DEDICATED

to

the hard working 'little man' who helped make this Territory what it is today
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Plates</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Maps</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction and Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 The Beginning: Captain Joseph Bradshaw 1837-1905</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 Miller Family: Patrick Quilty 1915-37</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 The Depot, 1920: Tom Liddy, 1938</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 Coolibah Station - Tom Quilty, David Fogarty, Paul Vandeleur, 1938-1956</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 Hugh Wason Byers, 1954</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6 Peter Chester Murray, 1958</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF PLATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Bradshaw Homestead</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Outbuildings</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mounted Constable Wally Langdon’s photo of Nemarluk</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thomas Andrew Liddy, 1909</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Constable Tas Fitzer and others outside the Timber Creek Police Station</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Victoria River Depot Jetty Area</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Victoria River Depot quarters, main house and store</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Phyliss Dobbin and David Fogarty at Buffalo Springs, 1948</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>En Route to Buffalo Springs, 1948</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Wason Byers</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Daily Round, Coolibah Homestead</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Head stockman, Jim Turley, with camp cooks</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Peter Chester Murray, mid 1960s</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Coolibah Homestead (side view)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Coolibah Homestead (front view)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Bradshaw Homestead</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### LIST OF MAPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bradshaw’s and Coolibah 1952 (after J H Kelly)</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Map showing blocks belonging to Ebsworth, Mason, and Fisher &amp; Lyons</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1928 map of the road from the Depot to VRD</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1920 pastoral map showing Bradshaw’s Run</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1945 map showing the changed Bradshaw boundary</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Extract from Pastoral Map of the NT 1984</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I commenced work on this history in November 1982 when, accompanied by my son Bradley, I made my first trip to Bradshaw's Run. At that time Mr Ian McBean, the then owner of Innesvale station, had purchased Coolibah station and with the help of his family and staff, I did my first field trip. I was very impressed by the spectacular beauty of the country and by the isolation. My respect increased for those who settled that remote country, with, at times, not much more than their courage and determination.

A main source for my resource was Bradshaw's Log Book which gives full details of the running of a station. It is a typical station diary written by men, in a man's pioneering world, as there was no mention of women, furniture, or the softer things of life. Joe Bradshaw is reported to have taken his wife to the Run, but nothing was found to substantiate this. The only mention of women, was the recorded arrival and later death, of the housekeeper Mrs. Pound. Apart from this, I found no record of any women and the role they played in that area at that time.

There is much written in this manuscript regarding the ill-treatment of Aboriginals by white settlers. This undoubtedly will be seen by some as extremes of cruelty, but it should be viewed in that era for which it was written. The Aboriginals speared the cattle which invaded their land and so the Europeans retaliated. The cruelty Wason Byers displayed on Coolibah station was for work not done by his station Aboriginals and, although it is impossible to condone such behaviour, it must be looked at in that light. The role of the station Aboriginal was changing at that time, a change which began after the War, when they found they could be paid for a full day's work.

One pioneering woman who knew Byers well said, 'He was very kind to children and helped many women with small children when their husbands were away out bush. He was a rough, rugged man, but please don't portray him as being all bad'. It appeared obvious to me from the evidence found and from what Hugh Van Heythuysen told me, that all parties concerned knew Wason Byers was stealing cattle and as it suited them, they chose to ignore it - until he was caught - then he was virtually abandoned. Hugh said Byers had the ability to do anything and be anything he wanted, 'He was one in a million'.

Olive Underwood deserves full credit for the ingenuity used in locating and using local stone material for the building of the lovely stone homestead at Coolibah.

Peter Murray could best be described as 'Nature's Gentleman' and the correspondence I had with him was tremendous. His letters, even if difficult to read at times, are worth publication in their own right. The reports in Hansards show him to be a man of vision and so much of what he said in the sixties is so applicable today. He is a man of honesty and integrity, who would have nothing to do with anything in Council which 'smacked of corruption'.

I made the decision to finish the history of Bradshaw's Run/Coolibah station at the point when the property left the Australian pioneering family man and went to overseas interests. This occurred when Peter Murray sold.
I acknowledge the Northern Territory History Award grant which was made to me and the assistance of Mrs. Helen Wilson while she was with the Oral History Unit, of the Department of the Chief Minister. I am deeply indebted to Ian Sutherland, who was the Regional Director at the Australian Archives, Darwin, for without his assistance in putting the original block numbers together, I would never have got started. My thanks to the following people who were generous with their photos, interviews and information:

Mr P Liddy, Darwin; Mrs J Crosby, Adelaide; Mr P Murray, The Rocks; Mrs O Quilty, Capel; Mr R Quilty (deceased), Caloundra; Mr H Van Heythuysen, Darwin; Mr P Vandeleur, Katherine; Mr & Mrs E Rayner, Katherine; Mr B Mettam, Adelaide; Mr R Bowrey (deceased), Bowen; Mr B Penny, Brisbane; Mr H Huddleston (deceased), Katherine; Mr D Fogarty, Alice Springs: Mr I Hall (deceased), Brisbane; Mr C Schultz, Adelaide; Mrs J Langdon, Brisbane; Mrs Carlsson for help with her mother, Mrs Chauvel, Toowoomba; Mrs P Dobbyn, Townsville; Mr J Holland, Charters Towers; Mr J Nicholson, Cloncurry; Mrs L Kenna & Mr J Kenna, Alice Springs; Mr D Magoffin, Brisbane; and Mr Pat Underwood, who I have met annually at the Timber Creek Races, where we enthusiastically discussed this work.

My thanks to Graham Hockey, Department of Lands, Darwin and to Mr H Giese, Darwin, for his many suggestions and words of wisdom, Dave Napier from Department of Primary Production, Bob Hutchinson of Department of Lands, and Peter Forrest. A special thanks to George Fogarty and Camille Fogarty for the use of their family's tapes, which contained many hours of story telling by Wason Byers.

I appreciate the hospitality shown to me by Mr & Mrs Ian McBean, their family and staff. The support given by my mother, Margaret Batchelor, in Brisbane, in checking information for me was invaluabale. Finally, I thank my son Bradley for 'listening' and for being with me so often on my many searches.

The past imperial terms of finance, weight and measurement have in most cases not been converted to the present day decimal and metric rates, as I feel to do so would not relate the correct value, particularly monetary, for transactions conducted over ninety years ago. The conversion rate is:

1 (one pound) = 2 dollars
1/- (one shilling) = 10 cents
1d (one penny) = 1 cent

1 mile = 1.60 km
1 foot (12 inches) = .30 m
1 lb (one pound) = .45 kg

Pearl Ogden
August 1989
Darwin. N.T.
Map 1  Bradshaw's and Coolibah 1952 (after J.H. Kelly)

viii
CHAPTER 1

THE BEGINNING: CAPTAIN JOSEPH BRADSHAW, 1837-1905

The Victoria River is one of the major waterways in the Northern Territory and has its watershed on Rivero station. From there it flows north, then west, through many stations including Victoria River Downs, Innesvale and Coolibah, before entering the sea at Queen's Channel. In 1837 the 235 ton Brig Beagle came to northern Australian shores. It was the crew of the Beagle who discovered and explored the Adelaide and Victoria Rivers, the largest in the north, and also the Fitzmaurice and Albert Rivers (Powell 1982, 45).

After its European discovery and exploration, the Victoria River became a reliable means of communication and transport for settlers in the region.

In 1894 Captain Joseph Bradshaw took up 4,800 square miles of land (NT Times and Gazette 14 December 1894). Careful research has failed to uncover any evidence of anyone taking up residence on the area north of the Victoria River prior to Bradshaw and his party. Although lease money was paid for that country by numerous people for several years prior to Bradshaw's time, it appears as though none of them were interested in taking up residence on the land and developing it.

Bradshaw had immediate neighbours when he arrived to work his holding. Almost directly across the Victoria River from his settlement was the Auvergne station boundary. Situated on the banks of the Baines River, it was established in 1886 and, according to Duncan (1967, 161), it carried 7,000 head of stock. Other stations in the Victoria River district included Victoria River Downs, Wave Hill and Delamere Downs, all settled and stocked in the early 1880s.

Numerous attempts had been made to settle the Northern Australian coastline, but all had failed. Land was surveyed and a settlement formed in 1869 by G.W.Goyder and his party. This was called Palmerston (later Darwin). Settlement inland was spurred by mineral discoveries and the Overland Telegraph Line. In 1872 the Telegraph was completed and Australia had instant contact with the rest of the world. Some settlements developed close to an Overland Telegraph station; others took shape where gold had been discovered and so, by the time Bradshaw arrived in 1894, twenty two years later, several settlements were established in the area between Palmerston and the good crossing on the Katherine River. But much of the country between his Run and Palmerston remained unexplored.

The Log Book (1) of Bradshaw's Run is full of valuable information regarding the formation of the Run and the exploration of the country between the Victoria and Fitzmaurice Rivers.

Mr. Joe Bradshaw took up 4,800 square miles under pastoral lease of forty two years, dating from 1 January 1894. From one of his established neighbours, Goldsborough Mort, he purchased all the sheep running on their Wickham River station (this property later became known as Victoria River Downs).

Messrs Gunn and Young inspected and took delivery of the sheep on 20th January. Mr. Gunn then returned to Port Darwin while Mr. Young remained in charge of the sheep. Mr. Bradshaw purchased the steamerette Redgauntlet in Melbourne, filled her with a supply of
necessary stores and despatched her to Port Darwin in charge of Captain Lindsay (Log Books).

Gunn, who was a cousin of Bradshaw, later became famous for his involvement with Elsey station. It was Gunn's wife Jeannie who wrote the book *We of the Never Never*. Gunn severed his connection with Bradshaw's venture a year and a half later in November 1895.

In April 1894 the steamer *Redgauntlet* and schooner *Twins* arrived at Blunder Bay with Joseph Bradshaw and Mr. Gunn amongst those on board. They spent some time looking at the country but, because of the many shoals, they were unable to take the two vessels any further with their heavy cargoes, so the decision was made to form a temporary camp at the base of what they called the Dome. On 26 April 1894 horses were purchased from their closest neighbour, Auvergne station, to enable the party to continue its journey. Bradshaw finally reached Mr. Hugh Young and the sheep on 2 June and was pleased to find everything satisfactory and the losses in the sheep herd minimal.

Mr. Hugh Young walked the sheep in an easterly direction towards Katherine and then west, finally making a semi-permanent camp on the Fitzmaurice River. There are remains of several settlements on Bradshaw's Run and it would be difficult to say which one came first and which ones were merely later outstations.

The NT Government Resident's report on the Northern Territory for 1894, noted that:

The sheep introduced by Messrs Goldsborough Mort & Co on the Victoria River have been removed by Mr. J. Bradshaw to the Lower Victoria, and I understand are doing well, though, owing to the lambing taking place while they were being shifted, the increase this year has not been very large.

During 1895 2,375 cattle were exported from the Territory by sea, an increase of 527 from 1894 (NT Government Resident's Report 1985). Nine horses were shipped to Batavia and 'the imports by sea were 374 sheep for butchering purposes, thirty three rams for Mr. Bradshaw's Victoria River station and twenty bulls for the Victoria River Downs station (Messrs Goldsborough Mort & Co.).' During 1895 Bradshaw purchased all of the Willeroo station stock before the property was abandoned. He arranged the purchase of the cattle in June when he was in Melbourne and in October the cattle arrived at the Run under the control of Mr. Jock McPhee.

Captain Bradshaw returned to the Territory from Melbourne in June 1896 with an Oil Launch, which he had decided would be used for 'river traffic'. Not only were the other early settlers important to the way of life on the Run, but law and order also played a significant part. On 11th May 1898 Captain Joseph Bradshaw visited the site where a new police station was erected at 'Timber Creek, 4 miles from the Depot, Constable O'Keefe to be in charge'. From that time on the Mounted Constable was a regular visitor to the Run bringing mail and local news. It appears that the newly purchased Oil Launch would have been suitable to proceed along the Victoria River towards the new Police Station site.

The sheep appeared to be prospering for, in the 1896 season, 1,553 sheep were shorn yielding eighteen bales of wool and in October the schooner *Twins* arrived with seventeen rams on board for the station. In September Bradshaw returned to the station, with a Mr. and Mrs. George Pound. Mrs. Pound was to be employed as the cook housekeeper. Although the total number of staff employed by Joseph Bradshaw is not clear, several men were with him from when he first settled the Run and they stayed for many years. These included Mr. Hugh Young who appears to have been a trusted friend as well as an employee, Ivan (Evan) Eggoriffe, Ah Wah, Billy Scotts and Jack Larson.
In July 1881, land north of the Victoria River, previously held by W. Kilgour was taken up by EM Ebsworth. He had blocks numbered 620 to 677, which covered 6,572 square miles. To the east of that, Mr Cyrus Mason had blocks numbered 461 to 495 and 3163 to 3170, covering 10,043 square miles. To the south of Mason's land and extending south of the Victoria River, Fisher and Lyons had blocks 182 to 189 covering 1,708 square miles. On 23rd June 1881, EM Ebsworth of Sydney, paid 3 pounds 15 shillings rental on a 150 square mile block south of the land he already held. South of that land, blocks 1065 to 1068 covering 400 square miles, was held by William Carson. In March 1885 the land held by Ebsworth and Mason was forfeited. This land between the Victoria and Fitzmaurice Rivers, was taken up by Bradshaw on 14 December 1894.

NATC 1973/13: Register of P.L. Applications 1864-1881
Australian Archives Darwin
Bradshaw initially reported that both the wool and the lambing were satisfactory, but he followed Goldsborough's example in disposing of the stock. In fact there were few to dispose of as the flock had declined to about eight hundred by 1897 (Duncan 1967, 75). No doubt the heat of the Wet season in the tropical north would have been too much for the flock but the spearing by Aborigines and the heavy losses in the flood of 1899, undoubtedly aggravated the situation. Nonetheless, when Mr. Fred Bradshaw, Joe's brother, took up 2,000 square miles of country on the northern boundary of the Run in 1898 it was decided to work the two stations as one. Cattle proved more successful than sheep.

Before he took up his Run in 1894 Captain Joseph Bradshaw, delivered a paper in Melbourne on 18 September 1891 entitled 'The Future of North Australia' to a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, of which he was a member. With the use of maps, Bradshaw discussed the most remote, northern part of Australia, some of which he had visited in 1890. He said:

In placing the southern boundary at the Tropic of Capricorn, I have differed from the opinion of some of the members of this society and also from that of His Excellency Lord Kintore, who in a recent despatch to the Colonial Office, advised that South Australia should relinquish control of the territory lying north of the 20th parallel and retain all to the south of that line... many persons interested in the territory agree with me, that if the province is to be treated as a tropical one, it should naturally include all such land as lies conveniently within the tropics' (Bradshaw 1891, 107,108,110).

It was almost twenty five years since permanent cattle settlement had commenced and Bradshaw praised the agricultural industry and its ability to produce a good variety of crops. However he was scathing in his comments regarding the support for the agricultural and pastoral industries by the South Australian Government. He continued:

The revenue derived from pastoral leases amounts to about 23,000 pounds per annum at the present time. In return for this assessment, the Government have entirely neglected the squatting interests until lately, when the outcry from disheartened cattle owners announced the fact that they had absolutely no market for their increasing herds, and shamed the South Australian Parliament into granting an annual subsidy of 5,000 pounds for five years, for the maintenance of a cattle steamer to trade to the Asiatic ports.

After the paper there was much discussion amongst the attending members, but most felt that it would be inadvisable to form Northern Australia into a Crown Colony.

Export shipments of live cattle on board the SS Darwin took place from Darwin between 1891 and 1897. Exports were abandoned in 1897, because of the non-renewal of the subsidy mentioned by Bradshaw, but '66 voyages are undertaken carrying 12,684 cattle' (Wilson & Estberg's 1984, 10). In the main, northern Australia was far too remote to have easy access to markets.

The log book of the Run does not tell much about the homestead or the Run but it does give detail about daily life.

There is no clear date when the homestead was erected but there was obviously a structure close to the escarpment in May 1896 when the water was piped 'to the house'. Other mentions of the homestead in the Log Book are done incidentally. In the flood of March 1899:
The water was two feet deep in the dwelling house and outhouses. The station staff vacated the house and were there for ten days on a stony rise in the horse paddock.

All of the men worked until well after midnight that night, moving the sheep in boats. Even so, there were heavy losses. Bradshaw felt that the losses could have been avoided, had 'the sheep been moved to the base of the mountains at the first indications of a high flood'.

