TRANSPORT: 5 horses

EQUIPMENT: 3 saddles, 3 bridles, 6 prs hobbles, 1 pack saddle, 1 tent fly, 2 swags.

DEPARTURE POINT: Shady Camp - Mary River

INTENDED ARRIVAL POINT: Tortilla Flats - Adelaide River.

Due to delays caused by weather disturbances we arrived at Shady Camp at approx 1200 hours on 6/1/59. Before starting, a strap broke on one of the saddles and it had to be left behind, and the bridle was left with it.

After loading gear on the horses, we departed in pouring rain at 1500 hours (visibility nil) for Alligator Heads. There was greater depth than anticipated in the channels of the Mary River, making long detours necessary and having to make running repairs on broken saddle-bag and saddle straps etc, we were forced to make camp approx. half way across the Mary River on the flats. At this stage we decided to let go two horses, which were semi-rid and difficult to handle to make their own way back to Point Stuart.

Alligator Heads was reached approx. 1330 hours on Wednesday 7th and the old track from the Woolner track was located a few miles further on. Camp was made at Pemis Creek (flow estimated 7 cusecs).

On Thursday 8th, the track was lost approx. 6 miles west of Pemis Creek, so we made for Whitestone Creek and the Woolner track on a compass bearing and camped just 1/2 of G.S. 52 (G.S. not read but flow estimated 8 cusecs).

Scotch Creek was reached approx 1530 hours on Friday 9th and found flooded. Flow in eastern channel estimated 100 cusecs and in western channel 300 cusecs. Difficulty was experienced in crossing the channels and 4 Mile Creek was reached on dusk and found through it was running a "banker". The 6 miles to Harrakai took 2½ hours to traverse and we arrived there at 2200 hours.

The homestead was found overrun by natives - men, women, kids, cats, dogs and pigs and stank like a blacks' camp. The food boxes and medical kit left by the Section there were intact but the wireless had apparently been used till the batteries were flat and was not satisfactorily protected from the weather. The battery charger was 0.5. But if any petrol was left there for it originally, there was no sign of it.

Contact was made by wireless to Darwin on Monday 12th. On Wednesday 13th, an attempt was made to cross the Margaret River via Adelaide River T/S track (the crossing is 15 miles approx. from Harrakai). Approx. 2 miles of plains from Bull Hole Creek towards the Margaret was flooded to approx. 18" deep and near the Margaret a flood channel approx. 200 yards wide and 8 to 10 feet deep was encountered. This channel was swam (without the horses) and the Margaret River was found to be flowing approx. 6" deep over the banks at this point. Our tracks were retraced to Harrakai, arriving back at dusk.

J. Bowen was flown in by helicopter on Sunday 16th to relieve
The horses and gear were moved to the Margaret River opposite G.S. 32 on Monday 19th for another attempt at crossing the river. Because of the depth and current, it was decided not to attempt swimming and to return the horses to Marrakai in charge of a native and evacuate J. Bowen and W. Clark by helicopter. When the rivers drop sufficiently another attempt can be made to get the horses to Tortilla Flats.

Rainfall and G.H. data etc. in Marrakai area attached on separate memo.

... ...
(J. Lawrie)
Hydrographer
20/1/59

"OPERATION HORSE-LINE" SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

The horses were returned to Marrakai on 19th by a native from there. J. Bowen and W. Clark remained at Margaret River.

On 22nd the Margaret River had fallen somewhat so the horses were brought to the Margaret once more by the native and swum across. J. Bowen and W. Clark then continued on to Tortilla Flats, encountering slight navigational problems on route and arrived approximately 1030 am on 24/1/59.

A saddle and bridle to replace those left at Shady Camp at start of trip were brought from Connellans Camp by helicopter in the course of a field survey flight.

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(J. Lawrie)