REPORT ON A FIELD TRIP
ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED
SAVANNAH WAY TOURISM INITIATIVE
5-9 NOVEMBER 2001

Bob Alford
Heritage Consultant
For:
Dept. of Lands, Planning and Environment

ABN: 17 502 373 803


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1. **Introduction**  
Following the preparation of desktop surveys to determine possible sites that might be considered for inclusion in any interpretive program for the proposed *Savannah Way* tourism drive initiative, and the documentation of a strategic approach to the route's development by Cloustons *et al.*, a field trip was undertaken to further identify sites that might be incorporated into the program.

The field trip was undertaken over the period 5-9 November 2001 and included the following personnel:

- Mike Butler, Manager Urban and Heritage Enhancement, Dept. of Lands Planning and Environment;
- Stephen Sutton, Director Heritage Conservation Branch Dept. of Lands Planning and Environment;
- Ms Pompea Sweet, Department of Industries and Business;
- Greg Larkin, Northern Territory Tourist Commission; and
- Bob Alford MPHA, Heritage Consultant.

The trip was planned to survey the route within the Northern Territory from the Queensland border and Wollogorang to Katherine via the Carpentaria Highway to Cape Crawford, Borroloola and Wollogorang; the Nathan River Road to Roper Bar; and the Roper and Stuart Highways to Mataranka and Katherine.

The outgoing journey was undertaken over the Carpentaria Highway from Daly Waters to assess the sealed route should tourists wish to avoid the Nathan River Road to Roper Bar from Cape Crawford and pick up the drive west from either Daly Waters or Katherine.

A number of sites were either accessed or noted over the route and readings in kilometres taken between specific sites, major points of interest, and peripheral points of interest (for planning purposes) including side roads, unnamed creeks and other points. These readings were corrected where necessary following any detours into sites.

Observations were also made regarding the terrain generally and are presented in broad terms. The work *Ludwig Leichhardt's Journal of an Overland Expedition in Australia* (Facsimile of the 1847 work by Corkwood Press 1996), contains a detailed commentary on the geology, landscape, flora and fauna generally within the area traversed and should be utilised as a reference where required.

Generally, however, the species noted included, *Eucalyptus Sp.*, *Acacia sp.*, including Lancewood (*Acacia sherleyii*), Ironwood (*Erythrophleum chlorostachys*) Cycad (*Cycas armstrongii*), *Melaleuca sp.*, *Grevillea sp.*, *Pandanus sp.*, Fan palm (*Livistona humilis*), Bulwaddy (*Macropteranthes keckwickii*), Water lilies (*Nymphaea violacea*), Cypress pine (*Callitris intratropica*), Northern Kurrajong (*Brachychiton diversifolius*) and Leichhardt tree (*Nauclea orientalis*).

Descriptions of the country, also appear in a number of works including Hudson Fysh in *Qantas Rising*, Bobbie Buchanan's *In the Tracks of Old Bluey*, Billy Linklater and Lynda Tapp in their joint work *Gather no Moss*, Gordon Buchanan's early work on his Report on a Field Trip Associated with the Proposed *Savannah Way* Tourism Initiative, 5-9 November 2001
father, Nat, in *Packhorse & Waterhole* and the most recent by Lynn and Yvonne Fraser, *The Great Top Road. Travellers Guide to the Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland and Northern Territory*.

Those sites identified during the field trip are presented in the accompanying spreadsheet to run west from the Queensland border and Wollogorang across to Borroloola, south to Cape Crawford, north to Roper Bar and west to the Stuart Highway, and are provided with brief annotations regarding any historical associations and observations where relevant. Photographs were also taken over the route.

