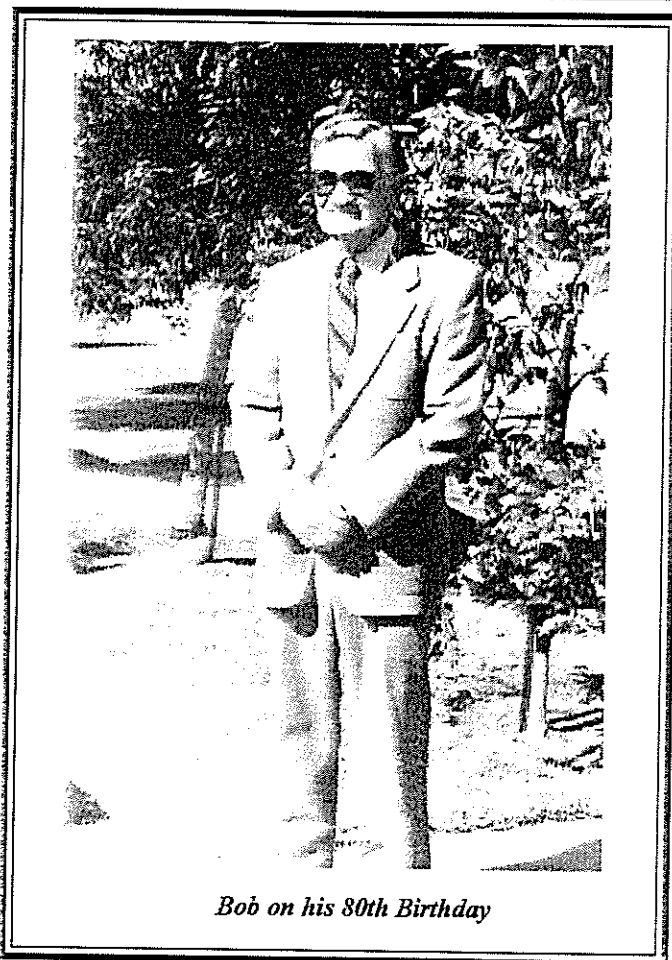




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CITATION

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Bob on his 80th Birthday

VALE

Bob Darken

Robert Cousins de Champfleure Darken was born in Parkes New South Wales on 9th July 1919. His parents were Eugene Darken and Catherine – nee Woodward. He had two sisters, Catherine and Doris and he was the youngest of three brothers, Frederick, Thomas and Raymond. His parents were both English – his mother had been a nurse and his father a soldier, having served in the Boer War and World War I where he was wounded on Gallipoli. His brother Ray was killed whilst flying Lancaster Bombers over Germany during World War II. Bob and his other brothers all joined the A.I.F. during this period.

His childhood was spent on a 5000 acre wheat, sheep and cattle property near Parkes, where he attended primary and later High School and it was there that he attained his Intermediate Certificate. His favourite subject was sport and at one stage, he and his brother Ray were both picked to play against an Australian XI. This would have been a very proud moment for both young men because the Australian team consisted of such names as Bradman, Kippax, Ponsford, Fingleton, McCabe, O'Reilly, Richardson, Oldfield, Woodfull and Wall. Bill O'Reilly bowled Bob for 4.

After leaving school, Bob obtained his wool classing diploma and worked in various sheds and wool stores. After his first year of wool classing, Bob moved to Sydney and got a job as manager of a



parking station garage. It happened to be next door to Jack Dunlevey's boxing gymnasium. Bob could fight a bit and learned the art from his older brothers. Earlier, at a shearing shed near Quirindi, N.S.W. he had an altercation with a shearer who was much bigger than himself. Bob gave the shearer a lesson in fisticuffs that earned him the respect of others who may have considered their own chances. Jack Dunlevey and Hop Harry Stone trained Bob – both great fighters in their day. He fought as a welterweight under the name of Jack Fitzgerald because he didn't want his parents to know he was a professional boxer. During the time he was with Dunlevey and Stone, he had 27 fights, won 26 and drew one. His last professional fight was against the N.S.W. Middleweight champion – 15 rounds and £500 to the winner. Although Bob had broken a thumb two weeks earlier, he still managed to win the fight.



