## OCCASIONAL PAPERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>John Stokes and the Men of the Beagle - Discoverers of Port Darwin</td>
<td>Alan Powell</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The History of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory</td>
<td>Bishop John Patrick O'Loughlin</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chinese Contribution to Early Darwin</td>
<td>Charles See-Kee</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Point Charles Lighthouse; and The Military Occupation of Cox Peninsula</td>
<td>Mike Foley</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Operation Navy Help: Disaster Operations by the Royal Australian Navy</td>
<td>Commodore Eric Johnston</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Xavier Herbert: a Bibliography</td>
<td>David Sansome</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Founding of Maningrida</td>
<td>Jack Doolan</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Writing a History of Australia</td>
<td>C M H Clark</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Katherine's Earlier Days</td>
<td>Pearl Ogden</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Aboriginal Pharmacopoeia</td>
<td>Ella Stack</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Pioneers of the Old Track</td>
<td>Graeme Bucknall</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Arnhem Land: a Personal History</td>
<td>Ted Egan</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Elsie Bohning, the Little Bush Maid</td>
<td>Barbara James</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Elsie Bohning was born to the bush and spent her childhood and teenage years not only living in the Territory outback, but recording the events of her family’s lives. She published her writings in the Northern Territory Times (and occasionally southern papers as well) under the pen name of 'The Little Bush Maid'. The articles, which began appearing in 1921 when she was about eleven, continue through 1932. They are not only an invaluable insight into life on a Territory station of the time, but also an insight into a young girl growing into womanhood.

Elsie’s mother, Esther Jenkins, had spent part of her own childhood in the Territory when her parents, Eliza and Thomas Jenkins, worked on Lake Nash Station in the early 1890s. Esther first married Harry Bennett, by whom she had two children, and then John Bohning. Between 1902 and 1915 the couple travelled through parts of the Territory and western Queensland. After working on various properties and building cattle yards near the Katherine River, they took possession of Helen Springs Station, a 3108 square kilometre property about 160 kilometres north of what is now Tennant Creek. Here they lived for the next thirty years, and it was from here that Elsie wrote most of her ‘Little Bush Maid’ articles. They reflect the daily routine of station life as well as the special events that occurred - such as when Elsie and her mother, who were known as the 'Petticoat Drovers', took the first mob of cattle between Alice Springs and Adelaide when the railway opened in 1929.

Elsie’s natural flair for writing, along with her curiosity and resourcefulness, ensured that she was seldom lonely even though she lived so far from any urban centres. Archives and library sources indicate she wrote letters to people from all over the world, and established many firm pen friends. In one letter to the Australian Inland Mission staff she reported that she had received 40 letters by the last mail, a boon to anyone living in the ‘wayback’.

To compile the following, I searched through the Northern Territory Times from 1921 to 1932, extracting her material, and a few articles that appeared about her in the press of the day. Unless otherwise indicated, the articles are from the Times. Although there are undoubtedly some gaps, this is a reasonably comprehensive collection of her writings, the originals of which were destroyed in a fire on the station in her adult life. Spellings and punctuation have generally been left as they appeared at the time, although some minimal editing has been done for the sake of clarity. The dates generally refer to the date on which the article appeared in the paper, although the date of writing is sometimes included as well.

Since compiling these writings from newspapers, I have discovered quite a number of letters from Elsie to various members of the Australian Inland Mission. These are held by the National Library of Australia.

Barbara James
Darwin, 1990

vi
NOTE:
These pieces were written in the 1920s and 1930s, so naturally all references to measurement, weight and money are in the imperial scales.

The conversion rates are approximately:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imperial Unit</th>
<th>Metric Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£1 (one pound)</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½/- (one shilling)</td>
<td>10c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d (one penny)</td>
<td>1c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>1.6 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 yd (one yard)</td>
<td>90 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ft (one foot)</td>
<td>30 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 inch</td>
<td>2.5 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 gal. (one gallon)</td>
<td>4 L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 quart</td>
<td>1 L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cwt (one hundred weight)</td>
<td>50 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 lb (one pound)</td>
<td>0.45 kg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the language will be found to be racist in Australia in the 1990s, but when it was written it was common usage and was not meant to be offensive. It has been left unaltered.
Elsie Bohning (The Little Bush Maid) in her early teens
(Photograph from the Hilda Tuxworth Collection, State Reference Library of the NT)

viii
24 January, 1922
Helen Springs, December 25, 1921, to Mr and Mrs Cranston:

Dear Mum and Dad. - Did you see my letter in the Sydney Mail's 'Cinderella Page'. It was in the honor place. I will soon be a full-blown author, won't I. I think I felt as proud as a peacock when I say it - I have never seen a peacock - but I felt just like one anyway.

We have had no rain to speak of; just a few small showers. We have not had to put up the mosquito net so far and the nights have been nice and cool and we have to get under the blankets before morning. There are banks of clouds about and we expect rain soon. All stock are in good condition, so we are not worrying. I have 11 little kids. We made a little butter yesterday for Xmas and a pudding as big as a cartwheel and a seven decker cake and Mum shot a turkey and we killed some roosters and made jellies and toffee and baked sweet potatoes and onions, but I'll make you hungry if I tell you any more about it. Butter Cup and Pretty Face, our pet heifers, have little calves but we are not milking them as they have to go out a good way for food. What kind of Xmas did you have and how is Darwin? It has I suppose got you nearly melted down with the heat. Best love from us all and be sure and write. I remain your young friend Elsie Bohning.

[In the same issue of the paper appeared the following editorial comment:]

Judging by the little letter appended there is more in the centre of Australia than meets the eye in the press controversy over the construction of the overland railway. The writer is a wee lassie of eleven, who with her parents, visited Darwin for the first time some six months ago. Her education and that of the family has been left entirely to a particularly busy mother and the result speaks volumes for the real bush people of the far inland. Renner Springs is a far cry from civilisation. The climate, however, as well as the good things produced for consumption, counterbalances the isolation.

5 September, 1922 (written 28 July, 1922 from Newcastle Waters):
[A friend in Darwin passed this letter on to The Times:]

We had a party last night. Our friend Mr Syd Smith invited us to celebrate his birthday. It was a real good old wayback party [with] songs and recitations. I started the ball rolling with a little speech like this: 'Our Friend Mr Smith has invited us to celebrate his birthday and I trust that every person present will join in with songs and recitations and give the dear old chap a real good time. I have much pleasure in presenting our friend with a small gift and wish him many happy returns of the day'.
Then came Mick who said the first thing to do was to elect a chairman, so we elected Dad, who said 'In appointing me your chairman I am well aware that it will require a great deal of pluck and skill with no end of determination to keep these vigorous young Territorians in order. As this is our first party I hope the larrikins will refrain from passing any remarks that might disturb our artists, or throw any stale eggs at them, but putting all jokes to one side, I trust everyone present will make this little function a success'.

The first item on the program was a recitation 'The Aeroplane', by Bill. Then Mick recited 'The Useless Kid'. I followed Mick and recited 'Fairy Time' and Edith recited 'In the Bush'. Then we all had to sing. After that tea and cakes.

Mr Batherin came in from Beetaloo to see us. Mum has not seen him for 12 years, although he is our next door neighbour. We live about 100 miles away from each other. Love and regards to you from all. I still remain your loving little friend of the Never Never.

16 October, 1923
'The Little Bush Maid out in the Never Never writes us the following interesting letter,' The Times reported:

Once upon a time I spent 14 days in Darwin and they were the longest 14 days in my life. I was glad to get out to the bush again and I did not think a town could be so lonely. In the bush there is always something fresh. The birds in the air, the shrubs in the forest, the beautiful butterflies and insects that flit about the grass all have a special charm for the student of nature and all bush kiddies are keen students of good old mother nature who teaches them many things not recorded in books. My favourite author is Gene Stretton Porter and I have correspondents all over the Commonwealth and in Darwin. My goats are lambing and the little kids keep us all busy until they are strong enough to take care of themselves. We have over 200 little kids. Do you know we have the best goat in the world. Our goats can beat all the fancy breeds in the world. The Nubran Persian and the poly Swiss goats are not in it with ours, yet people call them Stinkers and sook the dogs on them and they are almost valueless. If they were in any other country they would be treasured. Here I have goats who will give two quarts of milk and rear their kids at the same time. The kids run bush with their mothers all day and at night they are separated from them and in the morning some of them will give two quarts of milk and the weaners dress up to 80 pounds. All surface water on the downs is dry and we are just shifting our stock on to the soakys. They are in good condition so far, but the frontage is getting cut out and soon they will have to walk miles for food and travelling a long way from water they will be lean and the cattle men will have an anxious look on their faces until the welcome storms come around once more. Then they will come again like a full moon. I will ring off now with all good wishes and kindest regards from the never never.
1 February, 1924
From the land of lonely places
Tall gum trees and open spaces
Comes a letter from Little Bush Maid
To the editor in town.
Perhaps he thinks it cruel
That she never went to school,
But good dame Mother Nature
Has educated her just the same.
In the hut and cattle camp,
Among the drovers in the tent
With my good old pony Anzac
For a comrade and a friend.
Did you hear my stockwhip ringing?
Did it set your wireless singing?
As we raced across the clearing
Helter skelter after that wild steer?
He had broken from the mob
Just across that stony nob
But good old Anzac saw him,
Took the bit and chased him back
Over boulders large and small
Through the melon holes and all
Always running very wide
Never faltering in his stride
And the bush maid firm and neat
Never shifted in her seat
For both the horse and she are mountain bred
For they hail from up the country
Far beyond the O.T. line.
Where the range is rough and high
And the blacksoil plains are wide
And the bush men of our land
With a quart pot in their hand
Drink in honor of our bushmaid
From the never never land.

The country is dry and bailing water all day and sometimes into the middle of the night out of wells and soaks is not all kid stakes. The dry thunderstorms have been a nuisance this year. Cattle go out storm hunting and not finding any they go looking for water on their old beats and stand round the dry waterholes until their sides are almost touching before they drift back to the wells. Some will drop on the way never to rise again. The big stations suffer most. On small holdings where there are families of boys and girls reared among the cattle very few losses occur, for some of the family will be out and coax them back to water again. It is hard work and long hours and no go slow or union rules for you have to hustle all the time to keep them alive. Yesterday Jack and I were nursing a mob homeward when a little storm worked up from the
east. It only lasted about five minutes and it was only about a mile through it, but it made a few little gullies run, so it will keep them going for two days and will give them a stomachful of grass. It all helps and maybe we will get another little storm before long. I hope so as the old cows are getting lean.

On November 30, Jack, Edith and I took a fresh team of horses to pull old J. McCarthy through the sand. We heard his horses were in poor condition and there are about eight miles of heavy sand near Renner Springs. We met him at Ringwood. 'Hello girls', he said. 'Where are you going?'

'We have come to escort you and have some fresh horses to pull you through the sand.'

'I am glad to meet you. Cripes I feel highly honored. I don't like travelling by myself. I left the old lady at Newcastle and I have no meat, all went bad.'

'Don't you worry. We have some fresh chops in our pack and some good yeast bread. We are going to look after you. Grilled chops on the coals, the sweetest meat in the world.'

That night we camped at Renner Springs and Old Mac told us tales of long ago; of the old pioneers that have passed; of floods and droughts and bush fires and it must have been midnight before we went to roost. It is pleasant camping out with a bright blue sky and the stars blinking at you overhead and gentle cool southeast breeze fanning you to sleep.

As I lay down full length on the ground at peep of day, I hear the butcher bird singing his song and all Nature seems to be welcoming the sunrise. This old mud spring misnamed Renner Springs is just about dry. It needs fencing in and a few lengths of troughing would enable the mailman and travellers with small plants to water their horses. This is urgently needed and the cost would be very small. A five pound note would fence it in.

I don't know why the Govt have not taken this in hand. Perhaps they go about with their eyes in their pockets when out joy riding in the interior, or maybe we are too far away from the seat of govt. It is a well known saying that the further you go out back the worse the Govt.

Today is a day of jubilation for the rain god has opened his sprinkler for the first time. All the boys raced around in the rain like a lot of two year old colts and romped about everywhere. The creek is just starting to run and our strenuous labours are over. We have come out of the fray good oh. We have lost only about one per cent; just an old cow or two with calves hanging on them. Two died near the homestead, both had heifer calves which I am rearing on the goats and they will make fine quiet milking cows later on.
19 February, 1924

Mustering in the Never Never

The horses are no longer idle and as each head slips into the bridle the saddles are strapped tightly on. The four happy-go-lucky youngsters mount their steeds and steer across the black soil plain (two of them are girls). They are to [help] the two brothers who are out mustering calves for the branding. Across the bushland they canter, over gullies, scrub, spinifex and range. [In the distance] they see a smoke and recognise it as spinifex because it is black, a grass smoke is always white. This is the signal that the boys are coming. Faintly they hear the crack of the stockwhips drawing near and they are a rowdy mob of cattle too. We round them up on the old drafting camp and let them settle down. We then put the quarts on the fire, spread out a saddle cloth and have lunch. All the youngsters are bush bred and like their horses, gay and game, and they have learnt the stock riding business from their babyhood. Jack is the elder boy of the party, 5 ft 11 in to his stockings and as straight as the gum saplings of his native land. He is riding the old camp mare and she can gallop after a weaner at her top then stop dead and turn on a plate and never let a beast get back on her. But its very rarely she is put at her top for dad tells us to work our cattle with our heads, not with whip and spurs. After lunch drafting commences. We just dodge them altogether, gently, so that the cows will not get away from their little calves. There are five cows on the edge of the mob with unbranded calves and we ride between them and work them a little way from the mob, steady like and without whip. No racing about or fuss and all in good order. One stops and looks after the cows and calves; the rest ride back to the mob. Jack is drafting while the others keep them on camp. Out comes a cow and a cow and a calf. Then another and yet another and the old camp mare has not gone out of a job yet. Then Jack calls out 'Right oh, we have them all. Just turn their heads towards their beat and let them go'. Then we start on our home journey with the cows and calves and it's not until the sun is slowly dipping in the west before the slip rails are up and the cows and calves secure in the yard and we ride into the homestead all abreast. In the morning we brand them but that is rather unpleasant work so I will bring down the curtain.

With greetings and best wishes to warm the heart of friendship.

1 April, 1924

Miss E. Bohning, Helen Springs station writes:

It is not everyone who is aware of the easy growing of Cape Gooseberrys and the lovely homemade jam made from them. Sow the seeds in the beginning of the storm - in good deep soil and simply give them water and keep the goats out. They are heavy fruiters and very free from insect attack. There is no fruit more easily grown and even from the vine without dressing there is no fruit nicer. I have a seed or two for those who send a stamped envelope.

The weather during the last week has been such as to bring joy to the hearts of the cattlemen. The wet season set in on Feb 7th and it has been raining off and on for ten days and all the creeks are in flood and a big
green carpet is spreading itself out over the country side and every living creature is fat and happy.

Clouds are racing o'er the mountains, 
Creek and gullies run like fountains, 
Racing through the gorge; 
Over head the storm bird rages; 
In the tall gum tree a mopoke dozes 
And life is just a bed or roses.