Map references are related to the 1:100000 series of maps, notwithstanding a number of alterations to the alignment of the road in some areas.
### Sites accessed or noted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site name</th>
<th>Kilometres between points</th>
<th>Historical notes, comments/observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wollogorang to Cape Crawford</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland Border</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Plethora of signs, duplication of messages including one 'Outback' and one 'Nature' - need reconciling. Welcome only to Burke Shire on Queensland side - not to Queensland itself. On Settlement Creek west of the NT border, it was formed and stocked by the Carne Bros. in 1883 and is one of the oldest stations in the Territory. Hudson Fish and Paul McGinnis stayed there in 1919 on their way to prepare airstrips for the Vickers Vimy of Ross and Keith Smith and other England to Australia entrants. Hudson Fish provides a good description of the site, its characters and their journey in his book <em>Qantas Rising</em>. The old homestead, 1930s homestead and meathouse remain, the former in poor condition - the original homestead collapsed several years ago. Sheet 6463, Wollogorang, Grid Reference (GR) 134945. Located north of Wollogorang the creek was a part of the historic Queensland Road, said to be the border point, and where drovers demanded pay for the Queensland section, &quot;...the drover's point of no return.&quot; The creek was named by George de Latour during an overlanding trip, 1874-76. Sheet 6463 Wollogorang, GR 135953. The present crossing requires caution. An area of rugged escarpment north of the road contrasting to the scrubby open woodland and termite hills from Wollogorang. Wollogorang Homestead has photos of waterfalls there in the wet season, however the area is generally inaccessible during that time. The road is bitumised through hills for 3.6km. Associated with the Redbank Mine and recently upgraded for a new mining venture. All associated with Bill Masterson, the 'Redbank Hermit', a former commercial traveller who came to Burketown in 1914 and then cooked on a number of stations before discovering a copper show on Redbank Creek in 1916. He mined the show for many years but with little success. He lived in a series of caves over that time and died in 1961. Vivian Campbell, a lessee at Wollogorang with her husband John, and a George Butcher, erected the headstone. A rock shelter near Masterton's Cave contains a number of thus far unidentified human bones. Entry is currently restricted to mine employees. Sheet 6463, Wollogorang, GR 924994 and GR 931987. On present road west of Redbank, and named after an Aboriginal stockman working on Wollogorang Station. Sheet 6463, Wollogorang, GR 885974 - kilometre reading not taken. Eastern turnoff to Pungalina Station - the owner is now in the process of setting up a tourism wilderness venture, it is located on the old Queensland Road via Settlement Creek, Pungalina, Seven Emus, Greenbank and on to Borroloola. Was originally named Carnes Creek, after the brothers who established Wollogorang in 1883. The landscape is open woodland with numerous termite hills extending west from the crossing on the south side of the road.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Wollogorang Homestead</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement Creek</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escarpment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redbank airstrip</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redbank Mine, Masterton's Cave &amp; grave site</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echo Gorge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pungalina Station turnoff</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karns Creek</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Calvert Hills Station turnoff 65.3
   Turnoff to the station is also the entry to Cresswell Downs and Tablelands Highway - a 460km dry stage with no facilities. Emus and a bustard spotted, along with brolgas at a small waterhole. Open woodland country with termite hills.

Calvert River 88.4
   Named by Ludwig Leichhardt "in acknowledgment of the good services of Mr. Calvert...and which I feel much pleasure in recording." A small loop of 300m has been formed on the north western bank and a refuse bin indicated regular use of the site. Sheet 6363, Calvert Hills, GR 574958.

Surprise Creek 107.1
   Crossing with a side track 300m from the eastern bank leading south.

Kangaroo Creek 121.9
   Links to the Calvert River Station road.

Robinson River 160.0
   Named by Ludwig Leichhardt "in acknowledgment of the liberal support which I received from J. P. Robinson, Esq., in the outfit of my expedition." It has also been suggested that George de Latour later named it the Scott River after the Government Resident, George Byng Scott. Set of yards to the west of the road on the northern side of the crossing.

Robinson River Station turnoff 171.1
   Horse Creek 176.6
   Lily Lagoon 191.2
   A large expanse of water with a variety of bird life and lilies. A track leads off the main road to the west from the northern end and appears to be well used. Thick Cycad stands commence a kilometre north of the lagoon, along with Pandanus and 'snappy' gums among open woodland. The area also has large domed termite mounds of grey soils as opposed to the usual termite hills.

