos, stock, they all pulled wire out of fences. The team was frightened of wire (they might have thought it was a snake), and if it got caught in amongst their legs they'd go silly, they'd take off. Bill would

yell out: "Put her down!" and I'd screw the nose wheel down to make the plough dig in. Then, while they were kicking and lashing out – at me and the wire – I'd have to get amongst the horses with a pair of pliers.

I used to sit on the front of the fireplough and work the nose wheel. Any grass that was missed, if the plough wasn't cutting deeply enough, I'd have to grab a hoe and a pony, bareback, chip the grass off and then canter along and catch up again.

Every couple of hours Bill called out "Whoa" and the team stopped for a few minutes while the mares urinated. They have to bend down backwards. I don't know if they knew it was a pee stop, they just did it. I suppose they'd know, they'd been in the team long enough. They could do their droppings walking along, that's no trouble at all to a horse, but urinating is another story. Even the geldings have to drop everything and stretch out.

We'd pull up around lunch time wherever there was a decent spot and boil the billy, make a cup of tea. Sometimes the properties supplied us with meat, but we had no fridge so we couldn't keep it too long. We'd have cheese and onion, or maybe jam, on a sandwich. The horses just stood. They didn't get a drink till night.

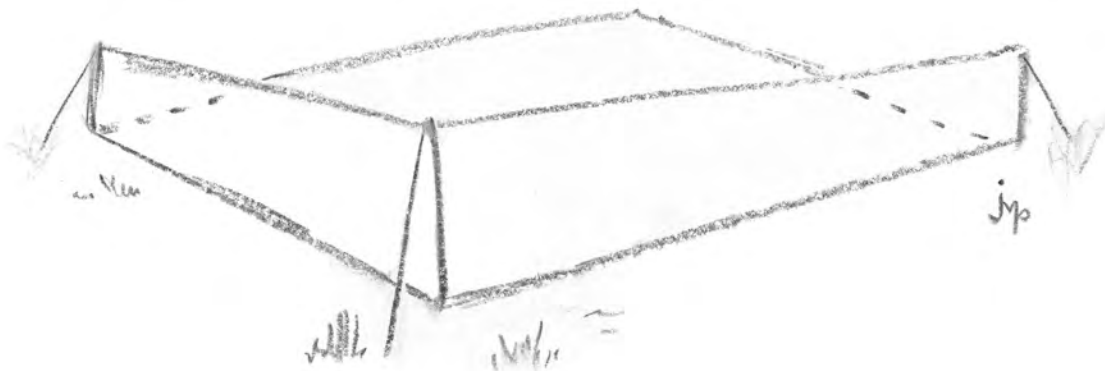
Much the same in the afternoon as in the morning. We'd break for a pee stop and then, about half-past 4, 5 o'clock, we'd pull up. We didn't necessarily camp near water for the horses. I might have to put them on water a few miles away. It didn't take very long at all to unyoke. It wasn't too bad really. I'd start from the front – pull off the harness and place it on the ground in a certain way, then take off the winkers and let that horse go. You do the rest of the string, the remaining seven in that column, the same way. Then you do the next string. It was no big deal. Probably took an hour to do the 34 horses.

In the morning you yoke the off-side string first, working from their near-side, and that left you space for the next string to come in.

At camp there were things I might have to do, like clip the manes. You couldn't have mane hair beneath the collar, rubbing against their shoulders, otherwise it'd cause sores. If we had a wet day we'd "grease harness" with mutton fat. I know on Wyaldra they were still using saddles they'd had since the 1920s, and they were as good as the day they bought them, nearly – this is the 1950s – and all they ever greased them with was mutton fat.

After I hobbled the saddle horses I'd put the windbreak up and roll the swag behind it. I'd have a wash, light the fire, and Bill would get tea going: dehydrated potatoes and a damper with onion and cheese. If we found fresh emu eggs we had omelettes. Mixed with a pint of powdered milk an emu egg was equal to a dozen hen eggs. For dessert, Bill made blancmange with strawberry or apricot jam spread over the top for a sweetener. We used to enjoy it. After tea I'd wash up, then we'd head off for bed at about half-past 7, 8 o'clock.

Opposite: Bill Davis (on horse) fireploughing
on J. Taylor's property, Werrina.
[Malcolm Dewar, DM01, ca 1946]



Left: "We used to cut a wool bale so that when you put it out on the ground you had two sides that were maybe 20 inches high. You'd only have it across the head and down one side, and you'd face that corner into the wind. You laid it out on the downs with three pegs: a peg at either side of the head and one down the side. Throw in your swag, and when you got in behind it you were as warm as toast." (Don Dewar)

OUR SEASON WENT FROM the end of March until the end of August. We'd do about 900 miles of tracks on Maria Downs, Wyaldra, Burwood, Sunny Plains, Huddersfield, Glenbervie and Spreyton. Bill was paid £2 a mile: he got 30 bob and I got 10 shillings. That was good money. I was only on £14 pound a week for other work (£700 a year), but with Bill I could pick up £450 in five months. During the off-season Bill worked on Wyaldra, or looked after properties while the owners went on holidays.

When we finished the season the horses were let go on the Julia Creek common. They were left free to roam all over the summer period. Some of them wouldn't be there next season, they'd get through a fence into a neighbour's property. Bill would be ringing people saying: "Have you got any strange horses, I'm missing two mares". He'd be on to Herb Fickling, the Common Ranger: "Have you seen my draughts?" Soon as the wet season finished we'd be mustering: over to Gilliat, down to Nelia, all over the place, and we'd bring them together. We'd clip their manes and clean the dirt out of their tails where they'd been rolling in mud. Tassie Triffett, the blacksmith, used to make chisels for us to cut their feet, to shape their big splaw feet, because if they crack or split the horse would go lame.

1955 was my last season with Bill. He did one more year in 1957 for the Paine brothers, fireploughing on Maria Downs, Burwood and Wyaldra. He wasn't forced out by machinery, he was simply getting too old. I think he would have been cost competitive, but he was a lot slower. Tractors can go day and night. They'd be off the place in no time, whereas Bill would be there for weeks. While ever he could yoke the team the Paines remained loyal to him. I remember Arthur Paine telling me that they would have liked to get tractors to do their firebreaks, but that Bill had helped them during the Depression when they had no money. That was the reason they remained loyal.

When he retired, the Paines let Bill's team stay on Wyaldra. I don't know whether they died there or what happened. I know he was against selling them to the knackery.

BILL LIVED IN THE SAME HOUSE in Julia Creek, that Coyne St one I told you about, till he died in 1968. He's buried at Julia Creek and his wife's ashes are also there.



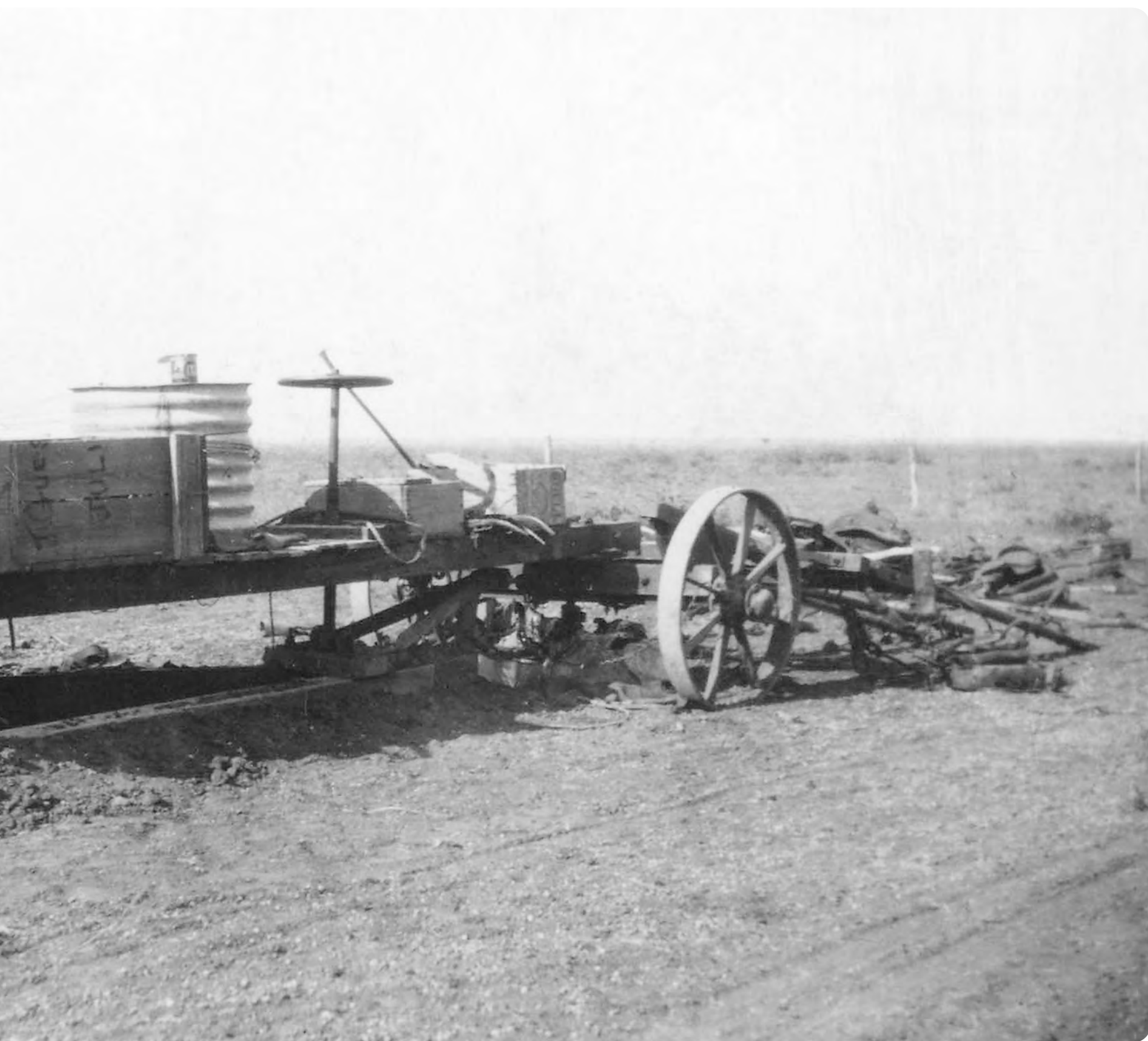
Right: Fireplough on Cremona. A fireplough was also home. You can see clothes hanging out to dry, and a watertank.

The sideways lettering (partly cut off) on the large wooden box on the fireplough says 'T. Gue... Juli...' That would be Tommy Guest, who lived in Julia Creek from 1925-1940¹. For some of that time, up until 1936, he had a garage. My guess is that the large box contained motor equipment addressed to the garage, and the box ended up as storage for whoever was doing the fireploughing on Cremona. It might even have been Bill Davis. The photo is undated, but the presence of Tommy Guest's wooden box suggests the mid 1930s.

[Lesley Bode, BoL15, ca 1935]

1. See page 404.





Tiny silver slippers **Malcolm Dewar**

MUM DIED ON the 4th of January last year [2004] aged 92. I tell you what, she wouldn't have told you anything. As soon as I asked her about Julia Creek she'd clam up; she didn't want to know about it, didn't want to relive it. In my eulogy I left out certain parts of her life. I said to Joff Casey¹, Mum's close friend from her Julia Creek days: "I want to tell the full story". Joff thought about it for a while and rang back: "No, your mother wanted to keep it quiet in her life time and I think you should honour that". I said to my wife: "My eulogy didn't do Mum justice. What I said is not what I would like to have said".

MY MOTHER WAS IVY DAVIS. Her father was Bill Davis, the teamster in Julia Creek, and he had three children. Young Bill, he had a stutter and they used to call him Stuttering Bill from Billygoat Hill. He copped a fair bit of flack during his school days. Another little boy called Darby died of diphtheria on the way to Charters Towers. And there was Mum. They called her Tibby. She grew up in Julia Creek. The story behind the name Tibby is that Mum, apparently, liked the tub of water when she was being bathed, and called it a "tibby".

My biological father was the overseer on Auckland Downs. Somehow he got to know Mum and a relationship developed. That was Tom Povey. See, I was born out of wedlock. I didn't find that out until 1965 when I was taking my wife and three little girls to England and I had to get an original birth certificate. I opened up the letter and there it was: P-O-V-E-Y.

I'll tell you something interesting. My brother Don went to Julia Creek and worked for Grandad Davis in the fifties. The people out there were asking: "Are you the one....?" So Don found out in about 1953, but I didn't find out till 1965.

The other interesting thing was: when I met my wife, Claire, she was working at AMP in Brisbane in the Address-o-Graph department. If you wanted a list of addresses they printed them automatically using stencils, the forerunner to computer printouts. One day she looked up the insurance records and found that I'd been adopted by my stepfather, Jack Dewar. She asked her mother should she tell me and she said no. This family conspiracy went on for 12 years. They all knew and I didn't.

I've since spoken to Mum about it. I said to her that I'd had so many good things happen in my life that I wasn't bothered by the situation early on. Being born

out of wedlock, I said, counted for nothing. I had the gift of life. Still, if I hadn't found out, Mum never would have told me.

I think with Povey it was a typical situation of a boy going to a country area and getting a local girl pregnant. I also think there might have been a bit of snobbery on his side. Marrying the daughter of a teamster probably wasn't on for a bookkeeper.

Imagine the shame of my unwed mother in a little country town in 1932. Innuendo and stares from small-town eyes would have been very difficult to bear, so Mum went to Brisbane for a couple of years to get away from the scandal. I was born at Mount Gravatt as a home birth. Apparently Tom Povey paid maintenance for a short while, then it fell upon Grandad to help support the both of us. He was often out on the fireplough, not always able to get to a bank to send money, so Joff Casey, my Godmother in Brisbane, gave Mum money. Grandad would repay her later. Joff really helped.

It was pretty hard for a single girl in the Depression, but Mum said: "No way in the world" to the idea of adoption. She stuck with me and looked after me by herself.

Mum returned to Julia Creek when I was about 2 years old. She worked on the telephone exchange and ran the railway refreshment rooms. It must have been somewhere around 1936 that she met Jack Dewar, a night officer in the railway. They met in Julia Creek. I've got a vague memory of a wedding reception in Townsville and me walking over to the bridal table with

a couple of tiny silver slippers.

After they married they didn't stay long, just long enough for me to start school in Julia Creek in 1937 with the surname Dewar. Then we moved to Forsyth in the Gulf, a railway transfer, and stayed there until 1945.

I don't know how they managed the boarding school fees on railway wages, but they sent me to All Souls for three years and then on to Brisbane Grammar. It was quite a big effort for them. Mum was passionate about education because she could see the only way out of poverty, unless you won Gold Lotto or something similar, was through education. The Second World War had a dramatic effect on people's thinking. The foot slogger would see that the officer, the educated bloke, didn't go into the firing line, whereas the foot slogger was cannon fodder. A lot of those guys when they came back from the war thought: *Well, right, my kids are getting an education.* Mum had the same sentiment.

It was obvious to me from the age of 5 that she wanted me to be a doctor. I didn't realize at the time how unlikely were the chances of that happening, almost an impossible dream. But it came true for both of us. In 1966 I passed the exams in London to become a member of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. I practised in Rockhampton for 37



before settling down.
Miss Joff Casey who has served several years as a sister in the US Army, accompanied by her sister Miss Pat Casey, arrived to spend holidays with their great friends Mr. and Mrs. Bill Davis. The Julia Creek woolscour is in full

CA: 14 Jun 1946

1. Joff's story begins on page 263.

years. Even though I got into a certain strata of society, I've always felt happier with the average person. I was the adopted son of a railway man and had three uncles and a father-in-law in the railway. I'd rather mix with people like that than with some of the academics I've met.



MUM WAS MASTER OF HOME REMEDIES remembered from her Julia Creek days, and was still recommending them when I became a doctor. A teaspoon of sugar and a few drops of kerosene – that was for a cough. The Rawleigh's man used to come around with Rawleigh's Mustard Ointment. You'd put that on your knee and you'd get so much pain from the ointment you forgot about the pain in your knee. It was just one pain competing against another. Joff told me that for head lice they used to wash their hair in dilute sheep dip. It probably worked better than the stuff they use now. For boils you had a choice: sugar and soap, or Epsom salts and glycerine, or castor oil and flour. Castor oil came in a blue bottle. It had a terrible taste, though it wasn't too bad if you mixed it with orange juice. In those days they often used castor oil as a purgative. I remember the ritual purging every Sunday. It didn't matter how regular you were, Sunday you had to have a bowel movement whether you felt like it or not.

luck wherever they may go.
Master Malcolm Dewar arrived from Charters Towers to spend school holidays with his grand parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Davis.
Miss Lucy Byrne arrived from Brisbane to take over the Blue Bird Cafe.
Miss Byrne was accompanied by little

CA: 27 Jun 1947

WORKING IN THE RAILWAY my father got a free pass, so I often went to Julia Creek for holidays. Grandad owned the block of land at the back of his Coyne St house and I remember seeing his dray parked there. The wheels were 7 feet in diameter, huge wheels specially made for him in Charters Towers, and on top was a wooden platform. He carted goods as far out as Millungera Station, about 75 miles north of Julia Creek, and he'd come back laden with bales of wool.

During one of my Julia Creek holidays I went out with Bill for two weeks fireploughing. I had a bath in the bore drain – twice – which suited me pretty well. It was either 1946 or 1947. There were three of us: me and Bill and the sidekick. I used to ride a horse beside the fireplough. One day the horse put its foot in a hole. It stumbled and went down so low that I was about to put my hand on the ground, but the horse corrected itself. I wasn't unseated, I was pretty lucky.

Grandad and the sidekick did the cooking in a quart pot over the fire. It was pretty simple fare, the same every day – lamb. They'd cook the lamb and we'd have it hot at night with potatoes and pumpkin, and cold during the day. Dessert every night was blancmange with plum jam.

I remember Grandad having his tea in a great big cup. When he finished the tea he'd have droplets hanging from the bristles of his walrus moustache and he'd go – scchhwitt – and take them all in.

When I was leaving to go back to All Souls, Grandad went to Lance Lewis and bought me a present. I suppose it was thanks for the two weeks I'd been helping him. Lance Lewis had a garage in the main street of Julia Creek and sold a few general items, as well as motor vehicle spares. I returned to All Souls with plenty of holiday stories to tell my friends, and something even better – a new bike.

GRANDAD DIED IN JANUARY 1968 in Julia Creek. His grave's there with Grandma's. I'd recently come back from England and was working as an assistant to an obstetrician-gynaecologist in Rockhampton. I was in the consulting room when the doctor from Julia Creek rang. My grandfather had just died from a haemorrhage. I've always kicked myself that I didn't go to his funeral.

He was yarning once with one of his Julia Creek mates. He'd taken me with him and I was listening to both of them talking about horses as you would talk about old friends:

Do you remember that bay horse on Millungera, Cloudy? Yeah, he was a half brother to...

It seemed to me that these two old codgers could remember every horse they'd ever owned: their colour and markings, their names, and how they were related. You'd think they were talking about their mates – and I suppose they were.



Left: Rawleigh's Mustard Ointment.

Opposite: Joff Casey (left) and Malcolm's mum, Ivy Davis.
[Malcolm Dewar, DM09, 1933]

Below: Malcolm, dressed in bow tie in front of his grandfather's Coyne St house.
[Malcolm Dewar, DM10, 1935]

"The story I've heard from Dadie Dawes about me stripping off down to my bow tie and racing around Eckford's picture theatre at Julia Creek is probably true – although Mum said it never happened. I was always the little bloke with a tie." (Malcolm)



Bill Davis And His Big Team Of Sturdy Horses Have Given Way To Progress

WILLIAM DAVIS, a rugged 73-year-old westerner from Julia Creek,

WILLIAM DAVIS, a rugged 73-year-old westerner from Julia Creek, stood and watched the rush and bustle of the traffic in Flinders St one day last week, removed his brown, broad-brimmed hat and sighed: "Motor transport is here to stay". White-moustached and grey-haired, Bill Davis was watching mechanisation, which has written an end to the romantic story of an era in transport in which he himself played a prominent part.



Bill Davis is one of the last of the teamsters. Before the coming of trucks, he used to drive magnificent teams of up to 34 draught horses over unmade roads to deliver supplies to outback North Queensland sheep and cattle stations.

In Townsville last week he averred: "I still believe horse-drawn transport can compete against lorries in the west. First of all the outlay is a lot lower. A good team costs about £580, fully rigged. Compare that with the price of a truck. And there are few running expenses for a team – no engine to wear, no springs to break, no rubber tyres to replace. Lorries need petrol; horses need only grass. It is simply a matter of turning the horse loose – they'll find their own feed."

But this is 1958 and Mr Davis now has his own car. "It comes in handy, sometimes" he says.

Bill Davis was born in Springsure. He will be 74 years of age next October. Most of his early days were spent in Longreach where he went to school. After that he had his first contact with the carrying business. Bill used to help cart water from Gin Creek about a mile and a half from the town. Longreach had no bores in those days and water used to cost 2/- or 2/6 a cask.

For a while, Bill accompanied his father on haulage trips to various stations in the district. The biggest properties in those days were Maneroo,

Wellshot, Evesham, Vindex and Bowen Downs, probably the biggest sheep property of them all. The biggest cattle property was Mount Cornish.

It was about this time that Bill first saw the motor car. "It looked strange and ominous. It was chain driven and a doctor owned it" he recollects.

At the age of 19 Bill became a station hand and worked on the sheep and cattle property of Kennington Downs, in the Longreach district, about 25 miles from Muttaborra. Three years later he went to Hughenden and worked as a woolpresser for Alloway Brothers.

Forty-three years ago, in 1915, Mr Davis went to Julia Creek and started his own carrying business. He obtained a team of 28 horses, by the method most people buy their cars today – time payment. The man who "had to start from the bottom" soon became a well-known figure in the Julia Creek area.

Bill's first team was from Harry Mathews of Hilton Park, Julia Creek. Mathews bred the horses himself in the district and they were light Clydesdales. "The big Clydesdales were perfect on the short routes, but no good on the long hauls" points out Mr Davis.

With his big waggon and team of 28 horses he made regular runs to Millungera Station on the Flinders River, about 75 miles from Julia Creek.

"We carried everything – rations, materials for building and for station plant, and wire for fencing" said Mr Davis. For most of the trip there were only wheel tracks through grass-covered country. In some parts there wasn't even this.

In the wet Mr Davis still had to deliver the goods. The rain often turned the ground into quagmires causing the heavily-laden waggon to sink well below the rims. Even after the destination was reached his job was not finished. He had to unharness the whole team, and with 28 horses this was a big task in itself.

Bill Davis loved his work, and most of all he loved horses. He knew and understood them; but then he had to – it was his life. It took strong hands to control the team and often he was on his own.

Bill was nine years on the Julia Creek–Millungera route. As back loading he carried wool from Auckland Downs, which was owned at that time by the Taylor Brothers. Then the lorries started to arrive.

"I wasn't beaten by progress" Mr Davis says. "I didn't give up the transport work because of the lorries. It was the difficulty in obtaining offsidiers. I just couldn't get lads to go on the long journeys with the team."

So Mr Davis turned his attention to fireploughing, still using his horse teams. Mr Davis worked on stations and selections – about 100 in all – from the Flinders to the Diamantina at Kynuna. His job was to plough fire breaks between 10 and 15 feet wide. "The horses were ideal for this work. They pulled hard and usually covered up to 12 miles a day." By "a day" Mr Davis meant a 4 a.m. start and a 5.30 p.m. finish. But even mechanisation has entered this field. Now tractors are doing the job of clearing fire breaks.

Mr Davis has only recently given up his work and pensioned off his horses. "Age beat me, not the tractors" he said. "I still guarantee I could do the work more cheaply with my horses." But Mr Davis is now living in retirement, with his good wife, at Julia Creek. They have a daughter in Theodore and a son in Bundaberg. The last of the teamsters in the district, William Davis and his huge team of pulling, plodding Clydesdales have now entered the realm of memories.

Listening for the bells **Brian Sohier**

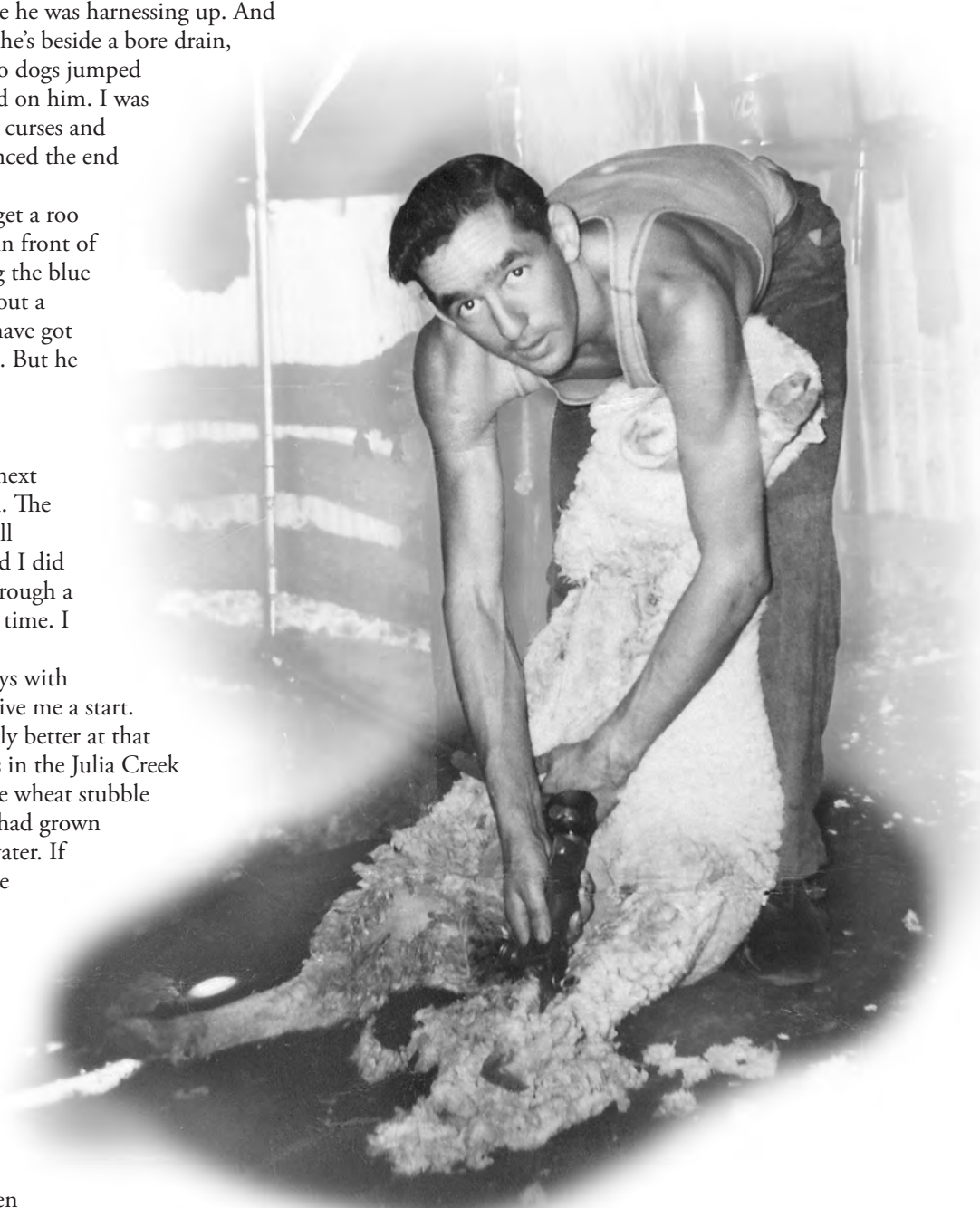
BILL DAVIS HAD THESE TWO DOGS: a white bull terrier and a blue cattle dog. He had them for holding the draught horses on the camp while he was harnessing up. And he liked to have a little snooze after lunch. One lunchtime he's beside a bore drain, asleep under a prickly bush and he lets out a snore. The two dogs jumped up – they must have been dead to the world – and pounced on him. I was watching this from my own prickly bush. Amidst the vivid curses and the flaying hands trying to shoo the dogs away, Bill announced the end of our lunch break. So back we went to the fireplough.

Sometime later I was riding the bore drain looking to get a roo as feed for the dogs. The two dogs took to a sheep way up in front of me. I cantered after them and flew off on the run, grabbing the blue dog by the tail and giving my boot to the white one. It let out a yelp – and just died. With my pointy riding boots I must have got him in the heart. Then I was worried about how to tell Bill. But he never got up me about the dog – we were good mates.

I DID A SEASON OF FIREPLOUGHING with Bill in 1957. The next year I went into the shearing sheds and took a learner's pen. The shearing season would start in June and go right through till November. Very hot at the end of each season. The last shed I did was way up in the Gulf. You'd sweat that much you'd go through a waterbag every two hours, and four salt tablets in the same time. I used to shear at 9 stone 5. I'm 11¾ now.

I worked for Ballingers, the shearing contractors. Always with Ballingers. They were the ones who were good enough to give me a start. I went in first as a board boy, picking up, and I was probably better at that than I was as a shearer. The shearers always had good tallies in the Julia Creek area because the sheep were easier to shear than those in the wheat stubble areas. They used to get a harder skin. A lot of the wrinkles had grown out of them because of the long distances they walked to water. If you had a 10-stand shed, you could bet that at least half the shearers would be doing 200 a day or better; then there'd be the 180s, 170s, 160s. Because of that, as a learner, you were lucky to get a pen. And they were reluctant to put me on because I was good at picking up. But eventually I got a learner's pen. See, what you'd have to do when you were learning, you'd wait for someone to get caught on the bell, who hadn't finished his sheep, and you'd ask him: "Can I finish for you?" You might shear one today, you might not get any tomorrow, you might get two the next day. When the boss of the shed thought you were getting competent enough to shear a hundred or better, then he'd give you a start. And I got a start. My best tally was 168.

I was around Julia Creek from the end of 1955 right through to the end of 1960. I got married in 1961 and that's why I decided not to go back out. Bill had retired from fireploughing at the time I left. He was working on Wyaldra for the Paine family.



Above: Brian shearing on Rosevale with the Ballinger team.
[Brian Sohier, SB01, 1958]

I WAS BORN IN JANUARY 1937, here in Ourimbah [north of Sydney]. I'm 69 coming up, getting close to 70. Grew up in this area. When I was 5 years old I lived in the house at the end of this street. I'm the youngest of 11. Three older brothers went away to war: Ted was killed at Singapore, Frank lost a couple of fingers in New Guinea, and Alf was on the Darwin wharf when it was blown up.

As kids we had an uncle with a 3000 acre property and sometimes we'd get shipped there for school holidays, so I had a little bit of the bush bred into me. Three years at Gosford High and I topped the class in Ag Science. The teacher wanted me to go to Hawkesbury College, but my father was on the old age pension by that time and money was short.

I left school and worked at a general store for 12 months. I'd look over at this 60-year-old bloke working there and I'd think: *I'm doing the same thing as him – I've gotta get something better than this.* I joined the railway. For two years I was there without a holiday, then my brother Bob and one of his mates were planning a trip to Darwin and I wanted to go. I applied for holidays but they wouldn't give them to me. I said: "If I left you'd have to replace me, so why can't you replace me while I have a holiday?" They wouldn't change their minds, so I picked up a piece of paper and wrote out my resignation.

We went to Darwin. Coming back we got to Tennant Creek and something was going wrong with our Vanguard. We applied for a job at Peko mines and ended up working there through the winter. Tennant Creek had two pubs made of galvanised iron, not much social life, and hardly a female in town. We pulled the pin on that and came east to a job contract mustering – a joint muster – on Cuckadoo and Chatsworth, cattle stations out the back of Selwyn. When the muster finished we were free again, so we went through to Julia Creek. I got a job on Wyaldra and Bob

got onto Lindfield, two properties side by side. And that's how I ended up in Julia Creek around about the August of 1955.

The Paine family owned Wyaldra; old Arthur Paine and his three kids. Frank was the oldest, then Noreen and Jack. I had a good relationship with the Paines.

I settled down to mustering and general stock work. At one stage I caught some wild pigs. One of them was a little runt and the others wouldn't let it feed, so I took it aside. It ended up like a pet dog. Followed me everywhere, wouldn't leave me alone. And it grew and it grew and it grew. After I left Wyaldra to work in the sheds, I came back one Sunday for dinner with the Paines. What are they having? Pork. And everybody's got a guilty look on their face. Sure as eggs, I picked it straight away: "You bastards are eating my pig, aren't ya".

In 1956 or 1957, just on Christmas, we had 43 inches of rain on Wyaldra and you couldn't ride a horse, couldn't kill a sheep. Christmas dinner was coming up and not a lot to eat. Several miles from the homestead the bore bubbled into a big swamp and we had a fish trap in there. A mate and I took a shotgun and walked to the swamp, shot a dozen or so ducks, and picked up half that number of fish from the trap. Alex Wall flew out bread, tin peas, tin something else, potatoes, and some alcohol. No parachute, he just dropped the lot. The buggie in the shop, I think it was Peter Dawes, put the tin peas in with the potatoes, and when the package hit the ground the tins bounced around and just about peeled all the spuds for us. The bread was squashed, but we pushed it back into shape. The publican, Bill Gannon, wrapped two bottles inside a cardboard box. The bottles came out the bottom and skidded in the mud, but they never broke. And that was our Christmas dinner: duck and vegies, fish, a bottle of rum and a bottle of wine.



Bill Davis' fireplough team on Wyaldra. Bill is riding his pony, Betty. Scanned from a print in the possession of Don Dewar, itself copied from a slide taken by Brian Sohler.

[Brian Sohler, DeD02, 1957]

BILL DAVIS WAS ON WYALDRA when I started work there. He was more or less doing the job of an overseer: horsebreaking, lamb marking, dipping, sorting the sheep as they came through the race, and so forth. He was on a horse seven days a week, either breaking-in or working with us. A knowledgeable horseman and very fit. He kept his horse team on the property. His grandson, Don, had helped work the team a couple of years earlier, but in 1957 Bill couldn't get an offsider, so he turned the horses out.

On Saturdays or Sundays when there was no work going on,
I'd ride the bore drain with a rifle
trying to wean the pigs off easy water.
The snout bounty was five shillings from the Paines,
two and six from the council.
And I'd have a fishing line with me to try my luck at the swamp.

I was riding the drain one day and I saw draught horses.
Nobody had told me about them.

Back at the homestead:

"Whose are all those horses?"

The story came out that Bill couldn't find an offsider:

"Well, Bill, why don't we hook em up and have a go?"

In the winter of '57, with my help,
Bill reassembled the team for one last season.
Two months, two men, and a team of horses
cutting thin slices from the Mitchell grass plains
on Wyaldra, Burwood and Maria Downs.

Fireploughing was a routine.

I'd be up at four a.m.

still dark, listening for the bells,
catching the night horse, saddling up.

If I couldn't see the draughts
I'd put my face to the ground
and scan for silhouettes against the picaninny dawn.
My job was to have the horses on camp before daylight.

By the time I got back, Bill would have coffee and breakfast cooked for me. I'd eat breakfast while he caught the horses and lined them up. Bill was in his early seventies, so he'd do the easier work while I fitted the harnesses on and hooked the team together. I'd connect them in single lines of eight horses: one, two, three, four lines like that, and then I'd bring the lines together and link them crossways. We'd try to get a start an hour or two after dawn. A lot of times we finished soon after lunch; other times it might be getting towards the latter part of the afternoon. We'd plough anywhere between 12 and 20 miles a day.

I wasn't working for the Paines, I was working contract for Bill. When we went fireploughing, our wages from Wyaldra stopped and we went onto contract. Bill was getting so much a mile for ploughing, and I was getting so much a mile as his offsider. As soon as ploughing finished we went back to normal duties on the property.

Bill retired the team after that '57 season.

He was still working on Wyaldra
when I last saw him.

His horses were running there,
his gear was stored there,
but the team was finished.

A photographer from the *Register* came out
to document the story.

They'd heard it was Bill's last season.

I took some colour slides myself at the same time.



Ray Godier

THE GODIERS CAME FROM BOULIA to Julia Creek in the very early 1940s. Grandad Godier was a pioneer of the Boulia area and he was on the council over there. He and his wife weren't getting on, so my grandmother left him and came to Julia Creek to be near her daughter, Biddy, who had married Arthur Fayers. Arthur was centred here in Julia Creek, but he used to do a lot of shearing around Boulia and that's how he met Aunt Biddy (Dad's sister). Arthur and Biddy came to Julia Creek to live and Grandma followed. Then Grandad moved to Julia Creek, made up with Grandma, and life went on as normal.



We've Lost All That

**A look back to the schooldays
of Julia Creek's halcyon years**

The whole Godier family eventually shifted to Julia Creek, but Dad, for a time, still lived in Boulia. He was a truck driver. All the mail and all the supplies for Boulia came from Dajarra at the southern end of the rail line from Mount Isa. Dad used to carry goods from Dajarra to Boulia and as far south as Birdsville. He met my mother in Dajarra and they married there in 1944. Jack and Lorna Godier were their names. They moved to Julia Creek that same year and I was born soon after. There were four boys straight, then two girls. I'm the eldest and I'm the only one who has stayed in Julia Creek.

After Dad shifted from Boulia he went shearing for Arthur Fayers. It was a family tie-up, what with Arthur being married to Dad's sister. Dad stayed in the shearing game probably until the 1960s, though he wasn't with Arthur all that time. He gave shearing away then, and became foreman on the council until he retired.

EVERY SATURDAY AFTERNOON when I was younger, but every Saturday night after that, I went to the pictures. In my middle teenage years Norm Downey used to show pictures on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday night. That was the big thing of the week, going to the pictures on Saturday night. You'd swear you were going to a bloody Command Performance. What else did we have? There was little else to do.

When I was a boy there was a dairy in Julia Creek. Blanches had a dairy out near the woolscour and sold the milk in town, but it was cheaper to have goats and milk them yourself. This town used to be just full of goats. Every family had goats. Our family had goats. Old Mrs Shaw, the lady in the hospital, she was one who had a lot of goats. She used to go away with them; shepherd them to where she wanted, rather than get hers mixed up with the others.

Goats were a part of life, a hardy animal that could survive a drought where other stock couldn't. But they didn't like the rain, the poor things, and they wouldn't leave the town area if it was raining. They'd head straight for the awnings of the shops. You couldn't get near the shops for goat stink when it rained.

Left: Godier family on the back steps of 46 Coyne St.
Clockwise from back row, left: Jack, Lorna,
Ray, Carmen, Ron, Michael.
William absent, Jackie not yet born.
[Ray Godier, GR02, ca 1960]

Opposite: Blue Bird Cafe (and order ticket)
when owned by Harry and Anna Liaros.
[Peter Liaros, LH02, 1974]

THE EXTENT OF EDUCATION for Julia Creek kids, unless your parents could afford to send you away, was Scholarship – grade 7. I started and finished school here, but I had a few years of disruption. In 1952 when I was 8 years old I was badly burnt. It was my job to light the wood fire in the mornings. I started the fire and went to put on kerosene to get it going, but it was shellite instead, much more flammable. See, back in those times clothes were ironed with petrol irons, which could also use shellite. You pumped them up to pressurise them, that's how they did the ironing. Anyway, I grabbed the wrong bottle and it caught alight when I tried to boost the flame. I ran outside to throw away the bottle, but somehow I tipped it up and shellite went down my back. I was burnt from my neck right down past my buttocks. Just about did myself in. I ended up hospitalised in Brisbane for nearly 12 months. When I came home, rather than go to school and get knocked on the scars, I did correspondence for two or three years. Then when the Catholic convent opened in Julia Creek I was one of the first students to enrol.

Like most young kids in small towns you just make your own fun. In my early teenage years I joined up with Ernie Brazier's youth group and we used to go riding and camping and swimming. We'd go to Eddington or to the 5-Mile. The 5-Mile was out along the old Normanton road past the cemetery. It was a waterhole fed by a boredrain from the woolscour. The drain ran across the road and down a gully into the creek. It was a fair waterhole; always good fishing. We used to ride out there a lot and camp overnight.

I finished school in 1958 and went to Byrne Bros – Frank, Maurie and Pat – who ran the Holden garage. Only Frank and Maurie actually owned the business. Pat worked for them and used to do the Portagas.

I started in spare parts. I actually wanted to do an apprenticeship as a mechanic, but it didn't work out. They already had one apprentice and they didn't want to put on another. I thought: *I've had enough of spare parts, I'm outa here.* So I went two doors along to Peter Dawes. He had a newsagency, a haberdashery, and right down the back, where I worked for 12 months, he had groceries. 1959 I went to Dawes. They were pretty hard people to work for, so I was outa there too.

The Post Office had a job for a telegram boy. You'd do one week delivering telegrams and the next week you'd do night shift on the phone exchange. I don't know how long I was there, probably two or three years. Then I went to Ernie Brazier as an apprentice panel beater, spray

painter. I didn't complete my apprenticeship because Ernie couldn't afford to continue with it, so I went into the sheds and learnt to shear. I did a few years shearing, then I went truck driving for Benny Burrows on the mail run from Julia Creek to Normanton.

At various times I've worked at the council, at Julia Creek Motors, at the Shell depot, as well as the other places I've mentioned. I've worked at lots of things in Julia Creek.

After being at the Shell depot 12 years, it closed and I was made redundant. I was thinking of moving to Townsville, but in the meantime my cousin David, Uncle Frank's son, he asked me would I be interested in managing the supermarket for him. I could see a few problems and I said:

Ah, you'd better get somebody else. I couldn't run that place.

Well, buy it.

C'mon, it's not worth anything. It's just about bankrupt.

How much will you offer for it?

So I quoted a price and within a month he decided to sell. That was May 1996 and since then I haven't stopped working. Not just me of course, my wife also. We now run a good little business.

There's a long history to this building. In the 1950s it started life as a garage and milk bar¹, and then the whole lot became the second Blue Bird Cafe. Harry Liaros, a Greek bloke, he was the last person to run it as a cafe. He went out of it in the 1970s and my Uncle Frank bought it. Frank had it for years and years and didn't do anything with it, just locked it up.

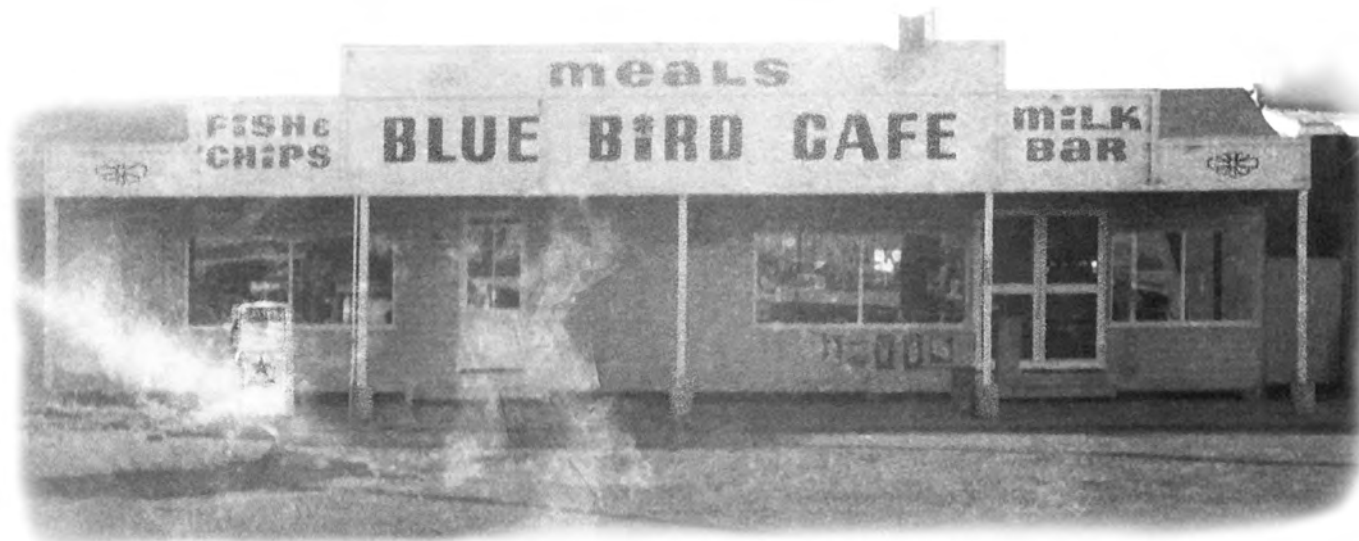
Just down here on the corner, Uncle Frank used to have a little grocery store, but business outgrew the floor space so he refurbished the Blue Bird and created a supermarket. Uncle Frank died in 1988 and his son, David, took over. He's the one who sold it to me.

carry out his... is constructed, Mr Svensson plans to bring his children up from Brisbane, so that the family may be together.

