

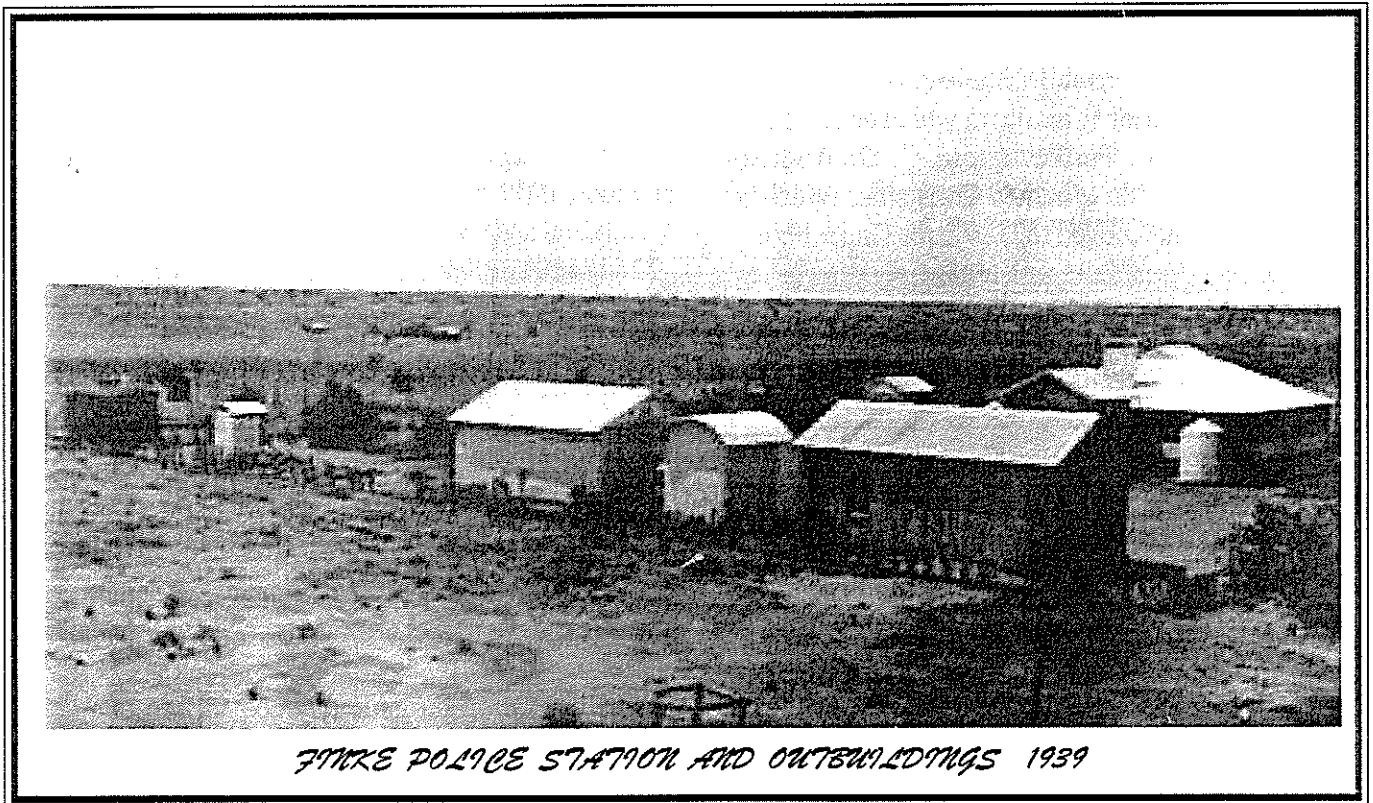


the **CITATION**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*EARLY HISTORY OF THE N.T.
AND THE FYNKE AREA*

*By
Peter Riley*



FYNKE POLICE STATION AND OUTBUILDINGS 1939

The Overland Telegraph Line, 1,800 miles long, Adelaide to Darwin, was commenced at Darwin on 15th September 1870 and completed in twenty three months, by December 1872. Thirty six thousand poles (wood) were used, some transported 350 miles. The white ants later ate them down and they were replaced with steel poles. These facts were taken from the book, *Our Yesterdays*, Australian Life Since 1853. In photographs, Irma Pearl and Cyril Pearl. Angus and Robertson - first published in 1954. One photograph shows the first pole being planted at Darwin on above date and a second one, shows Charles Todd at Roper River with three other men and ...'was taken in 1872 when the Overland Telegraph was about to be opened'.... Supplies of wire etc. for the northern sections came by boat to Roper Bar from where they were transported by wagons and horse teams to the line.



The construction of the O. T. Line which connected with a cable to Java, resulted in a number of Repeater Stations in the then Northern Territory of South Australia. The first in the N. T. would have been Charlotte Waters, then followed Alice Springs, Barrow Creek, Tennant Creek, Powell Creek and Daly Waters. All the transmission in those days was by morse code.