Darwin Mobile Force Boxing Team

Two weeks after his last fight, Bob joined the Eastern Command Coast Artillery at North Head Barracks. His number was 5371. Apart from standard military duties and training, he played rugby union and cricket for the army, on weekends he also played rugby with Five Dock Metropolitan and St. George. In 1938 he won the Australian Inter-services welterweight title. In March of that year, the Darwin Mobile Force was formed and Bob became a member of that unit. He found rugby wasn't played in Darwin so he took up Australian Rules, playing with the Waratah team. He represented the army in the boxing ring and continued to win his bouts. While with the Darwin Mobile Force, his main duties consisted of patrolling the coastline. It became apparent to Bob and his mates that the Japanese had a much better understanding and knowledge of the North Australian coastline than the locals. The maps of our northern shores and islands that were found on

Japanese soldiers appeared far more accurate and superior to those carried by our own personnel.

On 12th June 1939 Bob transferred from the army to the Northern Territory Police in Darwin. In those days, all training was learned on the street. On that first day legendary Inspector John Creed Lovegrove called Bob into his office and asked if he could fight. Bob answered that he could a bit and was duly informed "Well, you'll get plenty of practice". Those words were to prove correct. In those early days of his career, there were less than 50 police officers servicing the entire Northern Territory. Most of his duties were confined to patrolling the Darwin area.

One patrol he went on in 1942 was to investigate reports of Japanese and a wireless mast at Gunn Point. The group consisted of Dave Mofflin, Lionel McFarlane, Ron Brown and Bill Sedgewick. Their investigation subsequently proved these reports to be false. Apparently, a lot of articles including clothing had been washed ashore from a Japanese ship that had been sunk. It turned out the aboriginals had been wearing the clothes – particularly the caps. No doubt, the air patrol had good reason to make their report. The wireless aerial turned out to be the mast of a lugger that had been wrecked years before. Another part of their mission was to round up all the aboriginals in the area who were considered 'wild' and an obvious security threat in the event of a Japanese invasion. Twenty six natives were captured and returned to Darwin



Bob Darken Katherine 1941

In 1941 Bob was stationed as relieving OIC in Katherine for several months before returning to



Darwin. At 9.50 am on 19th February 1942, he had just given evidence in a court case. Hearing aircraft, he spotted three formations of nine Japanese Bombers and remembered his mate, Dave Mofflin who was asleep in the barracks after completing a night shift. He woke Dave and as they were leaving, the barracks received a direct hit. Both men were blown under a concrete tank stand, suffering only minor injuries. Fortunately, they also escaped the Japanese strafing and other bomb fragments as they made their way to the police station. Unfortunately, the Darwin Post Office also received a direct hit and many occupants of those premises were not so fortunate.

At the end of May in 1942 and after many air raids, Bob and other police found themselves transferred to Alice Springs. However, the war was still with them and Bob was successful in applying for leave to join the army. On 25th June 1942, he married Vicki Ormond whom he had met soon after joining the Mounted Police. Vicki was the first Miss Northern Territory and they were married in a church in Alice Springs where Woolworths is now situated. Bob used to joke that they took their vows where the cheese, cream and butter is now displayed. The couple were not financially well off and spent their honeymoon at a gap in the Western MacDonnell ranges in a tent. That gap was later named in their honour and is known today as Honeymoon Gap.

Bob returned to the AIF as a Private but was soon promoted to Warrant Officer. Due to his previous army background he was required as an instructor at various AIF units. Later on, Bob joined up with Captain Snow Elliott to form a transit camp south of Newcastle Waters. The camp was named Elliott after the Commanding officer and is now a township. Sometime afterwards, Bob developed malaria, was hospitalised in Alice Springs and recalled back to the police force where his duties included that of prosecutor, later transferring to Tennant Creek.

It was in Tennant Creek that Vicki gave birth to their first child, Sondra.