Young Ray Godier, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Godier, suffered from a burning incident last week. The boy somehow set fire to a bottle of shellite and in trying to throw it away from himself the resulting burst of flame set fire to his clothing. Shirt and singlet at the back were burnt entirely. He is in hospital suffering from burns to his back, and is improving.

The A.N.A. plane service on Sundays is to be reintroduced. It is understood that this centre is to be allocated a certain number of plane seats from here direct to Brisbane. This will be a tremendous advantage to plane travellers and denotes the air...

NQR: 11 Oct 1952



1. Mayne Milk Bar, see page 352.

BACK IN MY SCHOOLDAYS we had wonderful Anzac Day concerts in Julia Creek. It was one of the highlights of the year, really. You'd be in for a play or singing a song and you'd be practising for months. The night time concert would go on for two or three hours.

We'd start off with a parade down the main street, both schools marching. A lot of old Anzacs marched too. The parade finished in Peter Dawes Park and they'd give all the kids a free soft drink or an ice cream. The CWA put on a luncheon for the returned men, and that night in Eckford's Hall there'd be the big concert.

I can clearly remember the concerts whilst I was at primary school, but afterwards... I don't remember them afterwards. Once you get to those teenage years you don't want to be around that type of thing.

Anzac Day in Julia Creek was a great occasion because we had the two schools: the state school and St Joseph's. Everyone would be in uniform and there was always competition between the schools as to who put on the best show. About 65 kids went to the convent.

It's bloody marvellous – they've barely got enough kids now to run one school, yet back then we had students enough for two.

Julia Creek, it seems to me, has gone backwards since those days. Half a dozen shearing teams based themselves in town when there were plenty of sheep in the area. In every one of those teams there'd be 10 or 12 blokes. From shearing alone that's 60 men, and they'd each have a wife and two or three kids – at least. In our family there were six.

Life was different then because there were so many people around. The schools had no problems keeping their numbers up, therefore we had plenty of school teachers. We had a bank, we had...

Y'know, we've lost all that.

Lack of students caused the convent to disappear. It was pulled down because it was unsafe. The dormitories were upstairs, and with only one stairway up – only one fire exit – if the building had caught alight there would have been cooked kids everywhere. Not only that: because the church didn't have a lot of money when it was built, they cut corners and it was starting to deteriorate. Enrolments weren't there, money wasn't coming in, maintenance wasn't being done.

I was on the committee that decided the convent had to be pulled down. We went to the government and got money to erect demountable dormitories and classrooms in its place. It was a grant and we had to pay so much back. When student numbers dwindled we couldn't afford to make payments, so the government removed a percentage of the buildings. What was left we sold.

At one time extra classrooms were added to the convent because more space was needed. Those classrooms were the last remnants. We sold them to Andy and he created Julia Creek Villas out of them in about 1995.

If you go down to the Villas, near the Villa sign in the middle of the car park – you won't see anything, but that's where the convent stood.

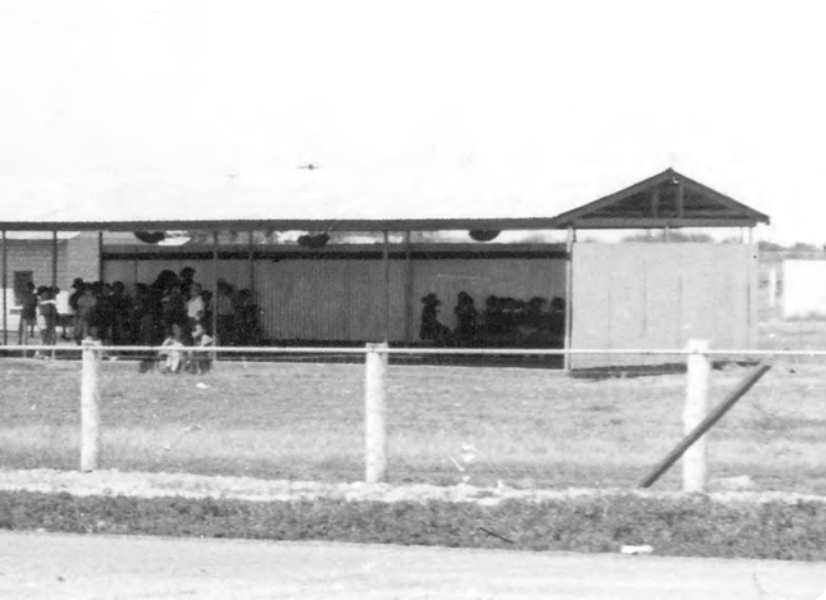


I WAS ON the convent committee when we were going to build a convent in Julia Creek. Max levelled the ground for us. I think Father Devereux may have approached him and asked would he give a price for levelling the ground, and Max said: "Yeah, I'll do that". Then when he finished the work he sent the bill – I don't remember exactly what it was, but it would have been considerable – he receipted it at the same time; he donated his work to the convent. He did that.

Max was instrumental in helping build the convent in so much as he did the levelling of the ground.

TERRY O'NEILL

Below: St Joseph's Catholic Convent, Julia Creek. It is probably recess time, as there are children in the playshed – and a dog coming in through the gate. Does he know he'll get a feed at that time every day? [Dadie Dawes, DW39, ca 1959]



12 December 1952—Plans for the new Catholic convent are well in hand and building operations will commence early in the new year. This will be a boarding school as well as a day school, and music will be taught as an additional item. The site will be chosen at some point just east of the court house. The ground will be prepared by Mr Max Burns, who has generously agreed to do this work gratuitously through the medium of his earthmoving plant and tractor drivers. This is a worthy gesture and is to be commended.

15 January 1955—Julia Creek's new convent will open on February 1 at the beginning of the new school year. The building and furnishings have cost £28,000. This double-storey building is 74' x 64', with a kitchen annexe 30' x 20'. Accommodation has been provided for 30 boarders: 15 boys and 15 girls. Construction commenced in September 1953.

22 January 1955—The new St Joseph's Convent is nearing completion and is looking a very nice building indeed. The painters have started on the job. It is understood that the sisters will be arriving next week, ready to open the convent at the beginning of the school term.

24 March 1956—The first inter-school sports between pupils attending the state school and St Joseph's Convent took place last Friday afternoon when the lads met in a game of cricket. Each side had one innings and the game was won by the state school team by five runs. It was a closely contested game and a return match will be played on Friday.

9 February 1957—School reopens this week and for many youngsters the life will be a new one. The enrolment at St Joseph's Convent has increased from 108 last year to 128 this year. If extra accommodation was available in addition to the 30 beds at present, twice the number of boarders would be accepted.

25 May 1957—Father Devereux, who has been in charge of St Abigail's Parish for 12 years, left Julia Creek on Wednesday to take over a parish in Townsville. During his time here he saw one of his chief aims become a reality – the establishment of St Joseph's Convent. Last Sunday his parishioners gathered to bid him adieu and to wish him well in his new charge. The high esteem in which Father Devereux is held by his own parishioners, and others in the community, was demonstrated when he was presented with a wallet packed with notes.

21 June 1958—With drums beating and banners flying, the pupils from the state schools at Julia Creek, Nelia and McKinlay; from the State Correspondence Course; and from St Joseph's Convent, paraded through Burke and Julia Streets on Sunday morning to compete in sporting events on the oval. These events are open to all school children in the district and nearly 300 children took part. The 39 events on the programme proceeded with the customary smoothness, and the competitors were roundly applauded by the large gallery of relatives and friends.

The Peter Dawes' Shield, won last year by Julia Creek State School, was wrested from them by the children of St Joseph's with a tally of 161 points. Julia Creek was second with 128 points, followed by Nelia 52 and McKinlay 10. Competitors from the last two schools were considerably less in number than those from the local schools.

These sports are held annually and create much interest throughout the district. It is the meeting place for young and old, and it fosters in the growing students the desire to excel.

Opposite: Vi Edwards.
[Fred Edwards, EF14, July 1946]

Below: Jimmy Edwards at Birdsville.
[Fred Edwards, EF03, 1937]



They Should be Remembered

Vi Edwards

Vi's husband, Jimmy Edwards,
drowns at the Punchbowl

ISUPPOSE YOU ARE FEATURING JIM because of what happened to him. He was very young to lose his life.

Jim had three sisters before he was born – and that was in Burketown by the way. Then when he arrived on the scene the parents said “the boy” all the time, because he was a real novelty for them. Novelty for the girls, too, to have someone different. So he became “Boy” to all the family. I didn’t know him as Boy, I always called him Jim.

We met when he arrived on our property in the Gulf with a mob of sheep. He was in charge of a mob brought to Brookdale for agistment. That was 1934 or ’35 during the Depression. They were bad years, the Depression years, because on top of the Depression we got this dreadful drought. They talk about this latest drought being the worst in a hundred years, but I think you could say that about most of them.

What I mainly remember of the Depression were the men walking along the road with billies swinging and swags on their backs. A lot of them came our way. In those days they couldn’t get official rations at the same place twice, they had to move on. We had little idea that the country

Dorothy Priora, a 41 year-old single woman who gives her occupation as domestic, set out, she says, to walk from Brisbane to Cairns carrying a swag to look for work. She went as far as Townsville where she was arrested by police and charged with having insufficient lawful means of support. She pleaded not guilty, and during evidence of Detective McIntyre laughed gaily and interrupted with remarks of “Oh, isn’t that terrible,” and “He’s telling lies.” At the conclusion of the police evidence, she said that she believed McIntyre had told the story he did, “because he is related to someone in my past.”

In Tuesday’s Court of Petty Sessions she was sentenced to one month’s imprisonment.

NQR: 08 Apr 1950

was in such a bad state. I’ve never forgotten the sight of men walking the roads with their swags. They came looking for jobs, but of course there *were* no jobs. When they asked for work, Dad had to tell them there was plenty of work but no money. Still, they never left empty handed. Their swags were always filled at Brookdale.

We saw a lot of men in the Depression, but we rarely saw a white woman other than our own mother. Women weren’t allowed to take up the swag. They weren’t supposed to leave home. They would have been arrested¹ and charged if they did.

I lived on Brookdale with my parents and heaps of brothers and sisters. We ran both sheep and cattle. It was only 35 miles to Burketown but we hardly ever went there. If we were lucky we might go in once a year; we might go to the Christmas tree put on for all the kids. But if it rained we’d have to stay home.

Distances in the Gulf might be large, but our horizons were very small: Punjaub on our western boundary, Armraynald on the eastern boundary, and Gregory Downs 45 miles away to the south. After Dad got a truck, about 1928, we went to Gregory Downs for the races. Before that we never went to anything much, and if we did go somewhere it was in the buggy.

When I was 3 years old I can remember going all night in the buggy with Mum and Uncle Alex to Granny Davidson’s place at Woods Lake, about 5 miles from Burketown. A lot of people lived along the lake. It was the only place fruit and vegetables would grow. Granny Davidson grew beautiful things, and there were quite a lot of Chinese gardens. My Uncle Alex drove the buggy, so Dad must have been away somewhere.

Soon after the buggy trip my brother George was born – born at Woods Lake with a veil of skin over his face. It was just a normal birth, aside from the veil.

In those days things were different. They didn’t make a fuss like they do now when new babies came along. Now, the moment they know they’re pregnant the world knows. But not then. People were more private.



Having this little brother was a wonderful thing. And the veil was deemed to be very lucky. My mother said George would come back from the war – and he did.

The veil is just like skin. I nearly threw it away after my mother died thinking it was a piece of tissue paper. That’s what it looked like. My sister said to me: “Don’t throw that away, that’s George’s caul”. I think that’s what she called it – a caul².

1. Vi’s recollection that swag women were subject to arrest is correct. As late as the 1950s, women were jailed for “waltzing matilda”. See NQR article 8/4/1950, left.

2. Another story about a caul is in Richard Flanagan’s *Death of a River Guide*, chapter 1: “Mama kept the membranes. Later she dried them, for the caul that a baby is born in is considered to be of the greatest luck, fate’s guarantee that neither the baby born within the caul, nor the possessor of the membranes will ever drown. She was going to keep them to give me when I was an adult, but in my first winter I fell badly ill with pneumonia and she sold the membranes to a sailor so that she could buy me some fruit. The sailor had the membranes sewn into his jacket, or at least that was what he told Mama he planned to do with them.”

A wild fancy perhaps, but I wonder would Vi’s husband, Jim, have been protected from drowning if he had been given George’s caul.

I GREW UP ON BROOKDALE. I was supposed to help my mother as a child but I hated anything in the house. So I learnt to ride, and out I went helping with the sheep muster. Then when Dad got cattle I'd be there on the rails watching everything that went on. Sheep weren't a great success on Brookdale, it was more cattle country. Dad still had sheep when he died, but the dingoes had cleaned up most of them.

It was hard to get a governess. You couldn't get girls to face the wild Gulf country, so I had lots of gaps in my education. That's why I was so naive. After I learnt to read a bit, books gave me a different world. I've always been a reader. The first romance I ever read was *Jacqueline of the Golden River* – how about that! The title has stayed in my head, but I can't remember who wrote it. It was better than Mills and Boon.

But this is not about me. No, I don't think you want to know about me at all. What I'm saying is... I didn't have much schooling and I didn't want you asking me...

JIM LOOKED AFTER THE SHEEP while he was on Brookdale that first time, and then took them away to somewhere around Julia Creek when the drought broke. He was on the station quite a few months. I saw this handsome young fellow and I didn't let him get away. Wasn't quite love at first sight; might have been second sight. There weren't many likely lads around Brookdale.

1935 we married in Townsville. I went by mail truck from Brookdale to Dobbyn and caught the train. Dobbyn was about halfway between Cloncurry and Burketown, an extension of the Kajibbi line. Jim was out bush on a droving trip, and when he'd finished he came to Townsville for the wedding.

We never had a permanent home together. We were in Cloncurry for a while after we married, waiting through the wet season till he went droving. And then I buggerised around in Julia Creek, living there with Jim's sisters. Teresa was married to Frank Whiting, a builder, and Maude was married to drover Tom Kelly. But whenever I got the chance I'd go home, go back to Brookdale.

When he could get the work, Jim went droving. It's only certain times of the year you can do that. There's a lot of times when there's no work because they've got to take into consideration: is there going to be enough grass? Is there going to be enough water? There's no use going on a droving trip and being stuck in the middle with no grass and no water.

Getting the droving trip down the Birdsville Track was good at the time. It was the tail end of the Depression and it was hard to make a bob. There'd been many other mobs of cattle before ours and there wasn't much grass around. Wasn't too much wood either, to make a fire at night to cook the meals. Fred was 18 months, so it would have been 1937, towards the end of the year.

Can't believe it, can you. A young woman with a young child, hardly been away from home, and really keen to go droving down the Birdsville Track – all 300 miles of it. See, I didn't see Jim very much after we married; he was away looking for work. I thought the Birdsville Track was the only

way we were going to see one another.

We started from Coorabulka Station outside Boulia and went through to Marree in South Australia. Weeks and weeks and weeks. I became a collector of stones. I'd never seen so many stones – there's none out in the Gulf – and I was fascinated with them. I just about filled the ute.

We travelled in a small utility. My brother Gill and I, and little Fred. Gill was about 16 and he did most of the driving. We went from bore to bore. The three of us would pull up in the middle of the day when the cattle were having a spell – and a drink if there was water available – and we'd have lunch while keeping an eye on them. They wouldn't stray too far. They wanted to lie down and have a spell too. If we'd come over a long dry stage, no water in between, the men would take the cattle to the troughs a few at a time, otherwise they'd have rushed in and none of them would have got any water.

Late in the afternoon when the cattle arrived in camp, I used to take the first watch. The cattle were pretty exhausted by then. All they wanted to do was lie down and chew the cud. Supper was usually prepared by Jim. I'd never cooked like that, out in the open in camp ovens. Jim cooked for everyone. He'd done it so many times when they didn't have a cook that he became really good at it.

I'd never tasted such lovely food as on that droving trip – corned brisket and damper, so different to what we'd had at home. Mum never made damper, always bread. I remember when I was 10 I had a day a week in the kitchen: cleaned up the shelves, put down new paper, did all the cooking. If we were getting short of bread, and if bread had to be made that day, it became my job. For years they told the story of my first batch.

The boys took it out to the mustering camp, and after the wet it was still hanging up in the trees. So the story goes.

While on watch, we used to sing to the cattle or say a few poems. You had to let them know you were there. It wasn't to entertain them, it was to calm them. If something made a sudden noise they'd all get up, and some of them might decide to clear out. A rush they called it. Luckily we never had one of those. That really was my only worry – trying to find a tree to climb if the cattle rushed.

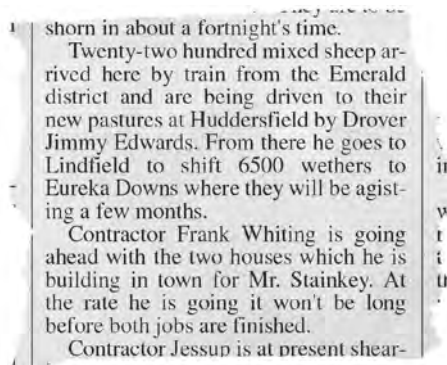
At night, the cattle became very quiet and they'd come around the campfire as if they were seeking human company. But what amazed me was how they palled up. If one bullock couldn't find his pal, he wouldn't lie down until he did. He'd go in-and-out and round-n-round the mob until he found his mate.

Then there were the ones that decided they'd return home.

And they left that decision till night time. In the morning before the cattle moved off, the men checked to see if there were any tracks going back home. Somebody would have to go and get them and bring them on. And that, too, has always amazed me. They're a bit like us. They like that old paddock they left behind.

It's strange, y'know. On Brookdale, after we finished mustering we opened the gates so the cattle could go back to where they were before we gathered them up. You didn't have to chase them, that's where they wanted to be. And if you put them in another paddock, they'd hang around the gate and nearly starve to death trying to get back to their old paddock.

One day just after we passed through Birdsville we took the wrong track. We didn't realise until it got fairly late in the afternoon that the cattle weren't coming. "Those buggers have taken the wrong track." Not us,



NQR: 13 Feb 1937

y'know. After a while we realised that we'd gone the wrong way. There were no road signs like there are today. We thought it was too late to go back to Birdsville; we mightn't be able to find the way. It was just a two-wheel track, it wasn't a formed road. Next morning, there we were on our way to Birdsville with all these horsemen coming towards us. These people got ready overnight from all around Birdsville, anyone within cooee distance, and they were out looking for us. But I've always said: we weren't lost, we just took the wrong track.

It rained before we got to Marree and that's when the beautiful thing happened. Desert flowers sprang up overnight, covering the sandhills. They reminded me of sheep – the flower-covered sandhills all looked the same to a new chum like me.

When we delivered the cattle at Marree they were in pretty good nick. There must have been over a thousand bullocks. It was a big mob when you saw them all together. I'd gotten really fond of them and I hated seeing them go on the train. Some fell over and couldn't get up and the others walked over them. We were nearly going to go with them to Adelaide, to look after them on the train, but at the last minute we didn't.

Gill took the horses back to Cloncurry. Jim and I didn't get back there for quite a while. We took on little jobs around Boulia and other places shifting cattle, and it was almost a year before we saw Cloncurry again. When we got back we camped with Jim's horses. They were spelled on the Cloncurry Common.

There was an old teamster's waggon on the common and we camped nearby. At that time, just before the war, that was about the end of the teamsters and their waggons. They were the Fogarty family, a family I knew. It was their waggon that had run over my grandfather Davidson 18 years before. They ran over his legs and squashed them. It killed him. This was long before the Flying Doctor came to the Gulf.

The Fogartys used to come past Brookdale with their waggon, carting stuff out from Burketown, and we got to know them. Everything came to Burketown by boat, and the teamsters carted it out to the Territory and all over the place. I'd known the Fogartys for years. If they came past Brookdale they always camped there. Dad had been a teamster too, and he let them stay, let them put their horses over the river for a few days to give them a feed of good grass.

The whole family went with the teams. I don't think they ever had any education, the kids. The women were terrific. They helped harness the horses, they brought up the kids, they cooked, they washed, they loved – all from a waggon. I've always admired those women, and they should be remembered.

That's one of the things I wanted to do when Fred took me to the Hall of Fame – I wanted my grandparents and my father remembered, to be enrolled as unsung heroes. My grandparents came all the way up from Mudgee in NSW in a waggonette. It took them several years to get to Burketown, and four of their children were born along the way. Imagine it. This is Mum's parents, the Davidsons. Mum started as a little baby, and before they got to Burketown she had all these brothers and sisters born. They arrived about 1904.



Left: Vi's brother, Gill,
on Longford Plains.
[Fred Edwards, EF06, ca 1940]

We regret to report the death of drover James Edwards during the week. He was accidentally drowned at the Punchbowl in the Flinders River, about 28 miles from Julia Creek, when he was swept away while attempting to cross the flooded river at the road crossing. He was in charge of a mob of cattle from Esmeralda on account of Mr. J. W. Fletcher. The body of deceased was found on the 23rd April and the burial took place in Julia Creek on the 24th April. The funeral was well attended by his many relatives and friends.

Jimmy 'Boy' Edwards, was well-known in our town. His father, William Edwards, resided in Julia Creek with his family for many years. Our deepest sympathy is extended to Jim's wife and son, relatives and many friends.

Golf has been quiet in Julia Creek of late but no doubt a start will be soon made in this popular sport. Tennis en-

NQR: 06 May 1939



Opposite: Vi and son Fred, in Townsville after Jim's death. [Stumpy Malone, MS03, 1940]

WE WERE AT CLONCURRY for a few months and then Jim got this job to take cattle from Esmeralda Station to Boulia. I came to Townsville and he was going to follow on later. I stayed in Townsville waiting for him.

But then one night...

someone came and woke me.

I thought I'd woken from a bad dream,
from a nightmare.

Y'know, after leaving Brookdale I had nightmares.

I think it was the Gulf Fever.

They say it doesn't leave your system for years.

But it was to tell me that Jim...

he'd been drowned that day.

You just don't know what's going to happen in your life, do you.

They let me know that night,

but they were looking for him for days.

So for days I waited to hear...

I wanted to go to Julia Creek,

but everyone advised me against it.

I was sorry after, that I hadn't gone out.

And I'm still sorry.

People think differently if it's not happening to them.

They always have good advice for somebody else,

don't they.

I stayed in Townsville until he was found.

The funeral?

No, I didn't – no I didn't... I didn't...

That's what I've been sorry about.

I should have gone out.

Even before he was found I should have gone.

After the funeral I remember his mother saying:

"Oh, it was lovely of Father So-n-So to bury Jim from the Church.

Drovers can't be good Catholics, y'know".

And I thought:

How can she say that of droving men?

They don't care all that much for religion,
for going to church.

To her, a good Catholic went to church every Sunday.

Lots of things you can't understand.

Rene, Jim's eldest sister, she and her husband had the hotel at McKinlay. She was the only one of the family who had money way back then, and I think she paid for most of the headstone and arranged the wording. I'd say so. It was up by the time I went to see the grave.

Jim died in 1939 on the 20th of April. I don't suppose Fred would have told you, but his wife Veronica was born that day, that very day. You hear about God taking away, but he will always give you something in return.

REQUIESCANT IN PACE

Mr J. EDWARDS

*There's a saddle that will not be used again
by a man who rode so often in it;
and a horse that whinnies for a rider
who lies under a fresh mound of earth;
and there's a storm of sorrow
that veils the town of Julia Creek.
Jimmy Edwards has passed away.*

"Boy" they called him on the northern droving tracks, and few men were so popular. He was a typical Westerner, slim and wry in build, with a heart as big as himself and a smile on his sun-tanned face for everyone with whom he came in contact.

The name of Edwards is respected right through that part of the country where Jim's father – "Stockwhip Billy", a widely known cattle drover of other days – and later Jim himself, carried on their work as drovers. Jim had worked on Dalgonally, and was head stockman on Kamilaroi, on the Leichhardt. He was a good jockey and rode many winners in the northern parts of this State. He was a fine all-round horseman. And there was little about the ways of cattle he did not know.

When the Reaper beckoned, Jimmy was in charge of cattle travelling from Esmeralda Station, in the Croydon district, to Winton. He met his death in the Flinders River at the Punchbowl crossing, north of Julia Creek, after jumping off his horse in a vain attempt to reach the opposite bank. Buffered by the strong current, Jim sank, to rise no more.

A word or two should be devoted to the men who spent much time walking the banks of the Flinders until they found the body. They were Constable Fred Murray, Vince Fickling, Bill Davis and Ted Malone. The remains were conveyed to the Catholic Church from where the funeral took place. Jim has left a young wife and child to mourn their loss.

So-long "Boy". The lads in the Gulf Country will miss a true friend and a fine fellow.

[Adapted from cuttings kept by Vi]





I THOUGHT THE BEST PLACE for me to start again was on a station. That was the only thing I knew about. I could ride a horse and milk a cow so I'd be able to help, more than some girls who were always in the house. I knew the bloke who was looking after Longford. I don't know exactly what he was, but he was there and offered me a job as his housekeeper. Well, that didn't go off too well. Some men, they get these young women out there, newly widowed, and think they're fair game. So that didn't work out. Mr Gilmore came and took over for a while. He had two stations, Longford Downs and Greenwood, on both sides of the line out towards Cloncurry. He was a lovely old man, married to Dame Mary Gilmore.

Later on I worked at Lindfield. I wanted to be closer to Julia Creek. Fred was nearing school age and I didn't want him to grow up like me and not have a decent education. Maude Kelly, Jim's sister, lived in Julia Creek and she said he could stay with them. They looked after him, Phyllis especially. Any kid at school that got a bit tough with Fred, she'd sort em out.

Old Mr Tom Wall owned Lindfield and I worked for his wife. I lived with the Walls at the homestead. It was all house stuff there. I didn't get out chasing sheep.

Left: Mr Gilmore and Vi's brother, Gill, on Longford Plains.
[Fred Edwards, EF09, ca 1940]

Opposite: Fred Edwards (baby) and the Kelly children, Tom, Patricia and Phyllis, at the Kelly home, Julia Creek. The children are sitting on a homemade three-wheeled car, one wheel at the back, two at the front. Fred is intently staring at someone, probably his mother, Vi, on the right of the photographer. The two girls would rather look straight at the camera and show off their most prized possessions – their blushed-cheeked, bootied and bonneted dolls. The eyes of Pat's doll, which should be open when held upright, appear to be closed. The mechanism which opens and closes the eyes has probably become sticky through many years of use.
[Fred Edwards, EF11, 1937]



The Walls went to Julia Creek nearly every weekend for the pictures or to get groceries, so I saw Fred all the time; and during school holidays he'd come out to Lindfield. He kept asking me when his father was coming home, and I hadn't told him.

That was another mistake I made.

I thought: *He's only a little boy, he'll forget.*

But they don't.

If he saw another little kid in the air,
tossed about like fathers do,
He'd say: "I wish *my* father was here".

On Lindfield,
between the Holloway's place and the homestead
(George Holloway was the overseer)
was a bore drain
with a board over it for a little bridge.
We'd been to see the baby Holloway.

Coming back, Fred fell into the drain
and I saw my chance:

*He's at school,
and soon will hear stories
that he won't believe.
Tell him now before others do,
of the water that took his father.*

So I did.

"...and this is what happened to your father;
he fell into a boredrain and drowned."

I've never heard a little kid cry like Fred cried.

Ever.

Ever since.

And I knew I'd done the wrong thing. I should have told him straight away when he was a little boy. I've told lots and lots of people that story, because you can always do the wrong thing with little kids. You think they're going to forget, but they don't. They don't forget.

Opposite: Vi's "Cyclone" horseshoe
[Fred Edwards, EF02, ca 2000]

Right: Fred and joey on Longford Plains.
[Fred Edwards, EF08, 1940]

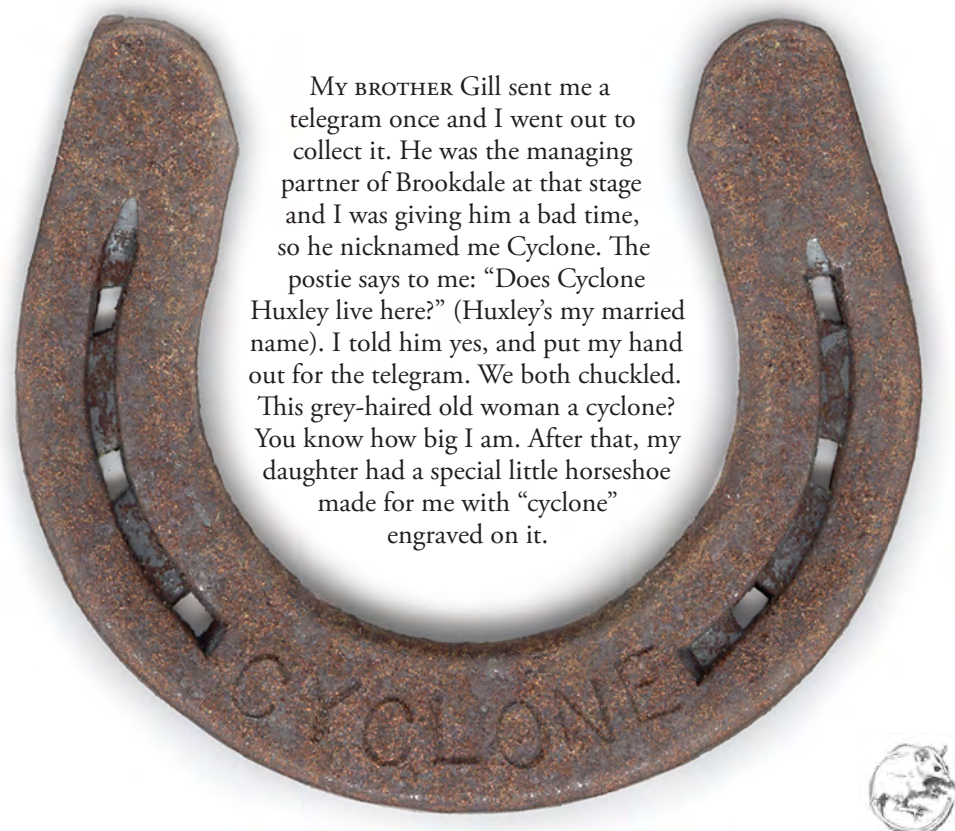


I WAS ON LINDFIELD during the first years of the war and one day I decided to join up. What happened that day: the doors had brass knobs and I was polishing these bloody door knobs and I thought: *What the hell am I doing here? My brothers are God-knows-where and I don't know if they're ever coming home. Why aren't I doing something to help them?*

My sister had joined the WAFs and was waiting to be called, so I decided I'd go down to Townsville with her. When I got there they weren't accepting women with dependants. Someone told me that the Americans were looking for civilian personnel, so that's what I did. I had a typing job for two and a half years. I learnt to type with two fingers. I had an Australian as a boss. He put me onto this typewriter: "You can do it". I got good money, better wages than I would have got anywhere else.

By the time I married again, Fred had finished school. I have a daughter from the second marriage. I would have liked more than two children but that wasn't to be.

I'M STILL HANGING ON to my piece of Brookdale. I'm the only one of the original family with a share, except for one brother. My heart's still out home – in the Gulf – and that's where I wanted to be buried. We've got our own private cemetery on Brookdale. Other members of the family are buried there, and my mother's ashes are out there too. But my second husband and my daughter put on a big turn about it, so now I've got it in my will: if I die out there I want to be buried there; and down here, with my husband Gordon.





Ted Malone at the Punchbowl crossing,
after Jimmy Edwards had been swept off his horse.

Court House
Julia Creek
9th May 1939

SIR - I have the honour to forward herewith, depositions taken at the inquest into the manner and cause of death of one, James William Edwards, late of Cloncurry, who was drowned at the Punchbowl, Flinders River, 28 miles from Julia Creek, on 20th April 1939. No expense was incurred in conducting this inquest.

CORONER

EDWARD JOSEPH MALONE states: I am a stockman by occupation and reside with my wife and family at Cloncurry.

I knew a man by the name of James William Edwards who was drowned at the Punchbowl, Flinders River, 28 miles from Julia Creek on the evening of Thursday, 20th April 1939. Edwards was a contract drover. From 1st April 1939 I was employed by Edwards, who was a drover in charge of a mob of cattle being driven from Esmeralda Station near Croydon to Brighton Downs Station near Boulia.

On the morning of Thursday, 20th April 1939, I left Yambore Creek on Fairlea selection where we had camped with the cattle, and proceeded to the Punchbowl where we intended to camp that night on the Julia Creek side of the river. I was the cook and travelled in advance of the main party with the waggonette and camping equipment. William Butler, a half caste who had the job of horse tailing, accompanied me with the horses. Edwards, Robert Hindom, Jack Williams and Jim O'Keefe were left to drove the cattle along.

About 10.30 a.m. I arrived at the Punchbowl to find that the Flinders River was coming down in flood and was rising. The water was up to the horses' bellies when I crossed over with the waggonette. Butler and I got the camp ready about 150 yards from the Punchbowl, and I told Butler to go back and tell Edwards that the river was rising and for him to get the cattle over as quickly as possible.

About 5 p.m. I saw the cattle arrive. The men were having a lot of trouble getting them in the river, so I took eight or ten horses from camp and crossed over. I intended to use these horses as coaxers to get the cattle to follow them across the river. After some trouble, we got the cattle across about a mile downstream from the Punchbowl. Butler swam in front of the cattle to hold them when they got to the other side. Hindom was also with Butler holding the cattle.

At this stage, Edwards, Williams, O'Keefe and I were on the north side of the river and the last of the cattle were in the water. The sun had just gone down and it was getting dark. We faced the choice of crossing where we were or crossing at the Punchbowl. I suggested to Edwards that we swim behind the cattle, because, where we were, the river was not running as strongly as at the Punchbowl. However, it would mean a swim, whereas the Punchbowl crossing could be taken on horses. Edwards said that it was getting late, that we would all get wet, and that the horses might have trouble getting out because the banks on the other side of the river were a bit steep. It was decided to cross at the Punchbowl about one mile upstream.

We rode to the crossing above the Punchbowl and drove the spare horses into the water in front of us. I was just behind the horses, Edwards was behind me, and O'Keefe and Williams were behind him. When the horses in front of me reached the middle of the stream, two of them were washed over the crossing and carried down the rapids into the big hole - the Punchbowl. Edwards seemed a bit worried and he called out: "We'll be drowned". The horse I was riding turned to face downstream, to follow the two horses which were washed away, but I gave him a hit with the whip and he walked out onto the river bank behind the horses we were driving.

As I was riding out of the water I looked back and noticed Edwards' horse turn to face downstream as mine had done. While the horse was turning, Edwards appeared to throw himself off sideways into the water. When he hit the water he was carried off his feet. He held on to the reins for a few moments but was jerked loose by the swirling water and was swept off the crossing. I

saw Edwards appear at the end of the rapids, about 20 or 30 yards away. I raced there on my horse, dismounted and pulled my clothes off. I called out: "Hang on Jim, I'm coming", and told him not to fight against the water. I swam to within 10 feet of him but the current was too strong and it carried me back to the bank from where I went in. I called out: "I can't come, it's too strong". The current carried Edwards away from me towards the opposite bank.

It was getting dark and I did not see Edwards again. I could hear O'Keefe and Williams on the other bank and I called out for one of them to go in, but they replied they could not swim. I then yelled for one of them to get on a horse and go in for Edwards that way. I do not know if they made any attempt to go in, but a few seconds afterwards I heard Edwards call out: "I'm done, I'm done".

Just then, Vince Fickling came down on a horse. I grabbed the horse and said I would go in on horseback. Fickling said I would have no chance and that one of the men on the other side would have a better chance. I called out to O'Keefe and asked if he could still see Edwards, but he replied that Edwards had gone under and that he could not see him. I do not know if Edwards reappeared. It was very dark by then and the water was muddy.

Next morning I assisted in the search for Edwards but without success. I was present when his horse was caught. It had the saddle on it. There were no marks on the saddle but I noticed that the near-side stirrup leather was broken and there was no iron on it. This leather had been broken the previous day while Edwards was putting the cattle across the river.

Edwards had very bad eyes and was near-sighted. He was fully dressed when in the water, and I am of the opinion that the weight of his clothes would have hampered him greatly. I remember him calling out that he could not swim to the bank as his clothes were too heavy. Without the clothing he had a good chance of swimming out because I knew him to be a good swimmer. I had known that for years.

Every possible effort was made to save Edwards. O'Keefe, Williams and I were the only ones to witness his drowning. When I last saw Edwards on his horse I was about 10 yards from him and O'Keefe and Williams were about 20 yards. No one was near Edwards to push him off his horse. I am satisfied that he drowned under purely accidental circumstances and I have no suspicions about his death. I am of the opinion that when he saw the two horses washed off the crossing and get taken down the rapids into the Punchbowl - and then his own horse turned and faced downstream - that he got frightened and jumped.

E. J. MALONE

VINCENT HENRY FICKLING¹ states: I am a married man residing with my wife and family at Julia Creek, and I am the Common Ranger. I knew a man named James William Edwards who was drowned at the Punchbowl, Flinders River.

At about 6 p.m. on Thursday, 20th April 1939, I arrived in my car at Edwards' camp at the Punchbowl for the purpose of seeing Edwards and advising him about the stock route he was to travel to Julia Creek. I pulled up at the waggonette but there was no one there. I looked downstream and I could see cattle being swum across the river, so I decided to wait at the waggonette for them to come up.

About half an hour later I saw some horsemen on the opposite side of the river driving a mob of horses towards the crossing at the Punchbowl. From where I was sitting at the waggonette I could see the men and horses go into the river. It would be about 150 yards to the crossing from where I was.

The next thing I saw was two horses swimming in the Punchbowl about 60 or 70 yards downstream from the crossing. I did not see them washed off the crossing. I heard Ted Malone call out: "Stick to it, Jimmy" several times. When I heard Malone call out I knew there was someone in the water so I immediately rode to the crossing. I saw Malone, who had been in the water, just coming out. I said to him: "What's wrong, Ted?" and he said: "Poor little Jimmy's in there and he's done", at the same time pointing into the centre of the stream. Just then I heard a voice, which I recognised to be that of Jimmy Edwards, calling out faintly: "I'm done, I'm done". I looked into the stream but I could not see Edwards. All I could see were two men sitting on their horses on the other side of the river. I heard these men call out: "He's gone".

It was getting dark by then and the water was too muddy to see anything.

1. A story about Vince Fickling begins on p629.

The river was half-a-bank in flood and rising. We waited on the bank for a while and then I assisted Malone, who was exhausted, up to the camp. After seeing everything at the camp was right, I left for Julia Creek and reported the matter to the police. Accompanied by Constable Murray, I returned to the scene of the drowning at about 9 p.m. and we made an unsuccessful search for the body that night. When we found the body two days later, it was fully clothed in a leather lumber jacket, shirt, singlet, trousers and boots.

I know of no suspicious circumstances surrounding this death. I consider the drowning was accidental. The deceased was known to me for some years and I knew that he was a fair swimmer.

V. H. FICKLING

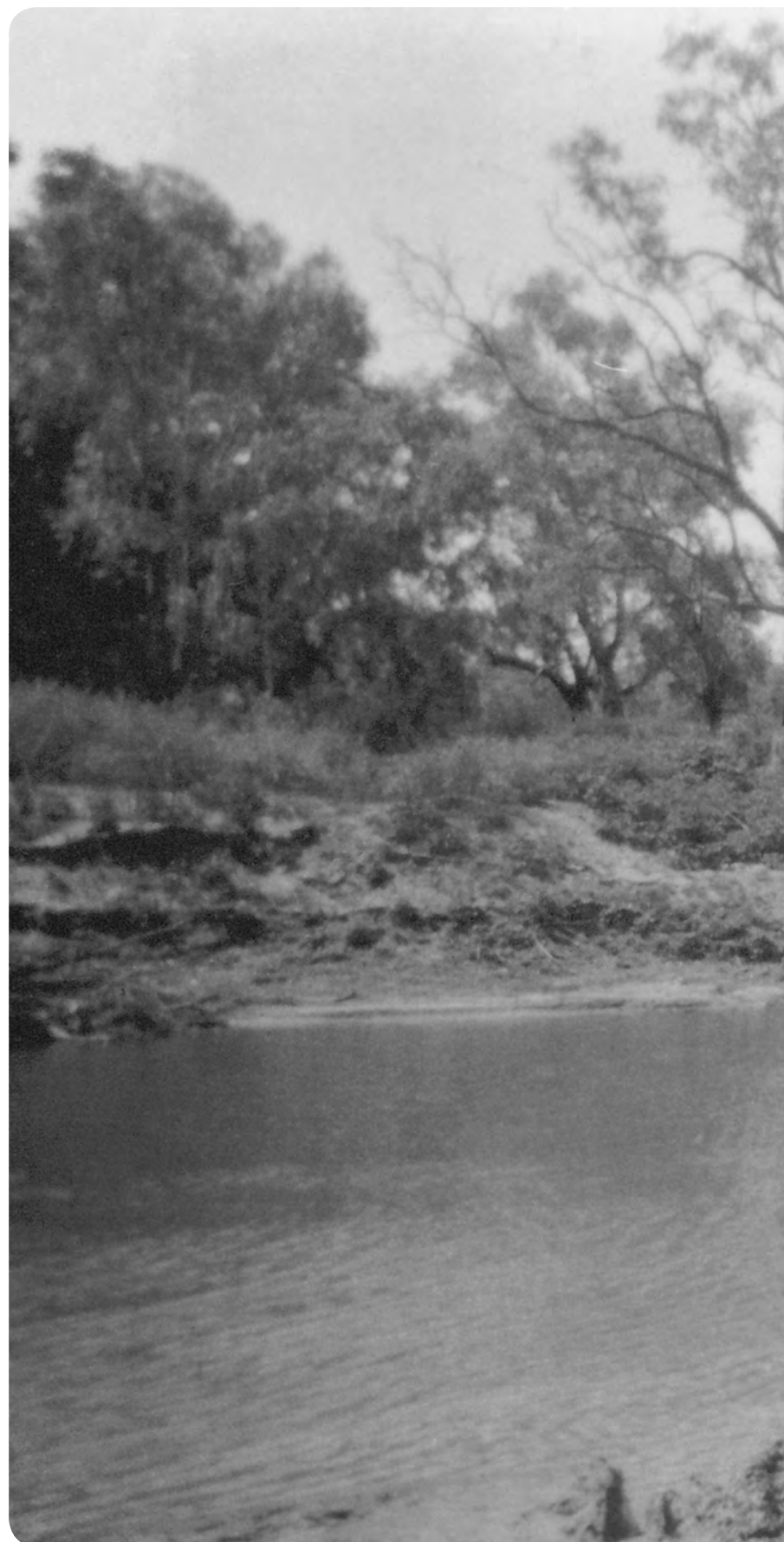
CHARLES FREDERICK MURRAY states: I am a Police Constable stationed at Julia Creek. At about 8 p.m. on the 20th April 1939, Vincent Henry Fickling, the Julia Creek Common Ranger, called at the Julia Creek police station and reported that James Edwards, a contract drover, had been accidentally drowned at about 6.30 p.m. that day at the Punchbowl. I went with Fickling to the Punchbowl to make initial investigations.

At dawn on the morning of the 21st April I supervised a search for the body of Edwards. It was not until about 2 p.m. on the 23rd April that Bill Davis, Vince Fickling and myself found the submerged body of Edwards caught in a tree about 60 yards downstream from where he disappeared. When recovered, the body was found to be fully dressed and in a good state of preservation – the water was particularly cold. The body was immediately taken to Julia Creek.