The establishment of these repeater stations had a police connection. The Centenary booklet 1986 states; ... 'research reveals that police were present in the centre' ... at the repeater stations of Charlotte Waters and Barrow Creek prior to 1879 and indeed as early as 1874, 'M. C. John Charles Shirley, first policeman at Alice Springs, was 'known to have been at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station by November that year' (1880) according to the booklet; and, 'served at the repeater station at Barrow Creek prior to his death which occurred in November 1883'. Further quote; ... 'On Wednesday 21st April, 1886 Mounted Constables Willshire and Wurmbrand moved to Heavitree Gap where the officers' ... quarters consisted merely of 'wurlies' constructed of boughs.

Now to the book *Bush Justice* by former member Ron Brown and Pat Studdy-Clift pages 28-29, letter dated January 12th 1883 Police Station, Charlotte Waters, in which M. C. Thomas Daer to Inspector B. C. Bisley, Port Augusta, reported on the accidental death of teamster Joseph McPharlin. Note the copper plate hand-writing, M. C. Daer's 'station' probably consisted of a tent and spinifex - thatched shade. Most likely it was the first station in that part of the centre, even before Alice Springs. Tom Daer has been immortalized in the naming after him of Mt Daer, east of Charlotte Waters, a connection which would not be known by many. Nearby is Mt Daer Station (cattle) recently flood-bound. Charlotte Waters was abandoned as a repeater station and then taken over as a police station, the building a substantial one.

Further on Charlotte Waters, N. T. Police News, June 1984, article, *Return to Alice*, page 29: Bill McKinnon appointed 1st June 1931. Service history includes - Relieved Charlotte Waters 1935. In 1941 transferred from Finke to Darwin, I was there on 19/2/42 at the bombing. Borroloola from September 1942 to November 1943. The Administrator's Annual Report for 1940 - *Strength*

and *Distribution of Police - April 1940* - Lists Constable McKinnon then at Finke River. In N. T. Police News, September 1982, Bill McKinnon gives an account of commencing his first recreation leave on 3rd February 1936 and making the trip in his Dodge 4 Tourer from Alice Springs to Nambour, Queensland, accompanied by his wife, Doreen. Five years almost before that leave seems unusual. From the foregoing, his wife may have been with him at Charlotte Waters when he relieved there in 1935, also later, at Finke. In the book *Bush Justice*, pages 210 and 211, in connection with the alleged murder of Aboriginal 'lollylegs', Constable McKinnon is mentioned, then at Finke, by Sergeant Koop in his letter to Superintendent Stretton, dated 10 April, 1941.

Going back in time, Austin Stapleton's book *Willshire of Alice Springs*, record of his service with the South Australian Police Force shows him at Finke River, Northern Territory 1890, suspended 27th April 1891. Reinstated 12th August 1891, the suspension in relation to the alleged murder by him of two natives, 'Donkey' and 'Roger', at Tempe Downs on February 22nd, 1891. (*See Citation special edition No 17, June 1999*). His police record further shows: 1st September 1891, transferred to Port Augusta, South Australia, (*Page 50 Stapleton's book*). This record of Willshire at Finke River seems to indicate that he had some sort of permanent camp in that area 1890 - 1891, the first Finke Station?

In *Bush Justice*, page 3, is the photo of Finke Police Station, circa 1938-9, which seems to have been taken soon after its construction surrounded by a bare waste, photo page 11, shows trees and page 13 mentions a good garden and couch lawn front and back, 'a legacy of a predecessor, Bill McKinnon'. The foregoing, Ron Brown's comment when he took over Finke in December 1945 from Constable V. J. (Joe) Mutch. There is no reference by him that Mrs Mutch (Mavis) and sons Kevin and Bob were then there.

On the question of who was the first officer at Finke, 'Citation' December 1964, article First Commissioner from Ranks (partly republished *N. T. Police News December 1981*), records that Constable C. W. (Clive) Graham then stationed at Alice Springs, opened the first Police 'Station' at Hatches Creek ... 'a couple of tents plus bough sheds,' ... September 1937. In July 1938 he married Miss Jane Hayes of Undoolya Station ... 'and took his bride to the canvas



and bough mansion at Hatches'.... Later that year, he was transferred temporarily to Barrow Creek and in July 1939 to Finke. In July 1940 he went to Rankine River. He may have opened the Finke Station, July 1939.

On page 1 of *Bush Justice*, Ron Brown records taking over Finke from Constable Joe Mutch in December 1945. Joe, with B. A. (Bernie') Rochford, was appointed in 1937 to replace me and Jack Stokes who were temporarily seconded to the Aboriginal Branch of the N. T. Administration to set up the Control bases at King River, Arnhem Land and Elcho Island respectively, Joe was present in Darwin at the bombing on 19th February 1942, after which all Darwin police except Constable L.J. (Lionel) McFarland went to Alice Springs. I was stationed at Tennant Creek from August 1942 to December 1943 and during that time visited Alice Springs on several occasions but have no recollection that Joe Mutch was stationed there then. He could have been at Finke. There seems to be a period, when Bill McKinnon was transferred from Finke to Darwin in 1941, up to the time when Joe Mutch took over, that some other officer was stationed there.