Foelsche River and Blazed tree '43' 197.5
   Named in 1874-76 by George de Latour after Palmerston, and the Territory's, first Police Inspector, Paul Foelsche. A track leads off to a lookout over the river 100m from the southern bank and a set of yards and what may be a mustering camp is located on the north bank to the west. The '43' tree is on the west bank of the Foelsche River near the crossing. It was marked to denote to the drovers on the old Queensland Road the miles remaining to Borroloola, but was not located. Sheet 6265, Wearyan, GR 012067. The Cycads finish at the river and some stands of Cypress pine recommence along with scattered termite hills in woodland. Some Pandanus was also noted.

Little Wearyan River 210.7
   Wearyan River 212.3
   Originally named by George de Latour after Justice W. A. Wearing during an overlanding trip in 1874-76 and since misnamed Wearyan.

Unsigned track 213.8
   Track leading off to the south. Cycads finish and termite hills start in open woodland.

Macpherson River 222.3
   May have been named after Archie MacPherson, who did carting and contracting with bullock teams on the Barkly before working with the Guns on Elsey in 1902. He dehydrated and died at the Georgina River in 1916 and was later buried in Camooweal.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mileage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher River</td>
<td>226.5</td>
<td>Suggested to have been named by Ludwig Leichhardt after &quot;Mr. John Fletcher, whose kind contribution towards my expedition had not a little cheered me in my undertaking.&quot; Not confirmed. Some Cypress pines noted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Fletcher River</td>
<td>233.0</td>
<td>Origins uncertain but it is known that Ludwig Leichhardt had a dog named Spring on his expedition and recorded that &quot;we have been frequently indebted for the life of Spring.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Creek and Spring Creek Station turnoff</td>
<td>239.3</td>
<td>On the road into Borroloola east of the Carpentaria Highway junction, the now misnamed McArthur River crossing is associated with the Leichhardt trek and the overlanders using the Queensland Road. Leichhardt named the &quot;Macarthur,&quot; in acknowledgment of the liberal support my expedition received from Messrs. James and William Macarthur of Cambden (sic). The crossing crosses a rocky bar with a small loop to a camp area east of the river. Sheet 6165, <strong>Borroloola, GR 406215</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poison Creek</td>
<td>245.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burketown Crossing</td>
<td>265.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borroloola turnoff</td>
<td>267.3</td>
<td>The town site for Borroloola was surveyed by J. P. Hingston, a South Australian Surveyor in 1885. The meaning of Borroloola is debated but accepted as 'place of the paperbarks', though 'fresh running water' is also suggested. The township was envisaged as a major port for the handling of beef, seafood and minerals and in handling goods shipped in from other parts of Australia and Asia. The Town of Borroloola was proclaimed by the Governor of South Australia, Sir William C. Robinson, on 10 September 1885 following Gazettal a week earlier. Captain Cresswell explored a stock route from Powell's Creek OT Station to Borroloola, also in 1885. Borroloola offers recreational fishing on the McArthur or the waters around the Sir Edward Pellew Group - general sites within the township include the 1886 Police Station Museum, the local heritage trail, lone graves, cemetery and the Tattersalls Hotel site. The Barranyi National Park is located in the Sir Edward Pellew group of islands some 30km north of the McArthur River mouth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caranbirini Conservation Reserve</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not accessed due to nightfall. The Reserve is located on the western extremity of the Bukalara Range 46km south of Borroloola and has been established by the Parks and Wildlife Commission NT (PWCNT). The site features sandstone escarpment and its associated flora and fauna, a semi-permanent waterhole and a 'lost city' of sandstone spires. Picnic facilities are provided and a walking track provides viewing and photo opportunities. Camping is not permitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight Mile Hole</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not accessed due to nightfall. Recreational fishing and camping spot, that might provide some opportunity for interpretation of the natural values, Cape Crawford, Ernest Favenc and Lindsay Crawford, etc. Sheet 6164, <strong>Glyde, centred on GR 098732</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Jump Up' on Carpentaria Highway</td>