We are going to take a peep at Central Aussie, the heart of Australia, (or is it the dead heart of Australia?) But I'll write and tell you lots and lots of things about it when we get back Home. So cheerio for this time.

Little Bush Maid
Helen Springs 29/2/24

13 May 1924

[Elisie's poem (which follows) was preceded by this introduction:]  
That wonderful little woman, Miss Elsie Bohning of Helen Springs Station on the edge of the Barclay Tablelands is on the road with a mob of cattle making for Oodnadatta, thence by rail to Adelaide. The distance to be travelled by road is over 700 miles and some of the stages are long and dry. Miss Bohning is an exceptionally good hand among cattle, and is probably the best hand in the droving camp. We sincerely hope that our gallant little friend will come through this prodigious and very trying journey with safety and profit to herself and family.

[From Elisie:]  
I am travelling down the O.T. Line and I'm a drover's hand  
I am handy at making Johnny cakes, I am handy with the pan.  
And I can bend a mob of steers.  
Did you hear my stockwhip crack?  
No; stockwhips are forbidden with fat cattle on the track.  
Now, with all you jolly drovers from hut and camp and town!  
Come, drink the health of the drover, the king of the overland!

There they go mooching along just in front of me with a good wide spread on them nibbling at the daintiest grass and herbage. They are a mob of shorthorns, great big curly horned fellows, them as big as the side of a cart and mud fat. They were bred on the edge of the Barkly Tablelands, where the good clean cattle and the good and open hearted stockmen live. Their destination is Adelaide unless sold on the route. The distance is 700 miles to the Railhead and I am afraid their long tramp across the dead heart of Australia with its numerous dry stages will knock all the condition off them and the trainage will knock all the profits off them, as it costs about 3 lb 10/- per head to truck them from Oodnadatta to Adelaide. We have negotiated a 32 mile stage and there is a 35 mile in front of us and one 50 mile stage from Alice Springs to Deep Well.

Walkup Creek April 9
A telegraph from Alice Springs states that Miss Elsie Bohning, a lady drover, has arrived there, after a dramatic experience, with 400 cattle and a flock of goats which she was taking from Helen Springs Station to Oodnadatta, a distance of about 800 miles. While passing through the poison country south of Wycliffe Well the whole mob became affected. The drovers, including the lady, held the mob together all night and in the morning 70 beasts were dead out of the 400. Postmortem examinations showed that the grass in the animals' paunches had rolled up in hard, big lumps, preventing it from coming up for a second mastication. As an experiment one fat bullock was allowed to eat fuchsia bush and it died in one day so the drovers are satisfied that the fuchsia bush is the cause of the disasters. A further experiment will be made on the return journey. Signing herself A Little Bush Maid, Miss Bohning has sent to the Register the following narrative of the affair:

We left the old homestead at Helen Springs Station on March sixteenth with a mob of fat cattle and a flock of goats. Arrived at Tennant Creek on the twenty eighth and took delivery of two hundred mixed cattle, destination Blood's Creek. They were an ill-bred inbred lot of things and low in condition. Arrived at Bonny Creek on April fifth and took delivery of fifty steers. Very nice little fellows, but very young. Arrived at Wycliffe Well and took delivery of thirty three bullocks a splendid lot with plenty of age on them. Spelled the cattle three days, dad remarking that we must have their tucker tanks full to get them through the poison patch.

All hands nerves jumping. It's a nerve shaking job droving cattle through a poison patch. We watered about eleven in the morning and started on the thirty-three mile stage. We kept moving them along all day and camped about eight miles out. We had a good moon and intended pushing them through the following night. Kept moving all next day and part of the night, but the country was very scrubby, with spinifex reaching over their backs and we were unable to travel at night. Camped seven miles from Taylor Well in a little clearing. Arrived at Taylor Well at nine in the morning and watered at the well. Cattle all looking well. Mr Hayes, a pastoralist, remarked that our bullocks were the best he had seen for years. In the evening we pushed on about one and one-half miles, then came the smash. The first one was a poor heifer she just stopped; her ears dropped]a little froth at the mouth; then she fell to the ground. Dad was off his horse at once, butcher knife in hand. He killed and bled her. Then opened her up. First he examined the spleen, then the kidneys and liver; next the lungs. Then he spoke. 'Red water be hanged! I have never opened a healthier beast! Girls, we are up against it! It's poison all right'.

The smash began just before sundown, cows, calves, weaners and steers started tumbling over like so many fallen soldiers on a battlefield. Some
of them died peacefully, some groaning with pain, some racing round and staggering like drunken men, others bellowing as if a pack of dogs had hold of them. The bullocks went mad; they raced around their fallen comrades seeking the invisible foe. It took all hands to hold them, the sturdy night horses sticking manfully to their tasks until daylight before the infuriated mob settled down. We had seventy dead out of four hundred.

It's a sickening sight to see your cattle dying all around you and unable to do anything for them. We lost no fat bullocks that night, but the whole mob was affected. We had to travel six miles to water and it took all day to push the poor sick beggars along, a good many dropping by the wayside never to rise again.

We noticed that the cattle were not chewing their cud and wondered why. Here we called a halt to try and nurse them back to health again. We lost four fat bullocks that night. The following morning dad held some more postmortems and found out the cause. The grass in the big paunch had formed in a solid mass unableing it to come up for its second mastication.

Nine miles north of Barrow Creek we noticed some of our cattle sick again. The only bush here was the fuschia bush and we drove them out of it. We saw one bullock eating it freely and we let him eat as much as he desired. He only lived one and one-half day, therefore we think we have it, but intend to make a further test on our home journey.

The Bush Maid ends in an optimistic vein:

We reached Woodford Well, where we sold our bullocks at a fair price and our worry and strenuous labours were at an end. So what's the use of whining? Things will soon come right, for every cloud that sails the sky has a silvery lining.

5 August, 1924
We delivered the tail end of our cattle at Undoolya Station, 12 miles east of Alice Springs. Undoolya Station belongs to the Hayes Bros, an old pioneering family. There is no surface water at the homestead; a soak with some troughing on it waters some stock and a well on top of the bank the garden and homestead. The water is carried to the homestead in pipes. The homestead is a very comfortable homely building, with every convenience and best of all four sturdy little Aussies who looked a picture of health. There are also two cars and Mr Hayes, better known as Ted, ran us in and out of town in good time. Alice Springs is the telegraph and post office; Stuart town is the township about one and 1/2 miles from the post office. There is no surface water at the township but a good water supply is procurable at about 20 feet. There is sufficient at this depth to water a city. We left Stuart town on June 17th pulled out five miles and camped at Wigulee on surface water. On the 18th came 30 miles to Birt's Well. This well has a 300 gallon per day supply and had
been rented to some sheep men for a month with the result that drovers with big mobs were unable to water their cattle. June 19th came 22 miles to Connor's Well. This well has a fairly good supply but there are about 900 cattle watering there. The sons of our old friend Mr Sam Nicker the lessee, are pulling water. Mr Grainger was watering his bullocks - 1000 head - just as we arrived. When watering cattle out of troughs you cut off a mob of about 80, let them have a drink, push them on one side, then let in another mob until they are all watered. Mr Grainger had just let in a mob and let them have about half a drink then pushed them away. I asked him the reason for doing this. He replied - 'If I let them have all they want I won't get my tail a drink. I only got 11 bolts at Ryan's well and some of them are pretty dry'. Tanks are measured by the bolts running up the side of the tanks. A 10,000 gallon tank contains 28 bolts. Most of the wells on this route have 10,000 gallon tanks on them. They are all too small; they should be 20,000 at the least. June 20th came 19 miles, Ryan's Well or Glen Maggie, the home of an old pioneering family, Mr Sam Nicker. It's a dry well about 400 gallons per day. This is the best bit of sheep country in central Aussie. Salt bush, cotton bush, Mitchell grass and splendidly timbered with mulga, bloodwood, gum and several other timbers. June 21st arrived at Woodford Well. This well is equipped with a windless, consequently cattle cannot water there - very small supply. This well needs a few sets of timber badly, the old timber is all decayed away and the whole lot will soon be at the bottom of the well. This well has about 8 sets of timber in her toward the top. Below this timber the shaft runs through rock. Two well sinkers are at work sinking another shaft about 50 feet from the old well. They struck a little brackish water at the depth of 43 feet. The timbering of the new shaft is a credit to the man. It is the neatest bit of work I have ever seen. To look down the well you would take it for sawn timber but it is only bloodwood logs cut out of the forest and trimmed with axe and adze. At Wycliffe Well we gave our horses a days spell: they needed it after their 33 miles of sandy heavy road. Professor Ewart [Ewart] from Melbourne and Captain Bishop assisted by Sergeant Stott are experimenting with poison plants. The Professor is in his glory. He informed us that this is one of the richest spots in plant life, there are about 130 different kinds of plants and he expects to add about 20 to the NT Flora. He said 'If you only had another 10 inch rainfall all you would have to do is put in the seeds', Mr Bishop had 10 head of cattle and they are bush cattle and not at all suitable for the work, because when you put them in an inclosure and isolate them they will fret and not feed for days. What they really need are a few poddies that will feed out of your hand. They are conducting their experiments on as near droving conditions as possible. At present they are experimenting on 3 different kinds of poison bush. The emu bush, the indigo and the fuchsia or sage bush. The professor informed us that the indigo plant is a deadly poison and is supposed to have killed 1000 bullocks in WA. They are tailing their cattle and yarding them at night but could not get them to eat the shrubs in the yard. So they got the shrubs and pound them up with the back of a tommyhawk and soak them in water, then drench a beast with the extract, one with the emu, one with the sage and the other with the indigo. The one that had the indigo
and witnessed the results. We are of the opinion that the two most able men are on the job and we would have learned quite a lot. It would have been quite an education for us but the lazy old rain god put a stop to it and we had to give the boy a hand to pump water for the stock.

The outlook is bad. Darn Central Australia. Darn the bridle pad which leads there. Darn the heavy dusty work. Darn the dry wells. Go! Darn Central Aussie altogether. When I get the walkabouts again I'm going north.

We reached home on June 26th just 20 days-from Alice Springs distant about 450 miles. We travelled 270 miles without seeing a water-hole of any kind.

Little Bush Maid
Helen Springs June 30.

16 September, 1924
A Days Work on a Station:
We arise at break of day. The day breaks quickly. Jack with bridle over his arm is streaking around the home paddock after the working horses; Edith and self are making for the cow yard, armed with buckets and billycans for the milking. Alick and Bill are racing for the goatyard, Alick with a kerosene tin nearly as big as himself. Bill has two billycans. Mum is preparing breakfast and putting the separator together. Dad is churning the butter. He has an old dem John with the top out of it for a churn. Its a very good churn. It keeps the cream sweeter and cooler than tin ware. He has a bit of board for a bat; a little short bat with a long handle on it. He stirs the cream around and around until it breaks into little lumps. Then he pours cold water out of a waterbag into it. This is for extracting the butter milk, otherwise butter will not keep. (Someday I shall write an article on butter making). We are now milking six cows. We put them in the bail then let the calves out of their pen (the calves are put in a pen by themselves at sundown) and let them have a good suck. Then we just take the last of the milk. The last milk in the cow's teat contains the most cream. Some cruel milkers take all the milk and let the calf nearly starve. We never let our calves go hungry. They are always fat and happy and buck about and bust one another all over the place. Jack has just yarded the horses, 'Come on Jack! carry the milk up for us while I turn the cows into the paddock'. We have just about four gallons and the boys have about 4 gallons of goats milk. Jack carries up the milk. Bill is wondering what there is for breakfast. Bill is always hungry. We strain the milk and Jack pours it into the Separator. Mum is on the handle, Bill is poking around to try and find something to eat. 'What have you got for breakfast mum?' 'Bacon and eggs; they are in the stove keeping warm. Fresh butter, gooseberry and rosella jam, tomato sauce, ripe gooseberry, cream and tomatoes, all grown on the farm and buttermilk scone. What more do you want?' 'I want some golden syrup; bread and butter is no good without treacle on top to sweeten it'. 'You had better run to the store and get a tin then; this one is empty'.
Breakfast is over. Edith takes over the kitchen to cook the dinner. Edith is a good cook. Jack and Dad are erecting some wooden troughing for watering stock. They went out into the scrub and cut big forest giant and old man gum trees; all hollowed out by white ants. Then they cut them into the shape of a trough and place on end inside the other; then tack tin over the point and choke up any leak with fat and ashes. Mum is the fat and ashes carpenter. Alick and Bill are pumping away at another well with their donkey. They are pumping into the creek and garden and they are keeping me busy opening and closing drains for the vegetable patch. The boys fork the well then put the donkey in the paddock and let the well make up again. After lunch they pump again. Then I make for Shingle Hut and tidy up a bit and the boys a lesson. Hullo! there is some dress material on the bed! Mum must have cut it out for herself. I'll just get the machine out and run it up. I have often made dollsies dresses but never had a go at a full grown one's. So here goes. I wont say much for the stitches in this elegant article. But she will like them as it is my first dressmaking stunt. There goes the bell for lunch. The time flies all too quickly. There comes the goats; the old nannies in the lead; they are looking for their little kids! The boys penned them up this morning. It is lambing time. Off we go to hand them out to their mothers and let them have a run in the evening we will pen up the milkers. Alick will muster the cows on his donkey and pen up the calves. After tea we read or start the old gramophone going. The time flies fast when people are busy. When every day and almost every hour there is work to do.

And you never can feel lonesome or ever want a friend with plenty of pleasant work to do and lots of pets to tend.

PS. The governor of Victoria and the Countess Stradbroke and party passed here in route for Darwin per four cars. They are a very charming couple and speak to people just like one human being to another. There is no frill about them and they don't even speak with a marble in their mouth like most English aristocrats.

28 October, 1924

Has it ever come to your mind how little voice practical men have in controlling affairs relating to their welfare? He is not consulted or summoned and yet there is no reason why he should not be. Maybe the powers that be take it for granted that because people from the inland do not complain everything is going along well. This is not so; things are going from bad to worse, and if a check is not put on them soon the Darwin district will not be the only one possessing Government white elephants. We shall also be in the fashion and be the proud possessors of quite a number of white elephants.

The Works Department have made a start with two and apparently they are making a start to erect another two to keep the other two from feeling lonesome. At Ferguson Springs they have erected a fence around the head of the Springs. It is in solid rock and therefore was not needed.
It is neither use nor ornament and the first big flood will sweep it to a
warm place as it is at the mouth of a gorge and will get the full current.
At the Woodford Well they have started another shaft 50 ft from the old
well. This new shaft is further from the creek on higher ground
consequently they would have to go deeper for water. The contract is let
for 50 ft and it is a 100 to 1 chance of getting water at that depth. But
why in the name of jumping Kangaroos didn't they sink that 50 foot of
storage. This would have been very acceptable; and why put blood wood
in same when there is a forest of Mulga all around the well. Perhaps our
amateur heads do not know that a three inch Mulga has 3 times the life of
a 10 inch bloodwood.