Ron Brown in *Bush Justice*, mentions, South Australian Police cadets John Donnegan, Bruce Evans and Ron Huddy who were stationed with him at Finke during his period of service 1945 - 1952. Constable Tony Kelly succeeded Ron at Finke, see page 230 of *Bush Justice*. Later in 1957. He records that Bruce Evans, then Officer in Charge at Oodnadatta, with Constable Conmee then stationed at Finke, were involved in the 'Sundown Murder' case, pages 222-225.

The origin of the Finke Siding dates back to construction of the railway line from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs and is mentioned in Ion Idriess' book *Flynn Of The Inland* as approaching Alice Springs 1925 and 1927. It arrived 1928.

Back to Charlotte Waters where Mounted Constable W.C. (Bill) Littlejohn later Superintendent, was stationed, apparently when the trains started running. When my wife and I were at the Alice Springs Centenary in 1986, Bill told me that when at Charlotte Waters he could hear the train ten miles away which was the direct distance to the line, west of the station. I do not know if he was married then. In 1926, Reverend John Flynn and Alfred Traeger came to Alice Springs to try out the Traeger pedal wireless.

They set up a temporary base 'mother station', 8AB in the AIM Nursing Home and then went out to Hermannsburg to test the transceiver. I had some correspondence with Reverend Fred McKay, AIM, in 1991 and 1993 seeking information as to when transceivers were installed in Northern Territory Police Stations. In relation to the above tests, he gave me this information; 'Constable Bill Littlejohn helped Alf Traeger in Alice Springs in 1926. He manned the experimental 'mother station' in Alice Springs while Alf went to Hermannsburg', Bill Littlejohn was previously in the Eastern Extension Cable Company, Darwin, as telegraph operator and as such, could read transmissions from Alf Traeger which would have been in Morse Code. This is a bit of history not known to many.

The foregoing is all I know about Finke and Charlotte Waters which may assist in your proposed history.

Written by
Peter Riley 24/2/2000

THE LAST CAMEL PATROL

by
Tony Kelly January 2000 (c)



Police Cameleers - Photo taken in April 1986. From left: 'Hanger Bill' McKinnon, Alf 'Broken nose' Johnson, 'Big Bill' Littlejohn, Ron 'Brownie' Brown and Tony 'Ned' Kelly 'the last Police Cameleer'.

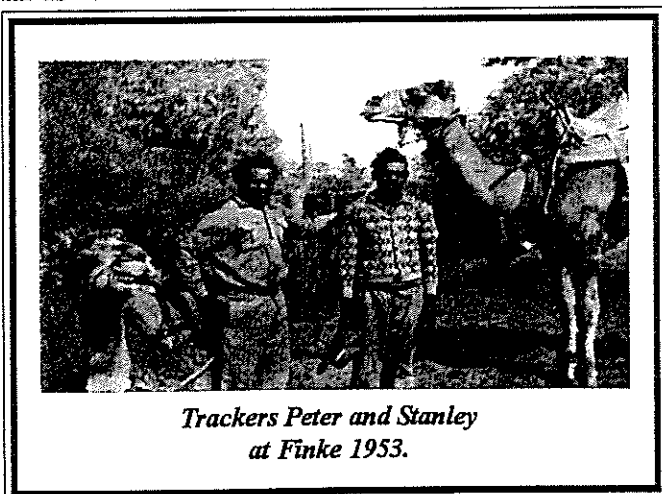
The occasion of the last Camel Patrol was a murder near Curtin Springs Station, some 300 kilometres to the West. On Monday 4th May 1953 I received a phone call from Inspector Graham at Alice Springs. He told me that Constable Milgate from Alice Springs and Native Affairs Patrol Officer Les Penhall had gone to Curtin Springs by Land Rover, but they were unable to pursue the suspect into the desert. I was to meet them at Curtin Springs with sufficient riding camels and supplies to enable the suspect to be pursued into the Western desert. Land Rovers were not considered sufficiently reliable to take far from the beaten track, and besides there were no supplies of



petrol west of Curtin Springs. Uluru had not been thought of.

I spent the next day with the Trackers rounding up the six police camels, Finke, Ferdinand, Flossie, Fred, Jumper and Oodnadatta. I also had to borrow two additional riding camels and saddles from Mick Doolan. The riding saddle is just two strips of iron held about 60cm. apart by three iron arches, one at each end and one in the centre. The side strips are padded with hessian and straw, the first arch goes in front of the hump, the second behind it. The rider sits on his blanket between the second and third. After my first patrol I had got a Dunlopillo tractor seat cushion to provide some comfort on long rides. Even then, I walked most of the way, only riding in the midday heat.

The camels were loaded with stores with one water camel carrying two water tanks. I set off with Trackers Peter and Stanley for Curtin Springs. Peter was an old tracker who had served Ron Brown. Stanley was a young Tracker, about my own age, who showed a lot of initiative. This had him categorised as a cheeky black, and I was warned against employing him. I found him a good companion. Normally on patrol the Trackers would find the way, as they knew the country intimately. However they have very little use for a straight line, or for time saving and would have travelled a very indirect route. I determined that the most direct route would be across the Wild Horse Plains towards Erldunda for the first part of the journey, following a compass bearing across the plains as far as



*Trackers Peter and Stanley
at Finke 1953.*

the country would allow.