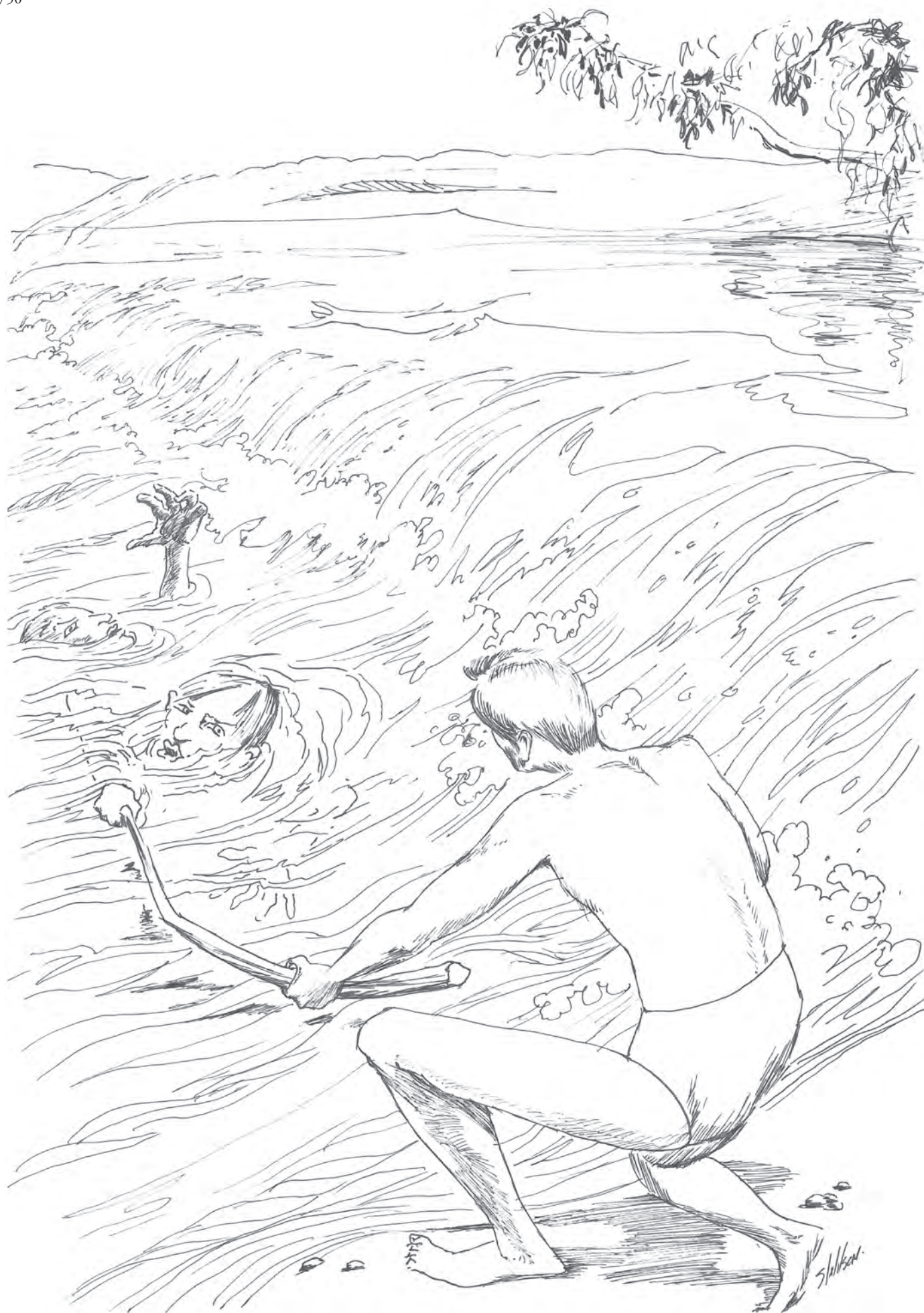
Deceased, who was well known to me, was 31 years 8 months old. He was a contract drover by occupation. His father's name is William George Edwards and his mother's Lillian Mary Josephine, née Pharr. The deceased was born at Normanton and has lived in Queensland all his life. He was married at Townsville when he was 27 to Violet Smith. He left one son, Frederick James Edwards, aged 3 years.

C. F. MURRAY

Right: A group of people and two cars at the Punchbowl crossing of the Flinders River, looking south to the Julia Creek side. The Punchbowl is off the photo to the right.
[Beven Flewell-Smith, BV25, ca 1955]







I'm Carrying Him Now

Suzanne Svensson

A little girl sees her father
drown at the Punchbowl



WE HAVEN'T GOT ANY PHOTOS of grandfather Elof Svensson. His family originally came from Sweden and they all went to Bundaberg. He married my grandmother. My father, Ray, was their only child. After Ray was born, grandfather up and left and there's no trace of him anywhere, but there are a lot of Svenssons still in Bundaberg.

My father married Gladys Hosier and they had four children, Jim, me, Rosemarie and John. I'm Suzanne Hosier Svensson. That's not a hyphenated surname. Mum gave her maiden name to my middle name.

I was born in Brisbane and the story I heard is this: Mum and Dad were going for a picnic and I arrived early. They had just passed the Annerley Hospital so they went back, and that's where I was born. That's how it started for me in 1947, on the ninth of the ninth.

When I was 18 months old they found out I had a congenital dislocation of the hip. I wasn't walking. Mum and Dad lived in Cooroy and I was given to my grandmother who lived in Brisbane, Mum's mother, because she was closer to the hospital. I spent a lot of time in a bed at the Mater. My very first memory is of the Mater. I might have been 3, maybe 4. A nurse, or a nun, had this black thing on and she picked me up and was carrying me. I was wearing irons – irons on my legs and irons on my boot. I was very nervous. I can remember trembling. Doctor Lars was the doctor that operated on me.

Once a week on a Sunday afternoon I was allowed to have visitors. Less often than that I'd see this woman I called "Mother", but I didn't know that "Mother" meant Mum. I didn't have much idea what the relationship should be. All I knew was that this person I called Mother would come in and see me. And my father, he was this man, different from everyone else. He would pick me up and dance with me in his arms. I can remember that so clearly.

Then in 1952 when I was 5, not yet at school, my grandmother said to me:

Suzanne, you're going on a holiday. We're sending you to Daddy.

Ooh, Daddy! Holiday, holiday!

They put me on a plane in Brisbane, on a plane by myself, and I remember I got sick and somebody gave me a brown paper bag. And that's how I came to be in Julia Creek, being swooped up in the arms of this very tall man and being twirled around.

My next recollection of Julia Creek is of the power station where we lived. It was like a great big shed split in two. On one side were the generators – what I've since learnt were generators – but to me as a child they were simply big, round turning-things. We lived on the other side of the wall. My father carried me to the generators and told me: "You must never come in here by yourself. You can only come in here when I carry you". I didn't walk very well, that's why he carried me. Mum didn't, but Dad carried me a lot.

Near the power station was the railway. At dusk, if you looked into the sunset from between the power station and the railway, you could see the brolgas dancing¹. Dad and I used to dance with the brolgas. I know that's weird, but we did.

mains the . . . flying test to complete his qualification.

The State Electricity Commission has advised the Council that efforts should be made immediately to obtain all necessary material for the erection of the power station. They also advised the despatch of electrical meters and 3500 yards of cable.

The tender of Mr. Ray Svensson of Cooroy, for the installation of overhead lines at £879, has been accepted. The tender of Mr. Allen of Maryborough, for the supply of 94 wooden poles at £571 has been accepted. Snashall Anthon & Sons Ltd will supply four generating sets at £7240.

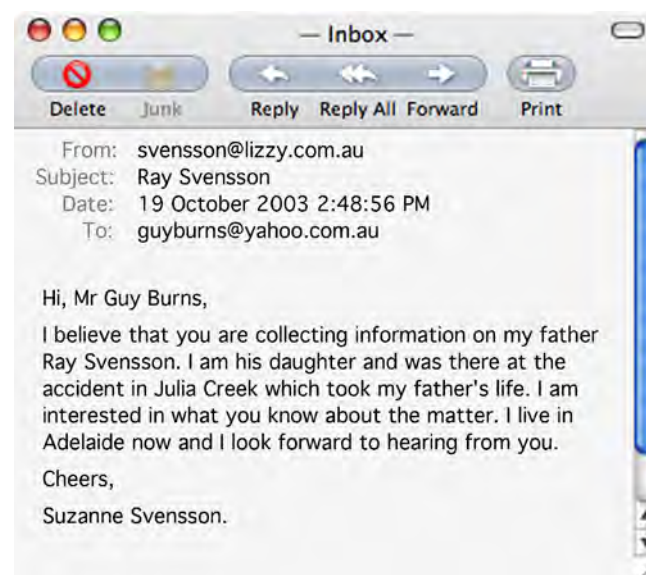
Mr. Ard Cooney and Mrs. Laird were . . .

NQR: 26 May 1951

Left: Suzanne at Murgon.

[Jim Svensson, SR02, 1954]

Opposite: Charlie Corrigan helping Jan Gluszyk at the Punchbowl crossing. The other man, Suzanne's father, drowned.



1. 1952 was the year of a serious drought in the Julia Creek district. One of the consequences was that brolgas came into town in search of food, as reported in the *Julia Creek Notes* (NQR) of 24 May:

"Half a dozen brolgas roam the streets each day. Usually they are shy birds, but these half dozen have become quite used to people as the search for food is much easier here in town."

JULIA CREEK NOW ELECTRIFIED

“The light which Julia Creek can now regard as its very own proud possession” was the quotation used by Hon. E. J. Riordan, M.L.A., Minister for Mines, and Member in Charge of Electricity Undertakings, when he officially opened the Julia Creek electricity scheme on Sunday night at a ceremony which took place in Eckford’s Hall.

The occasion was responsible for the largest gathering of town and district residents and visitors yet seen in Julia Creek. As the Hon. Minister turned the switch, the crowd enthusiastically greeted the transformation of the hall from being dimly lit by the doubtful flames of kerosene lanterns, to a shadowless sea of brilliancy emitted from large electric bulbs. Outside, 27 street lights glowed at regular intervals throughout the town, while in 60 homes, current was available for lighting and domestic use.

It was a great moment for Julia Creek, and the residents and visitors were out to mark the occasion in typical western style.

During the half hour which preceded the official ceremony, Eckford’s Hall was the scene of a fast gathering crowd. At exactly 8.30 p.m. the official party mounted the dais. In his opening address, the Chairman of the McKinlay Shire, Cr. F. A. Hickman, welcomed all residents and visitors to the reception. Cr. Hickman stated:

“It is a big occasion for Julia Creek tonight because we are about to see another big advance in our town, which will not only serve as an amenity in our homes but will greatly enhance the prosperity of our district. Tonight the Hon. E. J. Riordan, Minister for Mines and Member for this district, will address you, and later will perform the switching on of the electric light. Before calling on the Minister I would like to express appreciation for the electricity being supplied to Julia Creek. This has been made possible by Government financial assistance. Our town is rapidly going ahead and we trust the installation of the electric light will greatly assist, not only in retarding the drift of people to the coast, but encourage a drift of people from the coast to the west. To the Minister we owe a debt of gratitude as he has been a great help to us in our work in obtaining electricity. I now introduce the Minister, Mr Riordan.”

Addressing the assembly, the Minister said that this scheme at Julia Creek was one of a number of electricity schemes for small Queensland towns, several of which had already been put into use. The scheme was made possible by the financial assistance of the government which was paying 60% of the cost, and by technical devices that were self-regulating and automatic which allowed the machinery to be operated by one man.

“It is indeed a pleasure”, stated the Minister, “to be switching on electricity in Julia Creek tonight. The importance of this scheme goes far beyond its

size, for, in terms of engine power, it is not a very large scheme compared with power stations being constructed in larger cities. However, it is large in the pleasure and profit it will bring to a small town such as this. Electricity can no longer be regarded as a luxury. It is a necessity to all those who desire to live on a civilised plane.”

After the official switching-on ceremony, the crowd moved outside and witnessed a fine display of fireworks from under the colourful festooning that crossed the main street. The Electricity Undertaking Ball was then set in progress with bright music supplied by a four-piece orchestra, and in an atmosphere of gay abandon suiting the occasion, dancers celebrated until 3 a.m. the following morning. The entire proceedings carried a happy note throughout.

At a civic welcome before the switch-on, the Minister was entertained in the Shire Chambers, together with various engineers of the S.E.C. and representatives of the firms who supplied the equipment. Among those present were all the McKinlay Shire councillors and their wives; Eric Anthon and his son Neil representing Snashall Anthon and Sons Ltd, suppliers of the engines; and Mr Ray Svensson, Superintendent of the powerhouse.

The Scheme

The powerhouse, 52' by 24', is situated on the south-eastern extremity of the town adjacent to the railway line. It has four engine sets installed: oil-fired single-cylinder National engines, driving Mawdsley electrical generators via five vee-belts. Each engine is equipped with safety devices connected to its water cooling system, lubricating oil, fuel line and bearings, for the purpose of the safety of the plant. Should there be a supply failure of water, oil or fuel, or a bearing runs hot, the plant will be immediately closed down before any damage can be suffered to its parts. The switchboard was constructed in Sydney from Australian-made switchgear and instruments.

Two engines will be online during peak hours. As the scheme progresses a third engine will be introduced, with one always held in reserve. Outside of peak hours it is intended to run only one machine at a time. Hour meters have been fitted to ensure that the work is equally distributed among the four engines.

The powerhouse caters for all household appliances with the exception of electric stoves, radiators and hot water systems. Commercial loading will be accepted within certain limits.

this way and the advantage gained will be shared by all.

The electricity project for Julia Creek has had a shot in the arm since the arrival six weeks ago of Mr. Ray Svensson and his wife. Mr. Svensson has the contract for the erection of poles and the wiring of houses. All of the 106 poles are in place, and the wiring from poles to buildings is almost done. Although the internal wiring of houses is not yet finished, work is progressing satisfactorily and by October will be ready for switch-on. The engines at the power house are installed and ready for use, but the building itself is still to be completed.

The advent of electrical current will be a great improvement to the homes and business houses in Julia Creek and will add to the comfort of the people here. Consumers will be allowed to use most electrical appliances with the exception of electrical stoves, radiators and jugs.

The Northern Road Constructors are

NQR: 06 Sep 1952

those in this district.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Svensson have returned after a couple of weeks visit to Cooroy. Mr. Svensson has been appointed Superintendent of the electricity scheme and will remain permanently to carry out his duties. He plans to bring his children from Cooroy when his residence is constructed so that the family may be together.

Young Ray Godier, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Godier, suffered from a burning incident.

NQR: 11 Oct 1952

back in their new surroundings.

All week has been exceptionally hot. Monday reached 110 degrees and yesterday – a change came yesterday – 106. Yet that was a more uncomfortable heat. The wind blew boisterously from the north, thick with moisture and discomfort. These conditions prevail again today. We may yet have the storms needed to lift the country.

The progress of wiring private homes for electricity is satisfactory and it should not be long before all homes are wired. Kettles, irons and fans are proving a boon here in the outback. The fans especially are giving great relief during these exhaustingly hot days we are experiencing. Mr. Ray Svensson, Superintendent of the power house, has been keeping the power up well.

Max Burns and family leave in a few days for Redcliffe on holidays and will

NQR: 06 Dec 1952

Our house was noisy and very primitive. When you turned the tap on you couldn't let the bore water touch you because it was so hot it would burn. A new house was being built next to the power station, and when that was finished Dad was going to bring the rest of the family from Cooroy where they were staying with his mother. My sister and brothers didn't come to Julia Creek. There was only my mother and father and me.

Then Jan and Helen appeared in my life. Jan Gluszyk came to Australia as a displaced person from Europe and was sent to Julia Creek as a labourer. He saved up enough money to bring out his mother and his young sister, Helen. She was about three years older than me and Jan would bring her to the powerhouse as a playmate. We used to go swimming: Helen, Jan, Mum, Dad and myself. In the water I was always held either by Jan or Dad. I was always in someone's arms. Never had to struggle, never had to walk. I was just taken along in this adult's world and I was happy. All you get in hospital is loneliness and isolation.

I know I stayed in Julia Creek for quite a while but I have no recollection of length of time. I was having a really good holiday because my dad carted me everywhere.



Right: Ray and Gladys Svensson at Cooroy.
[Jim Svensson, SR01, 1947]

Bottom: Punchbowl crossing in flood, taken from the Julia Creek side looking north. The Punchbowl itself is about 50 yards downstream.
[Ivy Burrows, B104, ca 1948]

And then, I suppose that brings us to the day when... There was food piled into Dad's big black car. Mum and Dad and Jan, the three of them sat in the front and I sat in the back. I remember we were going pig shooting. Now, I didn't know what pig shooting was – then, as a child – but we were going pig shooting. Dad carried me to the car and carried the food, and he said something about a blanket. We needed a blanket. I kept asking him:

What's pig shooting, Daddy?
Ah, you'll see, you'll see...

We drove in the car to a river.

Dad stopped the car
and the three of them got out.
They told me to stay.

But I got out of the car when I heard my mother screaming,
and walked around to the front.
I could see my dad was in trouble.
I could see Jan running around frantically,
trying to get my dad out.
I don't remember anyone else being there.

I was bundled into the car.
Standing on the back seat of Dad's big black car
I heard Jan telling Mum:
"Ya gotta drive, ya gotta drive the car back",
and Mum sobbing:
"I can't drive".
But Mum did drive the car
and hit a post on a small bridge.

My Brisbane grandmother came to Julia Creek:
"This child! This child..."
and I wondered who was "this child"?
It was me.
After that, Julia Creek is very much a blank.

Years later I realised the screams in my head
– I can hear screams –
were mine.

I went back to Brisbane with my grandmother.



Verities and Lurid Rumours

Julia Creek, January 26 — A 27-year-old electrician, Ray Svensson, married, was drowned in the flooded Flinders River at Punchbowl Crossing, 28 miles from Julia Creek, yesterday morning.

Svensson, who was the electrician and engine driver at the local powerhouse, was on a picnic trip with his wife and two other men, Henry Gluszyk and Charlie Corrigan, at the time of the tragedy. His body has not been recovered.

Svensson was reported to have disappeared while engaged in a rescue attempt of Gluszyk. Members of the party who returned to Julia Creek said that Gluszyk had been washed over the crossing and Svensson entered the water to save him. Corrigan remained on the bank. When the two men in the water got into difficulties, Corrigan secured a long pole. He pushed it into the water and both Svensson and Gluszyk took hold of it. However, Svensson lost his grip and his body was carried away in the swirling water. In the area close to the causeway on the downstream side there are huge whirlpools and it is thought that Svensson was sucked under.

Large search parties have been out each day. Mr Lowe, a local pilot, has been assisting in the search, and several of Svensson's friends have floated along the river looking for his body, using inflated tubes as rafts. At the present time a fair current is flowing and a further freshet is expected.

Svensson is survived by his wife and a young family of four. He went to Julia Creek from Cooroy, near Brisbane. His parents, who are in Julia Creek on account of the tragedy, are understood to reside in the Cooroy district with the Svensson children.

NQR: 31 Jan 1953

IN 1952 a new power house was being built in Julia Creek. I don't remember how it was, but I went working part time for a fella named Ray Svensson, an electrician. Les Wellington and I both worked for him. We done wired Julia Creek, Les and I, all the house wiring. We didn't do the hospital, and we didn't do the two pubs, and we didn't do Peter Dawes, but that's about the only ones we didn't do. Les and I wired the whole rest of the town. Then I used to work in the powerhouse. I always worked that way. Whatever was to be done, I done it.

Then Ray got drowned. As soon as he got drowned his wife went off with this other bloke named Jan Gluszyk. Henry we used to call him. Lowest of the low. He worked for Peter Dawes.

Gladdy, who was Ray's wife, wasn't the full quid. She wasn't mad, but she was very eccentric. She married this Jan Gluszyk and everyone started talking. But there was nothing suspicious, because

I was there. I was there when Ray got drowned.

We went out swimming, not intending at the Punchbowl, but upstream or downstream. The Punchbowl is just a waterhole of the Flinders. The river flows over a high stone crossing and drops about 6 foot. It's all great big boulders. When it's running the turbulence is unbelievable. We went out for a drive. That's what you used to do those days, go for a drive and look around. Ray and I are standing on the bank and Henry's out on the crossing. I yelled out to this stupid Henry: "A fella got drowned off a horse trying to cross here". Anyway, next thing Henry's in the water and he's in big trouble, caught in a stopper wave. No way could you go in and bring him out. It don't matter how strong a swimmer you were, if you got in there you couldn't do anything.

On a fence were these great long saplings, on a floodgate, and I said to Ray: "Watch him while I grab one of these saplings". It would have taken me only a minute. Damn it all, when I came back here's Ray in there with Henry. They're both in this thing. So I shouted out to Ray: "I'll take Henry first and then come back and get you". Henry got hold of the stick and I dragged him to the bank. When I went for Ray he was gone. He may have hit his head.

There was nothing suspicious. Nothing. I thought I could save both: *Well, Henry's been in there the longest, I'll bring him out first.* I never dreamed that anything would happen to Ray. He was nearly 6 foot: strong, well-built, 26 or something like that. I'm just sorry that I took the wrong man. It's haunted me ever since that I brought the wrong man out. If I could've — after Gluszyk picked up with Gladdy, after the death — I would have done anything to hang the mongrel. I hated this Gluszyk after. Ray and I were really good mates, y'know. Oh, jeez it knocked me about.

CHARLIE CORRIGAN

WHEN WE were looking for Svensson we jumped in the river and just drifted along in case we felt something. I was only searching the one day. We went down the river and they came along in a jeep to pick us up. Someone else found the body after about a week.

MOSSIE McDONALD

I WAS WORKING with Henry Gluszyk at Peter Dawes' store. He was friends with Ray Svensson and Mrs Svensson. I think they went out to the Punchbowl during a flood and Ray got caught under a tree. The Punchbowl, when the Flinders was running and there was plenty of water around, was like a river, but when it dried out you'd just have this bowl of water there. That's how it got its name.

We never thought anything of it, but the Punchbowl might have had crocodiles. You'd be swimming in the bowl, and you might walk upstream across the road two hundred yards and you'd see big crocs sunning themselves. They could easily have been in the Punchbowl.

CLAUDETTE GREEN

HE WAS the town electrician, Svensson, and this bloody big wog, Henry, was rootin' Svensson's wife. Henry got the husband in swimming at the Punchbowl, kicked him in the guts, held him down and pushed him under a bloody log. We went out there trying to find the body. Didn't find it for five days. That photo [opposite] was taken while we were looking for him with Max's jeep.

B B

THAT BLOKE who drowned at the Punchbowl, I think he was murdered. Svensson, his name was. His wife was having it off with that wog bloke, big Henry. I dunno where Henry came from. Over Russia or somewhere. This Svensson and Henry were out swimming or some bloody thing. The Punchbowl was running, just after the wet, and they reckoned Henry kicked this other bloke in the stomach. Whether the story was right or wrong I don't know, but that's what the town believed anyway. That's the story that was going round. The wife and the boyfriend cleared out as soon as they could.

H W

WE HAD A MURDER out there. Svensson. Gorgeous dancer. His wife was having an affair. They went out to the Punchbowl where we used to go swimming, and he was drowned. He was a fantastic swimmer, yet he drowned. He was pushed in, there's nothing surer of it. They didn't find him for a week.

J B

and Townsville.

After almost a week's continuous searching, the body of the late Mr. Ray Svensson was recovered last Saturday morning about 250 yards downstream from the main bowl of the Punchbowl. The funeral took place on Saturday afternoon. Constable Sam Henry, officer in charge of police here, kept up a relentless search with his assistant constable and other helpers, and they are to be commended for the thoroughness of their work.

Mr Alf Stainkev has made certain

NQR: 07 Feb 1953

JAN AND MUM GOT MARRIED in Julia Creek five months after the drowning. When they came back, they moved to Murgon with the children. They opened a cafe in Murgon called the Blue Bird.

I must have been about 9 when I found out that Jan and Mum were married. I was still in Brisbane. I was there about three years before I joined them in Murgon. I didn't fit in. I was the outsider because of circumstances. My health caused that.

I didn't think of Jan as my father. He became a father figure for Rosemarie and John, but not for Jim and I. And I didn't really think of Mum as my mother in the way other little girls think of their mother, because she was far away while I was young and in hospital.

Actually, Mum was sick. She had an illness. I was the one who cared for her for 15 years. But she wasn't funny. I don't believe that. I believe she suffered severe depression from time to time.

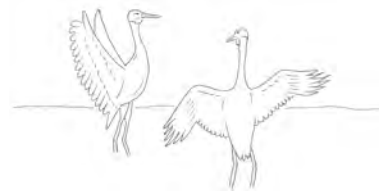
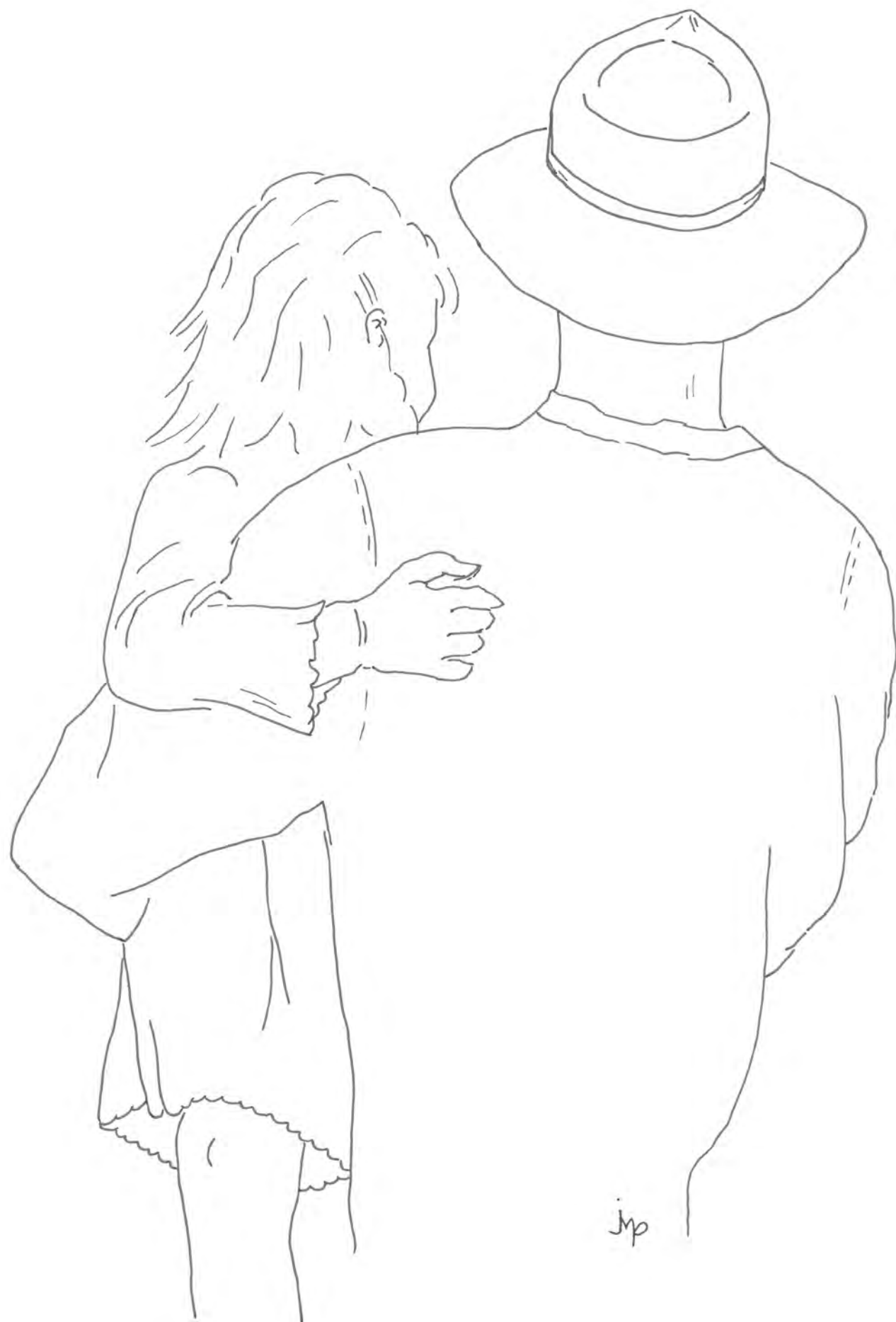
Mum died about 20 years ago in New Zealand, and Jan a few years earlier from a heart attack. My daughter and I went to New Zealand with them. Jan was good to my daughter. He treated all the children in his care as if he was their father. He did. He did the very best he could with what he had.



Above: Suzanne's mother, Gladys, and Jan Gluszyk, at Murgon after they were married.
[Jim Svensson, SR04, 1954]

Below: The search party for Ray Svensson gathered around Max Burns' Willys jeep. The only people identified are Arthur Orford (policeman on left), and Arthur Paine (second from right).
[Joy Burns, J23, 1953]





Opposite: Three of Ray's children
with his mother, Frances, at Cooroy,
a few months before his drowning.

Rear: Jim and Frances.

Front: Rosemarie and John.

Ray's other child, Suzanne, was at the
Mater Hospital in Brisbane
at the time of the photo.

[Jim Svensson, SR05, 1952]

MUM NEVER HAD ANYTHING to do with Ray's parents after he died, and we weren't supposed to see them either, but we did. They'd come to see us at school. Obviously, Mum had a problem about Ray. I would ask her about Ray's drowning but she wouldn't talk about it. The only thing she ever said about Ray was: "I won't talk about it, discussion closed". No happy memories, nothing. Not only did she not talk about the drowning, she didn't talk about him at all. Jan wouldn't talk about it either. Definitely closed topic. The family has never discussed it. I'd be interested to hear what Jim remembers, but he won't talk to me about it. Like I said, you're the first person I've spoken to about the drowning.

I COULDN'T GO BACK to see the grave, the river, or Julia Creek. I couldn't manage the travel. And I have no desire to. Every day of my life it's with me. I was there. I don't need to go back.

My father's death has affected me significantly. It's something that I remember clearly and vividly and I don't think it will ever go away. When most children are learning to talk and to say their ABCs and nursery rhymes, I was growing up alone, stuck in a hospital bed with my own thoughts. It does have an impact when you're in hospital and this man comes into your life and dances with you. Or you're on holiday and wherever you go this man carries you. You don't have to struggle to walk to be with him, you're just being with him. I grew up very susceptible when somebody showed me love. Extremely susceptible. And my dad was the only one that did.

I've got this... thing, that I was always in his arms when he was with me. It was something special between me and him. He was my dad and I was his little girl, always in his arms. It may be a strange, morbid idea, but I sometimes think that at the end of my life I'll return to Dad's arms to watch the sunset brologas dance again.

Ray isn't dead. His body may be buried at Julia Creek, but everywhere I go he's still with me. I'm carrying *him* now.



AS FAR AS I KNOW, at the time I was born in 1945 in Bundaberg, my father was an electrician. My first memory is of living in a shed type of thing in Cooroy, on top of a hill. I can remember going around with him while he was working, and him giving me those little electrical things that you break off, the brass terminals, to play with. Me sitting on the stairs and him wiring up.

He got a job in Quilpie and the whole family moved there and lived in a caravan park. I have a delightful memory of my father at Quilpie. I used to follow him around. One day he sat me outside the pub while he went off working, and told me to look out for Tom Micks. In those days Tom Micks was a cowboy you saw on the cartoons in the theatre. And I sat outside this pub all afternoon, an excited little boy waiting for this cowboy who was coming to town, while Dad did whatever it was he had to do.

I don't remember Dad and Mum going to Julia Creek, or anything about it, yet I remember going to Quilpie when I was younger. I didn't go to Julia Creek. We stayed with Dad's mother in Cooroy. I was with her when the phone call came through. After that I had a bit of a memory blackout.

I don't know exactly how long it was after the phone call before Jan and Mum arrived from Julia Creek. I was 7 and I had gone through a traumatic experience, so it would be difficult to judge an exact time frame, but it didn't seem like very long at all. They came back from Julia Creek in a big truck and we packed up everything and moved to Murgon.

I rejected Jan. I would not accept him as my father. I refused to call him Dad because that would mean I had a new father, and there was no way I was going to have that. I just called him Jan. He married Mum in Julia Creek not long after my father drowned.

My father's death was one of the most traumatic events of my life. The relationship I had with him is still paramount. It is still so dominant compared to the relationship I had with my mother. She had great antipathy towards my father. I can remember as a kid how devastated I was that she would not say anything positive about him. She was very antipathetic. And I got the feeling – from my mother, y'know – that this father that I idolised was absolute bullshit. She talked about him in completely negative terms, totally negative. And because of that she poisoned me against her side of the family. It's something I've had to deal with all my life, the treatment of my dead father by my mother.

JIM SVENSSON





He Couldn't Breathe

A bushfire on Narollah
claims three lives

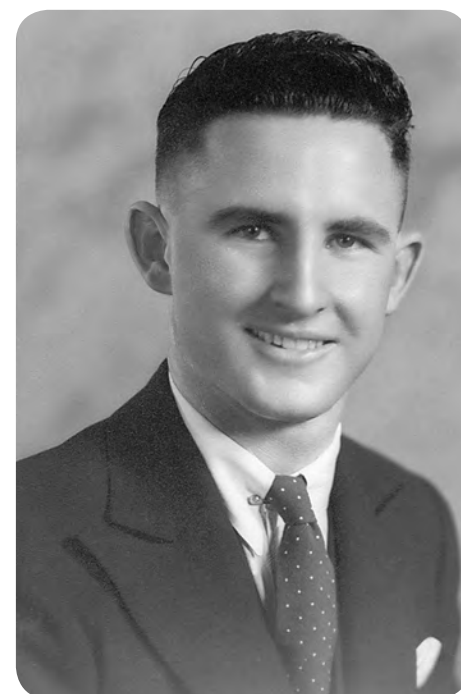
Bub Elliott

GOLLY, I DON'T KNOW HOW MY ROMANCE with Rex started. It just gradually came about. The Hallorans owned a property, Flers, just past our place and across the creek. Rex used to visit us when he was only young, and he might stay a week so that the Elliott and Halloran kids could get together. He was about 10 or 11 the first time he came over.

Our homestead on Cremona was 42 miles north of Julia Creek, in between Flers and Dalgona. Flers was 15 miles closer to town. Rex's father, Lance Halloran, drew Flers during World War 1, and later on he drew an additional area cut from Dalgona. Lance used to run sheep on the additional area, sheep that Rex looked after when he was old enough to take on the responsibility. But it was too far from the Flers' homestead for him to ride over and check every day, so Lance asked Mum and Dad if he could stay with us on Cremona.

I suppose I was 15, 16 when Rex came to stay. It was during the war. If we needed a hand, well, he'd help out, after checking his own stock first. Or if his father needed a hand, Rex went home. He lived with us about five years.

Rex and I always kept in touch, even after Mum and Dad and I went to Brisbane in 1947. When I went back to Cremona for holidays we'd see each other, and when he came to Brisbane he stayed at our place. Our romance just grew from that. We married in 1953.



Right: Rex Halloran.
[Joanie Halloran, JH137, ca 1950]

Opposite: Rex on Hector.
[Joanie Halloran, JH113, ca 1948]

"Hector was a horse that Bernie O'Brien owned and broke in. Bernie couldn't ride him, so Rex rode him.

Those horseyards, Rex and I built them. These great logs, we got them from Byrimine: brought them in, cut them to length and put them up. One hell of a job." (Murray Halloran)

MY COUSIN, Cynn timer Fickling, used to go with Rex Halloran for a long time. We used to think they'd get married eventually.

CARMEL FICKLING

I DIDN'T WANT to marry Rex Halloran because he lived bush. I didn't like the bush. I wanted to live in Julia Creek. Rex was terrific though. He married Bub Elliott. I married Jumbo Harris.

CYNTHIA FICKLING

was made again safely.

On Saturday last a benefit race meeting was held in aid of the Church of England. This event was very successful and the racing was entertaining. Only 18 horses nominated but the acceptances in each event were such as to make the racing quite competitive and interesting. Nine bookmakers fielded and gate takings reached £75. Rex Halloran was again very successful and won a treble; taking the maiden with *Tony*, the bracelet with *Nolls Pick*, and the last race with *Lawnette*. Our congratulations go to Rex. His success is well deserved on account of the outlay he incurs in racing his string of horses on each occasion.

On Friday night a successful ball was

NQR: 18 Jun 1949

Not long before we married, Lance and Rex drew another property which they called Narollah, near Corfield on the Hughenden-Winton line. We went to Narollah after we married, but we were only there a year or so when the accident happened.

It was mid afternoon. We'd just finished Sunday lunch and we could see smoke. The wind sprang up and it wasn't long before we could see fire. The men got the fire-fighting equipment ready, hand beaters with handles on them, and they filled the water tank on the truck – there was a pump on the truck and a sprayer – and off they went.

Rex's mother was there at the time, Lorna. We were watching this fire. We could see the flames getting bigger and bigger and then we could hear a truck roaring along the fence line. We knew it was our truck but we couldn't work out why it was coming home. It pulled up at the front of the house and I went out to see what was wrong. Ooh... I soon found out when Rex carried his father inside and put him on the bed. Something you'd never forget. Then he went and got the boy and put him

on the verandah. By this time Rex had no skin on his hands: from driving, from carrying his father and the boy, and from tearing burning clothes off them.

The young boy was a jackaroo. He worked on the station. It was bad enough that Lance was caught by the fire, and then rescued by Rex and lifted onto the truck, but nothing would have happened to Rex – nothing really bad – except the lad panicked when his clothes caught alight and Rex had to run after him. He tore off the lad's burning clothes – getting more burnt himself – and carried him back to the truck and put him beside Lance. Rex was so frantic driving back to the homestead that he took on fences and gates – knocked them down.

We had a fellow putting in overhead machinery at the shearing shed. Rex went to tell him to get Jean Jones, our neighbour 5 miles away, a fully trained sister. I said: "I'll go" but Rex told me to stay with his father. Jean did what she could, but the thing was she didn't have painkillers.

The irony of the situation was that it rained soon after – rained quite heavy – and that put the fire out, but it also hindered getting outside help.

We tried to phone for assistance. It took quite a while. The exchange in Corfield didn't open from Saturday lunchtime till Monday morning. Eventually the postmaster in Corfield came on the line. First of all a plane was going to fly them to Hughenden, but it wouldn't have been able to land on our wet strip. They tried to arrange an ambulance, but rain closed the road. Finally, they organised a special train with sisters and a doctor on board. Then we had to get to Corfield.

The mail contractor arrived in his truck. He brought quite a few men with him in case there was trouble with the wet roads. The boy was placed in a bed they made for him on the back of the truck. A neighbour came over in a 4WD and we put Lance in that. He died before we left.

We got Rex into our car and we set off, and after a bit of slipping and sliding we reached Corfield. Rex and the boy were put into beds at the hotel. The train got in about midnight I think. In the meantime Rex wrote his will, though I didn't know that at the time. This fellow Jack Brooks – all he had to write on was blotting paper – he wrote the will as Rex dictated it to him.

REX HAD JUST DRAWN that block over near Corfield, a block off Sesbania. He used to do a lot of race-horse training and riding. He drew that block down there and he only had it about 12 months. He was here at the races on the Saturday doing a bit of jockeying. I remember talking to him. After the races he went straight home to the property.

The next night I heard that he'd been burnt in a bushfire. Big fire on the Sunday afternoon. They went out to try and fight it and the old man got caught – the smoke and that – and Rex went in to try and pull him out and he got caught too; and this young fella, only 16, working for Rex, he got caught as well.

BRYAN FELS

BUSHFIRE VICTIM'S WILL DICTATED BY TORCHLIGHT

Brisbane, April 15—A 28-year-old Queensland grazier, badly burnt in a bushfire, dictated his will by torchlight to three men as he lay dying in a hotel bedroom in November 1954.

The will was written on a sheet of blotting paper attached to a writing pad. This was revealed in an affidavit filed with the will of the grazier, Reginald John Reed Halloran, of Narollah, Corfield, near Hughenden. Letters of administration of his £47,797 gross personal estate were granted in the Supreme Court to-day.

HEROIC BID

Halloran died in Hughenden District Hospital on November 16, 1954, after having been shockingly burned two days earlier in a heroic attempt to rescue his father and another man trapped while fighting a bushfire on Narollah station, 60 miles south of Hughenden.

The father, Hugh Reginald Halloran (61), owner of Flers, Julia Creek, and the other man, Robert Raymond Batterley (17) of Wynnum, were fatally burned despite the bid to save them. At the same time, more than three inches of rain was falling at Corfield only 16 miles away.

Despite his shocking burns, Reginald Halloran drove his father and Batterley four miles by truck to the station homestead.

SPECIAL TRAIN

An ambulance was unable to reach them because the rain had made roads impassable and a special train was sent from Hughenden with a doctor and nurse to Corfield.

Later Reginald Halloran was taken to Hughenden District hospital where he

died on November 16, 1954.

Leslie Keith Paterson, licensed victualler of Manuka Hotel, Corfield, in an affidavit filed with the will, said he and the postmaster, John Brooks, and a man named James Russel Lawry, on November 14 went to Halloran's bedside at the hotel where Halloran was first brought from the homestead.

Brooks wrote the will at Halloran's dictation, Paterson added. In one part of the will Brooks wrote the word 'Norma' and Halloran said 'Lorna'. Brooks made an 'L' over the letter 'N' and they each initialled the word 'Norma' except Halloran, Paterson said.

He said the will was written by Brooks in circumstances of great difficulty when the only means of illumination was torchlight.

SPECIAL TRAIN

Sometime later it was discovered the will had been written on a sheet of blotting paper attached to a writing pad.

Halloran's will, dated November 14, 1954, read: "It is my wish, in the circumstances of fire emergency, that I desire that all my possessions and assets go to my wife, Bessie May Halloran, and Gary John Halloran, my only son, and I make provision for my mother Lorna Lysle Halloran for the period of her natural life."

In September 1955, Halloran was awarded posthumously the Royal Humane Society's merit certificate for his courageous attempt to save the lives of his father and Batterley.

We got to Hughenden at six in the morning.
The boy wasn't in hospital long.
He died on the Monday.
Rex died four o'clock Tuesday morning.
I was with him during the night
and he was trying to tell me about his throat.
He couldn't breathe at the last,
his throat just closed up on him from inhaling smoke.
The funeral was at Hughenden and Rex is buried there.

A. B. C. NEWS SERVICE

BULLETIN TIMES :

MONDAY TO SATURDAY			SUNDAY		
6.00 a.m.	12.30 p.m.	7.00 p.m.	6.45 a.m.	12.30 p.m.	9.00 p.m.
6.45 a.m.	1.30 p.m.	9.00 p.m.	8.45 a.m.	1.30 p.m.	11.0 p.m.
7.45 a.m.	4.00 p.m.	11.00 p.m.		7.00 p.m.	

BROADCAST OVER THE A.B.C. STATE NEWS, 8.45 a.m., 23rd JANUARY, 1955.

A bushfire tragedy, in which three men lost their lives last November, has led to the formation of a special bushfire brigade in the CORFIELD district of WESTERN QUEENSLAND.

Previously the nearest brigades were at RICHMOND and OLIO, but now fourteen graziers have formed and registered their own brigade at CORFIELD.

Three men - Lance HALLORAN, Rex HALLORAN, and Raymond BATTLE - died from burns after a lone attempt to control a bushfire on NAROLLAH STATION, near CORFIELD, in November.

.....

W. Fraser

NEWS EDITOR

I WAS BORN IN CLONCURRY IN 1925. My parents were graziers. They came out from Blackall by waggon after they were married. Dad had drawn Cornwall Downs in a ballot and that's where they lived. I wasn't born then. Eventually they bought Cremona from people by the name of Cameron – the two names are anagrams. Julia Creek ran between the two blocks.

I had two brothers, John and Bill. John was five years older than me and Bill was one year older. I'm the youngest, and the only one in the family left now.

Probably once a month we'd go into Julia Creek. We loved going to town, yes – and buying ice cream. Lucas was their name. They were Italians and they had a cafe in the front street (near AJ Smith's store) with home-made ice cream.

I grew up a tomboy. I didn't have a choice: whatever my brothers did, I did. Probably more. I did have dolls when the two boys went to school in Julia Creek for a few years and stayed with Mum's brother, Tom Fry, and his wife. I had no playmates on Cremona then, so I lived for my dolls. I became a dolly girl. But when the boys were home I was doing what they did.



I didn't have a terribly good horse on Cremona.
I had to ride what the boys didn't want to ride.
I used to say to Uncle Bill Fry
(another one of Mum's brothers;
he worked for Mum and Dad for years)
he had a grey unbroken pony
and I used to say to him:
"She's beautiful".

Uncle Bill broke her in,
about the time I went away to boarding school.
Gave her to a drover to take on a droving trip.

One day,
the first school holidays,
Uncle Bill went riding on the pony.
Rode her all morning
and tied her up outside that afternoon.

He came over to me:
"Shouldn't you be after the cows?"
"I haven't got a horse."
"What about the grey one? Ride her."
"Can I?"
"Go on."

So he saddled the pony.
From that time on *Lucky* was mine.
She didn't have a name till I rode her.

Only two people could saddle Lucky – me and Uncle Bill. If anyone else tried she'd just keep backing away. I can remember a neighbour was in the yards one day, Mr Dalling, and he was disgusted that the boys didn't help me. He tried to saddle Lucky, but no way would she let him come close enough. I always had to saddle her myself.

Another thing I had all to myself were the goats. They were mine, that was my work. The boys wouldn't have anything to do with them. I had to milk them in the morning and shut them up at night. I suppose we had about 20 or more.

