



CITATION

Sesquicentenary of the NT Police



The year 2020 is a special year for the Northern Territory Police Force.

The Northern Territory Police Force is the oldest institution in the Northern Territory, and the year 2020 marks 150 years of continuous policing to the community of the Northern Territory.

In January 1870 Sub Inspector Paul Foelsche arrived in the then town of Palmerston to begin policing in the Northern Territory on behalf of the SA Mounted Police Force. Since then, there has been a continuing police organisational presence in the Northern Territory. Although there have been several changes in administration, there were shared personnel from one organisation to another, giving an unbroken line of policing service to the NT.

The Commissioner of Police has asked your Society to act as the coordinating organisation, in partnership with the other

members of the NT Policing family, of the 150th Anniversary or Sesquicentenary. We were happy to accept the challenge.

At this stage, planning for the celebrations in 2020 has only just begun but I ask that you commence making plans to visit the NT in the dry season of 2020 in order to join with us in making it a year to remember.

It is hard to be precise about timing at this stage, but the major celebration will take place over about a week in July 2020. There will also be some events in other centres in the NT that may be worth attending.

We will keep you advised as planning continues.

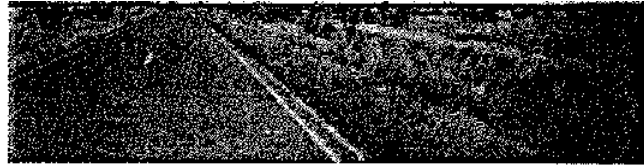
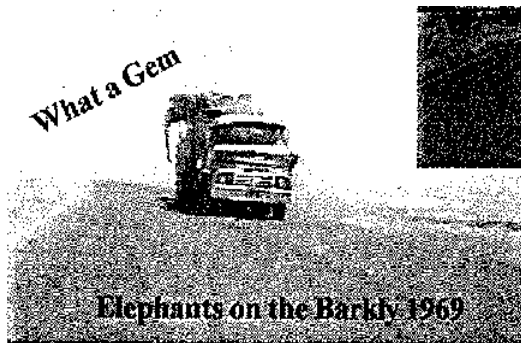
Mark McAdie APM

President

The NT Police Museums and Historical Society Inc.



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Police Station Avon Downs 1967

For three years, from 1967 to 1970, we lived at Avon Downs. Travelling west along the Barkly Highway from Avon Downs to the Stuart Highway, there were only two roadside inns along a barren and lonely 360km strip of bitumen - Frewena and Barry Caves. Both places are no more. Sixteen years ago, the Barkly Homestead Roadhouse was established at the junction of the old Alexandria Downs stock route. However, in our day, they provided a welcome break - albeit with many shortcomings - from the long journey that Harry had to make on patrol at least once a fortnight, and for me several times a year.

When we first arrived at Avon Downs, Herb and Mrs Harms were running the roadside inn at Barry Caves, approximately 68 kilometres west of Avon Downs. The stone walls and desert landscape gave it the appearance of a Mexican hacienda, however, in that remote area it was a haven for truckies, tourists and other travellers alike. Herb's sober and serious nature was to be of great assistance to Harry when stolen vehicles were on the

road. Herb would ring Harry and advise him that a particular vehicle had just refuelled there and was heading our way. That enabled Harry to set up a roadblock. Harry could gauge the time it would take for the vehicle to reach Avon, and of night time he could see the lights the moment they came over the 'jump up', some 22 kilometres from the police station.

That jump up was removed years later when the road was upgraded. What stunned many an apprehended felon was the element of surprise. They could never work out how Harry had known that they were travelling his way. Apart from two-way radio, the main means of communication was the manually operated party line telephone. From Camooweal just over the border in Queensland, it ran through Avon Downs Cattle Station and Police Station, Soudan Station, Barry Caves, Wonarah, Frewena and Tennant Creek. Each place had its own code, similar to Morse code. Avon was, for instance, a long, a short and a long ring.



