PREFACE

The ‘Victoria River District Doomsday Book’ has its inspiration in Jock Makin’s history of Victoria River Downs, *The Big Run*. In his book Makin has a list of the Victoria River Downs managers and the years they were in charge of VRD. In 1981 Deborah Rose and I were recording Aboriginal oral history in the Victoria River country and often found it difficult to place the stories in time. Aboriginal oral historians were not concerned to note the year when an event happened, but usually could say who the station manager was at the time. If it was known when that manager was in charge of the station the Aboriginal stories could be placed in a reasonable time frame. Because of this, from archival records and by talking with older cattle station people I began to compile lists like Makin’s for every station in the district. As this work progressed I kept coming across interesting facts about many of the station managers and other station employees, and I began to add this information to my lists. The biographical information kept growing to the point where I began to deliberately compile short biographies of as many of the managers as possible, and to include interesting facts and stories about the stations themselves. The Victoria River District Doomsday Book gradually took on a life of its own and the result, after more than 36 years, is the document reproduced here.

Why call it a Doomsday Book? In 1085 William the Conqueror ordered a great survey be carried out over much of England and parts of Wales. The survey recorded the names of all the landholders and estimated the value of their manor house and out-buildings, their land, livestock and plough teams. It listed the river-meadows, woodland, pasture and any other sources of revenue each landholder owned. It also listed the ‘several classes’ of peasants on each estate. The survey was done for taxation purposes and there was no appeal against any valuation made. In the following century the name ‘Domesday Book’ came into use because the valuations in it were unalterable, just as, people at the time believed, God’s rulings would be unalterable on Judgment Day. And, of course, the title grabs attention doesn’t it?

It seems to me that there are obvious though admittedly quite loose parallels between the original Domesday Book and my somewhat haphazard compilation of information about the stations and people of the Victoria River District. My record lists, as much as possible, the owners and size of the various stations, and their valuations at different times. It lists the numbers of livestock (including feral animals) and the modern version of the ‘several classes of peasants’ – stockmen, head stockmen, cooks, overseers and others. It focusses on the station managers – a rough equivalent of the ‘Lords of the Manor’ – as they tend to enter the written record far more frequently than the ‘peasants’. The Doomsday Book also reveals a social hierarchy on the stations which, particularly in earlier decades, was sometimes described as feudal. The housing usually reflected this hierarchy with the ‘Lord’ and ‘Lady’ living in a ‘castle’ (the ‘Big House’), the white workers in somewhat rougher accommodation, and the lowliest ‘peasants’ or ‘slaves’ – the Aborigines – living in crude humpies or later in basic corrugated iron sheds. Some station managers or their wives insisted on men wearing a coat and tie when dining at the Big House – this in intense heat in the days before air-conditioning! On at least one station, on Christmas Day this hierarchy was reversed with the white staff serving Christmas lunch to the Aborigines – a role reversal as was sometimes practiced in Mediaeval times when the aristocrats would serve the peasants.
The Doomsday Book includes much more than this – original accounts of fire and flood, spearings and massacres, cattle and horse stealing, and so on. The amazing mobility of station employees, from the earliest times onwards, is also revealed. Of course, my Doomsday Book is not about taxation, and some readers may be pleased to know that the contents may be adjusted on appeal.

Readers will note that the book includes stations outside what is generally considered the Victoria River region. It includes the east Kimberley border stations from Carlton Hill to Billiluna, Newcastle Waters far to the south-east, and Willeroo and Manbulloo closer to Katherine. In other words, it covers what may be termed ‘the Greater Victoria River District’. There are a few stations omitted or with only minimal detail, primarily because I have come across little or nothing about them during my research. Some readers will quibble with the term ‘manager’ being applied to men who were in charge of outstations, saying that they were only head stockmen. I don’t dispute this, but I’ve followed the documentation where in many cases the term manager was used.

The Victoria River District Doomsday Book has become a great resource for my ongoing history research and I’m sure will be the same for other researchers, and of interest to anyone with a connection to or interest in the greater Victoria River region, or with an interest in north Australian and outback history more generally. When I began this compilation it was never intended to be a publication, so I was sometimes remiss about keeping on top of the referencing. Sometimes I was given documents gathered by other researchers so I can’t vouch for the accuracy of their referencing. Some of my own documents have been lost over the years when moving from one address to another, so I haven’t been able to complete or check the accuracy of some references. There have even been changes to the reference number on some documents since I accessed them, and some have been transferred from one archive to another. I have done my best to address these problems, not always with success. Readers are welcome to use any information they wish from the Doomsday Book, but if they intend to publish such information they should try to check the references given in case any changes have been made or mistakes crept in. The information will definitely be in a document somewhere, but it may be that in some cases the reference given is inadequate or wrong. Researchers beware!

The Doomsday Book is a work in progress and will never be completed. There are large gaps in the record. No doubt some of these gaps will be filled when documents ‘buried’ in archives or in private collections are found, but there are probably documents that no longer exist, and undoubtedly information that never made its way onto paper. And, of course, new records are always being created as new people appear on the stations or new books, particularly memoirs, are published. History is being lost (and created) every day. If you, the reader, can correct any mistakes or add information – from personal experience, family tradition, documents or photographs – I would love to hear from you. Please contact me via the National Centre for Biography at the Australian National University (ncb@anu.edu.au).

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Founded with 4000 head of cattle by John Durack, Patrick Moore and Duncan McCauley for Patrick Durack (Bolton, 1953: 31). Some of the cattle (2000 head) came from Mount Marlow and Louisa Downs in north Queensland (Sellwood, 1995: 7). The original homestead site on the banks of the Behn River was chosen on May 8th 1886. It was described in 1891 (West Australian, 4-7-1891) as ‘built of clay and roofed with local timber and iron. It is about 40 feet long by 14 feet wide, with a verandah all round’.

In 1896 Francis Connor and Dennis Doherty formed a partnership with the Durack brothers, so the station became the property of Connor, Doherty and Durack (CD&D). In 1904 Argyle was said to be carrying 33,000 head of cattle and about 700 head of horses, and to be turning off 1,500 bullocks per year (Weir, 1906: 106).

In December 1898 it was reported that:

A lot of niggers are coming in to all the stations now, and the station people find it pays them to shoot bullocks to feed them with, to prevent them routing the cattle. Mr. M.P. Durack told me that on Argyle this year they killed over twenty bullocks to feed niggers (Northern Territory Times, 2-2-1900).

Historian Geoffry Bolton (1953: 235) says that in 1929 there was a ‘small thriving flock’ of sheep on Argyle. There’s a photograph of these sheep in the Durack Collection, Battye Library. Clive Stone, a former manager of Argyle, says (pers. comm.) that there were still a few sheep at Argyle when he first went there in 1965. Bolton also says (p. 319) that in 1950 Argyle tried to shift cattle with a road train, but failed.
ARGYLE

CD&D retained Argyle until 1950 when it was sold to The Peel River Land and Mineral Company, a subsidiary of the Australian Agricultural Company (AA Co.) which is the oldest pastoral company in Australia, established in 1824 (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty, manager of Auvergne from 1955 to 1979). The purchase price for all of CD&D’s stations was believed to have been £260,000 cash.

Rudolph ‘Dolph’ Schmidt, the General Superintendent for the AA Company, was responsible for buying out Connor, Doherty and Durack in 1949-50. While visiting Argyle in the 1960s he had a heart attack and died (Adams, 1962: 867). His job was taken by his son Roy Trevor Schmidt until the station was sold to Sogex Pastoral Company. Argyle was held by Sogex until the company sold out in 1992 to a consortium headed by Kerry Packer. Packer’s consortium changed the company name to the Baines River Pastoral Company (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty; Dayes, 2008: 41).

In 1951 Drover Bill Cussens took 300 stud cows from Headingly station to Argyle, via the Murranji Track (Hoofs & Horns, August 1951: 43).

When the Ord River dam was built the front part of the old homestead was pulled down and used in a reconstruction of the original, located near the dam wall. It’s now a tourist attraction. Although some of the best Argyle land is under water over half the original area is above water level and the station still exists, though it’s now run under regulations as a protected catchment area. This protected catchment also includes part of Turner and Ord River stations.

Sir Alexander Thomas Cockburn-Campbell. Stockman, 1899-1903. Cockburn-Campbell was the fifth Baronet of Gatsford, Rosshire, a title bestowed upon his great grandfather in 1807 and inherited by Alexander in 1892. He was born in 1872 in Albany, Western Australia, and educated at Hale School, Perth (Cockburn-Campbell, 1985: 21).

Mary Durack says that he arrived in Wyndham in 1898, supposedly to visit a mountain named after his father but actually to work as Clerk of Courts. Three years later he left the Court to become a drover and stockman for the Duracks on Argyle and Rosewood (Cockburn-Campbell, 1985: 22; Durack, 1983: 55-56, 78, 380). This conflicts with an entry in the Wyndham Police Occurrence Book of April 8th 1896 where he is noted as having come in from Newry, where he may have been manager, and this source mentions him again on October 19th 1896.

Cockburn-Campbell stayed on in the district for more than 30 years. In 1900 he was sworn in as a special constable to assist police in the search for the murderers of Galway Jerry Durack (McKellar, 28-2-1901). From the early- to mid-1920s he was manager of Waterloo station (Cockburn-Campbell, 1985: 1). Morey (1978b: 17) says he was manager of Manbulloo in 1927-28. He married Alfred Giles’ daughter, Maude, who died during childbirth on Waterloo in 1926 (Cockburn-Campbell, 1985: 75; Durack, 1983: 55-56, 379-80; AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1650). According to Maggie Lilly (pers. comm), Dr Adams rode from Wyndham to try and save Maude, but arrived too late. It was the wet season and he developed terrible blisters from the ride, so bad that he had to sit on pillows for some time afterwards.
In 1935 Cockburn-Campbell was hit by a train and killed at a level crossing in Guildford, WA. He’d been blind for a number of years and was living at the Salvation Army Men’s Retreat at the time of his death (Northern Standard, 5-7-1935). He was described as a lean figure, six feet two inches tall, a natural stockman and popular with his workmates (Cockburn-Campbell, 1985: 22, Durack, 1983: 55-56, 380).

Ambrose Durack. Head stockman/manager from 1898 to 1923 (Durack 1983: 74, 153). According to Mary Durack he was referred to by Aborigines as ‘Lagaga’ which they said meant ‘tall skinny one’. Ambrose had skin sensitive to the sun and Mary says, ‘he rode at all times with a handkerchief tied across his nose and another worn under his hat covering the back of his head’ (Durack, 1983: 74; Broughton, 1965: 59; Martin, 1985: 3). He married Nancy Tiddy in 1913 (Durack, 1983: 284-85).


Before going to Argyle Philchowski had been head stockman on Westmorland station, and then stockman on Macarthur River station, both in the Gulf Country. H. Anning, who was manager of the neighbouring Wollogorang station, met Philchowski in 1898 and said that:

He had come out from Germany as a young man … [He] was a most agreeable companion. Having travelled the world and seen a good deal, and like most
Germans being very well educated, he could talk, and talk well on most subjects. … Philchowski was an energetic chap and a good worker, but not much of a bushman. I saw a good deal of him afterwards, but the following year he left Westmorland to try his luck further out. “Further Out!” (Anning, July 1928: 474 and August 1928: 594-95).

Before going ‘further out’, Philchowski joined a gold prospecting party heading for Blue Mud Bay (eastern Arnhem Land), but whether it ever got there is unclear. The expedition is said to have ‘broken down’ and for a time Philchowski worked as a stockman on Macarthur River station (Anning, November 1929: 954). He passed through Timber Creek enroute to Western Australia in August 1902 (TCPJ, 26-8-1902).

According to Mary Durack (1983: 112) Philchowski was a cultured and educated man and his reason for living in the east Kimberly was considered a mystery. He began work for MP Durack 1902. Eventually he asked MP for higher wages because he considered himself worth at least two other men. MP disagreed so Philchowski was paid off. After he left Argyle he applied for a special lease to establish a market garden near Carlton Reach. It was suspected that this proposed market garden was to be a cover for a sly grog shanty. Either before he got a reply to his request or in spite of it being denied, late in the year he and a partner, McKellar, set up a wayside store on Ivanhoe at Carlton Reach, supplying sly grog and providing Aboriginal women to his customers. When MP told him to move off Ivanhoe he refused (Durack 1983: 123, 289; diary of MP Durack, 28-2-1904 to 21-1-1905, entry for 20-3-1904). In November 1904 CD&D charged Philchowski with trespass on their pastoral lease and he was ‘fined £1 & £3-14-0 Costs & ordered to remove within fourteen days’ (Wyndham Rough Occurrence Book 1904-1906, Acc 741-8, entry for 19-11-1904).

In December 1904 Philchowski’s partner, ex-constable T.A. McKellar, applied for a similar lease at ‘Button’s Falls’ a few miles from Carlton Reach. The WA Lands Department wrote to Dr. Browne, the Resident Magistrate in Wyndham, asking if he had any objection to McKellar’s application. He replied that the application was ‘too preposterous for words, and that it is only a very shallow pretext for some deeper game which he has in view. I am afraid that is that of a convenient depot for sly Grog selling’ (Browne [Resident Magistrate, Dr], 9-12-1904). The police replied that it was an open secret McKellar was in partnership with Philchowski and his application was made to obtain ‘a new site for Philchowski & Co’s store’ (Goodridge, 10-12-1904). The following year McKellar built a store near the Wild Dog police station and it’s possible that Philchowski was a partner (Willshire, 2-9-1905).

In August 1905 Philchowski was charged with a brutal assault on Tracker Banjo, but it was later revealed (or alleged) that the tracker had gone to Philchowski’s camp drunk and become abusive. Philchowski ejected Banjo and a fight ensued (Letter Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1904-1906, entry for 31-8-1905).

Philchowski then became variously a teamster, the Ord River packhorse mailman, and later was a partner with Joe Fagan (Fegan) on Spring Creek station (diary of M.P. Durack, 15-9-1906 – 21-7-1907, entry for 7-12-1906; Durack, 1983: 123). In 1908 Mrs Deacon of Waterloo station reported to police that Philchowski had, ‘for the past 18 months off & on been illegally using her horses in his team’ (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1907-1908, entry for 4-9-1908).
Mary Durack claims that it was Philchowski and his partner Cleary who in September 1905 discovered the body of Hugh McKenna who’d been speared by Aborigines near Wild Dog Spring (Durack 1983: 137-38). However, the Wyndham police records say that the body was found by teamster John McGregor (Wyndham Police Station, Journal of Patrols 1901-1906). Philchowski himself was speared and killed at Eight Mile Creek near Cockatoo Spring in June or July 1913 (Durack, 1983: 287-90). His body was found by Jim Crisp who was speared by Aborigines on Bullita in 1919 (Durack 1983: 360-61). After two men who had discovered speared bodies were later speared themselves, one wonders if the person who discovered Crisp’s body was worried about meeting the same fate!

Mary Durack (1983: 360) says that after Philchowski’s body was found a police party was organised and five special constables were sworn in to help track down the killer or killers. This ‘punitive expedition’ included Archie Martin, a brother of Alf who later managed Carlton Hill station for 17 years and then Victoria River Downs for 19 years. The party went out ‘east of the Keep River’ and brought back an Aborigine named Jilambin, alleged to have been one of the murderers. Jilambin was found guilty and sentenced to death. The official record describing an initial attempt to track down the offenders can be found in a report by Constable McKillan in the Wyndham police letter book (McKillan, July 1913) which is reproduced below (square brackets indicate an indecipherable word or words, or a word added for clarification):

[--------] on the 13th July Const Carr & special Const Prior arrived & I received a letter from Corp Jones stating that he had permission to engage three special Constables & he (Corp Jones) had already engaged two specials & instructed [---- ---?] I could get a suitable man to engage him & have him sworn in [at] Ivanhoe Stud Stn before Mr M.P. Durack J.P. meeting Mr McDonough on the road & I approached him for the purpose of engaging him [as] a special Constable he being
a good bush man but had no horses but was quite willing to walk. And as most of our work would be on foot & horses would not be required much I proceeded to Ivanhoe Stud Stn & had him sworn in before Mr M.P. Durack on [-------] July I along with party proceeded to get [to] the hills to try & come on natives on the hills I was overtaken on the [11th?] by Special Constables Neil Durack & Archie Martin this making four special Constables in the party & I did not feel disposed to dispense with Mr Donough services as he had no provisions or horses & as we were close on natives & our party was not [-------?] & from [owing?] to the condition of the country we were travelling And McDonough [was] well acquainted with this part of [district?] I therefore decided to keep him & it was fortunate that I did so, and [no doubt it] was owing to our strength that we were successful In capturing natives As the natives in this part are a fearless & daring lot, as on the morning of 12th July whilst proceeding along foot of ranges we saw a mob of natives on hills they were very hostile & shouting and wanting our boys to come up the hill & fight them, one of the natives on hills threw a spear [that] fell short as [the] native was a good distance away when he threw the spear We had surrounded & climbed up the hill but owing to the rough nature of the hill the natives had to[o] many get aways & when we reached top of hill they were gone we found a swag cover & blankets [in] there camp also some revolver cartridges & had left about a whole bullock We followed the tracks of the natives but were unable to overtake them as they were continually on the alert & going from one hill to another & there tracks were very difficult to follow trackers identified there track as those which were seen at 8 mile well & And on the night of the 25th July whilst camped at foot of ranges we were seated round fire M.P. Durack A Martin Murray Prior McDonough & myself [--- entire line obscured-----] and was alarmed by the dog rushing out of camp barking immediately we heard the dog barking we rushed into cover & had no sooner left the fire when two spears were thrown into camp followed by three more spears from a northern direction we fired a shot or two in the direction from which the spears came from & could hear the natives going up the hills there appeared to have been a large mob by the noise that they were making we shifted camp away from hills & kept a good look out all night but no more natives came near. Next morning we followed the tracks & saw where they had come down from the hills & were the same mob as we had been tracking we had evidently not Injured any the previous night as there was no trace of any being injured we continued on tracks of natives but were unable to come on them as they were always on alert [-------] country suited the natives kept on same hills & shifting from one to the other this country being a cluster of hills & they kept doubling back on their tracks.

The hills about here are a real stronghold for natives there being numerous caves & plenty of native food & water. On the 3rd July we joined [ --- last line on page obscured --- ] had seen coming down north side of tree & also identified K--- @ [--------] Jacky & two female and child track as [not?] having been at seen of murder Kailman @ Jacky pointed out to me a spear that was in there camp & said that It was the one that Jellibine had killed white fellow with at 8 mile well the stated spear has a iron point instead of the usual glass or stone Jellibine the alleged murderer [is] a real myall & does not understand English but Kailman @ Jack & females can speak a little English I returned to Wyndham with party on the [---] August with prisoners Jellibine & witnesses Kailman @ Jacky & two female women Bawarra & Begodurr & property found In natives possession also property of deceased which had been left at Stud Stn
In concluding my report I wish to make special mention of Special Constables N Durack, A Martin M. Prior & Mr McDonough who endured many privations during the search for native murderer also the special party from Argyle & Lissadell Stn who were all first class bushmen & there is no doubt that it was owing to our strength of party that we were able to capture the murderers as in my opinion that when the large mob of natives had seen that a large party after them they had chased the murderers away & they themselves cleared in the other direction.

The native Jellibine appears to have not been out hunting along with Kailman@ Jacky & female women on the day of murder of Philchoskie & had been close up to road when they seen deceased come along with his packs about midday & camp they watched him & saw him light fire & go to creek & fill billy can with water & put billy on the fire & then lie down [beside?] tree & go to sleep they then sneaked up to tree where deceased was laying Jellibine sneaked behind tree & drove spear into deceased while he was asleep & Kailman was in creek about 50 yds away & females were watching from a distance & on seeing that they had killed deceased they had went back to their camp on hill [&] brought more natives to scene of murder & carried away provisions belonging to deceased to their own camp on hills the natives appear to have had been having a big corroberree on hills [at] time of murder & were waiting on hills after [murder?] to kill some more whites as they were thinking police was not coming out for them & it was no saying who these natives would of done had it not been chased from hills.

Durack did not find any official records to indicate that any Aborigines were shot by the police party, but she cites a letter written by a local stockman, Roy Phillips, who suggests that this was the case: ‘You will be glad to hear that Philchowski was amply avenged, though I would not say anything about it if I were you’ (Durack, 1983: 290).


**Frank Eipers.** Stockman. He arrived early in 1906 and drowned at Argyle homestead on Christmas day the same year (Durack, 1983: 151-60).

**Patsy Durack.** Manager from at least 1922 until his death in 1933 (pers. comm., Reg Durack; *Northern Standard*, 22-1-1932: 5). He died at Turner Station en route to Halls Creek and is buried on the banks of the Turner River near the site of the old station (pers. comm, Cec Watts).

**Tom Ronan.** Head stockman in the 1930s, according to Elizabeth Durack (pers. comm.).

**Fraser.** Manager in 1935 (TCPJ, 11-12-1935). He may have taken over after the death of Patsy Durack.

**Eric Durack.** Manager from at least August 1940 until 1952 or 1953 (Biltris, 1951: 43; TCPJ, 3-8-1940; pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). Eric’s wife’s name was Marjorie (Beckett, 1998: 72). During the Second World War the Timber Creek police reported that, ‘E. Durack stated that he was having difficulty holding his employed male Abos & requested that if possible I could get some nomadic females to send them to Argyle’ (TCPJ, 3-8-1940).
When Connor, Doherty and Durack sold out to the AA Co. in 1950 Eric, who was a large shareholder in CD&D, requested to remain as manager. However, according to Lloyd Fogarty, Dolph (Rudolph) Schmidt wanted him out so that, ‘new blood’ could be put in control, ie G. N. ‘Mick’ Fogarty. Mick went to Argyle in 1951 to discuss the position with Eric but apparently they didn’t see eye to eye. Eric had no intention of handing over the reins but later decided to move on (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). Between 1957 and 1964 he was the Northern Territory and Western Australian Pastoral Inspector for Vesteys (pers. comm. Cec Watts; North Australian Monthly, January 1957: 31, 35). He was caretaker-manager of Wave Hill in 1964 (WHPJ, 22-8-1964; pers. comm. Cec Watts).

**George Schultz.** Manager from when Eric Durack left in 1952 or 1953 to the end of 1954 (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

**Jim Ward.** Head stockman in 1948 and the 1950s under Eric Durack, George Schultz and Fogarty (pers comm., Ray Macnamara). He was assistant head stockman on Wave Hill in 1964 (WHPJ, 3-8-1964). A man of mixed Aboriginal/European parentage, he was born on Argyle and educated by the Duracks (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). He may have been a son of James Webb, aka Ted Whelan or Ted Ward. For additional biographical information on Whelan/Webb/Ward see entry under Rosewood.

**Bob Garteny.** Head stockman in the 1950s (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

**George Nudley ‘Mick’ Fogarty.** Manager from early 1955 to 1960. He took over from George Schultz (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

**Fred Hooper.** Bookkeeper for the AA Co. in 1958 (Auvergne Station Report for January 1958). He was based at Argyle but also did the books for Newry, Auvergne and Ivanhoe (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

**Peter Ogden.** Manager from at least 1960. He began as a jackeroo from New South Wales. He worked with Mick Fogarty from about 1957 until Mick retired in 1960 and then became manager, but he suffered health problems (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty; pers. comm., Andrew Barker). He was still there in May 1961 (Stewart, 5-5-1961). Peter married Pam Kirk in 1958 (Australian Woman’s Weekly, 29-1-1958).

**Alan Peters.** Manager after Ogden and up to December 1967. He came from Mt Isa in Queensland and married Pat Elder, a buckjump rider (pers. commms., Lloyd Fogarty, Ruth Murphy and Patsy Applebee). He was transferred to Headingly, an AA Co. station (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

**Graeme F. Bell.** Manager from December 1967 to April 23rd 1973 (Australian Agricultural Company 148th Director’s Report … 1970; caption for photo in the Frank Johnston collection, NLA; information recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill). Bell was working as a ringer on Rosewood in March 1961 and February 1963, and later worked for Don Hoar at Fitzroy (Stewart, 22-3-1961).

According to Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.), Bell was a jackeroo and then overseer under Alan Peters. He became manager in 1967 after Peters went back to Queensland and was manager in 1972 when Lake Argyle filled more quickly than expected, putting the old
station deep under water. Bell had plenty of warning that the water was rising, but it suddenly rose much more quickly than expected and he ‘got caught with his trousers down’. Divers worked frantically salvaging what they could while the water was rising.

After managing Argyle Bell became manager of Ord River when it was taken over by the Western Australian Agriculture Department as a regeneration area (pers. comm., Patsy Applebee). From Ord River he went to Fitzroy station, Northern Territory, then to Billiluna for eighteen months and then to Lissadell for five years. He later had a piggery and a fuel outlet outside Perth (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). His sister married Dee Bostock who was manager of Rosewood from 1964 to 1973 (see Bostock’s entry under Rosewood).

**Clive Stone.** Manager at the new homestead site at Paddy Yard from April 24th 1973 until April 23rd 1980 when he went to manage Rosewood (pers. comm., Peter Kemp). For additional biographical details see his entry under Rosewood station.

**Rod McColm.** Manager from 1980 to 2000 and beyond (pers. obs.; pers. comm., Barry Scott). Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm) says McColm took over when Clive Stone went to manage Rosewood in April 1980.

**Emily Anderson (née Bryant).** Manager from May 2016 to 2017. Born in 1988, Emily grew up and was educated at Mitchell and later in Toowoomba, with school holidays spent on properties near Mitchell and Injune. After finishing school she began a nursing degree, but in 2008 at age 20 she took six months off to become a cook on Humbert River station. While there she met her future husband, Henry Anderson, who was a first year jackaroo. She stayed on as station cook for 18 months and then entered the Humbert stock camp. In 2011 Emily and Henry followed the Humbert manager who had been transferred to Newry. Henry was head stockman on Newry but left in 2012 to study for a helicopter licence. Emily took his place as headstockman. In 2014 she became overseer on Argyle and in May 2015 she was made manager. In March 2016 she became manager of Auvergne. All the above information comes from Condon, 18-8-2017 and from the **N.T. News**, 17-7-2016.
Originally taken up in 1881 by the Musgrave Range Pastoral Company. This company never stocked Auvergne and most of their leases were taken over by John Arthur Macartney who stocked the station in 1886. The station was named after the Auvergne district of France which was then, and still is, an important cattle raising area. The earliest mention of the name I’ve discovered is in a report by H.W.H. Stevens reproduced in the ‘Government Resident’s Report on the Northern Territory for the Year 1889’ (Stevens, 1889: 2), so it was probably named by Macartney.

Macartney was born in Ireland in 1834 and arrived in Australia with his family in 1848 (Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 5, 1974: 126-27). In 1857 he formed a partnership with E.G. Mayne and they went land-seeking in Queensland. During these trips Macartney explored much of Queensland and accumulated many stations. In the Northern Territory, Macartney and Mayne owned Florida Station in Arnhem Land. Macartney’s partnership with Mayne was dissolved in 1884, before he took up Auvergne. In 1887 he formed a new partnership, this time with Hugh Louis Herber-Percy, a nephew of the fifth Duke of Northumberland (Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 5, 1974: 126-27). It’s possible that Macartney had made a trip to England and Europe which could have given him knowledge of the Auvergne district of France and led to the naming of Auvergne station. He may have met Herber-Percy on such a trip though Herber-Percy had been to Australia and had visited Florida station (Herber-Percy, 10-12-1887: 2-3).

Some of the cattle sent to stock Auvergne came from Florida Station when that station was closed down. The Government Resident stated in his ‘Half-Yearly Report on the Northern Territory to June 30\textsuperscript{th} 1886’ that, ‘I am informed some of the stock on the run are being transferred to country on the Victoria’ (Parsons, 30-6-1886: 2). According to Rees (1945: 2), the first cattle were taken (from Queensland) to Auvergne by a man...
named Palmer and a second lot were taken (from Florida to Auvergne) by a man named Randell. The above-mentioned Palmer was W.F. Palmer who had a long association with Captain Joe Bradshaw and eventually disappeared on Bradshaw station in 1905 (see entry for Palmer under Bradshaw).

\[ \text{J.A. Macartney (The Pastoral Review, 16-7-1917).} \]

The *Northern Territory Times* of August 28\textsuperscript{th} 1886 reported that:

\[ \text{A herd of 800 head of cattle, for Mr. Macartney, has arrived at the Katherine, and is camped for the present on Maud’s Creek until the rains sets [sic] in, when it is the intention of the drovers to shift the cattle, with some 1800 others, on to the Victoria River.} \]

Whether the drover with these cattle was Palmer is unclear, though this seems likely. In December 1886 the *Northern Territory Times* (11-12-1886) reported that, ‘Mr. Longfield has also arrived [at Katherine] with a herd of horses for the same owner [Macartney], but intended for the Victoria River run’. Palmer definitely took cattle to Auvergne in 1887 as this was reported in the *Northern Territory Times* (23-4-1887).

Florida was effectively abandoned in 1891 and the remaining cattle were moved to Auvergne in the dry season of 1892 by Jack Watson and a party of stockmen. The Florida buildings were pulled down and ‘valuable parts’ and ‘other sundries’ were shipped around to Darwin (*Northern Territory Times* 16-9-1892). Whether these were shipped through to Auvergne is unclear, but this seems likely. The Florida lease was formally abandoned in 1893 (Stott, 4-1-1894: 12).
Macartney died at Ormiston House, Cleveland (Brisbane), in 1917. In the Victoria River district his name is commemorated at Macartney’s Gap, on the Victoria River a few kilometres upstream from the Timber Creek-Victoria River junction. This is the same gap used by Gregory’s party, first on December 12th 1856 on their return from a reconnaissance up the Victoria River, and again on June 21st 1856 on their way overland to Queensland (Gregory, 1981). Reg Durack told me that when the first cattle were brought to stock Auvergne the drover’s took a dray over Macartney’s Gap. The gap is not named on the current 1:100,000 map, but is known to local Aborigines and a few local whites. Aborigines pronounce the name ‘Micardo Gap’. In local Ngaliwuru language the name of the gap area is ‘Kanawunamin’.

The first cattle taken off Auvergne were 128 fats, shifted in 1889 (Stevens, 1889: 2). In March 1897 Auvergne was sold to Francis Connor and Denis Doherty (GRIC, NTAS NTRS F790, A1 item 7524). At this time the station covered more than 3,000,000 acres (Durack, 1983: 5, 63). Connor and Doherty came to the Kimberley with the goldrush of 1886 and established a store in Wyndham, and probably met the Duracks there (The Pastoral Review, 16-11-1935: 1161). Shortly after their purchase Connor and Doherty formed a partnership with the Durack brothers and both soon returned permanently to Fremantle, leaving the management in the hands of the Duracks.

In 1896 the Auvergne manager wrote:

A few years ago when Kimberley broke out men went there from every quarter, and got there either by fair or by foul means; several got there by foul means by coming to this station and stealing from 60 to 100 head of horses. These horses have never been recovered and the scoundrels that took them are still at large. But now Kimberley is supposed to be worked out, Wandi goldfield appears to be the centre of attraction and the return tide is setting in from Kimberley and with it many of these horse-stealing and cattle-killing scoundrels are returning and making for Wandi (Northern Territory Times, 28-6-1896).

He went on to describe a group of such travellers helping themselves to Auvergne cattle en route.

In 1929 F.J.S. Wise spent two weeks with the musterers on Auvergne. He said that:

in a mob of 1000 head gathered after 3 days mustering (more than that number were too wild to hold and broke away) there were 270 unbranded cattle of ages ranging from one month to ten years; there were approximately 100 bulls from 2 to 10 years old never before in a yard. The manager of Auvergne stated to me that thousands of bulls would eventually be shot on adjoining stations in the Territory. These bulls should have been prime bullocks and, as can readily be understood, are a menace to the breeding cattle, heifers often being killed by their maltreatment (Wise, 15-8-1929).

In 1930 Alf Martin voiced the following opinion:

I worked on this place in 1900. We did get some fat bullocks off this place but we were branding just as many calves then as they are branding now. It is country where cattle become very wild and [it is] practically impossible to keep the Run branded
up. In my opinion “Auvergne” has never paid Connor, Doherty and Durack Limited (Martin, 20-1-1930).

In 1947 the homestead was burnt to the ground and nearby Sydney-Williams huts were being used as a temporary homestead (Beckett, 1998: 77).

The firm of Connor, Doherty and Durack (CD&D) held Auvergne until 1950 when they sold it to the Peel River Land and Mineral Company. Under the guidance of Dolph Schmidt, whose family owned Alroy Downs, the Peel River (Australian Agricultural) Company expanded and acquired all shares in CD&D. At that stage Auvergne had 18,000 cattle, 5000 of which were scrub bulls and consequently were shot out (Northern Standard, 21-5-1953; Hoofs & Horns, July, 1953: 49; pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). The AA Co. introduced new blood with stud bulls being trucked to Auvergne from Queensland in 1953 (Hoofs & Horns, September 1953: 50).

During the 1952 drought the waterhole in the East Baines River which the homestead used for water was dry for the first time in living memory. Water had to be obtained from a well sunk in the river bed (Evans, 6-12-1952a).

Water problems in extreme drought conditions would have been solved if the findings of a 1970 CSIRO study had been implemented. The study was of the potential for Ord River-style irrigation and dams in the Victoria River district (Stewart, 1970: 132). One of the proposed dam sites was on Auvergne on the upper East Baines River. Another was on the Victoria River near Timber Creek. Both dams were to be used to irrigate areas of Auvergne. Nothing ever came of this study.

In 1992 multi-millionaire Kerry Packer acquired major shareholdings in the Baines River Cattle Company Pty Ltd, which included Auvergne and Argyle stations (unprovenanced newspaper cutting). The property is still (2017) held by this company.

**Longfield.** First manager according to Buchanan (1933: 110), but this is likely to be incorrect. Buchanan also says that Longfield was the drover who took the first cattle to Auvergne. This is more likely to be correct as Longfield certainly was on Auvergne in December 1886 when he was reported as being on the Katherine River with horses, bound for Victoria River (Northern Territory Times, 11-12-1886). Buchanan (1933: 111) also says that Longfield was replaced by F. Naismith, but there were several other managers who came before Nasmith, so again his information is suspect. In addition, Rees (1945: 2) states that it was Palmer who took the first stock to Auvergne and that Randell took the second lot over.

**Alf Randell.** Manager in 1887 (Herber-Percy, 10-12-1887; Rees, 1945; Mackay Daily Mercury, 16-12-1927; Randell family records). He’s likely to have been the first manager, from 1886. Alf had two brothers, Jimmy and Dick. According to C.E. Gaunt (Northern Standard, 3-7-1934), and the obituary of Jim Randell (Mackay Daily Mercury, 16-12-1927), Alf and Jim took the first cattle to Florida Station on the Goyder River in Arnhem Land, the property of J.A. Macartney (brand M8M; see Hill, 1951: 173). This appears to have been done in 1885 as it was reported that, ‘Mr Macartney has arrived on river Roper with 4,500 head of cattle, for stocking country near Blue Mud Bay’ (Parsons, 30-6-1885: 2). The bulk of these cattle came from Cork station, west of Winton (1250 head), and from Taldara (1200 head). The Randells established a homestead on the Goyder River,
notable features of which were a light swivel cannon mounted on the veranda and an encircling palisade. While Jim stayed on as manager, Alf returned to St. Lawrence in Queensland and then went to manage Auvergne. In 1888 Alf returned to Florida to take over the management from Jim. When Florida was closed down in 1891 he helped take cattle from there to Auvergne. I have no further information on Alf, but it’s known that Jim died at Mackay, Queensland, in 1927 (Mackay Daily Mercury, 16-12-1927).

**Thomas Hardy.** Manager from about June 1888. Hardy had previously been a stockman on Florida station where the blacks were considered so dangerous that the above-mentioned light cannon was kept on the veranda of the ‘high blocked house’ which was surrounded by a palisade (Mackay Daily Mercury, 16-12-1927; Randell family history notes). The Northern Territory Times of October 12th 1887 reported that Hardy and a Chinaman had just arrived at Port Darwin after a month-long overland trip from Florida station. The trip from Florida was 250 miles. One hundred miles from Darwin their three horses gave out so they covered the remaining distance on foot, subsisting on wild plums, roots and yams.

![Tom Hardy’s grave, Auvergne station, 1992 (Lewis collection).](image)

On Florida the manager, Jim Randell, kept the blacks out but Hardy is said to have ‘always been in favour of letting the blacks in, and did so on Auvergne, and within three months he was killed by them’ (Mackay Daily Mercury, 16-12-1927). He was speared on September 9th 1889 (The North Australian, 5-10-1889) and died on September 23rd
(Northern Territory Times, 8-11-1889). He was buried below the east bank of the East Baines River, close to the homestead site.

James ‘Barney’ Flynn. Manager in 1890-91. Like Tom Hardy before him, Flynn had been a stockman at the notoriously dangerous Florida station in Arnhem Land. According to MP Durack, at Auvergne Flynn suffered, ‘a number of extraordinary hallucinations’ among which was that the station was nightly surrounded by wild blacks and that he was doomed to die by a spear. During a visit by MP, ‘About midnight, when all were asleep, he [Flynn] leaped from his bunk and yelling like a maniac ran into the yard where he discharged the contents of his revolver. A most nerve wracking experience’ (Durack, 1974: 318). The only other reference to Flynn being manager at Auvergne comes from notes supplied by historian Cathie Clement (2000) who says that Western Australian police journal entries confirm his position for March 1891. Flynn is listed in the 1891 census as being a stockman on Auvergne, aged 29, and born in New South Wales (NT census, 1891). He is not listed in the 1901 census (pers. comm., Professor John Mulvaney).

Flynn eventually left Auvergne because of his nerves and the bad reputation of the place as regards attacks by blacks. He turned to buffalo shooting and was with Joe Cooper on Melville Island in 1895 when Tiwi warriors killed Joe’s brother, Harry, and speared and wounded Joe (Pye, nd: 27). While Flynn was there when Joe was speared, the time and manner of Harry’s death may be incorrect. Briggs (1990: 62) states that Harry died from illness on Melville Island in 1907.

The great bush balladist, Banjo Patterson, who passed through Darwin in 1898, remembered ‘the giant form of Barney Flynn, the buffalo-shooter, stalking emu-like through the dwarfish crowd of Japs and Manila men’ (Northern Territory Times, 20-1-1899). The famous buffalo hunter, Paddy Cahill, told of an occasion when “Barny” Flynn wounded a bull buffalo. The infuriated beast then became the pursuer, and catching up to his quarry put his horns between the horses hind legs and turned horse and man a complete somersault’ (Northern Territory Times, 24-2-1899).

Mary Durack (1974: 318) says that Flynn went to Arnhem Land buffalo shooting and was speared while asleep. Walter Rees (1945: 3) also states that Barney Flynn was a manager of Auvergne but claims he later drowned in the Alligator River. The facts are otherwise. The Northern Territory Times records that Flynn died in Arnhem Land on January 26th 1903. The account below describes how:

Flynn aroused the natives at his camp by declaring that there was a snake in his bed, and calling to them to bring a light. This was done, and in the course of the search the hut was set afire. Afterwards deceased vomited considerably and the next morning died, so that it would appear as if he had been bitten by the snake he reported as in his bed.

The paper mentioned that Flynn had been resident in the Territory about fifteen years and for most of that time had been a buffalo shooter. He was about fifty years of age and was thought to have come from the Goulburn district, NSW (Northern Territory Times, 13-2-1903). His age was actually about 43 because in the 1891 census he said he was 29 years old (NT census, 1891).
Billy Linklater attributed Flynn’s death to snake bite and says that he was very highly regarded by his Aboriginal employees. When his ‘blackboys’ buried him they placed an ironwood post at each end of the grave, five foot ironwood stakes all round, and cleared the earth away for a radius of fifteen feet to act as a firebreak. Later a cross was taken to mark his grave and erected in a cairn of stones (Linklater and Tapp, 1997: 50).

In 1898 Flynn had a camp by the side of a small granite hill about eight or ten kilometres north, northeast of present day Oenpelli (Northern Territory Times, 9-12-1898) and it may be that this is where he died. The Government Resident’s Inwards Correspondence refers to Flynn’s ‘Yerowie Station’ being stocked by December 2nd 1901 (GRIC, NTAS NTRS F790, A1 item 14849). This may be the block Flynn had near Oenpelli.

One last account comes from Carl Warburton’s book Buffaloes. According to Warburton (1944: 31, 36), who was in the region in 1920-21:

Flynn was an old prospector who had met a tragic death some years before. He had apparently been making his way back to Mount Wells when he was bitten by a snake. He knew he was beyond help and dying, and had scribbled his last farewell to the world on a scrap of paper which was found in a tin by the grave, which it was thought the blacks had dug for him.

Warburton goes on (p. 36) to describe the grave as having a small wooden cross which had been partly burnt away, and scrub growing on the cairn. If the grave did have a cairn as both Warburton and Linklater state, this could help in relocating it.

**Samuel Burns ‘Greenhide Sam’ Croker.** Acting manager in 1892 while manager Watson was away. Unless otherwise stated the following is based on a *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography* entry (Lewis, 1996a: 58-61). Gordon Buchanan (1933: 142) described Croker as:

Fair, of medium height and wiry build ... a natural backwoodsman, hardy and accustomed to hunt for and live on "bush tucker" of all kinds, from dingo and snakes to barramundi and wild duck ... Though not a good tracker, he had all the other bushcraft of the aborigine ... Not a great stockman or horseman ... yet he was equal to any bush emergency ... Never enthusiastic, yet never downhearted, he was generally cheerfully imperturbable, with a tendency to romance, and to chaff and banter.

Born on June 20th, 1852, at Dungowan Station near Tamworth in New South Wales, his childhood was spent at Cundletown (near Taree) and Dykehead station in the Burnett district of Queensland. In 1876 he was a member of W.O. Hodgkinson’s North West Exploring Expedition and it was on this expedition that he first met Nat ‘Bluey’ Buchanan, with whom he retained a close association until his death. In 1877 Croker, Buchanan and Tetley became the first Europeans to cross the central Barkly Tableland (*Queenslander*, 29-6-1878).

The following year (1878) he met Buchanan again at the Elsey. Bluey was at this time bringing a mob of cattle from Queensland to Glencoe; the cattle were on the Limmen River and Bluey had gone ahead to get much needed supplies at the Katherine. Croker offered to go with Bluey to the Limmen to help bring the cattle the rest of the way. When they reached the herd they found that while Bluey was away, one of the stockmen,
Travers, had been murdered by Aborigines and Sam joined Bluey and his men in their retaliation against the blacks (Buchanan, 1997: 59-61).

In 1880 he was with the party that explored what later became Delamere station and in 1881 he was with Buchanan again, this time on the big cattle drive of 20,000 head from Queensland to the Territory to stock Fisher and Lyons’ leases (Buchanan, 1997: 69-75).

From the beginning of 1882 he worked as a stockman on Elsey station. He was there when another Elsey stockman, Duncan Campbell, was murdered by his Aboriginal station hands (Queensland blacks) and Croker assisted the police party that went out to bury Campbell’s remains and to arrest the murderers (Giles, nd.: 174; Northern Territory Times, 7-10-1882; Lucanus, Daily News [Perth], 21-8-1929: 6).

On March 29th 1883 he passed Springvale with 400 heifers to stock Wave Hill but it was months afterward before he reached his destination, being held up for want of feed and water (‘HTH’, The Pastoralists’ Review, 15-3-1906: 40). In June 1883 he was reported as having a camp on Scotts Creek, probably holding the Wave Hill cattle there until rainfall made the remainder of the journey possible. After arriving at Wave Hill he stayed on to become the first manager.

In 1885 he rescued two of the survivors of Harry Stockdale’s land-seeking expedition to Ord River. According to the journal kept by expedition member James Ricketson, Stockdale was the leader of a party that explored the east Kimberley and Ord country late in 1884. The expedition members were Harry V. Stockdale, P. Mulcahy, Richard B. Pitt, Carl Bottmer (a German), John D. McIllree, G. Ashton and Ricketson (Ricketson, nd.). While heading eastwards and still sixty miles west of the Ord, Mulcahy and Ashton asked permission to remain behind, saying they would spell a week and then follow the other members’ tracks. They couldn’t be talked out of it so Stockdale gave them a supply of rations and ammunition and left them behind. He later voiced the suspicion that they ‘had some idea of finding gold (Northern Territory Times, 24-1-1885: 2).

Some time after leaving these men, Stockdale and Ricketson travelled ahead of the remainder of the party. Their intention was to secure help at the newly established Ord River station. However, they understood that the Ord was a mile wide where they expected to meet it. As a result, when they reached the Ord they didn’t recognise it and continued eastwards. By the time they realised their mistake they were too far east to consider returning and instead pushed on. On New Years Day, by absolute chance, they stumbled upon the recently established Victoria River Downs station homestead where they received full assistance.

When they finally arrived at Springvale they contacted Ernest Favenc and tried to negotiate a deal for him to go out and look for the remaining expedition members. After a week they still hadn’t agreed on terms so Stockdale and Ricketson decided to follow Croker, who had passed Springvale on his way to Wave Hill, and ask him to search for the missing men. They offered Croker £125 to do this and he accepted.

Eventually Bottmer and Pitt (who was by this time insane and suffering from dysentery) stumbled upon Wave Hill homestead and were assisted by Croker. Bottmer told Croker that M’illree, the expedition surveyor, had died of exhaustion and had been buried at the foot of a tree marked ‘HS 86’ (Pitt, cited in Ricketson’s journal, p. 314). Croker travelled
as far as the Ord River in search of Mulcahy and Ashton, but the river was in high flood so he could go no further. No trace was ever found of these men. Stockdale’s initial report of this expedition indicated it was a success, but as more details emerged there were calls for an official inquiry into this ‘suspicious looking matter’ (Northern Territory Times, 24-1-1885, 7-2-1885, 7-3-1885, 28-3-1885). No evidence has been found that any such inquiry took place.

In 1886, assisted by Aborigines familiar with the country, Croker tracked ninety head of strayed Wave Hill cattle southeast across the desert to Tennant Creek. After locating these and gathering together other Wave Hill cattle from various Barkly tableland stations, he started back for Wave Hill by the conventional route along the overland telegraph line. On the way he fell in with his boss, Bluey Buchanan, who was bringing a mob of 160 horses and cattle from Queensland to Wave Hill. Combining forces they decided to attempt to find a shortcut from Newcastle Waters to Wave Hill. With the aid of local Aborigines they were successful and thus pioneered the famous Murranji track. Much later in 1886 Croker was reported to be in charge of a mob of 300 cattle Nat Buchanan was taking to stock country east of Sturt Creek (Northern Territory Times, 27-11-1886).

Shortly after first arriving on Wave Hill, Croker is said to have shot an Aboriginal who was swimming the river after a raid on the station. The Wave Hill men believed the victim was a ‘half caste’ more than thirty years of age, which put his birth date before European settlement. This led Croker and others to surmise the dead man’s father might have been a member of Leichhardt’s 1848 expedition, but no further evidence came to light (Buchanan, 1997: 105; also see Flinders, 2016: 81 for a similar account).

In 1887 Tom Cahill and Wattie Gordon took 200 head of Wave Hill fat cattle to the Halls Creek goldfields. They made a bough shed in which Sam Croker slaughtered the cattle for sale to the miners (SMH, 19-2-1921). In January 1888 he travelled from Katherine to Daly Waters with D. Kelsey, though for what purpose is unknown (Kelsey, 1975: 83). By February Croker was back on the goldfield, probably supplying more meat to the miners, and was there again, or still there, in June 1888 (Halls Creek Police Occurrence Book, entries for 26-2-1888 and 22-6-1888). He was still on Wave Hill in 1889, but was listed in the 1891 Northern Territory census as residing at Victoria River Downs (NT census for 1891). This is confirmed in VRD staff records for March 1891 which lists SB Croker as a stockman (Stevens, 17-3-1891).

By September 1892 he was acting manager of Auvergne while manager John Watson was away (Northern Territory Times, 7-10-1892). One night a few weeks after he arrived on Auvergne, Croker was playing cards with Jock McPhee and a ‘half caste’, Charlie Flannigan, alias Charlie McManus. An argument developed during the game and Flannigan shot Croker dead. Flannigan then fled to Ord River station, but was eventually arrested and taken to stand trial in Darwin. He was convicted of Croker’s murder and executed at Fannie Bay, the first man to be hanged in the Northern Territory (Northern Territory Times, 7-10-1892; Waters, 30-1-1913). According to ‘Culkah’ (The Pastoral Review, 16-11-1951: 1253), Flannigan was, ‘A cool customer. It is said of him that he told the hangman how to make and adjust the knot.’

Under the pen name of ‘Greenhide’ or ‘Greenhide Sam’, Croker wrote articles for The Queenslander and is said to have also written for the North Queensland Herald. His name is commemorated at Croker’s Rockhole and Croker Creek on Wave Hill station, and
Croker’s Hill near Kathleen Falls on the Flora River. There was also a place on Delamere called ‘Sam’s Lookout’ which may have been named after him (Kintore, 1891: 29). His name was given to a creek on the Barkly Tableland when he and Buchanan made the first crossing, but this placename doesn’t appear to have survived.

John ‘Jack’ or ‘Long Jack’ Watson (‘The Gulf Hero’). Manager in September-October 1892 (Northern Territory Times, 7-10-1892), June 1894 (TCPJ, 18-6-1894), and probably until January 1895. Watson was born in Melbourne on either the 3rd or the 13th of March, 1852. His father was George Watson who for many years was the master of the Melbourne Hunt Club and also the Starter at Flemington Racecourse (Moore, 1996: 3-8; unprovenanced newspaper cuttings, Watson family papers).

Jack Watson was the eldest of nine sons, but virtually nothing is known of his childhood and young adulthood, and there are few contemporary records which deal with him in any way. Among those that do are police journal entries, Mounted Constable Willshire’s correspondence and his book, Land of the Dawning (1896a), Emily Creahé’s diary, and papers held by descendants of Jack’s brother, Bob. Other records were written many years later by those who knew him, or those who were told of him by his contemporaries. These sources include Gordon Buchanan’s Packhorse and Waterhole (1933), Ernestine Hill’s The Territory (1951), and the reminiscences of C.E. Gaunt in the Northern Standard (3-7-1934: 4). Most describe his sinister and cruel treatment of the wild blacks, and his wild exploits which some people thought verged on madness. Many of these stories are reproduced here.

Before he ever arrived in the North he was known for mad stunts. Frances Graham, whose father was a cousin to the Watson brothers, put some of the family traditions concerning Jack into a letter she wrote to Jack’s niece, Jan Cruickshank (Watson family papers). According to what her father told her, Jack was:

the wildest of the Watson boys and they always knew something awful would happen to him eventually … at one time he was at a picnic at the Gap in Sydney. He decided to liven up a rather dull outing so stood on his head at the top of the cliff facing the ocean. I believe pandemonium took place with women fainting etc. At another time he decided to travel the world. Of course he had little money but that didn’t worry him. However, to continue with my tale – Jack was on his way to China, when a Chinese fell overboard. Jack dived in after him and saved him from drowning. Eventually they arrived in China and The Powers That Be gave him a medal for bravery which he tucked in his pocket saying it would be good for a few bob when he was broke. Another tale my father told me happened when Jack was very broke and he found himself in Canada and had to earn a crust. To keep going he took a job teaching the lumberjack’s children at a makeshift school. The lumberjacks were very poor and used to pay him with what they could afford – very often food etc. However, when one child brought his father’s trousers as his pay, it was too much for Jack so he up and left. You will be interested to know that I have Jack’s army chest which he took with him on his travels. … It was Cousin Nell’s before as it belonged to her mother who was at one time in love with Jack. The affair came to nothing as he was much too wild for any woman to settle down with and she ended up marrying his brother.
George (which wasn’t as happy as it could have been because we think she still loved Jack, for all his wildness).

By 1883 Jack was in the Gulf Country, managing Lawn Hill station; possibly he was a partner with Frank Hann (Creaghe, 8-2-1883; Gaunt, *Northern Standard*, 6-7-1934). Watson was in charge of the second mob of cattle to stock Amos and Broad’s McArthur River station in the Queensland Gulf country (*Northern Standard*, 13-10-1931; Buchanan, 1933: 75).

A letter cited in the Government Resident’s ‘Half-Yearly Report on the Northern Territory to December 1886’ (Little, cited in Parsons, 1887: 2) mentions a J. Watson in charge of ‘500 fats and stores … for southern markets, North Australian Pastoral company owners, Alexandra station’. Because of his wild exploits in the Gulf region, Watson
became known as ‘The Gulf Hero’ or ‘The Gulf King’ (*The Pastoralists’ Review*, 15-8-1912: 594). I suspect that the name ‘Gulf Hero’ may have been sarcastic and applied by those who thought he was mad or a terrific show-off. Another source suggests that Watson was known in Queensland as ‘Mad Jack’ and says he worked for William Hann on Maryvale before going to work for Frank Hann at Lawn Hill. Watson was present when William Hann drowned (pers. comm., Tony Roberts).

One of Watson’s contemporaries in the Gulf country, C.E. Gaunt (*Northern Standard*, 6-7-1934), tells the following stories about Watson:

After the Randalls left [Florida station] Jack Watson “The Gulf hero,” as he was known to old timers, took charge and became manager. … Jack Watson came from an old Victorian family, his father, George Watson, being the popular starter in the Melbourne Cup for many years. … Jack was a wild reckless fellow—would charge hell with a bucket of water. A splendid athlete and boxer, and a terror on the blacks. Like Nat Buchanan and a few other old pioneers, he strictly refrained from intercourse with lubras. He would not have them around him. In the camp, and on the station they were strictly debarred, and he used his fists on any white stockman who harboured lubras on the station. He stood six feet one inch, and most men were careful not to cross the “Gulf Hero.” One incident occurred which is worth relating. When I was with Charlie Willis bringing out a mob of cattle to the Macarthur, the blacks were troublesome on the trail and one night we camped on Skeleton Creek, between the Macarthur River and Settlement Creek. That night the blacks attacked the camp, stampeded the cattle and drove some of our hoppled horses off. No one was speared. Next day whilst some went after the cattle, Carl Hansen and I went to muster the horses. On mustering we found three horses speared to death and one badly wounded, which we shot. Next day we met Jack Watson, who was returning to Lawn Hill after delivering a mob to the Macarthur. There were himself and four first lcass [sic] black boys. We told him what happened. “Leave them to me,” said Jack. “I’ll stir the possum in them when I get to Skeleton Creek,” and he did. Spending two weeks on the creek he tracked and hunted those niggers shooting them down as he came up with them until there was not a black on the creek. He was merciless and spared none. To return to Florida, when managing that place when the abos. stepped over the line, Watson threw lead at them, and threw it to kill. He had the blacks good hombres, but he had to wipe out a lot to make them so. … Eventually Florida Station was abandoned, the chief cause being the loss of stock by blacks. This was after Watson left.

Emily Creaghe, who was in the Lawn Hill region in 1883 when Watson was manager there, wrote in her diary that, ‘Mr Watson has 40 prs of black’s ears nailed round the walls, collected during raiding parties after the loss of many cattle speared by the blacks.’ (Creaghe, 2004: 26). It doesn’t appear that Emily saw the ears herself – she was at a neighbouring station and was told about the ears by Bob Shadforth, who’d just returned from Lawn Hill – but their existence would fit the pattern of Watson’s behaviour. A few days later Emily wrote that, ‘The blacks are particularly aggressive in this district.’

Ernestine Hill (1951: 232), who spoke with many old-timers in the early 1930s, recounts another story of Watson’s ‘efficiency’ in dealing with wild blacks:
There is a story—I do not like to believe it true—that hearing of a Burketown station pestered by cattle-killers, he promised to set the matter right. Riding back in a week he threw eleven skulls on the table with a jaunty “There you are! No more trouble out there!”

The first manager of the Macartney and Mayne property, Florida, in central Arnhem Land, was Alf Randell. When Alf left the station, presumably in 1886, Watson took over there (Northern Standard, 6-7-1934). In 1891 Florida was abandoned and Watson led the party of stockmen that brought the Florida cattle to Auvergne. Whether any of these cattle reached Auvergne in 1891 is unclear, but Watson himself was definitely on Auvergne early that year. In a letter Watson wrote to his brother Ned in San Francisco in July 1891 (Watson, 20-7-1891, Watson family papers), he mentioned that he had just come from Victoria River and was returning to Florida, but that he would be returning to the Victoria to live. Part of this letter provides some insight into the man and his times, and is reproduced here:

I got here [Katherine] today on my way to Florida from the Victoria River 600 miles of a ride ... I am making a bee line and so far have got on all right though the general impression was that I would not get water on the route but as I only had a useless brute of a nigger I did not care for it is cool weather and I can go days without a drink and I did not mind if the nigger perished ... from here to Florida is only 400 miles if I can go straight ... no one has been across yet one man tried [and] perished all his horses and returned on foot unless I get blocked in the first hundred miles by mountains I’ll get through all right. the [sic] inspector of police for the Territory is here and thinks I am mad ... he wants me to take a trooper and two trackers with me ... I told him Police horses could not live with mine & I only carried tea sugar flour & a rifle and did not always get game [so] as the police man would probaly [sic] Knock up so I would be better with out [him].

The Florida buildings were pulled down and materials worth saving were shipped around to Darwin. Whether these were then shipped through to Auvergne is unknown, but this seems likely (Northern Territory Times, 16-9-1892).

In September 1892 Watson took another mob of Florida cattle to Auvergne (Northern Territory Times, 3-4-1896). He must have left the station almost immediately because he was not at Auvergne on September 20th when Sam Croker was murdered (Northern Territory Times, 7-10-1892; see entry for Croker, above). Apparently Watson was manager of Auvergne for several years after Croker’s murder. Then in March 1895 he took over management of Victoria River Downs where he remained until his death in April 1896.

Watson is mentioned in a letter the local policeman, W.H. Willshire, wrote in response to a request for information about an Aboriginal named Pompey.

In reference to your "memo" enquiring about one "Pompey" aboriginal; I have the honour to state that three natives by that name came to their death in my time in the far north 1st for cattle stealing on "Annas Reservoir" in the vicinity of Central Mount Stuart one big strapping young nigger whilst being rounded up by M.C. Wurmbrand 6
black Trackers & myself was shot dead just the minute after he drove a spear through a horse ridden by Fred Godler, his name was Pompey
2nd A Blackfellow named Pompey was shot on Tennants & Loves "Undoolya" in 1884 by the Native Police under my charge, this native had killed a little civilized blackboy belonging to James Woodforde now at Alice Springs
3rd On the Victoria River Downs in February 1895 two civilized blackboys named "pompey" and Gordon Creek "Jimmy" ran away from the cattle station with firearms and joined the wild natives 4 miles from my hut, in three days the wild niggers killed them both, I went out and got on the natives & recovered the firearms, some few months after when the bodies of Pompey and Jimmy had sufficiently dried I went out and brought both their skulls [sic] in and buried them in my garden at Gordon Creek, as the late John Watson manager for Goldsborough Mort & Co, stated that he wanted Pompeys skull for a spittoon (Willshire, 4-12-1896).

This incident suggests that the story told by Ernestine Hill about Watson bringing in Aboriginal skulls may have some basis in fact. Watson soon fell out with Constable Willshire, accusing him of 'cohabiting with a child of the tribe about fourteen years of age or less she now has a child by him.' (Watson, 5-12-1895). Willshire in turn accused Watson of bad management, saying that:

Since Watson came on the run the whole place has been in a state of fermentation, what blackboys and lubras Mr Crawford left behind have all run away since. Watson has such a bad name amongst blacks that they are frightened to remain, nearly every white man has left, and there will not be a single person left who knows the run (GCPJ, 18-3-1895, 8-7-1895; Willshire, 1896a: 38).

According to Gordon Buchanan (1933: 149-50) the ‘Gulf Hero’ continued his wild ways while on the Victoria. For instance, on the crocodile infested lower Victoria River he dived into the river to retrieve Lindsay Crawford’s hat. Later he took a knife and swam towards a crocodile with the intention of stabbing it – they both got away unscathed. He also liked to jump his horse over a thirty foot bank into the Victoria River at the Wickham junction, and to shoot at jam tins balanced on a 'stockboy’s' head. In a later manuscript Buchanan (1941: 138-39) says that Watson kidnapped an eight year old Aboriginal boy from between Monmoona waterhole and Newcastle Waters, and sent him to H.W.H. Stevens (Goldsborough Mort’s General Manager) in Darwin.

Shortly after Watson arrived on VRD one of Willshire’s trackers (the man “Pompey” mentioned above) and three station Aborigines cleared into the bush with firearms. For a time the district was in ferment with the whites fearful that these ‘boys’ would lead the bush blacks against them as the Aboriginal outlaw, Pigeon, was doing in the Kimberley. However, two of the station boys were murdered by the wild blacks for having helped the whites and the other runaways gave themselves up (GCPJ 18th to 27th March, 1895).

In May 1895 Aborigines attacked teamsters Mulligan and Ligar who were bringing two wagon loads of stores through Jasper Gorge. Badly wounded and besieged for several days, the teamsters finally escaped to Auvergne, leaving the wagons to be looted by the Aborigines. When by chance M.C. Willshire turned up Watson was notified, and after helping retrieve goods dropped by the Aborigines when Wissshire arrived, he led a ‘punitive expedition’ of eighteen men into the Stokes Range. One claim is that sixty Aborigines were shot at this time (see entries for Mulligan and Ligar in the VRD section).
When Watson returned from the ranges he brought three Aboriginal women to Mounted Constable Willshire who later claimed that one had a broken arm, another was covered with wales and stripe-like marks extending around her sides and the third had swollen breasts and was losing milk. What had happened to her child was unknown, but in any case, the women escaped or were let loose that night (Willshire, 1896a: 75-76; GCPJ, 29-5-1895, 31-5-1895).

There is a source which credits Watson and the previous VRD manager, Crawford, with making ‘it possible for white men to travel in most parts of the empty north without fear of being murdered to make a myall’s holiday’ (North Queensland Herald, 20-5-1911).

As well as his wild exploits and harshness towards the Aborigines, Watson was inclined to be ‘flash’ or eccentric in his dress. Referring to Watson, in 1896 Mounted Constable Willshire wrote, ‘Just fancy meeting in the bush wilderness a fashionable amateur with Mexican spurs and a footballer’s jersey on’ (Willshire, 1896a: 76). Although Willshire was an enemy of Watson this is undoubtedly an accurate description because in 1891 Watson made the following request of his brother Ned, who was in San Francisco: ‘I want you to get me from Frisco the biggest pair of Mexican spurs that, Frisco can produce and a smaller pair’ (Watson, 20-7-1891, Watson family papers).

On April 1st 1896, Watson and George Ligar were crossing some packs over the Katherine River in a boat. After several trips, Watson decided to swim back to the township side. He disappeared mid-stream and was not seen again (Northern Territory Times, 3-4-1896).

An obituary published in the Northern Territory Times confirms many of the statements made about Watson and provides a fuller picture of his character. However, it should be borne in mind that obituaries seek to paint the most favourable image possible of the deceased and at the time this one was written euphemisms were used to cover negative characteristics; it’s not difficult to read between the lines:

In matters of honour he was as straight as a gun-barrel and in acts of generosity there are few amongst us who had a better right than he to be called liberal-spirited. The family predilection for all forms of sport was strong within him, and appeals for monetary help were never made in vain. In his younger days he was a fearless and clever horseman, like the rest of the Watsons. He was regarded besides as a thoroughly reliable judge of a horse, and of cattle, and a man in fact who knew as much as about stock and station management as the average run of authorities. His experiences here were not of the most cheerful kind in the line of station managing. He was for some years in command of runs for Mr. Macartney, part of the time endeavouring against ruinous natural conditions to make a success of the Florida station at the Goyder, and afterwards at the much more accessible and in other respects more promising Auvergne station in the Victoria district. After abandoning the management of Auvergne, Mr. Watson proceeded south for a change, but returned shortly afterwards as manager of Goldsbrough Mort and Co’s. Victoria Downs station, which position he conducted with much ability up to the time of his death. Watson had a great deal of the dare-devil in him, which may or may not deserve the name of pluck. Many who knew his peculiarities looked upon him as foolhardy and inclined to be sensational for the mere pleasure of shining above his fellows; but there were others who never flinched from their belief that his
"eccentricities," as they were sometimes styled were the outcome of an inherent courageous nature. A death by drowning was the least likely of all in one sense for a swimmer who had braved innumerable dangers in the water, yet in another respect it was perhaps the most likely: for it seems his too absolute belief in his ability to overcome all difficulties eventually led to his end. Years ago, when Jack Watson was sailoring, and one of the ship hands had fallen overboard, and was in danger of being killed by a shark, he plunged into the water, ripped up the shark, and saved the man. In later years, off the Queensland coast, one of the passengers fell overboard and was hardly in sight when the fact was discovered; Watson without hesitation jumped over and swam out to him, supporting him until they were picked up. Deeds like these are not as a rule undertaken for mere purposes of parade. Deceased had not the slightest fear of sharks or alligators. Repeatedly he has been know [sic] to jump into rivers for the fun of scaring off the alligators that appeared to be waiting for him. He thought no more of that than another person might of taking his morning bath in a tub. He would dive almost into an alligator’s mouth for the humour of astonishing it. In the same way his dealings with unfriendly blacks—and he had ample opportunity for coming in contact with them, were always guided by a spirit of daring amounting almost to recklessness. He claimed that he never carried a firearm when in the bush, but there was sometimes a significance in the boast that led one to conclude that firearms are not the only weapons of warfare. He had "brushes" innumerable with marauding natives, but so far as we know never got a scratch himself, while the natives more than once received terribly severe lessons, the punishment in one case at least being tended to in a manner that was much talked of in the Gulf country before Mr. Watson came over here. His ideas of revenge for murders or station depredations committed by the blacks were scarcely orthodox, but they were generally up to requirements. He claimed to be a fatalist and like all others of that faith he believed that when his time had come he would be "rubbed out," but not before, This may perhaps have inspired the performance of foolish acts which the bulk of mankind regard as little better than the acts of a lunatic. Whatever his faith may have been, the deceased, in his associations with other men, was a thorough "rough diamond"—painfully wild at times, but never wanting in generosity, kindness of heart, and bravery, three manly attributes which, to use an old quotation, "cover a multitude of sins."

In his book, In Australian Tropics, Alfred Searcy (1909: 174-75) tells of a man who:

boasted to me that he never carried a revolver. He said he did all the punishment he wanted with a stock-whip and a wire-cracker. ‘When I want to be particularly severe,’ he remarked, ‘I cut the top off a sapling and sharpen the remaining stump, bend it down, and drive it through the palms of both hands of the nigger.’ That seemed awfully brutal to me, but that man assured me on his oath that he did it. I wonder whether the cruelty he practiced ever came back to him in his struggle for life in the river—he was drowned in the Katherine.

Searcy doesn’t identify this man, but in light of what is known from the various sources cited above, it seems quite likely that it was Jack Watson.

Patrick Kinchela White. Manager in 1895 and part of 1896. He probably took over early in 1895 when Jack Watson left to take over Victoria River Downs after Lindsay Crawford resigned. According to an item in the Northern Territory Times, White was replaced by
F. Nasmith in about February 1895 (Northern Territory Times, 14-2-1895). However, White was still manager of Auvergne in April 1895 when the Norwegian zoologist Knut Dahl visited the station (Dahl, 1926: 191) and in May 1895 when Mulligan and Ligar arrived there after the siege at Jasper Gorge (see entry for these men under VRD; Northern Territory Times, 28-6-1895). It may be that Naismith was a general manager for Macartney, rather than actual manager of the station, or the Northern Territory Times got the story back to front.

John Kyle-Little, a correspondent with The Pastoral Review who wrote under the pen name of ‘Culkah’, claimed that in 1896 he travelled by lugger to Auvergne, in company of a bank representative who was to take over Auvergne from White. This was accomplished around the same time that Jack Watson drowned in the Katherine River on April 1st (The Pastoral Review, 16-11-1951: 1253; Northern Territory Times, 3-4-1896). By the time that Frank Hann passed through Auvergne on June 13th 1896 there is no mention of White, and Nasmith appears to have been manager (Donaldson and Elliot, 1998: 22).

‘Culkah’ (Kyle-Little) described White as ‘a very old Barkly Tableland pioneer’ (The Pastoral Review, 16-11-1951: 1253). In 1878 White was manager of Diamantina Gates, another property owned by Macartney, this one in partnership with Mayne (Mackay Daily Mercury, 16-12-1927: 3). He is also said to have been on Headingly station at much the same time (Graziers’ Review, 16-6-1924: 257). A ‘PK White’ is listed in the 1901 census as manager of Hodgson Downs (NT census for 1901), but an obituary for him was published late in 1899 (Prahran Telegraph, 11-11-1899). It’s likely that the information for the census was collected shortly before White died. The census listing White states that he was born in NSW and gives his age in 1901 as 52, so he would have been born around 1849. Unfortunately Gunn did not specify where White died – whether on Hodgson Downs or elsewhere.

In the obituary Gunn wrote he described White as:

An old northern friend of mine, Mr. Patrick White, of Auvergne station, best of good fellows, worshipper of Epicurus and devout disciple of his prophet, Brillat-Savarin [one of the first people to write a book on food and taste, in the 18th century], was banished by a harsh decree of fate from the pleasant Parisian boulevards, and still more agreeable provincial auberges of France, where he had lived in early youth the life of an epicure, to a hard existence on an Australian never-never land station. But out of evil cometh good, and he bought to the heathen squatters the evangel of a new gospel. He found the Australian settler a gross barbarian, whose gastronomic creed embraced but three tenets—damper and beef and tea for dinner, and tea and beef and damper for supper—and he began a propaganda for the regeneration of the station bill of fare. He ridiculed the questionable accomplishments of a Macartney, a Buchanan and a Watson, who would start on a long journey with barely sufficient food in their pack bags to [line missing] trust in Providence and their Winchesters. He probably underestimated the value of the bushcraft which could tell precisely what brand of iguana was warranted genuine and innocent of deleterious ingredients, just how long an alligator steak ought to grill on the coals, and at what particular stage a boab nut was done to a turn, but was quite orthodox in declaring that “to deliberately live up to one’s knowledge on these points, was to live life low down.” And he scathed [sic] the parsimonious economy of the "hungry" Westralian
station owners which made "lizarding" a still necessary and useful accomplishment in the equipment of a "sand groping" stockman. The chief articles of his gastronomic creed, and he was never tired of proclaiming them, were that the cook was the best man on the station, and that, though an incomparable gastronomic artist, who could make meals out of nothing, like the one immortalised by Brunton Stephens, might occasionally be found, he must have the requisite articles for a good dinner close to hand, or the settler would find his "eucalyptic [sic] cloisterdom anything but gay." Poor old Pat White, now, I hope, walking the shades with his beloved Brillat-Savarin, based the whole of his station economics on his creed, and he lived long enough amidst the austere conditions of back country settlement to make his influence felt, and to see his system prevail. The old hard days of "hungry" squatters and overlanders have happily gone out for ever, and the station hand, tired, weary and worn, jogs home from his hard day’s work under a pitiless sun with the blessed assurance that he will get a nutritious meal that will go some way towards restoring his impaired vitality. He may still have to resort to damper and beef, and milkless tea, when away out on his limitless run mustering or stock keeping, but he will have in his "tucker bags", to assist digestion, a tin or two of the best Adelaide jam, and a few bottles of the invaluable Lea and Perrin. His flour will be of the best, his damper or Johnnie cakes will be lightened and sweetened with baking powder, his tea will be eighteenpenny, his sugar as white as snow, and if his fishing line or his gun have secured him a bream or a turkey, he will sit down to his evening meal, while a short tropical twilight is painting the rapidly falling curtain of the night with opaline fringes, with a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure that a prince sated with the best of living might well envy.

The Brunton Stephens mentioned above was a well-known poet and novelist in 19th century Australia. One of his poems was ‘My other Chinee Cook which tells the story of the regularly served ‘rabbit pie’ made a Chinese station cook actually being made with puppies (www.middlemiss.org/lit/poetry/other_chinee_cook.html).

F. Nasmith. Manager (?) from 1895 to 1897. He was reported in the Northern Territory Times of February 14th 1895 to have arrived in Darwin from Undilla, Queensland, on his way to replace Patrick White. However, White was still on Auvergne in May when Mulligan and Ligar arrived there (Northern Territory Times, 28-6-1895), and may have been there until March 1896 (The Pastoral Review, 16-11-1951: 1253). White probably stayed on the station until Nasmith became familiar with the run, although he seems to have been there an excessively long time for this.

Nasmith was on Auvergne until at least June 1897 when he was reported to be on the boat ‘Wunwulla’, with Desmond, on his way to Darwin (Log Book of Bradshaws Run; see TCPJ, 21-1-1897 and Northern Territory Times, 1-1-1897). His name is commemorated at Nasmith’s Lagoon on Auvergne station. On the Retribution Camp Boab on Retribution Creek, Auvergne station, there is the inscription ‘Nasmith on his last legs’, probably an ‘in’ joke (see Lewis, 1993: 41).

According to Reg Durack, Retribution Spring is located in the ranges further upstream from this bottle tree. He assumed it was named from retribution taken against the bush blacks for some unknown incident. It’s possible that this might have been the spearing of ‘Big Johnny’ Durack near the eastern border of Rosewood in 1886, after which there was the usual ‘punitive expedition’ (Durack, 1974: 284-86) and the blacks are said to have
met their Waterloo (Pollard, 1970: 30). Another possibility is the spearing of Constable Collins on the eastern side of Rosewood in 1893 when again there were follow-up reprisal raids (Northern Territory Times, 10-11-1893; see entry for Rosewood).

The inscription on the Retribution Camp boab in 2000 (Lewis collection).

In some documents the name is spelled ‘Naismith’ (Buchanan, 1933: 11) and in another ‘Nasmyth’ (The Morning Bulletin [Rockhampton], 7-4-1905). Buchanan (1933: 110-111) states that a man named Longfield took the first cattle to Auvergne for Macartney and stayed on as first manager. He says Longfield eventually handed over to ‘Naismith’, but I’ve found no supporting documentation for this. In the Northern Territory Times of November 24th 1899 it was, ‘Rumoured that the manager of Austral Downs is about to take his departure from the Tablelands district for south ... and that Mr. Nasmith, an old Territorian, will take his place’. Where Nasmith had been since leaving Auvergne is unknown. In 1901 in a letter to the Government Resident, ‘Grant Nasmith’ is said to be manager of Austral Downs (GRIC, NTAS NTRS F790, item 10916).

J.H. Desmond. General manager by January 1897 (GCPJ 18-1-1897, 24-1-1897) and still there in November 1898 (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1897-1899, entry for 29-11-1898). In June 1897 he was heading for Darwin with Nasmith on the Wunwulla (Log Book of Bradshaws Run). On September 13th 1897 he was reported as ‘Overlander Mr. Desmond from Auvergne Station with horse and pack — arrived Wyndham and departed for Auvergne with provisions on the 14th’ (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police], 1-7-1897 – 24-10-1899). He is also described as manager in a letter written by Thomas Meldrum to R.M. Watson on the 26th of July 1897.

Records show that both Desmond and Nasmith were on Auvergne at the same time (Log Book of Bradshaws Run; GCPJ 18-1-1897, 19-1-1897). It seems likely that Desmond was a general manager for CD&D, although his name doesn’t appear in this capacity in Mary Durack’s books or in other records. In May 1897 his six year old son Ernest died in the
Wyndham hospital from malaria (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police], 1895-1897, entry for 27-5-1897).

Desmond’s name is commemorated at Desmond’s Passage on the Victoria Highway between Auvergne and Newry. It seems that the modern maps may have this name at the wrong place. This gap is known locally as Argument Gap; possibly Desmonds Passage is another gap located immediately to the south.

**Jack Skeahan.** Manager by 1898 (TCPJ, 26-4-1898). Jack Skeahan is said to have first came to the Kimberley as a stowaway on a boat bringing the Duracks and Tom Kilfoyle to settle their stations in 1886. He was described as being of the, "'wire and whipcord" variety' (Durack, 1983: 63). In 1905, together with his brother Jerry and Ambrose Durack, he took up and named Bullita station. The Duracks, who owned neighbouring Auvergne station, considered it likely that the Skeahans and Ambrose would raid them for cleanskin cattle so almost as soon as Bullita was established they offered to go into partnership. The offer was accepted and the Bullita Pastoral Company was formed late in 1905 (Durack, 1983: 63-64, 133). A few months later Jack’s brother Jerry was killed in the ‘Bradshaw massacre’ (Northern Territory Times, 12-1-1906; see Bradshaw station section).

In 1908 he married Emily, the sister of Tom Woodland who was then manager of Newry station (Durack, 1983: 333, 195, 241). By March 1915 he was a Justice of the Peace (TCPJ, 18-3-1915). In 1915 he sold his share of Bullita to CD&D (Durack, 1983: 315). According to Durack he then took his family to settle in the Murchison district of Western Australia. This move must have been late in the year because he was still on Auvergne in August 1915 (TCPJ, 2-8-1915). Skeahan was replaced as manager on Auvergne by Archie Skuthorp (Durack, 1983: 324). Lorna Moffatt (1990: 57) also mentions Jack Skeahan as manager. There is a ‘Skeahan’s Billabong’ on Auvergne, east of Alpha Creek.

**Jerry Skeahan.** Stockman. According to the Queenslander (17-2-1906: 29) he was born near Goulburn, New South Wales, grew up on Thylungra station in Western Queensland. He was educated at the Christian Brothers’ school in Brisbane, where he won a football medal and the 100 yards championship medal. When drought forced him to leave Thylungra he came to Auvergne to work with his brother.

By 1899 he was head stockman on Newry (Durack, 1983: 63). In 1905 he broke his arm in a cattle yard on Auvergne. He started to ride the 200 miles to Wyndham for medical attention (some sources say Katherine), but his brother Jack sent a messenger after him to say that Bradshaw’s boat was available to take him to Darwin (Northern Territory Times, 12-1-1906). While travelling on the launch he was killed in the ‘Bradshaw Massacre’ near Port Keats (Northern Territory Times, 26-1-1906). His remains and those of the other victims were recovered by police and buried on the beach. Some time later Joe Bradshaw retrieved the bones of the other men but the marker on Skeahan’s grave had disappeared and his remains were never found (SMH, 22-10-1906; pers. comm., John Bradshaw). Jerry Skeahan had at least one child with an Aboriginal woman, a boy (Hill, 1951: 243; Ogden, 1989: 10; Moffatt, 1990: 57-59; Northern Territory Times, 22-12-1905; ‘H7H’, Queenslander, 6-10-1906).

**Jack Frayne.** Stockman in 1898-99 (Durack, 1983: 36, 44, 63). For additional biographical details see entry under Coomanderoo.
Jack (John) Villiers. Stockman in 1899 (Durack, 1983: 63). He also worked on Argyle and Newry (Durack, nd.).


Henry Ventlia Peckham (‘The Fizzer’). Manager in 1900, according to Hill (1951: 243) and the Timber Creek Police Journal (25-12-1900), and stockman according to Durack (Durack, 1983: 75). Hill’s claim may be incorrect; he may have been caretaker-manager while Skeahan was away. On November 14th 1900 Henry Peckham reported to the Timber Creek police that, ‘all the boys at [Auvergne] station were watching an opportunity to get at the firearms & clear out & calling here to take all my boys away.’

Peckham was born in New Zealand on February 28th 1872. His family moved to Adelaide and he left home for the north at age 18. Before working on Auvergne Peckham worked as a stockman on Renner Springs (McDonald, 1996: 256). Between 1902 and at least 1904 he ran the packhorse mail between Katherine and Anthonys Lagoon (McDonald, 1996: 257). In 1908 he began the first overland packhorse mail service from Katherine to the Depot via Willeroo, Delamere and VRD, a 500 mile journey every six weeks (Northern Territory Times, 1-11-1907). His nickname, ‘The Fizzer’, is said to have come from his fast mode of horseback travel – he ‘fizzed’ along (McDonald, 1996: 257).

On April 17th 1911 he was swept away and drowned while attempting to swim the flooded Victoria River to get an urgent message to the nearest doctor – the VRD manager’s wife, Mrs Townshend, was seriously ill. As Peckham and his horse were swept away he called out to his ‘blackboy’, ‘Save the mails. Can’t be helped if I drown’ (Northern Territory Times, 12-5-1911). His body was recovered and buried on the riverbank. Eventually erosion threatened his grave so George Martin and Georgie Woodhouse exhumed his remains and reburied them higher up on the riverbank. All they could find was one bone and the heel of a boot (Connellan, 1992: 143). Later his remains (if any still existed) were exhumed once again and buried at the Elsey cemetery (McDonald, 1996: 257-58). Regarding Mrs Townshend, she died before any help arrived.

R. Bell. Stockman in 1903 (TCPJ, 26-11-1903). He first appears in the Durack diaries at Argyle in 1900 (Durack, nd.).

Victor Claude ‘Nugget’ Raymond. Head stockman between October 1907 and January 1909 (TCPJ, 26-10-1907, 3-1-1909). In February 1911 he accompanied the Timber Creek police in pursuit of the murderers of an Aboriginal named Harry (TCPJ Notes, 2-2-1911) and in May of 1911 he acted as caretaker of the Timber Creek police station while the Mounted Constable was absent on patrol (TCPJ Notes, 1-5-1911). He later worked on Bradshaw station. For additional biographical details see entry under Bradshaw.

Archie Skuthorp. Manager after Jack Skeahan left in 1915 (Durack, 1983: 315). Before going to Auvergne he was droving cattle out of the district, taking delivery of cattle on the West Baines River and moving them on to Wyndham in 1911 (Skuthorp, 27-9-1911), taking 1472 mixed cattle from Alice Downs (WA) to Bradshaw in April 1912 (TCPJ Notes, 30-4-1912), 1020 bullocks off VRD (VRD day book, 1909 to 1925, vol. 1) and 1000 head off Wave Hill late in 1914 (Northern Territory Times, 21-1-1915). He was in charge of Auvergne by January 1916 (TCPJ, 16-1-1916).
Archie was a member of the famous Skuthorp family of rough-rider and showman fame (his brother was Lance Skuthorp). One of his brothers, John (‘Jack-Dick’ or ‘Relics’) Skuthorp, took one of the first mobs of cattle across the Murrani Track in 1904 (Lewis, 2000: 39-44). During this trip he made the claim that he had crossed the Murrani and Victoria River country in 1878 (Lewis, 2000: 23). No one believed him because he already had a reputation for making wild claims, particularly that he had found diaries from the long lost expedition of explorer Ludwig Leichhardt (Lewis, 2013: 262-82). He took up land on Flying Fox Creek in southern Arnhem Land in 1906 (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 3, PP 125/1907) and a block (PP166) west-southwest of the Four Archers in the Gulf country in 1908 (file in the Office of the Placenames Committee, Darwin). He died on one of these blocks in 1926 (McCarthy, 1987: 152). Another brother, Amos, married the widow of Waterloo station pioneer Tom Deacon and went to live on Waterloo (Pollard, 1970: 40; see entry for Amos under Limbunya).

On October 8th 1916 on Auvergne Archie was speared and wounded (TCPJ, 10-10-1916, 2-4-1917). In April or May 1918, he was one of the police party that followed up the Aborigines who’d speared Alex McDonald at Dicks Creek. At least seven Aborigines were shot by this party (see below). On June 30th 1918 he was killed by a kick from ‘Badluck’ in the yard at Auvergne homestead and was buried in the Auvergne station graveyard (pers. obs.; *Northern Territory Times*, 27-7-1918; Auvergne station horsebook, Auvergne station).

**Alexander McDonald.** Stockman, yard builder and returned serviceman. Originally from Singleton NSW, he enlisted at Derby when the war broke out and served in Egypt and France. After being wounded in France he was invalided out of the Army and returned to Australia. He been working on Auvergne for about six months when he was speared and killed at Dick’s Creek in 1918. He’s buried near the remains of the yard he was repairing at the time.

*McDonald’s grave in 1992 (Lewis collection).*
After his death he was described by the *Northern Territory Times* (11-5-1918) as:

a most respectable, steady, decent man. A good workman and very handy with tools. While in England he became engaged to an English girl, and at the time of his death he was in communication with the Repatriation Committee, Perth, and was arranging to get a bit of land and make a home. The lady to whom he was engaged is either on the point of leaving England or on her way out. Tough luck that a man should live through the inferno of the Western Front and meet his death at the hands of naked savages armed with wooden spears.

McDonald was about 40 years old when he died so he would’ve been born in about 1878. A man named Alec McDonald was with Carl Linderoth when Linderoth beat an Aboriginal man so savagely that he died soon after (see entry for Linderoth in the VRD section). It’s not possible to be certain but it’s quite possible that this was the same Alec McDonald who was speared on Auvergne.

After McDonald’s murder Mounted Constable O’Connor led a punitive expedition after the Aborigines. Making up the party was George Campbell, Charlie Lincoln, Archie Skuthorp, tracker Bobby and ‘private boys Bob, Peter and Paddy’. According to O’Connor’s report (O’Connor, 10-4-1918) they tracked the murderers to Razorback Mountain at the foot of the Pinkerton Range and saw them climbing up the range. They followed the Aborigines up the range and when they neared a low cliff at the top they realised they were vulnerable to attack. O’Connor said he took the precaution of sending George Campbell, Tracker Bobby and private boy Bob to take up a position on a large rock outcrop. He, Skuthorp and Lincoln then continued up, but:

As soon as we commenced too climb the wall the aboriginals on the top of the mountain began rolling huge stones down in the direction where we were climbing the wall. Seeing that the aboriginals intended crushing us to death, and that we were unable to defend ourselves, and would have no hope of dodging the stones in our retreat on account of the awkward position we were in, and the terrific pace of the stones, Campbell and the two boys opened fire on the top of the mountain over our heads. After a few shots were fired at them they retreated, and we continued our climb and reached the top of the wall. Here we discovered that three of the aboriginals had been shot – one in the neck and the others in the stomach. Campbell, Tracker Bobby and Bob then climbed up to us, and we followed tracks for about two miles along the mountain. One of them was evidently wounded as there was a trail of blood for about half a mile from where the three were shot. By this time it was getting near sundown and we returned to the camp for the night.

Because the pass was impassable for horses the expedition travelled about eight miles along the foot of the range to Skinners Point where they found a way onto the range. They returned to where the Aborigines had been shot and buried them, and then continued to search for the other offenders. After travelling over the range for several days in the direction of Blunder Bay they finally came across a group of Aborigines:
At the bottom of a very deep gorge about 100 years wide with a river stretching from cliff to cliff about 150 feet below us. We found an entrance at the rear of a cave which opened out in the side of the gorge … after crawling about on our hands and knees for about three hours among the huge boulders which overhung the gorge we found that there was only one place where we could descend to the river. This was right opposite where they were camped, but as there was no hope of reaching the river anywhere else I took Tracker Bobby with me and descended down the side taking hand-cuffs and revolvers with us. The remainder of the party took up a position on the top of the gorge so that they could open fire on the tribe in the event of the tracker and myself being outnumbered upon reaching the other side of the river. Immediately we began to descend we were seen by the tribe.

A lubra was heard to call out “white fellow, white fellow”, and they all took cover. The majority took shelter behind [sic] in the large [missing word] in the side of the gorge. Others crawled into the cane grass and the pandanus on the sand bank where they were camped, and could not be seen until we had swum within about 20 yards of the other side. They then made their appearance and began to throw spears at us in the water. The party then fired several volleys at them and they fled in all directions. Several were seen to fall from the side of the gorge into the river and were not seen again. We searched the ambush and the side of the gorge and found four dead bodies. Upon making further search we found two old lubras and an aboriginal hidden in a small cave. The aboriginal had been previously wounded in the calf of the leg and was in immense pain.

In the camp they found a lot of items that belonged to McDonald and also a didgeridoo that had rifles, revolvers and broad arrows carved on it. At this point it was decided that further pursuit was useless so they left the wounded man and the women there to bury the dead in their own way and returned to Timber Creek.

There are some aspects of this report that don’t fit the facts or ring true. First, I have climbed up the range behind the Razorback Hill and while there is a large outcrop where Campbell and Tracker Bobby could have taken up position as O’Connor says, the cliff where O’Connor and the others were attacked while climbing up is no more three metres high – hardly high enough for boulders to be rolled down upon them in the way O’Connor describes. They could only have been dropped on them from a metre or so directly above, rather than rolled ‘at terrific pace’. Second, even if they party had a shovel with it, the ground on top of the cliff is more rock than soil, so it’s unlikely the bodies were buried – local folklore has it that for years on Razorback Hill you could find the bones of Aborigines who had been shot (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). Third, I have also visited the only gorge in the Bullo River-Blunder Bay country that has water from side to side, but in no other respects does it fit with or resemble the gorge described in O’Connor’s report. At the very least it appears that O’Connor exaggerated his report to make his patrol seem much more dangerous than it really was. It begs the question whether any other details also had been ‘modified’.

Neal Durack. Manager from 1918 to 1920. Born in 1890, the son of Galway Jerry Durack who was shot by Banjo on Dunham station in 1901 (Durack, 1983: 72, 79-84). In 1913 he was a member of the party that went out ‘east of Keep River’ in search of the murderers of Rudolph Philchowski (Durack 1983: 288; for details of Philchowski’s murder and the subsequent manhunt see entry for Argyle).
Neal went to the First World War as a Lieutenant with the 10th Light Horse in October 1915 (The Pastoral Review, 16-1-1921: 25). After his return to Australia early in 1918 he married a Miss Sellinger, daughter of Inspector Sellinger of the West Australian police, and shortly afterwards became manager of Auvergne, almost certainly after Archie Skuthorp was killed there. In December 1919 he provided fresh horses to the police party searching for the murderers of Jim Crisp (TCPJ Notes, 13-12-1918; see entry on Crisp under Bullita station).

In November 1920 he drowned while trying to cross the flooded Ord River at Ivanhoe Crossing. He had just attended the Depot Races and was on his way to Wyndham to see his wife off to Fremantle (Durack, 1983: 368; Morey, 1978e: 16; The Pastoral Review, 15-1-1921). After his death he was described in The Pastoral Review of January 16th 1921 as:

as fine a specimen of young manhood as one could wish to see. ... He was a fine horseman, bushman, athlete, and swimmer, and did excellent scout and intelligence work in Egypt and Palestine, where he was wounded. ... A fearless and heroic soldier, his manly character and lovable disposition endeared him to all who knew him.

According to local Aboriginal elder Bobby Witipuru (now deceased), the area centred on No. 1 Tank (co-ords 023631, Pinkerton 1:100,000 map) was known as Neal Durack’s
Plain or Picannny Plain. One of the characters in Tom Ronan’s book *Vision Splendid* (1954) is said to be based upon Neal Durack.

**Harold Reid (Reed).** Manager in December 1922 (TCPJ Notes, 7-12-1922). He left in about March 1924 (NT Times, 8-4-1924; Martin, 1985: 3). While he was on Auvergne Mounted Constable Turner reported receiving a letter from him, ‘inviting M.C. Muldoon or myself on a shooting exhibition of natives’. Turner remarked that, ‘Mr C. Darcy Mgr Keep (Newry) Stn has never reported to me any trouble with the same natives’ (TCPJ Notes 22-10-1922). In 1947 he was manager of Munja station, west Kimberley, and before that he managed Limbunya. He had also worked as a stockman, contractor, well-sinker and prospector (Western Mail [Perth], 18-12-1947). Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.) says that Reid was on Auvergne for two years and if so Reid was probably followed as manager by Ivor Hall.

**Lyell Raymond Dunn.** Manager in 1924 (Northern Territory Times, 8-4-1924: 3). Unless otherwise stated the following information was provided by his daughter Jeanette and son, Ross. Lyell was born in south-west Tasmania on August 31st 1896, one of nine children of Thomas Dunn and Ruth Price. Thomas was a mining engineer who developed and managed mines such as Mount Black at Rosebery and Lucy Spur near Corinna. In 1900 the family moved to the Herberton tin mining area in north Queensland and settled at Ravenswood Junction, near Charters Towers. Lyell’s father was often away prospecting and eventually died of malaria at Maranboy in 1916 (Northern Territory Times, 21-9-1916: 9).

Lyell and his brothers left home early, working as stockmen in western Queensland and supporting the family back home. He had minimal schooling, but studied auto mechanics by correspondence, qualifying in 1918. The following year he took on the job of driving Paddy Quilty from Cloncurry in Queensland to Bedford Downs in the Kimberley. This was the first motor vehicle to do this crossing, a distance of 1600 kilometres, much of it on station tracks and along rough stock routes.

After arriving in the East Kimberley Lyell stayed on, working as a stockman and mechanic. By 1922 he was managing cattle stations – Manbulloo in 1922 and Auvergne from April 1924. He was at Auvergne for little more than a year before Ivor Hall took over there. In 1929 he and Bob Smith formed a partnership and bought the Nine Mile Hotel at Wyndham (Northern Times [Carnarvon], 18-5-1929: 4). He was a JP from 1928 to 1931. While living in Wyndham Lyell took part in the search for Charles Kingsford Smith who, in his plane ‘Southern Cross’, had gone missing in 1929. Lyell was aboard the aircraft ‘Canberra’ when it located Kingsford Smith.

Immediately after Christmas, 1929, he drove his Buick 6 from Wyndham to Perth in about 10 days, to great acclaim from the Perth press (Truth [W.A.], 5-1-1930: 11). While in Perth he brought a truck and had it shipped to Wyndham where he started the first motor transport business there, serving stations between Wyndham and Halls Creek. He sometimes had to make new roads through difficult terrain. In late 1930 he was relieving manager at Moola Bulla near Halls Creek. Also late in 1930 he married Lily Bridge (née Chalwell) who sailed on the Koolinda from Fremantle to Wyndham for the wedding (Northern Times [Carnarvon], 23-10-1930: 4). Until they left the north in 1931 Lily joined Lyell on his trips around the Kimberley and made friends on a number of remote stations.
From the Kimberley they moved to Blackbutt, Queensland, where they set up a garage (see *South Burnett Times*, 5-5-1995). After 18 years there they moved to Western Australia. Lyell died of heart disease on December 16th 1960 and Lily passed away in 2005, aged 94.

**Ivor Hall.** Manager in 1926 (*Northern Territory Times*, 9-11-1926; *Northern Standard*, 16-3-1926). He was on the station in November 1925 though in what capacity is unknown (*Northern Standard*, 17-11-1925). He was manager there until Harry Shadforth took over in mid-1927 (*Northern Standard*, 26-7-1927). For additional biographical details see entry under Bradshaw station.

**Harry Cecil Shadforth.** Manager from about 1927 (or 25?) until 1937. According to family historian Bev O’Hara (pers. comm.), from whose records most of the following information comes, Harry was born at Yackandandah, Victoria, on July 31st, 1874, the seventh child in a family of eleven children. In 1879 his family moved from ‘Kergunyah’, Victoria, to Lilydale station in the Gulf country (now part of Riversleigh station), arriving there in 1880.

Harry spent most of his life in the North and became a talented horseman, cattlemens and an excellent swimmer. He was about 6 foot 3 inches tall. In Burketown in October 1901 he married Elizabeth Cornish Bridgeman. ‘Lizzie’, or ‘Aunty Shaddie’ as she was known, was also a competent rider. Once she and Harry rode from Katherine to Burketown and another time from Katherine to Adelaide.

Bev O’Hara believes Harry first went to Auvergne in about September 1927. Auvergne was then a Durack property and Mary Durack (cited by Bev O’Hara, 1996) described Harry as an, ‘An excellent and very likeable stock and station manager’ and that he and his wife Lizzie ‘were certainly a remarkable couple, Harry renowned for his prowess in the stock camp and his wife for her capability as a homestead organiser and entertaining hostess’. Reg Durack (cited by O’Hara, 1996) described Harry as ‘a fairly reticent, dignified man, good looking, with a white walrus moustache’. Another who knew him was former Timber Creek policeman, Ted Morey, who described him as, ‘A Queenslander from the Gulf country, Harry was an irrepressible joker ... the complete master of horses and cattle, so agile, lightning fast on his feet’ (Morey, 1978d: February, pp. 13).

Lizzie was known to have been very tough on her Aboriginal staff (O’Hara, 1996). This is confirmed by Brenda Niall (2012: 60), citing Mary Durack who described her as ‘a very cruel woman’. Mary wrote a grim short story based on the plight of an Aboriginal girl ‘exploited and terrorised’ by ‘the Old Woman’. The story was published in the *Bulletin* in 1939 and although Mary didn’t name Lizzie, details in the story made it easy to work out who she was talking about, so easy that Lizzie launched an action for libel (later withdrawn).

Upon arrival at Auvergne, Shadforth instituted a new method of handling the Aborigines, namely, those who were not employed were not allowed to camp nearby. When he began to run short of labour he wrote to the Timber Creek police asking for help in obtaining Aboriginal workers. By 1928 Constable Hemmings at Timber Creek remarked that:
Auvergne appears to be the only station in this district at present that is short of Aboriginal labour, and as long as I have been at this station some three years now, this station has been continually looking for labour. I do not know why this should be so, and the only conclusion I can come to is on account of the station not allowing a bush camp for miles in the vicinity of the station, this I think being the main factor as from my own experience aboriginals will not remain contented, nor will they come looking for work voluntarily if they are not allowed to form a camp, and keep their other tribal relations with them...

The late manager of Auvergne tried this scheme and an old king and queen were sent over from here for that purpose last year, but when the new manager arrived about December he hunted all these old women and the king from the station. They then formed a camp about a mile from the station, but they were again hunted from that place. He informed me of this himself.

The manager of Auvergne has also informed me in writing that at least on one occasion about last July a mob of aboriginals came to the station voluntarily and asked for work, but he would not put them on and hunted them away, and he could not have been full handed as by the same mail he wrote asking to be supplied with aboriginal labour from this camp at Timber Creek. I do not know for sure why he would not put them on, but understand it was on account of them previously running away from their employment prior to him taking charge of the place.