In the wet weather, when you couldn't go and get a sheep, we ate goat meat. Mr Dalling again: "No!" – he wouldn't touch goat. He had tea at our place one night and Mum cooked roast leg. Nobody said a word about goat, see, and old Pop Dalling: "Well, that's a beautiful piece of mutton. Mrs Elliott". If he'd have known, he wouldn't have touched it. But they wouldn't know unless you told them.

Left: Bub and Bill Elliott on Cremona.
[Lesley Bode, BoL06, ca 1937]

Opposite: Bub when she wedded Rex.
[Bub Elliott, CB01, 15/6/1953]

MUM DIDN'T HAVE MUCH EDUCATION, but Dad had a good brain. Between them they taught us for a while. Then we had governesses off and on.

When I got to about 12 I went to boarding school. Never been inside a school in my life before, let alone a boarding school. I was so thrilled about going to Charters Towers and seeing other girls. Mum took me into Blackheath and... all these girls came out for assembly. I never knew so many girls could exist in the one place. I was that excited about it. But my heart fell down to my shoes: I was not used to seeing so many people. The principal, Miss Bullock, she called a girl to come over and be with me. She was from out west, too. Later I said to Mum:

I cried all day.

Well, what did the teacher say?

Oh, she didn't see me. I just cried inside.

Where we boarded was just for eating and sleeping and homework. No schooling was done there. We walked across to Thornburgh for classes – and as well as all the girls, here's all these boys. I did the rest of my schooling at Thornburgh and boarded at Blackheath. Once I got into it, yes, I loved it. Except there'd be a bawling match when I had to go back to school again after holidays.

I only boarded three years: all of grades 6, 7 and 8. Things went bad on the land and my parents didn't have the money to send me back anymore. Dad wanted me to continue ("You're Dad's girl"), but I finished in grade 8 when I was 14.

I was always "Dad's girl". Still, I was pulled into line quick and lively. Dad only had to speak to me and I'd be in tears. Mum could get the strap, but that didn't hurt near as much as Dad's voice.

When I finished school I worked on the property for about eight years and I put my hand to most things. Mustering – they wouldn't dare do that without me. My God, there'd be hell to pay.

Mum and Dad retired from the property in 1947 and moved to Brisbane. I went with them and the boys were left to run Cremona. My parents had planned to stay in Brisbane, but they had a change of heart after Rex and I got serious. They thought it was a bit silly being on their own in Brisbane when all their family was out west. "Too far away for me" Dad said. So they had a house built in Julia Creek.

I got married from that house, the 15th June 1953. Gary was born on the 15th of September the next year, and Rex died in November. My parents sold Cremona the day Gary was born.

After Rex's death, Narollah came to me. I got to know the neighbour's brother, Ron Carrington, and married him in 1958. We ran Narollah together for 40 years. I sold it four or five years ago, just after Ron died.



more fortunate areas.

The monthly meeting of the McKinlay Shire council was held on the 21st when a permit was granted to Mr. Bill Elliott for a house in Burke Street at an estimated cost of £2400. Building contractor Mr. Alan Flewell-Smith has commenced work on Mr. Elliott's dwelling.

Wednesday and Thursday were very

NQR: 29 Mar 1952

Julia Creek Wedding

HALLORAN — ELLIOTT

A wedding of widespread interest was solemnised in St. Barnabas Church of England on Monday 15th June, the contracting parties being Bessie May Elliott, Cremona Downs, and Reginald John ('Rex') Halloran, Flers.

The petite fair-haired bride, who was given away by her father, made an enchanting picture in her gown of snow-white Swiss embroidered voile, the moulded bodice of which featured a scalloped neckline and tiny sleeves. The bouffant skirt was made in gathered tiers with a front panel of organdi, and fell into a slight train effect. A misty veil of nylon tulle fell from a lovely coronet of pearls. White nylon gloves, and a most beautiful rhinestone necklace and earrings were added to her ensemble. She carried a bouquet of orchids and roses.

Mr. Murray Halloran as best man, and Mr. Bill Elliott, as groomsman, capably attended the groom. The reception was held at Hampton's Hall where over 200 guests were entertained. Occupying pride of place on the bridal table was the lovely three-tiered diamond shaped wedding cake which was made and decorated in blue and pink by the bride.

The bride and groom were the recipients of many lovely gifts and valuable cheques. After the reception a dance was held. The bridal couple departed by car on their honeymoon which is being spent on a tour of the Tableland.

On their return the couple will make their future home at Narollah, Corfield.

CA: 03 Jul 1953

Maureen Byrnes

I THOUGHT WE'D COME to the end of the earth when Neil and I arrived in Julia Creek. I'd never seen anything like it. On a dark night, if you looked west, you could see the glow of Cloncurry lighting the horizon 80 miles away. So it wasn't really the end of the earth, there was something further out. And I did get used to Julia Creek. I grew to like it. The people were so... friendly and kind.

We were married in Ipswich in 1947. I was an Ipswich girl and I met Neil in the Post Office at Gatton where he and I were working. We were in Barcaldine after we married, among other places, and this job came up at the Julia Creek Post Office. There were a few jobs in Brisbane but I remember Neil saying: "Look, I'll never get ahead if we go back to Brisbane", because of limited opportunities for him to climb the ranks. So he applied for the Julia Creek job and got it. We went to Julia Creek in late 1956 and stayed four years.

Neil was postmaster. He went out before I did and he told me over the phone: "You'd better get a washing machine instead of that copper". He said there was no wood. But I really liked using a copper, so while I was in Julia Creek I stuck with it. I heated water for the copper on the coke stove I used for cooking. It was a lovely stove, but the coke came from Townsville and the freight was dearer than the coke. I probably should have got the washing machine.

There wasn't much in the way of entertainment in Julia Creek except for the pictures, and we weren't picture goers. Then one Sunday, Joey Mathews said to Neil: "There's a real good picture on at the open-air theatre". It was *The Quiet Man* with John Wayne. So we packed up our kids and we went to the pictures. And from that Sunday night, every week on the way home from Mass we went to Norm Downey's theatre.

And I suppose that brings us to...
Y'know, there was no doctor
in Julia Creek that weekend.

Is this cutting about the accident?
I haven't seen this before.

"In the Court of Petty Sessions at Julia Creek...
John William Winton..."

I wouldn't have even remembered the man's name.
Is he still out there?
If you see him again,
tell him I feel so deeply sorry for him.
He was a nice fellow, a young bloke...

"... was remanded till December 4th..."

Well, I don't doubt it's true,
but I can honestly say I never saw that in the paper;
never heard anything about it.

THIS IS MY MEMORY of the whole thing. Neil had finished work at the Post Office and we were at the Blue Bird Cafe with three of our children: Paul, Jim, and baby Clare in the pram. Clare was about 5 months old at the time. A woman who was in the Julia Creek Hospital when Clare was born stopped to say hello. As she stopped, a little kid called out from the O-K Store over the road where Percy Thompson worked, and I watched Paul and Jim go across. A few minutes went by and they ran across the street to come back.

Jim made it to the footpath. Paul didn't.

It wasn't as though the driver was speeding or had been drinking or anything like that. It was a genuine accident. He was going to a wedding. As he came around the corner – where Terry O'Neill had his cafe – he just didn't see these two little kids dashing across the street.



*I acknowledge this to be a true photograph
of my Austin A40 motor utility
Registered No. NEF-108
Engine no. 1-9-858372
J. Winton*

So Deeply Sorry

Burke St, Julia Creek,
5:35 PM, Friday 6th September, 1957:
a little boy comes to dust

guished by a number of fire fighters.

In the Court of Petty Sessions at Julia Creek on Wednesday, October 23, John William Winton, motor mechanic, charged on summons with having unlawfully killed one Paul Byrnes, on September 8 last, was remanded until December 4 on bail of his own bond of £100. Defendant at this stage was not represented by counsel. The only witness for the prosecution who gave evidence was Daniel Kleinig, Medical Superintendent Cloncurry Base Hospital, who related the medical examination carried out by him and the injuries sustained by the patient on his admission to hospital. Dr. Kleinig's evidence was given early as he was on the point of transfer to Brisbane, his successor having already arrived at Cloncurry to

NQR: 30 Nov 1957

There was a hospital in Julia Creek but no doctor. Grandma Byrne, Paddy Byrne's wife (no relation to us) she came and said to me: "Maureen, they're taking Paul to Cloncurry". We had no car and I didn't think they'd let Neil and I go in the ambulance with Paul, but she said to me: "I'll fix it. And don't worry about the kids. I'll look after them".

So I went home, got some nappies for Clare – no time to get clothes for Neil or me – and the three of us got into the ambulance. Ken Macklan, the ambulance man, drove us to Cloncurry. He was absolutely wonderful.

We'd never been to Cloncurry; had no friends there and nowhere to stay. One of the nurses at the hospital – Neil knew her mother in Brisbane – said that if we waited till she finished work we could come home and stay with her. So we did.

It got to be Saturday and Paul was still unconscious. I don't remember what we did Saturday. Nothing but grief.

Neil stayed Saturday night at the hospital and I went home with the nurse. He said he'd call for me Sunday morning to go to first Mass. I got up real early and I made a bottle for the baby. I went in and woke the lady we were staying with: "When Clare wakes, as long as you feed her she'll be right".

I met the priest and he drove me to the hospital. When I got out I *ran*. Paul was still alive, but he didn't ever regain consciousness. I wanted to touch him and feel him and try and bring him round, but that was not possible. He died that Sunday morning.

When we were at the hospital trying to collect our thoughts, Grandma Byrne rang. She came for us in a car. Her son, Frank, also came, and he took Paul to Julia Creek in the back of his ute.

We had the funeral that afternoon.



before serious damage occurred.

Evidence in the charge against John William Winton, motor mechanic, of unlawfully killing one Paul Byrnes, on September 8, 1957 was concluded in the Court of Petty Sessions, Julia Creek, last Thursday. The Magistrate held that the prosecution had established a prima facie case against the defendant. The defendant pleaded not guilty to the charge and reserved his defence. He was committed for trial at the criminal sittings of the Circuit Court to be held at Cloncurry, April 14, 1958, bail of £100 in his own recognisance being extended.

Word has been received from Dr. Geoff Bradfield, our town doctor for several years, that he has accepted the position of Obstetric Registrar, Royal Hobart Hospital, Hobart. Mrs. Bradfield trained in the block that her husband will administer. The position is one that Dr. Bradfield will occupy for two years and is recognised by the Eng-
li-

NQR: 14 Dec 1957

Police and Court Records

ARTHUR JAMES ORFORD

I know the defendant, J. W. Winton, now before the court. I also know the deceased child, Paul Byrnes. I remember Friday, 6th September 1957.

At about 5.35 on that day, following a telephone call being received at the Julia Creek Police Station, I went with Sergeant Purtle to a spot in Burke St near the O-K Store. On arrival there we were spoken to by a man named Clive Holland who indicated to us a biscuit-coloured Austin A40 utility; also a man known to me as John William Winton. I observed that his utility was parked on the north side of the roadway facing east. It was parked about 40 feet east of the Blue Bird Cafe. I walked over to the defendant who was standing near the vehicle and I said:

What happened, John?

Neil Byrnes' little boy ran in front of me and I hit him with the car.

What part of the car hit him?

The front passenger side.

Is the lad hurt very bad?

I think so. They've taken him to hospital.

Didn't you see him?

He was in front of me before I saw him.

Where were you travelling to?

These are extracts from files sent to Cloncurry in preparation for the trial. Some are statements made to police, others are transcripts from the committal proceedings at Julia Creek¹. The trial was abandoned.

I had just come from home. I've got cakes for the wedding.

What speed were you travelling when you hit the lad?

About 25 mph. It might have been a bit more. It wouldn't have been 30.

I then observed two skid marks which ran from the front wheels of the utility back towards Quarrell St.

Are these your skid marks?

Yes.

Have you shifted the vehicle since you collided with the boy?

No, that's where I pulled up.

I'll get you to shift the vehicle. I want to measure the skid marks.

I then measured the two skid marks and found them to be 45 feet in length.

On Tuesday afternoon, 10th September 1957 at about 3.10 p.m., I went to the Julia Creek Police Station where I saw the defendant and plain clothes Constable Corbett. When I arrived at the police station I heard Corbett say to the defendant:

I understand that you are the driver of the vehicle that collided with the child.

Yes. I never saw him till he darted out right in front of me.

Are you prepared to tell me your version of the incident?

I knocked off work about half-past 4 that afternoon and got cleaned up to go to the wedding. I was a bit late and I didn't go to the church service. Instead, I picked up some cakes at home to take to O'Neill's Hall for the reception. I was driving down Burke St. I did not see the boy until he was nearly on my left hand side. I tried to pull up but it was too late.

Did you see the boy on the footpath or crossing the street?

No, I did not see him till I was right on him.

Did you see anyone else in the street?

1. SRS 5309/1, 23/10/1957, Qld State Archives.

I looked over at Mannie Sills' fruit shop and I saw Mrs Sills standing in the doorway. I then looked straight ahead.

Where were you looking when you were going down the road?

I was looking across towards Peter Dawes' shop. I saw two cars driving on that side.

Were you looking at those two cars when you collided with the boy?

I looked over at the cars, and when I looked back in front of me I saw the lad in front of the vehicle.

When did you apply the brakes?

As soon as I saw the lad.

Mr Holland has informed me that he did not notice your vehicle braking until you actually collided with the lad.

I must have hit the lad and braked at the same time.

Had you drank any alcoholic liquor on the day of the incident?

I had one glass of beer at dinner time. That's all I had that day.

I would like you to accompany us to the scene of the incident. We want to make some tests.

Corbett, defendant and myself then got into the defendant's vehicle and we drove to near the Blue Bird Cafe¹ in Burke St. On alighting from the vehicle Corbett said to the defendant:

Will you show me where the child was when you collided with him?

He was about opposite the door of the Blue Bird.

Defendant then indicated a position on the roadway and pointed to the door on the eastern end of the cafe. Corbett then said to defendant: "Will you show me how far you went after colliding with the child before you pulled up?" Defendant walked along Burke St and indicated a position on the roadway: "I pulled up here and the boy was lying there". The distance between the two positions was measured and found to be 45 feet. Corbett then said to defendant:

From the positions indicated by you, and from measurements taken, it can be seen that you travelled 45 feet after colliding with the child. Will you accompany us in the vehicle while we test the brakes?

Yes.

I drove the vehicle east along Burke St towards Julia St at a speedo reading of between 25 and 30 mph. At a given point, the last awning of the Blue Bird Cafe on the eastern side, I applied the foot brake in full emergency and stopped the vehicle. Corbett and myself measured the skid marks made as a result of this test and it was found to be 43 feet.

Corbett, defendant and myself then returned to the police station. On arrival Corbett said to the defendant:



1. The Blue Bird Cafe of this story was located on the site of the present-day Godier's Supermarket. The original Blue Bird was next to the Post Office and was burnt down in 1950.



Do you think you kept a proper lookout? If you had looked at the roadway and on the footpath near the O-K Store, do you think you would have seen the child before you did?

It happened so quick. He was in front of me before I saw him. What's going to happen now?

The facts will be reported to my Inspector. If any action is deemed necessary you will be advised later.

The defendant then left the station. On 18th October I served a summons on the defendant in Goldring St, Julia Creek at about 10.30 a.m., charging him with unlawfully killing Paul Byrnes.

I have been four and a half years in Julia Creek. I drive a motor vehicle practically every day. I have frequently driven a vehicle along Burke St in that area. It is a very wide street, gravel surfaced. There are garden plots in the centre of that street that divide it into a two-way street, one up, one down. Visibility is good in Burke St from my experience. There are trees growing in the garden plots in the centre of the street. There is a garden plot in the vicinity of where the incident occurred. There are two trees in that garden plot that could restrict your view; one at each end approximately 10 feet apart. They are only small trees about 10 feet high and would restrict your view to a very small extent. The trunk of these trees is very thin; bare up to about 6 feet. Around each of these trees is a wire tree guard.

From my experience driving down Burke St from the west to the east it is possible to see both sides of the street.

Master Paul Byrnes, 5 years, son of Mr. and Mrs. Neil Byrnes, Coyne St, Julia Creek, was seriously injured on Friday afternoon when he was the victim of an accident in Burke Street. He was removed by ambulance car to the Cloncurry Hospital where he passed away on Sunday morning. His body was brought back to Julia Creek and interred in the cemetery on Sunday afternoon. Deep sympathy goes out to his sorrowing parents, brothers and sisters.

Friday afternoon in St. Barnabas Church of England, Mavis Ann Ives was married to Mr. George Winton. The bride, who is the fifth daughter of Mrs. E. Ives, Julia Creek, wore flock organdie with small matching chapeau. The bride's bouquet was of roses and lily of the valley. The wedding breakfast was held in O'Neill's Hall.

Mrs. Max Burns, accompanied by her sons Malcolm and Alan, returned to Julia Creek on Sunday after a holiday spent in the south. Persistent barking on the part of Prince, the Alsatian, disturbed Mrs. Burns in the night.

NQR: 14 Sep 1957

CLIVE EDWARD HOLLAND

I am a married man, 49 years of age, residing in Burke St. I am the proprietor of the O-K Store which is opposite the Blue Bird Cafe. I know the defendant. He is known by the nickname Choco. I know the deceased boy, Paul Byrnes.

At about 5.35 p.m. on the date in question I was standing in front of the O-K Store. Whilst I was standing there I saw Paul Byrnes and another boy, a brother smaller than him, looking in the window of my shop. Paul would be about 5 and the other boy about 3. I know the parents of the boys. The parents were standing right opposite my shop outside the Blue Bird.

After a while I noticed the now deceased boy, Paul Byrnes, leave the shop and run straight across the street with the other boy behind him. He was running straight across to his mother and father. As he was running across the street I noticed the defendant's car was near the doctor's residence coming down from the direction of Quarrell St towards Julia St. The doctor's residence is one door west of the Blue Bird.

When I saw the boy running across the street and the vehicle coming down the street I realised that if they both kept going they would collide. I called out something. The child was running as I called out. The car kept coming and hit the child. I actually saw it hit the child. The boy had passed practically right across in front of the car before it hit him. When the car hit the child the driver jammed his brakes on and stopped. You could hear the collision. You could hear it right across the street.

The driver had not put the brakes on prior to hitting the child. It must have been just after he hit the child that he applied the brakes.

When I saw the collision I ran across. The vehicle had pulled up when I got there. At the front of the car the boy was lying on the ground about 8 inches from the passenger side front wheel of the vehicle. He was lying on his left side. He was blue in the face and his mouth was half open. There was a trickle of blood coming from his mouth. I thought the child was dead.

I have had a driving licence for 28 years. I have done a lot of driving. When I saw defendant's vehicle I would say it was travelling about 30 mph. The vehicle did not slacken speed or attempt to swerve before it hit the child.

The younger boy continued across the street and sat on the steps of the Blue Bird Cafe.

HAZEL JULIA SILLS

I am a married woman residing at Hilton Park, Julia Creek. Hilton Park is about a mile out of town. My husband, George Sills, conducts a fruit shop in Burke St. At times I assist my husband in running the shop. I know the defendant. I had not seen the boy Paul Byrnes before, but I knew his parents.

I remember Friday 6th September, last. I worked in the fruit shop all that day. The front of the shop has two big plate-glass windows. There are also two windows on the eastern side of the shop. There is a vacant allotment next to the shop and those two windows open onto the allotment. By looking through those windows I can see part of the Blue Bird Cafe

on the other side of the street.

At about 5.35 p.m. I was in the front of the shop making orders. I looked out the front of the shop and I saw the defendant drive by in a biscuit-coloured utility travelling towards the Post Office. He was on the opposite side of the street to me.

Just about the time he passed the shop I went to the window on the eastern side of the shop. I happened to glance out of the window and I saw a little boy. He was on my side of the road running towards the opposite footpath. I saw him about a second before he dived in front of the car. I thought the boy was about 3 or 4 years old. I saw the utility strike the boy. I saw the boy throw up his arms and I heard a bump. I said something to my husband in connection with what I saw. I then turned from the window and ran out of the shop. I saw the boy lying on the road. I didn't go over to the boy, but other people went over.

I don't drive a car. I am no judge of speed. In my opinion he was driving carefully.

HANNAH ANNIE SMITH

I am a married woman, residing in Byrne St, Julia Creek. I am employed as a shop assistant by a man named Peter Dawes. I am a trained nurse.

I remember Friday 6th September, last. I was working in Peter Dawes' shop on that day. That afternoon, between 5 and half-past, the voice of someone in the shop drew my attention to the street. I noticed a small crowd near the Blue Bird Cafe. I went over and saw a child lying on the roadway on his left side. His general condition appeared very poor. He was unconscious and deathly pale. I knelt down and took the boy's pulse. It was weak but he was definitely alive. He was bleeding from the nose and possibly the mouth. I then picked the child up and took him across the road to a car standing in the middle of the road. Shortly after, a driver came along and conveyed the injured child and myself to the hospital. Mr Byrnes, the father of the child, came with us. He was in the back of the vehicle. I observed nothing of the accident itself.

KATE CROWLEY

I am the matron in charge of the Julia Creek Hospital. I reside at the hospital.

I remember Friday, 6th September 1957. I was on duty at the hospital on that day. I recall getting a telephone call after 5 p.m. It may have been half-past 5. In consequence of what I was told on the telephone I made arrangements for an emergency. Shortly afterwards some people arrived at the hospital. There was Mrs Hannah Smith, Mr Neil Byrnes and a little boy aged about 5 years. He was a son of Mr Byrnes. I examined the child. I found that he had a fractured left femur, abrasion on his knees, abrasions on his face, and haematomous swellings on the forehead and around the back of the head. I tried his pulse. At different times it was weak and at other times it was better. At times he would take spasms and hold his breath and his pulse would go off. I applied warmth as treatment for shock. I didn't administer anything to him except oxygen, which was kept up all the time until he left for Cloncurry.

There was no doctor in Julia Creek at the time. Arrangements were made for transportation to the Cloncurry Base Hospital. I rang the hospital and made arrangements for his admittance. Later that afternoon the boy was conveyed to Cloncurry. Sister Rule went with him.

NEIL BYRNES

I am a married man, residing with my wife and family at Coyne St, Julia Creek. I had a son named Paul Byrnes, born on 12th April 1952.

I remember Friday 6th September. During the lunch hour on that date I made some arrangement with my wife concerning some of our children. I took charge of two of the children, Paul and James. James is 4 today. He was 3 then.

I ceased work about 5.15 p.m. I then awaited the arrival of my wife. With the two boys I sat on the Post Office steps. I saw a pram, which I recognised as ours, in front of the Blue Bird Cafe. I waited a little longer thinking the wife was making some purchase at the Blue Bird Cafe, but when she didn't come out I walked towards the cafe. I walked as far as the entrance to the cafe and I saw my wife in conversation with the lady in the cafe. I went into the cafe. Paul and James were with me in the cafe.

A few minutes later we moved onto the footpath. After a while I noticed the two boys had crossed the street and were standing in front of the O-K Store on the opposite side of the street.

My wife was ready to leave and I clapped my hands to indicate to the boys that they should come back. Paul looked up and appeared to recognize that I had clapped to call him. I was in conversation with Mrs Milburn at the time, and after clapping I turned back to her. I was standing facing the Blue Bird with my back towards the boys.

There was then a murmur as though something had happened. My attention was attracted to the street. I cannot remember hearing any noise apart from the murmur.

I looked around. The first thing I saw was Paul on the front of the utility. At the instant I caught sight of Paul I would say that he was thrown from the front of the utility to the roadway. I immediately ran towards him. He was lying on the roadway with his head towards the Blue Bird. On looking at the boy I noticed that he was very pale and slightly blue around the lips. His eyes were closed and he was gravel rashed on one side of the face. He appeared unconscious.

A number of other persons came immediately to the scene. I saw Mrs Hannah Smith kneel beside Paul and take his pulse. Mrs Smith said something. I was doubtful about moving the child and made arrangements to have the ambulance telephoned. Mrs Smith picked up the child before the ambulance arrived and took him towards a utility parked in the centre of the street. The injured boy was driven to hospital in that utility and I accompanied them in the back.

Did you have any conversation with the defendant at the scene?

I would have spoken to him. As a matter of fact I think I approached him with a view of taking the child to hospital.

Did he express his willingness to do so?

He did.

Did he go to the hospital after the child was taken there?

Subsequently, yes.

Did he appear to you to be sorry about the accident?

He appeared to be considerably upset.

On arrival at the hospital Paul was immediately attended to by Matron Crowley. There was no doctor in Julia Creek at the time. Arrangements were made to have the injured boy taken to the Cloncurry Hospital in the ambulance driven by Bearer Macklan. Sister Rule also went in the ambulance. She administered oxygen continuously in the ambulance on the way. At the hospital Paul was attended to by Dr Kleinig.



My wife and I remained at Cloncurry. At 8.25 a.m. on Sunday 8th September I was advised that Paul had passed away.

DANIEL EGBERT KLEINIG

I am a legally-qualified medical practitioner registered in Queensland. On 6th September last I was Superintendent of Cloncurry Base Hospital. I remember Friday, 6th September 1957. I saw the child Paul Byrnes on that date at about 9 p.m. I examined the child for injuries. My examination disclosed that he was unconscious, but resented interference. He was groaning occasionally. There was a splint applied to the left leg. There were superficial abrasions on the left side of the face, on the forehead and chin, on the right side of the nose, both sides of the scalp (the right side more than the left) and behind both elbows. Those were the actual injuries.

There were clinical signs of some importance: he had a rapid pulse of 138 a minute and of fair volume; his eyes were roving and the pupils were contracted, circular, and reacted to light. I took X-ray photographs of his body and developed them. They disclosed an oblique fracture of the left femur at the junction of the upper and middle thirds, with marked displacement; and an oblique linear fracture in the right parietal region of the skull.

The child was male, aged 5 years, and was given appropriate treatment in the hospital for the injuries he was suffering. Nothing was done about the fracture of the femur as I thought that interference in that direction would be detrimental to his general condition.

I would not say the child's condition improved. It remained approximately the same until the early morning of 8th September. His condition then markedly deteriorated: his pulse became more rapid; his temperature became elevated; his level of unconsciousness became deeper; his extremities became cold; and his pupils began to dilate. Some spasticity appeared in his right arm and, to a lesser extent, in his right leg. There was also an uncertain amount in his left leg. The spasticity would be due to cerebral damage of some description.

The boy subsequently died at 8.25 a.m. on the morning of Sunday, 8th September 1957, without regaining consciousness. Cause of death was shown on the certificate of death as cerebral contusion as a result of being hit by a car. A contributing factor was a fractured left femur.



Above: Paul Byrnes.
[Maureen Byrnes, ByM01, 1957]



Below: "Baz is wearing a sports coat and a tie."
Burnses at the Brisbane Exhibition. Joy, Butch,
Marj, Barry, Mal, Don, Max.
[Joy Burns, J68, 1950]

Opposite top: Barry on the Biloela farm,
a year or two before his bum got cooked.
[Guy Burns, P051, 1938]

Opposite bottom: Barry.
[Mal Burns, BuM13, ca 1958]



Barry Burns

THE DAIRY FARM AT BILOELA IS MY FIRST MEMORY. It was about 1940 Dad bought the farm. It was what they called a scrub farm and Dad had to clear it of thousands of tons of cactus pear growing wild. Absolutely unbelievable.

I was about 3 and we lived in a little old shack with a wood stove. In the middle of winter it was freezing cold, and silly old Mum used to put a round tub beside the fire for us to have a bath. Being a very active child like I was, I spun round in the bath and cooked me arse on the side of the stove. I had a burn as big as a bloody football¹.

Just after me bum got burnt I went to the river flat where Dad used to grow watermelons and pumpkins. I fell into a little hole. Well, it wasn't a little hole, it was over my head. They spent hours running around yelling their heads off looking for me. And I can remember all the shitty cows and the stinking pigs.

The next thing I remember we were at the airfields at Rockhampton during the Battle of the Coral Sea. Dad was commandeered there. All earthmoving machinery was requisitioned for the war effort. The war was in full swing. We were at Rocky about two years, I think, living in a tent while they built the airfield.

During the Battle of the Coral Sea the old man said: "We're gonna go up and have a look at Cairns before the Nips take over". So the mad bastard bought this Whippet with a gas producer. It burnt charcoal because you couldn't buy petrol. That's how we went to Cairns – in a coal burner. We took off while the battle was on and drove to Cairns via Longreach because the coastal route was blocked.

Three months after the battle the airstrip was almost finished and the military wanted Max to go somewhere else. So in the middle of the night we packed up and bolted. We pissed off. Loaded everything onto the truck and went to Clermont. Never been there before. Max wanted to get away from government restrictions. They were just paying us food; they were paying nothing for the equipment, nothing for the work, and the machinery was getting worn out.

I started school at Clermont in 1943. We all went to the Clermont State School: Don, Joy and me, and every day we had war drill. They dug trenches and we used to run down there and jump in these trenches twice a day.

So yeah, they're my first memories.

Ooh, I Was Slippery

Max's second son, 'a bit of a mug lair' sums up his father's tanksinking years



THE SETTING: Barry Burns at a kitchen table, yarning about Julia Creek and looking at photos on a laptop screen. Josie (his wife) is in the lounge room watching TV, listening closely to what's being said in the kitchen, but not really interested in the photos.

B: You oughta come and have a look at this bloke, Josie [photo, opposite]. Have a good look. Baz is wearing a sports coat and a tie. Fine looking young fella too, he is. I tell you what: no wonder the girls used to swoon,

eh. Just look at this bloke here. He's got a flash, wide tie on. This is 1950 at the Exhibition in Brisbane. I'm about 13 – and looking smart!

J: [Yelling over the TV] I can imagine what you look like with those ears of yours.

B: Come here. Come here and have a look. Never mind the ears; have a good look at this photo. The smartest looking bloke you've ever seen in your life. No wonder you fell in love with me. [Josie comes in]

B: Now isn't that smart. Sports coat, three buttons, flash tie – a silk hand-painted tie. A bit of a mug lair.

J: Yeah... when I first saw you on the dance floor at the McKinlay Ball I thought you were a mug lair.

B: Ooh, I was slippery on the floor. I was right up there. Best rock-n-roller in the country, mate. And the best singer – but Josie never allowed me to sing...

BARRY & JOSIE

1. Clive Flewell-Smith, Barry's uncle, mentions this incident in a letter to his sister, Marj, dated 19/6/1941: "I am sorry to hear that Barry has burnt himself and that Don has been ill. I hope that they are both well again".

It was during the war that Max was tanksinking around Clermont. He had an International T6 crawler and a scoop, one of the first pneumatic-tyre scoops. And it was a big one – 2 yards! Big deal for those days because the average... well, there were virtually no scoops except the horse-drawn monkey tails¹, and they were only about a yard.

Clermont was the base, and from there he worked his way up past the Belyando River, camping out all the time. It was virgin country, never been touched, and suddenly someone wants a dam on his property. Gums like this... a yard across. The only way to get them out was to climb up 20 feet and put a rope around them and pull them over. You'd be weeks clearing a site before you could put a dam down. And there was virtually nothing in it. I remember he was working for sixpence a yard in the early days. He thought he was really making money when it got to a shilling.

Mum stayed in Clermont with us four kids until Max got amorous with a few women. After that she went with him and left us with Mrs... I won't tell you what I used to call her, but I will tell you what she fed us – fat and onion sandwiches! Mate, unbelievable. That's all she served up. Me, a little six-year-old kid eating fat and onion sandwiches. This was the housekeeper we had because Marj wanted to keep Max on track.

Max never drove bulldozers, except in those very early days. Organiser, overseer, manager (building a tank was a job that had to be managed), Max made certain everything was serviced. He only drove tractors from 1940, when he started, till just after the war when he could get drivers.



Above: The "fat & onion sandwich" house in Herschell St, Clermont. Pulled down in 2003.
[Guy Burns, GB60, 2002]

Opposite top: Eric Day
[Eric Day, DaE01, 1946]

Opposite bottom: John Kirk
[Valmai Kirk, KV04, ca 2002]

Below: The earliest photo of Max's tanksinking plant, working its way north from the Clermont area. From left: an Armstrong Holland one-yard scoop (a rollover scoop) behind a DD2 or DD4 Caterpillar; another Armstrong Holland scoop behind an International T6; a Ford V8; a Morris A40.
[Joy Burns, J61, 1946]

"That's it. That's what he had. Max left the Rockhampton aerodrome with that stuff and marched it west to Clermont. He had to walk the tractors everywhere in the early days. That's late 1946 after he'd moved to the Charters Towers side of Clermont from the Capella side.

Out front, that's Max's little Morris; and behind that is the old Ford truck, the one he had before he bought the KBS5 International.

You can see the rollover scoop with a big long lever in the air. When it was ready to tip you pulled on the lever with

a rope. You had this rope round your gut; that was the easiest way to hang onto it. One time the drawbar between the tractor and the scoop broke and Max got yanked backwards by the rope still attached to the scoop. Luckily he slipped over the top as he was pulled off the tractor." (Barry)



1. See page 622 for photo and story of a monkey-tail scoop.



1920 I WAS BORN, right here on this property. My father died in 1925, and as soon as I was old enough I was running the property. Been running Charlton¹ ever since.

Until Max appeared, there had never been any water improvements here, just a few bores. A lot of the country was much the same as it was back in 1902 when that major drought knocked out all the cattle.

Well, Max came over from Capella with his machinery, and Alan O'Sullivan gave him a job on Barcombe. He did an 8000 yard tank, and I think he might have went back there and did another one. He did more than one job. He worked on Cairo too.

On Charlton we were short of water and were looking for a tanksinker. We barely had enough money, but what we had we spent on dams because you can't live without water. I rode over to Barcombe and saw Max, and he agreed to come here and put down four tanks: Porters Tank, then Robinsons, then he did the one at No. 4 (a 4000 yard tank with

fluming through it), then he did Boggy. It was supposed to be an 8000 yarder, Boggy, but he got into sandstone and it wasn't quite 8000 yards when he finished. He couldn't dig, it was too hard. Porters and Robinsons were only small tanks – 1800 yards.

A 4000 yard tank took Max about 8 or 9 days I suppose. Did the lot himself, with the help of an offsider, using two small scoops and two tractors. They used to spend a fair number of hours a day on the tractors, driving all day and half the night until they ran out of fuel. Then Max would go to Clermont and come back with enough diesel for a couple of more days. Might get back at midnight and climb on the tractor again; dig out some more dirt. About one and six a yard we paid him.

Max built the tanks for us during the war, 1944 or 45. No, it must have been earlier than that. Might have been 1942 or 43, because while he was working we could hear other machinery on the Charters Towers road. The army were putting through a new road to the Towers as part of the war effort.

I remember Max and his offsider were pretty untidy around camp. They used to skin the spuds and onions and drop the peel on the ground, hoping they were off the job and gone before the smell gave

too much trouble.

He did more jobs up around the Belyando River. Worked right through that rough country until he got into good digging on the black soil downs. I think he liked the idea of big dams and good digging.

MAX'S FOREMAN, Cecil Willis, was in Clermont one time, several years later, and I had a couple of drinks with him at the pub. He was heading out to Julia Creek. Apparently a lot of tanksinking was in progress.

Kirk brothers were out there, too, though up north a bit, in the Gulf country. Kirks, when they unloaded their tractors off the train at Hughenden, they drove them 200 miles or more. Max, by the time I saw his foreman, he had trucks for moving his machinery. I think Max would have been amused that his competitors, the Kirks, sat down for several days to drive their equipment 200 miles.

The only other story I know about Max was that he got into marital trouble through dallying with a woman in a Richmond hotel². I never saw Max after he left here – but I sure heard about him.

ERIC DAY

Died ~ 2003

1. 80 miles north of Clermont, near the Belyando River.
2. Virtually everyone I spoke to who knew Max had heard of this "marital trouble". See page 55.



MY OLD HEAD'S just about worn out. I'm 92 this year [2002], so I don't know how much I'll be able to tell you about Max Burns and tanksinking.

Wool was booming just after the war, and wool cockies were rolling in money. I was working tractors around Clermont and Rolleston with my brother, Archie; working under the name of Kirk Brothers. Started off around Capella.

We got a contract from Angliss & Kidman for 450,000 yards of tanksinking around Iffley, so we shifted our tanksinking plant from the bragalow country around Clermont up to the Gulf. Max Burns was pretty well dug in around Julia Creek and the Gulf area, and I know he put in a tender, but I think he got too greedy. We came in under him.

We had four crawlers: two TD18 Internationals, and these other jolly things, Allis-Chalmers. The scoops were Britstand, all cable operated. First you'd clear the site with the dozers; clear the site and peg it out. There was Archie and eight drivers and a camp cook; he was a half-Chinese sort of a chap. They used to work round the clock to try and get the tank finished before the next shower came along. Nine men working round the clock, three eight-hour shifts, three on each shift. The tractors never stopped once we opened up a tank. The best we ever did was

15,000 yards in about a week: 200' by 200', and 20' deep. with three-in-one batters³.

The men worked on wages, not contract, and Archie was with them all the time. He got on well with the drivers and he was a good tanksinker; an easy bloke to get along with and quite capable, but he was a tiger who wouldn't write anything down. He'd rather be on a tractor than doing bookwork.

Alcohol was a bit of a problem. The men would sneak it in, but that was one thing we wouldn't stand – alcohol in the camp.

The Angliss & Kidman job was a fixed tender, but there was a clause in the contract that after half the work was done there would be a review of the price, having regard to the upsurge. See, everything was on the rise because of the wool boom. We put in a certain price when it was reviewed and Angliss & Kidman wouldn't quite come at it, so we went onto other stations around. We still had plenty of work, but it was a bit scattered.

After we finished the Angliss & Kidman job, we might have done half a dozen tanks or so, but because we didn't have any trucks, we came to the conclusion that it was too cumbersome dragging all the gear overland behind the crawlers to the next job.

Towards the end, we split the plant. Archie went with one half, and we gave charge of the other half to a big, rough-n-tumble, know-all sort of a bloke. Later on I traded-in my share and got scrub-pulling gear, but Archie stayed with tanksinking.

JOHN KIRK

Died 5 Jun 2004

3. John's memory for figures was pretty good. A tank of the dimensions given has a capacity of 15,408 cubic yards.

EARTH MOVING CONTRACTORS

PLANS and being prepared and contracts will shortly be let for the excavation during 1951 of a minimum quota of 10 earthen tanks, comprising eight of 15,000 cubic yards each and two of 20,000 cubic yards each, a total of 160,000 cubic yards.

The work will be at Vanrook, Rutland Plains, Iffley, and Donors Hill stations, all situated in the Normanton district of North Queensland.

Additional minimum quotas of work, totalling 350,000 cubic yards, will be let during 1952, 1953, and 1954, at the properties named.

Preliminary communications from interested contractors are now invited, with a brief description on the contractor's plant and daily earthmoving capacity.

Successful tenderers for the work (which need not necessarily be allotted to a single individual) will be required to furnish satisfactory business and financial references.

Letter should be addressed to the Secretary, Queensland Station Pty. Ltd. 524 Collins Street, Melbourne.

NQR: 3 Mar 1951

This is the job "around Iffley" that John Kirk talks about. Max may have been able to avoid bankruptcy if he'd undercut the Kirk tender and picked up all the work listed in the ad.

Opposite: Cecil Willis, Max's tanksinking foreman, driving an FDE Cletrac pulling a Britstand C14 scoop. Max instructed his drivers to stand while operating the FDEs (see pages 507, 525).
[Merv Brand, BM05, 1951]

Below: Beven Flewell-Smith and Butch Burns (in car) playing at Burns' house, Dew Drop Inn, during construction. Julia Creek Engineering Works is in the background, almost completed.
[Isabel Flewell-Smith, I21, 1951]

ALL SOULS SCHOOL

Annual Speech Night

A large crowd packed the pavillion overlooking the main oval at All Souls on Wednesday on the occasion of the school's annual speech night and prize giving. For Mr. R.L. Mills, the headmaster of All Souls, the occasion marked the close of 20 years association with the school, and for five others of the staff it was also their last speech night.

The Principal, Canon C.C. Hurt, stated that new appointments had been made to fill the places of the six masters who were leaving.

In his opening address, the chairman Archdeacon W. Hohenhouse, said, "The permit for the building of the first part of the new school has been received and I hope that we may be able to soon start. What we have done this year is to level four magnificent playing fields. This is the first step to the layout of the new school and has transformed our grounds, as no doubt you have seen. Here the enthusiasm of Mr. Mills, ably backed by the architect, was largely responsible for what has been done, but we should never have contemplated the whole scheme had it not been for Mr. Max Burns who has made a splendid job where most contractors would have given it up owing to the rocky nature of the subsoil. We are indeed grateful to him, and additionally so, because he has made a most generous gift of Top Field, including the surface dressing."

Stating that he had come to All Souls 20 years ago, Mr. Mills said he regretted he would not be here to witness the first matches played on the new fields which the school had acquired. He was sure that next year no other school in Australia would be as well equipped with playing fields as All Souls.

During the time that he had been

Northern Miner: 28 Nov 1947

IN OCTOBER OF '47 Dad put in the ovals at All Souls. I started boarding at All Souls in the February, along with Don and Mal. The school had no sporting field in those days other than Keith Oval, the main oval where the grandstand was. There was no other. All the rest of the land was gullies and Christ-knows-what. Pappy Hurt¹ said to Max:

Can you build us some ovals?
Yeah, righto.

In three months he made Mills Oval, Top Oval, one near the gym... he must have made four or five. The boarders at All Souls – I suppose 40 percent of them were from the bush – they were seeing this massive machinery working around the school and maybe they told their fathers. Anyway, some of the graziers came in and saw the work being done and said: "Jesus, Max, come west". He was nearly three months building the ovals, and during that time he decided where he'd go next – west. No trees, no clearing. He took off one weekend, chuffed out there in a ute, had a look around and said: "Yeah, that's where we're going". So, as soon as he finished the ovals at All Souls we packed up. It was the first week in December 1947. School broke up and we headed towards Clio with the machinery².

Clio Station, one of the bigger properties outside Winton, was owned by Pop Hogarth. It was the first big job Max and his workers ever did. Mum was there, too. On and off for two years she stayed in a truck-caravan and roughed it on site.

By this time Max had bought the first of his Cletrac FDEs, a monstrous tractor for those days. He went from a little thing like a T6, which weighed about 5 tons, to a thing that weighed 15 tons. Twenty hours a day, seven days a week Max operated them, shifting dirt, making money. Hogarth was paying two bob a yard and they'd easily shift 10,000 yards a week. That's a thousand quid. A thousand quid in 1948 – when the basic wage was four quid. And of that thousand, Max would be making seven or eight hundred.

You wouldn't believe the money Max was earning in '48 and '49. Within a few months he went from one FDE – a massive investment in itself – till he had three. And paid them off. He was turning over a thousand quid a week in '48, and when the wool boom was on, even more. Bought – and paid for – all the FDEs, all the scoops, and the three Macks and semitrailers. Paid cash for Balootha and put a homestead on it; built a double-storey house in Julia Creek and the engineering works next door; bought half a dozen blocks of land at Redcliffe, and a house, the one in Macdonnell Rd. It was on a double block, a beautiful home called *Rodville*. A Mr Rodway built it. Max paid a lot of money for that house³. We're talking about 4000 quid.

That was the boom after the restrictions of the war years. Fantasy it was.



1. Principal, CC Hurt.

2. Max actually started work on Clio before he built the ovals at All Souls. See page 20. According to Dawn Flewell-Smith: "Marj wrote and said that Max was needing help with his earthmoving, so we packed everything we owned into our little Morris and went to Clermont. Max was just finishing a job there, and then all of us went out west to

a property called Clio, tanksinking. We were only there a few months. After that we came back to Charters Towers and Max built those ovals at All Souls. This would be near the end of 1947."

3. Purchase details are on page 20, photo page 482. The Burnses retained the name *Rodville* given to the house by the previous owners.

The first year I was home after leaving school was 1953. I drove bulldozers. The first five or six months I did nothing else but drive bulldozers. I went up to Balootha then, for seven months, and further north into the Gulf. Dad was buying cattle for Balootha from the Priestley brothers. These Priestleys told Max: "Yeah, we've got plenty of cattle, Maxy. No worries mate. Send Barry along and we'll round em up". That was the only way to get cheap cattle: you go up there and do a bang-tail muster of what we called scrubbers: cattle that had never seen a human being. I was there to help muster these rangatangs and brand them. Unfortunately, it took us three months to round up 250 head. Just me and these four Priestleys: Doa, Kanga... five of us on this 600 square-mile property outside Croydon.

No house, no fences, no nothin'.

You had your swag,
you pulled into a waterhole
and that was your camp.

All we had to eat was damper and corn beef.

Rough – oh my God!