The first days journey took us along the dry creek bed of the Finke River to Crown Point, where we left the river and headed for Lilla Creek, skirting some sand ridges on our left. We camped that night

some 30 Kilometres from Finke. The following day we passed through Lilla Creek Station and camped at Angathita Well, avoiding some clay pan country on our right. We had made some 36 Kilometres, which was fairly good going. A loaded camel train walks at about 3.5 Kilometres per hour. Many old maps, including the hand-drawn one I was using, were made taking into account the camels pace at two and a quarter miles per hour.

When on patrol it wasn't just a matter of mounting your camel and riding off. The camels would be hobbled out at dusk when we made camp and the following morning we had to track them down and retrieve them. Feed was scarce and they would wander off a fair distance.

We were headed in the direction of what was shown on the map as a ridge of hills, which present day maps show as Mount Kingston, still skirting the clay pan country. Camels are very particular about the type of country they will walk across. Their feet are soft pads so they dislike rocky country and refuse to walk on slippery ground. With their long legs and heavy bodies, they can break a leg or dislocate a joint easily if one leg slips.

When we reached the vicinity of Mount Kingston, instead of the ridge of hills shown on my hand-drawn map there were just a few flat-topped hills. I climbed the highest one to take compass bearings to confirm our position. The side of the hill near the top was very steep. When I reached the table-top I was surprised to see a young camel looking down at me.

I called to the trackers to bring some ropes and in short order we had the young camel cornered on the edge of the drop and roped him. We had to tie his legs and lower him over the edge. My aim was to break him in as a riding camel. Most camels are cantankerous but this often comes from ill treatment. Broken properly they can be both good natured and intelligent.

There was plenty of salt bush on the top of the hill, but no water. We tried to work out how the young camel had got up there. The Trackers reckoned he had been born up there, his mother having somehow scrambled to the top when frightened by a storm. We searched the perimeter for bones but she had apparently got herself down without breaking anything, but the calf must have been too afraid to follow.

On my previous patrol I had been held up near Henbury Station by storms. When the rain had started



I had headed for some sand hills near the Palmer River, where we waited for the country to dry out before proceeding. That was some eight months before, which was about the age of the young camel we had just found.

We tied the young camel behind one of the pack camels and headed for Erldunda, camping once more and then arriving at Erldunda on Sunday 10th. When we watered the camels at Erldunda the young camel showed no interest in the troughs, leading me to speculate that he may have had no acquaintance with water from the time he had been weaned. He must have survived solely on the moisture in the salt bush as there was no water on his table-top hill.

We cut him loose at Erldunda as he was holding up our progress, intending to recover him on our return. We continued our journey fairly uneventfully, sighting Curtin Springs Station on the evening of Thursday 14th. We pressed on in the gathering dusk towards the dim kerosene lights of the Station, but this was not to the liking of one of the pack camels, who had become used to having her load removed at dusk. She threw her load and had to be repacked. This happened a second time and after repacking her, I rode behind her with my pistol drawn, being a bit irate by then. We rode in to the Station without further incident to find Constable Millgate and Native Affairs Patrol Officer Les Penhall playing Ludo by the light of a kerosene lamp, with Alan Pavelitch and Ossie Andrews, who owned the Station.

I learnt that the suspect, Barry Mutarubi, had followed the victim, a young girl, who was out rabbiting. He wanted her, but his desire was not reciprocated. He speared her in the back and had intercourse with her as she lay dying. The suspect had then headed bush.

The following day we interviewed aboriginal witnesses and then drove to Mulga Park, a Cattle Station about 70 Kilometres South, near the S.A. Border where the suspect, Barry Mutarubi had been seen. We took along aboriginal Norman, who knew the suspect well and was the main witness. The Trackers spent the day repairing saddles and then set off with the camels for Mulga Park. We left one Tracker with the camels at Mulga Park and drove to Ernabella Mission in South Australia, seeking information as to the suspects whereabouts, without success. We returned to Mulga Park and went by camel to Ayliff Hill, just inside the S.A. Border, where the suspect's tracks

had last been seen. No new tracks were found there. The old tracks indicated he could have been heading for the Kelly Hills, back in the Territory to the North West, where he could have hidden out. We searched that area and then headed South West to the foot of the Musgrave Ranges, checking around water holes for tracks, again without success. We returned to Mulga Park on Friday 22nd May.

As there was a track suitable for a four wheel drive to Ayers Rock and Mount Olga we checked the vicinity of the water holes in that area, again without success. We later heard from aboriginals that the suspect had crossed the border into West Australia. We decided to abandon the search, as the suspect would be likely to return eventually to his own country. I headed back to Erldunda with the camels.

When I arrived at Erldunda I found the young camel had died, possibly from shock. The Station owner, Sid Staines was ill, so I sent the Trackers and the witness Norman to Finke with the camels while I drove Sid in his utility up the track to Alice Springs Hospital for treatment. I was glad of the opportunity, as I was anxious to visit Alice Springs. Madge had been required to be in the A.I.M Hostel at Alice Springs before the end of the month, awaiting the birth of our second child. My patrol return for the month showed I had travelled 1,800 Kilometres, 500 of them by camel. I did not know it at the time, but this was to be the last Police camel patrol. Perhaps it might even be re-enacted on the 50th anniversary in May 2003, from the Finke to Ayers Rock.