I might mention that these aboriginals that were refused employment are suspected to have gone down to the horse paddock on Auvergne and killed a beast.

With the class of Aboriginal that one has to deal with in this district and the scarcity of labour offering beggars can not be choosers in this respect, and I doubt very much if the managers complaint re scarcity of labour can be classed as legitimate under the circumstances.

As well as Auvergne, Harry managed Yorke Downs in Cape York, Gregory Downs and Strathmore in North Queensland, and possibly Elsey station. In the late 19-teens and early 1920s, he and Lizzie owned Springvale, near Katherine. From there Harry ran a packhorse mail service while Lizzie supplied vegetables and poultry under contract to Vesteys meatworks in Darwin.

Fast on his feet he might have been, but in April 1938 while working cattle on Auvergne near Cedar Lagoon Yard he was horned in the leg (TCPJ, 25-4-1938). Mrs Lou James, wife of the owner of the Depot Store, drove a truck from the Depot to Auvergne to pick Harry up. On the way back they spent 16 hours bogged in a creek and Mrs James had to carry him on her shoulders out of the creek (Connellan, 1992: 102). From the Depot Harry was flown to Katherine by Dr Fenton (TCPJ, 30-5-1938), but his condition deteriorated and he was transferred to Darwin and then by ship to Brisbane. Eddie Connellan (1992: 102) reckons that in July 1938 Harry was at the Depot recuperating from his injury. Whether this is correct or not is unknown, but eventually the wound became grossly infected, blood poisoning set in and he died on November 8th, 1938. He was cremated and his ashes buried beside his mother’s remains at Riversleigh station (O’Hara, 1996).
‘Dopey Bob’. Head stockman in about 1932 (Ronan, 1966: 237). Johnny Stacey who grew up in and worked in the Territory all his life told me he had known a lot of ‘Dopey Bobs’!

Reginald Wyndham Durack. Manager from at least July 1939 (TCPJ, 25-7-1939) until at least October 1949 (pers. comm., Reg Durack; Sweeney, 1947: 5). Unless otherwise stated, the following information comes from Lewis, 1996b: 83-86.

Reg was born on January 28th, 1911, at Semaphore, South Australia, the son of Kimberley pioneer, M.P. Durack and Bess Johnston. Until school age Reg lived on Ivanhoe station, east Kimberley. He was educated in Perth and at age 17 returned to the north to experience life in the pastoral industry. He began work under his uncle Patsy Durack on Argyle station. In 1929 he spent six months in charge of a destocking program on Bullita station. He then returned to Argyle where he remained for six years.

Feeling the need to broaden his horizons, in 1937 he left Argyle and travelled overland and by air to Sydney. When his savings began to run low he set off overland to work his way through Queensland and back to the north. To avoid being prejudged because of his family name, Reg changed his name to ‘Jimmy Gale’ and arranged to have his mail forwarded on under this name. While in Queensland he heard that the management of Auvergne was available. He asked his father if he could have the job, on the proviso that he was treated exactly the same as other managers on Durack properties. This was agreed to and Reg took over there early in 1938.

When he took over at Auvergne the homestead had ‘mud floors, donkey-hide mats, and revolving tables made from cartwheels set on broad tree-trunk bases’. Soon afterwards a violent windstorm blew the roof off and the white ant riddled walls collapsed’ (Niall, 2012: 71).

In 1939 a visitor to Auvergne described Reg as:

> a shy, unassuming man, but dignified, considerate and well-read, seemingly in contrast to the dry humour and shy hospitality – and much bandinage at our expense (we were in outback terms, still very green, city types)… At breakfast, a casual remark of mine about blacks wearing coloured clothing, led to a short but illuminating discussion on Mr Durack’s ideas concerning the blacks, namely that they shouldn’t be made clowns of. This was the first time I had struck this attitude on the stations, where the blacks seemed at best to be regarded as objects of amusement, but mainly as mere chattels. He takes an interest in training the house lubras in neatness and cleanliness, and provides mirrors and combs and has inspections for clean faces and hands – no clean face, no sweets for picaninnies on ration day. … Another very pleasant evening passed talking, and I had about half an hour talking with Reg, when he revealed his intellectual interests and Marxist leanings. He longs to go to University, it seemed sad to think of him at 26 being confined to such an isolated life. He lent me several books, so I can continue to catch up on my classical reading – Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (Hilgendorf, 1994: 42-43).

Hilgendorf also mentioned that the Auvergne radio was operated with electricity rather than being pedalled.
Reg Durack (Reg Durack collection).

Reg married Enid Tulloch in 1944 and remained on Auvergne until the property was sold in 1949. Because he held an interest in the company he only agreed to the sale on condition that he be given a block in lieu of money. His preferred option was a block in the middle of Argyle, but he settled for a more realistic offer of the southern part of Auvergne (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). In 1950 Reg established Kildurk station from this bush block. His first homestead was at Stewart’s Yard Billabong. In January 1951 Hoofs & Horns (p. 44) reported that:

Reg Durack and Frank McMahon, of Kildurk Station, have been demolishing the old Victoria Depot for iron, which they require for outbuildings on Kildurk. Reg bought the depot from Lou James when the war forced the closure of the depot, and now that he is forming Kildurk Station, is finding the iron at the depot a valuable asset.

Finding that the water supply at Stewart’s Yard was unreliable, Reg moved the homestead to the current location at Pigeon Point. He and Enid remained on the station for over 20
years, then placed it on the market. The Commonwealth Government bought the station on behalf of the Aboriginal traditional owners in 1973. The lease was later converted to Aboriginal Freehold Title and reverted to its original name of Amanbidji. In 2017 the homestead built by Reg was burnt to the ground (pers. comm. Wayne Spence).

In 1981 Reg bought Bullita station but sold it three years later to the Northern Territory Government which wanted it to form the basis of a new national park. In 1987 he bought Spirit Hills station, but his heart was not in that piece of country and he sold out 1989. For some years Reg divided his time between Perth and Kununurra where he owned a suburban house and a small bush block. For the last few years of his life he suffered ill health and was unable to visit Kununurra. He died at his home in Perth on Saturday November 21st, 1998. Daly Pulkara, a Ngarinman elder, told me in 1980 that Reg was known as ‘Wulai’, the name of the sandstone country on the southern side of Kildurk, because he was ‘boss’ (owner) of part of this region.

Frank ‘Baldy’ McMahon. Head stockman (?) in November 1939 (TCPJ, 19-11-1939). For additional biographical details see entry under Buffalo Springs.

Jack P. Bourke. Acting manager from about December 1943 while Reg Durack was on leave (TCPJ, 4-12-1943). He was the saddler for all CD&D stations (pers. comm., Reg Durack). He was at Auvergne in May 1949 when Constable John Gordon visited (Gordon, 1992: 137-38).

Tom Ronan. Acting manager in 1946 while Reg Durack was on leave (TCPJ, 24-11-1946). He’d been a head stockman on Auvergne after his army discharge in 1944 (Ronan, 1966: 239; The Territorian, August 1965: 14). For additional biographical information see entry under Newry.


Victor was born in Springsure, Queensland, in about 1898 and began in the cattle business at the age of twelve (Hoofs & Horns, December 1950: 39). At the age of 16 he enlisted in the Infantry and served overseas. After the war he travelled to Derby where he became head stockman on Christmas Creek station. He also ran camps on Go Go and Meda and worked as a drover. In the 1925-26 wet season he was caretaker-manager of Christmas Creek, then he took over management of Cheribun where he stayed until 1935. Next he spent two years as manager of Meda. In 1937 he was in charge of a camp on Lissadell for ten months, then he was a stockman or head stockman on Moolooloo for three years (he was on Moolooloo in April 1941; TCPJ, 6-4-1941). He is mentioned as manager of Willeroo in August and December 1942 (TCPJ, 24-8-1942, 9-12-1942), so he was probably on Moolooloo between 1938 and 1941.

In 1949 he went to Auvergne as overseer, becoming manager there before resigning in April 1951 (Hoofs & Horns, December 1950: 39 and May 1951: 48). According to Billy Harney (pers. comm.), Vic and Reg Durack had a fight over an Aboriginal woman, Bugada, and that was when Vic left Auvergne. Lloyd Fogarty says that Vic branded 4000 calves in 1950 which he (Lloyd) considered to be ‘a good effort’. The brand was the number ‘O’ on the neck and Lloyd reckons those branded by Vic were about the only
branded cattle on Auvergne at the time! According to *Hoofs & Horns* (May 1951: 48), Watkins left Auvergne to rejoin the staff of the Wyndham Meatworks. In 1958 it was reported that Mr and Mrs Watkins had been holidaying in Cairns and Springsure, and were now retired and living in Fremantle (*Hoofs & Horns*, December 1958: 61).

Bill Ireland. Bookkeeper and relieving manager early in 1951 until the Fogartys arrived by road on April 7th (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

George Nudley ‘Mick’ Fogarty. Manager from April 7th 1951 to December 31st 1954 (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty; see also *Hoofs & Horns*, June 1951: 40; Gordon, 1992: 170; Evans, 6-12-1952a). Mick was the younger brother of Ted, the father of George and Lloyd (pers. comm. Lloyd Fogarty) and the uncle of Dave Fogarty of Buffalo Springs fame (Gordon, 1992: 170).

Mick and Ted (Edward Clifford) had worked together on Gulf stations, horse breaking, ringing etc. They parted company in Cloncurry in 1922; Ted headed west to the Territory while Mick went east to Maranoa where he married in 1925.
According to Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.), Mick was managing the AA Co’s. Caldervale station in central Queensland (east of Tambo) when he was approached by Dolph Schmidt with a proposal to take control of the newly acquired Northern Territory stations, Argyle, Newry, Auvergne and Ivanhoe.

Mick had heard a lot about the Territory from Ted. Following assurances that there would be work for his three sons, who had all worked for and were well known to the AA Co., he agreed to the proposal. Soon after arriving at Auvergne he realised the enormity of the job at hand. He relinquished the manager’s post at the end of 1954 and his son Lloyd took over as manager. George remained on Auvergne until his death in 1972.

Ainslie George Fogarty. Ringer from 1951 to 1955. Born at Mitchell, Queensland, in 1930. In 1950 with Mark Richards and Ken Hughes he drove stock horses from Caldervale, Corona, Headingly and Avon Downs stations to Auvergne via Camooweal and the Murranji for the Australian Agricultural Company (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). Lloyd said that the Caldervale horses were some of the best in Queensland, most from ‘Heroic’, by ‘Worthy Hero’, and won many races at the old Wyndham meetings. He reckoned you needed a racehorse to catch the Auvergne ‘scrubbers’!

George was head stockman at No. 1 Camp from 1952 until he suffered a broken pelvis in a horse fall in No. 5 Paddock near Dicks Creek in 1956. He then gave up stock work and became a travelling saddler (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

Lloyd Leonard Fogarty. Manager from February 1st 1955 until he retired on December 31st 1979 (pers comm., Lloyd Fogarty; Auvergne Station Monthly Reports, 1950-1973, Report for April 1951). Before becoming manager, Lloyd was head stockman on Auvergne from 1952 to 1954. (pers comm., Lloyd Fogarty). He married Auvergne bookkeeper Camille Stiles in January 1954 (Hoofs & Horns, March 1954: 43). Sister Ellen Kettle (1967: 153) credited Camille with promoting the welfare of Aborigines, one of the few stations at the time to do so; she established a school and a medical clinic staffed by a trained nurse. During the 1960s Lloyd was Pastoral Inspector for the AA Co. and Regional Superintendent during the 1970s until the station was sold to the Sogex Pastoral Company.

During the period of Aboriginal strikes (1966-72), Lloyd actively assisted the Auvergne Aborigines to set up their own community at Bulla by providing them with timber, roofing iron and the use of an old motor vehicle (NT News, 9-4-1972).

In 1981 Lloyd and Camille bought the store at Timber Creek, originally established by J.H. Rawle in about 1959 (TCPJ, 6-9-1959). They then built this up into the ‘Circle F’ Caravan Park and store. They sold out and retired in 1997 and still (2017) live at Timber Creek. For a period Lloyd ran a small herd of cattle and was the prime mover in the local race club and annual Timber Creek Races until the races were abandoned in 2001.

Campbell Copeland. Head stockman on Auvergne in the 1960s (see entry under Newry).

Les Brown. Head stockman on Auvergne and later manager of Ivanhoe for several years until most of Ivanhoe was resumed as part of the Ord River dam project (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner and pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).
Rod Hollingsworth. Manager from 1981 to 1992 (pers. comm., Rod Hollingsworth, pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). He had been a jackaroo on Auvergne before the Vietnam call-up (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). He left Auvergne in 1993 to take over management of Scott Creek after the previous manager, his uncle Don Laidlaw, had been arrested for growing marijuana there (pers. comm., Barry Scott; pers. comm., Billy Harney).

Alan Andrews. Manager from 1993 to 2009, taking over there from Rod Hollingsworth (pers. comm.). Previously he had spent twelve years on Wondoola station in the Queensland Gulf country, including four years as head stockman and six years as manager, and then was manager of Newry from April 1981 to December 1992. Alan retired from Auvergne in 2009 and went to Newcastle Waters where he was appointed as the environment manager for Lake Woods, a position he still (2017) holds.

While at Newry in 1982 he and his wife Ros commenced the Newry Easter Cricket Competition which continues on an annual basis. He was also president of the Kununurra Rodeo Association for eight years and beginning in 1983 (and ongoing) was a committee member of the Katherine Pastoral Advisory Council. More recently, for five years he was Chair of the Katherine Branch of the Northern Territory Conservation Association and a member of the Bushfires Council and recently (2017) was presented with a life membership of that organisation. He now lives at Dundee Beach where for the last four years he has been President of the Dundee Progress Association.

Glen Brooker and Lisa Walker. Managers in 2014-2015. Glen began his working life in 1993 as a jackaroo with the Stanbroke Pastoral Company. He progressed to head stockman and was with this company for ten years. After a year as a truck driver and three years as head stockman in the Gulf country, he joined the Consolidated Pastoral Company in 2008 as overseer of Isis Downs, Queensland. In 2011 he was transferred to Kirkimbie, then became manager of Isis Downs in 2013. He became manager of Auvergne in 2014. Glen’s partner, Lisa Walker, came to Australia from England in 2010. She travelled around for a few months before becoming a station cook on Isis Downs where she and Glen met (website: http://www.pastoral.com/en/content/carlton-hill).
BILLILUNA

Founded by Robert Falconer who took up one million acres in about 1920, according to Bolton (1953: 195), or 1922 according to Terry (1927: 207). By 1928 Billiluna had 5000 head of cattle.

By 1956 the station was owned by a Mrs Lorna Wilson (née Doman), managing director of T.A. Doman Ltd (Hoofs & Horns, April 1956: 13-14; NT News, 14-6-1962). Edna Quilty (1999: 121) says it was Margaret Doman, rather than Lorna Wilson, who owned Billiluna and who put down a series of bores across the Tanami to get her cattle out to southern markets. Marie Mahood says the name was Lorna rather than Margaret. According to Mark Nevill in a talk he gave to the Kimberley Society (Edinger & Marsh, 2004), Margaret Doman became the owner of Billiluna in 1958 – this needs sorting out. The first cattle were mustered near Lake Gregory, driven along this route and handed over at the Granites to Bill Waudby and Milton Willick, both members of the party that surveyed the new route (NT News, 14-6-1962). The Billiluna brand for many years up to 1950s was UD7 (Hoofs & Horns, April 1956: 13).

In about 1997 or 1998 Billiluna was purchased on behalf of the traditional owners for $600,000 and a guaranteed 12,000 cattle (Edwards, 2003: 60-61).

Robert Falconer. Pioneer owner and possibly manager for a short time. According to an obituary Falconer was born in New Zealand and trained as a mining engineer. He spent a short time on Queensland mining fields before moving to Western Australia where he gained a reputation as a first rate mining engineer. Around the turn of the century he bought the moribund Lady Shelton gold mine and was able to overcome various problems and make it a success. In about 1912 he gave mining away and turned to farming. Around 1920 he obtained the first leases on what became Billiluna station.

Because of the cold dry season (winter) temperatures on Billiluna, cattle ticks couldn’t survive so there was no tick fever there. As a result Billiluna cattle developed no immunity, and if they were taken through the tick areas to the Wyndham meatworks many died. From 1925 Falconer began petitioning the WA government to reopen the Canning stock route so that he could take his cattle that way and avoid the tick country. Eventually this was done and he took his first herd south to Wiluna in 1931 (Bolton, 1953: 239, 258). Later, in conjunction with his sons, Falconer took up another virgin area about 230 kilometres east of Wiluna and established Carnegie station. He stocked this station with Billiluna cattle. Eventually he sold all his pastoral and farming properties and retired. He died at Claremont, Western Australia, on August 3rd 1953. He left four sons and a widow (The Pastoral Review, 16-9-1953: 967; Hoofs & Horns, April 1956: 5).

Joseph Condren. Manager in 1922. Together with station worker Timothy O’Sullivan, he was murdered by Aboriginal named Banjo in September 1922. Banjo took several firearms and a large quantity of ammunition, and cleared into the bush (The Advertiser [Adelaide], 21-9-1922). He was eventually tracked down and shot dead (Bohemia and McGregor, 1995: 73-100; see also Flinders, 2016: 80). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) was told by Clarrie Wilkinson that Condren had managed Sturt Creek before he, Wilkinson, took over there in 1917 (see also Green, 1995: 78-80). Pat Underwood (pers. comm.), former owner of Inverway station, heard that a brother or brothers of O’Sullivan came across
from Queensland after the murders and shot every Aborigine they found in the region. There is no evidence to support this story.


George Trenouth. Manager? and also manager of ‘Wolf Creek station’.

Len Brown. Manager in the 1950s (Buchanan family papers). Marie Mahood (pers. comm.) said he was later manager of the Balgo Cattle Project and that he and his wife Betty had a son, Malley, who in 1965 was head stockman on Mongrel Downs. Kim Mahood (2016: 62-63) says Len’s wife was Bessie, an Aboriginal woman from Moola Bulla, W.A..

Bill Wilson. Husband of the owner in 1962-76. Marie Mahood (1995: 66-68) says he was the brother-in-law of the then owner, Mrs Doman, but in a private letter she says he was the husband of ‘Mrs Doman – Mrs Wilson, née Doman’. This needs checking. Bill and several others were engaged to open a stock route from Billiluna through to Alice Springs. This was done because the Canning Stock Route had been rendered unusable due to Aborigines removing the wooden planking shoring up the sides of the wells (pers. comm., Marie Mahood).

In January 1976 Bill was involved in an altercation with a group of eight Aboriginal men camped in a creek bed near the homestead. According to a news report (West Australian, 9-1-1976), these men were travelling through the station in an allegedly stolen Holden sedan. When Wilson, Lesley Verdon, another station hand and two children drove up in a station vehicle the Aborigines attacked them with ‘metal bars, spanners and other objects’, and tried to ram Wilson’s vehicle. Wilson and party then drove back to the homestead and locked themselves in. The Aborigines gathered outside and continued to hurl objects, breaking windows and yelling threats to kill the people inside. Shots were fired and one Aboriginal man was hit in the back, causing a severe injury (he was later airlifted to Perth). The remaining Aborigines left.

Joe Mahood. Manager for a few months late in 1963. He took over after a ‘shoot-up’ there. Marie Mahood (pers. comm.) said that the wife of the manager early in 1963:

objected to his dalliance with a half-caste girl, took a .22 to him (Joe showed me the shots in the door step and the door of the Landcruiser). She gave him the ultimatum – Pack up and leave with her and the kids right Now! Which he did, leaving the place to the cook and staff, who got on the grog and it was on for young and old, black & white.

For additional biographical information see entry under Victoria River Downs.

Gerry Adamson. Manager from the end of 1963, a few months after the ‘shoot-up’, to at least 1967 and possibly to the end of 1971 (Mahood, 1995: 73, 85, 108 and pers. comm.). Together with Phil Stoker and Joseph Vattista, Adamson was co-owner of Marion Downs north of Halls Creek for about 20 years until the station was acquired by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy in August 2008 (Broome Advertiser, 18-9-2008: 5).
Lesley Verdon. Manager in 1976. He was with Bill Wilson when Aborigines ‘laid seige’ to the homestead (West Australian, 9-1-1976).
BIRRIMBA

Birrimbah homestead, 1934 (NTPLIC collection).

Initially an outstation of Manbulloo, under Vestey's (Sweeny, 1947: 14-15). Johnny Stacey was camped at Birrimbah in 1955 waiting to take delivery of 1250 mixed cattle. He said that there were five or six huts there then as well as a big drafting yard and dip

The block was resumed from Vestey’s and put up for ballot in 1959 (Hoofs & Horns, August 1959: 46). Referred to as ‘the Delamere block’, it was described as:

A maintenance area comprised of red sandy tableland forest country on the eastern portion and mixed basalt stony country in the western portion. It is grassed with Mitchell, Kangaroo, Spear, Wire grasses etc., and timbered with Bloodwood, Bulwaddi, Gum and Lancewood. Watered by three springs, several good waterholes and the Victoria River

Leo Sweeney and Mick Elliott won it and held it from 1960 (or 1964?) to about 1993. It was taken over by Elders in 1996 and then sold to Wave Hill (pers. comm., Paul Vandeleur). Until 2001 it was owned by Brian Oxenford (pers. comm., Norm and Anne Forster). It was then sold to Wallco Pastoral Company which in turn sold the property in 2014 to the Jumbuck Pastoral Company (http://www.beefcentral.com/news/jumbuck-swoops-under-stag-to-claim-killarney/, accessed 10-2-2017).

Jack Davidson. Head stockman (?) in 1935 (TCPJ, 11-12-1935). At times he was also a drover (pers. comm., Dave Napier). His wife was named Mag or Maggie (Buchanan family papers). Johnny Stacey who knew Jack in his older age said (pers. com.) that he had no teeth so Maggie used to chew his meat for him and then give it to him to eat. Johnny added that Jack was always ‘half pissed’ so it didn’t matter to him.

Ranji Smith. Caretaker in August 1946 (pers. comm., Cec Watts) and in October 1947 (Sweeney, 1947: 14-15).
**Murtagh ‘Mick’ Edward Elliott.** Mick won the ballot for Birrimbah in 1964. He was owner-manager from at least April 1964 to at least August 1967 (WHPJ, 16-4-1964, 3-8-1967). Mick’s wife Pat (pers. comm.) said that before the ballot the region was ‘no man’s land’. Their first camp was at Widgee waterhole. They sold Birrimbah to Elders in 1996. Mick died from asthma on March 24th 1989. He and Pat had eight children – four boys and four girls.
Sometimes referred to as ‘Birrinduda’, ‘Burrundudu’, Baranduda or Birrendudu. According to Gordon Buchanan (1941: 203), he and his partners, and Tom Cahill, formed a station at ‘Birrendudu’ waterhole in the late 1890s. This may be incorrect because a police patrol in the Sturt Creek country in 1901 visited ‘Soakage Creek’ and ‘Soakage Creek Springs’, placenames closely associated with Birrindudu, but made no mention of a homestead in the area (Journal of P.C. O’Neil, 10-10-1901 to 1-4-1902).

In 1939:

The station buildings were in a most deplorable condition, adding to the feeling of such isolation. The goat yard was the most substantial and the cattle yards were neither large nor strong enough to hold cattle – a disgrace to Vesteys. The buildings consisted of bough shades and iron huts. The kitchen had no stove and apparently no utensils. However, Currin, the cook, fed us well on goat’s cream, jam and tea (Hilgendorf, 1994: 47).

In 1945 and through to 1955 it was being run as an outstation of Gordon Downs (Harney, 24-5-1945; Sweeney, 1947: 9; Evans, 1949; pers. comm., Mick Bower). Dave Napier (pers. comm.) says that Birrindudu and Wallamunga were run as one block under Vesteys. According to Paul Vandeleur (pers. comm.), during Stan Jones’ time as manager of Gordon Downs (1952-1964) the station had 1000 horses.

Welfare Officer Bill Harney visited Birrindudu early in 1945 and was horrified at the conditions Aborigines there were living in. He reported (Harney, 24-5-1945) that:

The same conditions applied at this place as at Wave Hill [see entry for Wave Hill], ie. Hardwork, poor food and dirty camp conditions, but at Wave Hill the dependants are maintained whereas at this place only two dependants … are given rations, the
others, old and blind, are left to fend for themselves. This I am told is the instruction of Mr. Hudson, Manager of Gordon Downs …

I gave these natives some of my own rations and have sent a wire: –

“Hudson.

“Desire meet you Burrundudu twentyfifth to discuss native matter this area……. Harney.”

I consider Hudson’s disregard of native welfare a flagrant breach of native’s welfare and a total lack of understanding and sympathy to these unfortunate people who provide the sons and daughters who run this property and ask that he be warned that should this occur in future his licence to employ aboriginals in the Northern Territory be cancelled forthwith.

I write strongly on this matter because the conditions I see around me have urged me to do so.

According to Beth Beckett (1998: 52) no white woman had lived at ‘Baranduda’ up to 1947, not suprising given the rough conditions there as described in 1952 by Native Affairs officer Ted Evans who said that:

Birrindudu is equipped with a transceiver set but makes no direct contact with Wyndham. A daily schedule is made with Gordon Downs when the set is operating. However at the time of inspection the set was out of order and it would appear that this is more often the case than not. There is no recognised airstrip although an emergency landing ground is available. This is rarely used. There is no motor transport available at Birrindudu and in common with other out-stations in the Northern Territory communication facilities on Birrindudu are poor. …

The older natives on Birrindudu are particularly shy and still have a fear of any person in a Governmental capacity. This year I was unable to see the old people who “went bush” when I arrived. In my opinion the main contributing cause for this attitude is the white people on the station instilling fear into the natives mind of persons governmental. …

The water supply on Birrindudu in the past has been very unreliable and on some occasions towards the end of the dry season it has been found ncessary [sic] to move all personnel to a bore 12 miles distant. A new bore has been sunk close to the homestead site but not yet equipped although water is being pumped from it by hand at present. …

The homestead buildings are to say the least crude and in their present condition Vesteys have very little hope of encouraging a married couple to take over control of this out-station (Evans, 1952b).

By 1955 Vesteys had surrendered the 1,587 square mile Birrindudu block and begun clearing all their cattle off the place (Hoofs & Horns, September 1955: 8). It was acquired in a ballot in November 1958 by brothers Russell and Warren Young, aged 21 and 18 respectively, who were said to be ‘mad keen to start their new life as cattle men’ (Hoofs & Horns, December 1958: 61). They stocked it with 600 cattle from Coolibah station (NT News, 11-11-1958; Ogden, 1989: 53).

The owner of neighbouring Wallamunga station, Peter Sherwin, bought Birrindudu in 1964. Sherwin subsequently acquired other stations including Gordon Downs, Flora Valley and Victoria River Downs (Sunday Territorian, 18-2-1996). The homestead was
moved to a new location in the early 1970s. In October 1989 Sherwin’s entire company was taken over by Robert Holmes a’ Court’s Heytsbury Holdings (SMH, 8-3-1997). As of 2016 it was still owned by Heytsbury.


Jack Barry. Head stockman before the Second World War (pers. comm., Stan Jones). For additional biographical details see entry under Sturt Creek.

Jack Davidson. Head stockman, 1939-40 (WHJP, 12-12-1939, 12-2-1940).


Vic Jones. Overseer in 1945-46. He was on Birrindudu in 1941 (WHJP, 18-4-1941) and described as ‘manager’ in the Wave Hill police journal of June 1943 (WHJP, 14-6-1943). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) remembers Jones as being a good cattleman but one who could put up with rough equipment and who ‘didn’t believe in giving blackfellas three meals a day’. By October 1949 he was manager of Christmas Creek (Barnes, 1948). In 1969 he was manager of Go Go station. Under his management the Go Go herd became famous in the Kimberley for its ‘uniformity and general excellence’ (Taylor, 1984: 164; Anon, ‘Narrative of an inspection tour of the Northern Territories and the Kimberleys,’ 1969). Mick Bower, who worked on Birrindudu in 1954, remembers Jones wearing his trousers at ‘half mast’ – the fork of the trousers was always halfway down to his knees.

William ‘Billy’ Speed. Head stockman from at least June 1945 (WHJP 23-6-1945, 24-6-1947) to September 1949 (Evans, 1949: 7). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) says Speed had been head stockman at Flora Valley for Bill Crowson in the 1940s, and in 1947-1950 he was overseer on Gordon Downs. He left in 1950 to get married and later looked after Cattle Creek for a while. After he left Cattle Creek he retired to Ourimbah, NSW, where he and his wife ran a cafeteria.

Charlie C. Harris. Manager of Birrindudu and Gordon Downs from 1950 to at least 1952 (Evans, 1952b: 1). For additional biographical information see entry under Gordon Downs.

Brad Hubbard. Bookkeeper in 1952 (Evans, 1952b: 3).

Jack Trent. Cook in 1949 (pers. comm., Cec Watts)

Jacky Byrne. Overseer in 1954-55. Byrne was on Gordon Downs in 1939 when he applied for a miner’s right (WHPJ, 16-12-1939), probably so that he could go prospecting in the Tanami or Halls Creek country during the wet season. He’s described in the Wave Hill police journal of March 31st 1945 as head stockman at Birrindudu, and was still head stockman there in 1952 (Evans, 1952b: 1). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says Jacky had an Aboriginal woman there named Larrikin.

According to Bill Hamill (pers. comm.), Byrne was overseer at Birrindudu in 1952-1955, and was an alcoholic who, ‘After marrying a bookkeeper from Gordon Downs … went to Perth for a honeymoon, succumbed to the grog and never made it back to the Kimberleys.’ Cec Watts (pers. comm.) says that:
Jack was used as a fill in on Burrindudu by Hudson when a headstockman was needed. Over the years Jack had also filled in as headstockman at Gordon Downs in Bruce Hudson’s time, he was an excellent cook and cooked at the station when not running the camp. When Hudson took over the management of Ord River, in late 1948, Jack went too, as headstockman. For some reason or other old Norman Welman used to refer to Jack as the “Little Man from Spain’. Jack married a station cook not a bookkeeper, and died in Perth, from pneumonia, whilst on his honeymoon. He was reputed to be the brother of Tommy Matthews, a famous pre-war ‘wild man’.

According to Stan Jones who knew Byrne well, Byrne claimed to be a descendant of one of the Kelly Gang (Joe Byrne).

**Victor Stacey.** Stockman, 1940s or 1950s (pers. comm., Len Hill). He was head stockman somewhere on VRD in 1934 (Martin, 2-10-1934). According to Cec Watts (pers. comm.), Stacey was a head stockman on Sturt Creek, Nicholson and other places before becoming a contract horse breaker on the Western Australian Vestey stations until he was seriously injured at Flora Valley. When he recovered he gave up stockwork and for many years was a contract fencer and yard builder. Cec says he was a really good bloke, a brother of Norman Stacey the drover and uncle to ‘Bomber’ and Kelly Stacey, the truckies. He died in Halls Creek.

**Jack Holland.** Stockman, 1940s or 1950s (pers. comm., Len Hill).

**Billy Harney.** Stockman, 1950s (pers. comm., Len Hill).

**Russell Young and Warren Young.** Owner-managers. Russell and Warren were brothers whose father, Joe ‘Bogger’ Young, drew the Birrindudu block on their behalf in 1958, after Vestey’s relinquished the lease (Young and Dalton, 1991: 141; pers. comm., Glenn Young). They sold out to Peter Sherwin in 1964. Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that Noel Bebe drew the block first but was run over while asleep and that Sherwin then took over.

**Jack Vitnell.** Head stockman in about 1961-62 (pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White). According to former Drover Rodney Watson (pers. comm.), and to Pat Underwood (Buchanan, 2002: 74), Jack married Dawn Norton, one of Roy Norton’s daughters. For additional biographical information and a photo see entry for Killarney.

**Lance Hutley.** Manager (when?).

**Paul Brosnan.** Manager, 2000 (pers. comm., Rob Glenn). He left in about 2005 to become a real estate agent in Queensland (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

**Mark Clifford.** Manager in 2005 (pers. comm.).

**Ian Hoare.** Manager in 2006-2007 (pers. obs.).
BLACKFELLOW CREEK

A former outstation of Lissadell, established by Jerry Durack in about 1900 (Clement, 1989: 14). Jerry was shot by an Aborigine at Dunham River in 1901 (Durack, 1983: 179). In 1908 an Aboriginal named Major killed Scotty McDonald at Growlers Gully on Texas station and later killed the head stockman and cook at Blackfellow Creek outstation on Lissadell (Durack, 1983: 199; Clement, 1989: 14).

Doug Moore claims that Major killed Scotty McDonald because he discovered that Scotty had poisoned a half a bag of flour and left it in the hut for the blacks to steal. He says many innocent Aborigines were shot during the manhunt for Major and that later a man named Jimmy Thompson climbed up to where Major had been shot and souvenired a thigh bone (Moore, nd.: 3).

The police party that went in pursuit of Major (Adelaide Observer, 8-10-1910).

The police caught up with Major about five miles north of the Negri-Ord junction. They later reported that, ‘Majors effects include proceeds several robberies three rifles two revolvers forty two cartridges about forty rounds fired at police’ (Derby Police Station letter book, Acc 738-23, entry for 9-9-1901).

Sir Alexander Cockburn-Campbell. Head stockman in 1905 (Clement, 1989: 14). This would fit with the statement in his son’s book that Cockburn-Campbell worked for the Duracks on Argyle and Rosewood for several years in the early 1900s (Cockburn-Campbell, 1985: 22). For additional biographical details see entry under Argyle.

George Fettle. Head stockman in 1908, when he was murdered by Major (Durack 1983: 199).
BLACK HILLS

A grazing licence taken up by Joseph Henry Rogers and Ralph Valke (or Balke?). The Black Hills after which the station was named are located in the Tanami Desert south of the Hooker Creek Aboriginal Reserve.

The original block was applied for by A.W. Rogers in 1944 and was described as, ‘Commencing at Buchanan Hills, thence 63 miles West; then 20 miles North to adjoin Grazing Licence 674 on East; then 63 miles East then 20 miles South to point of commencement. Area = 1260 square miles’. A.W. Rogers was Archie Warrington Rogers (see entry for Rogers under Wave Hill). He claimed that he was applying for the block on behalf of a nephew who was then fighting in New Gineau, probably the Joseph Henry mentioned above.

In 1963 Rogers and Valke had an altercation with an Aborigine from Hooker Creek during which shots were fired. This led to the police being called in. The Wave Hill police were at the VRD races at the time, but left immediately for Hooker Creek. Rogers and Valke were located south of Hooker Creek and after being questioned separately they were arrested and charged with illegally killing cattle. They were eventually convicted of a number of crimes and sentenced to either two years hard labour (WHPJ, 27-6-1963; Hoofs & Horns, September 1963: 20 and October 1963: 22) or six months (NT News, 11-7-1963). As a result they lost their grazing licence and along with it their homestead, cattle, etc.

Marie Mahood told me that:

The “Black Hills Boys” had a shack at Black Hills – Bill Wilson gave them a contract to put down a well “Gangster’s Well” – [it] was named after Margaret Sangster, therefore Sangster’s Well, but because of criminal activities locals renamed it Gangsters Well. [They] Dug [a] cave in side to hide stores stolen from Halls Creek. Bill discovered it there. He left it there and renamed the well Gangsters Well. They also stole horses from VRD and sold them to Father McGuire at Balgo Bob Savage of Supplejack may know Rogers and Balke.
Bradshaw station homestead and goat herd. The man may be the manager, David Byers c1913 (Donnison collection).

‘Captain’ Joe Bradshaw first applied for a lease on July 27th 1893, offering to pay six pence per square mile instead of the usual one shilling because he had reliable information that half the station was unusable rough ranges (Bradshaw, 27-7-1893).

"Marigui"
Camberwell
Victoria
August 16th 1893

The Honourable
The Minister for the Northern Territory
Adelaide

Sir. I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 10th inst. declining my application to lease 6000 sq’ miles on the north bank of the Victoria River N.T. at 6d per mile for 42 years.

From reports at my disposal I estimated that nearly one half of the country I applied for is occupied by sterile sandstone ranges, and that I would be paying fully one shilling per mile for such country as I could use. I am not inclined to take up the land as you suggest under clause 59, as the average rent for the first 21 years seems excessive considering the great extent of unoccupied land in the Northern Territory and the terms for the last half of the lease seem indefinite.

Would you therefore please state the lowest rent you are prepared to accept for the land applied for in my letter of the 27th inst. at the same rental per mile for the entire term of 42 years. I would feel obliged for your early decision on this matter as I am
about despatching a cargo of sheep to my country in Kimberley W.A. but on receiving a favourable reply from you I would probably alter their destination to the Northern Territory.

I [remain ?]

Yours most obediently

Joseph Bradshaw

Whether his complaint was successful or whether he decided to pay the full amount is unknown, but the station came into existence on January 1st 1894 when Bradshaw obtained a lease for 4,800 square miles. Aeneas Gunn and Hugh Young inspected and took delivery of the sheep on Victoria River Downs in January, Gunn then returned to Darwin while Young stayed on to take the sheep overland to Bradshaw (Log Book of Bradshaws Run).

On May 17th a temporary camp was established at the base of ‘The Dome’ and all the stores and equipment were landed there (Log Book of Bradshaws Run). At one stage the Bradshaw stores were kept aboard a cutter, ‘as a precaution against the thieving propensities of the natives’ (Brown, 1895: 3). On September 22nd, 1894, the stores and other goods were shifted to a place called Kumallalay or ‘Youngsford’ and a homestead was established there (Log Book of Bradshaws Run).

In April 1895 Knut Dahl, a Norwegian zoologist, visited the station. His description of the homestead and station staff is the earliest on record:

Having rowed for several hours we heard bells and very soon saw the ‘station,’ an open shed surrounded by some other buildings of still simpler architecture. Three Englishmen, a Brazilian and a Swede, besides a couple of Port Darwin blacks with their women, occupied themselves in shepherding a few thousand sheep, and appeared on the whole to lead a precarious existence. The Swede got very excited at meeting a Scandinavian. The station itself, as a going concern, looked pretty miserable. The houses were, to put it mildly, very sketchily built, all sorts of implements, as it were, floating around anyhow (Dahl, 1926: 190).

Kumallalay remained the homestead site until January 1896 when the homestead was shifted to ‘a high bank on the north side of the Bradshaw Riv. the nearest point to Deutpun springs, the water in the river being too salt Kumalale was deemed unsuitable’ (Log Book of Bradshaws Run). According to South Australian Governor George Le Hunte (1905: 6), who visited the station in 1905, this second homestead was about three and a half miles (six kilometres) above the junction of the Victoria and Angalarri rivers.

In 1905 the homestead was moved again, this time about one kilometre downstream. Apparently the house on this location was rebuilt in about 1913 when David Byers became manager because the timber frame was full of termites. According to Ernestine Hill (1951:254):

For beams and uprights he [Byers] had the bright idea of using Ivan’s old iron pipes. The new house, with its white-ant-proof beams and foundations, looked fine … but one dark night, in the first storms of the wet, it broke into a deafening chorale and town-hall-organ tooting to the skies. Every hollow pipe was packed with frogs that hibernated in the dry and came to life in the wet.
Tenors, soprano, alto, bass, the glee club hammered away night after night, quaver, crotchet, minim and breve, triangle, oboe and bassoon. The white people, living in a bell foundry, went mad for lack of sleep. They moved into the store, leaving their new house to nightly revels all through the wet.

In November 1913 a severe storm hit the station and:

For about half an hour the wind blew with hurricane force, and entirely unroofed the station dwelling house—a substantial building—and the stores and outhouses. The storm was followed by heavy rain, the record being two inches. The iron was so twisted by the force of the wind as to be rendered practically useless (Northern Territory Times, 4-12-1913).

Photographs taken in about 1913-14 indicate that the ‘new’ homestead is the one near the end of the airstrip today. A 1934 report says the homestead was built in 1913 and described it as, ‘‘40’x 60’ over all. G.I., on tubular iron frame, divided into three rooms and verandah all round, 12’ enclosed for store, cement floor’ (NTPLIC 1934, Bradshaw station). It’s possible that some of the iron on this homestead was brought to Bradshaw for use on the original homestead, being re-used in the second homestead and finally on the third ‘old’ homestead.

In January 1898 Joe’s brother Fred obtained a lease for 2000 square miles of country north of the original lease and the two leases were run as one station, making it a massive 6,800 square miles (Log Book of Bradshaws Run).

Initially the station was stocked with 4,500 sheep, purchased from Victoria River Downs in 1893 and driven overland. According to Flinders (2016: 48), Bradshaw intended to take his sheep to Marigui, his station north of the Prince Regent River in the Kimberley, but this didn’t happen because the Western Australian government imposed a duty of 2/6
per head on stock entering the state. However, Bradshaw’s letter to the Lands Department (cited above) and the *Northern Territory Times* (10-11-1893) indicates that if his application to lease the Bradshaw country was not successful he intended to take the sheep to Marigui. Bradshaw’s statement here may have been sincere, but it may also have been designed to pressure the Lands Department in his favour. In any case, his application was successful and instead of taking the sheep to Marigui, Bradshaw threw up that lease and took the sheep to his new property on the lower Victoria River – ‘Bradshaw’s Run’.

When the sheep reached Gregory Creek a camp was formed and they were shorn, and the wool carted to the Depot by James Mulligan later of Jasper Gorge siege fame (see entry for Mulligan under VRD). From there it was taken by boat to Bradshaw’s ship the ‘Red Gauntlet’ at the Dome for transport to Darwin. At this camp it was decided that the route to Bradshaw via Gregory Creek was impassable for sheep so they were instead taken the long way around via Price’s Creek (Delamere), the Flora River and the Fitzmaurice River (Log Book of Bradshaws Run).

It seems logical that from the head Fitzmaurice River the sheep would have been taken down Angalarri Creek to the homestead camp. This may have been done, but there is also evidence to suggest that for a period they may have been kept on the banks of the Fitzmaurice River well down the Koolendong valley. In the 1960s Tex Moar was mustering in the Fitzmaurice River country. When he arrived at the Koolendong his Aboriginal stockmen told him it was the ‘ship camp!’ When Tex queried what they meant by ‘ship camp’ they said, ‘Ship! Alla same nanny goat’ (pers. comm., Tex Moar).

Sheep turned out to be a disaster on Bradshaw. The heavy wet seasons, spear grass, crocodiles, dingos, floods and Aborigines dramatically reduced their numbers. When Knut Dahl visited the station in 1895 he remarked (1926: 190) that, ‘The local blacks were very aggressive and had taken a fancy to spearing sheep, and for this reason the shepherds fired at them whenever they saw them.’ In at least one instance Aborigines who had killed sheep were tracked down and shot by Bradshaw stockmen. In a letter to Billy Linklater in August 1949, Tom Pearce inquired as to the fate of Hugh Young, and had this to say:

> let me know how Young died — he was a heavy drinker — and Carrying a load on his mind — after Shooting, he and McPhee — many of the Blacks out on the Run for Killing Sheep & Burnt them, McPhee informed me — when one of them was partly Burnt — Rose up and scared Young — the eat [sic] of the fire Caused this to take place.

According to S.E. Pearson (31-3-1934) who visited Bradshaw in 1904:

> The first shearing ... took place on the bank of Bradshaw’s Creek, near its junction with the Victoria. As the necessary woolpacks had not arrived from Darwin, the newly-shorn wool was stacked into huge heaps, handy to the landing place for shipping purposes. One night the creek came down a banker from its head, and swept the lot into the Victoria. There was wool hanging on the mangroves for forty miles down the river. The niggers along the lower reaches must have thought there had been a snow-storm.
Pearson may have been on Bradshaw as one of a group of prospectors who chartered a boat named the Minnehaha for a month to visit the Victoria River in 1904 (Davis, 1992: 14).

Pearson’s story is confirmed by Knut Dahl’s account of his visit, referred to above. Dahl says that, ‘the wool, which was the result of the first year’s shearing, … [was] stacked in the open. A flood had obviously worked considerable havoc, as wool was seen high up in all the trees for some distance around’ (Dahl, 1926: 190).

In late 1896 1,553 sheep were shorn, producing 18 bales of wool (Log Book of Bradshaws Run). In July 1897 only 662 sheep were shorn for 9 bales. Then in March 1899 Bradshaw reported that:

> The wet season culminated in an exceptional flood which drowned nearly half the few surviving sheep although all hands were working up to their necks in water till midnight trying to save the sheep in boats. It might have been avoided if the sheep had been moved to the base of the mountain at the first indications of a high flood. The water was two feet deep in the dwelling house and three feet in the kitchen and outhouses. The station staff vacated the house and camped for ten days on a stony rise in the horse paddock (Log Book of Bradshaws Run).

As a result of this flood, in April 1899 Bradshaw reported that, ‘only 114 surviving sheep shorn today’ (Log Book of Bradshaws Run). In spite of their dramatic decline, as late as 1902 Bradshaw imported fourteen more sheep (Waters, 30-3-1903). These ‘declined’ as fast as the others. Writing many years later S.E. Pearson (31-3-1934) recalled that in 1904, ‘Fred Bradshaw had the six survivors … kept in a wire netted enclosure at the homestead, where they were fed and watered by the station gins. We used to jest with Fred, and call it his "sheep museum".’

As well as killing sheep, the blacks also stole shears and fashioned them into spear blades. It may have been one of these that was used in the attack on Mulligan and Ligar at Jasper Gorge in 1895, although it also could have been stolen from VRD or from Delamere, both of which had sheep in the 1880s (Lewis, 2012: 220-238). According to the Northern Territory Times (14-6-1895) it struck Mulligan in the thigh. Aeneas Gunn, who was a cousin of and closely associated with Bradshaw and Bradshaws Run, states that this spear hit Ligar behind the knee and severed the tendons, thus crippling him for life (Prahran Telegraph, 10-6-1899).

A letter to the Northern Territory Times (14-12-1896) reported that:

> The niggers have speared a few more horses, and were kind enough to send in word (the messenger standing on top of a cliff and sheltered by a big rock) that they would spear all the horses and then come along and spear all hands. They also tackled me and another man while poking about in the ranges, but they only hurt themselves.

An account of the mass killing of Aborigines on Bradshaw survives as oral history. According to Pauline Rayner (pers. comm.) her father, Peter Murray, who owned Coolibah and Bradshaw from 1958 to 1963 and remained on the station for a further five years, was told the following story by an old Aborigine named Johnson: Bradshaw station had continual trouble with bush blacks breaking into the station store and stealing bags
of flour, tobacco and so on. Eventually the station whites decided to leave a bag of flour laced with poison in the store. The bag was stolen and a big mob of Aborigines were poisoned.

Less than two years after the station was established moves were made to introduce cattle to Bradshaw. While in Melbourne in June 1895 Bradshaw, ‘purchased all the herd, cattle and horses on Willeroo station from Mr R. C. Cooper’ (Log Book of Bradshaws Run). Willeroo had been abandoned and the stock left to run wild after the murder of the manager, W.S. Scott, in 1892. Jock McPhee was employed to muster the Willeroo cattle and bring them to Bradshaw. Between September 1895 and July 1899 the Log Book of Bradshaws Run documents the arrival of over 1,500 head from Willeroo.

The station remained in Joe Bradshaw’s hands until his death in 1916 and was then taken over by the Miller brothers. They retained the station until June 16th 1937 when it was bought by Paddy Quilty (NTAS NTRS F27, Box 7, PL 2476). Around this time the station was said to be 7,192 square miles with an estimated 14,420 head of stock (horses and cattle). Paddy Quilty died at Wyndham on August 28th 1938 (Courier Mail, 2-9-1938: 4) and the property passed to his brother Tom. Tom purchased the neighbouring Coolibah station and ran Bradshaw and Coolabah as a single property. He held the two leases until 1950 when he sold them both to Snowy Kenna. Kenna and his partner Wason Byers held the property until 1954 when it was taken over by Spooner and Smith, who sold out to Peter Murray in 1958. In turn, Murray sold out to Unibee Australia (an Israeli company) in about 1963, but stayed on the station until final payment was made in about 1967 (pers. comm., Pauline Rayner; McBean, 2008: 123). For further details see entry for Coolibah.

In 1981 Unibee placed Coolibah-Bradshaw on the market and it was bought by Ian McBean. McBean held the property until 1996 when he sold it to the Australian Defence Force, to be used as a field training area (McBean, 2008: 103-127).

‘Captain’ Joe Bradshaw. Owner of Bradshaw from 1894 until his death on July 23rd 1916, aged 62 years. Born and educated in Melbourne, he was the son of Joseph Bradshaw of Bolwarra station, near Ballan, Victoria. The name ‘Bolwarra’ was later applied to a boat owned by Joe Bradshaw. During his life Joe had interests in mining, railways, pastoralism and (particularly) shipping. In 1905 the Pastoralists’ Review (15-12-1905: 792) reported that he had just returned from a visit to England and America where he had gone to ‘confer with a syndicate re a proposed land grant railway across the continent from Adelaide to Port Darwin.’ His title of ‘Captain’ apparently was a nickname rather than a qualification, and was said to have been bestowed by the Sydney Yachting Club (Northern Territory Times, 26-5-1925).

In his schooner ‘Twins’ Bradshaw explored a long stretch of the north coast for which, in 1896, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society (Kelly, 28-1-1982). For services to trade between Australia and the ‘Netherlands Islands’ (modern Indonesia) he was made a Life Fellow of the Imperial Institute. He was also a Justice of the Peace in several states and a Special Justice in the Northern Territory (The Pastoral Review, 16-8-1916; Northern Territory Times, 19-3-1914).
In partnership with others, Bradshaw acquired a pastoral lease covering the whole of the watershed of the Prince Regent and Roe Rivers in the Kimberley region (*Northern Territory Times*, 19-3-1914). This he named Marigui. According to the Graziers’ Review (16-8-1925: 656) the station was stocked by W.G. Gordon, the pioneer of Flora Valley station. In May 1892 Bradshaw advertised for ‘500-600 well-bred heifers, from one to three years, to be delivered to Hall’s Creek’ (*Northern Territory Times*, 27-5-1892), and these are likely to be those Gordon delivered, from his Flora Valley station. Whether he took them all the way to Marigui is unknown.

Among the first arrivals at Marigui was Joe’s wife, Mary Jane (the daughter of William Guy of Hartwell Victoria), Aeneas Gunn and Harry (Hugh) Young. Gunn and Young later helped establish Bradshaw where Gunn became the first manager. He later wrote an extensive series of articles about life at Marigui, published in the Prahran Telegraph. A comprehensive account of Marigui can be found in the book, *Under a Regent Moon* (Willing and Kenneally, 2002).
Eventually the isolation, severe climate and possibly Aboriginal resistance at Marigui led Bradshaw to throw up the lease and shift his attention to Bradshaw. Joe and Mary had a son (Northern Territory Times, 19-3-1914).

In 1903 Joe was the prime mover in the formation of the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company (also known as the Arafura Company). The company obtained leases over 20,000 square miles of country in Arnhem Land and built a homestead on the edge of the Arafura Swamp on the Glyde River. Joe was a major shareholder and the General Manager for the company (Northern Territory Times, 26-1-1903, 6-1-1905, 14-1-1905; Pastoralists’ Review, 15-2-1905: 928). Due to climatic conditions, poor pasture, and attacks by Aborigines and crocodiles, the cattle enterprise failed within a few years.

In May or June 1916, Joe Bradshaw travelled overland to his station in the company of the Miller brothers (Northern Territory Times, 15-6-1916). The Miller brothers may have been going out to inspect the station as they were the owners after Joe’s death (Northern Territory Times, 27-7-1916). Somewhere on this trip, or at the station, an old injury on Joe’s foot turned gangrenous. He returned to Darwin by lugger but the trip was slow due to low tides in the river. After five days the lugger arrived in Darwin on July 19th and Joe had his foot amputated the following day. Initially the operation appeared to be a success, but he took a turn for the worse and died a few days later.

Joe’s dying wish was for his remains to be placed with those of his brother Fred on ‘The Tomb’ at Bradshaw station (Northern Territory Times, 27-7-1916). This was not done as
his funeral was held at the ‘two and half mile [Parap] cemetery’, Darwin. The fragmentary remains of his headstone can still be seen at the Parap cemetery and there is no evidence that his remains were ever taken to Bradshaw.

**Aeneas Gunn.** Manager in 1894 and 1895, according to Hammond (24-9-1938). Gunn was born in Melbourne and was a cousin of Joe and Fred Bradshaw. In 1891 or 1892 he travelled to the north-west Kimberley with Joe Bradshaw to establish Marigui station. Located on the Roe River, after a couple of years hardship the station was abandoned and instead Bradshaw’s Run was established.

Gunn was present on Bradshaw from the time the first boatload of stores arrived there. Together with Hugh Young he took delivery of the VRD sheep on Bradshaw in January 1894. He left the station and returned to Melbourne in November 1895, probably because he had contracted malaria (Log Book of Bradshaws Run, entry for 18-11-1895; Dickinson, 1990: 136). In Melbourne he ran the Prahran Library, but within a few years he decided to return to the North. With his new wife, Jeannie, whom he had married on December 31st 1901, he travelled to Elsey station where he was manager until his death from malarial dysentery on March 10th, 1903 (*The Argus*, 24-3-1903; *The Leader*, 28-3-1903).

On Government Geologist HYL Brown’s map accompanying his report on a trip he made to the Victoria River in 1894, he show a section of the Victoria River below the Lobby Creek junction as ‘Gunn’s Reach’, but the name has not survived. He was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society from 1896 until his death in 1903 (Kelly, 28-1-1982).

**Fred Maxwell Bradshaw.** Part-owner and manager from at least April 1898 until his death in 1905. According to ‘Culkah’ (J. Kyle-Little: *The Pastoral Review*, 16-11-1951), Fred Bradshaw introduced the first power-driven boat on the Victoria River and it was this boat which took the wounded teamsters, Mulligan and Ligar, from Bradshaw station to Darwin in 1895. It may only have taken the teamsters from Bradshaw to Blunder Bay because they were taken from there on the SS Victoria. The engineer on the Bradshaw boat was the notorious Ivan Egoriffe (see entry below).

Along with three other white men – Ivan Egoriffe, Ernest Dannock and Jerry Skeahan – and three Aborigines, Fred was killed in the ‘Bradshaw massacre’ in 1905 (Lewis, 2012: 179-189). After being temporarily interred on the beach where they were washed up, the remains of Fred, Ernest and Ivan were taken to Bradshaw station and placed in a vault. In September 1908 the coffin containing Fred Bradshaw’s bones were carried by relays of blacks to the top of an isolated, flat-topped mountain on the banks of the Victoria River near the mouth of Angalarri Creek (*TCPJ Notes*, 14-9-1908). This hill has since been known as ‘Bradshaw’s Tomb’. The top of the hill is solid rock so the coffin was not buried. Old photographs show that it had a number of rocks placed on top and was left to the elements.
Fred Bradshaw, c1890 (John Bradshaw collection).

Fred Bradshaw’s coffin on ‘Bradshaw’s Tomb’, c1914 (Johns collection).
In 1984 I climbed to the top of this hill and located the coffin handles – all that remained of the coffin and its contents. I left them in situ, but they were later removed and placed in the museum at Timber Creek. Several accounts state that the remains of two of the other victims were also placed in this coffin (Moffatt, 1990: 64; NT News, 15-11-1966), but this cannot be confirmed.

As well as the name of the station, the Bradshaw name is commemorated on the Flora 1:100,000 map at Bradshaw Creek.

Edith Pound. Cook and housekeeper. Arrived on Bradshaw with her husband, George, in September 1896 and died there on June 25th 1898, aged 36. She was buried in the horse paddock (Log Book of Bradshaws Run).

Ivan Egoriffe. Engineer and general hand from 1894 until his death in 1905. After his death he was described in the Northern Territory Times (22-12-1905) as:

a native of Russia or Finland, about 45 years old, who has been for many years in the service of Bradshaw Bros. He is a powerfully built man who has a reputation for surliness and harsh treatment of the natives under him. Egoriffe has generally been in charge of the oil launches belonging to the station.

An example of his cruel, possibly murderous, nature comes from the Log Book of Bradshaw’s Run. In September or October 1899 Kolumboi, an Aborigine from south of Halls Creek (Prahran Telegraph, 5-8-1899), and a ‘lubra’ named Yanimbella ran away from Bradshaw for reasons which are not clear. On October 5th they were captured and chained up for the night. The next day the Log Book records that, ‘Ivan gave Kolumboi the father of a bumping and sent him and the lubra to glory.’ Whether this means that he killed them or told them to clear out is unknown, but neither Kolumboi’s nor Yanimbella’s name appear in the Log Book again.

It seems likely that Ivan was a man who turned violent when drunk. The entry in the Log Book for October 21st 1899 mentions that, ‘Larsen and Ivan have been stealing grog out of the store, hence sundry rows.’ On December 23rd 1900 the Log records that, ‘Towards evening Ivan was intoxicated and behaved like a madman.’

Ivan narrowly avoided death when Aborigines attacked the Wunwulla on the Daly River in 1900. The boat’s skipper, Larsen, was murdered and Ivan was knocked down and thrown overboard but managed to escape in the boat’s dinghy (The Advertiser [Adelaide], 24-7-1900). One of the alleged murderers, Josey, was later shot while resisting arrest on Bradshaw (Log Book of Bradshaws Run, 20-8-1901). Another, Jimmy, was arrested, tried and convicted in Darwin, sentenced to death and later hanged at Bradshaw homestead (Northern Territory Times, 28-9-1900; TCPJ 6-7-8/4/1901; Log Book of Bradshaws Run, 8-4-1901).

Ivan was one of the men killed in the ‘Bradshaw Massacre’ of 1905. During the trial of the Aborigines accused of the murders, evidence was given that while on a trip from Bradshaw to Darwin the Aboriginal crew of the launch, ‘Bolwarra’, cleared out at Port Keats. Two ‘bush blacks’ were enticed aboard the launch as replacement crew but when they found out the white men wanted them to go on to Darwin they wanted to leave.
Egoriffe and the other whites tied the Aborigines up and Egoriffe beat them with a stick. The boat was moored overnight with the intention of travelling on to Darwin the next morning. During the night the Aborigines escaped their bonds and killed all the whites on board (‘The King versus Combit, Donah and Charley’, 25-3-1907; for a detailed account see Lewis, 2012: 174-77).

**Hugh Young.** Manager in 1896 (Bradshaw, 15-8-1896) and at least at times through to 1900. He was the second manager, after Gunn (*Northern Territory Times*, 19-8-1898). According to Aeneas Gunn, Young was:

particularly capable and adroit in every department of frontier life. He was resolute, daring and resourceful. Like Gunga Din, “he didn’t seem to know the use of fear.” He had, too, the additional advantages of a Dookie College education [an agricultural college near Shepparton, Victoria], and had been, during the exploring expedition [by Bradshaw across the Kimberley], an understudy of Mr. Bradshaw, than whom no more resourceful bushman lives, unless exceptions can be made in the instances of McCartney, … Phil Saunders, an overlander, prospector and explorer of northern fame, and “Old Bluey” Buchanan, the Natty Bumpo of Australian backblocks bushcraft. [He was] a good fellow to boot, and the only fault I could find with him … was that he was not a commendable shot. (*Prahran Telegraph*, 5-8-1899). [He] is a musician to his fingertips, and plays almost any musical instruments, from a tin whistle to a pipe organ (*Prahran Telegraph*, 9-9-1899).

A book on the first century of Dookie College confirms that he studied there, being among the first graduates in 1888 (Aldridge, 1986: 177). Other sources confirm that Young was an accomplished pianist (Hill, 1951: 247).

Young accompanied Joe Bradshaw on his land-seeking expedition across the Kimberleys in 1891 (*Prahran Telegraph*, 5-8-1899). This expedition led to the establishment of Marigui station on the Roe River in 1891 or 1892. He arrived by boat shortly after the station was established and stayed until it was abandoned (*Prahran Telegraph*, 5-8-1899).

Young was in the party which established Bradshaw station and became manager there after Aeneas Gunn left, ie, from at least June 1895 (Log Book, January 1894; unprovenanced newspaper cutting, 10-6-1895; see also Brackenbury, 1896: 7), and probably was manager until he died in 1900 (see *Northern Territory Times*, 19-8-1898). Young may not have been a very good manager. According to Tom Pearce (16-8-1949), ‘Young Never ... did any droving like Gunn – Knew little about Cattle Stations’. Pearce is undoubtedly correct that Young never did any droving. He went straight from Dookie (Agricultural) College to Marigui and then to Bradshaw, and so never had time to go droving or to gain much experience of cattle. It was Hugh Young whom Pearce claims was affected psychologically, and who took to drink after the massacre and burning of Aborigines on Bradshaw.

According to Ernestine Hill (1951: 247), it was Young who brought the boab seeds to the Katherine pub and established the trees which are still growing there. If this is correct, and given that Young died in 1900, it follows that the oldest of these trees are probably well over one hundred years old.
While out on the run on July 4th 1900, Young was thrown from his horse. The Log Book of Bradshaw’s Run records that on:

Thurs 5th. Camped here last night Dry Billabong in consequence of H.Y. not being able to proceed any further we are five or six miles from the station. HY got very ill during the night — suffering severe pain throughout the stomach and Abdomen. F.B. sat up with him most of the night, applying pain killers and also hot plates to his stomach. FB set off to the station by day break and brought out some medicine, also Five Myalls with a stretcher to carry HY. back to the station. Arrived at the station between 12 a.m. and 1 P.M. H.Y seemed a little easier after being put to bed, but complained of not being able to pass water, had a hot bath prepared for him and gave him hot milk and water to drink, which seemed to relieve him. But while putting him in the bath his head fell back, and he expired suddenly, without a struggle and without pain. I believe the cause of death to have been Inflammation of the liver and intestines. He was sensible and spoke rationally to within a few minutes of his departure. His death took place about 1.30 PM. Ah Wah immediately constructed a rough coffin to receive the remains
Fri 6th. … 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.

‘Jock’ McPhee. Stockman. ‘Tam-a-Shanter’ in Jeanie Gunn’s We of the Never Never (see SMH, 14-2-1942). He and a blackboy were reported as having a narrow escape from an attack by blacks on Bradshaw in 1896 (Northern Territory Times, 17-4-1896).

In 1894 Joe Bradshaw bought the cattle from the abandoned Willeroo station and over a period of years they were mustered by McPhee and became the nucleus of the Bradshaw herd (Log Book of Bradshaws Run; Northern Territory Times, 23-8-1895). In September 1896 it was reported that he had taken up the abandoned Willeroo lease (Northern Territory Times, 18-9-1896). Apparently this was to forestall any other would-be leaseholder so that he could muster the remaining cattle without interference.

Jock was probably Jock McPhee who took delivery of a mob of Wollogorang cattle and took them to Arafura station after Joe Bradshaw, on behalf of the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company, bought Wollogorang in about 1903 (Graziers’ Review, April 1929: 115-16):

McPhee, with his full plant, … had come all the way from Hodgson Downs … He had been busy McPhee had already taking cattle to Arafura from Elsey and Hodgson Downs. He had a fair lot of horses, and an excellent camp of men and blacks, all of whom were absolutely conversant with the conditions of life. In his camp was a gin who could not have been more than three stone in weight; one of the smallest and smartest little things imaginable … He … took 1600 and started, and of course it was not necessary to convoy him along the road. As he followed hard on the heels of the other men [who were incompetent and lost many cattle], he did well, and delivered some 30 per cent. more than he started with (Anning, Graziers’ Review, April 1929: 115-16).

On October 4th 1910 McPhee set out from Willeroo to ride to Katherine. He was accompanied by a man named Chas J. G. Schwarz, who was travelling on foot. On
October 9th the mailman, ‘Madrell’ (Mick Madrill) found a deserted camp and a dead body at Native Cat Waterhole, near Scott Creek. Police investigation found this to be Schwarz’s remains. After a prolonged search, on October 20th the police located McPhee’s remains. He was estimated to have been between 60 and 70 years of age (Northern Territory Times, 4-11-1910; Northern Standard, 12-2-1926).

McPhee’s name is commemorated on a boab on present-day Fitzroy station which has ‘J McPhee 8-7-1900’ carved on it (Lewis, 1996c: 163-66).

Frederick William Palmer. Stockman, head stockman and drover on Bradshaw from 1899 to about 1903. Little is known of his early life other than that he was believed to have been well educated and to have been a bank clerk before coming to the Territory (Northern Territory Times, 21-4-1905; Graziers’ Review, April 1929: 116).

In 1885 a man named Palmer was in charge of 1300 mixed cattle destined for Macartney’s Florida station (Northern Territory Times, 12-9-1885). In 1887 he was reported to be taking cattle from Katherine to the newly formed Auvergne station (Northern Territory Times, 23-4-1887; Rees, 1945: 2). A report in 1905 (The Pastoralists’ Review, 15-2-1905: 928) says that he had come along the Old Coast Track seventeen years earlier (ie., 1886 or 1887). During the late 1880s and the 1890s he was active in the Katherine races, both running horses and as an official (Northern Territory Times, 17-11-1888, 31-12-1888, 29-11-1899, 15-9-1893, 19-1-1894, 25-5-1894). He was one of the first to reach Willeroo homestead after the spearing of Scott in 1892 and he provided a graphic description of the scene (see entry for Willeroo). From 1899 to at least 1901, and possibly until 1903, he was working for Joe Bradshaw as head stockman on Bradshaw station (Log Book of Bradshaw’s Run). In 1901 he took 100 head of cattle from Bradshaw for sale at Brocks Creek (Northern Territory Times, 7-9-1901, 4-10-1901). Also in that year he became a foundation member of the North Australia League (Northern Territory Times, 11-10-1901).

Early in 1904, on behalf of the Arafura Company (the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company), Palmer took delivery of Hodgson Downs station. Later he took delivery of Wollogorang station (Northern Territory Times 18-3-1904) and cattle from Hodgson, Wollogorang and Elsey were sent to stock Arafura (Northern Territory Times, 22-7-1904; 17-3-1905, 23-9-1904). One source states that he was sent from Arafura to take delivery of Wollogorang station (The Pastoral Review, 16-5-1914), but another says he rode across from Hodgson to take delivery (Graziers’ Review, April 16 1929: 115). In July 1904 he sent a herd of 7000 Wollogorang cattle to Arafura (Northern Territory Times, 22-7-1904) and by January 1905 he was said to have delivered 18,000 cattle there (Northern Territory Times, 6-1-1905).

H. Anning, the manager of Wollogorang who had handed that station over to Palmer in 1904, wrote that:

Palmer was good company, and was considered the champion cribbage player of the Territory. He had a most peculiarly shaped head, something like a particularly long pine melon. There was quite a definite sharp ridge along the top, from which the hair fell away sharply on either side. The blacks had nicknamed him “Watermelon” which rather amused him. He told us quite freely that he had sold
his head to the medico in Port Darwin – retaining a life interest, of course! (Graziers’ Review, April 16, 1929: 116-17)

Anning also mentions a Victoria River Aboriginal woman working as a ‘stockboy’ for drover Jock McPhee who knew Palmer from his time on Bradshaw. On the morning that McPhee’s team left Wollgororang with cattle, bound for Arafura, Anning says this woman called out to Palmer:

“Good-bye, Watermelon; ah, my poor old man – weentoofuller altogether go away, leavem you behind. No good country this one Watermelon – more better Bigtoria Ribber (Victoria River). Good-by, Watermelon; poor old man Watermelon.” Her voice kept rising higher and higher as we rode away, and quite affected my nerves, sounding like a death wail, but Palmer laughed heartily (Graziers’ Review, May 16, 1929: 234).

The Arafura Company experienced financial difficulties in 1905 and Joe Bradshaw relinquished his position as General Manager (Northern Territory Times, 17-3-1905). Palmer probably lost his position too, because he and Joe arrived back at Bradshaw together on the steamer ‘Waihoi’, on April 12th 1905, to begin work on the station after an absence of two years (TCPJ, 20-5-1905).

The morning after he arrived Palmer was found missing. A stockman on the station, Ernest Dannock, wrote to his family that:

Mr Palmer, who was head stockman here when I first came up, came back last night with mail after being away for two years. He went to bed all right last night but did not turn up for breakfast. We have been searching for him all day but without success. We think he went into the river and has either been drowned or been taken by an alligator (Moffatt, 1990: 55).

The Northern Territory Times of April 21st 1905 reported that:

After searching the blacks reported that Palmer had first left the house wearing his boots, but had returned and taken them off ... Palmer’s trousers were found, and eventually his trail was discovered leading directly into the river at a point some quarter of a mile from the house. Continued search failed to reveal any signs of the unfortunate fellow having again emerged from the water, and the presumption at the present moment is that he has either been drowned or taken by an alligator ... he is said to have been drinking heavily for some weeks.

In a letter to Billy Linklater in August 1949, Tom Pearce recalled that, ‘Parmer [sic] ... was fond of lying with legs in River Cooling off — when on a Spree which — took place — as often as he could get it and Know [sic] doubt was Taken by a Saltie’. Station Aborigines searched along the river for some time but his body was never found, and some weeks later Fred Bradshaw remarked, ‘I am afraid the remains of the unfortunate man have become the prey of the Alligators long before this’ (FMB, 2-6-1905).

It appears that while he was ‘on the grog’ in Darwin something underhand may have been going on there. After his death there were inquiries from a relative about his estate, and Fred Bradshaw remarked that Palmer had been ‘pretty well fleeced before he got away’
(FMB, 17-7-1905). This could mean that while he was on his binge he was not given value for money by an unscrupulous publican, or that he had a lot of ‘friends’ to help him drink his money away.

Victor Claude ‘Nugget’ Raymond. Stockman on Bradshaw in 1909. He was reported to be 76 years old in 1957 (Hoofs & Horns, March 1957: 4), so he would have been born around 1881. Between October 1907 and January 1909 he was head stockman on Auvergne (TCPJ, 26-10-1907, 3-1-1909). By October 1909 he was employed on Bradshaw (TCPJ, 15-10-1909). Raymond was still on Bradshaw in 1921 when the then manager, David Byers, disappeared without trace (TCPJ Notes; see entry on Byers below). After the police gave up searching for Byers, Raymond continued to search for another two days.

Thomas Giles. Manager (or stockman?) in 1905 (Northern Territory Times, 22-12-1905). According to the 1894-1911 Timber Creek police letter book (entry for 9-11-1905), he arrived in the Territory in July 1905. This could fit with information in one of Fred Bradshaw’s letters to ‘John’ in which he says the new stockman will arrive soon (FMB, 17-7-1905), but is more likely to be Charles Webster (see next entry). He died from ‘inflammation of the liver’ on the 9th of November 1905, aged 63. It was very shortly after Giles’ death that the ‘Bolwarra’ left for Darwin carrying the men who were murdered on the way in the ‘Bradshaw massacre’.

Charles P. Webster. Manager, 1905-1907. He was hired as a stockman in Melbourne by Joe Bradshaw and arrived in Darwin at the end of May, 1905 (FMB, 2-6-1905). After the death of Giles in November 1905 he took on the role of manager, and remained in that role until he committed suicide by shooting himself on December 14th, 1907. He was 54 years old at the time which would place his birth date as 1854 (Northern Territory Times, 10-1-1908; TCPJ, 15-12-1907, TCPLB 1894-1911, entry for 28-5-1908). In reporting his death the Northern Territory Times remarked that, ‘the [Victoria River] district seems to have the taint of tragedy in its atmosphere’ (Northern Territory Times, 10-1-1908).

Oliver Garfield Walter Wye. Manager from 15th December 1907 until at least January 31st, 1910 (TCPJ, 10-8-1919, 31-1-1910 and TCPLB 1894-1911, entry for 28-1-1910). Wye was in the Victoria River region from very early times. He had been head stockman on Bradshaw before becoming manager after the suicide of the previous manager, Webster (Northern Territory Times, 10-1-1908; TCPJ, 15-12-1907, 12-7-1908).

In 1908 Wye was interviewed by police about the previous manager, Webster, who was alleged to have murdered an Aboriginal man by giving him tobacco steeped in cyanide, and/or to have shot an Aboriginal named Calico on the cliffs near the spring that supplied the homestead. The police investigated, but could find no supporting evidence (TCPLB 1894-1911, 1-8-1908). This is quite possibly related to the story a Coolibah Aborigine named Old Johnson told Peter Murray when Murray was the station owner in the 1950s. Johnson said that in the early days at Bradshaw Aborigines kept breaking into the station store and couldn’t be stopped. In the end a bag of poisoned flour was placed in the store. It was stolen by the Aborigines and a great many died after eating damper made from the flour (pers. comm., Pauline Rayner).

In October 1909 Wye reported that:
when he, and employee named Raymond and a blackboy were riding along the run about 40 miles from the homestead about 30 natives suddenly attacked them by casting a shower of spears. The natives were in ambush. When the spears were thrown Wye, Raymond and the blackboy all fired their weapons at the natives and missed them. Wye and his companions discharged all their ammunition — 14 rounds — and then rode off some four miles and camped. Before riding off the natives threw stones at the party and while the party was in camp the natives set fire to the grass and the fire drove the party to make another camp (TCPJ, 15-10-1909).

Three weeks later in a gorge near the Angalarri River (Bradshaw station) a party led by Mounted Constable Dempsey:

found a huge blacks camp with approach so difficult that all except 8 lubras got away. Natives had a small garden of watermelons here, enclosed by stakes. Questioned lubras caught and learnt that notorious Bobby and a very dangerous boy known as "Killameer" who has on different occasions been employed at, and run away from Bradshaw’s, were amongst the many in the camp on our approach. … "Killameer" has boasted that he will Kill a white man (TCPJ, 5-11-1909).

Nothing more appears to have been done to investigate the matter. Wye later became manager or head stockman at Mount Sanford (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz). It’s possible that Wye is the man said by local Aborigines to have been involved in early massacres on Montejinni, and named by them as ‘Old Wallaway’. He died on the Victoria River at Wave Hill on August 20th, 1949 (WHPJ, 21-8-1949).

**David James Byers.** Manager for Joe Bradshaw from at least September 1911 (*Northern Territory Times*, 1-9-1911; TCPJ, 26-8-1913) until Joe’s death in 1916, and then manager for the Miller brothers until his death in August 1921 (Daly River police journal, 7-10-1921; TCPLB, 1911-1925, entry for 25-8-1921).

Byers had his wife on Bradshaw as the Timber Creek Police Journal for October 16th 1913 reports the arrival by launch of Mr & Mrs Byers, and she was still there in August 1921 when Byers disappeared without trace on the station (Daly River police journal, 7-10-1921). According to the *Northern Territory Times*, (16-8-1921):

Mr D.J. Byers, who had returned from Darwin a couple of weeks ago per train to Brock’s Creek, started home to Bradshaw’s Station, some 180 miles, in company with Mr. Ford, on horseback. Mr. Byers was not in good health. When within some 40 miles of the station, Mr. Ford went ahead, but after a long wait, finding Mr. Byers did not come up, he returned in search, but could find no trace of his companion. After a fruitless search he went on to the station and reported. The Katherine police and others carried out a prompt and minute search but so far no trace has been found of Byers or the horse.

Mrs Byers took the disappearance and undoubted death of her husband very hard indeed as the investigating Constable reported that, ‘It was impossible to obtain particulars of Byers Age etc. from Mrs Byers when I was at Bradshaw as she used to scream & break down’ (TCPJ Notes, 25-8-1921). Twenty eight people were involved in the search for Byers, but apart from horse tracks and Byers’ horse, no trace was ever found (*Northern Standard*, 5-5-1922).
After her husband’s disappearance Mrs Byers moved to Darwin where in 1924 she bought a dress shop (Northern Standard, 8-1-1924). In 1925 she and Mrs Voules Brown were in a buggy in Smith Street, Darwin, when the horse bolted and smashed them against an iron post. Both women were killed. Mrs Byers had been in the Territory for 26 years, mostly at Brocks Creek. At the time of her death she was 48 years old (Northern Territory Times, 6-11-1925; Northern Standard, 3-11-1925).

Byers’ disappearance was always treated as a mystery, but because he was known to have been suffering a fever it was believed that he had suffered an attack of delirium, become lost and died (see Hill, 1951: 400). According to Pauline Rayner (pers. comm.) her father, Peter Murray, who had owned Coolibah in the late 1950s-early 1960s, was told by a very old Aborigine named Johnson that an early white manager of Bradshaw had been speared and that no one ever found out. He had been speared because he was ‘too cheeky’ – too rough on the Aborigines. The only Bradshaw manager ever to go missing was David Byers.

Norman Albert Miller & Herbert Vaughan Miller. Owners from 1916 to 1937. According to Edna Quilty (1999: 7) the Miller brothers were solicitors from Melbourne. It may be that the Miller brothers had gone out with Joe Bradshaw to inspect the station with a view to buying it as they were with him on the station when he became ill. It’s possible they were already part-owners before Joe’s death (NTPLIC 1934, Bradshaw station); they definitely were the owners shortly after his death (Northern Territory Times, 27-7-1916). The Timber Creek police journal (21-7-1934) refers to ‘Mr Miller’ as the manager of Bradshaw in June 1934, but he should have been referred to as ‘owner’ because at this time Harold Cook was still manager. It appears that the Miller brothers retained Bradshaw until June 11th 1937 when Paddy Quilty became the owner (NTRS NTAS F27, Box 7, PL 2476).

Ivor Townshend Hall. Manager from 1919 to 1921 or 1922, according to Ogden (1989: 13-14, 23). However, Ogden’s statements here appear to be unreliable. There’s evidence that David Byers was manager until August 1921 (see above) so Hall couldn’t have taken over until late 1921 or early 1922. Ogden (1989: 13-14, 23) also says that Hall stayed on Bradshaw for about two years and became manager of Auvergne in 1924. A two year stint and the latter date support the idea that Hall began work on Bradshaw in late 1921 or 1922. Ogden quotes Hall as saying of Bradshaw that, ‘It was useless, poor, miserable country, but I was manager there. There were more black-fellows than cattle. The blacks were wild and I only ever had one other white man with me.’

Ivor and his brother Noel came out from the Hunter River Valley in New South Wales to Victoria River Downs as teenagers (Northern Territory Newsletter, January-April 1975). They were nephews of the then manager, Dick Townshend (Schultz and Lewis, 1995: 21). Ogden (1983: 13) says they were there by 1908 which is probably correct as Ivor’s name first appears in the Timber Creek police journal in 1909 (TCPJ, 25-4-1919). Both men stayed in the Territory all their lives. Ivor married a woman named Nina Pearce.

In 1920 Ivor Hall, Matt Wilson and Neal Durack restarted horse racing at the Depot by forming the Victoria River Amateur Jockey Club (Northern Territory Times 1-6-1920). In 1921 Ivor and Wilson formed a partnership in the Depot store (VRD Ledger 4, Victoria River Downs Ledgers, 1909-1944; see also Northern Territory Times, 2-12-1924 and 13-
According to the *Northern Territory Times* (31-3-1925) he sold his interest in the store in March 1925. The last entry for Wilson and Hall in the VRD records is on the 30th of June 1925 (VRD Ledger 4, Victoria River Downs Ledgers, 1909-1944). Jim Ronan became Wilson’s partner in 1926 (Ronan, 1966: 4).

Vern O’Brien cites information which says that Hall and Wilson were partners for a block on the Wickham. As far as I am aware, there was never a ‘block on the Wickham’ other than Victoria River Downs, so this may actually have been the Humbert River block held by Billy Butler and Noel Hall (see entry for Humbert River). Another possibility is that Vern has mixed up Hall with Frayne as for a period Frayne and Wilson were partners on the Coomanderoo block, on the headwaters of the West Baines River to the west of Humbert River (see the entry for Frayne under Coomanderoo).

Ivor was manager of Nutwood Downs in 1936 and 1937 (*Northern Standard*, 24-4-1936; Gibbs, 1995: 65; Fuller, diary, 1937-38). In 1953 he and Eric Izod won the ballot for the Killarney block and Ivor acted as manager on the station (*Hoofs & Horns* February 1953: 39).

Ivor’s brother Noel was at times a drover, farmer, buffalo hunter, had a butchers shop in Pine Creek, and owned Bonrook station (Riddett, 1996a). On May 1st 1939 he married Dorthy Allen, a Sister at the Wimmera Home at Victoria River Downs (Riddett, 1996b). According to Keith Landsdowne, when Japanese bombers attacked Katherine, Noel and Dorthy sheltered behind a tree. Noel had one arm around his wife and the other around the tree and a piece of shrapnel from a nearby bomb cut a joint off one of his fingers (Anon, *Northern Territory Newsletter*, July 1977). He died in Adelaide in 1990 or 1991.

**Thomas Harold Cook.** Manager from about 1927 or 1928 until Paddy Quilty became owner-manager in June 1937 (Ogden, 1989: 13, 14, 18, 19, 25; Morey, 1977c: 18; TCPJ, 8-4-1937). VRD station records mention T.H. Cook on the station breaking 13 colts there in May 1921 (VRD diary 1927, entry for 31-5-1921). These records have him on the station again in October 1927 and leaving there for Bradshaw on October 20th 1927. This suggests that he worked as a stockman in the district in 1921 and that he was manager of Bradshaw in October 1927. A commencement date of 1927 for Cook is supported by an article in *Queensland Country Life* of February 9th, 1939. This is based on an interview with Cook in which he says that he was manager of Bradshaw for eleven years until it was sold to Paddy Quilty in June 1937.

During Cook’s time on Bradshaw several Japanese pearlers were murdered near Port Keats by a group of Aborigines, including one named Nemarluk who later became the focus of a prolonged manhunt. Soon afterwards two prospectors, Koch and Arinsky, were murdered by Aborigines at the head of the Koolendong valley, on the south bank of the Fitzmaurice River (*Northern Standard*, 1-1-1934, 1-6-1934). One of these prospectors is said to have been involved in mining swindles and to have done six months in Borroloola jail (*Adelaide Chronicle*, 1-2-1945), but this has been questioned by historian Tony Roberts (pers. comm.).
Cook assisted the police in their hunt for Nemarluk and the other alleged murderers. He’s said to have shot crocodiles at every opportunity (pers. comm., Paddy Carlton) and to have hated the blacks (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz). Morey (1977c: 18) described him as, ‘a very intelligent, pleasant man’. Another source described him as ‘a first class cattleman, conscientious, hard working and an economical manager’ (Kowald and Johnston, 1992: 128-9).

After he left Bradshaw he was manager of Marion Downs from 1940 until 1955 and in 1961 was temporary manager on Coorabulka station (Kowald and Johnston, 1992: 128-9; Hoofs & Horns, Sept 1951: 48). It’s possible that he was manager of Bradshaw for a short time after Quilty bought the place, or that he had a job elsewhere, because there is a gap of two to three years between Quilty’s purchase and Cook’s job on Marion Downs.

**Tom Liddy.** Stockman, 1926-27 (Ogden, 1989: 25). He and one of his brothers, Jack, were stockmen under Cook in 1931-1932 when Ted Morey was a policeman based at Timber Creek (Morey, 1977d: 18). According to a list of names of northern identities compiled by Gordon Buchanan (junior), either Jack or Tom was known as ‘Melba’. Morey says the brothers were ‘famous throughout Queensland, NT and the Kimberleys for their horsemanship.’ Writing of the packhorse cutting in the cliffs above Bradshaw homestead, Morey (1977c: 18) remarked that, ‘the 800 feet high Yambarran Range [packhorse track was] so rugged and formidable, it was doubted that horse could be brought down this boulder-strewn steepness. The Liddy brothers had’. According to an
article in *The [Townsville] Register* (10-10-1953), Tom later owned Oooloo while his brother Mick owned Claravale. According to Morey (1978g: 35), Tom later owned Douglas station while Mick owned Dorisvale. Where Jack went is unknown.

**Jack ‘Melba’ Liddy.** Stockman 1926-27 (Ogden, 1989: 25) and to at least 1932 (Morey, 1977c: 18). He was a brother to Tom Liddy. As well as stock work he was a drover. In 1934 he and Harry Huddlestone took 616 cattle from Bradshaw to Wyndham (TCPJ, 21-7-1934). His initials and the date ‘15/2/31’ are on a boab on Lobby Creek, Bradshaw station (Lewis, 2000: 168).

**Patrick ‘Paddy’ James Quilty.** Owner-manager who took over from the Miller brothers on June 11th 1937 (NTAS NTRS F27, Box 7, PL 2476). He retained the station until the 29th of August 1938 when he died in Wyndham (TCPJ, 30-8-1938).

**Thomas John Quilty and Olive Marion Underwood.** Owner-managers after Tom’s brother Paddy died in August 1938 (TCPJ, 30-8-1938: Clement, 2002: 42-43) until they sold out to Snowy Kenna in 1950. Tom was born at Normanton, Queensland, on either April 1st (*North Queensland Register*, 15-4-1967: 21) or on April 4th 1887 (Clement, 2002: 42-43). He was the second of six children of Irish-born Thomas Quilty and his wife Mary (née Griffin). Tom was home-schooled for a period before attending Nudgee College, Brisbane. After finishing at college he joined his brothers helping run the family properties Oakland Park and Euroka Springs in the Gulf Country.

In 1909 his parents and two of his sisters moved to Sydney where Thomas senior increased the family fortune through property investments. According to Bolton (1953: 181) the Quilty brothers acquired Bedford Downs (formed from the earlier Idamere and Carolla stations) in 1917 for £34,000 – almost £5 per head of stock, twice the rate that Ord had sold for three years earlier. Patrick managed Bedford while Tom managed Euroka.

In 1919 Tom married Charlotte Byrne. They had four children but their marriage failed when Tom became involved with Olive Underwood, the daughter of a neighbouring station owner. Tom and Olive moved to the Territory in late 1937 and took over the running of the Six Mile Hotel in Wyndham. Paddy and Tom had previously purchased Bradshaw station and on his death in 1938 Tom and Olive sold the hotel and moved to Bradshaw. Their initials and the date ‘38’ are on a boab near Bradshaws Tomb and on another boab near the southwest end of the Yambarran Range (Bradshaw) with the date March 1940 (Lewis, 1996c: 70-72; Lewis, 2000: 159-161).

They purchased the adjoining Coolibah station in 1939 (TCPJ, 4-4-1939) and the two stations were run as one. In 1940 they surrendered the western part of Bradshaw (4,067 square miles). This was later taken up by Dave Fogarty and Frank McMahon and named Buffalo Springs. Tom ‘closed for Springvale on April 1, 1948, for £17,000’. He and Olive continued to live on Coolibah-Bradshaw until they sold out to Snowy Kenna in 1950. They then moved to Springvale station.

Beth Beckett who got to know Tom and his family in the late 1940s says that his nickname was ‘Treacle Tom’ and she remembered him as a man with:
an outgoing personality and a reputation as an outstanding cattle and horse man. … Renowned for his generosity he would back anyone he thought worthy of assistance and more than once helped those down on their luck. Now almost a legendary character, he was a great benefactor of worthy causes … Tom was larger than life, hardworking, hard drinking and boisterous and he had a seemingly endless supply of energy and wit (Beckett, 1998: 84).

Quilty also earned a reputation for being hard on the Aborigines. In August 1944 the Timber Creek police met him and:

enquired re his complaint runaway abos and informed him his method of harshness towards the blacks would have cease otherwise he wont have a single one on the place inside 12 months. In 1942 advised T.J Quilty re his working & feeding & clothing of blacks. Blacks on Stn state the boys ran away because of no clothing & insufficient food.'

Patrol Officer Sweeney reported in 1947 that:

Mr Quilty is still having trouble with his working natives running away from the station. Two of the natives on the hand pumps were under punishment for going walkabout without the manager’s permission. Two lubras were shut up each night in a store building and not permitted to camp with their husbands in the camp because they had previously run away from the station. Constable Stott had recently returned one boy to the station who had left the station. The boys working around the station when questioned stated that food and clothing were in short supply and that Mr Quilty was a hard master (Sweeney, 1947: 4).

Tom was also a good bush poet. A volume of his poems was published in 1958 (The Drover’s Cook and Other Verses) with all proceeds going to the Australian Inland Mission and the Royal Flying Doctor Service (North Queensland Register, 15-4-1967: 21).

In July 1964 Tom divorced his wife and in September he married Olive. In 1976 he was given an OBE (Order of the British Empire) for his services to primary industry. He remained on Springvale until 1978. After being incapacitated by a number of strokes he and Olive left Springvale to live at Oakland Farm near Capel, Western Australia. He died there on November 24th 1979 (Clement, 2002: 42-43; Quilty, 1999: 236).

**Jack Liddell.** Manager for Tom Quilty in December 1940 and April 1941 (TCPJ, 19-12-1941 and 25-4-1941). While manager of Coolibah he badly dislocated his knee joint in a fall from a horse and was eventually taken by plane to Darwin for treatment (TCPJ, 19-12-1940). His name was pronounced ‘Lid-ell’. In October 1932 Liddell and a number of other men obtained miner’s rights at Wave Hill police station and then left to join the ill-fated gold rush to the Granites (WHPJ, 11-10-1932). Before leaving Wave Hill he bought provisions and/or equipment at Mullang Khan’s store near the police station and paid with a forged cheque in the name of Laurie Pumpa (TCPJ, 26-10-1932). The forgery was discovered and Liddell was arrested at the Granites. He was taken by Mounted Constable Jock Reid on horseback onto the Murranji track, with the intention of catching the train to Darwin at the railhead at Birdum. However, near Montejinni station Reid’s horse fell with him crushing him against a tree. He sustained fractured ribs and injury to his pelvis,
his left knee and his ankle. Liddell and two trackers took Reid back to Wave Hill. When he recovered he and Liddell resumed their journey. Liddell was committed for trial at Newcastle Waters on December 24th for forging and uttering. Eventually he was sentenced to a year in prison (Northern Territory Times, 6-1-1933 and 11-4-1933; Southwell family collection photo caption; WHPJ 3-12-1932).

Between May 1946 and April 1950 he was sometimes ‘cowboy’ and sometimes head stockman at Moolooloo (VRD Journals: April 45 to Jan 48). For a time he also worked for Noel Hall at Hall’s butchers shop in Pine Creek (pers. comm., Billy Harney). Records show that Liddell married in May 1947 and that his wife was cook at Moolooloo from December 1948 to September 1949, and again from October 1949 to April 1950 (VRD Journals: April 45 to Jan 48). By April 1951 and through 1952 Jack and his wife were working on Willeroo, Jack as head stockman and his wife as cook. At the end of the year they were transferred to Helen Springs (Hoofs & Horns April 1951: 41; Ryan, 1953: 2).

Lex Bates met Liddell on VRD and remembers him as ‘Mad Jack Liddell’ who always wore ‘the biggest ten gallon hat and the brightest shirts, and was always up to mischief.’ She says that while at Moolooloo he got ‘a mail order bride, a poor frightened little thing’. According to Bert Mettam, writing under the pen name ‘John Stockman’ in Hoofs & Horns (April 1951: 41), Jack had often been told that he was the spitting image of Chips Rafferty.

In Hoofs & Horns (April 1956: 14) it was reported that Liddell, who ‘spent many years working for V.R.D. and Vestey’s’ was on Cadelga, South Australia. Marie Mahood also knew Liddell on VRD and says that he was ‘a real gentleman when sober’ and that he eventually became an alcoholic and died at Halls Creek in the mid-1960s. Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says Jack’s favourite drink was Star brandy. Like Marie Mahood, Edna Quilty (1999: 119, 160) describes him as an alcoholic. She says that in the late 1950s he
worked as a cook on Lansdowne station in the Kimberley and that he eventually died there and was buried in the old Wyndham cemetery.

Clarrie ‘Mun’ Bastion. Manager? (Buchanan family papers). He’s described as head stockman on Bradshaw in 1939 by the Timber Creek police (TCPJ, 14-9-1939).


Peter Chester Murray. Owner of Coolibah/Bradshaw (minus the Buffalo Springs block) from 1958. At this time the block that was to become Innesvale station was part of the Coolibah lease.

In 1960 Murray made a deal with the Lands Department to surrender the Innesvale block in return for the Buffalo Springs lease. Paul Vandeleur, the then lessee of Buffalo Springs, was told by the Lands Department that the lease would not be renewed and the deal with Murray went through. The Innesvale block was later won in a ballot by Ian McBean. The leases comprising Buffalo Springs, Bradshaw, Wombungi and Coolibah were then known collectively as Coolibah station. Murray sold the station in 1963 to Paul Cullen who was representing a ‘Jewish company’, Unibeef Australia (Dorling, 1963). However, he remained on the station until final payment was made in 1968 or 1969 (pers. comm., Pauline Rayner).
Ken J. Hall. Manager for the ‘Jewish’ company, Unibeef Australia, in 1968-69. Hall had been a manager for Dalgety in Darwin (pers. comm., Pauline Rayner).

Joe Groves. Manager for six months from late 1968 (Groves 2011: 169, 176). For additional biographical information see entry under Fitzroy.

Rowland ‘Rowly’ Walker. Manager for eleven years from at least August 1970 (TCPJ, 21-8-1970) until at least 1981. This was during the period when Bradshaw and Coolibah were run as one station, known as Coolibah. It was in Walker’s time (1970) that the centre of operations was shifted from Coolibah to Bradshaw where a new homestead was built after the wet season of 1971 (Bishaw, 30-9-1970). According to Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.), Walker completed major improvements on Bradshaw for the Israeli investors who didn’t stay long enough to reap the rewards and would have lost heavily.

According to Native Affairs Petrol Officer Len Muller, Walker managed the station from Bradshaw homestead and was, ‘obviously a cattleman with experience in handling labour’. Muller also wrote that, ‘At the station in June 1971 were the Coolibah Aboriginal group from Coolibah the previous year almost intact, a mechanic from Timber Creek with his wife and father, and four older people from Auvergne’ The mechanic was an Aboriginal named Mikamin, with the European name of Major (Muller, 1972).

Dick Gill. Gill carried out aerial mustering and other aerial work on Bradshaw for 11 years. According to Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.), Gill was a brilliant, dare-devil pilot working for Rolly Walker, and during his time there were small airstrips all over Bradshaw at yards and camps.

In about 1974 the Bullo River plane returning from delivery of a load of beef to Wave Hill crashed near Silverbox yard on Bullita. It was Gill who located the wreck and the seriously injured pilot, Ackerman, and a helicopter flown by John Armstrong was sent to rescue him (pers. comm., John Armstrong). Eventually Gill returned south and bought a property near Tumbarumba where he started a deer farm. He shot himself in September 2015.

Ian McBean. Owner-manager from June 1982 until 1996 when he sold Bradshaw to the Army for use as a military training area. As part of the sale deal he was given a lease to run the station until the end of 1998. In 1999 he was allowed to do another muster on part of Bradshaw but the following year Aborigines from Palumpa were said to be preparing to muster country north and south of the Fitzmaurice. Whether this happened or not is unclear. For additional biographical information see entry under Innesvale.
BUFFALO SPRINGS

The western part of the original Bradshaw block, surrendered by Tom Quilty in 1940. The area was taken up under grazing licence by Dave Fogarty and Frank McMahon in January 1945 and named Buffalo Springs. They stocked the block with cattle from Douglas station (TCPJ, 17-10-1945; Ogden 1983: 70) and with 50 head from Humbert River station (pers. comm., Billy Harney). It was held by them until 1954 when they sold the place and their cattle to Mick Vandeleur and Jim ‘Ringer’ Edwards. Vandeleur and Edwards then took Buffalo Springs cattle to stock Camfield (Barclay, 22-12-1954).

Buffalo Springs became part of Bradshaw station once more in 1960 when it was taken over by Peter Murray (pers. comm., Pauline Rayner). According to Paul Vandeleur, the Lands Department had promised that if they stayed two years their grazing licence would be converted to a pastoral lease. They mustered the place in 1954 but late in the year they got word that the Lands Department would not renew their grazing licence and they had to vacate the block. Vandeleur and Edwards got £1,180 compensation for improvements on Buffalo Springs (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 53, GL 1574). In 1967 Patrol Officer A. Scott reported that Joe Groves was contract mustering on Coolibah and that the ‘Old Buffalo Springs homestead is used as a base camp Beds, tables and chairs are available. A shower and lavatory are installed. … Spring water is reticulated to the kitchen [sic], shower and laundry’ (Scott, 1967a).

David George Fogarty & Frank Thomas ‘Baldy’ McMahon. Owners, 1945-1949. The Timber Creek police journal of March 24th 1945 reports: ‘F. McMahon & 2 W.A. boys arrived with plant of horses enroute Humbert. McMahon & Fogarty have opened up some country north of Bradshaw for cattle & horse breeding’. Their partnership was dissolved in 1949. Fogarty retained a 400 square mile block and formed a new partnership with his brother Ted (Ogden, 1989: 35). Before taking up Buffalo Springs, Fogarty had worked as a horse breaker on Wave Hill, a drover and a taxi driver (Ogden, 1989: 35). As a young man he had spent a number of years as a stockman on Humbert River station (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz). In 1956 he married Bill Crowson’s daughter, Joyce (Hoofs & Horns, April 1956: 8), who later died from cancer (pers. comm., Dave Napier). According to former Timber Creek policeman John Gordon, Dave was a teetotaller, one of the very few in the district (Gordon, 1992: 131). The others included Charlie Schultz and Gordon himself.

After the sale of Buffalo Springs in about August 1953 (TCPJ, 3-11-1953), Dave Fogarty shifted 1200 or 1300 mixed cattle from Buffalo Springs to Mulga Park, a property in Central Australia which he’d acquired in 1950 (Travers, 2003: 124; Hoofs & Horns, May 1951: 48 and August 1951: 43). These cattle were walked from Buffalo Springs to Mulga Park, a journey of seven months. In the opinion of Paul Vandeleur (pers. comm.), ‘Dave Fogarty was one of the best horsemen ever’. Fogarty was 31 in 1950, ie born in 1919 (Hoofs & Horns, October 1950: 44).