Later on, Bob was required to carry out relief duties at Roper River Police Station, causing him to leave his family in Tennant Creek. In 1945, Bob was transferred to Harts Range, a police district of 60,000 square miles or 100,000 square kilometres

where he was required to carry out regular patrols on horseback. During his absences from the station, the responsibility of duties normally performed by him fell upon Vicki. This was and in most cases, still is the situation at bush stations. During these patrols, Bob's constant companions were his trackers, Sid, Sonny or Jacky the Bull. The Harts Range patrol area covered from Alice Springs in the West, east to the Queensland border, north to Barrow Creek and south to Atnarpa Station (Loves Creek).



*Harts Range
Police Station
1941*

It was while at Harts Range that Vicki and Bob's second daughter, Joanne was born in Alice Springs.

Bob and the Webb Brothers from Mount Riddock started the Harts Range Amateur Race Club. This popular event continues today.

In 1950, Bob left the police force and purchased Simpsons Gap Station.

One day, Bob was mustering cattle when his horse fell on him and injured his back to such an extent it was 12 months before he could move freely and certainly unable to ride a horse again. He decided to sell the station to the Federal Government who turned it into a National Park. Bob was offered the position of Curator in Charge and then became a member of the Reserves Board, resulting in him being one of the first Rangers in the Northern Territory. A brief outline of Bob's achievements and community work are as follows:

He arrived in the NT with the army in 1938; joined the mounted police in 1939; Re-joined the AIF in 1942 and attained the rank of Warrant Officer, returned to the police force and served a total of 10 years in Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Roper River and Harts Range. The latter was his favourite posting.

President of the Police Association from 1940 to



1944;
Founding member of the Harts Range Amateur Race Club;
Chairman of the Alice Springs Hospital Advisory Board for 4 years;
Founding member of Tennant Creek RSL;
President of Alice Springs Owners, Trainers and Jockeys Association 1950;
Foundation member and president of the Centralian Art Society;
President of the Central Australian Show Society for 5 years;
Assistant Chairman of the Northern Territory Wildlife Advisory Board.
In 1961, he became a member of the Alice Springs Lodge.

Bob Darken was a man who achieved a great deal in his life. We are very fortunate that he thought to put many of his memoirs to paper. Some of his stories have previously been recorded in 'Citation'. Those of us who were lucky enough to know him can only appreciate what he did through good times and bad with others similar to himself who stepped forward when it mattered most. It was people like Bob Darken who helped make the Northern Territory the great place it is today. No doubt, he would have had his job made

easier over the years by the great support of Vicki who herself is a very accomplished artist.

Bob and Vicki were an exceptional couple. Very talented, well-travelled but never lost track of their humble background. They rubbed shoulders with the high and not so high in society and treated everyone on an equal footing.

In more recent times, Bob told me he was honoured by the NT Police Commissioner (whom he had great admiration for) on two occasions. The first instant was to receive the Police Service Medal to commemorate his 10 years in the Northern Territory Police Force. The Police Commissioner, Mr. Brian Bates presented the medal to him on 17th December 1999 during a ceremony at the Alice Springs Police Station.

The second occasion Bob felt honoured was when Commissioner Bates made a personal call to the Darken family home just a few weeks before his death. On a personal note, my family and I feel very fortunate to have known the family even though it was only for a little over 4 years. It seems to be a much longer time. Bob's memory will survive for many years to come.

Bob passed away at his home in the early hours of Thursday, 17th February 2000.

To Vicki, Sondra and Joanne, we all extend our sincere sympathy in your loss.