Our first two children were born while we were stationed at Finke. This meant Madge travelled by train to Alice Springs for prenatal visits. It was expected that a mother-to-be would leave home and go to the A.I.M Hostel three weeks before the due date of the baby. This was fine if the projected date of birth was right. I had to leave on this last camel patrol in May, just a week before Madge was due to go up to the A.I.M. hostel to await the birth of our second child. She couldn't take Tess, then 15 months old, to the A.I.M with her, so we had to send for my mother to come up from Sydney to look after Tess and to do the rations etc. This was an unwellcome extra expense, but you just had to cope. Madge's parents were living in Adelaide but her mother was expecting her 7th child in July, so she could not help out.

Of course baby Patricia was late arriving, so



Madge was in Alice Springs two weeks longer than expected. I arrived in Alice Springs just in time for the baby's birth. Madge had her 21st birthday in the hospital a few days later. I came back up from the Finke when the baby was a week old and Madge insisted on coming back to Finke on the Ghan, against Dr. Welton's advice. I signed her out, and home we went.

The Ghan had been the scene of an earlier incident. We were flying back to Alice from our first leave, in 1952. We needed to be in Alice by lunch-time to catch the Ghan, but the TAA plane was running late. The pilot radioed to the Railway Station and arranged for the Ghan to pick us up at the side of the line where it passed the Alice aerodrome. A car was ready and raced us over and set us down by the line, where the train duly stopped and picked us up. However the next day I was ill with a high fever. The Flying Doctor plane was sent down to take me to Alice. I was admitted to the Hospital with Pneumonia. Madge decided to catch the next 'Ghan' train, which was two days away. With the baby Tess in the basket she caught the train to Alice. The Conductor was 'Aspro' Lyons who gave Madge a sleeping cabin and kept an eye on Tess while Madge had an evening meal. When she finished the meal and had fed the baby she placed Tess on the seat whilst she adjusted herself. Then the train derailed. The top bunk, which formed the back of the seat in the daytime, came down and sandwiched the baby between it and the seat. Thankfully she wasn't hurt but Madge got quite a shock. The derailment happened about 40 miles South of Alice Springs. After a long wait for a bus the journey to Alice continued. The bus appeared to have faulty steering and wobbled its way to Alice Springs. Madge and baby arrived in Alice in the early hours of the next morning and she then had to carry her luggage and the baby to her sister's house. By the time she got to the Hospital she looked like she should have been admitted.

When we went on leave in March 1954, Constable Millgate took over at the Finke. He was provided with a Landrover and did not use the camels. I was posted to Alice Springs on my return from leave. Some months later I had to return to the Finke. Geoff Millgate had broken an arm in a fight with an aboriginal called Gilligan. I had some trouble with Gilligan but I had convinced him to leave Finke and get a job on a Station. A Flying Doctor plane, a converted Tiger Moth was sent to bring Geoff to the Alice Springs

Hospital. I travelled down lying on the stretcher in the body of the plane, looking over the pilots shoulder. When I arrived the townspeople had subdued Gilligan and locked him in the cell. I escorted him to Alice Springs by train.

Stanley followed me from the Finke to Alice Springs, and I was able to get him a job as a Tracker. In 1956, whilst still stationed at Alice Springs, I raided an aboriginal camp at Yuendumu at dawn one day, with Tracker Stanley, in search of a suspect in another matter. Stanley recognised Barry Mutarubi's tracks in the camp so I was able to arrest both suspects. I had never seen Barry and would not have found him without Stanley.

At his trial Barry's lawyer pleaded provocation, on the grounds that the girl he had killed had called him 'Karl'u' (erect prick). The Judge held that whilst words could not amount to provocation in our culture, they could in his. He was sentenced to six months for manslaughter.

Norman's evidence, from the tracks, was that Barry had followed the girl, who was hunting rabbits. He had speared her in the back and then had intercourse with her as she lay dying. Of course this was all inference from the tracks he had seen, he had not witnessed the actual events.

In April 1986 the Northern Territory Police celebrated the Centenary of Police presence in Alice Springs. Ex members of the Force gathered from around Australia. A group photo of the last of the cameleers was taken. It shows 'Hanger Bill' McKinnon, Alf 'Broken Nose' Johnson, 'Big Bill' Littlejohn, Ron 'Brownie' Brown and the author, Tony 'Ned' Kelly

A T T E N T I O N
WANTED
<i>Articles of interest for inclusion in issues of the Citation.</i>
<i>Please forward to:</i> Garth Macpherson C/- Community Relations PO BOX 2630 ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871



**THE ADVERTISER (ADELAIDE)
STORIES COVERING THE**

SUNDOWN MURDERS
Adelaide Advertiser 11 December 1957
Page 1

AIR SEARCH FOR N.T. TRAVELERS

A Bristol Freighter plane will leave Edinburgh Airfield at 6 a.m. today to continue the search for three people overdue on a car trip from Alice Springs to Adelaide. The plane will carry, emergency supplies of water, food and blankets.