On his arrival in Palmerston in February 1899, Mounted Constable O'Keefe reported that 'The Victoria River was visited in January by the heaviest floods ever known there' (NT Times and Gazette 24 February 1899). Whilst the weather and local flooding affected the Run in 1899, bad weather in earlier years appears to have had no effect. On the 6th and 7th January 1897 Palmerston was almost destroyed by a cyclone. Shipping to the Run was not delayed, even though 'the Schooner Twing which was anchored there, suffered slightly' (Log Book).

There are many springs on the escarpment at Bradshaw's Run, the main mountain area being called the Yambarra Range. Joe Bradshaw once described it as 'a superstratum of hard syenite 200 feet thick, below that for hundreds of feet, nobody knows how deep, the rock consists of laminated shale. Springs of delicious fresh water issue from the mountain base'. Bradshaw tapped one of those springs, piping the fresh water to his homestead.

In May 1896 one of those springs was utilized and water pipes were laid from Deutpan Spring to the house. In such an isolated area, where the inhabitants had few luxuries or comforts, running water was provided to the homestead via an ingenious method of plumbing.

There was obviously a good working relationship between those on Bradshaw's Run and neighbouring Auvergne station. Mr. P. Durack was a regular visitor as was Jack Skeahan. They often sent a smoke signal, or fired a gun from their side of the river when they were ready to cross, and the Bradshaw launch or dinghy would be sent down to collect them. Any stores borrowed from Auvergne were returned as soon as possible, after the Bradshaw launch returned from Palmerston with supplies. At one time, a plough and earth scoop were rented to Auvergne for a three month period, at a cost of 10 pounds. Any damages incurred to the machinery were to be paid for by Auvergne.

Two ducks and a drake were also sent over, apparently at no cost. Mr. Durack was also interested in purchasing two coils of broad width wire and sixty sheets of ten-foot roofing iron. Bradshaw decided to offer Durack the iron for 17 pounds and the two coils of rusty wire were to be delivered to Auvergne at no cost to the latter.

Much exploration work was carried out: Bradshaw and his party were obviously adventurous, brave and keen to open up Northern Australia for further settlement. On 2 December 1898, Mr. H. Young, on returning to the Run, went via the Douglas River to find a new route. Fred Bradshaw struck out for home in a more direct route and found one, which took only seven to eight days to traverse. Previously the route from Bradshaw's Run to Palmerston had been via the Katherine crossing. Overland trips were often made to Brock's Creek.

Bradshaw made trips to Darwin and Wyndham by boat for stores, but the mail was usually taken to Katherine by horseback. Katherine was a small settlement several hundred kilometers east of the Run. There, at the good river crossing, was a settlement Bradshaw described in 1907 as being 'of three establishments, one of which embraces public house, store smithy, butchery, bakery, etc; another is the police station; the third is the OT depot, comprising of the superintendent's residence, post and telegraph offices, stores etc.' (Bradshaw 1907, 26, 27). It was to the public house referred to by
Bradshaw, that his friend Hughie Young took some seeds of a Boab tree, which are so common on Bradshaw's Run. The old hotel at the Katherine River crossing is still standing and the boab trees have grown to an enormous size.

In April 1899 two handsome thoroughbred two year colts arrived from Melbourne, to be used for stud purposes on the Run. The locals wished them every success with their 'plucky venture' (N T Times and Gazette 14 April 1899). There was often trouble with the Aborigines spearing cattle and often the remains of the incident were found. This was apparently tolerated. When it was discovered that two blood line horses, Lena Malua and Nancy, had been speared, they decided to send for Mounted Constable O'Keefe. They then endeavoured to track down and arrest the culprits. Joseph Bradshaw commented:

The Myall blacks will plunge without hesitation into some alligator-infested waters with impunity.

The Aborigines were referred to as Myalls, niggers, natives, blacks and boys. (2) The term "Myall" as Joseph Bradshaw explained, 'is bestowed on all Aborigines in the native state, in distinction to those that are civilised, clothed and fed and working for the whites' (Bradshaw 1907, 26-7). The term 'boys' was usually used to refer to a trusted, capable, 'civilised' Aborigine, who has been working on the station for some time. One Log Book entry read, 'Shot a humpy jawed bull for niggers, sent two myalls to Byrmaioni with 20 lbs fresh beef for O'Keefe. Ivan and boy had a look at all the fats at Wogara, found them all right', thereby using three different terms for describing the Aborigines.

The Myalls caused a lot of trouble for the newly arrived white settlers.

An amusing tale was told by Fred Bradshaw. On his arrival at Brock's Creek in December 1898, Fred told everyone of the 'sensational experience which befell him on his way in' (N T Times and Gazette 2 December 1898). Whilst camping one night, two or three days out from the Run, he, two blackboys and a singalese were attacked by Aborigines who threw showers of spears. When the party fired on them the Aborigines quickly disappeared. Later while the party slept, the attackers returned and very quietly stole some of their laundry.

Much has been said regarding the cruelty of the white pioneers to the Aborigines, and certainly much is true. In return some of the Aborigines speared both white and Asian travellers, as well as their cattle and sheep, and so it was an ongoing fight, with the whites finally the victors, settling and developing that isolated remote corner of Northern Australia.

Serious consequences were to follow for any Aboriginals caught and convicted for killing white men, as the following Log Book extracts show:

Friday 5th April 1901; The launch and barge returned from Blunder Bay bringing Mr. Little the Sheriff, Sergeant Waters with several other warders and officials, who had the prisoner in charge. The authorities in Darwin thought it would be advisable that he should be executed at the Victoria River as a warning to the natives of that locality. Captain Mugg and his steward also came up.

Saturday 6th; Mr. Little and Sergeant Waters supervising the erection of the scaffold. Jimmey is chained in front of the verandah, guarded by a warder. The dinghy which is to take Little and Waters back to the vessel, arrived this evening with two more Chinamen and a blackfellow. Palmer and a boy brought in a bullock, which they killed this evening.

Monday 8th; Jimmey one of the murderers of Jack Larson, was executed this morning about 7 am. All the blacks on the place were
Plates 1 and 2: The Bradshaw Homestead (above) and Outbuildings (below)
These two photos were taken in 1934 to illustrate the report of
the NT Pastoral Leases Investigation Committee. The contrast
between the vegetation around the homestead and the bare
surroundings of the outbuildings should be noted.
(Photographs courtesy Australian Archives, Darwin, F658)
mustered to see the execution. The body was left hanging till after breakfast when it was cut down and buried beneath the scaffold. Mr. Little distributed tobacco among the blacks who were onlookers. The scaffold was then pulled down and brought down to the wharf. The launch left for Darwin at 9 am this morning. Mr. Little, Waters, Captain Mugg and the remainder of the visitors were passengers as far as Blunder Bay and Jolly & Co boat was towed along side.

Whilst it was common practice in those days to deal severely with a black man who hurt a white man, it was almost unheard of for a white man to go to jail for killing an Aborigine.

There are almost daily entries in the Log Book and although they are not all written by Bradshaw himself, it appears that it was the responsibility of whoever remained at the homestead to keep the Log Book up to date. Unfortunately it is the record of the passing of many of those early pioneers and travellers. Although there was once a reasonable sized cemetery on the Run, it was destroyed when an airstrip was built over it from the old homestead towards the new. All that remains of the cemetery is the headstone of a man who died in 1936 and a few pieces of twisted wrought iron. The Log Book records some who died.

Early in 1896 a shepherd named Antonio Bolan died and was buried at the back of the horse paddock. On 22 July 1896 James Edkins who had been employed as a cook, shepherd and gardener, died and was buried near Bolan. Two years later the station housekeeper died suddenly and was buried in the horse paddock. Although the name has been obliterated in the log book entry, it is presumed that it was Mrs. Pound who had been employed as the cook and housekeeper almost two years earlier. On 12 March 1900, William McIntyre passed away after a long illness. He had originally been taken to the police station at Timber Creek on the 10 February and from there he was taken to the Run. There was no medical help at either place, but perhaps the conditions at the Run were more comfortable than those at the police station.

Another death occurred on the station in July 1900. Mr. Hugh Young was working several miles away from the station when he became ill and had to be carried back to the station on a stretcher. He died at the homestead that afternoon. The news was immediately relayed to Constable O'Keefe at Timber Creek and to everyone at Auvergne. Ah Wah made the coffin and the last sentence for that day's entry in the Log Book reads:

Poor H.Y.'s remains were interred this evening about 5 pm, the coffin was carried to the grave (which had been dug in the forenoon) by several Myalls, and followed by the station hands, who were much affected (Log Book).

Mr. Young had been with Bradshaw's party from the very beginning and was well liked and respected. Several months later, Joe Bradshaw spent quite some time engraving a slate slab for Young's grave, and later a fence was erected.

Improvements to the homestead were apparently always being made. Late in 1900 iron was removed from the old homestead by Ivan, to be re-erected at the new site as a shed. For weeks everyone was employed cutting and dragging large, heavy posts for the shed, gates and yard. This was apparently an expansion of the homestead buildings.

In January 1901 Fred Bradshaw's room was being repaired and enlarged as the original room had been eaten by white ants. In March, Palmer and Ah Wah put a new floor in the bath house and shortly after, ant bed was collected and the verandah floor was laid. Ant bed when broken up and crushed was used as a flooring material in those days. After being wet it sealed like concrete and so was excellent to use for the floors. It merely had to be sprinkled with water, to keep the dust level down. A new meat house and shed were built and the saw bench in the blacksmith's shop was repaired.
While most homesteads of that era were constructed of corrugated iron, Bradshaw had used the water pipe left over after tapping the spring on the escarpment as his uprights, with only a small amount of local cypress pine used under the roof area. The building was never lined and the pipe uprights, along with the running water, make the homestead quite unique.

A lot of evidence is still visible of the many springs that were piped by Bradshaw. An abundance of old piping is still lying amongst the rocks on the escarpment today. There were many entries in the Log Book which read: 'cleaning pipes', or, 'pipes blocked again'. On one occasion they 'got all dead fish out of the pipes', and then a 'new nozzle' was fitted, but the ingenious method of providing fresh running water to the homestead obviously worked.

Ah Wah was employed by Bradshaw for many years and appeared to do a variety of jobs, including cooking and gardening. They were obviously fairly self-sufficient for there was a large vegetable garden in which Ah Wah grew English potatoes and, on one occasion, 313 pounds of soap was made. Palmer and several boys cut up and then salted 450 pounds of beef. The green hide was then taken by Palmer to make ropes and hobbles.

A Mr. Harris, who was employed as a cook for three weeks, was paid 4 pounds 10 shillings and that presumably left Ah Wah free for gardening and other duties.

Fencing was an on-going job and the remains are still on the station of some very solid fences and rails. Other normal station activities included repairs to gates, branding, cutting chaff, looking for cattle, horses and sheep, cleaning pipes and repairing saddles. Hobbles, ropes, pack bags, and water bags were all made from green hide. Much time was spent cutting and carting firewood for both the homestead and the steamerette. Repairs to the launch, barge and jetty seemed to be an on-going routine, as was putting sail on the barge, or making repairs to the sail. There was also the job of baiting alligators.

On one occasion a colt was bitten by an alligator. Fred Bradshaw personally cared for the wounded animal, cleaning the cuts, syringing out the festering wounds and packing them with tar. The animal lived for five days and Fred was very distressed when he arrived one morning and found that it had died during the night. He then took a party of Aborigines to clean the river bank opposite the homestead. The horses had started swimming the river from the homestead to the sheep paddock, so it became necessary to make a suitable crossing opposite the house, in order to follow them. It was hoped that this would provide a safer passage, free of alligators. The log book always made reference to alligators, as was the mode in those days, never crocodiles.

Ivan, who was feared and hated by the Aborigines for his cruelty, appears to have been a very capable man. After he had completed making a frame for the chaff cutter, he then commenced over-hauling the launch engine. On one occasion Joe Bradshaw and Billy Scotts were both ill and it was about to rain. Everyone rushed with sheets of iron, to cover the hay stacks which had taken Joe, Fred and many boys several days to cart and stack.

There were frequent visits by Mounted Constable O'Keefe from the local Timber Creek Police station. If he required something and was unable to go himself, he sent an Aborigine with a message. One day a shot was heard and Larrabla, an Aborigine, was sent down the river in the dinghy. It was the Constable, who was delivering the mail which had been left at the station by Constables Kingston and Thompson, who were passing through. Small fires were another method of communication used, particularly if it was getting dark, to assist visitors who were expected at the homestead.
Joe Bradshaw may not have had any close markets for his cattle but he was obviously interested in getting good stock numbers on his Run. In May 1903, he wrote to a Government Department asking if buffalo were classed as cattle, within the meaning of the Pastoral Act. He was advised that they were not, and that all pastoral leases must be stocked with cattle known as 'Domesticated' (Log Book; J Bradshaw re Buffalo and Pastoral, CRS A1640 1903/313 Australian Archives Canberra).

Finances never appeared to be a problem for Bradshaw. He was never late with his lease payments and never complained about the costs involved, as was so often the case with other pastoralists. No expense was spared for building materials or blood lines for stock and other station necessities seemed to be in regular supply. Whilst other property owners were often restricted in their expenditure, Bradshaw seemed to have had unlimited funds. Whether they were making a financial success of the property is another matter.

Joseph Bradshaw had just returned from England when he received news of his brother's death. Fred Bradshaw and the other three members of his party were all massacred by Aborigines near Port Keats in November 1905 and their bodies were not found until December (Australian 6 January 1906; Durack 1985, 200-1). Those who died with Fred were the hated Ivan (Evan) Eggoriffe, who was aged 30, a stockman named Ernest Dannock and Jerimah Joseph (known as Jerry) Skeahan, the brother of Jack, who had been a regular visitor to the Run. A full scale search to find the killers then took place.

Frederick Maxwell Bradshaw who had been born in Victoria, was unmarried and only 54 years of age when he met his untimely death. His remains were returned to the Run and he was buried on the top of the rock formation, to be known thereafter as Bradshaw's Tomb. There is a popular story circulating that Fred was buried in a lead coffin, but no evidence could be found to support this belief.

The Bradshaw brothers were involved in other ventures apart from their Run on the Victoria River. In 1890 they took up land on the Prince Regent River between Wyndham and Derby, W.A. (Durack 1985, 537; Hill 1970, 245; N T Times and Gazette 9 September 1890). Mrs. Bradshaw accompanied her husband and his brother Fred, Aeneas Gunn and Hughie Young to that remote and unexplored region. The venture failed and, four years later, they took up the Run on the Victoria River. After his brother's death, Joseph Bradshaw remained in the North and continued his development and promotion of the Northern Territory. On 21 September 1906 he was elected one of three Vice Presidents of the North Australia League (North Australia League papers, Australian Archives, Darwin).

Captain Joseph Bradshaw also took up enormous tracts of land known as the Arafura Leases over an area of land now known as Arnhem Land. He set up a station in an area that was even more remote than his Run, and purchased cattle from Elsey Station where his cousin Aeneas Gunn was the manager. He was involved with the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Co. Ltd, both at Arafura and Roper River, but none of these ventures seemed to be as successful as the Run (Hill 1970, 217, 253; CRS F199 item PP18, Australian Archives, Darwin).

He has been described as 'an English financier, ex windjammer Captain, Australian grazier come adventurer and a sturdy, fearless pioneer', who was born and educated in Melbourne (Linklater and Tapp 1968, 205). He was a visionary who not only promoted the possibilities of the Territory, but worked them as well. He died aged 62 years, on 23 July 1916, and was buried in Darwin. He left a wife and one son and although it was said his wife went to the Run, nothing was ever found to confirm that.
Most of the information in this chapter, unless another source is noted, was taken from "Log Book of Bradshaw's Run and Associated Material", original in National Library of Australia, Canberra, and photocopy in N T Archives Service, Series 04. Direct quotations from the Log Book are indented in the text.

These terms are retained when used in citations from original sources, although their use today is otherwise regarded as offensive.
Map 3 This 1928 map of the road from the Depot to VRD shows the area in relation to The Depot, Mat Wilson's block, the Police Station, Skull Creek where Ivor Hall had Koonbrook Station with Wilson, the Victoria River and Bradshaw's Run. It also shows Jasper Gorge, which is the country taken up by Byers and Kenna, before shifting to Coolibah. Distances in miles from VRD.
T.W. Lavender travelled through the Victoria River district in 1914. On returning south, he wrote a manuscript about past happenings and his experiences during his time up north. It is obvious from his writings that he had read the Log Book whilst visiting Bradshaw's Run, and he says that the homestead was built using hundreds of lengths of iron piping... The new home completed, went off very well during the first winter, but it seems that frogs had been feeding and hibernating in the hollow piping, and when summer and the wet season set in, they woke up properly and the roaring noise of the croaking they eventually put up, was apparently something to be imagined; it blasted the inhabitants right out of the place, after many sleepless nights and half silly with the incessant, infernal croaking; for there were many thousands of the pests (Lavender, unpublished manuscript).