Me out of school just twelve months and in with these bastards.

And buckjumpers! Every friggin' horse we had, bucked.



MR MOYNAHAN: Coming now to the year 1950/51, that income tax year. Now that particular year your net income had dropped considerably, from £12,416 to £3739 --- Yes.

What was the explanation of that big drop --- It would probably be that I was getting the concessions that I was entitled to and I hadn't got before; and we applied the brakes on the plant as a whole. Instead of buying new plant we were buying parts and repairing the old ones, which in the end proved rather fatal. I think if I had my time again... I spent a colossal fortune those years trying to repair old tractors instead of driving them into the river.

Are you suggesting the cost of repair was so heavy it resulted in the drop in your income from £12,000 to £3,000 --- Not altogether. But if you check back you will find something like £7,000 to £10,000 went on repair parts. £2000 worth of tractor parts doesn't go far.

Staying on this 1950/51 year, this was the year when the Biloela farm was sold. How much was it sold for --- I thought it was approximately £12,000 in round figures. That was sent to the

Taxation Department. I got nothing out of it. My records indicate that from the sale of the Biloela farm you paid the Income Tax Department £10,000 on account of that first heavy assessment you received in September 1949 --- Yes.

And it was in that year also, was it not, that you sold the lease of the Burnett Hotel at Gayndah --- Could have been. It was about that time.

It was in this year that you bought certain leasehold lands in Julia Creek --- Yes, a few allotments. Three allotments; may have been four. Cheap ones they were.

What about buildings --- Yes, I think it was 1951 we started to build.

And from that time right up until the time of your bankruptcy, Julia Creek was your headquarters --- Yes, we built a workshop and garage, and a house. We were sort of stationed more-or-less in Julia Creek. We worked the whole of the Gulf country down to Longreach, and Julia Creek became a kind of centre.

You had buildings and land in Julia Creek worth £3775 at the time of your bankruptcy --- Yes.

Now, coming to the 1951/52 year, your taxable

income in this year lifted to £15,342. It was a very large lift from the previous year --- Yes.

The next year, the 1952/53 income tax year, your income dropped down to £3337. A very severe drop in your taxable income, from £15,000 odd the previous year. I ask you: did that come about by you diverting work to Burns Burns & Burns¹ and the partnership of Burns & Goundry --- No, definitely not. That was the year of the big drought around Julia Creek. Before that there was enough work in Western Queensland to keep a dozen plants going twice the size of mine...

Coming now to the 1955/56 income tax year, that's the period from 1st July 1955 to 30th June 1956, it was at this time you had very heavy tax commitments. In fact your outstanding income tax at the 30th June 1956 was £32,370. Do you remember that --- Yes, that would be right. That would be after the tax investigation by Mr Scott.

MAX & THE OFFICIAL RECEIVER
17 August 1961

1. Burns Burns & Burns: see page 25.



When I came back to Julia Creek I managed the workshop. We had two mechanics – Choco Winton was there as an apprentice for a while – and two salesmen selling Chryslers and Vanguards. Meldie Eckford was in the office, and also the bookkeeper, Fred Huller. All told, there might have been a dozen people if you include the tanksinkers when they came in with the machinery. Big responsibility for an 18 year old.

Normally the tanksinking machinery went from site to site, but if there wasn't another job on the go, all the equipment came into town. You'd have the fuel waggon, water waggon, the ute, the 5-ton International, two caravans, the workshop (a 35 foot semitrailer fully set up with welders, lathes, the whole lot), and the three Mack trucks, each with a crawler on the back and towing a scoop behind. And then there was the Thornycroft. It carried the smaller BDH plus the ripper. There'd be 14 or 15 vehicles for a large contract. They'd all come in and they'd all have to be serviced.



It was flat out from the time of the ovals at All Souls until the big drought in 1952 and the wool bust. Then the cockies ran out of money. While you're making money it's fantastic. Max might have made £20,000 in a good year, but he should have put some of it away and not touched it. Touch it and you're in deep shit. As it tuned out, between the drought, the wool collapse, his women, and continuing to spend money that should have been set aside (he sent money down the drain in Julia Creek building the golf course and levelling the convent ground), Max's net worth gradually dwindled to nothing.

The golf club was originally a tin shed. When I say a tin shed, it was a lean-to with tin around it. Twenty by ten, no lining, and a dirt floor. That was the clubhouse. And no golf course to speak of. Max spent months with his bulldozers, at no cost to anyone but himself, carving out the whole course. He was a mad golfer. When he took up golf that's why he built the course because he couldn't stand the way it was. So he puts in a golf course because he wants one.

As for the convent, someone donated a block of ground and that's where they wanted to build the school. It was low-lying land, swampy in the wet. We were there for months filling it in. We carted thousands of cubic yards of dirt and we had to get it from 400 yards away. A very

expensive project. It cost Max a few thousand quid. He was a generous man when he was in the money¹.

The bad times started with the drought of '52. Massive drought. No rain out there for 16 months². The drought wiped out the sheep. You're talking about no sheep at all. Virtually none survived. And the same with cattle. We lost hundreds of head on Balootha waiting for the drought to break. "Oh, it'll only last three months; it'll only last six months." Wool collapsed, cattle collapsed, and taxation was chasing us. Max's tax debt stretched back to the Clio job. He owed massive amounts of tax. Once the wool boom died, that was the end of the story. Bankruptcy was a matter of time.

Money became short. And the bulldozers, Max's livelihood, wore out. Instead of trading-in the bulldozers, he decided it'd be cheaper to repair them. They were difficult to buy anyway. There was a great demand for machinery and you had to wait months and put your money up front.

In desperation, we bought a bigger machine in '57, an Oliver-Cletrac OC18, and got rid of the old ones. It was bigger all right; the scoop needed reconstructing to handle it. Ingenuity – that was another thing. To rebuild the scoop, to turn it from a 14 yarder into a 20 yarder, the only gear we had were welders and gas-cutters.

Opposite Top: Part of Max's tanksinking plant: Marmon-Herrington with workshop on back, towing fuel tanker. [Merv Brand, BM06, 1951]

Right: "Twenty by ten, no lining, and a dirt floor" – the Julia Creek Golf Club near where the main road to Richmond crossed Julia Creek. From left: Dot Smith, Marj Burns, Bob Smith, Ard Cooney. [Joy Burns, J09, ca 1951]

Opposite, bottom: Max's tanksinking plant in front of Lance Lewis' garage, Burke St. From right: Mack truck with Cletrac FDE and a Britstand ripper on the tray (note the bend in the tray due to the weight), towing a Britstand C14 scoop. In the distance is a Marmon-Herrington with the workshop behind.

Another truck is off-photo on the right, carrying and towing the same amount of gear as the truck shown – you can see the rear wheel of its Britstand scoop, partly cut off on the right of the photo.

Max's equipment would have stretched along Burke St from Gannon's Hotel to the O-K Store, almost an entire block. An impressive site in Julia Creek, which is the why the photographer, Mossie McDonald, took several photos of this spectacle – see pages 202, 523. [Mossie McDonald, M09, ca 1950]



1. Three other people mention Max's contribution to the convent. See pages 185, 210, 735.
2. The rainfall graph on page 341 shows that 4½ inches fell in 1952, the lowest since records at Julia Creek began.

Max decided to call it quits in 1958 and go into another pub. They had two picks. One was Gladstone, and I said: "Righto, I'm in". The other was Lismore. I said: "I'm out". They went and had a look in December '58, and then came back to Julia Creek and put on an auction. Now that was an auction, not a forced auction. Some of the older earthmoving equipment and household items were sold, but not the workshop or the two houses. I was staying behind in Julia Creek, so Max kept the buildings.

After the auction I went out on my own. I pulled the plug on Burns, Burns & Burns, the earthmoving partnership that Dad had set up in 1949 between Joy, Donny and myself. At the time I was only a kid, still at All Souls. He bought these little Cletracs, 40 horsepower ones, and set up a separate business to do small jobs. It might have been on the books as a separate business, but Max ran the whole lot as one. When the rest of the family, except Joy, left Julia Creek in February '59 and went to the Royal Hotel in Lismore, I stayed behind with my share from Burns Burns & Burns – a couple of tractors.

In late May, Donny and Mal came back from Lismore to do three big tanksinking jobs on Iffley, up in the Gulf. Max was still trying to

make a go of it. That's why he bought that Oliver OC18. You don't outlay money on a new machine if you're not going to have a go. But the OC18 broke down. Donny stuffed round putting chunks of it on the back of a Vanguard ute and taking them to Mount Isa for repairs, but the problem with the OC18 was too serious. It finished Max's tanksinking.

Max picked a dud with the OC18. And he picked a dud with the Royal Hotel – he pulled the wrong straw with pubs. All the figures were fudged. The bastard who sold it was running a pub at Ballina. It was doing all the trade but he was buying the grog through the Royal to make it look like the Royal had a healthy turnover. Marj, Donny and Joy put their money in and did the lot within a year. Absolute disaster. They didn't sell out... well, they did, but effectively they walked away.

I left Julia Creek in November '59 and came to Brisbane to get married. Max, Marj, Butch, Mal, Donny and Jill, you and Kal, were still at the Royal in Lismore, so that's where Josie and I honeymooned. We went back to Julia Creek in December. The Official Receiver had taken possession of all the assets by then and a scumbag was living in the house (the showroom on the corner), and even though he was only renting, caretaking for the Receiver, he ordered us out.

...each side of
Burke St to Allison Street.
Visitors from near and far invaded Julia Creek on Saturday to attend the auction sale conducted by the Australian Estates Co Ltd at Julia Creek Engineering Works. Bidding was brisk and most of the lines of household equipment and engineering lines were disposed of. Mr. Max Burns who has for a number of years taken a prominent part in garage repairs and the marketing of motor vehicles and machinery plant, will in future concentrate on tanksinking and earthmoving operations.
The golf clubhouse on Friday night

NQR: 31 Jan 1959

Below: Josie and Barry, Cloudland, Brisbane.
[Josie Burns, BJ02, ca 1955]

- J: I liked Max. Him and I got on real well together. I don't suppose there was any reason why we wouldn't. I listened to Mum Burns for years whingeing about him, but as far as I was concerned...
- B: He was absolutely hopeless as a father. Never got attached to us kids. He was always too busy; and fair enough he was busy. He'd get a brainwave – always had brainwaves. He'd snap his fingers and suddenly that's it, he was off. Most of them worked, at least until later when money came hard and things got difficult.
- And he always had other women. But he never chased the women, they chased him.
- J: Aww... what about the day he gave my tits a rub. This was the day he came to pick up Mum and I at McKinlay to take us to a deb ball at Julia Creek. I don't know how your father came to pick us up. I was going out with his son, not him.
- B: He was there selling motor cars.
- J: I remember he loved to cuddle. He always used to give Jill¹ and I big cuddles. He just loved women. But he only picked certain ones.
- B: No – they picked him. Women found him attractive. If a woman came onto him he couldn't help himself. He never chased a woman – they picked him, and then he'd shower them with holidays or presents.
- J: Well, anyway, he just about rubbed my tit off with his elbow all the way to Julia Creek. That's fair dinkum. I kept quiet about it for years.
- B: He'd be getting a real thrill out of that. He was probably working up to give one of his women a serve.

BARRY & JOSIE



1. Jill – the author's mother.

AFTER SEEING THE 1956 Olympic Games, you didn't have to be too clever to work out that it made little sense to stay in Julia Creek. Even if Dad hadn't gone bankrupt, all the Burnses would have left. Tanksinking was finished around Julia Creek. No good putting ads in the paper when there's no work. I was taking phone calls at the workshop, and I'd say to Dad:

So-n-so could be an interesting one. Right. Go out and have a look at the site. See what sort of money they've got.

I'd get there and they'd have a broken down ute, two lame horses and a few dead sheep. And no bore drain, mate, so they wanted a tank. No good sending Donny. He'd get carried away and start talking about his plane.

Tanksinking in the west had been finished, really, since the wool boom. There was no work. From 1947 to 1956 we saturated the market. When you have three FDEs shifting 110 yards an hour each, 20 hours a day, you have millions of yards of earth being moved. Anyone who needed water storage out there that ever had money that ever had a station – from Richmond to Cloncurry, from Boulia to Normanton – had tanks that were built by Max Burns.

WATER CONSERVATION
G R A Z I E R S

Take advantage of dry weather and have your water holes and tanks desilted and new ones sunk.

FREE INSPECTION AND ADVICE
Large plant available
Start immediately

MAX BURNS,
Julia Creek Engineering Works
P.O. Box 99 Phone 7
JULIA CREEK

NQR: 21 Nov 1959
This is the last ad Max placed for tanksinking. At this date he was bankrupt.

AUCTION SALE **AUCTION SALE**

FRIDAY, 26th. FEBRUARY, at 9.30 a.m.

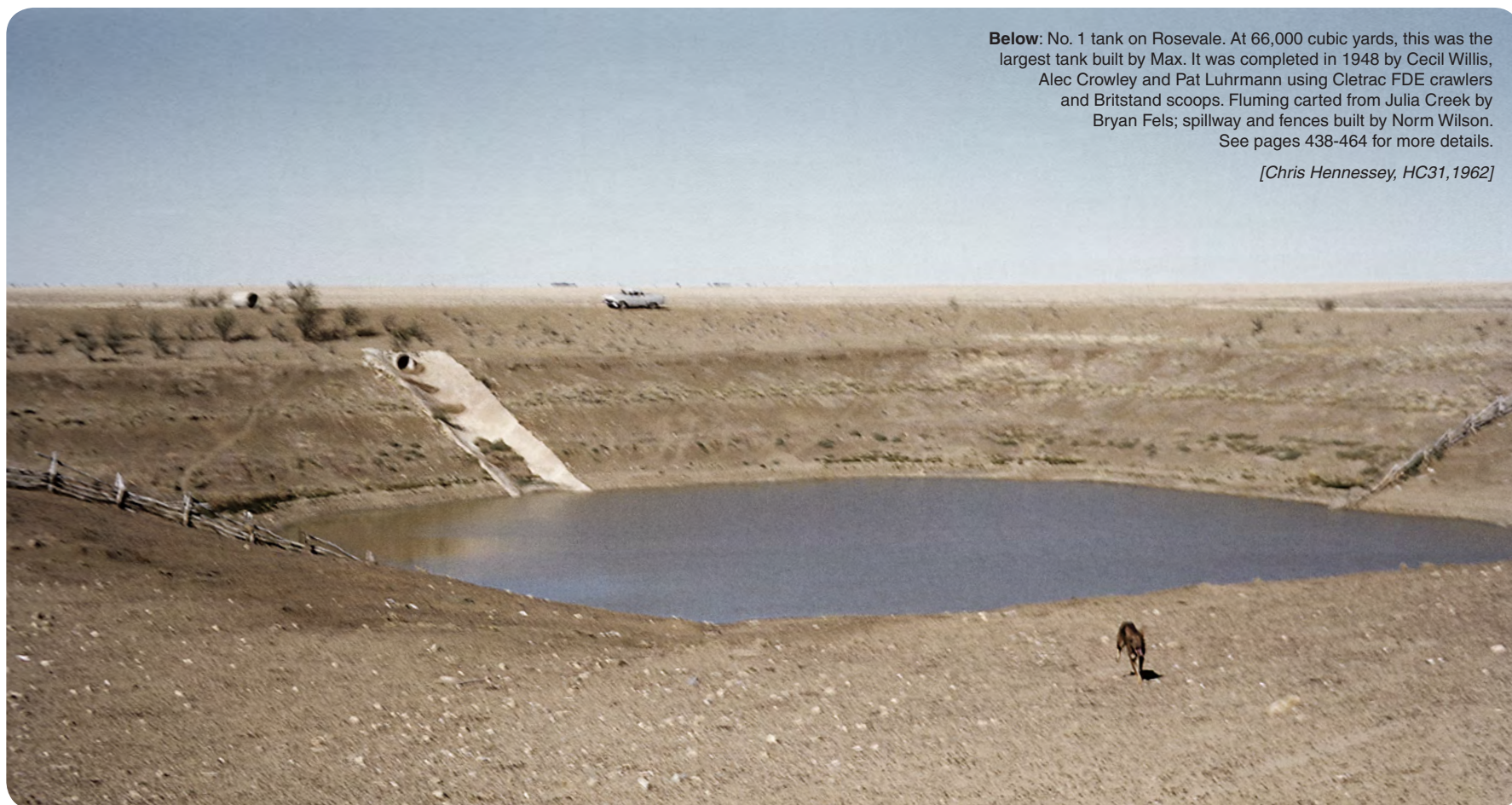
On behalf of the OFFICIAL RECEIVER we will offer for sale by auction on the premises recently occupied by M. D. Burns Esq., the following:

HOUSES, SHOWROOM, LARGE GARAGE BUILDING, HUT, GARAGE TOOLS, PLANT, TRACTOR AND MOTOR PARTS, TYPEWRITERS, VEHICLES, Etc.

THE AUSTRALIAN ESTATES CO. LTD.
(Incorp. in England)

JULIA CREEK

NQR: 13 Feb 1960



Below: No. 1 tank on Rosevale. At 66,000 cubic yards, this was the largest tank built by Max. It was completed in 1948 by Cecil Willis, Alec Crowley and Pat Luhrmann using Cletrac FDE crawlers and Britstand scoops. Fluming carted from Julia Creek by Bryan Fels; spillway and fences built by Norm Wilson. See pages 438-464 for more details.

[Chris Hennessey, HC31, 1962]

'The bad times started with the drought of 52'

19 JANUARY 1952—All through this last week we have experienced hot and uncomfortable weather. The highest temperature each day would be around 110°, until yesterday (Tuesday) when the maximum was 114°.

After the intense heat of yesterday, storms broke at dusk with a vigorous display of electrical energy and ignited bush fires on Toorak, Dalkeith, Lindfield, Burwood and at Gilliat. Firefighters and their fire fighting units rushed to the various outbreaks, and the fires were put out, though not without some effort.

The winds have varied continuously from north to east to south-east, with an occasional blow from the west. The nights have also been hot, and sleepers are seeking relief by bedding outdoors.

On some afternoons small storms have appeared but little rain has resulted. Today a north wind is blowing and we are certain to have another hot and sultry day.

The town remains quiet and has taken on a very uninteresting aspect. There is little activity and very little business being done on account of the uncomfortable heat that has been with us continuously now for many days.

2 FEBRUARY 1952—Australia Day was spent quietly here. The weather was so unpleasantly hot that there was no inclination to do much, except a little tennis.

Mr Harold Walters, our popular postmaster, has been advised that he is to proceed to Charters Towers on relieving duty early in February. Harold will go on afterwards to Bellingen, NSW, to which place he has been appointed.

Mr Max Burns and family arrived back from Sydney where they witnessed the Davis Cup matches. Mr Burns was able to get some good film shots of the tennis and these have been viewed by many tennis enthusiasts here.

The marriage of Miss Edna Eckford of Julia Creek to Mr Rod Quilty of Halls Creek, Western Australia took place in Townsville yesterday. Miss Eckford's sisters, Coral and Amelda were passengers on Sunday's plane to be present at the wedding. Mr and Mrs Eckford also went down for this occasion.

23 FEBRUARY 1952—Good rains still hold off and owners of flocks and herds are indeed worried over the season, especially since the period which usually gives the rain has passed. Some graziers are already feeding their stock.

The lot of the grazier in this area is in sharp contrast to his position at this time last year, when the season was bountiful and peak wool prices were operating. At present, with the outlook of a poor

season, falling wool prices, high costs of shearing, high taxation, expensive agistment, heavy feed bills, and high railage costs to shift sheep, the grazier is fearful of the outcome.

21 MARCH 1952—The town is very quiet. Most of the station people are shifting their stock to agistment country. All stock passing through are in very poor condition, and even the town goats are in a bad way. Some people are feeding their goats to keep up the milk for small children.

22 MARCH 1952—While there were some useful falls of rain on Saturday night between Townsville and the Burra Range (150 miles west), none fell in the drought stricken grazing areas beyond. The position of many graziers in the area between Hughenden and Julia Creek is becoming more precarious each day, forcing the movement to agistment of tens of thousands of starving sheep and cattle. A Nelia district sheep man said in Townsville at the weekend that he had already lost a third of his flock. He runs about 20,000 sheep.

Between Monday and Saturday of next week more than 20,000 sheep and 3200 cattle are to be loaded for movement to better grassed and watered areas throughout the State. Most activity will be centred at Julia Creek and Nelia. Graziers in the area say that their only hope now for relief rains is a late northern cyclone.

19 APRIL 1952—During this last week the weather has been beautifully mild, although for the first few days a warm change was noticeable. For the last couple of days we have enjoyed much cooler weather, a definite sign of approaching winter.

There does not seem to be any prospect of rain now on account of the cooler season commencing. Some of the graziers are hoping that we shall enjoy good winter rains in May and June.

10 MAY 1952—Stock continue to move from the district in what is being spoken of as one of the worst droughts known in this area. Dalgona is dipping and trucking 1000 head of cattle, and Mr Ard Cooney is trucking 4000 head of sheep. Hickman Bros are droving 3000 sheep to agistment country around Boulia. Owing to the bad state of the stock routes, sheep moving to the Boulia district have to be fed while travelling, and Hickman Bros are bearing this expense.

Mr Jack Beach of Lands End is also moving his sheep to Boulia, but by motor lorry. A road train consisting of eight individual motor lorries capable of carrying about 1600 sheep each trip, commenced to move the sheep on Sunday. The eight large lorries were lined up in the main street here on Saturday

afternoon and presented a novel sight. They have been plying backwards and forwards from Lands End to the Boulia district moving the starving stock. Approximately 10,000 sheep will be taken.

17 MAY 1952—During the whole of this week a summery type of weather has prevailed and we have been hoping that possibly some rain may come even at this late stage.

In the first two weeks of May, 35,360 sheep and 1852 cattle have been removed from the district. Since February, 164,225 sheep and 18,046 cattle have gone from this area. The movements are still going on and will continue for some months.

Some property owners are risking the purchase of further sheep, taking advantage of low prices.

24 MAY 1952—At the beginning of the week the prospects for rain looked bright. A north wind was blowing consistently on Thursday bringing with it moisture from the Gulf, and on Friday the sky was overcast with leaden cloud. At 10.30 a.m. heavy rain started. All business stopped while employers and employees watched the rain come pouring down. However, it was of short duration and only about half an inch was registered. Country districts fared no better. The clouds remained after the rain and have been building up each day since. It is to be hoped that substantial rain may fall before long to produce the stock feed so very necessary for the prosperity of this area.

The work of shifting sheep continued all last week. It is a common sight just now to see motor trucks moving through our streets loaded with livestock. During the last two days Mr Peut and his lorries have been transporting a small mob of cattle from Burwood to rail, and on the reverse trips he takes stock feed to various properties: bagged corn and lucerne, and also open, compressed bales of lucerne. The cost to primary producers is high but the stock must be saved.

It has been found necessary to shift cattle owned by Mr Max Burns from Balootha to agistment country. Mr Burns, accompanied by Mrs Burns, is in Brisbane and Sydney on business.

The number of scavenger hawks and black crows in the town area is most unusual. They can be seen in Burke St in large numbers during the early mornings. The crows seem to have been driven in from the country areas on account of shortage of food, although one would think during these drought times that there should be any amount of dead carcasses available. Half a dozen broilgas roam the streets each day. Usually they are shy birds, but these half dozen have become quite used to people as the search for food is much easier here in town.

Messrs Fred Sargent and Doug Wilmot were

responsible for a strange catch last week while fishing at the Eddington hole. Amongst the crayfish they caught was a freak. It had two nippers each 18 inches in length. It had a spike out from the head something like a king prawn, and had six feelers, not four like the ordinary crayfish. The shell of this freak was not nearly as strong as the ordinary cray, nor was its colour quite so dark. This unusual crayfish did not survive for long after being taken from the water, but the others remained alive even after being brought back to town. The freak was displayed throughout town and quite a bit of discussion took place concerning it.

£20,000 WAGES LOST AT JULIA CREEK

14 JUNE 1952—Removal of stock from drought stricken western areas continues at high pressure. Greatest movement has been from the Julia Creek district. It has been estimated that almost 200,000 sheep have now been shifted from that area to agistment in other districts.

Shearers and station hands will lose at least £20,000 this year, following the large movements of sheep. The shearing rate at present is £8 per 100, and station hands' wages run out at about £2 per 100, for a total of £10 per 100 – or £1 for each 10 sheep removed. The heavy loss of money is already being felt in hotels and business houses, but it will become progressively greater as the year advances.

To date 195,033 sheep and 20,668 head of cattle have left the area due to drought conditions, a total of nearly 220,000 head of stock. In the last week 30,808 sheep and 2622 head of cattle have been moved.

BUDGET SPEECH

6 AUGUST 1952—"In the preceding financial year, 1950-1951, national income had risen by £820,000,000 or 36%. Wool prices had averaged 144d per lb. Retail prices had risen by 19 percent and wholesale prices by 27 percent. In the same period the basic wage had risen by 37%. Acute shortages of labour existed all over the country.

"Since the last Budget dramatic changes have occurred in economic conditions. Wool prices fell to approximately half the level of the year before. Imports of every description flooded into the country, so that, notwithstanding the drastic restrictions imposed in the later months of the trade year, the total landed cost of the imports brought into Australia was over £1,200,000,000. Our international reserves fell in consequence by nearly £500,000,000.

"These factors in combination brought a remarkable change in the economic scene. They threw many unexpected and heavy strains on the economy, but at the same time removed many elements in the wave of accidental prosperity which in 1950-51 bade fair to engulf us. They assisted, also, to lessen the extreme inflationary pressure from

which we were suffering.

"A year ago there were 139,000 vacancies for jobs registered with the CES and no more than a few hundreds of people drawing unemployment relief, almost all of them for special and temporary local reasons. Today the registered vacancies have fallen to 32,000, and while unemployment is still sporadic and I believe, transitional, the number of people on relief has risen to something over 12,000.

"A year ago we had just concluded a year of record wool prices, which had seen an addition of £380,000,000 to our export income, with far reaching consequences. Today we have sharply reduced wool prices. A year ago relatively few people were disposed to look ahead, to guard against economic dangers, to encourage steps to steady down the inflationary boom. Today there are hundreds of thousands who have become apprehensive of the future..."

[Extract from speech by Sir Arthur Fadden]



NQR: 23 Aug 1952

4 OCTOBER 1952—The local stock inspector, Mr Ron Groves, states that the drought has caused an unprecedented exodus of drought-stricken stock in order to save their lives. There is no other record to compare with the stock movements of the first nine months of this year, during which period local pastoralists were forced to move flocks and herds numbering 355,000 head. Compared with other years, the movements started later as stockowners hoped for late autumn relief rains, and ended earlier as the weak condition of the remaining stock rendered them unfit to be driven over a bare stock route. It is to be hoped that no future drought ever threatens the 1952 stock movement record.

The long and severe drought and the removal of 355,000 livestock from the district – and the loss of a similar number – has affected business activity here adversely. A canvass of Julia Creek business reveals that drapery stores, hotels, cafes, garages, the fruiterer, and the barber and billiard saloon, all show a reduction of approximately half the normal business. Shearing contractors have little further work for this year. The storekeepers have not been affected as yet, owing to the extra activity of droving plants, but from now on business is expected to recede. Earthmoving work is becoming scarce on account of the grazier's drought expenses. It is

expected that business activity will deteriorate progressively until substantial rains fall and the stock return. Dismissal of employees has taken place, but not to any marked extent in the town area. However, lack of work in the shearing and pastoral industries is most apparent.

6 DECEMBER 1952—This district continues to miss soaking rain. Prospects of storms looked promising on Friday but did not materialise. Along the line, however, other areas did benefit from substantial falls.

All week has been exceptionally hot. Monday reached 110°, and yesterday – a cooler change came yesterday – 106. Yet that was a more unpleasant heat for the wind blew boisterously from the north, thick with moisture and discomfort. These conditions prevail again today and we may yet have the storms needed to lift the country.

Max Burns and family leave in a few days for Redcliffe on holidays and will spend a couple of months at their beautiful home of *Rodville*.

24 JANUARY 1953—The first real rain for 16 months fell in the town area during this last week, and some of the sheep flocks are returning to home pastures. At the end of the next two weeks about 30,000 sheep will be returned from agistment. It is pleasing to hear that stock are on the move home, for this will mean more work in the district and activity in our town will return to normal. At present, the quiet is most noticeable.

The cricketers gathered at the oval on Sunday to play a match between old rivals, Railway and Town. However, the heavy downpour soon put any idea of sport out of their minds and there was a helter-skelter scurry towards home and mother. The rain also washed out the tennis which will be forgotten for some time yet.

The progress of wiring the private homes here for electricity is satisfactory. There are a number already who have got the benefit of this amenity. Appliances, kettles, irons, and fans are proving a boon here in the outback. The fans especially are giving great relief during these exhaustingly hot days that we are experiencing. It should not be long before all homes are wired. Mr Ray Svensson, Superintendent of the power house, has been keeping the power up well.



The drought broke in January 1953, and with the rain came a tragedy. Ray Svensson (mentioned in the last paragraph above) and some others, went to the Punchbowl on the Flinders River when it was in flood. On the 25th of January, while attempting to pull a man from the water, Ray was drowned. See page 751.

The End of Max's Tanksinking

MR MOYNAHAN: How did it come about that Barry took over the workshop in 1957 --- It had become a worry to me and a liability and we weren't doing any good in it. Mechanics were coming and going. Better for someone who was on the job to try and do something with it.

Was Barry a qualified mechanic --- No, he was handy.

How long then did Barry run the workshop business --- He poked along until it closed up.

When did it close up --- About July '58. My last interest in it was about that time.

How did it come to close up --- Barry was no longer interested in running it, and I certainly wasn't.

What were the mechanics of closing down the garage --- Just shut the doors I think.

You had large stocks of spare parts and so on, didn't you --- Yes.

What happened to those --- They would have been locked up in the garage and were eventually sold by the Official Receiver --- the tractor parts and quite a lot of motor parts. A few of the firms took their own parts back to liquidate their debts.

Are you suggesting that whatever spare parts that were there in the middle of '58 were still there when the Official Receiver took over --- The bulk of them would have been.

Now, moving on to the Lismore hotel: how long had it been decided to seek a hotel before it was actually purchased --- Not very long.

Were you keen that the family should be in the hotel business --- No, it wasn't my idea. That was their idea, I'm afraid.

When did this idea crystallise --- Probably late in 1958, a month or two before they went into it. Wouldn't be any more.

Did you work at the hotel --- I helped out for a few months until about March of 1959.

In 1958 before you went into the hotel, had you decided that you were at the end of the road at Julia Creek --- No, I was quite happy to carry on. I had a pretty good plant --- or should have had because I paid a colossal price for it. It was a bit of a dud and let me down. If I had been able to keep that tractor working I could have made a lot of money.

Are you referring to the OC18 tractor --- Yes.

You say that in '58 you were going to carry on. Well, when did you decide that you wouldn't carry on --- About August 1959. I was fed up, but only because the tractor was giving quite a bit of trouble, which it shouldn't have done. I got very little help from Dominion Motors. The OC18 was very new to Australia and nobody knew much about it.

Did you have a clearing sale when the family left for Lismore --- Of most of the spare parts, yes¹.

When was that --- About January 1959.

Was this at the same time as the house furniture was sold --- Yes, the same time.

I think your wife said the proceeds from the sale of furniture and so on are shown in one of her bank accounts... Here it is --- 31st January 1959, Australian Estates, £494. Did you have an auction sale of parts at the same time --- Yes.

What parts did you actually sell at that time --- Everything that could be sold from the garage: general saleable parts, welders, tyres, bits and pieces.

Were you liquidating the garage --- Trying to get it down, yes. To get what we could out of it and leave the rest there. What wasn't sold wasn't saleable.

Was the auction sale successful --- Oh no. Quite a lot of parts weren't sold, and those that were sold weren't sold very profitably.

You sold everything you possibly could sell --- Except tractor parts. We were still operating the tractor plant, so naturally we wouldn't sell them.

When you finally left Julia Creek in August 1959 what happened with regard to all your plant and all the assets that you had in Julia Creek --- The OC18 and scoop were hired to Don, and the rest was just left there.

What about the garage, all the spare parts and everything --- They were there in the garage.

Was the garage operated --- Barry may have been doing a few small jobs there. He wasn't working it extensively. He was just there to please himself as long as he liked, as far as I was concerned. It was no use to me.

But there were valuable parts there --- Yes.

And you just walked away from them all --- Yes.

And you didn't make any arrangements with Barry or Don --- They were just to be taken reasonable care of. It wasn't their worry, it was mine really.

The only earthmoving equipment you had was this Oliver OC18 tractor and scoop --- Oh no, no. There would be another tractor, an FDE, maybe two.

Who was looking after those --- No one.

But you are walking away from Julia Creek in August of 1959 --- That's right.

And you are just leaving it there --- That's right. I never went back after August.

Nobody was to use them, they were just to sit there --- That's right. That's the set-up exactly as it was. It's valuable machinery, isn't it --- Oh yes.

It sounds almost incredible, doesn't it --- I don't think so. I had a brother-in-law² in Julia Creek who would naturally keep an eye on it and see that no one ran away with it overnight. The garage itself was generally locked, but the machinery would

be out in the field round the garage.

During 1959 you were still working in the earthmoving business --- Up till August, yes.

Where were you working --- Round Normanton.

You were doing jobs on what stations --- Iffley, Miranda Downs, a place called Wakakarack further north.

What was the actual contract at Iffley, and when --- Before June, it would be. There was no specified amount. They don't normally specify very much. They might say 20,000 yards or 10,000 yards. You could finish up with 100,000 or you could finish up with half.

And who owned Iffley --- Kidman and Angliss.

This was a contract that you had with Kidman and Angliss. It was one of your contracts --- Oh yes. I went to Iffley to do some work. We did a certain yardage. It was too wet to finish the job so we cleared off to one of the other places. It may have been Miranda. I was paid 80 per cent of what I did on Iffley, leaving a balance of £270. If I could get back I would complete the job; if not, the contract was finished. Away I went. I never went back.

Where did you leave the OC18 and scoop --- At Iffley. I hired them to Don and Joy operating as Burns & Burns. Don finished the work on the job I'd started --- on which they owed me £270 --- and they gave him some more work, which wasn't mentioned in my original contract. That's the story of Iffley.

I would like you to tell us exactly how that came about, that hiring arrangement --- I'd had it with tanksinking. The OC18 was giving me too much trouble. So I hired the plant to Don. He was more mechanical minded than I was.

How much was the hire --- £800 a month. I don't think Don made much money out of the OC18. I don't think he ever got the money back.

Was it usable when you hired it to Don --- It was, in a sort of a way.

Wasn't hire owing on the Oliver tractor only for the month of October and November --- Something like that.

Don had been to Lismore in February 1959 with his mother, had he not --- Yes. He came back from Lismore and took over the Iffley job in August.

How long did Don continue --- Two or three months. And then he returned to the South --- He did, yes, in January 1960.

What happened to the OC18 and scoop --- Don abandoned them on Iffley.

The OC18 tractor was about one of the largest units it would be possible to get in this type of business, was it not --- No, it was only a pony.

[continued opposite]

1. See NQR, 31/1/1959, page 778.

2. Alan Flewell-Smith.

MR. MOYNAHAN: Only a pony?---Yes.

Dear oh dear. It would cost many 'ponies'?---It cost £15,000, but the bigger ones today cost £35,000. It was only peanuts compared with the big ones.

How long did you have that plant?---The new one?

Yes, the £15,000 job?---Much too long, I know that. Possibly 15 months or 12 months.

THE REGISTRAR: You say 12 months or 15 months, - you think that was too long?---Much too long considering the trouble we had with it and the way we worked. If we had bought a good tractor it would have performed a colossal amount of work. We had the work for it when we bought it, - 50,000 quids worth - and it wouldn't do it. We knew nothing about it and even the agents didn't know, and we were silly enough to buy it.

MR. MOYNAHAN: What was wrong with it?---Speaking technically, it was in reverse to everything all the other engineering crowd had tried in practice. It didn't go unless the oil was pumped. It was driven by oil, which was unique. According to the Yanks it was something revolutionary, according to what I read about it. We just couldn't fix it and we couldn't get any help from the people who sold it to us, in spite of the fact that they had sold me many thousand of £'s worth of machinery. Had that tractor gone as it should have gone and I was capable of making it go - at the time I bought it we had £50,000 worth of work lined up and on all these stations I have talked about - but we just couldn't do it.

(To the Registrar): I want to call Mr. Don Burns, Mr. Registrar, and I don't wish to proceed further with the public examination of Mr. Max Burns. I would suggest Mr. Burns' further examination go over to the dates that are open in November. I would suggest Wednesday, 22nd. November at 10.30 a.m.

THE REGISTRAR: I will adjourn the public examination of the bankrupt until Wednesday, 22nd November at 10.30 a.m.

MR. MOYNAHAN: Mr. Burns, have you got that date?---Yes.

THE REGISTRAR (to the witness): You are required to read over and sign the notes of the evidence you have given. You have given a considerable amount of evidence. The evidence you gave in August is ready for your signature. Will you undertake to read over and sign that portion of the transcript as soon as convenient to you? The evidence you have given in the last few days this week will be ready some time next week. As long as you make some reasonable attempt to get that done between now and 20th November - - - ?---I'm a little bit pushed at the moment.

Keep it in mind and get it done?---Where do I go? Here?

At the office. Or I can arrange to send it down to the C.P.S. at Redcliffe for you, or some other appropriate place like that?---Can I do it here?

Yes, any time during office hours?---I will make an effort to do it.

I will leave it at that for the present time. You see what you can do.

CD/CW/6d.

342.

M.D. BURNS.

20/9/61.

~~(Bankrupt No. 1) (1965)~~

To Official Receiver
Bankruptcy Administration
224 Adelaide St
Brisbane

1/1961

73 Boundary St
Tingalpa
16 March 1967



Dear Sir

I was declared bankrupt in October 1959. As eight years have passed since then I would like to apply for my discharge. I am nearing sixty years of age & would like to be free of this blot in my life while I still have a few years left.

Please advise what procedure I have to adopt to bring about my discharge.

Thanking you for the courtesy your department has extended to me during these agonising years.

Yours faithfully
D. J. Burns

Registrar in Bankruptcy,

Referred. A Certificate of Creditors is being prepared.

H. A. McIntosh
OFFICIAL RECEIVER IN BANKRUPTCY
23 March 1967

The Official Receiver

I, HENRY AUCKLAND RICHARDS, Official Receiver of the estate of Malcolm Douglas Burns, hereby report as under:

- A. On 23rd October, 1959, on the petition of H.C. Sleigh Limited, a creditor, a Sequestration Order was made against Malcolm Douglas Burns of Julia Creek, earthmoving contractor.
- B. ASSETS: The bankrupt's Statement of Affairs disclosed the following assets totalling £24,613.
- (a) Book debts estimated to produce.....£6,707
 - (b) Various pieces of land and improvements6,093
 - (c) Stock in trade4,995
 - (d) Amount due (secured by mortgage) on sale of a property named Balootha near Julia Creek.....4,459
 - (e) Plant and equipment2,362
- C. LIABILITIES: The Statement of Affairs disclosed 54 unsecured creditors, owed a total of £32,220:
- 1. Deputy Commissioner of Taxation (preferential creditor).....£16,962
 - 2. H.C. Sleigh (Townsville)3,208
 - 3. A.G.C (Brisbane, loss on repossession)2,152
 - 4. Samuel Allen & Sons (Townsville)2,042
 - 5. S.G.I.O (Brisbane, workers' compensation)932
 - 6. Dominion Motors (Brisbane)803

A Dividend of 5.6%

Taxation takes 100 cents in the dollar; other creditors get 5.6 cents

7. Norman Leslie Downey (Julia Creek)£780

IN THOSE DAYS it was a disgrace to go bankrupt. I always felt that Max was such a big boy that there was no way in the world he'd let that happen. Maybe he didn't have the money. Or maybe – if he had money put away that the bankruptcy people couldn't get at – maybe he thought it was better to go bankrupt and not pay anybody.

Max put me in a hell of a position. And it wasn't necessary. We had the feeling that he was shrewd, that he got away with avoiding paying his bills. Look at it this way: Max's debt to me was almost half a house. He owed me, in round figures, £1000. Later, I bought a house in Julia Creek for £2500. When it got down to the nitty gritty, at the last, I said to him: "This is not Caltex, Max. This is me, Norm Downey..."

I reckon I rolled 3000 drums of fuel to pay Max's debt. It directly affected my income for several years.

NORM DOWNEY¹

- 8. Shell Oil Co. (Brisbane).....£758
- 9. Vacuum Oil Co. (Townsville)679
- 10. Cyril James O'Neil (Normanton)413

[Brrr, brrr... brrr, brrr...]

...Max's grandson, are you? Well, I don't want to hear anything about Max Burns unless you've got a cheque for me. We stood him for hundreds of pounds of fuel and he just up and left and never paid us. My brother-in-law at the Albion Hotel here in Normanton, Max probably owed him money, too, for food and board.

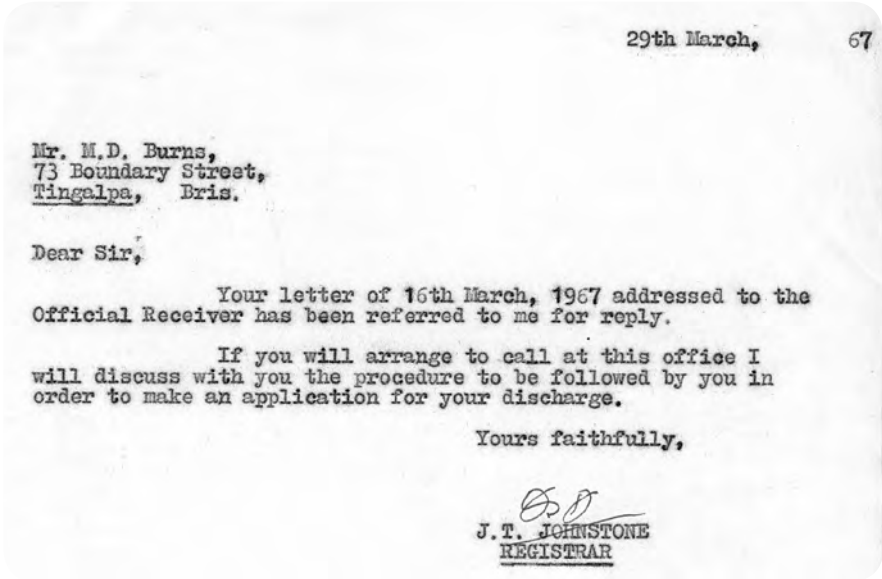
I'll talk to you when you pay your grandfather's bill. He left us with a huge debt. What would be the benefit to me to talk about him?

[Click. Brrrrrrrrrrrr...]

JOAN O'NEIL (wife of Cyril)
24 Sep 2002

- 11. C. Wakefield & Co. (Townsville).....£298
- 12. Dunlop Rubber (Townsville)290
- 13. Humes Ltd238
- 14. McKinlay Shire Council (Julia Creek)193
- 15. Robert Bosch (Brisbane)171
- 16. Engineering Supply Co. Ltd (Brisbane)165

1. This is an excerpt from Norm's story, see page 210.



17.	4LG (Longreach, advertising)	£151
18.	E.S.C.A. Ltd (Townsville)	150
19.	I.B.C. (Townsville)	131
20.	Motor Supplies (Townsville)	130
21.	Intercolonial Boring Co.	120
22.	P.M.G. (Townsville)	117
23.	Mr Harry & Dorothy Stainkey (trading as Clifton Park Station, Gilliat)	115
24.	All Souls School (Charters Towers)	100
25.	Caniffe (Brisbane)	100
26.	Henry Norman Powell (Charters Towers)	100
27.	Austral Motors (Townsville)	80
28.	McKinlay Shire Electrical Authority (Julia Creek)	78
29.	Martin Wilson Bros. (Townsville)	70
30.	Rapson Engineering (Brisbane)	70
31.	Butler Bros (Brisbane)	50
32.	Townsville Electrical	50
33.	<i>John McMahon and Roy Champneys</i> ¹ (trading as Champneys & McMahon, butchers, Julia Creek)	49
34.	North Queensland Register (Townsville)	45
35.	Russell Batt (Kooroorra Station)	42
36.	Olympic Tyre (Townsville)	40
37.	<i>Peter Dawes</i> ² (Julia Creek)	39
38.	Caltex Oil Co. (Townsville)	31
39.	Hastings Deering (Brisbane)	30
40.	Redman Motors (Brisbane)	30
41.	T.H. Philips & Philips (solicitors, Charters Towers)	29
42.	James Burns (accountant) [no relation of Max's]	27
43.	J.H. Gardiner (Brisbane)	23
44.	Westco Motors (Brisbane)	21
45.	Elphinstones (Townsville)	20
46.	Metropolitan Motors Spare Parts (Brisbane)	20
47.	Massey Ferguson (Brisbane)	17
48.	Australian Estates (Julia Creek)	16
49.	U.B.D. (Townsville)	15
50.	CIG Qld (Townsville)	10
51.	Flinders Tyre Sales (Townsville)	7
52.	<i>Albert Laurencic</i> (Julia Creek)	6

THE CHEQUE given to me by the bankruptcy people, I put it in the bank. Sixty cents! That's how much I'm talking about. I'm still ashamed putting 60 cents in the bank. I thought it was 60 dollars³.