At the old mud spring, misnamed Renner Spring also at Muckedie (so
dame rumour has it) they are about to erect Windmills for opening up the
stock route. One official came along, measured the flow and made it 3/16
of an inch; then another came along and made it 4,000 gallons per day.
Maybe he was measuring backed up water. The drain gets filled in and
when released flows above normal for awhile. I have never measured the
flow but having lived here for a number of years, I claim to know more
about it than any official. At the dry end of the season it will just keep the
Galahs in water. Our mailman could not get a drink for seven head of
horses at the end of last year's dry season. At Muckedie, Mr Fordham the
teamster, who carted the Windmills, could not get a second drink for his
team horses. He had 50 head of horses. The inland needs water and both
places are in need of a bore or well.

If mills are erected without making water for them to pump they will be
the greatest white elephants ever erected in the N.T. I have sounded a
note of warning and for my practical advice I fully expect the Works
Department to get a move on and open up the North South road with
water to enable cattle to reach a market.

It is very dry hereabouts at present and all stock are in on the wells and
soaks but the weather during the last few days has been such as brings
hope to all the anxious cattlemen. A gentle north breeze and banks and
banks of huge white clouds.

9 December, 1924
The well borers are in full swing at the Renner. I am tipping shallow
water. Our people have just struck a 20,000 gallon supply at 20 ft in No.
3 Well. It is in sandstone and has the biggest supply in this district. Dad
is quite jubilant over it and reckons he is some water smeller.

Now I just want to raise my voice in protest of leasing wells on the stock
routes and not making proper provision for travelling stock. There is no
justification for giving a few lessees the privilege of exploiting the
travelling public. Every bore and well should have a small reserve where
drovers could spell their cattle for a few days in case of sickness without
having to pay heavy agistment fees. Mr Huddleston had to pay 40 lb for
ten days after losing 400 out of 750 bullocks from the deadly sage bush at
Taylor Crossing Well and was unable to travel his cattle for 10 days. Mr Grainger informed me that it cost him 50 lb at Ti Tree Well waiting for the wells ahead to make a drop of water for his cattle. Both wells are government wells on the stock route, put down with public money and stone the crows, why should not the public have the benefit of same instead of a few favoured leases? Those leases must surely belong to the chosen people.

The crushed cattlemen in our district have no less than four robbers. The king robber is drought. This is drought year and cattle are frightfully low in condition and some of the breeders are going out. Further inland it is worse. The Bonds near Alice Springs had to shift most of their herd for want of feed.

The second robber is the poison bush. He takes a heavy toll when bullocks are padding the hoof to market.

The third is the agistment fiend on the government wells.

The fourth is the railway from Oodnadatta to Adelaide. It costs about 3 pounds per head to truck bullocks from Oodnadatta to Adelaide a distance of 700 miles. From Najara to Brisbane, a distance 1400 miles, it costs only 35/- per head for trucking. Then there is rent, income tax, dog tax, wear and tear, carriage four hundred miles inland and by the time they all get a cut out of it there is nothing left for the poor struggling cattlemen on the land. He has to make do of it on pumpkin and beef.

Federal politicians attend public meetings deploring the desertion of the country side for the cities and with their hands and eyes raised towards heaven in search for the mystery of city invasion, then they appoint a fresh batch of high officials who don't know a tuft of mitchell grass from a bunch of barley grass. The powers that be seem to think the cure of all ills lies in appointing officials. Meantime population is decreasing. The small men are gradually being pushed off the land. We of the waybacks know they can rob us of our trade by not opening up the stock route to our natural market. But they cannot fool us, all the while, so far as the inland is concerned the settlers have cursed the day which placed them under Federal direction.

Had good rains away from homestead several outside water holes are full and we are set for about two months with outside waters - we hope to have some more soon. Mum and Alick went to Renner Springs yesterday. The drillers are down 200 feet. They struck a small supply at 70 feet. It's pretty salty. Alick said they must have struck the sea. Dad said that bore is up to putty; officials don't use the least discretion with bore and well sites, just dump them down anywhere. If they had put the bore down 1/2 mile west of the present site they would have had a supply now. They are right off the line of water.
The Race:
We saddled up to have a race
On Helen Springs one day,
And all the Jockeys on their mounts gathered to the fray.
Jack who was on Anzac yelled 'You jokers all look slow!
Line up here now, you turtles and I'll show you how to go.'
They started and the lead was quickly took by Mum and Dad
And Jack who was the judge clapped hands and yelled that's not too bad.
Bill was on the donkeys back, he looked quite flash that day
Especially when the donkey stopped and started forth to bray.
Mick was on the camel's back and treating Humpy kind
Caught the lead, held them a while then left them lengths behind.
Elsie on flash Desert Gold raced by the gum trees tall
But Edith, scorching on the bike, set sail and beat them all.

Little Bush Maid
Elsie M. Bohning.
Aged 14

20 January, 1925
The Renner Springs bore as predicted is a dud. The contractor put it down 550 feet and all they got for their trouble was salty water. It is as salty as any butcher's brine. They struck salty water at 70 feet and why they did not knock off at this depth and try a fresh hole among the mud springs where there is a good chance of getting water, is beyond the comprehension of any ordinary person. This salty water will rust any casing in a few years and in the event of striking fresh water below the salty water would have been an everlasting expense in buying, carting and labour for putting down new casing. If the money expended on this bore had been spent on a reservoir, it would have made permanent water there. A 20,000 yards reservoir would last forever and the upkeep would be nil. It has one of the best catchment areas in the district and is good holding ground. The Muckadie bore, 25 miles south of Renner Springs turned up trumps. It is about the shallowest bore in the NT. Its depth is 58 feet and the water rises up to within 17 feet of the surface supplying 80,000 gallons. It is all there too. Dad and Mr Ambrose witnessed the test. This bore is in the artesian basin, and it makes one wonder how far down the artesian water would be struck. I do not think it would be very deep. Rain is keeping off. We have had only one storm this season at the homestead when only a few points were registered. There is no grass about the place, not even stubble; it is as bare as the main street in Darwin; but there is good feed out on the run, and the stock are putting on condition. Tomorrow we expect some of our neighbours over for Christmas. We have just made a seven decker cake and put a big duff nearly as big as a cart wheel in the pot. The boys are going to take it turn about tonight and keep it boiling all night long. Alick and Bill have a dear little calf each. Their mothers died in the day time and the boys are rearing them on goat's milk. They are pretty little things and will be an increase in our milking herd next year.
3 March, 1925

Water is the essence of life. Water is of more importance than silver or gold in the remote parts of the outback. There cannot be settlement or progress without water. Roughly speaking about 20 additional watering places are needed before the settlers in Central Aussie can hope to deliver cattle in anything like condition in the Adelaide sale yards. We start bullocks from here mud fat, and by the time they reach Oodnadatta, the railhead, they are poor stores and owners simply have to give them away to the middle men, and it is all for the want of water on the stock route. Cattle travelling south from here are lucky if they get two drinks a week even in a good season. There is undoubtedly general ignorance in regard to the Central Aussie stock route. The wells are too far apart and the supply in most of them is very limited, owing in most cases to putting in drives instead of sinking into the water. I know of several wells along the stock route with drives in them above water level. The storage tanks are also too small. Various schemes have been put forward by politicians, scientists and others for developing the inland, but a Government boring plant co-operating with the settlers would knock them all into a cocked hat. There is a Government plant rusting for want of a little work at Daly Waters. If that plant was sent along to open up the stock route and sink a few bores for the settlers tremendous strides would be made in turning our empty land into suitable homes for a prosperous and happy community. Transporting the plant should not be difficult or costly as all the settlers are overrun with horses and could shift the plant from one to another and could also supply all labour with the exception of a driller. 

Have just received Professor Ewart's report on the cause of heavy mortality in shock after travelling between Wycliffe and Taylor well. A few lines may be of interest to drovers. Professor Ewart's statement that our losses were probably due from indigo fern, commonly called indigo, is misleading. Our losses with the cattle were due to the poison sage bush, locally known as fuchsia. The indigo and emu bushes are quite harmless as cattle will not eat them unless very hungry, and a good drover never lets his cattle go hungry. Re. gastrolobium, Professor Ewart said goats seem to be fairly immune. This is not so. We lost quite a lot of goats from gastrolobium. We conducted tests and found that six leaves will kill a kid. Goats are very fond of it and will eat it greedily when grass is plentiful.

Two travellers arrived here on January 11th. They came from the Barkly Tablelands they left Brunette on Jan 1st and they reported no rain east of here and that the Downs were alive with dead cattle it is the same tale all over the NT. The Tablelands have had a run of good seasons. Consequently they are overstocked and the first dry year means big losses in stock. We had glorious rains here from Jan 25th to the end of the month and the creeks have been running very high and some of the paddocks washed down the creek but all the stock are strong and they will not bog. As a rule Xmas and green grass come hand in hand but the only green thing here last Xmas was yours truly.
We had a good crop of grapes this season. I will send you some cuttings later on they should do well in Darwin we have a few cabbages and pumpkins in the garden so are not faring too bad the quickest result we had was from the figs. We brought some roots back from Alice Springs they were planted in June 28th and one has a fruit on it.

17 April, 1925

Birtles in recent articles in the southern press mentioned the natives between Katherine and Alice Springs are starving and there is only one depot namely Newcastle Waters. This is a grave falsehood and people who read it should take no notice of it as Birtles is only a bird of passage, criticising places and people as he goes along on his bike or car. We of the bushland know that Birtles is simply playing to the gallery and talking through his hat. As a matter of fact every Telegraph Station is a depot for nigger rations. They also receive a blanket once a year and there is a well stocked medicine chest for anyone needing same. The natives are so well treated that big able bodied young men hang around these stations and refuse to take employment when offered. I hope some day Birtles will come along in need of a nigger and he will find that it will take a good team of working bullocks and half a dozen cattle pups to pull one of those hungry natives away from the Telegraph stations. Birtles own words prove beyond all doubts that he has had no experience among natives. Birtles said they are often hungry in the wet season. Every bushman will tell you that the wet season is the natives paradise. In the wet season the natives can get away from main waters on to fresh hunting grounds. All the berries and fruits ripen in the wet season. In the creeks there are mussels and fish. On the hills there are wallabies, cats, and kangaroos. In the trees are grubs and so on. All the blue bush and swamps are full of wild fowl and eggs. In the valley there are snakes, iguanas, possums and bandicoots. In the wet season the natives live a happy isolated existence.

Perhaps Birtles would like to know my identity? Just tell him I am the Fairy Princess of the 'Never Never and guardian of my beloved kingdom; therefore let Birtles beware and not trespass on my domain or I shall beg my God Mother, the Fairy's Queen, to wave her magic wand and throw a spell over him that will compel him to speak the truth for ever and ever and ever!

The wonderful recuperative powers of the inland are apparent here. After the record rains there is abundance of green feed where a month ago only a dust cloud and the barren looking soil was visible and to look at it would break the heart of a stone. Now there is a green carpet over all, right up to the door, the general freshness and greenness of the surrounding hills are restful and soothing to the eye and bring contentment to the mind and makes every living creature happy. The Poddies are as fat as mud and are bucking about and butting one another and racing around the stock yards. The little kids are gamboling and jumping over the salt trough; there is nothing wrong with them. Have been very busy dress making, I can cut out and make all my own dresses now. I can feel the walkabouts coming on and soon I hope to have a trip north just to have a look at all
my old cobbers again hope to be leaving here for our annual trek to the railhead at the time of march. Just had a note from an old pioneer. He lives near Woodford Well. He tells me the new well is a 'Blue duck'. Another old hand further south sends me the following: 'They have not started boring this end yet. Came up with some casing in November last and have not been near site since'. Site is about 12 miles south of Alice Springs. Goodness knows what luck they will have. I am tipping a blank. Johansen is putting down a govt well three miles south of Deep Well. Down to 100 ft, no water; tipping that to be a blank also. They get people from town that know nothing about the bush to pick sites instead of leaving it to some of the people that had to get their experiments in the bush and know more about it. Well, there is the fault, but then our Cinderella is a land of wait awhile and waste, a paradise for official heads.

28 April, 1925
[Northern Territory Times comment:] I regret to hear that that splendid little woman Miss Elsie Bohning, of Helen Springs, recently met with a painful accident. She was helping the men in a drafting yard when an exceptionally wild bullock charged her. Elsie hopped up lively onto the fence but lost her balance on top and fell to the ground on the other side, dislocating her shoulder. On arriving at Maranboy Hospital an anaesthetic was administered and the dislocated bone pushed back in its place. Miss Bohning is now quite well. What a godsend to suffering humanity is that Maranboy Hospital with the self denying ladies in charge.

18 August, 1925
Today should be a red letter day for the waybacks a new era is dawning. Motor transport for the NT. The first load per motor lorry was delivered at Powells Creek from the railhead at Oodnadatta in SA, a distance of 700 miles. The driver Mr W. McKay informed me that the trip was accomplished in 8 days and they came easy stages, they did not go in for record breaking stunts, the only place they had a bit of trouble was at the McLaren. I remember this creek a nasty heavy sandy uphill pull on the north bank, but on the south bank going towards Alice Springs it is hard. The McLaren is about 6 miles north of Bonnie Well. Mr McKay was accompanied by the fizzer, the fizzer knows every inch of the road from Powells Creek to the Alice having ridden that mail for about eight years. The driver informs me that the road will be quite alright for motor transport if a little is done to the roads. I am tipping that camels, our ships of the desert will in about 10 years time will be valueless, motor trucks will take their place, roads are the arteries of a state. The NT has absolutely no roads they have never had any consideration from the powers to be. Take the OT line for example the same old winding road that the bullock teams made when carting the telegraph poles in the year 1901 is still followed by teamsters. In some places the bends around the forest giants are so sharp that it would break a snake's back to follow it and the roads are so narrow that teams are unable to work their horses four abreast. No one, except the teamsters, knows the difficulty they have to put up with getting through the Lancewood scrub from Daly Waters to
New Castle Waters, the road runs along the telegraph line most of the time. The line naturally runs along the high dry country out of flood waters consequently it is a heavy sandy road in lots of places. All the sandy patches along the biddoom could be avoided by making the road a little further to the west on the black soil. They say tenders are out for pulling a fire plough from Katherine to Anthony's Lagoon, we always hear about these contracts long after the tenders are closed. This is unfair to the inland folk. There are people living out here who would tender for same if given the opportunity. I am further told that the plough is to be dragged along the teamsters old road. This is very unfair to the teamsters as it will fill in the ruts and make the roads heavy and heavy roads increase freight and the waybackers have to pay the increase. It will be a waste of public money as it will have to be done over again after the wet season is over and motor traffic is just about over. The NT needs motor roads but why not go about it in a practical way? Make a side track away from the main road and it will be lasting. All traffic will be compelled to stick to the old road in the wet, for the new road will be too boggy. Traffic will not tackle a new road in the wet therefore the road will be in good order as soon as the roads dry up and it is in the wet season that the roads are made bumpy. The mailman's team of horses alone make the road bumpy and a mob of cattle driven along it play merry all. This road making will need a practical man who knows the country well. The only qualified man for the job is a teamster who knows the country. You cant expect a mechanical engineer to know half as much as a teamster about bush roads. A teamster knows just the kind of soil that will not cut up with traffic. He knows where the good running will be and he will be able to cut a bee line from point to point without getting lost. Some few years ago the police were sent out with natives to clear a road for motor cars and M.C. Giles did very good work about Maranboy. The man farther up north just kicked a few ant beds out of the road and for all the good he did he may just as well have stayed at home. He was not the right man for the job. Recently an official passed here in his Rolls-Royce and expressed the opinion that the country along the OT Line from here would carry a lot of stock if a well was gut down. It would not carry a mob of bandicoots. He apparently is not the right man for his job. I am a great believer in my native state. It has great possibilities but we will have to get rid of our amateur officials first.