In 1915 Bradshaw's Run was taken over by Messrs N.A. & H.V. Miller, trustees of the Estate of William Henry Miller, their father, who had died on 20 September 1905. The holding consisted of 6,800 square miles under Pastoral Lease 2215. They then applied for and were granted, in October 1918, pastoral lease 2467 covering 192 square miles and pastoral lease 2477 covering 200 square miles, making a total of 7,192 square miles held by the Miller family (CRS A1 37/12141 NA & HV Miller, Australian Archives Canberra).

It appears that members of the Miller family lived on the Run at various times over the years, but in the main they employed managers to live there and run the property. It was during 1919-1920 that Ivor Hall went to manage Bradshaw's Run. Ivor had come to the Territory in 1908, as a clean shaven young man, to work for his uncle Mr. Townshend who was the manager for Forrest, Emanuel and Kidman on Victoria River Downs. He said that the Run was, 'useless, poor miserable country, but I was the manager there. There were more blackfellows than cattle. The blacks were wild and I only ever had one other white man with me' (Ogden, 1983, chapter 2).

This description is similar to an earlier one given by members of Bradshaw's party after an exploration trip done around the Fitzmaurice River in June 1900, when they described the country as 'utterly useless for anything' (Log Book).

The water was being piped from the spring on the escarpment, and Hall enjoyed the comforts of the Bradshaw homestead. Whilst there, he read the Bradshaw Log Book which was still at the homestead. There was an extremely good vegetable garden between the iron and piping homestead and the river. Aboriginals attended to the garden and he had a Chinese cook. General supplies and stores were obtained from Jolly's store in Darwin and brought down by boat and dropped off on the river bank near the homestead. From there, they were taken up to the homestead by pack-horse (Hall is cited here and below from interview 1980 and notes 1983).

It was during 1920, whilst Hall was managing, that Calcino Ltd of Charleville, Queensland attempted to buy the Run. 'They paid more for the deposit, than what I'd have paid for the whole lot of it... I advised them to get rid of it', Hall stated. The sale eventually fell through, apparently through lack of finance. The station was supposed to be carrying around five thousand head of cattle, but Hall seriously doubted that.
'There were excellent blood lines in the cattle and 'some beautiful horses, good blood lines and stallion'. Ivor Hall and drovers working there constructed 'a mile track, a quarter of a mile down from the station', and for many years, it was used to train horses for the local races. One of the better known sires was 'Sir Douglas (by Son-in-Law), a beautifully bred horse' imported by the Millers from England (PL 597 Coolibah Station, Dept of Lands, Darwin). The horse had spent one year in Melbourne, where it was raced unsuccessfully, owing to its difficult temperament. Sir Douglas was finally sent to the Run for it was classed as a 'man eater. It was impossible to train him for a racing career'.

Hall referred to the Run as being two years younger than himself, meaning that he was born in 1892 and Bradshaw took up the Run in 1894. He spent about two years there, before moving to the Depot on the Victoria River to form a partnership with Mr. M.B.Wilson.

The longest serving manager after Ivor Hall was Mr. L. Harold Cook who arrived in the mid twenties and was paid 356 pounds per year in the first years of his employment. He took up residence in the homestead which was described as '40' x 60' overall, galvanised iron on tubular iron frame, divided into three rooms and verandah all round'. There was also 'a 30' x 30' kitchen made from galvanised iron and Cypress'. Other buildings included the stockman's quarters, the card shed, feed room and blacksmith's shop, which were all together, and the hay shed and meat house (F658, Bradshaw's Station 25. Australian Archives, Darwin).

Apart from the boab trees which are prolific in the area, there is also a plentiful supply of stringybark, woollybutt and coolibah trees, as well as cypress pine, which was used as a building material. Flinders grass grew well and the feed on the eastern side of the Run was considered the best for the cattle, whilst the horses grazed along the frontage to the Victoria River.

In 1927 Chief Inspector of Stock, Captain Frank A.C. Bishop, did a working trip on stations situated north, north west, and south west of Newcastle Waters. In October of that year he submitted his report with a covering letter which stated in part:

Cattle dressed at the meatworks, Darwin, North Australia and the cattle carcasses shipped overseas as frozen meat was not a financial success. Why? Owing to excessive overhead charges and inferior quality of the beef, both due to tropical conditions. It is only reasonable to expect that where cattle are bred and reared under tropical conditions and treated directly at meatworks situated in the tropics, that carcasses when dressed cannot compete with carcasses from temperate zones (CRS A1 27/21460 Cattle Industry in North Australia, Australian Archives, Canberra).

He felt that the cattle industry in Northern Australia was a non-paying venture, because of high production costs and the absence of nearby markets. His report covers more than a dozen stations and states that Bradshaw's Run was free of Buffalo fly and was carrying approximately 8,000 head of cattle. The Run had had a good season and 'The horses on the station are a good class, being well bred and very suitable for stock work'. During the 1928 season, Cook, using two drovers and a stockman, was able to send 327 head of cattle to the Wyndham meatworks for a return of 826 pounds (N T Pastoral Lessees Association, Darwin).

There were occasions when the station became short on supplies, as the shipping services from Darwin were not regular. The freight was brought down from Darwin by boat and left on the river bank, as had been done in Ivor Hall's time, at a cost of 6 pounds 10 shillings per ton.
Plate 3: Mounted Constable Wally Langdon's photo of Nemarluk and the caption from the back of the original photograph (Photograph courtesy Mrs J Langdon)
In 1928 the Miller brothers offered Bradshaw's Run to the Government for the purpose of establishing an Aboriginal station. In correspondence it was pointed out that the Run had to be sold before the Estate of W.H. Miller could be wound up. They were eager to sell and were prepared to accept a reasonable price and give possession of the property very quickly. They stated that as well as the many improvements on the land there were approximately 8,000 head of cattle and 450 horses. They also pointed out that their boundary adjoined the Daly River Aboriginal Reserve and it was feasible that both blocks could be linked and used for the purposes of breeding cattle to assist the feeding of Aborigines (F5 B327 Bradshaw's Run 1927-1929, NT Archives Service). The proposal was passed on to the North Australia Commission in Canberra for their consideration. Early in 1929 the Trustees were advised that the Commission was not prepared to recommend the purchase.

The realities were that between 1912 and 1930 five blood stallions were introduced, but no new bulls had been brought into the cattle herd. Cost factors may have contributed to that situation and there were still no close markets, but even so, the quality of the herd was drastically reduced from that of Bradshaw's time (F658 Bradshaw's Station 25, Australian Archives, Darwin).

Some problems were still being encountered with the Aborigines. By 1927 the Millers had solved this problem to some extent by surrendering part of this run to them. There obviously had been some improvement, for Mr. N.V. Miller who was visiting the Run during 1929 stated that 'the bush blacks were not interfering with the cattle on the Run. The Police had cleaned up all the cattle killing natives by arresting them, and on being convicted [they] served a term in gaol'. Mr. Miller felt that the exercise had had a good effect on the Aborigines still on the Run (CRS AI 27/21460 Cattle Industry in North Australia, Australian Archives, Canberra).

The 1935 Northern Territory Pastoral Leaseses Investigation Committee reported on Bradshaw's Run that 'the area North of the Fitzmaurice River is not used at all but is left to the Blacks who are troublesome in this locality. West of the homestead to the sea and North to the Fitzmaurice River is very rough, rangy country, much of it inaccessible but with small open flats of feeding country. There are many pockets of good horse and cattle country here, and this part is given over entirely to the horses' (F658 Bradshaw's Station 25, Australian Archives, Darwin).

Although this report was compiled during 1934 the reference to trouble with the Aborigines undoubtedly meant Nemarluk, Tiger Chugulla and their followers. In the Port Keats Story, Brother John Pye describes Nemarluk as 'a Port Keats native warrior of a giant build 6 feet 2 inches with cat-like movements, was chief of the Chul-a-mar, Red Band of killers, Japs and otherwise. The men close to him and most loyal were Minmara, Mankee, Mangue and Lin' (Pye 1973, 8). Nemarluk and his followers lived and camped on the Moyle Plain at the mouth of Port Keats, while his half brother Tiger lived on the Fitzmaurice River.

Nemarluk and his band were obviously very clever. With the assistance of several of their women, including Marpu, Nemarluk's wife, they boarded the Japanese lugger Ouida and lulled the crew into a false sense of security. Nemarluk, Minmara, Lin and others murdered the Japanese crew on 17 September 1931 (CRS A1 33/8560 Nemarluk, Australian Archives, Darwin). The Melville Island boys on board the lugger escaped and lived to report the incident.

In October 1931, Constables J.J.(Jack) Mahoney, A.E. Koop, with two Aboriginal Police Trackers left Darwin on-board the Maroubra to look for the Ouida (E72, DL847 Nemarluk, Australian Archives, Darwin). They located it on the beach between Port Keats and Port Hay. After that, the police patrols set out and the chase for Nemarluk and the others continued for over two years.
During 1934 many mounted Police patrols from Brocks Creek, Katherine and Timber Creek were involved in the chase. Mounted Constables A.E. (Ted) Morey, Tas Fitzer, Wally Langdon and Jack Mahoney were all involved and always following his tracks was Bul Bul the Aboriginal tracker, trying to outsmart and out think Nemarluk’s moves. The country between the Victoria and Fitzmaurice Rivers is rough, rugged and not easily accessible in many places.

On many occasions the patrols leaving Timber Creek made the Bradshaw homestead their first stop, and were grateful for the hospitality and support shown to them by Harold Cook and staff on the Run.

Amongst those apprehended for killing the Japanese was Marpu, Nemarluk’s wife. Through the interpreter Bangtail she gave a statement in Darwin in May 1933. She explained how the five women spent two days on board before enticing the Japanese sailors ashore, with the promise of good hunting. Once ashore, they were all murdered. She said that her ‘whitefellow name Nellie’, and on leaving the lugger, they took three bags of rice, one bag of flour, plus blankets and trousers (CRS A1 36/1229 Protests 1934, Australian Archives, Darwin).

Police trackers Bul Bul and Splinter finally caught Nemarluk and Pundek and took them into the Timber Creek Police station. From there they were taken to the Fannie Bay Gaol in Darwin. Nemarluk was in fact only in gaol for about four months when an opportunity came his way in the exercise yard. The gaoler was supervising the removal of garbage, when Nemarluk rushed him. ‘Suddenly Nemarluk hurled himself at the gaoler and both men crashed. Nemarluk was up and away as the gaoler rose to his knees, whipped out his revolver and fired, then sprang up and faced the excited crowd surging upon him’ (Idriess 1947, 133-4). Nemarluk escaped at 6.20 am on 23 September 1933; once again he was free. In October 1933 guard Leonard Robert Samut was charged with carelessness in discharge of his duties and fined one pound (Northern Standard 20 October 1935).

The Yambarra Range on Bradshaw’s Run is quite spectacular, both in size and beauty. It must have been almost impossible at times for the Police patrols to follow Nemarluk, he moved so fast, often alone and on foot, while they were slowed down with their horse plant. How foreign it must have been for him to leave that wild country and be caged in the Fannie Bay Gaol! Freedom once again was for him merely survival. Ever fearful of the white man’s patrols and the ever persistent Bul Bul, he was sleeping and eating on the run.

In his book Patrol Indefinite, Downer describes Bul Bul as

one of the greatest of the Territory trackers, who had done two years in prison for a tribal murder concerning ‘Kidney-fat-business’, a form of magic killing. When released from prison, he was officially appointed a tracker, and subsequently built himself a reputation that struck fear into native malefactors all over the Territory (Downer 1977, 48-9).

Tiger, Nemarluk’s half brother, was by that time making a name for himself. He, Barney, Chugulla, Chalmer, Fryingpan, Alligator, Maru and Harry murdered two prospectors, Steven Arinski and Adolf Koch, on the Fitzmaurice River.

The Aborigines being hunted knew that country so well and were very able to outwit any police patrols that came near them. The local Aborigines, either through fear or loyalty, would not give any information to the police or trackers regarding the whereabouts of Nemarluk, Tiger, Chugulla and the others. When the police patrols went out they were chasing all offenders.
Mounted Constable Wally Langdon finally detained Chugulla and Nipper at Bradshaws in October 1933. During the next month, in three more raids, he apprehended seven Aborigines in connection with the murder of Arinski and Koch.

Most of the travelling was done on foot, at the risk of his life through country too rough for horses. With four black trackers and seventeen horses and mules he left Timber Creek in October. He began to hunt in the worst weather of the year, the terrific heat and glare from the limestone ranges was trying to both men and animal. At one stage of the pursuit, Constable Langdon handcuffed two entire tribes to prevent them combining with other natives to attack him. On the return journey with his prisoners, he was imperilled by food shortage and torrential rain and had to swim six flooded rivers (Langdon Manuscript).

In January 1934 Constables Hoffman and Birt travelled together by train from Darwin to Katherine, with Birt continuing to the police station at Timber Creek. Bul Bul finally recaptured Nemarluk on 21 February 1934 and Constables Fitzzer and Birt were at Timber Creek to take delivery of the prisoner (Birt 1976). Nemarluk was charged, found guilty and sentenced to death.

Hundreds of letters poured into Darwin from all over Australia, protesting at the verdict, and begging that he be given mercy. Many writers professed knowledge of Aboriginal ways and felt that he should not be answerable to the white man's courts (CRS A1 36/1229 Protests 1934, Australian Archives, Darwin). The sentence was eventually commuted to life imprisonment, with hard labour.

Although the Aboriginal prisoners were released in 1942 with the outbreak of War, Nemarluk in fact died in the Fannie Bay gaol and, according to Idriess, 'of a broken heart'. Constable Gordon Birt later stated:

Nemarluk had also been labelled a gaol breaker. However the law makes a sharp distinction between 'prison breach' where a prisoner gets free by force, and 'escape', where force is not used. Since Nemarluk walked out of an open gate, his offence was the latter (Birt 1967).

Mounted Constable Langdon undoubtedly earned the King's Jubilee Medal awarded to him in 1935, in recognition for his months of hard tracking. He was commended for his 'tact, judgement and bravery, as well as devotion to duty', under trying and very difficult conditions (Langdon Manuscript).

Regardless of the Police patrols moving across the Run for years, Harold Cook still had to run the property. During the thirties the Miller family continued their efforts to sell the Run but it was not until a Mr. Patrick Quilty arrived in 1936 to inspect the property that they were confident of a sale. Harold Cook who was considered a sound practical man and well respected, remained until Patrick Quilty became the new owner in June 1937. Patrick James Quilty paid 500 pounds for the transfer of three pastoral leases covering 7,192 square miles and the balance of the money paid was for cattle, horses and stores (CRS A659 37/7647 NA and HV Miller, Transfer of Bradshaw's Run to P. Quilty 20.5.1937 - 12.11.1937, Australian Archives, Canberra).

Born at Croydon, Queensland in 1889, Patrick (known as Paddy) was 48 years old and unmarried when he arrived in the Territory. He had a great love of horses. It was this love that drew him to Bradshaw's Run for even though there had been evidence of walkabout disease in the horses at different times over the years... it is still a wonderfully
good horse proposition, and here some of the best light horses in the
Northern Territory have been produced (F658 Bradshaw's Station
25, Australian Archives, Darwin).

Quilty then took up Bedford Downs station in Western Australia, but he made Bradshaw's
Run his place of residence and took up further land under grazing licence (NTRS F28
G.L. 854, NT Archives Service).