The three missing people are Mrs. H. N. Bowman and her daughter Miss Wendy Bowman, both of Glen Helen station, via Alice Springs, and Mr. Thomas Whelan, of Unley road, Unley.

RAAF assistance was called for yesterday afternoon after police and the Flying Doctor Service had spent two days checking all outback stations from Port Augusta to Alice Springs without finding any trace of the party.

A Winjeel two-seater trainer plane left Woomera and made a two-hour flight before dusk as far as Coober Pedy, 592 miles north-west of Adelaide.

Flying at about 500 ft. the pilot noticed a number of vehicles travelling along the main north-south road, but saw no sign of the missing car.

SEARCH PLAN

Today the longer range Bristol aircraft will fly over the route as far as Mabel Creek, or further depending on reports received by the Rescue Coordination Center in Adelaide. Mabel Creek is about 30 miles west of Coober Pedy.

Mr. H. N. (Pete) Bowman, who flew to Adelaide last week ahead of his wife and daughter, said yesterday that the party had enough water and food for three days when they left Glen Helen station.

He spent yesterday with the chief of the Police Rescue Intelligence Center (Superintendent E. L. Bonython) while checks were made with stations along the route.

After a telephone conversation with Mr. Bert Sutton, an Alice Springs garage proprietor, Superintendent Bonython told RAAF air search officers that the party was previously lost between

Coober Pedy and Kingoonya.

RUGGED

Mr. Sutton arrived in Adelaide on Monday afternoon with his wife and three children.

The Sutton family left Alice Springs by car 24 hours after the missing party.

Mr. Sutton told police that he believed the party was lost in the most rugged country encountered on the trip from Alice Springs.

A report that the party's car had been sighted out from Kingoonya was found to be incorrect yesterday. According to police, the car was of another make.

Reference

The Advertiser, (Adelaide) 11th December 1957, page 1

MISSING PARTY FOUND MURDERED
THREE BODIES HIDDEN IN SCRUB
Finding of car 14th December 1957 P1

The dramatic identification of the missing Vanguard car by searching RAAF Lincoln bomber was graphically described by the pilot PO M. T. Richardson) at Alice Springs last night.

The car was first sighted by Capt. Gerald Santy, a US Air Force officer on ex-change with the RAAF at Sale, Vic., who was navigator in the Lincoln.

PO Richardson said:-

“We first sighted the Vanguard car at 11.57 a.m. under a group of scrub trees, about 50 yards west of the Alice Springs - Adelaide main road and about four miles south of Sundown station.

“The trees screened the car from observation by motorists passing along the Alice Springs - Adelaide road.

“BUZZED”

“Having noticed a blue Austin A40 car, approaching about 15 miles back from the direction of Alice Springs, we flew to-wards the Austin and buzzed it until the driver stopped.

“After the Austin had started to move south again we flew how over it and dropped a message, which the driver picked up.

“The message said: “A car, similar to that reported missing, is stopped, four miles south of Sundown and 50 yards to the right of the main road.

“If you identify the car as the missing blue



Vanguard and in need of assistance, please wave something white.

"We then flew back over the Vanguard and directed the Austin to it.

"The two men in the Austin leaped from their car, opened the Vanguard door and looked inside.

"Then both men began frantically waving white handkerchiefs at us.

RADIOED

"We at once climbed the Lincoln to get good radio contact with Alice Springs and radioed for a ground party and aircraft from Alice Springs to be sent.

"When we flew low over the Vanguard, we were able to make out with binoculars the car's registration number, which appeared to be NT 3069 (that of the missing Vanguard).

"THREE BODIES HIDDEN IN SCRUB

The bodies of the three people who had been missing in Central Australia since last Friday were found hidden near the Alice Springs Adelaide main road about three miles south of the deserted sundown Station homestead yesterday afternoon.

Police believe that all three were murdered in the car in which they were travelling, their bodies driven to the spot, and covered with a tarpaulin over which tree branches had been thrown. A rifle had been poked under the bodies. The car had then been hidden on the opposite side of the road three-quarters of a mile away.

The party consisted of Mrs. H.N. Bowman, about 45, her daughter Wendy, 14, of Glen Helen Station, via Alice springs, and Mr. Thomas Whelan, 22, of Unley Road, Unley.

The discovery of the bodies followed the finding by an R.A.A.F. Lincoln bomber of the missing Vanguard car about noon.

The bomber radioed Alice Springs to send a ground party to the scene.

Blacktrackers were flown to the spot by a Conellan Airways plane.

As Soon as the bodies were discovered the plane took off for Alice Springs again and returned with a doctor.

TRACKS

News of the tragedy spread like wildfire throughout the outback and within a matter of hours more than a dozen cars had congregated at the scene.