Before joining Dave Fogarty at Buffalo Springs, ‘Baldy’ McMahon was bookkeeping on Moola Bulla station (Ogden 1983: 70). He had previously been a stockman on Bradshaw (TCPJ, 31-8-1938), head stockman on Auvergne (TCPJ, 19-11-1939), head stockman and then overseer on Lissadell from 1940 and manager of Alice Downs in 1969. In June 1945 McMahon brought 83 head of horses and 10 head of donkeys to Buffalo Springs (TCPJ 29-6-1945). In 1950 he became head stockman for Reg Durack on Kildurk (Hoofs &
Horns, October 1950: 44) and by August 1951 he was the manager of Creswell Downs (Hoofs & Horns, August 1951: 43; pers. comm., Patsy Applebee). According to Hoofs & Horns (October 1959: 59) he became manager of Lissadell in October 1959. His daughter, Patsy Applebee, says he was manager of Lissadell for several years from about 1969. Frank Willmington and Lloyd Fogarty reckon this is wrong. He also had been overseer on Mabel and Texas Downs, and managed Alice Downs in 1960-69 (Anon, ‘Narrative of an inspection tour of the Northern Territories and the Kimberleys,’ 1970; pers. comm., Patsy Applebee).


Charlie ‘Curley’ Hazard. Stockman, drover and occasional station caretaker. He was on Buffalo Springs in 1949 when policeman John Gordon first arrived at Timber Creek (Gordon, 1992: 130). Hazard had previously been working at Gordon Creek outstation on VRD (VRD Journals: April 1945 – Jan 1948) and with Vesteyes as head stockman on Gordon Downs in 1944 (WHPJ, 29-3-1944). Eventually Dave Fogarty gave him some horses to make up his plant and Hazzard went droving (Ogden, 1989: 32).
**Jack Douglas.** Manager from at least May 1955 to at least June 1958 (TCPJ, 5-5-1955, 8-6-1958). By June 18th 1958 he was on Humbert River station (TCPJ, 18-6-1958). Later he went to Camfield station to work for Vandeleur (pers. comm., Mick Bower). He was described as ‘part-coloured’. Johny Stacey (pers. comm.) remembered him as an excellent horseman.
Bullita homestead c1930 (Reg Durack collection).

The Timber Creek police journal in July 1904 noted that, ‘About 11 a.m. J.J. Skeahan & Charlie Smith arrived here from Newry station. Skeahan is going out to inspect his Brothers Block of country with view of stocking it’ (TCPJ, 15-7-1904). At this time Jack Skeahan was the manager of Auvergne and Jerry Skeahan was working there as a stockman. On March 29th, 1905, Jack Skeahan obtained pastoral permit 82, giving him grazing rights to an area of 1,020 square miles south and east of Auvergne (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 2, PP 82/1905). Apparently Ambrose Durack was a partner with the Skeahans and he shifted his cattle from agistment on Dunham River station to Bullita in September, 1905 (Durack, 1983: 389). In recent years Ambrose Durack’s partnership with the Skeahan’s has been confirmed by Reg Durack (Durack, 1987).

The Skeahans and Ambrose were cousins of the original East Kimberley pioneers, M.P. and J.W. Durack (Durack, 1983: 73, 133). Jack had come to the Victoria River/Ord River region in 1886 when, according to Mary Durack (1974: 269), he stowed away on the ship bringing his cousins to take possession of their Kimberley holdings. Jerry Skeahan followed his elder brother out some time later (Durack, 1983: 103). By 1898 Jack was managing Auvergne for CD&D (TCPJ, 26-4-1898). Ambrose Durack was head stockman on Argyle by 1898 (Durack, 1983: 73-74). He eventually became manager of Argyle and remained there until about 1923.

The Skeahans and Ambrose Durack named their new block ‘Bullita’. It was located east and south-east of CD&D’s Auvergne station and because of the common (and unfenced) boundary between the two properties CD&D considered it likely that their cousins would raid the Auvergne herds for cleanskin cattle. Consequently, within months of Bullita being established they offered to go into partnership with the Skeahans and Ambrose Durack. Their offer was accepted by September 1905 and the Bullita Pastoral Company came into being (Durack, 1983: 133).
Jerry Skeahan’s involvement with Bullita was short-lived. In November 1905 he broke his leg while working in a stockyard at Auvergne. After setting out to ride over 300 pain-racked kilometres to Katherine, a messenger caught up with the news that he could instead take the Bradshaw launch to Darwin. Halfway to its destination the boat anchored overnight near Port Keats. During the night wild Aborigines crept aboard and murdered Jerry and the three other white men aboard (Durack, 1983: 138; Northern Territory Times, 22-12-1905; see entry for Fred Bradshaw in Bradshaw station section).

In 1907 CD&D obtained pastoral permit 141 for 1,013 square miles of country east of the Bullita block (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 3, PP 141/1908), possibly one of the blocks for which Mary Durack says the company had been paying option rates for a number of years (Durack, 1983: 133). On the other side of this new block was pastoral lease 2202, 300 square miles which Jack Skeahan had acquired in 1902 (information from the Pastoral Leases Card Index at the Office of the Placenames Committee, Darwin). Both blocks – PP 141 and PL 2202 – were placed under the control of the Bullita Pastoral Company and became part of a greatly enlarged Bullita station (Artaud, 31-12-1907).

During the next twenty-five years Bullita was run by at least eight different managers. Ambrose Durack continued for many years as manager of Argyle station while Jack Skeahan remained as manager of Auvergne until 1915. Late that year he sold his share of Bullita to his partners and took his family to settle in the Murchison district of Western Australia (Durack, 1983: 315; NTAS NTRS F199, Box 2, PP 82/1905). The sale came into effect on the 29th of March, 1916 and the size of the property was then put at 1132 square miles (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 2, PP 82/1905).

In the early 1930s a Commonwealth Government committee was set up to investigate the situation regarding pastoral leases in the Northern Territory. In its report on Auvergne and Bullita the committee noted that the owners, CD&D, were financially embarrassed, and that Bullita was deserted and dilapidated. They recommended that, ‘a consolidation area of Bullita’ be resumed and made available for closer settlement (NTPLIC 1934, Auvergne/Bullita).

The station remained in the hands of CD&D until their leases expired on the 30th of June 1945 (Lands Department, 20-1-1943). Between about 1933 and 1947 Bullita didn’t have a manager and the homestead was said to be ‘fast falling into disrepair’ (NTPLIC, 1934, Auvergne and Bullita). During this time there was no permanent white presence on the property and it was occasionally mustered from Auvergne. When the leases expired two major portions were split off. The area north-east of the Auvergne stock route provided the foundation for what became Fitzroy Station, and another large section was incorporated into CD&D’s Auvergne lease. From a size of over 2,300 square miles, Bullita was ultimately reduced by more than half, to 949 square miles (information from the Pastoral Leases Card Index at the Office of the Placenames Committee, Darwin).

In 1948 Bullita was taken up by Charlie Schultz, owner-manager of neighbouring Humbert River Station. The original homestead had burnt down some time before so Schultz built a small new ‘homestead’ at Bullita, but there was rarely, if ever, a permanent white presence, the area being mustered from Humbert River. Schultz placed the property on the market in 1964 for £60,000, ‘walk-in walk-out’. It was bought by Happy Berlowitz in 1967. Ten years later Berlowitz sold Bullita to Brian Hill and in 1981 the property was
auctioned after the Timber Creek races. Reg Durack (pers. comm.) was at the races and when he heard it was to be auctioned he put in a successful bid, and the property returned to Durack control. Reg retained control until 1984 when the station was bought by the Northern Territory Government. In 1992 it was incorporated into the newly formed Gregory National Park (Gregory National Park Draft Plan of Management, May 2001: i). Rightly or wrongly, the purchase by the Northern Territory government was believed by some to have been made to prevent the station falling into the hands of the Aboriginal traditional owners. If this was true then it was ultimately unsuccessful as title to the entire Gregory National Park was handed to the traditional owners in 2010 (Cavanagh, 17-5-2010).

Bullita was never considered to be a good property. According to Alf Martin in 1930, ‘this country is no good and never will be of any use. The place has been formed over twenty years and cannot breed sufficient cattle to keep the place in beef. It is only a small valley on the East Baines River’ (Martin, 20-1-1930). Charlie Schultz said he applied for Bullita, ‘much against my will as I knew it I would draw it, and that it would no doubt help to crucify me in acquiring a decent block’ (Schultz, 26-12-1947) and that the station was known as ‘The Rock’, because of what a hard and poor place it was (Schultz, 18-3-1948).

On August 12th 1947 the newly defined Bullita was taken up by Charlie Schultz, owner/manager of neighbouring Humbert River Station (Information from the Pastoral Leases Card Index at the Office of the Placenames Committee, Darwin). Six years previously the newly created ‘Aboriginal Department’ (Native Affairs) had notified him of its intention to begin using the Humbert River block for the benefit of local Aborigines – over 30 years after it had been gazetted as an Aboriginal reserve – and Schultz had been trying to secure rights to additional land in the district ever since (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 4, GL 109, various letters). He didn’t consider Bullita to be particularly good land but there was nothing else available and he had little choice but to take it up.

McLean. Said to have been manager around 1906 or 1907 (pers. comm., Vern O’Brien, who spoke with McLean’s son, May 1995).

Jim Darcy. Position unknown – present on Bullita with his son Walter in 1908 (Durack, nd.).

Harry Edward Condon. Manager/head stockman by March 1908 (TCPJ, 18-3-1918). He was speared in the shoulder near the homestead in March 1910 (Northern Territory Times, 22-4-1910; TCPJ, 31-3-1910; TCPLB, 1911-1925, entry for 31-3-1910). In a statement to the Timber Creek police (TCPJ, 14-4-1910), Condon stated that:

on March 30th a Gin Named Maggie Employed at the Station, had broken open a Box and Stole Some Tobacco. And when this was discovered the Gin went in hiding in the Creek. About Midnight, Toby and Minnie (A Boy & Gin) Employed at Bullita, Came up to the Homestead and informed him (Condon) that the Gin Maggie was down at the Creek and was frightened to come up, for fear he, Condon, should growl. They enticed him to Go down and bring the Gin up. He did Likewise. In the Meantime the Boy and Gin disappeared. When He, Condon, was within 20 Yds of the beforementioned Creek, the Gin Maggie made her appearance And Condon said Come on back to your Camp don't be frightened, No Matter Box —
And as he turned on his heel to return He saw a tall Blackfellow rise up and the next instant he felt the pierce of a Spear in the back. He immediately ran for the House, Pulling at the shaft of the Spear in the Meantime, to Extricate it from his body. He then dispatched the Cook George Inward to inform the Police. In the Meantime he Barricaded himself in the house until the M.C. arrived. That Night the Natives returned to the Homestead And Condon Saw Several of them through the Chinks in the Wall stalking around, On this he fired a shot and the Natives decamped

During a subsequent manhunt for the offenders two Aboriginal men were shot dead (TCPJ, 14-4-1910). In his old age Condon lived on Muckaty Station (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz).

Harry Condon in his old age (Lilly collection).

Charlie Lincoln. Manager, 1912-13 (Love, 1912-14: 115; TCPJ, 14/15-10-1913). Lincoln had previously been a ‘travelling saddler’ (TCPJ, 12-1-1917) and a wagon driver. He first appears in the Durack diaries in 1901 (Durack, nd.), but is mentioned in the Wyndham Occurrence Book as coming in from Newry on July 18th 1895 (Schultz, 18-3-1948). In May 1897 he and Ben Cranwell left Wyndham with a wagon load of material to erect a telegraph station at Turkey Creek (Wyndham Police Occurrence Book, 1895-1897, entry for 24-5-1897). Later Cranwell ‘blew his brains out drunk’ (Booty, 5-11-1911). In 1899 he had the contract for the mail run between Halls Creek and Wyndham
BULLITA

( Wyndham Occurrence Book 1897-1899, entry for 23-4-1899). He was working on Argyle station in 1908. At one time Lincoln worked for ‘Texas’ Jack Kelly on Texas Downs (Clement, 1989: 22).

**Robert Vincent.** Manager?, 1913-17 (TCPJ, 19-1 13, 11-7-17). In June 1906 he was manager of Elsey station (Northern Territory Times, 1-6-1916). In 1912 and 1913 he worked on Rosewood (Durack, 1983: 286; Durack, 25-6-1910). He was present at Ivanhoe station when Jim Legerwood died there in 1910 (Vincent, 14-3-1910).

A man named Brown was on Bullita a lot at the same time as Vincent. It’s not clear which one might have been manager but I suspect it was Vincent. There’s a boab tree on the upper Humbert which has a large ‘RV’ carved on it which is likely to have been carved by Vincent. He died in 1921 and in the Supreme Court Testamentary Causes Jurisdiction notice in the Northern Territory Times (2-7-1921) his name was given as Robert Vincent Brickland.

**James Henderson Crisp.** Manager in 1919. He had previously worked on Denison Downs, Lissadell, Rosewood (1909) and other Durack stations (Broughton, 1965: 69, 74). Crisp was mentioned in the 1895-1897 Wyndham Occurrence Book on August 8th 1896 when he left Wyndham for Ord River with a bullock wagon. He was on Ord River in 1899 when a dispute arose over the branding of Ord River and Texas cattle (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station], 1897-1899, entry for 23-2-1899).

Mary Durack places him on Rosewood from 1901 through to 1909, at Waterloo in 1911 and Wave Hill in 1915 (Durack, nd.; see also Letter Book, 1901-1912, page 7. SROWA). He became head stockman at Lissadell after Jack Martyr left in 1908. According to Broughton he arrived at Lissadell with ‘Big Bill’ Atkinson and both had come over from Denison Downs (Sturt Creek; Broughton, 1965: 69, 74). I don’t know when he became manager of Bullita.

He was regarded by one who knew him, as ‘one of Kimberley’s roughest men’. The same observer described him as ‘a thin and rather pale-faced man … Quiet when the action around him was quiet, he changed dramatically into a cursing and yelling demon of energy in the branding pens or on the cutting out camp’ (Broughton, 1965: 69).

It was Crisp who discovered the body of Rudolph Philchowski, murdered by Aborigines at Cockatoo Spring in 1913. Six years later (December 10th, 1919), while riding up the East Baines River he and his stockboys came across a group of bush Aborigines. Suspecting that they’d been spearing cattle, Crisp tried to ride down and capture one of the men. During the chase he was speared in the back, fell from his horse and died almost immediately. A police party of six whites and nine Aboriginal trackers and stockboys went out to locate and arrest Crisp’s murderers, the leaders of whom were identified as Emu and Monkey (Durack, 1983: 360). They managed to shoot one Aboriginal man dead, but the others escaped into the hills (Waters, 31-7-1920: 72). Another attempt was made to apprehend Crisp’s killers later in 1920, but without success (WHPJ, 14-7-1920). Six years later in rough country to the south of Bullita, a police party shot an Aboriginal man named Emu, but whether this was the same Aboriginal man implicated in Crisp’s murder is unclear. Another Aboriginal man was shot through the jaw but escaped and attempts to find him failed when the blood trail being followed petered out (Sheridan, 12-1-1926; see also Northern Standard, 17-11-1922).
Crisp was buried on the banks of the East Baines River, near where he was killed. His grave originally had a wooden railing and was marked with stones (Heathcock, 13-12-1918) but the railing was eventually burnt and the location lost for many years. In the 1950s Charlie Schultz stumbled upon the burnt out grave posts and put extra flagstones on the grave as a more permanent marker. He later had a headstone and plaque made up but never got around to placing it on the grave (Schultz and Lewis, 1995: 203-204). In the early 1980s the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory asked Charlie and Reg Durack if they could help relocate the gravesite. They were successful, and a steel rail and the headstone made by Schultz have since been placed on the grave. Crisp had a son with an Aboriginal woman so there may be living descendants (Durack, 1983: 361).

**Jack Ashwood.** Manager in 1922. His name was reported as Ashwood in the Northern Standard and ‘Ashworth’ in the *Northern Territory Times*, but Ashwood appears to be the correct name. In November 1920 he was a member of a police party searching for the killers of Jim Crisp on Bullita and was present when one of the alleged murderers was shot (Heathcock, 2-11-1920). He was therefore almost certainly an employee of Connor, Doherty and Durack and may have taken over Bullita after the spearing of Crisp.

In June the Timber Creek police received a report that an Aboriginal man named Peter (aka Lampalampa) had been murdered at Bullita. The original Timber Creek police journals for 1920-22 are now missing but some time in the past a person unknown, almost certainly a policeman, copied a lot of entries from the Timber Creek journals and these are now lodged in the Northern Territory Archives (TCPJ Notes). Unless otherwise stated the following account is based on these notes.
The police received the report on about June 17th and planned to go out to Bullita the next morning. Jack Carrol was in Timber Creek at the time and heard the story, so that night he rode 50 miles to Bullita to warn Ashwood and the cook, George Turner, that the police were coming. As a result Ashwood cleared out, and when Mounted Constable Muldoon arrived at Bullita only Turner was there. Later it was learned that Ashwood had headed for Katherine and on June 21st had handed over the management of the station to J. Cusack (Northern Territory Times 17-11-1922). While in Katherine and under the influence of alcohol, Ashwood told the Katherine police that they were after him. He didn’t tell them what for and at that time the police in Katherine hadn’t heard of the murder and no warrant had been issued for Ashwood’s arrest.

Muldoon took statements from several Aboriginal women who were at Bullita when Peter was killed. They said that the Aboriginal men who had been at Bullita had been shot at and cleared out before the murder took place. They told Muldoon that, ‘Turner went over to where Peter was lying down on his blanket, kicked him, knocked him about, chained him up and sooled the dogs on him, then shot him for nothing at all’. The witnesses disagreed on who shot Peter, but later this discrepancy was found to be caused by Nellie trying to protect Ashwood, and she admitted that it was Ashwood who fired the first shot. All the witnesses agreed that when Peter was shot the other white man took the gun and also shot Peter. Ashwood then cut firewood to burn the body. They said that Peter’s body had been cut up with a tomahawk and burnt, and afterwards the tomahawk was thrown into the river. Muldoon retrieved some pieces of burnt bone in an ash heap and sent some women to dive for the tomahawk, which they found. He asked Turner for the handcuffs and rifle allegedly used in the murder. Turner denied knowledge of handcuffs but gave Muldoon a rifle which the Aboriginal women said was the one used to shoot Peter. He then left for Bullita, taking the witnesses with him. Strangely, he didn’t arrest Turner then and there which later led to a reprimand from headquarters in Darwin.

When orders came from headquarters for George Turner to be arrested the police went to the Depot store and asked Mathew Wilson, J.P., to issue a warrant for Turner’s arrest, but Wilson said he ‘did not care to have anything to do with issuing of a warrant to apprehend Geo. Turner’. Mounted Constable Turner remarked that ‘There is a great deal of public sympathy here for Turner & Ashwood’.

Later the Aboriginal witnesses’ story was elaborated on by Philip Mackay in Katherine who almost certainly had heard the story direct from Ashwood. While under the influence, Mackay told Mounted Constable Cheyne that:

There was a lot of grog at the Station, the niggers were drunk as well as Ashwood, and Turner. An argument arose between Ashwood, and a nigger. The nigger called Ashwood a white bastard and Ashwood not having guts enough to tackle the nigger He and Turner tied 3 gins up in his room. Ashwood then got the rifle and shot the nigger who fell on the ground. Turner then picked up the rifle and fired a shot into the body of the nigger who was lying on the ground. Just as Turner picked up the rifle to fire the shot the scrammy hand gin got out of the room, and saw Turner fire the shot.

Mackay said that he heard from W. Schultz that Turner was wanted on a charge of murder but had gotten away from the police. At the time Mackay was telling his story, Ashwood was at Emungalan, across the river from Katherine. Mounted Constables Cheyne and
Hemmings went to see him to ask for a description of Turner. While there, Ashwood asked a question that, in retrospect, was very incriminating. He asked, ‘supposing a person killed another and [you] could only find a finger, or toe, or some teeth would that be evidence’. Cheyne replied that it would depend on there being witnesses to what had occurred.

Soon afterwards Mackay left Katherine for Borroloola. In July a warrant was issued for Ashwood’s arrest in connection with the murder but by then he had left Katherine and his whereabouts were unknown (Northern Standard, 17-11-1922; Northern Territory Times, 18-11-1922). On August 28th 1922 he was seen by the Stock Inspector, Captain Frank Bishop, at OT Lagoon in the Gulf country, possibly heading for Queensland (Hare, 1985: 17). Bishop knew Ashwood was a wanted man but I haven’t determined whether he reported seeing Ashwood to the police.

Eventually George Turner turned himself in and was arrested at the Timber Creek police station and taken to Darwin to stand trial for the murder, but he was acquitted (see entry for Turner, below). As a result it was realised that any action against Ashwood would also fail and on January 27th 1923 the charges were withdrawn (TCPJ Notes, entry for 27-1-1923).

George Turner. Cook. He started as cook at Bullita on January 7th, 1922. In July of that year a warrant was issued for his arrest for the murder of an Aboriginal man at Bullita homestead (see previous entry). He was present during the initial police investigation at Bullita but later when a warrant was issued for his arrest he was said to have left the district ‘on business’. He was not arrested until he handed himself in to the Timber Creek police in October (Muldoon, 2-10-1922). Once again Matt Wilson refused to have anything to do with the case, saying that, ‘I object to adjudicate in this case for reason which I consider justifies me in this action’. At Turner’s trial most of the evidence was from the Aborigines who were at Bullita. It was argued that they’d been drunk and their evidence therefore was unreliable. It was also argued that the bone fragments might not be human and that the alleged murder victim could still be alive and on walkabout. As a result, Turner was acquitted (Northern Standard, 17-11-1922; Northern Territory Times, 18-11-1922).

Aborigines living at Timber Creek still remember this story. In 1977 they told me the murder victim’s Aboriginal name was Lampalampa. Charlie Schultz also knew the story and his version is reproduced in Beyond the Big Run (Schultz and Lewis, 1995: 56-58). Tom Ronan, who lived in the Victoria River country for many years from the 1920s, tells a similar story of the murder of an Aboriginal man in his novel, Vision Splendid (1954). His story includes the detail (pp. 93-96) that after one whiteman shot an Aboriginal, other whitemen with him also fired shots into the body.

In 1931 a George Turner arrived at the Wave Hill police station from the Tanami goldfield (White, 5-6-1931), but it’s unclear if this was the George Turner who was on Bullita. In June 1940 a cook named G. Turner was involved in an incident at Montejinni (WHPJ, 22-6-1940). Mounted Constable Langdon went to Montejinni and interviewed Turner about:

trouble with Abo. Mac, was informed Mac swore at him, he did not point rifle but was holding it when boy rushed him & took it away Turner did not want to take
action & as no one was hurt, decided to let the matter drop after giving Turner & Abo Mac a talking to. Advised Turner to resign his position as cook which he did.

Whether this was the same G. Turner who was involved in the murder of Peter is unknown, but his behaviour in this instance suggests this might be the case.

In one of Billy Linklater’s poems (Linklater and Tapp, 1997: 155-56), ‘Booze on the Button’, Turner or George Turner is mentioned three times, and twice he’s described as attacking someone with an axe, vis:

So when the motor hove in sight
I am stating but plain facts
George Turner he was chasing
O’Connor with an axe

and,

If Turner will act as starter
He will race thro’ you like hacks
If he dispenses with a pistol
And starts you with an axe

There can be little doubt that this is the same George Turner who’d been charged with the murder of Peter and that Linklater’s poem alludes to Turner’s role in the killing.

Jack Cusack. Manager who took over from Ashwood on June 21st 1922 (Northern Standard, 17-11-1922). This probably was the Jack Cusack who at various times had worked on VRD, Limbunya, Mount Sanford and possibly Montejinni. In December 1919 he was a member of the police party hunting for the killers of Jim Crisp (TCPJ Notes, January 1919) and in 1924 he was working as a stockman and drover on Rosewood (Letter Book, 1901-1912, page 53. SROWA).

Kenneth Hector Fuller. Manager in 1923 (Martin, 1985: 3) and 1926 (WHPJ, 26-1-1926). In December 1926 Mounted Constable Sheridan of the Wave Hill police visited Bullita while searching for wanted Aborigines. He had to wait ‘for Fuller and H.C. [‘half caste’?] George Campbell to shoe up etc in order to accompany party.’ This patrol eventually led to the shooting dead of Emu and the wounding of an unknown Aborigine on Kaiser Creek in the Gordon Creek sandstone (WHPJ, 6-1-1926). Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.) said Hector Fuller was definitely manager on Bullita before he went to Newry. For additional biographical details see entry under Newry.

Tom Lawson. Manager in 1929-30 (Northern Territory Times, 5-7-1929; Cole, 1988: 129; Humbert River station diary, April 22nd, 1929, Schultz family papers). In a letter to the Stockman’s Hall of Fame newspaper in March 1995 (page 8), Tom Cole says that he ‘took over from Tom Lawson when he [Lawson] had a fall from a horse while branding at Bob’s Yard and went off his rocker. He was drinking kero and all sorts of things’. The Northern Territory Times (5-7-1929) reported the accident thus:

An accident happened to Tom Lawson, Manager Bullita Station about the middle of June. A bullock and a horse rolled on him. He had roped the bullock which
wheeled round and pulled horse and all over. He was brought to Timber Creek Police Station where M.C. McNab rendered first aid and when he had improved enough to travel he was taken on to Wyndham by Mr Durack for medical attention. He is now on the mend, but he had a very bad shaking up.

After some months Lawson recovered and returned to Bullita (Cole, 1988: 151). According to Aborigines interviewed by Shaw (1991: 124) Lawson had worked on Ivanhoe, not surprising given that both Bullita and Ivanhoe were Durack stations.

**Tom (‘Mix’) Cole.** Head stockman and then acting manager in 1929 while manager Lawson was recovering from an accident (Cole, 1988: 129, 134-51; pers. comm., Charlie Schultz). Tom was born in England in 1906 and came to Australia in 1923. By 1927 he was in the Northern Territory where he remained for 16 years. While in the Territory he worked as a stockman, camp cook, drover, butcher, brumby runner, prospector, buffalo and crocodile shooter, linesman, horse breaker and station manager. In the Victoria River district Tom worked as a head stockman on Wave Hill in 1928, a stockman and temporary manager on Bullita station in 1929, a horse breaker on Waterloo, Limbunya and Ord River stations in 1930 and on Sturt Creek station 1933 (Cole 1988, 1992).

Cole owned or co-owned various stations at different times, including Esmerelda near Pine Creek, Kapalga on the South Alligator River and Tandidi between Helen Springs and Newcastle Waters. His brand was ‘TAN’. Drover Rodney Watson (pers. comm.) registered this brand later. Tom also had a share in a tin mine at Myra Falls in Arnhem land and spent part of the 1933-34 wet season there (Cole, 1992: 87-95).

In 1943 Tom was on the run from the law after an attempt to lift a mob of cattle from Newcastle Waters and Helen Springs went wrong. His partner, Jack Guild, was arrested and later convicted of cattle theft, but Tom managed to evade arrest by crossing the Murrarji Track ‘like a whirlwind’ (pers. comm., Dick Scobie), and travelling through to Ord River where he caught a plane to Perth. This story doesn’t appear in any of his books but was recounted to me by Charlie Schultz and confirmed in several documentary sources, first, in an entry in the Newcastle Waters police journal (29-4-1943):

> From Police Tennants Creek COR re cattle stealing – suspect – T. Coles. (28-3-43). Received following telegram from headquarters. Police Station 8YK “Aboriginals Charlie & Mark, natives Maranboy district, urgently required as witnesses, stop they believed to have been with Tom Cole for whom warrant issued & who reported to have left Wyndham by plane for South 16th April stop Make enquiries all your stations, very urgent Stretton”.

> Police 8KY “My telegram today Aboriginals Mark & Charlie previously with Cole have been located at Wave Hill” Stretton.

The second is in a book by Eddie Connellan (1992: 223-24). Eddie was in Wyndham when Tom came through on his escape and had firsthand knowledge of the affair. A third is in correspondence in the records of the NT Cattlemen’s Association (NTAS NTRS A1/2A, Circulars 1930-40) and a fourth, in the Newcastle Waters police journal (entries from 31-1-1943 to 12-2-1943). Tom didn’t return to the Territory until the 1980s when a film was made about the buffalo hunters and his time there (McKenzie 1985, *Something of the Times*). He died in Sydney in 1995.
‘Peg-leg’ Wilkins or Wilkinson. Cook under Lawson, about 1926-28, until about 1930
(Cole, 1988: 133). He was active for many years as stockman and boundary rider. ‘Peg-
leg’ is said to have been involved in a drunken gunfight during which he was shot in his
wooden leg although the exact location where this happened varies with the telling. For
example, Tom Cole (1988: 131-2) said it was at the Timber Creek Depot while Ted Morey
(1978c: 17) and Clarrie Wilkinson said it was at Katherine. Clarrie told Cec Watts the
story (Cec Watts, pers. comm.) and said that Wilkinson was an innocent bystander. Peg-
leg’s reaction to having his wooden leg shot is the subject of mirthful reminiscence to this
day. He died in Darwin in 1953 after being in the Northern Territory for nearly 40 years
(Hoofs & Horns, June 1953: 55).

Jack Noble. Cook at Bullita after Peg-leg Wilkins (Cole, 1988: 150). He later
rewarded after being involved in the discovery of ‘Noble’s Knob’, a major gold deposit at Tennant Creek.
This caused a gold rush and the founding of the township of Tennant Creek. With his
new-found wealth Jack bought a hotel in the new town (Weaber, 1997). Johnny Stacey
(pers. comm.) believes that Jack received a reward of £5000 from the government which
he blew on ‘wine, women and song’.

Reg Durack. Manager for six months from late 1930 until after April, 1931. During this
time the station was being de-stocked (Reg Durack, pers. comm; Durack, 1987). Reg was
later manager of Auvergne and owner, consecutively, of Kildurk and Spirit Hills. He was
owner-manager of Bullita again from 1981 to 1984. For additional biographical details
see entry under Auvergne.

No one. No one was manager between about 1933 and when Charlie Schultz got the lease
in 1947. The property was occasionally mustered from Auvergne during Charlie’s
time. When he first held the block there was no homestead and he built a permanent camp
beside the boab tree at the present homestead.

Charlie Schultz. Owner-manager, 1947 until 1965. For additional information see entry
under Humbert River.

Alex Morton. Head stockman, April 1960 (Hoofs & Horns, April 1960: 56). Dave Napier
(pers. comm.) and Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.) both say that he was only there
temporarily. Mick Bower (pers. comm.) said he was a ‘half caste’.

Harold ‘Happy’ Berlowitz. Owner-manager from 1967 to 1977. Happy was born at
Launceston, Tasmania, on June 24th 1914. In 1921 his family moved to Melbourne where
he attended Ripponlea state school. His family moved to Sydney in 1928 where he
became a gramophone mechanic on 15 shillings a week. When he was about nineteen he
went over to visit relatives in Western Australia and was taken to Wiluna by an uncle.
There he worked driving a train and then on a diamond drill at nineteen shillings a day,
and eventually obtained an ‘internal combustion certificate’.
When the Second World War broke out he enlisted and saw service in the Middle East, New Guinea and with the ‘Small Ships Company’. After 5½ years he was discharged in Queensland. First he worked in Innesvale, north Queensland, for about 6 months. Then he took up an offer to help build and run the powerhouse in Darwin. He arrived there in June 1946 and spent 2½ years in this job before he and a man named Barkla started up a pest control business. He was in this business for over 20 years.

Happy bought Bullita in 1967 and held the property for 10 years. On March 15\textsuperscript{th} 1977 torrential rain fell and the Baines River flooded to record height. Happy’s wife Lynn, home alone at the time, was caught in the floodwaters and spent from 8-20 am till near dark hanging onto a tree branch. By then the waters had receded enough that she could wade back to the cottage. The flood destroyed all their possessions, including photographs from Happy’s time in the war. The Berlowitz’s sold out soon after and moved south (\textit{NT News}, 1-9-1998; pers. comm., Cec Watts; pers. comm., Charlie Schultz; pers. comm., Happy Berlowitz).

In his later years he married Jane Hopkins who, with her previous husband, had started the Timber Creek store in 1959 (TCPJ, 6-9-1959). He and Jane were living in Charters Towers in 2003 but were in the process of selling up to retire to Cyprus.

\textbf{Don Berlowitz}. Manager in May 1970. He was a son of the owner, Happy Berlowitz. (Muller, 1972).

\textbf{Brian Hill}. Owner-manager. He bought Bullita on July 1\textsuperscript{st} 1977 and sold in January 1982 (pers. comm.). He was the principal in the East Baines Pastoral Company.
One of the earliest references to Bullo River is in the Timber Creek police journal of August 28th 1934 where ‘Buller River’ is mentioned. On a series of maps I’ve looked at the earliest appearance of the name is in 1941. Early maps have only the mouth of the river marked. A 1906 map shows a very inaccurate version of the course of the river and has it marked ‘tributary running into Shoal Reach’. A map produced from a sketch made during a police patrol in 1909 has the lower reaches marked as ‘a big salt arm’. I have no information as to who first applied the name, or its meaning or origin.

The block which eventually became Bullo River station was originally ‘an old Grazing Licence formerly held by Connor, Doherty and Durack’ (Hoofs & Horns, August 1959: 46). In CD&D’s time and until it became a station in its own right, the region was mustered from Auvergne. For example, in the monthly report for August 1956, manager Lloyd Fogarty reported that, ‘Owing a lack of headstockmen [sic] the two camps have been operating together during the month and a sweeping muster of Bullo river and lower Victoria resulted in the capture of 500 head 98% of which were cleanskins’ (Auvergne Station Monthly Reports, 1950-1973).

Covering 1,352 square miles, the block was made available as a pastoral lease (PL 568) in 1959 and was described as follows:

Block 579 ... is a maintenance area and comprises high sandstone ranges in the south-east and several other high stony hills with good grazing in the valleys between, with large frontage plains on the lower Bullo River. There are no improvements whatsoever on this block ... the estimated carrying capacity is 8,000 head of cattle’ (Hoofs & Horns, August 1959: 46).
The block was obtained by Raymond Locke (Bullo River Pty. Ltd.) late in 1959. According to John Nicolson (pers. comm.), Locke claimed to have been on Bullo River during the Second World War. There had been many applicants for the block but of these Locke was the ‘star applicant’. Apparently successful applicants were not allowed to sell their block before five years had passed. Locke wanted to sell out after a couple of years and claimed his health was not up to running a station, so he was allowed to sell earlier. According to a Welfare Branch officer, Locke abandoned Bullo River in 1963 and went to New South Wales (Giddins, 1964).

Before Locke sold he contracted a team from Coolibah-Bradshaw to muster the block. Les Little was head stockman on this muster and Ernie Rayner was a ringer. In Ernie’s words:

we were trying to take the horse plant over to Bullo River to do the contract muster—this is in ‘62. And we started to get a few horses to start off … John Nicolson [was] right out in the middle of the river there, on the horse, trying to get these horses to go over. It was low tide, it was right at the turn of the tide. And ah, bloody – they just wouldn’t go. We’d git ‘em into the water and then flog ‘em into the water and they just kept turning, they just wanted to come back. They all savvy the crocodiles you see, they … wouldn’t swim. So anyway, we abandoned that and had to walk ‘em back right back to Timber Creek and then back down the other side. It didn’t work.

[There] was John Nicolson, Les Little and meself and a heap of blackfellas … and he was taking half the cattle as payment – Peter [Murray] took half the cattle [and Locke took the other half]. … we walked those cattle out … [more or less along the present Bullo River road] and we had to get ‘em down that jump-up. By the bloody Christ, didn’t they take some gettin’ down there! We got to that yard … on the West Baines there about half past nine that night and it was bloody, pretty hectic, they just … they’d only string down bloody, one or two at a time there. Once you got ‘em started – to get ‘em started was the thing, you know? It was so bloody steep! We ended up walkin’ about … six and a half to seven hundred out there or somethin’. We ended up with about fifteen hundred all told.

… I think we were there about for about six or eight weeks I remember – all fresh cattle see … and there was a big mob of cleanskin bullocks in there because Lloyd Fogarty used to go in there, send his stock camp in there late in the year because he knew this was coming up for a ballot. He used to send his stock camp in there [and] just bloody trap ‘em, [and] ah, tip these bloody mickys [cut the tips off their horns], with the hope that he’d draw it, and he’d have a heap of bloody bullocks to send off, you see. So, … with the bloody Auvergne stock camp, it’s costin’ him nothin’. He’d send ‘em in for a month or so at the end of the season just bloody throwin’ and cuttin’. But the bloody mongrel things, you couldn’t do anythin’ with ‘em! There were plenty of bullocks there! They were good eatin’, but you couldn’t do anything with ‘em! Because they, they’d never been handled, you see?

Nicolson says that two musters were carried out and two mobs of about 800 head were taken off and eventually sent to Honk Kong. When Ernie was taking his mob out to Auvergne he carved his name and the date into a boab tree.
Ernie Rayner’s team about to try to get the Coolibah plant horses to cross the Victoria River, 1962 (Murray-Rayner collection).

Shortly after the cattle were taken out the present access road to Bullo River was put in. Until then vehicles had to follow down the north side of the Baines, go through Kurrukumbi Gap and then down the Victoria River, a very slow and rough track. The new road followed the route taken by the cattle and passes within a few metres of the boab marked by Rayner. John Nicolson said that before the road was done up in 1970 it took three hours in a four-wheel drive to do the 70 kilometres from the Victoria Highway to the homestead.

While he had Bullo River Locke hired Snowy Baker to build a yard on the Victoria River – Shoal Bay Yard – so that live cattle could be taken from the station by boat. John Nicolson says only one mob was ever loaded from this yard – in 1963, sixty or eighty bulls were taken by Perkin’s barge to the Angliss Meatworks at Berrimah, Darwin.

Locke sold Bullo River to Charlie Henderson early in 1963 for about £25,000. In 1966 Henderson formed a partnership with his manager, John Nicolson, and eight years later Nicolson was bought out by Gus Trippe. Henderson and Trippe remained partners until 1985 when they agreed to divide the property and take one part each. The new leases were PL 811 (Bullo River) and PL 812 (Spirit Hills pastoral lease, Index cards, Office of the Placenames Committee, Darwin). There was also a payment of a certain number and quality of cattle to be made to Trippe. Charlie Henderson died in June 1986 and later a dispute arose between Trippe and Henderson’s widow, Sara, over the payments allegedly due to him. An acrimonious court case followed which Sara Henderson eventually lost (Henderson, 1992: 290-94; Ranacher, 2003: 159).
The remains of the loading race on the Victoria River at Bullo River in 2000 (Lewis collection).

**Ray Locke.** Owner from the beginning of the station in late 1959, until 1963 (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty; pers. comm., John Nicolson).

**John ‘Nico’ Nicolson.** Manager in 1963-64 and part-owner-manager from 1966 to 1974 (pers. comm., John Nicolson; TCPJ, 23-3-1964). Nico’ was born and educated in Wangaratta. In 1953 he worked on Pigeon Hole under Jack McDonald and from early 1954 to mid 1955 he worked on Moolooloo under Buck Buchester. He then returned to Victoria for two years before spending a couple of years working on stations in the Clermont area of Queensland.

In 1959 he got the management of Fitzroy station (Northern Territory). Nico’ set out for the Territory from Dalmore Downs, owned by Brisbane Meat Agencies which also owned Fitzroy. However, when he got to Fitzroy he learned that the company had gone bankrupt so he got a job on Coolibah instead. He spent late 1959 and all of 1960 on Coolibah.

In 1961 Peter Murray gave Nico’ and Ian McBean a contract to muster Innesvale. According to Nico’, Murray gave them a very good deal which he thinks netted them £10,000 each, but possibly less. In 1962 he ran a camp on Coolibah and at the end of the year he went to Bullo River. After a holiday down south he came back to Bullo River in March or early April 1963 and took on the management of the station. He said he was offered a good salary by Gus Trippe, but never got paid it all – only some – so after three years he was offered a half share by Charlie Henderson. The purchase price for this half share was covered by Nicolson’s unpaid wages, supplemented by him with cash from other sources.
While Nicolson was managing Bullo River there was a dispute between Bullo River and its northern neighbour, Legune station, then owned by L.J. Hooker. According to H.C. Bladwell, the General Manager of L.J. Hooker’s pastoral enterprises, there had been claim and counter-claim that Legune station and Bullo River station had been mustering on each other’s land. Bladwell claimed that in mid June 1966 about 200 head of Legune cattle had been mustered and taken to Bullo River ‘via the old Police Road’ – a long and narrow, east-west trending gorge between the two stations. Nico’ said that Legune had a trap yard on the Sandy Creek side to get Bullo River cattle onto Legune and that his raid on Legune was reciprocal. Bladwell and Pat Shaw, the Pastoral Inspector for L.J. Hooker, flew in to Bullo River and sorted it out on good terms over a bottle of rum.

After selling his share in Bullo River, Nico’ did casual work around Kununurra and Wyndham before going to Queensland in 1975, intending to buy another cattle property. He never bought a property but from 1976 to 1985 he did contract mustering work there. In 1986-87 he went gold prospecting around Halls Creek and he and Stuart Skoglund located an ore body about 35 kilometres south-west of Halls Creek. In the 1990s they sold to a mining company, retaining options for two to four years.

An amusing (though apparently inaccurate) report about Bullo River was written in 1972 by a visiting Welfare Officer, Len Muller:

In 1971 I visited Bullo River, leaseholders being Nicholson and Henderson. Mr. Charles Henderson greeted us “warmly” and Constable Taylor and I joined the family for lunch, in the homestead which though incomplete, is already a prize architectural disaster. It is built of huge logs on a stone-flagged floor, and most of the logs are riddled with borers. I saw the plans of the house, drawn up in carpenters pencil on a sheet of three-ply leaning against the wall. Mrs. Henderson said she would like to add a second storey for “the cocktail hour”. The view from the front
of the house was an unobstructed one of the airstrip. The fireplace was rather unusual, in that it contained about 20 bullet holes put there by Mr. Nicholson the night before. Mr. Nicholson had apparently flown to Kununurra for the day and apparently on the previous evening he had been drinking rum fairly steadily until Mr. Henderson emptied the remaining six bottles – (or broke them or something). Mr. Nicholson apparently then had a shooting spree but fortunately didn’t hit anyone.

Nico’ said it was not quite as painted by Muller. For a start he’s certain that there were no borers in the logs. As to the bullet holes, he and Henderson had a bet as to who could knock the top off a series of bottles over the kitchen stove, and their firing left the holes in the wall and the broken glass seen by Muller.


Sara and Marlee Henderson. After the death of Charles, Sara and her daughter Marlee continued to run the station. There were debts to be cleared which Sara and Marlee were able to do, and in 1990 Sara was named ‘Australian Business Woman of the Year’. This led to a publishing contract and a series of best-selling books which made Bullo River station and the family’s story famous across Australia and internationally. The first two books (Henderson, 1992, 1994) ‘put the boot’ into Charlie, but in the opinion of Gus Trippe (pers. comm.), one of Charles Henderson’s sons from his first marriage (Henderson, nd.) and several other people in a position to know, her books have inaccuracies or are one-sided with respect to Charles.

In mid-2000 Sara decided to sell out, but in spite of the fact that Marlee had worked on the station for 20 years for very little financial reward and had expected to inherit Bullo, apparently Sara didn’t advise Marlee that she was intending to sell. Understandably, Marlee was shocked. An acrimonious dispute arose between mother and daughter which led to Marlee obtaining a court injunction to temporarily prevent any sale. At a subsequent court hearing Marlee and her husband Franz were given time to raise the capital necessary to buy the station. This they were able to do and in March 2001 they took control of the property (Ranacher, 2003: 291). Sara then retired to the Sunshine Coast where she became a spokesperson for BreastScreen Australia. She died of cancer at the Caloundra Hospital in April 2005 (Duff, ‘Sara was my mum, so I’m going to her funeral’. The Sun Herald, 1-5-2005. Website: http://www.smh.com.au/news/People/Sara-was-my-mum-so-Im-going-to-her-funeral/2005/04/30/1114635787518.html).

Marlee and Franz continued to run the station as a cattle and tourist enterprise, but struggled to meet the repayments on the loan they had taken out to buy Bullo. When the export of live cattle to Indonesia was suspended in 2011, it was the last straw. They placed Bullo River on the market and in 2015 the station was bought by a Darwin-based businessman, Grant Farris, and his Perth-based business partner for a price believed to be $9.5 million (Nason, 2015).
BUNDA

Formerly the western part of Inverway station (see entry for Inverway). The Consolidated Pastoral Company (CPC) bought Bunda in 2015.

Reg Underwood. Owner-manager before CPC.

CALVERT DOWNS or DEWDROP STATION

These were the names by which a block held by Charles Whittaker was known from 1901 to about 1910 (NAA ACT, A1640/1 item 01/118). Whittaker first appears in the records of the district in April 1897 when he was leaving Wyndham for Lissadell to pick up a mob of cattle (Occurrence Book [Wyndham] 1895-1897, entries for 3-4-1897 and 1-5-1897). In October 1904 he married Mrs Fannon who went to live with him at Dewdrop station (Durack, diary 28-2-1904 – 21-1-1905, entry for 25-10-1904).

Whittaker is reported to have sold his block to Waterloo in 1910 (White, 1910: 25). The block is now largely or totally within the boundaries of Limburuya station. Whittaker was a brother-in-law to Tom Deacon who took up Waterloo in 1900 (O’Keefe, 30-11-1900). I don’t know what Whittaker did after selling out. Vic Hall (1970: 82-4) mentions arresting a man he names as William Whittaker (‘Scrammy-Handed Joe’) for stealing a number of police horses from the Timber Creek police station in about 1928, but this is unlikely to be Charles. In 1989 when I visited Whittaker’s ‘homestead’ (described on an early maps as a ‘grass hut’) there was a small spring nearby. Jimmy Manngayari, who took me the site, said that in Whittaker’s time the waterhole there was very large and indicated 100 to 200 metres long.

A pile of rocks is all that remains of Whittaker’s place in 1989 (Lewis collection).
CAMFIELD

Originally part of VRD, it became a station in its own right after it was resumed and put up for ballot in 1952. The 1,052 square mile block was won by Michael Ambrose Vandeleur and Herbert James ‘Ringer’ Edwards (Hoofs & Horns, February 1953: 39). According to former Stock Inspector Dave Napier (pers. comm.), and others, a man named Charlie Campbell also originally had a share in Camfield. This is confirmed in the Wave Hill police journal of April 19th 1953 where it is said that, ‘C Campbell & J. Edwards, new lessees of Camfield Block, called at Stn at 2 pm’. When Campbell ended his partnership is unknown.

The station was purchased in 1977 by Desa International Pty Ltd. (Sabah Government) and was managed on their behalf by Gunn’s Rural Management International (Dayes, 2008: 30). It was placed on the market again in July 1998 (pers. comm., Paul Vandeleur; NT News, 7-4-1998, 4-7-1998). It was then described as being:

2772 square kilometres and adjoins the southern boundary of Montejinni … a perpetual pastoral leasehold …
The recently-renovated homestead is surrounded by cool shady gardens and there are a visitor’s quarters, cottages, staff kitchen and mess as well as all necessary workshops.
Camfield has 31 equipped bores plus three government bores on the stock route and the Victoria River which runs through the north west corner.
About 16,000 head of high-grade Brahman cattle are offered for sale with Camfield, with another 2500 calves (NT News, July 1998).

Camfield was bought in 1998 by Tejas, a Texas-based organisation, for $6.225 million (NT News, 2-9-1998) and sold by them to the Australian Agricultural Company in 2005 (Loizou, February 2005). As of 2017 it’s still in their hands.

Jim ‘Ringer’ Edwards and Charlie Campbell. Edwards and Campbell are described in the Wave Hill police journal of March 19th, 1953, as the ‘new lessees of Camfield Block’. Edwards was the first manager, from 1953 to 1955. However, in a letter that W. De Vos, the Secretary of the NT Cattleman’s Association, wrote to Charlie Schultz in September 1957 he stated that, ‘I understand the “Camfield” lease is in the name of Edwards but, that in fact, the place is owned by Mr. Vandeleur.’

Edwards was born in Fremantle, Western Australia, on the 26th of July 1913. He went to the Kimberley region with Harry Farber and 400 horses in the 1920s, returning to Meekatharra with cattle from Pinda Bay. He worked at various stations in north west Australia and the Kimberley before overlanding cattle to Queensland in the 1930s (Stockman’s Hall of Fame archives, USH00340). In Queensland he was head stockman on Delta Downs and manager of Glenore station and Strathmore stations, all in the Queensland Gulf country (Hoofs & Horns, September 1950: 35).

Following the outbreak of World War Two, Ringer enlisted at Cairns and was posted to the 2/26th Infantry Battalion. The battalion became part of the 27th Brigade, which was assigned to the 8th Division. As the possibility of war with Japan increased, the main body of the division was sent to Singapore. The 2/26th fought the Japanese in the Malayan campaign and at the Battle of Singapore. When the Allied forces at Singapore surrendered
on February 15th 1942 Edwards, along with the rest of the 8th Division, became a prisoner of war. Along with hundreds of other Allied prisoners he was put to work on the infamous Burma Railway.

To supplement the meagre rations given to the prisoners he became proficient at surreptitiously killing and butchering local cattle at night (*Hoofs & Horns*, February 1951: 42). Eventually he and two other men were caught and sentenced to death by crucifixion. They were tied to a tree with wire around their wrists and then beaten with a baseball bat. Edwards managed to free his right hand so the Japanese re-tied his hands by driving wire through his palms. He spent 63 hours tied to the tree and survived his ordeal because other prisoners managed to smuggle food to him. The other two men died.

Ringer returned to Australia at the end of the war and married Pauline Munro at Normanton in 1948. In 1950 when he, Campbell and Vandeleur won the Camfield block he drove 600 horses to the station. VRD had a certain time period to muster their cattle on the Camfield block. The muster would inevitably also gather a lot of cleanskin beasts and although VRD had a clear legal right to do this, Edwards was not happy about it, so he and his stockmen disrupted the muster. For a detailed account of this event see entry for VRD.


**Paul ‘Pluto’ Vandeleur.** Manager from 1955 to 1977. Unless otherwise stated the following comes from an article in the *NT News* (7-4-1998) and his obituary in the *Courier-Mail* (30-9-2011). Paul was born at Innisfail, Queensland, on May 11th 1933. He attended the Mt Carmel boarding school in Charters Towers but during the war the school was taken over by the American military and he and other family members were sent to Toowoomba.

In 1952 at the age of nineteen Paul went to work on Camfield but at the end of 1953 he shifted to Buffalo Springs station (Victoria River), held by his family under grazing licence. When Buffalo Springs was taken over by the Lands Department at the end of 1954 the Vandeleur family bought out Edwards and Campbell’s share of Camfield and Paul took over there as manager. He had a ‘stroke of luck’ to get Wason Byers to come to Camfield contract mustering. Paul married Betty Barnard in 1958 and built a homestead at Camfield, using timber brought over from Atherton and materials from the old Bovril meatworks in Katherine. He put down twenty-three bores in twenty-five years and made many other improvements. In 1977 when he sold Camfield to the Government of Sabah there were 31,000 head of cattle on the station.

He and Betty moved to Brisbane late in 1977 but in 1978 he was offered the job of Pastoral Inspector for L.J. Hooker, taking over from Pat Shaw in 1979. They moved back to Katherine and Paul supervised VRD, Rosewood, Ivanhoe, Carlton Hill, Legune and an irrigation block on the Ord. At this time L.J. Hooker was planning to sell out so Paul had the job of ‘cleaning up’ the places before sale. He joined a syndicate to bid for VRD but
it lost out to Peter Sherwin. Paul then worked for Sherwin for five years, supervising VRD and Sherwin’s other places in the region, and says he was ‘a great bloke to work for’. When Holmes a’ Court took over VRD Paul worked for them for a short period, but when Peter Holmes a’ Court died and his wife Janet took over Paul left. One story is that he couldn’t stand having a woman as his boss, was rude to Janet and was sacked, while another version is that he resigned. Whatever the case may be, this was his last direct involvement in the cattle industry. He and Betty retired to Brisbane where Paul died in September 2011 (Courier-Mail, 30-9-2011).

**Jack Vittell.** Head stockman for about half a season in 1955 *(Hoofs & Horns*, September 1955: 8; pers. comm., Paul Vandeleur). For additional biographical information and a photo see entry for Killarney.

**Fred Wharton.** Horse breaker in 1955 *(Hoofs & Horns*, September 1955: 8). Johnny Stacey says (pers. comm.) that he was a man of mixed Aboriginal-European descent from Cunamulla.

**Wason Byers.** Contract musterer in 1955-56 *(WHJP, 8-2-1956; Hoofs & Horns, February 1955: 12)*. For additional biographical details see entry under Coolibah.

**Jack Douglas.** Head stockman on Camfield before Buchester (pers. comm., Mick Bower). For additional biographical details see entry for Buffalo Springs.

**Stanley Peckham.** Head stockman (pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White).

**Buck Buchester.** Head stockman (pers, comm., Dave Napier and Cam White). For additional biographical details see entry under Moolooloo.

**Lyn Hayes.** Contract musterer (pers. comm., Dave Napier). For additional biographical details see entry under Willeroo.

**Gerald Dayes.** Contract musterer (pers. comm., Dave Napier).

**Gerald Dayes.** Manager from October 1977 to 1988, assisted by his wife Enid. The following information comes from Gerald’s entry in Jeff Hills, book, *The Privileged Few* (2008: 13-48). In Gerald’s time as manager of Camfield the Desa Cattle Company put in a lot of infrastructure – buildings, bores and fencing, including the eastern boundary fence with Dungowan station. This meant that the station herd of 28,000 head was finally completely fenced in. He established a second stock camp so that during the dry season there was an average of 32-35 employees on the station, necessitating extra accommodation at the homestead and an expanded store. Gerald’s responsibilities further increased when he was given a supervisory role over Desa’s other properties, Montejinni and Legune.

In 1987 satellite dishes were installed which for the first time enabled station personnel to watch television and learn what was going on in the world. Previously they only had news broadcasts on high frequency radio at midday, which most would not easily access. The following year reliable communications were finally replaced with the installation by Telstra of STD telephones.
In 1988 Gunn’s Rural Management (GRM), acting for Desa, asked Gerald and Enid to shift to Brisbane where Gerald would become Pastoral Supervisor for Gunn’s, with responsibility for Auvergne, Newry and Argyle (recently acquired by GRM), in addition to his supervision of Desa’s Camfield, Montejinni and Legune stations. He also was supervising the management of Rosewood on behalf of the owners, the Sarawak Government. He soon became involved with the inspection, purchase and running of properties throughout Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Gerald and Enid opened a produce store in Fernvale, west of Brisbane, in 1999. Gerald continued to work for GRM until about 2001. They sold the store in 2003 and retired.

Ted Templeton. Manager from the late 1980s to 1998. He then went to manage Scott Creek where he remained until about 2000 or 2001 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

Tim and Ruth Milne. Managers in 2016
CAMPBELL SPRINGS (on Limbunya)

The remains of Campbell Springs homestead, 1989 (Lewis collection).

An outstation of Wave Hill which was the forerunner of Limbunya homestead. It was located well to the south of Limbunya rockhole, on the south side of Stirling Creek. The walls of a rectangular two-doored hut, built of flat flagstones and almost two metres high, can still be seen there.

A few kilometres upstream from the site of the outstation there is marked on the 1:100,000 map, ‘Frayne’s Camp Spring’. The site of this camp is marked by the stones of an old kitchen fireplace. According to Tom Ronan, VRD had employed Jack Frayne to establish Montejinni outstation so that an eye could be kept on the activities of local ‘battlers’. Possibly Jack Frayne had special qualities when it came to setting up such outstations, and was sent by Wave Hill to establish a presence in the Campbell Springs area to watch over Jack Beasley, Jimmy Wickham and others. The ‘Frayne’s Camp’ on the map may be the site of his initial camp before the stone hut was built.

Exactly when the outstation was established is unknown but it’s likely to have been about 1904 or 1905 as this is the time that several ‘battlers’ took up land in the area. The earliest reference I’ve seen is an entry in the Timber Creek police letter book, dated October 13th 1905. At that time Jack Frayne was there, apparently the man in charge. In 1910 it was reported that, ‘The outstation known as Campbell Springs has been shifted to Lembunya [sic], north of Stirling’ (McBeath, 1910). In January 1912 Campbell Springs was described as an outstation of Wave Hill, so presumably it was still in use, but it’s unknown how much longer it remained in use after this time.

In 1900 a traveller named Stanley disappeared at Campbell Springs, believed murdered (Northern Territory Times, 6-4-1900). According to Billy Linklater (nd. Buchanan family papers), Wave Hill manager Tom Cahill saw Stanley camped there and because there
were fresh Aboriginal tracks in the area he advised him to pack up and come with him to Ord River station. Stanley declined to do so and when Cahill passed the spot afterwards he saw signs that Stanley had been murdered. Later Cahill made a report to the Wyndham Police:

Thomas Cahill from Wave Hill reports man named Stanley probably murdered by Natives at Campbell Springs, all his Packs & Horses are there no trace of man natives have burnt and destroyed most of his property, Cahill saw man camped there two months ago with large mob natives and cautioned him but he disregarded it he should have arrived ord river last six weeks think no doubt natives have Killed him Campbell Springs about 40 miles inside South Australia’ (Freeman, 2-12-1899).

The Timber Creek police investigated and discovered some of his belongings but couldn’t locate his body (TCPJ 19-10-1900 and 20-10-1900). While it was assumed that he had been murdered his body was never found and his disappearance never solved. However, Aboriginal oral tradition tells of a white man being speared near Campbell Springs and his body hidden in a hollow tree (pers. comm., Jimmy Manngayarrri).

**Jack Frayne.** Head stockman (?) (TCPJ, 16-1-1905, 13-10-1905). For additional biographical details see entry for Coomanderoo.

**A. Skuthorp.** Head stockman in 1908 (TCPJ, 16-12-1908). This probably was Amos Skuthorp because Old Jimmy Manngayarrri told me that ‘Amos Keesob’ was one of the early days whitefellows at old Limbunya.
CAMPBELL SPRINGS (Gregory National Park)

A pastoral permit located on Sullivans Creek and held consecutively by W.F. Buchanan, Tom Pearce and W. Wright (Vesteys). The name Campbell Springs appears to come from the fact that, apparently with Tom Pearce’s permission, from 1906 to 1908 the block was occupied by the cattle duffer Jim Campbell who had a ‘homestead’ on a spring there. Campbell fled the district in 1908 and by 1913 a man named Bert Brown was living there. He may have remained there until his death in 1926. Eventually the block became part of Delamere station and is now part of the Gregory National Park (notes supplied by Vern O’Brien). For additional biographical details on Jim Campbell see entry under Mayvale.

According to Flo Martin (1980: 9, 11), the first lease was taken out by brothers Joe and Jack Hart and the Duracks, in July 1893. This claim is supported by an entry in MP Durack’s diary dated August 1893 in which he says, ‘Messrs J & J Hart Jim Durack and self take a tour out across the river thence round to Southward and back to meet the camp at Spring Creek Not Particularly impressed with country passed over to day’ (Durack, diary, 1-1-1893–31-12-1893, entry for 17-8-1893). This ‘tour’ was out from Goose Hill, in the future Carlton Hills area. Martin goes on to say that in 1894 the lease was transferred to the Harts alone and that in 1897 a third Hart brother, Herbert, took control of the lease. Herbert Hart settled there with his family and stayed until April 24th 1903 when he sold out to Emanuel, Kidman and Troup (NTAS NTRS, F199, Box 1, PP17/1914).

Bolton (1953: 115) says that Emanuel and Kidman bought Carlton from the Hart brothers in 1902. His claim finds support in the Northern Territory Times (20-6-1902) which says that ‘The owners of this property [VRD] have lately purchased another station near Wyndham, and expect to send a large number of male cattle to it from their V.D. station very shortly.’

Documents in the Northern Territory Archives indicate that I.S. Emanuel, Sydney Kidman and Alexander Troup obtained pastoral permit 17 for 706 square miles on April 21st, 1903 (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 1, PP 17/1914). Emanuel, Kidman and Troup sold the block to Bovril Australian Estates and the pastoral permit was renewed by Bovril on April 21st, 1909. The area in question was east of the Western Australian border, and Turtle Point was in about the centre of the northern (coastline) boundary. In the prospectus for the sale Carlton was described as ‘937 square miles (600,000 acres), and … held from the Crown until 1928, at an annual rent of £150’ (NAA ACT, CRS A1, item 1909/11995).
In 1945 Alf Martin wrote that:

The best time to muster Carlton is in May on account of the high grass and big swamps. Ningbing in June and Leguna in July. By that time the long grass and bog should be gone. As labour is very short it will take three stations to make up one plant. By that we mean that Carlton should get the Ningbing and Leguna stock camps to help them muster Carlton in May for bullocks, then all three camps muster Ningbing in June and Leguna in July. By doing this we should get a good muster on the three places. They do not seem to have any blackboys now only a few on each place. What seems to have happened is that the Native Affairs department send a doctor around all the stations looking for lepers and all the blacks go bush and do not come back for some time. White labour cannot be got in that district (Martin, 22-2-1945).

In 1949 neighbouring Legune was being run as an outstation of Carlton (Evans, 1949: 6). It possibly had been for quite some time. Bovril retained Carlton until they sold all their Northern Territory holdings to William C. Buckland in 1955 (Hoofs & Horns, July 1955: 4). On May 4th 1960 Carlton, Ningbing, ‘Leguna’, VRD, Walgra and Rosewood were purchased from William Buckland by the L. J. Hooker Investment Corporation. Carlton, Ningbing and Leguna comprised ‘2,873 square miles, have a frontage of about 45 miles to the Ord River and on ‘Leguna’ there is natural water in the form of 2 large lagoons and 11 good springs. Average rainfall is 36 inches and the properties are carrying 19,000 head of cattle’ (Press release by L.J. Hooker, 4-5-1960).

In 1983 Hooker placed VRD and Carlton Hill on the market, with a price tag of $1.6 million (Kimberley Echo, 14-12-1983). The stations were bought by Peter Sherwin (Border Morning Mail, 4-12-1984) but he didn’t want Carlton and sold it to David and Susan Bradley in 1984. In turn, the Bradley’s sold Carlton to Kerry Packer’s Consolidated Pastoral Company. In 2016 CPS sold the property to the Chinese-owned Kimberley Agricultural Investments (West Australian, 3-8-2016). Carlton is now completely within Western Australia and the old Northern Territory portion is part of Legune Station.

Joseph Hart. Part owner-manager in 1896 and after a gap of a few years was manager again in 1901 (Clement, 2000). He was probably manager a year earlier and had his family there (Wyndham Occurrence Book 1895-1897, entries for 3-6-1895 and 3-8-1895). He had previously been working for the Duracks on Argyle (Durack diary, 1-1-1893–31-12-1893, entry for 11-10-1893). Someone named J. Hart was bookkeeper on Argyle in 1904, but whether this was Jack or Joe is unclear (Durack diary, 28-2-1904–21-1-1905, entry for 19-12-1904).

Sam Russ. Manager in 1897-98 and 1901 (Clement, 2000; Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1897-1899, entries for 3-12-1897 and 31-1-1898).


1907 Lloyd reported that the store at Carlton had been raided by Aborigines who stole three 50lb bags of flour, two hundredweight of corned beef, and five pounds of tobacco. He said they were also killing cattle and had firearms believed stolen from Matt Wilson (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1907-1908, entry for 25-3-1907).

**Frederick Nicholson Terone.** Stockman on Carlton before 1905. After 1926 he was on Frog Hollow station (Clement, 1989: 11). In 1902 Terone was involved in a gruesome murder. On February 11th the Wyndham police received a report that an Aboriginal man had been shot and his body burnt on Carlton, and two other Aborigines wounded. They investigated and found an Aboriginal named Dicky with a bullet wound on the ribs and one named Friday with a bullet wound through his ear. The two men explained how they and a countryman named Barney had approached the camp of a white man and asked for tobacco. The white man told them to wait and went to his tent, but instead of tobacco he produced a rifle. The Aborigines bolted and Terone opened fire, with one bullet passing through Dicky’s side and striking Friday in the ear. Then Barney was hit in the back and fell, and Terone put three more bullets into his body. When they were out of rifle range Dicky and Friday sat down and watched the white man make a fire on top of Barney’s body. They then they swam the Ord River and went to Parrys Creek where the police later found them.

The police eventually arrested Terone and charged him with murder, but this charge was later dropped because the Aboriginal evidence was ‘contradictory and unsatisfactory’. He was then committed to trial at the Supreme Court for ‘shooting with intent’, but this charge was also dismissed because of contradictory evidence (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1899-1902, entry for 11-2-1902 and subsequent entries).

Six years later Terone was sworn in as a special constable to assist the police in the hunt for Major, the Aboriginal who had killed three white men at Texas and Lissadell (Buckland, 13-8-1908). Soon afterwards Tom McLaughlan, who also had once been tried and acquitted for killing and burning the body of an Aboriginal man, was enlisted as a special constable on the manhunt (see entry for McLaughlin in Texas Downs section). Terone appears to have remained in the Kimberley because in or after 1926 he was manager of Texas Downs (Clement, 1989: 22).

**William Charles Brown ‘Billy’ Weaber.** Manager in 1908-1909 (TCPJ, 7-4-1908). He is regarded by present-day Aborigines as one who shot a lot of bush blacks (eg Shaw, 1991: 90-91). For additional biographical details see entry under Ningbing.

**Alf Martin.** The first manager for Bovril, from 1909 to 1926 (Durack, 1983: 382; Martin, 1985: 9). While managing Carlton, every two months Alf would ride for five days to Wyndham to collect the mail and the supplies that arrived by coastal steamer (Beau Martin, cited in Bradley, 1993). For additional biographical details see entry under Victoria River Downs.

**Percy Pretlove.** Manager of both Carlton and Legune (and Ningbing?) stations from 1926 until he died in October 1943 (TCPJ, 18-10-1943; Martin, 1985: 25, 58, 73). His name appears in the Durack diaries in 1906 and Mary Durack describes him as droving for CD&D in 1908, on Newry in 1911, Rosewood in 1916-17, and manager of Carlton. He began work for the Bovril company in 1917 (Martin, 2-9-1936). He was the father of Jean who in 1943 married Jack Martin, manager of Ningbing (Bradley, 1993; Durack, nd.).
Percy had been head stockman and saddler in Alf Martin’s time (by 1918) and became manager after Alf Martin left to take over VRD in 1926. Previously he had been manager of Legune. He took the first motor vehicle onto Legune in 1932 (Martin, 1985: 5, 11). He is remembered by local Aborigines for having shot ‘bush blacks’ on Carlton (pers. comm., Paddy Carlton). In the 1930s he is said to have been in charge of Ningbing, Carlton and Legune (Shaw, 1991: 72; TCPJ, 2-11-1934).

Percy was married to Marion, a pretty and serious young woman who loved reading and poetry, and who developed a close relationship with the Aboriginal women (Beau Martin, cited in Bradley 1993). Marion died in 1917 during the birth of her second child. Percy never got over her death and never remarried. In 1936 Alf Martin believed Percy had “gone to the pack”. Martin met him at Carlton after Percy had been in Wyndham and ‘could not get any sense out of him as he was still very drunk.’ Martin went on to describe Carlton as:

only a black’s camp; bullocks perishing on the fence as no one looking after them. In my opinion Pretlove has lost all interest in the place and I think it wants a married man there … Pretlove is not now a suitable man to handle the Company’s Cheque Book etcetra (Martin, 13-8-1936).

Because he had been with the company since 1917 and had previously been reliable he was given another chance, and stayed on for another seven years (Martin, 2-9-1936).

During the Second World War, fear of Japanese invasion led Percy Pretlove move the station supplies from the store to a big boab in the horse paddock (Bradley, 1993). He died in Wyndham in 1943 (Bradley, 1993; Martin, 1985: 23).
Jack Martin. Manager in 1943 (TCPJ, 26-5-1943).

Charlie Pretlove. Manager of Carlton, Legune and Ningbing from the death of his brother in 1943 to at 1953 (Clement, 2000; Gordon, 1992: 128, 152; Evans, 1949: 8; Hoofs & Horns, January 1951: 43; Pretlove, 2-1-1947). When he left in 1953 ‘W’ noted that because, ‘Pretlove is a very sick man, being in an advanced stage of diabetes and generally in bad health, it is unlikely that he has a normal expectation of life for his age’ (‘W’ to Lord Luke, 24-9-1954).

C. Provost. Head stockman in August 1945 (McKechnie, 9-8-1945).


W. Coventry. Head stockman, 1949 (Evans 1949: 8).


F.E. Steemson. Manager of Carlton and Legune in 1955 (TCPJ, 8-9-1955). A Bill Steemson, either the same man as listed here or perhaps a relation, was head stockman on Mistake Creek in 1946-47 (WHPJ, 1-2-1946, 29-8-1946; The Pastoral Review, September 1947: 859), manager of Ord River in 1947 (WHPJ, 10-4-1947) and a stock inspector in the Victoria River district in 1953 (Crowson, 2008: 3).

Frank Spencer. Manager in 1953-56. (AML&F, 19-11-1953; Hoofs & Horns, May 1956: 9; Quirk to Buckland, 9-9-1958). Born in 1900, Spencer began work on VRD in September 1923 and ran the Gordon Creek camp on VRD for many years. He became manager of Carlton after Charlie Pretlove retired. According to Bradley (1993), Frank fell in love with Daisy, the wife of Brownie Carlton. Daisy left Brownie for Frank and Brownie, who was devastated, tried to shoot Frank while he was in the meathouse cutting up the killer. Some stockmen grabbed Brownie and tied him up until the Wyndham police, who’d been contacted pedal wireless, arrived two days later to take him to Wyndham to be tried for attempted murder. Brownie never returned to Carlton. After some years on Carlton, Spencer left to manage Glenroy station in the Kimberley (Australian Shorthorns, April 1960: 43). For additional biographical details see entry under Gordon Creek.

Frank A. Hargreaves. Manager, 1956-67, after Buckland bought the station (Clement, 2000; TCPJ, 5-1-1967; Stewart to Buckland, 6-5-1960; Shaw to Bostock, 26-7-1966). Rodney Watson (pers. comm.) says Hargreaves was there before and after 1964. According to Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.) Hargreaves was there for a long time. In a letter written to the manager of VRD, William Buckland (1-5-1958) declared that while ‘Hargreaves … will never set the world on fire he is a decent honest chap’.

When L.J. Hooker bought Carlton Hargreaves and his wife Hilda stayed on. They left in 1968 after being on Carlton for about 20 years (Bradley 1993).

Noel Ball. Manager from the beginning of 1970. He had previously managed Coolibah. Welfare Officer Len Muller reported in 1972 that Mrs Ball:
enjoyed the isolation of Carlton Hill and spent most of her day on horseback, being a keen equestrienne when she was down south. Perhaps she was a little starry eyed when she said she wanted to learn the local language and asked me whether there were any books on it; but she was sincere because she asked whether any of the men were likely to be offended if she asked Gypsy to teach her.

According to Susan Bradley (1993), Ball was an American and didn’t know the country well. While he was manager a major disaster occurred when nearly 3000 head of cattle perished in the Collins Creek paddock. Ball left soon after.

**Hugh Petherick.** Manager of both Carlton and Legune in the 1960s (pers. comm., Patsy Applebee). This time period is probably wrong as Susan Bradley says he was relieving manager after Ball left in 1971 or 1972. He was relieving manager on Rosewood from December 1967 to March 1968 (Bostock to Bank of NSW, 16-11-1967) and overseer at VRD in 1969 (TCPJ, 3-9-1969 and 20-7-1970). After leaving VRD he returned to Queensland (Ingham, 2000: 127).

**Bill Dawes.** Manager in April 1971? (Shaw, 5-4-1971). Susan Bradley (1993) says that the second night after Bill and his wife Linda came to Carlton a taxi with a load of grog arrived from Wyndham. Apparently this had been a regular occurrence and Bill was not prepared to allow it to continue as the men were fighting and the women and children were suffering. Soon afterwards when Bill and Linda were mustering at Brolga Springs another taxi load of grog arrived and after drinking it all the men broke into the store and drank their way through 30 cartons of beer and a carton of whiskey! As a result Dawes had to call the police who arrested his good friend, Teddy Cooper, and a large number of others, and took them to the Wyndham lockup. From then on no drinking was allowed on Carlton and a normal station routine and cattle work was able to continue without interruption.

**Peter ‘Harpoon’ Harpham.** Manager 1971 to 1976 or 1977 (pers. comm., Peter Kemp). He was relieving manager at Rosewood in the 1971-72 wet season (Shaw to Viney, 18-1-1971). According to Susan Bradley (1993), Peter was a former Vesteys man who’d been managing the L.J. Hooker feedlot in Kununurra. Peter brought his new bride Annie to be the ‘missus’ on Carlton but she couldn’t adjust to station life and soon left. Soon afterwards two Queensland country girls on a working holiday did some cooking for Peter and one fell in love with him. Peter and Susie Shaw married and returned to Carlton. Later Peter left Hookers to take up farming on the Ord.

**Don Olsen.** Manager after Harpham (Bradley 1993).


**Peter Camp.** Manager for the Bradleys, 1984 (Bradley 1993).

**Cam White.** Manager in late 1970s for the Bradleys (pers. comm. Cam White). This can’t be right because the Bradleys didn’t own Carlton until 1984.
CATFISH

A former outstation of Wave Hill now located within the old Hooker Creek Aboriginal Reserve near where the Victoria River turns to the north after coming in from the west. It is located roughly twenty kilometres from Mucka Mucka, an outstation set up by Wave Hill but later found to be on Inverway country, so Catfish may have been set up following the abandonment of Mucka in about 1910. The area that became the Catfish Reserve was surveyed by Bill Harney and Gubbins in April 1947 (WHPJ, 8-4-1947) and excised from Wave Hill station early in 1948 (Commonwealth Government Gazette, No. 42, 11-3-1948). In 1951 this new reserve was referred to as ‘Catfish Mission Stn’ (WHPJ, 17-4-1951).

The remains of a basalt-walled hut can be seen on the east bank of Catfish Waterhole. Around this hut there is a scatter of debris typical of that found around other homestead sites of the same period. Aborigines who guided me to the site said that the Aboriginal name for Catfish is Muntuluk and its brand was 62U. They said that an Aboriginal camp was located on a ridge to the south of the hut site and that Nyining, Kartangurla and Gurindji used to work here for Mat Savage, but no Mudburra.

In August 2000 during conversation with Mark ‘Fox’ Lumsden I learned that he knew of a stone hut at another location near Catfish waterhole. Together we flew out to both locations in his helicopter. The site Fox knew of is located at the junction of Mountain Spring Creek and the Victoria River. There are two rectangular stone structures about one metre high and several mounds of stone at this location. On a hurried examination there was no sign around the structures of any debris – glass fragments, nails, rifle shells, wire, tobacco and matches tins etc. – that might indicate their age. Indeed, the absence of any sort of debris suggests that the structures were never used as dwellings or only used for a very short period. At the present time their origin remains unknown but Buck Buchester
(pers. comm.) reckons that Vestey once had plans to establish an outstation on Mountain Spring Creek so this could be the answer.

**Mathew James Savage.** Manager between about 1918 and 1921 (Willey, 1971: 104; Makin, 1983: 117). According to information in his biography, Savage was born in Western Australia in about 1890 or 1892 (Willey, 1971: 9-10, 161). He left home at sixteen and for some years knocked about the Pilbara country, working variously on a sheep station, a government battery and as a drover. He arrived in the Kimberley at the age of twenty, probably in February 1912 (Willey, 1971: 12). Initially he worked as drover for the Duracks, taking cattle from their stations in to Wyndham. Later he was also a drover for Vestey's and 'delivered plenty of big mobs from Gordon Downs to Wave Hill' (Willey, 1971: 49). In 1915 and 1916 he was a hand on Rosewood (Willey, 1971: 48; Letter Book, 1901-1912, pages 22, 23. SROWA), and at different times on Waterloo, VRD, Sturt Creek and Willeroo (Willey 1971: 48). In 1922 he went prospecting in the Tanami Desert (Willey 1971: 64, 111) and the following year he took work on VRD, repairing fences.

In 1924 he took over management of Montejinni outstation on VRD and stayed there until the end of June 1935 (Willey, 1971: 111; VRD ledger 4, Feb 1930–Feb 1937). In 1925 he had C. Carpenter (cook and caretaker) and Ted Fuller working with him (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926). Ted later became a drover. Savage left Montejinni to take up land at Lewis Creek (W.A.) in partnership with Gordon Buchanan (Willey, 1971: 114). At various times he also held blocks on the Territory side of the border (see NTAS NTRS F28, Box 38, GL1192). He was on Lewis Creek until 1939 and then returned to droving for Vestey's for most of the following decade (Willey, 1971: 145). GL 1192 lapsed at the end of June, 1948. Around 1949 or 1950 he decided to shift to Alice Springs to be near his daughter Sheila who was in school there (Willey, 1971: 154).
According to Daguragu Aborigines, Matt was called Yanda because he was ‘no good longa eye’, i.e. cross-eyed.

CATTLE CREEK

Initially an outstation of Wave Hill, set up as a breeding centre for Shorthorn bulls in 1958 (Australian Shorthorns, October 1958: 40-41). The Wave Hill police journal of March 1959 notes that, ‘Cattle Creek is new Stud Stn being started on Wave Hill – not completed yet’ (WHPJ, 29-3-1959). A visitor in 1962 noted that, ‘Vesteys have assembled three hundred selected station cows and joined them to twelve high quality, southern bulls’ (Adams, 1962: 988). Tom Fisher didn’t like the idea of this area being set up as a breeding centre because the country was too sour and the cattle didn’t like it. It was unfenced so they kept walking back to Wave Hill. It became a station in its own right in 1984 (pers. comm., Cec Watts). In 1992 Cattle Creek and Wave Hill were bought from Vesteys (Western Grazing Company) by Queensland grazier and businessman, Brian Oxenford (Weekend Australian, 18-7-1992) and Cattle Creek once more became an outstation of Wave Hill (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

Gus Ringler. Improvements manager in 1958-59. He and his crew built the homestead and facilities there (Clarke, 2008: 87).

James Duncan ‘Jim’ Warren. Manager in April 1959 (WHPJ, 14-4-1959) and in June 1963 (WHPJ, 1-6-1963). Len Hill (pers. comm.) puts his time there as between 1956 and 1969. Warren’s wife was with him at Cattle Creek from April 1959. He also managed Douglas station in the late 1960s and early 1970s (pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White).

William ‘Billy’ Speed. Head stockman? in the 1960s (pers. comm., Cec Watts). For additional biographical details see entry under Birrindudu.


George Wheeler. Manager, c1967-68 (pers. comm., Len Hill) and still there in 1975 (pers obs.). My experience of him in 1975 was that he was a weird sort of person, unfriendly, unresponsive and suspicious. Apparently when the School of the Air teachers went out to visit the station children (part of the regular school year), they received similar treatment.

Lindsay Black. Manager (pers. comm., Len Hill).


Bill Dawes. Last manager. He left in 1994 when Cattle Creek became an outstation of Wave Hill once more (pers. comm., Darryl Hill). More recently he was at the Mataranka Rural College and owned a photographic business in Katherine (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). He previously had managed Carlton Hill, Rosewood and Legune. His father, Billy senior, had been a partner with Fred Marton, ‘The Whispering Baritone’, on Florina station (pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White).
COOLAMIN

This was the name of an area held under grazing licence on the north side of the Fitzmaurice River valley. At the present stage of research there’s a bit of confusion about who held the licence and if there was one area involved or two. Records in the Northern Territory Archives show that Alex Potts applied for 300 square miles on the Fitzmaurice on October 24th 1944. It was granted and became grazing licence 1139 (NTAS NTRS F28, GL 1139). If Potts named this block the name is not known. There are also records showing that William Henry ‘Billy’ Mackie, aka ‘Straight Through Billy’ or ‘Billymack’, applied for an area of 200 square miles on the Fitzmaurice River in September 1945. He said this was to be known as ‘Range station’. His application was granted as grazing licence 1158 (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 37) but there does not appear to be any further mention of ‘Range station’. Seven years later Mackie applied for a grazing licence over 300 square miles on the Fitzmaurice. This area did not extend as far west as his original 200 square mile block but extended some distance south of the river (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 47 GL1452). His application was granted and he held the licence until at least 1956.

The areas these men applied for almost certainly were taken up merely to harvest the cleanskin cattle in the Fitzmaurice River country and other neighbouring areas. Mackie’s brand was TWM and his ‘homestead’ was a bush timber and corrugated iron structure, located on a tributary of the Fitzmaurice.

In the April 1956 issue of *Hoofs & Horns* (p. 8) it was reported that:

February has been a month of tragedy in the North. Firstly, we had the mystery of radio calls for medical assistance that, after a lot of work by the radio services, was
finally pinpointed as having come from the small and newly opened Coolamin station on the Fitzmaurice River. A land party from Coolibah Station was sent out to investigate the calls because it was not possible to reach the block by car or plane. For a long while it was thought the calls were being made by a man and a woman, but it finally helped to pinpoint Coolamin as the source when it was recollected that one of the partners had a high voice.

The radio they were operating was not registered and they had been using the call sign of an Alice Springs station, 8ZE. No report has yet been received from the land party.

The Lands Department did not consider the block provided a maintenance area for a pastoral lease and it recommended that it be included as a pastoral area with PL440 and PL554, held by Peter Murray of Coolibah/Bradshaw (pers. comm., Vern O’Brien).
Formed when George Murray joined forces with Tom Liddy, and Harry Huddleston in 1936, and combined his Skull Creek block with their Killarney Springs block (Ogden, 1989: 26). They then abandoned the Killarney Springs hut and established a homestead further south at Bluebush Billabong. The name ‘Coolibah’ is first mentioned in the Timber Creek police journal on September 29th, 1938.

According to Ogden (1989: 30) Tom Quilty bought out Murray and Liddy in 1938. Some sources have it that Quilty’s partner, Olive Underwood, built the stone homestead at Coolibah that is still in use today (eg., Chauvel, 1973: 134), but Welfare Officer Gordon Sweeney noted in 1947 that, ‘Men are at work at the station building a stone house and a Sydney William hut as a store’ (Sweeney, 1947: 4). Quilty retained the station until 1950 when he sold the station to Wason Byers and Snowy Kenna.

In July 1947 Constable Stott at Timber Creek investigated the theft of fibro sheeting from the abattoir in Katherine and noted that, ‘Quilty has a carpenter erecting a stone house and a close watch will be kept as it is being built as cheaply as possible ie. Dirt from a billabong is being used as a mortar for walls.’ The stone used was carried up from the nearby river bed by Aboriginal women so exactly what Olive’s roll in the building is unclear. Stott searched high and low for the fibro on Coolibah, without success. He mentioned a rumour that Tom Fisher at Manbulloo had taken the fibro but was convinced Quilty was the offender and was determined to get him. He questioned the Coolibah Aborigines but could obtain no information so he, ‘assumed Quilty carted fibrolite, minus blacks’. Nevertheless, he remained, ‘certain Quilty has the fibrolite sheets planted out on the run and considers he is a scoundrel’ (TCPJ, 24-7-1947, 26-7-1947).
Quilty and Underwood retained Coolibah-Bradshaw until 1950 when they sold the station to Wason Byers and Snowy Kenna (*Northern Standard*, 8-9-1950, 17-2-1950). By December 1952 it was reported that:

Since the transfer of Coolibah from the Quiltys to Kenna the station could be described as being in the doldrums, the conditions of sale making the operation of the station as a financial success a very difficult project, and this combined with the well known eccentric actions of Byers does not create the impression that the present owners will make a success of the property (Evans, 6-12-1952b: 3-4).

Byers and Kenna were financed by Spooner and Smith under a deal whereby Kenna and Byers would repay with 8000 head of cattle, delivered in four years, and in cash repayments to begin after the first cattle were delivered. The repayments were not made and Spooner and Smith took over the property in 1954 (Fitzer, 1-2-1954; *Hoofs & Horns*, March 1954: 41).

In February 1958 Coolibah was hit by a ‘freak tornado’:

The homestead was unroofed except for the kitchen, and the storeroom, harness shed, butcher’s shop, and other buildings were flattened. One aged blackfellow was blown off his feet by the gale and hurled half a mile against a fence, to which he clung. The manager, Mr. Ted Morey and his wife had to treat eight natives for shock after the storm (*North Australian Monthly*, April 1958: 2).

On May 1st 1958 Spooner and Smith sold Coolibah-Bradshaw to Peter Murray for £30,000 (*Hoofs & Horns*, July 1958: 59; Ryan, 8-7-1958a). Murray sold the station in 1963 (Dorling, 27-8-1963) but remained on the station until final payment was made in 1968 or 1969 (pers. comm., Pauline Rayner).

In 1970 Coolibah-Bradshaw was bought by Sir William Gunn’s company, ‘Gunn Resources & Exploration (Australia) Pty Ltd.’, (*NT News*, 8-1-1970) and in 1981 it was reported as being owned by ‘Israeli/American interests’ – Unibeef Australia (*The National Times*, 23/29-8-81). In 1982 Ian McBean purchased Coolibah/Bradshaw and held the Coolibah section until 1988 when he sold it to Milton Jones.

According to Ernie Rayner (pers. comm.), Coolibah-Bradshaw was still using packsaddles in 1960. The Coolibah-Bradshaw brands were QTM and MTQ, the latter having been the Bradshaw brand since at least Tom Quilty’s time (1916-1937; VRD Ledger 5, Feb 1937 – Feb 1944).

**Tom Liddy, Harry Huddleston & George (‘Wee Georgie’) Murray.** These men formed Coolibah in 1936 (Ogden, 1989: 26). Thomas Andrew Liddy was born at Laura, Cape York, in 1891 (Ogden, 1989: 27), and according to Glenville Pike (*Hoofs & Horns*, May 1953: 53), Tom and Paddy Liddy (senior) came to the Territory in about 1925. Speaking of Thomas Andrew Liddy, Ogden (1983: 70) says that, ‘By 1923 he had been the head drover for some time for Tommy Graham, manager of Victoria River Downs. In 1926 he spent a year mustering on Bradshaw for Harold Cook’ (Ogden 1983: 70). Tom married Daisy Lanson at Wave Hill (Ogden, 1989: 27).
COOLIBAH

A third brother, Mick, arrived in 1928. According to Morey (1978g: 35), when Coolibah was sold Tom Liddy bought Douglas station and his brother Jack bought Dorisvale. Glenville Pike (Hoofs & Horns, May 1953: 53) says that Mick Liddy bought Claravale station in about 1940 or 1941, while Paddy Liddy owned Dorisvale until about 1952. He says that Tom Liddy owned Ooloo station and that Paddy Liddy’s son, Paddy, owned Douglas station. All of this needs sorting out.

Harry Huddleston had been a horse breaker on Wave Hill in 1916 and spent a lot of time with Tom Fisher on Manbulloo (Clarke, 2008: 94). There is a boab on Lobby Creek, Bradshaw station, which has the initials ‘HH’ (Harry Huddleston?) and the date ‘3-2-31’ carved in it. The same tree also has ‘JL 15/2/31’ carved in it, probably the initials of Tom Liddy’s brother, Jack. Of his experience with Liddy and Murray on Coolibah, Harry he said, ‘we starved for seven years’ (Clarke, 2008: 94). A man named Harry Huddleston died at Newcastle Waters on May 29th 1942 (Timber Creek museum documents), but Buck Buchester (pers. comm.), who had a phenomenal memory, reckons Huddlestone died in Darwin aged in his eighties.

According to Mary Durack, George Murray came from Cardwell in Queensland and died in Queensland from cancer (Durack, nd.). His nickname comes from a list of names of northern identities compiled by Gordon Buchanan (Buchanan family papers).

Tom J. Quilty. Owner-manager from 1938 to 1950. For additional biographical details see entry under Bradshaw.


Hugh Wason Byers. Manager, 1950-54 (Fitzer, 27-3-1954). Byers was born in 1890 near Herberton, Queensland, the son of John Byers, a north Queensland pioneer who was a grazier, butcher and storekeeper on the Palmer River in 1874. Byerstown (now gone) on this goldfield was named after John Byers (Hoofs & Horns, February 1953: 41).

Frank Field, who knew Byers in the early 1920s, claims that Byers senior was Land Commissioner in Hughenden (SHOF December 1993). Field also says that Wason Byers had owned a cattle property of some 40,000 acres called Sumana, about 70 miles north of Aramac. At the time there were two Comet mills on the place but no homestead, and Byers lived in a tent. During World War One he put a manager on Sumana and enlisted. He became a sergeant in the 5th Light Horse and fought at Gallipoli and in Palestine. Field heard that in the army Byers was a champion boxer and said that in the early 1920s he stood six foot three and weighed 13 stone (82 kilos). Jack Sammon (pers. comm.) says that his father worked with Byers in 1921 when Byers was head stockman at Yacka Munda, near Nebo and Clermont.

Eventually the bank took over Sumana and Byers headed for the Northern Territory. He arrived in the Victoria River region in 1924 (Byers, 15-10-1953) and lived much of the rest of his life in that district. In September 1927 he was reported as having been killed by Aborigines at Tanami but investigation showed he was then working on Wave Hill (WHPJ, 29-9-1927). At other times he managed Sturt Creek, Flora Valley and Turner stations (Willey, 1971: 149; Cole, 1988: 171; pers. comm., Cec Watts) or worked as a stockman, contract musterer, prospector and boss drover.
Byers was a big man with a loud voice, and was feared by Aborigines because he could be very harsh towards them. Victoria River Downs Aborigines called him Karrawajangana, loosely translated as ‘swearing bugger’. Sturt Creek and Gordon Downs Aborigines called him Jawurayin, ‘stealing bloke’. In the Victoria River district Byers’ name was distorted by elderly Aborigines to resemble ‘Boison Bie’, and he was sometimes referred to among whites as ‘Western Byers’. One old Aboriginal man said of him, ‘Wason Byers, if he didn’t like you, he’d take a bull whip to you, and if he really didn’t like you, he’d shoot you’ (pers. comm., Doug Campbell).
Bill Hamill (1996: 13) described Byers as ‘the rough house fighting bully of the Kimberley’, but he didn’t always win. Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says Snowy Lyle was one who beat him, and he is also said to been beaten by ‘Whispering’ Fred Marton. Charlie Schultz, who knew Byers for many years, described him as ‘a bastard of a man’ (Schultz and Lewis, 1995: 170) and Constable Tunney at Wave Hill regarded him as ‘an inveterate liar’ (Tunney, 1949). However, several people who knew him had kind words for him. In 1945 Native Affairs Officer Bill Harney wrote:

I met this man who is good with natives and like all these people who are just they are well supplied with labour … Byres pays [Aboriginal stockmen-drovers] into trust and also pays each native £2/- per week and also maintains the boys; dependents, and he states these people are worth this (Harney, 12-6-1945).

Paul Vandaleur (NT News 7-4-1998) remembered him as, ‘a very capable man … In public he was a very courteous and stylish fellow, very popular with the ladies and always well dressed.’ He added that, ‘Everyone said Wason was cruel to Aborigines, but I never saw any evidence of that. In fact, he had a great following among Aborigines’.

Marie Mahood was another with a good word for Wason, saying that he was a very entertaining yarn-spinner. Marie related the following story about him:

He told Joe and me in 1954 (at Beswick) about how, as a young man, he had “trouble” with the police and wanted to disappear for a time, so he went south from Gordon Downs into the desert and lived off the land for 2 years, in what he described
as “wonderful grassy plains – great cattle country, but nobody will ever take it up because it is just too far from anywhere and surrounded by rubbish desert country”. (We remembered this later when we took up Mongrel Downs – exactly fitted his descriptions). He met there a small tribe of very tall (7 foot men) blacks, who pointed with their lips to the west as their country (Canning Stock Route – I have two other mentions of these tall blacks, and we employed “Long Johnny” at Mongrel Downs – who was one of them). They were friendly to Wason, and he said they “cracked their knuckles” when speaking, but he could not understand any of their language.

Another who knew him made the point that for all his faults he was very kind to children, but there definitely was a ‘dark side’ to Wason Byers.

While managing Sturt Creek station in the 1920s or 1930s some desert blacks threw spears into his camp. He escaped unscathed and in the morning he tracked the blacks into the desert. He caught up with them and, in his own words, ‘evened the score’ (Ogden, 1989: 40). It may have been this event that caused him to ‘disappear’ into the desert, as described above. This story was confirmed and expanded during the Tanami land claim hearing in late 1990 when elderly Aboriginal men told the hearing that several of their named relations had been shot by ‘Wayzshen Pile’ (pers. comm., Nick Peterson). An old Territory cattleman, Dick Scobie, former owner of Hidden Valley station and friend of Byers, said that Byers told him of this incident and that he had shot twenty-six blacks at Sturt Creek. The last one shot dead was an old man who had been wounded, and as he lay face down he made a feeble attempt to conceal himself by placing a handful of grass across his buttocks (pers. comm., Dick Scobie). Given the relative absence of hiding places on the generally flat and open desert plain, the mobility afforded by horses and the virtual certainty that Byers had modern repeating firearms, a massacre of twenty-six Aborigines would be quite possible.


From his time on Coolibah comes the story of how the station ‘gins’ let the vegetable garden die while Byers was away. As punishment Byers forced them to sit up on the red-hot galvanised iron roof in the sun. This story is sometimes said to have happened at Sturt Creek (eg Harney & Wositzky, 1996: 130-32; Schultz and Lewis, 1995: 170), but Brian Penny was a jackaroo on Coolibah when Byers was there and he told Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.,) that he had witnessed the event. The weight of evidence appears to favour Coolibah as the location where this happened.

In the 1960s Pauline Rayner was told by Aborigines on Coolibah how Byers used to have an iron triangle near the back door, made from an old crowbar. He would ring this at odd times and the last Aboriginal through a narrow gate in a fence between the black’s camp and the house would get a lashing.

In spite of his reputation for harsh treatment of Aborigines, Welfare Officer Evans noted in 1952 that:
Stock camp boys were particularly well dressed and all females including Government Dependents were fitted out with clean dresses. This was not just a “window dressing” as Byers cannot have had any prior information of my visit. There is a large vegetable garden, a big area of 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 dependents (Evans, 6-12-1952b: 3).

Byers starred in the Chauvell film, Jedda, filmed in 1953 (Hoofs & Horns, July 1953: 46), and was described by Elsa Chauvell (1973: 134-35) as follows:

He was a rough-hewn man, moody and aggressive, somewhere between fifty and sixty years of age, who used to delight in giving me the horrors at the dinner table. He told of the good old bad old days and the general treatment meted out to offending aborigines who slacked at their work ... He made no effort to deny his own part in the punishment, which if it were true, measured up well to that handed out to the early slaves of America’s Indiana ... he would glare at me and his great monster of a clenched fist would come down with a crash on the rough wooden table like an exploding bomb, lifting the knives and forks a foot high and scattering them. He was a bully and at times rather sadistic. He confided to Charlie’s secretary that I upset him, because I reminded him of his mother.

In 1953 he was arrested for the theft of 88 head of Victoria River Downs cattle (NT News, 27-8-1953). According to a letter from Mrs Litchfield, cited by Billy Linklater in a letter he wrote on February 10, 1955 and reproduced in the Stockman’s Hall of Fame paper of June 1993, it was when filming was nearly complete that the police turned up to arrest Byers for cattle stealing. Chauvell asked the police to delay the arrest until filming was finished, and they agreed.

The cattle stealing charge came about in the following way. In 1950 Snowy Kenna and Wason Byers made an agreement that when the mortgage on Coolibah was paid off, Byers would become a full partner (Ogden, 1989: 41). Byers would work as manager, and the cattle he sent from Coolibah would pay off the mortgage. In an attempt to pay the money quickly, or to keep up the payments, he began duffing VRD cattle. The Coolibah brand was MTQ and the ‘Q’ would conveniently cover the bulls head brand of VRD. Some of these cross-branded cattle were recognised at the Anthony Lagoon cattle dip – a cross-brand is easy to see when the hide is wet – and Byers was arrested. According to Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.), the drover Bill Ellis was in charge of these cattle and he told Johnny that you could see the bulls head under the Coolibah brand as clear as day, and there were hundreds of them.

At his trial Byers argued that it was his black stockmen who cross-branded the cattle in question and that he knew nothing about it (Hoofs & Horns, December 1953: 40-41). At a preliminary hearing Hector, one of his Aboriginal stockmen, gave evidence against him (NT News, 27-8-1953) but at the Supreme Court trial at Anthony Lagoon he changed his story and said that he’d made up his original testimony (NT News, 8-10-1953). As a result, Byers was acquitted and a policeman involved in the case later declared that, ‘if ever there was a miscarriage of justice, that was’ (Gordon, 1992: 194). After the trial Byers is said to have pulled a revolver out of his swag. When asked what he had it for he replied that
if he’d been convicted, one bullet was for the policeman who arrested him and one was for himself (Schultz and Lewis, 1995: 171-72).

A few weeks after the trial ended Byers sought to cause trouble for the police. He wrote a letter of complaint to W.C. Wentworth, Member of the House of Representatives in Canberra, alleging that the charges against him were instigated by the ‘big companies’, and that the police had taken eight Aborigines from Coolibah as witnesses in his case and deliberately not returned them after the trial (Byers, 15-10-1953). He asked Wentworth to try and have the stockboys returned and to have Mounted Constable Fitzer removed.
from Timber Creek, but was unsuccessful on both requests. It was determined that the Aborigines involved didn’t want to return to work under Byers because they feared retribution at his hands (Leydin, 24-11-1953). Another reason they didn’t want to return was that Byers had not allowed them to go on their annual wet season walkabout for two years. Instead, he had them mustering cattle on Willeroo and Victoria River Downs (Fitzer, 1-12-1953).

The trial led to a falling out between Byers and Kenna with talk of writs for damages from both sides, and Byers left Coolibah at the beginning of 1954 (Evans, 30-12-1953; Fitzer, 1-2-1954). He worked for a short time in Vandeleur’s Katherine slaughter yard but soon took on contract mustering for Vandeleur on Camfield (Hoofs & Horns, February 1955: 12; WHPJ, 8-2-1956).