ALBERT LAURENCIC

53.	James William Weir (Julia Creek)	£5
54.	T. Willmet & Sons (Townsville)	2

I DO KNOW that Max left a few debts behind. I think it left a bad taste in a lot of people's mouths when he left Julia Creek owing money to some of the townspeople.

ERIC SLACK-SMITH

- D. REALISATIONS: An amount of £17,816, as under, was brought to credit of the estate account:
- | | |
|---|--------|
| Amount (including interest) | |
| in respect of mortgage over Balootha | £5,213 |
| Sale of properties at Julia Creek and Woody Point | 4,300 |
| Proceeds of bank account | 3,064 |
| Sale of plant and equipment | 2,280 |
| Collection of book debts | 1,758 |
| Interest on fixed deposit | 600 |
| Sale of lease at Caboolture | 497 |
| Rents received | 80 |
| Sale of parts and scrap metal | 19 |
| Deposit on H.C. Sleigh's petition | 5 |
- E. DIVIDEND: A dividend of 100% was paid on preferential claims of £16,962, and ordinary creditors were paid a dividend of 5.6% on claims of £21,433.
- F. PUBLIC EXAMINATION: The bankrupt's public examination was proceeded with on 17th August 1961 (and subsequently), and on 12th March 1962 was adjourned to a date to be fixed. I have no objection to an Order to conclude the public examination.
- G. GENERAL: The bankrupt is aged 59 years and has no dependants. In 1938 the bankrupt purchased for £1600 a dairy farm at Biloela. In 1940, whilst conducting the dairy farm, he purchased a tractor, and commenced to perform earthmoving contracts. Thenceforth the dairy farm operations were carried on by the bankrupt's wife and a share-farmer, and the bankrupt concentrated on earthmoving operations.
- The bankrupt's turnover in his earthmoving business increased over the years, and during the year ended 30th June 1948, his net income was £16,274. During the following financial year, his net income was £18,799.
- In September of 1949, the bankrupt received an income tax assessment of £21,557 in respect of the two financial years mentioned in the previous paragraph.
- During the year ended 30th June 1949, the bankrupt purchased for £8000 a grazing property named Balootha, near Julia Creek, and made available £7900 to assist his wife to purchase grazing properties named Abydos and May Downs, which were adjacent to Balootha. The bankrupt also purchased livestock. The bankrupt in addition purchased land at Redcliffe, near Brisbane. He said that purchases of the just-mentioned properties, together with livestock and certain items of earthmoving equipment, contributed to putting him in a situation where he was without liquid funds to enable payment of the income tax assessment.
- In 1951, or thereabouts, the bankrupt sold the Biloela dairy farm, mentioned earlier, for about £12,000, £10,000 of which was paid to the Taxation Department in reduction of his income tax. The bankrupt continued to operate as an earthmoving contractor. He established an office and a garage business at Julia Creek, and thereafter operated in that area of Western Queensland.
- A partnership named Burns Burns & Burns was formed, the members of which were the bankrupt's three children who were minors at the time of formation of the partnership. According to the bankrupt, he and his wife made available about £1000 as deposit for purchase of equip-

1. Champneys & McMahon: see page 232.
2. Dawes: see page 185.
3. Payouts were made after decimal currency came in (£1 = \$2) so Albert would have received \$12 x 0.056 = 67 cents. Albert's story is on page 647.

ment for Burns Burns & Burns. The bankrupt said that Burns Burns & Burns operated in Western Queensland and did small earthmoving contracts in which the bankrupt was not interested.

In 1952 a partnership named Burns & Goundry was formed, the members of which were the bankrupt's wife and a person named Harry Goundry. Each of them contributed about £1200, and they commenced business in Western Queensland as tanksinkers. The bankrupt said that Burns & Goundry performed contracts which he was not interested in seeking.

In 1953 there was an investigation by the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation into the bankrupt's financial affairs. Assessments were issued, and the position was that on 30th June 1956, the bankrupt's liability for income tax stood at £32,370. On 13th November, the bankrupt had an interview with the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation in Brisbane with regard to his tax commitments.

The bankrupt continued to trade as an earthmoving contractor and garage proprietor. He also continued grazing activities on Balootha.

The following is an extract from the notes of public examination:

Now, Mr Burns, we know that throughout 1956/57/58 you were being heavily pressed by your creditors including the Taxation Department were you not --- The Taxation Department I would think, yes.

What about your other creditors --- I don't think they were greatly alarmed at that stage.

What about 1958 --- 1958, yes.

Your other creditors were pressing very heavily were they not --- Yes.

Were they not also pressing in 1957 --- They probably were, but it hadn't got to the stage where it was really serious as far as I was concerned.

Can you tell me when was the stage reached when things became very serious in your own mind --- About the end of 1957.

I take it then, that from towards the end of 1957 you realised you were in an impossible situation --- No, I never gave up hope, never.

But things were extremely difficult --- Yes.

In a form of questionnaire completed and lodged by the bankrupt, he set out that he was unable, after the early part of 1948, to pay his debts as they fell due.

In 1958, the bankrupt sold Balootha for about £14,000 and made a substantial payment to the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation. He was paid a deposit by the purchaser, and took a mortgage from the purchaser to secure payment of the remainder of the moneys. As mentioned in paragraph B above, at the date of the Sequestration Order the bankrupt was owed £4459 under the mortgage.

In January 1959 the bankrupt arranged an auction sale of his plant and equipment, including spare parts and accessories. He said the sale was not successful, and that a substantial number of parts remained unsold, and those which were sold brought unsatisfactory prices. There was mention that items which cost the bankrupt about £6000 were sold for £300.

The bankrupt's wife sold Abydos and May Downs, and in partnership with two of their children she purchased the lease of a hotel in Lismore, New South Wales. The bankrupt's wife and her partners conducted trade at the hotel, and the bankrupt continued to perform earthmoving contracts. In August 1959 the bankrupt ceased trade and assisted

AT THE END of the 1950s it just all fell in for Max. This tax thing was hovering about and took all the money. I never realised what was coming. Max might have known but I didn't. We went from being as poor as a church mouse, as the saying is, up into the higher brackets once he started tanksinking, then back again.

The Official Receiver took everything. We had no assets left out west. Nothing. The only thing they didn't get was Gran's house in Georgina St. The house was in her name and the tax couldn't take it. It was our money, but we bought it in Gran's name. Everything else that Max owned the tax grabbed¹.

MARJ BURNS

his wife and children in the Lismore hotel for a short time, and then obtained employment in an estate agency in Brisbane.

H. BOOKS OF ACCOUNT: For much of the time during the five years prior to his bankruptcy, the bankrupt was in business as an earthmoving contractor, garage proprietor and grazier. He employed a clerk to maintain books of account, including cash books, private ledgers and debtors' and creditors' ledgers, and in addition he engaged a public accountant to prepare and lodge income tax returns on his behalf, and to perform other appropriate services. I do not allege that the bankrupt failed to keep proper books of account.

I. CAUSE OF BANKRUPTCY: In a form of affidavit sworn with his statement of affairs, the bankrupt attributed his bankruptcy to a shortage of funds caused by expenditure of moneys on capital assets.

In my opinion, the main cause of bankruptcy was the bankrupt's failure to provide for and pay, in 1947 and subsequently, his income tax obligations. A contributing cause was capital losses incurred on acquisition and subsequent disposal of earthmoving plant and equipment, including spare parts and accessories.

J. CONDUCT: The conduct of the bankrupt during the proceedings under the bankruptcy was satisfactory.

K. OFFENCES: I do not allege any offences under the Act.

L. SECTION 119(7): Pursuant to Section 119(7), I report as under:

That the bankrupt has, after knowing himself to be insolvent, continued to trade, or obtained credit to the amount of one hundred dollars or upwards.

M. PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES: The bankrupt is employed as a real estate salesman, and his earnings are about \$56.00 per week.

DATED AT BRISBANE this Fifth day of May, 1967.


OFFICIAL RECEIVER.

1. Excerpt from Marj's story, page 56.

Max Poppa's Funeral

I CAN REMEMBER going to Max's funeral. There weren't very many people, mainly family. Even though I'd never met Max, I went as support for Marj. We sat in the church. The woman who was supposed to be the girlfriend, she was dressed in black and she sat on the opposite side. She sobbed her heart out for the whole service. The minister directed all the sympathies to Marj and her family, and this poor soul who had been there to the end with Max, she was broken hearted and nobody was sorry for her. The minister never directed any condolence her way.

Marj had been separated from Max for years and years, and it didn't mean a lot to her, except, I suppose, that he was the father and grandfather of the family, but she got the sympathy ahead of the girlfriend. I can remember that as clear as anything.

VAL TYLER

I REMEMBER at the time of Max's funeral it was like Judy never existed. She had no status, she had nothing, even though he had been living with her.

Max was claimed from the hospital by the Burnses because he was still married to Marj. He was buried as Marj's husband. I thought that was a tough thing to do.

MARY BURNS

I WROTE TO MARJ after Max died. Although they weren't together then, I just wrote to her and said I was sorry he'd gone. She wrote back and she said: "You were the only one who wrote to me who thought that I might have been upset." He was the dad of all those kids, so naturally she must have felt something. I was so happy I wrote to her.

FLO BRENNAN



I think Max died an unhappy man,
but that was of his choosing.

I was there when he died.

Judy sent for me.

She made all the arrangements for the funeral
because he died from her place.

We all turned up at the church:
the Burnses on one side
and Judy and her lot on the other.

At the end of the service,
when it was time to make a move,
Joy said to me: "Come on Mum".

I was still Max's wife, so out we went first.

MARJ BURNS



“All you need to know is we loved each other very much and that’s it. I closed that chapter in my life 23 years ago. I’d rather not reopen it – it’s too emotionally upsetting.”

JUDY PHILIPPI

October 2002

Right: “Max Poppa”, as I remember him as a child, at his Tingalpa home. The photo on top of the cabinet is of Joy, Don and Barry, ca 1941.
[Guy Burns, GB134, July 1966]

Opposite top: Max and Judy (with a pet terrier cradled in her arms) outside the caravan where they lived after Max left Marj.
[Judy Philippi, GB108, ca 1972]

Opposite bottom: Max’s funeral notice from the *Courier Mail*, Saturday 22/9/1979. The writing is Marj’s. “20-9-79” refers to Max’s death; “22nd Sept 1979” refers to the funeral.

“LATE OF JULIA CREEK”

Max was 40 when he first went to Julia Creek. He called it home until he became a bankrupt at 52, left in disgrace and never returned, spending the remainder of his life in Brisbane.

He was in the Julia Creek district only 12 out of his 72 years, yet his funeral notice says “late of Julia Creek”. Why? Because in Julia Creek he was somebody, the wealthiest man in town, and in Brisbane he was a nobody. Everyone I met while gathering stories for this book who lived within 100 miles of Julia Creek in the 1950s remembered the name Max Burns. If they hadn’t met him personally, they’d heard their father or somebody else mention him. But in Brisbane, Max was lost in the shoal. I couldn’t find anyone outside of family (except Lyn Mellish and Judy) who remembered him. In the city, the big fish of the Julia Creek pond shrunk to a minnow.

Late of Tingalpa? Late of Redcliffe? No other place except Julia Creek would make sense in Max’s funeral notice. Even though he had left there 20 years previously, the notice had to read “late of Julia Creek” in memory of his glory days.





'A Nice Old Stick' ¹

I'D NEVER met Nanny Burns until about the time Jill² got sick [1979]. We seemed to click straight away and became good friends. We still are. She'd come down from Woodridge to the Sandgate unit and drop in and say: "Come over and have a coffee with me. I'm doing a bit of ironing". I'd go over and sit. She'd be ironing away and we'd have a coffee and she'd chat for ages. I'd have to go, but she'd want me to stay longer. She'd be buzzing around, doing the ironing, doing some washing; she was always on the go. Then she'd get in her little car and off she'd buzz again. She'd be back in a few days: "I've just come down to straighten things out". Soon after that she sold her Woodridge house and moved into the unit full-time.

When Jill was alive there were always parties

at the units. Once we organised a party for the Liberals, a pool party, and the women were to wear a tie or something man-ish, and socks. During the night, after the men had had a few drinks, perhaps too many, they started dipping people into the pool. An old lady lived on the second floor of the units next door and we could see her figure behind the screen door in the darkness, peering out, looking over into the pool area. She was a stickybeak. There was a bit of swearing when people got dunked in the pool and that set her off: she rang the police. Now, Nanny Burns thought that she wouldn't get dunked, she thought her age would save her. But anyway, she gets dunked in the pool too. She gets out to go upstairs and is walking through the garage with a swimming costume on

and she sees the police. Nanny Burns was such a character, she was just full of life, and she starts questioning *them*: "What's going on here?" And the police said: "Well, that's what we came to find out". That was one of the last parties at the unit. There were some fantastic parties around that pool.

Nanny Burns often spoke about Max and their days out west. She talked about his womanising, about the time he'd gone off somewhere with another woman. She found out where they were staying and went to the room. The first thing she sighted was the pisspot, so she picked it up and threw it over them. She told everybody about that. She'd be blunt, straight to the point, and open with you about anything. We get on well.

VAL TYLER

1. Quoted from Nev Sheehan, see over page.
2. The author's mother.

In Memory of Nanna Burns

KALLI

WE ARE HERE to celebrate Nan's life. We all have so many memories of Nan, memories that will stay with us forever. I'd just like to take a moment to share with you some of mine.

Everything I can remember about her was full of energy. She loved walking and doing yoga, she had lapidary classes, and she spent a lot of time running around after us grandkids. My fondest memories are of our trips in the Gemini. I think Nan must hold the record for fitting the most people in such a little car. Nan would be driving, Phyllis in the passenger seat, Jason on the handbrake, and me on Phyllis' lap. In the back seat we'd have Andrew, Donald, Tony, Kerry and Stephen. Nine people. Poor Nan would be trying to drive while we'd be yelling and laughing and fighting, and on the odd occasion a bum being pushed against the back window. Nan could never understand why other motorists abused her, but she was always great on the comeback.

We used to get Nan so flustered she'd never remember our names. She would go through several before she'd get it right:

Tony... Don... Andrew... Malcolm...

It's Jason, Nan.

I know that. Sit down and be quiet, all of you.

School holidays were always about being with Nan and being with cousins. Us kids used to spend hours and hours with Nan's Lego in front of the cricket with an endless supply of ginger nuts. How she coped with all of us I have no idea.

Thanks for the love and laughter, Nan. I'm sure the stories of you will be told for generations.

I would like to add that Nan said to me before she died: "Don't you cry for me. I'll be running those stairs to heaven". So run Nan, run.



When I am old,
no strife,
but a calm corner of a glowing fire
and memories my musings to inspire.
In summertime a sheltered garden nook,
sight clear enough to read a friendly book,
and strength to fold
a child of my own blood
against my breast,
feeling against my cheeks
his warm lips pressed...
When I am old.

TREVOR

FAMILY AND FRIENDS, we are here today to pay tribute to a mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend. Many of us know Nan by different names. Some of us know her as Mum, some as Nan, others as Marj.

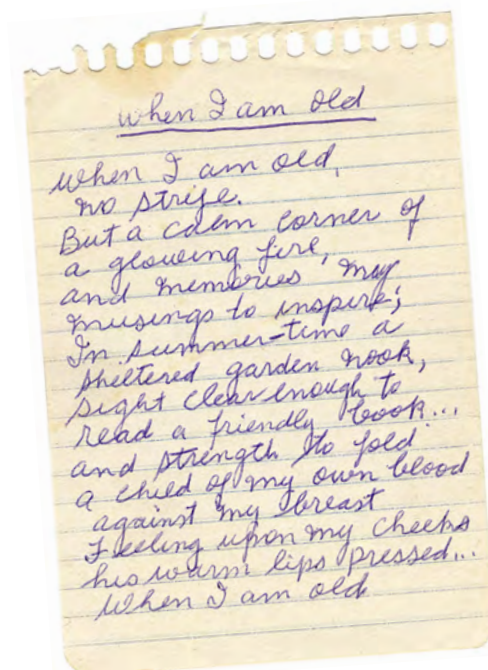
My fondest memories of Nan were that she could always hold a great conversation – she could talk the leg off an iron pot – and she always had an opinion on something, especially politics. John Howard should have been here today because she was probably the staunchest Liberal supporter I've known. You were not welcome, I think, if you voted Labor.

Auntie Joy has written some notes for me, so I'll read from them. Marj Burns, née Flewell-Smith, fifth child and only daughter of William and Lou Flewell-Smith. Born in Lowood on the 10th of October, 1911. Nan had six brothers, Doug, Stan, Alan, Keith, Clive and Ned. She was the last of that generation.

She married Malcolm (Max) Burns on the 17th August 1932 at Wondai. Five children were born: Joy, Don, Barry, Mal and Alan. All siblings married, giving Nan 13 grandchildren and five great grandchildren. In her younger days she liked to play tennis and golf. She won many trophies, but unfortunately these were lost in a fire when their house burnt down in Julia Creek.

Nan prided herself on being a good driver – and perhaps she was. Most of the grandchildren will remember her Gemini. Many holidays the car filled with grandchildren and off we would go: squabbles, laughter, and occasionally a yell for us to shut up. At the age of 80 an accident finished her driving career. Not her fault – but the police said differently.

Nan will be very much missed by all. The grandchildren not here today – Barry in Baghdad, Tony in Canada, and Donald in Cairns – they all send their love.



Opposite: Jill Burns (my mother, pregnant with me), and Nanna Burns, dressed for the Julia Creek races, outside Midnight Sun, the low-set home next to Max's workshop in Julia Creek.
[Guy Burns, p129, 1957]

Far left: Kalli's card on flowers at Nan's funeral.

Left: A poem in Nan's handwriting.
[Kerri Burns, BuK21]

After you were here,
 I went down to see Marj, your grandmother.
 I rang the home first
 and the lady wanted to know was I some relation.
 “No, I worked for her husband years and years ago
 and I’ve just found out she’s in this home here.”
 She checked, and said I could come down
 and talk to Marj anytime I liked.

 Well, I went down and had a good yarn to her.
 It’s only a quarter hour’s drive from here, not even that.
 Went another day and had another good yarn;
 talked about the days when they had the hotel at Gayndah,
 about Max’s tanksinking,
 her golf playing.
 Talked about Julia Creek.
 And then I went back next time and they said she’d passed away.

 Aw, jeez I was disappointed that I missed out on her funeral.
 She was a nice old stick, y’know.

NEV SHEEHAN
 26 JULY 2007

Opposite: Nan having breakfast at
 the nursing home where she died.
[Guy Burns, GK81, 2002]

Nan’s recollections on her 90th birthday (2001)
 of her life with Max and their tanksinking days in
 Julia Creek were my prime motivation for
 gathering the stories that fill this book.

She died at 1.00 a.m., Tuesday 29th March, 2005.
 No one was with her. Nursing staff had been in at 12.30,
 moving her every hour to relieve pressure sores.
 Her breathing was shallow and relaxed.



MILCH GOATS

4 July 1921—A correspondent writes from Papua and is much in earnest on a subject that will interest very many worthy bush people of our country. He says:—

I always read with the greatest avidity your interesting letters, more especially your “Mail Bag” for they are not only of interest to struggling settlers like myself on the outskirts of civilisation, but exceedingly instructive.

In the issue of March the 14th of the *Register* you had a very interesting letter commenting upon the neglect of the goat. It appealed to me so much that I ask to get into communication with you.

It seems a pity such a useful and faithful animal should be so neglected, more especially in Australia where they had the pick of the breeds. There was no country in the world had such an opportunity as Australia did. Before condensed milk was introduced in the old wind-jamming days of the 1850s, every sailing ship carried goats to supply the women and children with milk and often fresh meat. Upon their arrival in Australia the goats were disposed of. It is only fair to assume that it was only the very best class of milking goats were chosen to undertake such long voyages.

When it is considered how much all classes in Australia are indebted to the poor, despised, neglected little goat, their ingratitude is beyond comprehension. How many sturdy sons of the colonies owe their constitution to goat's milk? When their fathers and mothers, hardy pioneers, were opening up the mineral and agricultural lands of Australia, it was the despised goat stood by them, not only supplying milk but fresh meat; whilst the kids – the only companions their children had to romp and play with – helped to wile away the dull monotony of their young lives in that far away never-never country, cut off from all joys and intercourse of civilisation. It was the goat who carried their wood and water and their goods from field to field; gave them milk, gave them meat, gave them playmates for their children. No animal has taken such an active part in opening up Australia as the goat, and no animal more abused. Why is it then, that no interest is taken in keeping up and improving the breed? Why is it that there are no competitions for the best milkers and best breed of goats at the agricultural shows? The goat is like the British soldier when he is fighting – he is a hero; but when the fight is over the hero is vanished.

The goat is always the best friend of the poorer classes. When new country is being opened up, with all the attendant hardships, the goat is called for; is everything. When it is settled – poor goat! It is kicked, stoned, shot and hunted from pillar to post. Despite this, unflinchingly, he remains the best friend of the poor.

It is only within the last two years I have had any experience of the goat. Circumstances placed me in charge of an estate with a small herd of goats. As I observed them more closely I became deeply impressed with what remarkably charming animals they are. Kindly treated they are sagacious and exceedingly affectionate and become very much attached to those who treat them well. Being so clean in their habits they are ideal pets for children; much better in fact than dogs or cats. Any medical man will vouch for this. For this reason alone there should be classes opened up for

goats at all agricultural shows throughout Australia.

One hears a great deal about their mischievous properties, but if good fences are put up they are nothing near as bad as some horses I have had, and not in the same street with pigs.

There is a peculiar antipathy to goat flesh. This seems unaccountable. Being free from fluke, it is far healthier meat than sheep; and being so tender and free from taint, is far better meat for the tropics than that of the sheep. This prejudice may be accounted for by so many Australians having had, in their childhood, goats for playmates. The incident may be forgotten, but the childhood's horror of eating a pet still remains.

I note how much you have done to bring the goat back into its own again, but the real trouble is, it does not grow wool like a sheep and make wool-kings. It is only a friend of poor people without influence, and the friendship only appears to be on the one side.

Anyhow, a great deal could be done if the *Register* took the subject up and wrote articles upon the different breeds of goats: English, Welsh, Scottish, Nubian, Maltese and so on, describing their different points, markings and peculiarities, and explaining what value would accrue to the children of Australian families that keep goats. The *Register* could also agitate for agricultural shows to open up classes for the different breeds and varieties. A children's page could be instigated requesting them to write about their goats and to submit suitable photos.

Well, replying to this: I agree with my correspondent's appreciation of the milch goat as one of the greatest aids to livelihood that comes to the lot of man in this country; and to my mind, milch goats have a good place on every farm where cows, for many reasons, may not be kept. The principal claims of the goat are perfect health and economy of cost and maintenance – and these claims are considerable.

Of the various breeds of goats in the world, not one is superior to the common, and often despised, goat of North Queensland. Swiss, Saanen, Maltese, Nubian, and the best improved breed of English and Welsh goats, none exceed the 3-quart yield of our common goats. And as for meat quality and weight of carcass, ours can easily excel in localities where the feed is good. This is manifest in our western country where goats grow to immense size.

Some years ago in Richmond, the Stainkey family¹ had a team of 14 great wethers that drew a waggon specially built for them, regularly carrying a ton of water from the creek.

For many years we kept domestic goats in large numbers, and so long as my family were children the goats were well-tended. But my family grew up and talked horses and cattle and forgot their old pets on whom they used to tie ribbons and little tinkling bells. Children are almost essential to success in the keeping of a goat flock. Given a fair chance of dry camp and shelter, a good milk goat should be lovable in every home where children are. What greater delight would kindly children have than to fondle little kids. The love of animals is in most children's hearts.

ALONG THE LINE (J.R. Chisholm)

Opposite: An unidentified Winton boy and his goat, about ten years before Charlie Corrigan and his father rounded up all the stray goats in town. [Joanie Halloran, JH66, ca 1930]

1. A photo of Stainkey's goat team is on page 280.

Friend of the Poorer Classes

GOD STREWTH – Julia Creek was a goat town, that’s for sure. There was an Austin A40 with a canvas hood parked in front of Gannon’s. Wasn’t really canvas, it was some type of cotton with rubber sprayed on it. And here’s all these goats jumping on top. Next thing, one went clean through the hood into the car. They loved climbing on cars.

Goats get out of hand. They’ll eat everything; they’ll eat clothes on the line. They’ll stand in shop doorways, especially if it’s raining. Any shops with an awning, the goats would stand under there out of the rain. Manure everywhere.

I can remember in Winton – during the war it was – and the town was overrun with goats. They used to camp on vacant lots, in doorways.

Corfield and Fitzmaurice, a big store, had a loading ramp and they used to camp under that. The shire clerk said to Dad one night: “What about mustering the goats?” Dad was reluctant because he thought we’d be run out of town. “Do it in the dark. We won’t say who was responsible.” So we mustered these goats. Started at 10 o’clock. We rounded up 500 odd goats and yarded them all. People had to come and buy their goats out. Holy Jesus! What a ruckus we caused. You were supposed to register a goat for two bob a year and people weren’t doing that.

Now, having made all these bad remarks about them, in the early days that’s the only way some families survived in western towns – on goat’s milk and goat’s meat.

CHARLIE CORRIGAN



GOATS? If you didn't have goats – God, you was a pauper, you was. They were the wealth of the family, goats were. God Almighty. Everyone and his brother – and his sister too – had goats.

If you wanted to cart wood – in those days there was no electricity, it was all wood stoves – you did it with goats. We'd go a mile out of town with a goat cart, looking for wood along the creek. A goat cart had four wheels and a flat top, like this table. You could sit on it. The front axle would be mounted on a piece of timber that swivelled. That's how you steered the cart. You might have two goats pulling or you might have four goats.

When I was a boy in Julia Creek, all our water at home was carted from the railway in kerosene tins by goat cart. You'd cut the top out of a four-gallon kerosene tin and away you'd go with the goats to get water.

We did everything with goats: milk them, eat them, ride them. A goat was a pretty strong beast. He'd carry a fair-size kid on his back and be able to jump over a fence. At school we raced them. Colin, I called my racing goat. The Gilleys, – they lived at the other end of town – they had a goat called Speckle. Now my goat Colin was pretty fast, but he didn't always win. If the race went from school towards Gillet's house, Speckle would always win; but if it went towards my house (the other way), my goat would win. It depended on whether the goat was heading home.

With goats, you never worried about milk and meat because you had it laid on. Between here and Charters Towers there was no bitumen, and during the wet season the roads might be impassable for three months – we were 37 days without a train once – but we wouldn't worry about milk and meat, we had the goats. And everybody had fowls for eggs, so there was no problem with being isolated.

Goats were necessary in Julia Creek, but they used to annoy me when I had the fruit shop. All the potatoes and onions were stored in the back. By gee, you'd have to watch that the goats didn't come and eat them. They'd put their head around the corner and nibble whatever they could reach. Terrible things in that way, though I remember one occasion when I didn't mind attracting a goat inside – when Charlie Byrne closed his butcher shop and meat was lacking for several weeks. I'd get a good bit of meat out of any unwary goat. They used to annoy me any other time, but not when the butcher was scarce.

MANNIE SILLS

BUSINESS VISIT TO TOWNSVILLE.

The town has been without meat for weeks, not even mutton being sold at the butcher shop. Business people have to have their meat sent either from Cloncurry or Richmond.

Heavy clouds bank up and all we seem to get is plenty of dust and wind. Let us hope 1949 will bring plenty of the badly needed rain.

CA: 23 Dec 1948

A Short History of Julia Creek Goats

28 February 1931—The Common Ranger took upon himself during the past week the unpleasant task of trying to eradicate the town of numerous pests. I am referring to animals such as goats, and I understand the dogs will get their turn next. Much as I am aware of the use of these two particular animals, there are occasions when quantity overrules quality.

11 June 1938—With the Saanen strain of goat introduced by council to the Julia Creek herd, the quality of the herd has improved considerably in recent years. Notwithstanding this improvement, during the week the goats were rounded up, those not having owners were either sold or destroyed. Having a good milkman in Julia Creek in the person of Bob Harbutt, we are now not so dependant on goats as formerly.

9 October 1948—The local dairy has had to close down owing to dry conditions and is only supplying the local hospital. It is as well for Julia Creek that some people keep a good stock of milking goats, and these are now giving good service. Most of the owners are feeding their goats and they are worth the attention given. They are a hardy animal that thrives on little feed; and although they are described as a nuisance, what would we do without them in the dry periods? They endure hardships in conditions where other animals would die. The McKinlay Shire Council is to be congratulated on buying well-bred billy goats of the Saanen breed from different studs to improve the town flock.

5 July 1952—The Milch Goat Project Club of the Julia Creek State School held its annual club day at the school on June 13 when 13 goats were paraded before the judge, Mr Herb Fickling. Some interesting talks were delivered by club members. These included Diseases in Goats, Breeds of Milch Goats, Goat's Milk, How to Rear a Kid Goat, and How To Milk A Goat. During the meeting the school choir sang *Horo My Nut Brown Maiden* and the upper grades performed two folk dances.

The head teacher, Mr Wilson, congratulated the children on the efficient working of the whole project and outlined to the visitors the aims and importance of club work. He emphasised how important the milch goat was in western areas, and stressed that in Europe, particularly in the Mediterranean countries, 60 per cent of the milk produced is goat's milk.

13 April 1957—Some of the goat herds of Julia Creek have started wandering. One mob went as far as Minamere about 50 miles from Julia Creek. The owners brought them back by motor lorry. Several other mobs wandered short distances and

were brought back before they got too far away. At this time of the year, goats seem to have wandering fits and have to be closely guarded. At present, several persons are keeping their goats shut up day and night, feeding them until such time as their wanderlust eases up.

21 March 1959—It will not be long before Julia Creek has a daily bottled milk supply and a daily milk ration for the children of the local schools. Julia Creek is linking up with Richmond and Cloncurry and a census has been taken of the milk required here. The milk will be delivered by train from Townsville daily, other than Sunday, and will be distributed to householders and to the schools. Goat's milk rather than cow's milk has been the usual product over several decades, but is likely now to be in dwindling demand.

6 June 1959—The by-laws relating to the keeping of dogs and goats in the shire has been drafted, and after due advertisement and confirmation will be put into operation. The maximum number of goats that any household may keep is 10. The registration fees on goats, 2/6 per head, remains the same. Goats straying on the streets between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. can be seized and released on the payment of 5/-, otherwise they will be destroyed.

5 December 1959—Feed on the common is scarce and of small value, and goats have practically

EVERYONE had goats. People used to eat them, but mainly they had goats for the milk. Be a couple of hundred, no trouble at all, in the hey-day of goats in Julia Creek. More, at times when they used to breed up. The council supplied stud billies to breed from. Just let them go with the mob to improve the herd.

What used to happen with goats: when there was a really big mob of them, mainly after the wet, they'd go walkabout and sometimes they wouldn't come back. They just kept going along the creek and you wouldn't see them again. That was common for goats to go walkabout. Or else they'd just roam around the town and become a menace. When it rained, they'd get under the shops for shelter and the smell was really bad.

If there was a car parked in the street, well, they'd jump on it and make a nuisance of themselves. They'd line up one behind the other and jump on the bonnet, climb up on the hood, then down the back. Follow the leader sort of thing. That's why they used to cull them now and again. Eventually, when more and more people had cars, and when Malanda milk came in, goats were gotten rid of altogether.

REG FRY

forsaken that place. They are staying close to town and are becoming a nuisance in the streets, their value as mobile garbage removalists being negligible and their capacity for damage being unlimited. The Common Ranger has a task ahead of him in eliminating these unwanted and unlicensed beasts.

26 December 1959—Goats to the number of half a gross were mustered one night last week by the council rangers and were transferred to a place from which they will not return. You can plainly notice the effect of this round up on the local goat population.



Below: Malcolm and Don Dewar outside the home of Bill Davis (their grandfather) in Coyne St. The original Shire Office is in the distance, and across the road was one of the school gates mentioned by Ivy Burrows (sidebar, right). Photo taken looking east.
[Malcolm Dewar, DM05, ca 1939]

IT WAS MY JOB to look after the town goats if they wandered. South winds used to come up and they'd wander, they'd go walkabout. Once I went way out to Ulick Browne's place to find them. He told me they were there. About two or three hundred of them. Everyone's. I went out and put them on a spare allotment and charged people a few pennies each to get their goats back. I made a bit of money out of it.

REG FICKLING

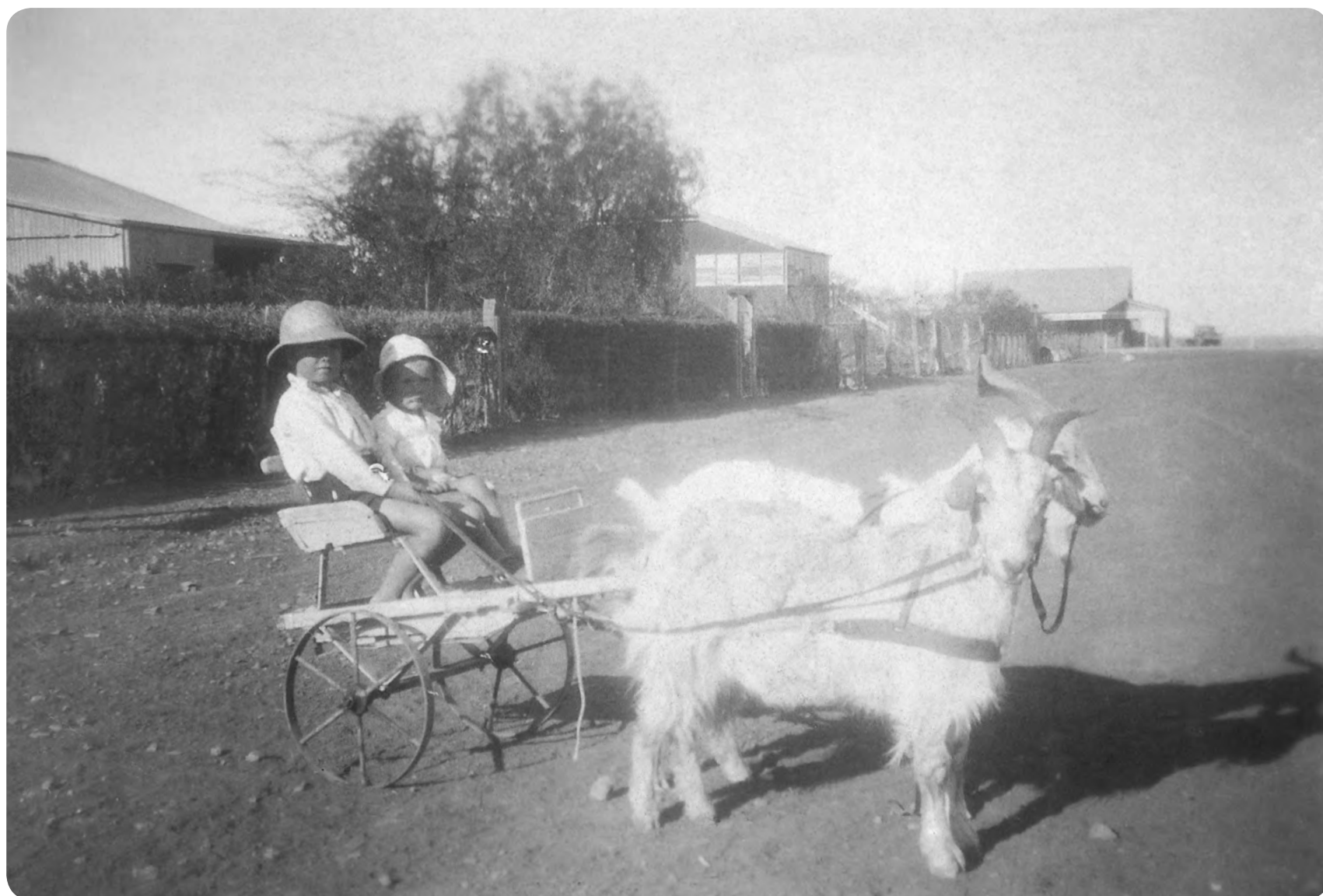
GOATS – they'd eat anything in the dry time. Remember those Fuji silk shirts? In a Fuji silk shirt you were top class, but they'd eat them off the clothes line. And they'd eat ladies underwear. They'd eat them off the line, too. And those canvas-hood cars – they'd climb on them and fall through the hood. That was a great game for goats in Julia Creek.

NOOKIE GUEST

GOATS? OH GOD! Beware the billy. He used to wait for us after school. There were two outlets to get out of school. One was the headmaster's gate (near the headmaster's house) in front of the council office in Coyne St. It was a big gate. The other one was in Burke St near Eckford's picture theatre. That was just an ordinary little walk-through gate. This billy goat always seemed to hang around one of these gates waiting for us, about the time we got out of school. We'd look to see where he was and then we'd run like crazy, whooping and howling if he chased us. Dirty stinking billy goat he was. I don't know who the hell owned him.

We never had goats, but Fosters next door did. Fosters kept a big herd of goats in their yard, about 30, and they sold the milk around town. Often there were too many kid goats born and they'd knock them on the head and bring one over. "Aw, kid again tonight for tea." We used to have kid a lot.

IVY BURROWS





IF I WAS ASKED TO NOMINATE one photo that captured the town of Julia Creek portrayed in this book, I would choose the one below. Goats were an integral part of Julia Creek prior to 1960. They fed a lot of families and were friends to a lot of children. The cattle yard in the background speaks of the importance of the rural industry to the economic well being of the town, and the railway in front of the yards was the connection to other communities. Neither tree nor hill disturbs the clear line of the horizon (though in this photo, a fence causes some disturbance); and just as clear, of clouds, is the typical outback sky.

The Julia Creek of this book, and the Julia Creek in the photo, came to an end in 1959. The year coincides with the Burns leaving town, but that is simply happenstance, and for me, a handy happenstance. It meant I didn't have to research Julia Creek after it became dulled by modernity.

Until the war, Julia Creek had the look and feel of a town a half-century out of time. I don't mean that in a disrespectful way; I mean if someone had time-shifted from the late 1800s they would have felt at ease. You'd have to explain to them about the occasional motor car, and the light aircraft that appeared now and again; but if the time traveller looked inside the typical home, you wouldn't have to explain electrical appliances (irons, for instance,

were heated by petrol or stove; washing was by copper; refrigeration was by charcoal cooler), and outside the home you wouldn't have to explain electric power poles, bitumen surfacing or concrete swimming pools – they didn't exist in Julia Creek. With only a few concessions to progress, the town was a time capsule.

The late 1940s brought the beginning of change, including the heavy earthmoving equipment of my grandfather, equipment not seen before in the district. A few years later the golf course and club house came into existence, in large part due to my grandfather's efforts. In 1953 electricity arrived; in 1958 plans and specifications for a concrete swimming pool were approved; and "a sketch of the proposed civic centre was considered and accepted, subject to a few minor alterations". The same article¹ went on to state: "Next financial year's programme will include £3000 for planning purposes in regard to the township's sewerage project".

In 1959 Burke St was bitumenised: "Burke St is being transformed. Gravel from the quarry is gradually filling in the excavations and machines and men are levelling it, ready for part to be sealed with bitumen. The other part will be heavily gravelled... When Burke St is completed, the nightmare of glutinous mud, which previously formed

Below: Boys and their billy goats at Julia Creek.
[Noel Peut, PN02, ca 1935]

1. NQR: 27 Dec 1958.



the thoroughfare, will return only when comparisons are made of old and new methods of road structure”.¹ And in March 1960, what eventually became the Town & Country Club was first mooted, utilising the workshop from my grandfather’s bankrupt estate.

It almost appears, in hindsight, as if there was a conscious decision by the townspeople to sweep out the old and bring in the new before the arrival of the 1960s. (In the case of the Town & Country, the deadline was just missed.)

Also caught up by the new broom were the goats. In the last *Julia Creek District* notes for 1959, Julia Creek’s correspondent wrote: “Goats to the number of half a gross were mustered one night last week by the council rangers and were transferred to a place from which they will not return.”²

It was not only the mustered goats that disappeared. If any one date can be picked out as marking the juncture between the old and the new Julia Creek, it is the date of that muster. When the carcasses of 72 goats were buried at the tip, along with them was interred the character of the old Julia Creek. Gone was the spirit of the goats, the mud streets, the night pans, the petrol irons, the carbide lamps, the dirt swimming pool. Gone was Max Burns, tanksinker. And gone was my interest in pursuing stories of Julia Creek into the sixties and beyond.

On the date of that muster, just before Christmas 1959, Julia Creek became a proper little modern town, and was for me bereft of further interest.

1. NQR: 18 Jul 1959.

2. NQR: 26 Dec 1959.

3. Maurice O’Connell, page 113.



“Jim, hold the leaders straight.

And Noel, keep your hand on Blacky so she doesn’t move.
You other boys can stand around the cart.”

A group of Depression-era Julia Creek children
and their team of goats

pose near the lifeless cattle yards,
absent the rumble and low of beasts waiting for market.

At other times –

when drovers and meat animals
raised a clamour of noise, odour and dust,
and brought vitality to the downs –
then, the yards were a favourite place for fancy.

“Boys, can you keep still? I’m almost ready.”

The eldest boy has charge of the near- and off-side leaders,
A little girl, the youngest child,
whether out of respect for her sex or age,
rides in the cart.

Anonymous tykes in a threatening environment,
secure in their proximity to town,
congregate and play,
imitating the husbandry occupations of their fathers.

An experienced man on government business,
before the rail brought community and comfort,
died of thirst not far from here.³

Now the town common is a playground for youngsters.