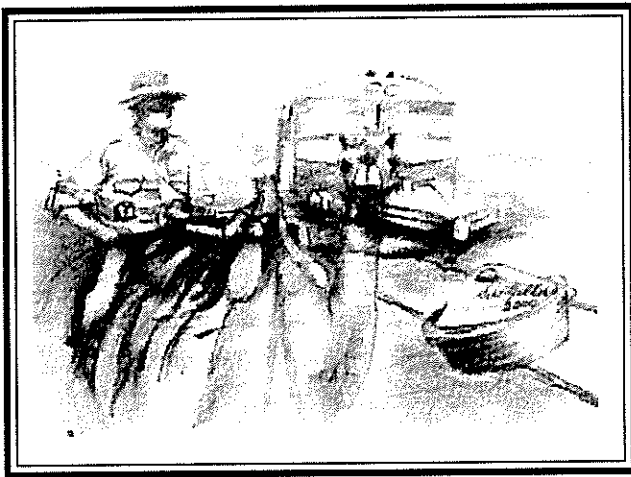
*Bob
Darken
on
Horseback*



THE FINKE RIVER POLICE STATION

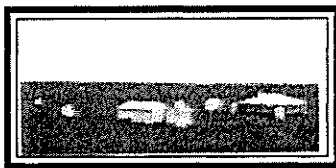
On the 20th August 1938 Charlotte Waters was officially closed by Constable W. Mckinnon, and the Constable was transferred to the Finke River Police Station on the 25th August 1938. (Ref. p831 Pt, 2, W.J. McLaren). From this point in time an interesting history unfolds surrounding the Finke Police Station. Many risks were taken by officers and families on what were considered normal routine working days.

There are many stories of isolation, hardship, and sometimes dangerous patrols that were undertaken to help bring law to the Territory. These stories are mingled with nostalgia, moments of love, affection and admiration. This was an area considered by many as one of the last frontiers of Australia. Many close friendships were formed along the way, and remain so even today.



EARLY DAYS & CAMEL PATROLS

By Tony Kelly, January 2000 (c)



*Finke Police Station, circa 1938 - 9
Taken from Bush Justice, Ron Brown & Pat Studdy - Clift*

The last police camel patrol in Australia was carried out by the author, then Constable A.B.Kelly, during May and June 1953. Finke (now Apatula) was the last Police Station in Australia with camels on strength. The South Australian Police had previously had a Camel Patrol from Oodnadatta, but that had been phased out. I took over the Finke Police district from Senior Constable Ron Brown. (Ron was the co-author of Bush Justice, published in 1990). Finke was my first bush posting. I had

been transferred to the Finke from Alice Springs, arriving by train on 4th November 1951, I remained posted to the Finke until being posted to Alice Springs on my return from leave which had commenced on 26th March 1954.

Finke was my first 'bush' posting. I had served previously at both Darwin and Alice Springs, I had been recruited to the N.T. Police from NSW, where I was a clerical officer in the public service, then acting as relieving clerk at



the Morrisset mental asylum. I had no interview before appointment, having answered a recruiting advertisement by mail. My interest in the Territory and the NT Police had been raised by my reading of Ion Idriess' books about the Territory and the Islands while I was still at school. I was provided with an air ticket from Sydney to Darwin, The flight, in a DC3, took more than thirteen hours. It was a 'milk-run' which hopped from town to town across Queensland. It certainly gave one an appreciation of the size of Australia. I arrived in Darwin on 24th March 1950, towards the end of the wet season. I was the first of the 1950 intake to arrive, as I had lost no time resigning from my rather routine job in the public service.

At that time the full complement of the Force was fewer than 50 men throughout the entire Territory. The police establishment for the Northern Territory was about 60, but there were always vacancies. As I write this in January 2000 there are some 120 Police in Alice Springs alone!

On arrival in Darwin I was issued with a baton and badges, my collar number being 61. I was then sworn in and directed to a Chinese tailor to obtain a uniform. There were a number of such tailors so uniforms were not entirely uniform. Some of the older members of the force still wore their broad brimmed hats in a peak, with three dents, somewhat similar to the New Zealand Army style, whilst the rest wore the hats with a single crease, adding to the variety. Police caps were unknown. It seems odd to see Territory Police wearing peaked caps, when Police in the rest of Australia are moving more to broad brims. Peaked caps were introduced first by Constable Bill (Blossom) Dunn, when he got one of the first Police Motorcycles to ride. He had been in the SA Police and he also liked to sport his jodhpurs and leather leggings.

Apart from the badges and buttons I was issued with a few copies of N.T. Ordinances, the most important being the Police and Police Offences Ordinance. Training consisted of hanging around the Bennet Street Station for a couple of days until the uniform, comprising khaki short sleeved open neck shirt, khaki drill trousers and broad brimmed hat, was ready. The new recruits were paired with an old hand and sent out on foot patrols of the town. Constable Henry Lullfitz was

my mentor. He was a sound and straight character. Once when we were on foot patrol we were told of a fight in the Don. I wheeled around to go straight to it. Henry steadied me and continued on his less direct route. The combatants were pretty worn out when we arrived.