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I was telephone office keeper at Avon. Because the cattle station was on eastern standard time and the police station on central standard time, it meant I had to be in attendance half an hour earlier than the other places. I'd quite often start operating at 5.30am and still be going until 10-11pm. It was an unspoken honour system that one did not listen in to others' calls. However, one day when Graham took suddenly ill, I phoned the hospital in Tennant Creek to seek advice and was told to bring him straight in - a 300km plus trip. I hadn't taken one step away from the phone, when it rang. It was Mrs Harms from Barry Caves. I'd heard that she was an eavesdropper but until that moment I wasn't sure.

Apparently in her vast and lonely planet existence, Mrs Harms couldn't help herself. I tried to understand that people do strange things in strange places and thus was more forgiving of her little foible when she said that she'd heard that our baby was sick, and that cornflour and water was a good remedy for diarrhoea! I was so flabbergasted that I thanked her and gently hung up the receiver.

The following is a little story based on truth, evocative of Barry Caves, that I had published in an anthology, *Life Beyond the Louvres*, in 1989. I called it *A Fine Specimen*.

It was one of those little outback pubs that stood like an oasis amidst the barren moonscape of the Barkly

Tablelands. That such places where people with cut throat petrol pirates and cold pie merchants did not in the least diminish their appeal to thirsty wayfarers.

Fred knew the next watering hole was Frewena, an hour's drive to the west, or eastwards for two hours to Camooweal. Fred knew too that his rheumy eyed, sallow skinned and slack mouthed countenance, would take on an almost angelic appearance to travellers in the last throes of dehydration and exhaustion. They'd sit up and beg like slaver puppies at the mere mention of a cold beer. That a stubby cost twice as much wouldn't even make them flinch. By the time they'd had their fill they'd be beyond arguing about prices anyway. It was only the local cowboys and ringers who got a bit argumentative at times. They settled down when Fred unstrapped his wooden leg and started flaying them with it.

When Fred and Barbara took over Barry Caves back in the late sixties they'd dreamed of building the place up into a grandiose five-star motel. The previous owners had extolled the virtues of the place to such an extent, that when Fred had first set eyes on his 'dream', he collapsed into a quivering delirium of remorse. From that day onwards, he was never again to be found sober. His contribution to upgrading the place was a single coat of whitewash over the rough, stone hewn, hacienda-style motel units. Barbara planted a few contorted cactus



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plants out front to give the place a 'bit of greenery'. Fred ran the bar, Barbara, the dining room. A mouldy plastic strip curtain enticed the hungry into the eatery. Mismatched chrome chairs and chipped Laminex tables covered with tattered polythene cloths saw half empty salt and pepper shakers corralled alongside messy sauce bottles. Greying artificial roses hung limply from cracked wall vases, with desert cockroaches scabbling and scuffling around the walls and floor.

One day a dear little old lady tourist had rushed into the bar. In her shaking hand she held a pale green opaque stone.

'How much can I have this for?' She eagerly asked Fred. Fred took the 'gem' from her. He got his magnifying glass from the drawer and carefully examined it. Turning it this way and that he finally handed it back.

Blowing several flies off his moist lower lip, Fred replied reluctantly, 'I'll let you have it for \$15.' With her newfound treasure, the happy lady rushed back to the coach where the other passengers oohed and ahed with great envy.

'Bit rude, Fred', drawled Dan from Avon. 'Whadaya mean?' snorted Fred.

'Well I mean to say, it was only a lump of old cement.'

'I run my business on I and E - Ignorance and Enterprise. Their ignorance and my enterprise',

smirked Fred. 'She's 'appy. I'm'appy.'

The Englishman stayed on in the bar long after the sun faded beneath the spinifex and coolabahs. Most of the station folk had drifted out to their Toyotas, leaving Fred, Harry and me.

Because of his gregarious nature, Fred soon became enveloped in a little cloud of near boredom. Suddenly he slapped a chunk of rock on the counter in front of my husband. Whadaya reckon that is, 'Arry?'

Harry knew it was ribbon-stone but decided to string Fred along a little. The tourist became intrigued too. Finally, Harry said, 'Ribbon-stone'. Fred appeared a little crestfallen.

"Ere, what's this then?' Fred snarled.

'Malachite' ventured the tourist.

'And this', said Fred, reached for the big green jar.

In the darkened bar no amount of squinting could penetrate the thick glass. In a flash the jar was back on the high shelf.

'Petrified wood?' Na. That's what they all say.'