In 1955 he joined with Sid Tennyson and went prospecting for uranium south of the Murrarji track (Hoofs & Horns, September 1955: 8). Five years later Welfare Officer P.J. Lennard visited drover Dick Scobie’s camp on the Barkly Tableland to check the welfare of Aboriginal employees (Lennard, 1960). He found that Scobie was absent in Newcastle Waters, ‘Young Scobie’ was out with the cattle, and an Aboriginal stockman, Jimmy Newcastle, had quit the camp after a fight with ‘Young Scobie. Only Wason Byers and stockmen Billy Moore and Larry Jambjimba were in the camp. After speaking with Larry, Lennard left the camp to find and talk with Jimmy, but had reason to return to Scobie’s camp that evening at about 9 pm. He later reported that on arrival,

Moore was found to be completely intoxicated, unable to walk or talk. One trouser leg was alight apparently from contact with the camp fire. This I extinguished. Byers was in a state of unconsciousness in his swag and when aroused was unable to talk coherently or rise to his feet. The younger Scobie was out with the cattle and Larry Jambajimba was the only one in the camp to whom I could speak. He and Jimmy informed me that this was not an uncommon state of affairs and that both Byers and Moore drank continuously throughout the day. I had noticed that morning both had been drinking but at that stage were not unduly affected.

In 1966 Darryl Hill (pers. comm.) met Byers on Gallipoli station when Byers passed through with packhorses. Byers asked for some beef. No fresh beef was available, but Byers was quite satisfied to take some really old, hard salt beef, probably six months old, saying it would last better in the pack-bags.

In later years Byers drifted back to Queensland and eventually became a camp cook on Yelvertoft station west of Mount Isa (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). One day Hector, one of the Aboriginal men who’d given evidence against Byers in 1953, arrived at Yelvertoft with Ernie and Pauline Rayner. Even though Byers was by this time an old man, when Hector saw him there he was very frightened and tried to keep out of sight (pers. comm., Pauline Rayner). Clive Stone tells the story tell of how Byers was drinking in a pub. Although quite elderly at the time he had long carried the reputation of being a good fighter and, seeking to increase his own fighting reputation, a young ‘tough’ named Miller ‘king hit’ him. In the resulting fight Byers got Miller by the ear, marched him out the front door and and threw him onto the road. He then jumped onto Miller’s back, grabbed him by the head and proceeded to rub his face back and forth on the ground. As a result, all further ideas Miller had about beating the ‘Great Wason Byers’ evaporated! Byers died
in June 1974 at the age of 84 and, according to Ogden (1989: 49), was buried at Charters Towers, but Clive Stone (pers. comm) thinks he was buried at Mt Isa.

**Jack Brumby.** A stockman of Aboriginal-European descent who was given a Royal Humane Society silver medal for outstanding bravery in trying to rescue Captain Colin Johnson, the pilot of a Connellan Airways plane which crashed at Coolibah on October 21st, 1949 (*Northern Standard*, 28-10-1949; *NT News*, 28-8-1952). On takeoff the plane crashed and burned near the homestead and several Aborigines immediately ran to the scene. In an affidavit, Brumby said:

When I arrived at the plane, I couldn’t see anything but I circled the plane twice, peering low beneath the flame and saw the pilots forearm. I said to the boys, “Whats that” and they said “thats him”. I then told them to break off a long stick. I then got in between the grass fire and the plane and had a couple of goes, but I couldn’t open my eyes because of the heat, so I then pulled my shirt over my head and looked out through the collar, put the stick under him and pulled him out. After pulling him out, I had the boys pull bushes and placed in the shade, laid the pilot on them and covered him with more bushes to cool off. I had to run about a mile over sand and rock to reach the plane. I don’t know how long it took me but I had had it when I arrived there. Once I arrived I didn’t wait until the flames died down. I ran around twice until I saw the pilot and went straight in. The plane was still burning fiercely when I arrived. I think the petrol must have exploded just before I arrived, the ground was on fire, which must have been petrol. When I first saw the pilot, he was inside the plane, between the two engines back behind the nose lying beside his seat. All his clothing even to his boots were burnt off him. I drew him out with the stick until he was far enough from the plane, until the boys and I could pick him up with our hands and place him on the bushes (‘PRO’, 1-3-1950).

The Superintendent of Police in Darwin was ‘dubious as to the authenticity of Brumby’s story’, and ‘instructed the constable at Timber Creek to get statements from the aboriginal witnesses “no more gammon, no more humbug,”’ He believed that ‘So far, no “unimpeachable” evidence … [was] … forthcoming’ (‘PRO’, 1-3-1950). Constable Bert Mettam, who took down the affidavit, also was sceptical that Brumby had placed himself in danger to retrieve the pilot’s body (Mettam, 14-3-1950).

Later when Brumby went to Darwin on matters related to his pending award he went into a pub for a drink. Unfortunately, he was not exempt from the prohibition on Aborigines drinking alcohol and was seen there by a policeman. He was arrested, charged and sentenced to six months jail, and had to be released from Fanny Bay to receive his medal (*Northern Standard*, 9-2-1951).

Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that Jack was a big strong man who built yards. He was on Florina with Fred Martin and was a son to him. He adds that from Coolibah he went with Tom Quilty to Springvale and eventually died at Halls Creek. The Victoria Highway crosses a creek on Coolibah that has been named for Jack.
Johnson’s grave at Coolibah station (Lewis collection).

John (Jack) William Holland. Manager from the 1st of April 1954 (Hoofs & Horns, June 1954: 55; Holland, 29-4-1954). Holland was previously manager of Lissadell (Hoofs & Horns, June 1954: 54) and Newry for the Peel River Company. He was still manager of Coolibah in December 1954. His daughter, Yvonne, married Ron Ball in 1956 and spent years with Ron on Wild Boar station east of Darwin (Ball, 2001).

Jack Scott. Manager in 1956 (Walter, 19-7-1958). At this time the homestead was described as:

built of creamy-coloured stone found nearby and plastered together with clay. The dining room runs right through the house with an open arch at each end. This makes a very cool room, and it looked most attractive with skin rugs on the stone floor, and bullock horns filled with oleanders used as wall vases. The bedrooms opened off the stone-flagged verandah which ran right round the house (Jack, January 1956: 13).

Edward Herbert ‘Ted’ Morey. Manager after Jack Scott who was manager in 1956 and definitely on Coolibah by January 4th 1957 (Walter, 19-7-1958). He remained there and until Peter Murray bought the place in May 1958 (Hoofs & Horns, October 1956: 4 and July 1958: 59; Gordon, 1992: 229). Morey has left a short biography, published in the Northern Territory Newsletter (1978b) and Bill Wilson (2012) has written another short biography. Unless otherwise stated the following information is derived from these sources.

Morey was born at Mannum in South Australian on March 2nd, 1902. At age twelve and a half he 'bolted' from school and began working on farms, but he soon realised that station
work was more to his liking. He drove bullock, donkey, camel and horse teams, was a shearing shed rouseabout, drove horses for Kidman, and broke in horses.

In 1924 he toured England and the USA with Snowy Thompson’s team of rough riders (*Hoofs & Horns*, November 1950: 37). In England they rode at the Wembley Stadium International Exhibition Rodeo. He returned to Australia with an American saddle and there are photographs of him using it. On his return from England Morey joined the South Australian police, but after a year he had a confrontation with the Commissioner and went back to station work again. After one long droving trip he applied to join the Northern Territory police. While waiting for a reply he joined the fire brigade. He was accepted in the Territory police in 1927 and travelled to Darwin on the ‘Malabar’.

![Ted Morey (left) and Constable Bert Mettam, Beswick, 1950 (Mettam collection).](image)

During his police career he was stationed at Darwin, Emungalen (Katherine), three years at Borroloola, Ranken River, Timber Creek, Groote Eylandt for six months, Lake Nash for six years, and then Newcastle Waters. While at Timber Creek in 1932 he was in the hunt for the famous Aboriginal outlaw, Nemarluk. In 1934 he was a member of the police expedition to Arnhem Land to investigate the spearing of five Japanese trepangers. It was during this patrol that Constable McColl was speared and killed at Woodah Island.

Next Morey was stationed at Lake Nash on the Barkly tableland and in April 1935 he married Kathleen Audrey Reilly in the shire hall, Camooweal, Queensland. He was at Newcastle Waters at the outbreak of World War Two and was released from the force to join the Citizen Military Forces. He carried out intelligence work and broke in 1100 horses while posted (August-September 1944) to the 2nd Pack Transport Company. He served on the staff of the Darwin area camp and the Northern Territory details depot, included a period as acting Darwin mayor. Before his demobilisation in September 1945 he prepared a detailed plan for the development of the Northern Territory Aborigines. This included the location of training settlements and instruction in a wide variety of
skills. Morey never saw active service and after the war he returned to the police force, stationed at Pine Creek. In 1948, after twenty years’ service, he resigned from the force.

After a period a manager of the Darwin Club in 1949, he became a buffalo and crocodile shooter in what is now Kakadu National Park and conducted tourist safaris there. He was also the lessee of Wildman River station, in partnership with Billy Mac (pers. comm., Billy Harney), but he regarded the mosquito-infested swamps of the Wildman as unfit for raising a family so he sold out to Eddie Connellan in 1949 (Carment, et al, 1989: 28; Gordon, 1992: 92). From Wildman River, in November 1950 he went to Beswick which he managed for six years. Then he managed Coolibah for Tom Piper until Peter Murray bought the station in 1958. After Coolibah, ill health led him to move south to Adelaide. There he became stableman to the South Australian Police ‘greys’ and a horse-breaker for the well-known racehorse trainer, Bart Cummins. At age 77 he began work as a part-time bank guard at Glenelg.

Eddie Connellan met Ted at Lake Nash in 1938 (Connellan, 1992: 96). He wrote in his diary that:

Ted has the physique of film star Victor McLaglen, but is good looking with regular features, firm of character with leisurely grey eyes. His movements are slow and rhythmical like his speech, but in the latter matter, he prefers to listen or ask questions, rather than speak of his most unusual experiences.

He died on April 24th 1982 at Woodville, South Australia, aged 80.

Peter Chester Murray. Owner from May 1st 1958 until 1963, but remained in residence until final payment was made in about 1967 or 1968 (Hoofs & Horns, July 1958: 59 and October 1958: 67; pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). Local policeman John Gordon (1992: 228-29) described him as ‘a very big man and he was built like a bull. Unless otherwise stated the following information was supplied by Pauline Rayner (née Murray). Before buying Coolibah Murray owned several sheep stations in the Cobar/Nyngan area of NSW. He also had a small mixed cattle and sheep place at Wollomombi in the New England area.

Coming from the south, he didn’t share the prejudices of many other cattlemen and immediately set about improving the living conditions for his Aboriginal employees. Early in 1959 Welfare Officer Ryan remarked that:

During the nine months Mr Murray has owned Coolibah Station a transformation has occurred in regard to employment conditions and amenities for the station wards. In that short period it can be safely asserted that these general conditions have been brought to a standard never before existing in the property’s history. … Mr Murray’s policy is to make his employees, white and black, comfortable and satisfied … His treatment of wards has subjected him to considerable criticism from some pastoral managers. However he plans to carry on with his present method of treating all his employees with respect. He has not yet had to raise his voice to abuse any aboriginal employee (Ryan, 1959).

The Northern Territory News of April 4th 1967 says that Murray sold out in 1963, but Pauline Rayner says (pers. comm.) that he sold in about 1964 and that the payments were
spread over several years, so it wasn’t until 1967 or 1968 that the station was finally handed over to the new owner. A report written by Native Affairs Patrol Officer John Hunter in late 1963 states that, ‘Mr Murray has recently contracted to sell Coolibah and it is now believed that the sale has been finalised. Mr. Murray will stay on for a couple of years as Manager’ (Hunter, 27-9-1963).

In 1958-59 Murray trialed Buffell grass on 50 acres at Coolibah. He also had plans for improved pasture – Townsville Lucerne, Urachloa and Birdwood grass – on 300 acres in the homestead paddock (Agriculture Branch to S.J. Rogers, 28-7-1964). In 1964 there were plans to irrigate 1000 acres from the Victoria River at Tortoise Reach and 400 acres were ploughed for sowing on Fitzroy (Walter, 19-7-1958).
After selling Coolibah Murray went mining on the upper Mary River with Tiger Brennan. They had the Minglow lead mine. During his time (from May 1963 to September 1965) he was a member of the Northern Territory Legislative Council. This was a nominated position with Murray representing the pastoral industry. Then from October 1965 until October 1966 he was the Member for Arnhem (Labour Party).

On leaving the Northern Territory he was, for a period, caretaker on Blackflag station outside Kalgoorlie, W.A. He then returned to New South Wales and bought a dairy farm at Murwillumbah. Eventually he retired to The Rock, a small town in southern New South Wales. He died in the Albury Base Hospital on June 23rd 1993, aged 80.

**Leslie John Gordon Little.** Head stockman during Murray’s ownership (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner; TCPJ, 20-7-1958). He came in to Timber Creek from Bradshaw outstation just before the outstation was closed for the 1969-70 wet season (TCPJ, 14-12-1969). In 1958 it was reported that he’d contracted to lift a mob of Coolibahs and would be contract mustering before leaving with the cattle for Dalmore Downs (*Hoofs & Horns*, June 1958: 56). He died from emphysema in October 1982 and is buried at Timber Creek.

![Les Little, Coolibah, 1959 (Murray-Rayner collection).](image)

**Jack Scott.** Manager by July 1958, after Morey left (*Hoofs & Horns*, July 1958: 59). Scott was the first manager in Murray’s time. According to a report written in 1958, Murray and Scott:

> Both have a tremendous task ahead, because of the fences, many of which have collapsed – and I believe, ALL stock yards have been burnt to the ground. … The position with regard to horses is grave. Only an odd 50 horses could be mustered. The station is now in the progress of building up the number of horses (Walter, 19-7-1958).
Sid D. Byers. Stockman in 1943 (TCPJ, 17-4-1943) and in June or July 1951 when he left to be head stockman on Kildurk after McMahon left (Hoofs & Horns, July 1951: 41; Ogden, 1989: 43). He appears also to have worked on Bradshaw station as his name and the dates ‘19/6/30 40 43 44 50’ are written in the hut at Larung yard (pers. obs.). He may also have worked on Auvergne as the Timber Creek police journal mentions his presence there in 1934 (TCPJ 30-12-34).

On December 15th 1941 Byers, a ‘half caste’ and ‘Abo Cocky’ with 87 horses were reported as having passed Timber Creek police station en route to work on Arizona station in Western Australia. In 1957 he was reported to be travelling with 1,460 head from Newry to Creswell Downs (Hoofs & Horns, July 1957: 6). During the 1957-58 wet season he was employed saddling at Montejinni and was planning to return to Texas station to drove cattle from there to Wyndham in the coming Dry (Hoofs & Horns, June 1958: 56).

According to Charlie Schultz, Sid died of thirst in Western Australia. Reg Durack (pers. comm.) said that this occurred on Mabel Downs station. Patsy Applebee (pers. comm.)
said that Byers died near the main road between Halls Creek and Mabel Downs. She said ‘his legs went on him’ and he couldn’t move – he could hear the traffic on the road, but couldn’t get there. He wrote down day by day what happened and drank his urine in an attempt to stay alive. Cec Watts (pers. comm.) said that Sid worked in the Halls Creek area during the 1950s and that, ‘His car broke down whilst driving to the station from Halls Creek. Sid tried to walk to the station via a creek quite close to the station but perished.’


**Jim Nelson.** Head stockman on Coolibah in July 1951 (*Hoofs & Horns*, August 1951: 44). In 1953 he was head stockman on the newly formed Camfield station and was involved in the standoff with the VRD mustering plants that were trying to get their cattle off Camfield (see entry under VRD for an account of this standoff). Johnny Stacey says (pers. comm.) that Jim died on Kamilaroi station, Queensland, in the early 1970s.

**Hughie Van Heythesen.** Owner-manager in 1954 (*Hoofs & Horns*, 1954: 19). In 1947 he was manager of Narwietooma station in Central Australia (Darcy, 1996: 47) and in 1950 he was managing Dalmore Downs, Queensland (Quilty, 1999: 20).

**Ron Ball.** Head stockman, July 1955 (*Hoofs & Horns*, July 1955: 8; Ogden, 1989: 9). He married Jack Holland’s daughter, Yvonne, in 1956 (*Hoofs & Horns*, April 1956: 12) and in 1997 was managing Eva Valley station (pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White).

**John Crane.** Manager by July 1964 (Milikins and Welsh, 22-9-1964). One report says he’d bought the station from Murray (Giese, 21-9-1964). He was gone by April 1965 (Agriculture Branch to S.J. Rogers, 28-7-1964). In the report by Milikins and Welsh, they stated that:

> Generally employment conditions and accommodation are on the improve, both Mr. & Mrs. Crane appear to be sympathetic employers and Mrs. Crane showed a genuine interest in the welfare of the women and children. In view of the improved living conditions and the fact that food issues are above those laid down in the Wards employment Ordinance, it is recommended that the Station be paid Maintenance at the higher rate.

**Dave L. Napier.** Caretaker-manager during the wet season of 1966 (pers. comm.), but according to records in the National Archives he was there early in 1965 (Napier, 27-1-1965).

**Ken J. Hall.** Manager from at least February 1965 (Hall, 19-2-1965). He appears to have left around the end of the year. At one stage Hall was working with Dalgetys, possibly as general manager (pers. comm., Dave Napier).

**W. Huddlestone.** Head stockman at Wombungie outstation in 1965-66 (Ivory, 27-9-1965; Milikins, 6-7-1966).

Colin Hewett. Manager in July 1966 (Milikins, 6-7-1966). One report referred to him as the ‘farmer’ who was in charge of an experimental plot of Townsville Lucerne (Agriculture Branch to Rogers, 28-7-1964).

Bill ‘Leggin’s’ Stewart. Manager from August 1966 to at least September 1967 (Stewart, 29-8-1967). According to Patrol Officer A. Scott, when Stewart arrived, ‘The station was run down. He was told to fix it. He immediately implemented a building and repair programme [sic]’ (Scott, 23-8-1967). For additional biographical details see entry under Rosewood.


Major-General Paul A. Cullen. General-manager for the Israeli-owned Coolibah Pastoral Company, and possibly also part-owner, from at least July 1964 (NAA NT, F941/0 item 67/609). He was in charge of the Army Reserve. Some say he changed his name from Cowan to Cullen to fit in better with the Israeli owners of the station (pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White). The NT News of the 4th of April 1967 lists shareholders Cullen (of Sydney), Don Iretton (USA) and about 12 others.

Ronald Yoder. Manager in April-May 1970 (TCPJ, 1-4-1970). He was ‘a Canadian Agronomist with no experience in Station Management’ (Muller, 1972).

Noel George (or Ron?) Ball. Manager or head stockman early in 1971. In 1968 he was horse breaking on the station (TCPJ, 18-4-1968) and apparently was on Coolibah/Bradshaw until at least the end of 1969 (TCPJ, 14-12-1969), and possibly until 1971. From Coolibah he went to Carlton Hill station. According to Department of Aboriginal Affairs Officer Len Muller, ‘Mr and Mrs Ball were both well liked and some of the Coolibah employees went over to him when he transferred’ (Muller, 1972).

Rolland Walker. Manager in September 1970 (Bishaw, 30-9-1970), and in June 1971. For additional biographical information see entry under Bradshaw.


Ian McBean. Owner-manager from 1982 until 1988. For additional biographical information see entry under Innesvale.

Coomanderoo was a block (pastoral permit 26) on the watershed between Stirling Creek and the West Baines, taken up by Jack Frayne and Matt Wilson on September 17th, 1903 (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 1, PP 26/1903). The area under permit changed slightly during the following few years. Coomanderoo is on the headwaters of the West Baines River, a large area of rough sandstone and gorges. Living in this area when Frayne went there were many Aborigines who had refused to come in to the homesteads of the white men. Old Jimmy Manngayarri told me of a massacre close to the homestead:

Yeah, they bin shoot 'im, oh, big mob! They bin shoot 'im there. Right on the river. They [Aborigines] bin just have a camp, you know, 'longa, 'longside a water. Well, kadia [whiteman] was come and kill 'im first thing in the morning now. Shoot 'im.
That all about, they [Aborigines] bin kill 'im ngarin, kill 'im bullock - milker got a bell. They bin kill 'im ... and they bin eat 'im. Alright – that kadia bin quieten 'im down, quieten 'im, and feed 'im up [made friends with the Aborigines]. Now after that kadia bin turn in, muster 'im [Aborigines] all about, and put 'im all in a heap – now he bin start shootin' the lot. Shoot the lot – no one bin get out.
That's where the kadia bin do, early days.

Jack Frayne & Matt Wilson. Owners Tom Ronan, author of several books on the Victoria River district, had planned to write a book on Frayne based on stories his father and others had told him. Of Frayne, Ronan said, ‘I know little of Frayne except his achievements. They are too magnificent to relate here. I’m saving my next full-length novel for him. He deserves it’ (Ronan, 1962: 179). Unfortunately Ronan never wrote the novel, or it was never completed.
The 1891 census lists Frayne as being born in Victoria (Bendigo) in about 1865 (NT census for 1891). He was a resident of the Northern Territory from 1888 until his death in 1912. In the 1880s he had a licence for the Roper Bar Hotel and in 1891 he held a Slaughtering Licence at Pine Creek (Northern Territory Times, 15-9-1888, 17-7-1891). In 1892 he was one of a party led by police hunting the murderers of W.S. Scott at Willeroo (Northern Territory Times, 11-11-1892). At one time he held a mail contract, operating out of Springvale. He is mentioned in the Wyndham Occurrence Book on April 12th 1896 as having come in from Wave Hill. A few days later he left to go back to Wave Hill to pick up a mob of cattle for Connor, Doherty and Durack (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1895-1897).

He had horses named ‘Naughty Boy’ and ‘Scatterbrains’ in the Katherine Races in 1892 (Northern Territory Times, 1-1-1892). By the late 1890s he was working for the Duracks on Auvergne, Newry and Keep River, being first mentioned in the Durack diaries in 1899 when he was on Auvergne (Durack, nd.; Durack, 1983: 36, 44, 63). Tom Ronan states that it was Frayne who established Montejinni outstation in the period 1901-1903 (Ronan, 1962: 195). It was probably established to keep an eye on the activities of the Flemings on their Illawarra block and Jim Campbell on his Retreat block (Ronan, 1962: 195; TCPJ, November 1903).

About the time that he established Montejinni, Frayne went into partnership with Matt Wilson on pastoral permit 22, on the watershed between Stirling Creek and the West Baines River. Over the following decade he built two homesteads on this block, the first called Kunja and the second called Coomanderoo. Both names survive on the current 1:100,000 maps for the area as Kunja Creek and Coomanderoo Creek.

Kunja homestead was located very close to the western border of the block and the reason for the second homestead being built may be because L.A. Wells’ survey of 1905-1907 fixed the western boundary slightly further to the east. This idea needs following up in Lands Department records. Another possible reason is that Kunja waterhole was unreliable. In any case, A.J. White reported in 1910 that, ‘Frayne has removed his homestead to Coomunderoo Springs, where he has erected a hut and, yards’ (White, 31-12-1910: 24-25).

In June 1911 Frayne was reported to be ‘on his way in [to Pine Creek] with all his stock, some 700 or 800 cattle. He proposes settling on a block on the Katherine River, near Bundy Springs’ (Northern Territory Times, 30-6-1911). This indicates that Frayne had thrown up his Kunja/Coomanderoo block at this time. A report dated January 1st 1912 states that, ‘Kamundaroo has recently been purchased by Wave Hill’ (Johns, 1-1-1912).

On May 31st 1912, while droving on the upper East Baines River, he died of malarial fever. He was reported as being 50 years of age (Northern Territory Times, 13-2-1913), but from the census of 1891 it appears he would have been 47. His grave has not been located but the late Reg Durack told me he had seen a boab on the upper East Baines with the name Frayne carved on it. If this boab can be found it may turn out to be a marker for Frayne’s grave.

Matt Wilson was the executor of his estate. Tom Pearce from Willeroo bought 500 head of cattle from Frayne’s estate (Durack, 1983: 36; Northern Territory Times, 6-2-1913). The Coomanderoo block was bought by W.F. Buchanan’s sons on September 17th 1912.
and it then became part of Limbunya station. In turn, the Buchanans sold most of their Northern Territory properties to Vesteys in 1913 (Durack, 1983: 36; File in the Office of the Placenames Committee, Darwin; NTAS NTRS F199, Box 1, PP 26/1903).

Jack Frayne’s name is commemorated at ‘Frayne’s Knob’ on the Killarney 1:100,000 map sheet and on the Limbunya 1:100,000 map sheet at ‘Frayne’s Camp Springs’. There is also a ‘Frayne’s Pocket’ on the south side of Kildurk/Amanbidji although this is known only to locals and is not marked on present day maps. Aborigines pronounce ‘Frayne’ something like ‘Brown’ or ‘Brain’ and this has led to confusion at times. His name also appears on a boab at the Drover’s Rest – the junction of Barrak Barrak Creek and the East Baines River – and on the Retribution Camp Boab on Auvergne station (Lewis 1993: 95; 1996c: 373).

In their partnership, Frayne was the active partner while Wilson carried out droving for VRD and later bought and ran the Depot Store. Biographical details for Wilson are provided under the heading for Skull Creek station.
DAGURAGU

Originally part of Wave Hill station, it became a separate station in 1975 when Prime Minister Gough Whitlam handed over title to the Gurindji people.
On July 26th 1880, on behalf of Dr W.J. Browne, A.T. Woods (financial manager of Springvale) took nine weeks provisions and led a party consisting of Frank Withel, W.H. Johnson and Sam Croker to look for better sheep country than that around Springvale. They found good pasture country which Woods named Delamere Downs (McMinn, 1883-84: 2; Giles, nd.: 153-54).

Woods had worked on the original Overland Telegraph Line construction and was with the party that brought the first stock (cattle, horses and sheep) overland from South Australia to Dr Browne’s leases (Northern Territory Times, 14-12-1894). His name is commemorated at Lake Woods near Newcastle Waters (Linklater and Tapp, 1997: 62) and at Woods Promontory near the Katherine-Flora junction, on the Bowman 1:100,000 map sheet (series R621, sheet 5268, co-ords 818 601).

Croker was a great frontiersman who rode with Bluey Buchanan and was eventually shot dead at Auvergne station (see entry under Auvergne). In September/October 1880, Croker again visited the Delamere country, this time with Alfred Giles, and a block of 600 square miles was later taken up (NTAS NTRS, F829 A4762; Giles, nd.: 156-159). A further 400 square miles was added at a later stage (Northern Territory Times, 11-6-1887). With Tom Pearce and Rodney Claude Spencer, Giles visited the area again in early June 1881 (Giles nd.: 161-64). Tom Pearce was later to become the owner of Willeroo, a station formed in the same area in 1884 (see entry under Willeroo). In 1889 Spencer was convicted of the murder of an Aborigine at Bowen Straits and sentenced to death, later commuted to life in prison (Northern Territory Times, 11-7-1890; The Express and Telegraph [Adelaide], 23-1-1891). After serving about ten years he was released and returned to Arnhem Land where in 1905 at Arnhem Bay he was murdered by Aborigines (NTAS NTRS F829 A4762; Giles, nd.: 60; Northern Territory Times, 3-2-1905, 24-2-1905; Waters, 30-1-1913).

On June 28th 1881, Giles hired Henry Gosse as overseer in charge of cattle for Delamere. 1100 cattle and 3000 sheep were brought onto the run in July (Giles, nd.: 164-170;
At Springvale the sheep were shepherded by ‘southern blacks from Alice Springs’. When these Aboriginals were sent home they were given a revolver for self protection during the trip (Giles, nd.: 155). At one time there were also Chinese shepherds who had a flock each (Giles, nd.: 133).

The run turned out to be unsuitable for sheep. According to one observer, ‘They tried sheep here in big numbers for which the country from a practical point of view was utterly unsuitable [because of] sour bladey rank grass with no herbage whatever’ (Everett, 1888). According to William Sowden who visited the Territory in 1881-82, when Springvale was stocked with sheep they began to die in large numbers. Whether there were also shepherds on Delamere is unknown, but the hostility of the Aborigines in the Willeroo-Delamere area suggests that shepherds would have been reluctant to work in the region. The sheep were taken to Delamere but continued to die so early in 1882 they were removed (Sowden, 1882: 151-52). Sowden says the surviving sheep were bought by the ‘Telegraph Department’ and sent to Tennant Creek which, being further south, was believed to be more suitable for them.

By March 1885 there were said to be 1,500 cattle on Delamere and another 2000 on their way from Queensland (Giles, in Parsons, 31-3-1885: 3). In February 1886 Drover Walter King was expected to deliver 1500 mixed cattle from Roxboro station, and 100 first class herd bulls. These were intended for Newcastle Waters and Delamere stations (Northern Territory Times, 30-1-1886).

A number of sources indicate that the two blocks originally taken up were held on separate leases, one known as Price’s Creek and the other as Delamere. For example, an obituary for Dr Browne published in the Northern Territory Times of December 12th 1894 states that, ‘The first station was formed at Springvale, and subsequently operations were extended to Delamere and Price’s Creek’. Similarly, an advertisement placed in the Northern Territory Times by Alfred Giles in January 1887 threatened prosecution of anyone taking horses or cattle from W. Browne’s stations, including the ‘Delamere Downs, or Price’s Creek runs’. It appears that sometimes the name Delamere was used to refer to both stations and this often leads to confusion when trying to sort out the history of the area.

Early sources leave no doubt that each lease had its own homestead – one at the Price’s Creek/Aroona Creek junction (the original Delamere) built in 1883 (Giles, nd.: 181-82) and another closer to the junction of Mathieson Creek and the Flora River (Price’s Creek). For example, according Government Geologist, H.Y.L. Brown (1895: 10) who travelled from VRD to Katherine in 1894, it was 28 miles from Willeroo homestead to Delamere homestead, another 20.5 miles to Price’s Creek homestead, and another 11.5 miles to Flora Falls.

Surveyor Wells’ 1908 topographical map shows the location of only Delamere homestead, at the junction of Price’s and Aroona Creeks. The Price’s Creek homestead was ‘on Price’s Creek about two miles above the junction of the same with the Flora’ and was not on Wells’ map because it had been burnt out in 1893 (Dashwood, 1894). Today Price’s Creek doesn’t have a junction with the Flora River but apparently it did so in the past and what is now referred to as Mathieson Creek was originally Price’s Creek right to the Flora junction. Today’s Price’s Creek is located about 37 kilometres from the Flora River – there it joins Aroona Creek which in turn joins Mathieson Creek. In 1999 I
relocated the original Delamere homestead site near the Price’s Creek-Aroona Creek junction, and I relocated the Price’s Creek homestead site on Mathieson Creek about three kilometres above the Flora River-Mathieson Creek junction, in 2000 (see Lewis, 2000: 23-31).

In July 1887 Delamere station was advertised for sale and described as follows:

The improvements consist of newly erected manager’s house of 3 rooms, constructed of iron and cypress pine, also mens’ kitchen, and cook’s hut ... A most compact set of drafting yards. Two substantial fenced paddocks adjoin the homestead. At the out-station, 26 miles distant, there is also a large paddock suitable for weaning. Out station yards have also been lately erected on Hayward’s Creek, 15 miles distant ... The following stock, (more or less) will be sold with the run—700 bullocks, (400 of which are now fit for the butcher), and 200 cows of various ages. A waggon and 10 horses, working stock, stores and plant to be taken on valuation (Northern Territory Times, 11-6-1887).

From this it would appear that by this time the Price’s Creek homestead two miles from the Flora River junction was being referred to as an outstation, that there was another outstation or at least outstation yards on Haywards Creek, and a homestead existed on the Delamere block. Exactly when the Delamere homestead was built is unknown, but it must have been between 1883 and 1887. The same advertisement mentions that the property was 1097 square miles and held in two leases, one of 697 square miles and the other of 400. Eventually both the Price’s Creek block and the Delamere block were incorporated into Willeroo station so that the original positions of Delamere and Willeroo relative to each other – Delamere north of Willeroo – has been reversed.

According to historian Peter Forrest, Brown found a buyer for Newcastle Waters station but there was no interest in either Springvale or Delamere, and Alfred Giles became owner of Springvale by default (Forrest, 1985: 55). Giles actually bought Springvale, Prices Creek and Delamere in 1887 (Northern Territory Times, 19-6-1891; Everett, 1888). However, he couldn’t afford the high rental so he let all but 213 square miles of Springvale lapse (Forrest, 1985: 55). In 1890 Giles described a ‘new’ homestead as being fifteen miles from the outstation yards on Haywards Creek and consisting of a, ‘Substantial manager’s house of cypress, pine and iron, with boarded floors and verandah; stockyards, kitchen, and usual outhouses’ (Giles, cited in Kintore, 1891: 29). This would have been the homestead located near the junction of the present day Price’s Creek and Aroona Creek.

Early in November 1893 the building and yards at Price’s Creek were found ‘reduced to ashes, having recently been burnt, it is presumed, by the natives’ (Dashwood, 1894). Strangely, a year later the Government Geologist passed by and described Price’s Creek merely as ‘abandoned’ (Brown, 1895: 10). There is no evidence that the homestead was ever rebuilt although new yards, fences, a bore, a solar-powered pump, an airstrip and a graded track were constructed in the vicinity at later times. Eventually the Price’s Creek section of Delamere became part of Willeroo station but exactly how or when this land transfer came about has not been determined.

Delamere was located in the country of the Wardaman Aborigines and during the first twenty to thirty years of settlement in the area they earned a reputation for fierce
resistance to the whites, aided, no doubt, by the rough range ‘getaway’ country to the west (Lewis, 2012: 198-219). Because the histories of Delamere and Willeroo are so intertwined through land swaps, I’ve combined the two stations in the following summary of Aboriginal attacks in the area.

In 1886 while travelling to the Kimberley goldfield with Fox’s teams and camped on the Gregory Creek, Mat Cahill and Fred Williams were surprised by the blacks while fishing. Williams was speared through the neck and killed while Cahill was wounded in the back.
In 1892 W.S. Scott, the manager of Willeroo, was murdered near McLure Rockhole and Willeroo homestead was looted. The place where the murder occurred was close to the spot where two of Scott’s men had been murdered a few years earlier. Scott’s brother George had also been speared at Willeroo, but only wounded (South Australian Register, 17-10-1892).

Paddy Cahill was attacked near the Gregory Creek/Victoria River junction in 1895. In his words:

We had just started from the luncheon camp, and had hardly gone 300 yards when I noticed some very fresh black’s tracks. Knowing that the blacks were very bad in that part of the country I took my rifle from under my saddle flap and filled it with cartridges. I rode on a few yards when one of my boys cried out, “Look out Paddy!” I knew the blacks must be behind me, so I dodged down alongside my horse’s shoulder, and only just in time. A spear struck my hat, going through it, and giving me hard knock on the head. Luckily I am Irish, and a bit thickheaded, so it did very little harm! Before I could say a word I had niggers all around. I could do nothing but shoot as quickly as possible, and I can shoot fairly quickly. I don’t know how many niggers I shot – I didn’t stop to count them (Adelaide Register, 18-12-1905).

Joe Bradshaw was attacked at the same location. On May 26th 1894 Bradshaw, Larsen, and a ‘blackboy’, Nym, set out to travel up the Victoria and Gregory Creek to visit the ‘sheep camp’. On the 29th near the ‘Gregory Crossing’ they were attacked by Aborigines and Nym was killed (Log Book of Bradshaws Run). ‘Nym’ apparently is short for Nymgorla, a Larrakia word for ‘young man’ (Wildy, 1876: 108-09). Apparently Joe only buried Nym’s body in a shallow grave or else he had to flee for his life and leave Nym unburied because a few months later Mounted Constable Willshire from the Gordon Creek police station found Nym’s bones scattered about by dingos, and reburied them (TCPJ, 22-7-1894).

The Wardaman people were blamed for the attack on Mulligan and Ligar in Jasper Gorge in 1895. While it’s possible that Wardaman people were involved, Jasper Gorge is not Wardaman country and it’s just as likely that they were blamed by other Aborigines to divert attention from the real culprits.

In 1896 a man named Johnston was attacked on Dead Finish Creek. According to the Northern Territory Times (3-7-1896) the Aborigines:

in the first instance surrounded the camp before daylight and then quietly drove the horses away; while doing so a dog in the camp ran at them and woke Mr. Johnson and his boy, who were thus put on their guard, otherwise there is no doubt that the consequences would have been most tragical, judging by the heap of broken spears I saw laying on the road, proving the attack to have been most determined. When daylight broke the party found … that they were surrounded and their horses gone. Luckily Mr. Johnson expected Mr. Ligar would catch him up that day. Ligar did arrive about dinner time and raised the siege, and shortly afterwards the horses were tracked up over some very rough country and found 12 miles away from camp. One of the most valuable of the animals had been speared in the jugular, apparently from sheer wanton wickedness and cruelty.
Eight years after Scott’s murder drover Fred Mork was taking a mob of cattle westward across Willeroo. His cattle were camped on McLure Creek and in the morning Mork rode ahead, probably checking the route he would be taking that day. About ten miles from camp he unwittingly rode into a camp of ‘fifty or sixty’ Aborigines. According to the *Northern Territory Times* (22-6-1900):

He was no sooner observed by its occupants than a shower of spears was sent flying in his direction. One of these, a three pronged wire-headed spear, struck Mork in the fleshy part of the thigh, going right through to the saddle-flap; another spear struck the horse Mork was riding in the stifle, only just missing the joint by about two inches. Had the missile, the head of which was manufactured from an old shear blade and capable of inflicting a most horrible wound, struck the animal in the stifle...
joint, thereby crippling him, the affair would in all likelihood have ended fatally for Mork … Mork wheeled round and galloped away, followed by another flight of spears, which fortunately flew wide.

In August 1901 Dutchy Benning and others thwarted an intended ambush by about twenty Aborigines at the Gregory Creek-Victoria River junction. That night and ten miles further on, Aborigines killed two of their horses and badly wounded another. When Benning’s party arrived at the Timber Creek police station they found an old Frenchman there whom Aborigines in the Gregory Creek area had robbed of all he owned, including a sporting rifle (Northern Territory Times, 28-9-1900; TCPJ, 15-7-1900, 28-7-1900). Why he wasn’t murdered is a mystery.

A traveller named Osbourne was attacked and wounded in 1900 near the junction of Sullivans Creek and the Victoria River. As reported by the Northern Territory Times (9-11-1900):

whilst quietly riding along about midday, he was suddenly struck by a wire spear in the muscle of the right arm, the weapon being thrown with such force and murderous intent as to pass right through the arm and enter his side between the ribs, thus pinning his arm to his side. Frightened by the yells of the blacks his horses bolted. After galloping some distance Osbourne managed to extract the spear, and then feeling sick and faint from loss of blood, he got off and lay down.

After resting for several hours his horse alerted him that something was wrong, but before he could mount he was again attacked:

another shower of spears was thrown, one of which struck him in the head, but fortunately glanced off without inflicting more than a flesh wound. With the blood from this fresh wound running down his face and almost blinding him, and the terrific yells of the black fiends sounding all around him, he succeeded in mounting his frightened horse and again making his escape.

Osbourne rode some distance and camped for the night, and in the morning he returned on his tracks to try and retrieve his six packhorses. The heat and his wounds led him to take another rest and while resting he was attacked again, but this time he drove them off with his revolver. He eventually found his packhorses, all dead, and the pack bags looted. He then rode the 65 miles to ‘McPhee’s camp on Willeroo’ where his wounds were treated, and eventually he returned to Darwin (Northern Territory Times, 9-11-1900).

A ‘German traveller’, name unknown, disappeared ‘between the two Delamere’s’ in August 1902. His horses were found a few days later but a month-long police search failed to find any trace of the missing man. According to a Katherine River correspondent to the Northern Territory Times (24-2-1902), ‘Bush blacks state that the man was killed and his body, and saddles, etc., burnt, but whether this information is reliable I cannot say’.

In 1905 a Chinese cook at Willeroo was shot by Nipper, a Roper River Aborigine employed on the station. There was some suggestion that the cook had taken Nipper’s woman; in any case, Nipper shot the cook, took a horse, rifle, ammunition, blanket and other gear, and headed in towards Katherine (Northern Territory Times, 11-8-1905 and
In a spot thickly covered with long grass and intersected by small creeks and jungles – a difficult country … The spot was at once surrounded as well as possible. Nipper raised his rifle and was on the point of firing at tracker Jack, when the latter anticipated him by a snap shot at the murderer from his revolver. M.C. Johnstone then called on Nipper to surrender, but received no response. The long grass was then set on fire, and being dry soon burnt itself out. But there was no trace of Nipper, who had apparently disappeared like a snake by crawling away through the surrounding grass whilst the conflagration was raging (*Northern Territory Times*, 1-9-1905).

Nipper got clear away and apparently then:

joined the Willeroo tribe, some of whom were camped not far away, and he very foolishly boasted to them that he had not only shot the Chinese cook, but that he had also shot an old lubra employed as a goat shepherd at Willeroo. This revelation was suicidal on his part, as the old lady belonged to the Willeroo tribe (*Northern Territory Times*, 8-9-1905).

The Willeroo Aborigines took revenge by tricking Nipper into leaving his rifle in camp and going on a kangaroo hunt with spears. Not far from camp:

one of the natives suddenly stopped and called to Nipper, “There is a kangaroo. Quick! Give me your spears until I spear him!” Nipper unsuspectingly handed the other the spears. There was no kangaroo, and the next moment the unarmed Nipper had taken the place of that suppositious animal, being speared to death where he stood. This tragic event occurred near the Kathleen Falls … Nipper was found by M.C. Johnstone lying where he was killed. There were two spear wounds in the back, and also a hole in the back from whence the deceased’s “kidney fat” had been extracted by his slayers (*Northern Territory Times*, 8-9-1905).

In October 1914 a mustering team in charge of Billy Butler found two pack bags, cooking gear and human bones at the northern end of VRD, and he ‘immediately put this down to a case of murder by the river tribe known as the Waterman blacks’ (*TCPJ*, 4-3-1915). The remains were initially thought to be those of a man named Carney (*TCPJ*, 26-12-1914), but were later supposed to belong to Chas Smith (*TCPJ*, 5-1-1915). The police made inquiries and were told that Aborigines named Larry, Tiger, Tommy, Charlie and Bamboo had killed a white man in the area where the bones had been found (*TCPJ*, 5-1-1915). They searched for these men in the Skull Creek ranges and in Jasper Gorge (neither place in Wardaman country), but eventually learnt the wanted men were in camps at Timber Creek (*TCPJ*, 7-1-1915). When arrested the men admitted the crime (*TCPJ*, 13-1-1915), but the police couldn’t find corroborating evidence and eventually the accused men were released (*TCPJ*, 3-4-1915).

By 1901 Delamere was owned by W.F. Buchanan, brother of the famous Bluey Buchanan (Buchanan, 11-1-1901), and in October it was reported that Buchanan was about to stock the block (*TCPJ*, 16-10-1901). In May 1902 it was reported that Mick Fleming was
heading for the station with 2000 cattle (TCPJ, 30-5-1902; Northern Territory Times, 29-5-1903) and that teamsters Mathew Hart and Nicholas had taken a wagon load of rations and building materials there (TCPJ, 30-5-1902). Fleming later inspected timber for the homestead at the junction of the Big and Little Gregory Creeks (TCPJ, 2-6-1902). Three years later it was rumoured that Buchanan was planning to transfer another 3000 cattle from Wave Hill to Delamere (Northern Territory Times, 17-2-1905). A report in February 1905 stated the following: ‘From Delamere Downs 330 head of fats have left Port Darwin during this season. This station has only been started a little over two years, and the cattle have not properly settled down’ (The Pastoralists’ Review, 15-2-1905: 928).

Another report from June 1905 states that, ‘We arrived at new Delamere Station on Sunday, 2th [sic], and were very kindly received by Mr. P. Cahill, the manager, and Mrs. Cahill... Delamere is 1,190 square miles; stock, 5,000 cattle and 400 horses.’ After leaving Delamere en route to Katherine, this correspondent reported that, ‘On the 31st we met the drays bringing the yearly stores for Delamere from Pine Creek, the end of the railway line from Port Darwin. The cost of carting from Pine Creek is £18 per ton, to which must be added the railway freight, &c.’ (Adelaide Observer, 4-11-1905).

Again in 1905 it was reported that:

Among the methods adopted for water conservation is an interesting experiment being made by Mr. P. Cahill, manager of Delamere Downs, who is making a trial of cutting across the bed of Delamere Creek, and filling in the cut with clay up to water-level, with a view of preventing underflow or soakage after the water has stopped flowing over the bed of the creek. By this means Mr. Cahill hopes that waterholes usually dry in September will hold out for a few months longer Herbert, 1906).

Cahill’s hopes were dashed during the next wet season when a cloudburst caused the dam to be washed away (Northern Territory Times, 18-1-1907).

In 1907 Delamere had a ‘new iron dwelling-house in the course of construction.’ (Artaud, 31-12-1907). In 1921 it was reported that Delamere was 1800 square miles in area and carried about 8000 cattle (The Melbourne Age, 4-10-1921).

By 1947, and probably much earlier, both Delamere and Willeroo were being run as outstations of Manbulloo (Sweeney, 1947: 3-4). In 1955 Delamere (2,042 square miles) was resumed from Vesteyes with the intention of being thrown open for lease applications (Hoofs & Horns, September 1955: 8). This was done in 1959 when Delamere was described as:

a maintenance area comprised of red sandy tableland forest country on the eastern portion and mixed basalt stony country in the western portion. It is grassed with Mitchell, Kangaroo, Spear, Wire grasses, etc., and timbered with Bloodwood, Bulwaddy, Gum and Lancewood. Watered by three springs, several good waterholes and the Victoria River’ (Hoofs & Horns, August 1959: 46).

The station was put up for ballot which was won by John Nott (Adams, 18-9-1962: 987) who later sold the station to Americans Johnny Schneider and Luke Wise in 1966. These men were the principals in the Delamere River Ranch Company Pty. Ltd. (SMH, 4-9-
1966). Gerald Dayes (2008: 28) says that when he went to Delamere to become head stockman in 1976 it was owned by the American Kewanee Oil Company and it was this company that built the current homestead on the edge of the escarpment just off the highway. Dayes adds that it was not a practical position as it was ‘40-50 minutes’ drive from any stockwork on the station. According to Cam White (pers. comm.), the Delamere River Ranch Company held the property until at least 1982 when it sold out to John Nott, but Cam appears to have reversed the order of ownership.

In 1990 or 1991 Delamere was bought by Peter Sherwin. He sold it to Gunn’s Rural Management in 1996 for $8.75 million, probably to a consortium consisting of ‘Henry Townsend, Leo Venturin, Neville Walker and British-based former Darwin casino manager James Osbourne’ (NT News, 15-2-1996). At the time of sale the property was reported to be 5289 square kilometres and to be running about 21,500 cattle. In 2002 Delamere was bought by the Tejas Land and Cattle Company for about $15.25 million (Loizou, February 2005). In 2004 Tejas sold Delamere to the Australian Agricultural Company. In 2004 or 2005 Delamere was subdivided, with 2,110 square kilometres (810 square miles) east of the Delamere Road being taken over by the Airforce for use as a bombing range and the western portion remaining as a cattle station (SMH, 18-11-2005).

**Henry (Hugh) Gosse.** Overseer in October 1882 and up to at least March 24 1883 (Northern Territory Times, 24-3-1882; Giles, nd.: 192; Saunders, 1991: 69). On August 17th 1884, Alfred Giles sent Gosse to Newcastle Waters to relieve McPhee. Between August or September 1884 and 1886, he managed Newcastle Waters (Giles, nd.: 192: 161-64; Pastoralists’ Review, 15-3-1906: 40; Northern Standard, 6-2-1934).

In 1872-73 Gosse, a younger brother of explorer William Gosse, was a member of the Gosse Expedition in Central Australia. In 1876 he was a ‘mail contractor’ at Blinman in northern South Australia where he married Elizabeth Clark, but further details of his life are unknown until he became overseer at Delamere in 1881 (Gosse, 1981: 130).

At the end of May 1888 he went missing, having left the homestead on foot in just the clothes he was wearing. A search was made and he was found dead four miles north of Price’s Creek homestead, and 400 yards from the Flora River. His tracks led within a few yards of the Flora, then circled round and round, crossing the road several times. ‘It seemed as though he had been out of his senses, his boots, shirt, and hat were found several hundred yards from where the body was found. He seemed to have crawled some distance on his hands and knees before finally succumbing’ (Northern Territory Times, 23-6-1888). Whether Gosse had been at Delamere for the previous seven years or was visiting the station after a period away is unknown. He was buried where found and a fence put around the grave (Northern Territory Times, 23-6-1888). His name is commemorated in the area at Mt Gosse.

**J.J. McDonald.** Manager in August 1884, taking over from Gosse (Giles, nd.: 192). He was still there on Jan 9th 1885 when Stockdale and Ricketson passed through (Stockdale, nd: 102).

**Harry Sprig.** Manager in 1885 (Lucanus, 24-8-1929: 6).

**Tom Cahill.** Manager of the ‘new’ Delamere station for W.F. Buchanan in 1902-1903 (TCPJ Notes; Northern Territory Times, 29-5-1903). Actually he was manager of both
Wave Hill and Delamere, and was based at Wave Hill. He may have been manager at Delamere for the first year, or he may have had another man based at Delamere as manager (probably Mick Fleming), which was the case in 1903. For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

**Michael Fleming.** Manager of ‘new’ Delamere in 1903, under Tom Cahill (TCPJ Notes, 27-6-1903). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that Fleming’s Rockhole on Delamere was named after him. For additional biographical details see entry under Illawarra.

**Paddy Cahill.** Manager in 1905-1907 (Herbert, 1906’; TCPJ, 7-9-1907; Pastoralists’ Review, 15-3-1907: 11; North Queensland Herald, 4-12-1905). Cahill was born at Dalby, Queensland, on April 22nd, 1862 (NT census for 1891). He was the son of Thomas Cahill, a blacksmith, and Sarah Scahill (Cole, 1990: 49). In 1881-82 he and his brothers Mat and Tom helped Nat Buchanan bring 20,000 head of cattle from Queensland to the Northern Territory. The brothers stayed on in the Territory and Paddy became head stockman on Buchanan’s property, Buchanan Downs (Muckaderry), located on the Overland Telegraph line (Northern Standard, 26-6-34).

Paddy eventually became involved in the buffalo shooting industry, forming a partnership with William Johnston. When Johnson was gored by a buffalo (c1899) Paddy made an epic ride of 320 kilometres to obtain assistance (Cole 1990: 49). He claimed the credit for having introduced shooting from horseback instead of on foot and with having established a record one days’ shoot of 46 (Northern Territory Times, 24-2-1899). Ernestine Hill (1951: 372) credits Paddy with shooting 58 beasts with 56 bullets so perhaps he bettered the record he’d established by 1899.

In 1895 he took a mob of horses overland to the Victoria River Depot, for use by the Government Geologist, HYL Brown, who was arriving there by boat. On the way down Gregory Creek Cahill was attacked by Aborigines and narrowly escaped with his life (Adelaide Register, 18-12-1905).

In 1896 a report from the Wandi Goldfield mentioned that, ‘Cahill and party… have run up against another good reef in the St Lawrence block’ (Northern Territory Times, 28-2-1896). The Cahill referred to here was Paddy as his favourite buffalo-shooting horse was called ‘St Lawrence’. One of the men who worked a mine for Paddy was Lewellyn who later died on the Murranji Track (Northern Territory Times, 6-2-1906).

In October 1899 Cahill married Maria Pickford in Darwin (Northern Territory Times, 20-10-1899; Cole 1999: 49). About the same time he bought a pearling lugger (Cole 1990: 49). By 1905 he was managing Delamere (Adelaide Observer, 4-11-1905; Herbert, 1906’). In an Aboriginal story recorded by W. Arndt (1965: 241-59) Paddy is named as the perpetrator of a massacre of Aborigines on the station. The details of this massacre are somewhat confused as Arndt’s informant said it was Bilinara people who were shot but Delamere is Wardaman country and Bilinara territory is located on VRD and Wave Hill, well to the south. It seems likely either that Arndt’s informant was confusing Paddy Cahill with his brother Tom, or Arndt didn’t know about Paddy’s brother Tom and misheard ‘Tommy’ as ‘Paddy’. Tom was on Wave Hill for most of the period from about 1885 to 1905. In that period the VRD-Wave Hill boundary was 26 miles further north, which would put it well into Bilinara country (Northern Territory Times, 23-3-1906).
Paddy left Delamere in 1907 and in 1908 established a farm at Oenpelli, in west Arnhem Land where he lived for the next 14 years. In 1909 it was reported that he and his partner Johnson had ‘recently planted about 20,000 young sisal hemp plants’ at Oenpelli (Northern Territory Times, 26-11-1909). While at Oenpelli he became an authority on the local Aborigines, providing great assistance to anthropologist Baldwin Spencer and collecting bark paintings, artefacts and zoological specimens for the National Museum of Victoria (Mulvaney, 2004: 50, 75).

According to his obituary in the Graziers’ Review (16-3-1923: 1278), Paddy and his wife both caught a severe flu at Oenpelli. Paddy never fully recovered and went south for treatment where he died on February 4th, 1923, while staying with his brother Tom at Clovelly, Sydney.

**Hunter Loder.** Manager in April 1911 (TCPJ Notes, 24-4-1911). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

**Pierce George Kelly.** Manager in mid-1912 (Turner, nd: 109), in January 1914 (TCPJ, 6-1-1914) and in 1921 (The Age [Melbourne], 4-10-1929). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

**Robert Andrew Muir.** Manager in 1917 (TCPJ, 31-7-1917, 6-8-1917). He also was manager of Willeroo in 1918 and it may be that the two stations were being run as one. Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that Muir had a ‘half caste’ son who was taken away by the authorities. Johnny Stacey says (pers. comm.) that this was Billy Muir who was later killed in cyclone Tracy. For additional biographical details see entry under Willeroo.

**Ridley.** Possibly manager in July 1922 (Basedow diary, 2-7-1922).

**Edward Clifford Hunter ‘Ted’ Fogarty.** Manager by mid to late 1922. Before Delamere he had been manager at Catfish outstation and horse breaker on Wave Hill (Hoofs & Horns, July 1964: 21: Ogden, 1990: 261-2). In 1926 he became manager of Newry.

**Jack Little** (or Liddell?). Manager some time before 1925 (Northern Territory Times, 24-3-1925).

**Frank Conway.** Manager in 1925. He had a wife with him on the station (Northern Standard, 12-2-1926 and 19-2-1926).

**Donald Stephen Rankine.** Manager of both Delamere and Willeroo in 1928 (Northern Territory Times, 20-7-1928; Hall, 1970: 75). Rankine was the manager when Fred Marton, James Webb, Jack Gordon and David May carried out a daring dry season cattle heist near the Delamere-VRD boundary. Webb was the leader of the gang and probably was the same Webb who was a stockman on Delamere in 1926 (Northern Standard, 12-2-1926).

The gang mustered 200 hundred and drove them cross-country to Stan Brown’s Dorisvale station. Aborigines found the tracks crossing Delamere and alerted the Delamere head stockman, James Bennett. Bennett, with Mounted Constable Vic Hall, the Delamere-Willeroo manager Donald Rankine and Aboriginal trackers and stockmen, followed the tracks for more than 160 miles northwards and found the cattle in a paddock near...
Dorisvale homestead. Most of the cattle had been freshly branded and some were found with the Victoria River Downs brand or earmark (Northern Territory Times, 20-7-1928)

Sufficient evidence was found for the Katherine police to arrest Brown, Marton, Gordon, May and Webb, but Webb got away and at trial the charges against Gordon were dismissed. James Bennett gave evidence that on arrival at Dorisvale he ‘saw Brown with a small mob of cattle and left the tracks and galloped to him with a rifle at my hip’. When questioned if this was his usual method of approaching friendly stations he claimed it was!

Eventually, Brown Marton and May were convicted. Brown got two and half years and costs of £75, Marton two years and May nine months (Northern Territory Times, 31-7-1928: Hall, 1970: 75-8; Cole, 1988: 77-86; Katherine Felonies book, 7-6-1928). Webb later turned up in the Kimberley under the pseudonym ‘Ted Whelan’ (Cole, 1988: 85), and it was under this name that he helped Jack Kilfoyle steal bulls from the government stud at Wydnham (see entries for Whelan and Jack Kilfoye under Rosewood).

In 1929 a ‘Petition to the King’ was raised by Stan Brown’s friends, protesting about Stan being jailed without trial by Jury (NAA ACT series A1 [A1/15] 28/7425. Bovril Australia Estates Ltd. Prosecution for Cattle Stealing’ in Supreme Court). The petition read as follows:

To His Majesty the King
May it please your Majesty.
This petition by the undersigned residents of North Australia, humbly sheweth.
(1) The William Stanely Brown is a prisoner in H.M. gaol, at Darwin, North Australia, under a sentence of 2½ years imprisonment, together with £75 costs, having been judged guilty of receiving unbranded stolen cattle by His Honour the Judge of the Northern Territory (Mr Justice Mallam) at a criminal sitting of the Supreme Court, without a jury.
Your petitioners desire to point out that, as far as they know, no place, except the Northern Territory and New guinea within His Majesty’s Dominions, is denied the privilege of trial by jury
(2) That the prisoner is without sufficient means to appeal to His Majesty’s, Privy Council, the trial above-mentioned having cost the prisoner over £1000 which entirely exhausted his means.
(3) Your petitioners humbly draw attention to the fact that the locality in which the cattle were running has an area larger than the Kingdom of Belgium; that it is a wild uninhabited country, except for a few primitive aboriginal natives, that horned cattle have been running wild and breeding in large numbers for the past 50 years; thousands dying in the bush of old age. There is no means of identifying the owners thereof except by the firebrands thereon. That hundreds of cattle are captured each year, which really belong to His Majesty the King, and branded by cattle station employees, the owners of the station claiming ownership though the cattle may be roaming wild hundreds of miles off the property held under lease from the Crown.
(4) Your petitioners are all natural born and loyal subjects of the King and they humbly submit that though His Honour Mr Justice Mallam was legally and technically right in his decision, yet morally the decision is a shock to those residents, including your petitioners, who are personally acquainted with all the peculiar circumstances of the case.
(5) Your petitioners request that Your Majesty will command that a new trial, before a Judge and a Jury be held. And your petitioners will ever pray.

The petition was signed by 113 residents but rejected on the grounds that the law did not allow trial by jury which the petitioners asked for. If they had asked for a remission of sentence it could have been done (Memorandum, 25-10-1929). However, in January 1930 the Minister for Home Affairs recommended that trial by jury be re instituted (Minister for Home Affairs, 28-1-1930).

**Jim Bennett.** Head stockman from 1926 to at least 1928 (*Northern Territory Times*, 20-7-1928; Cole, 1988: 82). He was manager from 1935 to at least August 1937 (Fenton, 1947: 61; TCPJ, 6-8-1937). He also had been a stockman on Willeroo. Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says Bennet had a ‘half caste’ son, Mick.

**Paddy Griffin.** Cook in about 1928 (Cole, 1988: 82).

**Murray Gaden.** Manager up to 1932 when he died and was buried at Delamere (Morey, 1977d: 18-19). The name is pronounced ‘Gay-den’. According to Morey, Murray Gaden was a brother to Hazel Gaden, a well known buffalo shooter, and Hazel came out to Delamere to take over after Murray’s death. Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that he dropped dead while opening a gate.

**Hazel Gaden.** Manager after the death of his brother in about 1932 (Morey, 1977d: 19). Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.) knew Hazel and said that when Hazel’s mother was pregnant she was longing for a daughter that she planned to name Hazel. When she had a boy instead of a girl she decided to give him the name of the daughter she thought she’d have.

Hazel married Ada Smith in 1920 and they lived together on Orient station in Queensland which Hazel was managing. Ada was the daughter of Alf Smith, a noted early buffalo hunter in the Territory. When Alf died in 1921 Ada and her brother Fred inherited his buffalo leases. Hazel, Ada and Fred shifted from Orient station to the Territory and carried on Alf’s trade in buffalo shooting (Cossons, 1990: 262-3).

**Roy Henry Bartlam.** Overseer in 1936. He had also been overseer on Willeroo, head stockman on Wave Hill in 1934 and possibly manager of Nicolson in 1939.

On Delamere at the end of April, 1936, just before a muster was about to begin, all the ‘stockboys’ cleared out. The next day, May 1st, Bartlam and a musterer’s cook named John Riley rode out on the run and came across the Aborigines at Bigpanang, a pocket in the ranges near the homestead. Spears and boomerangs were thrown and shots were fired (*Northern Standard*, 9-6-1936; pers. comm., Billy Harney). The Aborigines involved were subsequently arrested and charged with attempted murder, but at their trial accounts varied as to who initiated the fight.

According to Bartlam and the cook, the Aborigines sang out to them from the top of the range so they rode to the bottom of the hill and called out ‘What do you want?’ Brumby then yelled, ‘I’ll kill you, you white ———’, and threw a spear which ‘passed close to his face’ (*Northern Standard*, 9-6-1936). Fat Jack, Bob and Brumby began throwing spears and boomerangs so he and Riley galloped for the narrow opening of the pocket. As they
fled they saw the Aborigines running along the hilltop to try and intercept them at the gate, so Bartlam fired several shots in their direction with a .25 calibre pistol. This caused the Aborigines to take cover and enabled the two white men to get away. The Aborigines claimed that they were on the hilltop hunting kangaroos when Bartlam and the cook rode to the bottom of the hill. Bartlam began shooting at them with a .45 revolver so they retaliated with their spears and boomerangs.

Judge Wells accepted the word of the whites, but he thought there was something seriously wrong and although satisfied that the accused had tried to kill the two white men he said, ‘there was some reason for it and he wanted to know what that reason was’ (Adelaide Advertiser, 30-7-1936). Sergeant R. Woods was asked if he could offer a reason and he gave evidence that, ‘there had not been any trouble between the blacks and the employers of Willeroo previously, nor has there been a complaint about the natives at Willeroo.’ He added that, ‘Former managers at Willeroo spoke highly of Brumby,’ and added that, ‘he had been stationed at Katherine for eight years and found the boys at Willeroo most efficient and reliable’ (Northern Standard, 31-7-1936).

Bartlam was then recalled and asked why he thought the Aborigines had ‘gone bush’. He suggested it might have been because, ‘the natives were afraid of several horses which had injured several and left camp to evade having to ride them.’ The only explanation Bartlam could offer for the attack upon himself and Riley was that, ‘Brumby may have been disgruntled and the others acted at his instigation’ (Northern Standard, 31-7-1936).

Summing up for the defence, H.J. Foster argued that, ‘the natives concerned in the spearing were all civilised and not myalls and they had always behaved themselves’. He said that they, ‘all had good characters and there must have been something very serious indeed to have caused them to act in the way they did’ (Northern Standard, 31-7-1936). In spite of Woods’ testimonial to the general good character of the Willeroo Aborigines, and the lack of a compelling reason for the attack, the accused men were found guilty and given the minimum sentence of three years imprisonment. However, Judge Wells remained unhappy with the evidence presented and expressed disquiet over the sentence which he thought was ‘a bit too long in the circumstances’ (Adelaide Advertiser, 30-7-1936). He said he intended to write to the Minister to see if the sentence could be shortened, but it’s unknown if this ever occurred.

Unfortunately, the Aborigines do not appear to have been asked what the problem was but Wardaman elder Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that the reason for the trouble was that Bartlam had an Aboriginal woman locked up to keep her for himself. So, what was the truth of the matter? It may be that the Aborigines did clear out through fear of some of the horses in the mustering plant although I suspect there was more to it than this. There is one piece of evidence which strongly suggests that when Tiger and the others approached the white men no attack was intended. During the trial the cook gave evidence that children were present when the fight started because, ‘he heard them crying and screaming’ (Northern Standard, 31-7-1936). It’s highly unlikely that Aborigines involved in a premeditated attack would have had their children with them and in view of the high reputation the Aborigines had previously enjoyed it seems unlikely they would have made an unprovoked attack on the two white men.

Clarrie Wilkinson. Manager in November 1944 (NAA NT F77, file 7/45). For additional biographical information see entry under Sturt Creek.
**Harry Huddlestone.** Head stockman in October 1947, when the station was under Tom Fisher, manager of Manbulloo (Sweeney, 1947: 4). Harry was one of the founders of Coolibah station in 1936, along with Tom Liddy and George Murray (Ogden, 1989: 25, 30). In 1953 Harry went from Manbulloo/Delamere to Wave Hill as head stockman under Tom Fisher (Ogden, 1992: 53).

According to George Man Fong, who worked for Huddleston on Wave Hill:

> He was a hard boss, a livery old bastard. He’d drop the stockwhip on you quick if you done the wrong thing, you’d have to toe the line with Harry. It wouldn’t matter what you were, black white or brindle you had to toe the line with Harry. A very tough boss, a good boss (Ogden, 1992: 53).

In 2000 Buck Buchester told me that Harry died in Darwin ‘about seven or eight years ago’, aged about 85. Another man named Harry Huddlestone is recorded as dying at Newcastle Waters on May 29th, 1942 (Timber Creek Museum records). Johnny Stacey says (pers. comm.) that these men were father and son, both named Harry. Johnny said that Harry senior was a teamster who carted telegraph poles and wire from Boorolooka to Powell Creek via Beetaloo station, and that there was a waterhole on this route named after him.

**Arthur Dunn.** Cook from at least September 1944 to at least September 1945 (TCPJ, 29-11-1944, 25-9-1945). In 1944 he was reported to have shot dead an Aborigine named Tiger, allegedly in self defence (TCPJ, 29-11-1944). Dunn was charged with murder and at his trial a stockman, Michael John Connors, gave his version of what had happened. Connors said that on November 24th he gave Tiger a letter to take to Delamere. Tiger left, but returned some hours later and when asked why he had not gone to Delamere he said ‘you no -------- good’. He then became abusive towards Connors and approached ‘in a fighting attitude’. Connors picked up a rifle and shoved Tiger off the verandah with the butt end, and ‘told him to go get his gin and leave the place’. About ten minutes later Tiger and another man named Monday came back with boomerangs and a nulla nulla. He threw the boomerang at Connors but it missed and smashed to bits nearby. Connors then fired a shot over Tiger’s head and told him to go back to his camp, but Tiger threw another boomerang and ducked behind the butcher’s shop. While trying to reload his rifle Connors heard a shot and one of the other Aborigines there called out that Tiger had been shot. Later Arthur Dunn admitted to shooting Tiger, with the excuse that he thought Tiger was about to attack Connors whose gun appeared to have jammed. Tiger was carried back to the Aboriginal camp where he died the next morning (The News [Adelaide], 16-7-1945: 3; Advertiser [Adelaide], 7-7-1945: 7). No evidence was given that medical help was given or arranged. If any of the Aborigines present gave evidence it wasn’t reported and no reason was given for Tiger to attack Connors. Dunn, described by Mounted Constable Gordon Stott as ‘a decent old chap having been working aboriginals for years’, was acquitted.

**Jack Connors.** Overseer or head stockman, 1943-56. He began work as head stockman on Delamere on June 10th 1943 (NAA NT, F77, File 7/45). Bill Hamill (pers. comm.) says it was Connors who shot Tiger dead at Delamere and that he was then transferred to Manbulloo. However, the Timber Creek police journal and other records say it was Dunn who shot Tiger.

George Man Fong. Head stockman in 1952 (Ryan, 10-3-1953: 2).

Roly McPherson. Temporary head stockman in 1952 (Ryan, 1953: 2). He was on Willeroo in 1954 or 1955 (pers. comm., Don Corcoran).

Wray Finlay. Manager before Millwood (pers. comm., Cam White).

Ken Hughes. Manager some time after arriving in the Territory in 1950 (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

Tom ‘Hobble Chain’ Millwood. Manager in the 1960s (pers. comm., Donna Schultz) and definitely there in 1965 (NT News, 5-5-1965). He was also manager of Gordon Creek in about 1963. Apparently Millwood had a reputation for his appalling treatment of women. There are also stories about Tom’s cruelty to cattle, ringers etc. For instance, in May 1965 there were allegations that he beat up young white workers on the station (NT News, 5-5-1965) and he is said to have shot cattle in yards when they wouldn’t load.

Donna Schultz thinks he was killed by a bull on Delamere station but Charlie Schultz thinks he was shot dead by his wife in Tasmania. Ernie Rayner (pers. comm.) says that Millwood definitely was shot by a woman while he was sleeping and that this happened in New Zealand (Millwood was a New Zealander). Ernie knows this to be the case because when it happened Millwood’s brother came into a shop in Katherine crying and told Ernie about it. The New Zealand Herald reported on December 28th 1968 that Christine McKenzie was acquitted of the murder of Thomas Henry Millwood at Kohinui. In light of Ernie’s story it seems likely that this was ‘Hobble chain’ Millwood.


Cam White. Manager for 12 months in 1965. Later he was a stock inspector (pers. comm., Cam White).

Peter Coosney. Manager 1966-67 (pers. comm., Jack Sammon, who was head stockman there in 1967).

Don Todd. Manager in 1968-69 (TCPJ, 17-12-1968; NT News, 26-11-1969). When he left it was reported in the NT News (26-11-1969) that ‘the 20 stone American from Montana, [who was] manager of the Delamere River Ranch for the past two years will soon become manager of Mainoru Station’.

Geoff McLeod. Manager from about 1969 to 1981 (TCPJ, 3-7-1970; pers. comm., Cam White). Geoff’s daughter, Georgina, told me that he was a stockman on Delamere in 1969 and afterwards became owner or part-owner. He left Delamere in 1971 to become manager of Mainoru station (NT News, 26-11-1969).
Gene Tunney. Head stockman under McLeod, then he went to Hooker Creek and bought the store there (pers. comm., Cam White). He was a policeman at Wave Hill in 1948-50 (WHPJ, various entries from 11-10-1948 to 24-6-1950) but Buck Buchester reckons that Tunney was never head stockman. Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that Tunney had only one arm.

Eddie Hackman. Manager (pers. comm., Mick Bower). Eddie was born in China on December 24th 1932 to Scots-Scandinavian parents. He spent his childhood in China, Finland and Britain. After being educated in arts at Gordonstoun School in Scotland, in 1953 he came to Australia. After twenty years working on cattle stations in the north he returned to the arts, becoming well known for his bronzes. After battling cancer for some years he died on May 24th 2005 (SHOF, March 2005; Outback, Issue 23, June/July 2002).

Ross Ellison. Manager in the 1980s.


Noel Hassle. Manager after Trier.


Scott Doherty. Manager in 2014 (Schubert, 27-5-1911).
FITZROY

Fitzroy came into being after Bullita was resumed from the pastoral holdings of Connor, Doherty and Durack in 1945 (Lands Department, 20-1-1943). On November 8th 1947 the Timber Creek police noted that, ‘Truck (Kenna @ Byers) Driver Bunce in Charge, W. Cussens and Jack Cleverly arrived @ left for Slatey Hole near Gorge where a new Stn “Fitzroy” is being started.’ Nine days later the Timber Creek police noted that, ‘McIndoe E. Bunce and N Prendergast retd to Gorge and Skull Ck. McIndoe to shift camp to Skull Creek and Stn to be known as “Fitzroy”.’ On the bank of Skull Creek to the west of Jasper Gorge there is the remains of building which VRD Aboriginal man Doug Campbell (deceased) said was the old Fitzroy homestead. The site, a waterhole nearby and the general area is known to local Ngaliwurru Aborigines as Yajajin (see Lewis, 1996c: 207-212).

The Auvergne stock route which ran through Bullita appears to have become the boundary between two new stations, but this needs confirmation. The block of 1,007 square miles to the north east of the stock route was taken up by ‘Snowy’ Kenna in 1947 (Ogden 1989: 39). He named it Fitzroy, probably after the range on the property given this name by explorer Gregory in 1855 (Gregory, 1981: 99-194). The land to the southwest was taken up by Charlie Schultz in 1947 and retained the name Bullita.

In 1950 Kenna obtained a loan from Spooner and Smith (the United Cattle Company) and bought the adjoining property, the combined Coolibah and Bradshaw (Ogden, 1989: 40-41). Wason Byers then moved into the Coolibah homestead and the Fitzroy homestead – a rough affair of bush timer and corrugated iron – was either abandoned or dismantled (Lewis, 1996c: 207). For reasons explained above in the entry on Coolibah station, Byers and Kenna couldn’t meet the agreed repayments so both Coolibah-Bradshaw and Fitzroy were taken takeover by Spooner and Smith in 1955.

In 1958 or 1959 Spooner and Smith sold Fitzroy for a reported £25,000 (Hoofs & Horns, February 1959: 40-41). It appears that it was sold to a man named John Nott who owned Fitzroy in the late 1950s-early 1960s (pers. comm., Cam White). In 1963 Fitzroy was bought by Allied Pastoral Enterprises, a company owned by the wealthy Americans, Chase and Linklater, for £100,000 (Hoofs & Horns, June 1963: 30). They retained the station until the early or mid-1980s. Then Don Hoar became the owner and in 1992 he sold Fitzroy to the Commonwealth Government which bought the station on behalf of the Aboriginal traditional owners (Bauman & Stead, 1992).

Leslie John ‘Snowy’ Kenna. Owner from about the time the Fitzroy block was divided from Bullita, until it was foreclosed in 1955. Later he owned the Pioneer Theatre in Alice Springs (pers. comm., Johnny Stacey).


Leslie Verdun Turley. Head stockman in October 1949 (Gordon, 1992: 141). Another source places him as head stockman on Coolibah at this time. He was head stockman at Wombungie in 1950-51.
John ‘Nico’ Nicolson. Manager for a short period in the 1960s but at the time he arrived there or shortly afterwards the company went bankrupt, so there was no longer a job. For additional biographical details see entry for Bullo River.

Mick and Pat O’Neil. Manager from 1960 to at least 1971 (Ogden, 1989: 61; pers. obs.) Mick was involved in forming the Timber Creek Race Club. He had previously been head stockman on Willeroo. He died at Gympie in 1998.

Bob Napier. Manager for 12 months or so (pers. comm., Dave Napier).

Rod Ansell. Manager (pers. obs.; pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White). Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.) thinks Ansell was there from about 1978 to 1982. Ansell achieved national attention in 1977 when he was rescued after spending two months stranded on the lower Fitzmaurice River. He claimed that he’d been on a fishing trip down the Victoria but some believe he was actually on the Fitzmaurice poaching crocodiles and another story is that he had been dropped off there by a character known as ‘The Arab’ to grow marijuana. Whatever the truth is, something happened and he ended up stranded. After surviving several days without fresh water he made it to the head of the tide where the Koolendong valley meets the river and the water is fresh. He had a rifle, ammunition and a knife so he decided to remain there and live off the land until the wet season arrived, five months later. Once the wet came he figured he could walk out without perishing for water.

This was a strange strategy to adopt. The Koolendong Valley has waterholes and springs along its length and is an old Aboriginal ‘highway’ from the Fitzmaurice River south to
the Victoria. Springs and waterholes occur in the ranges throughout the Fitzmaurice River catchment and the Fitzmaurice River itself is a spring-fed stream for 30 or 40 kilometres above the tide, with numerous large waterholes for a considerable distance further upstream. Ansell could have followed the Fitzmaurice upstream or explored along the Koolendong valley, found the next nearest water source and shifted camp to it. By repeating this process he probably could have found a way back to civilization within a few weeks or a month. However, he did survive for two months before being found by Luke McCall and a group of Aboriginal musterers from Palumpa, an Aboriginal community in the Daly River Aboriginal Land Trust. Many others might have perished long before, so he should be given some credit for that.

Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that at one stage Ansell worked for Winny Bright and when given a cheque for $40 he added a couple of noughts to greatly increase his payoff. His experiences were made into a film, To Fight The Wild (1979) and later published in a book (Ansell and Percy, 1980). It’s said that he was the model upon which actor Paul Hogan based his character in the movie, ‘Crocodile Dundee’.

He married the woman who helped him put together his book and bought a station in the buffalo country east of Darwin. In 1988 he was awarded ‘Territorian of the Year’, but in 1992 he was convicted of cattle duffing. During the BTEC program he was forced to shoot thousands of buffalo on his property but did not receive any compensation from the government. As a result he was in deep financial difficulties. Later he had this station taken from him, officially because he had failed to fulfill the covenants of his lease (eradicate feral animals and weeds), but some thought it might have been ‘punishment’ because he’d been outspoken against the government’s BTEC Program (NT News, 5-8-1999).

In July 1999 Ansell, at the time heavily affected by alcohol and drugs, fired shots at a house at Acacia, on the Stuart Highway. He then commandeered a vehicle that had been driven to the house by a neighbour who’d heard the shots. A man in the house came out and hit Ansell through the side window with a baseball bat, but Ansell fired a shot and blew off the man’s index finger. Some hours later at a police roadblock about a kilometre away Ansell shot and killed Glen Huitson, said to be the most popular policeman in the Northern Territory, and wounded a local citizen in the buttocks. Another police officer at the scene returned fire and shot him dead (NT News, 5-8–1999).

Wayne Fogarty. Caretaker-manager after Ansell (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).


Joe Groves appears to have had a sympathetic attitude towards his Aboriginal employees. He was bull-catching on Bradshaw in 1967 and a Welfare Officer reported that:

It is apparent that Mr. Groves goes out of his way to help his employees. He endeavours to pass European idea [sic]. He insists on everyone sitting up to a properly set table while at the base camp [old Buffalo Springs homestead]. He also encourages the use of sheets and underclothes.
Mr. Groves is an excellent employer, his relationship with the Aboriginals is excellent. He states that there are no better stockmen than Aboriginals. He has employed Europeans only because they were the only labour available. He hopes to help the Aboriginals overcome their differences by making them part of his family (Scott, 1-11-1967).

In *An Outback Life* Mary Groves states that Joe had previously worked as a horsebreaker on Moolooloo, in stock camps on Moroak and Mountain Valley (pp. 96, 120, 131), head stockman at Mount Sanford (p. 139), bull-catcher on Moroak, Elsey, Hodgson Downs, Roper River and Coolibah (pp. 147, 151), assistant manager on Delamere (p. 148), cartaker manager on Coolibah in 1967 (pp. 154), manager of Bradshaw for six months from late 1968 (pp. 169, 176), manager of Eva Valley for a short period in 1969 (p. 178) and manager of St Vidgeon in 1970 (p. 205).

After leaving Fitzroy in 1979 the Groves bought Prices Springs, a small property north of Katherine. In 1981 they sold this property and bought Woolner station (pp. 240, 258).

**Graeme Bell.** Manager for Don Hoar (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). For additional biographical details see entry for Argyle.

**Tony and Kathy Doyle.** Managers after Bell.

**Des Stenhouse.** Manager for the Aboriginal owners from the time that they acquired the station in March 1992 until his retirement. Des began his working life as a jackaroo in southwest Queensland. Other stations he managed include Helen Springs, Muckaty, Manbulloo and Waterloo (pers. comm., Des Stenhouse; pers. comm., Billy Harney). Des died at Scone on May 5th, 2016, aged 81.
FLORA VALLEY

According to Gordon Buchanan (Buchanan, 1961: 899; Buchanan, 1997: 134), Flora Valley was stocked with Wave Hill cattle in 1887 or 1888 by brothers Hugh and Wattie Gordon, and himself. The first homestead was described (West Australian, 4-7-1891) as ‘only a small house built of native wood and a thatched roof.’

The station remained in the hands of the Gordon brothers and Buchanan until it was taken over by Vesteys in 1914 (Bolton, 1953: 170). Weir (1906: 243), who visited the station in 1906, states that the station was ‘originally stocked in 1893 with 600 head of Shorthorns and the number has since increased to 7,000, from which a draft of 250 head of fats are disposed of annually.’ Weir described the station as being ‘440,000 acres, which includes a plain about 40 miles long by seven miles wide, the remainder being mountainous country, which is of little value for feeding purposes.’ He remarked that:

The proprietors have collected the natives together and formed a large camp near the homestead, where they are practically supplied with provisions by the station. The older natives and young children remain in close proximity to the camp, where they may hunt and obtain a portion of their food in the usual native fashion, whilst the stronger and more able bodied perform the necessary station work and are cared for at the homestead.

Eventually Flora became part of the Vestey empire. In 1967 625 square miles of Flora land was resumed by the Western Australian government with the aim of preventing erosion which threatened to silt up the Ord River dam (Kelly, 1971: 55). Peter Sherwin bought Flora from Vesteys in 1984 and lost it in the corporate takeover by Robert Holmes a’ Court in 1989. For additional details of this takeover see the entry on VRD. Gordon Downs and Flora Valley are still controlled by Heytsbury and are now run as one property (pers. comm., Rob Glenn). In the 1950s, at least, the brand was UOX.

Oswald J. Quinn. Manager in 1919 (The Pastoral Review, 16-2-1921). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.


H.D. Chidley. Manager in August 1921 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 2039) and in late 1926 (Dorney, c1928: 107). He probably took over from Woodland.

Dick Laffan (or Laffin). Manager in 1923 (Volkman, 14-10-1921: 548). According to an obituary published in the Graziers’ Review (16-10-1925: 888), Laffin was born in Wagga Wagga in about 1860. He was a drover for nearly 30 years in the Gulf Country and made fifteen trips from the Kimberley to Queensland. Afterwards he became a Vesteys manager on ‘Tannumbina’ (Tanumbirini) and Burnside, as well as on Flora Valley. He was a keen racing man and was well known in the Territory where he died in Darwin hospital from malaria on September 30th 1925. He wife was a hotel keeper in New South Wales and his son was employed at Randwick.

Keith ‘Tiger’ Goddard. Manager in 1926 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 2063). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.


Bill Crowson. Manager in the 1940s (pers. comm., Cec Watts). For additional biographical details see entry under Montejinni.

Claude Hawkins. Manager of Flora Valley and Margaret station in 1945 and part of 1946 (pers. comm., Cec Watts). Hoofs & Horns magazine (April 1947: 7) published a photo of him and reported him as manager early in 1947, but their information may have been out of date.

Ken Cameron. Manager from about 1946 until late 1950 when he left to take over Wave Hill (pers. comm., Cec Watts; Barnes, 1948; Hoofs & Horns, May 1951: 47). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

Joe Walker. Manager after Cameron (pers. comm., David Lloyd). For additional biographical details see entry under Gordon Downs.

Patullo. Manager? (Buchanan family papers).


Jack McGeorge. Manager? (Buchanan family papers).
**Harry Sergeant.** Cec Watts (pers. comm.) says he was relieving manager after Cameron was transferred to Wave Hill (late in 1950).

**Len Keihne.** Manager in 1951-1953 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; *Hoofs & Horns*, August 1951: 43). For additional biographical details see entry under Limbunya.

**Bruce Bardon ‘Bolivar’ Hudson.** Manager in about 1945-46 (Buchanan family papers). Cec Watts (pers comm.) thinks he may have been manager there some time pre-war. For additional biographical details see entry under Gordon Downs.


**Bill Atkinson.** Manager, c1955 (pers. comm., Len Hill), or 1953-54 before being transferred to Turner station in 1954 (pers. comm., Cec Watts).

**Bill ‘Dinny’ Crowley.** Manager in 1956 (pers. comm., Cec Watts). For additional biographical details see entry under Sturt Creek.

**Bob Louden.** Manager in 1955-56. He was gone by January 1956 to take over management at Nutwood Downs (*Hoofs & Horns*, January 1956; pers. comm., Len Hill). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says he also was on Limbunya or Waterloo.

**Arthur Proudfoot.** Manager from April 1956 to 1959 (WHPJ, 11-4-1956, 21-4-1957; pers. comm., Len Hill; pers. comm., Cec Watts; Calley, 2000).

**Bob McLachlan.** Manager from February 1959 to December 1965 (Calley, 2000). For additional biographical details see entry under Waterloo.

**Jim Tough.** Manager after Bob McLachlan, from 1966 to the early 1970s. He was head stockman on Wave Hill before going to Flora (pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White; Calley, 2000).


**George Wheeler.** Manager from 1977 to 1980. He was the last Vesteys manager on Flora before Sherwin bought the station, and he stayed on with Sherwin for twelve months. Then he was on Mistake Creek, running an abattoir there at Nelson Springs (pers. comm., Cam White and Dave Napier; pers. comm., Darryl Hill). Previously he had been manager at Cattle Creek (pers. obs).

**Giles Loder.** Manager from 1980 until the corporate takeover of Sherwin’s cattle empire by Heytsbury Holdings in 1989. Then he worked as a welder in Darwin. By 2014 he was living in Brisbane (Barber, 2015).

**Laurie Curtain.** Manager (when?)

**Wayne Bean.** Manager, 1998 (pers comm., Rob Glenn).

Gary and Tinkey joined Heytesbury Cattle Co. in January 1999, when Gary was appointed Overseer at Mt Sanford and Tinkey was part of the stock camp. Both progressed through the company in various roles before taking their current position at Flora Valley.
GORDON CREEK

Formerly an outstation of VRD (known as No. 4 Camp; *Northern Standard*, 19-2-1926), now the Aboriginal Community of Yarralin. There have been two Gordon Creek outstations, in very different locations. The original was located on Gordon Creek, about 40 kilometres south of the present VRD homestead, and was in fact the original homestead (Ricketson, nd.). This was built in 1883 or 1884, but a new and larger homestead was built at Stockyard Creek within a few years and the Gordon Creek hut was then converted to an outstation. From 1894 to 1898 it was used as a police station and subsequently, as far as is possible to determine, was abandoned. The other ‘Gordon Creek’ outstation – the one dealt with here – was located on the Wickham River, 20 kilometres upstream from the present VRD homestead.

It’s difficult to determine exactly when the Gordon Creek outstation on the Wickham was established and why it was named Gordon Creek. Before about 1909 there were only three or perhaps four established outstations on VRD – Longreach, Montejinni, Camfield Creek and possibly another known as ‘Vomards’ (see entry for Moolooloo’). From the VRD records (*VRD Day Book*, Nov-December 1909 to April 1916) it appears that apart from these outstations, from 1915 there were several semi-permanent mustering camps. These were sometimes referred to by the name of the head stockman in charge, so the names changed as head stockmen came and went. For example, among the various camps mentioned in the VRD records are ‘William’s Camp’, ‘Reed’s Camp’ and ‘Butler’s Camp’. Other camps were named for their location – ‘Battle Creek Camp’, ‘Weaner Camp’ and ‘Poison Creek Camp’.

According to Aborigines at Yarralin, Gordon Creek was originally known as ‘Pincher Camp (‘Spencer’s Camp’), Spencer being Frank Spencer, a long term employee of VRD who first appears in the VRD books in September 1923. Their statement is confirmed in an entry on August 9th 1927 in the VRD diary 1927: ‘Joe Beckett arrived from Spencer’s Camp with note (Gordon Creek)’. Before Spencer’s time there was a ‘Butler’s Camp’ and a ‘Crocodile Camp’ in the same general vicinity. The ‘Crocodile Camp’ was probably located at Crocodile billabong, close to the later Gordon Creek outstation. A Gordon Creek Camp is mentioned in the VRD records in April and May 1915 (*VRD day book, 1909 to 1925, vol. 1*) but this might refer to a camp on the watercourse, Gordon Creek, rather than on the Wickham River.

By September 1921 a ‘Gordon Creek Ration Account’ appears in the VRD records (*VRD day book, 1909 to 1925, vol. 1*) which suggests at least a semi-permanent camp at this time. From old photographs it appears that the original building at the Wickham River Gordon Creek was a paperbark hut. During 1936 an angle-iron and corrugated iron homestead was erected there (*VRD Ledger 4, Feb 1930-Feb 1937*).

Some time prior to 1952 there apparently was a move to establish a new outstation to replace both Gordon Creek and Pigeon Hole, but this never eventuated (for further information on this planned move see VRD section). According to Dave Napier (pers. comm.) after Humbert River obtained the White Water block in 1962 (pastoral lease 975), Gordon Creek closed down.

**J. Deissler.** Head stockman at Gordon Creek Camp from August 29th 1921 to December 31st 1921 (*VRD Ledger 2, Jan 1913 – Dec 1921*).
Francis Edward Spencer. Head stockman from at least late 1925 (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926). Because Aborigines say that Gordon Creek was originally known as ‘Pincher (Spencer) Camp’, it’s probable that he established the outstation. Spencer started working at Gordon Creek in Tom Graham’s time, in September 1923 (VRD diary 1923, 2-9-1923). In 1932 he was head stockman at No 1 (Centre) Camp (Morey, 1977c: 21) though in 1933 he was again said to be at Gordon Creek (TCPJ, 21-5-1933). In 1935 he was said to be temporary overseer (Martin, 22-7-1935). Later he again became head stockman at the Gordon Creek camp and was there for many years (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz). He was eventually employed as overseer and in other capacities. For example, in October 1948 he was acting manager while manager Magnussen was away on holidays (Barnes, 1948).

Frank Spencer nursing Miff Iverach, VRD (Mildred Martin collection).
Charlie Schultz says that Spencer got the nick-names, ‘the Speckled Hen’ and ‘the Copper Rivet’, because of his very large freckles. These can sometimes be seen in old photographs. According to Old Dora at Yarralin, Spencer was known as Nampula (bush fig). Another name I was given was Malyaka or Mylaka (‘spots on arms’). Because of his complexion he couldn’t take the sun and wore a very wide-brimmed hat, long sleeves and a neckerchief (pers. comm., Mildred Martin).

In February 1951 Spencer was reported to again be acting manager of VRD while Magnussen was away (Hoofs & Horns, February 1951: 38), but he left in 1951 after 26 years on the station and by March 1951 he was reported as managing Kurundi station, near Tennant Creek (Hoofs & Horns, March 1951: 39). Marie Mahood (pers. comm.) says that he left in protest because Magnussen ordered all the old stockhorses to be sold for pet meat rather than being ‘pensioned off’. He was still on Kurundi in August when he was reported as ‘trucking Kurundi bullocks’ (Hoofs & Horns, August 1951: 44). Another item in Hoofs & Horns (June 1951: 40) says that Harry Richards was manager of Kurundi in June 1951 so there is a conflict here.

In June 1953 Spencer was overseer on Bovril’s Walgra station (Qld), but by October he had been transferred to ‘western properties’ (‘Station Staff’, 1953). This ‘western property’ was Carlton Hill, another Bovril station. In a letter to William Buckland in September 1958, the VRD manager Jack Quirk mentioned that Spencer had been on Carlton until ‘about 1956’ (Quirk, 9-9-1958 and Quirk, 1-11-1958), and Hoofs & Horns reported in May 1955 (p. 9) that Spencer was no longer manager at Carlton. Australian Shorthorns (April 1960: 43) has a photo of Spencer and describes him as manager of Glenroy Station. I’ve heard that Spencer died at Lissadell, but Gerry Ash (pers. comm.) said he knew Frank Spencer at Glenroy and that he died in Derby hospital. Johnny Stacey says (pers. comm.) that Spencer had Aboriginal children from his time on Kurundi station.


had quite a long experience, extending over more than ten years, including a considerable period with Sir Sidney Kidman, on various Stations of his, and seems to have gathered quite a bit of knowledge because he was in charge of one of the places on the route between South Australia and Queensland. He had been at the Tonbridge School, I think, with Sir Sidney Kidman’s son, and this, I believe, is how he originally came to go out. He had been getting £200 a year and his keep, but owing to the economies that sir Sydney Kidman had to practice he was cut down to £100 a year, which was a pretty poor living for a man with his experience or without it. He makes no complaint of course, but just recognises it as one of the troubles of the financial crisis. What made me interested was that he was introduced to me by a Director of the Bank of England, and because his brother is one of the Secretaries there, and he has been working at the Bank for some months … He came to me to see if I could place him in the Argentine. His age is 28.
Born in 1904, he married Audrey Harrison in 1935. They had one child, named James Francis West, born on December 9th, 1936 (Tax form, 28-8-1943, NBA 87/9).

According to Charlie Schultz, Frank Reynolds was ‘a bit of a Lord Haw Haw’ and says he eventually went back to England. He was in England in 1939 and by the time he was about to return to Australia, the Second World War had broken out. Alf Martin wondered how Reynolds could manage to leave England without joining up (Martin, 3-11-1939), but leave he did, arriving back in Australia by January 1940 (Martin, 12-9-1939 and Martin, 9-1-1940). He left under a cloud in 1943 (Martin, 9-2-1943).

At one time Reynolds worked on Ningbing where he suffered an accident (Martin, 11-7-1939). There was a Mr and Mrs Reynolds managing Alice Downs in the Kimberley during the 1940s (Clement, 1989: 2) and in August 1956 the Wave Hill police journal noted ‘Mr & Mrs F. Reynolds in chev sedan and caravan (Qld rego) passed through for West at 6pm’.

Charlie Schultz recounted an epic fight he had with Reynolds. According to Charlie, Reynolds had a reputation on VRD as a good fighter – nine fights and nine wins. One day Reynolds and Charlie got into an argument over an Aboriginal employee and this turned into an all-out fight. Hessie Schultz was there and screaming, ‘Don’t fight Charlie! Stop!’,
but they went at it regardless. Someone held Hessie around the middle to stop her getting in the way. As Charlie told it he knocked the stuffing out of Reynolds, probably a true version as Charlie had trained as a boxer in his youth and had a reputation as a tough fighter. Reynolds was known to VRD Aborigines as Wurunpun (pers. comm., Dora Jilpngari).

**Dave Magoffin.** Head stockman from May 31st 1938 to July 31st 1940 (VRD Ledger 5, Feb 1937-Feb 1944; Magoffin, 1996: 89). In later years he became a well-known radio personality in Brisbane.

**Joe (KJ) Callanan.** Head stockman from July 22nd 1943 to October 1st 1944 (VRD Ledger 5, Feb 1937-Feb 1944).

**V.C. “Curly” Hazard.** Head stockman from January 31st 1942 to January 31st 1944 (VRD Ledger 5, Feb 1937-Feb 1944). This needs checking because of clash with Callanan. He also was head stockman for some months on Gordon Downs (WHPJ, 29-3-1944).

**Mick J. Crowson.** Head stockman from February 5th 1945 to July 20th 1946 (VRD Journals: April 1945 to Jan 1948). He had previously been head stockman on Wave Hill and subsequently (1946) he became a truck driver, based in Alice Springs. In about 1951-52 he worked on Hidden Valley and Creswell stations (Crowson, 2008: 1-2).

**Bob Nelson.** Head stockman (temporary) from July 19th 1946 to August 24th 1946 (VRD Journals: April 1945 to Jan 1948). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

**George Bates.** Head stockman in August 19th 1946 to October 31st 1946 (VRD Journals: April 45 to Jan 48; TCPJ, 8-10-1946). He was also head stockman at Mt Sanford from October 1946 to April 1952, overseer from August 2nd 1953 to September 30th 1953, and head stockman at Centre Camp from August 1955 to December 31st 1958. For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

**William Max Wever (Weir?).** Cook in October 1946 (TCPJ, 8-10-1946).

**Fred W. Mork (junior).** Head stockman from October 19th 1946 to January 10th 1949 (VRD Journals: April 45 to Jan 48; VRD Journals: 28 Oct 48 - Sept 49; Sweeney, 1947: 4). He later was manager of Limbunya and Sturt Creek (Beckett, 1998: 89). For additional biographical information see entry under Limbunya.


**Alf Absolom.** Head stockman in March 1950 (VRD Journals: 28 Oct 49 – Sept 50).

**Jeff Nixon.** Head stockman from January 31st 1950 to March 31st 1951 (VRD Journals: 28 Oct 49 – Sept 50 and Nov 50 – Sept 51). He left in about July 1951 (Hoofs & Horns,
August 1951: 44). According to Rodney Watson (pers. comm.) Nixon died at Kajabi and was buried at Cloncurry.

**Jack Vitnell.** Head stockman, in place of Jeff Nixon, from March 29th 1951 to August 18th 1951 (*Hoofs & Horns*, August 1951: 44; Allen, 1995). He was also a stockman at Pigeon Hole in 1953. For additional biographical information and a photo see entry for Killarney.

**Gerry Ash.** Head stockman from September 1st 1951 to May 22nd 1954 (pers. comm., Gerry Ash; VRD Journals: Nov 50 – Sept 51 and Nov 51 – Sept 52). At this time he described VRD as having the largest uncontrolled cattle herd in the world. Gerry came to the Kimberley in the 1940s. He did two trips down the Canning stock route with Wally Dowling. They took 500 head of cattle and were four months on the road.

While packing his horses prior to leaving Gordon Creek outstation in 1954 he was approached by a young Aboriginal woman named Whip (aka Margaret), who wanted Gerry to get her out of Gordon Creek. Possibly she wanted to escape from a ‘promised marriage’. Gerry took Whip across to Moolooloo and on towards Killarney. He was found by the Police at Gallaghers bore, near Killarney (TCPJ, 7-8-1954). This was in the times when it was against the law for white men to cohabit with Aboriginal women. Word had reached the VRD manager, Scott McColl, that Gerry had Whip with him, and he notified the police (TCPJ, 6-8-1954). The police took Whip and Gerry back to VRD. Gerry told me he became angry about the law and decided it was no other man’s business who he lived with. Consequently, at Gallaghers Bore he decided to Darwin to confront the authorities (TCPJ, 8-8-1954).

*Doug Campbell and Gerry Ash butchering a beast at Gordon Creek, 1952 (Ash collection).*
Gerry said that when he confronted the authorities in Darwin and challenged them to prosecute him, they decided they wouldn’t pursue the matter after all and Gerry and Whip lived together for over twenty years. After this event Gerry worked for a time on Mainoru station. Eventually he returned to the Kimberley and became partners in Geegully station. Whip died at Halls Creek and Gerry later remarried. He died in the early 2000s.