Darwin was still much as the Japanese had left it after the bombing. The harbour was full of sunken ships, which appeared at low tide. The Commonwealth Bank, across the road in Bennett street, was a bombed out shell and there were many similar sights, including the original Post Office. On town patrols we had to scramble over piles of debris from shattered buildings. The streets were clear but the short-cuts, such as between the Vic Hotel and the Darwin Hotel, were hazardous. Darwin was a colourful and interesting place, and fully measured up to the expectations Ion Idriess had raised in me. There was a great mixture of races, but people were mainly treated in accordance with their actions not their race. The aboriginals were prohibited from drinking, and had to leave the town at night, except for picture night. To people with no knowledge of aboriginals the prohibitions on liquor might appear harsh, but it was a practice which had its foundations in the experience of contacts with aboriginals in Australia since the first settlement. Subsequently the 1960's generation knew better than all their elders (and betters), and they did the aboriginals the 'favour' of removing those prohibitions, to the detriment of what remained of the aboriginals dignity and culture. One exception to the rule to leave town in the evening was Nucklejar, an ex-tracker, who could forget his immaculate appearance in spotless whites with a dignity to match.

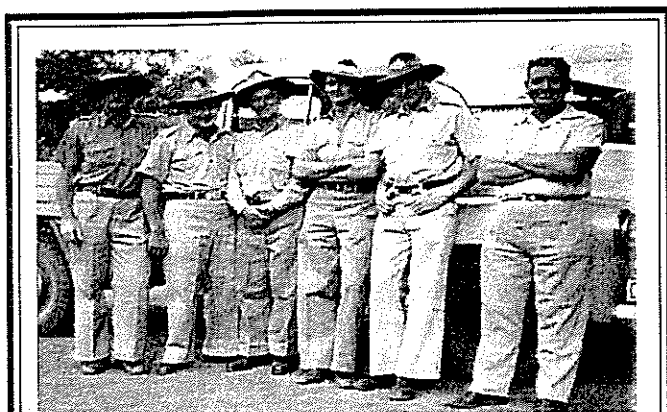
If there had been a conspiracy to destroy the aboriginal race and culture it could not have been carried out more effectively than was achieved by the 60's generation's genocidal 'reforms'. What was done was with the best of possible motives, but with profound ignorance. Perhaps we could consider similarly 'reforming' the prohibition on heroin by making it freely available to all.

The form of training, learning on the job, was risky in retrospect but effective. I was disappointed to find on my return to Darwin many years after I had left the Force, a more regimented style of training had been introduced. I have not had the



opportunity to examine the present training. Regimented training is designed to produce unthinking compliance with orders whilst at Law, a Police Officer always has the responsibility for his own actions. The 1950 intake were short on saluting and standing to attention, and nobody ever tried to march us, but we used our initiative and provided effective policing. Foot patrols, 'showing the flag', was the order of the day. We were few, but highly visible. We had some vehicles, but used them mainly to take us to locations for foot patrols at places like the Parap and Berrimah Compound.

At the first meeting of the Police Association I attended I was elected as editor of the Police Association Journal. Very few early issues of this Association Journal have survived, and if any retired members - or even Police Station Files - have old copies, they should be photocopied and sent to Citation or to RPANT. They are a valuable source of information about members and conditions.



On duty at the Katherine races 1950. from left: Const. Cec Dillon, Const. Keith Price, ?, 'Slim' Edwards, Const. Tony Kelly & Sgt. Jim Mannion.

WANTED

Articles of interest for inclusion in issues of the Citation.

Please forward to:

Garth Macpherson

C/- Community Relations

PO BOX 2630

ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871

The range of Police duties was surprising. A few of us were sent as reinforcements from Darwin to a race meeting at Katherine. Constable Keith Price's duty was to run the Tote! Katherine appealed to me and I used to Motorcycle down from Darwin to spear fish in the river. I had handmade gear, made by a workmate in the NSW Public Service who had been a frogman during the war, commercial spear fishing gear was not available. I always got a feed, and never bothered about crocs', as they were then hunted for their skins.