'Where did you say it come from?'

'Picked it up along the road, mate.'

"Good God, man, it must be worth a fortune!"

'You bet!' This went on and on for hours until finally the Englishman



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exclaimed, 'I don't think you know what it is yourself. Anyway, I'm going to bed.'

At sunrise the next day the rather seedy Pom fuelled his car for the run into Tennant.

'Couldn't for the life of me work out what it was', he said to Barbara as she slapped the cap roughly back on his tank.

'Oh, you mean the elephant turd? Fred's had a helluva lot of fun with that since the circus came through.'

Frewena had been established during the bituminising of the highway pre-World War II, however in post-war years it was being run as a fuel and refreshment stop for the travelling public. As with so many Territory roadside inns, depending on the proprietors at the time, it too had a chequered history. When we first went to Avon, two young men were running Frewena. One shimmering hot day we were on our way home from Tennant Creek and pulled in for a cold drink or two. Because the swimming pool looked so inviting, Harry asked if we could have a dip. With permission granted, I jumped in- straight onto a broken stubby bottle. While my badly gashed foot was being bandaged we asked why the glass was in the pool. The languid response was, "Oh yeah, that's

right, we had a party there last night, smashed a few floating bottles, thought we'd got 'em all out."

Another day I'd ordered a much-needed cuppa. Out came a tray complete with small aluminium teapot, milk and the like. When I lifted the pot to pour my tea, out popped a beetle. Having become

used to such minor

annoyances in the bush, I simply lifted the little beastie out, drank my tea, and went to the counter to pay. The price quoted was ridiculously high, however when I asked how much extra it was for

the beetle, I was met with genuine apologies and my proffered coinage was gently pushed back towards me. Eventually, when new owners took over at Frewena, they made a valiant and satisfactory endeavour to rid the place of its reputation for violent brawling and other unsavoury conduct involving certain kinds of relief for truckies and ringers alike.

When threatened by drink-crazed patrons, the new owner, Eugene, would reach under the bar for his own self-styled 'baton'. Once the offender set eyes on the sawfish saw, fashioned with a good gripping handle, about 400mm in length, they backed off.



Harry, Christine and baby Graham with the late Robbie Robbins (NT Fire Chief)

Photo Courtesy Christine Cox



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There have been several notorious and well-publicised murders on the Barkly over the years but there are many other horror stories that go unreported. I was to experience the most terrifying drive of my life along the Barkly Highway. I normally travelled in the police Toyota with Harry but on this particular day because it was necessary to take both vehicles into Tennant Creek; I was to drive our Holden station wagon

Just before our early morning departure from Avon Downs, the phone rang. I muttered my annoyance as I unlocked the door leading on to the large fly-wired veranda. Gold and mandarin slices crisscrossed the blackness of the morning sky. The air, thick with the honey sweet aroma of citrus, was already warm and the flies swarmed around the flowering grape vine on the trellis just outside the front door "Good morning, Avon Downs Police Station. Yes, he's here. I'll get him for you..."

"Got to go, darl I'll wait for you at Frewena". Harry crushed me to his massive chest and enveloped me in his powerful arms. His Old Spice aftershave and my Yardley lavender enveloped us in a loving aura. We'd become closer in that lonely land. We each depended on. The other more than ever. As he kissed me hard on my lips I went weak at the knees. God, how I loved this man.

"Hey enough of this!" Harry said, "I'll get going and meet you at

Frewena. You'll be half an hour behind me, right?"

"Yep, and I'll drive every centimetre of the 400 kays ever so carefully. I'll have our two babies on board, remember," I laughed. "I'm really looking forward to the drive. Breaks the monotony of being stuck out here by myself for weeks on end. And best of all I can go shopping."

With the sun just bursting over the distant horizon, and singing 'I'm on the road again', I gunned the car into action and set off to the west. In about two hours I'd meet Harry. Baby Ellen was asleep in her bassinette while two-year-old Graham sat next to me in his car seat happily chewing on his favourite blue rabbit rattle.

Because the children were quiet and contented, I didn't stop at Barry Caves, some 100kms from Avon. Still singing to myself I slowed down to 80kmph. as I passed the little roadside inn, and then put my foot down to 100kms. Harry had always told me that was a safe speed and that if anything untoward happened, I'd be able to control the vehicle without any problems.