29 September, 1925

Here in the open bush, bathed in the glorious Australian sunshine with the cattle lowing in the distance an occasional pleasant companion to converse with, a good horse to ride, plenty to eat and drink one feels happy indeed. The world with its madding crowd and all troubles and trials of life seem far away and shrink into insignificance and you smile at the thought that they could ever have troubled you. Some neighbours arrived at the homestead overnight and we had been engaged in argument all the following morning about horses, consuming innumerable cups of tea and cakes as we talked. A horse race out on the old cattle camp is a matter of absorbing interest and in a country where children learn to ride when they are three, there is not much that grown up men have left to
learn about horses. After the midday meal was over, Jack ran up the paddock horses and we had no less than five races. My luck was in. I had two wins on Old Jack. We nicknamed him Boomerang Jack because when he was a frisky young foal running by his mother's side another horse kicked and broke his leg below his hock. Mum put his leg in splints and bandaged it up, but the young scamp got his bandages off before his leg was properly knitted, with the result that it is a little crooked. His leg is quite strong; he can wheel the flying scrubbers and draft on the cattle camp and win races at a picnic. There was great excitement over the last race. Five started, but the boys looked on it as a match between Sailor and Jack. Fred was on Sailor, Elsie on Jack. The following was the result:

Fred and Elsie had a great race  
They both put up a tremendous pace  
And one could see by the look on Fred's face  
That he was determined to win that race  
But Elsie rode with a smile on her face  
For the sake of the station brand.  
She knew that the breed could stay and had speed  
And whip and spurs were never in need.  
They all jumped off together.  
Sailor and Jack quickly went to the lead  
But we heard a glad shout from all our young scouts  
When Elsie romped home in the lead  
There was music and joy in the hut that night  
With singing, dancing, and refreshments light  
We all had a gay old time that night in the never never land  
Now all you young men from near and far  
Come fill your glasses at Gilligan's bar  
And drink to the health of the lassies out outback  
The pioneering girls who are blazing the track.

Season Notes
The season has been very patchy. All the heavy rain fell in the unstocked country. Banka Banka and here, light season. Powell's Creek very heavy. I never saw her looking so well both for grass and water. Newcastle Waters and Beetaloo had very light rain at the homesteads, but better on parts of the run. An old pioneer expressed the opinion that we are in for a bad year. I can quite endorse his good opinion. The wet season has been all too short. The grass never matured properly and did not give the breeders time to put on much condition. They are still lean and when they have to walk any distance from water for grass they will just pine away and drop by the wayside. Our only salvation is an early storm. If we miss early storms there will be big loss, but I am tipping early storms. The birds are nesting very early and maybe they know something about mother nature's ways. It only takes 21 hours to turn a bad season into a good one. From Frews Pond to Katherine very heavy all the way. Frews Pond was like an inland lake, sky blue, clear as crystal and on its placid water all kinds of water fowls. The grass, success grass reaching up to our stirrups was a happy feeding ground for one's team horses. Climbing
creepers overhanging the forest giants, the pea bush was in bloom and very pretty. It was just like one big garden of wilderness unspoiled by the hands of civilisation. At Millners (No 6 Bore) record floods. The blue bush swamp was an inland sea. The flood waters have surrounded the mill and troughing and teams will have to go the old road through the lance-wood the new road was one great sheet of water for miles.

22 December, 1925

The elections will just about be over by the time this reaches you. I am tipping an easy win for Nelson. Owing to Story’s drastic (and some say illegal) action over the dingo tax no self respecting wayback cattleman will vote for him. It seems rather over the odds that blunders committed in the administration office should put a penalty on the wayback settlers.

But why does the League select the most unpopular man as their candidate? Story may be popular in his own little vicious circle, but outside of that he is the most unpopular man in the NT and Darwinites have yet to learn that Darwin is not the universe but just a speck on the map. They should have taken a tumble from the enrollment of outside members but apparently they would not take a tumble off a horse.

In the last election they blamed pastoralists for not getting their candidate elected. This was not so as the vote on the Downs was almost a block vote for Love. Why don’t they face the issue like men and admit their own weakness? Personally I have small hope that political activity will ever strew our path with roses.

There are questions, perhaps changes in taxes, import duties, railroad rates, regulation of the middleman pirate, smoothing the primary producers way, but there is one thing only that will haul the chestnuts from the fire and that is Markets. The producer has never received the returns of workers in other occupations. The consumer is paying double the price of production. The middleman runs away with the cash. The margin now eaten up by the middleman in both from buying and selling should go to the producer. The reward for tilling the soil must become equal to these in other occupations or prosperity will bid the country farewell. I do so hate to write about this sort of thing as it will be a nasty pill for some of the Darwinites but born and bred in the freedom of the bush has converted me into a bold and I hope a fair and just critic!

Season Notes:
The rainy season is hanging fire, so far we have only had one storm on November 19th. It was a very good storm and ran most of the creeks from about 6 miles south of here to Banka Banka, Banka had about 2 inches. Printice Lagoon is full, this will last a couple of months and will be a great relief to Banka folks. Our Homestead missed, but one creek run and it will give the boys a spell from pumping, but it made no feed for the stock as all the rain fell in the barren spinifex country, we have had lovely cold days with cold nights that make you grab for blankets towards morning.
The wind has again turned towards the north and the weather is warming up and we are in hopes of another storm very shortly.

Cheerio and good luck. All the wayback join me in wishing you all a very jolly Xmas and a bright prosperous and happy New Year.

Happy may your future be
Scarce a shadow may it see
Everything unite to shed
Sunshine on the path you tread.

18 March, 1926

From drought to running creeks and pools of crystal clear water! Old King Drought has given this part another cowardly knock, and a good many breeders went west. It has been the driest season since 1914-15. Our first storm fell on Nov 19th, then we had some very heavy rain and the poor breeders were too weak to plod through the bog, consequently every crab-hole will be alive with dead cows. We are getting around the corner for a bit of cool weather. Yesterday we started the separators humming. There are lots of milk, lots of flies and bung eyes and the mosquitoes make the running in the night.

There is nothing very memorable happening just now. Jack's big colt Darby bucked into a tree with him tore it out by the roots and knocked Jack out and made him a bit stiff for a day or two, but am pleased to say he is handling the young ones again.

Black Cockatoos have been coming about the goat yard in hundreds. This is the home of them at this time of the year they come after nuts from the huge nutwood trees (or Tuttargie?). We have been riding around the run. It's walkabout weather for the stock. One never knows what cranky fit will strike them. There is green feed everywhere, but we need more rain to put more body into the grass. The American prospector and party are out west of here looking for an eldorado. The party consists of Messrs Starke, Ambrose, Ryan and Wallace and two black boys. They have two camels for carrying water, also saddle horses. We wish them luck.

7 September, 1926

No doubt you will think me a nice sort of person for not dropping you a line ere this. But we have been away and I did not find time to write earlier, though my intentions were of the best. Well there is really nothing much to write about this time, except that we had a most glorious time whilst in Emungalan. Everyone was most kind and hospitable and I am sure they did their utmost to make our stay happy and enjoyable - which they most surely did - and altogether we had a most delightful holiday, and yet, in spite of the most enjoyable time we had whilst in town, I for one did not weep when the time for our departure arrived. For though I can enjoy myself as well as anyone and look forward to a jaunt to the railhead once in a while I soon get fed up and long to be out in the open bushland again riding about and attending animals, simply
long for a glance of the old bush hut, for I have learned to love the
certainty of the bush with a firm steadfast love that will never die. Old
Mother Nature has thrown her spell over me and I am a bound victim for
ever and ever. I suppose it largely depends upon what one has been used
to. If a girl has been brought up in the city and accustomed to soft ways,
tramcars, bright lights and jazz, well, she simply could not live away from
that; but the country born girl who has looked out upon wide expanses
and filled her lungs with the fine fresh air and feels the sense of plenty of
room everywhere, is usually pretty content with these things rather than
the life of sisters in the thickly populated suburbs. It is all a matter of
upbringing and desire and it appears will continue so to the very end. Do
you think the railway will come through to Daly Waters? We are all very
much interested in it and are strong believers in the dream that is one
day going to come true, viz that cities and towns will one day occupy the
rolling plains and valleys. I do hope the old Govt. gets a hustle on and
sends the line right through this part. It would be the making of the
country. Do you not think so? Well, good friend, I must run the cows in
now, so must conclude. Bye Bye! Very best wishes.

5 October, 1926

The motor truck has come to stay. The motor of today is not an
experiment - it is a speculation, and the time has now gone by when it
was bought with a feeling of uncertainty. Under certain conditions it
must be admitted that it cannot replace horse drawn vehicles, but its
greater speed can be employed to advantage. So a single truck may
replace 20 or more horses. Motor trucks have proved their success in
wool and general hauling in the grazing industry. The blacksoil roads on
the tablelands are most suitable for motor transport. In drought time
graziers are not faced with the problem of accommodating draught horses
and wool getting hung up en-route to market. In the year 1890-91 - so
dad tells me - there were 3 bullock teams loaded from Candilla, on the SA
border to Hergott Springs. It just took them two years to deliver the wool
at the railway. The lorries will do away with all this delay. Economical
road transportation is today not given so much thought as rail or ship
transportation. During writers travels it has often occurred to her that
transportation in the inland does not receive the study that it should. We
find, for instance, a horse wagon or a camel team travelling along the road
at 2 or 3 miles per hour, when a motor truck would deliver the same
quantity of goods at least 10 miles per hour and deliver perishable goods
in good condition at no additional cost and in many instances at less cost
and certainly more comfort to the driver. Its very hard for the teamsters
to be pushed off the road, but they will have to go, they cannot compete
against motor power and the sooner the better as its a dog’s life working
16 hours a day and swallowing dust half the time.

The Works Department are endeavouring to make roads for motor
traction with Fireploughs, but Fireploughing the road is only half doing
the job. There should be a road party accompanying the plough to grab
stumps and big rocks out and to make creek crossings. There is now a
ploughed road across the tablelands running into Queensland at
Camooweal. The Works Department had a road ploughed to Monmoona [Wonarah?]; the Brunette Station grader linked up here; Alexandria will link up on the east, then Avon Downs and plough to the border. Our boys saw the Brunette grader at work and are praising her sky high. They said they felt like sticking a firestick into the horse killing sleigh they were hauling. Its beyond their comprehension why the Works Department should use an obsolete implement that is 20 years behind the times. The grader cuts the earth in the same way as an earth scoop, consequently 17 light draught horses can pull it 10 miles per day. This grader cuts one side of the road at a time, this is not a disadvantage as you have to take the plough home again (in most cases) and she cuts a nine foot road, this is suitable for both teams and motor transport. The horse murderer we were hauling makes a track for motor traffic only. It is too narrow for teams and the result is when the teamsters hit it they turn the sky blue. Dad says he will have to go out of the business or out of his mind. Alroy Downs, or I should say Rockhampton Downs, are ploughing a road direct on to the OT line to open up communication. They are doing it in style. They have a horse draw fireplough and a motor lorry follows on behind with water for the draught horses. Our boys are out ploughing a road, south from Bundara for 25 miles, then into Renner Springs about 30 miles or more, straight across the bush without any guide. Monmoona [Wonarah?] owners must be under the impression that our boys are civil engineers. They are not; they are just plain bush boys who can cut a straight line through a scrub of pine. Mousmoona [Wonarah?] country has been taken over by a big company and are stocking with sheep. Six bores are to be put down as soon as they can get the plant out. Their intention was to put sheep on this year, but owing to the drought in Queensland it was impossible to get them out. It is a great pity as this is the best season since 1914. Alexandria and Avon Downs managers made a trip to Eva Downs to inspect some agistment country for starving stock. Looks bad for that part of the NT. Monmoona [Wonarah?], on the Barkly Tablelands, should be a good sheep investment. The rolling downs are grassed with good Mitchell and Flinders grass, but it is dry country and almost timberless, making it an expensive place to work. Fencing timber will have to be carted 30 miles and more over heavy downs. Wire, stores, etc, 400 miles from railhead. Water is obtainable from 200 to 3,000 feet, sub-artesian. Dingoes are not plentiful and easy to destroy - they take bait readily. The biggest enemy will be bog, as there are very few dry spots in the wet season. But we wish them the best of luck. It takes a big heart and a long purse to start sheep raising, surrounded by cattle stations, where dingoes are not kept in check.

The boys arrived home with plough; they were unable to cut a track across the bluebush, owing to big holes and dry bog that threatens to swallow plough, horses and all. It is 20 miles across the bluebush.

Cheerio! Heaps of good luck, and best wishes to everyone from all of us bushies.
16 November, 1926
The weather is frightfully hot with every indication of rain, so our hopes are high. The outside waters are dry now, and all stock are on the wells and spring, so the frontage will soon be cut out and rain needed. The boys are breaking in some colts, so excitement is raging high. Our garden is almost at its wits end now, with just a few eatable vegetables but the grapes are on in thousands. Our goats are doing fine and milking well. The boys have just recently put a new floor suitable for dancing in our back verandah. It's Al and we have a dance and sing song every night. We are giving the little boys a lesson - breaking in the two year olds as Jack says. There's no news, all our pets are well and we have just completed the general calf muster so the event of the year has waned. As this is the last mail before Xmas, I will seize the opportunity and wish one and all of you the most merry Xmas and brightest new year.

The flowers of friendship shall never decay
These on no season depend.
When the skies are golden, when the skies are gray.
There's a bloom in the heart of a friend.

P.S. We had a sprinkle here the other day, it freshened us up but that was all.

Cheerio! Best wishes from all!