Jerry Woods. Head stockman from May 24th 1954 to 1961 (Quirk, 26-4-1957; pers. comm. Ernie Rayner). Marie Mahood said (pers. comm.) that Jerry and his family came out to Australia from England as assisted migrants in 1950. Jerry was 18 years old when he arrived on VRD and he went straight into Centre Camp. He began work there on March 17th 1952 (List of VRD employees, 10-4-1955).

A report on VRD written in 1959 describes Woods as, ‘hard working, hard riding, hard on cattle, definitely in charge but needs more experience under skilful guidance’ (Anon, c1959). In August 1957 it was reported that while mustering at Stony Crossing a bull charged his horse which reared and threw him heavily, giving him a dislocated elbow (Managers & Agents Pty Ltd, Correspondence, NBA, 87/17/4).
Bob Barnes and Jerry Woods, VRD, 1951 (Mahood collection).

Woods had gone to Denham River by September 1960 (Hoofs & Horns, September 1960: 6), but Ernie Rayner reckons he was still at Gordon Creek through 1961, then he went to Denham and later to Camfield. Lloyd Fogarty says Woods was a head stockman on Auvergne when he (Lloyd) was manager there. Tex Moar remembers Jerry being ‘belted’ by Kevin Paterson for playing around with Kevin’s wife. He died in about 1980 when he fell from an upstairs window in Darwin. Some express suspicions that he may have been pushed.

**Tom ‘Hobble Chain’ Millwood.** Manager in about 1963 (pers. comm., Donna Schultz). He was also manager of Delamere station in the 1960s. For additional biographical details see entry under Delamere.
According to Bolton (1953: 234) Gordon Downs was formed by Vestey's in 1917 or 1918, to conform with the Land Act of 1917, but this is not correct as the station is mentioned in the Timber Creek police journal entry for the 31st of March 1902 and there’s a photograph of Gordon Downs homestead in the Buchanan collection which has the date ‘circa 1900-1914’ written on it. Cec Watts (pers. comm.) believed that the first Gordon Downs homestead was where Birrindudu is now. He said it was at Birrindudu rockhole and was known as Soakage Creek – the rockhole is on this creek.
Aboriginal women in front of the original Gordon Downs manager’s house, c1950 (Watts collection).

There’s a waterhole on Gordon Downs known as Explosion Hole. According to former manager Stan Jones (pers. comm.), and to Cec Watts (pers. comm.), this was named after a fight amongst a mob of drovers camped there. Stan believed the fight was to do with some drovers undercutting the contract price of others for droving cattle. Cec said that No. 3 Bore on Breakfast Creek was a big delivery spot – a crossroads for the drovers – and someone had a store there which sold grog. The drovers got on the grog there and a fight erupted. Former Gordon Downs manager Stan Jones said that they burnt each other’s packs and had ‘a hell of stoush’. Cec said that Wallamunga waterhole was a similar crossroads and delivery spot for the drovers.

Peter Sherwin bought the property in about 1980. Soon afterwards he forced the Aboriginal families living near the homestead to leave the station. They moved to Halls Creek and while they were gone about 50 dogs that had been left behind were either poisoned or shot (West Australian, 19-1-1981).

Sherwin lost Gordon Downs to Holmes a’ Court’s Heytesbury Holdings in 1989 (SMH, 8-3-1997). For additional details of this corporate takeover see summary history of VRD. The Gordon Downs homestead site was abandoned some years ago. The ‘big house’ was shifted to Birrindudu and the remaining buildings were allowed to fall into ruin. The property is still owned by Heytsbury which now runs it together with Flora Valley as a single property (pers. comm., Rob Glenn).

**Mathew Cahill.** Manager from 1886 (?) to the early 1900s (TCPJ, 31-3-1902). Given that Matt and his brothers were closely associated with Bluey Buchanan and the Gordon brothers, that Gordon Downs was first stocked in 1886, and that Tom Cahill was the first
manager of Buchanan’s Wave Hill station and had shares in Gordon Downs, it’s likely that Matt was the first manager.

Pearson (*Hoofs & Horns*, June 1949: 14) states that Matt and his brothers Tom and Paddy came from Dalby in Queensland and that they went to school in Toowoomba. Pearson also refers to Matt Cahill as manager of Gordon Downs around the turn of the century. He says Matt died at Gordon Downs in 1898. In fact, suffering from ‘semi-paralysis of the lower limbs, which rendered him temporarily almost a cripple’ and possibly fever, Matt shot himself about 10 miles north of Katherine in June 1908 (*Adelaide Register*, 19-6-1908).

**W.E. Richards.** Manager before 1916, possibly taking over after Mat Cahill (*The Pastoral Review*, 16-6-1916). For additional biographical details see entry under Sturt Creek.

**Matt Savage.** Manager for about a month in about 1916 (Willey, 1971: 107). For additional biographical details see entry under Catfish.

**Abe Seaton.** Manager in 1923 (Volkman, 14-10-1921: 548).

**Joseph Egan.** Manager in 1922-24 (Laurie, 22-3-1924; Young, 1990: 12; Clement, 2000). For additional biographical details see entry under Ord River.

**Manderson.** Manager in 1925 (Terry, 1927: 161-72).

**Mick V Downing.** Manager in 1931 (White, 5-6-1931), and in 1936 (Parker, 1937: 47; Buchanan family papers).

**V.C. “Curly” Hazard.** Head stockman for some months in 1944 (WHJP, 29-3-1944).

**Bruce Bardon ‘Bolivar’ Hudson.** Manager from 1946 to at least October 1948 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; WHJP, 6-8-1948). Hudson’s wife Connie was with him on Gordon Downs in 1947 (Beckett, 1998: 52). Watts says that Hudson had been on Gordon Downs since at least 1942 and left at the end of 1948 to take over management of Ord River station. According to the Wave Hill police, and to Myra Hilgendorf, Hudson was on Gordon Downs in 1939 (WHJP, 9-10-1939, 9-11-1939; Hilgendorf, 1994: 45). Buchanan (20-11-1950) says that Hudson had been manager for ten years and left to go to Ord River in 1948. Bill Harney states that Hudson was head stockman of Gordon Downs when he visited the station in 1945 (Harney, 29-6-1945). The Wave Hill police refer to him as manager in September 1944 and in July 1948 (WHJP, 22-9-1944, 19-7-1948). In the Northern Territory Cattleman’s Association records he is referred to as manager in October 1948 (Barnes, 1948).

Hudson’s move to Ord River is confirmed by Gordon Buchanan in a report he wrote on Ord River station on November 20th, 1950. Buchanan also places Hudson as manager on Flora Valley. In 1954 VRD manager Scott McColl said that Hudson claimed to have been manager of Gordon Downs ‘for ten years, also Wave Hill, Ord River and other Vestys [sic] properties.’ McColl added that, ‘Until recently he has managed Malungra Station in North Queensland for Australian Estates Limited’ (McColl, 8-10-1954). This adds weight to his claim that he had been manager of Gordon Downs from 1938.
In 1945 Bill Harney was in the region as a Patrol Officer with the Native Affairs Branch. He was appalled at the conditions and treatment of Aborigines on some of the stations, including Birrindudu which, along with Gordon Downs, was under the control of Hudson. According to Harney, at Birrindudu only the working Aborigines were provided with food, the elderly and infirm people being left to fend for themselves. This was not the usual practice on stations at the time and Harney was led to believe this was being done on the orders of Hudson. Also, no accommodation was provided, the Aborigines living in makeshift humpies. He lodged a strong protest with the Director of Native Affairs (Harney, 29-6-1945) and tried to arrange a meeting with Hudson, but I have no information about the result of his actions.

Stan Jones (pers. comm.) heard a story about Hudson from Jacky Byrne who was on Birrindudu for many years. According to Byrne, Hudson had a son by an Aboriginal woman named Topsy. When the child was born, Hudson said to Topsy, ‘Take that kid and kill it.’ Instead, she took it to Birrindudu and teamed up with Jacky Byrne who told her, ‘Don’t kill ‘im Topsy. He’s a nice little baby that fella’. They reared him as their own and educated him. Cec Watts believes that Hudson’s son was born to a woman named ‘King’, not ‘Topsy’, and that in about 1953 he turned up at Gordon Down. He was around twenty or so at the time, so he would have been born in the early 1930s.

In 1954 Hudson was sent by Vesteyes to inspect VRD with a view to purchase (McColl, 8-10-1954), but the sale never eventuated and W. Buckland bought the place instead. When Scott McColl resigned as manager of VRD, Hudson was among those considered as a possible replacement, but again, this never eventuated (Buckland, 22-12-1954; Buckland, 17-1-1955; ‘W’ to Buckland, 22-11-1954).

There is a place named Bolivar on the northern side of Adelaide and this may have a bearing on Hudson’s nickname. His wife, a former AIM sister at Halls Creek, was named Connie (Beckett, 1998: 52).

Cec Watts (pers. comm.) said Hudson, ‘selected a number of horses from the downs stations as Ord was short of horses – I can remember seeing a large mob of horses pass though Turner Station, en route the Ord, from Gordon Downs and the Sturt.’

K.A.J. ‘Jim’ Hagen. Manager, 1947-1949, before Stan Jones took over (pers. comm., Stan Jones). He was previously manager of Waterloo. Cec Watts (pers. comm.) says that Hagen took over at Gordon Downs after Hudson left but didn’t stay long, leaving early in 1949 and handing over to Joe Walker. Johnny Stacey says (pers. comm.) that Jim was head stockman on Nutwood Downs in 1951.


Cec Watts. Head stockman from 1950 to 1953 (pers. comm., Cec Watts). For additional biographical details see entry under Turner station.

Ray Felix Jansen. Head stockman in 1954 (pers. comm., Cec Watts). Another source says that Jansen was overseer rather than head stockman (Taylor, 1984: 141). For additional biographical details see entry under Limbunya.


Stan ‘Galloping’ Jones. Manager from late 1952 until 1964 (pers. comm., Stan Jones). He took over from Charlie Harris (pers. comm., Cec Watts; pers. comm., Patsy Applebee; see also Hoofs & Horns, December 1961: 39). Stan (pers. comm.) said that when he first went to Gordon Downs there was not one paddock. There was a horse paddock but it was wrecked because of ‘walkabout’ disease amongst the horses, and they’d keep walking through the fence. As a result he started to use camels in a big way – as pack animals, for riding and for pulling a wagonette. They were used right up until he left the station. His wife was named Mary. Stan died on the 26th of March 2003 (Jones & Knight, 2012: 233).

Ralph Hayes. Manager from 1964 to 1969. Then he went to manage Wave Hill (pers. comm., Cec Watts). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

Ernie Blackwood. Overseer in 1955. He had his family with him (WHPJ, 6-6-1955). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says he also was on Nicholson and later on Oomagooma.

Tony Clark. Manager (?) in the late 1960s. Between 1971 and 1978 he was manager of Nutwood (Clarke, 2008: 103-04). He is now on Ellison station near Scone (one of Packer’s places; pers. comm., Dave Napier). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) cannot remember Clark on the station and thinks he might have been a relieving manager over the wet.

Milton Hayes. Manager in 1970. His wife’s name was Madeleine, (Ogden, 1997: 71).
**Graeme ‘The General’ McArthur.** Manager from 1974 until 1980 when Vesteys sold the station to Peter Sherwin. Previously (1967-69) he had been head stockman on Wave Hill (pers. comm., Len Hill). He and his wife stayed on after Sherwin became the owner but didn’t like the way he ran things so they left towards the end of the year. At Christmas time on Gordon Downs Graeme and the white station staff reversed the usual roles of servant and master, and served the Aboriginal workers Christmas lunch (pers. comm., Penny Taylor). In 1998 he was owner-manager of Halls Creek and Bungle Bungle Tours, based in Halls Creek (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). More recently he has worked as a real estate agent, based in Broome (pers. comm., Dave Pentelow).

**Giles Loder.** Manager in 1981 (*West Australian*, 19-1-1981) but see entry for Sturt Creek.

**Wayne Bean.** Manager of the combined Flora Valley and Gordon Downs (pers comm., Rob Glenn).

**Des Petersen.** Manager (when?)
GRASSHOPPER FLAT

A block of 96 square miles was rented from Bovril by Charlie Darcy from at least September 14th 1931 (Waugh, 20-7-1935). At that time he actually wanted to buy the block for £75, but this didn’t happen until 1935 or 1936 when Bovril transferred the lease to him for £100 (Martin, 21-3-1931; Martin, 27-5-1935; Martin, 12-8-1935; Martin, 19-6-1935). This appears to be what became the Grasshopper Flat block. At the time of purchase Darcy was already owner of ‘Koonbook Station (Skull Creek) so this block expanded that station. Presumably he had been living in the Skull Creek homestead but after acquiring this block he built a new homestead on a waterhole on Line Creek which ran through the middle of the block.

Darcy’s name first appears in the Durack diaries on May 18th 1909. Reg Durack, who knew Charlie, told me that Charlie had been a ‘buggy boy’ for M.P. Durack. According to Morey (1977c: 20), ‘Charlie and his brothers were renowned throughout the Kimberleys, WA for their horsemanship, athletic prowess and devilry’ (see Ronan, 1966: 156). One of his brothers took up Ruby Plains in the Kimberley in about 1920 (Bolton, 1953: 194).

Charlie married Gertrude Hyland, of circus family fame, in about 1918 (Durack, 1983: 350). After buying the Grasshopper Flat block he lived there for a time with his wife and daughter (Morey, 1977c: 19-20). According to Morey Mrs Darcy was a competent horsewoman although she was blind. Reg Durack told me that in 1930 Charlie had a contract to muster Bullita.

Reg Durack told me that Charlie was killed when a bucket fell on him at the Ruby Mine. Mary Durack says that he died in a well on Alice Downs in 1907 and is buried at Old Halls Creek (Durack, nd.). Unless there was another man of this name the date of 1907 given by Mary Durack must be a misprint because the date conflicts with other documents and there is a headstone in the old Halls Creek cemetery which says that Charles Darcy died at age 52 in 1944.
Hidden Valley homestead, c1950 (Scobie collection).

Hidden Valley was originally 240 square miles, taken up under grazing licence by Dick Scobie on the 11th of February 1945 (GL 1200). By August 1948 Scobie had obtained two adjoining blocks, GL 1296 and GL 1257. In 1958 the three blocks were combined to form GL 1724 (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 59).

In 1959 the Lands Department put the block up for ballot. At the time it was said that:

The land comprises generally inferior country growing Kangaroo, Bladey and Spear grasses and timbered with Bloodwood and Gum with areas of spinifex desert. It has an area of 1,578 square miles at 3/9 per square mile per annum. There is one dam on the property, and it is proposed to supply one bore under the scheme to assist lessees. It is estimated that the block can carry 4,800 head of cattle (Hoofs & Horns, August 1959: 47).

Scobie won the ballot and continued to run the station which later was converted to a pastoral lease. After continuing to manage Hidden Valley for another fifteen years, in 1982 he sold out to Dean Ottens and Brian Hill (pers. comm., Joyce Galvin; pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). The station was put up for sale again in September 1994, but passed in at auction. It was bought by Charters Towers pastoralists Jenny and David James early in 1995 (pers. comm., Jenny James; pers. comm., Thelma and Dick Scobie). They were still on Hidden Valley in August 2006 and were planning to stay indefinitely.

Dick Scobie. Owner-manager from 1945 to 1982. Dick was born in Adelaide in 1917 and grew up on his father’s property Ooroowilinnie station in South Australia (Ditchfield, 2003: 2). He left Ooroowilinnie in 1940 with the aim of starting his own droving plant. R.M. Williams helped get Dick started and his first droving trip was 700 kilometres from
Nockatunga (east of Thargominda) to Maree. One of his longest trips was in 1945 when he took 1500 head from Ord River to Palmer’s Lagoon near Julia Creek, a distance of 1700 kilometres. The cattle were 37 weeks on the road and he arrived with 1496 head.

While running wild cattle in the dark in the late 1950s his horse was knocked down by a bull. According to Dick (NTAS NTRS, TS 318) the bull:

> Whipped around and drove his horn through me leg – broke the leg – and through the saddle flap and into the horse, and turned the horse arse over head and broke three of me ribs and broke me neck, and knocked me out. I didn’t know anything about it, I was unconscious for fourteen days.

Dick fully recovered from these injuries, but in 1968 while travelling in a Ford station wagon with his wife, Thelma, and one of his daughters, he hit a large kangaroo. The vehicle rolled over and he broke his neck again. This time the injury was more serious and he was permanently confined to a wheelchair. In spite of this, Dick continued to run the station. When he wanted to look around the property Thelma and station staff would push Dick in his wheelchair up a ramp and into the back of a Toyota ute. They’d strap the chair down and then drive him wherever he wanted to go (Ditchfield, 2003: 153-57).

Alex McNamara. Head stockman. He was shot dead on the station in February or March 1958 (Hoofs & Horns, March 1958: 58). According to Paul Vandeleur (pers. comm.) it was a man named Bray who shot McNamara ‘over booze’ and this is confirmed by Johnny Stacey who says (pers. comm.) that Bray was so drunk he couldn’t remember doing it.

Brian Hill. Part-owner with Dean Ottens, but sold his share to Ottens (pers. comm.).

Dean Ottens. Part-owner-manager, 1982 to 1993 or 1994 when he was arrested for growing marijuana, convicted and sent to jail (Sunday Territorian, 2-4-1995; Canberra Times, 1-3-1995: 7).

David James. Manager/owner after Ottens ‘left’, until present time. His wife is named Jenny (pers. comm., Norm Forster).
Humbert River was named by Alexander Forrest in 1879, after the King of Italy (Forrest, 1880: 30). Later the Italian King reciprocated by conferring on Forrest the Italian Order of the Crown (West Australian, 18-1-1881). The original block was taken up under annual pastoral permit by J. Newton and Kearney on March 1905 (NTAS F199, Box 2, PP 56/1908). W.J.J. Ward replaced Kearney in the partnership in 1906 but in 1908 a renewal of the permit was refused and the block was declared an Aboriginal reserve. Ward was speared by Aborigines a short time later. In 1914 Butler and Hall obtained a grazing permit and held the block until 1919 when they sold to Charles Schultz (senior). Schultz’s brother Billy ran the station until his untimely death at VRD in 1927. Charles Schultz tried to sell the block to VRD but VRD considered his price of £9000 too high (Martin, 4-7-1928; Martin, 15-8-1928).

In 1957 the geographer F.H. Bauer described Humbert River station as,

exceedingly poor. There is no Mitchell or Flinders grass on the place. The country itself is about half unavailable (my estimate), much of it being sandstone plateau country with steep, rocky slopes on all approaches. There is water on this country but no way for cattle to get onto it. The useable portions are all rolling detrial slopes, lying below the sandstone plateau, very poor country and much subject to sheet wash and gullying.

The block remained in the hands of the Schultz family until 1971, but was expanded through the addition of neighbouring country in 1947, 1949 and 1962 (Schultz and Lewis, 1995: 103-04, 198-214; NTAS NTRS F28, Box 4, GL109).
With the establishing of the Catfish Aboriginal Reserve in 1948 the status of Aboriginal reserve was rescinded and Humbert River became Grazing Licence 13345. This was converted to pastoral lease 503 in 1952 (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 4, GL109). By 1975 Humbert was owned by Rural Improvements Pty. Ltd (NT Cattleman’s Association, Membership G-J). In 1983 the station was divided, with the rough northern and western country being incorporated into the newly-formed Gregory National Park and the remainder remaining as Humbert River station, owned by CPC. In 2016 the Heytesbury Cattle Company bought Humbert River from CPC (Fitzgerald, 29-4-2016).

‘Colorado’ Jack Newton & Patrick James Kearney. Owners in 1905-1906. These men, self-described as Halls Creek sheep farmers, took out the original permit (No. 56) on March 28th 1905 (NTAS NTRS, F199, PP 56/1908; NAA, ACT, A1640/1 item 06/102). There is no evidence that they ever used the block or erected any structures, although this may well have been the case.

In 1889 Kearney was a butcher at Halls Creek (Tucker, 1986: 69). Possibly he is the same James Kearney who, with Samuel Long, was charged with murdering a ‘Chinaman’ at Macarthur River in June 1892. He and Long were found not guilty, the jury not even waiting to hear the defence arguments (*Northern Territory Times*, 12-7-1892; Waters, 30-1-1913; Trials for Murder, NT. ‘The King against Linderoth. Murder’).

Colorado Jack was born in Dublin and in Australia first appears in the Durack diaries and the Wyndham police journals in 1899 (Durack, nd.; Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1897-1899, entry for 5-7-1899). Apart from service with the AIF during the First World War he lived in the district for 40 years. years and worked at a variety of occupations. At different times he was on VRD (Makin 1992: 104; VRD Ledger 4, Feb 1930–Feb 1937) and Limbunya (pers. comm., Jimmy Manngayari). At one stage he was a part-owner of the fledgling Humbert River block but there is no evidence that he was ever on the place. Mary Durack comments that he was a tall man while Jimmy Manngayarri said he had a large beard. The most detailed summary of his life in the Victoria/Ord country comes from Billy Linklater (nd., Buchanan family papers). I’ve reproduced it in full below, with his spelling, punctuation and grammar intact:

About 97 a man working on a Cattle boat called the John Hockings got left at Wyndham his name was Jack Newton. Dick Smith a drover gave him a Job – Cook - Fred McDonald – Con Keeler – his nickname – was horsetailer. Coming to Wyndham with a mob of Shippers from Flora Valley or Stretches – Sturt Station they was camped at a Spring below Argyle Station. Newton told Con Keeler that he had been in america Keeler Nicknamed him “Colorado” Keeler also Chopped the word Colorado on a Boabab Tree close to the Spring which is Called Colorado Spring to this day. The droving Season finished Colorado got a Job with Jack Kelly of Texes Station to build a House of Pise, on the Mexican Style. Colorado being handy with timber got plenty of Work yard building Etc but he wanted to be a Stockman. he at last got a job on the Ord River Station his job was to camp up the Osborne [Osman] River and Keep the poddy dodgers from Coming in & taking away Cleanskins from Osborne & The Country around the blue Hole on the Ord River Close to a Mountain Called Mount slinky, Called after a forigner a – pole I think – who found gold in WA 1906 Colorado took up a block just across the N.T. WA Border, putting a few head of cattle on the Country Colorado intentions was to become a Pastoralist, but fate was against him, he was Suspected of Killing Ord
River bullocks for beef. He was under surveillance either N.T. police or Ord River men riding the boundary – which cramps the poddy dodgers style. So he turned it in and went in smoke. Two Ord River Men having rode on him killing an Ord River Bullock. When things blew over Colorado worked on the surrounding stations till 1914. War broke out Colorado enlisted in Darwin to go to France at the finish of war. Colorado came back to WA where he got a job. House building. He built the Government House on Gordon Dns, one of Vestey’s stations on Sturt Creek, also pulled down the 3 Mile Hotel at Wyndham & re-erected it on Newery Station. A property close to WA border belonging to Connor Doherty & Durack. Later on Colorado stood his trial in Wyndham for exploding some dynamite under the Hotel in Wyndham. He was acquitted. I see in the Dec Standard – Darwin – Colorado was found dead in his camp so passed out one of the old hands of East Kimberley.

Linklater’s statement that Colorado was ‘handy with timber’ is confirmed in his war service record where he is described as a ‘ships carpenter’ (Townsville Daily Bulletin, 23-12-1939) and in a tale told by Joc Makin (1992: 104):

One day ‘Colorado’ Jack Newton, a teamster on the stores’ run from the Depot, came upon one of Vestey’s early Buicks with a smashed wheel rim. The fellys and spokes were made of wood, so Newton got to work, cut down a Bauhinia tree, and made a new wheel – out in the bush.

In 1911 Jack Newton and Jack Duggan were charged with assaulting an Aboriginal named Noble at Cullen Creek. Duggan was acquitted but Newton was fined 10/- and 15/- costs (Northern Territory Times, 15-12-1911). On February 21st 1913 he was charged with unlawfully entering an Aboriginal camp. The next day he was fined £2, with 18/- costs. He was also charged with giving gin to an Aboriginal called Noble, fined £3 with costs of 10/. Newton must have upset the JP for he was also found guilty of contempt of court and remanded in custody (PCPJ, 21-2-1913 and 22-2-1913).

In 1915 he enlisted and left Darwin with a group of volunteers from Wave Hill and Victoria River Downs which included Archie Martin, Jimmy Read and a brother of the late manager of Wave Hill, Harold Scale. Arriving in Brisbane, he was drafted into the 6th Company of Field Engineers, A.I.F. After a short period in Egypt and two months training at a school for engineers in England, Colorado was sent to France where he was in the Battle of the Somme. He survived nine weeks there before being sent to the Ypres front. Eventually he was severely injured by a shell, receiving head wounds, a broken knee and wounded groin – six others with him were killed and six uninjured. After a long convalescence he was discharged as ‘medically unfit’ and returned to Australia on June 13th, 1917 (Northern Territory Times, 28-6-1917).

In 1933 he was charged with attempting to blow up the Wyndham Hotel (West Australian, 5-8-1933: 15). At his trial it was stated that:

the gelignite that exploded was apparently packed in sand in a small tin and the failure of the charge to do any serious damage was probably due to the fact that it was so loosely packed. The remains of several plugs of gelignite were found laying about the billiard room in the morning but very little damage was done except two holes in the fluted iron ceiling.
Old Jimmy Manngayari told me Colorado’s Aboriginal name was Ngapa-tang-paytang. Gerry Ash (pers. comm.) heard that Colorado Jack ‘was a violent-tempered man. He was that bad if he slipped a cog in the blacksmith’s shop he’d get down on his hands and knees and he’d bite the anvil. It’s a … they reckon that’s a bloody fact!’ He died in Darwin on December 18th 1939 aged 63 (Townsville Daily Bulletin, 23-12-1939).

**William J.J. ‘Brigalow Bill’ Ward.** Part owner from 1906 to 1909. Ward replaced Kearney and became Newton’s partner on March 28th, 1906 (NTAS NTRS A1640, item 1906/102). Like Newton and Kearney, Brigalow is on record as being a sheep farmer from Halls Creek (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 2, PP 56/1908). Ward wanted to dissolve his partnership with Newton and to this end he asked the Lands Department if he could pay half the rent for half the block – the eastern half which was the only part that wasn’t spinifex-covered sandstone ranges (Ward, 20-9-1908). In a letter he wrote to the Lands Department in March 1908 (Ward, 1-3-1908), Brigalow said:

> I am sending my portion of the rent due on the Humbert Block Cheque 15£ enclosed within I sooner you would cut the block in two as I came here and stocked the lower end with my stock and after sivelizing the country and getting half my stock killed with Blacks and stand a chance of been driven off it witch aught to be mine by the rights of stocking

Newton didn’t want to have the block divided. He continued to pay his share of the rent and inquired whether, if he paid the entire rent, could he obtain sole possession (Newton, 25-4-1907). In any case, the Lands Department refused to divide the block (Government Resident to Minister controlling the N.T., 19-5-1908). In 1908, after adverse police reports, the South Australian Lands Department refused to issue another annual pastoral permit (NAA ACT, CRS A1640/1 item 1907/580). Ward was aware of moves to make his block an Aboriginal reserve and protested (Ward, 15-4-1908), but in 1909 the reserve became a reality (South Australian Government Gazette, 17-6-1909: 15).

Meanwhile, things had gone from bad to worse for Brigalow. In June 1908 he wrote to the Timber Creek police saying, ‘I want your instant protection here at once the Blacks killing cattle and throwing spears at me. They are now hostile and defiant they forbid me to go out again I will expect you here in the course of a week’ (Ward, 28-6-1908).

While waiting for his protest against the loss of his block, Ward continued to squat there until he was speared and killed at his homestead late in 1909. His body was thrown into the river and never recovered (TCPJ, 5-3-1910, 17-4-1910). According to the police account of the hunt for his murderers at least one Aborigine, Gordon, was shot dead (TCPJ, 26-6-1910). However, Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) heard from old-time VRD locals that a great many were shot.
HUMBERT RIVER

Mounted Constable Holland at Brigalow Bill’s homestead, 1910 (Johns collection).

Mounted Constable Holland with alleged killers of Brigalow Bill (Birtles collection).

As well as shooting Gordon, the police arrested four other Aborigines, but two escaped before they could be taken to Darwin. The remaining two, Mudgela and Fishhook, were convicted and sentenced to life. In 1914 it was reported that Mudgela had escaped (PCPJ, 21-3-1914). Whether he was again captured or made it back to Humbert River and remained at large is unknown. As for Fishook, it’s possible that he was eventually released because an Aboriginal stockman named Fishhook worked for Charlie Schultz on Humbert for many years, and Charlie said (pers. comm.) that Fishhook was terribly afraid of the police. Several other Aborigines implicated in the murder remained were never
arrested. Two of them, Maroun and Cockatoo, were later implicated in other crimes (see Mt Sanford section).

William ‘Billy’ Butler. Owner-manager from late 1914 to 1919 when he held a pastoral permit over the ‘Mudbura Aboriginal Reserve’. In a letter to the Lands Office in December 1914 he said that he intended to run horses for the Fitzroy market (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 4, GL109). Some sources suggest that he was in partnership with Noel Hall. This is supported by a number of entries in the Timber Creek police journal. For example, on May 23rd 1916 a message was received from:

Mr I. Hall Manager of Vic River Downs Stn wherein he reported that the Natives on the Humbert River were becoming troublesome at Mr Noel Halls camp (situated close to the Humbert River & three miles from where Ward was murdered in 1909) & that the Natives had been right around the camp, but had done nothing rash.

Similarly, on November 25th 1916 the police reported that, ‘Two Aboriginals passed with 13 head of horses & mules from Hall & Butlers Stn to Depot for rations.’ Like many such partnerships, this one doesn’t appear to have been based on a legal agreement as only Butler’s name occurs on the lease documents. There is a grave near Humbert homestead of an Aboriginal man named William. According to Ngarriman man Daly Pulkara, William died after being knocked down and ‘kicked in the guts’ by Noel Hall, but Daly suggested that William might have had a bad heart. The partnership between Hall and Butler couldn’t have lasted beyond 1919 because that’s when Butler sold out to Charles Schultz senior.

Butler was definitely on VRD by 1905 (TCPJ, 31-1-1905) and possibly several years earlier (Ronan, 1962: 201). He was a head stockman on VRD early in 1905 (TCPJ, 31-1-1905) and he ran horses in the races at Longreach Outstation in November 1909. His horses were named Ribbon, Clara, Ruby and Mavis (Northern Territory Times, 28-1-1910). He was acting manager some time in 1914 while Townshend was absent (Northern Territory Times, 21-1-15) and on Townshend’s return Butler was described as ‘acting assistant manager’ (Northern Territory Times, 21-1-1915).

According to Ronan (1962: 201-1902), a VRD employee he names as Billy had been on the station since at least 1902. This ‘Billy’ had come to VRD from Kapunda in South Australia. Eventually, in Townshend’s time, he became overseer, ‘more by seniority than competence’. He convinced himself that he was going to become the VRD manager after Townshend, but when this never happened, ‘He Brooded. Finally, in 1922 he helped himself to a bottle of laudanum from Mat’s [Wilson’s] office shelf, and put himself to sleep.’ Although Ronan doesn’t give Billy’s surname, it is without doubt Billy Butler who committed suicide at the Timber Creek Depot in 1922. Butler’s name is commemorated where the road into Humbert River station passes through the Warburton Range at Butler’s Gap. Anzac Munganyi of Pigeon Hole claims that Billy Butler was the father of his brother, Bob (now deceased), so he may have living descendants. Anzac’s brother may have been known as Yellow Bob, a ‘half caste’ man whose photograph appears in Willey’s book, Eaters of the Lotus (1964: plate 11).

William ‘Billy’ Julius Schultz. Manager from 1919 until 1927 when he was killed in a drunken fall from a horse on VRD (Northern Territory Times, 27-9-1927; Schultz and
Lewis, 1995: 19-20). It was this accident that led to Charlie Schultz (junior) becoming owner-manager of Humbert for 44 years. Billy was known to Humbert River Aborigines as Lurntat. Both he and his brother Albert occasionally drove cattle from VRD to Wyndham to get money to help run Humbert (VRD Ledger 3, Jan 1922 – Feb 1930).

**Albert Frank Gustavio Schultz.** Stockman at times between 1919 and his death on July 8th, 1925 (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz; Inquest book 1904-35). According to Schultz, Albert helped Billy on Humbert during the dry seasons and went out to Tanami prospecting for gold during the wet seasons. He must have gone out during the dry seasons too, because it was July when he died at Green Swamp Well. His death was reported by a former manager of Willeroo and Delamere, Andrew Robert Muir (WHPJ, 27-7-1925).

The cause of death is listed variously as drinking bad water (WHPJ, 27-7-1925; Terry, 1931: 167), appendicitis (inscription on gravestone), or murder by poisoning (family tradition). The family story is that Albert’s partner may have poisoned him with a ‘glass bottle bait’ to get Albert’s share of the gold they had found (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz). Albert was known to Humbert River and VRD Aborigines as Janguru.

In 1932 Albert’s brother and owner of Humbert River, Charles Schultz senior, led an expedition from Ayr to Tanami in an attempt to relocate and exploit Albert’s gold discovery (*Brisbane Courier*, 20-9-1932). Unfortunately, the expedition was too late as the area containing the deposit had been taken up by others, principally by a man named Chapman who made a lot of money from his mine at the Granites. While in the Tanami
the Schultz expedition exhumed Albert’s bones and brought them in for reburial alongside Billy’s bones in the VRD graveyard.

Charles Noel Schultz. Owner-manager from January 1928 to 1971. Unless otherwise stated the following information comes from *Beyond the Big Run* (Schultz and Lewis, 1995). Born in Charters Towers, Queensland, on February 17th 1908, he grew up on Woodhouse station and in Ayr. He was educated in a boarding school at Bowen and at college in Charters Towers, and always maintained that he was ‘just hopeless’ at school. Fortunately for him, he was anything but hopeless at horse and station work.

At age 16 he travelled to India with a boat load of remounts for the Indian Army, the youngest to ever do the trip. For some reason he was too late to apply for the job the following year and was planning to do another trip in 1927 when word arrived that his uncle Billy had been thrown from his horse on VRD, and killed. Instead of going to India again, Charlie joined his father on a truck loaded with stores and equipment, and during the wet season of 1927-1928 travelled with him to Humbert River. They found the station in very poor shape – buildings and yards rotting, cattle unbranded and wild, and a debt of £8000 left by Billy. When initial attempts to sell Humbert River to VRD failed, Charlie volunteered to run the station while his father returned to Queensland and found a buyer there. No buyer was found and Charlie remained on Humbert River for the next forty-four years.

![Charlie Schultz holding Daly and Dorrie, Humbert River, 1928 (Schultz collection).](image)

The conditions Charlie found himself in on Humbert were an Australian archetype – remoteness, bark huts, camp Aborigines, ‘wild’ blacks, damper, beef and tea. In 1929 he found thirteen head of cattle killed by blacks in Riley Pocket and on occasion he found the remains of a beast killed by ‘bush blacks’ or saw the footprints of one or other of a
few old renegade blacks who remained in the ranges all their lives (Humbert River station diary, 5-1-1929, 21-6-1929, 8-11-1929).

Charlie Schultz, 1933 (Schultz collection).

The first seven years were the hardest for him. He endured loneliness and harsh conditions, and drew no wages during this time. He sent bullocks off the place in 1930, 1931 and 1933, and each time the drover in charge lost several hundred head – he heard later that one of them had actually sold the ‘missing’ beasts. Charlie decided to take the subsequent mobs in himself. In 1935, 1937, 1939 and 1941 he successfully took mobs of over 1000 head from Humbert to Dajarra or Kajabi in Queensland. From there he sometimes continued on to Woodhouse station to visit his family. On one of these trips he attended a rodeo in Townsville where ‘he came sixth in the buckjump contest for the Australian championship and won two smaller events’ (Northern Standard, 24-7-1934). Charlie also overlanded cattle from Humbert to Wyndham for many years.

There was a strong demand for horses in the Victoria River district and Kimberley because of the prevalence of ‘Walkabout disease’. Charlie himself claimed that in 1947 he had lost 70 or 80 horses from this sickness (Schultz, 26-12-1947). To replenish his losses and to take advantage of the general demand for horses in the region, after
delivering his cattle he would buy horses and overland them to sell in the Territory. On one occasion he started back to the Territory with 150 head.

The successful droving trips, and in particular the advent of World War Two and a consequent rise in cattle prices, enabled Charlie to clear the debt on the station. In 1941 he married Hessie Graham, a friend of his sister. Eventually they adopted and raised two baby girls, and they also raised and educated a number of ‘half caste’ children.

In his time Charlie built up Humbert River from a small run-down bush block to a large, well-developed and maintained station. First, in about 1947, fearing that the Welfare Department might be about to develop Humbert River as an Aboriginal reserve and thus force him to leave, he bought the neighbouring Bullita station (Schultz, 26-12-1947). Welfare’s plan never eventuated and in 1948 the Lands Department converted Humbert from Aboriginal reserve to grazing licence (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 35, GL 1335). A year later he applied for what he termed the ‘up river block’. This was an area of 720 square miles on the south side of Humbert River which had been resumed from VRD in 1935 but Schultz’s application was unsuccessful because the resumed area was immediately leased back to VRD for ten years (Chief Clerk, NT Lands and Survey Branch, 22-6-1936; Schultz, 18-3-1948). However, in 1949 he was granted grazing licence 1358 for this block (Scott, 22-6-1949). Finally, in 1962 he got hold of the ‘White Water Block’ (PL 975), good black soil country that had been resumed from VRD.

Humbert River was regarded as one of the showplaces of the Territory. This is attested in various sources. For example, in 1947 Patrol Officer Sweeney (1947: 14) remarked that, ‘Humbert River station is poor country but Mr Schultz has built a good homestead chiefly out of local materials and has improved his station’. In 1950 Native Affairs Officer Evans (4-8-1950) remarked that, ‘there is an air of progressiveness and contentment on Humbert River that extends to the native camp ... it is a pleasure to visit Humbert River Station’. Writing in 1957, geographer ‘Slim’ Bauer described Charlie as ‘one man in about ten thousand’ (Bauer, 1957).

According to CD Kelman, manager of Wave Hill in the 1940s, Charlie ‘had the reputation of being the best cattle man in the Territory’ (Kelman, pers. comm. to David Nash, 7-6-1990). Aborigines who worked for Charlie say that he was ‘a good boss, hard but fair’. Some say that he was known as Lurntat (‘big forehead’), but others say that this name was applied to Charlie’s uncle Billy. Possibly it was applied to both men.

Charlie had a sense of history. In 1948 he suggested (Schultz, 25-8-1948) that various graves along the stockroutes should be marked with:

just a sign board and post of some description, placed over them, with their names and date of death on it. One could class them as pioneers, and we have a lot to be thankful to them for, some are only drovers cooks or ordinary drover’s hands, but the fact remains they died under some shady tree and with their boots on, and wrapped up in their swags, right where they died – it being the only home they ever new [sic], or property they ever owned. Too many of these types have been forgotten, within a passing year, simply because their graves were not marked, and their last resting place lost sight of.
Charlie sold out in 1971. Remarking on the sale, *Hoofs & Horns* magazine (November 1971: 7) noted that, ‘we have seen the end of an era when battling pioneers like the Tom Quiltys, Charlie Schultzes and Bill Crowsons could go out into the bush with a packhorse and swag and carve a kingdom’. The *NT News* of 20-5-1972 said that Charlie held the place until April 1972 (when Charlie Clark took over) and with Hessie he then moved to a beef farm near Yankalilla, South Australia. Hessie died there in 1979. Charlie remained on the place until 1992, then shifted to live with his daughter Betty near Proserpine, Queensland. In the early 1990s I worked with Charlie to produce his biography, published in 1995 as *Beyond the Big Run*.

Charlie died at Proserpine on April 14th, 1997. On June 2nd 1997, in the presence of a large gathering of friends and some of the Aboriginal people he and Hessie had raised, his daughter Betty unveiled a memorial plaque and scattered his ashes on the site of the old yard at Humbert homestead.

*Betty Atkinson scattering her father’s ashes at Humbert River, 1997 (Lewis collection).*

**Rolly Bowrey.** Acting manager in 1935 while Charlie Schultz took cattle to Queensland (TCPJ, 12-4-35). Probably acting manager again in 1937 as he was there shortly after Charlie returned from Queensland (Fuller, diary 1937-38). Rolly was a member of the ‘Schultz Expedition’ that came to the Territory from Queensland in 1932 (see entry for Albert Schultz above). At the end of 1933 when the expedition returned, Rolly went to work on Humbert. He remained there for the greater part of his working life (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz). Amongst themselves, Aborigines on VRD and Humbert called him ‘Wangawun’.
**Harry McCullagh.** Manager in 1964 and beyond (pers comm., Charlie Schultz; Les Humbert biography). For additional biographical details see entry under Limbunya.

**Hughie Olsen.** Head stockman in 1951 (*Hoofs & Horns*, December 1951: 51).

**Sid Byers.** Caretaker while Charlie Schultz and his wife were away in Adelaide settling their daughters into boarding school (*Hoofs & Horns*, April 1959: 59-60). For additional biographical details see entry under Coolibah.

**Raymond Clark.** Manager in 1971-1973 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill). His father, Charlie Clark, was the owner (pers. comm., Betty Atkinson).

**Les Humbert.** Head stockman from at least 1957 to at least 1961 (*Hoofs & Horns*, July 1957: 6). Les was born in an Aboriginal camp on Humbert River on July 16th 1934. His mother was Millie and his father was Rolly Bowrey (see entry for Rolly, above). When he was about six Charlie Schultz’s wife Hessie took him in raised him. Charlie Schultz taught him stock skills and he was educated, first via correspondence lessons and later as a boarder at the Hartley Street school in Alice Springs. For a period he was head stockman on Humbert, then went to VRD for two years before returning to Humbert. Through the 1950s he worked on various Victoria River stations as a stockman, head stockman, horse breaker, yard builder, mechanic and jockey. He also managed Bullita and Humbert River.

He married Mary Kelly from Montejinni where he was head stockman at the time (1966). Then he moved to Katherine where he worked for Northmeat and did track work for George Lewis and Noel Buntine. He was a successful jockey, winning races at centres from Alice Springs to Wyndham (*NT News*, 13-7-1999). Eventually his marriage failed and Mary moved to Queensland with their three children. Later Les teamed up with Margaret Kickett and they stayed together until Margaret’s death in 1995. In about 1979 or 1980 he went to work on the Kidman Springs Research Station where he stayed until retiring on July 15th 1999 (*Katherine Times*, 26-9-2007; Les Humbert biography, nd).
Barry Parton. Head stockman from at least 1969 to at least 1970. He came from Kingaroy, Queensland (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz).


Ken Warriner. Manager, based at Newcastle Waters (pers. comm., Barry Scott).

ILLAWARRA

A small and short-lived station on the eastern border of VRD. The block was almost certainly taken up to reap the harvest of the unlimited cleanskins on VRD, Wave Hill and Delamere.


The 1901 census states that Mick Fleming was 44 years old and born in NSW. According to Charlie Gaunt, he came to the north during the Kimberley gold rush (Northern Standard, 10-7-1934). Later he acted as a guide for the first sheep taken to VRD in 1891 (Stevens, 8-1-1891) and was one of the drovers who took VRD cattle to the Darwin butcher and for live export in the 1890s (Meldrum, 27-10-1897). He therefore had ample opportunity to see the potential for a small station where he later took up the Illawarra block.

Illawarra consisted of pastoral leases 2198, 2213, 2212 and 2214, and from 1904 pastoral permit 46. The resulting block extended a considerable distance along the eastern boundary of VRD and Wave Hill. From 1903 Mick also held pastoral permit 29 for a block near Camfield Creek.

Various sources state that Mick was in partnership with his brother Jim, and with Ben Martin and Jim Campbell. There appears to be only one document to indicate that Campbell had such an arrangement. The Timber Creek police letter book, entry for 12-3-1903, states that a camp (station) had been formed on Coolibah Creek by:

C.E. Campbell partner with Michael Fleming of Illawarra Downs Stn on the Armstrong Creek.’ It was the opinion Campbell and a man named Brown were employed by T. Pearce then of Kne to get all the cleans skins. Campbell and B. Martin got a number of clean skin horses last year. The block was known as “Kirby” Also suggested that Campbell and Ronan came to some understanding re clean skin cattle.

However, only Mick Fleming’s name appears on the original lease documents (file in the Office of the Placenames Committee, Darwin). For more comprehensive biographical details on Jim Campbell see entry under Mayvale.

In 1902 Mick took 2000 cattle to W.F. Buchanan’s new station on the ‘Big Gregory’ Creek (TCPJ, 30-5-1902). This new station took on the name of the abandoned Delamere and Mick became manager there (O’Keefe, 27-6-1903).

Mounted Constable Burt (1905: 23), states that:

During September Messrs. Flemming and Martin, of Illawarra Downs, dissolved their partnership, the latter taking away his share of the cattle, 950, and horses,
30: these cattle are for sale, but as yet none has been effected, and they are camped for the present on Scott’s Creek.

Mick died at Burnside Station on June 11th, 1939 (Northern Territory Deaths Register).

Campbell also had left Illawarra by 1905 (if he ever was a partner) and in 1906 the Timber Creek police reported that, ‘Mr. Fleming of Illawarra Downs and Mr. Campbell of May Vale abandoned their country during the year as they found they were really squatting on Victoria River Downs country’ (‘CAD’ [Constable Dempsey], 31-12-1906). This was a result of the work of Surveyor L.A. Wells whose survey showed that Illawarra’s best waters were actually on VRD. They moved their cattle north to two blocks on the Douglas River. Mick took up a block that was the forerunner to the present Douglas River station and Jim took up a block which was the forerunner to the present Ooloo station (files at the Office of the Placenames Committee, Darwin). Ben Martin returned to the Top End where he died on January 4th, 1921 (Northern Territory Times, 5-2-1921).
INNESVALE

According to Rodney Watson (pers. comm.) the Innesvale area was known as ‘Sullivan’s Creek’ before the Innesvale name was applied. Originally various parts of what became Innesvale were held by different leaseholders or pastoral permit holders. For example, Matt Wilson obtained the rights to block 264 in 1910 (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 5, PP 248/1911), and in 1944-46 a man named Alex Potts held GL1139 in the Innesvale area for a year (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 36, GL 1139). Eventually part of the Innesvale area belonged to Coolibah station and part to Willeroo. In 1960 Peter Murray, the owner of Coolibah (of which Bradshaw and Innesvale were part) surrendered the Innesvale block in exchange for the Buffalo Springs block. He hired Ian McBean and John Nicholson to muster the area.

The block was then put up for ballot and was won by Ian McBean in 1964 (pers. comm., Ian McBean). McBean sold out to Tommy Teece in about 1984. In 1994 Innesvale was bought for the traditional owners, the Wardaman people, and it has since become Aboriginal Freehold land (Katherine Times, 10-11-1999).

Ian Roy McBean. Owner-manager from 1964 to 1984. The following information comes from ‘An Eventful Journey’ (McBean, 2008: 103-127). Ian was born in Melbourne on August 10th 1931. His father James had served at Gallipoli, was in the 21st Light Horse between the wars, and served in New Guinea during World War Two. He married Margaret Drysdale in 1929.

Ian’s first eight years were spent on Wageragong, a ‘soldier’s settlement’ block near Urana, NSW. When World War Two broke out his parents sold the farm. His father joined the AIF while Margaret, Ian and his brother moved to Sydney. Until this move, Ian had not attended school, but over the next eight years he attended a Prep school in Mosman and Shore in North Sidney. When he left school in 1948 Ian worked on farms in NSW and rode as a jockey in local races.

In 1953 Ian moved to Alice Springs where initially he worked as a stockman on Elkedra station. At the end of his first muster on Elkedra Ian helped shift a mob of cattle to Andado station, his first experience of droving. Eventually he became a boss drover, taking many mobs out of the Victoria River country, but the Elkedra mob was and the worst he ever had, rushing every night.

After delivering the cattle Ian was given time off and attended the Brunette races. He rode in many of the races and won the Ladies Bracelet. While at Brunette he accepted the offer of a job to look after the station bull breeding herd. During 1955 he worked variously as horse breaker, butcher and drover. The following year he took on a half share in a droving plant and became a boss drover. Over the next three years he shifted many mobs, mostly in the Barkly and western Queensland country.

In 1959 Ian married Myrtle McFarlane, a Stolen Generations girl, and the set up house in Camooweal. Eventually they had five children together. Not long after they were married they went to the Brunette Races where Ian expected to ride as a jockey once again, but the ABC race committee would not let him ride because he was married to a ‘coloured’ girl. They also refused to let him and Myrtle to attend the races ball.
In about 1960 he walked a mob of horses from Camooweal to Delamere, his first visit to the Victoria River country. In 1961 he accepted a droving contract to shift cattle from Coolibah station to Queensland, but when he arrived at Coolibah he found that the cattle he was meant to lift had all escaped from the holding paddock during the wet season. Instead of droving he spent the year mustering cattle on Coolibah, Fitzroy, the Innesvale block and the Buffalo Springs lease, in partnership with John Nicolson (see entry for John under Bullo River). The following year Ian shifted cattle from Humbert River to Katherine, then took a mob from Bradshaw station to Katherine via the Angalarri valley, Wombungie, Flora River and Katherine River.

In 1963 Ian took a mob from Auvergne to Avon Downs. The following year he was in charge of another mob of Auvergne cattle – the second last mob to use the legendary Murranji Track – when he heard that the Innesvale Block was up for ballot. He had previously helped muster the Innesvale block and knew what the country was like, and that there were plenty of cleanskin cattle in the area. He entered the ballot and was the successful candidate.

As soon as possible he shifted to Innesvale. There were no yards, buildings, roads or other improvements so Ian had to start from scratch in the work of creating a cattle station from this virgin block. His first camp was at Stub Yard on Sullivan’s Creek, but he soon built a rough house on the banks of the Victoria River in what was known as Matt Wilson’s Pocket (see entry for Matt Wilson under Coomanderoo and Skull Creek). In 1967 he shifted to a hard gravel ridge where he established Innesvale homestead. Over the coming years he put in a lot of infrastructure – yards, station tracks and bores – and began to improve the quality of the station herd.
Ian and Myrtle separated in 1974. He later met a nurse, Kay McKenny, and they married in 1977, eventually having two children, Sam and Fiona. In about 1982 he bought the adjoining Coolibah and Bradshaw stations which at this time were being run as one under the name Coolibah. Access to Bradshaw was very limited so to get cattle off the station Ian had a barge built. Using this he was able to take cattle across the Victoria River to a yard where they could be loaded onto a road train and taken to market.

In 1984 he sold Innesvale to Tommy Teece and shifted his base of operations to Bradshaw homestead. 1988 he sold Coolibah to Milton Jones and then in the early 1990s he sold the Wombungie section of Bradshaw to Alan Fisher of Swim Creek station. Finally, in 1996 he sold the rest of Bradshaw to the Army for a reputed $5 million and shifted further north to a property called Bonalbo on the Douglas River (NT News, 25-12-1996). By agreement with the army he spent the next three years removing his livestock. In recent years Ian and Kay have retired, but still (2017) live on Bonalbo.

**Tommy Teece.** Owner-manager from 1984 to 1988 (pers. comm., Mick Bower).

**Lyn Hayes.** Owner for a short time in the 1980s (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). For additional biographical details see entry under Willeroo.


**Shane Nimmo.** Manager after Tak Hall, 1998 (pers. comm., Tak Hall).

**Ronnie Ogilvie.** Manager in 1999-2000 (pers. comm., Tak Hall).
According to R. Reynolds (1965), Inverway was known to the Aborigines as ‘Khudurdhi’ which is said to mean ‘swampy place’. The station was first taken up by the Farquharson brothers, Archie, Harry and Hughie, and there are many versions about when this happened. Leonnie ‘Jo’ Biltris, aka ‘Mrs Bill Hammil’ (WHPJ, 2-12-1949), and later as Mrs Frank Willmington, knew the Farquharsons in their later years. She said that the station was originally taken up in about 1890. The brothers couldn’t afford to stock their land immediately, so they spent three years in Queensland, droving and dealing in horses and cattle to build up their funds (Biltris, 1951). Reynolds (1965) states that he met Hughie and Wattie Gordon in 1910 and was told by them that Inverway was taken up in 1900. However, Myra Hilgendorf (1994: 35) met the brothers in 1939 and claims it was taken up in 1896 but not stocked until April 1902, and this appears to be the correct version. It’s supported by ‘Vanguard’ (1934), and by J.A.G. Little (1901) who reported that he met the Farquharson brothers overlanding cattle ‘for the purpose of forming a new station near the Western Australian boundary’. The Northern Territory Times of November 22nd 1901 reported that, ‘Messrs. Farquharson Bros. are now camped near Wave Hill Station with about 700 head mixed cattle and 40 horses, waiting for rain before proceeding to their destination; this stock is being travelled on to their Sturt’s Creek country.’

Finally, and in support of the Northern Territory Times report, the Timber Creek police (TCPJ, 16-10-1901) received information in October 1901 that the Farquharson brothers were stocking country on Sturt Creek. There therefore seems to be little doubt that Inverway was taken up in 1896 but not stocked until late 1901 or some time in 1902.
According to Vestey’s travelling manager, A.S. Bingle (1986: 34-35), the station was stocked with cattle purchased from the Inverell district of NSW. He also says that there were actually six Farquharson brothers, the other three being bankers in Perth, Adelaide and Sydney, and that there was also a number of sisters. Another source say that they were from a family of ten (Reynolds, 1965).

The first homestead was built by Archie Farquharson on Sunbeam Hole, discovered by Gordon Buchanan in 1886 and named after his horse (Buchanan, 1997: 120-21). All the timber for the homestead was cut on the property. Listing the improvements on cattle stations for the year 1908, Mounted Constable Dempsey reported (Dempsey, 31-12-1908: 19) that, ‘On Inverary [sic] a dwelling-house has been erected’. If the homestead took four years to complete then a stocking date of 1902 would appear to be correct.

Leone Biltris (1951) says that while the homestead was being built:

The natives at that time were still troublesome and treacherous, and the work of the three men was hampered by the necessity of always keeping guard. One brother stood guard at all times with the guns loaded while the other two men cut and adzed the timber for their homestead.

In 1935 the homestead was described as, ‘Drop slab 27’ x 10’, divided into two rooms with 10’ verandah back and front. Back verandah enclosed with G.I., and divided into two rooms. G.I. roof on bush frame, ant-bed floor new verandah on one side, sawn timber uprights, earth floor and light rails’ (NTPLIC 1934, Inverway).
Myra Hilgendorf (1994) visited the station in 1939. She states that the brothers lived under a tent-fly for four years until the homestead was completed and that this was homestead was the one in use at the time of her visit.

Reynolds (1965) states that the Farquharsons were ‘descended from the famous clan Farquharson, which derives from Farquhar, fourth son of the Alexander clan.’ He added that:

Their tartan is of three dark shades of green, with red and yellow single line over check. The Farquharsons of Inverway were a celebrated Jacobite branch of whom the Black Colonel – John, 3rd Laird of Inverway – lives in Deeside legends and ballads, according to family records.

Biltris (1951) says that the Farquharsons named their station after the county in Scotland where the family came from. According to Surveyor L.A. Wells, cited in Parker, 1937: 43), when the plans of the Victoria River district were produced in 1906-08 the name was misspelled, with ‘Inverway’ being written instead of ‘Invermay’, and this mistake was perpetuated thereafter. The mistake was not made by W.F. Johns when he wrote from the Midnight Creek police camp on January 1st 1912 that, ‘Invermay, [was] owned by the Farquharson Bros.— Cattle 4,328 … horses 157’ (Johns, 31-1-1911). In any case, it may be that both Inverway and Invermay are wrong! Research carried out by Paddy Cannon (pers. comm.) suggests that the ancestral homeland of the Farquharsons was ‘Inverey’ in Ireland, not ‘Invermay’ in Scotland. Whether Archie Farqharson told Leonne Biltris that the Farquharson’s ancestral home was Scotland or it was her presumption is unknown.

Reynolds (1965) remarked of the Farquharsons that:

They spent their lives on horseback and attended the musters on the western and southern areas of Wave Hill Station, those large tracts being unfenced in those days. They had a number of black stockmen, including several young lubras, and 40-odd loose horses—saddle and pack, and usually with Harry or Hughie in attendance riding in the rear, they presented an imposing cavalcade. The “whites” always rode at the rear so that they could watch the “blacks”, who always knew their own country, and all points of the compass were familiar to them. A couple of rifles were strapped on pack-bags and “whites” invariably wore revolvers on their belts, usually Brownings or Colts. The aborigines had great respect for men so armed, owing to earlier experiences in those distant lands.

The Farquharsons are famous for making the longest successful dry stage with cattle. Accounts vary as to exactly how far this was, how many cattle there were or in what year it happened. The herd was probably about 1000 head, the distance close to 200 kilometres and the year probably 1917 (see Lewis, 2007a: 47-50).

Beth Beckett (1998: 52), says that in the early days Inverway was known as ‘Liberty Hall’ because of the wonderful hospitality offered to travellers.

In 1935 F.P. Shepherd (NTPLIC 1934, Inverway) noted that:

Although the lessees have been in occupation since 1901, there has been no importation of bulls. There were a few bulls in the first herd of cattle purchased
when the place was established. In effect the herd has been carried on for about 30 years depending on a few stragglers from adjoining runs to provide the change of blood.
The cattle on the run reflect the lack of breeding but they are no worse that the cattle on the adjoining larger runs where the management is very little better in this connection.

In 1947 Inverway was bought by the Leahy brothers, Lou and Des, and a major program of building and improvements was begun (Evans, 1949: 7; Evans, 10-11-1952: 1). By late 1952 the Leahy brothers had dissolved their partnership, with Lou selling his share to Des, and a program of improvements has been implemented making Inverway one of the best improved properties (Evans, 10-11-1952: 1). Among the improvements was a new homestead, built to replace the one originally erected by the Farquharsons (Biltris, 1951).

Sister Ellen Kettle visited Inverway in 1954 and noted that:

Inverway Station in ’54 had a team of six camels for transporting stock camp equipment. The camels continued in this role until 1961 when they finally fell from favour by devouring the flower and vegetable gardens at the homestead. They were shot, and so ended the era of camel transport on stations in the northern half of the Northern Territory (Kettle, 1967: 74).

Apparently the Leahy’s had bought Inverway with the intention of using it as a breeding station and taking the stock to fatten on their Central Australian property, Alcoota. However, the introduction of the ‘pleuro line’ which prevented cattle from the pleuro affected north being taken to Central Australia, meant that this plan was no longer feasible (Hoofs & Horns, January 1956: 13).

In 1956 Des Leahy sold out to a partnership formed by Pat Underwood and Basil Quilty (Buchanan, 2002: 84). Quilty was a ‘silent partner’ and eventually sold his share to Pat, except for a 1/8th share which he gave to Pat’s son, John. Under Pat’s management the assessment that Inverway was a well-improved station continued (Dorling, c1962). The station remained in Pat’s hands until about 1976 when he divided the property into three, one portion for each of his three children. The eastern part (the Mucka block or the ‘River End’ of the property) became Riveren, held by Terry and John Underwood. The central part, held by Trish and John Westerway, remained as Inverway, and the western part, held by Reg Underwood, became Bunda (Buchanan, 2002: 125-26).

In about 2006 Trish and John sold Inverway to Terry and John Underwood, but in 2012 they placed both Riveren and Inverway on the market (Condon, 2012). The properties were bought in late 2013 by Japfa Santori Australia, a fully owned subsidiary of Japfa Comfeed TBK, an Indonesian company (Website: http://www.centralstation.net.au/riveren-station/). In July 2016 the stations were bought by Gina Rinehart’s Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd (Brann, 2016).

**Archie Mosman Farquharson.** Co-owner and pioneer. He was described as ‘the eldest, a smallish man of neat and wiry build, with a white goatee beard’ and credited with building the station homestead ‘of four rooms of local hardwood with axe, saw and adze, strong and plain’ (*The Pastoral Review*, 19-4-1965: 363). Mat Savage (Willey 1971: 21)
described Archie as ‘a wonderful man with an axe. Give him a bloodwood log or something like that, and he would dress it up as well as anyone else could with a saw’. When the Leahy brothers bought Inverway in 1947, part of the deal was that Archie, the last remaining Farquharson, retained shares in the property which enabled him to live his remaining years there. He died at Inverway on (or about) August 13th, 1950, at the age of 88 (Hoofs & Horns, November 1950: 46; Biltris, 1951: 44; Daily News, Perth, 24-8-1950; ‘Culkah’, The Pastoral Review, 16-11-1951: 1253). His name is commemorated on the Nongra 1:100,000 map at Mount Archie.

Hughie Farquharson. Co-owner and pioneer. He is said to have done all the bookkeeping and office work for the station and was described by one who knew him as ‘of quieter demeanour but a good fellow and, like his brothers, bearded and blue-eyed’ (Reynolds, 1965). He died in Darwin in 1946 (Biltris, 1951: 45).

Harry Gordon Farquharson. Co-owner and pioneer. Harry was involved in the big trek of cattle from Queensland to the Northern Territory in 1881. Another Farquharson, ‘Big Bill’, was in charge of the leading mob of cattle (2000 head). These cattle were mustered on Norley station, near Thargomindah, Queensland (Buchanan, 1997: 71). In 1896 Harry accompanied Bluey Buchanan on explorations into the Tanami desert, south of Inverway (Buchanan, 1933: 184). He was described as ‘6 feet, … a “braw Scot” with sandy beard, blue-eyed, with an open countenance – genial or jovial, and [wearing] basil gauntlets with finger holes and hand-backs to his elbows to prevent sun blisters’ (Reynolds, 1965: 363). He died in Perth in 1945 (Biltris, 1951: 45).

Jack Farquharson. Stockman. ‘Yellow Jack’ was the son of one of the Farquharson brothers and an Aboriginal woman. He started work on Inverway, then moved on to VRD. He spent time in the Tanami Desert prospecting for gold, was a drover for Vesteys, and a contract fencer and yard builder (Hoofs & Horns, May 1954: 51). He died at Lajamanu on June 11th 1960.

George White. Head stockman on Inverway in June 1932 (WHPJ, 10-6-1932). According to Cec Watts (pers. comm.), George married Gracie, a daughter of one of the original Farquharsons. He thinks she was a sister of ‘Yellow Jack’ Farquharson. Cec says that, ‘George was a very tough man, did a lot of droving, he and Gracie had two children. Last I heard of him he was ‘sitting down’ at Mistake Creek around 1965.’ Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) placed White on Pigeon Hole and Rosewood. He said White was a:

Very good man, exceptionally good man. And he could fight as well. Those days it was a matter that they, they had to keep the Aboriginals in hand – that’s with the fists you know. Of course when there’s about ten or twelve or fourteen Aboriginals in the camp they, they took a bit of handlin’, you couldn’t sort of make too much of ‘em you kept ‘em in their place. But you treated ‘em fair. They got rations and what not, and they were quite happy and contented.

Des & Lou Leahy. Owners from about 1947 (Biltris, 1951: 44-45; Evans, 1949: 7). In 1951 they dissolved their partnership and Des Leahy became sole owner of Inverway (Evans, 10-11-1952: 1). Des Leahy sold out to Pat Underwood in 1956. He (or perhaps both brothers) gave Archie Farquharson a block of shares to ensure that he could remain living on the property until he died.
Drover Mick Cusens discusses droving problems with Des Leahy of Inverway Station (Hoofs & Horns, September 1953).

Frank Willmington. Manager from at least March 1947, after the Leahy brothers bought the property (WHPJ, 12-3-1947) to at least 1950 (WHPJ 19-8-1948; Sweeney, 1947: 8-9; Evans, 1949: 7; Beckett, 1998: 98). For additional biographical details see entry under Lissadell.

Norman Jensen. Head stockman in 1946 (WHPJ, 4-9-1946).

D.D. ‘Sandy’ McIndoe. Manager in March 1950 (Hoofs & Horns, March 1950: 40). Tom Cole states that McIndoe was head stockman on Ord River in about 1929 (Cole, 1988: 185) and he was a drover at times in the 1940s (WHPJ, 7-4-1941, 4-7-1941; Hoofs & Horns, November 1949: 19). He was described as a saddler on Lissadell in March 1951 (Hoofs & Horns, March 1951: 39). Gordon Buchanan compiled a list of northern station owners and managers, and he places McIndoe on Mabel Downs (Buchanan family papers).

Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) remembered McIndoe as ‘A coloured bloke, drover. I gave him some horses once to look after ’em. Worst mistake I ever did. I thought I was given’ him … a hand along but ah, some of the horses I never got back again’.

There is a story that McIndoe ensured that a new will in his favour was signed by the last of the old Farquharson brothers before he died. He stood to inherit the substantial amount of money from the sale of the station and the shares in Inverway, which had always been promised to the Farquharson’s friend, Gordon Buchanan. This doesn’t fit with the fact that Archie, the last of the Farquharsons, sold out to the Leahy brothers in 1949, but it
may be that McIndoe’s intention was to inherit the share Archie retained in the station. Another version of the story has it that McIndoe spent hours practicing writing Archie’s signature but did not destroy the practice copies which were later discovered so that his scheme came undone (Buchanan, 2002: 82). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says Frank Willmington told him that McIndoe poisoned Archie.

McIndoe attended the Negri Races in 1950 and began drinking heavily, and after his return to Lissadell he shot himself (pers. comm., Cec Watts). One suggestion is that he killed himself out of guilt for his supposed actions over Inverway (Buchanan, 2002: 82). Another is that he knew he had been found out and couldn’t face the consequences (pers. comm., Marie Mahood). Johnny Stacey heard from drover Scotty Watson that a policeman had told him (Watson) that they couldn’t prove anything but that McIndoe panicked.

**William D. ‘Bill’ Hamill.** Manager from 1950 to 1954 (WHPJ, 6-5-1951, 7-6-1952 and 12-5-1953; Hamill, 2000). He also was head stockman on Manbulloo in 1945-46, overseer on Mistake Creek in 1947-48, manager of Ord River from 1955 to 1959, and improvements manager over all Vestey’s stations from mid-1955 to September 1955 (Hamill, 2000).

Bill was born in Gympie on September 10th 1920 and went to school there. He left for the Northern Territory at age eighteen. He said that he competed in a rodeo at Gympie and was thrown, and as he walked back he overheard two old-timers say he’d make a good rider if he got more experience. Later he saw a Vesteys’ add for workers and applied. He was sent to Manbulloo where he spent a wet season and then early in 1939 he went to Willeroo. After one and a half years there he went to Darwin to enlist. They wouldn’t take him in Darwin so he went to Sydney and enlisted there. He spent three years in the army, 1941-44. Then the Vesteys General Manager, A.S. Bingle, got him out to go back up to Willeroo. The following year (1945) he ran a camp on Manbulloo and then was made overseer of Willeroo and Delamere. Next he went to Mistake Creek for a couple of seasons. He spent time as head stockman at Inverway and then became manager of Ord River.

While he was on Mistake Creek he had to bury the famous Canning Stock Route drover, Wally Dowling. Bill says Wally had returned from delivering a mob of bullocks to Wyndham and was due to pick up another mob. It had been raining and Wally was wet through for three days. He came to the homestead complaining of feeling very sick and asking for medicine. All they could give him was aspirin and cough syrup. He died in his swag that night. Bill, the cook George White and a couple of Aborigines buried him, along with a pair of new riding boots Wally had in his swag. Some stories say that Wally died after a binge, but Bill is adamant that there was no grog involved in his death and this is confirmed in the Wave Hill police journal entry for 6-6-1959.

Hamill married Peggy Andrews, the bookkeeper at Nicholson, late in 1951. Peggy was the first woman bookkeeper to work for Vesteys (pers. comm., Bill Hamill). A son, William George, was born in 1952, the first white baby on Inverway. The Native Affairs report cited above states that:
It is pleasing to note that at last a white woman is resident at Inverway. Mrs. Hamill takes a practical interest in the natives health and Hygiene. Showers are provided for the staff working in and around the homestead and they are used extensively. … The station has an excellent vegetable garden and the natives share liberally in the produce. Vegetables which they receive include, onions, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, tomatoes, beans and carrots. … in Mr. Hamill I feel that Inverway has become more stabilised. It is apparent that there is an atmosphere of contentment among the natives particularly among the females who are responding to the interest being taken in them and their children by Mrs. Hamill.

Bill said he left the north early in 1961 because he felt his wife needed ‘civilisation’, and his son, then about seven, needed school. He also didn’t want to put up with drunken Aborigines once citizenship came in. He said he and a couple of other cattlemen went to see Northern Territory Administrator Charles Abbott to try and talk the government into trying a different approach to citizenship (I think he said something about training the younger Aborigines in the cash economy and drinking – there may be something in the records on this).

**Mick J. Crowson.** Manager for five or six months up to August 1954 (WHPJ, 9-7-1954; *Hoofs & Horns*, August 1955: 12; pers. comm., Paul Vandeleur; pers. comm., Bill Hamill).

**Jack Lee.** Manager for the Farquharson Pastoral Company (Leahy brothers) in 1955. Lee was, ‘An old Kidman man who spent 20 years managing Kimberley Downs out from Derby' before taking over from Mick Crowson (*Hoofs & Horns*, September 1955: 9). He was still manager in April 1956 (WHPJ, 28-4-1956).

**George Hamilton.** Head stockman from 1951 to 1955. He was a ‘half caste’, a half brother to Drover Dick Smith (*Hoofs & Horns*, September 1955: 9). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that George was Charlie Sing Poo’s brother (see entry for Sing Poo under Limbunya).

**Salli Mahomet.** Private storekeeper, probably from the 1930s (WHPJ, 19-1-37) to 1955 (pers. comm., Cec Watts). He was ‘the last of the old camel men who used to bring the station stores out from Wyndham’. Before going to Inverway he used to run a store behind the Wave Hill police station (*Hoofs & Horns*, September 1955: 9). The building he used at Wave Hill was the original Wave Hill police station building. He must have bought this building because when he set up his store at Inverway he shifted it across.

In 1952 a Native Affairs Officer that:

> it is pleasing to note that owing to Salli’s haphazard method of costing (he is not able to read or write), Mr. Hamill has now taken over the costing of all items in the store. In this way both the aboriginal customer and Salli Mahomet himself are assured of a more reasonable deal (Evans, 10-11-1952: 2).

After Salli died or moved on the police station/store building was used as the head stockmen’s quarters (Buchanan, 2002: 85). It was in existence until about 1996 when it was destroyed by station personnel to make way for a new building, another piece of regional history lost.
Mark Richards. Worked for Pat Underwood for many years, also for Hector Fuller on Rosewood (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). He was head stockman on Rosewood in 1952 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; see also Ball, 2002: 107).


Basil Underwood. Manager/owner in March 1956 (Hoofs & Horns, March 1956: 3).

John and Patricia Westaway. Owner-managers from about 1976 to 2006 when they sold Inverway to John and Terry Underwood (pers. comm., Barry Scott; Condon, 2012; Buchanan, 1997: 122).


According to Mary Durack (1974: 338) Ivanhoe was formed in 1893 and was named after Walter Scott’s novel, ‘Ivanhoe’ which MP Durack was reading one night near the Ord River crossing. He fell asleep with the red and green buggy light on, and when this was seen by Aborigines later in the night they thought it was a ‘debil-debil’, and scattered.

In the 1990’s Ivanhoe was owned by the Consolidated Pastoral Company. At the present time (2017) Ivanhoe was bought by the Chinese-owned Kimberley Agricultural Investments in 2016 (West Australian, 3-8-2016).

**James ‘Silver King Jim’ Dillon.** Manager in 1899 (Evans, 14-10-1899; Durack, nd.).

**Duncan McCauley (‘The Scrub Bull’).** Manager from 1904 to at least June 1910 (Durack, 25-6-1910; Weir, 1906; Clement, 2000; Broughton, 1965: 37). McCauley had worked for P.B. Durack at Thylungra, southwest Queensland, before the Kimberley properties were taken up, and had come to the Kimberley with the first Durack cattle. Described as ‘weighing fourteen stone and standing six feet tall, he was noted for his tough hide and a soft heart’. After a brief period as a stockman on Ord River he became a permanent employee of the Duracks (Durack 1983: 35). In May 1890 McCauley was reported as being drunk and threatening the police before escaping up a nearby range. He was arrested the next day and later fined ten shillings and costs (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1890-1892, entries for 31-5-1890 and 2-6-1890). In 1893 he and his wife left Argyle for Newry station where it appears he was to become manager (Durack, diary, 1-1-1893 to 31-12-1893, entry for 4-12-1893).
In 1909 McCauley reported by letter to the Wyndham police that Aborigines were killing cattle all over the station and had threatened to take his life. On February 12th about 22 kilometres down the river from Ivanhoe homestead Aborigines:

made a Hostile demonstration & would undoubtedly have done me bodily harm or perhaps have Killed me had I not Galloped away I was not interfering with them although they frequently give me great provocation to do so I shall be glad if you will at your Earliest possible Convenience Send a police patrol to the stud both for the sake of protecting property & Life (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1908-1910, entry for 26-2-1909).

McCauley was married and had his wife at Ivanhoe station by 1905. They had no children of their own and adopted a baby girl (Durack, 1983: 136). In 1913 the Timber Creek police reported that he had arrived with 400 mixed cattle for Bradshaw (TCPJ, 26-8-1913). He died at Ord River about 1917 and was buried beside his mate, Tudor Shadforth, who’d been speared by the blacks in 1890 (The Pastoral Review, 16-6-1927). Ten years after his death his friend, Fred Booty, published an ‘In Memorium’ for him which was published in The Pastoral Review (16-6-1927: 559):

The Scrub Bull has crossed the last ridge.
Fifty years ago in the days when Queensland was young and cattle were her chief industry, when Mt. Cornish was a mighty cattle run and fences were almost unknown, Scrub Bull was a smart youngster on Thylungra.
Now after twenty-five years on other stations in Kimberley he had returned to Ord River to die. Here, twenty odd years ago, he had worked as head stockman, mustering cattle, and branding calves at the rate of one a minute.
Something about the man reminded one of Falstaff—an unconscious swagger that suggested ancestry from some old soldier of fortune.

Now he had come back to be buried in the station cemetery alongside the man who had been speared to death at his side.

I see “The Bull” galloping up to the station on a foaming Macarthur brumby with the news that the blacks had speared Tudor Shadforth as he and Shadforth rode together down the Osmand River, telling how, with the spear in his heart Shadforth had ridden his scared and bounding horse 70 yards and then in a fallen heap gone out, muttering only, “Oh Christ.”

One likes to think of “The Bull,” with whiskers bristling, revolver levelled, unconsciously controlling his excited brumby, standing guard over his dead mate, whilst the blackboy of the dead man carries his boss out of the gully to a safer place. After twenty years, by the whim of fate, the two are to lie side by side, where, maybe, the two splendid horsemen can talk “horse.”

Here with the eternal east wind blowing over them and a wide view of the country they rode over, let them rest. Vale! Scrub Bull!

W.J.C. ‘Bill’ Jones. Manager from 1915 to 1919 (Clement, 2000; Durack, 1983: 350; Martin, 1985: 24); AIA [Vestey] collection, caption on photo 2196). According to Morey (1978e: 15), Jones was manager in about 1931-33 and ‘Vanguard’ (1934: 81) places him there in 1933. Jones came to the Kimberley from a New South Wales station in about 1903, apparently after a falling out with his brothers over a will. In 1904 he was working as a drover for CD&D, bringing bullocks from Flora Valley to Wyndham (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1904-1906, entry for 26-8-1904).

He was an experienced cattleman, stubborn, proud, loyal, argumentative, a shrewd judge of stock and a good friend to his fellow workers, including the Aborigines. He soon became the general supervisor of the Durack stations (Durack 1983: 112; Bolton 1953: 236). A contemporary described him as ‘a long thin streak but a very interesting man. He was manager of Buckabunda station near Maree and lived in the Gwyder district until 1892’ (Phillips, cited in Durack 1983: 273). Jones was in the position of general supervisor by at least April 1918 (Northern Territory Times, 11-5-1918). This last information was disputed by Elizabeth Durack (pers. comm.).

Norman Bridge. Manager in 1936 and through the Second World War (pers. comm., Elizabeth Durack). Beckett (1998: 73) says that Bridge was manager there in 1947. His wife’s name was Thelma. Myra Hilgendorf, who visited the station in 1939, was not favourably impressed with Thelma. She described her as ‘a depressed, fat, rather slatternly woman with a young child’ and said that, ‘they gave us tea and Murray’s chair broke under him – it wasn’t a very convivial encounter’ (Hilgendorf, 1994: 40).

Jimmy Turner. Manager? and also at one time manager at Margaret River (Buchanan family papers).


Dave Drysdale. Manager from about 1950 to about 1952. Unless otherwise stated, the following information comes from Keef (1996: 77-80). David George William Drysdale was born at Zeehan, Tasmania, on October 15th, 1904. Although he did manage Ivanhoe and, briefly, Rosewood, he was a missionary rather than a cattleman. After completing
his schooling he studied at the Melbourne Bible Institute until 1925 and then went to Sunday Island Mission off the Kimberley coast. He married fellow missionary, Ingrid Amelia Folland, in 1927 and they both continued to work at Sunday Island.

Differences with head office caused them to resign in 1932. They then bought a pearling lugger and went beach combing around the Buccaneer Archipelago. By 1939 they had shifted to Perth where their fourth child was born. At the outbreak of World War Two Dave joined up. In 1940 he was captured on Crete and spent the next four and a half years in prisoner of war camps in Germany, returning to Australia in 1945.

In 1947 he and his family moved to the Kimberley Research Station at Ivanhoe. When Ivanhoe homestead burnt to the ground in 1950 the manager resigned and Dave took on the job (Hoofs & Horns, February 1951: 38). After a few years there he left and filled in as manager of Rosewood for a short period. Then the family moved to Batchelor where Dave grew pineapples at Chandler Farm.

In 1957 Dave and Ingrid went to establish a Welfare Settlement on the Liverpool River, remaining there until 1961 when they settled in Katherine. Later they spent a year at the Hooker Creek Aboriginal Settlement. In 1964 Dave had a heart attack so he and Ingrid moved to Perth. In spite of severe health problems, in 1967 David returned to Sunday Island to help the Aborigines set up a fishing co-operative. Ingrid joined him there in 1971 and remained until she died in 1982. Dave stayed on and died there in 1984.

**Gordon Arnold.** Manager from 1953 until 1961. The following information was supplied by Gordon Arnold. Born at Campsie, Sydney, on January 6th, 1929, he was educated at Campsie Primary School and attended Hurlstone Agricultural High School at Glenfield, NSW, from 1941 to 1945. He then enrolled in veterinary science at Sydney University, but left after one year and became a jackeroo on Mt Enniskillen station, a Clark and Tait property at Blackall, Queensland. After eighteen months he transferred to Barcaldine Downs, another Clark and Tait property. Gordon stayed ten months there and then spent five months on Vergemont station, a Vesteys bullock depot. Next he worked on Woodstock station, first as a stockman and then head stockman, staying for a total of two and half years.

In 1952 Gordon married Ellen (Nell) Periman of Gnalta station, at Middleton, Queensland, and they went to the Australian Agricultural Company bullock depot, Brighton Downs station, where Gordon was head stockman for six months. This began a thirty-six year association with the Australian Agricultural Company. His first management was on Ivanhoe station where he and Nell remained from 1953 to 1961. Gordon then managed Brighton Downs station for two years (1961-63) and, finally, he managed Wrotham Park station, near Chillagoe, Queensland, for twenty-six years (1963-1989).


**Perry Morey.** Manager in 1962 (Gordon, 1992: 248). According to Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.) he wasn’t there long.
Crondon. Manager (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). Lloyd Fogarty doesn’t remember him (pers. comm.).

Les Brown. Manager in 1971 (Shaw, 5-4-1971). He had been a head stockman on Auvergne and Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.) says he was manager of Ivanhoe after Morey and stayed there a long time, 1960s-1970s. It would have been Brown’s wife who Welfare Officer Len Muller met in 1971:

The missus at Ivanhoe stands in striking contrast to the missus of Carlton Hill [Mrs Ball]. Mrs Ball said she was a little afraid of her and I could see why when I met her. She is an authoritarian English woman who possibly worked in a Lyons Teashop as manageress before coming to Australia. After insisting that we had nothing to gain from seeing “the blacks” – since they could speak only English and were all born at Ivanhoe and she couldn’t make them be clean, she finally consented to allow me to go down to the camp if I didn’t stir them up to any mischief (Muller, 1972).
KILDURK/AMANBIDJI

Originally part of Auvergne, the Kildurk block was marked out by Tom Kilfoyle and MP Durack in early 1890s and, according to Mary Durack, was named by MJ Durack in 1905. The name ‘Kildurk’ is a combination of the names Kilfoyle and Durack (Durack, 1983: 41, 134). According to Reg Durack (pers. comm.), Tom Kilfoyle and MP Durack were taking cattle to the Pine Creek butchers. When they got to the Kildurk area they struck on the name.

Between the time the area was first named and Reg Durack taking it up, it had become known as the Magdharba block (pers. comm., Reg Durack). According to Reg, this name referred to a battle in Egypt during the First World War. He said that Neal Durack had fought in this battle and later when mustering in the area Neil had some trouble there with a mob of wild bulls. Neal’s comment was that, ‘it was worse than Magdharba’, and the name stuck. When Reg took over Kildurk he reapplied the old name for the block.

Kildurk became a station in its own right in about August 1950 when the remainder of Auvergne was sold to the Peel River Company. Reg Durack had been a boundary rider on the block and knew it well. He was managing Auvergne when the Durack properties were sold, and he took over the Kildurk block as his share of the sale.

Auvergne had the right to destock the Kildurk block before Reg took over. In the monthly report for July 31st 1951 it was reported that, ‘1,200 cattle [were] mustered from Kildurk and brought to No. 3 paddock. … 779 cleanskins branded, 100 cows speyed. Approximately 114 wild bulls shot’ (Auvergne Station Monthly Reports, 1950-1973). The block was also used during dry times to help Auvergne cattle survive until the first rains came. For example, in the report for October 1952 it was mentioned that:

> The stock camp was closed down on October 14th after a horse muster was made to get them all away on to the Bullo River side where they have a chance of holding on till it rains. … Hot dry weather continues and is becoming very serious. All waters in the West Baines country have given out except Devil Devil and Brumby Hole and with approximately 6000 cattle closing in on them these will crack up in a few days (Auvergne Station Monthly Reports, 1950-1973).

In 1973 the Commonwealth Government purchased Kildurk and handed it back to the Aboriginal traditional owners (Durack, 1983: 377-78). The Aborigines reapplied their traditional name of Amanbidji and the area has since been put through a land claim and become Aboriginal Freehold.

**Reginald Wyndham Durack.** Owner-manager. Reg formed the station in 1950 (Hoofs & Horns, January 1951: 43; Gordon 1994: 103) and stocked it with cattle from Springvale and Bedford Downs, the latter cattle being delivered to Kildurk by Sid Byers (Hoofs & Horns, August 1951: 43). When he first took up Kildurk, Reg and Frank McMahon demolished the old Depot Store buildings to use the iron in the construction of the new homestead at Stewart’s Yard (Hoofs & Horns, January 1951: 43). There is a billabong at Stewarts Yard which was used as the homestead water supply, but almost as soon as they settled there one of the worst droughts on record set in. Water for the homestead had to be carted 37 kilometres and because of this Reg decided to shift the homestead to its present location, a place then known as Pigeon Point after a mule which had died there.
KILDURK/AMANBIDJI

(pers. comm., Reg Durack; 30-9-1954). This shift was made in September 1954 (TCPJ, 30-9-1954).

Bill Laurie and Reg Durack, Kildurk station (Reg Durack collection).

Reg held the lease until 1973 when he sold it to the Commonwealth Government (Durack, 1983: 378). It was then handed over to the Aboriginal traditional owners. For additional biographical on Reg details see entry under Auvergne.

Frank ‘Baldy’ McMahon. Manager from at least October 1950 to July 1951 (Hoofs & Horns, October 1950: 44 and August, 1951: 44). For additional biographical details see entry under Buffalo Springs.

Sid Byers. Head stockman in 1951. He took over after McMahon left (Hoofs & Horns, August 1951: 44). For additional biographical details see entry under Coolibah.

Donald Lawrence Laidlaw. Manager for the Aboriginal traditional owners in 1980 (pers. obs.). In 1969 he was manager of Christmas Creek station in the Kimberley (Anon, ‘Narrative of an inspection tour of the Northern Territories and the Kimberleys’, 1969: 33). After Kildurk he became manager of Scott Creek where he later was arrested for growing marijuana.

Ken Bowden. Manager? (pers. comm., Barry Scott).

Paul Bonner. Manager for two years until mid-1996 (pers. comm., Barry Scott).
When Goldsbrough Mort was considering buying VRD from Fisher and Lyons in 1889, they commissioned a report on the station by a man named B. Blair (1889). In his report, Blair mentioned that to the south of the VRD boundary and east of the river there was, ‘a beautiful tract of country not in lease to any one’ and he recommended the company acquire it, and then offer 400 square miles to W.F. Buchanan in exchange for a block of a similar area held by Wave Hill in the centre of VRD further north.

The Wave Hill block ‘in the centre of the Coys property further north’ sounds like the original Killarney block, but there is no evidence that Wave Hill held Killarney until the early 1900s, and records show that the block did not become part of VRD until 1928 (Attorney for ‘N.A.’ to Chairman of Directors, 18-12-1929). It’s therefore more likely that the block referred to by Blair was one shown on very early maps as centred on Hutt Creek (NBA, Map F247). This block was part of VRD by the 1890s so it seems likely that a swap was done, as Blair suggested.

According to Vern O’Brien, former head of the Northern Territory Lands Department, the Killarney block was either taken up or transferred to a man named Kirby in 1903 as pastoral lease 2110. Unless otherwise stated the information in following section was supplied by O’Brien via the Office of the Placenames Committee, Darwin. Kirby came from Collarenabri in New South Wales, the region where WF Buchanan (Nat Buchanan’s brother) had his home base, and he may have been a friend or acquaintance of Buchanan. It was during Kirby’s time that the block was used by Jim Campbell as a base for his
cattle duffing operations, and is either the block which Campbell called ‘Retreat station’, or adjacent to it. There’s a Retreat Yard and a Retreat Creek near the present boundary between Moolooloo and Killarney. Some local Aborigines pronounce ‘Retreat’ as ‘Idris’.

O’Brien says that Kirby transferred his lease (PL 2110) to W.F. Buchanan in 1904. WFs’ station near Narrabri was named Killarney and it’s likely this name was applied to the block by Buchanan. The Timber Creek police journal of 16-9-1905 refers to ‘Killarney (Delamere outstn.)’. A sketch map of pastoral lease 2110 made by Surveyor Wells in 1906 shows an outstation named Killarney.

Two sources claims that Battle Creek, which runs across Killarney country, was named after a fight there between Aborigines and Tom Kilfoyle when he was bringing the first cattle across to Rosewood (Linklater, ML Uncatalogued Mss, 198: 5; see also Apsley and Apsley, 1926: 102). Another source claims that a man named Tom Roach ‘had a beaut fight with his employer here’ (West, 1951). Possibly both events occurred.

Ernestine Hill (1951: 323-24) places the famous cattle duffer ‘Diamond’ Jim Campbell on ‘Illawarra Springs’, a block she says was owned by Kirby, but she states that Illawarra was 400 square miles and contained Mt. Compton. She is almost certainly referring to the Killarney block, rather than to Illawarra, a block held by Mick and Jim Fleming. Hill also has Campbell on another block on Battle Creek which he named ‘Retreat’, but as far as I can discover, there never was another block on Battle Creek – she appears to be confusing the Killarney block, the Fleming brothers’ Illawarra block and another block held by Campbell on the headwaters of Coolibah Creek, north of Birrimbah.

W.F. Buchanan died in 1910 and his leases were transferred to his sons. In 1913 the sons transferred the leases to Charles H. Wright of London. It’s unclear whether Wright was acting for himself or for Vestey, though I suspect the latter. In 1919 Wright had Surveyor Brockman survey the block and also the boundary between VRD and Delamere to the north. By 1920 he had sold the lease to Willeroo & Manbulloo Pty Ltd (Vesteys). The original lease eventually became PL 188N(6) which was issued on the 30th of April 1928. As part of the bigger Vesteys aggregation, in August 1929 this new lease became part of VRD (pers. comm., Vern O’Brien).

The block formed the major part of one of three areas resumed from VRD in about 1949. Along with Montejinni and Camfield, it was surveyed, enlarged, and put up for ballot. Killarney was won by Ivor Hall and Eric Izod in 1952 (Hoofs & Horns, February 1953: 39). At that stage the block was 1156 square miles. Hall and Izod were owners until 1960 when Hall sold out to Izod (Hoofs & Horns, June 1960: 62).

According to Rodney Watson (pers. comm.), Hall formed some sort of unofficial partnership with Thelma Hawkes at Top Springs and struck a deal with her to force Izod out of the partnership. Hawkes let Izod run up a large bill at her Top Springs store, apparently with the intention of calling in the debt, which she and Hall believed Izod could not pay. When the trap was sprung, Izod hired a number of stockmen, including Watson and Jack Vitnell, to carry out a wet season muster on Killarney to get cattle which could be converted into cash to pay the debt. The muster began and Hall called in the Wave Hill police to investigate what he thought or alleged was cattle duffing. When the police confronted the musterers they were shown a legal letter which gave them authority to muster cattle on behalf of Izod. The muster was successful and Izod was able to pay
off the debt. The suggestion that Hall had a close relationship with Thelma Hawkes possibly finds support in the WHPJ entry for the 30th of January 1960. This records that Mrs Hawkes had contacted the Wave Hill police about Jack Vitnell castrating a horse at Killarney without Ivor Hall’s permission. It seems that Vitnell had the permission of Izod to do so, so it appears that the partnership between Izod and Hall was falling apart.

Hall’s brand from his early days on VRD was his initials, ITH (pers. comm., Dave Napier). This was the Killarney brand until the property was bought by Brian Oxenford in 1996 when it changed to NKT (pers. comm., Norm Forster). In 1960 or 1961 Killarney was bought by Bill and June Tapp for £90,000 (Northern Standard, 7-11-1947: 12).

In about 1994 or 1995, Killarney was bought by the Western Grazing Company, owned by Brian Oxenford, a Queensland pastoralist who had bought Wave Hill in 1992. After Oxenford bought Killarney there was an unusually high turn-over of managers – four managers in four years. Killarney was placed on the market again in 2000 and sold to Wallco Pastoral Company, then led by John Quintana, in 2001 for about $21 million. In 2012 Killarney went into receivership and was sold to Jumbuck Pastoral in 2014 for about $35 million (The Australian, 24-3-2014).

Ivor Townshend Hall and Eric Izod. Owners from 1953 (Hoofs & Horns, February 1953: 6) until 1960 or 1961 (pers. comm., Rodney Watson). At the time he and Ivor won the ballot for Killarney, Eric Izod was described as a ‘well-known garage proprietor and racehorse owner’ (Hoofs & Horns, February 1953: 39). His garage was Eric Izod Motors, Darwin. At times he held mining interests, owned a block of units in Darwin, was a member of the Northern Territory Legislative Council, was active in local racing, the RSL, the Police Boys Club, and other organisations. He died in a motor vehicle accident in June 1971. For a more complete biography see Izod, 1996: 169-70. For additional biographical details about Ivor Hall, see entry under Bradshaw.

Charles William ‘Bill’ Tapp. Owner-manager from 1961 until his death on May 23rd 1992 (Coutts, 2010: 4). Tapp was born and educated in Sydney in 1929 and came to the Territory in 1947. He worked for three years as a jackaroo on Elsey station, then being managed by Bill Crowson. When Crowson went to Rosewood in 1950 Bill went with him to work there as head stockman. After two years Crowson and Tapp became drovers (Sunday Territorian, 7-7-1996; Northern Territory Affairs, vol. 6, October 1972; Coutts, 2010: 5).

Bill Tapp and Bill Crowson formed a partnership and were the successful applicants for the Montejinni block in 1952. He worked there until 1960 when he sold his share to Crowson and bought Killarney for £90,000 (Coutts, 2010: 5; Northern Territory Affairs, vol. 6, October 1972). Bill married June Forscutt on August 2nd 1962. Under their ownership Killarney came to be regarded as one of the best improved stations in the Territory. In 1981 he bought Maryfield station and sent his son, Billy, to manage it.
At this time Bill’s health was deteriorating and he became seriously addicted to drugs and alcohol. Eventually June left him and they divorced in 1986. In the middle of divorce proceedings and against the advice of his financial advisor at Elders Pastoral Company, in 1988 Bill bought Roper Valley station and sent another son, Ben, to manage it. Then he borrowed more money to buy Western Creek station. He retained Killarney until 1993, but after running up a debt of more than $14 million his creditors, Elders, foreclosed on his stations (Coutts, 2010).

Bill died the same year at Killarney and is buried near the homestead (Sunday Territorian, 7-7-1996). June and their adult children fought the foreclosure in court. They managed to hide machinery, horses and gold bullion from Elders, but eventually had to concede defeat. Of their three stations they managed to retain only Roper Valley (Sunday Territorian, 7-7-1996). In 1998 Bill Tapp’s son, Ben, sued the Northern Territory
Government for $1.75 million for an alleged breach of contract during the BTEC Program (NT News, 24-2-1998). He won the case by reaching an out of court settlement.

**Joe Sowden.** Stockman from about May or June 1953 (Hoofs & Horns, June 1953: 54).

**Jack Vitnell.** On Killarney in April 1960 (Hoofs & Horns, April 1960: 56; TCPJ 30-1-1960). Vitnell married one of Roy Norton’s daughters, but the marriage didn’t last long (Buchanan, 2002; 74). Drover Rodney Watson worked with Vitnell on Killarney and remembered his as, ‘the smartest man I ever saw with a bad horse and a bad bull. In that holey country on Killarney he would be flat gallop and his horse would fall and he would land on his feet holding the reins, a one and only’ (Watson, 2008: 153). Vitnell’s life story has been written by Geoff Allen in Gun Ringer (1998).

**Dave Mills.** ? 1964.

**Les Brown.** Manager in 1970s and then went to Gin Gin (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

**Brothers Ray and Neville Hood.** Contract musterers on Killarney in 1959-1960 (TCPJ, 29-4-1958). Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.) said they were described as ‘hail fellow, well met’, but that they never paid him or his mates for work done. Lexie Simmons (pers. comm.) suggested that their surname was appropriate, given their behaviour.

Lex Lethbridge. Manager in 1996 and 1997. He and his wife Robin are now (c2000) at Georgetown, Qld, where he’s working as a helicopter pilot (pers. comm., Norm Forster).

Peter McGregor. Manager in 1997 for six months, before Norm Forster took over (pers. comm., Darryl Hill; pers. comm., Norm Forster). His wife is named Sue.

Bruce ‘Bacon Head’ Wreford. Manager for Oxenford for about two months until he allegedly was sacked for killing trees around the homestead and other ‘misdemeanours’. For additional biographical information see entry under VRD.

Norm Forster. Manager from March 1998 through to very early 2000 (pers comm., Norm and Anne Forster). Just as he felt he was getting the station knocked into shape he was sacked, apparently to make way for a mate of the owner. Norm and his wife Anne took this as an unfair action and a blow against his reputation, but he was reassured by many locals that they knew what had gone on and it would not damage his reputation. From Killarney Norm and Ann went to Montejinni where Norm worked as a bore mechanic. They returned to Queensland in 2001.
KILLARNEY SPRING

Located on present-day Innesvale, on the headwaters of Angalarri Creek. In 1936 it was combined with Skull Creek to form Coolibah (Ogden, 1989: 26).

Thomas Andrew Liddy. Owner-manager from the time he acquired the place until at least June 1935 (TCPJ, 12-6-1935; NTAS NTRS, F27, Box 6, PL 2448). Tex Moar (pers. comm.) knew Tom in Tom’s old age. He said that Tom told him there was a hut at J41 yard on Bradshaw which he dismantled for the corrugated iron to use on his homestead at Killarney Springs. When Coolibah was formed the iron was removed again and carried to Coolibah by Aborigines for use on the new Coolibah homestead. Tex says this iron is still at Coolibah on the roof of a shed. Pearl Ogden (1989: 25) says that Tom started Killarney Springs in 1932, but elsewhere (1983: 70) she says that he went there in 1927. For additional biographical details see entry under Bradshaw.
KIRRKIMBIE

The station name first appears in Mounted Constable McBeath’s stock report for 1910. This mentions, ‘Kurrikimba (J. McDonald’s place). – McDonald sold 400 mixed cattle to Joe Brown, who has started through with a mob of 1,100 for Alice Springs, via Tanami; thence southern markets.’

In a report from the Midnight Creek police camp (Limbunya), written by Mounted Constable W.F. Johns (Johns, 1-1-1912), he mentions that, ‘James McDonald is camped at Kirkimbie with 300 cattle and 34 horses’. The station is later mentioned in various entries of the Timber Creek and Bow Hill Police Journals between 1913 and 1916 (TCPJ, 7-10-1913; BHPJ, 31-12-1915; 11-4-1917). From these entries it’s apparent that James McDonald was the owner at that time. It appears that he was still there in 1925 because in Apsley’s book (The Amateur Settlers, 1926: 118) they mention ‘one old man, aged 76, who was still droving horses and cattle. … This old drover, McDonald by name, … had an “Abor” wife and two black sons, and a nice little property of his own, but makes a bit extra every year by droving.’ In 1927 George Forrestal’s brand, FTF, and Leeson and Stubbs’ brand, LST, were both listed as having been cancelled. The address given by these men was Kirkimbie (Northern Territory Times, 22-7-1927).

According to Bill Hamill (SHOF, September 2000), he supervised the building of a homestead there in the early 1950s and he believed that no Kirkimbie station existed before this time. This suggests there may have been a substantial time period between the early ‘Kirkimbie’ and the later Kirkimbie. In 1975 the Kirkimbie brand was DJT.