My reverie was suddenly shattered. The squeal of tyres and a babble of obscene voices rent the air. Right beside me, not more than a metre away, was another station wagon, older, much older than mine, and in it were four men. They made rude gestures with their hands and yelled obscenities at me. My blood ran cold. My face flushed hot and cold.



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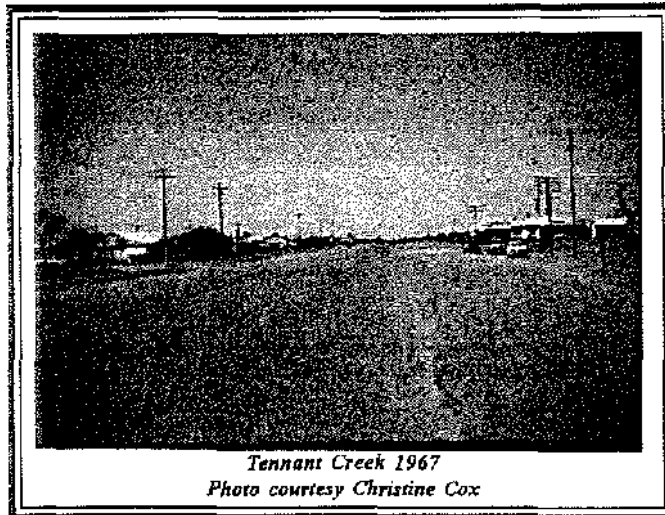
My head spun. In an instant, I decided to slow down. They must've seen me as I drove past Barry Caves and decided then on their little game. They slowed and stayed abreast. I kept the wheels on the bitumen and mouthed the words, "Please stop doing this " Great guffaws of laughter emerged from the louts. A hand touched the window More laughter. "I beg you, please stop!" I pleaded, burning with terror.

They dropped back, and I sped up a little. Just to a hundred 'Never over a hundred', I heard Harry's words. They drew alongside on the wrong side, on the gravel this time, spraying my windows with a shower of pebbles. "I've got babies with me," I shrieked. They roared laughing

The landscape of low contorted bushes rushed by. Nowhere to turn. No one to help. Not a soul lived in this neck of the woods. I'd never felt so alone in all my life. Would I, should I go faster? What if I rolled? Harry would find us - or some other decent traveller - would report the accident to Harry. He'd never know that the louts had been part of the story. He'd just think I'd been driving too fast and had lost control.

Would his journal entry be like all the others? Clipped, formal, precise - "Fatal accident. Bandy Highway. Fifty kilometres east of Frewena. Three dead. One woman. Two children. "Would he load the bodies into the plastic body bags like the others he'd had to attend to? Would a grown man cry? By then the louts would have laughed their way into Tennant Creek.

Would Harry even believe me, if I managed to survive? He had a habit of dismissing my concerns. He was a policeman through and through. The odd times I'd given him the low down on incidents that had happened in his absence, he often hadn't even journaled them.



*Tennant Creek 1967
Photo courtesy Christine Cox*

When it was necessary to journal events concerning me, he just put 'wife' in the journal. He didn't even give me a name. That was the one thing I hated about him. So bloody officious. Always ready to give me a lecture but never ready to really listen to what I was telling him. Wife' reported this, or 'wife' reported that. I was as anonymous as a speck of dust so much for the love that I'd felt for him only an hour or so beforehand. The pendulum on that psychologically ambivalent metre between love and



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hate swung over to 'H' as I tried to evade my car-borne assailants.

I was his back stop at home. His offsider. I tended to the injured, the ill, and the enquiries when he was out on patrol. It was me that spent the lonely nights lying awake listening to the dog's bark and the odd uninvited traveller rummaging around looking for petrol in the police yard at some ungodly hour of the morning. I was no martyr, but I wanted him to take more notice of what I did behind the scenes. He would if I were to be killed by these 'animals' that were terrorising me now. My life was flashing before my eyes.