Patricks's brother, Thomas, and Olive Underwood arrived from Queensland en route to
Wyndham late in 1937 and stayed with Patrick. After the Wet they travelled to Wyndham
where Thomas and Olive took over the Six Mile Hotel. On the 22 August 1938 Paddy
Quilty passed away in the Wyndham Hospital and was still unmarried at the time of his
death (Mrs O. Quilty to author 27 July 1983). Thomas received Bradshaws from Paddy's
estate, so he and Olive sold the hotel and moved to the Run where they lived in the
corrugated iron and pipe homestead, built by Bradshaw.
Map 4 This 1920 pastoral map shows the enormous size of Bradshaw's Run, held by NA and HV Miller. Note the northern boundary, well above the Fitzmaurice River, and touching the Aboriginal Reserve. The Miller family also held two other blocks to the east.
CHAPTER 3
THE DEPOT, 1920: TOM LIDDY, 1938

The Depot is a site reached by travelling inland from the Run on the southern bank of the Victoria River. Captain Joseph Bradshaw described the area in a paper read to the Royal Geographical Society in Melbourne in 1907:

The Fitzmaurice River, called in the Jumonjoo language Win-Win-Ima, flows sinuously through some very fertile country, but some of the tribes infesting its shores are treacherous and warlike. In 1893 the late Mr. Hugh Young formed a sheep station on the open tablelands of the Upper Fitzmaurice, and had considerable trouble with the blacks. Sometimes they assemble in considerable numbers for war and worangin purposes. ... Mr. A.C. Gregory formed his depot camp on the banks of the Victoria River, a hundred miles from its mouth. The schooner Tom Tuff, in which the party, with its horses, cows, sheep, goats and pigs voyaged... was brought up the river and moored at this point. When the river became salt at the end of the dry season, a supply [of fresh water] was obtained from a spring at the base of a boabab tree, which he marked (Bradshaw 1907, 26-7).

In the mid 1880s it was reported that:

There are now two teams running trips to the Depot on the Victoria River, bringing stores for the stations in the neighbourhood, which have been brought to the river by the boats chartered by Mr. Stevens at Port Darwin (NT Times and Gazette, 29 August 1885).

Special Permit 509 covering five acres was granted to Phillip Hutchinson in 1905 at the Depot Site, where he operated a store. Mathew Bell Wilson took over the Permit in 1908. In August 1912 Wilson applied for, and was granted, a Miscellaneous Licence over the area. He felt that a Licence covered him better than a Permit and Miscellaneous Lease 82 was granted with an annual rental of 5 pounds for the full term of the lease, which was twenty one years. The Depot site was chosen apparently because of the good landing site on the river bank, but also because the river ceased to become navigable at that point for the boats heading upstream. Several kilometers downstream, towards Bradshaw’s Run, was the site of Gregory’s Principal Camp and the boabab tree he marked.

Once Mathew Bell Wilson took over the Depot store in 1908, he began building quite an establishment. The main building was a long one, with a verandah, which had a flag stone floor and corrugated iron roof. One part of that building held the store and post office and the living quarters were situated at the back. Not far away was the dray shed and saddle room. Those buildings had dirt floors and iron roofing. Close by the settlement was the Aboriginal camp. Wilson had Aborigines working for him and they, along with their families, lived at the camp near the store. A short distance from the store, on the river bank, was the jetty.

The luggers came up the Victoria River on high tides, unloaded their stores and left as soon as possible, to enable them to navigate the river whilst the water level was high. To delay their departure from the Depot would result in their being stuck on one of the many sand bars in the river. The local station people or carriers then arrived with their donkey or horse teams and later, trucks, to collect their stores.

21
Plate 4: Thomas Andrew Liddy, 1909
(Photograph courtesy Mrs J Crosby)
The closest neighbour for those at the Depot was the policeman stationed at the Timber Creek police station. As Bradshaw's Run was located approximately forty miles west of the Depot their social contact was very important, particularly in the very early days, and access was either down river by boat or by horseback.

There were various stories that Wilson, who came from Queensland, was involved in the big shearsers' strike there in the late 1890s. According to T.W. Lavender, an early traveller in that area, 'Mat was the leader in a striking shearsers' camp on the banks of the Thomson River at Longreach, Central Queensland'. He stated that Mat had to leave the area in a hurry, and that 'like so many bushmen, Mat was a good tale spinner' (Lavender unpublished manuscript). Confirmatory written evidence has not been discovered, although Ronan states that Mat 'helped found the Queensland Bush Workers' Union in 1886' (Ronan 1966, 115). The date of his arrival in the Territory is unknown, but by 1901 he was droving from VRD.

As well as the Depot store, Mat had several blocks of land near the Victoria River. Block 2 consisting of 96 square miles was held in 1905 by Philip Hutchinson and is very close to the Depot and the police station. M.B. Wilson took it over as Pastoral Permit 136 and in 1921 was granted Pastoral Lease 2447 (NTRS F199 P.P. 136: PL 2447, NT Archives Service).

Wilson was often scathing in his correspondence to the Director of Lands. He stated on one occasion that he had stocked the country and 'may say that I have battled under adverse elements', yet no member of the Lands Department had been to inspect his country (NTRS F27 PL 2448, NT Archives Service). He had stocked the country with more cattle than the stocking conditions required, yet there were no markets locally, for him to sell his stock.

It was after he left Bradshaw's Run that Ivor Hall formed a partnership with Mat Wilson. This was in relation to Wilson's block 2 and Ivor went to live on Skull Creek, several kilometers from the Depot. He built a hut out of bush timber and lived alone most of the time. He also built branding and drafting yards, broke in horses and ran the pastoral side of the business for Wilson.

Ivor once said of Mat Wilson: 'Mat would have liked to have been a big time station owner, but he just had a finger in a lot of pies' (Hall interview).

Whilst Ivor was managing Bradshaw's Run he, Neal Durack the manager of Auvergne atation, and Mat Wilson all got together and formed the Victoria River Amateur Jockey Club. That was in 1920, and the club had 'a six furlong track near the store. It was a good clean area, no pot holes and near the store', said Ivor. He also said that no women attended for the first two years - not because of discrimination, but because at that time, there were no women in the area. Some ladies finally attended the third meeting. A feature of the race meeting was an event for the Aboriginal stock boys only; they were able to enter on whatever they could get to ride.

Ivor was with Matt off-and-on for some time before finally leaving for Darwin in 1923 and in 1924 he accepted the management of Auvergne station, on the opposite side of the Victoria River to where he had been several years earlier. No documented evidence was located to confirm the partnership between Hall and Wilson. Another two men who were living and working in the area at that time were Jim Ronan and his son Tom. Both men spent many years working with Mat, both in the store and with his cattle. Tom was Mat's godchild and was at the Depot at the time of Mat's death (Ronan 1966, 131).

Mathew Bell Wilson died on the 18 January 1931, aged 73 years and was buried not far from the Depot and just off the present bitumen highway, on a site which has two unnamed graves. After his death, Wilson's estate was managed by the Public Trustee.
Plate 5: This photo was taken on the steps of the Timber Creek Police Station c. 1935 and shows:

Front centre: Constable Tas Fitzter
Clockwise from left:
George Murray (a friend and partner of Tim Liddy); Charles Schultz (owner of Humbert River Station and the man who placed the plaque on M.B. Wilson’s grave); Sister Stewart (from the A.I.M. Hostel at VRD); Thelma James; Roley Bowrey (worked at Humbert River Station and later employed as Pastoral Inspector by Tom Piper on Coolibah Station); Mrs Mathilda James (she and her husband, Lewis, took over the Depot Store); Joyce James; Ron Campbell (of Montejinnie station). The other three men are unidentified.

(Photograph courtesy Mr R Bowrey)
Wilson was a short man with a snowy white beard and 'deaf as a door post' according to Mr. Charles N. Schultz. When Schultz first went to Humbert River station he was struggling to make the property a success and was very short of money. Wilson staked him: 'He stood me, as regards to my ration bill', said Schultz; 'This was before I had any money whatsoever. Anyway, as I told old Mat (feeling frightfully embarrassed), that I'd pay as soon as I got my first mob of bullocks away' (Schultz to Ogden 1984).

When he was financial many years later, Charlie Schultz organised a head stone for Matt Wilson's grave. He had a bronze plate made, fitted it into a cement pillar and then placed a steel rail fence around the grave. 'CNS' in the corner of the bronze plate stands for Charles Noel Schultz, in deep gratitude, for the good turn done so many years previously. Many of the early settlers in the Territory, who struggled so hard in such adverse conditions, would never have succeeded, without the help of people like Mathew Bell Wilson.

Wilson also held other land. Block 4 consisting of 100 square miles was held by Pastoral Permit 31 during 1903 and 1904 by Harry Benning. Philip Hutchinson then took it over and held it until it was transferred to Mat Wilson in 1910. Pastoral Lease 2449 was granted to Wilson in 1921 (NTRS F199 P.P.31, NT Archives Services).

Block 5, consisting of 79 square miles was held under Pastoral Permit 248 by Wilson. Block 8 of 240 square miles was held under Grazing Licence 84. When these two blocks were combined, Pastoral Lease 2448 was granted on a 300 square miles area (NTRS F199 P.P. 248, N T Archives Service; F665 GL 84, Australian Archives, Darwin). This block would later become the basis of Coolibah station.

Many of the drovers who gathered at Victoria River Downs station (VRD) around 1923 were originally from Queensland. They gathered at the station each year, waiting for a mob of the station's cattle to take to the meatworks at Wyndham. They included Jim Fuller, with his sons Ted and Charlie, George Murray and Jack Liddy. Jack's brother Tom was highly respected by Tommy Graham the station manager.

Tom Liddy left VRD around 1926 and spent the next twelve months mustering on Bradshaw's Run for Mr. Harold Cook, who was the manager. He ran one mustering camp, while Jack Liddy and Cook ran another. During 1930 Cook managed Bradshaw's Run with a staff of four stockmen, two drovers, himself and the cook Ah Sam. For his work as one of the drovers during that year Tom Liddy received 319 pounds (NT Pastoral Leases Association Records, Darwin).

Tom Liddy then went into partnership with Mr. F.G.H. Chardon of Florina station, west of Katherine. When Chardon became very ill and unable to run the property, he went south and his wife took over the station's affairs. Between 1927 and 1932 Liddy was droving, contract mustering on Bradshaw's Run and Florina station and finally in 1932, went to Fletcher's Gully. From there he wrote to the Lands Department inquiring about available land. He was out of the partnership with Chardon, but the man owed him a considerable amount of money.

In 1932 Thomas Andrew Liddy took over Pastoral Lease 2448 from Mathew Bell Wilson's estate (NTRS F27 P.L. 2448, N T Archives Service). He named this Killarney Springs. Although records do not show it, he had his friend Harry Huddleston with him as a partner. Harry was a part Aboriginal man and, as such, due to the laws of that era, was unable to own land.

He was an excellent bushman who was born at Anthony's Lagoon in 1902. Tom Liddy gave him some horses when he was starting out and that helped him to get his first plant together. Harry was a close friend of the Liddy family. He had lived and worked with all members of the family. He had been breaking in horses on Bradshaw's and didn't really
want to go to Killarney Springs when Tom approached him, for the family was always arguing. But in the end he did go.

According to Mrs. Jessie Crosby, Tom's daughter, they 'came out to Killarney Springs on 13th April 1935', from Darwin to the Depot on the Maroubra (Mrs J Crosby to author, 1983). On board were George Tye, Mrs. James who owned the Depot store, and three of the Liddy children.

Tom had his sons Thomas Patrick (known as Paddy), Francis Joseph (known as Mick) and his daughter Jessie with him, as well as Harry Huddleston, George Murray and Tom Dare. Things were very rough for the family and money was short. Mrs. Liddy and the rest of the family had decided to stay in Darwin.

A house was built of bush timber, with ant bed floor and stringybark, pulled from the trees by the Aborigines, was used as roofing. Everything was pulled by the mules and the country was so rough that all of them and the horses had stone bruises. Jessie, with the help of Topsy, a trusted Aboriginal woman who looked after her when her father was away, built a bathroom. They used bush timber, put down stones for flooring and then put bark on top of that to ensure proper drainage. The Aborigines carried the water for Jessie by placing a bucket on each end of a pole, which was then balanced on their shoulders.

Liddy's difficulties were compounded by the failure of a man named Cameron to pay him for work done. Cameron attempted to buy Bradshaw's Run when the Millers were trying to sell it in the thirties but he had financial problems. Tom Liddy had been droving for Cameron for three years and had received bad cheques in payment. In 1935 the Miller Estate was still trying - unsuccessfully - to finalise the sale with Cameron, but there is little evidence of what happened in this period. Cameron, according to the manager of Bradshaw's Run had debts of over 2,000 pounds in 1936.

Tom Liddy and Harry Huddleston then went to do a muster on Florina station for Mrs. Chardon, as it was felt that the sale of the cattle would give them a good financial start on their block. The sale fell through. Tom left some of the cattle at Florina, took some to Killarney Springs and left the rest to be taken to Fletcher's Gully, which was north towards the Daly River. He had hoped to sell some stock there, but Fletcher's Gully was not very successful either, so Tom and Harry decided to go off to dig tin ore. Cameron still owed him money in 1936 and even though Tom was away from his block, the annual rent of 37 pounds on the 300 square miles he had still had to be paid.

As the Wet season approached they packed up, rounded up the remaining cattle and set out for Killarney Springs. On their return Harry Huddleston built himself a 'grass shack' by cutting clumps of grass and tying them together (Huddleston interview, November 1985). Jack Liddy had been running the Number Two camp at Wombungie on Bradshaw and had received no money from Cameron for six months, so he decided to leave and move down to Killarney Springs with his brother.

In stock returns furnished for the year ending 1930, George John Murray stated that he had 296 cattle, 82 horses and 2 camels running on Mat Wilson's Koonbrook station. In return for the use of Wilson's land George did 'a lot of voluntary unpaid work' for Wilson. Murray took over this block in June 1935. He also took over block 4, pastoral lease 2449, consisting of 100 square miles in the same year (NTRS F27 PL 2448, N T Archives Service). Both of these blocks came from Mathew Bell Wilson's estate.

Murray and Liddy were old friends and they had worked together for many years. On returning from digging tin ore in 1936 Tom Liddy, George Murray and Harry Huddleston joined forces and formed and named Coolibah station. They moved south from their hut and gave up the Killarney Springs name. They called the spot where they built their new hut Bluebush Billabong, because of the little blue flowers growing around the nearby
billabong. Coolibah station got its name from the abundance of Coolibah trees growing in the area.

Paddy Liddy said, 'Young Mick and I couldn't agree, so Dad used to send me with Harry and Mick went with him. Poor Harry, we must have driven him mad' (P.Liddy interview, 23 August 1984). Paddy said his father 'had a pioneering spirit. If he got an idea, he just kept on it and got it done. He ran the camp at Alexandria first and then went to VRD'.

It was on Alexandria station that Tom met his wife Daisy. Daisy was a part Aboriginal woman and her family, the Lansons, were well known in the area. Tom came from a Catholic, Irish background and was born at Laura, Cape York, Queensland in 1891 (Mrs J Crosby to author, 21 August 1985). Tom and Daisy were later married at Wave Hill station by Father Henschke, according to the rites of the Catholic Church.

In 1937 with the sale of Bradshaw to P J Quilty about to go through, Liddy contacted Harold Cook, as he thought some of the outstanding cheques issued by Cameron might be met. That apparently did not occur and Liddy's struggle to make a success of his newly formed station became harder. He did a couple of droving trips to Wyndham and on the proceeds lived and ran his block.

Whatever they attempted, there was no money to apply to it and 'whatever we did, we did hand to mouth', said his son Paddy. Liddy has been described as a very honest, hard working man, yet his business transactions often failed, leaving him in a worse situation than previously. It was the Depression years and the Territory fared no better than the rest of Australia. The distances between the Territory pastoralist and the cattle market place were enormous. There were no decent roads and the cattle were walked to wherever the sale was to take place. Maybe the contracts undertaken by Liddy were good; perhaps he thought other people were as honourable as he was.

Late in 1937 Tom applied for, and was given, grazing licence 863 covering 500 square miles, for, by that time, his brother was helping him financially (NTRS F28 GL 863, N T Archives Service).

Another man in the area at that time was Charles Darcy of Koonbrook station, which had been Mat Wilson's block 2. During 1932 he advised the Lands Branch in Darwin that he wished to split the blocks with his partners Murray and Liddy. He wanted 'Victoria River frontage' and stated that he was paying the rental on P.L. 2447, 2448 and 2449 (NTRS F27 PL 2448, N T Archives Service). He was advised the land would remain with the Public Trustee, the executor of Wilson's estate, until such time as the the money owing 'namely 2,970 pounds, has been paid in full'. It is possible that Darcy was a partner as Jack Liddy and Harry Huddleston were: undoubtedly there were 'Gentlemen's Agreements', but the pastoral lease files show only Thomas Andrew Liddy and George John Murray as being lessees of those three pastoral leases.

It is not clear whether those involved in the 'Gentlemen's Agreements' were financially secure and Tom Ronan's feelings regarding Mat Wilson's business practices were that 'Mat had twisted on me once. I'd never trust him again' (Ronan 1966, 114).