15 February, 1927
I hope you had a truly jolly Xmas and wish you all health wealth and prosperity in the new year. We had three Xmas guests and had a very nice time considering. The boys got 12 fine fat whistlers and killed a nice pig (poor Piggie). We had an 8 decker Xmas cake a rainbow cake some sponge rolls candy grapes vegetables biscuits and a huge plain pudding. So everyone had a nice hearty meal. Bill was wishing his 'dinner bag' was twice as large. We had some nice races and games. The egg and spoon race was goodo and had to be run about 4 times. The sack race by far was the most amusing. Alec Bill and George turned turtle and Jack won easily. I hope you have had some good rains. Our creek has been flooded twice. All the stock are out on their back runs and doing splendid. Dame Mother Nature has donned her green gown once again and everything looks fine and fresh. We had a nice shower yesterday and I hope we get more soon as more rain is needed to make substantial feed and water. The day before New Years day a party of eight of us went 15 miles down to Murkety. We rode and took lunch and guns in case we saw any ducks or Turkeys. At midday we halted by the side of a deep and shady pool tied our horses up to some huge gums and boiled our billy lunched and rested then we went over to Prentice's Lagoon duck shooting. We got 8 ducks and had some good fun falling into the pools, clothes and all, to fetch out any wounded birds after shooting 8 ducks we set out for our 15 mile ride home. On our way we got 2 fine turkeys so had a nice dinner for New Years day and we all enjoyed the ride immensely. Our garden is almost minus any vegetables now. We had such a nice lot too and the grapes were delicious. All our pets are doing splendid and the little kids buck
and play around the yard all day. 'Sunday', Bill's calf, will hardly ever drink all her milk. She much prefers the fresh green grass to her daily meal of nice fresh milk. Our goats are going splendid and milking wonderfully well. We have nice fresh cream for breakfast every morning.

29 March, 1927
Notes from Never Never
Thanks very much for the Times they are of great interest to us old 'Bushies'. Well, I hope you are all having the best of good times and enjoying the best of health and enjoyment in 1927. We are all quite well here and have been so ever since the flu left us.

The boys have completed the walls of the new kitchen and are now hard at work cutting timber for the frame. Mr PV Ambrose of Banka Banka station has arrived home from south with a lovely 30 cwt Reo truck, it is a beautiful lorry so strong and serviceable looking, we have enjoyed a bonza ride in it as Mr Ambrose very kindly ran us all down to his place in it. It was goodo I can assure you and made us all wish that our truck was here instead of coming. However our next trip to the railhead will most probably be in a car somewhat different to riding I should think, guess it will feel more like 200 instead of 400 miles when the old lorry gets going. Our garden is coming on good again now and we have already sampled some delicious rockmelons. The wet season hasn't come on definitely yet, some of the waterholes on the run haven't been filled yet and the grass is very short, but no one appears to be worrying much. Dad is confident it will come and I think it will too. Just about here the rain has been really good and the place looks lovely and green. The trees, the flowers, the birds, the hills and the plains, so wide and green, have a special and beautiful charm of their own. The beautiful clear creek water with some goats or cattle down drinking and a few cranes or stately pelicans perched on the bank or whatever it may be to make a beautiful picture it is like a stream that if it could only be explored, underneath would be a mine of wonderful treasures. These things may not appeal to anyone else, but to me they are a world of delight and of which I may drink deep of the wonderful and exquisite beauties of dear old mother nature. I must end now so bye bye.

10 May, 1927
March 8th 1927 was a red-letter day for the waybacks. No less than 23 whites including three women my mother, sister and self, gathered at Powell's Creek to greet the first Overland Motor Mail. We now have a trans-continental motor mail service running direct from Oodnadatta in SA to Katherine the railhead of the NT. This has been a long felt want the pioneers in Central Aussie can now reach Adelaide in 7 days, how different from the old bullock dray days when it used to take weeks and sometimes months to reach the capital. The mail contractors are the well known and respected firm of Wallis Fogarty of Alice Springs. The popular Bert Nikinson a member of the firm took the opportunity of a run through and acquainted himself with the road, people and conditions on this end. He was highly delighted, surprised and greatly impressed by
the lovely country he passed through and the wonderful possibility as a wool producer in the near future when Railway communications are an established fact. The car a Graham-Dodge speed wagon, its pilot W. McCoy - a steady reliable chap, and what a driver! Four hundred miles in 2 1/2 days on just a camel pad! Think of it, you city folks on your billiard table streets. McCoy was born and reared in the freedom of the bush where boys in their teens have to think and act quickly for themselves. Consequently they can knock the city drivers into a top hat. The bush boy has to fight hard at all times against difficulties of their own accord. He is at all times prepared for mishaps and sticks to the fight until he finally conquers.

I must go and run up the cows now, so cheerio. Bestest wishes from all along the OT Telegraph Line.

14 June, 1927
Just a short note as the muster is in full swing and we are all very busy. The winter is with us again with his strong southeast winds and bright warm sunshine. The old separator is running well, also the butter fat and they're turning out some nice butter as hard and sweet as a nut. But we will soon let our old cows go as we have over 60 little kids and the flock is hurriedly increasing, so we will have to give the all our attention and make goats' butter instead of cows. Jack is breaking in some calves and has some very nice creatures amongst them. Our garden is just coming on and we will soon have lots of eatable vegetables and are quite looking forward to them as beans is the only vegetable we grow here during the summer. We killed our old porker yesterday and he was huge just like a huge bullock so we should have some nice bacon for the winter and its sure to be sweet as he was fattened on milk and that is the best thing out to fatten pigs on, it makes them so much sweeter. We have our Ford truck now and have already enjoyed a nice run in it. The wind is drying the country up terribly and making things look awfully dry and bare, the only place one can see anything really fresh and green is in the gardens. So we are praying for a good and early wet and I hope to goodness we get it. Unfortunately, our bullock sale did not come off this year and our usual visit to the Katherine may not come off as we are all very busy and will be so for some time....

2 September, 1927
Here I am again after a long 12 weeks silence. The weather is very disheartening. Just at present it is chilly and dusty with that wretched southeast wind blowing - when we want hot cloudy weather and rain - rain, rain, rain! There is nothing cheerful about residing on a cattle station at the end of a dry year. All you can see from the homestead is black soil where the grass has been dust clouds and endless strings of cattle coming and going to and from the wells where they are watered.

The isolation is almost a thing of the past, we had eight cars pass us in 6 days. A few years ago we saw the mailman once every six weeks and an occasional traveller, a car was a novelty. Three parties of railway
surveyors have passed to their different destinations. One party will work from Daly Waters to Anthony’s Lagoon to Borroloola and the other one from Camooweal back to Anthony’s Lagoon. At last the old NT seems to be claiming her birth right. A port at Borroloola must prove of tremendous importance in the development of the Barkly Tablelands. At present all coastal steamers have to anchor at the mouth of the river. Large steamers would have to anchor outside and passengers and cargo are taken in in small boats. I am told by one who should know that a port in one of the islands near Borroloola is not a castle [in Spain] matter. In my minds eye I can see in my birthplace a port that will put Darwin in the background. I can see a big ocean liner loading frozen meat, wool, peanuts, cotton and all kinds of tropical products; I can see freezing works on the McArthur River further inland. I can see thousands of sheep grazing on the abundant Mitchell and Flinders grass. Futhermore I can see several townships similar to Winton in places along the railway line I can see motors everywhere loaded to the plimsol with wool going to the nearest railway siding, and I can see, but I'd better stop or Darwin will get jealous and tell me I am a regular optimist.

I note in Angela’s letter she is wishing more bush friends would come to Darwin. If Angela can induce the railway manager to give the country the same privilege as the country people in Queensland get, if we had the excursion fare in the NT a lot more people would visit Darwin. But I am sorry to say that excursion fares in the NT are only for people living alongside the railway, so the waybacks can only take a run in when work is slack on the station.

Mr Braitling passed with 700 head of cattle for his new home somewhere in the Never Never about 200 miles west of Woodford Well, OT Line. He will hang up somewhere till the storms set in. There is an 100 miles dry stage leading to his new home in the Never Never. I wish this lion hearted pioneer all the good luck possible. It’s bed time so bye bye.

Greetings and best wishes from the Never Never.

[In the same paper was printed this poem by Elsie:]

The Motoring Craze
Some people drive their Hupmobiles
And some their Chevrolets
But now the little Bush Maid feels
The urge of the mot’ring craze.
She bought herself a Ford, brand new,
Spare sparking plugs and tyres.
But you would get a scare if you
Heard Liz when she backfires.

Old Lizzie jumps and bucks and snorts
Puts onlookers to route
And she in every way contorts
And turns most inside out.
And once the little Bush Maid tried
A chauffeur to be.
But Lizzie took the bit and shied
And ran against a tree
Now Mum thought she would show the lot
Just how much she could do
But accidentally touched the throt
And off old Lizzie flew
But Dad has quietened old Lizzie down
She's quiet as quiet can be
And he has taken her to town
For rations - don't you see.
When dad returns from Katherine Town
With Lizzie wobbling back
The next to tame old Lizzie down
Will probably be Jack.

When idiosyncrasies of Liz
They think they've got all 'Pat'
They'll find it's an expensive biz
For tyres will run flat.
And tyres have the happy knack
Of wearing out so fast
No matter rough or smooth the track
They wear out at last.

And then again the 'diff' may go'
Perhaps ignition shorts
Or possibly the benz won't flow
Or transmission out of sorts.
And if the steering rods go wrong
When Liz is at her best
It will not be very long Before they're 'Laid to Rest'
'Tis manifest there's no end worse
Than results from this mad craze:
They've thrown away the good old horse
Which served them many days.
So if on some long desert stretch
Ol'Lizzie will not gee
They'll say with many another wretch
The old horse will do me.
Too late, too late my friends I trow
Too late to make amends
For invitations by Jim Crow
Have been issued to his friends.
Now listen all ye motor cranks
Who to motoring fame aspire
Just fill the motor's benzine tanks
And drive them on the fire.
16 December, 1927

It is fearfully hot here at present and nothing startling to relate. We are having a dry time as yet and I hope rain soon comes to relieve the boys from water drawing. Our neighbours have had good rain so I feel sure we will get a storm soon. Dad and Jack have been out on the run for some time sinking a well. They have a good supply at 14 feet and hope to secure an unlimited supply at about another 6 feet. Mr P. Ambrose of Banka Banka, left here this evening for Katherine in his big truck and hopes to do the trip in six days. He is afraid of being held up by the wet season. At this time of the year one needs to make every post a winning post when travelling with a loaded truck. We had a jolly delightful time when in Katherine this year and were sorry our stay could not have been longer. It was a delightful change and we have never enjoyed ourselves better, thanks to the sociable spirit and generous heartedness of the Katherine townsfolk. The latest addition to our large family of pets is a "Mountain Devil." He is very tame and lives practically on ants. I also had a dear little porcupine but he met with an accident yesterday and died last night. He was only a couple of days old when I got him and was growing so fast. I was terribly sorry to lose him. He was a dear gentle little pet.

Joves! it is hot and clouds peeping up all around. Everyone tips a wet Xmas. I hope they are speaking the truth. I have a birthday in three days time so maybe the rain will come then, it often does and it is a beautiful gift we all think. So cheerio with very best wishes for a Merry Xmas and Prosperous New Year.

20 January, 1928

Not a blade of grass in the Horse Paddock but there is good feed out on the run and stock are all OK. Alice Springs people are having a bad time, no rain and cattle are tumbling over for want of feed. Renner Ck, Helen Ck, and the McKinly are still running, so we are alright for water. Banka had the outback Moffat running so they are set. All the rest of my people have bolted, going like scalded cats for the Barrow Ck Races. They should have a good meeting as the Alice Springs meeting is knocked on the head on account of the drought and some of the Alice people will no doubt make the trip. I often wish I could have postponed my birth for about 50 years. What a splendid time our coming generation have in comparison with our old pioneering bullock dray days. It would take us two weeks at the least to go to the Barrow now they do it in a day.

Re, Mr Parer's recent article for making a road from Darwin to Katherine. I don't see eye to eye with Mr Parer. Its just a famous phrase they have up north. Darwin first, Darwin second and again Darwin and the wayback take the hind most. Why build a road running parallel with the railway, a track that will serve only a few joy riders, when there are places far distant from the railway crying out for tracks? A track running alongside of the railway will only increase the rates on loading, because it will decrease tonnage. Where traffic is light fares are high and the people outback have to pay the fares. Its victimising the waybacks, that's what it is. Motor roads should serve as feeders for the railway, not compete
against them. Our Railway Manager should keep an eye on those idle joy riders about town and if possible compel them to use the railway, thereby increasing tonnage and reducing rates. Knock them back a bit, otherwise they will be demanding swiss roll, free railway pass, free beer and a pass for life to the pictures in the near future.

Watering places in the Stock Route right from Newcastle Waters to Oodnadatta are more urgently needed than roads. This stock route in regards to water is the most neglected in the Commonwealth. In fact I can say without fear of contraction, its a disgrace to civilisation.

There is a settler who has taken up a big lump of country some 200 miles west of Woodford's well. This man has been hung up with 700 cattle right on the stock route. He can't even get to the Woodford Well. In spite of this, our high salaried officials will tell you there are wells on the stock routes sufficient for all requirements. There are a few wells alright, mostly on the dry side and the ones that have a bit of moisture in them are leased. Consequently there is neither feed nor water, so the lessee as a rule has more stock than the well is able to carry. The root of the trouble is that our officials are not practical men, just office hacks, they come along in their cars just after the wet season when everything is in its natural beautiful state, when the desert is smiling like a rose and so long as they can get sufficient water to fill their radiator they seem to think everything is OK and race back to town and tell their cobbers, the people outback live on milk and honey.

I was living in hopes that the NT people would put up a practical cattle man on the Advisory Council. A man with knowledge of the Wayback and the needs of stock routes.

The Pastoral Industry is the backbone of the NT and a practical man could do a lot of good, provided the powers that be would listen to him.

28 February, 1928
Helen Springs Notes:
As yet no general wet has set in, the country looks very bare in parts, even at this late period. On Feb 3rd we had our second good storm for which we were more than thankful.

I do not know what we would have done had we not had good relief rains in November, they put an end to the water-drawing and the boys were very pleased to be rid of that monotonous hauling of water day in and day out.

What a source of enduring patience and will power the young squatter boys display on the land, where trials and troubles have to be met squarely in the face and fought out to the bitter end.

At present we are finishing off the muster left over from the dry season, when the cows were too poor to work.
We are pleased to report that our troubles and worrying hardships are now over for another year, everything and everybody living a life of perfect happiness once again.

The bushmen all have a jolly, boyish expression on their honest suntanned faces; peace and contentment showing in every line. Has not the bush given them all the peace which comes to those who know and love nature? They turn to the bush to find rest and happiness like a weary child - far from the cares and worries of the world.

With compliments of the season to every one in Darwin.

from the Never, Never
L.B.M.

13 April, 1928

Helen Springs Notes:
Just a short note as news is somewhat scarce just now. The weather has everyone thinking we had had no rain from the 19th of Feb, in fact the weather was quite wintry until the 15th of March when we had 1\(\frac{1}{4}\) inches of rain (fast and heavy). The creeks ran a banker and the gullies flooded everywhere, it was glorious; clouds came up in huge rolling banks and we all felt sure of a good heavy late wet. But, alas, the southeasterly wind came up again and blew all the clouds and our high spirits away.

We are milking 12 cows, all picked milkers and there is more milk splashed around the place than water. Its a treat to have some lovely fresh butter again and we have it for dinner, supper and breakfast. My hardest task is to keep the bread tin full. Our garden is coming on splendidly so what with all the milk, eggs and butter we will soon be living high. We have recently completed branding up and had a good muster and enjoyed some lively rides. The grass is good round about now and the country looks beautiful if only we could get the remainder of our usual wet season now, everything would be O.K. but I'm afraid we aren't going to have it. Still! One never knows ones luck in a big city does one? So lets hope for the very best.