In those days, women, especially police wives, were very much in a category similar to that of children, of being 'seen but not heard'. The police hierarchy took scant regard of anything the women had to say. It was truly a 'man's world' out in the bush. Yet when it came to relying on the wives to 'hold the fort' in the absence of the policemen, the expectations that the same 'silent' women could cope with any contingency, went unquestioned. In other words, many police wives were unsung heroes of the time and no doubt are still deserving of high praise for similar efforts in this day and age.

Job wise, Harry had had the aura of a statesman. He was little different from American presidents, Clinton excepted, whose wives were only dragged out and dusted off at election time.

It was up to me to remind him occasionally that his all, enveloping aura diminished mine, and that when I felt I'd been painted into a corner, I'd react in some way. It might be a little puff of anger, a warning, like the goanna that hissed at me once because I was sitting on it well-worn pad to the river. Or the feral cat's snarling attack when it found itself bailed up a tree. Worst of all would be the 'I'm, packing my bags' reaction akin to a mother bird being disturbed at her nest.

Regardless, my little outburst would clear the air, and everything would return to a semblance of normalcy, until the next time.

The louts were still there. Right along-side me again. The obscenities got worse. They made it clear what they wanted to do to me. The leering faces, the piercing eyes, the slobbering mouths made me aware of what a bitch on heat must feel like. Only thing was I wasn't sending out the pheromones - or whatever they were - to attract the mongrels. Some people would call them dingoes - cowards. I wouldn't. As much as the damage they might cause to sheep flocks and cattle herds, I had a healthy respect for native our dog. I'd had one as a pet when I was a kid. Dusty couldn't be compared with this pack of mongrels.

Harry would be drinking a cold can of soda water - he never drank beer when he was on duty at the bar at Frewena by now. He'd be chatting to the licensee completely unaware



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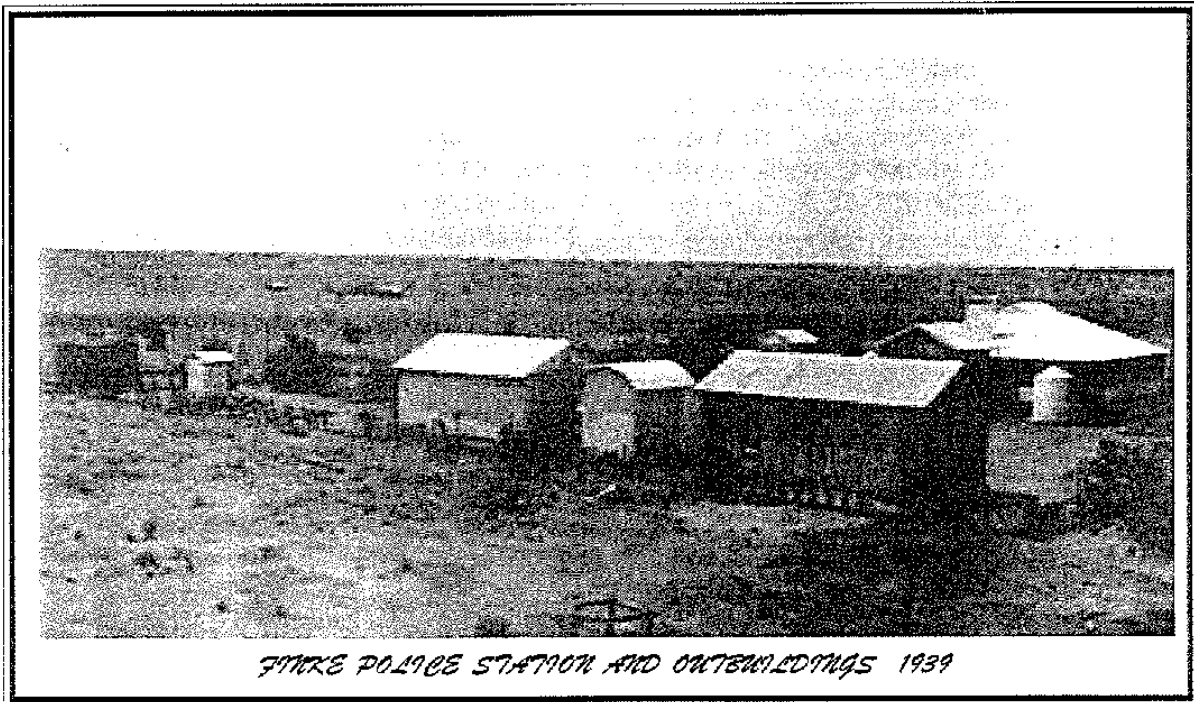
of the predicament his wife and children were in