Charles Darcy did in fact hold 96 square miles under pastoral lease 164 (Vol. 1, Fol 159, PL 164 Register Book, Registrar General, Darwin). In his book Ronan gives a good description of the settlement on Skull Creek where Ivor Hall lived, then George Murray and later Charles Darcy and his family. Ronan gives details of what appears to have been an arrangement between Wilson and Darcy and Wilson and Ronan senior and states that after Wilson's death 'the original nine-year-old lien which Dad held over the livestock' never turned up and 'I still don't know whether Mat destroyed either or both. It is possible' (Ronan 1966, 131). Once again only one name had appeared on the lease, Wilson's, although according to Ronan, his father helped finance Wilson.
CHAPTER 4

COOLIBAH STATION - TOM QUILTY, DAVID FOGARTY, PAUL VANDELEUR, 1938 - 1956

It is from the 1940s that the properties change - in boundaries and in the development of truly separate identities, but to the old timers of the Territory, Bradshaw's Run, however it was managed and under what name, has always been referred to as Bradshaws.

The situation in 1938 was that Liddy held land north of the Victoria River, Murray south of it and Tom Quilty on Bradshaw. In 1938 Quilty bought George Murray's two pastoral leases covering a total of 296 square miles and Tom Liddy's pastoral lease covering 300 square miles (Pastoral Lease cards, Dept. of Lands, Darwin). He also took over the grazing licences held by Liddy.

Liddy and his family eventually took up more land in the Douglas/Daly area. Tom loved racehorses and always owned and trained horses for local race meetings. He made good use of the race track built by Ivor Hall, on Bradshaw's Run, and trained many horses there for the Depot race meetings. He was an excellent horseman and a hard working bushman; not a large corporation land owner, just a 'little man', who struggled through bad times when there were no markets for cattle and the country was in a depression. He was a man to whom not enough credit has been given, for his hard work in the Victoria River district and the settling of the Northern Territory. Thomas Andrew Liddy passed away in Darwin on 7th March 1965, aged 73 years (Mrs. J Crosby to author, 21 August 1985). In his obituary Tom Ronan stated that he was amazed that Liddy had 'been allowed to walk off camp without any mention at all' (Territorian, March 1985).

After Patrick Quilty's death and the purchase of Coolibah station, Tom Quilty's sons Roderick and Patrick left school in Queensland and set out for the Territory, intending to work with their father. They arrived in December 1938 and Patrick commenced making roads onto the property and Roderick carted wire to Coolibah and began making paddocks. Roderick stayed, but Patrick returned to Queensland. 'Young Pat my brother, he died in Cloncurry in 1939. He was on Coolibah with us making the roads. My uncle Paddy, he's buried in Wyndham,' Rod explained (Taped interview by Mr R Quilty, June 1986). It was a difficult time for Tom Quilty for he had lost a brother and a son, within a year.

Quilty and his family lived, as previous owners had done, in the old pipe and iron homestead built by Bradshaw. Mrs. Quilty felt that the 'harsh land of the North has a great appeal. I lived at Bradshaw' and those years 'will always be very precious and very vivid' for her (Mrs O Quilty to author, 14 August 1983).

During 1941, plans were put forward by Quilty to alter the boundaries of Coolibah and Bradshaw, for the purpose of 'squaring off and setting out a more clearly defined shape' (PL 380 Dept of Lands, Darwin). In January 1940 Tom Quilty surrendered 4,067 square miles of pastoral lease 2215, part of the original Bradshaw's Run. The lease on the land expired in June 1944 and the balance of 2,722 square miles was then taken up as pastoral lease 440.

In the middle of 1942 Tom Quilty and his family moved from Bradshaw to Coolibah. It was the last time the old homestead would be lived in as a home. Mrs. Quilty now says of those years, 'I loved Coolibah and with Tom, spent many happy and hard times there for ten years. We built it up by hard work' (Mrs O Quilty to author, 14 August 1983).
During May and June 1943, work commenced on the new homestead at Coolibah. The hut which had been erected by Tom Liddy was utilized in the beginning. Olive Underwood (later Mrs Quilty), organised Tom and Bob Burton (known as Bob the Dog) and with the help of Aborigines, they built the beautiful stone and mud homestead. Explaining how the homestead was built, Mrs. Quilty said:

The stone was in squares or natural shapes, with at least two straight sides and was gathered from the river bed. It was approximately half a mile from the house site. The lubras and myself prised the slabs of stone from its bed in the river. We carried the slabs in sacks or bark carriers up the steep bank to the top. From there Tom, with donkey wagon, carted the stone onto site.

Dry billabong mud, which was a good clay type soil, was found nearby and 'it was made into a slurry in 44's cut lengthwise'. The slurry was used to join the stone slabs, and it set like concrete. Bob the Dog eventually left and the homestead remained unfinished, until Marty Lind arrived from Wyndham. He then finished the verandah, roof and remaining rooms. This building is still in excellent liveable condition today, over forty years since it was built.

In October 1940, Tom Quilty was successful in obtaining a further 1,388 square miles under pastoral lease (PL 380 Dept of Lands, Darwin). Tom Quilty formed a partnership with Olive Underwood and his son Rod Quilty. The block had previously been held by both Liddy and Quilty under grazing licence and was originally part of land leased by Willeroo/Manbulloo Pty Ltd, who had lost it by way of resumption. Willeroo/Manbulloo was part of the vast Vestey organisation and Vesteys were not happy when they found Liddy had sold to Quilty. They were even more unhappy when Quilty was successful in getting their resumed land under a pastoral lease. 'Vestey's never used it in all the years they had it,' said Rod 'and of course, when we got it... they wanted it back. They only held it to keep some others away from them.' (Interview June 1986). At the same time Quilty surrendered part of his old leasehold.

Improvements were undertaken. Buffel grass seed was given to the Aborigines to be broadcast by hand and good results were soon obvious, particularly around the homestead and the aerodrome areas. Quilty purchased several good red Poll Shorthorn bulls and a stud herd was commenced.

Bradshaw had the finest blood horses in that part of the country... Sires Sir Douglas and Lysanious raced and won in Sydney. Both these horses disappeared and it was rumoured they were stolen. Had Paddy lived, they would have been tracked down. Horses were the light of Paddy's life and the sole reason that he purchased Bradshaw (Mrs Quilty to author, 9 August 1985).

In July 1945, Quilty sought information from the Department of Lands about available land. He said that he 'would like to get some better country, as I do not like this corner. The blacks are getting worse every year and they are encouraged to play up' (PL 597 (1), Dept of Lands, Darwin). It was during 1948 that the partnership of Tom Quilty, his son and Olive Underwood underwent changes but between them, in varying shares, these people held land covering 5,105 square miles (Pastoral Lease Cards, Dept of Lands, Darwin). But further changes of the leases were soon to come.

In 1944, David Fogarty and Francis McMahon applied for a grazing licence over part of the land surrendered by Quilty in 1940. Fogarty was breaking in horses on Wave Hill station for Tom Quirk and Frank McMahon was at Hall's Creek in Western Australia, when they found that land was available for lease. Both men were keen to go into partnership and get started somewhere.
They applied for a grazing licence on a 400 square mile block and it was granted on 9 January 1945. Two other blocks were applied for, and were granted on 9 September 1946, but the licences were not renewed three years later in 1949 (NTRS F28 GL 1148, GL 1250, GL 1363, NT Archives Service). They were anxious to have a pastoral lease granted on the 400 square mile block, which was held under grazing licence 1148 and, to obtain this, it was an advantage to have cattle and carry out some improvements on the land; but even when that was done, there was no guarantee that the pastoral lease would be granted. Their land was part of the original lease taken up by Captain Joseph Bradshaw.

Dave Fogarty decided to go to Tom Liddy, an old family friend, and a man who had always promised to help him, if ever he needed a start on a block. Dave went to Liddy's Douglas station and with the help of Tom's son Paddy, mustered one area of the station. Tom told Dave he could keep what ever cleanskins he mustered. The muster was a great success, but Dave took only the 100 head he needed and got his receipt for the cattle. This legally entitled him to brand, so allowing him to muster and brand any cleanskins on his Buffalo Springs block.

The Wet was starting when Dave left Douglas station with his cattle. He drove them across the top through Wombungi, across Coolibah to Buffalo Springs, a most successful trip, considering that they were swimming the rivers by the time they got home (Fogarty interview 18 January 1981 for much of the information about Buffalo Springs).

Although the old Bradshaw homestead was still standing and liveable a short distance away, it was on Quilty's land and had been standing empty and isolated for several years. They had to build their own homestead, so Frank McMahon submitted great plans to the Lands Branch, safe in the knowledge that no one ever ventured out that far to check on them.

Dave said, 'There was an airstrip near Hayes Creek and when the Yanks walked out of there, they just left everything behind, so we got all the materials. All the iron and stuff, we used for the homestead' (Fogarty interview 5 August 1984). The building may have been primitive, but it was a fairly typical structure for that era and it fulfilled their needs, in that it kept the rain out in the wet and the wind at bay in the dry. There was a small kitchen, which was separate. When the wood stove was going, Dave said, it was too hot to stay in it and he was grateful it was separate. Water was piped down from a spring as was done in Bradshaw's time.

Dave and Frank had two Aborigines, Hector and Ajax, working for them. Dave acquired some excellent glass spear heads while he was there. He commented that there were spear heads and other Aboriginal tools 'just lying around on the ground. If you wanted something special it was easy to obtain, by bribing the Aboriginals with tobacco'. Also working with them from time to time was old Charlie (Curley) Hazzard. Hazzard had been working for Vestey's and Dave gave him some horses to make up his plant and he went droving. He often used to mind the place for Dave and Frank when they had to go away.

McMahon and Fogarty were in fact given some credit for their efforts on the land. Correspondence from the Lands Branch in 1948 stated that: 'These people have already effected about 450 pounds worth of improvements and apart from that, have shown plenty of enterprise by cutting a direct road from the Victoria River to the highway near Pine Creek' (NTRS F28 GL 1148, NT Archives Service).

A trip to Katherine was a lengthy one, either by horseback or in the ex-Army Blitz truck (sometimes referred to as a Blitz buggy) via Pine Creek over the rough road they had made. The only way across the Victoria River was by horseback to the shallow crossing: there one could cross in safety, without fear of the crocodiles, and that was a fairly lengthy trip. As had happened in Bradshaw's time, the social contact between those in that isolated country and the Police at Timber Creek was maintained. The two men made themselves a raft out of 44 gallon drums, with a table top on it and this was fairly good transport and enabled them to cross the river in a more direct route. Fogarty said McMahon (known to all as Baldy) had
Plate 8: Phyliss Dobbin and Dave Fogarty at Buffalo Springs, 1948
Back of the photo reads: ‘Alligator hide nailed on tree [at left] shot by Curley’. This was Curley Hazzard who worked for Dave Fogarty.
(Author’s collection)
Plate 9: En Route to Buffalo Springs 1948
Rod Quilty, Frank McMahon, Phyliss Dobbin and Dave Fogarty. Phyliss’s two children are in the front of the group. The two Aboriginals by the truck at the left are unidentified. The trucks are heavily loaded with stores, drums of fuel and some enormous swags. The truck to the right is Dave Fogarty’s two wheel drive Blitz.
(Author’s collection)
some big plans: ‘Baldy had grand plans and ideas to build a yard on the raft and float cattle across’.

Fogarty also said that what McMahon told the Lands Branch and what actually happened on their block, were two different things. Mr. H. Barclay, the Director of Lands, stated that although the area was listed for inspection, it would be some time before it was carried out, and that ‘Meanwhile I am of the opinion that men who are prepared to develop such a dangerous area should receive every encouragement’ (NTRS F28 GLP 1148, NT Archives Services).

David George Fogarty was 26 years old when he went to Buffalo Springs and had spent all his working life in the Territory. He had worked with a pack horse mail man, been droving, breaking in horses, had spent several years working for Charlie Schultz on Humbert River station and had a half share in a taxi cab in Darwin for a while. Dave’s father, Ted Fogarty, had been a Vestey’s manager and so Dave had lived and worked on many stations as a boy. In July 1949 Dave Fogarty formally dissolved his partnership with Frank McMahon but still retained grazing licence 1148, which then became grazing licence 1363 (NTRS F28 GL 1363, NT Archives Service). Dave and his brother Ted then formed a partnership.

Dave, his brother Ted, and Roderick Quilty from Coolibah station were mustering after the Wet in 1950, when Dave’s horse hit an ant hill hidden in the long grass and rolled on him, breaking his pelvis and three ribs off his spine. Rod said that Dave ‘certainly knew his job. He was a wild rider. I used to shudder every time I saw him take off. He’d only have to break his leg and that would be the finish of him. But it didn’t seem to worry Dave’ (Interview June 1986). Rod then went on horseback to the Timber Creek Police station to get help from mounted Constable Bert Mettam who was stationed there. Constable Mettam, his two Aboriginal trackers and Rod then proceeded in the policeman’s ex-Army International ute, to the pre-arranged site on the bank of the Victoria River.

When travelling along the Victoria River towards the coast, there is a spot where there is easy accessibility, from the Auvergne station side, to the Bradshaw/Buffalo Springs side. The party from Timber Creek were headed to this site. ‘When we arrived at the elected rendezvous on the bank of the Victoria River opposite where Dave had his camp, we unloaded the drums, timber and ropes we had brought with us and made a raft’, recalled Constable Mettam.

I think my Trackers George and Lightening swam across the river to Buffalo Springs with it. We fired a few shots from the .303 to frighten away any ‘gators and the boys got the clumsy raft across the river without any apparent bother. With Dave lying on the stretcher I had brought from the police station, the return journey commenced. This time Ted also joined the swimmers to push Dave over to us (Mettam to author 9 June 1986).

Dave then spent several days with Bert Mettam and his wife. Ted swam back across the river river to Buffalo Springs with the raft and their two Aborigines. There were hundreds of jelly fish in the river and one stung Ted on a tender part of his anatomy, for he was swimming in his shirt: his long pants were keeping dry on the raft. He jumped onto the raft and as it started to fall to pieces, Ted ‘beat them all to the other side bank’ (Fogarty to author July 1986).

Unknown to Constable Mettam, Rod Quilty had given one of the trackers a box of matches and told him to clear a track back to the police station. There was a lot of long grass and the obstructions were hard to see and they wanted to make the journey for Dave Fogarty as easy as possible. ‘George burnt a track allright, including Leichhardt Yard on Auvergne’, said Bert Mettam. ‘After all the excitement was over, and an indignant letter from Vic Watkins, the manager of Auvergne station, I went back with the blacks from the Timber Creek camp and rebuilt it’ (Mettam to author 9 June 1986).
Ted Fogarty and Rod Quilty completed the muster on Buffalo Springs and brought the cattle across the river to Timber Creek and there Rod offered to take them into Wyndham, as he knew the country better than Ted. In the end it was decided that Ted would return as planned to Mulga Park, a station south west of Alice Springs which Dave bought in 1950, and Dave would take the cattle to Wyndham.

With some Aborigines, it took him three weeks to walk the cattle from Timber Creek to the Wyndham meatworks. He commented that it was 'a bloody trip and a half - the worst trip of my life. The night watch was the hardest. It was about three hours twenty minutes, turn about - I only had five or six black fellows with me' (Fogarty interview 1984). After delivering the cattle, he then continued to Perth to see a doctor and was told that he had a broken pelvis.

Dave maintained both Mulga Park and Buffalo Springs until 1954, when he sold his Buffalo Springs interests to Paul Vandeleur and associates. He was leaving the northern part of the Territory where he had lived most of his life and felt that Mulga Park was better country, more civilized and a better market for the sale of cattle. One season, that time I hurt my back, we had the second best mob of cattle delivered to the meatworks - from Buffalo Springs that is. Rosewood's was best, but there were no roads. They wouldn't put them in, you had to do it yourself. There were no luxury trips to town. You went in, in the blitz - a couple of days in and a couple of days back.

There was no landing strip, and he didn't have a pedal radio. There were no beef roads and so the cattle had to be walked to the markets. He felt that the Top End was probably more 'civilized' now, but in his day on Buffalo Springs they saw no one and got nothing.

It was in October 1954 that Fogarty transferred the Buffalo Springs assets to M.A. Vandeleur Family and J. Edwards Family Partnership (NTRS F28 GL 1363, NT Archives Service; Mr & Mrs P Vandeleur to author, 13 August 1985).

Paul Vandeleur and his brother Mick were new to the Territory. They had come from the sugar cane district of North Queensland and the rough, rugged country of the Victoria River was very different from what they were used to. On their way across to the Territory, they picked up Jack Douglas, who came from Normanton. They had recently acquired Camfield station, which was land that had been taken from VRD by way of resumption.