After a short spell in Darwin I was transferred to Alice Springs. This entailed a two day journey by non air-conditioned bus and another visit to the tailor, as Southern Division had a winter uniform of brown gaberdine. There was more uniformity as John Matin's in Adelaide had the contract. After Constable Bert Mettam left the force he used to measure us up for the winter uniforms.

Alice Springs was truly a green oasis in the desert, particularly after two days on the bus. The streets were planted with white cedars, which were removed years later. The single men's quarters were attached to the police station, a brick building, and we ate at the administration mess. If we didn't make breakfast, after a hectic night, a milk shake at Heenan's with a couple of eggs in it would do the job. In Darwin we had eaten at the Police Barracks in Daly Street, so we saw other Police both on and off duty. Our rooms in Daly Street were pretty tiny, the new recruits getting the worst, and a fan under the mosquito net was the nearest we got to luxury. We clubbed together to pay the cook, and did our own washing and ironing. A uniform would not survive as wearable without washing for more than one day. In Alice Springs we mixed more with other single Government employees at the Mess. As there was always a fairly high staff turnover, Alice Springs, which then had a population of about 3,000 was anything but dull, unlike some other small towns in the south.

I was on foot patrol with Sam Parsons in Alice Springs one afternoon shift. We had checked out Todd Street and the Stuart Arms and were rounding Heenan's corner on our way to Underdowns's pub. I saw the prettiest girl crossing the street towards us. Sam turned the corner while



I continued straight ahead, and had to cross back to catch up with Sam, who chuckled at my distraction. Sam was a good bloke who had been a member of the, Metropolitan Police before coming to Australia. I married the girl.

There were no Police Houses available in Alice Springs-no one seemed to have thought of Police occupying other Administration houses, so Madge and I took up residence in the Stuart Arms. This cost more than my pay, but fortunately Madge was working. A few months later I was posted to the Finke.



Madge Yvonne McConville
1949

Finke was on the old Ghan Railway line and was the only NT Police Station South of Alice Springs. Most north-south traffic passed through the Finke by rail. At that time there was no formed road from Alice Springs to Adelaide. There was only a seldom-used dirt track, running through Kulgera, made by the occasional single cut by a grader.

I was stationed at the Finke from November 1951 to March 1954. The township was near the western edge of the Simpson Desert, about 50 kilometres from the South Australian Border. You could see the first line of sand hills from the Police house. I have heard that the house and police station are to be restored, as the oldest police station still standing in the NT.

The Police Station Office at Finke was a small galvanised iron annexe attached to the police house, itself constructed of a metal frame and galvanised iron except for the wooden floor

and the windows. There was no attempt at insulation. It was surrounded by a verandah, enclosed by galvanised iron and fly wire, hot as Hades in the summer and pretty cool in winter. We had a ration store in the yard, where rations were issued weekly to aged and infirm aborigines and a store room where we stored the camel gear and other police supplies, including a coffin. There was also a small cell. There was a high oleander hedge around the police yard, which never needed watering, and a large chook yard with a peppercorn tree providing shade, also a garden with established fig trees and a mulberry tree-non of which seem to have survived.

The Finke Police district was probably the largest one man Police district in Australia. It ran from a line drawn from East to West, some eleven kilometres South of Alice Springs, running from the Queensland border to the West Australian border, and continued down to the SA border, enclosing some 220,000 square kilometres. My responsibility also extended beyond the Northern Territory, as I was also a Special Constable for South Australia. My access to Ernabella, an Aboriginal Mission across the border in South Australia, was closer than it was for SA Police from Oodnadatta, the nearest SA police Station. The only transport provided to cover this huge area was a string of six Police camels, Jumper, Oodnadatta, Fred, Ferdinand and Flossie. The camels were on the Police station inventory, and when one died it took a lot of paperwork to have it written off.