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Drawing & Photo Credits

DRAWING CREDITS

Burns, Guy 324, 557
 Dawes, Kate 195
 Pearce, Jenny 223, 229, 257, 298, 469, 477, 573, 722, 756
 Wilson, Stephen 2, 55, 112, 120, 125, 128, 130, 131, 273, 277, 487, 491, 611, 614, 712, 746, 750

PHOTO CREDITS

Adam, Vicki 135, 659, 660, 662, 663
 Azzopardi, Joe 559, 560, 561, 602
 Batt, Kath 181, 602, 603, 604
 Baxter, George 415
 Beach, Myra 717
 Beutel, Bill 351, 397, 498, 505, 514, 520, 525, 527, 531, 534
 Blanch, Thelma 676, 681
 Bode, Lesley 169, 170, 710, 724, 762
 Bradfield, Robyn 586
 Brand, Merv 454, 541, 543, 774, 777
 Brazier, Ernie 589, 601, 665, 666
 Brennan, Flo 353, 537, 657, 696, 699
 Browne, Geoffrey 144, 146, 157, 274, 303, 304, 307, 309, 311, 320, 323, 329, 331, 332, 335, 336, 339, 341, 579
 Browne, Ulick Jnr 320, 331, 335
 Bulley, Carmel 398
 Burns, Bill 38, 41, 43, 44
 Burns, Guy 14, 16, 22, 35, 36, 44, 46, 48, 56, 57, 59, 95, 100, 104, 162, 199, 216, 299, 341, 347, 353, 431, 463, 472, 477, 491, 497, 514, 516, 520, 525, 567, 571, 585, 586, 620, 634, 654, 662, 676, 692, 703, 715, 716, 772, 789, 791, 792
 Burns, Josie 778
 Burns, Joy 4, 18, 27, 29, 35, 36, 37, 48, 51, 169, 296, 395, 444, 482, 491, 581, 755, 770, 772, 777
 Burns, Kerri 28, 39, 59, 791
 Burns, Robin 38, 42, 48, 50, 431, 453, 505, 506, 509
 Burrows, Bill 348, 351, 550, 562, 667
 Burrows, Ivy 201, 382, 459, 489, 555, 629, 634, 637, 639, 651, 653, 694, 705, 753
 Burrows, Judy 632, 699
 Byrne, Rita 191, 204, 222, 225, 226, 256, 259, 261, 377, 398, 416, 420, 590, 626, 637, 678, 707

Byrnes, Maureen 769
 Casey, Joff 263, 267, 268, 578, 586
 Chardon, Pat 355, 356, 358
 Coleman, Keith 654
 Cooke, Richard 700
 Corrigan, Charlie 667
 Crawford, Nita 407, 409, 410, 412
 Crowley, Alec 444, 447, 457
 Dau, Ron 348, 532, 544, 545, 548, 560, 617
 Davis, Erol 6, 347, 454, 518, 522, 524, 527, 537, 538, 546, 681, 696, 705
 Dawes, Dadie 150, 152, 164, 175, 176, 184, 186, 189, 193, 194, 196, 198, 206, 212, 215, 236, 267, 290, 307, 311, 314, 317, 342, 344, 377, 379, 404, 406, 461, 470, 553, 623, 627, 661, 663, 735
 Day, Eric 772
 Denman, Harry 466, 469, 472, 477
 Dewar, Don 577, 718, 721
 Dewar, Malcolm 371, 718, 722, 727, 797
 Dickfos, Dot 91, 360, 363, 365
 Edwards, Fred 183, 193, 612, 736, 742, 744
 Elliott, Bub 762
 Ensor, Genny 555
 Faithfull, Pam 279
 Fayers, Frank 689
 Fayers, Nora 218, 577, 593, 682, 689, 692
 Fels, Bryan 459, 463
 Fickling, Carmel 367, 415, 425, 552, 574, 595, 617, 618, 620, 625, 631, 639
 Flewell-Smith, Beven 29, 351, 482, 484, 489, 492, 499, 502, 505, 510, 531, 565, 566, 567, 569
 Flewell-Smith, Dawn 20, 44, 453
 Flewell-Smith, Isabel 29, 480, 481, 484, 489, 495, 497, 499, 513, 528, 774
 Flewell-Smith, Merle 7, 483, 500, 502, 509
 Forster, Harry 474
 Fortune, Alma 641
 Fortune, Bill 642, 643
 Fortune, Herb 640, 643
 Foster, Bernie 194, 592, 651
 Fry, Lionel 259, 585
 Fry, Reg 604
 Gannon, Alma 175, 206, 226, 234, 236, 240, 243, 244, 249, 259, 420, 423, 426, 626
 Gerahty, Kath 249, 269, 272, 372, 374, 383, 409, 416, 418, 661
 Gerahty, Lil 368, 371, 410
 Godier, Ray 581, 732

Green, Claudette 200
 Greene, Rawdon 313, 317
 Guest, Nookie 402, 403, 404
 Halloran, Joanie 492, 596, 615, 759, 794, 795
 Hamilton, Neville 428, 431, 439, 440, 441, 451, 465, 466, 469, 474, 477
 Harbutt, Carolyn 669, 671, 672, 675
 Harris, Jumbo 552
 Hennessey, Chris 435, 437, 447, 465, 477, 478, 779
 Jaques, Jean 221
 Kaeser, Betty 216, 218
 Kaeser, John 220
 Kirk, Valmai 772
 Laurencic, Albert 646, 648
 Lavarack, Gordon 86, 179, 181
 Liaros, Harry 259
 Magoffin, Richard 569, 571
 Malone, Pat 230, 709, 710, 714
 Malone, Stumpy 740
 Mann, Edith 418, 634, 641, 700, 703, 705
 Matsen, Ivor 482, 506
 Maxwell, Edwin 173
 McDonald, Mossie 203, 417, 522, 656, 777
 McKay, Bill 433–434
 Morris, Marty 230
 Netterfield, Margaret 313
 Norton, Ann 685
 Pearce, Jenny 573
 Peut, Noel 225, 629, 673, 798
 Philippi, Judy 789
 Richards, Bert 447
 Sheehan, Neville 500, 510, 513
 Sohler, Brian 729, 730
 Stainkey, Dot 210, 289, 607
 Stainkey, Elsie 296
 Stainkey, Trevor 233, 281, 282, 284, 285, 287, 289, 293, 295, 296, 300, 347, 618
 Svensson, Jim 751, 753, 755, 756
 Wall, Shirley 598, 612
 Wall, Tom 601, 609, 612
 Walters, Harold 400
 Wilder, Albie 385, 386, 388, 389, 390, 391
 Wilkins, Pat 655
 Wilson, Norm 439, 440, 441
 Winton, Mary 379, 380

Photo Index

A

Adam
 Douglas 658
 Les 658, 659
 Merle. *See* Hampton
 Vicki 660
 Affleck, Arthur 157
 Ahern, Vince 590, 593, 658
 Aircraft hangars
 Lowe, Arthur 614
 Lowe & Wall 612
 Akiloff
 Lena 650, 653
 Sophie 651
 Alabasheva, Mary 651
 Allison St 625
 Australian Estates 231, 554

B

Banks
 NSW 175, 203, 231, 406, 461, 637, 678
 Qld National 174, 238, 317, 344, 663
 Baxter, Bob 414
 Bennett, Fred 314
 Beutel, Bill 397, 498, 521, 525, 527, 530, 531
 Bicycle race 344
 Billiard rooms
 Cooper 181
 Hampton 181, 238, 310, 397, 427, 461, 661
 Birch, Jim 619
 Bitumen road, first 553
 Blacktracker. *See* Ryan, George
 Blanch
 Bill
 grave 677
 Dummy
 inscription 677
 Eric 391, 676
 John 681
 Thelma 681
 Vince Jnr 288
 Bode, Leo 432
 Bode McKay & Co 432–433
 Bogged vehicles 459, 667
 Boyd, Esme 579
 Bradfield, Dr Geoff 584, 586
 Brand
 Merv 537, 541, 542, 543

 Stacey 482, 484, 501, 504, 513
 Brazier
 Ernie 665, 667
 Panel Works 666
 youth group 600, 667
 Hazel 664, 665
 Brennan
 Flo 259, 696
 Joanie. *See* Halloran
 Brisbane
 Bert 378
 John 489
 Maris. *See* Fels
 Britten, Billy 18
 Brolga (Charlie) 485, 499
 Browne
 Barbara 579
 Geoffrey 304, 329, 330, 331, 336, 339
 Maureen 322
 Monica 146, 304, 330, 334
 Nevill 306, 329, 330, 331, 336, 339
 Roderic 306, 309, 330, 336, 339
 Sylvester 322
 Ulick Jnr 306, 329, 330, 331, 334, 336, 339
 Ulick Snr 306, 322, 330, 341
 grave 340–341
 Vessie 323
 Bungilmonabocca 313
 Burke St 144, 203, 206, 231, 317, 406, 459, 461, 489, 502, 523, 527, 637, 675, 701, 776
 flooded 555, 705
 mud 459, 502
 Burns
 Barry 14, 27, 51, 52, 58, 346, 482, 770, 771, 778, 789
 Bob 46, 48
 Butch (Alan) 14, 19, 20, 27, 58, 346, 444, 482, 770, 774
 Don 14, 19, 27, 51, 52, 58, 346, 457, 489, 490, 770, 789
 Guy 45, 56, 57, 634
 Jane 42
 Jean 45
 Jill 45, 56, 57, 58, 490, 790
 Josie 58, 778
 Joy 14, 19, 29, 51, 58, 346, 353, 395, 457, 490, 770, 789
 Judy 45

 Kal 45, 56, 57
 Mal 14, 27, 52, 58, 346, 444, 457, 482, 770
 Marj 14, 20, 35, 36, 46, 48, 49, 58, 346, 353, 457, 496, 580, 584, 770, 777, 790, 792
 Mary 58
 RL 41, 43, 45
 Trevor 58
 Burns Field (All Souls) 53
 Burns, Max 4, 6, 14, 18, 20, 38, 46, 48, 49, 58, 346, 451, 457, 501, 521, 530, 580, 584, 770, 788, 789
 account with Dawes 185
 account with McMahon 232
 account with Ronald 50
 boat at Woody Point 482
 bounced cheque 185
 first dam 52
 Past Dams poem 516
 properties
 Avondale 41, 42, 44
 Balootha 480, 484, 485, 499, 503
 Biloela farm 16, 51, 52
 Brigooda farm 15, 48, 49
 Clermont home 772
 Commercial Hotel 452
 Dew Drop Inn 296, 351, 490, 495, 531, 774
 Midnight Sun 497, 790
 Rodville 482
 Royal Hotel 52
 Utopia 46
 Proston store 50
 reference from 547
 workshop. *See* JC Engineering Works
 Burrows
 Benny 351, 395, 632, 634, 641
 Ben Snr 382, 415
 Bert 259
 Bill 562, 667, 699
 Ivy 628, 635, 639, 653, 695
 Judy 633
 Lily 152, 342
 Nick 146
 Byrne
 Bosie 377
 butcher shop 223, 317, 377, 398, 406, 416, 675

 Charlie 146
 Frank 593
 garage 231
 Jenny 222, 226, 423
 Joan 415
 Lucy 152, 259, 264, 342, 372
 Mary 225
 Mick 146
 Paddy 146, 412, 590, 593, 595
 hire cars 225
 Rita 259, 584
 Byrne Bros truck 228
 Byrnes, Paul 769
 Byrne St 625

C

Cafes & Milk Bars
 Blue Bird-1 227, 256, 259, 317, 383, 406, 489, 502, 675
 Blue Bird-2 696, 733
 menu 1, 259
 order ticket 733
 Garden of Roses 259, 261, 406, 416, 502, 637
 Hortie 181
 Mayne 352, 698
 Train station 382
 Calvale School 51
 Campbell, Mick 595
 Casey
 Arthur Jnr 264, 268
 Arthur Snr 262, 266, 268
 Joff 263, 264, 268, 726
 Pat 263, 267
 Castle Rock 104
 Chapman, Peggy 561
 Chardon
 Ethyl 357
 Frank Jnr 354, 358
 Frank Snr 358
 Pat 354, 355, 357, 358
 Chatsworth 536
 Children at play 267, 331, 336, 360, 482, 673, 798
 Churches
 Presbyterian 492
 St Abigail's 658
 St Barnabas 268
 Clifton Park 199
 Clio 20, 27
 Cloyna School 36
 Coalstage 680

Cobb & Co 127
 Compagnoni, Alice 46
 Cook
 Bob 306
 Gladdy 259
 Cooke
 Coonie 701
 Ivonne 701
 Cooney
 Ard 580, 581, 777
 Gladys 580
 Cooper, Jack 593
 Corrigan, Charlie 347
 Coyne St 797
 Crawford
 Laurie 391, 409
 Nita 407, 411
 Ted 413
 Cream can label 36
 Cremona 711
 Crouch, Stan 595
 Crowley, Alec 444, 457
 Cummins, Billy 590, 593
 CWA cottage 705

D
 Dairy 671
 Dagonally 363
 Dau, Ron 454, 537, 544, 545, 546
 Davis
 Arthur 537, 546
 Bill 718, 721, 728, 730
 home 256, 371, 675, 797
 Erol 504, 521, 524, 527, 528, 530, 538, 704
 Ivy 726
 Dawes
 Dadie 152, 184, 188, 193, 264, 342
 Kathleen 658
 Peter 193
 hawkers van 391
 store 194, 195, 203, 231, 404, 406, 461, 637, 678
 Peter Jnr 658
 Day, Eric 773
 Delving 308, 606, 711
 Denman
 Harry 466, 467, 469, 473
 Shirley 473
 Devereux, Father 638
 Dewar

Don 797
 Malcolm 371, 727, 797
 Dickfos
 Dick 364, 367
 Dot 360–366, 574
 Dodt, Mr 152
 Dominion Motors 512
 Downey
 Horace 205, 288
 Jimmy 264
 Norm 204, 211, 247, 288, 342
 medal citation 426

E
 Eastern Ck vicinity 100
 Eckford
 Coral 188, 217, 264
 Dadie. *See* Dawes
 Edna 151, 152, 193, 264, 314
 Jim Jnr 152, 188, 189, 264, 267, 405
 Jim Snr 186, 344
 Joe 186
 Meldie 151, 188
 Peter 186
 Eckford buildings
 first home 188
 hall & theatre 189, 198, 199, 206, 317, 406, 502, 527
 ice works 151
 skating rink 415
 Eddington waterhole 170, 211, 288, 372, 391
 Edwards
 Fred 741, 743, 744
 Ivy 264
 Jim 183, 736
 headstone 740
 Vi 737, 741
 Elliott
 Bill Jnr 170, 762
 Bill Snr 170
 Bub 170, 762, 763
 Emily 170
 John 170
 Ellis, Bill 357
 Emblen, Ernie
 bore drilling 602
 Evans, Garney 211, 288
 Everest, George 58

F
 Faithfull
 Paul 279, 288
 Vic 278
 Fancy dress 193, 213, 214, 226, 247, 342, 389, 402, 403, 676, 700
 Fayers
 Arthur 592, 593, 682, 689, 693
 Frank 688
 Nora 689
 Fels
 Bryan 458, 463
 Maris 418
 Fickling
 Carmel 628, 635, 653, 695
 Catherine 628, 695
 Clarrie 415, 616, 619
 Cynthia 552, 574, 616
 Elsie 574, 616
 Francis 574
 Herb
 droving plant 621, 625
 Reg 616
 Vince Jnr 567, 600
 Vince Snr 630
 Fireploughing 308, 474, 601, 718, 721, 723, 730
 Fireploughs 321, 724
 Flewell-Smith
 Alan 481, 482, 503, 504, 510, 512
 “Ambon” Georgina St 29, 57
 Beven 7, 480, 482, 483, 484, 485, 499, 500, 501, 503, 511, 512, 513, 531, 748, 774
 Clive 20, 34
 Dawn 20
 Deric 20
 Hazel 29, 481, 482, 484, 499, 501, 503, 512
 Isabel 395, 480, 482, 485, 488, 489, 490, 499, 501, 503, 511, 512, 513
 Keith 36, 48
 Lou 29, 37, 49, 57, 58
 Merle 493
 Ned 20
 William 49
 Flying Doctor 157
 Flynn, Peter 550
 Footballers 590, 592, 593, 595, 596
 Forster, Thomas & Grace 474
 Fort Constantine, Mt 104

Fortune family 640–643
 Foster
 Bernie 595
 Clem 595
 Levina 651
 Mike 590
 Tom 423, 593
 Franchar Downs
 bore 358
 homestead 354
 Freemasons
 1930 members 268
 temple 262
 Fry
 Bill 170
 Doreen 259, 696
 Lionel 395, 699
 Maude 574
 Tom 699

G
 Gannon family 234–249
 Alma 164, 226, 342, 421, 423
 Bill Jnr 264, 342, 422
 Bill Snr 421
 Ivy 164, 264, 342
 Olive 164, 193, 264, 342, 373, 405, 421
 Gannon’s
 cows 310
 Hotel 181, 231, 235–248, 310, 317, 344, 372, 406, 427, 461, 502, 617
 Garomna
 homestead 322, 335
 pool 306
 Gaughan & Young 280
 Gerahty
 Billy 391
 Kath 369, 372, 373, 374
 Lil 342, 369, 373, 410, 420
 Myrtle 370
 Gibson, Arthur 463
 Gilliat 715, 716
 hotel 520, 708, 709, 717
 Gilmore, Mr 742
 Glenrock 37
 Gluszyk, Jan 755
 Gluyas, Shirley 395

Goats
 pets 702
 pulling carts 280, 360, 797, 798
 riding 795
 Godier, Ray 581, 732
 Goldring St 181, 243, 251, 463, 648
 Golf 578–588
 relocated clubhouse 777
 Goundry, Harry 348
 Gracedale 474
 Graham
 Barney 170
 Daisy 170
 Delma 658
 Evelyn 170, 658
 Gladys. *See* Hampton
 Grace. *See* Young
 John 290
 Joy 170, 658
 Kathleen 169, 170, 254
 Matilda 169, 170, 290
 Shirley 170
 Tommy 170
 mail truck 168, 169, 170
 Grant, Gordon 590, 593
 Grasshopper plague 500
 Graves & Headstones
 Blanch, Bill 677
 Blanch, Dummy 677
 Browne, Ulick Snr 340, 341
 Byrnes, Paul 769
 Edwards, Jim 740
 Hortie 255
 Lewis, Lance 679
 Malone, Jim 713
 McIntyre 90
 Ryder, Ruth 691
 Svensson, Ray 757
 Wilkins, Wicky 654
 Green, Claudette 200, 490, 641
 Greene, Rawdon 317
 Guest family 402–405

H

Halloran
 Joanie 356
 Murray 493
 Rex 493, 758, 759
 Hamilton, Neville 440, 464
 Hampton
 Gladys 135, 169, 170, 290, 658, 662
 Merle 170, 658, 659, 662
 Roy 658, 663
 home 459

Harbutt family 669–672
 Hardgraves, Guy 314
 Harris
 Cynthia. *See* Fickling
 Jumbo 550, 552
 Helton 125
 Hely, Cedric 421
 Hennessey
 Chris 434, 437, 465, 475
 Leo 435, 442, 478, 569
 Val 434, 437
 Henry, Ernest 92, 93
 Herrington, Constable 266
 Heussler, Jack & Rowie 306
 Hickman
 Fred 306
 home 702
 Mrs 306, 342
 Hilton Park 146, 307, 517
 Holznagel, Freddie 518, 521, 524, 530
 Horton
 Grace
 grave 255
 Jim 308, 320
 Hudson, Mickie 214, 342

I

Icyball 327
 Inlander 168

J

Jaques
 butcher shop 181
 George 221, 425
 home 314, 425, 590
 Jean 221, 425
 JC Caravan Park 692
 JC Engineering Works 296, 347, 348, 495, 504, 515, 528, 530, 531, 697, 774
 JC Hospital 191, 651
 JC Hotel 181, 236, 251, 274, 290, 310, 379, 408
 JC Mail coach 292
 JC Motor Works 207
 JC State School
 buildings 144, 179, 196
 residence 164, 176
 students 152, 264, 342, 388, 405, 641
 teaching train 247, 388
 Jenkins, Alf 314
 Jones, Frank 593
 Julia St 181, 310

K

Kaesar
 Albie 219, 590, 593
 bakery 216
 Bally 218, 390
 Betty 216
 Bev 641
 Elizabeth 390
 Joe 220, 390, 593, 595
 John 600
 Kenny 641
 Marie 388, 402
 Myrtle 373
 Kelly family 743
 Kirk, John 773

L

Laurencic family 646–648
 Lavarack, Gordon 180
 Leichhardt, Ludwig 66, 74
 Lever, Billy 289
 Lewis, Lance
 garage 203, 207, 406, 416, 461, 637, 678, 776
 headstone 679
 home 181
 Lowe, Arthur 614
 Luhrmann
 Margaret 457
 Pat 438, 457

M

Macallister, Eileen 193
 Magoffin
 Dick 569
 Gordon 440
 Richard 570, 572
 Maleza, Mat 18
 Malone family 709–714
 Manfred Crossing 642
 Mann
 Edith 641, 700–704
 Harold 702
 Mathers, Pat 595
 Mathews
 Harry 146
 Joey 577, 590, 593
 Mathews' Hall 317, 397, 489, 502, 707
 Matsen, Ivor 7, 455, 501, 506, 510, 512, 513
 McAllum, P 146
 McDonald
 Betty 657
 Don 592, 593

Mossie 351, 656
 Norma 651
 McGowan, Mr & Mrs 146
 McIntyre, Duncan 83
 grave 91
 tree 86
 McKay, Bill 432
 McKinlay Hotel 330
 McLeish, Mat 580
 McMahon butcher 233
 McPherson
 Buck 398
 John 416
 Mellish, Lyn 58
 Menzies, A 146
 Meredith, Gordon 595
 Milk cart 669, 672, 675
 Morgan, Cecil 590, 593
 Morris, Marty
 truck 230

N

Nathan, Sir Matthew 144
 Nelia races 173, 221, 354
 ribbons 662
 Nelson, Bill 493, 503
 Netterfield, Eric 580
 Norton
 Ann 685
 Violet 342, 685

O

O'Brien, Mick 501, 513
 O-K Store 203, 406, 461, 636
 O'Neill, Mr 146
 O'Regan, Mike 490
 Orford, Arthur 755
 Orr, Bill 590, 593, 658
 O'Sullivan's building 243

P

Paine, Arthur 755
 Parker, Edward 186
 Parsons, Enid 247
 P. Davis Painkiller 106
 Pedersen
 Bill 164
 John 164, 342
 Thelma 164, 264, 342, 372

P

Peut
 Bob 423, 427
 home 629
 Fred 193
 George 470, 538
 mail truck 470, 538
 Les 590, 593, 595
 Pickersgill
 John 466
 Roy 466, 467
 Pigsties, railway 131
 Plague rats 165, 167
 Polgreen, Jack 22
 Police station 188, 266, 267, 268,
 272
 Post Office 201, 269, 317, 489, 502,
 675, 704, 707
 Potts, Miss 146
 Prickly acacia 477
 Prior, Bill 357
 Proudfoot
 Dot. *See* Dickfos
 Jenny 360
 Pulley, Bob 455, 483, 510, 513, 521,
 526
 Punchbowl 350, 653, 748, 753

Q

Quilty, Tom 645

R

Raddle stick 472
 Ration cards 193, 417
 Rawleigh's Ointment 727
 Richards, Bert 447
 Rickertt
 Betty 515
 George 514, 515
 Roberts
 Gloria 574, 658
 Jim 413, 416, 423, 590, 593
 Rosevale
 cottage 476
 Dunlite generator 435, 469
 homestead 435
 stud rams 472
 Ryan
 Don 417
 Ethyl 266
 George 266, 267
 Ryder
 Billy 566, 567, 600
 Ruth
 headstone 691

S

Samuel Allen 181, 236
 Sanphy's Store 251, 274, 290
 School of Arts 176, 179, 405, 675
 Scrimshaw, R 304
 Sedatree, May 244
 Sentinel waggon 183
 Shaw
 Chummy 285, 286, 289
 Clara 289
 Johnny 289, 293, 300
 Mabel. *See* Stainkey
 Maria 289
 Violet 299
 home 314, 590
 Shearing 357, 632, 729
 Sheehan, Neville 482, 512, 513
 Shire office 176, 797
 Short, Mrs 146
 Silent cop 176, 461
 Sills
 Esther 164, 169, 170
 Mannie 163, 169, 170, 176
 Sylvia 152
 Skinner
 Emily. *See* Wilder
 Mick 390
 Pat 386, 395
 Smith
 Bill 294
 Bob 580, 593, 777
 Dot 580, 584, 777
 Gill 742
 Sally-Anne 580
 Trevor 193
 Sohler, Brian 729
 Somers
 John 416, 417, 420
 Paddy
 home 625
 Stainkey family 280–297
 Fagan 618
 garage 297, 352, 698
 Harry Jnr 606
 Roy 211
 Trevor 600
 Stanley, Nugget 593
 Stinson L5 490
 St Joseph's Convent 735
 Stokes, Cpt John 65
 Stokes, Esme 628, 695
 Svensson family
 Ray's search party 755
 Swimming pool 623, 626, 627, 635,
 667

T

Taaffe, Mick 593
 Tanksinking
 abandoned Mack 517, 567
 bathing 454
 Blitz 501, 508, 534
 Burns & Kirk 430
 by horse team 577
 Christmas (1948) 457
 drive-sprocket nut 514
 finished tank 532
 green caravan 428, 482, 483, 501,
 508, 512
 in progress 6, 7, 433, 438, 444,
 449, 451, 464, 518, 542, 544,
 545, 560, 565, 568, 775
 maintenance 510, 511, 515, 519,
 537, 546, 550
 mobile workshop 203, 534, 559,
 560, 776
 plant 18, 20, 203, 321, 433, 438,
 444, 449, 452, 453, 455, 462,
 464, 483, 498, 501, 505, 506,
 508, 513, 522, 523, 534, 541,
 545, 548, 550, 559, 560, 563,
 697, 772, 776
 ripper 452, 511
 ripping 542
 Rosevale No. 1 tank 428–464, 779
 Rosevale No. 2 tank 447, 463
 scoops, old
 rollover 772
 tumbling Tommy 577
 scoop tipped over 511
 smoko 455, 521
 workers' van 202, 348, 428, 453,
 508, 522, 523, 548, 550, 559,
 561
 Telephone exchange 703
 Tennis 314
 Thomas, Reece 663
 Thompson
 Lennie 398
 Wally 590, 593
 Topping, Gordon 193, 213
 Town & Country Club 162
 Triffett
 Les 417
 Rene 373
 Shiela 373
 Tassie
 blacksmith shop 625

U

Underwood, Olive 645

V

Villiers, Harold 590, 593, 595

W

Wall
 Alex 598–608
 Lionel 580, 612
 Shirley 580
 Walters family 170
 Harold 400
 Ward, Ray 421
 Welch, Dr 157
 Wells, Miss 146
 Wharton, Reg 146
 Whitby, Les 641
 Wilder family 385–395
 Biddy 152
 Clive 418
 Cooee 489, 641
 Emily 342, 418
 Hilda 373
 Wilkins
 Ivy 169, 170
 drapery 406, 461, 636, 654
 Pat 655
 Wicky 170, 655
 Williams River 130, 131
 Willis, Cecil 7, 451, 455, 510, 521,
 775
 Wilson, Norm 438, 440, 442
 Winton
 Bill 380
 Choco 381, 395, 489, 564, 641
 George 381, 391
 Henry 381, 395, 592, 595
 Hilda 381
 Ivy 381
 Mary 381, 418
 Tootie 381
 Wool
 carting 307, 332, 333, 478
 dead 404
 Woolscour 303, 311, 376
 huts 312, 313

Y

Young
 Gladys 170, 373
 Grace 169, 170, 290

General Index

A

Adam
 Douglas 659
 Les 164, 659, 660, 662, 706
 Merle. *See* Hampton
 Vicki 132, 659–662
 Adams, John 250, 299, 496, 561, 565, 566, 705
 Aerial bait laying 606
 Affleck, Arthur 157
 Agate Downs 599, 600, 601, 607
 Ahern
 Charlie 616
 Jack 378
 Vince 170, 590, 593, 659, 681, 693
 Ahern, LJ 132
 Aircraft hangars
 Lowe, Arthur 615
 Lowe & Wall 612
 Air raid blackout 416
 AJ Smith 180, 189, 192, 194, 218, 390, 577, 594, 635–637, 655, 762
 Akiloff
 Lena 650–651, 653, 690
 Sophie 651, 690
 Alabasheva, Mary 651, 690
 Albrecht, Norm 215, 216, 219, 220, 586
 Alick Ck 96, 101, 103
 Allison, Bill 214, 331, 409, 414
 All Souls 19, 20, 24, 52, 53, 182, 332, 338, 428, 568, 570, 571, 600, 601, 619, 684, 726, 727, 774, 777, 778, 786
 Along the Line. *See* Chisholm, JR
 Anzac Day 419, 734
 Ardbrin 349, 436, 450, 569, 570, 571, 670
 Artesian bore
 first in Qld 128
 in JC 158
 Arthur, Hugh 31–33
 Artificial insemination 440, 468, 472
 Auckland Downs 290, 307, 582, 583, 690, 726, 728
 Australian Estates 230, 249, 261, 309, 325, 529, 536, 554, 555, 577, 580, 607, 631, 676, 778
 Azzopardi, Joe 209, 431, 489, 551, 557–561, 562, 563, 565

B

Baby show 685
 Balootha 7, 20, 22–24, 31, 53, 60, 85, 253, 431, 480, 481, 484, 485, 491, 493, 498, 499, 500, 501, 503, 505, 554, 582, 583, 698, 708, 710, 711, 715, 774, 775, 777, 780, 785–787
 Banks
 a history of 174–175
 Commercial 663
 NSW 230, 404, 406, 461, 678
 Qld National 174, 221, 238, 240, 314, 317, 344, 420, 663
 Bannah, Kevin 192
 Barefield, Sister 221
 Barker
 Bill 484, 491, 503, 534
 Edna 491
 Baroona Downs 578, 585
 Basketball 373
 Batt, Russell 564, 607, 615, 786
 Baxter
 Bob 414, 415
 George 670
 Beach
 Jack 780
 Myra 717
 Beauchamp
 Levina. *See* Foster
 Roy 594, 595, 602, 676
 Belford 7, 483, 502, 505, 506, 508–510, 513
 Belgravia 163, 208, 455, 577, 607, 683
 Belle of the Ball 374, 631, 638
 Bell, Henry 199
 Bennett, Fred 25, 314
 Benson, Henry 246, 409, 419, 631, 655
 Beutel, Bill 60, 397, 498, 501, 520, 521, 524–533, 535, 536, 542
 Bezuma 313
 Bicycle racing 344–345
 Billiard rooms
 Cooper 180, 181, 192, 252
 Hampton 174, 181, 238, 310, 311, 396, 397, 426, 427, 461, 468, 542, 639, 661, 663, 706
 Birch, Jim 459, 461, 617–620, 692, 709, 714
 Bitumen road
 constructing 552
 first 553
 Blacktracker. *See* Ryan, George

Blanch

Bella 681
 Bill 182, 199, 233, 382, 649, 670, 676, 677, 681
 headstone 676
 Dummy 677–679
 Eric 391, 399, 676, 677, 681, 690
 John 680–681, 690
 Thelma 677, 679–681, 690
 Tuppy 190, 216, 233, 685, 690
 Vince 289
 Bode, Leo 432–434, 455
 Bodell 33, 460
 Bode McKay & Co 21, 432–434
 Bogged vehicles 458, 667
 Borghardt, Walter 241, 272, 387, 393, 399
 Boxing 182, 215, 219, 220, 491, 597
 Boyd, Esme 579
 Bradfield, Dr Geoff 459, 585–588, 606, 765
 Bradman, Donald 49
 Bragg, Billy 182, 382
 Brand
 Merv 504, 537, 540–543
 Stacey 480, 482–484, 498–505, 513, 529, 534, 541, 542
 Brazier
 Ernie 565, 665–667, 733
 youth group 601, 667, 733
 Hazel 352, 664–665, 667
 Brennan
 Ernie 172, 230, 356, 396
 Flo 259, 352, 696, 788
 Jill. *See* Burns
 Joanie. *See* Halloran
 Sgt Tom 218, 400, 594, 643, 713
 Brinard 554, 569, 670
 Brisbane
 Bert 302, 376–379, 382, 418
 Bill 313, 376, 378
 Jim 182, 378, 386
 John 489, 640
 Maris. *See* Fels
 Brolga (Charlie) 484, 498–499
 Browne
 Barbara 325, 338, 579
 Geoffrey 110, 111, 157, 275, 304, 305, 309, 311, 315, 320–325, 329, 331, 336, 338, 339, 555
 Maureen 323
 Monica 146, 304, 306, 330, 331, 334, 335, 413
 Nevill 307, 328–333, 336, 339

Roderic 303–309, 325, 331, 336, 339
 Sylvester 323
 Ulick Jnr 307, 311, 325, 329, 331, 334–341
 Ulick Snr 91, 110, 118, 157, 177, 302–341, 413, 414, 419, 422, 797
 Vessie 305, 309, 322, 323
 Bunda Bunda 230, 583, 642
 Burke St flooded 555, 705
 Burke & Wills 62, 76, 78, 81, 82, 92, 94, 111
 Burns, Barry 4, 8, 15, 18, 19, 24–27, 31, 42, 51–53, 57, 59–61, 347, 482, 491, 496, 564, 565, 582, 606, 754, 770–779, 782, 789
 golf winner 579, 582
 Burns, Bill 44, 47
 Burns, Bob 44, 47, 48, 501, 509
 Burns Burns & Burns. *See* Tanksinking
 Burns, Butch (Alan) 8, 15, 53, 56, 59, 60, 347, 444, 452, 454, 482, 768, 770, 774, 778
 Burns, Don 5, 8, 15, 19, 24–27, 49, 51–53, 56, 57, 59, 60, 200, 346, 347, 349, 395, 456, 457, 462, 489, 491, 496, 562, 565, 632, 770, 778, 782, 789
 Foghorn 489
 model plane 489
 why named 49
 Burns Field (All Souls) 53
 Burns, Guy 8–9, 44, 56, 57, 60
 Burns, Jamie 314
 Burns, Jane 42, 45
 Burns, Jean 44
 Burns, Jill 5, 8, 37, 44, 56, 57, 59, 60, 491, 696, 778, 790, 791
 Burns, Josie 59, 771, 778
 Burns, Joy 15, 19, 20, 24, 25, 28–29, 37, 49, 51, 53, 56–60, 200, 347, 353, 395, 456, 457, 491, 496, 528, 543, 694, 697, 754, 770, 782, 788, 789
 Burns, Judy 19, 44, 45
 Burns, Kal 44, 56, 57, 778
 Burns, Mal 8, 19, 52, 53, 56, 59, 60, 347, 444, 456, 457, 482, 768, 770, 778

- Burns, Marj 8–9, 16, 19, 22, 24, 30–61, 296, 347, 351, 353, 396, 431, 445, 452–457, 482, 487, 490–492, 494–497, 558, 561, 565, 580–582, 584, 585, 768, 770, 777, 778, 788
 funeral 791–793
 golf 578, 579, 584
 wedding 46
- Burns, Mary 59, 788
- Burns, Max 4–61, 162, 163, 184, 185, 202, 246, 250, 297, 320, 321, 346–348, 353, 374, 394–395, 428–568, 576–585, 606, 659, 697, 698, 708, 711, 735, 752, 755, 770–793
 account with Dawes 185
 account with McMahon 232
 account with Ronald 50
 ads
 last 779
 tanksinking 429, 781
 workers 524
 workshop opens 531
 army work 53
 as a bankrupt 163, 185, 202, 210, 232
 auctions 778, 779, 782
 bankruptcy summary 786–787
 cattle-theft case 582–583
 cricketer 38–39, 47, 49, 50, 486
 first dam 52
 funeral 788–789
 golf captain 585, 588
 golf champion 581, 585
 golf course 232, 578, 580, 582, 777, 798
 golf life member 580, 581
 golf president 582
 impressions of 38, 59, 185, 202, 210, 482, 505, 513, 519, 538, 544, 548–549, 552, 561, 568, 576, 579, 580, 584
 JC Engineering Works
 opening of 531
 list of creditors 785–787
 movie making 510
 other women 47, 55, 58, 59, 296, 353, 491, 514, 523, 584, 773
 Past Dams poem 516
 properties
 See also Balootha
 Abydos & May Downs 20, 22, 23, 33, 53, 56, 60
 Avondale 40–45
 Biloela farm 15, 16, 18–19, 23, 51–52, 428, 771, 775, 786
 Brigooda farm 14, 46–49, 60
- Burnett Hotel 22, 24, 53, 60, 775
- Caboolture farm 562
- Clermont house 19, 31, 53, 772
- Commercial Hotel 19, 20, 24, 53, 60, 452, 453
- Dew Drop Inn 60, 296, 351, 395, 396, 489–491, 494–497, 531, 774
- Ebbw Vale farm 15, 57, 61
- Midnight Sun 60, 61, 497, 791
- Rodville (Redcliffe) 20, 22, 31, 60, 482, 774, 781
- Royal Hotel 8, 52, 53, 56, 60, 61, 210, 778, 782
- Tingalpa 58
- Utopia 39, 46
- Proston store 50, 51
- Realty 59
- reference from 547
- showroom 8, 697, 778
- taxi driving 59
- telegram to Marj 44
- tennis 347, 554
- workshop. *See* JC Engineering Works
- Burns, RL 38, 40, 42, 44, 45
- Burns, Trevor 59
- Burrows
- Benny 351, 395, 489, 562, 632–635, 641, 654, 696, 703, 733
- Ben Snr 190, 345, 415, 594, 635, 637, 638, 655
- Bert 182, 227, 256, 259, 382, 383, 594
- Bill 562–563, 635, 667, 699
- Ivy 216, 250, 253, 301, 631, 634–640, 653, 678, 694, 797
- Judy 195, 216, 299, 632–634, 654
- Lily 152, 342
- Nick 143, 146, 152
- Burwood 290, 720, 723, 731, 780
- Byrimine 228, 428, 429, 434, 437, 438, 440, 471, 473, 476, 479, 621, 759
- Byrne
- Bosie 22, 223, 226–228, 377, 411, 415
- Boydie 223, 227, 228
- butcher shop 206, 221, 223, 228, 230, 233, 317, 377, 398, 406, 416, 675, 796
- Charlie 214, 221, 228, 233, 252, 256, 259, 377, 388, 393, 398, 405, 612, 796
- Frank 163, 228, 230, 259, 297, 593, 666, 674, 696, 698, 733, 765
- Greg 223, 228
- Jenny 222–229, 244, 259, 393, 411, 419, 423, 678, 705
- Joan 227, 228, 259, 415, 419, 696, 703
- Kath 228, 259, 426, 589, 674
- Lucy 152, 223, 226–228, 259, 264, 342, 372, 423, 727
- Mary 224–225
- Maurie 170, 206, 230, 425, 666, 694, 733
- Mick 145, 146, 156, 223, 228, 232, 303, 385
- Paddy 146, 208, 223, 225, 226, 228, 230, 411, 412, 416, 590, 593, 595, 765
- Pat 145, 223, 228, 419
- Rita 223, 226–228, 256, 259, 278, 411, 426, 585, 694
- Byrnes
- Maureen 764–765
- Neil 764–765, 769
- Paul 764–769
- C**
- Cafes & Milk Bars
- a history of 256–261
- Blue Bird-1 206, 226–228, 256, 259, 316, 317, 365, 382, 383, 406, 489, 502, 594, 641, 674, 675
- Blue Bird-2 2, 259, 296, 352, 353, 459, 618, 696, 698, 699, 732, 733, 764–769
- menu 1, 258
- Corner Cafe 397, 663
- Dawson 166, 351, 352, 395, 488, 496, 701
- Garden of Roses 180, 256, 259, 261, 406, 416, 461, 502, 655, 661
- Hortie 157, 180–181, 189, 192, 250–257
- Lucas 180–181, 256–257, 307, 762
- Mathews 258, 397
- Mayne 256, 259, 297, 352, 353, 459, 618, 665, 698, 699, 733
- O'Neill 633
- Train station 256, 257, 382
- Cann, Arthur 161, 218, 382, 388, 399, 404, 409, 594, 623, 674
- Carbide lights 493
- Carrum 720
- Carter, Dr Don 169, 199, 713
- Casey
- Arthur Jnr 263, 264, 268
- Arthur Snr 241, 262–272
- Joff 160, 189, 226, 262–269, 276, 726, 727
- Pat 263, 266, 267, 726
- Casket winners 200, 370
- Castle Rock 104
- Cesspit 154
- Champneys
- Ethyl 233
- Roy 233, 317
- Champneys' Hall 397
- Champneys & McMahon 220, 233, 259, 786
- Chapman, Peggy 561
- Charcoal gas 413, 416
- Chardon
- Ethel 356
- Frank Jnr 354–356, 358
- Frank Snr 358
- Pat 354–359, 366
- Chatsworth 518–521, 534, 536, 537, 607, 667, 730
- Chemist 174, 245, 370, 587
- first in JC 156, 586
- Children at play 267, 331, 336, 360, 640, 673, 798
- Chisholm, JR 237, 251, 794
- Christmas party 196
- Churches
- Presbyterian 229, 492, 707
- St Abigail's 174–175, 262, 278, 659, 681, 735
- St Barnabas 174–175, 263, 268, 375, 421, 657, 763
- Clifford, ED 290
- Clifton Park 176, 199, 208, 786
- Clio 8, 20, 27, 31, 53, 60, 428, 429, 444, 446, 450, 452, 453, 456, 514, 774, 777
- Cloyna 36, 37, 481
- Clutha 354, 459
- Coalstage 156, 188, 219, 396, 680, 681
- Cobb & Co 118, 123, 126, 127, 129, 290
- Coleman
- Keith 33, 301, 459, 497, 604, 605, 633, 666
- Titch 254, 298, 459, 665
- Compagnoni
- Alice 46, 47, 50
- Wilf 38, 50
- Cook
- Dudley 698
- Gladdy 259, 698

Cooke
 Coonie 700
 Ivan 657, 700
 Ivonne 638, 700
 Cooney
 Ard 233, 259, 578, 580–583, 585, 588, 613, 676, 690, 777, 780
 Gladys 233, 580–582, 585, 606, 717
 Suzanne 581
 Cooney Cup 579, 582
 Cooper, Dick. *See* Billiard rooms
 Corn Beef Freddie 607
 Corrigan, Charlie 209, 256, 259, 346–353, 496, 561, 603, 618, 625, 665, 666, 709, 751, 754, 794, 795
 Crawford
 Laurie 391, 409
 Nita 406–412
 Ted 412
 Cremona 697, 710, 724, 759, 762, 763
 Crowley, Alec 60, 439, 444, 447, 449, 450, 452, 456, 457, 779
 Crowley, Matron 232
 Cummins, Billy 590, 593
 CWA cottage 182, 221, 380, 383, 399, 565, 700, 705

D
 Dagworth 446
 Dairy 640, 668–676, 702, 732, 796
 Dalgionally 76, 78, 83, 113, 182, 194, 237, 313, 360, 362–363, 366, 741, 780
 first taken up 88
 Dalkeith 494, 619, 714, 720, 780
 Dau, Ron 209, 454, 496, 521, 536, 537, 544–547
 Davis
 Arthur 521, 536, 537, 542, 545
 Bill 158, 169, 256, 371, 576, 642, 718–731, 741, 748
 home 371, 675, 797
 Erol 60, 234, 497, 505, 520, 521, 524, 525, 527, 531, 534–539, 542, 545, 548, 705
 Ivy (Tibby) 371, 720, 726–727
 Dawes
 Alex 190, 246
 Dadie 152, 160, 168, 184–196, 257, 264, 265, 315, 342, 387, 616, 649, 657, 663, 678
 Kate 194
 Kathleen 190, 659, 660
 Peter Jnr 190, 195, 637, 659, 660

Dawes, Peter 165, 190, 193, 200, 214, 240, 246, 259, 491, 577, 587, 597, 649, 655, 659, 689, 730, 733, 754, 768, 786
 Golf Shield 735
 hawkers van 391
 Park 185, 192, 734
 Store 194, 200, 203, 230, 261, 300, 356, 404, 406, 461, 546, 637, 656, 665, 678
 Dawson, Mrs 166, 258, 317, 351, 488
 Dawson's Hall 351
 Day, Eric 772, 773
 Debella 606, 607
 Delving 308, 471, 606, 607, 710, 711
 Denman
 Harry 440, 464, 466, 467, 469–473, 477
 Shirley 472, 473
 Dentist 246, 587, 589, 655, 657
 Devereux, Father 164, 245, 254, 278, 420, 426, 616, 638–640, 649, 660, 681, 694, 735
 Devey, Don 538
 Dewar
 Don 276, 642, 719–723, 726, 730, 731, 797
 Malcolm 371, 726–727, 797
 Dhu
 Lionel 161, 197–199
 Mairi 419, 685
 Phyllis 197–198, 685
 Wilma 419
 Dickfos
 Dick 208, 364–367, 378, 552
 Dot 360–367, 574, 662
 Diphtheria 169
 Dodt, H 152, 154–155, 158, 263
 Dominion Motors 508, 512–515, 782, 785
 Donald, Roy 215, 220
 Douglas, Evie 683
 Downey
 Dot. *See* Stainkey
 Helen 226
 Horace 155, 204, 205, 271, 289, 380, 426
 Jimmy 226, 264
 Marcella 209, 681
 Norm 176, 181, 202–211, 226, 228, 230, 247, 252, 259, 289, 342, 426, 486, 491, 496, 553, 554, 561, 562, 582, 601, 633, 655, 681, 708, 732, 764, 785
 medal citation 426

E
 Eckford
 Coral 216, 217, 226, 264, 315, 780
 Dadie. *See* Dawes
 Edna 150, 152, 155, 186, 193, 217, 226, 264, 314, 315, 343, 780
 Jim Jnr 226, 264, 267, 315, 404
 Jim Snr 151, 152, 156, 174, 176, 186–188, 197–199, 208, 344, 387, 640, 657
 Joe 182, 186–188, 192, 197–198, 316, 387, 640
 Meldie 150, 170, 315, 422, 697, 703, 776, 780
 Shirley 279, 315
 Eckford buildings
 first home 188
 hall 156, 170, 176, 208, 214, 228, 245, 343, 374, 388, 403, 419, 425, 587, 638, 660, 690, 694, 700, 752
 ice works 150, 151, 176, 182, 188, 404. *See also* Ice & cordial works
 skating rink 176, 227, 415
 theatre 174, 176, 182, 188, 189, 198, 199, 200, 208, 246, 265, 286, 317, 406, 502, 527, 630, 727, 797
 Eddington 113, 118, 204, 237, 282, 305, 307, 325, 713, 714
 Eddington waterhole 135, 168, 170, 182, 210, 216, 220, 289, 351, 372, 382, 391, 601, 655
 Edwards
 Fred 193, 738, 742, 744, 745, 748
 Ivy 160, 264, 265
 Jim 183, 193, 622, 630, 736–749
 Vi 736–745, 748
 Electricity arrives 752
 Elliott
 Bill Jnr 170, 762, 763
 Bill Snr 170, 763
 Bub 170, 366, 758–762
 Emily 170
 John 170, 762
 Emblen, Ernie 602, 606
 Etta Plains 493, 505, 710
 Euroka Springs 640–644, 676, 708, 711
 Evans, Garney 210, 289, 353, 698
 Everest, George 59