Jack Douglas, Paul Vandeleur and Dave Fogarty went out to Buffalo Springs together on Paul's first trip there, in Dave's Blitz truck. They went via Dorisvale station, Pony Pocket, Wombungie, along the Angalarri River to Buffalo Springs. 'That was a trip I only did once and I never want to do it again - Dave took us out in the Blitz' Paul said laughing (Mr P Vandeleur interview 27 October 1984, for this and following quotations). When they arrived there, there was 'a piece of salted, smoked beef hanging in the cook house, which may have been hanging there weeks - or months', according to Paul, but he 'hacked into it' and still feels that it was the best beef he had ever tasted.

He described his new home as 'about 50' by 30', with prop out type windows', and the ant bed floor had to be watered daily to keep the dust settled. The separate kitchen was joined to the main building by a walkway. The building which protected Dave Fogarty from the elements for years was now home to Paul Vandeleur. And as was the situation in Dave Fogarty's time, the old Bradshaw homestead, so close at hand, stood empty.

There were virtually no roads into the place, so after Vandeleur and his people got settled, they left a vehicle on the Auvergne side of the Victoria River; they then went across by boat. 'Apart from that, it was a packhorse job in and out of town for supplies', commented Paul.
He felt it was good country, with a limited number of stock on it. 'You could burn early or late and you always got a green shoot', he said. Around August 1956, Vandeleur sent a mob of cattle into the Wyndham Meatworks, right at the end of the season, and 'got 31 pounds per head. They would have been around 500-560 lbs each'. He felt it was a good block for an owner/operator.

Flour, tea and sugar were the basis of the diet and 'as long as you had those you were OK. You could go down to the river every afternoon and spear a mullet'.

A lot of the local Aborigines wanted to work or stay on Buffalo Springs, as Paul treated them reasonably well. He had considerable trouble with the local police and other station managers, 'demanding that boys be returned after Walkabout', so eventually he stopped using them and got all his Aborigines from Port Keats.

Vandeleur had some 'shocking blues' with Hugh Barclay, Director of Lands in Darwin, over the years. He took over Buffalo Springs under grazing licence, which is a very shaky tenure, but he was assured he would be successful in being granted a pastoral lease. He is quite sure to this day that 'deals' were arranged in Darwin and, as a result, he was told to muster his cattle and vacate the land. He was 'real cranky' and didn't want to go, but simply had no choice.

Jack Douglas organised and did much of the mustering, but many of the cattle were left as the country around the northern boundary was rough, hill country, almost inaccessible. Whilst the country is awesome in its beauty, in practical terms, it is almost impossible to run cattle on. It was planned that the young steers would go from Camfield station to Buffalo Springs and then to the Wyndham Meatworks, 'a crazy concept in retrospect', Paul now feels.
Map 5 This 1945 map shows the changed Bradshaw boundary. This vacant Crown land between the western boundary and the coast, was taken up under Grazing Licence by David Fogarty and Francis McMahon in 1946.
In February 1942 Darwin was bombed and the Second World War arrived at Australia's shores. In March of that year, Katherine was also bombed. With the influx of soldiers, the Territory proved that it was capable of growing first class vegetables and tropical fruits. Those farmers on the Katherine River who had not been evacuated were selling most of their crops to the troops. The Territory pastoralists, for the first time since the pastoral industry commenced approximately sixty years previously, had a local market in the Army.

There was a big surge of interest and activity in the Territory after the War. Many soldiers liked the country and returned to settle. With an increase in population in many areas, the demand grew for better services. Even so, the Territory was under the control of the Commonwealth Government and anything achieved had to be fought for hard. Development of the Territory generally and Katherine particularly was not a high priority of the Commonwealth.

Two future owners of the Bradshaw/Coolibah country were Leslie John Kenna and Hugh Wason Byers. In April 1947 Kenna, who was living in Alice Springs, applied to the Lands and Survey Department for land which had been gazetted. He had worked on Quilty's station in Queensland, had been droving with Harry Zigenbine and had worked with Wason Byers, whom he had known for over 25 years. He was successful in his application and in August 1947, took over pastoral lease 452, covering 715 square miles, at a rental of 107 pounds (NTRS F630 PL 538, NT Archives Service).

Hugh Wason Byers was a huge powerfully built man. He was born at Cairn Dhu, Nigger Creek, Herberton, Queensland on 31 March 1890 and was a veteran of the Light Horse from World War 1 (P Murray to author, 1983; J Nicholson to author, 31 January 1983; Registrar Generals Office, Brisbane). He spent many years as a Boss Drover, worked on Wave Hill station and managed Flora Valley and Sturt Creek stations. He was droving during the War years and was with Dave Fogarty when Darwin was bombed.

He was mentioned in Walkabout, in 1942. The American author, Edgar Laytha, said that with his thirty odd horse plant, Wason arrived at V.R.D. to collect several hundred head of stock for the Darwin garrison. 'To keep his stock in form for the meatworks, Hugh Wason Byers rarely does more than 63 miles a week on his great droving stunts, which sometimes cover up to 1,500 and even 2,000 miles. He is getting nine shillings a beast for every hundred miles' (Walkabout, March 1942).

Known to all as Wason, Byers had worked on and managed Lower Sturt, Turner and Flora Valley stations in the Kimberley district. Several men had been speared on Sturt Creek and Wason made up his mind he was not going to be next. He referred to himself as 'young and strong' and said 'I went up the black B's' (Byers interview). He said that in that country, the Aborigines had their music and instruments, the main one being the didgeridoo. 'It's a hollow log', said Wason, 'and it'll go from daylight till dark. When one bugger knocks up, another will take it on'. He used to whistle, sing out, crack the whip and fire a few shots, but nothing would stop the noise.

This bloke, this Congal, I said did you play that didgeridoo last night, and he said yes. So I said, allright, you bring em one down. I said you get up that pole, that post in the yard and you play that didgeridoo. Everytime he stopped playing, I'd fire a shot at him. Well, he kept playing that
didgeridoo - playing all day. Now I said, I'll give you bloody didgeridoo. I never heard a bloody didgeridoo for months after, Wason laughed.

It was while he was on Sturt Creek that a group of Aborigines threw dozens of spears into the homestead one evening. Byers was not hurt, although one spear lightly grazed his arm. The group took off and Byers tracked them for several days, finally found them and 'evened the score'.

Wason went to extremes of cruelty with his Aborigines prior to going to Fitzroy station and it seems incredible that the Aborigines wanted to go there to work for him. Yet while at Fitzroy, many of the Aborigines wanted to work for him as, 'he is regarded by natives as a very good employer' (CRS F1 48/208. Report of Ill-treatment of Aborigines at Coolibah Station, Australian Archives, Darwin).

There are at least three different versions, all 'straight from the horses mouth' and all entirely different - as to why he put the station lubras - naked - on the hot corrugated iron station roof, in the middle of the day, and left them there. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that he did do it. He also fired shots between the feet of an Aborigine to make him jump, flicked a stock whip on the ground by a lubra's feet for the same reason and chained his Aborigines around the neck. However records show that many of the other stories retold about him are grossly exaggerated.

Byers moved to Kenna's block known as Fitzroy station, where he lived in a tin hut close to a spring near Jasper's Gorge. While there appears to have been a good relationship between Byers, Leslie Kenna (known to all as Snowy) and Hugh Barclay, the Director of Lands, that does not appear to have been the case with Quilty. There was a dispute regarding land at the northern part of Fitzroy, which Byers felt was their country, and objected to Quilty having a bullock paddock there. Barclay assured Kenna that an officer would be down before the Wet of 1949 to look at the block.

Kenna stated that he had 2,500 head of cattle and 250 horses. He had various grasses to sow during the Wet, and he 'was very interested in making the block into a developmental area, as soon as possible' (NTRS F630 PL 538, NT Archives Service). Hugh Barclay told him Townsville lucerne had been proved in the tropics and that after four or five years usage, the soil would be in an improved state, capable of taking other varieties of grasses.

In the following months Barclay praised Kenna and Byers for their efforts and said they had 'displayed considerable energy' in the development of the Fitzroy block (PL 674 Dept of Lands, Darwin). A homestead, fences and yards had been erected, and various types of grasses grown.

In August 1950, the Quilty/Underwood partnership sold all of its Victoria River holdings, which covered 5,015 square miles, to Leslie J. and Lena R. Kenna. To avoid restrictions on the amount of land one person could lease, Kenna put three other holdings in his wife's name at the time of the Coolibah purchase.

Tom Quilty and Olive Underwood moved to Bedford Downs station and later they were married. Wason left Fitzroy and moved into the stone homestead at Coolibah. Several years later he commented, 'When I took over Coolibah, there was a woman there, Olive Underwood. She had the place spick and span and there were damn good lubras there. The way she had the arrangement, with the pot plants, it was a credit to her' (Byers interview for this and subsequent quotations).

Wason's brother, Stuart, and his wife, Margaret, arrived at Coolibah for a visit. Wason objected very strongly to his sister-in-law's interference with the station Aborigines and every time he left the station for a few days, Margaret would re-arrange things.
I went away - I had to go to Alice Springs to see that calico eyebrowed mate of mine, that Snowy Kenna. When I came back, over comes this gin in a pair of high heeled shoes. You'd think she was going to appear in Hollywood or somewhere. I give her a boot up the arse (he laughed) and she fell over. She went up to this bloody sister-in-law of mine and said she's broken her leg.

'Things weren't going too good for me', Wason stated, but he managed to get a mob of cattle together and was in the process of taking them into Ted Collins, the butcher in Katherine, when he suffered appendicitis along the road. The Wet season had started, the rivers were all running and Wason was worried. His Aborigines looked after him very well and every night saw that he was covered, off the ground and out of the rain. Eventually, they made it to the King River just west of Katherine. He sent an Aboriginal named Gordon into Katherine to get Ted Collins to come out with his Land Rover and collect him.

Well, I had to swim the King. We made a boat you know, with my swag cover and the pack like. We swam the King and it was blooming wild and full of alligators. There were heads bobbing up everywhere. How we all got across, without being taken, has got me tricked to this day.

Whilst in Katherine, he was worried about what his sister-in-law was doing on his station, so he told Brian Penny to go out there, sack Stuart, and bring the couple into town. Brian was a very young man recently arrived from Sydney, who had heard that the Territory was a good place to be. He had never been on a horse in his life and two days after his arrival at Coolibah, he was on the road to Wyndham, on horseback, with a mob of cattle. Eventually, Stuart and Margaret arrived in Katherine and then departed for Queensland.

It was in the early fifties that several blocks were cut from the enormous holding of VRD and near Jasper Gorge, the Fitzroy and VRD station boundaries meet. Byers was made an offer by VRD management, to do some mustering. Mr. Hugh Barclay, Director of Lands, wrote to Snowy Kenna:

I was very interested to hear the proposition Victoria River Downs put to Wason Byers. The manager of Victoria River Downs is at his wits end to get the resumed area mustered and I should imagine would only be to pleased to get a team who are as capable as Wason Byers to help them clean up their country. I think your idea that Victoria River Downs should supply the rations while you take 50 head in every 150 mustered would be a good proposition to both sides. I feel sure too that if you come to this arrangement the hostile attitude would probably disappear (NTRS CRS F630 PL 538, NT Archives Service).

That situation possibly set the scene for what was to happen later. When Kenna took over Coolibah station in 1950, he borrowed 12,500 pounds over a three year term and a Mr. A. Spooner of Tom Piper Pty Ltd held the mortgage (PL 674 Dept of Lands, Darwin; Mortgage 5216, Lands Title Office, Darwin). Several shipments of cattle had been delivered to a Tom Piper property on the Barkly Tablelands and it was felt that only two more shipments of cattle would have cleared the debt. Hugh Wason Byers was then to be taken in as an equal partner. Some of the cattle and horses being provided to repay the debt were to go to Dalmore Downs, unstocked virgin country, leased by the United Cattle Company, a subsidiary of Tom Piper. Unfortunately, Byers was caught with allegedly stolen cattle and charged with cattle stealing in August 1953.

Hugh Van Heythuysen was the manager of Dalmore Downs station and General Manager for the United Cattle Corporation. United Cattle intended to use Coolibah station cattle to stock Dalmore Downs. Van Heythuysen had taken several large mobs of cattle off Coolibah during Quilty's time for Narwietooma station, west of Alice Springs. Then, several years
Plate 10: Wason Byers
Wason Byers taking delivery of cattle for the Wyndham meatworks at VRD in 1938-39. Front, left to right: unknown Aboriginal man; Jim Martin; Wason Byers; David Magoffin.
(Photograph courtesy D Magoffin)
later, Hugh took several thousand head off Coolibah for Dalmore Downs. He felt that the agreement Kenna signed with Tom Piper was too tight, 'they never had a snow ball's chance in hell of getting out - which I told them', he said (Van Heythuysen interview, 30 October 1984). Kenna and Byers had signed themselves to a promise of delivering bullocks that just were not on Coolibah. Hugh felt Coolibah had already been milked of stock and they could never 'get the numbers in - even if they's been given five years', because the stock were not there.

Another capable cattle man who was there at the time was Ronald Bowrey. Known to all as 'Roley' he came to the Northern Territory from Queensland in the early thirties and worked for many years on Humbert River station for Mr. Schultz. He left for the duration of the War, but later returned to the Victoria River district. Tom Piper offered him the position of Pastoral Inspector, in an effort to keep an eye on their interests on Coolibah. Sid Byers (no relation to H.W. Byers) was running one camp and Turley was running the camp at Wombungie. According to Bowrey 'Sid Byers did a bunk', and so the two mobs of cattle were combined (R Bowrey interview, December 1985). Roley's job was to inoculate and cross brand the cattle, before they left for Dalmore Downs. When Roley saw what was happening with the cattle, that brands were being altered, he 'wouldn't touch them'.

Roley was at Coolibah in April 1951, when Dave Fogarty came through walking his mob of cattle to Mugla Park station. Dave camped the night at the station and the two men, who had worked together years earlier on Humbert River, spent the night talking. Soon after, Roley Bowrey, not wanting any part of what was happening at Coolibah, left and moved to the Alice Springs district to work.

The altering of brands on cattle was not new and certainly not new in the Bradshaw/Coolibah country. The ear mark of Victoria River Downs cattle was similar to a number seven. Wason merely took an identical notch from the other side of the ear, to make the ear marking the same as the Coolibah station ear mark. His brand was MTQ and the V.R.D. brand was the bull's head symbol. Wason also had another brand which was called the 'Hand Brand', because it was in the shape of a hand. By using MTQ and the Hand Brand, it was possible to cover the bull's head brand of V.R.D. and so alter it. 'If it was done right, then it was O.K. - not held too long - otherwise, it would take the lot off', said Hugh Van Heythuysen, referring to the heat on the hides. Byers with the help of his Aboriginal stockmen, used this system on many of the stock. When he saw the cattle Hugh told him, 'Wason these cattle are that hot, they'll burn all the grass, all the way to bloody Dalmore'.

Hugh had a sore arm, was short of branding irons, did not have the time to cross brand, and so told Wason to put the cattle on the road and he could cross brand them later when he had time. Billy Ellis was placed in charge of the mob and Hugh told Billy to use the badly branded cattle first as killers while they were on the road to Dalmore Downs. When they arrived at Anthony's Lagoon a few of the botched brands, which should have been used as killers, were still in the mob; and so the cattle duffing came to light.

Hugh Wason Byers and Hugh Van Heythuysen were arrested at Coolibah station by Constables Tas Fitzer and Gordon Stott who arrived from the Timber Creek Police Station. Both men were released on bail, Wason on Closed Arrest and Hugh on Open Arrest. The court case was held at Anthony's Lagoon in August 1953 and a local paper at the time described it as 'the biggest case of alleged cattle stealing ever heard in the Territory and the first involving more than a few head for 20 years' (NT News 27 August 1953).

About 120-130 head were cut out of the impounded mob and a few of them were shot, skinned and the hides thrown over the fence to dry. Any discrepancies on a hide would show by comparing wet and dry hides. At the hearing, Wason and Hugh agreed to have a full race of cattle put through for inspection. Two lots were put through and as luck would have it, 'the cattle we had were good', Hugh said, meaning there were no botched brands (Van Heythuysen interview, 30 October 1984). Van Heythuysen was acquitted on the
grounds that he was just accepting a mob of cattle for the station. He certainly could not inspect every beast and could not be expected to know that the cattle were stolen. Wason Byers was committed for trial. Two of his Aborigines, Duncan and Hector, gave evidence as to how they had changed the brands under his direction. Byers engaged a Queen's Council by the name of Travers to defend him and he was acquitted.