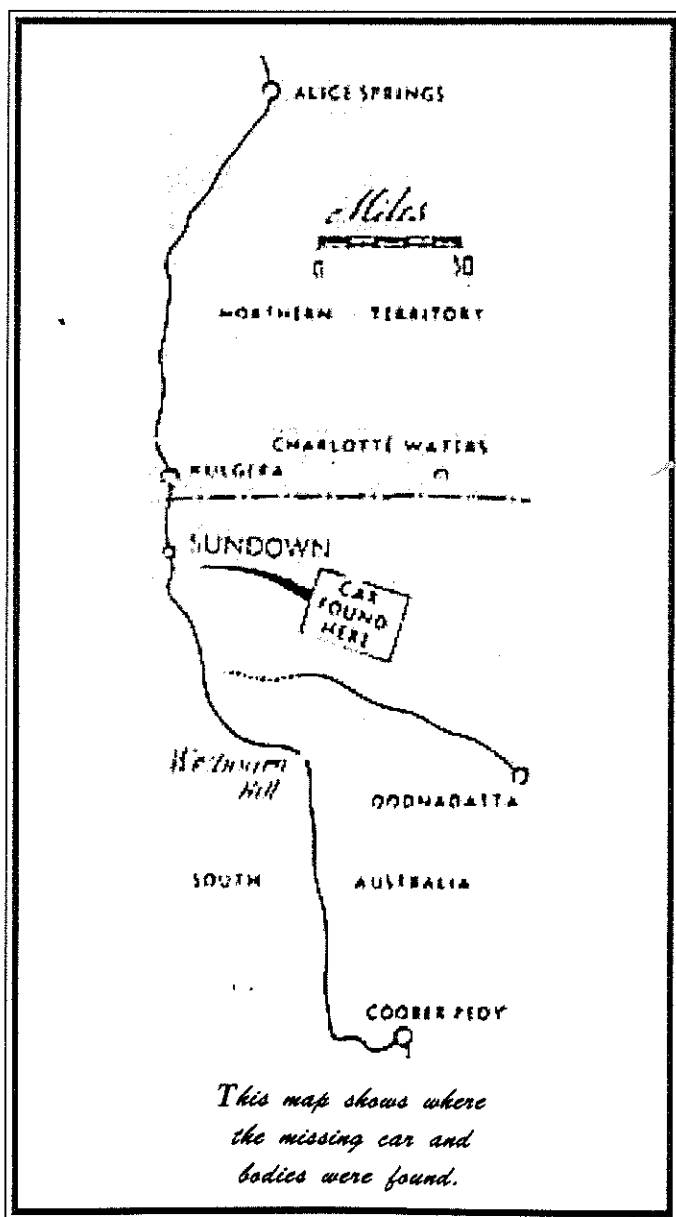
Tracks were found leading from the car to the spot where the bodies were found.

Meanwhile a wide search is being conducted for a man whom police wish to interview.

The man who had been in the locality during the past few days, is described as being short and stockily built, about 50 to 60 years of age, wearing long trousers cut off at the knees and new long stockings, black knitted jersey and hat.

A man answering this description was given a ride by truck to Alice Springs by M. Robinson, of Alice Springs about two days ago.

It is believed that blacktrackers followed a par-





ticular foot print from the car to the bodies and from the bodies away into the scrub.

Light rain which fell during the past few days, however has obliterated the tracks.

Sundown Station is just south of the NT Border and about 33 miles South of Kulgera Station, where the party was last seen.

Homicide detectives are rushing by car to the scene, and will bring the bodies back to Adelaide.

The police party consist of detectives K. Moran, C Hopkins, and police photographer F. O'Neil, all of Adelaide and Detectives A. Palmer and C. Lehmann, of Port Augusta.

They will join Constable Conmee, of Finke, who is guarding the bodies until their arrival. He was at Kulgera Station when the car was sighted from the air by a Lincoln bomber, just off the main road in low scrub.

THEORY

Police believe the three people were possibly attacked in the car by a hitch hiker to whom they had given a ride.

This theory is substantiated by the discovery of blood and hair in the back seat of the Vanguard although it has not been identified as human blood and hair.

It is not known how they died.

Their attacker is believed to have covered their bodies with a tarpaulin and is then thought to have made his way back to the main road and obtained a ride in a passing vehicle.

Police believe the three people were killed within a few hours of leaving Kulgera station on their way to Adelaide.

FLEW TO THE SCENE

A description of the finding of the bodies of the missing party was given by Mr. Eddie Connellan, of Connellan Airways, last night.

Mr Connellan took a leading part in the search, and flew the Finke Policeman Constable Conmee to the scene of the tragedy.

He said it was clear from tracks and blood in the car that the occupants had been murdered in the car.

CAMOUFLAGE

The car had been driven off the road and the

bodies had been taken out, covered with a tarpaulin and camouflaged with bushes.

A rifle had been poked under the bodies.

The car had then been driven along the road and across to the opposite side, and had been hidden in bushes making it hard to see from the air and invisible from the road.

Constable Conmee, who had flown with him to the airstrip near the site, had examined the bodies and identified them, Mr Connellan said.

Constable Conmee had said he thought there were signs of violence, but the bodies were badly decomposed.

SHOT

Mr Connellan said when his plane landed at the disused Sundown station airstrip, Mr Pat Davis of Hamilton Downs station who was on board the aircraft had remarked that he heard a shot.