There's no news so please excuse this woeful scribble - Cheerio.

L.B.M.

26 June, 1928

Just a hurried note to let you know we arrived home OK once again from our annual trip to civilisation. As per usual we had a lovely time and were sorry when our fortnights stay was at an end. I often think of the Katherine folk and the grand old dances we have had there; to say nothing of various picnics and mixed bathing parties in the lovely waters of the Katherine River.

We are having a very dry year here now and water drawing is in progress once again. Our stock are not in a very bad way; thank goodness: but further south they are having a most dreadful time I believe.
The boys completed our new kitchen yesterday and I am ‘shifting camp’ tomorrow; so will be able to have things very ‘stylish’ on Helen Springs then and the opening ceremony will be held on June 9th; so all friends come along and hear our little jazz band. It consists of a comely leaf; mouth-organ and kerosene tins and we have an excellent sand and tar floor on which dancing may be indulged in. At 10 pm we will have coffee; tea; cocoa; jam tarts; honey rolls; cream puffs and cucumber and tomato sandwiches. So bidding you all a hearty welcome I conclude. Au revoir until Saturday night. Very best wishes to all friends at Emungalan and Darwinites included.

18 September, 1928
Notes from the Never Never:
Here I am again for a little chat. The winter winds have said good-bye and let’s hope they are gone for the year. It is so gloriously hot and muggy that we are really tempted to hope for an early wet. During the last few weeks we have been surrounded in dust pools - just whirl after whirl of great looming dust clouds that seem to chase each other day and night. It is so dreadfully dry and bare here now and one would need a great deal of beauty in the eye indeed to admire the surrounding scenery. Far, far away, as far as the eye can see, is just bare, brown earth with dusty cattle pads stretching away to the dust clouds on the horizon, or strings of cattle mooching to and from the water. Thank goodness as yet they are strong and in fair condition so we hope to pull through old King Drought’s hands with but slight loss.

Mr Ambrose passed here a few days back and I am sure you Will be pleased to hear that his bore was very successful, and reports are good, fresh water and plenty of it. That does sound inviting on these hot, sultry days.

Mother and dad are not at home at present, in fact they have been away seven weeks, but should soon be putting in an appearance now.

We ended butter making for the season on Friday last, as the old nannies like everything else are feeling the drought and are drying up fast. Our hens are laying well again, though they took a few weeks holiday a while back, so it is a treat to get plenty of eggs again. I have set one old bird on a dozen eggs and hope to have a nice little family of chicks when dad and mum comes home. I hope the heat does not prove fatal, for as a rule chicks do not thrive in very hot weather - but I hope for the best. We caught a poddy motherless - calf a few days back, intending to rear him on the goats milk but he was a rough little one and when his first lesson on feeding came around he went to charge one of us but being weak and poor he slipped and fell, and when we lifted him up again we discovered to our horror that his leg was completely broken above the hock. How simple accidents can happen. It is really almost unbelievable, as he fell so simple. But one can't be too careful in this world. Of course there was
only one thing to do with our poor little motherless pet, and that was to end his misery the quickest and easiest way possible, so Mick shot him.

A party of tourists passed here recently (Withers' party). When passing the homestead one of the car drivers ran over and killed my best dog, and never even had the manners to say he was sorry he did it, in fact never mentioned the matter to me - just drove on with his head in the air as if he was the King of England. That's a sample of South Australian tourist for you.

Jack and Bill are camped out at the eight mile well, with some cows and calves. The feed is good up there and some of the old cows are looking fat already, I believe. The boys have the supply tank completely erected now, and it's a treat to have the supply always on hand and the cool water is something of a godsend to the stock.

An aeroplane flew overhead a few days back. We heard him buzzing and saw a mere yellow speck the size of an eagle outlined against the clear blue sky.

2 November, 1928
A delightful bundle of Times to hand and many thanks indeed for same. Mother and Dad are still away and we do not expect them home for some time yet, so we still have it quiet but busy. We had a few spots of rain on the tenth, in fact it was so cloudy and stormy that we really expected a good fall, but alas the wind haze is here again and our hopes down to zero; but we will surely get a storm some time this month and that won't be so bad. Jack is still up at the well, we only see him when he wants a fresh supply of meat and rations, as he has a good number of cattle up there now and is kept very busy drawing water for them all. All our pets are well and fat considering but naturally will be much more so when our glorious visitor the rain comes. My chicks are quite grown up now and will soon be laying eggs for me. The mail is due on Sunday but is not so anxiously awaited as last time as the mailman had a crowd of passengers last time including were Mrs and Mr and the Misses Crook. We womenfolk had a great old 'chat' in fact some of our party joined them here and went onto a neighbour where we had a farewell and welcome home party combined. We enjoyed ourselves immensely. Some kind friends had thoughtfully brought along their gramophone and we certainly made good use of it, in fact we jazzed until the small hours of morning and we arrived home feeling like young two year olds after our delightful outing and were fresh and fit for work next morning. There is no news but I hope I can send you a telegram that we have had a foot of rain by mail day.

11 December, 1928
Notes from Never Never:
It is still beastly dry here and the country and stock in a dreadful way. Worse luck there are no indications of rain whatever. The boys are out on the wells also mother and dad; many are the trials and troubles of the
man on the land when King Drought rules supreme. Mr P. Ambrose and Mr. Percy Peacock were up here on a hurried trip a few days back and we were pleased to learn that Mr Peacock has been successful in striking water in the new bore. Let us hope it will be as successful as the first. The pet calves and foal are growing nicely and should do well now. Dad and mother have them out on the new well as the grass out there is dry but plentiful and the old nannies should 'milk' well. Xmas will soon be here but if rain does not come first I am afraid there will be more glum faces than merry ones around the old bush homes. But we must hope for the best. Anyway I now wish all the North-end-ites Merry Xmas and a very bright and happy New Year.

There is no news so I must conclude with greetings from the Never Never.

16 April, 1929

Notes from the Never Never:
Dear Mr Editor. Am bubbling over with joyful anticipation and feel too elated with feeling of adventure, curiosity and excitement, to remain calm and collected, so please excuse the incoherent style of these lines. The cause of so much joy and thrill is simply because we have been very kindly invited to a wedding. Miss Doreen Crook, of Singleton station, elder daughter of Mr and Mrs Crook, is to be married to Mr W.W. Braitling on April 1st and quite a crowd of we bushies are off to the big spree per car and hope to have a jolly good time. However, I will let you know all about it next time I write. The mere fact that I have never witnessed a marriage ceremony makes me tingle with impatient anticipation.

We have had splendid rains since January and the grass is beautiful. We are milking fourteen cows and making lots of butter for home consumption. One could hardly recognise the surrounding country as that of a few months back. Where bareness and brown prevailed is mass on mass of waving green and brown beautiful scene on scene wave beneath the golden Australian sunshine. Nature is just beginning to live again. The flowers with their starry hand-painted heads and shining leaves garlanding the grass tops; bush vines pushing out their small swelling buds and grasses and mosses springing forth in every variety of brown and green. The trees of all kinds and all hues, especially the finely shaped nutwoods of so bright and deep a green, the tips of the outer branches drop down with such a crisp garland like richness and the stately gums are just now so splendidly adorned by the sunny colouring of young leaves and the gorgeous surrounding plains dappled with shining pools of water.

The flat's covered in clinging vines and low furze whose golden blooms reflect so intensely the last rays of the setting sun as it dips below the mountain peak beyond and covers us all in a golden flood of glorious good night...

Cheerio! Best regards from the Never Never.
29 May, 1929

You will be surprised to hear that we did not see the wedding after all. We did commence our journey and had gone 30 miles of our distance when we received word that the wedding was to be postponed and now the Crook family had gone to Adelaide and I believe the ceremony is to be performed in the fair city of the south.

Winter is here again with his cold nippy winds and bright blue sky and we are making the most of the cold weather while it lasts and milking seventeen cows and storing lots of butter for the season.

The stock are splendid and fat and its a treat to see frisky animals about again. Harry Hentys murderer is still at large and goodness knows when they will get him. He has been gone so long and may get away out of the country. Anyway we can rest assured everything possible will be done to land him now that Constable Murray is on his trail. I would not mind betting my best pair of Jazz garters that this noble constable will have Wollaberta Jack safe in his care before the year is much older.

Cheerio.

Best wishes from mum, dad, and everyone.

12 July, 1929

Just a few hurried lines as we are on the 'Track' and my time is well filled. I have been reduced from full blown station cook to a common drovers 'greasy look' and can assure you am having great experience and many a heated argument with the pots and pans on a bush fire. The camp ovens and I can seldom agree, but the pot hooks are first to fall out with. We are only 60 miles on the journey and already have lost several sets of hooks. Could some of you old drovers cooks send me a recipe or a cure? If something does not happen, there will be no wire left along the route and the camps will be strewn with pot-hooks. So please hurry and send a cure, kind friend as I am distressed. Well old Pal we have a nice mob of hornys together and creeping slowly along en route to Adelaide, that fair city of the south. We will travel very slowly otherwise the old fats would soon lose their condition as further down the feed is very scarce and water is as scarce as beer up here with numerous dry stages. Our bullocks are behaving splendidly now. They were a bit rusty at first and very very homesick...

We went into Alice Springs with our truck and had six days in town. It is a budding city now. Cars and trucks and people everywhere and some beautiful homes. It has improved beyond all recognition since we were here in 1924. The town folk are splendid, I couldn't possibly find words to express my opinion of those big hearted generous and very very hospitable townsfolk and I fell in love with the town itself all over and over again.

Now we are on our way to Adelaide and expect to have a few weeks in that fair city when our long long trail is traversed and our bullocks sold and
delivered. I have never visited a city yet. We went to Darwin 1920 and it was the isle of my young dreams for a week. Then I longed for the bush and my animal pets and play things again. Now I guess Adelaide will be full of thrill, drama, laughter and fun for a week or so and then the lure of the open spaces will ring in our hearts and ears. Dad says I'll never want to leave the city when I get there but leave that to me.

Dear old NT, my country of birth, I pledge to thee love and toil and years to be. Yes, dear friends of the north, be ye sad or happy, old or young, mark my words, I will come back back to the deary sunny bushland where the open spaces and the big hearts are. And now dear friends and readers I must boil the billy so goodbye one and all...Nay, Au revoir, for I will come back.

19 July, 1929

We had a rotten trip to Alice Springs and back per truck. Had no end of breakdowns. Another trip or two like this and I should be able to write on the joys of motoring, the breakdowns you are likely to have and the tools you should always carry. Dad said old 'Liz' tried to divorce him but she failed to do so and we managed to struggle home with her. 15 miles this side of Wycliffe we turned a rear wheel inside out. This mishap occurred in a creek on a down grade and every spoke was smashed to match wood. So we set to work and made mulga spokes and made a really strong wheel that carried us home in fine style. Our only trouble was the need of tools. We only had a blunt tommy hawk and a screw driver for making the wheel. However, a kind friend sent a saw and a bit of round iron out to us - also water. We had no auger so had to burn the holes in with this bit of iron. It was rather a slow process but we managed to build the wheel in 11/2 days. Of course our old 'Liz' never had a fair spin. Dad bought her brand new for the Prodigal son, as he desired a car, reckoned he'd be set if he had a truck. But the car was badly used over loaded and over speeded and a breakdown of the kind might easily have been expected.

10 August, 1929

[The Adelaide Advertiser's article about her visit after she and her mother took the first cattle on the train between Alice Springs and Adelaide:

**Girl Drover. Visit From Interior. First Time in a city. Not Awed.**

Mrs J. Bohning and her daughter, Miss Elsie Bohning, arrived in Adelaide on Thursday evening having travelled from near Powells Creek Central Australia with the first trainload of stock from Alice Springs. They are true daughters of the bush, possessing a thorough knowledge of the cattle industry. They moved among the cattle after they were untrucked at Dry Creek yesterday morning with less fear than the average person would approach an old milk cow on the parklands. They had given names to many of the bullocks in the herd, such as Nobby, Noble, Tinker, Rigger, Rubbish Heap and Goggle Eyes. Mrs Bohnings previous visit to a city was made 30 years ago when she went to Brisbane since when she had
remained right in the heart of the continent. She was born at Gingy near Waigett in New South Wales.

Miss Bohning who is just over 20 years of age and a fine type of Australian womanhood, has never been to a city before and for her this visit is a momentous event in her life. She travelled to Darwin when a child of eight.

Although born and bred in the bush where the facilities for education are so limited, Miss Bohning did not miss the opportunity of learning to read and write under instructions from her father. Later she took up a correspondence course of education and thus made herself proficient in many subjects.

Although this is her first visit to a city she is by no means awed at what she has seen. She is interested in Adelaide's fine buildings and parks and the trams too have made an impression. She speaks interestingly of her life on Helen Springs Station, the property of her father and her work and says she would not forsake the country for the city.

Detailing the journey from Helen Springs to the railhead at Alice Springs with a mob of 350 cattle in charge of her father and mother, her brother William, a black boy and herself, Miss Bohning said eight weeks were occupied in droving them over the 460 miles of country. They crossed some dry country and for three days and two nights the cattle were without water. The party camped each night and one kept watch while the others slept. The one on watch rode around the mob and sang. 'That has a quieting effect on cattle' said the bush girl, 'and I took my turn with the others'.

'Yes I love reading books', Miss Bohning confessed, 'and have indulged in a little journalism too, having written of my experiences for some of the papers under the pen name of Bush Maid. The blacks are troublesome at times and but for the dogs we keep about the station they would cause a deal of trouble.'

Mrs and Miss Bohning visited the Majestic Theatre last night. It was the first show they had ever seen and both remarked afterwards that it was wonderful. Mr Stan Foley mentioned their presence in the theatre. Mr Bohning will arrive in Adelaide on August 17 with one of his sons. The visitors are staying with a relative at Parkside.

29 November, 1929
A Trip to Adelaide (by the Bush Maid):
Dear Reader - 'Hurrah' Here we are back home amongst our dearly beloved animals and birds and trees and flowers it is simply grand to be out in our garden of wilderness again and to fill one's lungs with fine fresh air; one cannot breathe properly down there or even sleep at night with all the cars and buses rushing past and making a noise like distant thunder! The Isle of Noises is my favourite name for the city - it is so very appropriate. Well dear friends we stayed six weeks in the city of the
south and had a truly delightful time. Everything was so fresh and strange it was just one long adventure and we were keen pleasure hunters and made the most of everything. The fruit carts were a source of delight to Bill and myself they are full of the most luscious things I have ever seen and simply force your appetite to action. The flowers down there are gorgeous beyond description some of the most beautiful color schemes I've ever seen were in the Adelaide gardens. They were so alluringly pretty and filled the air with heavy perfumes of everything so lovely that I could have lingered there until the cows came home. Then there are the beautiful flowers of satiny silk and velvet displayed in the windows. I wanted to carry off armfuls of them. And oh! the shops! they are marvellous so crammed with such delightfully pretty things that you just want to buy buy buy! None of the windows I had seen before had anything in them and the ones in Adelaide are gigantic and beautiful almost beyond belief. We spent a good many days shopping and I remember when Auntie took me into the first lift and when it began to move I almost screamed - I had a feeling that I was trying to swallow my toes - But I soon got used to them and liked going up before we left. It's an easy way of getting up in the world. We all felt an atmosphere of home when we visited the museum and saw the stuffed birds and their eggs. The Roo's were so life like I felt sure they were just ready to hop away. Adelaide was just full of surprises. I remember the first night we went to the Majestic Stan Foley (the comedian) on the stage mentioned our trip to Adelaide and our presence there - needless to say I felt like falling through the floor. We went to pictures and talkies galore. I will never forget the luxury and splendour of the theatres and never in my life have I dreamt of anything so wonderful as the pictures themselves. We stayed down for the show and spent many an amusing hour there. The animals were the most interesting feature especially the horses; some truly beautiful creatures were on parade there. The Speedway was Bill special bit of amusement. He loved to see the motor bikes going their fastest and I am sure he was the keenest onlooker there when any of them turned turtle.