Constable John Gordon, who was a policeman stationed at Anthony's Lagoon at the time of the court case felt 'If ever there was a miscarriage of justice, that was' when Byers was acquitted (J Gordon to author, 19 December 1983). One cannot help but wonder how Byers was acquitted, when the Aborigines who assisted him, gave evidence against him.

The conditions of Aborigines on cattle stations in the area were a subject of increasing contention in that period. Several reports were done on conditions at Coolibah station around the time of the sale from Quilty to Kenna in 1950. Tom Quilty was always in trouble for the lack of clothing and food supplied to his workers. In 1948 he was advised 'that unless there is an improvement, his Licence may be cancelled', that being his Licence to employ Aboriginal people to work for him (CRS F1 48/208 Reports of Ill-treatment of Aborigines at Coolibah Station, Australian Archives, Darwin).

The Patrol Officers who visited Coolibah were not happy with Quilty's treatment of his Aborigines and felt he needed to be more progressive, and not allow 'petty jealousies within his own area, to impinge upon his better judgement'. Mrs. Quilty felt that their Aborigines worked very well and praised Maryann, the young Aboriginal girl she had helping her in the house. She felt the trouble came more from the Native Affairs Department, interfering with Tom's way of working the Aborigines.

The role of the Aborigines in the pastoral industry was undergoing great changes at that time. Under the Aboriginal (Pastoral Industry) Regulations No 5/1949, and by agreement, the owner of a pastoral property paid for the services of a working Aborigine, his wife and first child, and the Commonwealth Government assumed responsibility - financially that is - for the remainder of the dependants of the employed Aborigine (CRS F1 52/741 Coolibah Station, Australian Archives, Darwin).

Not all of the Aborigines received a weekly wage - they were, however, clothed, given tobacco, flour, tea, sugar, as well as other stores and when trips were made to town, money was given out to enable them to go to the pictures and buy 'lolly water'. They were still given time to go walkabout and get their own choice of bush tucker.

Records show that Byers did care about many of his station Aborigines, particularly those who got into trouble with the police, or those who were ill and taken into town. He asked on one occasion that a sick elderly Aboriginal woman be returned to her country, Coolibah, as opposed to Darwin, as he felt she would be a lot happier there. Yet in his own words, 'When you live in black fella country, black fellas keep their place'. He encouraged his station Aborigines to look after themselves and keep themselves and their camp clean. After an inspection in May 1952, two Patrol Officers stated that 'both Mr. Ryan and myself agree that rarely have we seen better dressed or healthier looking natives than those seen on Coolibah...Wason Byers is something of an enigma, but in spite of cross-questioning and even encouragement, not one of his native employees is prepared to run down or complain of his conduct' (CRS F1 52/741 Coolibah Station, Australian Archives, Darwin, for this and following information).

There were 39 adult Aboriginals and 8 children living on Coolibah and those who worked included Duncan, Hector, Nugget, Depot Joe, Bloomer, Violet, Daisy and Dinah. The white staff consisted of Jim Duigan who was employed for a time as book-keeper and Les Turley as headstockman. Wages being paid to Aboriginal stockmen on Coolibah that time were 1 pound per week. The cost of rations to the Aborigines was calculated to be: 'Beef 4d
Plate 11: The Daily Round, Coolibah Homestead
Aboriginal group with the mule team and rubbish cart on Coolibah Station, early 1950s.
(Photograph courtesy Mr Brian Penny)
Plate 12: Head Stockman, Jim Turley (second from left), departing for stock camp. "Old Violet" is on Turley's left. (Photograph courtesy Mrs L Kenna)
per pound...Syrup 1/- per tin...7 lb flour 3/-6...2 lb sugar...a shirt 25/-, trousers 35/-, dress 30/-.

A large herd of goats kept the station supplied in fresh milk. These were milked and tended by Aborigines.

A report on Coolibah station undertaken in December 1952 for the Director of Native Affairs stated that all of the Aborigines were particularly well dressed, and 'this is not just a 'window dressing' as Byers cannot have had any prior information of my visit'. The large vegetable garden was a

big area which is cared for by five female Aboriginals who are not otherwise employed. The produce from this particular garden is used exclusively for the natives and their dependants. All natives questioned admitted freely that they receive plenty of vegetables to eat and from their appearance it is obvious that they are receiving an adequate diet.

The station used hurricane lamps, had a two way radio connection and mail and some passengers came from Katherine via Connellan Airways. At one time, the aircraft crew and passengers overnighted at Coolibah when the aircraft did the weekly 'milk run' from Katherine to Wyndham. Wason Byers loved to 'entertain' his captive audience with his stories when the Connellan crew overnighted.

The Coolibah homestead was not ten years old and the comforts it offered were enjoyed by Wason, who had lived in some rough accommodations over the years. During that period it appears that the old Bradshaw homestead was not lived in and remained abandoned. Most of the outbuildings had been removed and the iron used for other purposes.

Shots of the exterior of the Coolibah homestead were used in the film Jedda. Snowy Kenna and Charles Chauvel were old friends from Queensland. During 1950 Charles and Elsa Chauvel, their daughter, a photographer and a truck driver did a reconnaissance trip through the Territory, looking for an interesting homestead, preferably located close to a town. They were very impressed with Coolibah, with its lovely coloured stones, plants and flowers, and it was hoped that it would film well.

Mrs. Chauvel described their visit:

Eighty miles of rutted and stony bush road from Katherine brought us to the interesting homestead of Coolibah Cattle Station which was the spot chosen as the main location for our film. The interiors of Coolibah were later constructed in detail in a Sydney studio for the dramatic dialogue sequences. The entire large homestead was built of rough, uneven rubble stones, and had been built stone by stone, we were told, by the wife of one of the early owners of the property and her lubras. The house had an odd primitive charm with its varied colours ranging from ochre to rust browns and grey greens.

Chauvel was experimenting with a new type of colour film and encountered many difficulties in keeping the film cool, both before and after exposure. Many problems were also encountered with the processing of the film which had to be sent to England.

The filming of Jedda was a history making venture in its own right, apart from the fact that the Coolibah homestead was used. It was the first full length colour feature film made in Australia and premiered in Darwin in January 1954 and was shown not long after in Katherine, much to the delight of the locals.

To see the film today, after living and travelling through the Territory for many years, is a little like watching a travelogue and recognising the many different areas used, many
obviously not the Victoria River district. Towards the end of filming, a local policeman approached the Chauvels and asked how long before they would be finished. Mrs. Chauvel's comments regarding Wason Byers and their stay at Coolibah, were less than complimentary. The film crew had just left when Wason was arrested for cattle stealing, and those cattle were the ones used for the cattle scenes in the film.

Both Wason Byers and Mounted Constable Tas Fitzer feature in the film. A small book entitled *Eye in Ebony* was released for sale with the film. It gives a brief history of all the actors, and says of Wason Byers, 'A tough, gnarled, weather-beaten, two-fisted character, Byers was recently charged with cattle rustling, but acquitted on trial. His appearance in *Jedda* gives the film added authenticity' (*Eye in Ebony* 1954).

Part of the article on Tas Fitzer reads, 'In real life, Constable Fitzer roamed the terrible country of the East Kimberleys for several years before eventually capturing the famous Aborigine outlaw, Nemarluk. By getting him to play his real life role in the picture, Chauvel added considerably to the credibility and realism of the script'.

A good deal of discussion took place with the Lands Department, prior to the sale of Coolibah to Kenna in 1950. He already held 715 square miles on his Fitzroy block and because of the Statutory restrictions in the Crown Land Ordinance on the amount of land one person may lease, he put three of the pastoral leases in his wife's name.

Byers and Kenna had a private agreement and that was, as soon as the mortgage was satisfied with Tom Piper Ltd, Byers was to be bought in as an equal partner. The financial arrangement between Byers, Kenna and Tom Piper Ltd deteriorated after the court case.

The advent of the trial also brought trouble in the Byers/Kenna partnership. Byers wanted Kenna to pay for the legal costs of his trial, but Kenna said that would make him appear guilty as well and he did not want any part of the affair. The partnership arrangement was dissolved and there was talk of suit and counter-suit. Wason was going to sue for loss of half a station, but, as happened previously in the Wilson/Liddy time there was only one name on the pastoral lease and that was Kenna's.

Byers then started action to claim half of the station. Records show that Byers could have applied to have some of the pastoral leases transferred to him, but no application was submitted. No rent or dingo rates had been paid and finally, in November 1955, Wason Byers was given the option of paying all the rents due on Coolibah, and so claim his share of the pastoral holding.

A visit from anyone from the Lands Department was a rarity. As was the case in Dave Pogarty's time at Buffalo Springs, they saw no one from Darwin, could not get their boundaries checked and received no services to warrant dingo rate charges. Wason asked for further time to pay, as 'due to litigation started, I am temporarily financially embarrassed' (PL 674, Dept of Lands, Darwin). His costs to that point were 2,000 pounds.

Obviously, neither Kenna nor Byers had the financial resources and backing to save the situation and so Kenna eventually forfeited the land.
CHAPTER 6

PETER CHESTER MURRAY, 1958

After severing the partnership with Kenna, Byers departed for Camfield station where he worked for Edwards and Vandeleur. Eventually Wason returned to Queensland, where he spent many years working and finally retiring on Yelvertoff station near Mt. Isa. He was a frequent visitor to the town during the sixties. Hugh Wason Byers, who never married, died aged 84 years, on 16 June 1974 and was buried in Charters Towers. The years following his departure from Coolibah appear to be quite unspectacular. Mr. Archibald Spooner of Tom Piper Ltd held the mortgage and so made the decision on how the station would be run.

Mr. Jack Holland who was working at Lissadell station, was approached by Hugh Van Heythuyzen, the General Manager of United Cattle Corporation, and offered the job as manager at Coolibah. It was a good offer financially so he accepted. Jack, along with his wife and two children, took up residence in the Coolibah homestead. United Cattle still wanted stock from Coolibah and 'they thought there was an endless supply that couldn't dry up. They thought they could just go out and muster a thousand bullocks, but they weren't there', Holland stated (Mr J Holland interview 28 September 1985 for this and following quotations).

With the departure of Byers, many of the Aborigines who were frightened of him returned. Holland very rarely had more than two white stockmen at a time, although he had seven or eight Aboriginal stockmen and his wife had Aboriginal women helping in the homestead. 'She had eight or nine lubras helping. We had more lubras than boys', he laughed. Ron Ball was his head stockman for twelve months. Of the cattle mustered, one mob of over 1,300 head did go to Dalmore Downs and several hundred head were sold to butchers in Katherine and Darwin.

In Holland's time, Paul Vandeleur was on Buffalo Springs and the old iron homestead at Bradshaw remained vacant, by now, stripped of all its inner furnishings and all outbuildings. Wombungie outstation also stood abandoned. In Wason Byers's time he operated it as an outstation and built a shed there. Kenna and Byers called their leases Fitzroy, Coolibah and Wombungie. A dispute arose years later which resulted in a court case, as to who actually owned the Wombungie land. Apparently there was an error made at some time when the boundary surveys were undertaken.

Holland said 'The place was too big. We had one camp and you couldn't cover the place. You didn't have enough men or horses. The one camp operated from the homestead'.

Coolibah still played host to the Connelan crews and passengers on their overnight stops from Katherine to Wyndham. The Holland family utilised this service so as to receive regular mail and some perishable supplies, as the river could not be crossed for at least three to four months of the year. Jack commented that they went to town, meaning Katherine, only once or twice a year. 'Sometimes it'd take two or three days to get to town. We had a big three ton truck. We brought the supplies back in it' he said. The road was still dirt and rough, showing very little improvement since Liddy's time, and it was not bitumenised for many years.

There was no social life (he laughed), too far away from anything. You never had any visitors, apart from the police at Timber Creek. When we first went to Coolibah, Tas Fitzer was there.
No pasture improvements were undertaken and 'it was natural feed and not much good. The Bradshaw portion is really better than the Coolibah lot. Coolibah is made up of mountains and hilly country'.

Very little fencing was carried out. Holland stated that in Quilty's time, he had made use of the hills and natural land formations and fenced across the top of the river, in line with the gorges, so as to keep the cattle in a specific area. Very little money was spent on the place and no improvements were undertaken. There was no desire on the part of Tom Piper to be progressive with the property and during his time on Coolibah, Jack Holland saw no one from the company and had contact with no one, with the exception of Hugh Van Heythuysen - whom he liked and worked well with.

When Jerry Wren replaced Van Heythuysen as General Manager of United Cattle Corporation, Jack found he did not have a good working relationship with him and so resigned.

Ted Morey, an ex-mounted policeman, then arrived to take over as manager. Jack Holland and his family were living in Katherine when he was offered the management of Beswick station, east of Katherine. It was merely coincidence that Ted Morey had been the previous manager there.

Peter Chester Murray, who owned a sheep property and who had thirty years experience with cattle in the western districts of NSW, heard that Coolibah station was up for sale through Winchcombe Carson in Armidale NSW.

Peter Murray was not a North Australian cattleman, but the country interested him and, with a view to his family's future, he decided to move to the Northern Territory. With his wife Jane, his two sons and three daughters, it took two trips from Armidale with a five ton truck, land rover and a 3 ton trailer, to move the family. Murray paid 30,000 pounds for Coolibah in May 1958 (Mr P Murray to author, February 1983). This was for an aggregation of leases and improvements and an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 head of cattle and horses (PL 597 (1) Dept of Lands, Darwin).

When they arrived there were virtually no fences or serviceable yards, everything was starting to deteriorate and 'whilst the homestead was old fashioned, it was delightful' (P Murray to author, April 1983). The nine room stone homestead built by Olive Underwood was valued, along with '32v lighting plant and septic and other fixtures at 4,000 pounds'.

Peter Murray then set about rebuilding the station. Existing fences were made sound and holding paddocks and yards built. Some of the Coolibah land is very rugged and almost impossible to muster and added to that, Peter was confronted with the problem of large distances between the yards he did have. The lack of expenditure and lack of upkeep on the station's equipment had taken their toll.

He then 'hit upon the idea of carting four, fifty yard rolls of six foot hessian around on two mules and tying it to trees and pegs in the ground. Everyone laughed at the idea and said Peter Murray thinks he is still in sheep country. But the idea worked' (P Murray to author, 30 June 1983). The hessian enclosure 'was 200 yards round' and once the cattle were driven in and the hessian closed, 'it took two men for each two hour watch, riding in opposite directions', to keep the cattle away from the side of the enclosure. As a result of that method, they were able to muster 3,000 head in 1959 - 1,900 of which were sold. Some of those cattle were walked to Katherine and then railed to Darwin.

Late in 1958 the news was released that cattle exports to the Philippines were to resume and that 'the firm of Henderson Trippe have won a six months contract to ship 5,000 head from Darwin' (North Australian Monthly, December 1958). The Western Australian ship Koolinda was refitted to take the live cattle trade. During the following months, many shipments of cattle from Tipperary, Beetaloo, Elsey and Urapunga stations were exported.
Plate 13: Peter Chester Murray, mid 1960s
(Photograph courtesy Mrs E Rayner)
Plates 14 and 15:

Coolibah Homestead
Side view (above), front view 1951 (below). Note the pot plants and neat garden referred to by Byers, after he took over from Quilty.

(Photographs courtesy Mrs L Kenna)
There was obviously a feeling of optimism in the pastoral industry during that period. The Young brothers took over Birrindudu station, Peter Sherwin 'won' Wallamunga station in a ballot and six other pastoral blocks were opened for selection (North Australian Monthly January 1959, August 1959).

Late in February 1959, 300 head of Peter Murray's cattle were walked to Katherine, ultimately for shipment to Hong Kong. During September 1959 cattle were arriving in Darwin by train at regular intervals for shipment to Manila and Hong Kong and cattlemen were receiving 'the previously unheard of price of 25 pounds per head for 'scrubbers' - until last year not worth more than 8 pounds and therefore scarcely worth the trouble of mustering', one magazine reported (North Australian Monthly September 1959).

Two loads of 500 head each, of Peter Murray's cattle, sailed on the San Domenico for Hong Kong during 1960. Whilst Murray was quoted 10 pounds per hundred pounds live weight on the wharf, he in fact received 2 pounds 10 shillings per hundred pounds live weight (P Murray to author, 30 June 1983). The weight of the cattle was calculated by putting each truck 'over the weighbridge fully loaded and then each truck [was] weighed empty after unloading. The difference between first and second reading of trucks, was the amount of live beef we were paid for. This was bad for us, as the cattle were held too long and lost a tremendous amount of weight'.