EARLY HISTORY OF THE N.T. AND THE FINKE AREA

Written by Peter Riley 24/2/2000

The Overland Telegraph Line, 1,800 miles long, Adelaide to Darwin, was commenced at Darwin on 15th September 1870 and completed in twenty-three

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



FINKE POLICE STATION AND OUTBUILDINGS 1939

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

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



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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-Cliff 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, MC. 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



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Superintendent Stretton, dated 10th 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



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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 the direct distance to the line was, 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.



LETTER FROM TED HEATHCOCK, MOUNTED TROOPER

This letter was written, probably in 1937, by Ted Heathcock to his friend Alec Black. Ted Heathcock was a Mounted Trooper from 1st June 1913 until his death at Alice Springs on the 28th June 1944. He served at Timber Creek, Wave Hill, Maranboy, Mataranka, Roper River, Boorooloola, Darwin and Alice Springs. "My girl", to whom he so lovingly refers, was Henriette Sabina Rayney, and they were married at Mataranka on 15.11.1931. A display at our museum tells of one of her courageous deeds. Ruth was later awarded the M.B.E.

The book, "Sister Ruth" by Victor C Hall is a biography of this passionate woman.

Dear Alec:

It was a pleasant surprise to get a letter from you. It arrived yesterday & only having two days to get through a 6-weeks mail means the typewriter. So please excuse the latter.

My girl did not know what she was letting herself in for or she would not have given the W.W. that item.

She's had hordes of letters this mail & last, but they live and learn. They wanted me to give them an account of our outback

police life but they make such a song about it that when one reads afterwards one could murder them.

However that's that. Now this letter of yours. I must say it was a pleasure to receive it as I had often wondered what had happened to you. Whether you had stopped one or what.

I wonder what happened to Billy Wilson (with the wound)? He was engaged to Miss Summerhayes of Cooktown. Do you remember her?. she was a perfect pianist & I've often wondered how they got on. Billy was too much of a b-hoy though to settle down I think.

Yes, I remember Houston, Grentell & Wally Lattimer. I heard Lattimer lost his foot. He had a mate named Harry Stone, a fine sort of chap I have often wondered how he got on too.

I met another one named Walter Staines of Townsville when I was on holiday in Brisbane last year. He was at a re-union of the 2nd L.H.B. He is a teller at the Commonwealth Bank in Bris. We had a night together.

My girl & I had a wonderful time for five months down South this time. Spent a month in Bris then 6 weeks Sydney. Overlanded it to



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Adelaide, breaking the journey at Melbourne for a while then a month in Adelaide at the Centenary, & casually overlanding it through the lakes to Alice Springs & home to Roper.

This is my third term at Roper about 10 years & now I have just received word from H.Q. that I am to take charge of Borroloola. It is next door below here & about 300 miles per road but cutting across it's about 200.

Borroloola is a good station and there is likely to be a chilling works over that side now it is Abbott who is to be made Administrator. This station has a large district comprising all the country inside the parallels 133 & 137 Long & 11 & 15^{1/2} S latitude. Including all the Islands. I love the bush & I'll still be able to love it at the `Loo' as nearly all that country is cattle.

My girl has an aptitude for the bush too so we are both in our element.