For my part I thought them thrilling but just a little too reckless and daring though the riders must be plucky lads. They have some dreadful spills but think nothing of them. The machinery and cars there were a work of art the cars being so spruce and businesslike I felt like trying to 'sneak' one some awfully clever ideas were amongst them. The flowers and needle work displayed were just too gorgeous and the fruit and sweets looked too lovely to seem real. We visited nearly all the sideshows and had a ride on the Ferres wheel and Bill had a spin in the electric chairs and considered them great. We were dead tired every show night I never walked so far for ages. We visited the Zoo and found everything very interesting. The cutest little monkey imaginable is there and he does antics all day long I think. The lion and tigers are huge and fierce looking I wouldn't like to have them roaming through our forests - Bill wanted to see them fighting. The dingo there is so tame and friendly such a contrast to our wild 'dogs' that I had to stop and consider it. The birds in there are very pretty and so nice and tame. I had to smile at such a variety of birds and animals attacking a peanut lunch and couldn't help
all and attempted a swallow Bill’s yell was enough to awaken the dead and amidst a host of smiles and laughter from a crowd of onlookers an amused cousin hurried the country bumpkins on. The Giraffe is a tall queer looking creature I wouldn’t like him for a pal - he’d look down on one. Everything in the zoo looks so contented and fresh and well cared for that one carries away a feeling of elated happiness at having been there. We went for many drives in the Adelaide hills and saw some magnificent scenes. While down south I had the great pleasure of meeting one of my correspondent’s a Miss Bitiner of Maitland whom I had never previously met but we have been corresponding regularly for eight years. She sent a car in for me with a sister and we motored out 120 miles for lunch and I stayed with them for a few days and was made such a pet of I felt quite spoilt and didn’t feel like returning to the city again. Whilst there we motored up to Moonta and Kadina via Walleroo and I enjoyed it immensely. The crops were all growing rapidly and we had such splendid weather that our tour was the completeness of everything wonderful. It was very thrilling to meet my girl chum and all her family, they are such splendid people and ‘Min’ and I were like old friends. My advice to anyone who has unseen correspondents is keep on and one day you will benefit to your utmost pleasure. It is a perfect commencement to a true foundation of friendship.

Dad bought a nice double seater Dodge car and when we were all homesick we cranked it up and left for our glorious domain and had a good run home. It took us a fortnight to do the journey as we were held up by rain at Maree and after Oodnadatta was reached the hospitality of the settlers way laid us quite a lot. Anyway we are right back now and jolly pleased to be here. Its splendid to be among the sun tanned smiling faces of the bushboys; faces that are always smiling with happiness in spite of every trial and trouble and dry seasons!!!! What a contrast these men of the outback are to the city critters and why down there you could throw them two bob and it might just raise a smile. There they have every comfort and convenience and still they are always complaining. I think the whole trouble is they are all far too idle. No idle man or woman could be happy. Eve was idle and that’s how she became tempted poor creature. Employment gives appetite and digestion. Duty makes pleasure doubly sweet by contrast. When the day is done if the work is not too hard a horse likes to kick up his heels. When pleasure is ones business of life it ceases to be pleasure and when its all work and no pleasure work like an unstuffed saddle cuts into the very bone. Neither labour nor idleness can lead to happiness - one has no room for the heart and the other corrupts it. Labour is the best of the two for that has at least sound sleep - the other has restless pillows and unrefreshing sleep - one is a misfortune the other is a curse and money isn’t happiness that’s clear as daylight.

Well I must end now dear reader. Hope this finds you all as fit as fiddles as it leaves truly yours at H.S. With Best Wishes from the Never Never.
6 August, 1930

I can scarcely hold my pen so excuse the wavers. I have just realised it is almost a year since I penned you a few lines, so am naturally all a tremble a wondering what your answer might be. First of all I most humbly beg your pardon for so much neglect - and thank you muchly for the papers altho' have been unkind and rude enough to omit sending along my thanks and appreciation. I have with my family enjoyed everyone and realise how fortunate I am in having such kind consistent pals up north. Have always intended to write but have become a real rolling stone of late so haven't had much time.

We are only home a few weeks from another trip to Centralia with another load of beasties for the market. Had a good trip down is spite of numerous grass seeds and long stages. Yours Truly who was cook for the camp as per usual was not perched up with the swags on the dray this time but was in charge of our Dodge tourer. It was a greater responsibility but of so much more comfortable and cannot be equalled on the long dry stages I don't know how we managed without it previously. The roads were wicked for the first week but once Mr Cobb and party were passed everything went swimmingly. Dad went as far as Quorn with the cattle to attend them on the journey while Alex, Mother and your truly enjoyed the social life of Alice Springs. The final of the Queen Competition was held whilst we were there. Miss Maggie Bloomfield was crowned Queen she looked gorgeous in her lovely white train and pretty shining crown. There were three competitors present and each girl received a beautiful prize. Altogether over 400 pounds was raised quite a marvelous collection for a country town. It was in aid of the Alice Springs Hostel so everyone should be pleased at the wonderful result. The Stuart races also eventuated while we were there so we were in the midst of all the merry making. The race ball was wonderful; we were in town eleven days and almost every night there was a dance, so you can imagine your bush friend quite a modern young flapper, now partaking in the latest jazzes from town.

On the whole we had a truly wonderful time but were pleased to head our little bus for the dear old home again. Had a splendid time completing the journey in three days. We have settled in our old nest again and everything goes merrily on. Have just turned the cows bush so that means an extra 40 winks in the mornings. A drove of cattle just passed for Central Aussie from Beetaloo over 1000 mixed I believe and W. Riley has gone out to lift another lot and one mob of theirs from there now in charge of W. Hexernan of Ti Tree. Quite a trail of beasts en route to South Aust. this year. Unfortunately the market is down to zero and cannot possibly rise with so many cattle going in. Oto's struck a very meagre market realising about 8 lb 5/0 [£8/5/-] per head which is not very satisfactory for good bullocks when they have to be driven so far to the railhead. But it could have been worse so we are not complaining. Have a lot to be thankful for in this great grand wilderness of ours. Pa has just purchased 600 head of beasties from Roper Valley Station off John
Warrington Rogers. The boys took delivery at Banka Banka and brought them home and cross branded here. Had some great fun as some of them were very lively. They are a fine mob and should be okay for the Adelaide market after the season breaks. The boys are all away tending their new purchases. Quite a host of tourists passing through also a pioneer crowd but so far all the house pets have escaped them with their lives.

I suppose most of you have long ere this saw Miss Nicker's interview with the representative of *The Mail*, SA. I was contemplating sending in a contradictory reply to her many exaggerations but think I will treat such simple pettishness with the contempt it deserves. But cannot help wondering how Miss Nicker knows that Doreen Crook (now Mrs WW Braitling) and myself do not enjoy or appreciate social festivities as much as another of our sex. Perhaps she cannot see any difference in a 400 miles and 70 miles run per car and expects us girls to run to town for every little weekend festivity? She only lives what I would call a decent two hours run for our Dodge tourer any day and what is more she does not live and work on the station permanently her visits home were usually short and sweet. She is not a bush girl as she led Adelaide to believe. Her statements proved that when she tried to belittle her fellow creatures. A bush girls motto is to always help but never hinder. Doreen and myself love dancing and gaiety as much as any young folks do but Australian bush life is glorious to us we love our outback, our animals, our home, our work and the vast stretches of drought stricken plains or these same stretches when they are hazy with green. In fact we love our whole and every existence around about us far too much to neglect it for surplus merrymaking. We enjoy every pleasure that comes our way with every zest and glad to be alive feeling there is and believe me we have more fun and sport than most people realize but all our love for these pleasures of modern times cannot make us neglect our home and animals and the life we love above all things. So let Miss Nicker say what she will she cannot rob us of our fragrance of Australia's freedom and love and content and the reflections and dreams of Australia's past joys and sorrows and her future success shall reign with us for ever and ever.

When one is brought up among broad-minded frank openhearted people and taught to love and respect everyone else and help each other always they cannot help but love the whole universe of our bush domain. The golden Australian sunshine seems to penetrate its glorious goodness to the hearts of all our men of the bush and it fills the women of the west with a feeling of motherly tenderness and capability that goes a long way towards making their souls pure and bright like the rays of the glorious old sun itself.

Sincerest sympathy to the O'Shea girls and all their relatives in their recent sad bereavement.

Well, dear friends I must stay my hand now. Very sincerest good wishes to everyone from the Never Neverites.
2 September, 1930
Dear Friends - Tomorrow is mail day so I am hastening to catch the outgoing mail with a few lines. But there is only scant news to relate this time as I haven't been away to collect any. The tourists seemed to have faded out of the picture we haven't had any along for ages in fact it is getting quite like old times again such surfeit of pack horses and footmen passing by mostly drovers returning home with their plants after the long journey to Centralia. Mr J. Morck has just passed on his return journey after delivering his 1000 head at Bond Springs of Kidman. W. Riley should be along any day with (I think) 500 from Beetaloo. Mr E. Lowe of Mataranka was our last car visitor on his return from Adelaide with his new Pack and such a lovely car! He went from Mataranka to Adelaide in 4 1/2 days! Is he any good for a record breaker? Miss Noreen Lowe accompanied her father on his flighty trip. We have all been so interested in the cricket; and our little wonder - Don Bradman - Is he any good? Wouldn't Amy Johnson and Don make a splendid match? Be nothing else talked of in our great isolated wilderness! Dad has just arrived in from the Bullock camp and left Jack and Mick in charge. The new beasties have settled down wonderfully well and are so quiet and no trouble to attend now. The boys have been having some great feasts on duck eggs that are very numerous down there this year! What extraordinary weather one day its burning hot and next as cold as mid winter. One wonders how the season shall break and when! Had a telegram from sister Edith at Katherine saying she would be married to W. McDonald on August 21st so I guess they have tied the knot with the tongue that you can't undo with the teeth long ere this. Not being present I cannot write on account thereof. Believe the cattle market in Adelaide is flourishing again some of the squatters received quite good prices awhile back we heard. The market seems to be very spasmodic. Expecting Mr Burkett of Newcastle Waters along on his way south any day. We all wish him a jolly good trip he certainly deserves it after such a long stay outback. The garden is still mildly flourishing - Cape gooseberries and cabbages have pride of place. The new chicks (21 in all) are growing famously and all the pets are fit and well so everything is A.1 in the old bush home. Cheerio good pals best luck from us all.

The Little Bush Maid

29 November, 1930
Notes from the Never Never
Sorry I have been so long again. But time will fly and I have been busy so please excuse! The wet season is slow at appearing altho we have had several nice showers and the green carpets are spreading slowly over all the surrounding plains and flats nothing general has begun yet around nearby parts so our early wet prophets are all wrong.

The boys are away on the run with the new beasties this stormy weather gives them an inclination to ramble so our stockmen have to be alert for awhile now. So far the new purchase have given little bother they settled down quite quietly on their new run and are getting clean and fresh
looking. Let's hope the market goes up sky high when the cattle season comes round again. The drovers seem to have come to an end now and we miss the lean suntanned boys who used to drop in as they went by for a chat over a cup of tea. However I believe old Mr J. Morck is somewhere on his way down with a mob of beasties for Ryans Well I don't envy the poor old chappe his trip during this dreadful hot dry weather. The heat has been somewhat dreadful here this last week and our usual million mosquitoes and flies began their annual feast a short while back. The day after tomorrow is mail day and we are all on pins and needles awaiting his arrival or rather wondering if he shall be on time or not. The weather has been very dark looking down south so poor old S may have a bad trip - do hope he gets through OK. It's a nuisance when one doesn't know when to expect anyone. If only we had a telephone! But that unavoidable if is always in the way - and our Heads will not consider the welfare of their pioneers so what's the use?

Haven't been away from home for awhile so have not gleaned any news of interest. If we are lucky and get down to the Barrow Creek races I shall come back bursting with news for our local readers. Please everybody pray for light showers only until the end of January.

Must end now. The mossies are enjoying themselves too well at my benefit - cheerio.

Kindest regards and Xmas greetings to all old friends and readers everywhere. All good luck from Never Neverites. The Little Bush Maid.

May, 1931

You will note by the address on my letter that we are enroute for the railhead with a mob of beasties for the SA market once again. You remember we bought 600 Roper Valley cattle early in the year. Jack was in charge of them while on the run and camped out bush tailing and attending them as they are great homing pigeons during the wet periods. Now Jack is managing the station and the remainder of us are taking the big beasts to their doom.

I am cook of the concern and also drive our Dodge car. The boys call it 'the Cook's Hut' because I take all my cooking utensils etc. along with me; get to camp early and all the cooking is completed ere the boys arrive with their horse plant. They give me plenty of chaff about getting stuck in the big creeks or bogs or breaking down - and I believe the young scamps would be in their glory could they find me stuck in one of the creek beds. But so far they have been disappointed - Mr Dodge knows his work too well to let me down and I can vouch for the power and durability of his car. Ours is SUCH a boon on the road - I can't imagine how we managed without it before. Do you know I can make yeast bread on the entire trip without the slightest fraction of bother thanks to the car.
I should have written last mail but we were in the midst of the bullock muster and the preparations for our departure. Our muster was not as big nor as smooth as one could wish owing to the rain's rude interruption. It does bother folk when they have cattle in hand.

We had a chap assisting us for awhile, a new chum at stock work. He didn't enjoy himself much and I am sure does not envy the drover his duties. He reminded us of another new chum whom Dad had with him once. They were bringing some fresh bullocks in for yarding and driving them slowly along near the paddock fence when suddenly an old horned attempted to break his way into the protected area and got his horns caught in the wire. Of course he struggled and bellowed and made the usual fuss and away went the mob in a frightened rushing heap. The jackaroo's old horse went to the lead and bent them all around against the fence - BANG! they went into the slender wires and with a mighty crash and whirr the wires broke and the fence fell flat everywhere. Sundry beasts were caught in the tangled wires and their bellows of fright and pain sent the remainder of the herd faster and faster straight for the opposite fence - 'Whirr!' and 'Bang!' - and out the opposite side. No horse or horseman born could block them in their wild stampede until the fence and the noise were far far behind. Dad's on his old mount and one of the boys were mustering near by and heard the racket and came galloping to the rescue and together they managed to steady and hold the herd quietly until the galloping fever had passed.