Held in the heat with limited water and feed, the cattle suffered tremendous weight losses by this method of selling, and the average rate paid was 'about 8 pounds per head'. As it cost 'over 6 pounds to deliver them, taking all expenses into consideration', it was hardly a profitable exercise for Peter, but decidedly profitable for the purchaser.

Six hundred head of cattle were also sold to Joey Young, to help stock his newly acquired Birrindudu station. Apart from himself, Peter had his son John, two white stockmen and approximately twenty-one Aborigines working on the property. Mrs. Murray had about a dozen Aboriginal women working in and around the homestead.

In 1959, Ernie Rayner and Sandy Little arrived at Coolibah station in Ernie's Model T, in the hope of a job Murray promised him in 1958. Ernie had worked for a Sam Little when Murray met him in Longreach in 1958 and Sandy was brother to Leslie John Gordon Little who was working for Murray at that time.

Apart from those men, Peter had some very loyal Aborigines working for him, including Duncan who was one of the witnesses against Wason Byers. He was one of Peter's best boys, spoke good English, ran the camp when there was no other white staff and his brother Joe was Peter's 'Motor Car Boy'. That meant he went everywhere with his Boss - it was considered a very important job. Nugget was another trusted man who had been a witness against Byers and both he and Dinah, Duncan's wife, were descendants of Nemarluk.

The kindress showed by Murray to his Aborigines was such a contrast to the hard work and cruelty they had endured for so many years under Quilty and particularly Byers. They trusted Peter Murray and told him of their tribal ways. 'It is only the people who have lived and worked side by side with them who can give an accurate picture of their make-up and it goes very deep' said Peter. He felt that,

from the white point of view [Aborigines are] seen as a shiftless, improvident, indolent people. They lived entirely off the land and no provision was made for future times...it can be safely said, the blacks did not improve the land in any way: neither did they hurt it in any way. They first lived on what nature produced and spread themselves around in numbers, not to demand more than each area was capable of yielding.

While the Aborigines trusted Peter and were happy to talk of their tribal ways, he too was happy to listen and learn from them. The Aborigines told him the Wandoan, the big curved
hill at the Coolibah horse paddock, was the Dreaming Place of the Caterpillars and the Ten Mile Water Hole was the Dreaming Place of the Barramundi.

The Aborigine whose job it was to tend the vegetable plot or water the garden took a great pride in what he did. The Aborigines were always happy when there was a white Missus in residence on the property. They were given better care with a woman there and their babies were looked after when sick. It was a common occurrence for an Aboriginal woman to take a sick baby up to the homestead for the Missus to look at.

The white men learnt much from them about survival in the bush. This bush Aborigine is not to be confused with the drunken human wreck, which unfortunately, many of the Aborigines who live in town have now become.

Peter Murray felt the Aboriginals had little to thank the white settlement for. As the European population settled Northern Australia the Aborigines 'in order to survive', retaliated against their hunting grounds being despoiled, their sacred places being rent asunder, their water holes being fouled up by horses, camels and donkey terns. Water holes and soaks that in many cases, barely supported the black tribe living around them. Added to that, 'disease and sickness was spread by the intruders...Leprosy, Syphilis, Measles and Influenza, all common ailments to us, had devastating results on Aboriginal peoples' (P Murray to author, April and June 1983 for this and all preceding quotations).

The Director of Lands was anxious to clear up the situation with United Cattle Corporation, in respect of the amount of excess land they held as a result of owning Fitzroy, Dalmore Downs and Coolibah stations. The suggestion was put to Peter Murray that he surrender some land to the east, accept some land touching his western boundary, and so be given a new lease with a fifty year tenure. He did and was granted pastoral lease 597 covering 3956 square miles, with a a fifty year lease commencing from 1st July 1960 (PL 597 (1) Dept of Lands, Darwin).

The land surrendered on Peter's eastern boundary eventually became Innesvale station. Soon after Murray took over Coolibah, John Nicholson, Ian McBean and Mick O'Neil arrived with their plants. They assisted with mustering and did much of the droving between Coolibah and Katherine. Subsequently, Ian McBean became the owner of Innesvale and eventually, owner of all the Bradshaw/Coolibah country. John Nicholson and later Mick O'Neil became managers of Fitzroy station.

In March 1963 Peter Chester Murray became a Non Official member of the Northern Territory Legislative Council (P Murray to author, 25 September 1985). During 1964 he was as active on the Council as his position enabled him to be. He was on Select Standing Committees for Land Development and Local Government. From 1959 to 1965 the Legislative Council was made up of eight elected members, six official members, and three non-official members.

When the report of the Select Committee into Social Welfare Legislation was presented to Council in 1964, Mr. Drysdale the member for Nightcliff stated that it was only a report and if the legislation, when it goes through, is administered in the way and in the spirit that the Report requests, it will bring nothing but good for our Aboriginal people and I think the Commonwealth Government should now grasp the opportunity and the urgency of providing funds and personnel to make this legislation work and to integrate these people into the Australian community in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Murray, as the member representing the pastoral industry, spoke out against much of the Report. He and other pastoralists were not questioning 'the inevitability of this legislation: it must come', more that the timing was wrong (Hansard May 1964, 1785-6).
He spoke at length about the passing of the Bill at that particular time, and always felt that the Aboriginal people could not cope with the responsibility of the change. He spoke of Albert Namatjira who

was a man who reached heights of achievement in our culture: his intelligence in the artistic field, his ability, brought him to heights unprecedented among Aborigines, and to heights to which many white people aspire, as an artist. And yet, at the height of his success, he drank the dregs of despair and humiliation simply because the conflicting influences of two civilisations were pulling in different directions.

Knowing that many Aboriginals had limited experience in handling money, he told the Council that 'large sums of money in employment relief would, I feel, be a calamitous step in the lives of the Aboriginal people at the present time and should be subject to the strictest Welfare supervision for some time to come. This is my view, Sir, and it is the view of very many other Territorians'.

Armed with his knowledge of the Aboriginal people and the knowledge that many pastoralists felt the legislation was premature, he stated:

I feel that by far the most important legislation proposed at the moment is the Wards' Employment Ordinance which would enable the Aboriginal to receive adequate money he honestly earned and sufficient to keep himself and his family and himself and live as a useful member of our community.

In May 1962 Aborigines were given voting rights, although enrolment was not compulsory and two years later, the Social Welfare Ordinance was passed, removing the concept of Wardship. In September 1964, the Licensing Ordinance was amended to give Aborigines drinking rights and their lives were changed forever. Within two years, three legal changes had taken place, lifting all restrictions on Aborigines living in the Northern Territory.

On 30 October 1965 Peter Murray resigned as a Non Official Member of the Legislative Council, stating that he felt Non Official Members were not much help to the people of the Northern Territory and the only way to progress was to have a clear majority of elected members. In his resignation speech he stated:

I will always support any move by Territorians, whether I am inside this Council or outside this Council, for the full right of self-expression in their political representation. Sir, I again refer members to Article 22, paragraph 3, of the Declaration of Human Rights, which says:

The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of the Government.

Now I ask you, Sir, and the members of the Council, is the legislative structure of this Council based on the will of the people? I say, definitely, no. It is not. And, until the Northern Territory is given that privilege and advancement, I believe this situation will hold it back and retard its political, social and economic development (Hansard August 1965, 3092).

A mass walk-out of members of the Council in 1965 resulted in major changes to the Council structure, which was what Peter Murray and others had been striving for. In the October 1965 elections, Murray was elected member for the District of Arnhem and when the Council sat on 15 December, he was elected the Chairman of Committees. During those two years, 1963-65 he was mining with Tiger Brennan and travelled to Darwin when Council meeting and associated business required him to do so.
As a pastoralist, Murray had first hand knowledge of the problems land owners encountered and he knew what their greatest needs were. He felt it 'a very desirable thing that buffalo be eradicated and that cattle be established in the Northern Territory' (Hansard February 1965, 2796).

The sixties were a time of activity and optimism for the Katherine district. Buntine Roadways commenced the cartage of cattle by roadtrains. Pressure was being put on the Government in December 1964 to have the Katherine-Willeroo-Top Springs road and the Willeroo-Timber Creek road declared as beef roads. That would then be the start to having them upgraded and bitumenised. Peter Murray was all in favour of a local meatworks being established and was always very outspoken on any matter which would benefit Territorians. The meatworks opened in Katherine in 1963.

The pastoralists had never had a local market before, with the exception of the Wyndham meatworks and the Armed Forces during the War years, but during 1963-64, '27,055 head were slaughtered at the export meatworks at Katherine, Darwin and Montejinnie' and a further 212,473 head left the Territory (Administrator's Report 1963/64). The meatworks at Montejinnie station was established by the Crowson family, owners of the station.

The Territory population in April 1921 was 3,867 and in June 1961, forty years later, it was 16,206, both figures being exclusive of Full Blood Aborigines. The Territory was finally, slowly, getting what it needed most, people, and the pastoralists were slowly finding it easier to get their cattle to markets.

For all his trips to Darwin for Council meetings and trips south to take his children to boarding school, Peter Murray still had a station to run and he was having trouble fulfilling the covenants under the conditions of the lease. Although station vehicles were used for most of the cartage, freight charges from Wyndham were 1 shilling per ton per mile (PL 597 (1) Dept of Lands, Darwin for this and following references to the station).

A report done by a Pastoral Inspector stated that 'due to poor management' prior to Peter Murray's taking over, it was difficult to assess herd numbers. The herd was a poor quality shorthorn, the remnants of Tom Quilty's breeding program, and although there was definitely a need for new stud bulls, Peter had 'no definite views on a breeding program'.

Two of Murray's children were to remain closely linked with the Territory. Ernie Rayner married Pauline Murray in 1963, and by that time he had left Peter Murray's employment, had worked on various properties in the VRD area and at the time of their marriage, was a stock inspector. Not long after, another of Peter's daughters, Pamela, married Glen Young whose brothers had previously owned Birrindudu station and whose family were well known hoteliers in the Top End.

For Peter Murray, the struggle with Coolibah station continued. 'The place was so run down, you could never have got it in top condition without capital', he said and unfortunately, he did not have enough capital (P Murray to author, 25 September 1985). There had been too many years of neglect and nature itself seemed to be against him. Many bush fires had swept through the property and as a result fences, both old and new, had burnt down and were not rebuilt. That resulted in an adverse report from a pastoral inspector.

Whilst pastoral inspectors' reports were realistic, there does not appear to have been any encouragement or sympathy given to Peter Murray in his effort to build up the station. In comparison, those same pastoral inspectors and Department of Lands staff, were extremely 'supportive' of Snowy Kenna. After the fiasco of Kenna, Byers, United Cattle and the years of inactivity, their lack of support for a man who was working hard and obviously trying to succeed, is difficult to understand.
The old homestead at Bradshaw remained vacant and was only used on occasions when they were working in the area. Scattered near the homestead and up the escarpment were the remains of the pipe, laid down by Bradshaw. A report done around that time valued the old Bradshaw homestead at 100 pounds and the structure erected by Dave Fogarty was considered 'of no value in present condition'.

With the remains of some fencing and yards nearby and some uprights that were once part of the outbuildings, the old homestead stood as it does now, empty and abandoned. No new work was undertaken on the Bradshaw homestead by Peter Murray. He rebuilt one of the old yards nearby and erected 'a loading jetty for unloading boats' (P Murray to author, 18 May 1988).

Coolibah station was inspected in September 1963 and the ensuing report was critical, with the pastoral inspector stating that the progress being achieved was 'very unsatisfactory'. While he admitted the lack of finances had forced Murray to concentrate on mustering and the sale of mustered stock, the lack of a 'breeding or developmental program' was not being progressive.

Peter admitted that he did not have enough capital to develop the property to its full potential, 'but contractors are to commence fencing and yard building immediately, under the proposed sale agreement'. Even so Peter felt he 'left it in a better state than when I went there' (P Murray to author, 25 September 1985).

Peter Murray's decision to sell the station was a difficult one. He had come to the Territory primarily for his family and now after many years of hard work, he was deeply in debt. An agreement for sale was signed by Peter C. Murray and Paul A. Cullen in September 1963. Coolibah station had gone to overseas interests.
Map 6 Extract from Pastoral Map of the Northern Territory 1984.
Dept of Lands Darwin
Coolibah station stayed in the hands of overseas interests for many years. Coolibah Pastoral Company Pty Ltd, which was owned by Unibeef, an overseas based company, built the new two storey homestead on Bradshaw’s Run. It is only a short distance from the still standing iron and piping homestead built by Bradshaw over eighty years ago and a few metres from the site of Fogarty and McMahon’s corrugated iron hut. The resident Manager then ran the Coolibah pastoral lease from that base.

Innesvale station was in fact once part of the Coolibah pastoral lease. The land was surrendered by Mr Peter Murray in 1960 and he then took up the Buffalo Springs block after Paul Vandeleur was asked to vacate. Once again, there were boundary changes on Bradshaw/Coolibah. Murray was issued with a new fifty year lease and the Coolibah station boundaries were to remain unchanged for many years.

Mr Ian McBean won the Innesvale block by ballot in 1964. At that time McBean had been in the Northern Territory twelve years, having arrived in Alice Springs from N.S.W. in 1952. Innesvale station touches the eastern and original boundary of Coolibah, which McBean purchased in June 1982. Ian McBean and his family made the move to Bradshaw in 1984 and Innesvale was then sold. Once again there were boundary changes and Coolibah station covered an area of 10,639 square kilometers.

Access across the river is achieved in a small boat, fitted with an outboard motor. A vehicle is left on the Auvergne side of the river, as was done in Vandeleur's time. The roads from Coolibah and Wombungie are still poor and not easily accessible and in a heavy Wet, no vehicle can get through for months at a time. The added bonus is the airstrip and the mail plane from Katherine every Friday. Communication with the outside was conducted by way of radio telephone until more recent years, when the Run was connected to the Micro Wave link.

McBean has already purchased new bulls, commenced the breeding program to upgrade his herd and has done an enormous amount of fencing. He has purchased a Cessna 182 plus two helicopters and has a staff of around thirty. There are six radios, all vehicles have one and there is one in the stock camp. This enables Ian to keep in close contact with his staff and family at home. He recently had a barge built and after mustering, two-thirds of the cattle are taken across the Victoria River, loaded onto roadtrains and trucked across Auvergne country.

During 1987 a funding arrangement between the National Trust of Australia (N.T.) and Ian McBean enabled a new roof to be placed on the Coolibah homestead. In 1988 there were boundary changes again when McBean sold the Coolibah homestead block. Coolibah station is now held under Crown Lease Perpetual No. 842, covering 644 square kilometers. The new owners have stocked the block with shorthorn brahman stud cattle. At the time of writing, Wombungie, covering 1,285 square kilometers, is in the process of sub-division and all documents are before the Minister.

In some ways the area around the Depot has changed little and progress has come slowly to the district. The Depot store continued to operate until after the War, and eventually the business moved to its present site, close to the Victoria Highway. In the early eighties a new store and caravan park were constructed on the site. Unfortunately, all that remains of the Depot site are some remnants of the landing on the river and some twisted iron and rock rubble where the store once stood. The area was Gazetted the Victoria River Depot Historical Reserve on 12 December 1980.

The small cemetery nearby has never been gazetted. After his death in 1982 Les Little, who was respected and much admired by the Murray family, was to have his final resting place
Plate 16: The Bradshaw Homestead in 1982
(Photograph by P Ogden)
where Mathew Wilson and two others are buried. They were, according to correspondence, Bill Butler and a man named Brown, both men having worked in the area for several years prior to their deaths.

Both of these sites and Gregory's Tree which became an Historical Reserve in 1979, became part of the Gregory National Park, covering 10,550 square kilometers in 1984. During 1988 the old Police Station from which Mounted Constable O'Keefe worked, was restored and opened to the public.

The annual race meeting, once held close to the Depot site was held at various sites over the years and credit must go to Mick O'Neil, who had once been droving for Peter Murray and who in 1969 was the manager of Fitzroy station, for re-establishing the meeting. On 1 November 1969 the first meeting of the Timber Creek Amateur Race Club Incorporated was held on the new site near the junction of Watch and Timber Creek. It is still a big social annual event, which attracts visitors from all over the Territory.

Bradshaw's Run now covers 9,995 square kilometers. As Ian said, 'If the plane stops and the new boat packs it up, then I am nearly back to Bradshaw's time. All he had for communication was the boat'. Bradshaw's Run has returned to the Australian family man, who along with his wife and children, are doing some present day pioneering of their own. Bradshaws had finally returned to its original identity.
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Bradshaw via Coolibah: The History of Bradshaw’s Run and Coolibah Station

by Pearl Ogden

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