The Policeman at a bush station was effectively the Government agent. He was a registrar of vehicles, of firearms and dogs, a stock inspector a licensing inspector and health inspector, a destroyer of dingo scalps, agent for the flying Doctor and the visiting dentist, and custodian of a medical kit to provide treatment to the sick and injured, if necessary after discussion with the doctor in Alice Springs. He had to establish a clinic for the Flying Doctor's occasional visits and maintain the airstrip. He was responsible for the distribution of rations to aged and infirm aboriginals. When he was away on patrol a lot of these duties devolved upon his wife.

The Finke township comprised the Finke pub, Colson's store, a Post Office and Overland Telegraph repeater station next to the Police Sta



-tion, a railway house for the Pumper, Spud Murphy, who supplied water for the town and the trains, and a Fettle's barracks for the crew who maintained the Ghan railway line. Frank Quinn, the mail man, lived in a caravan. He ran a weekly mail and goods service to the cattle stations in the district. Phil Turco was the cook at the fettle's camp. His two sons worked in the gang. They were Italian migrants, enemy aliens, in the jargon of the day. Phil would sometimes bring over a great dish of pasta, a novelty in those days, with a couple of small birds with their legs in the air on the top. They looked suspiciously like top-knot pigeons, but without their feathers there was no way of telling, was there? The town also sported a tennis court, a community hall, a racetrack - just over the first sand hill towards the Simpson Desert, and an airstrip. There was a blacks camp in a nearby gully, mostly old people, and including Mick Doolan, a tribal elder and retired Tracker, and the two Trackers attached to the Police Station.

Madge was raised in Alice Springs so was used to dust storms, but nothing like we experienced at Finke. We would shut ourselves into the kitchen until they passed but even then the dust would get to us. After a dust storm we would shovel the dirt off the verandah and hose down the verandah walls. We had a good water supply from the railway tank. We got electricity from the overland telegraph repeater next door. It was 110 volts DC, so it would only work the lights. We had a kero' fridge and a double door Coolgardie safe. In the summer of 1953 our second daughter, Patricia, was about four months old. She felt the heat and kept the town awake with her crying. I managed to get a 110 volt fan, cut a hole in the back of the Coolgardie safe and put the fan inside blowing out the back. I took a pane of glass out of the window of the sitting room and let the fan blow into the room after it had been drawn through the wet walls of the safe. We were the proud owners of our first 'air conditioner'. The baby slept well and so did the town. The safe also worked more efficiently, keeping vegetables crisp.

The main events of the week were the arrival of the Ghan, which stopped at the Finke to fill the depleted water tanks of the steam engine, and to refresh the passengers at the pub. When ready to leave the train would blow its whistle to empty the

hotel. Sometimes it would have to start up and move the carriages to convince the drinkers to leave. It was a hectic half-hour but never any trouble as the customers concentrated on drinking. The Ghan was not air conditioned - I don't think anything was - and at that time it did not have a Bar.

We ran a herd of some 300 goats, which provided us with both milk and meat. Occasionally the Ghan would be held up when the Finke flooded as the train track was laid on the normally dry bed of the river. Bridges had been built but had washed away. On one occasion when the Ghan's stores were running low, we provided a goat for a barbecue for the passengers. They said they had never tasted better lamb.

My first camel patrol was a brief foray to New Crown and Andado Stations and on into the Simpson Desert, in September 1952, to familiarise myself with the camels. Not that I wanted to get too familiar. They are the only animal which smells just as bad at either end, and they attract every fly within 100 miles. I find it difficult to understand people paying for the 'pleasure' of riding them. In October 1952 I patrolled to Horseshoe Bend, Maryvale, Renners Rock, then Bob Buck's Station, now called Orange Creek, Henbury, Palmer Valley, Erldunda and Kulgera, covering 550 kilometres by the end of the month.

When I was away Madge had to hand out the rations to the aged and infirm aboriginals. The rations comprised treacle, flour, tea, sugar, baking powder, chewing tobacco, dress material and blankets. She would also have to treat medical problems from the Flying Doctor kit. We treated everything from coughs, colds, boils and bung eyes to yaws and gonorrhoea. At 19 years of age this was quite a responsibility, but she had worked previously at the Alice Springs Hospital as the typist-receptionist, so she knew the Doctors and could contact them if in difficulties.