James McDonald. Apparently owner-manager as he had cattle ‘illegally branded’ by Joseph Brown in 1916. Brown was arrested but the charges were withdrawn (BHPJ, 8-11-1916). McDonald himself was investigated for ‘helping’ his neighbours on Inverway muster their cattle:

    M.C. Mac Donald station duty. … At 3 pm Native arrived from Inverway Stn with a letter from Mr A. M. Farquharson complaining that James McDonald of Kirkimbie had sold 270 head of Cattle branded with A.P.T. the same being the property of Farquharson Bros of Inverway Stn & that McDonald intends mustering & delivering these cattle to man named Henry Hayes. Mr Farquharson requests that Bow Hill Police grant him protection on this matter. (BHPJ police journal, 11-4-1917).

Ken Hughes. The first manager of the ‘second’ Kirkimbie (pers. comm., Bill Hamill).

Clarrie Wilkinson. Manager in 1956. He was the first manager of the ‘second’ Kirkimbie (pers. comm., Cec Watts; pers. comm., Len Hill). Cec says that, ‘he and his companion Margaret lived there during the building of the Station buildings ’55-’56. Moved down to Mistake Creek in 1956 after the big flood.’ For additional biographical information see entry under Sturt Creek.


Mick Basham. Manager, c1963 (pers. comm., Len Hill). He left Kirkimbie late in 1966 or early in 1967 (Bostock, 2-2-1968). Previously he had been manager of Sturt Creek (Paine, 2003: 209) Mick Bower (pers. comm,) says he was very athletic – he could ride well, do heaps of chin-ups, run up the side of a yard without using his hands, and so on.

Graeme Fulcher. Manager in October 1963 (WHPJ, 30-10-1963). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that Fulcher was also on Flora Valley, Nutwood and St Vidgeons.

Tim Doran. Manager? c1964-66 (pers. comm., Len Hill). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that Doran was on Flora, Manbulloo and Nutwood.


Bill Perry. Manager from 1974 to June 1977, then went to Waterloo (information from Geoff Newton, head stockman on Kirkimbie in 1982, recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill). He and his wife later went to Brisbane where he worked as an executive in the building industry (when?)

John Mill. Manager from 1977 to 1978. He then transferred to Walhallow in the Gulf country (information from Geoff Newton, head stockman on Kirkimbie in 1982, recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill).


Ron McKay. Manager in 1981. He was the last manager for Vesteys on Kirkimbie (information from Geoff Newton, head stockman on Kirkimbie in 1982, recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill).


The name Kunja almost certainly derives from the Aboriginal word Kanjalu (pronounced ‘Kahn-jah-loo’), the name of an edible water plant and the name of the rockhole where Kunja homestead was located. The block was taken up as a pastoral permit by Jack Frayne in partnership with Matt Wilson in 1903. It was one of a number of small blocks – Humbert River, Mt Stirling, Mayvale, Calvert Downs - taken up on the edges of the big stations in the early 1900s, ostensibly to establish legitimate small cattle stations but all or most of which were really cattle duffing operations. Kunja was located between Wave Hill, Ord River, Auvergne and Victoria River Downs, and close to rough areas where Aboriginal people had sought refuge. Aboriginal oral tradition (pers. comm., Jimmy Manngayarri) describes an Aboriginal man being shot there.

In 1910 the site was abandoned and a new homestead erected on Coomanderoo Creek to the north (White, 1910: 25). This change quite possibly was caused by L.A. Wells’ 1906-1908 survey of the station boundaries which showed that Kunja homestead was inside the neighbouring lease (Wells, 28-11-1907). Kunja (Coomanderoo) was sold to Vesteys in 1911 (Johns, 31-1-1911) and then became part of Wave Hill station.

Jack Frayne & Matt Wilson. Owners (see entries for Coomanderoo station and Skull Creek).

Billy Linklater, alias Billy Miller. Stockman there before going to Bedford Downs in 1908 where he worked as a cook for Bob Sexton. Linklater was born in Adelaide in 1866 and educated at a Catholic institution. There was talk about him training for the priesthood, but instead he decided to seek adventure in the outback.

Billy said that, ‘When you went north of the 20th parallel you threw away your underpants and socks. When you passed the 10th you threw away the Ten Commandments’ (Charleville Times, 7-2-1952). In 1920 he was on Bedford Downs (Census for 1920; Linklater and Tapp, 1968: 191-92; Clement, 1989: 3, 4). He also worked for the Flemings at Illawarra station (Mallinson, SMH, 27-6-1942; Linklater and Tapp, 1997: 111). In 1924 he travelled with Noel Hall on the lugger ‘Margery’ from the Depot to Wyndham. On the return journey they were shipwrecked on the coast of Ningbing station, but survived and were rescued six weeks later. Linklater says that at a spring he located ten or fifteen miles inland he carved ‘Salvation Soak’ on a boab tree (Linklater and Tapp, 1997: 136-39; Northern Territory Times, 16-12-1924). Attempts to relocate this boab has failed and it may no longer exist.

According to John Claringbold (1995) the name Billamilla means ‘he bin die and jump up’, a name given to Linklater by Aborigines at OT station when he returned there after an absence of some years, during which they thought he had died. He says the name was subsequently corrupted by whites to ‘Billy Miller’. However, Linklater himself claims to have adopted the name while on his way north after running away from home (Linklater and Tapp, 1968: 5).

Linklater was a very good bush poet, improvising verse dealing with current events. One of his poems, “Patterson’s Prayer”, is reproduced in the section on Ord River. Others are reproduced in the Hesperian Press 1997 edition of his book, Gather No Moss.
Originally (and sometimes still) pronounced ‘Leg-oon-a’, now usually pronounced ‘Lege-oon’. The origin of the name is a mystery but may be nothing more than a reference to the lagoons in the region, which has large wetland areas. According to Martin (1980: 29), Legune was first gazetted in about 1905 and initially the land was held under grazing licences. Records in the Northern Territory Archives (NTRS F199, PP 114 1914) indicate that an area of 706 square miles was taken up under pastoral permit on April 21st 1903 by I.S. Emanuel, Sydney Kidman and Alexander Reith Troup.

This permit was taken over by Bovril on April 21st 1909. The station was formed in 1914 and stocked with cattle brought over from VRD by Richard Townshend and his nephews, brothers Ivor and Noel Hall. In 1917 a coastal block was added to make a total of 1300 square miles. The Legune pastoral permits were converted to leases in 1936 (Waugh, 15-2-1936).

In 1932 Legune (and Ningbing) was being run as an outstation of Carlton, owned by Bovril (Morey, 1978a: 12; Wilson, 1996a: 346-48). An angle iron hut, 12 x 12 with a ten foot verandah all round, was erected in about 1917 (Martin, 7-9-1935). A new angle iron homestead is said to have been erected by Bovril in 1941 (Letter dated 1-9-1941, NBA, 119/6), but in 1949 Patrol Officer Evans (1949: 8) described Legune as:

a very primitive out-station. Only single men have lived at Legune and accordingly the usual mud and log huts comprise the buildings known as the "homestead". Water is carried by native women from a billabong 300 yards from the house, although a 15,000 gallon tank is being constructed on a high eminence. This, however, is to be filled by rain water catchment from a near-by building. There is neither an airstrip nor a transceiver wireless.
Evans was wrong about only single men having lived at Legune up to that time as Nell Martin, wife of one of the early managers, had lived there in the early 1920s (Martin, 1985: ix).

Legune was still an outstation of Carlton in the 1940s and 1950s (pers. comm., Rodney Watson). Legune, Carlton Hills and Ningbing were taken over by L.J. Hooker Pty Ltd when that company bought out Buckland in 1960 (Press release, 4-5-1960). Hooker sold Legune to the Sabah Government, trading as the Desa Cattle Company, for a reputed $2 million in 1981 (The Age, 1-7-1981; Chancellor, 2014). At the time this company also owned Campfield and Montejinni. The company ran 17,000 head of cattle, with 4000 trucked out for export each year. In June 1997 Legune was bought by a consortium – a company named Multivest and other shareholders (pers. comm., Chris and Denise Edwards). At some stage there was an outstation on Legune called ‘Greenswamp’ (pers. comm., Chris and Denise Edwards).

Legune includes huge wetland areas and it’s necessary to cross the Keep River and several large creeks to get to the station. Even at the present time, access to the station other than by air remains impossible for long periods during the annual wet season, one of the last stations in the Territory where such regular isolation (by road) still exists.

Most of Legune is blacksoil country so horses don’t need to be shod (Hargreaves, 22-4-1960).

**Jack Bourke.** First manager (Martin, 1985: 29). A ‘J. O. Bourke’ is mentioned in the Timber Creek Police Journal on the 31st October, 1934. Jack Burke is first mentioned in the Durack diaries in 1904, listed by Mary Durack as ‘stockman, Ord, Rosewood, Legune’ (Durack, nd.). In 1935 Alf Martin wrote, ‘Our Leguna Head Stockman, J. Burke, has had to go to Melbourne for medical treatment. Think this poor chap will not come back. C. Pretlove has gone to Leguna until we see how Burke gets on’ (Martin to Waugh, 16-10-1935).

**Lawrence John “Jack” Martin.** Manager for Bovril Estates from about 1919 until he was accidentally killed at Parry’s Creek near Wyndham in April 1924 – he fell from a dray and was run over. His wife, Nell (née Mulligan), was the first white woman on Legune (Durack, 1983: 382; Martin, 1985: 26).

**Percy Pretlove.** Manager during 1924-25 (Martin, 1985: 58) and in 1934 (TCPJ, 2-11-1934). In the latter entry he is said to be the manager of both Legune and Carlton Hills. An entry in the Timber Creek police journal records that he was manager of Legune when he died at Wyndham in October 1943 (TCPJ, 18-10-1943). Other police journal entries suggest that it was his brother Charlie and not Percy who was manager in 1937 and 1939 (TCPJ, 14-6-1937, 10-8-1939). This apparent overlap needs sorting out. In 1916 and 1917 he was a stockman on Rosewood (Letter Book, 1901-1912, pages 25 and 29, SROWA). For additional biographical information see entry under Carlton Hill.

**Charlie Pretlove.** Manager in June 1937 and August 1939 (TCPJ, 14-6-1937, 10-8-1939). He was still manager in May 1949 and into 1950 (Clement, 2000; Gordon, 1992: 152).
Norman John Osman. Windmill mechanic in May 1950 (Gordon, 1992: 152). Osman had previously worked on Rosewood and had been involved in the theft of a windmill from GB rockhole in 1941 (TCPJ, 26-8-1941). For details of this theft see entry for Jack Kilfoyle under Rosewood.

Ken Hewitt. Crocodile shooter on the station with wife Lily in May 1950. He took Constable John Gordon from Legune to Keep River in May 1950 to search for the barge of missing crocodile shooters, Mathews and Williams (Gordon, 1992: 152-53). The following details of this story come from John Gordon’s book, Just and Ordinary Bloke (1992: 127-29, 142, 151-55). Mathews and Williams had left the Victoria River by barge the previous November, intending to shoot crocodiles on the Keep River. Their Aboriginal wives and children had gone by truck to wait for them in Wyndham. In May their barge was found on the river by Legune stockmen but their was no sign of Mathews or Williams. The plan then was for the police to go to Keep River by boat but for some reason this didn’t happen. The following October constables Mettam and Potts were ordered to take a truck to Keep River and bring back all the property from the barge. They were unable to do this because they couldn’t get the truck through to the barge.

The following year Constable Gordon was told to try to find the barge. By chance, at Legune station he met Hewitt who offered to take him by boat the rest of the way to Keep River. After various troubles they travelled up the Keep River until a rock bar blocked their way, but there was no sign of Mathews and Williams barge. Apparently it had been washed out to sea during the previous wet season.

When they reached the rock bar they became stranded on a king tide and couldn’t leave for a month. While Hewitt and his wife slept on the boat Constable Gordon and the Aboriginal crewmen camped on the river bank, and at about midnight one night Gordon was woken by a strange noise, similar to the heavy breathing of a horse, though slower. He put on his boots, grabbed his revolver and a torch, and walked towards the sound. For some 200 yards or so the sound kept moving away from him, but eventually it rose into the air and he heard no more of it. When he questioned the Aborigines about it the next morning the showed signs of fear and declared, ‘him to much proper BIG one debbil-debbil


G. Griffiths. Head stockman from June 1944 (TCPJ, 10-6-1944) and to July 1946 (McKechnie, 9-8-1945; TCPJ, 8-7-1946).

W. Coventry. Head stockman/manager in October 1949 (Evans, 23-12-1949: 8). By 1960 he was working as a cook on Rosewood (Stewart, 20-2-1960).

Bridge. Head stockman in May 1950 (Gordon, 1992: 152).


Roger M. ‘Stainless’ Steele. Manager on Legune for three years, from 1965 to April 1968. The following information comes largely from Jeff Hill’s book, Horsebells and
Hobblechains (2003: 1-20) and from conversations with Roger. Born in Sydney in 1939, a son of Robert George Steele and Mary Heffernan. Roger’s father was in the army and in the early 1940s was transferred to Brisbane before being sent to fight the Japanese in New Guinea. Thinking that life in Brisbane with their mother would be too unstable, Roger’s father placed him and his brother Bob in an orphanage, a time Roger remembers as ‘endless days spent in a harsh disciplinarian environment totally devoid of joy, love and human warmth.’ When his father returned from New Guinea he took the boys from the orphanage, but they were then separated, with Bob staying with his mother and Roger with his father.

Roger’s father remarried in 1946 and the family moved to Darwin. Though family life was much more stable, Roger felt ‘on the periphery’, and began to go ‘off the tracks’. Eventually he began to have run-ins with law and was offered a ‘last chance’ of going to live on Humbert River station with legendary cattleman Charlie Schultz (see entry for Charlie under Humbert River station). By the time he left Humbert River in 1956 Roger was well on the way to becoming a cattleman.

Over the following seven years he worked as a station hand on Ucharonidge, Austral Downs, Newcastle Waters, Morestone, Limbunya, Waterloo, Victoria River Downs and Humbert River. He also spent time droving cattle, including a trip from Wave Hill, across the Murranji and on to Dajarra with master drover, Pic Willetts.

In 1962 Roger joined the Northern Territory’s Animal Industry Branch as a stock inspector, first on the Barkly Tableland and later in the Victoria River district. He married Donna Schultz in 1965 and took on the management of the remote Legune station. At the time the homestead was unfit to live in, and the road and the airstrip were only useable in the dry season.

After leaving Legune he worked for a time on Ellendale station, near Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley, and then once again returned to Humbert River as head stockman. In 1969 Roger became an insurance salesman in Adelaide, but moved back to Darwin in 1970 and continued to sell insurance throughout the Territory for the next four years.

In 1974 he became a Country-Liberal member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, serving with the Everingham government. Soon after the election Darwin was devastated by Cyclone Tracy and Roger was heavily involved in the subsequent clean-up and rebuild. He was with the CLP government for twelve years, serving variously as Minister for Tourism, Industrial Development, Transport and Works and Primary Industry and Fisheries, eventually becoming Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The speaker’s job involved extensive overseas travel during which he met Queen Elizabeth and the then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

His marriage to Donna had failed in 1981 and in 1986 he married Janette Kennedy. The following year he became a promoter of the Northern Territory as a tourist destination. In 1988 Roger and Janette moved to Brisbane where he was in charge of the Northern Territory stand at the World Expo in Brisbane. From January 1989 to 1991 he was Director of the Stockman’s Hall of Fame, based in Brisbane. Returning to Darwin in 1992, he worked for the Territory Insurance Office, then in real estate for nearly two years. Subsequently he spent three years working as a Community Liaison Officer for the CLP. During this time he was responsible for the erection of a memorial to the only Territorian
to be killed during the Vietnam War, and the creation at Timber Creek of a monument to the Durack family and other pioneers.

With the election of a Labour government in the Territory in 2001 Roger was again unemployed, but he and Janette had established a Bed and Breakfast business, ‘Steeles at Larrakia’, which they continue to run today (2017). Roger regards his greatest personal achievement to be the establishment of the Gregory National Park in 1992.

Hugh Petherick. Manager from about May 1968. He was also manager of and based at Carlton Hill, the two stations being managed as one.

Roy and Del Harlan. Roy managed Greenswamp outstation on Legune (pers. comm., Denise Edwards).

John Griffiths. Manager after Petherick, from at least late 1968 to July 1973 (information from Griffiths, recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill). His wife, Janet, was the station bookkeeper (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). A Department of Aboriginal Affairs patrol officer, Len Muller, visited the station in 1970. He reported that John Griffiths, ‘raved quite a lot about the bible bashing bastards he had to put up with for stockmen.’ He was referring to his Aboriginal stockmen (Muller, 1972). Muller also reported:

The policeman at Kununurra said later that John was too small to handle Aboriginal stockmen. Perhaps that was the reason for the trouble. I gathered that life wasn’t exactly smooth at Legune, and its isolation tended to be the end of the line for some pretty rough whites.

Before working on Legune he may have worked on Moolooloo.

Dawes. Manager some time before Gitcham (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

Billy Sullivan. Billy was manager from about July 1973 to the end of 1981 (pers. comm. Billy Sullivan). His wife, Annette, was station bookkeeper. While on Legune the station established one of the first Brahman herds in the district. There was no broncoing done on Legune in his time. Before working on Legune he was head stockman on Limbunya from 1969 to 1973 (pers. comm., Billy Sullivan; also information from Bevan Gitcham, recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill).

Bevan Gitcham. Manager from January 1st 1982 until November 10th 1990 (pers. comm., Evonne Gitcham). Before Legune Bevan had managed Pigeon Hole from January 21st 1971 to July 1974. He was overseer at VRD from July 1974 to March 1979. From March 1979 to January 1982 he worked for Uni Beef on Roper River station. After Legune he went to Montejinni where he was manager from November 1990 until October 5th 1998. He and his wife, Evonne, then went to Hayfield station (information from Bevan Gitcham, recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill).

Shane Dunne. Manager since the beginning of 2002 and still there in October 2003 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

Peter Bagley. Manager for a few months before Rasheed.

Cameron Rasheed. Manager April 2006.
Initially an outstation of Wave Hill, established in 1910. It replaced Campbell Springs which also had been an outstation of Wave Hill (McBeath, 1910: 24). Some time after Vesteys took over Wave Hill in 1913 (Northern Territory Times, 7-8-1913, 3-9-1914) and Waterloo in about 1916, they must have reorganised the properties because in the 1920s Waterloo and Limbunya appear to have been under a single manager and in 1932 Limbunya was described as an outstation of Waterloo (NTPLIC 1934, Waterloo and Limbunya). It was still part of Waterloo in 1947 (Sweeney, 1947: 9).

Myra Hilgendorf (1994: 32-33) visited Limbunya in June 1939 and described the homestead complex as:

a collection of partly whitewashed, corrugated iron buildings, set among rocky outcrops. … Limbunya uses a surface on the floors, made of crushed ant-bed and also there is a bread oven, a sort of hump-backed structure outside the kitchen, 4-5 ft high, also of ant-bed. The windows have no glass or fly wire and are covered with an iron flap that’s propped open with a pole. This main room is also stone flagged with bush stools and a table. It has corner shelves containing very battered books and a little portable H.M.V. gramophone. … [the cook] called for a lubra to bring in a fire, which she did literally, it was roaring in a petrol drum, which she set down in front of me in the dining room.

Myra and her husband decided to stay the night and were given rooms:

Ours was a corrugated iron partition off the verandah, and a bed of logs and rawhide. The lubra brought in “hot wadder for the missus”, but finding a toilet was more difficult, as there was none in sight and very few bushes. I finally found there was
LIMBUNYA

a small iron structure on the side of a hill out the back with no door, but it had a splendid view.

The water supply for Limbunya came from a big rockhole beside the homestead. In the drought of 1952 the rockhole dried out completely and for four months water for the homestead had to be carted from 20 kilometres away. This was done under contract by Jack Farquharson (Evans, 21-11-1952). Sister Kettle, who visited Limbunya in 1954, noted (1967: 75-76) that the area around the rockhole, ‘except for one outlet, sloped towards the hole so that when it rained all the gutters at the homestead, laundry, stockyard, pig pen, fowl pen and aboriginal camp (which had no toilets) drained into the drinking supply.’

According to Native Affairs officer Ted Evans, in November 1952 ‘There had been a number of changes of managers and book-keeper during the past twelve months’. He went on to say that:

Under the managership of recent previous managers Limbunya as a cattle station slipped considerably. Poor management is reflected in the contentment of the natives, particularly the stock boys and it was noticeable that this year there was a freer and happier air among the native population (Evans, 21-11-1952).

In common with most other stations in the Victoria River district, there is a lot of rough country on Limbunya so before the advent of helicopter mustering there were large numbers of wild, cleanskin cattle. Sister Kettle (1967: 77) recounts the following story from Limbunya:

A story is told of a young stockman who came close to death in an attempt to destroy a savage bull. He rode up on the bull’s flank, but as he raised his revolver to shoot, his mount threw up its head and the bullet entered between its ears. The horse collapsed, pinning down its rider.

Fortunately the stockman had not lost his grip on the revolver and as the bull turned and charged to the attack he shot it, at close quarters, through the brain. The stockman lay pinned beneath both horse and bull until found and rescued by his mates, having escaped with just a few fractured ribs.

In 1957-58 a new homestead was built at a site about eight kilometres to the east of the rock hole by contractor J. Edwards at a cost of £7,004-19-3 (Limbunya Improvements Book; Kettle, 1967: 79-80). In September 1961 the storeroom at the new homestead caught fire. The mechanic, John Perry, was helping put out the fire when the nylon pyjamas he was wearing caught fire and melted into his skin. Embarrassed at being naked he retreated to his bed, but his burns were severe and weeping, and before the flying doctor could arrive he died (Kettle, 1967: 80-81; Courts, 2008: 149-50).

**Jack Cusack.** Manager? (TCPJ, 14-3-17). Old Jimmy Manngayari (deceased), a Malngin-Bilinara man whose country included most of Limbunya, reckoned Jack Cusack was manager of Limbunya when he was born. Given that Limbunya was established in 1910, Jimmy must have been born around that time or soon after.

**A. Skuthorp.** Head stockman at the forerunner to Limbunya, Campbell Springs (TCPJ, 16-12-1908). It was Amos Skuthorp who married Tom Deacon’s widow in about 1905
and took over Waterloo (Durack, 1983: 134, 238, 390), so this may have been his brother, Archie (pers. comm., Andrew Barker).

**Dick Skuthorp.** On Limbunya, according to Jimmy Manngayari.

**Joe Brown.** On Limbunya 1916-18 but in what capacity is unclear (WHPJ, 8-11-1916, 29-4-1918).

**Harry Reid (or Reed?).** Manager (?) June 19\textsuperscript{th} 1920 (WHPJ, 14-7-1920). The name Reid is carved on the bottle tree above Springer’s grave on the old road between Auvergne and Timber Creek. There is a Harry Reid mentioned in the Wyndham Occurrence Book in March 1909 (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1908-1910, entry for 16-3-1909).

**Hugh Ross.** Manager in June 1922, and still there in June 1925 (WHPJ, 8-6-1925, 14-9-1925). In 1922 he was reported to be manager of Waterloo (WHPJ, 26-7-1922), but at this time Limbunya and Waterloo were being run as a single station.

**A. Benr.** Manager In 1924 (WHPLB, 18-1-1924).

**Sir Alexander Cockburn-Campbell.** Manager in 1924 (WHPLB, 30-9-1924). For additional biographical details see entry under Argyle.

**G. Brown.** Manager in 1925.

**P.J. Lyons.** Manager in 1927 (WHPLB, 19-12-1927) and possibly for a year or two earlier. He was still at Limbunya in 1929 (WHPJ 29-9-1928).

**Laurie Pumpa.** Manager about 1928 to 1933 (WHPJ, 12-12-1932, 14-2-1933, 30-5-1933; Cole, 1988: 190, 213; Morey, 1978f: 17). Pumpa had been a stockman on Burnside station in 1920 and at that time held 98 square mile Grazing License 303 near Mt Tolmer (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 10, GL 303). He was a stockman on Wave Hill in 1926-27 (Henry, 1989) and in 1932 he was a drover, taking 381 Wave Hill bullocks to Alice Springs, using a station plant (WHPJ, 26-5-1932). In 1936 he was working on Limbunya again (WHPJ, 28-7-1936). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says Pumpa also was on Willeroo.

**Jack F. Colbert.** Bookkeeper in 1934-1935 (WHPJ, 10-10-1934, 6-12-1935; Morey, 1978e: 17). For additional biographical details see entry under Waterloo.

**George G. Voll.** Stockman and boundary rider. Voll died at Limbunya of malaria fever, on June 30\textsuperscript{th} 1934 (Northern Standard, 3-7-1934; WHPJ, 1-7-1934). According to the newspaper obituary, Voll was from Arkansas, but had been in the Northern Territory for many years. He was stockman and boundary rider on Wave Hill station for a number of years and later was employed on Victoria River Downs. VRD records (VRD Ledger 3, Jan 1922–Feb 1930) show that he had been a boundary rider in May 1923 and a labourer in January 1930, so he probably was on Wave Hill before 1923. His death at Limbunya presupposes that he had left VRD to work for Vesteys again. The *Northern Standard* (19-2-1926) has him as cook at Pigeon Hole late in 1925. Before coming to Australia he spent some times in the Philippines.
Sydney George Bonnell. Manager in 1936 (WHPJ, 15-7-1936, 18-11-1936) and in 1937 (Fuller, diary 1937-38; TCPJ, 16-9-1937; pers. comm., Max Sargent; Street, 2000). Syd was born in 1907 at O’Possum Creek, N.S.W. His parents were Edward James Bonnell and Maud May Bonnell (née Gillies). He was educated at Black Mountain State School, near Cooroy, Queensland, and later was a boarder at the Church of England Grammar School in Brisbane. After leaving school he became a jackaroo with Vesteys in the Northern Territory. He was a stockman on Limbunya before becoming manager there and became a Justice of the Peace on December 10th 1936 (WHPJ, 10-12-1936).

Syd Bonnell in uniform (Milgate collection).

At the outbreak of World War Two he enlisted in Brisbane and later fought in Syria, Lebanon, and the Western Desert. A wound he suffered led to his return to Australia where he served in a small boats outfit in the islands. He contracted malaria and spent a lengthy convalescence in Concord Military Hospital in Sydney.

While recuperating in the Red Cross Home in Gordon he met Matron Isabel Sherrit who later became his wife. Isabel was a Scot who came from Forbes, NSW, and was deputy matron of the hospital where she and Syd met.

When the war ended Syd rejoined Vesteys and was posted to Sturt Creek station. Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says Bonnell also was on Willeroo and later on Waterloo. Possibly before the war and certainly afterwards, Syd had terrible problems with alcohol. This may
have been caused by or perhaps exacerbated by his wartime experiences. His behaviour on the grog was sometimes violent, possibly due to undiagnosed post traumatic stress syndrome, and amongst other cattlemen he gained the nickname of ‘Dog’ or ‘Mad Dog’ Bonnell (pers. comm., Cec Watts).

His niece, Val Milgate, agreed that Syd was known as ‘Dog’ and that the nickname came about after he had belted an Aboriginal woman with a hobble chain – treated her like a dog. She said that Syd and others in his family had a ‘mad streak’ and that Syd was awful. She added that he modelled himself on a visiting Englishman, the ‘Right Honourable Michael Robinson’, and spoke with a pommie accent, ‘a bit clipped’.

Eventually he developed kidney stones and was forced to resign. He subsequently ran small businesses in Brisbane and Hemmant, and worked on properties in South Australia until his health collapsed. He died in the Military Hospital in Adelaide in the 1960s (Street, 2000; Milgate, 2000).


Frank W. Willmington. Manager at Limbunya twice – once in about 1940 and again some time later (pers. comm., Frank Willmington). He is listed as manager in the Wave Hill police journal of September 6th 1943 and is implied to be manager in January 1944 and May 1944 (WHPJ, 14-1-1944, 19-5-1944). His management has been disputed by Hamill (2000) so he may have been caretaker or relieving manager. For additional biographical details see entry under Lissadell.


Harry McCullagh. Manager from at least March 1945 to at least July 1950 (WHPJ, 21-7-1945, 29-3-1947, 22-7-1947, 4-4-1948, 13-7-1950; Sweeney, 1947: 9). According to Beckett (1998: 60), Harry had grown up in the Queensland Channel Country where his father managed Kidman properties, one of which was Diamantina Gates (Barnes, 1948). At the age of eighteen the woman who became his wife had travelled up the Birdsville Track to work as a governess on one of these properties. According to Vivian Philp (2001), Harry was manager of Glengyle station, Queensland, from 1915 to 1923, and was then transferred to Durham Downs. This seems too early to be the same Harry McCullagh documented here.

When Beth Beckett passed through Limbunya in 1948 Harry had his wife Nancy and three children with him on the station – Hardy, Janice and Lynette (Beckett, 1998: 60). They had a baby, Robert, who died on May 11th 1948 and is buried at the old Limbunya homestead. Welfare Officer Evans noted in September 1949 that, ‘Mr. McCullock is one of Vesteyes rising managers and he gives the impression that the firm and his future come first with him. However, he appears to be fair in his treatment of the natives but his wife adopts a very poor attitude in dealing with them’ (Evans, 23-12-1949: 10). By 1953 he was manager of Alice Downs in the Kimberley, and he had a fourth child (Beckett, 1998: 151). Two years later he and Nancy were working on Narwietooma station in Central Australia (Beckett, 1998: 177). He’s also listed by Buchanan as manager of Sturt Creek (Buchanan 1950, Buchanan family papers). During his time at Limbunya the station was known as ‘Hong Kong Downs’ because of the number of Chinese-Aboriginal stockmen.
employed there, including Charlie Sing Poo and George Man Fong (Watts, nd.: 50). Johnny Stacey told me that at Hidden Valley in 1965 Dick Scobie introduced him to McCullagh but McCullagh ignored him – he didn’t like coloured people.

**Ron Eadam.** Manager for a short period after Harry McCullagh (pers. comm., Bill Hamill).

**Claude Prendergast.** Bookkeeper in October 1947 (Sweeney, 1947: 9). According to Paul Vandeleur (pers. comm.), at one time Claude used to drive a tram in Brisbane. In the 1950s he (or a namesake, which seems unlikely), was a boss drover taking cattle from the Victoria River country to Queensland (*Hoofs & Horns*, September 1955: 31, photo 6).

**Harry (or Max?) Sargent.** Manager in January 1951 (WHPJ, 27-1-1951). The police journals leave no doubt that a man named Sargent was manager in 1951, but Max Sargent told me that he was manager there in 1937 and 1938, and said he took over after Syd Bonnell. The dates he cited certainly fit with the time of Bonnell, but Cec Watts (pers. comm.) says it was Harry Sargent who was manager rather than Max. Either Max was stretching the truth or he was manager at the time he claimed, and Harry Sargent was manager in 1951. Max’s claim certainly needs confirmation via historic records.

Max Sargent says that while he was on Limbunya he shot 40,000 wild bulls and 20,000 (?) wild horses (?), claims which are almost certainly gross exaggerations. Later he ran cattle for many years in the Finnis River country, south of Darwin. According to Rodney Watson (pers. comm.), Max once had a big fight with Jack Vitnell and nearly chewed off Vitnell’s thumb. Jack hit him in the face with a rock and, says Rodney, ‘didn’t he let go then!’ Cec Watts disputes this story.

**Bill Murphy.** Manager in July 1951 (*Hoofs & Horns*, August 1951: 43).

**Charlie (or George?) Sing Poo.** Stockman on Rosewood in 1916 (Letter Book, 1901-1912, page 27, SROWA), he was killed in an accident at Limbunya on Christmas Day, 1949. Details of his life were given in an obituary in the *Sunday Mail* of January 1st, 1950:

One of Australia’s greatest stockmen and horse breakers was killed in a motor car accident yesterday. He was Sing Poo, a half-caste Chinese, who was born near the Northern Territory-Western Australian border, and lived there all his life. Sing Poo, who was about 35, was killed at Limbunya Station, where he had lived and worked since he was a boy. Sing Poo’s name is famous among the cattle men and horse breakers of the Territory ... The pastoral inspector of Vestneys Limited (Mr. J.A. Quirk), who knew Sing Poo as a boy, said today: "There was never a better stockman in this country. It is no exaggeration to say that he broke in thousands of wild horse and brumbies. He was fearless and one of the hardest riders the cattle industry has known”.

Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that Sing Poo had brothers, George Hamilton and Charlie Ah Lay.

**George Gape.** Head stockman during 1953-4 (Meggitt, 1955: 48).
Fred Mork (junior). Manager from late 1951 to 1953 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; Evans 21-11-1952) and May 1953 (WHPJ, 19-12-1952, 30-5-1953). Len Hill (pers. comm.) puts Mork there from 1951 to 1953. Fred was a nephew of the original Fred Mork (pers. comm., Cec Watts; pers. comm., Charlie Schultz; Meggitt, 1955: 45). He told Cec Watts that when he was a lad he came out to Mistake Creek with his uncles, Fred, Jack and Tom, in 1917 when they picked up a mob from Mistake Creek.

From 1946 to 1949 he was head stockman on Victoria River Downs (VRD Journals: April 45 to Jan 48; VRD Journals: 28 Oct 48 - Sept 49; Sweeney, 1947: 4). In 1950 he was said to be going to manage Sturt Creek (Hoofs & Horns, June 1950: 33). He won the Negri Cup in 1949 and again in 1950 (Hoofs & Horns, February 1951: 38). Stan Jones (pers. comm.) says Mork took over as relieving manager at Nutwood station in 1954 when Masey Hood went on holiday. According to Tom Ronan (1964: 112), the Morks ‘were an Irish-Polish cross, and hailed from Victoria’s Kelly country.’ Lexie Simmons (née Gurr), who was storekeeper at VRD in 1948, said (2005: 30) that Fred was ‘well over six feet tall with a large frame, but he was a gentle, courteous man, well liked by everyone.’ Billy Harney (pers. comm.) agrees that Fred was a big man and says he eventually drank himself to death. If true this may have had something to do with his wife.

Gerry Ash, who was a stockman at Gordon Creek when Mrs Mork was the ‘missus’ there, said (pers. comm.) she was ‘a real shocker’, a vindictive, nasty woman. Splinter Prendergast told Gerry that after an altercation with Mrs Mork during which Splinter, a bit drunk, had hurled insults at her, she fired shots at him with a rifle as he galloped for his life. Gerry’s Aboriginal partner, Whip, told him that Mrs Mork had stabbed her (Whip’s) mother in the head with a pocket knife. Gerry also heard from a source he considered reliable that years before Mrs Mork had been in trouble, suspected of the murder of a white woman.

Lexie Simmons said (Simmons and Lewis, 2005: 30-31) that Mrs Mork was ‘a massive woman, close to six feet tall and built to proportion’. Lexie had heard that ‘she was an aggressive, domineering woman who ruled everyone at Gordon Creek with a rod of iron, including her husband, Fred’, and that ‘she was very hard on the house girls she employed’. Lexie said that being so large Mrs Mork had to make her own underwear. She made bloomers from empty flourbags, but needed calico for her peticoats’.

Beth Beckett provides a colourful description of Mrs Mork:

[She was] A keen gardener and animal lover with a heart of gold, she claimed to have graduated as a trained nurse from Guys Hospital in London. This was questionable as her medical knowledge was limited and to say the least, unorthodox. … She was a chain smoker, who on every occasion that I saw her, had an Aboriginal girl in tow whose sole duty it was to roll her cigarettes!

Mrs. Morch [sic] was a very large woman and her untidiness was legendary…. Once when we were at ‘Gordon Downs’ a ringer called Cec Watts went out to meet the mail plane around mid-morning. During lunch the manager’s wife asked if there had been any passengers on the plane. “Oh yes,” was the casual reply, “Mrs Morch was on board looking as if she had ridden on the wing all the way from ‘Limbunya’…

Mrs Morch always travelled with her menagerie and once we met her and Fred on the road when they were moving to Sturt Creek. She was seated in the front of the
utility surrounded, and almost concealed by pot plants and nursing a pet bird. On the back of the ute with the boxes, and suit cases were a pet goat, two cats and six fowls in pens. However, her entourage was incomplete without the cigarette girl, who had to remain with her tribe.

Marie Mahood also knew Mrs Mork and said (pers. comm.) that she, ‘was the original Mrs Malaprop. I used to hear her on the galah sessions – “3 dieticians” = “3 diarroheas”, etc.’ Another example of her colourful style of English was told by Lexie Simmons (2005: 31). One day when Mrs Mork was at Montejinni she got on the two-way radio. The radio call sign for Montejinni was 8MN and for VRD was 8RI. Mrs Mork pronounced the first as ‘hate hem hen’ and the second as ‘hate har high’.

After visiting Limbunya station in 1952, Welfare officer Ted Evans remarked that, ‘Mrs. Mork is an elderly woman of very irrascible temper but generally speaking female employees in and around the homestead take little notice of her moods and had no complaints to make to me’ (Evans, 21-11-1952).


**Len Kiehne.** Manager in March 1954 (Kiehne, 8-3-1954) and up to September 1955 when he left to manage Brunchilly. His name was pronounced ‘Keenee’ (pers. comm., Billy Hareny). Len Hill (pers. comm.) thinks Kiehne was manager of Limbunya but Cec Watts (pers. comm.) doesn’t think he was ever manager there. Onstead, Cec says he was overseer at Spring Creek around 1948-50, manager of Flora Valley in 1951-53 and manager of Manbulloo around 1956. He also spent a lot of years with Vesteys in the Kimberleys (*Hoofs & Horns*, September, 1955: 10).

**Jack Lynham.** Head stockman (new) in February 1955 (WHPJ, 17-2-1955). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says he later went to Carlton.

**Johnny Sorensen.** Head stockman after 1955 (pers. comm, Johnny Sorenson).

**Geoff Tribe.** Head stockman after 1955 (pers. comm., Johnny Sorenson).


According to Taylor, Ray was born at Collinsville, Queensland, in 1927. He left school at thirteen and began a butcher’s apprenticeship. Three years later he left to go droving and after a year he went to Moray Downs, near Clermont, as head stockman. By age twenty-three he was manager of the neighbouring Cumberland Downs. Ray went droving again before becoming overseer at Gordon Downs and later the manager of Nicholson.

From Limbunya he went to Morestone. In about 1966 he left Vesteys and took over management of Newcastle Waters. In 1972 he joined Stanbroke as manager of Stanbroke station, south of Cloncurry, and in 1976 he became manager of Rocklands, near
Camooweal. Cec Watts (pers. comm.) says that Jansen had been head stockman on Gordon Downs in 1954, and later managed Newcastle Waters, Macarthur River, Rocklands for a very long time, and Morestone. Cec and Ruth Murphy (pers. comm.) both say that Jansen was manager of Newcastle Waters, possibly in the late 1950s and into the mid 1960s, but these dates conflict with the written record and the statements of others. Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.), who was in a stock camp on Newcastle Waters in 1967, says that Jansen was manager at that time. Ray’s wife was named Pat.


Mick Bower. Head stockman, 1958-1959 (pers comm., Mick Bower; pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White). Mick’s father was actually named Watson and Mick’s real Christian name was Allen (pers. comm., Mick Bower).


Maitland James ‘Lyn’ Hayes. Manager (or head stockman?) in 1963-64 (WHPJ, 18-4-1963, 24-12-1963, 7-4-1964; Dayes, 2008: 17).

Alf Marshall. Manager, c1964-75 (pers. comm., Peter Harpham), or from May 1970 to 1984 (WHPJ, 23-5-1970; pers. comm., Len Hill). He had previously been on Manbulloo (pers. comm., Billy Harney) and also manager of Spring Creek (pers. comm., Neil Dudgeon).

John Stewart. Manager from 1964 to 1967 (Milikins & Welsh, 1964; Bostock, 2-2-1968 [should be 2-3-1967]). Before Limbunya he managed Turner station and afterwards he went to Vanrook in the Gulf country. He later joined a cattleman’s organisation in Townsville (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). His father, Bill, was manager of Rosewood station in the late 1950s-early 1960s (pers. comm., Dave Napier; pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty; see entry for Bill Stewart under Rosewood).

Ron McKay. Head stockman in Stewart’s time (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner).


**Rod Ansell.** Head stockman, 1970s (pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White; pers. comm. Len Hill). For additional biographical information see entry under Fitzroy.

**Mick Basham.** Manager? (pers. comm., Dave Napier).

**Barry Kelly.** Head stockman in the 1970s (pers. comm., Len Hill).

**Tommy Peters.** Manager in the 1970s according to Cec Watts (pers. comm.). Head stockman in the 1970s according to Len Hill (pers. comm.). Cec says he left Limbunya to take up a position in West Kimberley.

**Len Hill.** Relieving manager in 1981 (pers. comm., Len Hill). For additional biographical information see entry under Nicholson.

**Don Hoar.** Owner-manager? in 1983 (Crowson, 2008: 10).

**Alan Hagen.** Manager in 1989 (pers. obs.). In 1961 when manager of Mungabroom station Hagen indulged in a fine Territory tradition. He mustered cattle on Mungabroom on April 5th and the next day cut out cows bearing the Eva Downs JTJ brand and separated them from their calves. To keep the cows and calves separated he then drove the cows across the Mungabroom-Eva Downs boundary, across Eva Downs and through the Eva Downs-Anthonys Lagoon boundary. Charged with the theft of 36 Eva Downs calves, Hagen was found guilty and placed on a £10 two-year good behaviour bond (*NT News*, 22-5-1961).

**John Thompson.** Manager in 1999 (pers. comm.).

**Greg Kimpton.** Manager 1986-87

**Mick Stanley.** Manager before Tim Spiden (late 1999?). He later was on Mistake Creek (pers. comm., Tim Spiden).

**Tim Spiden.** Manager since January 2000. His wife is named Louise (pers. comm., Tim Spiden).
LISSADELL

Founded (stocked) on September 17th 1885 by Michael J ('Long' Michael) Durack and a ‘sleeping partner’, Durack’s uncle Lumley Hill (Durack, 1933b: 27; Bolton, 1953: 31; Clement, 1989: 13). The founding herd at Lissadell was 2200 head from Mount Marlow station, Barcoo River, Queensland, (brand IUT). Other cattle came from Thylungra and Galway Downs (‘H7H’, 1-9-1905: 3). Near the junction of the Bourke and Georgina Rivers the drovers were in camp for six months waiting for rain. At the junction of the Gregory and Nicholson Rivers they halted once again when pleuro’ broke out in the herd, with the loss of 600 head. At Roper Bar one night Aborigines stripped the provisions wagon of stores, only some of which were recovered (The Pastoralists’ Review, 15-5-1908). As they moved the cattle down the Ord the drovers met fierce resistance from local Aborigines (Durack, 1933b: 27).

In 1886 Lissadell cattle were being sold to butchers on the Halls Creek goldfield. By about 1889 the station was carrying approximately 4000 cattle and 140 horses (Clement, 1989: 14).

When Long Michael died his cousin, M.J. Durack, bought his share of the property. Apparently Sid Kidman also held shares in the property at one time, ie post-1916 (Bowen, 1987: 243, 282).

In 1905 Durack and Hill decided to send 4,000 cattle overland to Queensland. The drover was Walter Rose and his trip became one of the epics of Australian droving history. He struck severe drought conditions in the Territory and Queensland, and was continually forced to double back or wait for prolonged periods for rain to fall. At least two of his men died en route and only two of the original men saw the trip out. Hundreds of the cattle died of Redwater or other causes and it took seventeen months for the survivors to reach their destination at Richmond, 2,200 miles away (Durack, 1983: 125-26; ‘HTH’, The Pastoralist’s Review, 15-1-1907).

In 1907 it was reported that Hill and Durack ‘purchased 40 pure Hereford bulls and 15 heifers from Mr. Frank Reynolds, of Tocal, N.S.W. These cattle reached their destination safe and in good condition’ (The Pastoralists’ Review, 15-5-1907: 271). Apparently this was a second attempt to introduce Herefords. In 1905, Hely Hutchinson (aka ‘HTH’ or ‘H7H’) remarked that, ‘It is purely a Shorthorn herd, and the bulls are bred from studs imported from Point Sturt, South Australia; but races of Hereford cows having been used in the herd are still to be noticed in some of the cattle’ (The Morning Bulletin, [Rockhampton], 1-9-1905).

In 1925 the station was sold to a Queensland cattleman, William Naughton for a reputed £80,000 (Clement, 1989: 14: Martin, 21-3-1931). In the opinion of Alf Martin, ‘it was a bad deal … it is surrounded with small “Cockies” and I think they are kep [sic] going keeping the “Poddy Dodgers” out’ (Flinders, 2016: 90; see Buchanan, 1933: 98 for alternative information).

In the 1960s or 1970s the station was owned by E.G. Green and Sons, a big meat company from Harvey, Western Australia (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).
Lumley Hill was part-owner with M.J. Durack from 1883 (*The Pastoralists’ Review*, 15-5-1908) until at least 1903-1904? (Durack, 1983: 125). There is no evidence that he ever visited the station. According to the *Pastoralists’ Review* (16-11-1909: 946) he was born in 1840 at Tickbill Castle in Yorkshire, the second son of Colonel Charles and Lady Francis Hill. Educated at Rossal school and Oxford University, he arrived in South Australia in 1863. After a year on Woolundunga near Port Augusta he became manager of Northampton Downs on the Barcoo River in Queensland. In 1865 he and two old university friends, Allan and Holbertson took up Isis Downs, and later Westlands, Avington and Thornleigh.

*Lumley Hill (Pastoralists’ Review, 15-3-1911).*

Lumley was the first to alert the authorities about the theft of 1140 head from Bowen Downs by the famous Harry Readford and he issued the warrants for the arrest of the Readford gang. He also undertook a ‘punitive expedition’ against the Aborigines who murdered his friends, Welford and Fanning. In 1870 he became the first member for Gregory in the Queensland Parliament. He resigned in 1883 in order to travel to England, but was elected to Parliament again in 1885 as the member for Cook. In 1901 Lumley married Condamine Taylor. He died of malaria at his property, Bellevue, near Esk on October 28th 1909 (Morrison, 1972).

**Michael J. Durack.** Owner-manager in 1898 (Durack, 1983: 39). He was one of the Duracks who pioneered south-west Queensland. Forced out by drought and flood, he joined the party that overlanded cattle to East Kimberley. When he sold Lissadell to William Naughton he retired to Perth where he died in 1937 (*The Pastoral Review*, 16-9-1937).
Patrick ‘Mantinea’ Joseph Durack. Manager for about twelve months from about 1890 (Durack, 1991: 132). Mantinea had helped overland the first cattle to Lissadell in 1884-85, then overlanded back to Darwin. There he chartered a schooner and sailed to Cambridge Gulf to open a store at Land Slip Point, View Hill, catering to diggers heading to Halls Creek. When the gold rush petered out he founded Mantinea station on the Ord. After a few years there he sold out and returned south and settled at Arrino, near Geraldton, W.A. (The Pastoral Review, 16-2-1934).

Jerry Durack Manager in 1900 (Clement, 1989: 14). In September 1900 Constable Freeman of the Wyndham police reported to Inspector Brophy that:

Mrs J. Durack here with half caste child Maudie treats her very cruelly all Wyndham talking child been shown to me marks caused by pin pricks Cuts and bruises made put out tongue then struck under chin made bite tongue child … often kept without food (Freeman, 16-9-1900).

Freeman asked if it was possible to do something other than a court case as Mrs Durack would soon give birth and also had a fractured leg. Inspector Brophy told him to get a doctor to examine the child and to go ahead and prosecute Mrs Durack (Brophy, 20-9-1900). Mrs Durack was charged but the outcome of her court appearance is as yet unknown.


William Horton ‘Big Bill’ Atkinson. Caretaker manager while Hill went on holidays (Broughton, 1965: 69). For additional biographical details see entry under Ord River.

Jack Martyr. Head stockman in 1906 and 1908. After a severe bout of malaria he left to return to his own country, east of Borroloola (Broughton, 1965: 57-58; Durack, nd.). A man named John Martyr was second in charge of Rose’s droving plant which took cattle from Lissadell in 1906. At Charleville he was reported to have left Rose to manage Palm Tree station on the Dawson River, Queensland (Northern Territory Times, 21-9-1906; 18-1-1907). This undoubtedly was the same Martyr who worked on Lissadell as head stockman.

James Henderson Crisp. Head stockman after Martyr left in 1908. According to Broughton he arrived with ‘Big Bill’ Atkinson and both had come over from Denison Downs (Sturt Creek; Broughton, 1965: 69, 74). For additional biographical information see entry under Bullita station


**Joe Davis.** Manager in 1911 (Booty, 5-11-1911).

**Lake Hall.** Manager in 1912 and 1917 (Clement, 2000), and December 1919 (TCPJ Notes, January 1919). He was probably manager in the intervening years. Described by M.P. Durack as ‘an educated and interesting man with a wide experience of stock conditions throughout Australia’. Hall had previously been a drover and had managed Glengyle station on the Georgina River for about six years (Durack, 1983: 278-79). Aborigines interviewed by Shaw (1991: 110) say that he also managed Argyle at one time. In December 1918 into January 1919 he was one of a party led by police in search of the killers of Jim Crisp (TCPJ Notes, January 1919). Diagnosed with cancer, he committed suicide by shooting himself on October 8th 1923 (Shaw, 1991: 166, citing Mary Durack).

**Ted Wheelan, alias Jimmy Webb or Ward.** Head stockman about 1929 (Cole, 1988: 183). For additional biographical details see entry under Rosewood.

**G. Vic Watkins.** Head stockman for 10 months in 1937 (Hoofs & Horns, December 1950: 39). For additional biographical information see entry under Auvergne

**Dave Wilson.** Manager in the 1920s (Clement, 1989: 14) and in 1930 (Clement, 2000).

**Gordon Neihus (alias Stanley).** Manager around 1927 when Potts was the owner, according to his granddaughter in a letter to the Stockman’s Hall of Fame (Crowther March 1995: 13). I have no record of anyone named Potts owning Lissadell and I don’t think it very likely. Crowther says that Neihus was born in Adelaide and died in Derby in 1929. He’d been a storekeeper in Darwin in 1914 and was a publican in Derby at the time of his death. This entry needs confirmation from other sources.

**Alvitius Patrick Michael ‘Galloping Paddy’ Macnamara.** General manager for William Naughton from about the end of 1932 when he took over from Wilson (Clement, 1989: 14). He was still there in 1950 (Senior, 1950) but by March 1951 he was reported as having retired and gone to Brisbane (Hoofs & Horns, March 1951: 39). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) states that Macnamara managed Lissadell again in 1957 or 1958: ‘I was on Spring Creek at the time and Paddy came over with the full Lissadell camp to attend the boundary muster – he was getting on in years then – he wasn’t very trustful of Vestey’s blokes.’ Gordon Buchanan also places Macnamara on Lissadell (Buchanan family papers). He must have been a great rider in his time because he is described by one source as the son of ‘Clancy of the Overflow’ and a nephew to ‘The Man from Snowy River’ (Clement, 1989: 14).

**George Griffiths.** Manager according to Buchanan (Buchanan family papers, nd).

**Sandy McIndoe.** Saddler on Lissadell in March 1951 (Hoofs & Horns, March 1951: 39). For additional biographical details see entry under Inverway.

Born in 1915, Frank grew up on Harrow Creek station in southern Queensland. He came to the Territory in 1922 and went to work for Vestey’s as a jackaroo on Wave Hill. He was head stockman by the time he left Wave Hill three and a half years later to become relieving manager on one of Vestey’s Kimberley stations. He remained a ‘Vestey’s man’ throughout his working life and probably spent time on most of the Vestey properties. He is on record as having been manager (or ‘under manager’) on Wave Hill in 1942, on Limbunya in 1940-44, on Inverway in 1947-50, on Lissadell c1950-54, possibly on Turner, relieving manager on Waterloo in 1956, manager on Waterloo for four years in the 1960s, manager on Ord River in 1966-67, acting manager on Lissadell in 1967, and manager of Wave Hill again in 1967-68. He must have been on Flora Valley at one time, possibly droving, because Cec Watts says that on a plain on Flora there is a picket driven in at a place which was known as ‘Willmington’s Plain’.

The threat of Japanese invasion occurred while Frank was in the Kimberley and he was involved in a scheme to give local civilians some basic military training. He was also involved in a plan to destock the Kimberley and Victoria River districts to deny beef to any invading force. Vestey’s had overall control of this cattle movement and over 40,000 head were sent to Queensland in 1942.

In 1950 he married Leonne (Jo) Biltris and they went to Lissadell station where he was manager for three and a half years. He was Road Boss for Vestey cattle going into Wyndham Works for a long period during the 1960s and was acting manager of Lissadell.

*Frank Willmington, Tom Fisher and Clarrie Wilkinson, Wave Hill, 1955-58 (Sampson collection).*
for a while in 1967. He remained with Vesteys until he retired to Katherine, possibly about 1969. Cec recalled that:

He was nicknamed ‘The Hollywood Drover’ because he was very careful about his personal appearance (he had a neat pencil moustache and kept his saddle polished, etc) and he was once considered for a part in the film, ‘The Overlanders’, although this never happened.

He still had his pencil moustache when I met him in 1994. According to Maureen Tough (pers. comm.) Frank also had the nickname ‘The Bush Cockroach’ because he always had his black boots polished. Maureen also said Frank was, ‘The biggest ladies man in the North’. He died soon after I met him.

Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.) said that a story did the rounds that Frank had caught his wife ‘riding another woman with a strapped-on dildo’. He gave them both a hiding and took the dildo out to the wood heap and chopped it up. He left the pieces there where they were found by the Aborigines and later shown to drover Dick Smith.

Jack Holland. Manager in 1952-54 (Fitzer, 27-3-19 54). For additional biographical details see entry under Coolibah.

Frank ‘Baldy’ McMahon. Manager in October 1959 (Hoofs & Horns, October 1959: 59). Frank Willmington and Lloyd Fogarty reckon he was never manager there. For additional biographical details see entry under Buffalo Springs.

Macmicking. Head stockman 1962 (Hoofs & Horns, November 1962: 24). Hoofs & Horns reported him as being manager, but Frank Willmington and Cec Watts reckon not. He is therefore more likely to have been head stockman.


Bob Foster. Manager in late 1960s or early 1970s (pers. comm., Patsy Applebee). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) says that Bob was manager of Mabel Downs for a long time and worked in the meatworks at Wyndham for some years before he retired. Lloyd Fogarty (pers. comm.) reckons he was on Lissadell for a long time before E.G. Green took over.

E.G. Green. Manager (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

John Davis. Manager in the 1970s (pers. comm., Patsy Applebee).

Graeme Bell. Manager from 1982 to 1993 (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). For additional biographical details see entry for Argyle.
‘Grigo’ Fergusson. Manager in 1994. He was a jackaroo on Argyle in 1972-73 and later was a stock inspector (pers. comm., Patsy Applebee).
LONGREACH

An outstation of VRD, located on the west side of Longreach waterhole on the Victoria River, about 20 kilometres downstream from Pigeon Hole. Longreach was established by 1905 and was rationed until 1909. Pigeon Hole is rationed from February 1910 (VRD Ledger 1, Victoria River Downs Ledgers, 1909-1944) so Longreach clearly was the forerunner to Pigeon Hole. Why the shift was made is unknown.

In 1905 two white men, Frost and Harry Edwards, and an Aboriginal woman, Nowra, were shot dead near Longreach outstation by Alligator Tommy, who had been working for the white men. Tommy also tried to shoot Dutchy Benning (see entry under Skull Creek), but Benning got away and raised the alarm at the outstation. Tommy took off, heading for his country in the Alligator Rivers region, but was caught at Brocks Creek, near Darwin. He was tried and convicted for the murder of Frost, and hanged at Fannie Bay jail in December 1905 (Northern Territory Times, 17-2-1905; Hill 1951: 328-29; Rose, 1991: 55-64).

There was a racecourse at Longreach and races were held there in 1909 (Northern Territory Times, 28-1-10).

**Tom Cusack.** Head stockman in January 1905 (Northern Territory Times, 17-7-1905). He attended the races at Longreach in 1909, making a clean sweep of all events. He entered horses named, ‘Mountain King’, ‘Lenore’, ‘The Peer’, ‘Prospector’ and ‘Gentle Annie’ and won the Lady’s Bracelet, the Flying Handicap, the All Comer’s Handicap, the Victoria River Amateur Race Club Cup and the Consolation Stakes (Northern Territory Times, 28-1-1910).
MANBULLOO

Information about the establishment of Manbulloo and its early history has not yet been located. It was owned by Vesteys for most of its history and was acquired by the Consolidated Pastoral Company in 1994 (CPC website, accessed 23-12-2016: http://www.pastoral.com/en/content/manbulloo).

Sir Alexander Cockburn-Campbell. Manager in 1920-22 (Northern Territory Times, 29-7-1920; The Age [Melbourne], 4-10-1921) and in about 1927 (Morey, 1978b: 17). When Geologist Herbert Basedow passed through Manbulloo station on his way out to Humbert River he remarked (diary, 25-6-1922) that Cockburn-Campbell was about to depart for Waterloo station. For additional biographical details see entry under Argyle.


Taylor. Manager in 1924, probably F.R. ‘Reg’ Taylor who had previously been manager at Wave Hill (Northern Territory Times, 11-1-1924; VRD diary 1923; The Age [Melbourne] 4-10-1921; AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1790; WHPJ, 5-12-1922).

Little. Manager in 1925, according to Cedric Battle (1925) and Lord and Lady Apsley (1926: 91).

A. McGuggan. Manager in July 1926 (Northern Territory Times, 13-8-1926). For additional information see entry under Wave Hill.

**Jack Quirk.** Manager in 1932-33 (Morey, 1978f: 19), and from about 1939 to 1945 (Hamill, 2000; VRD diary 1940, entries for 5-10-1940 and 6-10-1940). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

**Duncan Neil Mathieson.** Manager from 1932 to 1936. An obituary published in *The Pastoral Review* (18-4-1962) states that Mathieson was born in 1891 at Prairie, near Jondaryan in Queensland, a small property taken up in the 1880s by his father. He was the second youngest of a family of six sons and four daughters. He began his career in 1913 as ‘boss musterer’ on Mt Marlow station in western Queensland. After a year or so he became overseer on Albilbah station (Macansh Estates) on the Barcoo, on the southern side of Isisford.

*Duncan Mathieson, 1932 (AIA collection).*
In 1916 he enlisted and joined the 26th Battalion, AIF, and served in France and Belgium. While in the army he rose from ‘junior non-commissioned rank’ to commissioned officer, and won the Military Medal for bravery. In 1919 he resumed duties at Albilbah station and in 1920 was promoted to the management of Arno station. After three years he became manager of the Queensland National Pastoral Company’s 2000 square mile sheep and cattle property, Cork station. His first season there was good but the following five years were drought stricken. In 1928 he transferred from Cork to Thylungra station, near Quilpie. At this time Thylungra was 3,500 square miles and carried 170,000 merinos and 20,000 cattle. Four years later Mathieson became assistant pastoral inspector for Vesteys, based at Manbulloo station. He held this position for three and half years and then in May 1936 he became pastoral inspector for the Scottish-Australian Company’s fourteen properties in Queensland and Northern Territory. In 1945 he was appointed deputy manager of the company, based in Sydney. Later he became general manager and he remained with the company for the rest of his life.

Apart from working for the Scottish-Australian Company, he was at various times a member of the Beef Cattle Research Committee, president of the Poll Beef Shorthorn Society, vice-president of the Northern Territory Pastoral Lessees Association, a director of Amagrazo Ltd., and a member of the board of directors of Grazcos Co-operative Ltd.

Mathieson’s daughter, Mrs Mary Newton (1995: 8) states that the family left Queensland for Manbulloo at the end of 1932, to replace Newmarch as manager there, and says they left in 1936. Newton’s information conflicts with other sources – see entries for Quirk and Newmarch. Mathieson’s name is commemorated at Mathieson Creek, on Willeroo station (see also Northern Standard, 16-7-1935).

Aubrey Brown. Bookkeeper for all Vesteys stations in the early-mid 1930s, but based at Manbulloo (Newton, 1995: 8).

Johnny H. Newmarch (I’m Sayin’). Manager from 1936 to 1937 (Fenton, 1947: 73, 148). According to Mary Newton (1995), her father, Duncan Mathieson, was manager from 1932 to 1936 and had replaced Newmarch, but it may be that she is wrong on this. An obituary for Mathieson (The Pastoral Review, 18-4-1963) states that he was assistant pastoral inspector, based at Manbulloo, so Newmarch would have been either pastoral inspector or manager. Most of the following biographical information was supplied by John Newmarch, a son of John H. Newmarch.

John senior was born in Sydney on April 11th 1894, the son of Bernard James Newmarch, a Sydney surgeon. He went to school at Shore College and later enrolled at Duntroon Military College. World War One broke out while he was at Duntroon and he and fellow students were immediately sent into action. He went to Gallipoli as a Captain and was wounded there, and hospitalised in London for nearly twelve months. While in London he studied accountancy and when he recovered he was repatriated back to Sydney. For his war service he was awarded a Military Cross.

In Sydney and not in good health, he worked on and off for Prouds Jewellers, and while there he met an old army colleague who was employed by Vesteys. According to family tradition, this man gave John a fist full of notes to buy a Buick car and drive it up to Katherine for Vesteys, and that was how his Northern Territory experience started. He
travelled to the Territory by boat early in 1923 so the motor vehicle trip is likely to have occurred some time later.

During his time with Vesteys in the Northern Territory, John worked as manager of Manbulloo and also Wave Hill. Tom Cole (1995) states that Newmarch also sometimes acted as relieving manager at Wave Hill and Willeroo. Morey (1978b: 21) says that Newmarch took over at Manbulloo when Cockburn-Campbell left which appears to have been in about 1928 (see entry above). This finds some confirmation in Hall (1970: 98). Len Mann (nd, SHOF, HF 295) met Newmarch when he (Len) was managing Willeroo. He said that Newmarch ‘had only worked for Vestey’s doing office work in one or two of their meatworks. A nice bloke with a very nice wife but with no experience of managing cattle properties.’

John married Eleanor Mary Ross Smith in Darwin on June 13th 1927. Known as Mary, John’s wife came from a property named Argyle, in the Inverell district, and was from a family whose ancestors were among the founders of Inverell. Also, her family was related to the first Governor of Queensland, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, whose wife was a Greek, Countess Diamantina Roma. The Diamantina River and the town of Roma were named after her.

Mary returned to Inverell for the birth of her children, Linde Jill in 1930 and John Leofric in 1934. The Newmarch family left the Northern Territory by air 1939 and travelled to Sydney. They were there for several months and then moved to Melbourne where John became General Manager of the Forestry, Paper and Pulp Company, Pty. Ltd. He served as a Colonel for the duration of the Second World War.

John retired in about 1958 due to bad health and moved from Melbourne to the family property, Argyle, which is midway between Glen Innes and Inverell. He passed away in 1963 and Mary moved to Inverell. Unfortunately she lost her house in a fire in the 1970s and with it all the records and family history. Included in her loss was a bible over 300 years old which was sent to John from England in the 1950s. This bible had the Newmarch family history carefully and clearly recorded on its blank back pages, and appendices going back as far as 1066. Mary survived the fire and passed away in 1981 as a result of a motor vehicle accident. Newmarch’s nickname ‘I’m sayin’’ comes from a list of Kimberley identities compiled by Gordon Buchanan (Buchanan family papers).

Tom Landers. Head stockman during Mathieson’s time (Newton, 1995: 8). When Mathieson left in 1936 Landers went with him to a Scottish Australian property.

Tom Fisher. Manager from at least 1939 when the Governor General visited the station (Beckett, 1998: 93) until at least 1951 (Sweeney, 1947: 3; Hoofs & Horns, January 1951: 43). In Fisher’s time and until the end of Bob McLachlan’s management, Delamere and Willeroo were controlled from Manbulloo (pers. comm., Dave Napier). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

Barry Barr. Manager for a week before being dismissed by General Manager Jack Quirk for drunkenness (pers. comm., Billy Harney).

Jerry Rynne. Manager in about 1952 (pers. comm., Billy Harney).
Joe Sowden. Manager in 1956. A horse fell with him at Flemings Rockhole on Delamere and he ended up in a wheelchair (pers. comm., Len Hill; pers. comm., Billy Harney).

Len Keihne. Manager in the early to mid-1950s. Len Hill (pers. comm.) puts Keihne’s time at Manbulloo as 1947-51. Bob McLachlan’s daughter, Janice Calley (2000), says that her father took over from Keihne in June 1956. Len Hill (pers. comm.) also says that McLachlan took over from Keihne. For additional biographical information see entry under Limbunya.

Bob ‘Barbed Wire Bob’ McLachlan. Manager from June 1956 to August 1958, taking over from Len Keihne (pers. comm., Len Hill; Calley, 2000; Buckland to Quirk, 20-6-1958). For additional biographical information see entry for Waterloo.

Len Hill. Overseer for three months in 1958 (pers. comm. Len Hill). For additional biographical information see entry under Nicholson.

Jim Jackson. Bookkeeper and occasional storekeeper and caretaker for all Vestey’s stations, but based at Manbulloo (pers. comm., Dave Napier; pers. comm., Billy Harney). He was there in 1957, and possibly earlier and later (pers. comm., Jan Calley, née McLachlan).

Mick Bower. Head stockman under Warren (pers. comm., Dave Napier; pers. comm., Mick Bower).

Eldred Richardson. Head stockman under Warren (pers. comm., Len Hill). Later he was manager of Elizabeth Downs and Koolpinya (pers. comm., Billy Harney; pers. comm., Mick Bower).

Dave Allworth. Head stockman in 1960. Dave also ran a camp at Kirkimbie in 1959 and was droving cattle from 1961 to 1964 - ‘Mistake Creeks’ in 1962, and ‘Wave Hills’ in 1963 and 1964. Also in 1964 Dave took over Ian McBean’s mob of Auvergnes so that Ian could go to Darwin to apply for the Innesvale block. He took this mob across the Murranji track, one of the last to do so (pers. comm., Dave Allworth).

Tim Doran. Manager in 1968. Before Manbulloo he was on Nicholson, Flora and Cattle Creek (pers. comm., Billy Harney). His wife is named Jocelyn (information recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill; pers. comm., Mick Bower).


Harry McNaught. Manager in 1995 (pers. comm., Barry Scott). After Manbulloo he bought King Valley station near Mataranka, and eventually sold this station to the Tapps (pers. comm., Billy Harney).


MAYVALE

Mayvale is the name given to a block held under grazing licence by ‘Diamond’ Jim Campbell, alias Sonny Muir. Campbell apparently was in the district as early as 1898, working as a stockman on Auvergne. It’s proven difficult to pin down the correct location of the Mayvale block. Campbell held or used grazing licences for a number of different areas. One was located on what is now the Dry River stock route, on Forrest’s Creek. Another was located on the north side of the Victoria River, east of the present Coolibah homestead. A third was located on Bradshaws Creek, on the north east side of Bradshaw station (pastoral permit 98). A fourth appears to have been on either Gregory Creek or Sullivans Creek (pastoral permit 121), most probably the latter where there is a Campbell Springs.

The Northern Territory Times of November 10th 1907 states that Mayvale was held by Campbell and Williams on Sullivan Creek, but another Northern Territory Times item (23-3-1906) implies that the Forrest Creek block was named Mayvale. According to Dave Napier (pers. comm.) there is a Mayvale Yard on the eastern side of Killarney station. This would make it virtually certain that Campbell’s Mayvale block was on Forest Creek.

Campbell was a notorious cattle duffer who devised the extremely versatile diamond 88 (◊88), diamond 40 (◊40) and diamond 30 (◊30) brands which, according to Ernestine Hill (1951: 324) would cover the brands of many other stations – hence the name ‘Diamond’ Jim. These brands were said to be particularly effective on the original VRD brand, G10. According to the Timber Creek police journal (12-4-1907) the G10 brand was cancelled by April 1907 and was replaced with the famous bulls head but an eight of Campbell’s diamond 88 could cover this, too. The G10 brand was apparently still in use in 1934, and may still be in use (TCPJ, 25-7-1934).

In 1906 Surveyor Wells determined that the eastern boundary of VRD was ten miles farther to the east than had previously been supposed. This adjustment meant that Campbell’s Forrest Creek block lost necessary water sources. The Northern Territory Times of March 23rd 1906 reported that, ‘I hear that Mr. Campbell is also beating a retreat from Mayvale. He is said to be removing his cattle on to Bradshaw’s (Fred) Creek, situated between the Daly River and the headwaters of the Fitzmaurice River’.

Campbell continued to use his block, and probably others, until 1908 when he was caught red-handed on VRD with over 400 head of VRD cattle. Before the police could arrest him he cleared out into the unsettled no-man’s land of Arnhem Land where he remained a fugitive, making a living through trepanging and buffalo hunting. A friend, probably Alf Brown – Brown and Campbell had applied for a lease on Croker Island in 1906 – brought him supplies and took out his trepan and hides by boat. In 1910 his ‘half caste’ son ‘OT’, who had accompanied Campbell to Arnhem Land or joined him there, was reported to have been accidentally shot dead (Northern Territory Times, 28-10-1910).

In about 1912 the charges against Campbell were dropped and he was finally free to make a trip to Darwin. According to an oral tradition, he was greeted there as a hero and carried shoulder-high down Smith Street and into the Victoria Hotel (pers. comm., Reg Wilson who was told the story by John Mott, a Territory surveyor in the period 1913-15). Campbell then returned to Arnhem Land where within a few months he was speared and killed. He is buried at Guion Point, not far from Maningrida.
Jim Campbell’s grave at Guion Point, west Arnhem Land (Sydney Mail, 31-10-1917).

In February 1997 I visited Max Davidson’s Safari Camp at Mount Borradaile, in the old buffalo country north of Gunbalanya (Oenpelli). At a rock art site which contains a number of well-preserved paintings of steam and sail ships, the Darwin wharf, a house, and Aboriginal copies of European writing, I saw a carefully painted 88◊. According to Max, rock art researcher George Chaloupka interpreted this as the date 1880 and related it to the time when the ships and the Darwin wharf were seen by the artist. There is absolutely no trace of pigment where the number 1 would be if this was a date, and the ‘zero’ has flattened sides, making it a diamond shape. Aboriginal people who have a minimal familiarity with or understanding of writing often reverse or invert letters and numbers. Rather than the date 1880, it seems far more likely that it represents Jim Campbell’s brand, the diamond 88, probably painted by one of Campbell’s Aboriginal associates during the time that he was living in the region as a wanted man.
MISTAKE CREEK

Originally the Northern Territory part of Ord River was known as Negri Station, the name later changed to Mistake Creek. It was formed as an outstation late in 1884 (Swan, 1991: 104) and was still known and Negri station in 1910 when it was reported that, ‘Drover Payne has just arrived here [Darwin] with 1050 bullocks from Nigra [sic] Station, N.T.’ (Northern Territory Times, 4-11-1910). Eventually the area known as Negri station became known as Mistake Creek (McLennan, 1965: 5).

In Mounted Constable McBeath’s stock report for 1910 (p. 24), he said that an outstation of Ord River had been established on Mistake Creek. A visitor in 1939 was told various stories about the place. One was:

about a “booseroo” at Mistake Crik (creek) which was interrupted by a Vestey’s travelling manager. Alcohol is supposed to be prohibited on all Vestey’s stations, but somehow it seemed to get in on freight trucks. The drunks were running around naked when surprised by the manager. One grabbed a waistcoat and another, not finding a garment, squeezed through the hole at the top of the water tank in his panic. He had to be cut out in a terrible state of heat exhaustion. (Hilgendorf, 1994: 33).

It was still being run as an outstation in 1949 (Evans, 23-12-1949) and no doubt much later. In 1947 there was a telephone line connecting Mistake Creek with Ord River homestead (Beckett, 1998: 63). Buchanan (20-11-1950) states that up to 1950 Mistake Creek had been used by Vesteyes for many years as ‘a central bullock depot for all Wyndham cattle and is used by all the stations in this group.’ He said that there were plans to shift this bullock depot to Spring Creek. A new homestead was built in 1959 (WHPJ, 14-6-1959) and according to Len Hill (pers. comm.), from about 1965 Mistake Creek was managed from Nicholson.
The famous Negri Races are mentioned in the Wave Hill police journals on the 18th of September 1925. In the records the next mention of these races is once again in the Wave Hill police journal where on September 4th 1949 it was reported that ‘Mr. M. Willick, J. Crouch and C. Cleary and 23 boys passed thro en route Negri Races.’ In later years the races were actually held further west in Western Australia but the name ‘Negri’ was retained. Cec Watts (pers. comm.) said that:

Two race meetings were held on the Negri River by the Negri Picnic Race Club (near the junction with the Ord) in 1948 and 1949 – [later] the Club transferred its activities to the Linacre River and later to Nicholson Station due to seasonal and political conditions.

On the opposite side of the river from the site of the most recent homestead (now an Aboriginal community) there are the remains of the original Mistake Creek homestead and not far away, on the flats beside a small creek, there are signs of an earlier habitation and yard (Lewis, 1993: 238-41). Old Jimmy Manngayari showed me this location and said that it was the ‘first house’. This could be the location of ‘Patterson’s Camp’ which is shown on an early map or could be the location of the original Negri outstation.

In the 1990s Mistake Creek (and Kirkimbie) was owned by Gary Dann and it was Dann who sold Mistake Creek to the government who bought it for the Aboriginal traditional owners (pers. comm., Dave Napier). After a land claim hearing in 1995, in 1998 it was granted to the Aboriginal traditional owners as Aboriginal Freehold Title.

**George Manton.** Head stockman who came to the Ord with bulls at the end of the first big cattle drive to stock the station (Swan, 1991: 104).

**Sam Muggleton.** Stockman? in the late 1890s. According to Clement (1989: 11) Sam hailed from New South Wales and had worked his way ‘across the top’ in the late 1880s. On his way to the Territory Muggleton was working on Brunette station with an old mate, Bob Hamilton. On return to the hut one evening he found Hamilton had been viciously stabbed to death. His ‘boy’, ‘Cupid’ was later found, also mortally wounded, and before he died he admitted to killing Hamilton. After this Muggleton refused to remain on Brunette and continued on to the Kimberley (*Northern Standard*, 9-10-1931: 4).

Sam’s brother was Arthur Muggleton who, among other things, acquired Red Rock station in 1929 and renamed it Bungle Bungle (Clement, 1989: 5). Sam formed Frog Hollow station in about 1900 and died there in March 1910 (Durack, 1983: 237). Fred Booty, former manager of Ord River, was executor of Sam’s estate and in about 1912 he sold Frog Hollow to William Naughton (Clement, 1989: 11; Bolton, 1953: 181).

Bolton (1953: 59) says, ‘in 1892, Sam Muggleton had stocked 50,000 acres, north of Halls Creek, from the eastern colonies.’ Bolton also says (1953: 181) that Muggleton was dead by 1915 and that Frog Hollow was bought by William Naughton. Naughton also bought Alice Downs, Mabel Downs, Texas Downs and Lissadell (Clement, 1989: 14, 22; Flinders, 2016: 90; see Buchanan, 1933: 98 for alternative information). Clement describes Naughton as ‘a Queensland cattle man’ as opposed to Bolton (1953: 181) and Durack (1983: 344) who both say he was a ‘Riverina pastoralist’.
**Tom Cole.** Head stockman at the ‘Mistake Creek Camp’ in 1915 (Moore, February 1958: 49).

**H. Pretlove.** Manager in September 1920 (TCPJ Notes, 5-9-1920).


**Jack Davidson.** Manager in 1927 (*Northern Territory Times*, 25-1-1927).

**Wilson.** Manager on April 9th 1930 (WHPJ).

**Bruce ‘Bolivar’ Hudson.** Manager? (Moray, 19-9-1937). This record suggests Hudson was manager of either Mistake Creek or Ord River. For additional biographical details see entry under Gordon Downs.

**E. Clissold.** Head stockman 1944 (WHPJ, 22-9-1944).


**T. Farrell.** Head stockman in 1946 (WHPJ, 29-8-1946).

**Bob Lewis.** Head stockman in 1946 (WHPJ, 29-8-1946).

**Peter Hagen.** Head stockman in October 1947 (Sweeney, 1947: 8), and in 1952 (Evans, 18-11-1952).

**‘Snowy’ Barlow.** Manager (or head stockman) from late 1947 (Beckett, 1998: 63) until at least 1952 (Sweeney, 1947: 8). Beth Beckett (1998: 63) says that Snowy and his wife and baby daughter Anita came to Mistake Creek direct from Queensland. A few days after their arrival Beth and her husband Ken met them there and described the situation the Barlows found themselves in as follows:

The homestead was a two roomed, unlined, corrugated iron dwelling with a verandah and a detached kitchen, bathroom and toilet at different points of the compass. The floors of the two rooms and verandah were covered with flat flag stones from the river set closely together in the dirt. There was very little furniture, what there was was mostly bush-made. The make-shift telephone line to ‘Ord River’ was out of action, effectively eliminating communication with the outside world, there was precious little food, no conveniences and no conveyances. Snow had his own saddle, but there was no station horse readily available to ride. Fortunately, he had a gun and ammunition to shoot a bullock for meat. It was impossible to either cure or chill the beef because there was no salt and no kerosene for the refrigerator, so it soon spoiled. A few basic items such as flour, sugar and tea were in the store and one or two tins of soup.

At this time Mistake Creek was an outstation of Ord River so after giving the Barlows what food and medicines they could spare, the Becketts travelled to Ord River to ask the manager, Bill Young, to send out food and supplies. They found him to be ‘most unsympathetic’. He said, ‘You have to be tough with these new blokes, so when we do
give them some of the luxuries of life, they think they’re in clover’ (Beckett, 1998: 63-4).

**Bill Hamill.** Overseer 1947-48 (Hamill, 2000, see also Stockman’s Hall of Fame newspaper, September 1984). The Wave Hill police referred to him as ‘manager’ in 1948 (WHPJ, 19-7-1948). For additional biographical details see entry under Inverway.

**Fred W. Mork.** Overseer in July 1949 (WHPJ, 6-7-1949; pers. comm., Cec Watts; see Evans, 1949: 7). In 1890 his uncle, also named Fred, brought 1005 breeding ewes from Darwin to VRD (Durack, 1983: 65). Uncle Fred had been at Borroloola in 1884 and died at Wiluna on July 26th 1917 (*Northern Territory Times*, 2-8-1917). For additional biographical information see entry under Limbunya.

**J. Atkinson.** Head stockman until late 1952, when Bates took over (Evans, 18-11-1952).

**George Bates.** Head stockman from late 1952 to about mid-1953 when he returned to VRD as overseer (Journal in account with VRD Station, 1945–1953; *Hoofs & Horns*, October 1953: 67; Evans, 18-11-1952). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

**Joe Madrill.** Cook in 1952 (Evans, 18-11-1952). Described in the Wave Hill police journal as a ‘Manilla man’, Madrill had been on Delamere and Limbunya, and later was gardener on Wave Hill near the junction of Gordy Creek and the Victoria River where he died in about 1955 (WHPJ, 8-6-1925, 31-12-1926 23-9-1927, 29-6-937, 30-11-1946). Local Aborigines knew him as Junpuk which they say means ‘short one’. He had a son, Sam (alias Joe), with an Aboriginal woman.
Joe Madrill's grave at Wave Hill, 2000 (Lewis collection).


Johnny Ah Won. Overseer c1957 to 19?? (pers. comm., Len Hill).

K.W. Hughes. Manager in June 1957 (Hughes, 10-6-1957).

Norman Wellman. Manager? (Buchanan family papers). His name first appears in the Durack diaries in 1906 and Mary Durack described him as a ‘CD&D drover – stockman Ord River fr. 1912’ (Durack, nd.). According to Cec Watts (Boab Bulletin, February 1998: 11) who was manager of Ord River from 1960 to 1964, Norm Wellman was head stockman on Ord River for twenty-five years before retiring in 1950. Cec says that Norm arrived in Wyndham in 1901 and had worked on Waterloo, Wave Hill and Bedford. In 1909-1910 and 1912 he was on Rosewood (Letter Book, 1901-1912, SROWA) and in 1921 he was reported to be a stockman of Timber Creek (Durack, nd.).

One of his early exploits was helping Joe Egan, Frank Martin (Alf’s Martin’s youngest brother), Murray Prior and Possum Dillon (cook) stock Bovril’s newly formed Northcotte station on the Drysdale River, north Kimberley, with 1300 cows. Northcotte, established in 1913, was 1,473 square miles, was located ‘within 30 miles of Napier Broome Bay’ (VRD Day Book, vol. 1, Nov – December 1909 to April 1916). The station failed within two years because of, according to Flo Martin (1980: 61-62), the depredations of the ‘wild blacks’. Wellman died at Ord River on September 18th 1963, aged 86, and was buried on the station (pers. comm., Vern O’Brien).

Russell McQue. Manager in 1961 (Stewart, 12-6-1961).

Bob Napier. Manager in 1968 (pers. comm., Vern O’Brien). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) says that Napier was overseer in 1960-1964. This is supported by an entry in the Wave Hill police journal (8-11-1961) which describes Napier as ‘manager’ in 1961. Len Hill (pers. comm.) places Napier there from 1958 to 1969. Bill Hamill (2000) says that Bob took over at the new homestead, the old one having been abandoned after being flooded and damaged by a cyclone in February 1957. It was Hamill who chose the site and supervised the building of the new homestead.

In July 1968 Hooker’s General Manager, Pat Shaw, complained to Vesteys about Napier’s behaviour:

> Some years ago a mutual agreement was made between the two stations for your cattle to truck in our yards at a charge of 10 cents per head. This part we still have no objection to but we do object strongly to the attitude adopted by your Manager, Bob Napier in so much as he never bothers to give notice of his intention to travel the stock through our property and lacks the courtesy of even asking if he can use our Faradays yard for the first night and the trucking yard the second night. The first our Manager knows about any movement is if they happen to hear telegrams to and from the carriers or your Darwin office, or run across them on the run, as I did the other day.
> If you desire to carry on with this arrangement would you please instruct your Waterloo Manager to give the proper notice of intention to travel and request permission to use the yards at least two days prior to the entry to the property. After all, this is only normal courteous practice (Shaw, 15-7-1968).

Bob had also been manager on Soudan in 1956 (Steele, 2003: 8) and after Mistake Creek was manager of Waterloo (Dayes, 2008: 20). He died in Katherine as a result of a fall from a shed he was helping dismantle (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner).

Arthur Garrard. Manager from March 1966 to November 1969 (pers. comm., Dave Napier; WHPJ, 14-7-1969). From Mistake Creek he went to Manbulloo (information recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill).


Jim Little. Manager in July 1970 (WHPJ, 13-7-1970). If Robin Finger followed Arthur Garrard then Little may have been a caretaker-manager between the two. This needs sorting out.


Alf Marshall. Manager, and also manager of Limbunya (pers. comm., Dave Napier).

Gary Alfred Dann. Owner who sold Mistake Creek in the 1980s to the Commonwealth Government which bought it on behalf of the Aboriginal traditional owners (pers. comm., Marie Mahood; pers. comm., Milton Jones). In 1997 or 1998 he and Ord River manager Donald Matheson were arrested for allegedly stealing 3000 head of cattle from Ord River station (NT News, 12-3-1998). The outcome of their trials needs checking but I believe Dann was later acquitted.

Bronte Sims. Manager for Gary Dann.

Steven Craig. Manager from 1995 and still there in 2016 (Forth, 8-2-2016). Married to Jo, he was head stockman on Carlton Hills for some years, c1979-82 (pers. comm., Peter Harpham).
MONTEJINNI

Formerly an outstation of VRD, it appears to have come into being in about 1902. According to Tom Ronan (1962: 195) Montejinni was established by Jack Frayne, later of Coomanderoo and Kunja fame. He was sent there by Jim Ronan (VRD manager 1901-1903), supposedly to prevent the Aborigines from killing cattle in the area, but no doubt also to keep an eye on the battlers at Illawarra and Retreat stations – Jim and Mick Fleming, Ben Martin and Jim Campbell. In May Mounted Constable O’Keefe ‘Called at Fleming’s Camp found that Campbell had shifted Met John Fraynes and went to his camp’ (TCPJ, 9-5-1902) and later went ‘from Frayne’s Camp to Campbell’s Camp 17 miles’ (TCPJ, 11-5-1902).

Ben Martin is said to have been an old friend of Jim Ronan’s who met the Fleming brothers when coming out to take a job on VRD. He then decided to throw in his lot with the Flemings and became ‘another hard riding individualist’ on VRD’s eastern boundary (Ronan 1962: 179). Martin certainly could ride. In 1887 he won tent pegging and lemon slicing contests at an athletics carnival in Darwin (Northern Territory Times, 8-1-1887). In the 1890s he had been a buffalo hunter and was credited with shooting 36 buffalo from horseback with 36 shots – Paddy Cahill held the record with 58 shot in one day (Northern Standard, 27-1-1931). In 1910-11 he held pastoral permit 274 south of Tanami where he was a ‘grazier and butcher’, apparently supplying meat to the miners (NTAS NTRS F199, 274/1911, Box 5; Northern Territory Times, 29-4-1910).

Makin (1992: 64) claims that the first building at Montejinni was a slab hut shifted across from Stockyard Creek, but there doesn’t appear to have ever been a slab hut at Stockyard Creek and it may in fact have been a hut from an early and short-lived outstation on Camfield Creek (Stevens, 1-6-1891). In 1910 a homestead was built at Montejinni (White, 1910). Two different men are credited with building a homestead at Montejinni in 1929 or 1930. One is B.A. Ogden, said to have built it in 1929 (VRD Ledger 3, Jan 1922 – Feb 1930), and the other is ‘Contractor Taylor’. The cottage Taylor built is said to have first been erected at VRD head station and later re-erected at Montejinni (Bovril - Land resumptions, July 1933–1947). A 1934 report describes Montejinni homestead as,
MONTEJINNI

‘HOUSE. 15’ x 21’ 10’ verandah all round. G.i. sawn timber, hardwood floor. Built on stubs 4’ out of the round, detached bathroom 8’ x 8’ ripple iron.’ There was also a kitchen, store, harness room and meat house. The buildings were said to be ‘sound[ly] constructed but the house is old and has been shifted from a previous site and re-erected’ (NTPLIC 1934, Victoria River Downs).

In 1926 Montejinni was described as ‘No. 3 Camp’ (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926). In 1951 Montejinni was resumed from VRD and in 1952 it became a station in its own right, the first owners being William J. ‘Bill’ Crowson and C.W. ‘Bill’ Tapp. The block was 1,300 square miles (Hoofs & Horns, February 1953: 39). According to Charlie Schultz, when Montejinni was resumed VRD had a certain time to clear its cattle from the block. After the deadline for this had passed, Crowson and Tapp mustered the block again and got over 4000 cleanskins missed by VRD (see VRD section for a more detailed account of the resumptions). By 1962 it was reported that Montejinni was running 20,000 head.

In 1961 Tapp sold his share to Crowson. On April 4th 1963 Crowson opened his own export abattoir at Montejinni (The Territorian, 30-11-1963). Johnny Stacey (pers. com.) said that in 1962 he and Brian Crowson dug the post holes for the abattoir yards with a crowbar and shovel through solid limestone. Bill Crowson remained on the property until about 1978 or 1979 when he sold out to a group which included Charles Henderson of Bullo River station. Since then the station has changed hands several times. In 1982 Montejinni was bought by Desa International Pty Ltd, a company owned by the Sultan of Sarawak, for $3 million (pers. comm., Gus Trippe; news item on the ABC Country Hour radio program on 1-9-1998; Dayes, 2008: 13-48). The Desa company was severely affected by the Asian financial crisis and placed Montejinni on the market in July 1998 (NT News, 4-7-1998). In 2002 the property was bought by Tejas, a Texas-based company, for $7.575 million (NT News, 2-9-1998). In turn it was bought by the Australian Agricultural Company in late 2004 (pers. comm., Caroline Butcher) and the AA Co was still the owner in 2017.


Paddy Bennett. Manager or head stockman in 1910, ‘a tall “devil-may-care” stockman.’ Later he became the packhorse mailman on the VRD run, possibly taking over after ‘The Fizzer’ was drowned in 1911. Eventually he died from poisoning but whether by accident, suicide or murder is unclear (Makin, 1992: 105).


‘Boomerang’ Jack Brady. Manager in about 1916 (Campbell, 2014: 94). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

D. Morgan. Head stockman in March 1920 (VRD diary 1920, entry for 22-3-1920).

B.S. Sandford. Head stockman from January 31st 1923 to April 30th 1925 (VRD Ledger 3, Jan 1922–Feb 1930).

Murray. Manager (?) at Montejinni before February 1926 (WHPLB, 17-2-1926).
T. Connolly. Head stockman from January 10th 1927 (VRD Ledger 3, Jan 1922–Feb 1930).

Matt Savage. Head stockman from February 15th 1927 to June 30th 1935 (VRD diary 1927; Cole, 1988: 122). According to Savage’s own account (Willey, 1971: 111), he was head stockman from 1924, but in the VRD records he commenced at Montejinni in February 1927. He may have been on Montejinni in 1922. For additional biographical details see entry under Catfish.

Cusack. Manager in June 1926 (WHPLB, 17-5-1926). There is a conflict here with the dates for Matt Savage. Perhaps Cusack was a caretaker-manager?

George Sloan ‘Snowy’ Shaw. Manager in October 1934 (TCPJ, 19-10-1934). In 1938 he got into a drunken fight with the camp Aborigines, shot at them (and missed) and in return was hit in the chest with a boomerang thrown by Kaiser Bill. He was taken to the head station (VRD) and flown to Katherine by Dr Clyde Fenton for treatment. Kaiser was charged with unlawful assault, but was acquitted on the grounds of self defence (Northern Standard, 9-8-1938). Snowy’s wound was not severe and he recovered in a short time.

In 1941 he married Sarah Fogarty (née Paterson) in Darwin and they lived together on Montejinni until 1946. Then they moved into Katherine where he opened a saddlery business (Ogden, 1990: 261-62). According to Rodney Watson (pers. comm.), Snowy contracted Leprosy and died at one of the Fogarty stations in Central Australia and was buried at the wing of a yard.

J. Gallagher. Caretaker on August 21st 1936 (TCPJ, 21-8-1936). His name first appears in the Durack diaries in 1905 (Durack, nd.).

D. Scobie. Head stockman from May 18th 1940 to October 31st 1943 (VRD Ledger 5).

John William Clarke. Head stockman from August 14th 1943 to September 1st 1943. His wife was named Jean May (b. 14-2-1912) and their children were Beryl (b. 11-4-1932), Joan (b. 2-2-1935), Vernon (b. 14-5-1938) and Evelyn (b. 6-2-1942).

Roy ‘Have a Charge’ Norton. Head stockman from March 12th 1945 to April 29th 1948 (VRD Journals: April 1945 to Jan 1948; Sweeney, 1947: 11; Beckett, 1998: 91). According to Gordon Buchanan’s list of names of residents of the Victoria River – East Kimberley region, Roy was known as ‘Have a Charge’, and according to Pat Underwood he was known as ‘the Bare Foot Stockman’ (Buchanan, 2002: 74). The latter nickname was more generally applied to Wally Dowling so there might be a mistake here. Roy met his future wife, Lou Banfield, at Savanna, an outstation of Millungera, and he used to walk in ten miles from his camp to see her (Buchanan, 2002: 74).

His first Territory job was head stockman at Banka Banka in 1943. When he and Lou tried to enter the Territory from Queensland they were told that white women were not allowed in because of wartime regulations. However, they were able to get around the red tape and travelled across by army convoy. They spent two years there before moving on to Montejinni where they spent three years (1947-48). Next they went to Wave Hill where they stayed for six months and before moving to Margaret River in the Kimberleys. After
three years there Roy was transferred to Sturt Creek. (pers. comm., Cec Watts). He and Lou spent a year there (1952) but Lou hated the place – ‘You’d clean the place late evening and have a nice clean home until the wind got up next morning. By evening you could shovel it out’ - so she and Roy decided to leave and go droving. They spent three years on the road (Norton, nd).

In April 1947 while at Montejinni, Lou contacted the Wave Hill police about a supposed naked Aboriginal armed with a spear prowling around the homestead at night (WHPJ, 8-4-1947). Police investigation revealed the only sighting had been made by a middle-aged Aboriginal woman named Polly whose eyesight was defective. Constable Riley questioned Polly who told him that:

she saw the blackfellow behind a bush and when she called out he just grunted at which she took to her heels keeping to the clear ground while the blackfellow kept close along the creek. She kept calling out all the time & when she got near the station yard, abo. Nellie came running from the homestead to meet her. The blackfellow then according to Polly was standing near a small creek some distance from the yard. Nellie said she didn’t see any blackfellow. Tkr Tommy, Const. Riley & Polly went over the ground of the alleged chase, but could find no tracks. Abo. employees Bungaree & Peter had been out mustering killers goats & horses practically every day since Polly had the scare but had seen no tracks or sign of anyone. In their opinion Polly had been frightened by a kangaroo hiding in the bushes. Mrs Norton said that for several nights after Polly claimed to have seen the black, her dogs had barked very savagely at times, and she considered that someone was about Const. noted that these dogs seemed to bark all night with varying
degrees of ferocity, and especially when dingoes howled close to the homestead. Do not think any reliance could be placed on them (WHPJ, 18-4-1947).

A thorough search over several days revealed no strange tracks and Riley believed the whole episode was a case of imagination (WHPJ, 18-4-1947). Riley might have been right, but Norton family tradition is that over several nights there definitely was someone sneaking around the homestead. In April 2004 I sent a copy of the police report to Lou and Roy Norton’s daughter, Lurline, and after reading it she sent me the following letter:
There was a stalker around the station at the same time and he knew when the women were on the station on their own as the husbands were away mustering and for how long.

Yes he was at Montejinni and Lou Norton was one of the women he stalked when on her own.

Yes the Dogs did bark of a night but Lou Norton had a blue heeler Dog tied up under the house of a night and if any person was around this dog didn’t bark but it growled for attacking which he would when let off the chain. Lou Norton didn’t let the dog off in case he had a knife and could have killed the dog. She was afraid he would rape her.

Another night he came across from the goats yard where the Desert Blacks used to come in to the station to raid the store. And Lou Norton used to fire 303 tracer Bullets but this time you could hear a horse galloping away.

He came back again when two young stockmen were staying the night at the store. Lou Norton thought one of the men had taken short. Next morning she asked the men did they go up to the goat yard and they said yes. By coming down from the Goats yard was a low stony ridge and it was the track the goats took after milking on the way to the creek so any foot prints would have been covered up.

Ron Woodland from Wave Hill said shoot to kill and walk away & leave the body. Ron Woodland was in the Police force but at this time don’t know if he was out of the force but working as a stockman at Wave Hill.

Dawn my sister didn’t say if he was a white man or not. One of my brothers visited me last week before going over seas and I asked him about the story. He said it was a white man that often stopped at station and got small job & food and as well did a lot of Dogging as the money was good. And if he was in the country found he was out of meat he use to help himself to a beast. And he was able to know when the men would be away from home stead.

Mervyn Norton my brother said his name was Hoot the Goot or Goot the Hoot, Dawn Vitnell my sister said he was caught when & where I don’t know.

Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) remembered Norton as ‘a good cattle man’. Beth Beckett (1998: 58) says that the initials of Roy’s wife were ‘ML’ and whenever she finished a session on the pedal radio she signed off ‘M for Mary, Hell for London, Norton. Over’.


Alf G. Dann. Head stockman from August 13th 1948 to December 2nd 1948 (VRD Journals, 28 Jul 48 - 30 Sept 48). He had taken over from the previous head stockman, Roy Norton.

Alf Barwick. Head stockman from May 17th 1949 to September 30th 1950 (VRD Journals: 28 Oct 49 – Sept 50; pers. comm., Buck Buchester; Gordon, 1992: 130), and from April 16th 1956 to May 26th 1956 (NBA – details misplaced). Buck says Alf was hard to get along with, ‘a bit of a death adder’. Darryl Hill met Alf on Gallipoli station in 1969 when Alf was working there as a pumper on a bore – a very lonely existence.

**Dan Thorne.** Head stockman in 1950 (or 1951), according to Bill Yoemans, cited in Geoff Allen’s obituary of Yoemans (Allen, 1995). Buck Buchester (pers. comm.) thought this might be wrong.

**Elmore Lewis.** Head stockman from July 25th 1951 to? (VRD diary 1951). For additional biographical information see entry under Mount Sanford.

**William J. Crowson, Brian Penny & C. William Tapp.** Owners from 1953 (WHPJ, 9-8-53; *Hoofs & Horns*, February 1953: 39) until 1977 or 1978. For additional biographical details on Bill Tapp see entry under Killarney. Brian Penny was a silent partner (pers. comm., Syd Jones; pers. comm., Rodney Watson).

Bill Crowson had formerly been manager of Morestone (Miller, 1984: 17), Nicholson (Beckett, 1998: 96) and Rosewood from about 1949 until late 1951 (Evans 4-12-1952; Gordon, 1992: 161). He also was on Flora Valley (pers. comm., Cec Watts). He owned and managed Montejinni from 1953 until at least 1977 when he sold the station to Gus Trippe for $800,000 (pers. comm., Gus Trippe). According to Charlie Schultz, Bill’s wife kept on leaving him.

![Bill Crowson, c1953 (Schultz collection).](image)

His son, Brian, sometimes acted as manager while Bill was away (Crowson, 2008: 6). Brian was killed in a plane crash on Montejinni in March 1972 (WHPJ, 27-3-1972). Drover Rodney Watson worked with Bill on Montejinni and remembered him as one of ‘the greatest cattlemen and horsemen I ever had the privilege to work with’ (Watson, 2008: 1530. Watson said that:
In those days Montejinni was a moving mass of wild cattle with piker bullocks (Vestey and V.R.D.) cleanskins, bulls and breeders. We would start mustering on the Armstrong below Top Springs and in one single run would end up with 1000 head of mixed cattle and we would let just as many go. We used to keep ringing them up (not throwing) and Bill and Brian Crowson had a luger each and shot the bulls as there was no bull market. It came in later. At Cullenjacki and Lonely Springs you could run into 50 or so bulls in one mob at any given time.


