The Anmatyerr Man Of Ywerternt

Image from Central Desert Shire Council
This information was researched and written by Jay Gibson and Teresa McCarthy for the Northern Territory Library Anmatyerr community history project.
The Alieron roadhouse is approximately 150 kilometres north of Alice Springs and is a popular stop for travelling tourists and locals. In December 2005 the Anmatyerr Man statue was erected on the hill behind the roadhouse as an attraction to increase tourism to Alieron. The building of the Anmatyerr Man was the inspiration of Alieron owner Greg Dick, who employed Alice Springs artist Mark Egan who worked on the statue for approximately one year the 17 meter statue made of steal, mesh wire and cement. Artist Mark Egan stated during the raising of the Anmatyerr Man that he hoped the statue would ‘…. get them (tourists) to think a little bit about how the Aboriginals live in this country …’ (Word Today transcript). In December 2005 the Anmatyerr Man statue was erected and the occasion was celebrated by approximately 300 people, both locals and tourists.
The Real Anmatyerr Man – Charlie Quartpot Ngwarray

The Anmatyerr Man statue is historically significant to Anmatyerr people because it is seen by them to represent Charlie Quartpot Ngwarray, an important Anmatyerr leader and rainmaker for the area. Little is publicly known about the man behind the statue but his story helps us understand how Anmatyerr people have retained their local identity and connection to country under very difficult circumstance.

Ernest Kramer’s photograph of some of the Anmatyerr elders taken in the late 1920s at Woodforde Well. Image from the South Australian Museum.
The photograph taken by missionary Ernest Kramer in the late 1920’s shows a group of Anmatyerr elders living near the Ryan’s Well homestead, just south of the current day Aileron roadhouse. The photograph taken at Woodforde Crossing shows six old men seating under a young river red gum tree. Kramer has written in blue ink the names of four of the men, Q. Charlie, Harrie, Johnnie and King Billy, while on the reverse side of the print is written, ‘The Oldmen of the Ryan’s – Ellenora to Pine Hill’. Kramer makes special note of ‘Q. Charlie’, whom he refers to as ‘Quatja Charlie [Kwaty, being the Anmatyerr word for water or rain] who was given up dead [in] A.S. [Alice Springs] 18 months ago’ (SAM - AA 1/59/3). While Kramer leaves us with no clues as to what happened to Charlie and why he was ‘given up dead’, the diaries and field notes of Arandic linguist and anthropologist TGH Strehlow do provide some further information. While taking down genealogical information with senior men at Aileron in the late 1960s Strehlow was told that Charlie, otherwise known as Ywerterntareny, meaning belonging to the place called Ywerternt (the area around Ryan’s Well and Aileron), was the man who owned all the rain traditions for this region. Strehlow writes that Charlie, ‘was like most other Ryan’s Well men, taken to Port Augusta in chains for cattle killing….The prisoners used to be taken to Port Augusta, *Etnana ingkala knetjata Potogasaula, biagiana inditala, nantang? inditala?* (walking with neck chains behind the police buggy or the police horses).’ (Strehlow, 1968).

Senior Anmatyerr elder and current caretaker of the Ywerternt area Eric Penangk has confirmed this story, telling of how men would find their way home from the railhead at Oodnadatta, a journey of over 700km, by following the stars and picking up work on the Overland Telegraph line along the way. Some men never made it back to their country and others would have taken many months or even years to get back. Even though Charlie was given up dead after his long absence, he did eventually make it back to Ywerternt. Strehlow goes on to say that Charlie had broken generations of tradition and bequeathed his knowledge to two men who were not from Ywerternt area because he had no children of his own and could not rely on his brothers to help him with the rainmaking ceremonies.
Senior Anmatyerr elder and current caretaker of the Ywerternt area Eric Penangk. Image from Central Desert Shire Council.

Eric Penangke told this story relating to Kramer’s photograph:

‘They worked for Mr Moore as tyepey tyepert (sheepy shepherd) --- arntarnt-arekarleng. Inenh yanheng kwet. Yanhel nheng alhernter nheng George Moore-el atyerretyal iltem. Mr Moore-el-akwetaw. (??) Rang inenh arntarnt-arek. Not nheng, George Moore petyek yanh-warn. Ra arntarnt-arek-anem inenh ingkerrek. Lakenh. Nhenh map anek mer llyelepwenteyl. Yep-yep-akerteng. Inang aywangel shotgun-el inenh arntarnt-arek. Alhernter arrpenh kwereng. Yaway. Kel lakenh. ---- because he looked after them from that one all the time. That George Moore (?) growled at that whitefella without shooting. (?) Mr Moore? He looked after them. George Moore came there. He looked after them all. This mob lived at Woodford Crossing. Because they had sheep. (?) That old man looked after them with a shotgun. From that other white fella. Yes, it was like that.

‘These old men used to work with Mr Moore as sheep Sheppards and Mr Moore looked after them. They lived there and when George [sic] Murray was shooting (reference to the killings in the Coniston Station area in 1928) they were still staying with Mr Moar. That old whitefella was protecting and caring for them. He didn't want George Murray to come down there because he was protecting them. That's how it was. They were staying at Woodforde Crossing, Mer Lyelepwentye, with the sheep. That old man looked after with a shotgun. Yep, that's it. Charlie Quartpot apmere Ywerterntarenny Kwatyakartwey. He was the traditional owner for Mer Ywerternt and owned the rain dreaming for this place. His other name was Charlie tyele-apwert because he was in jail in Port Augusta for such a long time. When he got out of jail he came back home to Atnyemkwaty (Ryan's Well). He came back to Atnyemkwaty and he died at Atnyemkwaty (Ryan's Well). That's it.’ (Story Recorded at Alyuen Outstation on the 6th December 2007 by Jason Gibson (Northern Territory Library). Rough Translation by Malcolm Pengart Heffernan).
Reference

World Today Transcript – [www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2005/s1529403.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2005/s1529403.htm).

Strehlow, TGH, 1968. Family Tree no. IX (5). Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs.

Interview with Eric Penangk recorded at Alyuen Outstation on the 6th of December 2007 by Jason Gibson Northern Territory Library, translation by Malcolm Pengart Heffernan.