The Flying Doctor made regular visits to the town, I would let everyone know to present for 'coughs, colds, boils, moles and pimples on the ankles'. Madge would set up the clinic on the verandah of the Police house. The same routine would be done for the Dentist, whose drill was foot operated, by a treadle. The Finke could be a busy place. There were plenty of goods trains and many



of the crews were friends of Madge's parents or relatives, so she saw many familiar faces.

We got most of our stores from Alice Springs or from the Commonwealth stores at Port Augusta Doughy Moor, the friendly baker from Todd Street, sent us fresh supplies of yeast every fortnight and I made the bread. We got our milk from our goats. We always boiled the milk as we suspected the girl who did the milking put her foot in the bucket to steady it, particularly on cold mornings. It was not only camel patrols which took me away and left Madge holding the fort. When Alice Springs was very short of staff I was called back to help out the town patrol. I also had to visit the fettling camps along the railway line. On one occasion a fettler died after a fight in a camp up the line. I had to use an open quad car to travel up to the camp to retrieve the body and take it on top of the quad to Alice Springs for a post mortem. We found the victim died from a ruptured spleen, as a result of excessive drinking. The spleen ran through your fingers when you tried to lift it. The fight had precipitated to rupture, but the blow would normally not have had a serious effect.

The fettling camps were interesting mixtures of people. The pumper at Bundooma was Ted Ryko, who had ridden a push-bike from Adelaide to Alice Springs in the 30's. He was a tall, thin well tanned character. He had to walk from Bundooma everyday to the pump at Alice Well on the Hugh River. It was pretty hot crossing the sand hills so Ted used to go through the rags which were sent to him to clean the pump engine. He liked to select ladies slips to wear as they were cool. For his walk over the sand hills he also made a turban, which he wetted, with a jam tin full of water in the centre, with a small hole in it to keep the turban wet. Ghan passengers were sometimes amazed to see this turbaned apparition in a ladies slip coming back over the sand hills. I think Ted timed his walk for the effect.

JAMES CONMEE

We are appreciative of the help that Mr Syd Stanes and Charlie Taylor volunteered in respect to the whereabouts of Constable James Conmee. Syd has stated some of these dates are only approximates. We are hoping that this article may lead to filling in the missing historical facts.

Thanks to the help of Syd Stanes, Laurie Kennedy and Charlie Taylor, we have now located an address and have contacted James Conmee himself. Constable James Conmee was at the Finke Police Station around December, 1957 at the time of the Sundown Murders. This is stated in the Writings of W.J. McLaren, History of Northern Territory and its Police Force, Pt. 2, page 1319. ... *'Inspector McKinnon contacted Constable Conmee and instructed him to go to Kulgera Station and commence a search for the missing people and the car. Occupants Mrs Sally Bowman, aged 43, her daughter Wendy Bowman aged 14, and Thomas Whelan, aged 22, a radio mechanic of Adelaide. Constable Conmee and Tracker Stanley left Finke at 5.30pm that day and arrived at Kulgera Station at 9.30pm. They could not awaken anyone so camped the night. An entry from the Police Journal written by Constable Conmee describes what happened on Friday 13th December '1957'....* There is also an account of these horrific murders in two subsequent books.*

John Merriman from the Adelaide Advertiser has been very helpful in locating various news clippings of the same case and we will be bringing these to you over following news letters.

Syd Stanes, the owner of Lyndavale Station, originally part of Erldunda, mentions that James, visited them from time to time while on patrol. He recalls that Constable James Conmee, was actually stationed at Finke Police Station for the approximate period of two to three years, after which he resigned.

If you can help with information about the early days of the Finke Police Station we would like to hear from you. We are presently putting the stories from these serving officers themselves, into a book form. It is our hope to see this book published and all proceeds go to the Northern Territory Police Historical Society. If you can help with some small comment, tale or story, please contact us, put pen to paper and send your story in to, PO Box 2630, Alice Springs.

* *Crime and Punishment, (50 Crimes That Shocked Australia), Allen Sharpes, Kingsclear Books, 1997, p 244-251.*

* *Bush Justice, Ron Brown and Pat Studdy - Clift, 1990, Hesperian Press. P 222.*