<td></td>
<td>Part of the Favenc Range approximately 42 kilometres west of Cape Crawford - formal rest stop and vista of the delta to the east - natural values and associations with explorer Ernest Favenc. Opportunity to interpret and have visitors extend the stay. Sheet 5964, <strong>OT Downs, GR 405529</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Located at the junction of the Carpentaria and Tablelands Highways, the site is associated with the journey of Favenc and Crawford, the natural values of the area and the Abner Range (Lost City), nearby Mallapunyah and the 'Beef Roads' enterprise of the 1960s. The road from Daly Waters was constructed by the Dept. of Works for the Dept. of the Interior and officially opened by the Administrator, R. L. Dean, CBE, on 6 December 1969. The heartbreak Hotel was established to service the road gangs. The Tablelands Highway was finished a year later. Sheet 6064, Mallapunyah, centred on GR 774552.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Distance (km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cape Crawford (Heartbreak Hotel)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Crawford to Roper Bar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan River Rd turnoff</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy Springs Creek</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little River</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set of steel yards</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Creek</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leila Creek</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limestone Creek</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlook</td>
<td>26.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pandanus Creek</td>
<td>33.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ebony Creek</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roper Bar/Borroloola road</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batten Creek</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnamed creek</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauhinia Downs Station turnoff</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawallah Range</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnamed creek</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawallah Creek</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnamed creek</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two kilometres west of Heartbreak Hotel. Gravel road recently graded but subject to deterioration at the onset of rain or heavy traffic. Open woodland with red termite hills. Paperbarks and Pandanus commence 750m from crossing, with 'snappy' gums in open woodland. Yards located west of the road on the north side of the creek have associations with pastoral endeavours in the region. Ridge line to the west of the road extending for some four to five kilometres. Open woodland with Ironwood, Grevillea and 'snappy' gums. Set of wire yards on the northern bank east of the road have associations with pastoral endeavours in the region. Sheet 6064 Mallapunyah, GR 725679. Country very green with red soils and termite hills. Limestone outcrops noted along with Euro wallabies. Limestone indicative of cattle country. Set of wire yards 100m to the north and west of the creek. Provides an overview of the country to the north. Naming of the creek is borne out by the Pandanus, with Paperbarks on its banks. The country tends to open woodland with a variety of Bulwaddy, 'snappy' gums, ghost gums and some Ironwood. Black rocks were noted at the crossing, suggesting its naming. Road in good condition but some deterioration commenced north of the junction. (Batten's Creek). Named after William Batten by George de Latour during his overlanding trip, 1874-76. A camping sign was noted on the southern approach, however no site was noted, possibly due to disturbance. Open woodland country with a rise to the east of the road. Directional/reassurance signage required - presently confusing. Paperbark creek to the east crosses road 150m north. Range visible to the north through open woodland with termite hills turning to grey. Limestone outcrops in a ridge line east of the road from 65-69km point. Escarpment noted to the west of the road at the 73km point and extends for 37km. Informal camping area noted on the north bank west of the road. Undulating country commences, with limestone outcrops from 83.9 to 89km and then rocky ridges and outcrops in scrubby country, mainly west of the road.