**Gus Trippe.** Owner after Crowson and before Desa (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). For additional biographical details see entry under Spirit Hills.

**Trevor Christenson.** Manager in 1977 (Ogden, 1992: 113).

**Dick ‘Whistling Dick’ Winters.** Hut keeper when Buck used to muster Montejinni from Moolooloo in 1951 and 1952 (pers. comm., Buck Buchester). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that his nickname came from his habit of always whistling. Other positions he held on VRD include boundary rider, cook and head stockman

**Wally Atkinson.** Manager for a short period in 1972. He had previously been manager on Vesteyes’ Helen Springs station (pers. obs.)

**Gerald and Enid Dayes.** Managers from about June 1972 to early 1975 (Dayes, 2008: 25, 27). Gerald and Enid later became managers of Camfield station for the Desa Company, and when Desa bought the neighboring Montejinni, Gerald also had to supervise operations there and on Legune station, also owned by Desa (Dayes, 2008: 35).

**Peter ‘Sabu’ Sing.** Manager from 1982 (Dayes, 2008: 35).

**John Jansen.** Manager after Sabu (Dayes, 2008: 35).

**Bevan Gitsham.** Manager for the Desa Cattle Company until it sold out to Tejas, a Texas-based company (ABC Country Hour, ABC radio, 1-9-1998). He was there from November 11th 1990 to October 10th 1998 (information from Bevan, recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill). For additional biographical information see entry under Legune.

**Danny Groves.** Manager from the end of 1998. His wife is named Jenny (pers. comm., Norm Forster).

**Craig Butcher.** Manager in early 2006. His wife is named Caroline.

An outstation of VRD established in May 1921, also referred to as ‘No. 1 camp’. There was a forerunner to Moolooloo named Vomards, located seventeen kilometres southwest of the present Moolooloo homestead, near Number 35 Bore. The name comes from a man named Julius Voumard who was a teamster on VRD where he worked from at least May 1903 until at least December 1904 (TCPJ, 24-5-1903, 25-5-1903, 6-11-1904; Northern Territory Times, 30-12-1904). Voumard ran horses in the Depot Races of November 1904 (Northern Territory Times, 30-12-1904) but not in following years (Northern Territory Times 12-1-1905, 18-1-1907). He had previously been living on the Wandi goldfield in 1896; according to Billy Linklater he was a striker for a blacksmith (Petition…Wandi, August 1896; Linklater and Tapp, 1968: 94). His name doesn’t appear in the surviving VRD employment records which begin in 1909 so he may have been a private contractor or he may have left VRD before 1909. How his name came to be applied to the outstation site is unknown; one can only suspect that Voumard established the original camp, so he may have been a head stockman at one time and a teamster at another, in the same way the teamsters Mulligan and Ligar were in the 1880s-1890s (see entries for Mulligan and Ligar under VRD).

In 1986 I was shown the site of the outstation by a local Aboriginal man, Mr Alan Young, who referred to it as ‘old Moolooloo’ but who didn’t mention the name ‘Vomards’. The Aboriginal name of the site is Mulyulyukurlani, and the similarity of this name to Moolooloo, a placename in South Australia, may have led to the name being used here. In the records the name is sometimes rendered as ‘Bomards’. Still visible at the site (1988) are a flagstone floor, some standing bush timber poles, an old stub yard, and fragments glass, iron, wire, etc (Lewis, 2000: 71).

VRD records mention ‘Vomards Yard’ in August 1920 (VRD diary 1920, entry for 24-8-1920). Two years later the records list the rations sent to Vomards. In the VRD ration accounts there is no mention of Vomards from the start of the earliest surviving VRD
ledger until October 31st 1921 (Ledger 2, 1919-1923). Then there are monthly lists until April 30th 1922. After the latter date there is no mention of rations for Vomards again, but an entry in the VRD day book on May 21st 1922 mentions ‘Moolooloo No. 1 Plant rations’ (VRD day book, 1909 to 1925, vol. 1).

In October 1927 Victoria River Downs records use the term ‘new Moolooloo’ and lists B.A. Ogden as ‘dismantling & carting to Wilson Creek of old Moolooloo out station house & out buildings Erecting new house & harness shed (VRD Ledger 3, Victoria River Downs Ledgers, 1909-1944). A letter written by Scott McColl in 1953 confirms Alan Young’s identification of the site he showed me as ‘old Moolooloo’ and that Old Moolooloo and Vomards were one and the same: ‘I have had the [boring] plant taken to Vomards (Old Moolooloo Station) about 9 miles South West of Waterbag Bore’ (McColl, 2-12-1953). The name ‘Vomards’ is still known on the station as ‘upper Vomards paddock’, ‘lower Vomards paddock’ and ‘Vomards Yard’.

In a 1934 report the new Moolooloo homestead was described as, ‘HUT. 21’ X 21’ with 10’ verandah all round. G.i. bush timber, earth floor, two rooms on the verandah. Ant-bed floor.’ There was also a blacksmith’s shop and a meat house. These buildings were said to be ‘of rough construction and in fair condition only’ (NTPLIC 1934, Victoria River Downs). An angle iron building was erected at Moolooloo in 1939 (VRD Ledger 5, Feb 1937–Feb 1944).

![Moolooloo outstation, 1953 (Johnston collection).](image)

**J. Ogilvie.** Stockman at Vomards from March 31st 1922 to May 31st 1922 (VRD Ledger 3, Jan 1922 – Feb 1930).
W.M. “Sedgie” Sedgwick. Head stockman from March 31st 1923 to November 1925 (VRD Ledger 1 and VRD Ledger 2, Victoria River Downs Ledgers, 1909-1944). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

Kevin Graham. Head stockman from 1925 until his father (the VRD manager) died in August 1926 (Graham, 1981). Apparently he took over there after Sedgwick left.

Jack Liddy. Head stockman in 1925 (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926) and still there or back again from January 10th 1927 to October 31st 1929 (VRD diary 1927). He came from the Gulf country (Northern Standard, 19-9-1926). For additional biographical details see entry under Coolibah.

Jack Beasley. Head stockman in 1933 (Morey, 1977d: 18). For additional biographical details see entry under Mount Stirling.

Archie Warrington Rogers. Head stockman in 1934 (pers. comm., Buck Buchester). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

John (Jack) Wyndham Martin. Head stockman in 1934. He was one of Alf Martin’s sons (pers. comm., Buck Buchester).


Jack Knox. Head stockman. He was on VRD by October 1933 to September 30th 1938 (VRD Ledger 4, Feb 1930 – Feb 1937; TCPJ, 29-1-1937; pers. comm., Chas Schultz; Martin, 1985: 48; Knox family records). Jack was born in the living quarters of the Shamrock Hotel, Boulder, Western Australia. His mother died when he was six. At the same time there was a decline in the local economy so his father shifted the family to Southern Cross. His sister and one of his brothers died soon after, and for the next four and a half years Jack and his surviving brother Bill travelled with their father on the road between Southern Cross and Toodyay. Then their father enrolled them at the St Ildephonsus College at New Norcia. After four and half years there Jack left in December 1920, aged 15. Jack and his brother went with their father to Wyndham where he had a job lined up at the meatworks. The boys were unable to get work there so they went to work on cattle stations. Jack spent the next eighteen years in the north, working first on Moola Bulla, and in subsequent years on Fitzroy, Go Go, Cherribun, Christmas Creek, Flora Valley, Ningbing, Leguna and VRD. He also did some droving with his own droving plant. At one time he was the mailman between Fitzroy and Halls Creek.

Family records suggest that when the Second World War broke out Jack and his brother were working on VRD, and resigned to join up, but they appear to have left together in September 1938, before the war began. In any case, at about the time the war broke out they travelled to Adelaide and enlisted. Jack fought in the Middle East and later Kokoda. After the war he settled in Broome where he ran a butchery. He married and raised a family in Broome and on Meda station. Jack’s brother, Oliver (pers. comm.), said that Jack had many articles published under the pen name, ‘Ringer’. He died in Broome in 1980.
G. Vic Watkins. Stockman or head stockman for three years, 1938-41 (TCPJ 6-4-1941; December 1950: 39). Charlie Schultz told me that Vic did up the old Moolooloo homestead, probably replacing the original bush timber frame with angle-iron. For additional biographical details see entry under Auvergne.

George Hunt. Temporary head stockman in August 1942 and still on the VRD books up to June 1943 (TCPJ, 27-8-1942; Tax form, payroll tax and income…, 14-6-1943). More usually he was a drover. Hunt was described by Charlie Schultz as man who:

if [he] had one or two beers he was a damn nuisance because he’d walk into your camp and be trying to tell you something, and he’d fall over the top of you. He’d get up, shake the dust of himself, and he still wouldn’t see the trouble he was in and he’d babble away again (Schultz and Lewis, 1994: 74-5).

On one occasion at the Depot Races he was such a nuisance that he was shoved onto a vehicle heading out to Bullita. Billy Linklater was there and he included George in a poem he composed for the occasion, part of which is reproduced here (Linklater and Tapp, 1997: 151):

Then next came Jim Maloney  
And sitting right in front  
Surrounded by the Billeta gins  
Was the drover Georgie Hunt

Eventually he married Sister Emma Latham of the VRD hospital and in 1933 they bought Springvale station at Katherine where they remained for sixteen years (Ogden, 1983: 15). They had one child (at least), named George E., born in June 1933 (Tax form, payroll tax and income…, 14-3-1943).


Tex Moar. Head stockman in 1950 (or 1951?; Allen, 1995). Buck Buchester reckons this is wrong. Tex died in 2013 or 2014. For additional biographical information see entry under VRD.

Joe Sowden. Head stockman after Liddell left, from April 25th 1951 to June 8th 1951 and possibly longer (VRD Journals: Nov 50 – Sept 51; pers. comm., Marie Mahood). Before Buck Buchester arrived (1952-53) Sowden was contract mustering on Moolooloo. It was Sowden who brought Buck out to VRD (pers. comm., Buck Buchester). He was there in 1953 but left that year to go to Killarney (Hoofs & Horns, June 1953: 54). At other times he was a drover. Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says Sowden had two wives, one white and one ‘half caste’. Eventually he moved to Brisbane so that his children could get a good education (pers. comm., Marie Mahood).

Gus Anderson. Cook in 1953 (Hoofs & Horns, October 1953: 67). For additional biographical information see entry under Victoria River Downs .

Neville ‘Buck’ Buchester. Head stockman from February 3rd 1953 to July 31st 1961 (VRD Journals Nov 51 – Sept 52), and possibly until the end of 1963 (pers. comm., Buck Buchester). Buck was born at Aramac on September 7th, 1929. After unwittingly becoming involved in a robbery in town when only about 13 or 14, he was given a choice – leave town or be sent to a boy’s home. His father managed to get him a job with a drover, working from Queensland to the Victoria River district, and he never again visited Aramac.

In March 25th 1952 he began work as a stockman on VRD and remained in the district for the rest of his life (List of VRD employees, 10-4-1955). A report on VRD written in 1959 (Anon, c1959) described Buck as ‘a first class man by Territory standard, good cattle man, and reliable. Very hard worker.’ While working in the bronco yard at Moolooloo, Tobacco Jack hit Buck with a branding iron and laid him out (pers. comm. Buck Buchester). Different versions of the story say that it wasn’t Tobacco Jack or that it wasn’t Buck who was involved. One has it that Tobacco Jack hit Emil Daniels (pers. comm., Stan May). On record is an attack at Moolooloo by Banjo who belted Constable Fitzer with a boomerang in 1953 (TCPJ, 23-10-1953, 11-4-1961; NT News, 17-9-1953: 2).
Buck also had been head stockman at Pigeon Hole (Bill Yoemans, cited by Allen, 1995). While he was there he sacked Peckham (pers. comm., Mick Bower). He’s also reported as being based at ‘Waterbag outstation’ in 1962 (*Hoofs & Horns*, November 1962: 10). In about 1965 Buck fell out with VRD manager George Lewis, and went to work on Hidden Valley for a while (McKinnon 1998). In 1969 he went to Wave Hill station where he worked until 1983. He became cattle manager for the Gurindji on Daguragu but left after about three years because there were ‘too many chiefs and not enough indians’. From Daguragu he went to Delamere where he worked for two or three years before retiring to Wave Hill in 1990 (pers. comm., Buck Buchester).

Buck was married for many years to Nancy, a Ngarinman woman from Victoria River Downs. When they were based at Waterbag bore Noel Buntine’s roadtrains often came to pick up cattle in the early hours. No matter when they came, Nancy would get up and make ‘tea and tucker’ for the drivers. Because of this, Noel set up a trust fund for Nancy and over many years paid a substantial amount of money into it. Eventually the balance
MOOLOOLOO

exceeded $40,000 (pers. comm., Mick Bower). Buck died in Katherine on the 21st of April 2009, aged 80 (North Queensland Register, 2-5-2009).


John Griffiths. Manager before McLean. Legune station records indicate that he was manager there from early 1968 though Darryl Hill (pers. comm.) believes he left Moolooloo at the end of 1969.

Lindsay McLean. Manager for 12 to 15 months before Saltemer, ie in 1974-75 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

Jack Saltemer. Manager for about six months before Darryl Hill, ie late 1975 to early 1976 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

Darryl Hill. Manager from March 1976 to March 1984 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill). Unless otherwise stated the following biography was provided by Darryl. He was born in Corowa NSW in 1949, the eldest of six. He spent his early childhood at Tatura in Victoria before his family moved to the Toowoomba area in Queensland. He was educated at Meringandan and Toowoomba. It was while living in a dairy farming community in the Toowoomba area that Darryl’s love of horses and cattle developed.

As a sixteen year-old he furthered his education as a jackaroo at Gallipoli, an outstation of Alexandria Station in the vastness of the Barkly Tablelands in the Northern Territory. There he was able to hone his skills in the company of seasoned stockmen and drovers. He later moved to central Queensland to work on his uncle’s property, Duckponds. From there he went spent two years managing Rhodesia station in the Emerald area for Carl Young, an American grazier. Then he commenced work with Rural Improvements, a pastoral company owned by the Clarke family from Rockhampton. In 1973 he went to the Victoria River district in the Northern Territory to work as head stockman on Humbert River station, then owned by Rural Improvements. Darryl met his wife Royelene Whelan at Humbert River and they married in 1974. In 1976 Darryl took on the management of Moolooloo, an outstation of Victoria River Downs which was then owned by the Hooker Pastoral Company.

Eight years later Darryl commenced work with the Northern Territory Government as the ‘Officer In Charge’ of the Victoria River Research Station (Kidman Springs). Following this he took on a new passion, soil conservation, and was based at Timber Creek for eight years as a Soil Conservation Officer with the Northern Territory Conservation Commission. It was while in this position that he became ‘Territorian of the Year’ for having organised the first Aboriginal rodeo, at Timber Creek (NT News, 8-7-1994). When the Commission wanted to transfer him to a desk job in Katherine in 1996 he resigned and he and Royelene returned to their beloved Humbert River Station in the capacity of caretaker-manager and conservation officer for Consolidated Pastoral Company (CPC). After three years he took on a field position with the Victoria River District Conservation Association (VRDCA) and shifted to Katherine.

After 27 years working in the Victoria River District and rearing two daughters, Tamlyn and Claire, Darryl and Royelene finally moved into Katherine in the year 2000. Darryl
was then employed as a facilitator for the VRDCA. He held this position for four and half years before forming his own business, ‘Soil Save’. This requires travelling Australia-wide conducting soil erosion workshops on pastoral properties and with land care groups, including some works with rehabilitation on mining and army training sites. His workshops still take him interstate on a regular basis but inbetween he is self-employed operating heavy machinery, weed spraying, doing stock work and on the family property, Albalea.

One of Darryl’s long-term interests is in the history of the Victoria River district and among various history-related activities he has located many lonely bush graves, photographing them and sometimes erecting a plaque with appropriate details.

**Duncan.** Caretaker-manager for about six months after Darryl Hill left (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

**Tony Izod.** Manager from about 1985 to 1987 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

**Ian Rush.** Manager from at least 1985 until 1993 (pers. obs.). He then went to manage Anthonys Lagoon (pers obs; Makin, 1992: 183; pers. comm., Patsy Applebee; pers. comm., Maggie Lilly; pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

**Wayne Bean.** Manager 1994 (pers. obs.).

**Mick Crombie.** Manager in 1996 (pers. comm., Barry Scott), but only for a few months (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

**Tac Hall.** Overseer from June 1999 to 2000 (pers. comm., Tac Hall). He had previously owned Innesvale. From Moolooloo he went to manage Lucy Creek. His wife’s name is Sharon.

**Mark Clifford.** Manager in 1997-99 (*NT News*, 29-1-1998; pers. comm. Mark Clifford). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

**Gary Faulkes.** Manager from 2005 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

An outstation of VRD, established in 1921 and known as ‘No. 5 Camp’ (*Northern Standard*, 19-2-1926). A forerunner to Mt Sanford was the Poison Creek Camp, apparently a semi-permanent stock camp established in 1914 and probably based at Poison Creek Spring (VRD Ledger 1, Mar 1909–Dec 1912). In the VRD records the Poison Creek Camp was rationed until January 31st 1921 while the first mention of Mt Sanford is a ration list dated February 28th 1921 (VRD Ledger 2, Jan 1913–Dec 1921). An entry in the VRD Ledger for 1919-23 (page 427) has the heading, ‘Mt Sanford – Out Stn or Poison Creek’, which seems to make it clear that Poison Creek was the forerunner to Mount Sanford.

In 1924 the Mount Sanford cook reported that he’d been held up at spear point by Cockatoo, Bamboo and several other Aborigines who demanded flour and other items – ‘They were all armed with spears and the cook, McIntyre, had no option but to hand over a quantity of beef’. Cockatoo and Bamboo were arrested a year or so later, charged, found guilty and sentenced to 12 months’ hard labour at Fanny Bay jail (*Northern Standard*, 16-3-1926).

Charlie Schultz suggested to me that Mount Sanford was established by VRD to keep an eye on their southern boundary with Wave Hill. It was probably also placed there to keep an eye on Humbert River, then being run by Charlie’s uncle, Billy Schultz, and on Limbunya, the next station to the west.

In a 1934 report the Mt Sanford homestead was described as, ‘HUT. G.i. on bush timber frame’ (NTPLIC 1934, Victoria River Downs). In 1939 an angle iron Sydney Williams
MOUNT SANFORD

cottage was erected at Mt Sanford (VRD Day Books, 1957-1958) and an airstrip was put in there by Wally Dowling in April 1940 (VRD Ledger, 87/4/5).

W. Miller. Cook at Poison Creek Camp from September 24th 1919 to October 31st 1919 (VRD Day Books, 1909–1925; VRD Ledger 2, Jan 1913 – Dec 1921). It’s possible that this is Billy Linklater, who was more generally known as Billy Miller.

Harold McGuire. Head stockman at Poison Creek Camp from March 11th 1920 to August 31st 1920 (VRD Ledger 2, Jan 1913 – Dec 1921).

J. Hallam. Cook at Poison Creek Camp on April 1st 1920 (VRD Ledger 2, Jan 1913 – Dec 1921).

Ah Jack. Cook at Poison Creek Camp from May 10th 1920 to January 31st 1922 (VRD Ledger 2, Jan 1913 – Dec 1921).

Bruce Marlay. Head stockman at Sanford from March 26th 1923 to August 1st 1925 (VRD diary 1923).

Edward Johnson. Head stockman from June 26th 1927 to July 18th 1927 (VRD diary 1927).

Charlie T. (or F?) Carew. Head stockman from to July 19th 1927 to July 24th 1927 (VRD diary 1927). This needs checking because of a clash with Johnson’s dates.

J.K. Althous. Head stockman from 1925 (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926), to June 25th 1927 and again from April 30th 1941 to October 31st 1941 (VRD Ledger, Victoria River Downs Ledgers, 1909-1944; WHPJ, 13-6-1941; Northern Standard, 16-3-1926). In late 1925 he had Maurice Brutton as cook (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926). Johnnyt Stacey says (pers. comm.) that he dropped dead outside Max Schober’s store at Elliott in 1952.

Jack Cusack. Head stockman from July 25th 1927 to 1929 (Cole, 1988: 152; WHPJ, 30-5-1929; VRD Ledger 3, Jan 1922 – Feb 1930). For additional biographical details see entry under Bullita.

George ‘Snowy’ Shaw. Head stockman after Cusack left, from February 1st 1930 to February 1st 1944 (VRD Ledger 5). For additional biographical details see entry under Montejinni.

Sam Marshall. Head stockman in February and May 1933 (TCPJ, 23-2-1933, 21-5-1933). Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) said that he ‘was a good man, Sam, too, but a bit of a ratbag’. Charlie said that while crossing the Barkly Tableland he was caught in a flood and had to climb a tree. They found him dead there, possibly bitten by a deaf adder.

Walter Wye. Head stockman (or just stockman?) in the 1930s (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz). He was at Mt Sanford in June 1937 (Fuller, diary 1937-38); January and May 1938 (WHPJ, 8-1-1938, 30-5-1938), May 1939 (WHPJ, 15-5-1939), May 1940 (TCPJ, 30-5-1940) and July 1941 (WHPJ, 13-6-1941). For additional biographical details see entry under Bradshaw.
James Norman ‘Jim’ Martin. Head stockman in 1930s or 1940s. The Wave Hill police journals (12-12-37) have an E. Martin at Mt Sanford in 1937, but this is probably Jim Martin, one of Alf and Beatrice Martin’s sons. According to an obituary in the Northern Territory Newsletter (December 1975: 22), Jim Martin was born in Wyndham. When World War Two broke out Jim and his brother Stan went to enlist. Stan was too young to join, but concocted a story to increase his age. However, they got their story mixed up and the enlisting officer pointed out that Stan must have been born six months before Jim. Jim had worn glasses from the age of 13, but he got through the eyesight test by learning the eye chart from Stan, who took the test before him. They both ended up as commandos, with Jim probably the only Australian commando to wear glasses.

After the war he started the Martin Brothers transport business out of Alice Springs and later he owned a garage in Katherine. Subsequently he was manager of Mataranka for thirteen years, was president of the NT Cattleman’s Association, and helped form the Katherine Show Society. He died in Katherine hospital late in 1975.

Bob ‘Broadaxe’ Nelson. Head stockman from August 8th 1933 (VRD Ledger, 1909-1944), and again from April to June 1945 (VRD Ledger, 1909-1944). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

Ted Martin. Head Stockman in 1937 (Fuller diary 1937-38, entry for 3-6-1937).

F. Marshall. Head stockman from June 28th 1945 to August 11th 1945 (VRD Ledger, 1909-1944; WHPJ, 9-7-1945).

Wason Byers. Head stockman from June 2nd 1945 to July 7th 1945 and again from August 10th 1945 to October 6th 1945 (VRD Journals, April 45 to Jan 48). For additional biographical records see entry under Coolibah station.

R.W. ‘Bob’ Barnes. Head stockman from October 3rd 1945 to October 10th 1946 (VRD Journals, April 45 to Jan 48). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

George Bates. Head stockman from November 28th 1946 to April 5th 1952 (VRD journal, Nov 51 – Sept 52; Sweeney, 1947: 13; WHPJ, 7-10-51; Gordon, 1992: 130; Allen, 1995). In 1953 he was overseer at VRD (Hoofs & Horns, October 1953: 67). He resigned as overseer in 1956 to once again become a head stockman, either at Mount Sanford (WHPJ, 13-11-1956; Hoofs & Horns, January 1956: 6) or at Centre Camp (VRD Day Book, 1949-50). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

Splinter Prendergast. Head stockman from December 30th 1948 to April 28th 1949. He died ‘after the Brunette races last year’ (Hoofs & Horns August 1953: 56).

Jim A. Roberts. Head stockman from September 30th 1949 to October 10th 1949 (NBA).


Fred Schull. Boundary rider in 1956 (WHPJ, 13-3-56). He was known to Aboriginal people as Wangamali, and renowned for his immense strength. In the early 1920s he used a donkey team and fire-plough to help form the Dry River stock route between Katherine
and Top Springs (Douglas, TS195). In 1927 he was rumoured to have killed an Aboriginal man, ‘Lumpy-eye’ or ‘Old Toby’, who was working for him in the bush near Montejinni (WHPJ, 23-7-1927). The Wave Hill police investigated but found no evidence of a murder and an inquest was considered unnecessary (WHPJ, 26-7-1927). Albert Lalga, a Mudbura man who showed me Lumpy-eye’s grave in 1977, said that Fred Schull and Lumpy-eye were working with a fire plough and fought over possession of Lumpy-eye's wife. Schull knocked Lumpy-eye out with a shovel and then left poisoned water there, knowing that Lumpy-eye would need to drink when he regained consciousness.

According to Billy Harney (pers. comm.), Fred had a habit of putting spare change into a large drum and ended with a considerable amount of money.

Fred Schull and his donkeys, 1953 (Stan May collection).

Elmore Lewis. Head stockman from November 17th 1958 to July 31st 1961 (VRD diary 1960; pers. comm., Ernie Rayner; Clarke, 2008: 89). According to family history research (Flynn, 2002: 21-23) Elmore was born about 1921, the son of Tommy Lewis and his wife Annie (née Jenkins) and one of nine sons and a daughter, Gwen. Elmore and his brothers grew up on Rocklands station, near Camooweal, and though poorly educated they became proficient horsemen, stockmen and drovers.

Flynn describes Elmore as,
A big powerful man noted for his rough riding ability. He worked mainly as a drover and was known to enjoy a bar-room brawl. In the 1950s he drove cattle from Newcastle Waters, Northern Territory to Julia Creek and to Clifton Hills on the Birdsville Track, South Australia. He also drove from Newcastle Waters through the Georgina River to Bedourie and Glengyle in the Channel Country of Queensland.

A report on VRD written in 1959 (Anon, c1959) described Elmore as:

ex-drover, intelligent, knowledgeable, experienced, good leader, works men well but hard on them. Likes and lives on hard tucker and thinks food in tins was made only to wear out pack bags. A great horse master and a valuable man. His boys know their job, his cattle are well handled and well treated.

The experience of Bomber Stacey shows how ‘hard’ Elmore Lewis could be. Bomber was 13 when he joined Lewis who was contract mustering on Montejinni. He recalled how, ‘any little thing went wrong he flogged me’. In one incident Bomber described how Lewis had made him ride a horse bareback, then drove up behind him in a vehicle which made the horse bolt:

I couldn’t turn him and off the track he went, straight into the plant, which was on the camp. He knocked over a couple of horses who were hobbled and I landed among them still holding the reins in my hand. I got up and took the bridle off and walked over to the camp and Elmore was laughing his head off. I walked up to him and hit him down the forehead with the bridle. He flogged me with a bull strap and tied me up for a couple of hours (Stacey, 2003: 188-89).

Joe and Mary Groves. Managers in 1965 (Groves, 2011: 139). For additional biographical details see entry for Fitzroy.

Trevor and Jill Christensen. Managers in 1969 (Dayes, 2008: 23).

Dennis Twine. Manager from 1979 until at least 1987 (pers. obs.). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.


Paul Stone. Manager from 1989 or 1990 (pers. comm., Paul Stone; Makin, 1992: 183) and still there in 1999. His wife’s name is Jane (pers. obs.).

MOUNT STIRLING or ‘BEASLEY’S’

The location of Beasley’s place, just beyond the head of the erosion gully. The gully itself is where there was once a stockyard (Lewis collection).

These were the names applied to block 177 (pastoral permit 10) located on Stirling Creek and originally held by William Patterson from December 16\textsuperscript{th} 1902 to 1906 (NTA F199, Box 1, PP 10/1903). When Patterson died on October 24\textsuperscript{th} 1906 he bequeathed all his property to his partner, Jack Beasley (TCPLB, 1911-1925, entry for 21-6-1907). Later Beasley went into partnership with John Barry and Barry became the ‘resident manager’ (TCPJ, 25-7-1908). In 1910 it was reported that, ‘Messrs Barry and Beasley disposed of their Mount Stirling Station to Mrs Skuthorp, of Waterloo’ (White, 1910). However, that sale must have fallen through because records in the Northern Territory Archives indicate that the block remained in Beasley’s hands until 1911 when he sold it to W.F. and C.H. Buchanan of Wave Hill. On December 16\textsuperscript{th} 1913 it was sold to Vesteys and became part of the Limbunya run (NTAS NTRS F199, PP 10/1903).

Beasley is said to have accompanied Nat Buchanan to the Victoria River country in 1883 (Farwell, 1951:151). Matt Savage, who knew Beasley, said that Beasley formed Soudan station on the Barkly Tableland (Willey, 1971: 40). Soudan was in existence by 1877 and Beasley was born about 1870, so Savage’s information cannot be correct. Savage also said that Beasley couldn’t write his own name but instead used to sign with a conjoined JB which was also his brand (Willey, 1971: 40). There are several boabs in the Victoria River district which bear a conjoined ‘JB’ and dates from the mid 1890s (Lewis, 1993: 94-106 ; Lewis, 1996c: 375-79).

The earliest mention of Beasley in the Victoria River district appears to be in a letter delivered by him from Flora Valley to the Ord River manager in 1896 (McLennan, 1965: 7). He was working on Ord River in 1897 (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station], 1897-1899, entry for 30-7-1897) and was head stockman on Ord River in the early years
of the 1900s (Moore, nd.). Doug Moore, who was variously bookkeeper, storekeeper, assistant manager and gardener on Ord River between 1904 and 1914 (Moore, January 1957: 38; see entry under Ord River), mentioned that, ‘Jack Beasley was the headstockman at time my arrival a rough good natured chap who talked about gouging out blackfellows eyes with a blunt pocket knife although I thought it only talk but some built on it later.’

Jack Beasley, 1930s (Lilly collection).

Beasley is also mentioned in an entry in M. P. Durack’s diary in 1898, written when he was at Auvergne and Beasley was horse breaking there (Durack 1983: 37). ‘Diamond’ Jim Campbell was working there at the time and MP Durack noted that, ‘There is nothing Campbell has not taught [Jack] Beasley except for what Beasley already knew’ (Durack, 1983: 37). In 1911 J.W. Beasley was about to lift 1000 bullocks from VRD for the Adelaide market (Northern Territory Times, 10-2-1911).
Beasley appears to have remained in the district for most of his life. In 1932 he was head stockman or manager at Moolooloo (Morey, 1977d: 18). In March 1932 VRD manager Alf Martin wrote that:

when our Stockman Beasley from Moolooloo section went over to Delamere country to attend a muster and bring our cattle back on to our Killarney country he saw five or six Victoria River Downs cows who had calves following them carrying the Delamere brand and earmark. The Delamere stockman said they must have been branded by mistake and he gave our stockman cleanskins for them, this settled the mistake on the Delamere side.

However when the Delamere plant came across to our Killarney country and saw some Delamere cows with calves branded with the Victoria River Downs brand and earmark the Delamere stockman would not take cleanskins for them. He maintained the calves were deliberately branded and wanted one hundred cleanskins to settle the matter. This I refused to do. We offered to muster all Killarney and give him a cleanskin for every calf that turned up wrongly marked. This he refused and said that he could prove that our Headstockman Beasley on Killarney deliberately branded Delamere calves.

When I took over management of Victoria River Downs I told all our Head Stockmen to be very careful on the boundary mustering and to brand nothing but our own calves as my policy is that if a man will take anything for you he will take anything from you.

It is a very easy matter to brand a wrong calf at Killarney as the cattle are very wild out there and run about on camp a lot. When they are cutting out some times a cow will get away and leave her calf in the mob. This calf would be branded. It may be a Delamere calf or it may be a Victoria River Downs calf. When the cattle are let out of the yard the calf will find it’s mother and very likely turn up in the next muster and if the Stockmen see a Victoria River Downs cow with a calf following it bearing the Delamere brand and earmark they know it has been wrongly marked. All they do is to give a cleanskin in place of it. This has been the custom on every station in the North.

The stockman working with Beasley – our Head Stockman at Moolooloo – said he saw about twentyfive head of Delamere cows with our brand on their calves. We have discharged Beasley for carelessness and neglect in not cutting them out. We are now waiting to see what the Delamere men are going to do. If they will not take a cleanskin for each calf that has been wrongly marked on the same basis as we did then they must prove that Beasely did brand them intentionally. If he did so we will go Beasley for using our brand on other peoples cattle.

Beasley maintains they were branded by mistake, personally I am doubtful (Martin, 22-3-1932).

After being laid off, Beasley and two companions planned a six month’s-long prospecting trip to the headwaters of the Katherine, Roper and Wilton Rivers in Arnhem Land. He contacted H.G. Nelson, the Northern Territory’s Member of the House of Representatives in Federal Parliament, requesting a subsidy of £50 to assist in this proposed expedition (Beasley, 28-3-1932). His request was refused because no funds were available and Arnhem Land was an Aboriginal Reserve where prospecting was prohibited (Weddell, 17-5-1932).
Beasley eventually retired to Tennant Creek and lived well into his 80s (Centralian Advocate, 13-4-1952: 1). He is remembered today by Aborigines across the Victoria River district as one of the early settlers who shot a lot of people. His name is commemorated at Beasley’s Knob, on the Victoria Highway at Keep River, Beasley Yard on Rosewood station, Mount Besley (sic) on Limbunya, and on the Murranji Water tanks where he is described as ‘Jack Beasley better known as the WA gin jockey’ (Lewis, 2007a: 132).

William Sandbrook. Cook at the time of Patterson’s death in 1906 (TCPLB, 1911-1925, entry for 24-10-1906).
MUCKA MUCKA (CLARE INNES)

Originally an outstation of Wave Hill, established in 1901 (*Northern Territory Times*, 22-11-1901), and known officially as ‘Clare Innes’ (NAA ACT, A11/13146) but was most often referred to by its Aboriginal name ‘Mucka’ (‘Mucka Mucka’ in the *Chronicle* [Adelaide], 3-6-1911: 39) and as ‘Mukka Mukka’ by R. Reynolds who was on Wave Hill in 1910 (*The Pastoral Review*, 19-4-1965: 363). When Surveyor Wells carried out his trigonometrical work Mucka Mucka was found to be on Inverway country (Wells, 26-6-1936, cited in Parker, 1937: 43). It was abandoned by 1910 (McBeath, 1910: 24) and probably a few years earlier, as soon as Wells completed his survey work in the area. Wave Hill then established a new outstation at Catfish Waterhole. While Mucka may have closed in 1910 it was probably used in later years as a camping place during joint musters between Wave Hill and Inverway.

**Joseph Brown.** ‘Stockowner’ there in September-November, 1916 (BHPLB, 8-11-1916). This may have been Joe Brown, the famous Central Australian bushman (see Kimber, 1990: 39-41).
The waterhole now known as Newcastle Waters was found by explorer Stuart in 1861 and originally named by him ‘Glandfield Lagoon’ after the then mayor of Adelaide (Threadgill, 1922: 55). The name was later changed by the expedition sponsor to ‘Newcastle Waters’, after the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary for the Colonies.

A lease at Newcastle Waters was taken up by Arthur John Giles in 1875, but it was never stocked and was later sold to Dr W.J. Browne. It was included in Browne’s lease of 600 square miles which he took up in 1877. In 1883 Giles sent R.C.L. McPhee to discover a track from the east for the 2000 heifers being brought over to stock the station from Gooyea (Barcoo River) by Darcy Uhr, Fred Mork (senior) and Fred’s brother (either Tom or Jack) (Giles, nd.: 173).

While he was at Newcastle Waters McPhee chose the site for a homestead and erected a building. This was on a stony ridge known as the ‘Express Camp’. He also built yards there (Giles, nd.: 184, 189). Newcastle Waters was referred to as ‘Mr. W.J. Browne’s’ in 1885 (Giles, 24-3-1885: 2). In 1887 it was reported that 1,500 mixed cattle were being taken from Delamere to Newcastle Waters (Parsons, 1887: 4). By 1891 the station was reported to be 1,200 square miles and was referred to as belonging to ‘Mr. L.G. Browne’ (Kintore, 1891: 29). Whether there has been a mistake and ‘L.G.’ Browne is the same person as ‘W.J.’ Browne or whether they are in fact two separate people is unknown at this stage. According to ‘H7H’ (The Capricornian, 10-6-1905) Browne, who also owned Springvale station, ‘went to a lot of expense in procuring cattle and horses of high quality for stocking-up purposes, and … was supposed to have eventually lost £100,000 over the two places — Newcastle Waters and Springvale.’ W.J. Browne died in 1894 (Northern Territory Times, 14-12-1894).

Browne sold the station to John Lewis of Adelaide. Lewis and his family held the station for 50 years. In 1907 the manager of Newcastle Waters wrote that, ‘50 cows and 50 bulls are nearing there from Dalhousie, and 50 cows and two bulls from Monkira, Queensland, for improvement of the station herd” (Grainger, 1906: 4). In 1945 the station was bought by Roy Edwards and held by him for 35 years. Finally, in April 1983 Kerry Packer’s
Consolidated Pastoral Company (CPC) bought the station and as of 2017 it remains in CPC’s hands. The station brand is the wine glass which was in use by at least 1907 (South Australian State Library, PRG 247/10/1).

R.C.L. McPhee. The first manager. He was there to receive the first cattle in 1883. In August or September 1884 he was relieved by Henry Goss (Giles, nd.: 192).

Henry Gosse. Manager from August 1884 to 1886 and possibly until late 1887 or early 1888 (Giles, nd.: 192; *Northern Standard*, 6-2-1934). Information on the subsequent manager, Ravenscroft, suggests Gosse may have left Newcastle Waters by mid-1886. For additional biographical information see entry under Delemere.

A.G. Ravenscroft. Manager in November 1888 (Kelsey, 1975: 89) and 1890, 1891 (Ravenscroft, 1891: 7; Kintore, 1891: 29). Linklater (1997: 60), who was on Newcastle Waters in 1892, says that Ravenscroft was ‘an Oxford man’ who added to the ‘splendid library’ established there by the owner, Dr Browne.

Steve Lewis. Part owner-manager from 1894 until 1899 (*Quirindi Advocate*, 3-10-1958; Linklater, nd. Buchanan family papers; Durack, 1983: 66). Steve later took one of the first mobs of cattle over the Murranji stockroute, in 1904. His destination was Oodnadatta, possibly Dalhousie Springs, as the Honourable John Lewis held the Dalhousie lease from 1896 (Lewis, June 1996), or else the railhead, if the railroad was at Oodnadatta by 1904.

Harry Lewis. Part owner in 1899. He was a brother to Steve and handled the station business in Adelaide (Durack, 1983: 66). He didn’t think much of the management of either Radford or Grainger (South Australian State Library, PGR 247/10/1).

M.A. Radford. Manager from at least April 1902 until July 1904 (South Australian State Library, PGR 247/10/1).

Harry Grainger. Manager from July 1904 until at least August 1911 (Grainger, 1906: 3; Barklay, 3-8-1911). Grainger was on Newcastle by at least January 1903 and became manager when Radford departed. In spite of the fact that Harry Lewis supposedly did not think much of his management, in 1907 his salary was raised to £250 per year (South Australian State Library, PGR 247/10/1). Johnny Stacey says (pers. comm.) that Grainger was also known as Eli Johnson.


Wilfred Steele. Manager in 1914-15 (*Northern Territory Times*, 16-9-1915). Steele left Adelaide for the inland in 1899, working first on his cousin’s farm at Woodside for eighteen months and later for four years on Callana station in the Marree area. In 1903 he set out for Wave Hill to join a droving team taking one of the first herds of cattle across the Murranji Track in 1904 (Steele, 21-2-1906). This mob was 31 weeks on the road and was delivered to Marree, a distance of 1,600 miles (*Adelaide Observer*, 13-2-1926; Steele and Steele, 1978: 129). In 1906 Steele wrote from Callana station to the Government Resident in Darwin asking if the Resident could help him find work on a Northern Territory cattle station (Steele, 21-2-1906). I have no information as to the result of this letter.
Steele served three years with the Light Horse in Egypt, Palestine and Syria during the First World War, and afterwards visited Italy, the Continent and England. He intended travelling back to Australia via Russia but couldn’t get permission from the Russian officials because of the unstable political situation there (Adelaide Observer, 13-2-1926).

In 1922 Steele was manager of Kidman’s Annandale station in far south-west Queensland. From at least 1926 to at least 1934 he was Kidman’s representative in the Kimberleys, with his headquarters at Yeeda station (Adelaide Observer, 13-2-1926; Bolton 1953: 246). Other stations under his supervision then were Glenroy, Isdell and Fossil Downs. Probably in connection with this job, in the early 1920s he made the first car trip to Mount Hart station, at one stage crossing 40 creeks in 20 miles (Adelaide Observer, 13-2-1926; Bolton, 1953: 246). He also spent three years on the Macarthur River. In the early 1940s he was manager of Henbury station (O’Bader, 1-2-1945).

**Smart.** Manager in 1918 (Smart, February 1918).

**W.C. Burkett.** Manager from 1919 until 1934 (Scherer, 1993: 8; Hare, 1985: 14). According to the Northern Territory Pastoral Leases Investigation Committee Report (NTPLIC 1934, Schedule N, p. 3), the manager at Newcastle in 1934 had been there for 15 years. The Northern Standard of July 6th 1934 mentions ‘Mr Burkitt’ as manager of Newcastle Waters, so it must have been Burkett who’d been there 15 years, from 1919 to 1934. His job appears to have been taken over at the end of 1933 or 1934 by Allan Grant-Smith.

During Burkett’s time an airstrip was constructed with Aboriginal labour ‘when the total tribe of the district numbering 40 was pressed into service, men, women, and children, the contract price agreed on being 2 bags of flour, 20 sticks of “nicky nicky” (tobacco), and 5 yards of Turkey red cloth’ (Northern Standard, 23-7-1926).

**Allan Grant-Smith.** Manager in 1935-36 (TCPJ, 17-1-1935, 31-1-1935; NAA ACT, A284/1, B5485).

**Wally Langdon.** Manager between August 7th 1936 and July 14th, 1938 (NAA ACT, A284/1 B5483; Northern Standard, 30-11-1937; Connellan, 1992: 98). Langdon was on Newcastle Waters as early as 1925 (Bridges, 1925: 222). According to Connellan, in 1937 Langdon caught 600 brumbies in a trap yard on Newcastle. In the early 1930s he had been one of the police involved in the manhunt for Nemarluk—this needs checking.

**Jack Lowe.** Manager in 1938 (NWPI, 30-9-1938) and 1940 (Grant, 1997: 6). Gibbs (1995: 80-81) says his name was Ted and that he was manager in 1942, but Grant says Jack Lowe died at Tennant Creek in 1940 while being evacuated to Alice Springs because of a serious illness. Connellan (1992: 233) says that Lowe was manager in January 1941 and that he died from a burst duodenal ulcer shortly after being evacuated to Tennant Creek. Connellan’s is likely to be the accurate account because he kept a diary.

**Ted Casey.** Manager from at least June 1941 (Casey, 13-6-1941) and probably from the time Lowe died in January, but he was dead himself by 1945 (Adelaide Chronicle, 1-2-1945). He appears to have left Newcastle Waters by 1943 (see entry for Arthur Wilson, below). According to Morey (1980: 12), Casey was manager of Macarthur River station...
in the early to mid 1930s. There is a conflict between the dates given for Casey and the dates for Arthur Wilson.

**Arthur H. Wilson.** Manager from at least 1943 to 1952 (NT News, 22-2-1952). He’s listed as manager by the Newcastle Waters police in August 1943 (NWPJ, 13-8-1943). In December 1951 it was reported that he was leaving after nine years as manager which means that he must have started there in 1942 or 1943 (Hoofs & Horns, December 1951: 49). He was referred to as ‘recently manager of Newcastle Waters’ in February 1952 (NT News, 22-1-1952). Gerry Ash (pers. comm.) said Wilson was the brother of ‘Tragedy’ Wilson, the butcher at VRD in 1950-52. See the entry for ‘Tragedy’ in the Ord River section.

![Arthur Wilson, c1950 (Mahood collection).](image)

**Roy Maxwell Edwards.** Owner from 1945 (or 47?) to 1980. Edwards was born in Palmerston in 1906, the son of a pearling master, and grew up in Darwin. For a period he worked as a telegraph operator. In 1935 he learnt to fly and during 1940 and 1941 he flew the Flying Doctor plane based in Darwin (NT News, 2-8-1962). In 1947, with partners, he bought the property from the Lewis family who’d held the station for more than 50 years.
from about 1894 or 1895. He died from heart disease in Darwin in June 1992 (NT News, 2-8-1962; Dickinson, 1992: 57-8).

**Joe Walker.** Manager (?) in 1953. He was reported in the *NT News* of 26-3-1953 as on his way to manage Ord River. For additional biographical details see entry under Gordon Downs.

**Don Robertson.** Manager from some time in 1951 to at July 1962 (*Hoofs & Horns*, May 1951: 48; *NT News*, 2-8-1962; Gordon, 1992: 161, 202; F.H. Johnston Papers; *Hoofs & Horns*, July 1962: 6). A teetotaller, he was born in about 1913 and began his working life in stockcamps on Kidman properties in South Australia. Before taking over management of Newcastle Waters he had previously managed Banka Banka and then Waterloo (*Hoofs & Horns*, May 1951: 48; *NT News*, 2-8-1962). As a result of falls from horses during his career he had suffered a fractured spine, broken ribs, broken collar bone and broken leg (*NT News*, 2-8-1962). His wife was named Bess.

**Vivian McLean.** Manager 1963.


**Ken Warriner.** Manager in the 1980s and 1990s. He later was General Manager for CPC.

**Bruce ‘Baconhead’ Wreford.** Assistant manager in 1981 (for additional biographical details see entry under VRD).

**Dick Wilson.** Manager for CPC (?).


First taken up in 1888 by Francis Connor and Dennis J Doherty, who were partners in stores at Wyndham and Halls Creek from 1886. They named the block after their hometown in Ireland and at first bred horses for the Indian market (The Pastoral Review, 16-9-1916 and 16-11-1935: 1161; Durack 1983: 4-5). In March 1891 the Newry homestead was described as, ‘a single roomed house about 20 feet by 12 feet, constructed of clay walls and covered with local timber and iron, the whole being very roughly put together’ (West Australian, 4-7-1891).

The same new item describes how in March 1891 Connor, J. Butler and an Aboriginal stockman:

> were riding together through a pass in search of horses, when first four spears were thrown at them by natives, and immediately afterwards about a hundred were thrown at them from a hill close by. Luckily, no one was hit, probably being a little beyond the accurate range of a native. This indicates the disposition of some of the native tribes if they get what they consider a good opportunity for spearing a white man. No doubt in this instance if the party had been a little closer to the hill all three would have lost their lives (West Australian, 4-7-1891).

In 1896 Connor and Doherty formed a partnership with the Duracks. This partnership (CD&D) retained Newry until 1950 when all the partnership’s properties were sold to the Peel River Land and Mineral Company (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

Sometimes referred to in early documents as ‘Keep Station’ (eg TCPJ, 6-10-1908), the original Newry homestead was located about 25 kilometres southwest of the present homestead. At this site there are the remains of a stone-walled single-roomed hut. Local Aborigines identified the site as ‘old Newry’ but this has since been disputed by one
former local white resident. The diaries of MP Durack provides support for the Aboriginal identification. MP has an entry on December 3rd 1905 in which he mentions riding from Argyle to ‘old Newry’ and the next day ‘on to the Keep’ (River), where the present homestead is located (Durack, diary 29-11-1905–7-1-1906). I have no information about when or why it was shifted, but by 1906 the homestead was at the present location on the Keep River (Queenslander, 13-1-1906).

The remains of the building identified by local Aborigines as ‘old Newry’ (Lewis collection).

A ‘new four-roomed iron dwelling’ was erected there in 1907 (Artaud, 1907: 26). Between 1922 and 1934 the ‘private quarters’ at the Three Mile Hotel out of Wyndham were dismantled and re-erected at Newry as a new homestead (Ronan 19664: 106). Reg Weston (pers. comm.) told me it was erected by ‘Colorado’ Jack Newton. Another new homestead was built in 1957 (pers. comm., Ruth Murphy).

Newry homestead, 1959 (Cornish collection).
Cattle to stock the station came mainly from Wave Hill, via Elvire station near Halls Creek. They were mustered and delivered by W.F. Buchanan’s nephew, Charlie Buchanan, in 1894 (Buchanan, 1997: 140, 146).

**Tom Connor.** Manager from the beginning of the station in the late 1880s until at least 1892. He is also credited with building the original buildings and yards (Swan, 1991: 112; Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Journal] 1890-1892, entries for 22-5-1892 and 20-6-1891).

**Duncan McCauley.** Manager [?] from 1893 (Durack, diary 1-1-1893 – 31-12-1893, entry for 4-12-1893). For additional biographical information see entry under Ivanhoe.

**Jim Patterson.** Manager in 1899-1900. He left to become part-owner of Ord River station in 1902 (Bolton, 1953: 115-117; Durack, 1983: 63, 114; Durack, nd.). For additional biographical information see entry under Ord River.

**Jack Frayne.** Stockman in 1898 (Durack, 1983: 44). For additional biographical details see entry under Coomanderoo.

**Billy Madden.** Stockman in 1898 (Durack, 1983: 44; Durack, nd.), and manager in 1899. At this time Newry was described as an outstation of Argyle (Evans, 14-10-1899; see also Clune 1942: 161). He is mentioned in the Wyndham Occurrence Book on March 21st 1896 and in 1897, together with H.M. Skinner he was ‘given permission to muster all unbranded cattle over one year old and all unbranded horses over two years old on ORD River Station’ (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station]1897-1899, entry for 13-8-1897). In 1899 he was on Argyle station (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1897-1899, entry for 19-6-1899; Durack diary, 1-1-1899 – 10-3-1901, entry for 24-1-1899) and it’s likely that he worked on all the various Durack stations. In 1900, with W. Littleton, he briefly took up Willeroo (Northern Territory Times, 21-9-1900; see entry under Willeroo). In 1907, in partnership with Edward Brennan, Madden took up land north of the Bungle Bungle Range and named it Stonehenge station (Clement, 1989: 5). This was stocked with Ord River cleanskins (Moore, nd.). Before 1907 he was a stockman on Texas. He died in 1927 (Clement, 1989: 5) and is buried in the old Ord River cemetery (pers. obs.).

**Jerry Skeahan.** Head stockman in 1899 (Durack, 1983: 63). For additional biographical details see entry under Auvergne.

**Sir Alexander Cockburn-Campbell.** Manager in 1904 and 1905 (Durack diary, 28-2-1904 – 21-1-1905, entry for 5-12-1904; North Queensland Herald, 22-7-1905). For additional biographical details see entry under Argyle.

**Tom Woodland.** Manager from November 1906 until 1910. His sister Emily married Jack Skeahan in 1908 (TCPLB, 1911-1925, entry for 5-11-1909; TCPJ, 18-11-1909; Durack, 1983: 545). He is probably the A.T. (Tom) Woodland whom Clement (1989: 19) says became manager of Moola Bulla in 1921. This would have been after the departure of Arthur Haly, the first manager.
**Charlie Whittaker.** Manager in 1900 (or 1906-7?) (Durack, 1983: 400). For additional biographical details see entry for Calvert Downs.

**Lawrence John Martin.** Acting manager in October-November 1907 (TCPJ, 12-11-1907).

**Charlie Darcy.** Manager during 1916-1923 (Durack, 1983: 324, 350; Martin, 1985: 3; TCPJ Notes, entry for 7-12-1922). For additional biographical details see entry under Grasshopper Flat.


**Jack Black (‘The Black Snake’).** Manager? (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers).

**(Kenneth) Hector Fuller.** Manager, 1931-1947. Unless otherwise stated the following information comes from a transcript of the reminiscences of Irene Fuller (nd.) and additional details provided by Hector’s daughter, Lesley Millner.

Hector was born at Sommerville near Kalgoorlie on June 23rd 1902. His father, Arthur Albert Fuller, a New Zealander, was a butcher in Kalgoorlie and later in Fremantle and also an actor and artist. His mother, Maude Worman, was an actress and show rider, a great horsewoman and the first to ride astride in Western Australia. Hector, the only child of the marriage, was educated at Christ Church Grammar School in Clermont, Perth. After leaving school he was apprenticed to a dentist but soon gave this away. During the last stages of World War One and for a few years afterwards he served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Naval Reserves. In 1920 he won the Army and Navy Heavyweight Boxing Championship. Not surprisingly, he later won a fight over cattle during a joint muster at Boomondoo (Auvergne). Fights over cattle between station managers or head stockmen were a recurring event in the Victoria River country, and no doubt elsewhere. Mounted Constable W.F. Johns refereed such a fight on Rosewood station in the early 1900s (Johns, nd.).

In about 1921 Hector went to work for the Duracks, first on Ben Ord, a Durack property in south-west Western Australia, but was soon sent north on a boat with a stallion for Argyile station and spent the next thirty-one years in the north. In 1922 he worked as a jackaroo with Bill Jones at Ivanhoe station. During this time he helped clear the road over Button’s Gap and ‘the Jump Up’ to make it passable for a car. In 1923 he worked under Lake Hall at Argyile and was one of the men who found Hall dead after he committed suicide. Later he became ‘junior manager’ at Bullita where he remained for seven years.
Hector Fuller at car, Tas Fitzer in front of tree, M.P. Durack in buggy. Timber Creek, 1928 (Reg Durack collection).

Irene Fuller using a Treager pedal radio at Newry, 1939 (Fuller collection).
Hector became manager of Newry in 1931 and remained there for about sixteen years (see Morey, 1978g: 34, 36; TCPJ, 28-2-1935 and 25-10-1945). In 1932 in Perth he married Irene Clarke whom he’d met there several years earlier. Irene was born at Kalgoorlie in December 1904, the daughter of a miner-mine manager. The newlyweds spent their honeymoon in Sydney and were there to see the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

The homestead complex at Newry when Irene arrived there in 1932 was:

Just a two-roomed house, built of corrugated iron with a 10’ verandah all round, which my husband laced with split bamboo brought from Darwin, leaving one end open which had been turned into a sleep-out with wire netting. The two rooms he had lined with hessian, whitewashed, which although a bit crude, were at least comfortable – one was the lounge room, which of course you couldn’t lounge in, because it was too hot, and the other a bedroom. We did have some lounge furniture on the enclosed verandah, which comprised a cane lounge suite and a couple of canvas squatters chairs with extended legs, so you could put your legs up on and rest. The dining room, was a grass covered long room, open on both ends of course, which did away with the heat from the iron roof, and just an antbed floor (this actually makes quite good floor, as incorporated with the antbed was oil, which saved the dust. O.K. in the cool weather, when there was any, but disastrous with high heels. The kitchen, as are all kitchens on Stations, was well away from the house, and in between our house (or the big house as it is so called) was the old homestead. This too, was of corrugated iron, with a stone floor. Some of these rooms served as men’s quarters, such as the cook, head stockman and the saddler. This also had a 10’ verandah all round, where bunks were put of course for the men. The native quarters, of course were some hundred yards or so away from the homestead. The laundry facilities were about 50 yards from the homestead. This also was a grass covered structure, with an old copper outside of course. This also had long benches inside, and only old galvanised tubs for the washing. No water laid on of course. All water had to be carried from the well.

… the bathroom jutted off one end of the verandah, and was equipped with a portable shower, a wash bench and basin, and a 44-gallon drum of water, from which you filled the portable shower and you had to be quick, as the shower held only about 4 gallons of water – a great place for snakes too – just small ones who would come down from the roof after frogs.

Their first child, Leslie, was born in Perth in 1934. When the war broke out Irene and Leslie were evacuated to Perth, and a son, Ken, was born there on July 13th 1942.

During the war when labour was in very short supply, most station managers tried to ‘steal’ Aborigines from other stations. The Waterloo manger complained to the police that Hector Fuller had taken some of his boys, but this proved to be incorrect and the constable wrote that, ‘H.K. Fuller is one of the few persons in the District who will not employ other Stn. boys’ (TCPJ, 12-2-1943).

In 1947 Hector and Irene left Newry and bought a shop in Wyndham and established an agency business for fuel, stock, and transport, and also ran a taxi service. During 1948 their son Ken died and Hector suffered a heart attack and then a nervous breakdown. In
1952 they sold their businesses and returned to Rosewood for six years. Hector was Managing Director of Buckland’s stations, and manager of Rosewood.

Hector may have been the bookie at the Negri and VRD races in 1950 (pers. comm., Marie Mahood). He was a bookie at the VRD races in 1951 when he was manager of Rosewood (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). Officially he took over management of Rosewood in late 1951, but he suffered a serious illness and was not able to begin work until April 1952 (NAA ACT, CRS F1, item 53/352). He was sick for about a year and during this time his daughter Leslie was ‘effectively the manager’.

Hector and his family remained on Rosewood until the end of 1958 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; Stewart, 5-10-1961). In 1959 he bought a small farm at Armadale, Western Australia, and was elected to the local Shire Council. In 1961 he suffered a fatal heart attack and died with a beer in his hand.

**J. Somerfield.** Acting manager while Fuller was on holiday in 1936 (TCPJ, 13-11-1936).

**Jack Shore.** Head stockman in December 1943 (TCPJ, 18-12-1943).

**Fred Inkerman.** Stockman (?) during 1943-44. He was regarded by the Timber Creek police as a ‘bit simple’ (TCPJ, 16-8-1944). Eventually he committed suicide on Moriarty Creek, a few kilometres west of Newry homestead (TCPJ, 15-9-1944, 17-9-1944: Lewis, 1993: 113-115). He was 46 years of age. His remains were not found for a fortnight and were buried where he died.

**Tom Ronan.** Manager from at least October 1947 until at least October 1949 (Beckett, 1998: 76; Evans, 23-12-1949: 8; Gordon 1992: 141). Elizabeth Durack said (pers. comm.) that he was head stockman on Argyle in the 1930s. Tom was born in Perth in November 1907. His father Jim was a well-known cattleman who once managed Victoria River Downs. His mother Minnie was a city girl from Melbourne. He was educated at a Christian Brothers boarding school in Perth, leaving school at 15 to go droving with his father. After serving with the AIF during the Second World War, Tom married Mary Kearins. They raised eight children and had two more who died in infancy.

As well as managing Newry, Tom also managed Springvale station (Katherine) where he had a goat farm for milk (pers. comm., Billy Harney), and from 1950 to 1957 he worked for the CSIRO in Katherine. He began writing novels in the early 1950s and won several prizes for his work. He was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Council in 1954 but left after only a year. Later he was chairman of the Northern Territory Tourist Board. The Ronan family shifted to Adelaide in 1968 and Tom died there in 1976 (Dewar, 1996: 279-80).

**John William Holland.** Manager from 1950 until early 1953 (Evans, 1-12-1952). After Holland left Burt Drew was caretaker until a new manager arrived (Hoofs & Horns, March 1953: 50). For additional biographical details on Holland see entry under Coolibah.

**Burt Drew.** Boundary rider in 1944 (TCPJ, 18-9-1944), head stockman in 1952 (Evans, 1-12-1952) and caretaker in February or March 1953 (Hoofs & Horns, March 1953: 50). Referred to by some as the ‘Donkey King of the North’, from 1917 (TCPJ, 8-9-1917)
until about 1938 he brought the loading to VRD and Wave Hill from the Depot. In his heyday he had three wagons.

Drew was involved in several notable incidents in the region. In 1918 he was at Wave Hill station when Boomerang Jack Brady shot the manager, Hunter Loder, in the shoulder (Mallam, 7-3-1919). Six years later he spent a night in a tree when he was among those caught in the massive flood which wrecked the Wave Hill homestead complex (WHPLB, 12-2-1924). Drew lost the collars for his donkey team and until new ones could be obtained he improvised collars by wrapping flour bags around the hames (pers. comm., Reg Durack).

In December 1931 he was employed by VRD in the ‘partial removal of Big Rock Jasper Gorge’ (VRD Ledger 4). This was almost certainly a massive rock in the narrow part of the gorge, a turtle Dreaming which local Aborigines say was blown up long ago. In 1934 he carried the wreckage of Dr Fenton’s plane, which had crashed near Pompey Knob on VRD, from VRD to the Depot (TCPJ, 29-6-1934). In 1937 his teams were late arriving at VRD. The nurses at the hospital were extremely low on rations and therefore very concerned about Drew’s arrival. Eventually it was learned that his wagons were bogged and in time honoured fashion, Drew had gone on a bender. Later he was brought to the hospital and the nurses, ‘Had a dreadful night, neither of us had a wink of sleep. Mr. Drew very ill, had the horrors well & truly, apart from being very weak; and a very old man. Could not leave him for 5 minutes all day’ (Fuller, diary 1937-38, entry for 26-11-1937).
Burt Drew’s wagon bogged near Jasper Gorge, 1937 (Knox collection).

Burt Drew, c1950 (Reg Durack collection).
Drew was described by Morey (1977b: 12) as,

Of medium and proportionate build ... his pleasant face adorned with a thick moustache and short clipper-cut beard ... an omnivorous reader, a most interesting conversationalist and it was always a pleasure to have a yarn to him – even if one had to shout into his hand-cupped ear. His speech was quiet, unhurried and nicely modulated. Reputed to be quite wealthy, he was always generous to the needy.

According to Eddie Connellan, who met Burt at VRD in 1938, ‘The more rum he consumes, the more “cultured” he becomes. Waves his guests to their chairs with real old-world ceremony. And that accent. Packed in cotton wool and dry ice all the way from Oxford, at least’ (Connellan, 1992: 105).

In his retirement he spent much of his time at Kildurk station. Drew died in Darwin Hospital on July 7th 1954 (pers. comm., Vern O’Brien, citing letter from Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Darwin, 6-2-1986).

**Stan Wilson.** Manager who took over after Holland left, beginning work there about March or April 1953 and still there in October 1955 (Hoofs & Horns, May 1953: 55; Bellette, 1996; TCPJ, 22-10-1956).

**Keith Lansdowne.** Took over there from Stan Wilson in 1956 (pers. comm., Ruth Murphy). He left in May 1960 (Hoofs & Horns, May 1960: 60).

**Alan Peters.** Manager (?). He was also on Argyle and Lake Nash.

**Kevin Servin.** Manager, 1960-1967 (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner; pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).

**Robert Lowe.** Listed as manager in 1964 in the Timber Creek police journal (TCPJ, 24-1-1964).

**Bill Scott.** Manager after Servin (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty). He may have been there by June 1966 (Bostock, 3-6-1966).

**Campbell K. M. ‘Tadpole’ Copeland.** Manager from at least June 1968 to 1971 (Anon, Narrative of an inspection tour … 1969; manager (Bostock) to Shaw, 22-6-1968). He had previously been head stockman on Auvergne and his nickname was ‘Tadpole’ because his boss there was Lloyd Fogarty, known as ‘The Frog’ or ‘The Bullfrog’.

**Rod Hollingsworth.** Manager from about 1978 to 1982 (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner).

**Alan Andrews.** Manager from April 1981 to December 1992. For additional biographical information see entry under Auvergne.

**Dave Muller.** Manager in the 1990s (pers. comm., Des Stenhouse).

**Vic Murray.** Manager in 1998-99, married to Pat (pers. comm., Vic Murray; pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

NICHOLSON


According to Bruce Shaw (1991: 163) Nicholson was formed in 1888. Bolton (1953: 234) says that Nicholson was formed by Vesteys ‘In conformity with the Land Act of 1917’. Buchanan (1895-1950) says the station was originally part of Ord River but was separated in about 1920. It thus appears that Shaw is wrong although it may be that Nicholson was an outstation in earlier times. It definitely was a station by 1923 when the manager was living in a temporary homestead (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1638).

In his 1950 report on Nicholson (p. 3) Buchanan commented that the cattle were:

Fair quality Shorthorn herd. Herd originally established from Ord River stock, which in their turn, came from Queensland. A few bulls from Lawn Hill Station in Queensland have been put into the herd in recent years. The number of bulls introduced was too small and their quality was not outstanding.

Buchanan also mentioned that, ‘There is not one decent cattle yard on the property. Rebuilding urgently required’ and that, ‘There is also a type of disease similar to peg-leg which attacks the cattle. This is evidently caused by some mineral deficiency as cattle effected (sic) are great bone chwers [sic] and this applies especially to cattle running at Nos. 8, 9 and 23 bores.’

The homestead when Buchanan wrote his report consisted of, ’Angle steel frame, C.G.I. roof and walls, unlined but portion ceiled (cement floors throughout) containing 3 rooms, verandah dining room – wire gauzed & ceiled – sleepout – gauzed – verandah lounge room and kitchenette. Condition and maintenance good.’

Hunter Loder. Manager? He may have been the first manager as he’s in a photograph taken at Nicholson in 1923 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 2004). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

Harvey. Bookkeeper in 1932, soon to be transferred to Wave Hill (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 2018).

Keith ‘Tiger’ Goddard. Manager in June 1934 (Morcom, 1935: 13). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.
**Roy Bartlam.** Manager 1937-1939 (Hilgendorf, 1994: 35; information from Bartlam’s daughter, Mary – pers. comm., Andrew Barker). He previously had been overseer on Willeroo in 1934-36. For additional biographical details on Roy see entry under Delamere.

**Len Mann.** Manager in January 1943 (Mann, nd: 9; Connellan, 1979: 6). Len had been relieving manager at Nicholson for six weeks in 1940. For additional biographical details see entry under Willeroo.

**Bill Crowson.** Manager when he was first married (Beckett, 1998: 96). For additional biographical details see entry under Montejinni.

**Milton Willick.** Manager in 1942 or 1943 (Connellan, 1992: 218) and 1946 (WHPJ, 10-9-1946; *Boab Bulletin*, February 1998: 10). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

**Froggatt.** Manager (?) before 1954 (pers. comm., Mick Bower). In response to an inquiry from William Buckland, in 1958 the VRD manager Jack Quirk sent Buckland some background information on C.F. Froggatt (Quirk, 20-6-1958). In his former role as General Manager for Vesteys Quirk had met Froggatt and had this to say:

>This man was brought out here by Vestey’s from Queensland, I would say somewhere about five years ago, and was supposed to go to Nicholson as Manager. I after a short acquaintance and conversation with him on arrival in Darwin, decided that he was not up to doing the job, and reported accordingly. We then decided to send him to Wave Hill for a try out. I discharged Froggatt three weeks after he started there, and that finished him as far as Vestey’s were concerned. I found him to be a complete failure in every respect. Talk like a gramaphone, could not agree with anybody, handled the truth carelessly, got drunk every chance he got, and so on. … In summing up in a few words, I would say, most abjectionable [sic] and I would not think of employing him under any consideration.

**Ted Scanlan.** Manager? (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers). Ted was Bill Crowson’s uncle (pers. comm. Cec Watts).

**Mike F. Biddulph.** Manager after Willick, from 1946 to at least November 1950 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; pers. comm., Len Hill; Buchanan, 18-9-1950). From there he was transferred to Coolullah station, Queensland (*Hoofs & Horns*, May 1951: 48).

**Bill Atkinson.** Manager, 1950s (Bell, 1992).

**Bob Nelson.** Manager during 1951 and 1954 (*Hoofs & Horns*, May 1951: 48 and December 1953: 42; Bell, 1992; pers. comm., Len Hill). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

**Bill (or G?) Holland.** Manager in December 1952 (WHPJ, 19-12-1952). He was there for about six months (pers. comm. Cec Watts) and left for Queensland with his family in March 1953 (WHPJ, 21-3-1953). Bill was the brother of Jack Holland. They came from the Tambo region (pers. comm., Lloyd Fogarty).


Ernie Blackwood. Manager in 1956-58 (pers. comm., Mick Bower; pers. comm., Len Hill). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says Ernie also was on Gordon Downs, then went to Flora and then went back to Nicholson.


Leonard George Hill. Manager from 1958 to 1980 (pers. comm., Len Hill; Hoofs & Horns, November 1962: 24). The following information was supplied by Len Hill and also comes from Pastoral Properties of Australia (Taylor, 1984). Len was born at Mount Barker, Western Australia, on June 27th 1926 and went to school in Perth until he was sixteen. At seventeen he became a jackaroo, spending time on Tootra, Bindi Bindi and Carnegie stations.

While working as a stockman on Windidda station in 1946 he helped round up a mob of horses and then went with drover, Ben Taylor, taking the horses up the Canning stock route to Halls Creek. After five weeks on the road the horses were delivered and Taylor’s droving team then took possession of 550 bullocks and took them back down the Canning to Wiluna. The 1,400 kilometre return trip took eighteen weeks. Len kept a rough diary of these trips which has since been published as Droving with Ben Taylor (2009).

In 1947 Len worked as a stockman on Yathroo station near Moora, Western Australia, and the following year worked as a casual labourer on building sites. In 1949-52 he worked for Vestey’s on Flora Valley and Margaret River stations, first as horse breaker and later as head stockman. During the next two years Len worked as head stockman, the first year on Amhurst station in the Kimberley and the second (1954) on Coolullah near Cloncurry. After a year of casual work in New Zealand Len rejoined Vestey’s in about 1956 as head stockman on Nicholson station. In 1957 he was an assistant boss drover for Vestey cattle going to the Wyndham Meatworks and into the Territory, and in 1957 he took Vestey cattle across the Murrangi Track. Through 1958 he was relieving manager on Manbulloo, Nutwood, Wave Hill, Kirkimbie and Flora Valley stations, all Vestey properties.

From 1959 to 1964 Len was manager of Nicholson station and from 1965 to 1968 was ‘group manager’, supervising Ord River, Turner River, Mistake Creek, Spring Creek and Nicholson stations. He was the last Vestey’s manager on Nicholson before it and the other Vestey properties were sold to Partners, Sleep & Company in 1980. When the sale of Nicholson went through Len went to live in Perth, but when Emanuel Brothers offered him the management of Christmas Creek station he accepted. He was in this position from September 1981 to March 1982 when he was transferred the neighbouring Gogo station.
Gogo was bought by WA Livestock soon after Len went there but he remained as manager of Gogo until 1986 when he retired. His ‘retirement’ was short-lived. In 1987 he became Improvements Manager for WA Livestock to develop seven blocks excised from Gogo, Christmas Creek, Cherabun, Lousia and Bohemia stations. This development consisted of surveying, clearing and fencing about 600 kilometres, as well as putting in bores and yards. In 1988 he retired again.

During his time in the north Len was active in various local government and cattlemen’s associations. Up to 1980 these positions included 15 years as a Councillor of Halls Creek Shire Council (six years as Shire President), eight years on the Kimberley Zone Development Committee, three years on the Agriculture Protection Board in Halls creek, six years as president of the Negri Race Club and six years as a Justice of the Peace.

After 1980 Len was a member of the Pastoralists and Graziers’ Association for six years, and at the same time he was a member of the Agriculture Protection Board West Kimberley, representing the Pastoralists and Graziers, the Bush Fire Authority and the Soil Conservation Committee, West Kimberley. At other times in the 1980s he was a member of the Pastoral Industry Liaison Group for the Kimberley Region, a member of the newly formed Soil Conservation Committee, Fitzroy River Basin, and a member of the locally formed Bush Fire Authority, West Kimberley Branch.

Len met his future wife, Robin Richardson, in Perth in the 1950s when she was doing a midwifery degree. They went out a few times and then went their separate ways, Robin to Melbourne and Len to New Zealand. They met again in Katherine in 1957 when Len was relieving manager at Manbulloo. They married in Katherine on December 27th, 1958. After a honeymoon driving to Port Augusta and taking the train to Perth, they were given the job of managing Nicholson. Robin adjusted quickly to station life and her nursing qualifications were invaluable.


**Nick Pasa.** Manager in 1996 (pers. comm., Ian Hoare).

**Martin Laffer.** Manager in 1997 (pers. comm., Ian Hoare).
According to Shaw (1991: 164-65) the Ningbing lease was taken up by Walter Okes in 1909 and transferred to Billy Weaber and Julius Prior in 1910. Shaw says that buildings were erected about the time of the First World War. Wilson (1996: 346-48) says that Weaber bought Prior’s share in 1915 and in 1922 went into partnership again, this time with the Wyndham Stock Inspector, Arthur Haly. Haly died on March 2nd 1929 (The Pastoral Review, 16-4-1929: 339) and four years later Weaber sold Ningbing to Bovril (Martin, 23-4-1935). During Bovril’s time, Ningbing homestead was used as an outstation and the station was run from Carlton (Wilson, 1996: 346-48).

When the first bombs fell on Wyndham in 1942, Ningbing was abandoned and all hands moved to Carlton. In 1944 after having only a caretaker at Ning Bing for 2 years, Ningbing officially became part of Carlton Hill (Bradley, 1993). In 2003 title to the station was handed to the Aboriginal traditional owners.

**William Charles Brown ‘Billy’ Weaber.** Part-owner-manager from 1910 to 1933. According to his son, Kevan (Weaber, 2000), Billy Weaber was born on a farm on the Logan River, Queensland, in 1876. At age 15 he left home to begin work as a drover, travelling with cattle in the Kimberley, Northern Territory and Queensland. He is mentioned in the Timber Creek police journal of September 24th 1906 as having arrived there with Edward O’Loughlin from Burketown. He is mentioned again in the Wyndham Occurrence Book of March 1908 (entry for 16–3-1908). In 1910, in partnership with a man named J. Prior, Weaber took up Ningbing station. He married Kathleen Hayes, a younger sister to Tom Hayes who was a pioneer of Rosewood. She joined Billy on Ningbing and they had three children – Owen (b. 1918), Kathleen (b. 1922) and Kevan
Billy bought out Prior in 1915 and remained as sole owner until 1922 when he formed a partnership with the Wyndham stock inspector, Arthur Haly. In 1929 Haly died (*The Pastoral Review*, 16-4-1929) and in 1933 Weaber sold Ningbing to Bovril Australian Estates. The sale was made because Weaber had become blind, the result of being hit in the eye by a tree branch while out mustering (Weaber, 2000). The same source says that he later lost his sight in the other eye through a kick from a horse.

Bill and Kate Weaber, 1916 (Flo Martin collection).

In a letter VRD manager Alf Martin wrote to Lord Luke in July 1932 he states that:

This station is mortgaged to the Wyndham Meatworks for about £4,000 and everything points to the Works being after this place. Mr. Weaber, part owner, has gone blind and will never be able to work on it again. Mrs. Haley, the other part owner, seems to be against Weaber. They have a man managing it for them but the Wyndham Meatworks seem to have all the say (Martin, 1-7-1932).

Billy sold out to Bovril Australian Estates in 1933 (Waugh, 29-6-1935) and together with his wife Kate and their children he set out for Brisbane. On their way they diverted to
Tennant Creek to try their luck at gold mining. They were very successful, pegging the ‘The Rising Sun’, ‘Weaber’s Find’ and ‘The Kimberley Kids’ leases. The family remained in Tennant Creek until Billy’s death on October 5th 1940. His widow then sold the leases to ‘Australian Development’ and moved to Brisbane, and later to Sydney (Weaber, 1997; Weaber, 2000; Wilson, 1996: 346-48; Clement, 2000).

**Jack Wyndham Martin.** Manager from 1933 to 1943 (Martin, 1985: 81; Buckland, 1-10-1959; Martin, 21-10-1942. In a 1935 letter Alf Martin stated, ‘J. Martin at Ningbing. I have put this man on £1.0.0 per week extra as he is having a very trying time just now’ (Martin, 21-9-1935).

In 1959 William Buckland advised VRD manager Quirk that:

> A man named J.W. Martin – Aged 48 – married – no children writes to ask whether there is any vacancy as Station Manager or Oversee. He has been seven years with the Wyndham Meat Works – Livestock foreman – And wants to get on property again. He was with Bovril Estates for 20 years, and managed NingBing for 10 years and Walgra for three years – prior to that he was running stock camps on Victoria River Downs, and acting Manager on two occasions. He left Walgra on his own accord to take up the Butchering business at Tennant Creek (Buckland, 1-10-1959).

**Arthur Haly.** Part-owner from 1922 until his death at Cottesloe, Western Australia, on March 2nd 1929 (The Pastoral Review, 16-4-1929: 339; Wilson, 1996: 346-48). Unless otherwise state the information on Haly comes from *The Pastoral Review* (16-4-1929: 339). Haly was born on Tabinga station, in the Burnett district, Queensland, in 1874. His father was C.R. Haly who was the first to introduce Arab blood into Australia, a gift from the Khedive of Egypt. Arthur learnt cattle work on Maroon station and went on to become manager of Burenda station in Western Queensland.

In 1902 he began work as a Stock Inspector in the Kimberley and in 1909 he was in charge of purchasing three Kimberley stations for the Western Australian Aborigines Department. These purchases were then combined in 1910 to form the Moola Bulla Aboriginal station which he managed for many years. With the Ord River manager, in about 1908 he made a three month exploring trip into the Kimberley between the Durack and Drysdale rivers (Broughton, 1965: 95).

Haly married Doris de Winton of Toowong, Queensland, in 1911 and she joined him at Moola Bulla. As well as his interest in Ningbing he may have been involved with other properties.

**Edward O’Loughlin.** Manager? ‘was in charge of W. Weaver’s Ningbing station for years’, probably while Weaber was living at and managing Carlton Hill. He died at Newry on September 30th 1918 (*Northern Territory Times*, 19-10-1918).

**Charlie Pretlove.** Manager in 1947 (Pretlove, 2-1-1947). In this letter he described himself as manager of Carlton Hill, Leguna and Ningbing stations.
Taken up by W.H. ‘Billy the Smelter’ Osmand and J. M. Panton in 1883 and stocked in 1884, either on June 15th (Buchanan, 1933: 96) or June 22nd (Bolton, 1953: 29). Panton was at that time the City Magistrate in Melbourne (Pearson, 31-3-1934, Buchanan family papers) while Osmand was resident at Stawell, Victoria (Buchanan, 1997: 89-90). According to Swan (1991: 93) Osmand had made his fortune on the Victorian gold fields. This is confirmed by McLennan (1965: 12) who also states that his nickname came from his expertise in smelting. Osmand bought out Panton in about 1893 and died at his Stawell mansion early in 1900 (Durack, 1983: 46, 70).

The first cattle were delivered to the Ord by Nat Buchanan whose party included Bob Button, Hugh and Wattie Gordon, Tom Cahill, Donald Swan, Gordon Buchanan, Paddy McDonald, G.W. Campbell and Octolonius Turtle Sinclair (Bolton, 1953: 29; Swan, 1991: 94). 4000 or 5000 breeders started out on the 2,250 mile journey which took 22 months and had a total of over 300 men employed throughout the trip. The first 1000 head were bought at Beaufort station on the Belyando River. Another 4000 were taken off Avington station near Blackall (Swan, 1991: 94).

Giles (nd.: 190; *The Pastoralists’ Review*, 15-3-1906: 40) records that the cattle mostly came from Avington and Beaufort near Rockhampton and:

were started out under the direction of one McFee, but shortly after starting McFee was deposed in favour of a raw office youth named Longden, who was sent up from some business house in Melbourne. Longden did not last long, and Mr. "Nat" Buchanan was sent out to take the cattle over, which he did near Richmond, in Western Queensland, and finally delivered them on Ord River, in Western Australia, in May 1884.

Giles goes on to state that Bob Button passed Springvale with 2200 Fisher and Lyons cattle on March 1st, 1884. He also records that, ‘Messrs Mc Maugh, Thos. Cahill ... W. and H. Gordon all close up with mobs over which Mr "Nat" Buchanan had general supervision.’ This indicates that Bob Button’s mob was in the lead and would have been first to strike the Ord.
According to Swan (1991: 95-6):

A site for the homestead was picked in a bend of the Forrest River about two miles up from its junction with the Ord ... a hut was built of bloodwood saplings, with a greenhide roof, as grass was out of the question. The table and bunks were also of greenhide with grass mattresses. There was plenty of ventilation. When the wind blew it whistled through the cracks in fine style.

By 1891 the homestead had improved somewhat, being described as ‘situated on elevated ground commanding an extensive view. It consists of five main buildings of stone and mortar with verandahs all round, the walls being two feet thick, all the wood is cut from local timber and the roof is covered with iron’ (West Australian, 4-7-1891). Doug Moore added that the homestead had ‘no windows – only doors. Built for safety when black[s] bad. Store – heavy doors, no windows, verandah … The baker’s oven in the kitchen doorway and when the fire was burning you had to duck to get in or out or get burned’ (Moore, nd.).

The original name of Ord River was supposed to be ‘Plympton St Marys’ (Bolton, 1953: 29) which, according to McLennan (1965: 10) was the name of Osmand’s birthplace in Devonshire, England. It was sometimes referred to in early documents as ‘Forrest River’ (eg Parsons, 31-12-1885: 2), probably a reference to the location of the first homestead on Forrest Creek, but ‘Ord River’ or ‘The Ord’ are the names by which the station has been known throughout most of its history. The property straddles the Western Australian-Northern Territory border. According to early employee Doug Moore who arrived on Ord River in 1900, the property was then unfenced and the stockmen used to joke that Ord River ‘had two paddocks – one in the Northern Territory and the other in W.A., so you can imagine they were fairly big’ (Moore, nd.).

Bob Button stayed on to become the first manager and in 1885 he was said to have had ‘a head station in the Northern Territory and in Western Australia, both’ (Parsons, 31-12-1885: 2). Donald Swan, Paddy McDonald, G.W. Campbell and Octolonius Turtle Sinclair also stayed on. In 1895 Ord River was said to have branded 8000 calves (Northern Territory Times, 28-2-1896).

The first stores for the station were bought to Cambridge Gulf by Osmand’s yacht, the ‘Cushie Doo’, the name being Scottish and meaning ‘soft job’ (McLennan, 1965: 11). On arrival J.S. “Sandy” Maugher and several sailors were sent on foot to advise Button that the stores were landed. One of these men died shortly after reaching Ord River station. Button and the others took packhorses and picked up the stores, but there was a proportion left. They sealed the excess in a metal container and buried it for later retrieval, but when they returned to where the stores had been left they found that the blacks had lit fires under the container and destroyed the contents (Swan, 1991: 98; Buchanan, 1997: 99; Bolton, 1953: 30). The following year (1885) stores for Ord River were delivered to the Victoria River Depot and transported overland from there (Northern Territory Times, 13-6-1885).

On September 7th 1896 the Wyndham Police reported that the ‘SS. Clitus brought the following live stock for Mr. W.H. Osmand’s Ord R. Stn. – 261 bulls, 50 sheep, 2 Rams, 2 waggons, 6 bullocks & a quantity of chaff & hay.’ At this time the area of Ord River
was 3,365,000 acres, 1 million of which is in the Colony of South Australia’ (McLennan, 1965: 4-5).

Bolton (1953: 115) states that William Copley or the brothers Ben and Jim Copley and Jim Patterson purchased Ord River from Osmand’s executors in 1902 (1953: 116). The Pastoral Review (16-5-1940: 424) also says it was Ben and Samuel. Bolton goes on to say (1953: 117) that these partners began shifting stock to market by chartered boat, making nine trips annually. Between 1902 and 1908 they sent 31,801 cattle south. By 1904 the station was said to have 60,000 head of cattle (The Pastoralists’ Review, 17-10-1904) and by 1908, 100,000 (Adelaide Register, 13-1-1908). The partners had a policy of not employing Aborigines although with ‘an element of coercion’ a station blacks’ camp was established in 1905 (Bolton, 1953: 124). In 1907 the Timber Creek police journal (28-8-1907) referred to the ‘Ord River outstation – Rainbar’. Rainbar (Ray-in-par) is located on Stirling Creek on what is now Mistake Creek station.

In 1906 Weir (1906: 242) described the station as:

one of the oldest, and perhaps for such an extent of country (5,000,000 acres), it is one of the best all round properties in this State. At present it has a carrying capacity of 75,000 head, with an annual branding of 18,000, whilst 6,000 fats are annually forwarded from the station for shipment to Freemantle. The property is magnificently watered by the Ord, Nicholson, Turner, Osmond, and Negri Rivers, besides a number of springs which flow continuously throughout the year. The country in parts appears like huge paddocks, with trees fringing the river banks for boundary fences. The grasses are all of a finer nature than those near the coast, and are more rapidly affected by dry seasons.

According to Doug Moore who worked on Ord River for about fourteen years from 1900 (see below), there were about thirty men employed on the station including at outcamps at Turner, Sturt, Margaret, Mistake Creek and Osmond River’ (Moore, nd.). Moore claimed that:

The majority of stockmen carried revolvers on their belts, but when boundary riding and doing slow work where blacks were bad, always carried their 32 rifles under the saddle flaps on the near side hung in the front with a strap from the front D and a small strap round the neck of the rifle from a back D on the saddle.

While Moore was on the station he said (May 1958: 40) that all the men were ‘tuckered from the Ord and we had two teams of ninety head each of bull camels, one team of fifty cow camels, two horse teams, and a team of thirty pack mules bringing up rations from Wyndham the whole season.’

Moore’s (December 1959: 50) description of conditions on the station in the early 1900s mentions that:

On one occasion we had no lamps for a long time other than cow manure instead of fat which gave a good light … a fat lamp was then considered an amenity, and an oil lamp was a luxury! The tucker we got on the stations was plentiful but plain—flour, tea, sugar, jam, cream-of-tartar, soda, preserved potatoes, and salt. The salt was obtained from what we called the Salt Pan; it was scraped off the rocks by
the blacks and often had a lot of small stones in it which one found at times when eating salt beef. Those were the days when men were men in the outback; no one was spoon fed. Wages were £2 a week and found, and there were very few loafers. The men were all first class bushmen and knew station work from A to Z…

The Ord River salt deposit, c1930 (Bovril collection).

In January 1914, Copley and Patterson sold Ord River, Margaret River and Sturt Creek, with a combined herd of 120,000 to 140,000 cattle, to the Union Cold Storage Company (Vestey's) for £250,000 (NAA ACT A3, NT14/5459; The Pastoral Review, 16-5-1940: 424). The Ord River brand at this time (and since at least 1893) was a circle with a dot in the centre followed by ‘55’ (NAA ACT, A3 NT 14/5459; Bolton, 1953: 169). Vestey's held Ord River until it was resumed by the Western Australian government in 1967 (Kelly, 1971: 51).

According to Bolton (1953: 234), Ord River was divided in about 1917-1920 to form two stations – Ord River and Nicholson. Buchanan (18-9-1950) confirms this but adds that a third station was formed from Ord River – Turner station. In 1921 A.P Volkman (part owner of Passchendaele station) claimed that in Western Australia about three years earlier a land act was passed in which it was required that, ‘every million acres of country (about 1500 miles) has to have a manager, set of books, and separate brand’ (Volkman, 14-10-1921: 548). Volkman went on to say that the act was:

undoubtedly aimed at Vestey's, who were taking up land all over the place—the lower end of the Sturt adjoining their other stations—their intentions evidently being to manage them from the one centre. Since the act had come into force, Ord River station, which was originally one station with one manager, has now five stations with five separate managers and staffs.

Beth Beckett, who visited the station in 1947, describes the homestead at that time as:

a series of detached rooms constructed mainly from stone collected from the river and whitewashed. The floors were paved with river flag-stones, but unlike at ‘Mistake Creek’, they were concreted together, they made a rustic, uneven but very serviceable floor. … On retiring we found a bush-made bed without a mattress and only a blanket over the rawhide base’. Beckett described the toilet as, ‘Built smack
on the top of a small rise the ascent was by a series of steps set into the ground. It was a pit toilet, sheltered from above by a corrugated iron roof and the bush-made wooden seat was surrounded by four foot high, corrugated iron walls above which it was open to the air. This simple but effective construction enabled an unobstructed 360 degrees view of the surrounding country and it was built to the specifications of the pioneer manager. At the time there was conflict between the blacks and the whites and he obviously didn’t want to be speared with his trousers down (Beckett, 1998: 64-5).

A 1944 report on erosion on Ord River reported that:

The most striking and persistent feature of the whole area [the upper Ord watershed] is the widespread occurrence and severity of soil erosion. Before the area was taken up for cattle grazing (fifty-five to sixty years ago) the vegetation was a grassland and savannah woodland association where Mitchell and Flinders grasses were abundant. Now most of the perennial grasses are gone and a large proportion of the trees are dead. During the dry season of 1944 the landscape was bare and brown over most of the area between Ord River and Turner stations. Examination of the soil profiles would indicate that 4 to 12 inches of topsoil have been stripped away from large areas, by the combined action of wind and water (Maze, 1945: 7).

This erosion was spreading quickly. Another observer in 1944 noted that, ‘as little as 17 years ago in the upper Ord Valley, it is reported that there was a heavy grass cover on many areas now virtually bare and desertic’ (Teake, 1944: 174).

In 1950 Buchanan (4th to 6-11-1950) mentioned that there were:

Large areas of red soil undulating country which is very badly eroded and on which practically nothing grows except for narrow strips along the creeks and watercourse. This is similar to that country mentioned in the Turner Report and has no doubt been caused by the same thing i.e. overstocking in the earlier times … Disabilities include large areas of what was once good grazing country now being rendered practically useless due to soil erosion, bad breakaways along the Ord and larger rivers that are becoming worse each year, cattle tick, buffalo fly and trouble with wild dogs. Large numbers of wild donkeys and camels – they are shooting these out as best they can – and the usual difficulties in respect to suitable labour and the obtaining of materials. Horses do not do well. Manager says they are very wormy, and there appears to be some kind of poison but he does not know what.

Nothing was done about the erosion problem until construction of the proposed Ord River dam was approved late in 1959 when concerns were raised that ongoing erosion could lead to siltation. In 1962 the Ord River area contained several thousand square miles of bare land, caused by many decades of overgrazing, and large areas were closed to allow regeneration (NT News, 3-8-1970). In March 1967 the Western Australian government:

resumed 3,280 square miles composing the Western Australian part of the Ord watershed which covered the whole of Ord River and Turner Stations and 625 square miles of Flora Valley Station, all of which were held by the Vestey interests (Kelly, 1971: 55).
At this time there was said to have been ‘several thousand square miles of bare land’ (*NT News*, 3-8-1970).

In the 1950s donkeys reached plague proportions on Ord River and other stations along the Western Australian-Northern Territory border, and they were employing full time donkey shooters. One man is reported to have shot 1200 in four months (*Hoofs & Horns*, May 1955: 14). These ferals and long-term overstocking were major factors in the erosion which led to the station being resumed by the government and declared a regeneration area. According to Len Hill (pers. comm.), from about 1965 Ord River was managed from Nicholson.

A coordinated program for feral donkey control was begun in 1978 and involved broadscale shooting but feral donkeys remained a problem into the 1990s. In 1994 the ‘judas collar’ technique was introduced. This involves fitting a wild donkey with a radio transmitter on a collar. The animal is then released and teams up with other wild donkeys, and every month it is tracked and the other donkeys are shot. The process is repeated every month until the area is feral-free, and has led to a marked success in controlling wild donkeys (*Savanna Links*, issue 9, March-April, 1999: 7).

**Bob Button.** Manager from 1884 until at least August 1888 (*Northern Territory Times*, 18-10-1884; Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station], 26-8-1888). The son of a convict, he is said to have been born in May 1853 at Wedderburn, Victoria. In about 1857 his father began working for Francis Tozer, a wealthy Western District pastoralist. Bob rode for Tozer in Victoria and in the early 1870s he travelled into Queensland to another of Tozer’s properties (Gibbins, 1986: 10-11).

Durack (1974: 277) says he pioneered the track from Queensland to Kimberley. According to Buchanan (1933: 81) Button left Walcha (NSW) in 1883 to take up the management of Ord River for Osmand and Panton (Buchanan, 1933: 81). Giles (nd.: 190) says he took a mob of 2200 Fisher & Lyon’s cattle past Springvale on March 1st 1884, so there appears to be a conflict between the two sources. According to the *Northern Territory Times* of 18-10-1884, Button began work on Ord River in September 1884, but Buchanan (1933: 96) states he began in June 1884. He was definitely manager by September 8th (‘Exploration of Cambridge Gulf’, *Argus* 18-10-1885: 10).

Donald Swan, who accompanied the first cattle to the Ord, described Button as:

> a natural bushman, born not made ... I don’t think a better was ever born in all Australia. He never carried a compass, yet, though I travelled a good deal with him in virgin country I never knew him to be at fault. He was a most conscientious man who would rather lose a pound himself than let his boss lose a shilling. He was also a heavy smoker and very eccentric in many ways ... He was a splendid rough rider and fearless over timber and fences.

In March 1887 Mickey, a Queensland Aborigine, shot and killed his white ‘boss’ Alexander Patrick near Halls Creek, took horse and firearms and cleared for Queensland. On the way through Ord River he stole Button’s horse “Tow Row”, one of the best horses on the station. The Western Australian police were unable to cross the border in pursuit so Button and a stockman named Paddy McDonald set out after the fugitive (Swan, 1991: 103; Wyndham Police Station, Journal of Patrols 1901-1906; *Queensland Figaro &
ORD RIVER

Punch, 28-5-1887: 5; pers. comm., Andrew Barker). Later Button (Halls Creek Police Occurrence Book, SROWA AN5/Halls Creek, Acc. 14222, entry for 8-3-1887) made the following statement to the Halls Creek police:

P McDonnel & myself left the Ord Station on the morning of Saturday the 5th March to track up Mickey the black boy the murderer of A Patrick [and] to get a horse that Mickey had stolen from the Station.

We came up with the murderer at about eleven Oclock on Tuesday the 8th March on GB Creek a tributary of the Victoria River and about 40 miles west of Buchanan's Wave Hill Station and about 15 miles east of the overland road to Port Darwin. When we came on Mickey he had the horse tied up to a tree and was digging out an iguana about 12 yards away from the horse. We were only about 90 yards away from him when we saw him. I called out to him not to run away that I would not shoot him. For answer he pulled out the revolver and fired at me. I started my horse into a gallop to get out of his way, but there was a large waterhole which kept me in range and he fired two more shots out of the revolver at me.

At this point he had succeeded [sic] in getting the Snider rifle out of the canvas case and I thought it was time to defend ourselves or one or both of us would be shot. Mickey was in the act of firing again when he was shot down and expired at once. there was only one shot fired at the murderer, and that was not fired until Mickey had fired three times and was going to fire again, so we had to fire on him in self defence. On the body we discovered a Cartridge belt containing 11 revolver cartridges and 9 snider cartridges, in his trousers pocket was one snider cartridge and 3 buttons with about 200 rounds of cartridges strapped on the saddle.

All the things found with the murderer I deliver[ed] to the Police at the Diggings.

(Signatures)      (Sd) Robert Button, manager
                 P J McDonald stockman
                 March 16th 1887

Button and McDonald claimed the shooting was self-defence and no police action was taken (Elvire Creek Police Occurrence Book, 1887-88; Buchanan, 1933: 116).

Button appears to have finished at Ord station in early 1888 (Gibbons, 1993; Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station], 8-6-1888), as George Hedley had taken over by April 1888 (Halls Creek Police Station Report and Letter Book, 6-6-1887 to 7-11-1893). He then spent a considerable time prospecting — the eastern Ord River, the west side of Cambridge Gulf (with Tweed and Perry, for three months), the Leopold Ranges and in the Prince Regent River country (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station,] 1890-1892), entries for 16-2-1890, 22-7-1890, 26-11-1890, 29-12-1890, 8-5-1891, 20-5-1891, and 27-7-1891.

While on the goldfields on May 5th 1888 he was reported to have been wandering around Halls Creek in a state of unsound mind and was detained by the police as a dangerous lunatic until June 5th 1888 (Halls Creek Police Occurrence Book). Button was an epileptic and almost certainly had taken a fit. He was still manager in August 1888 (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 13-4-1886 to 31-8-1888). At one stage he was the owner of Ruby Plains station in the Kimberley. There is mention of ‘R. Button’s camp on Ruby Plains’ in April 1898 (Halls Creek Report Book; see also Flinders, 2016: 77).
According to Flinders (2016: 78), while managing the Ord Button refused to sell meat to the famous ‘Ragged Thirteen’, but he sold them salt which they then used to salt down some Ord River beef they shot for themselves.

In 1908 Button applied for exemption from the Aborigines Act of 1905 for a woman named Perry (Jenny) and her children, and the Chief Protector of Aborigines wrote to the Wyndham police asking for their opinion of Button (Ryan to Chief Protector of Aborigines, 9-10-1908). The police replied in highly positive terms and explained that:

Some 16 or 17 years ago he made the acquaintance in the Bush of the native woman ‘Perry’ already referred to being then almost segregated from Civilization he lived and Cohabited with the woman and as a result (5) five children were born to them all of which are today alive the Native Woman “Perry” and her offspring Butten has never repudiated his connection with and has ever provided in them as comfortable a manner as his means would afford Button is now in very fare way to Fortune … He avers that being the putative Father of those Children he cannot in Justice desert them or their mother. The Latter he would be willing to Marry in accordance with the Provisions of the Act if he had only his own Feelings to Consult but unfortunately he had a number of relations chiefly Nephews & Nieces and it is in Consideration for them and their Honour that he declined to Marry the native woman – on the other hand he is prepared to maintain and Educate the Children and at present is negotiating with the Beagle Bay Missionaries to have them Educated – The welfare of the woman and Children is his greatest desire.

Button died, apparently in tragic circumstances, on June 30th 1911 (Finders, 1933). In his will he bequeathed his station, with about 3000 head of cattle, to his Aboriginal wife and three of their children, two girls and a boy. Two other children born after he made his will were not beneficiaries. Shortly before he died Button sent the two girls, aged six and ten, to Beagle Bay Mission, and the boy, then fifteen, went with them. After he died the station was unoccupied and the bush Aborigines began ‘spearing the cattle wholesale’. The executor of the estate, an ‘old friend in Sydney … refused to act and renounced the executorship’ (West Australian, 12-6-1913). The eventual outcome of this situation is unknown.

His name is commemorated at Button’s Gap on the old Wyndham Road on the west side of Kununurra, at Button Creek which flows into Sturt Creek and at Mount Button which abuts the south side of the Negri River on Texas Downs (Osmond 1:100,000 map).