Yes, I have often looked back to the parties we used to have & I

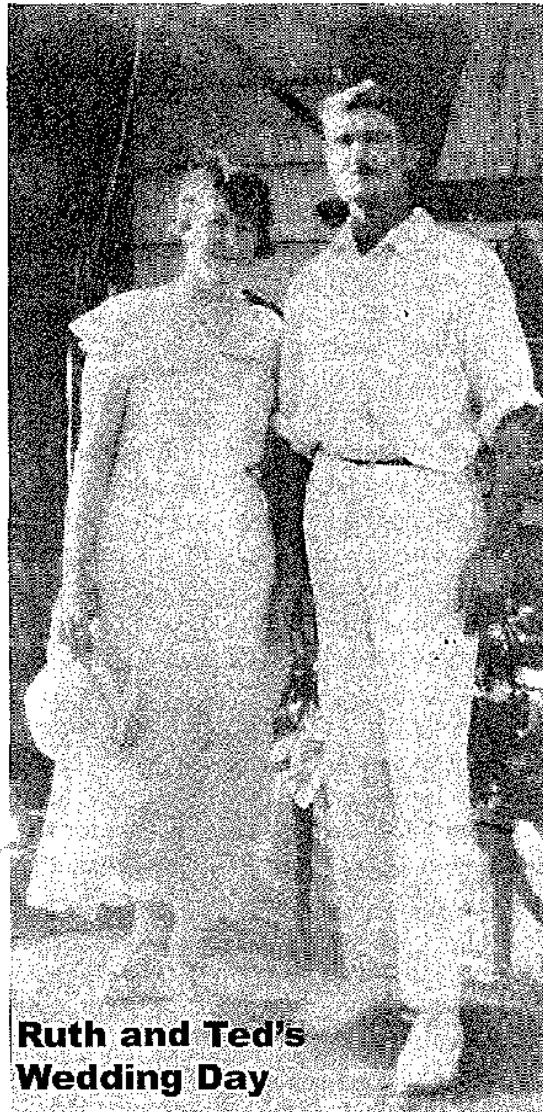
have very vivid recollections of the 'little brown jug' harmony & it's 22 years ago nearly.

It would be a pleasure to meet a few of the old boys again & I suppose we shall meet again - we weren't meant just to pass - perhaps not all together. That wouldn't do would it? I've had a fairly passable time the twenty years up here. My mate McColl was killed from this station whilst

I was away on my last but one holidays 4 years ago.

You remember the Caledon Bay mob got him. I occasionally go up that way but only if there is a murder. They are a warlike mob but I get on fairly well with them. Trade tobacco works wonders. I was also over in charge of Timber Creek District in 1918 to 1921 & then the Wave Hill District (bigger than this one but not so good)

with Tanami Goldfields on one patrol. It used to take me about 4



**Ruth and Ted's
Wedding Day**



CITATION

or 5 months when I took that trip on as I was Acting Warden & had to visit once a year. All the Southern side of this district is cattle & all West too. The Elsey - We of the Never Never - is next door but one W. about 120 miles. Although the Station or most of it is in my district.

I knew a lot of the characters in the Book; they are mostly all dead now. Old Tom Wakelum (now we shan't be long) was ahead of me by a day when he got drowned. I was on my way in to the railhead on a trip to Wembley 1924. I heard Old Tom was ahead of me & was trying to catch him up when I heard that he was missing. Crossing the King River - it was in flood - his horses got washed away & he went with them.

I spent a couple of days looking for his body but there were too many alligators to find him.

Practically all of them died unnatural deaths too... one speared, one perished, two drowned. Another perished too, the teamster Jack Grant. The Canny Scot dies in Katherine Hosp three years ago & old Jack McCarthy died last year in Adelaide

By the way, have you read the 'Sky Pilot' by Langford-Smith. That is about this quarter of the globe. He has quite an amount in about Roper & yours truly. Also a few

items about yours truly whilst I was at Mataranka for a short while. Another about this side is Sky-pilot's last flight.

Any way Alec, I must cut this a bit short just now, as I still have some official mail to complete. I shall have six weeks to write to you again between now & next mail.

We have a six weekly mail (pack) & the roads are middling. I have a Buick & I know it. I suppose there may soon be a monthly motor mail. I get a small mail through Burketown as the A.K. 'Noosa' comes here with our rations etc every month after the floods are finished, about April. It serves the Roper & Mac Arthur Rivers. Borroloola is on the latter.

Well boy it will be a pleasure again to receive one from you but my address will be next time Police Station, Borroloola. Via Camooweal for your Queensland letters or Via Burketown.

Greetings from my sweetheart & self to Mrs Black the youngsters & yourself. We have been married 6 years have no youngsters but are still sweethearts.

Yours sincerely,

(signed) Ted Heathcock.

P.S. I am Postmaster too so will put an extra date stamp on for luck.



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