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A search for the site of an abandoned copper mine 400m south of the Coppermine Creek and east of the road the junction of a track to the east (Sheet 6066, Tawallah Range, GR 573263), was undertaken with no success but for some shards of glass. A prehistoric quarry and reduction site was located on a rise to the east of a small branch. The site features cores, flakings, tools and a knapping floor.

Large outcrop in view on a right hand bend and left of the road, with a ridgeline/escarpment running north south for two kilometres, also west of the road.

Named after Les Sly, who had a number of Grazing Licences (GLs) in the Limmen River area. A ridgeline with rock shelters was also noted here on a left hand bend and to the west of the road. Sheet 5966, Mantungula, GR 498480.

An escarpment was visible ahead and to the east of the road and two kilometres on, a formation clearly showed stratification of the rock angling from the southern base upwards.

Airstrip on eastern side of road.

Nathan River Station is currently being set up as a National Park by Parks and Wildlife Commission. Sheet 5966, Mantungula, centred on GR 457776. Directional/reassurance sign required for the Roper Bar road at the junction of the Nathan River access road (No Through Road sign).

Traffic counter noted at gate and later confirmed as PWCNT data gathering exercise.

Limmen Bight itself was named after one of Abel Tasman's three ships, the Limmen, Zeemeur and Bracq involved in the 1644 voyage to find the strait between New Guinea and the 'southland', pass through it and circumnavigate the continent, charting it along the way. Leichhardt named the river "...from its disemboguing into Limmen Bight." An informal camping area was noted at the river. From the Limmen the road deteriorated badly with curves over about five kilometres.

Nondescript but historically significant natural features comprising three outcrops, one with two crowns, named by Leichhardt "...in honour of my excellent hosts Messrs. David, Charles, John and Thomas Archer of Moreton Bay" for the 1844-45 journey to Port Essington. Sheet 5967, Towns, centred on GR 450900

Lagoon to the west of the road with a variety of bird life including Brolgas, and Lilies, Paperbarks, etc. Sheet 5967, Towns, GR 381037.

Named the Burketown Crossing by Leichhardt in 1845, the name was later changed to Cox and de Latours Crossing after the overlanders of the same name and is associated with both Leichhardt and his epic journey, and droving along the Queensland Road. Sheet 5967, Towns, GR 429883
**Maria Lagoon turnoff** 186.4

Turnoff to the Limmen River Fishing Camp 21km to the east. The camp provides most facilities including a general store, fuel, camping and a boat ramp. The road runs west of a ridgeline with magnetic termite hills extending for eight kilometres, and some Cypress pine and Grevillea amongst scrubby open country.

**Towns River** 224.6

Probably named by Leichhardt (but not recorded in a listing of principal places named by him) after Robert Louis Towns (1794-1873), a Sydney merchant whom Leichhardt had met prior to his 1844-45 journey. PWCNT are presently working on providing a camp/rest area on the northern bank and west of the road overlooking a picturesque billabong. There is a loop of some 500m formed with further works to be undertaken.

**Little Towns River** 228.8

The river is in effect two streams. From north of the river, low flat scrubby country starts with some Cypress pine stands and larger domed termite mounds of grey soils.

**Outcrops** 253.6

Outcrops of rock (possibly limestone but not confirmed) similar to quartz 'blows' noted east of the road.

**Roper Bar/Port Roper junction** 255.8

A search for the ruins of the Old St. Vidgeons homestead as detailed in Hiddins work *Explore Wild Australia with the Bushtucker Man* was carried out with no success - it was later found that the site was at the junction of the old Port Roper road 22 kilometres further on. The country is open and scrubby with some Bulwaddy and Acacia noted.

**Whirlpool Creek** 262.6

A homestead precinct of white painted cement block construction, most appear in good condition though roofless. Sheet 5868, Urapunga, GR 876656. Access unknown but is owned by the NT Government - a land claim is underway.

**St. Vidgeons Station ruins** 273.5

Leichhardt notes the naming of Whirpool Creek.

**Mountain Creek** 284.1

Lagoon with a right hand bend following. A variety of bird life was noted along with Lilies and Paperbarks, Pandanus, etc.

**Unnamed lagoon** 291.2

Lagoon with a variety of bird life was noted along with Lilies and Paperbarks, Pandanus, etc.

**Unnamed lagoon** 296.0

A boat ramp sign was noted on the northern side of the road, with Mt. Birch to the south.

**Boat ramp** 298.9

Flat open woodland.

**Toll Gate Creek** 303.0

Both noted some twelve kilometres from Toll Gate Creek with Todd Bluff to the north of the road. The feature was named after Charles Todd, the Superintendent in charge of the construction of the Overland Telegraph Line in 1871-72. An OT depot was established near Roper Bar when the wet season delayed works to the west at the King River. Flooding at the OT depot saw it reestablished on Telegraph Hill south of Roper Bar. Named by Leichhardt on 23 October 1845 as "Hodgson's Creek", in honour of Pemberton Hodgson, Esq."