None of the other passengers heard it, but, said Mr. Connellan, "the fellow could be in the area and the shot could have been a suicide shot."

"Since then, we have told police about the shot and suggested that it be investigated with the possibility of the man living in the old homestead at Sundown station".

Mr. Connellan said a suspicious character had been seen twice in the past week on the north-south road.

On one occasion he dashed off and tried to hide when a car passed, which "was a bit unusual, because people don't foot walk in this country".

The man had been seen by Mr and Mrs Frank Wilkins of Kulgera station, on Wednesday.

On the previous day he had been given a meal at Eridunda station.

Later on Wednesday he had been picked up and given a ride to Alice Springs.

Police were investigating his whereabouts now.

The Party left Glen Hellen station on the morning of December 5 and was due to reach Mr Whelon's home in Unley on December 7.

Mr Bowman had flown to Adelaide earlier in that week.

They were last seen at Kulgera station 164 miles south of Alice Springs, on the morning of



December 6.

On Tuesday when fears for their safety mounted, police began checking with outback stations in the hope of tracing them.

A Winjeel trainer plane from Woomera also began searching outback tracks for the missing car.

On Wednesday, an RAAF Bristol Freighter from Edinburgh Airfield, a Connellan Airways Beechcraft plane from Alice Springs and a Lockheed plane owned by the Bush Church Aid Society and based in Ceduna made sweeps along a 180 mile stretch.

AIR SEARCH

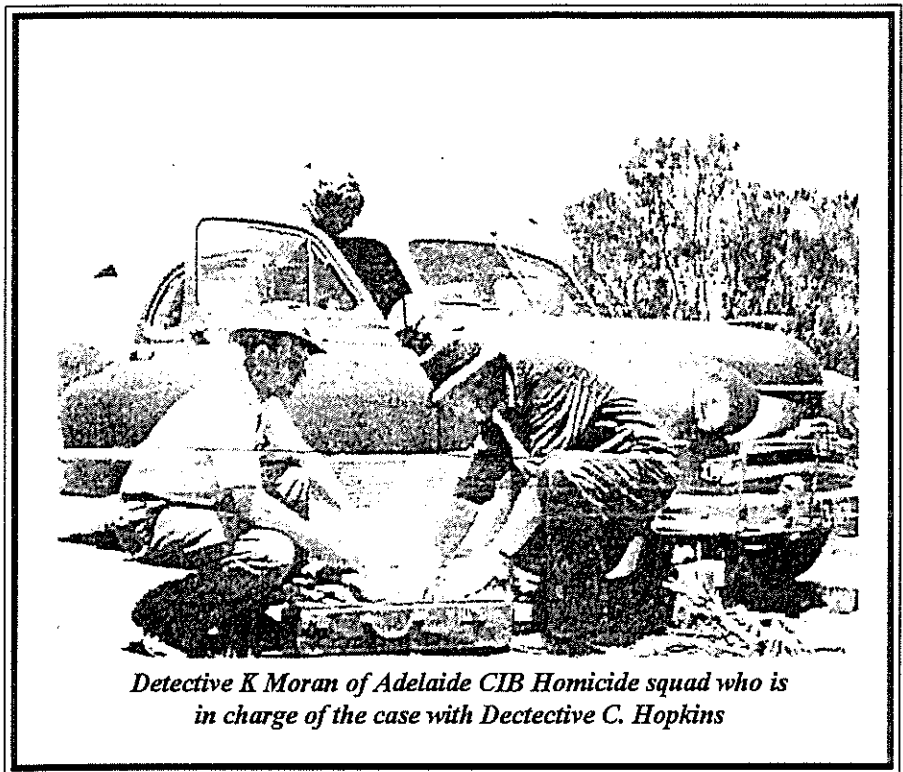
An RAAF Lincoln bomber of longer range joined the search on Thursday and the police Land Rover left Marree.

The manager of "The Advertiser" Network (MR K.A. Macdonald) said last night:-

"All our staff, including those from our country stations, are greatly saddened by the tragic news.

"During the course of Mr Bowman's long service with 5AD as chief reporting engineer, his family had come to be our friends.

"Mr Whelan had been associated with 5AD since his days as a performer in the Kangaroo club parades, from which he joined our staff, finally transferring to the technical department.



Detective K Moran of Adelaide CIB Homicide squad who is in charge of the case with Dectective C. Hopkins

"It was there that he developed an aptitude for recording and under Mr. Bowmans tuition, was able to take over our recording activities on Mr. Bowman's retirement last May.

"He had displayed outstanding ability and promise, and his pleasant, cheerful and helpful disposition had won him many friends".

We will be following up with other news clips on this case in following newsletters.

*TO
THE ADVERTISER
(ADELAIDE)
&
JOHN MERRIMAN*

MANY THANKS FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN FURNISHING US WITH ALL THE NEWS PAPER CLIPPINGS THAT SURROUNDED THE SUNDOWN MURDERS. THESE NEWS CLIPPINGS HAVE ENABLED OUR READERS TO TAKE A WALK BACK THROUGH HISTORY.