When they brought them back to the yard the new chum met them with a grin "My word Boss" he said proudly "you were lucky I was on the lead that time else those beasts would have gone galloping across the creek out in front and some of them would have been lamed. You were lucky I was there all right!" he emphasised. Dad's answer? - Well I don't think you'd print it - you can guess what it was when you realise that more than half his bullocks were lame, bruised and hurt and the best beast of the whole mob still tangled in the wire and crippled for life.

Another day the same new chum and Dad were tailing a mob and the new chap was riding a horse who also was a new hand at the game. The bullocks 'rushed' and got all round the poor Pom and his mount and simply carried the frightened man and horse along with them. "No matter how I tried to get out' he explained later on; 'it was no use. There were bullocks in front of me, bullocks behind me, bullocks each side of me and horns whizzing alongside of me in every direction. And I lost my new hat too;' he finished up sadly. One of the lads rescued that for him the next day Old Goggle eye had been wearing it on one curly horn but it was restored to the original owner none the worse for the bullocks wear save for a nice neat round hole in the crown of the head where Goggle eye's horn had entered. The Pom shuddered when Jack explained where the hat had been located - one can realise what his thoughts were.
The boys have just arrived and I must go out and help them hobble the gee ges. All good luck to the NT Times from The Little Bush Maid.

Many thanks for the announcement of my engagement.

19 May, 1931 - Northern Standard
Miss E Bohning's engagement:
Sometime ago we published the engagement of Miss E Bohning and for this we are the subject of a par in the last issue of our contemporary headed, "A note of Reproof - From Miss E Bohning". The young lady in question indirectly admits her engagement but appears to be annoyed because the Standard beat her to it. As The Little Bush Maid Miss Bohning has contributed letters to the Times for years so, apparently, loving the limelight, she wants a monopoly of the news. So far as Miss Bohning being obliged 'if the Standard will leave me out of the paper until they have authority from myself...' we desire to tell Miss Bohning that the Standard is being run as a newspaper and if we receive authentic news of significant importance to warrant publication we will print it whether [it is] with the wishes of Miss Bohning or otherwise... apparently it is a case of pique rather than injured feelings.

14 September, 1931
Up Country News
We have been having a most busy time of late. Dad has just bought 800 Roper Valley cattle so the boys will be kept busy for the season tending the new herd. The road is still alive with droving cattle, goodness knows how the poor creatures will fare for grass and water further south. The road must be in a deplorable state now. Stan Brown passed yesterday with 250 bullocks also Drover Booth with 600 Tannanbrinnie bullocks and there are over 900 mixed due tomorrow from Humbert River and 1300 in charge of Drover Fowler for Kidman also due here tomorrow while 600 Tannanbrinnie bring up the rear, in charge of S. Stacey. The weather has been cold and windy and needless to say, dusty also. The travelling stock make the country soft and now that most of the station cattle are watering here we get more than our share of the good old Territory earth. It is over everything.

Several carloads of tourists have passed by en route for Darwin and thence on to Queensland; some folk in Australia have missed the deadly depression.

We are now the lucky possessors of lady neighbours. The Ambrose Brothers of Banka Banka station have had their sisters join them, so Mum and I are quite thrilled now and when we women folk get together we have a great old spate of talk.

We did not see the Baby Austin, it branched off at Newcastle Waters en route for Queensland, but Mr B. Litchfield and his party spent a day with us. We wanted them to stay longer for it is delightful to meet folk in the
flesh whom you have corresponded with for so many years, but they did not want to make the trip too long, so stayed just the day.

It was lovely having them here and they have promised to return for my wedding so I'll hold them to the promise. Betty was quite thrilled at my glory box, and gave me several additions to it, that she had worked for me, specially. Betty is enjoying the trip immensely, she says it has done her a world of good, and that she feels the benefit enormously. She says that everyone along the road whom they have met have been kindness itself to them and that she only wishes she could linger among the big hearted bush folk and the freedom and fresh air of our glorious Territory.

Fortunately my fiance came along while they were still with us so he had a chance of meeting one of my oldest pen friends, and that made things even better. Mum and I only wished that we could have kept them longer but they have promised to call in on us again on their next trip, and stay a little longer then.

27 October, 1931
Here we are, nearly at the end of Oct and having wintry weather still, when it should be hot and stormy. All our early wet prophets are very quiet on the subject at present.

Our boys are still out with their cows, anxiously watching the sky for the first indications of rain. The country is getting very dry and parched and water drawing is in full progress almost everywhere. Many prayers have been offered for the Glorious old rains.

The new railway people, Mr and Mrs Laurence and their daughters, passed through here, and spent a night in our locality. We did enjoy a chat with them all. It was a real delight to have the girls and their mother camp here for the night. We had a good old yarn. I hope they had a nice trip to Birdum and that their new life proves satisfactory and pleasant.

We hear the M.C. Muldoon, his wife and son have gone south on leave and that M.C. Cameron and his wife have taken up stay at Barrow Creek. We wish the good old Muldoon a jolly good time. Old friends will miss cheery old Muldoon and his kindly hospitable wife immensely and we wish them all a speedy return to the bush again. We wish the Camerons all good luck at their new station.

It is reported that Mr Jock Nelson (son of our Member) is engaged to be married to Miss Maggie Bloomfield, eldest daughter of Mr L. Bloomfield, of Loves Creek Station. We all wish the young couple all sorts of good luck.

Mr George Birchmore was married to Mrs Doreen Ollige at Stuart Town a few weeks ago. Our best wishes go with them also in their new life together.
The Baby competition in aid of the Stuart Hostel was a tremendous success. Something like 469 pounds was collected, truly an absolutely unexpected and wonderful sum considering these hard times. Nine competitors entered judging was done by popular vote, of course and the winning baby was presented with a lovely gold cup. Mrs D.D. Smith's baby won the prize, Mrs Jill Twiney's came second, Mrs Lovegrove's third and Mrs Jim Bird's little Ruth was fourth.

Dr Brown and his wife are settled in Alice Springs now and the new Doctor has taken over duties from Dr. Kirkland. We hear the latter is motoring to Darwin via the Jervois Range and the Lake Nash route so his old friends are somewhat disappointed, as it was reported that he would be motoring through our parts.

Mr Smith, engineer from Stuart, passed here on his way home a few days ago and Mr Les O'Connell and his mother passed yesterday followed by Mr George Nicholls. All were in connection with the new Commission work. Mr Smith certainly has some job before him now he is in charge of the Northern route.

Old friends will be pleased to hear of the success of Freida Bohning, a cousin of Miss Elsie Bohning, of Helen Springs. She is doing remarkably well on the stage in Adelaide; the Adelaide papers call her their own charming actress. In 1930 she won the South Australia scholarship (singing) and has been improving ever since. She started with the Robert Roberts Company in the Tivoli theatre in February and the company has been playing for 7½ months, a record for the theatre. On the last night, thousands of streamers were thrown to the stage from the audience and from the stage to the audience. She was given a large cretonne covered box, tied with a big satin bow, containing 30 perfect roses, all the same shade of shell pink, with sprays of tiny maiden hair and covered with sparkling dew drops. At the end of the entertainment, hundreds of people crowded round to the dressing room to congratulate her; she could not get out of her room for over an hour, so great was the crowd. The Robert Roberts Company are going on to Perth later on and Freida Bohning goes with them. She is a native of Adelaide, is 19 years of age and a very beautiful type of young womanhood.

The folks of the Never Never send all good wishes to the readers of the Times in which they are joined by

A Little Bush Maid

24 November, 1931
Notes from Outback, by the Little Bush Maid:
Who says Friday is an unlucky day or 13 an unlucky number? On Friday, November 13th the first rains of the season fell 6⅝ inches being registered. So now the swirling dust storms are things of the past, for the three nice showers that followed the first one set the water running in the gullies, and even in the creek, that runs down into the station
water hole, so water drawing is at an end for awhile, thank goodness. Several little creeks out on the run are also running and the stock are getting quite frisky, for all the district shows a tinge of green above the brown. Another shower or two and we will be set for the season.

The road has been quite lively with returning drovers and their plants; J. Althouse went by for Birdum per car, and Drover Don Booth left yesterday, while Stan Brown has just arrived and is spending a day or so here. Drover N. Stacey passed with a truck this morning, and we hear that two more plants are north of Tennants Creek, so there is a regular train of them coming along, quite a change to the usual surfeit of motor cars and trucks.

The boys are still out on the run with the cows; they will be very pleased when a good downpour of rain comes, for the poor old cows are none too sturdy as yet. But the pet calves are all bucking and playing across the plain, they are nice and plump now, so will be all sleek and shiny in a few weeks.

We hear that Miss N. Nicker was married to Mr Rex Hall at Alice Springs a few days ago.

Mr and Mrs Hatfield and Mr Wilson called in on us on their way South and we were delighted to meet them. They are certainly most charming folk to meet with and we all hope his new novel of the North will be a splendid success.

**12 January, 1932**

News from Outback. The Little Bush Maid sends greetings:

The season is very dry, no rain has fallen to speak of, yet. Only a few scattered storms here and there, not enough to do more than lay the dust. But the weather is hot, and clouds banking up so we live on in hope. Christmas passed off very happily indeed; we motored up to our neighbours for the happy event, and had a great time.

Everyone was bright and jolly, and full of the good old Christmas spirit, so that one could not help feeling happy and joyful and wanting to make the other fellow feel just as merry too. We kept the good old gramophone going till it was nearly tomorrow and danced and sang and feasted to our hearts' content. If there was a happier party anywhere, - well - we'd like to meet them. That's the fruit of having such splendid neighbours. Friendship is the wine of life and the foundation of purity and happiness and the bush folk have all these blessings to the full. They know what it is to be glad and sad together and to endure for one another and stick to life's last breath if need be. That is what I have found my Pals to be, the good old Bush bank who know what it is to have a battle to fight and know how to make the best of everything however hard and irksome the task. May God now never part us from the peace and the beauty of the bush and the big hearted frank friends we have around us here. Here's the best of good luck to everybody for 1932.
12 February, 1932
Notes from Outback:  
Dear Editor, Can't you send us some of your wet weather? The season is very dull; King Drought has the land under his merciless sway, and the country is dreadful. Our 'wet' season will soon be only a memory and all we have had to date have been a few sprinkley showers; so goodness knows whether it is going to be another six years drought or not. All the local lads are anxiously waiting and hoping for rain, for this is the driest wet we have had for years. But we must all smile and hope for the best. The year is only new yet so who knows what it may bring. There may be green and golden times ahead.

Ne never attended the Barrow Creek races this year, so I cannot give you any results, just yet, but may be able to send along reports later on. Our men folk are all away, busy with the cattle, a dry season does make a lot of extra work. Poor cows have to be shifted on to any little drop of stormwater as soon as it hits the ground, and all the wells are to be kept working at once. No wonder prayers are offered up for rain from every stationhand. It is such a peace giving relief when the creeks run, and the green blades come shooting up from the old brown earth.

Tomorrow is mail day, so there are still pleasures in store, in spite of scanty rainfalls. Clouds are banking up from everywhere, one almost begins to think that the rains are coming at last; but clouds and dry weather have gone hand in hand so long this summer that one almost fears to hope. Drover J. Morck is on the Downs somewhere with 700 cattle from Holmes estate. We hear he is held up out on one of the bores owing to a breakdown further on. But I expect the old chap will be along as soon as the necessary repairs are made for his 'next drink' for his beasties. I do not envy him his trip this time of the year, under the present circumstances. There is scarcely any traffic on the road these days. Drover Johnston passed here with his plant and a new car, returning north after delivering a mob of horneys to Hannah Creek from the top end; he had a long trip.

Now I'll say good bye, but do send us some of your rain!

15 April, 1932
Up Country News and Notes:  
My last letter told that King Drought was still on the throne here. But on the 9th, 10th and 11th Jupiter Pluvius was reigning, and raining. We were away shifting cattle when he tipped up the bucket, camped out at the well one night, Dad, the boys and yours truly. Owing to the dry, windy weather, the boys had omitted to bring tents or flys on the packs so King Rain saw his opportunity of giving us a thorough wash and he TOOK IT - All that night and all the next day it rained; - needless to say we let the beasties go, and came home. It was a slow, muddy task getting home across the black soil plains in the pelting rain, and wading through every little running gully, with our horses slipping and bogging in the mud. But
we didn’t care a rap how wet we were, nor how cold or muddy it was. RAIN was what we needed what we had been praying for for months, so we could afford to laugh at the wet and the cold - and it WAS cold. But all that is over and gone now and really wintry weather has set in, but the place looks lovely. Old Mother Nature must be proud of her work, for everywhere one turns one sees a shimmering mass of lovely emerald, with the dancing golden flowers on the sparkling dew kissed vines.

The lagoons are all a brim with cool, clear water and all things are glad and happy that the rains have come.

J. Rodgers, junior, of Roper Valley is due here any day now with his 700 head of cattle enroute for Alice Springs. He was very fortunate in getting such a delightful downpour of rain just before he started on his 40 mile dry stage. He should have a splendid trip now, as good rains are reported at Powells Creek down below. Alice Springs and the stock routes should be splendid conditions this season, thanks to the rain.

[On 5 October 1932 Elsie married Fred Harris of McLaren Valley Station at the home of her parents... where they stayed for a few days before going to live at McLaren Valley Station. As The Times had quit operating by this time, the following item appeared in the 13 October 1932 issue of the Northern Standard:]

Looking charming in an instep length flared skirt of heavy weight crepe de chene with flared sleeves, white tulle veil and carrying a wreath of orange blossoms, Elsie, youngest daughter of Mr and Mrs John Bohning of Helen Springs was wedded to Mr Frederick Harris of McLaren Valley station, Central Australia, by the Rev. H Griffiths of Katherine at the residence of the bride’s parents at 3 pm on Wednesday, October 5th, the bride being given away by her father. The bride also carried a sheath of white oleanders cut from the garden of her parents. Miss Betty Litchfield of Darwin was bridesmaid and chose a frock of ankle length rose pink silk georgette with pleated sleeves. She wore a posy of pink oleanders and carried a bouquet of orange blossoms. Mr Mick Bohning, brother of the bride, was best man. The bride’s gift to the groom was a travellers set, the grooms gift to the bride being an engraved dressing table set, the gift to the bridesmaid was a string of pearls, which was worn at the wedding and that to the best man a pair of hair brushes in a leather case.

After the ceremony had been performed a reception was held at the residence of the bride’s parents. The Rev. Griffiths in proposing the toast of The Bride and Bridegroom, congratulated them on the step they had taken and wished them long life and happiness to which the Bridegroom replied thanking Rev. Griffiths on behalf of himself and his wife for his kind words and good wishes. The toast of the The Bridesmaid was given by the Bridegroom and responded to by Mr M Bohning and the toast to the parents of the bride was proposed by Mr S Y C Smith of Newcastle Waters. The two tier wedding cake, which was the work of Balfours Adelaide, was beautifully iced and decorated.