**Mount Eclipse and Todd Bluff**

Erroneously marked as the Queensland Crossing, which is four kilometres to the west at Rocky Bar Crossing. (see below). Very scrubby country with termite hills including magnetic termite hills.

**Hodgson River** 321.2

Formation overlooking the Roper Bar Store turnoff.

**Eagle Bluff** 340.8

Named by Leichhardt on 23 October 1845 as "Hodgson's Creek", in honour of Pemberton Hodgson, Esq." (see below). Very scrubby country with termite hills including magnetic termite hills.

**Nathan River/Roper Highway junction** 342.6

**Roper Bar Store/Roper River/Urapunga junction** 343.6

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Roper Bar Sites

*Roper River and Bar*  
*(Leichhardt’s Crossing)*

The Roper River was named by Leichhardt on 19 October 1845 after it had been seen by "...Mr. Roper...two days before, and I named it after him, as I had promised to do." Leichhardt lost four horses and his botanical collection in the Roper before locating the crossing - the site also has tangible associations with explorers and drovers with names said to be inscribed in the rocks - possibly now covered by the concrete causeway. Located to the NNE of the store. Sheet 5868, *Urapunga*, GR 469733.

The site includes the remains of the c. 1935 Police Station and the cairn to Leichhardt constructed by the army's NT Force, c. 1945 and a plaque recently replaced under the aegis of the NLC. Sheet 5868, *Urapunga*, GR 469731.

In front of Police Station - associated with the teamster Johnson, who was speared by Aborigines in 1875.

West of the main Police Station site. Roper Tommy (1876-1948) was a Black Tracker attached to the Roper Bar Police Station for many years and was a part of the 1934 patrol to Blue Mud bay during which Constable McColl was killed on Woodah Island. Sheet 5868, *Urapunga*, GR 469731.


Not accessed. Approximately one kilometre south of the store it is associated with the Overland Telegraph Depot sited some distance away on the Roper 2.5km north from the confluence of the Hodgson River. Sheet 5868, *Urapunga*, GR 537668. Discussion with store owner confirmed visitors have 'ratted' the Telegraph Hill site and they don't let anyone know its whereabouts. The old OT Depot is remote.

Queensland (Rocky Bar) Crossing

Roper Highway/Nathan River

road junction 0

Hodgson River

Access track 22.5

Rocky Bar Crossing 26.6

The erroneous reporting of the Queensland Crossing on the Hodgson River provided the opportunity to locate the actual crossing and this was undertaken as a separate exercise to the main trip itself and in reference to both Hiddins' directions (*Explore Wild Australia*) and a map provided by the Roper Bar Store. A search of the area provided as a 'mud map' proved fruitless until it was realised the map had been transposed 180°. The site was located at the site marked on maps as Rocky Bar Crossing.

(see above for naming)

A formed well used track leads from the main road through old St. Vidgeons south of the river to the west.

The crossing is signposted. The area is one of rock shelving forming at least two crossings over the Hodgson. An extensive area features a diverse range of Aboriginal petroglyphs, whilst at least three examples of inscriptions by drovers are present at the crossing. These include QX SID McC, C MILL ROCKHAMPTON and F BEATTY MITCHELL and MD. The crossing is associated with droving and the Queensland Road.

Sheet 5868, *Urapunga*, GR 533553

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mileage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roper Bar to Stuart Highway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roper Highway/Nathan River</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>road junction</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy Creek</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hell's Gates</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnamed creek</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount McMinn</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherwin Creek</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheon Creek</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rest area</td>
<td>37.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fizzer Creek</td>
<td>38.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Packsaddle Creek</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayle Creek</td>
<td>79.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayhew Creek</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangways River</td>
<td>92.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest Area</td>
<td>97.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Low lying open woodland country. The passage was associated with the overlanders and the Queensland Road on the route through to Katherine. Sheet 5768, Chapman, GR 385740. The large formation borders the road and features escarpment and rock outcrops.