F
 Fairlea 283, 285–287, 300, 618, 619, 747

Faithfull
 Pam 278–279
 Paul 215, 219, 249, 278–279, 289
 Vic 146, 174, 180, 182, 197–199, 204, 246, 269–271, 278, 279, 392, 393, 414, 419, 426, 644
 Family Trees
 Blanch 679
 Burrows 632
 Byrne 222
 Eckford 186
 Fayers 684
 Fickling 616
 Fry 616
 Gerahty 368
 Graham 658
 Hampton 658
 Harbutt 673
 Kaeser 212
 MacDonald 689
 Magoffin 568
 Shaw 281
 Sills 658
 Skinner 368
 Stainkey 281
 Walters 658
 Wilder 368
 Winton 368
 Fancy dress 170, 193, 213, 214, 226, 247, 342, 389, 402, 403, 676, 700
 Farley, Frank 362
 Fayers
 Arthur 163, 192, 357, 592–594, 619, 682–693, 706, 732
 Arena 689
 Biddy 684, 687, 690, 732
 Elaine 683, 688–690, 692
 Frank 555, 684–689
 Joe 683
 Nora 650, 681, 683, 684, 689–694
 Ray 692
 Sharon 690, 693
 Valma 684
 Fellmongering 304–305, 310, 319
 Fels
 Bryan 9, 321, 338, 439, 449, 470, 494, 598, 606, 620, 760, 779
 Joe 459
 Lynette 232
 Maris 418, 598
 Reg 396, 463
 Fickling
 Bev 630, 631
 Carmel 396, 628–631, 638, 653, 694, 759
 Catherine 629, 694

Clarrie 366, 574, 616, 617, 619, 621, 625, 629, 713
 Cynthia 366–367, 552, 574, 594, 616, 617, 619, 621, 631, 657, 703, 759
 Elsie 366, 574, 616, 617, 623
 Francis 574
 Herb 169, 366, 380, 574, 603, 616, 617, 619, 621, 625, 631, 672, 700, 713, 714, 723, 796
 droving plant 620, 624
 James 631
 Reg Jnr 182, 187, 261, 366, 391, 616, 617, 619, 621–625, 627, 629, 797
 Reg Snr 621, 631
 Ted 630
 Vince Jnr 462, 567, 601, 631
 Vince Snr 574, 621, 622, 629–631, 741, 747–748
 Fireploughing 169, 308, 366, 576, 601, 711, 715, 718–731
 Fish in gutters 555
 Flers 366, 615, 759
 Flewell-Smith
 Alan 29, 35, 36, 51, 53, 60, 431, 481, 482, 490, 492, 493, 499, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510, 513, 529, 763
 “Ambon”
 Brighton 53
 Georgina St 20, 29, 57
 Beven 52, 480–485, 492, 494, 499, 500–502, 510, 513, 531, 567, 582, 774
 Clive 29, 34
 Dawn 44, 53, 60
 Douglas 35, 492
 Hazel 481, 482, 492, 493, 499, 500–503, 513, 531, 532
 Isabel 200, 253, 395, 431, 480–492, 496, 499, 500–502, 510, 513, 677
 Keith 35, 39, 48, 492
 Lou 29, 35, 48, 53, 56–59
 Merle 35, 253, 481, 492–494
 Ned 5, 19, 22, 31, 34, 48, 53, 60
 Stan 22, 35, 53, 492
 William 35, 48
 Flying Doctor 399
 first flight 157, 158
 Football 590–597
 woolscour team 204, 597
 Forde, Frank 209, 222, 259, 278, 694
 Forster
 Thomas & Grace 474
 Tom 437, 474–478, 569

Fort Constantine
 Mt 104, 108–110
 Station 109, 127, 370
 Fortune
 Alma 641
 Annie 640–642
 Bill 313, 641–643
 Herb 640, 641, 685
 Monkey 640, 642
 Foster
 Bernie 261, 590–595, 602, 651, 679, 700
 Clem 415, 459, 595
 George 594
 Levina 641, 651
 Mike 590, 593
 Tom 165, 345, 420, 423, 426, 593
 Franchar Downs 354–359
 Francis
 Charlie 274–277
 Jerry 181, 244, 373
 Lindsay 373
 Franzman, Mr 215, 409
 Freemasons
 1930 members 268
 temple 174, 177, 262, 263, 399
 Fry
 Bill 170, 631, 701
 Doreen 259, 352, 605, 633, 696
 Lionel 395, 489, 494, 605, 633, 696–699
 Maude 574
 Reg 495, 604, 605, 697, 796
 Tom 366, 699

G

Gairloch 21
 Gannon
 Alma 164, 226, 234–249, 311, 342, 420–423, 426
 Bill Jnr 239, 246, 264, 342, 414, 419, 421–423, 715
 Bill Snr 155, 156, 234–249, 310, 314, 372, 375, 399, 400, 404, 408, 420–422, 424, 426, 577, 578, 585, 617, 626, 631, 638–639, 655, 694, 703, 705, 715, 730
 obituary 249
 tax evasion 246
 Ivy 164, 239, 244, 249, 264, 325, 342, 375, 421, 638
 Olive 150, 164, 193, 239, 244, 249, 264, 314, 342, 343, 372, 404, 414, 420, 421
 Olivia 234, 249
 Gannon’s cows 197–198, 247
 Gannon’s Hotel 174, 175, 181, 189, 208, 240, 243, 249, 256, 261, 271, 300, 301, 310, 311, 317, 338, 344, 345, 372, 375, 394, 401, 406, 408, 426, 427, 461, 471, 502, 524, 527, 543, 586, 617, 631, 638–639, 661, 663, 694, 695, 705, 777
 burnt down 240–243
 Christmas dinner 248
 Garomna 274–275, 302–341, 413, 446, 462, 555, 620
 bore 606
 homestead 323, 334–335
 pool 307
 sale of 325, 340
 Garrity, Fred 174, 175, 182, 270–271
 Garvey, Father 210
 Gaughan & Young 281
 Gerahty
 Bill 370, 391
 Cecil 215
 Kath 215, 234, 252, 368–375, 420
 Lil 234, 261, 342, 368–370, 372, 410, 420
 Myrtle 371
 Gibson, Arthur 463
 Gilliat 123, 131, 172, 176–177, 215, 236, 237, 249, 269, 520, 548, 708–709, 715–717, 780
 Gilmore, Mr 742
 Ginns, Daren 230–231
 Glenbervie 723
 Glenore 61
 Glenrock 36, 39
 Gluszyk, Jan 751, 753–755, 757
 Gluyas, Shirley 395
 Goats 204, 220, 322–323, 460–461, 484, 600, 680, 702, 732, 794–799
 dancing on cars 600, 795
 pulling carts 230, 280, 360, 797, 798
 riding 794, 795
 Godier
 Biddy. *See* Fayers
 Bill 259
 Frank 259, 357, 619, 733
 Jack 685, 732, 733
 Lorna 732
 Ray 209, 253, 259, 296, 301, 360, 459, 581, 582, 732–734
 Goldring Tolarno & Co 132
 Golf 578–589
 clubhouse 579, 581, 589, 777
 golfers 580–581

Peter Dawes trophy 588
 trophies 585, 586
 Wall Shield 585, 606
 Goundry, Harry 60, 348–349, 450, 544, 558
 Gracedale 474, 475
 Graham
 Barney 137, 170, 616
 Daisy 170
 Delma 659
 Evelyn 170, 659
 Gladys. *See* Hampton
 Grace. *See* Young
 John 132, 133, 290
 Joy 170, 659
 Kathleen 169, 170, 226, 400
 Matilda 132, 137, 169, 170, 290, 292, 660
 Shirley 170
 Tommy 137, 164, 168–170, 365
 mail truck 169, 170
 Grand March 150, 388, 389, 403, 700
 Grant, Gordon 590, 593
 Grasshopper plague 500
 Graves & Headstones
 Blanch, Bill 677
 Blanch, Dummy 677
 Byrnes, Paul 769
 Edwards, Jim 740
 Lewis, Lance 679
 Malone, Jim 713
 McIntyre, Duncan 91
 Wilkins, Wicky 654
 Gray, Robert 96–99, 108
 Green, Claudette 489, 491, 504, 631, 641, 754
 Greene, Rawdon 303, 308, 310–317, 338
 Griffiths, Cliff 156–157, 587
 Grimshaw, Alex 687
 Guest
 Dorothy 402
 Nookie 255, 327, 402–405, 661, 797
 Tommy 175, 404–405, 724
 Gulf fever 62, 86–88, 105–107, 740

H

Haddington 493, 710
 Hallam, MFJ 132
 Hall, Gertrude 387, 392–393

Halloran

Hugh 760
 Joanie 356, 378
 Lance 759, 760
 Lorna 383, 681, 760
 Murray 61, 302, 492, 493, 615, 759, 763
 Rex 366, 492, 493, 758–763
 Hamilton, Neville 440, 464, 466–468, 471, 477
 Hammond, W 189, 208, 236, 238, 663
 Hampton
 Gladys 135, 137, 143, 169, 170, 290, 659, 660, 662
 Merle 170, 426, 659, 660, 662, 681
 Roy 135, 164, 175, 238, 258, 261, 310, 317, 521, 524, 586, 639, 655, 659–663, 706. *See also* Billiard rooms
 home 459
 Harbutt
 Alice 671, 676
 Bob 668–672, 674, 679, 796
 Carolyn 670–671
 Don 640, 675
 Henry 668–672, 676
 Joe 669, 672, 673, 675
 John 674–675
 Myrtle 673–675
 Hardgraves, Guy 314
 Hardy, Mannie 357, 665
 Harris
 Cynthia. *See* Fickling
 Jumbo 174, 259, 360, 367, 431, 550–552, 558, 559, 563, 565, 574, 580, 586
 Mick 204, 206
 Harris brothers. *See* Vamvakaris
 Harrogate 440, 601
 Harwood, Huey 552–554
 Hazards, game of 172, 310
 HC Sleigh 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 60, 61, 210, 785–786
 Hello Girls 189, 227, 229, 269, 675, 703
 Helton 121, 125–127
 Hely, Ced 420, 421
 Hennessy
 Chris 434–437, 464, 465, 474–477, 569
 Leo 428, 435, 438, 440, 449, 450, 462, 464, 466–469, 471, 473, 475–479, 569
 Val 434–437

Henry

Ernest 62, 92–111
 Sam 607, 754
 Herford, Mrs 464–465, 467, 470
 Herrington, Constable 267
 Heussler, Jack & Rowie 307
 Hickman
 Fred 175–176, 180, 182, 189, 192, 259, 270, 303, 307, 387, 577, 606, 619, 676, 703, 752, 780
 Mrs 215, 322, 342
 Hill, Ernie 165, 234, 420, 426, 662
 Hilton Hotel 132
 Hilton Park 144–147, 163, 164, 218, 278, 300, 387, 516, 567, 577, 578, 588, 655, 720, 728
 Hogarth, Pat 428, 444, 450, 456, 514, 774
 Hogg, Dr Joseph 177, 178, 252, 270–272, 387, 392–393
 Holland, Clive 637, 765–766, 768
 Holloway, George 249, 744
 Holzheimer, Jim 595
 Holznagel, Freddie 6, 60, 431, 511, 518–523, 524, 525, 528, 531, 535, 536, 542
 Home-made toys 640, 673
 Hornung, Fred 368, 370, 381, 384
 Horton
 Bill 91
 Grace 150, 156, 175, 180, 181, 189, 192, 221, 250–255, 298, 301, 324, 383, 493, 655
 Jim 308, 320–321, 576, 713
 Sydney 250
 Tom 250
 Horticultural Show 177
 Hourihan, L 132
 Huddersfield 283, 286, 293, 720, 723
 Hudson
 Alf 174
 Mickie 214, 215, 342, 345
 Hudson's Hotel. *See* JC Hotel
 Hughenden
 founding of 94
 naming of 96
 Huller, Fred 29–30, 60, 491, 560, 561, 564, 579, 697, 776
 Hutchison, Keith 704–707

I

Ice & cordial works 151, 174–176, 180–182, 188, 208, 209, 257, 360, 367, 378, 380, 399, 404, 417, 552, 562, 575, 631, 640
 Iffley 61, 210, 378, 455, 706, 773, 778, 782

Inlander 169, 172, 560, 633, 639
 flood bound 168
 Innisfail Downs 306, 332–333
 Isabel Downs 446

J

Jack, RL 128–131
 Jackson & Co 125, 132
 Jaques
 butcher shop 175, 180, 181, 204, 221, 253, 577
 George 175, 180, 204, 221, 253, 314, 375, 377, 388, 425, 612
 home 314, 425, 590
 Jean 221, 425
 JC Caravan Park 692
 JC Engineering Works 8, 47, 53, 60, 61, 162, 163, 296, 346–348, 351, 431, 458, 481, 485, 489–491, 494–499, 504, 505, 514, 515, 518, 523, 524, 528, 538, 542, 543, 546, 560, 564–566, 696, 697, 774–776, 778–779, 782, 786–787, 791, 799
 opening of 531
 JC firsts
 beginning 118
 first day of school 137
 first mention 110, 114
 first school 135
 first teacher 135
 first train 122
 rails arrive 121
 JC Hospital 190–191, 216, 232, 246, 252, 283, 299, 300, 325, 561, 587, 650–651, 681, 689, 690, 765, 768–769, 796
 JC Hotel 118, 147, 174–175, 180, 181, 189, 236, 240, 243, 251, 252, 271, 274, 277, 290, 307, 311, 322, 344, 345, 365, 378, 379, 381, 382, 404, 408, 409, 471, 577
 JC Mail coach 293
 JC Motor Works 204, 206
 JC races 286, 401
 JC State School
 a history of 132–161
 buildings 196
 description of 404
 residence 164, 176
 teaching train 247, 388
 JC streets 553–555
 JC Taxi 696
 Jenkins, Alf 314
 Jensen, Jack 182, 197, 357, 378, 413, 426

Jessup

Tom Jnr 195, 209, 253, 311, 357, 555, 570, 604
 Tom Snr 182, 356, 357, 594, 640, 720
 Jones, Frank 593

K

Kaeser

Albie 215, 218, 219, 261, 390, 590, 593
 bakery 150, 181, 204, 206, 237, 380, 384, 385, 392, 493, 577, 634, 655
 Bally 181, 213–217, 216, 218, 219, 228, 261, 268, 370, 372, 375, 389, 390, 420, 660, 685
 Betty 213–217, 261
 Bev 641
 Edna 345
 Elizabeth 213, 317, 390
 Hazel 213
 Iris 259, 585
 Joe Jnr 182, 213–216, 218–220, 259, 386, 390, 579, 582, 585, 586, 593, 595, 638
 Joe Snr 150, 213, 214, 252, 336–337
 John 209, 220, 601
 Kenny 215, 218–220, 253, 390, 641
 Marie 388, 402, 419, 425, 426, 612
 Myrtle 213, 215, 372
 Nellie 213
 Kamada, Harry 387, 392–393
 Keenan, Annie 253, 254, 660
 Kelloshiel 720
 Kelly
 children 742
 Tom Snr 673, 738
 Vic 475, 580, 582, 585, 631
 Khorassan 568–571
 Kidman & Angliss 773, 782
 Kilterry 230, 563
 Kirk
 Archie 455, 773
 Bill 428, 430, 452, 453
 John 430, 431, 455, 772, 773
 Knuth, Morty 429, 445–447
 Knyvett, Mr 157
 Kuridala 164, 249, 370, 381, 384, 398, 599, 609, 610

L

Lafferty, Kevin 258, 317, 488
 Lamont, Charlie 577

Landsborough, William 62, 76, 77, 81, 92, 102, 103, 105, 106
 Lands End 717, 780
 Langtree, N 317, 419
 Laurencic, Albert 646–649, 786
 Lavarack
 Darcy 174, 182, 399, 409
 Gordon 180–182, 251, 274, 393, 422, 678, 681, 705
 Huey 182
 John, Sir 182
 Leichhardt, Ludwig 62, 66–75
 search party 82–91
 Lerida 437, 476, 477
 Lever, Billy 283, 289
 Lewis, Lance 164, 174, 175, 192, 197, 205, 206, 208, 219, 226, 227, 230, 259, 345, 367, 400, 401, 404, 405, 424, 425, 455, 566, 577, 637, 654, 677–679, 727
 garage 203, 206, 406, 416, 461, 637, 678, 777
 headstone 679
 home 181
 Liaros, Harry 259, 698, 732, 733
 Lindfield 366, 599, 601, 602, 730, 738, 742, 744, 745, 780
 Longford Plains 229, 739, 742, 744
 Lord, Bob 230, 563, 581
 Lowe, Arthur 405, 521, 555, 564, 575, 585, 605, 612–615, 695, 754
 flight from England 615
 Lowood 35, 791
 Luhrmann
 Margaret 428, 445, 450–457
 Pat 20, 60, 349, 428, 439, 444, 445, 449–457, 462, 497, 499, 511, 720, 779

M

Macrossan Smash 31, 35
 Magoffin
 Dick 349, 374, 436, 569, 570, 670
 Gordon 437, 464, 467, 569
 Jim 681
 Margaret 436, 569
 Richard 170, 568–573, 683, 686–688, 693
 Malbon 599, 600, 610
 Malham 305, 309, 322, 325
 Malone
 Grace 156, 548, 708–709, 713, 715–717
 Jim 708, 712–714
 Mick 583
 Pat 710, 715

Stumpy 9, 338, 710–711, 715
 Ted 520, 548, 708–709, 713, 715, 741, 747
 Toby 708
 Manfred Arms Hotel 368, 369
 Manfred Crossing 643, 676
 Manfred Downs 290, 294, 719
 Mann
 Edith 641, 685, 700–704
 Mary 299, 460, 461
 Maps
 Bicycle race 345
 Burdekin River 71
 Cafes 257
 Dew Drop Inn fire 396
 Flinders River 97
 Henry 94, 102, 105, 108
 Julia Creek 132, 140
 Landsborough 76
 Leichhardt 66, 75
 McIntyre 79, 83, 84, 85, 89
 O’Connell 114
 Plains of Promise 63
 Railway 122
 Scorpion Ck 111
 Marathon 96, 97, 282
 Maria Downs 283, 285–287, 289, 290, 292–295, 300, 720, 723, 731
 Mathers, Pat 595
 Mathews
 Bill 190, 206, 256, 258, 317, 357
 Harry 145, 146, 159, 237, 300, 307, 720, 728
 Joey 163, 226, 278, 420, 576–581, 585, 588, 590, 593, 655, 676, 764
 Mrs Harry 146
 Store 637
 Mathews’ Hall 196, 232, 317, 397, 424, 488, 489, 502, 591, 612, 663–665, 684, 685, 707, 763, 768
 Matsen, Ivor 454, 483, 500, 502, 506–513
 McCarthy, Gloria. *See* Roberts
 McDonald
 Betty 200, 351, 656–657, 665
 Don 366, 592, 593
 Mossie 200, 297, 351, 395, 475, 488, 522, 639, 654, 656–657, 665, 698, 754, 777
 Norma 651
 McIntyre
 Donald 84, 87, 88, 91, 111, 113
 Duncan 62, 75, 76–92, 102, 111
 McIvor, Dominic 154, 155, 158–160, 263, 404

McKay, Bill 430–434, 455
 McKinlay Hotel 331
 McKinlay, John 62, 81
 McLeish, Mat 581, 585, 613
 McMahon
 John 233, 585, 612, 676, 786
 Mavis 232–233
 McMahon & Champneys.
 See Champneys & McMahon
 McMahon & Wall 612
 McNickle, Bill 200, 375, 650, 651
 McPherson
 Buck 398
 John 416
 Mellish, Lyn 59, 789
 Meredith, Gordon 592, 595
 Mickie loaves 181, 214–216, 218, 389, 685
 Micks, Tom 182, 757
 Milk cart 669, 672, 675
 Millions Club 180–181
 Millungera 96, 97, 169, 194, 313, 422, 536, 544, 582, 583, 601, 604, 639, 642, 643, 706, 719, 720, 727, 728
 Minamere 96, 97, 99–103, 105, 108–110, 113–117, 796
 Min-Min light 52, 536, 537
 Miranda Downs 61, 210, 782
 Mitchell, Harold 582, 585, 588
 Morisset, R 87, 95, 100, 101, 103
 Morris, Marty 228, 229, 678
 Moule, Dr George 440, 468

N

Narollah 492, 759, 760, 763
 Nash, Sister 380
 Nathan, Sir Matthew 145–146
 Needham’s Hospital 245, 371, 387, 393, 587
 Nelia
 Hotel 215, 409, 662, 663
 mail run 230
 races 172, 173, 355, 459, 662
 Nelia Ponds 23, 96, 121, 446, 683
 Nelson
 Bill 151, 480, 492, 493, 502, 503
 Harry 178, 377, 382, 404
 Netterfield, Eric 232, 321, 581, 585
 Norton
 Ann 685
 Bill 91
 Frank 221, 317, 414, 419
 Jim 256, 257
 Stella 419
 Violet 342, 685

O

O’Brien, Mick 500, 501, 512, 513
 O’Connell, Maurice 62, 110–117
 Official Receiver 6–7, 12, 30, 53, 56, 232, 562, 696, 775, 778, 782, 785–787
 O-K Store 192, 194, 203, 253, 406, 418, 459, 461, 489, 594, 636–637, 654, 655, 696, 764, 768, 777
 O’Neil, Joan 785
 O’Neill’s Hall. *See* Mathews’ Hall
 O’Neill, Terry 258, 259, 317, 633, 735, 764
 O’Regan, Mike 491
 Orford, Arthur 755, 765
 Orr, Bill 366, 590, 593, 659
 Osbert 589
 O’Sullivan, Roy 175, 176, 270–271
 building 236, 240, 243, 381
 Oxtown Downs 177, 319, 617

P

Paine, Arthur 290, 582, 723, 730, 755
 Palmer, Edward 96, 106, 118
 Parsons
 Enid 247
 Jim 177, 182, 199, 382, 387, 399, 409, 418, 425, 495, 580, 585, 648
 Pearce, Jenny 9, 37, 572–573, 716.
 See also Drawing Index
 Pearson, Sidney 110, 111
 Pedersen
 Bill 151, 155, 164
 John 164, 342, 416
 Mrs Catherine 216, 226, 343, 388, 403
 Thelma 164, 264, 265, 342, 372
 Pegg, Dr Stuart 232, 459, 587
 Pehrson, Bill 358
 Perry Davis Painkiller 106, 107
 Peut
 Bert 253, 636
 Bob 423, 426, 629
 Fred 193
 George 378, 383, 419, 459, 464, 467, 470, 538, 637, 648, 694, 702, 706, 780
 mail truck 470, 538
 Les 182, 317, 419, 590, 593, 595, 654
 Neville 367, 378
 Noel 399
 Peut’s Hall. *See* Mathews’ Hall
 Philippi, Judy 58, 59, 788–789

Pickersgill
 John 466–468
 Roy 466–468, 471
 Pictures, at the 316, 371, 382, 387,
 394, 411, 486, 601, 657, 764
 silent movies 188, 265
 talkies 245, 265
 Plague rats 165–167, 323, 468, 485,
 498
 causing fires 165–166
 Plains of Promise 62, 63, 96
 Platelayers 121
 Poems
 Bronte, Anne 366
 Burns, Guy 255, 333, 442, 456,
 517, 677, 799
 Burns, Max 516
 Goldsmith, Oliver 196
 Lynd, Robert 72
 Magoffin, Richard 573, 687
 “McIntyre’s Last Ride” 89
 Pearce, Jenny 716
 Tankard, Charles 194
 “Vale Jim Edwards” 741
 “When I am old” 791
 Polgreen, Jack 22
 Police station 189, 268, 272
 Polio 493
 Pollard
 Bert 199, 388, 663, 713
 Keithie 150
 Ponjola 619
 Post Office 200, 269, 317, 383, 489,
 502, 675, 705–707
 Potts, Miss 146
 Powderham, Mr 637
 Powerhouse 751–753
 Prickly acacia 477, 570
 Princess Alice 232
 Proudfoot
 Arthur 361, 364, 366
 Dot. *See* Dickfos
 Jenny 360–363, 365, 367
 Pulley, Bob 60, 454, 483, 500, 501,
 510, 513, 520, 525–527, 536,
 540, 542, 543, 545
 Punchbowl 193, 200, 216, 220,
 285, 306, 351, 394, 589, 601,
 605, 622, 649, 653, 657, 741,
 746–749, 750, 751, 753, 754,
 781
 Purtle, Sgt Frank 495, 579, 585, 765

Q

Quambetook 436, 569, 570, 572
 Quarrell Siding 172, 332–333, 462

Quilty
 Lillian 644–645
 Lillian’s Po 642–643
 Rod 780
 Tom 276, 640–645

R

Raddle stick 472
 Railway quarters 156, 174
 Rainfall graph 340
 Ralston, Dr 188, 252
 Rationing
 butter 417
 coupons 192, 193, 417
 Rawleigh’s Ointment 727
 Red-light ladies 314, 400, 404
 Refrigeration
 charcoal 324, 370, 409, 619, 710
 Coolgardie safe 324
 Icyballs 324, 326–327
 Richards, Bert 446, 447
 Rickertt
 Betty 55, 296, 514, 515, 523
 George 55, 504–505, 512,
 514–515, 523, 538, 542
 Roberts
 Gloria 574, 659, 660, 663
 Jimmy 165, 412, 416, 420, 423,
 590, 593
 Robotis, Nick 259
 Rockvale 618
 Rose Downs 283–285, 288
 Rosenskjar, George 401
 Rosevale 53, 60, 428–479, 569, 621
 cottage 473, 476, 477
 Dunlite generator 435, 469
 homestead 435
 stud rams 404, 465, 472
 wool records 246, 441
 Rumbold, Ernest 387, 392–393
 Ryan
 Blacktracker George 266–267
 Don 416
 Ethel 267, 268
 George 582, 583
 John 118
 Ryder
 Bill 231, 420, 679, 690, 693
 Billy 371, 431, 462, 516, 566–
 567, 601, 667
 Lew 566, 605, 607, 615, 679, 708
 Loretta 691
 Ray 691
 Ruth 689–691, 694

S

Saenger, Peter 106
 Samuel Allen 180, 181, 192, 236,
 249, 252, 381, 418, 616

Sanitary contractors 385, 553, 649,
 676, 678
 Sanphy
 JW 236, 290
 store 150, 189, 274, 290, 577
 Scarr, Moey 663
 School of Arts 158, 174, 176–178,
 182, 226, 246, 269, 675
 Scorpion Ck myth 110
 Scott, JF 118, 132, 133, 135, 136,
 290, 292
 Scrimshaw, R 304, 305
 Sedan Dip 364, 391, 616, 656
 Sedatree, May 244
 Sentinel Waggon 183
 Seymour, Mr 135
 Shaw
 Chummy 259, 285, 287, 289, 294,
 295, 297, 352, 459, 618–619
 Clara 289
 Johnny 287, 289, 293, 298–301,
 300
 Mabel. *See* Stainkey
 Maria 289
 Violet 254, 298–301, 400, 460,
 732
 home 314, 590
 Sheaffe, Roger 95, 96, 101, 103, 109
 Shearing 195, 383, 475, 619–620,
 734
 Shearing teams
 Ballingers 729
 Fayers 192, 594, 619, 683, 685,
 692, 732
 Godier 357, 619, 732
 Hardy 357, 665
 Jensen 357
 Jessup 356–357, 738
 Mathews 206
 Stainkey 282–285
 Tankard 632–633
 Sheehan, Nev 482, 483, 500, 508,
 509, 512–514, 792
 Shire office 176, 797
 Short, Mrs 146
 Silent cop 176, 344, 461
 Silent movies. *See* Pictures, at the
 Sills
 Esther 164, 169, 170, 324, 387
 Hazel 766, 768
 Jim 164
 Mannie 9, 132, 163–176, 196,
 218, 226, 259, 338, 345, 404,
 420, 426, 453, 496, 605, 621,
 654, 713, 768, 796
 Sylvia 143, 152, 164
 Sisters of Mercy 382, 629
 Skating 165, 176, 189, 198, 227,
 411, 415

Skinner
 Emily. *See* Wilder
 Mick 383, 385, 390
 Pat 383–386, 395
 Slack-Smith, Eric 21, 230, 231, 605,
 786
 Smith
 Bill 294, 295
 Bob 578–582, 585, 588, 593, 613,
 777
 Dot 579–582, 584–585, 777
 Sally Anne 232, 581
 Sir Henry 232
 Trevor 193
 Sneyd, H 177, 245, 370, 586, 587
 Sohler, Brian 729–731
 Somers
 John 182, 416, 420
 Paddy
 home 625
 SP bookies 400, 638–639, 660, 706
 Spence, Elizabeth. *See* Walters
 Spreyton 577, 723
 Stadhams, Les 257
 Stainkey
 Alf 206, 208, 280–282, 288–290,
 297
 Dot 250, 426, 786
 Elsie 259, 296–297, 351, 352, 665
 Fagan 259, 287, 294–297,
 351–353, 618, 665, 696–698
 garage 699
 Harry Jnr 199, 206, 208, 230, 289,
 349, 378, 455, 607, 665, 666,
 679, 696, 786
 Harry Snr 281, 284
 Herb 280–287, 618
 Mabel 156, 285, 287, 289, 300,
 618
 Rose 284
 Roy 210, 289
 Trevor 285, 601
 Stanley, Nugget 215, 314, 374, 375,
 420, 593, 626, 660
 St Elmo 208, 297
 Stinson L5 491
 St Joseph’s Convent 184, 196, 734,
 735, 777
 Stokes, Capt John 62, 76
 Stokes, Esme 301, 629, 694–695
 Stores
See Dawes, Peter;
See AJ Smith;
See Mathews;
See O-K Store;
See Samuel Allen;
See Wilkins
 Stout, Lily 269
 Sunny Plains 720, 723

Sutcliffe
 Harry 289, 293
 Martha 289
 Svensson
 Gladys 753, 755
 Jim 756, 757
 Ray 351, 733, 750–757, 781
 search party 755
 Suzanne 750–756
 Sweet, Ted 548–549, 561
 Swimming pool 626–627, 667
 constructing 622

T

Taaffe
 Billy 174
 Mick 593
 Tankard, Charlie 194, 632, 633
 Tanksinking
 See also Photos/Tanksinking
 anatomy of a tank 557
 Burns Burns & Burns 24–27, 56,
 60, 775, 786–787
 cheating 552, 557
 formula 433, 532
 in progress 532, 543–545, 565,
 569, 774
 Max begins 16, 52
 not a challenge 38
 OC18 a dud 778, 782
 on Ardrin 565
 on Belford 483, 505, 506, 509,
 510, 513
 on Carrum 563
 on Chatsworth 518–521, 534, 536
 on Clio 444, 453, 774
 on Grenada 563
 on Hilton Park 579
 on Iffley 778
 on Khorassan 568, 569
 on Kilterry 563
 on Langsdale 567
 on Millungera 544
 on Nonda 560
 on Spreyton 577
 on Toorak 550, 557, 562, 563
 phantom drivers 30
 ripping 537, 543
 Rosevale No. 1 tank 428–464, 779
 Rosevale No. 2 tank 447, 463
 scoop tipped over 511
 signwriting 516
 standing up to drive 507, 525, 543
 Union 430
 workers' van 348, 453, 454, 548
 Taxation rates 23
 Taylor
 Ernie 571

Waldron 205, 313, 376, 419, 655,
 703
 Telephone exchange 703
 Tennis 314, 347, 554
 Thompson, Wally 590, 593
 Thomson, Len 398, 414, 422
 Tichborne, Roger 156, 158–160, 177
 Tierney, Jim 400, 460, 461, 617
 Toorak 303–309, 466, 557, 710,
 714, 715
 Topping, Gordon 193, 212, 213
 Town & Country Club 162, 163,
 296, 497, 531, 696
 Tracey, Jim 159, 160, 189, 389
 Triffett
 Bill 367
 Dorrie 411
 Les 414, 416, 419
 Rene 372, 411
 Shiela 155, 372
 Tassie 216, 372, 422
 blacksmith shop 625
 Ted 416, 422
 Tidly 23
 Tuckett, Eric 230, 231
 Tunny, Joe 231, 409, 459
 Tyler, Val 788, 790

U

Uhlmann, Graham 259, 580,
 586–589
 Underwood
 Jim 606, 644
 Olive 368, 644–645
 Pat 619
 Usher, Dan 274–277

V

Vamvakaris
 Nick 180, 256, 261, 655
 Tony 261
 Vanook 61
 Villiers, Harold 590, 593, 595
 VJ Day 424

W

Wakakarack 210, 782
 Walker, Frederick 62, 92
 Wall
 Alex 209, 581, 598–613, 615,
 666, 730
 aircraft 602, 603, 604
 fireploughing 601
 Lionel 233, 249, 366, 378, 414,
 495, 555, 575, 580, 581, 585,
 599, 604, 605, 607, 612–613,
 616, 695
 aircraft 612

Shirley 580, 581, 612–613
 Tom Jnr 598–608, 615, 693
 Tom Snr 366, 599, 613, 742
 Wallacooloobie 228, 385
 Walsh, Johnny 632
 Walters
 Elizabeth 170, 218, 398–399, 409,
 659, 660
 Harold 132, 170, 218, 226, 228,
 250, 276, 301, 314, 398–400,
 404, 419, 552, 677, 704, 705,
 780
 Jack Jnr 170
 Jack Snr 156, 164, 170, 398–399,
 401, 552, 637
 Watson, Flo 206, 259, 382, 641, 674
 Wedding descriptions
 Blanch, Thelma 681
 Burns, Max 47
 Burrows, Bert 259
 Dickfos, Dick 364
 Gannon, Olive 421
 Gerahty, Lil 420
 Halloran, Rex 763
 Hampton, Merle 660
 McDonald, Mossie 657
 Ryan, Blacktracker George 266
 Wall, Alex 599
 Welch, Dr 157
 Werrina 718, 722
 Whitby, Les 594, 595, 641, 674, 700
 Whiting
 Frank 178, 399, 421, 738
 Norman 421
 Wilder
 Albie 182, 226, 234, 252, 371,
 380, 383–392, 433
 Biddy 152, 155, 226, 342, 385,
 386
 Clive 182, 226, 384–386,
 389–391, 418, 419
 Cooee 200, 218, 383, 394–396,
 489, 496, 497, 605, 641
 Don 383, 385, 386
 Emily 342, 371, 380, 381, 383,
 385, 387, 390, 393, 394, 418
 Herb Christian 385
 Herb (“Herco”) 218, 236, 383,
 386, 394, 663, 677
 Herb Julius 152, 155, 226, 259,
 261, 383, 385, 389, 394, 404,
 418, 663
 Hilda 151, 152, 155, 178, 252,
 372, 383, 385
 Wilkins
 Drapery Store 165, 192, 406, 461,
 654, 655, 663
 Ivy 169, 170, 374, 654–655, 663,

720
 Pat 259, 298, 654–655
 Wicky 170, 633, 654–655
 Williams, Darkie 181
 Willis, Cecil 60, 439, 445, 447,
 449–454, 456, 483, 500, 501,
 505, 510, 513, 520, 521, 525,
 536, 540, 542, 545, 773, 774,
 779
 Wilmot, Doug 396, 781
 Wilson
 Norm 431, 438–440, 442–443,
 449, 464, 475, 779
 Stephen. *See* Drawing Index
 Wind generator 469
 Winton
 Bill 380
 Choco 162, 200, 210, 380, 395,
 459, 489, 496, 497, 564, 565,
 641, 764–769, 776
 George 380, 391, 768
 Henry 380, 395, 492, 496, 592,
 595, 754
 Hilda 370, 380
 Ivy 380
 Mary 301, 370, 378, 380–382,
 384, 386, 418
 Tootie 380
 Wog party 229
 Woodlands 285–287
 Wool
 dead 404
 records 440
 Woolscour
 a history of 318–319
 closes down 309
 general 176, 188, 204, 205, 246,
 262, 302, 305, 307, 308, 310,
 314, 317, 366, 376, 386, 636
 huts 313
 Wyaldra 290, 380, 720, 722, 723,
 729, 730

Y

Yorkshire Downs 33, 145, 230, 301,
 322, 446
 Young
 Gladys 170, 372
 Grace 135, 137, 169, 170, 290,
 616

This page won't be printed. The last signature ends on the page opposite, page 816. The book proper runs from page 1-816.

The book can be broken into these signatures: (9 x 32) + (18 x 28) + (1 x 24):

001-028 (7, C14)
 029-056 (7, C42) – spread in centre
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 085-112 (7, C98)
 113-136 (6, C124) – spread in centre
 137-164 (7, C150)
 165-192 (7, C178) – spread in centre
 193-220 (7, C206)
 221-248 (7, C234)
 249-276 (7, C262)
 277-304 (7, C290) – spread in centre
 305-332 (7, C318)
 333-360 (7, C346)
 361-388 (7, C374)
 389-416 (7, C402)
 417-448 (8, C432)
 449-480 (8, C464)
 481-512 (8, C496)
 513-544 (8, C528) – spread in centre
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 573-600 (7, C586)
 601-632 (8, C616)
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 721-752 (8, C736)
 753-784 (8, C768)
 785-816 (8, C800)

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 B: 6, 7, 7, 7 (Start 113, C206)
 C: 7, 7, 7, 7 (Start 221, C318)
 D: 7, 7, 7, 8 (Start 333, C432)
 E: 8, 8, 8, 7 (Start 449, C558)
 F: 7, 8, 7, 7 (Start 573, C674)
 G: 8, 8, 8, 8 (Start 689, C800)

Page numbers:

A: 28, 1, 2, 27, 26, 3, 4, 25, 24, 5, 6, 23, 22, 7, 8, 21, 20, 9, 10, 19, 18, 11, 12, 17, 16, 13, 14, 15, 56, 29, 30, 55, 54, 31, 32, 53, 52, 33, 34, 51, 50, 35, 36, 49, 48, 37, 38, 47, 46, 39, 40, 45, 44, 41, 42,

43, 84, 57, 58, 83, 82, 59, 60, 81, 80, 61, 62, 79, 78, 63, 64, 77, 76, 65, 66, 75, 74, 67, 68, 73, 72, 69, 70, 71, 112, 85, 86, 111, 110, 87, 88, 109, 108, 89, 90, 107, 106, 91, 92, 105, 104, 93, 94, 103, 102, 95, 96, 101, 100, 97, 98, 99

B: 136, 113, 114, 135, 134, 115, 116, 133, 132, 117, 118, 131, 130, 119, 120, 129, 128, 121, 122, 127, 126, 123, 124, 125, 164, 137, 138, 163, 162, 139, 140, 161, 160, 141, 142, 159, 158, 143, 144, 157, 156, 145, 146, 155, 154, 147, 148, 153, 152, 149, 150, 151, 192, 165, 166, 191, 190, 167, 168, 189, 188, 169, 170, 187, 186, 171, 172, 185, 184, 173, 174, 183, 182, 175, 176, 181, 180, 177, 178, 179, 220, 193, 194, 219, 218, 195, 196, 217, 216, 197, 198, 215, 214, 199, 200, 213, 212, 201, 202, 211, 210, 203, 204, 209, 208, 205, 206, 207

C: 248, 221, 222, 247, 246, 223, 224, 245, 244, 225, 226, 243, 242, 227, 228, 241, 240, 229, 230, 239, 238, 231, 232, 237, 236, 233, 234, 235, 276, 249, 250, 275, 274, 251, 252, 273, 272, 253, 254, 271, 270, 255, 256, 269, 268, 257, 258, 267, 266, 259, 260, 265, 264, 261, 262, 263, 304, 277, 278, 303, 302, 279, 280, 301, 300, 281, 282, 299, 298, 283, 284, 297, 296, 285, 286, 295, 294, 287, 288, 293, 292, 289, 290, 291, 332, 305, 306, 331, 330, 307, 308, 329, 328, 309, 310, 327, 326, 311, 312, 325, 324, 313, 314, 323, 322, 315, 316, 321, 320, 317, 318, 319

D: 360, 333, 334, 359, 358, 335, 336, 357, 356, 337, 338, 355, 354, 339, 340, 353, 352, 341, 342, 351, 350, 343, 344, 349, 348, 345, 346, 347, 388, 361, 362, 387, 386, 363, 364, 385, 384, 365, 366, 383, 382, 367, 368, 381, 380, 369, 370, 379, 378, 371, 372, 377, 376, 373, 374, 375, 416, 389, 390, 415, 414, 391, 392, 413, 412, 393, 394, 411, 410, 395, 396, 409, 408, 397, 398, 407, 406, 399, 400, 405, 404, 401, 402, 403, 448, 417, 418, 447, 446, 419, 420, 445, 444, 421, 422, 443, 442, 423, 424, 441, 440, 425, 426, 439, 438, 427, 428, 437, 436, 429, 430, 435, 434, 431, 432, 433

E: 480, 449, 450, 479, 478, 451, 452, 477, 476, 453, 454, 475, 474, 455, 456, 473, 472, 457, 458, 471, 470, 459, 460, 469, 468, 461, 462, 467, 466, 463, 464, 465, 512, 481, 482, 511, 510, 483, 484, 509, 508, 485, 486, 507, 506, 487, 488, 505, 504, 489, 490, 503, 502, 491, 492, 501, 500, 493, 494, 499, 498, 495, 496, 497, 544, 513, 514, 543, 542, 515, 516, 541, 540, 517, 518, 539, 538, 519, 520, 537, 536, 521, 522, 535, 534, 523, 524, 533, 532, 525, 526, 531, 530, 527, 528, 529, 572, 545, 546, 571, 570, 547, 548, 569, 568, 549, 550, 567, 566, 551, 552, 565, 564, 553, 554, 563, 562, 555, 556, 561, 560, 557, 558, 559

F: 600, 573, 574, 599, 598, 575, 576, 597, 596,

577, 578, 595, 594, 579, 580, 593, 592, 581, 582, 591, 590, 583, 584, 589, 588, 585, 586, 587, 632, 601, 602, 631, 630, 603, 604, 629, 628, 605, 606, 627, 626, 607, 608, 625, 624, 609, 610, 623, 622, 611, 612, 621, 620, 613, 614, 619, 618, 615, 616, 617, 660, 633, 634, 659, 658, 635, 636, 657, 656, 637, 638, 655, 654, 639, 640, 653, 652, 641, 642, 651, 650, 643, 644, 649, 648, 645, 646, 647, 688, 661, 662, 687, 686, 663, 664, 685, 684, 665, 666, 683, 682, 667, 668, 681, 680, 669, 670, 679, 678, 671, 672, 677, 676, 673, 674, 675

G: 720, 689, 690, 719, 718, 691, 692, 717, 716, 693, 694, 715, 714, 695, 696, 713, 712, 697, 698, 711, 710, 699, 700, 709, 708, 701, 702, 707, 706, 703, 704, 705, 752, 721, 722, 751, 750, 723, 724, 749, 748, 725, 726, 747, 746, 727, 728, 745, 744, 729, 730, 743, 742, 731, 732, 741, 740, 733, 734, 739, 738, 735, 736, 737, 784, 753, 754, 783, 782, 755, 756, 781, 780, 757, 758, 779, 778, 759, 760, 777, 776, 761, 762, 775, 774, 763, 764, 773, 772, 765, 766, 771, 770, 767, 768, 769, 816, 785, 786, 815, 814, 787, 788, 813, 812, 789, 790, 811, 810, 791, 792, 809, 808, 793, 794, 807, 806, 795, 796, 805, 804, 797, 798, 803, 802, 799, 800, 801

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Rear Endpaper: 818-819

Signatures 1-28: 7, 7, 7, 7, 6, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8, 7, 7, 8, 7, 7, 8, 8, 8, 8.

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B: 124 (24), 118 (12), 178 (80), 214 (94, 0.5 mm back only)

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D: 342 (20)

E: 469 (24), 517 (74), 528 (96), 558 (124)

F: 674 (114)



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Kalmela
(Wallacooloobie)

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Sedan Dip

Haddington

Byrimine

Dalgonally

Cremona

Mar

Fler

Lands End

Werrina

Baroon

Fort Constantine

Castle Rock

CLONCURRY

Clifton Park

Eddi

Gilliat

Kuridala

Malbon

Agate Downs (5 miles)

Tooral