Named after William McMinn, the government's Overseer of Works on the Overland Telegraph Line. On 3 May 1871, McMinn cancelled the contract of Darwent and Dalwood as contractors for the northern section of the line when they purportedly misjudged the power of the wet season and the construction teams became bogged down at the King River.

Escarpment on both sides of the road with shelters noted in the cliffs on the south side.

Named after Ah Cheon, the Chinese gardener and cook in Jeannie Gunn's 1908 classic work, *We of the Never-Never*. Ah Cheon originally came from the California goldfields and worked at Renner Springs in 1897 before joining the Gunns and running a vegetable garden on Elsey Station. He returned to China suffering from Rheumatics and died as Hong Bock Cheon c. 1923.

Formal roadside rest area set off the highway, with shelter, water, table and seating, bins, etc.

Named after Henry Peckham who was born in 1872 and was later a stockman at Renner Springs before winning a mail contract in the top end. Known as 'The Fizzer', the mailman made famous in Jeannie Gunn's work, Peckham drowned at the Dashwood Crossing on Victoria River Downs on 14 April 1911. He was buried at the river and later disinterred and buried at the Elsey Cemetery in 1944 by Brigadier Dollery's men of the NT Force. The highway is sealed from just over the creek to the Stuart Highway.

Named after the saddles used by the drovers to transport food and gear on pack horses. Lancewood and some Mulga were noted in open woodland country.

Possibly named after drover and one of three brothers (William, Tom and Reg), William Sayle, a member of an 1881 overlanding trip from Queensland to Clencoe by Nat Buchanan and his party. Sayle died at the Wearing River (Wearyan) after apparently eating Zamia' palm (probably *Cycad - Cycas armstrongii*) nuts without leaching them as the Aborigines did before pounding it to a flour for Johnny cakes. Sayle's headstone was brought to Borroloola in 1940 and renewed. It now stands as a memorial in the Borroloola graveyard.

Named after H.B.T. Strangways, a member of the South Australian Parliament in 1868 and Premier in 1870. His ministry announced the project to construct the Overland Telegraph Line from Port Darwin to Port Augusta.

Set off the road with a good overview of the country to the south. Features shelter, water, table and seating, bins, etc.

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Report on a Field Trip Associated with the proposed Savannah Way Tourism Initiative, 5-9 November 2001
Possibly named after South Australian Labor leader, Tom Price, who in a Liberal-Labor alliance came to power in 1905. Price was instrumental in the negotiations leading to Commonwealth control of the Territory in 1911. Low flat country with Lancewood and termite hills were noted with the termite hills extending over some 22 kilometres, the thickest between 117 and 122km.

Formal rest area set off the road in rocky terrain with large termite hills.

Termite hills and fan palms noted to the west near the Jilkmingan turnoff after Elsey.

A very picturesque crossing in rich country featuring large Fan palms and lush vegetation on the waterway.

Similar to Elsey Creek.
3. **Extraneous sites noted or not accessed**

Some sites not previously recorded in the desktop surveys were noted as the trip progressed. Some were identified prior to the trip by reference to a number of works not previously accessed as part of the desktop studies.

There was also a number of sites that were not accessed due either to time or other constraints but should ideally be included in any considerations in the development of the *Savannah Way*. Those in the Roper Bar area, including the graves and old homestead site at Old Urapunga, are such sites.

4. **Observations**

The country between Wollogorang and the Stuart Highway is one of diversity over its historic, natural and cultural values. In some cases these values are linked and thus provide a continuum in the potential of the route to be brought alive by a strategic approach to its development as an 'adventure' or self discovery by those who use it.

This approach has been addressed by the Clouston report, which provides a series of detailed options that if implemented would see the *Savannah Way* initiative become a tourism 'icon' in providing the self discovery experience, but tempered by an acknowledgment of the fragility of the landscape generally and its susceptibility to any increased pressure.

It is envisaged that many examples of these historic, natural and cultural values would be identified and incorporated into the development of the *Savannah Way*, and in particular the interpretive media, be it signage, maps, *Savannah Way* passes, 'bush tucker' and other guides, or audio tape sets.

Bob Alford MPHA
Heritage Consultant
13 November 2001