**George R. Hedley.** Manager from at least April 1888 to about the end of 1890 or early 1891 (Halls Creek Police Station Report and Letter Book 6-6-1887 – 7-11-1893; Buchanan, 1933: 98; Halls Creek Police Occurrence Book, 20-6-1890). He was on Ord River almost from the beginning.

Hedley had been on the expedition across the Gulf country with Favenc and Briggs in 1878 (Buchanan, 1997: 46). He was also on the trip in 1881 to stock Fisher and Lyon’s Glencoe station and the 1884 trip to stock Ord River. His job on the latter trip was to gather together strays and other cattle left behind by the main party of drovers – the
‘hospital mob’ (Swan, 1991: 104; Buchanan 1997: 93). He arrived on the Ord late in 1884, four months after the others, with a mob of about 600 stragglers (Swan, 1991: 104; Buchanan, 1933: 97). This would have been in September or October 1884. While on the Glencoe trip, on the Nicholson River he shot an Aboriginal who had lifted his mosquito net in order to attack him (Buchanan, 1997:93). This place is marked on the ‘Commonwealth maps’ as ‘Hedley’s Camp’ (Buchanan, 1941: 117).

In 1885 he and a man named Morgan were the first white men to cross the Murranji region when they travelled from New South Wales to Ord River (Northern Territory Times, 29-8-1885 and 6-12-1886). Through 1885 he prospected for gold on the Ord and found colours, but no commercial quantities. His name is commemorated on Lissadell 1:100,000 map sheet at Hedley Spring Creek.

**Somerville Herbert Edward Leigh.** Manager from at least December 1890 (Houlahan, 9-1-1891), and probably to the end of 1892. Leigh is mentioned as manager of Ord River on January 16th 1891 in a report to Goldsborough Mort (Stevens, 16-1-1891). Fred Booty’s poem about the rapid succession of managers on Ord lists Leigh before Oakes, and Oakes is known to have been manager from the beginning of 1893 (Buchanan, 1941: 183; Northern Territory Times, 1-1-1893).

**Duncan McCauley, ‘The Scrub Bull’.** Head stockman in the early 1890s. For additional biographical details see entry under Ivanhoe.

**Theodore Tudor Shadforth.** Stockman and then head stockman in the period from 1886 (Gibbins, 1993: 14) to 1888. He was described by a contemporary as ‘a cool and self-possessed Queenslander who shrank from nothing. Like all true bushmen he cared not what he ate as long as he got food. Whether it rained or the sun shone seemed to be a matter of supreme indiffERENCE to him’ (Gibbins, 1993: 14).

In 1888 or 1889 he formed a partnership on a small run and a pub at Turkey Creek. He also went into cartage (packhorses) and in 1889 took out the mail contract on the Wyndham to Halls Creek run (Durack, 1974: 314; Clement, 1989: 36). Clement (1989: 24) says that:

In 1890 two young men, Shadforth and Taylor, who had overlanded from Queensland with 30 horses the previous year, set up a small inn and butcher’s shop at Turkey Creek. The site of their hut was called Shadforth’s Crossing. By October a few of the young Aborigines were venturing down to the hut, while the older men remained in the nearby ranges. Around this time the water dried up and Shadforth and Taylor shut up shop and cleared out.

Clement appears to be incorrect on the date of Shadforth’s arrival. She later says that it’s her conjecture that Taylor was Shadforth’s partner (1989: 36).

Shadforth was a believer in spiritualism (Gibbins, 1993: 14). He was speared and killed while out mustering with Duncan McCauley on the Osmand River. According to Shadforth’s headstone at Ord River homestead he was ‘Killed By Blacks’ on November 7th 1890, but McCauley’s account gives the date as November 21st (McCauley, nd.) Halls Creek Police Occurrence Book, SROWA AN5/Halls Creek Access No. 1422, entry for 10-1-1891).
A description of the events surrounding his death was provided to the Halls Creek police by McCauley:

On Monday th17 [sic] November last I left the Ord River Station in company with Tudor Shadforth and a native Boy for the purpose of looking for horses we continued to look for horses untill [sic] the following Thursday Night when we camped fourteen miles from the Station. On the Friday morning th21 Nov- we again left camp in search of horses we travelled up the Osmond [sic] River when we came onto some horse tracks Shadforth and the Native Boy turned at a water hole and rode down the River, I stopped behind to search for more tracks. About two or three minutes after Shadforth left me I heard an awful yell, I believe it was natives yelled. I Galloped straight down to where I heard the yells, I galloped about three Hundred yards when I met Shadforths native Boy I asked him where Shadforth was and he pointed straight to where He was lying. I rode straight to the Place indicated and I found Shadforth lying on the ground with his head doubled under him when I was galloping I saw Shadforths Horse Galloping with the saddle empty. I did not get off my horse I was frightened the Niggers might rush onto me I told the Black Boy to get off and pick him up and carry him on to a piece of higher ground, when I first saw him I could see he was just drawing his last breath. when I got him to the high ground I found he was speared in the left side, there was no spear in him but it looked like a spear wound, the mussell [sic] of the left arm was cut and a big gash in the left Ribs. I believe he was speared through the heart I then got the Native Boy to take the body in front of his saddle and I rode with him for two or three miles. I then told the Boy to go straight to the camp where we camped the night
previous, and I went to the Ord River Station to report the matter, I saw no natives at all that day nor any of the days while out with Shadforth.
The Native boy told me that after Shadforth was speared he saw a good few natives but saw none before he was speared. As Shadforth was riding there was a water hole on his left, about five yards between where he rode and the Water hole was thickly timbered with Pandemis [sic] trees. The Natives were in those trees there [sic] tracks was all through them.
Shadforth had a Rifle in his hand. He dropped it when he was Speared. The Native Boy had a Revolver. I had a rifle. The native boy fired two shots he said it was to frighten the natives after Shadforth was Speared. I came out with a party and bought the body to the Ord Station where we camped on the Thursday Night was at a yard where we generally muster cattle. It was about 10 miles from where Shadforth was speared. It was from seventy to eighty yards from where Shadforth was speared to where I found his body.

According to Booty (The Pastoral Review, 16-6-1927: 559), Shadforth’s only words after being speared were, ‘Oh Christ’.

**Ernest Harold Oakes (or Okes?)**. Appointed as overseer in January 1892 (Northern Territory Times, 1-1-1892), but in subsequent newspaper reports described as ‘general manager’ for Osmand and Panton (Northern Territory Times, 6-5-1892 and 1-9-1893). He had previously been manager of Elsey station (Northern Territory Times, 6-11-1891).

On February 3rd 1892 the Northern Territory Times reported that ‘400 head of cattle have been started over by Mr. Oakes from Osmand & Panton's Ord River station. They are for export to the east, and are in charge of Bob Anderson.’

Early in 1893 the Northern Territory Times (3-2-1893) reported that:

> The numerous friends of Mr. E H. Oakes, the general manager of Messrs. Osmand & Panton's Northern Territory and West Australian stations, will be sorry to hear that he is now and has been for some time past suffering from a serious affection of the eyes. When going over to Wyndham some weeks ago he caught a severe cold which flew to the eyes. On the way from Wyndham inland the affection had practically rendered one eye useless, and soon after arriving at the station the other followed suit. Mr. Oakes became absolutely blind. In order to reach a medical man as soon as possible it was necessary for him to return to Wyndham, and the 200 miles were travelled by him stone blind on a horse led by his brother inlaw. Under the most favorable conditions this journey would have been distressing enough; but it was made doubly painful by the fact that several streams had to be crossed by swimming. The crossing of the Ord itself is half a mile wide and a truly dangerous ford at any time. But Mr. Oakes arrived safely at the port, after enduring intense pain and running many risks, and from there came to Palmerston in the s.s. Adelaide. He is still helplessly indisposed, but there is every reason to believe that with proper care and skilled treatment his sight will be restored to him in time little, if any, worse than before the affection seized him. Since Christmas or thereabouts Mr. Oakes has not seen daylight.

Initially his eyesight improved quickly (Northern Territory Times, 10-20-1893), but in September it was reported (Northern Territory Times, 1-9-1893) that ongoing trouble,
‘will force that gentleman to seek a climate more favourable to a recovery’. No evidence has been found to indicate that Oakes ever returned to Ord River.

Cec Watts (pers. comm.) said that:

Oakes Creek on Flora Valley Station [which] Flows from The Oakes (a cluster of rocky outcrops on the edge of the Antrim Plateau) into the Elvire River, the creek contains a permanent waterhole called Oakes Rockhole. There was a half caste bloke called July Oakes who was headstockman at Rosewood in 1956/57, may have been a descendant?

Cec Watts’ speculation about July Oakes (Okes) is correct (Durack, nd.).

**Frederick Charles Booty.** Manager from 1895 until about 1900 or 1901. He was an Oxford graduate and a nephew of Billy Osmand, part-owner of Ord River. According to Mary Durack (1983: 236-27) he came to Australia from England in 1894 to visit his uncle, ‘Captain’ W.H. Osmand, and asked to be allowed to visit Ord River station before returning to his studies, but this conflicts with several other sources (Northern Territory Times 24-2-1893; Hill, 1951: 243; Buchanan, 1933: 144). According to Buchanan (1997: 146), Booty was bookkeeper on Ord River when Bob Button was manager, but Button had left Ord River by 1888 or 1889. Booty was at Ord River in September 1892 and manager in June 1895, no doubt after Buchanan had left. He was at the station homestead in 1890 when Duncan McCauley rode in to report that Tudor Shadforth had been speared (The Pastoral Review, 16-6-1927: 559).

From June 1897 in partnership with Bob Button and Tom Cahill he was owner-manager of Ruby Plains, south of Halls Creek. Later Nat Buchanan asked Booty and Sam Muggleton to come in with him on an outstation of Flora Valley. This property, Lamboo, became known as Kujabrin (or Cujabring) station, the name said to have derived from frequent requests to travellers, ‘could you bring’ goods from town (Durack 1983: 236-38; Moore, May 1958: 40). Booty was still there on the May 23rd, 1900 (Halls Creek Police Occurrence Book). According to Flinders (2016: 75) Booty later became owner of Lamboo station outside Halls Creek. Bolton (1953: 112) puts this at 1901 and says Booty was still there in 1912. A letter written by Booty (Booty, 5-11-1912) confirms that he was still there in 1912. It’s possible that Kujabrin and Lamboo were one and the same (pers. comm., Andrew Barker)

While W.H. Osmand owned Ord River he was in the habit of sacking his managers after relatively short periods, or else they left because of his interference. In 1903 Booty composed the following poem about the rapid turnover of Ord River station managers (Gibbins, 1986: 10):

> A smartish young fellow called Button  
> Brought up on horses (and Mutton)  
> First managed the Ord  
> And the country explored:  
> In the bush he was what they call "sudden".

Barefooted Hedley succeeded,  
Put up improvements much needed,
But the Old Man at Stawell
Didn’t want them at all
And Barefooted Hedley was "weeded".

Leigh, with a bustle and rattle
Next with the "mickies" did battle;
Said he wanted to go
For his wife ‘twas too slow
And he went — like the Ord River cattle.

Oakes was the next to the fore.
Scarcely a month had passed o’er
When he left with sore eyes,
And to no one’s surprise
Never came back any more.

Booty was there on the spot;
Better for him were he not,
For his old uncle Bill
Cut him out of his will,
And that was the thanks that he got.

Buchanan came next for one year,
A donkey spoiled him so I hear;
He staved off the "sack"
He telegraphed back
"When my time’s up I’m going to clear".

McLellan, whose short name was Jock
Next got in charge of the stock;
He understood rabbits
And their little habits;
He very soon got a rude shock.

Campbell next rode for a fall;
His yarns were exceedingly tall;
He bustled around
Galloped over the ground
And swore ‘he had branded them all’.

Young reigns in his stead,
For the Old Man is dead
And can’t change his managers more,
But I’m sure in his grave
He thinks him a knave,
And wishes he’d ‘sacked’ him before.

Paddy J. McDonald. Stockman from the founding of Ord River in 1884 (Swan, 1991: 95) and still there in 1887 (Halls Creek Police Occurrence Book, 28-3-1887). In 1910 while sleeping on the deck of a boat going to Port Essington he rolled off the deck and in
spite of a determined attempt to find him he was never seen again. The news item reporting this event (Northern Territory Times, 29-4-1910) said that, ‘Paddy McDonald has been in the Territory for some years, and was a well known cattle man. He is said to have played a principal part in the founding some years ago of the Ord River Station.’ Paddy is almost certainly the stockman who accompanied Bob Button on the chase after and eventual shooting of the Aborigine named Mick who had shot his white boss at Halls Creek (see entry for Button, above). Just prior to his death he had been negotiating to buy a boat with the intention of becoming a trepanger, and also doing some buffalo shooting.

**Jack Kelly.** Manager or head stockman in 1892. He was reported in Wyndham with Okes in April ‘from Ord River station’ (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station], 5-4-1892). While he was at Ord River Charlie Flannigan rode in after shooting Sam Croker at Auvergne. Kelly (Buchanan 1933: 144) says Booty convinced Flannigan to give himself up at Wyndham (or Halls Creek?) and (Kelly) accompanied him on the five day trip. At Wyndham Flannigan was arrested, sent to Darwin for trial, convicted and hanged (Buchanan, 1933: 144; Durack, 1974: 324). Gordon Buchanan (Buchanan family papers, 1950) has Jack Kelly as either owner or manager of Texas station.

**John McLennan.** Manager for a year, from September 1895 to September 1896. These dates are derived from a booklet published by John’s son, N. McLennan (1965: 3-4), in which is reproduced the balance sheet for his father’s expenses for the trip to Ord River, dated 18-9-1895, so there can be no doubt of the accuracy of his information.

McLennan was born in 1848. He owned a farm near Stawell in Victoria, not far from home of one of the owners of Ord River, W. Osmand. As well as being a farmer he was a pastoral inspector and a Justice of the Peace. Clearly he was not particularly well qualified to manage a large north Australian cattle station. While on Ord River he was registered as a Justice of the Peace for the Kimberley goldfields and occasionally had to attend court at Halls Creek.

According to Clive McLennan and Kath McLennan (pers. comm.), Bob Gibbons told them that McLennan returned to Stawell on October 24th, 1896.

**Nathaniel Armstrong ‘Bluey’ Buchanan.** Manager of Ord River for a year, beginning in 1894. Unlike most managers who worked for Osmond, Bluey left before he was sacked (Buchanan, 1997: 154-5). He had resigned by July 1895 because the next manager, John McLennan, was signed on in August. He may have remained on the station until McLennan turned up in September 1895. For additional biographical information see entry under Wave Hill.

**John William ‘Jack’ Beasley.** Head stockman in 1898 (Durack, 1983: 37) and through to at least 1900 (Moore, nd.). Beasley was reported as departing Wyndham for Argyle with packhorses in August 1899 (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station], 19-8-1899). For additional biographical details see entry for Mount Stirling Station.

**Donald Campbell.** Manager in December 1898 and January 1899 (Wyndham Occurrence Book 1897-1899, Acc 741-13, entries for 7-12-1898 and September 1899). He would have been the manager before Charles Young. Campbell was manager in September 1899 when an Ord River employee named Wilson was accused of branding some Ord River cattle with the Texas brand. Jim Crisp disputed the claim but said that
Some of Kelly’s calves were given the Ord River brand by mistake, and Campbell told Crisp to brand an equivalent number of Ord calves for Kelly. The police noted that, ‘apparently both Ord and Kellys Stations give and takes as is done on all unfenced stations where cattle intermix’ General Opinion Ord River Station Managed as well as the Limited number of men allowed can possibly do it’ (Wyndham Occurrence Book 1897-1899, entry for 15-2-1899).

**Charles (or Arthur?) Young.** Manager from 1899 (?) until 1902 (Durack, 1983: 46, 115; Bolton, 1953: 116; Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1899-1902, entry for 27-1-1901). Durack and Doug Moore (May 1958: 40) refer to him as Arthur Young and this needs clarifying; possibly he was Charles Arthur or Arthur Charles. Young had a wife on the station whom Bolton (1953: 1143) states would insist that men wear their coats to the table, whatever the weather. Apparently Young was a witness in a breach of contract case bought by the Duracks against Ord River part-owner Jim Patterson, and this caused the termination of his employment (Durack, 1983: 115). Patterson was part-owner of Ord River from 1902 to 1914.

**James Patterson.** Part-owner and manager from late 1900 or 1901 until at least 1902, and probably at times through until 1907. He was in partnership with brothers Ben and Sam Copley (Weir, 1906: 242; Durack, 1983: 44, 63, 77; Moore, May 1958: 40 and December 1959: 50; Bolton, 1953: 116).

According to Doug Moore (May, 1958: 40), Patterson was, ‘A North of Ireland man and very keen on stock-work. He made big money shipping horses to South Africa during the Boer War, and bought in with Copley Bros. He came up to the Kimberleys about 1903.’

Patterson probably took over the management after he and his partners bought the Ord in 1902 (Bolton, 1953: 116). He was described as manager of Ord River in the Wyndham Occurrence Book in November 1907 (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1907-1908, entry for 14-11-1907). According to Mary Durack, Patterson had been on Argyle in 1899 and was manager of Newry in 1900, before he took over Ord River (Durack 1983: 63; Durack, nd.).

Doug Moore (May 1958: 40) says that one year in Patterson’s time, nine mobs of 500 were taken from Ord River to Fremantle, three mobs of 1500 overlanded to Queensland and two mobs shipped to Batavia, yet the branding on Ord that year was 18,000. Moore says there were three big mustering camps in operation on Ord – Carter Camp, Turner Camp and Mistake Creek Camp.

During Patterson’s time cattle prices were high for the first time in decades and as a result, duffing was rife around Ord River and other large stations elsewhere. ‘HTH’ (Hely-Hutchinson – usually ‘H7H’), a journalist travelling with a drover from Lisadell station to Queensland, wrote about the problem in *The Pastoralists’ Review* (15-2-1906). According to ‘HTH’:

> The two principal industries on the East Kimberley side are cattle rearing and cattle ‘duffing’. That is, one man breeds the cattle and several men brand them, but, of course, with different brands, and cattle duffing is about the principal of the two industries. It is wonderful how the small man with a few head of breeders (and sometimes those breeders are working bullocks) will settle down on the boundary
of the ‘big’ men and thrive and fatten like a dingo on the carcase of a dead bullock. Every cattle run in the East and West Kimberley has its ‘hangers on’ in the ‘small’ men, with anything from 100 to 1000 miles of country. These men first take up the country, and then they get hold of a few breeders, anything, 100 to 300 head, and they settle down to breed cattle, and the way their herds increase is the most wonderful part of the business. Every cow they possess must have at least twenty calves per year, and many of the calves born with horns, and about two to three years of age at that. Some of the men who started this way a couple of years ago now hold herds from 3000 to 7000 head, and the question is naturally asked, where did they get hold of them, seeing they made no purchases of stock during the time? Well the question is easily answered – they ‘duffed’ them. In other words, the ‘big’ man on whose boundary their holding is situated won’t put on enough men to keep his herd branded up, so these men cut in ‘on their’ with another brand to help the squatter. Of course, there is such a thing as the squatter's employees – and sometimes the most trusted of his employees – being hand in glove with the ‘duffer’, in which case the ‘duffers’ herd increases at an alarming rate; and in course of time the small man’s cattle – or at any rate cattle bearing his brand, and therefore in the eyes of the law his property – are found running on the squatter’s property in hundreds, and one now and then hears of the ‘duffer’ (who by this time has left the ‘duffer’ state and become a squatter) sending away 700 to 800 head of fats to the market; or, more often, selling them to the squatter at £5 10s. per head, station delivery. I was talking to the managing partner of one of the largest cattle-buying firms the day he took delivery of a mob of 100 fats from a ‘small’ man at £5 per head, and he said, with a very bitter tone in his voice, ‘It is hard luck to be buying your own cattle back at £5 per head, especially when they have grown fat on your own country.’ This remark naturally led to further talk on the subject, and I asked him how it was one never heard of the ‘duffers’ being arrested for cattle stealing. ‘What is the use?’ replied the squatter. ‘The first thing is to catch the thief, and even when that is done – and it is a most difficult thing to do – you cannot find a jury to convict him; and then, again, the law for the prevention of cattle-stealing is all in favour of the thief; in fact, one would think the law had been framed by men given to duffing their neighbour’s cattle.’ I met a man on Auvergne a few weeks ago. We were watering our mob at the lagoon when he came along. He had a fair lot of horses, and in conversation he informed me that he was on his way out to settle on a piece of country he had taken up on the Ord. I smiled, and said, ‘I suppose you have breeders coming along?’ He nodded his head, and made enquiries as to the state of the herds over there, and if they were kept well branded up? He was anxious to know if they ‘spayed;’ and, when I told him that they did, but that the ‘spayed’ cows in nine cases out of ten had a calf at foot, he remarked that it was a pity to see a ‘spayed’ cow in such a condition, and smiled broadly. No doubt this man will do his best to relieve the ‘spayed’ cows on the Ord of the trouble of rearing their calves, to say nothing of the fact that as they are supposed to be ‘spayed’ they have no right to put the ‘spayer’ to shame by having calves.

The situation led Billy Linklater, himself at times engaged in cattle duffing, to write a poem titled ‘Patterson’s Prayer’, later published in his biography, Gather No Moss, (1997: 64):

Oh Heavenly Father, if you please,
I pray to you on bended knees,
That You and your blessed Son, our Lord,
Will keep the duffers from the Ord.
O, paralyse Dick Thompson’s hand
When he picks up his duffing brand.
Keep Skinner and Simpson from the
Osmand Glen
For Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.
And now, O Lord, forgive my sins,
And may every cow on Ord have twins.

According to Mrs Maggie Lilly (pers. comm.) and to Bolton (1953: 69), this poem was carved on a boab tree, possibly near Turkey Creek, but so far efforts to relocate it have failed.

Horton William ‘Big Bill’ Atkinson. Manager after Young and before 1908 (Moore, May 1958: 40; Moore, nd.; Broughton, 1965: 70). Moore was surprised that Atkinson got the job:

how he got the job I don’t know. He pitched a good tale to Mr Patterson, the part owner of the station, and did a lot of crooked work with the Head Stockman. By this time I found that Beasley was a partner of old Billy Patterson on the Stirling run and he was doing all he could to stock that country up for the partnership.
What rogues these chaps were – all had something against them that they had done in the past but otherwise very nice chaps to meet and converse with.

Atkinson was manager of Sturt Creek in 1906 (Weir, 1906: 359; Moore, nd.) and caretaker-manager of Lissadell in the early 1900s (Broughton, 1965: 69). Moore (May 1958: 40) says that some time after leaving Ord River Atkinson bought a pub in Queensland.

Joseph Davis. Manager during 1905 and through to October 1906, and gone by 1907 (TCPLB, 1911-1925, entry for 24-9-1907; Copley & Co. to Commissioner of Police, Adelaide, 18-10-1905; Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1904-1906, SROWA, Acc 741-8, entry for 23-10-1906). Moore (May 1958: 40) says that Davis had been a drover and had been with cattle all his life ‘but was getting too old for long distance overlanding.’ He was still manager when admitted to the Wyndham hospital in January 1907 (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1907-1908, entry for 30-1-1907). His name appears in the Durack diaries in 1911, listed as a stockman on Lissadell who’d been around since 1901 (Durack, nd.).

Harry Harpers. Blacksmith who arrived on the Ord when Patterson was manager (Moore, December 1959: 50). Harpers had come across from Queensland on a single-wheeled vehicle he had designed and built himself. This was:

pulled by one heavy horse. The wheel had a frame over the top with a frame all round it; he sat on this and put his feet on the tucker box in front. Swag, billies, etc., were all packed around. The wheel was the size of the front wheel of a buggy and was fitted with an axle specially made by Harry himself … Shafts were fitted on to this one-wheel cart and when the horse was put in the shafts it stood perfectly balanced … Harry informed us that he had no trouble on his long trip and could run
along cattle pads with ease and could carry in a big canteen enough water for the horse and himself for two days (Moore, 1959: 50).

While on the station Harpers built an entire wagon from local pit-sawn timber; only the wheels were imported (Moore, 1959: 50).

**Arthur Lloyd.** Manager in August 1909 and 1911 (TCPJ, 10-8-1909; Booty, 5-11-1911). He had previously been manager of Carlton station (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1904-1906, entry for 29-4-1905). His name first appears in the Durack diaries in 1912 and there is mention that he had a wife there (Durack, nd.). According to Doug Moore (May 1958: 40), Lloyd, who’d been ‘a Kidman man and well experienced with cattle’, was still manager of Ord River when Vesteys took over in 1914. He says that Lloyd ‘had a huge area to look after as the Margaret Station was a Copley property, also Sturt Creek.’

Moore (July 1958: 50) says that in about 1906 a very large muster was carried out ‘for the benefit of Mr. Weir, chief stock inspector from Perth, and Mr. Arthur Daly, manager of Mulla Bulla’. At the end of the muster there were 8000 head of cattle on camp.

**Dave Suttee.** Stockman before January 1912 when he died after a bender at Capsize Creek on the Wyndham road, four miles from Ivanhoe station (Durack, 1983: 416-17). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

**William Douglas Moore.** Bookkeeper and storekeeper, assistant manager and gardener between 1904 and 1914 (Durack, 1983: 257-58, 389-390; *North Australian Monthly*, January 1957: 38). In his memoir Moore said that he arrived when Charles Young was manager so he might have been on Ord River in 1902 or earlier (Moore, nd.).

Bolton (1953: 123, 245) describes him as ‘assistant manager’ during the Copley era (ie, between 1900 and 1914). In his memoir Moore said that he eventually:

> took over the position of Storekeeper and Second-in Charge of one of the biggest cattle runs in Australia – 6,000,000 acres. The store I went through and took stock – really for that time we were well off. Stores were brought up from Wyndham by 3 camel teams, 2 horse teams and 1 mule team. We had a big crowd of men employed, approx. 30 all told at different camps – Turner, Sturt, Margaret, Mistake Creek and Osmond River.

Moore (nd.) also described the toilet – ‘The lavatory, or dunnican as it was called, I could not improve as it was built over the bank with logs and had a 50 ft. drop. The wind was always blowing – the paper used to fly up over your head. Old hands had a better way of doing this.’ In 1911 his mother and sister visited him at Ord River and his mother died there (Durack, nd.).

**Oswald J. ‘Ossy’ Quinn.** Manager in 1915, the first manager under Vesteys (*The Pastoral Review*, 16-2-1921; Moore (nd.). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

having been a manager in 1921. This may have been Jack’s father. According to Beckett (1998: 73), Jack, his wife Myrtle and their four children were living at Alice Downs (Kimberley) in 1947. These children were so wild that Jack referred to them as ‘The Dingoes’.

**T. Gordon.** Bookkeeper in August 1923 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1606).

**L. Kingsmill.** Manager (?) in August 1923 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, captions on photos 1606 and 1673).

**Sandy McIndoe.** Head stockman in about 1929 (Cole, 1988: 185). For additional biographical details see entry under Inverway.

**James Thomas ‘Joe’ Egan.** Manager from late 1925 or early 1926 (WHPLB, 30-9-1925; Martin, 1985: 2-3) until about 1948 or 1949 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; Young, 1990: 13). He was on Ord River by 1911 (Durack, nd.). This probably was in the position of drover as in the Rosewood records in the Battye Library there is mention of a J. Egan droving 1292 Wave Hill bullocks to Wyndham in 1911 for CD&D (Egan to Connor, Doherty & Durack, 27-11-1911).

Young (1990: 12) claims that Egan was manager of Ord River for 27 years and other sources indicate that this is about right. Martin (1985: 61) states that in 1914 Joe Egan, Frank Martin (Alf’s youngest brother), Murray Prior, Norman Wellman and Possum Dillon (cook) drove 1300 cows to the Drysdale River Mission area to stock leases Bovril had there, 40 miles from the mission. The station, called ‘Northcote’, failed within two years because, Martin (1985: 61-62) says, of the depredations of the ‘wild blacks’.

According to some sources, Egan had been manager of Wave Hill for about two years from February 1923, before he went to Ord River, and before that he was manager of Gordon Downs (WHPJ, 16-2-1923 and 13-8-1923; Cole, 1988: 181; Young, 1990: 13; Terry, 1927: 109) and Margaret River in 1919 (Scherer, 1993: 12). However, these dates conflict with another source which says he was manager of Gordon Downs in 1924 (Laurie, 22-3-1924). There may be confusion here between Joe Egan and a brother named John as a ‘John Felix Egan’ was manager at Margaret River station in 1938 (*West Australian*, 21-3-1938).

While on Gordon Downs, in 1924 Egan was fined £5 for assaulting an Aboriginal woman there. He’d been reported for this offence by Tom Laurie, a well-known Tanami prospector who said:

> I state here emphatically that these natives are slaves and of the worst kind. Take the case of this girl. I knew her when she was a toddler at Tanami. She is a native of this place. They got her brought out of the bush when her age was suitable to their desires, made a prostitute of her, reduced her to waiting on them night and day, and then for practising [sic], so it is assumed, what they taught her, turned round and half beat her to death with a hobble chain or something which left similar marks. The marks were partly obscured by iodine, for her body was painted all over with it (Laurie, 22-3-1924).
The police believed there was ‘old trouble’ between Laurie and Egan (Douglas, 31-7-1924), but in any case, after Egan was fined Laurie was not allowed to buy his beef from Gordon Downs and was threatened with violence by Egan (Laurie, 22-3-1924). Fortunately for Laurie, Egan was gone from Gordon Downs by 1925.

Egan may have been relieving manager at Wave Hill in 1930 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1614). He was still on Ord River when Kelman left the Northern Territory in 1944, and was replaced by W.E. Young in 1946 (Young, 1990: 13). Cec Watts believed that Egan left Ord River in September 1946 and that Young left there at the end of 1948. One story is that he eventually shot himself in Perth but thiu shasn’t been verified.

**J. Hubly.** Cook in August 1926 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1609).

**Fred ‘Tragedy’ Wilson.** Head stockman on an Ord River camp in 1929 (Hoofs & Horns, July 1952: 46). Tragedy came from the Queensland Gulf Country and first came to the Territory in 1927. He worked in a variety of occupations – prospecting in Cape York, Tennant Creek and Halls Creek, droving from the Kimberley to Queensland, in a Darwin brewery and as a stockman on various stations in the Kimberley and Territory. A small man, he was a jockey at various bush race meetings (Hoofs & Horns, July 1952: 46). He was a brother of Arthur H. Wilson, manager of Newcastle Waters from 1942 to 1952 (pers. comm., Gerry Ash). According to Marie Mahood (pers. comm.), in 1950 he was ‘cowboy’ and butcher on VRD. Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.) says that Tragedy was later at Booroloola.

**C. Schultz.** Bookkeeper in 1930 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1614) and 1934 (WHPJ, 5-12-1934). This is not the Charlie Schultz who was owner-manager of Humbert River from 1928 to 1971.

**Frank Earl.** Manager in or before 1931? (Mather, 9-9-1931).

**Macnamara.** Manager in 1939. Myra Hilgendorf, who visited the station in 1939, described the boss as ‘a rough-looking, awkward Irishman’ and his wife as ‘a bit over-anxious.’ She said, ‘they have a French poodle, which is the idol of the household and treated like a child. It’s [sic] party piece was to dance on its hind legs to music’ (Hilgendorf, 1994: 39).

**W.G. Steemson.** Manager in 1947, according to the Wave Hill police journal (WHPJ, 10-4-1947).

**Bruce Bardon ‘Bolivar’ Hudson.** Manager? in September 1937 (Moray, 19-9-1937). This record suggests Hudson was manager of either Ord River or Mistake Creek in 1949, after Young left. Bill Hamill (pers. comm.) reckons Hudson was manager from 1945 to 1949. Hudson was still there in November 1950 (Buchanan, 4th to 6-11-1950). Gordon Buchanan commented in 1950 that Hudson was ‘well known to me personally and has been on the property for two years – prior to coming here he managed Gordon Downs for ten years – and is a capable manager.’ His previous connection to Gordon Downs was confirmed by Cec Watts (pers. comm.). For additional biographical details see entry under Gordon Downs.
William Ernest Hamilton ‘Rager Bill’ Young. Manager from 1946 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; WHPJ, 5-8-1947; Chalk, 2000) until 1949 (Young, 1990: 13). According to Kowald and Johnston (1992: 102), Young was born at Gloucester, NSW, on January 11th, 1908. He left school at twelve and attended a business course for twelve months at a Newcastle commercial college. He then headed west and worked on a number of sheep and cattle properties, including the management of Iffley station in Queensland. At the outbreak of World War Two he tried to enlist in the army but was rejected because of diabetes. Eventually he rose to the rank of manager, in charge of St Aubin’s Stud (Scone, NSW), Strathmore (1949), Iffley (1950) and Alexandria (beginning December 1955, to 1971).

Described as ‘a big man – 183 centimetres tall (6ft) and over 105 kilograms (16.5 stone). He was a most generous person but his tempers earned him the name, ‘Willie the Rager’.’ A contemporary said he was memorable for ‘the little red boots, the white moleskins, the blue shirt, the grey hat, the cigar, a lot of white hair, and above all, the man himself’ (Kowald and Johnston, 1992: 102).

Another account (Worsley, 1964: 4) described his size and added that he had:

a voice to match. While we were enjoying our drinks under the female-powered “punkas” (primitive air-circulation devices) the flow of air started to decrease a little. Bill Young let out an unholy yell which could be heard over most of the station — “More gin power” — so the lubras went back to more rapid action.

V. Chalk (2000) said that Young was ‘an alcoholic who left Ord River on December 23, 1948 under a cloud of very ambiguous circumstances’. Young died in January 2001 (Raskall, 2001).

Joe Dowling. 1952. Reported in the NT News (21-3-1952) about to be Ord River manager but whether this occurred is unclear.

Bob Nelson. Manager in 1952 (Evans, 18-11-1952; Hoofs & Horns, March 1951: 39). Cec Watts said he was there for about a year after Bruce Hudson left, but Bill Hamill reckons he was only there ‘for a month or so’. An anonymous correspondent to the Stockman’s Hall of Fame newspaper (March, 2001) claimed that Nelson was managing Nicholson at this time and was never at Ord, which tends to confirm Hamill’s claim. For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

W.D. Walker, ‘The Belyando Kid’. Manager from March 1953 to 1955 (WHPJ, 25-3- 1953; Hoofs & Horns, June 1953: 54; NT News, 26-3-1953, p 2; pers. comm., Len Hill). On March 23rd 1953 the Wave Hill police noted that J. Walker and his family had passed Wave Hill en route Ord River. Other records indicate that the Walker who became Ord River manager as Joe so the initials ‘W.D.’ may be a mistake, or the name ‘Joe’ could be a nickname. Before taking over at Ord River Walker had been manager at Helen Springs (1950) and then at Gordon Downs. His wife’s name was Muriel (Beckett, 1998: 101, 105). If Joe and W.D. were one and the same he had also been manager of Newcastle Waters, Flora Valley and Turner. This needs sorting out.

Don McLachlan. Horse breaker on Ord River station in the mid-1950s (Hamill, 1993: 10).
**George Applebee.** Bookkeeper in 1957 or 1958. He was also bookkeeper on Flora Valley in 1959 and did the books for Sturt Creek when Bill Crowley was manager there (pers. comm., Patsy Applebee).

**Bill Hamill.** Manager from 1955 to 1959 (Hamill, 2000; WHPJ, 14-4-1959; Greenfield 21-4-1956). According to a report in the *North Australian Monthly* (June 1956: 8), during Hamill’s time as manager, Alex Scott was building a yard on one of the station’s outstations. He had his wife and three month old daughter with him. Just before daylight one morning his wife realised that the baby was not alongside her and it was discovered that a thirteen foot python had the infant by the head and was dragging it away. Alec struck the snake with a stick upon which it released its grip and made off. For additional biographical details on Hamill see entry under Inverway.

**Jack Cook.** Head stockman, c1953-59 (pers. comm., Len Hill).

**Tom Peters.** Overseer, c1965-66 (pers. comm., Len Hill).

**Cec Watts.** Manager from 1960 to at least May 1964 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; see also *Hoofs & Horns*, November 1962: 24; Hooker Pastoral Company, Rosewood Pastoral Records: ‘D’ Sundries Correspondence, 1962 March – October 1967. Box 12 NTAS NTRS 9 A7281). According to Len (pers. comm.), from about 1965 (soon after Cec Watts left) Ord River was managed from Nicholson. For additional biographical details on Cec see entry under Turner station.

**Norm Wellman.** Head stockman on Ord River. He was on Ord River for twenty-five years before retiring in 1950 (*Boab Bulletin*, February 1998: 11). He died there and was buried on the station in 1963 (pers. comm., Cec Watts). For additional biographical details see entry under Mistake Creek.

**Frank Willmington.** Manager, 1966-67 (pers. comm., Len Hill). For additional biographical details see entry under Lissadell.


**Len Hill.** Manager (when?).

**John 'Jack' Webber.** Manager in 1971 for the Western Australian Agriculture Department when Ord River became a Regeneration Area (pers. comm., Andrew Barker).

**Graeme Bell.** Manager from about 1975 to 1986 (pers. comm., Patsy Applebee; Ogden 1992: 112. For additional biographical details see entry under Lissadell.

**Donald McLean Matheson.** Manager from at least April 1985 to August 1989. In 1997 or 1998 he was charged with official corruption and fraud for allowing ‘cattle to be rustled from the Kimberley property in exchange for a quarter share in a $1.8 million abattoir.’ The cattle had been trucked across the Northern Territory border to the abattoir at Nelson Springs, part-owned by Gary Dann (*NT News*, 12-3-1998). There is more to this story.
than the news item above discloses. One unsubstantiated version I’ve heard is that the Western Australian government gave Dann a contract to clean up a certain number of head from the station and told him he could have any extra cattle above that number. It turned out that there were many thousands of head above the government estimate. The outcome of their trials needs following up.
This station apparently consisted of two grazing licenses owned by two men who were partners. One license (GL 506), owned by Billy Braitling, was a long north-south oriented block along the eastern boundary of VRD, close to the present boundary of Montejinni. The other block, owned by A.P. Volkman, bordered Braitling’s block on the eastern side. Volkman had difficulty obtaining his block. On August 4th 1922 the stock inspector, Captain Bishop, met Volkman who he found to be:

hostile in his speech, owing to his application for a brand being held up pending enquiries. A confidential file was sent to me, and after perusing its contents was satisfied he was not a fit and proper person to hold a brand in N.T. He accused the Administrator as being at the bottom of his application for land, and a brand being refused (Hare, 1985).

According to an interview he gave in 1923

It was five weeks before he could get definite information about it. It was not until he had written to Mr. C. McDonald, M.H.R., in Melbourne, that he could get any satisfaction at all. He communicated with both the Home and Territories Department in Melbourne and the Lands Department at Darwin. Every reply he got by telegram was an evasion of the information he wanted as to whether it was available, and what rental. He finally got a grazing license without preference for lease, of 500 miles, which together with his partner’s (Mr. Braitling) block of 500 miles, made 1000 miles (Volkman, 14-10-1921: 548).

Volkman’s block was later taken over by a man named Patterson who remained in partnership with Braitling. In 1928 Alf Martin wrote to Lord Luke about buying Braitling and Patterson’s block:

We will take this offer; as I know of others that are after it. My reason for buying this man out, is this:– About seven years ago, he was allowed to put about 900 Breeders on the top spring of the Armstrong River. This spring is only about eight miles from Monteginnie Station. His cattle are now all over our Eastern Side of V.R. Downs. When mustering for calves, this man Braitling and his partner will attend with only one boy. This means that the Monteginnie Plant have to cut out his cattle, and help him brand. So we are branding his cattle for him: and have been doing so for the last six years (Martin, 8-10-1928).

Bovril took over the grazing licence on November 1st 1928 and paid Braitling and Patterson £6000, ‘walk in walk out’ (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 11, GL 336; Martin, 23-11-1928). VRD retained the THE brand for years and in 1959 VRD manager Jack Quirk stated that he intended to use it to brand stud bulls (Quirk, 30-6-1959).

William Walter ‘Billy’ Braitling, A.P. Volkman & Patterson. Owners, with Billy Braitling acting as manager. Little is known of Volkman except that in 1923 he was living in Cloncurry, that he was wealthy enough to own a car and that he made long trips dealing in stock. One such trip was by car from Western Australia to Alexandria station from where he continued on horseback to Victoria River Downs. At VRD he picked up a mob of 350 horses he had previously paddocked there and took them west to Lousia Downs
where he sold them. He then bought a mob of cattle and took them back to stock Passchendaele (Volkman, 14-10-1921: 548).

Eventually Volkman sold his share of Passchendaele to a man named Patterson, but I’ve found no mention of Patterson in the district and it’s possible that he was a sleeping partner, with only Braitling active on the block. One source has Patterson’s initials as ‘W.H.’ (VRD Ledger 5), but another has them as ‘F.M.’ (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 14, GL 446).

According to the entry on Billy Braitling in the Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography (Braitling, 1990, vol. 1: 33-34), he was born in 1889 at Aturus Downs, near Springsure, Queensland, one of the ten children of Charles Braitling and Elizabeth Bradley. At age 16 he left home for the Northern Territory, working as a drover and horse breaker. For a time he had saddlery business in Pine Creek (GRIC, NTAS NTRS F790, item 6427). In 1909 he joined the rush to the Tanami goldfield but found no gold.

In 1914 he contracted to Vesteys to bring a mob of 500 herd bulls from Ifley station in Queensland to Wave Hill via the Gulf Track and he was at Montejinni in May 1915 (VRD day book, vol. 1, Nov - December 1909 to April 1916; Northern Territory Times, 3-12-1914). After the trip with the bulls he joined the AIF and served in France where he won a Meritorious Service Medal. At the end of the war he did a course in animal husbandry at Edinburgh University and then returned to the Northern Territory.

Braitling got the Passchendaele block in June 1921, naming it after the village in France where many of his friends had been killed (NTAS NTRS, F28, Box 11, GL 336). His brand was ‘THE’ (VRD Ledger 4) and he was licenced to carry 300 head, but his founding herd was given as 825 head. Four years later he was reported to have 3500 head, a remarkable and quite likely ‘unnatural’ increase (Memorandum from Accountant, Home and Territories Department, December 23, 1926). His partner at this time was a man named A.P. Volkman from Cloncurry. Braitling and Volkman each had a block of 500 square miles, run together as one station (Volkman, 14-10-1921: 548). Whether the 3500 head in 1925 was on the combined block or Braitling’s alone is unclear.

When Braitling heard that the railway was to be extended to Alice Springs he became interested in obtaining land in that district, so in 1926 he made an exploration trip from Ti Tree to Wave Hill. By 1927 he was shifting his stock to a 2,500 square mile block in Central Australia (NTAS F28, Box 11, GL 466; Northern Territory Times, 5-7-1927). While on his way down he met his future wife, Doreen Crook, at Singleton Station. When he eventually settled on his new block he named it Mount Doreen.

Braitling and Patterson sold Passchendaele to Bovril (VRD) in 1928 on a ‘walk-in walk-out’ basis for £6000 sterling (Martin, 23-11-1928; Braitling, 18-10-1928). Part of the block had been held by Martin and Fleming in the early 1900s (Illawarra). Later the eastern part was held by Sid and Thelma Hawkes (in the 1950s) and eventually it became part of the present Dungowan Station. Patterson and Braitling both appear on a list of owners and managers prepared by Gordon Buchanan as owners of ‘Passiondale’ (Buchanan family papers). Braitling died at Alice Springs in 1959.

Michael Terry, a contemporary of Braitling, believed that he was one of the hardest of all in his treatment of Aborigines. In 1945 in Alice Springs Braitling was charged with
assault occasioning actual bodily harm. It was alleged that an Aboriginal, ‘Jimmy,’ or ‘Jimija,’ had been tied an to a tree by the neck and that Braitling had ‘thrashed him with four heavy mulga waddies’ until he was unconscious because he believed Jimmy had killed his cattle. A witness, Alex Wilson, told the court that Braitling had ‘thrashed the native with waddies until they broke’ Army News (6-8-1945: 2; Canberra Times, 8-8-1945: 3). The evidence given was not accepted and the charge against Braitling was dismissed.
Makin (1992: 99-100) claims that Pigeon Hole was established on its present site in 1910 when Sam Green built its house and yard, but a stockyard existed at Pigeon Hole by December 1895 (Dashwood, 1895) and there appears to have been an outstation there by 1909 (VRD day book, 1909 to 1925, vol. 1, Nov – December 1909 to April 1916). Before this time there was an outstation at Longreach Waterhole about twenty kilometres to the south which was the forerunner to Pigeon Hole. Longreach appears to have been in existence by March 1899 (Watson, 25-3-1899) and probably closed around 1910.

According to Makin, the forerunner to Pigeon Hole/Longreach was the Stockyard Creek homestead which, once the new homestead was built on the Wickham in 1890, was renamed ‘Fagin’s’ (correctly ‘Fegan’s’) Camp after its head stockman. Makin (1992: 64) implies that Fegan’s Camp was renamed Pigeon Hole and that this name was later shifted to the present site, but this seems unlikely. Local Bilinara elder Anzac Munganyi (deceased) told me the reason that the present site was named Pigeon Hole is because Flock pigeons used to water there in their thousands.

In 1910 it was reported that, ‘A substantial dwelling house, men’s quarters, beef house, and iron shed has been erected at Pigeon Hole’ (White, 1910: 25). It was constructed of local bush timber and to the same design as a new homestead at the head station, built at the same time.

In 1926 Pigeon Hole was described as ‘No. 2 Camp’ (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926). The homestead used to be located between the present day homestead and the river (pers. comm., Anzac Munganyi). In 1934 this homestead was described as, ‘Two storey building 36’ X 48’ g.i. on bush timber, ground floor two rooms, and bed floor, upper floor two rooms with 9” verandah all round and enclosed on three sides with g.i. H.W. floor
and roof sawn timber.’ There was also a kitchen, harness room, blacksmith’s shop and meat house (NTPLIC 1934, Victoria River Downs).

Pierce George Kelly. Head stockman in May and July 1916 (Northern Territory Times, 11-5-1916) and probably up to April 1920 (VRD diary 1920, entries for 11-4-1920 and 18-4-1920). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

Alec Grant. Head stockman in 1920 (Scherer, 1993: 13; needs checking because of clash with the dates for Brady). Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.) says Grant was a drover for Newcastle Waters during the war years and later held a lease for the old telegraph station at Daly Waters.

John Brady. Head stockman from January 1st 1920 to September 1921 (VRD Ledger 2).

Roy Settatree (‘The Jaberoo’). Head stockman. He began work for Bovril in March 1924 and by 1925 he was head stockman there (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926). He was still head stockman in February 1927 (VRD diary 1927) and went on to become overseer at VRD in about 1928.

Originally a Western Australian (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926), his name first appears in the historical records in the Durack diaries in 1911 where he is described as a mailman. He was also on Rosewood in 1913 and 1914 (Letter Book, 1901-1912, pages 15 and 17. SROWA MN 485 Acc 2184A/4). At another time he had worked on Texas Downs for Jack Kelly (prior to 1919; Clement, 1989: 22). When he died in Katherine hospital on the 12th of June 1935 he was described as ‘assistant manager of VRD’ (Northern Standard, 21-6-1935). He had worked for Bovril for about twelve years and was overseer for the last seven (Martin, 19-6-1934). His nickname comes from a list of names compiled by Gordon Buchanan (Buchanan family papers).

Archie Warrington Rogers. Head stockman from October 25th 1927 to ?, and again from February 1st 1930 to December 31st 1930 (VRD Ledger 3 and VRD Ledger 4). He may have been the son of the original Archie Warrington Rogers, because an item in the Northern Territory Times, of February 22nd 1927 mentions AW Rogers junior coming in to Darwin from his father’s station, Roper Valley. For additional biographical information see entry under Wave Hill.

G. Newman. Cook. He died at Pigeon Hole on December 25th 1934 (WHPJ, 27/28-12-1934). Ernestine Hill (1951: 437) was told by Billy Linklater that he was at Pigeon Hole when a cook named George ‘Nothin’ ‘ere’ died on Christmas Day. This would have to be the same man. According to Billy:

They reckoned he’d been a cook an’ bottle-washer to a duke, an’ he came to Australia as chef on a liner. Any rate, he was a white-tablecloth cook. He could dress a bush turkey so you’d think it was the real thing, an’ knock up a duff or curry with croutes an’ canapès an’ all them French an’ Hindu sauces. For a golden pudding of his made with a dipper of flour an’ a tin of golden syrup I seen the boys back up a dozen times – as light as cotton-wool.

He got his nickname, ‘Nothin’ ‘ere’, because he was always complaining that he couldn’t cook a proper meal because he didn’t have the correct ingredients – he had ‘nothin’ ‘ere’.
**Bill Knox.** Cook on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1937 (Fuller, diary 1937-38, entry for 4-7-1937). Bill was brother to Jack. He was on VRD by February 28<sup>th</sup> 1934 and left with Jack in September or October 1938 (VRD Ledger 4). He is described as having been a crack horseman.

**W. Davidson.** Head stockman from April 30<sup>th</sup> 1938 to December 9<sup>th</sup> 1938 (VRD Ledger 5).

**Kevin Smith.** Head stockman (?), said by Tom Ronan to have branded 10,000 calves in one season at Pigeon Hole (*The Territorian*, February, 1965). Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) also placed Smith as head stockman at Pigeon Hole and said that he’d heard he was ‘inclined to be a very melancholy bloke … melancholy when he got on the grog … But he could run a stockcamp [and] he knew how to work aboriginals’. Charlie also said he’d heard that eventually Smith shot himself.

**Len Tilley.** Head stockman in 1939 (Connellan, 1992: 194) and in May-June 1945 (VRD Journals: April 1945 to Jan 1948).

**Bob Nelson.** Head stockman? from June 28<sup>th</sup> 1945 to December 24<sup>th</sup> 1946 (VRD Journals, April 45 to Jan 48). He was at Pigeon Hole in 1936 (WHPJ, 9-6-1936) so may have been head stockman before 1945. For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

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*Gus Anderson and ‘Big Mac’ McDonald at Pigeon Hole homestead, 1953 (Stan May collection).*

**Jack ‘Big Mac’ McDonald.** Head stockman from February 4<sup>th</sup> 1946 to June 1<sup>st</sup> 1957 (VRD Journals 1945–1953; *Hoofs & Horns*, February 1951: 39 and August 1953: 56; Sweeney, 1947: 13; Gordon, 1992: 130). During McDonald’s time an Aboriginal man
suffered a severe gunshot wound. McDonald (nd.) sent the following letter to the manager, Scott McColl, at the head station:

Dear Sir,

There is one half caste boy here with a .303 bullet hole in the right side of the chest, eye looks like it is blown out and one thumb blown off. His condition looks very critical, and he wants a doctor urgent.
The boy belongs to Fred Marton drover.

According to Pigeon Hole elder, Anzac Munganyi, the shooting was an accident, though the position of the wounds is curious. Strangely, there is no mention of this shooting in either the Wave Hill or Timber Creek police journals, or in the Northern Standard in Darwin.

**Buck Buchester.** Head stockman in 1950 (Allen, 1995). For additional biographical details see entry under Moolooloo.

**Hugh McMillan.** Head stockman in 1959-60. A report on VRD written about 1959 describes him and his wife as follows:

a small young wiry fellow, can shoe, break horses, work cattle, quiet, efficient, has only been there short time; his boys respect him and would follow him anywhere. Broken in young in a hard school he is my pick of the box. Would make a Manager of smallish place. Wife good hard type, wont help him much; too simple, too little real brain (Anon, 1959).

Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.) heard that the McMillans lost a son through drowning and that the mother never recovered from the shock and was ‘simple’ afterwards.

**Billy Dawe.** Head stockman in late 1950s or early 1960s (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz).

**Allan Moy.** Manager in about 1974 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

**Bevan and Evonne Gitcham.** Head stockman from January 21st 1971 to July 1974 (pers. comm., Evonne Gitcham; information from Bevan Gitcham, recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill). Manager of Montejinni station, 1996-1997 (pers. obs.). For additional information see entry under Legune.

**Ian Petherick.** Manager in 1975. Ian had been a ringer on VRD in 1969-1970. He was manager of Pigeon Hole in 1975 and then spent four years bull-catching on VRD. In 1976 he learnt to fly a helicopter and from 1976 to 1979 he flew for Hooker Company on VRD. From 1979 he worked for Heli-Muster (pers. comm., Ian Petherick).

**Dave Helan.** Manager (when?) (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

**George Sutton.** Manager in the 1970s. George was born in 1945. A farrier by trade, he began his career as a cattleman in about 1967 at Kenmore Park in northern South Australia. He managed Argadargada in Central Australia and then went to Pigeon Hole. Other properties he worked on include Montejinni, Mallapunyah Springs, Kiana,
Maryfield, Balberini, Currawilla, Melinda Downs, Strathmore, Jersey Plains, Oban, Chudleigh Park and Toolebuc (North Queensland Register, 27-6-2002).

While on Balberini George was gored by a bull. It was too wet to airlift him out so he was taken by Toyota seventy miles to Borroloola. In George’s words:

I had a towel wrapped around my abdomen and tied down with swag straps to keep my insides in.
The plane picked me up there and flew me to Darwin. They started operating around five in the morning and I came out shortly after midday with 480 external stitches.
I had four holes in my liver, three more in my diaphragm, one kidney had been displaced and I had a cracked jaw. I was in a bit of pain. (North Queensland Register, 27-6-2002).

George was once Queensland middleweight boxing champion, fighting in 87 bouts. According to Billy Harney (pers. comm.), Sutton once punched Paul Vandeleur at Waterbag Bore (VRD). In 2002 he was managing Toolebuc. His wife’s name is Sharon.

Gary Schubert. Manager in 1980-84 (pers. obs.). He later became manager of VRD (pers. obs.). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

Bill Abdee. Manager during 1986-88. Afterwards he went to manage Delamere. Regarded as a ‘good bloke’ by local Aboriginal people, his wife didn’t enjoy an equivalent reputation (pers. comm., Hector Wanayarri; pers. comm., Anzac Munganyi).

John Brosnan. Manager in 1989 (pers. obs.). He was gone by 1990 or soon after.


Ian Hoare. Manager for four months in 1997. From 1992 to 1995 he’d been head stockman and then overseer at Eva Downs. He went to Flora Valley as overseer in October 1997, then to Eva Downs in May 2000 as manager where he remained until June 2006. He was born at Duringa, Queensland (pers. comm., Ian Hoare).

Mick Crombie. Manager in 1997. He was at Moolooloo before going to Pigeon Hole (pers. comm., Barry Scott) and in 2001 was managing Albro station near Clermont, Queensland. He originally came from the Warwick district, Queensland, (Lamerand, 2001).

PRICE’S CREEK

The lease known as Price’s Creek was taken up by Dr Brown at the same time as he took up Delamere. The Price’s Creek homestead was located ‘on Price’s Creek about two miles above the junction of the same with the Flora’. In October 1893 the building and yards were found ‘reduced to ashes, having recently been burnt, it is presumed, by the natives’ (Dashwood, 1894: 8).

In 2000 Billy Harney told me of the location of ‘old Delamere’ and I was able to relocate and document the site (Lewis, 2000: 17-23). For additional information see entry under Delamere.
RETREAT

This is almost certainly the same block which later became the foundation for Killarney station. In March 1902 C.E. Campbell was issued with a brand for Retreat Station (TCPJ, 31-3-1902). There is a Retreat Creek and a Retreat Yard on the boundary between Moolooloo and Killarney. The block was taken up by a man named Kirby in 1903 and it appears that Campbell made a deal with Kirby for the use of the block. Another source suggests that Campbell had made a deal with Tom Pearce to supply Pearce with cleanskins (TCPJ Notes, entry for 12-3-1903). For additional information about Campbell see entry for Mayvale, and also Lewis, 2012: 246-260).
RIVEREN

Originally the eastern part of Inverway, referred to as the Mucka block or as the ‘river end’. In 1976, along with Bunda it was split off from Inverway by Pat Underwood to provide three stations for his sons and daughter (Buchanan, 2002: 126).
RIVER VIEW

The name of a block near Timber Creek, held by drover George Murray (TCPJ, 21-10-1936). I haven’t been able to pinpoint the location of this block with certainty. The name suggests that it abutted or overlooked the Victoria River, but the ‘River View’ may in fact refer to Timber Creek. I’ve been told by Aborigines that George Murray had a camp at Gilwi (Eleven Mile Waterhole on Timber Creek). This may be that block that Phillip Hutchinson took up around ‘12 Mile Hole’ on Timber Creek in 1906 and which later was taken over by Matt Wilson, on October 23rd, 1909 (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 3 PP136/1907).
Rosewood station was established in 1885 (Durack, 1974: 273). The original partners on Rosewood were M.P. Durack, Tom Hayes, Tom Kilfoyle and ‘Galway’ Gerry Durack (Durack, 1974: 273). The station was named ‘Rosewood camp’ and then plain ‘Rosewood’ after a town near Gerry Durack’s Queensland home. According to Charlie Gaunt (Northern Standard, 22-1-1932: 5) the original camp was ‘on a creek about twelve miles this side of where Rosewood Station stands at present’. It was stocked with 2000 head (Bolton, 1953: 31) and while bringing these cattle to Rosewood, Tom Kilfoyle had a fight with Aborigines on Victoria River Downs which supposedly led to the naming of Battle Creek (Linklater, Mitchell Library mss 3639 (F) CY 2744); see also Apsley, 1926: 102).

In April 1886 Kilfoyle was looking for a homestead site (Kilfoyle, diary 3, April 29th 1886). He may have built a temporary homestead soon afterwards, or else decided to move later because in January 1887 he mentioned that he had, ‘reached to where I am going to form the Steation [sic]’. Work on the new homestead appears to have been delayed until October 1887 (Kilfoyle, diary 4 Jan 1887 to March 1888). The first homestead appears to have been on the Behn River because the Northern Territory Times reported that, ‘Messrs. Kilfoyle and Hay have long since shifted their station on to Hicks Creek, some ten or twelve miles from the Behu [Behn] River’ (Northern Territory Times, 22-1-1887).

According to Flinders (2016: 80) the partnership between Hayes, Kilfoyle and Durack was dissolved in the 1890s with Jerry Durack taking his share of the cattle to a block on the Dunham River country where he was later murdered by an Aboriginal employee (Flinders, 2016: 67). The dissolution of the partnership is confirmed in the Northern Territory Times of May 31st 1895. In the late 1880s cattle from Lissadell and Rosewood became the first to be taken to Derby for shipment (Flinders, 2016: 72).
Rosewood was the scene for two murders of whites by Aborigines. The first was ‘Big Johnny’ Durack, speared and killed near Mount Duncan in 1886 (see entry below). The second was Constable Collins, killed in 1893. The police account of Collins’ death (Lucanus, 7-10-1893) is as follows:

P.C. Collins, myself, & two nat. assist. left Rosewood Cattle Stn on the 5th Sept. in route to Lissadell Stn. On the 6th Sept. after crossing the Behn R., we saw a white bullock quite freshly killed by the natives. I pulled a spear almost 3’ long out of his near flank. Many meat was taken off him. We followed the tracks of the natives up the river, but lost them in the rough country.

On the 8th Sept we met Messrs J. & P.B. Durack & T Hayes on a place called Quamboneseme Spg, where the natives had killed 3 brood mares previously. I informed them that we had seen the tracks of the natives quite fresh, & offered their assistance & fresh horses, which we gladly accepted, as our horses were getting very leg weary.

On the 9th Sept, we came to quite fresh native camps & found the remains of a fore-quarter of a horse, which had been eaten here. We followed the tracks … until we came upon the natives at 9 a.m. on the 10th inst.

We galloped up endeavering [sic] to make arrests when Collins sang out to me “I am speared.” The spears were thrown from all directions & I was unable to assist him at once. I just reached him in time to save him from falling off his horse. I put him under a tree, then went to the assistance of others in dispersing the natives.

P.C. Collins had not his rifle undone from his … saddle, when he got speared. The mare I was riding was the property of Rosewood Stn, was speared in her off flank about 8” under the seat of the saddle. I pulled out the spear, which was in over two feet & the mare died about 2 hours afterwards.

After the natives were dispersed, I attended on poor Collins & found that the spear had entered his stomach about ½” to the right of his navel & had come out on his back about 2” from the spine. We at once built a bough shed & placed him under same & I attended on him to the best of my ability.

P.C. Collins died about 5 p.m. on the 11th Inst, he was quite conscious until the last.

August Lucanus
P.C.

There is a spring on Rosewood named ‘Quambensene’ named after a racehorse:

The Duracks brought good blood horses into Western Australia with them, including Lord Lisgar and Quamboneson. I remember these two horses starting in the Queensland Cup of 1885, won by My Love. Lord Lisgar spun round at the fall of the flag and ran the wrong way, while Quamboneson’s jockey fainted in the straight and the horse ran second … Quamboneson and his mares, some sixty head, were stolen from one of Durack’s places on the Denham some years ago and have never been heard of since (H7H, 1-9-1905).

The homestead still there in the 1950s was built in 1903. At the time that Jack Kilfoyle sold the property in 1947 he had a series of large photographs of his stockmen and house staff on the walls, but a manager’s wife in 1960 cleaned the place up and removed all the
photos (Kettle, 1967: 84). These are undoubtedly the photos that Clive Stone took from Rosewood when he left the station in 1997.

Sister Kettle visited the station in 1954 and noted that there were four sheep including one ram on the station (Kettle, 1967: 86).

In a 1934 report Rosewood was said to be 1,073 square miles with 14,000 cattle and 1,000 horses (NTPLIC 1934, Rosewood). Jack Kilfoyle sold Rosewood to William Buckland in 1947 for either £75,000 (Evans, 4-12-1952; Bolton, 1953: 312) or £92,000 (Northern Standard, 7-11-1947: 12). Buckland never visited the properties he owned in the north and under the managers he had the station became very run down until Bill Stewart took over, in 1959. Soon after he arrived Stewart wrote to a friend and remarked that:

Old WL [Buckland] sold me a real pup with regard to Rosewood. He told me how beautifully improved it was and that the Governor & other V.I.Ps always stayed here. This is really a beautiful cattle property and undoubtedly was the best improved cattle run of the size I have ever seen. Water improvements were practically unique, plenty of paddocks, yards etc. However the whole place is falling to bits. All the fencing is in shocking condition and the water improvements have been let go. The cattle are alright but are starting to run out, there has been practically no fresh blood been put into the herd for years. The stock camp is something out of this world. Half caste head stockman and the rest blacks, they start and stop just when they feel inclined and spend as much time as possible playing cards. The cattle are travelled everywhere with a mob of dogs behind them. There are supposed to be 35,000 cattle on the place and if there is more than 25,000 I will be the most surprised man in the Territory. The old man is paying me a good salary and says I can spend the money but I think when he finds just what it will cost to do the place up it might be another matter. Arnold & I made a thorough inspection of the place and he was knocked edgeways (Stewart to ‘Bob’, 2-7-1959).

In a letter to another friend nearly a month later, Stewart (30-7-1959) stated that:

From what I know now the old mans grapevine was 100% correct with regard to Wilkinson and I am quite satisfied he was a shyster, but Fuller was really something. As far as I am concerned W.L. is most co-operative. Has told me that he is prepared to spend, in his own words several thousands a year to put the place in order. I don’t know how long this will last. I might mention that old Fullers & Wilkinson’s correspondence with W.L. has either been taken away or destroyed.

In April 1960 Buckland sold Rosewood to L. J. Hooker Pty Ltd (Stewart, 20-4-1960; Press release by L. J. Hooker, 4-5-1960). At the time of this sale Rosewood was described as follows:

This property is well watered by the Behan [Behn] River and numerous wells. It has an average rainfall since 1935 of 25 inches. It comprises 1,073 square miles in Northern Territory and an adjoining area of 47,368 acres in Western Australia
and is situated about 130 miles from Wyndham. It is carrying 25,000 head of cattle.

The Hooker Company held the station until October 18th 1983 when it sold out to the Sarawak State Economic Development Corporation for $3.5 million. Clive Stone, manager from 1980 to 1997, said (pers. comm.) that both Buckland and Hooker relied on natural waters and that this led to significant damage to the land by stock and ferals.

**Tom Kilfoyle.** Owner-manager, 1885 to 1908 who, in partnership with Tom Hayes and Galway Jerry Durack, first took up Rosewood in 1885. Unless otherwise stated, the following information comes from the book, Tom and Jack (Byrne, 2003). Tom was born in Ireland in 1842, the son of John and Bridget (née Dwyer) Kilfoyle. He came to Australia as a twelve year old with his widowed mother and three siblings, John (aged 21), Patrick (aged 19) and David (aged 17). They settled near Munmell, northwest of Goulburn, where other relations were already established.

Little is known of Tom’s life between 1855 and 1882 other than that he became a drover and teamster. On one occasion he and two other teamsters were held up by the famous bushranger, Frank ‘Darkie’ Gardiner, but when Gardiner found out they were working for Charlie McAlister, whom he respected, he let them go. By 1875 he was employed on Thylungra station in southwest Queensland, then owned by his relations, the Duracks.

In 1882 he was a member of the Durack Expedition to the Kimberley and later was a member of the team that brought over the first cattle to stock the region. Soon after he and his partners took up 1,174 square miles of country which they named Rosewood after the town of that name in Queensland near where ‘Galway Jerry’ Durack had a property.

In the early 1890s Tom and M.P. Durack made a number of droving trips to mining centres in the Top End of the Territory. On one of these trips they travelled across the southern end of Auvergne and marked out a block which eventually became Kildurk station. The name comes from a combination of their names (Durack, 1983: 41).

The Rosewood partnership was dissolved in 1895 with Hayes leaving soon afterwards for New South Wales and Galway Jerry Durack moving to Dunham River where he was later shot dead by an Aboriginal named Banjo (Durack 1983: 79). Seven years later Tom went into partnership with John Joseph Holmes who was Member for East Fremantle (Durack 1983: 41). He died in Palmerston Hospital on October 8th 1908.

For many years a boab at the western end of Jasper Gorge and marked with his initials was known as the ‘TK Boab’ (Hill, 1951: 235). It was there in 1895 that a famous fight between teamsters Mulligan and Ligar, and the Aborigines took place (see entries for Mulligan and Ligar under VRD). The boab no longer exists and name ‘TK Creek’ has been lost, replaced by ‘Six Mile Creek’. There was another tree marked TK, almost certainly marked by Tom during one of his trips to the Top End in the 1890s, located near the western end of Auvergne station, probably near where there is a ‘TK’ Waterhole in the West Baines River today (Byrne, 2003: 101).

On December 20th 1890 Tom married Catherine ‘Cattie’ Byrne, a sister of the ‘Byrne brothers’, proprietors of the Six Mile Hotel, Wyndham (pers. comm., Andrew Barker). They had only one child, a son named John (Jack) born on December 9th 1893. Jack
eventually took over management of the property (see below). Tom was described by Charlie Gaunt (*Northern Standard*, 22-1-1932: 5) as, ‘A splendid bushman, stockman and of strict integrity, almost puritanically so; bluff, quick of temper, but with the heart and simplicity of a child’.

‘Big Johnny’ Durack. Part-owner-manager and pioneer of Rosewood. He was speared and killed on the eastern side of Rosewood in November 1886 (Durack, 1974: 284-86). According to elderly Aborigines who’d worked on Rosewood, Big Johnny was killed close to Mount Duncan. When I asked them if they could show me the place they said it was too rough for a vehicle to get there. The original report of the spearing to the Wyndham police is as follows:

Jacob Mort reports at 9 a.m. that last Thursday week he was camped about fourteen miles from Messrs Durack Station on the Ord River. A man named Thomas Hayes came to his camp and stated that John Durack had been speared and killed by natives on the previous day. Hayes was then going to Duracks Station to report the Matter as this occurred about fifty miles from the station towards the Victoria River.

John Durack reports at 1 p.m. that on the 17th Inst. he and his cousin [sic] Mr John Durack were mustering for cattle about fifty Miles from their Station on the Ord River. At about 4 p.m. when riding alongside a creek they came upon a number of natives They were lying in the grass they jumped up and one threw a spear which struck Mr Durack in the chest. They both galloped off together for about eighty yards when he that was speared fell and died in a few minutes. (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station], 26-11-1886).

According to another account (*Northern Territory Times*, 11-12-1886), Big Johnny and his younger brother, aged 16, left the head station with one packhorse on November 16th. The next day about fifty miles from the station:

as Durack was riding up the bank of a creek, he saw the head of a nigger, and immediately turned to go back to his brother and the pack horse, which were following close behind him. As he turned, he was struck in the side by a spear, and after riding about 80 yards, fell from his horse he exclaimed, ‘Oh! I am done for’.

When a party led by the police went out to bury the body they found that it had been:

jobbed full of spear holes, quite 80 or 90 holes having been made; they also found some stone spear heads under the body. From tracks it was estimated that there must have been 70 or 80 natives in the party. The horses, saddles and packs, were found untouched near the body (*Northern Territory Times*, 11-12-1886).

There is no report in the Wyndham Occurrence Book of the outcome of the police investigation. However, years later Black Pat Durack recalled that, ‘Later on a punitive force of police and volunteers were sent out by the Government, and a lot of the blacks were shot’ (Durack, 1933b: 43). Big Johnny was buried where he was killed but his remains may no longer be buried there. In response to my inquiry in 1993 Mary Durack replied that she recalled having been told that his remains were later removed and reburied near his parents, she thought probably in the Goulburn area. Mary was going to follow
this up but I never received further information. The diaries of Tom Kilfoyle, Big Johnny’s partner on Rosewood, are in the Battye Library in Perth and the library provides a short description of the contents of each (Catalogue 71, Battye Library). In the description for Journal 5 (March-Dec 1889, Jan-Feb 22nd 1890), there is the following passage: ‘speared by blacks on Rosewood Station 1886 removed to Ipswich Cemetery.’ This would suggest that Big Johnny’s remains were exhumed and now lie in the cemetery at Ipswich, Queensland.

**Charlie Good.** Worked for Kilfoyle in 1900 (Durack, 1983: 80, 399) and on Argyle (Durack diary, 28-2-1904 – 21-1-1905, entry for 26-12-1904).

**Darcy (Dave?) Oliver.** Manager in 1909 (Durack, nd.).

**Tollis.** Possibly manager in 1923 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 2231).

**Ward.** Manager in 1934 (*Northern Standard*, 29-5-1934). This is likely to be Jimmy Ward, aka Ted Web or Ted Whelan (see below). For additional biographical details see entry under Argyle.

**John Augustus Charles ‘Jack’ Kilfoyle.** Owner-manager from 1922 until September 1947 (pers. comm., Geraldine Byrne; TCPJ, 3-9-1940 and other entries; Frank Johnston Papers, NLA; *NT News*, 26-6-1952). He was born on December 19th 1893, the son of Tom Kilfoyle, the original pioneer of Rosewood and his wife Catherine (Byrne, 2003: 113; Durack, 1983: 41, 378; Rosewood Rainfall Book, Rosewood station). At the death of his father in 1908 when he was eight years old he was sent to Perth to be educated and lived with two aunts while his mother worked elsewhere. His mother died on December 1st 1915 (Byrne, 2003: 145).

In 1915 Jack spent a season on Rosewood. In 1917-18 he was on Lissadell and in March 1918 he spent 26 weeks on the road with a mob of bullocks going from Lissadell to the Queensland border. Late in 1918 he returned to Rosewood where he remained for the next 29 years. In September 1947 Jack sold Rosewood to Victorian millionaire William Buckland (Byrne, 2003: 242; Frank Johnston Papers, NLA). He said he would never have sold Rosewood if he could have found a man ‘who could have carried on the station as I wanted’ (Frank Johnston Papers, NLA).

Jack took over the management of Rosewood in March 1922. When he took over:

> There was not much improvement but taking into consideration the times, my Father did very well, he built 3 splendid branding yards, 3 big tailing yards, some miles of good fencing, a nice homestead, kitchen etc., and two nice huts on outcamps. It was during the management of the man who came after my Father [Dave Oliver], that everything was very badly neglected and the bronco methods and yards came into operation. These original pioneers carefully branded in branding yards, speyed etc. and worked their cattle properly (Kilfoyle, 24-9-1953).

Jack also said that:
The men in the district, looking for work or working, were absolutely the scum of Australia – they would not get a job anywhere else, etc. It is strange how many men, good and bad of course, worked on stations along the W.A. and N.T. border and in the East Kimberley, where their wives found it difficult to trace them (the man who did all that store [stone] work about Rosewood was one of these), men trying to forget the past, etc (Kilfoyle, 24-9-1953).

By the time he left Rosewood there had been significant improvements on the station:

In addition to the 26 to 36 employees, there were fence contractors, contract yard builders, 3 expert Southern Cross men, Drovers, etc. Always two boundary riders and odd men with their own plant of horses, camels etc. were put around the fences repairing, cleaning grass away or removing loose pieces off the posts, the same of course applied to the yards.

The Southern Cross Windmill Company looked upon Rosewood as their model station for their business and I must say their results were excellent.

On Rosewood everyone was given boxes of matches to burn grass etc., all the year and I am certain on this well grassed country not 10 fence posts per year were burnt. If we neglected our strict attentions to the fences for one or two years, then a different story would be told.

Anything at all nervous or of a wild nature was speyed promptly. By culling for age and quality it meant, practically no females died of old age on the run and all the unfit, weak constituted etc. did not leave their likes behind, but were turned in marketable condition (Kilfoyle, nd.).

Jack was an innovative cattleman who took advantage of abundant black labour to create substantial works on the station. For example, he had at least two earth dams shored up inside and out with stone walls and he designed and built a circular stone cattle-watering trough which could be placed at the junction of several fences to water several paddocks at once. One of the stone-lined dams is at the homestead. This has a stairway and a stone plaque with the following inscription: ‘The Border Star Foundation stone Layed by his excellence Lord Gowrie Governor General 10 July 1939 Erected by G Kinevan.’ Maggie Lily (pers. comm.) saw Kinevan doing the stonework on a dam at Sugar Spring so it’s almost certain that he did the work on the other stone constructions on Rosewood. Kinevan also built Kinevan’s Yard, now a ruin, the massive construction and superb workmanship of which is still remarked upon by those who saw it before it fell down. He was a great horseman who in 1951 at age 70 won the Negri Cup for the third time (Hoofs & Horns, November 1951: 48).

One of the first things Jack did when he took over Rosewood was to do away with the open bronco method of controlling cattle, which he regarded as detrimental to cattle, returning to the exclusive use of crushes and yards. He had yards built all over the property, preferring to place them on black soil as the red soil broke up and became very dusty, and he mustered regularly so that under his management cleanskins were rare on Rosewood (Bolton, 1953: 237; Kilfoyle, nd.). He implemented a fencing program which eventually resulted in many fenced paddocks on Rosewood which enabled him to shift cattle to different areas as the grass in favourite areas was grazed down. This was in a period where elsewhere in the region the open range system prevailed.
Although Jack was of the opinion that the majority of men in the East Kimberley were ‘absolute scum’, he was not above using their assistance to bend the law when it suited him. In 1932 he was convicted for the theft of stud bulls from Wyndham, and sentenced to two years jail. In a letter written to the Bovril Chairman of Directors on February 29th 1932 by VRD manager Alf Martin, he said:

The half-owner of Rosewood Station – J. Kilfoyle – was sentenced to two years in goal and fined £500.0.0 and the return of eighteen bulls stolen from the Wyndham Meatworks paddock. The bulls were owned by the Wyndham Meatworks Limited. He gave a man by the name of Wheelan Ten pounds per head for the bulls. Wheelan also got two years. This Wheelan is the same man that took the cattle from Killarney some time ago, he was then under the name of Webb. The Darwin police still hold a warrant for him, we have been renewing it every year. He has been over the border in Kimberley all the time and we hope he remains there (Martin, 29-2-1932).

Apparently not all the bulls stolen were recovered because when a visitor was being shown around the station in 1939 Kilfoyle pointed out various bulls and exclaimed: ‘There you see, that’s one of those expensive ones!’ (Hilgendorf, 1994: 39).

In 1941 Jack was implicated in the theft of a windmill and other bore equipment from GB rockhole on the stockroute between Limbunya and Wave Hill. The windmill was due to be erected on the new government bore, but disappeared and was eventually located hidden at various places in the bush on Rosewood. Kilfoyle and others were arrested and tried, but acquitted when key witnesses failed to appear (TCPJ, 27-8-1941; Byrne, 2003: 235). During police inquiries at Rosewood and before any arrests were made Kevin Kay, one of those suspected of being involved, tried to commit suicide by shooting himself in the chest with a .22 rifle. When asked why he did it he replied, ‘I couldn’t stick it any longer, it would be gaol for them if I gave evidence wouldn’t it?’ (TCPJ, 31-8-1941). He survived his wounds and later gave evidence against Kilfoyle at Kilfoyle’s trial (Northern
Another man charged with the same offence was ‘contractor’ Norman Osman, but D.D. Smith, the Resident Engineer in Alice Springs and chief witness for the prosecution, refused to travel by plane to appear at the trial and the case against Osman was dismissed (TCPJ, 31-8-1941).

While certainly an innovative and enlightened cattleman, at least one who met him (and his wife) was not impressed: ‘Mrs. Kilfoyle lives in the camps when her husband is there. She is a peculiar, unattractive women [sic], with apparently no interests at all, and he is a hard, tough man, not very pleasant’ (Hilgendorf, 1994: 39).

When he was close to four years old Jack’s eye was bitten by a fly. The eye became infected and eventually he became blind. The eye was removed and replaced with a glass eye (Byrne, 2003: 122), and legend says that in later life he used to take it out and leave it to watch his Aboriginal workers (Byrne, 2003: 229).

Kilfoyle eventually sold out in 1947 to a syndicate headed by ‘Bucklands of Melbourne’ for a price reputed to be ‘in the vicinity of £92,000’ (Byrne, 2003: 242; Evans, 23-12-1949: 9; Northern Standard, 7-11-1947: 12). Around the time he left Rosewood he established life pensions for nine of his Aboriginal employees. The amounts paid varied according to how long each person had been employed by Kilfoyle and they were indexed to take inflation into account (Byrne, 2003: 244-246; Evans, 23-12-1949: 9; Kilfoyle, 24-9-1953). Kilfoyle remarked (Northern Standard, 31-10-1947) that, ‘Three of the old ones came across from Queensland with the very early mobs of cattle and horses.’ The money for the pensioners was sent by Merry and Merry, a legal firm in Perth, in the form of cheques. These were cashed in Wyndham and placed in a petty cash account from which:

we pay the natives in cash and obtain a thumb imprint of receipt from which is sent back to Merry & Merry certified as correct by me. From a managers point of view it is not altogether satisfactory as the natives get the idea that they are being robbed and if the cheques are at all late in coming they are on this door step looking for the money. However I don’t see how the scheme can operate any other way. At any rate it costs the station nothing except on one mail stamp every month (Stewart, 9-8-1961).

Interviewed in 1952, Kilfoyle described:

the construction of concrete huts that were provided for the “abos” – the only ones of their type known to exist in North Australia; [he] told how a special concrete building had been provided for aborigine visitors to the aborigine quarters; told how Mrs Kilfoyle would make personal inspection of the quarters to see that they were kept nice and clean … The aborigines’ “huts” were provided with hot and cold water, and the native women working at the homestead were obliged to have a shower and wear clean clothes before starting work each day (O’Loghlen, 1952: 32).

In his retirement Kilfoyle took up stamp collecting and eventually gained world fame for his collection (Australian Shorthorns, May 1962: 47). While he had the place the Rosewood brand was a combined J and K. This brand is still used but the station also has the brand ‘TRW’ (see Shaw, 1992: 183-186; pers. comm., Doug Struber).
**Jimmy Klein.** Head stockman in 1929-30. He was on Rosewood in March 1927 but it’s not known in what capacity (Rosewood Rainfall Book, Rosewood station; Letter Book 1901-1912, pp. 139, 151). Gordon Buchanan (junior), who lived in the East Kimberley and Victoria River districts from about 1920, compiled a list of names of local identities and he places Klein on Texas station. Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) regarded Klein as one of the best cattlemen he’d met. He said that Kilfoyle thought the world of him and that he later went to work for the Naughtons. He’s also listed as being on Manbulloo in 1923 (VRD diary 1923, 31-1-1923). For additional biographical details see entry under Waterloo.

**Ted Whelan or Wheelan (alias Jimmy Webb or Ted Ward).** Manager (or head stockman) in 1934 (*Northern Standard*, 29-5-1934). Together with Jack Kilfoyle, in 1941 Whelan was arrested for the theft of the stud bulls from the Wyndham Meatworks (Byrne, 2003: 179-184). Wheelan, under the name Jimmy Webb, had previously been implicated in the theft of 200 head of Delamere and VRD cattle during the wet season of 1927-28. He and three other men took the cattle cross-country to Stan Brown’s Dorisvale station, but Aborigines on walkabout discovered the tracks, realised something was not right and told the Delamere manager. Police and station hands followed the tracks and recovered the cattle at Dorisvale, and eventually arrested Fred Martin, David May, Jack Gordon and Stan Brown (*Northern Territory Times*, 28-7-1928). However, Webb/Whelan, regarded as the leader of the gang, escaped and made his way to the Kimberley (Cole, 1988: 85; Martin, 23-11-1928).

While serving his sentence for the theft of the stud bulls, on December 1932 he married schoolteacher Mary Alice McEntyre (Nash, 2002: 490-91). They returned to Rosewood as Mr and Mrs Phillip (Ted) Ward. The *Northern Standard* of May 29th 1934 (p. 9) reported the death of Ernest Dunstan who, until he died, had been nursed by the manager’s wife, Mrs Ward.

In 1935 the Wards went to the Tennant Creek goldfield and struck it lucky, discovering and opening the Blue Moon mine which made them wealthy. In 1941 they bought Banka Banka station. Ted died in 1959 (Nash, 2002: 491).

**Richard H. ‘Dick’ Hayes.** Manager in October 1947 (Sweeney, 1947: 6; WHPJ, 22-11-1947; Beckett, 1998: 62) after Buckland bought the station (Ogden, 1997: 63). Formerly he had been manager of Waterloo and later (1948) he managed Roper Valley (Evans, 1949: *Hoofs & Horns*, August 1949: 13). He married Mary ‘Cudge’ and was the father of Lyn, Milton and Ralph (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). Dick died in Darwin on June 22nd 1949 and was buried at Roper Station.

**Eric Blanche.** Bookkeeper in October 1947 (Sweeney, 1947: 6).

**F. Munro.** Manager, September 1949 (Gordon, 1992: 140; Rosewood Rainfall Book, Rosewood station) and October 1949. At this time Rosewood had recently been bought by Buckland (Evans, 23-12-1949: 9).

**Alan Dunstall.** Bookkeeper, September 1949 (Gordon, 1992: 140).

**Bill ‘The Crow’ Crowson.** Manager after Hayes died in June 1949 until late 1951 when Hector Fuller took over (Evans, 4-12-1952; Gordon, 1992: 161; *Hoofs & Horns*, June
1950: 33). He’d been head stockman there beforehand. Beckett (1998: 96) states that when Bill and his wife Vi were first married they were managing Nicholson station and in late 1947 they were managing Elsey. They were still on Elsey in March 1949 (Northern Standard, 11-3-1949). For additional biographical information see entry under Montejinni.

**Bill Tapp.** Head stockman in August 1950. He had come to Rosewood with the Crowsons in 1949 (Gordon, 1992: 161). For additional biographical details see entry under Killarney.

**Rowand Murray.** Manager in 1952 (Papers of Frank Johnston, NLA).

**Kenneth Hector Fuller.** Manager from late 1951 to the end of 1958 (NAA ACT, CRS F1/0, item 53/352; Hoofs & Horns, July 1955: 4; pers. comm., Cec Watts; Stewart, 5-10-1961). The Director of Native Welfare who visited Rosewood when Hector was there remarked that:

> Mr. Fuller, through the kitchen which he operates on the station, provides good food for all native employees and their dependents. I believe also that he is a sympathetic employer and does all he can to see that steady and reliable employees are assisted to put money away and to make the best purchases they can through a well-stocked canteen which he operates on the station (Giese, 18-6-1958).

For additional biographical details see entry under Newry.


**Dave Drysdale.** Manager (caretaker?) in the mid 1950s (Keef, 1996: 77-80). For additional biographical details see entry under Ivanhoe.

**Mark Richards.** Head stockman under Fuller (Evans, 4-12-1952). He was still on Rosewood in 1959, doing some fencing for Bill Stewart (Stewart, 30-7-1959).

**Bill ‘Leggin’s’ Stewart.** Manager from June 1st 1959 to at least October 1961 (Stewart, 5-10-1961). He first arrived on Rosewood on September 1st 1958 (Rosewood Rainfall Book, Rosewood station) and a week later he wrote to station owner W.L. Buckland, reporting on the state of the property:

> For the past week Mr Arnold and myself have made a thorough inspection of the improvements on the station and to say the least I am very disappointed. Undoubtedly Rosewood is a beautiful property, in fact one of the best I have seen & beyond doubt it would be the best improved cattle runs I have ever seen. However, as it stands today the improvements, particularly fencing, are in a state of disrepair, in fact most of the paddocks will not hold cattle at all. Water Improvements have been neglected and in most cases small calves cannot drink at the troughs (Stewart, 6-6-1959).
A few weeks later he wrote to Buckland again:

I am not very happy with the position here. The stock camp is really beyond description and the natives are completely out of control. Gambling is rife with both the stock boys and the girls in fact the Headstockman joins in the gambling with both his boys and on occasions with the gins. The cattle are worked far too fast and with dogs. Working fats fast and with dogs is unheard of on a well run station. All these phases will be dealt with in my report but I cannot over emphasise the urgent need for complete re-organisation at Rosewood. I think that you will find that Mr Arnold will substantiate my contention. While there is nothing on Rosewood by way of maintenance & repairs that cannot be put right with money this does not apply to the natives and the native position here is acute. While the bulk of the stock boys are really good types they have been allowed to do what they like and as long as there is a half caste running the camp it would be impossible to make any alteration. (Stewart, 19-6-1959).

One of the first musters Stewart organised managed to brand 500 head of which, ‘320 were cleanskin bulls & cows from 2 years up to any age with a big percentage of aged bulls’ (Stewart, 30-7-1959).

A year later he commented that, ‘to me the station diary is a most important record. Would you kindly send one out as a diary has never been kept here’ (Stewart, 19-6-1959).

Stewart had continuing trouble obtaining reliable staff. On one occasion he wrote that his head stockman, Gallagher, ‘was in at the station when I returned from Wyndham instead of being with the Camp so I sacked him on the spot’ (Stewart, 11-7-1961). On another occasion he advised Buckland that a cook:

J. Bell was dismissed for co-habiting with a young halfcaste house girl and supplying her father with some stores issued to the kitchen and selling tobacco to the natives at 10/- per tin. Incidentally this sort of thing has been going on at Rosewood for a long time, and was fostered apparently by one of the previous managers (Stewart, 20-2-1960).

In 1961 over 100 square miles of Rosewood ‘top’ country was burnt out by a fire Stewart believed was started by a Vestey’s Drover (Stewart, 11-7-1961).

Stewart stayed on as manager after Buckland sold out to L.J. Hooker in 1960 (Canberra Times, 5-5-1960). In February 1960 he wrote to ‘Gordon’ saying that:

they don’t work cattle in this country, they just trot them everywhere as instanced by the fact that soft bullocks, they don’t get time to harden up, are driven 130 miles to the Wyndham Works in fourteen days, that is after being housled [sic] hell west and crooked when mustered. I would say definitely that any young chap spending 5 years on stations, with odd exceptions, in this area could not hold down a job down on a well managed inside run unless labour was very scarce. The way the stock camps are run here, in many cases by Irresponsible half castes, is I think the main reason why the cattle are bad. A half caste of the worst [type?] has been running the stock camp here for some years and believe me to see the camp in action was really something. He has been replaced by a white man from Queensland this
season. The previous H/S built up book figures through pencil branding to the colossal figure of approx 34,000 head on 1,200 miles of country largely dependent on natural water. The average annual cast for some years has been in the vicinity of 2000 head which speaks for itself (Stewart, 3-2-1960).

In May 1961 Stewart wrote to Hooker’s General Manager, Pat Shaw:

this heard [sic] is definitely running out and is in bred as there has been no infusion of fresh blood in the Rosewood herd, that could make any impression, since Buckland purchased the run in 1946 or 1947. That is a long time in a climate like this and it is surprising that the cattle are as good as they are. (Stewart, 23-5-1961).

In December-January 1965-66 he was relieving manager on Rosewood (Bostock, 29-11-1965). One source indicates that he was going to manage Walgra after leaving Rosewood but whether he did so is unknown (Stewart, 19-9-1961). From August 1966 to at least September 1967 he was manager of Coolibah (Stewart, 29-8-1967). Mary Groves, who was on Coolibah in 1966 when her husband Joe was bull-catching there, described Leggin’s and his wife as, ‘stoic, old-school managers; the type who rang silver bells for the maids to attend the dinner service’ (Groves, 2011: 152).

Gallagher. Head stockman in 1961 (Stewart, 11-7-1961). This may have been Jack Gallagher, also known as ‘Calico’, a man of mixed European and Aboriginal descent.


In March 1964 Bostock wrote to Pat Shaw reporting that:

I offered July Oakes a job while there [Wyndham] and yesterday he arrived out in all his glory, gave his chauffeur a bashing and then started brandishing a rifle. Three whites and numerous blacks were doing a couple of goats for to eat then all at once they vanished under the troughing lying on the cement.

Its no joke facing a lunatic with a rifle but I’ll never know how I got him to put it down. Bernie Jansen was here at the time fortunately for me.

Managed to settle him down and get him on my truck and away we went.

In the dark at the turn off he jumped off and rolled in the grass, couldn’t find him so we came home – this morning he walked in looking for his job.

Well I just don’t seem to be able to have that type around so took him away, quite sober now and full of apologies (Bostock, 9-3-1964).
Bostock wrote to Pat Shaw again in May 1964 reporting trouble with his Aboriginal workers, and with blowflies:

> We have to have a few more whites soon as these coons may only see the bullock muster out, Dave bushed one last week and they all bailed up. Now that they have full citizens rights we just don’t know where we stand. Anyway I shall keep this lad here with me for a while and then I will make a start on the speying. I realise its late to spey, but the flies are still blowing saddle cloths etc and the paddock is eaten out so they will be off to a bad start (Bostock, 27-5-1964).

Then Bostock had trouble with some of his white employees:

> The new Headstockman has taken over and it’s a different camp already. Dave has gone over to Kildurk to do a spot of breaking in for Reg. took one young fellow with him. Somerfield and Colbert knew Collins in Qld. So thought it best to get out as they wouldn’t have lasted a week with him. I would say they were the worst two fellows I’ve ever had in a camp. Evidently they were responsible for all the bashings these kids got and the engine that was sabotaged at Farradays was their work as they didn’t want to carry on spraying (Bostock, 14-6-1964).


In December 1972 Dee wrote a letter of resignation to the General Manager of Hookers, Pat Shaw. He said he wanted to leave on holidays in December 1973 and finish up at the end of January 1974, which would make it ten years that he’d been on Rosewood (Bostock, 12-12-1972).

**E. Lees.** Head stockman from early 1962, moving there from head stockman’s job on Wave Hill (Bostock, 22-1-1962).

**Hugh Petherick.** Relieving manager in 1967-68 (Bostock, 16-11-1968).

**Alex Morton.** Head stockman, December 1969 (Bostock, 3-12-1969).

**Peter Conway.** Head stockman in 1970-71 (TCPJ, 18-6-1970).

**R.M. Russell.** Relieving manager for two months from 3-12-1969 (Bostock, 3-12-1969).

**Bill Dawes.** Manager from 7th December 1973 until April 24th 1980 (Rosewood Rainfall Book, Rosewood station).

**Clive Stone.** Manager from April 24th 1980 (Rosewood Rainfall Book, Rosewood station) until he left on May 15th 1997 to run the Timber Creek roadhouse in partnership with Bluey Lewis (and others). Clive was born in Miles, Queensland, and went to school at Nunda State School in Brisbane. He first worked in the Winton area on Cork, Glenelg and other places during his school holidays. He was a jackaroo on Crandon station (Kynuna area) and then jackaroo-bookkeeper on Rockhampton Downs in 1964-65. He
was sacked from Rockhampton ‘for talking to the blacks’. From there he went to Argyle as jackaroo. From mid-1967 to March 1968 he worked on a poultry farm at Charters Towers, but in 1969 he returned to Argyle as head stockman. In 1970-71 he was head stockman on Auvergne. 1972 saw him back on a poultry farm and then spending six months on the Greenvale Line, built for the Yeeboola aluminium smelter. From there he went to ‘New Argyle’ and finally to Rosewood where he was manager from 1980 until 1997. Since 2004 he has run cattle on Kildurk, leased from the Aboriginal traditional owners, and he also established a store there (pers. comm., Clive Stone).

**Graeme Douglas Struber.** Manager from May 1st 1997 to 2018 and ongoing (pers. comm., Doug Struber; pers. comm., Andrew Barker).
SCOTT CREEK.

Originally part of Willeroo, it became a station in its own right some time after 1966. Rather than running cattle it was used for cropping.


**Don Lawrence Laidlaw.** Manager in the 1990s. For a few additional biographical details see entry under Kildurk.

**Ted Templeton.** Manager from about 1999 to about 2001 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

**Rod Holingsworth.** Manager from about 1993 (pers. comm., Barry Scott). For additional biographical details see entry under Auvergne).
SKULL CREEK/KOONBROOK

In 1885 while travelling across what is now Fitzroy station Donald Swan found a number of Aboriginal skulls in an abandoned Aboriginal camp on the banks of a creek (Swan, 1991: 102). The creek became known as Skull Creek, this being the main stream flowing through a block first acquired by Dutchy Benning in 1903 (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 1, PP 31/1911). This block was transferred to Phillip Hutchinson in 1908 and then to Matt Wilson in 1910 (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 1, PP 31/1911). One of the owners tried to name the station Koonbrook, probably a European version of the traditional Aboriginal name, Kunpuk (Koon-pook), but everyone else preferred to call the station Skull Creek (Ronan, 1966: 30).

Harry ‘Dutchy’ Benning. Owner-manager from December 13\textsuperscript{th} 1903 to December 13\textsuperscript{th} 1908. He held this block under pastoral permit 31 (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 1, PP 31/1911). Benning also held pastoral permit 198 in 1909 but I haven’t yet checked to find out where this block was located. The Northern Territory Times reported on July 15\textsuperscript{th} 1904 that, ‘Mr. Henry Benning is out here buying heifers to stock some country held by him on Victoria River.’

Benning spent many years in the outback and northern Australia. According to one who knew him, Benning was, ‘German by birth … an Australian by preference, medium sized, berry-brown with the tropical sun, bushy-bearded, and with a Teutonic accent. He knows like a book the country from Camooweal to Kimberley – from Port Darwin to Barrow Creek’ and was ‘known as an outback romance’ (Adelaide Observer, 19-12-1905). The same writer said that Benning was on Carlton station and Lissadell around the turn of the century and that in the 1890s he was speared while stock-keeping on the Georgina River:

The spear entered his side from the back, just below the ribs, and his horse, bolting in fright from the natives, carried him to a place of safety. He pulled out the broken spear-head and a portion of his intestines exuded through the hole. Bennin [sic] tied up the wound with a piece of torn shirt – he never saw a doctor! The wound healed up, and to this day a lump of intestine and flesh remains outside his skin.

Benning was involved in a number of notable incidents in the Victoria River district. For example, he was present when Alligator Tommy shot Frost, Edwards and an Aboriginal woman near Pigeon Hole in 1905, but managed to escape unhurt (Northern Territory Times, 17-2-1905; Hill, 1951: 328-29). For additional details of this event see entry under Longreach. Also in 1905, when Benning and his mate Harry Flinders were en route to the new alluvial goldfield at Fletchers Gully they called in at Bradshaw for beef (The Register [Adelaide], 18-12-1905). There they heard about the ‘Bradshaw massacre’ from Bobby, one of the Aborigines who escaped the killings. Benning and Flinders took news of the massacre to the police at Brocks Creek and then joined the police party that went to search for the offenders (Adelaide Observer, 19-12-1905). In 1908 Benning was closely involved with the discovery of Jim Campbell’s attempt to steal over 400 head of VRD cattle. For additional details of this event see entry under Mayvale.

Phillip Hutchinson. Owner-manager from December 13\textsuperscript{th} 1908 to December 13\textsuperscript{th} 1910 (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 1, PP 31/1911; TCPJ, 24-1-1910). It was Hutchinson who established the Depot Store in 1905 (Northern Territory Times, January 1905; TCPLB, 1911-1925, entry for 28-7-1905). As well as storekeeper he worked at mining, stock work
and teamstering. He died in Katherine hospital in October 1925 at the age of 57 (Northern Standard, 2-11-1925).

**Mathew Bell Wilson.** Owner-manager from the December 13\(^{th}\) 1910 (NTAS NTRS, F199 Box 1, PP 31/1911) until his death in 1931. Wilson’s obituary published in the *Northern Standard* of February 3\(^{rd}\) 1931 states that he’d been a shearer and office holder in the shearer’s union during the Queensland shearer’s strikes of the 1890s, and was holder of AWU ticket No. 1. When the strikes ended he was disillusioned with the agreement made by the union and swore he’d never shear another sheep. He became a drover and drifted ‘further out’.


He came to the Territory at the behest of Jim Ronan when Ronan became manager of VRD in 1900 (Ronan, 1962: 174). In the Victoria River district he was first a drover for VRD but on March 31\(^{st}\) 1908 he became the co-owner of the Depot store with Phil

414
Hutchinson who had established the store in 1905 (Northern Territory Times, January 1905; TCPLB, 1911-1925, entry for 28-7-1905; TCPJ, 31-3-1908). They were partners until Wilson bought him out in 1910 (Northern Territory Times, 17-3-1911; Northern Standard, 3-2-1931).

According to Tom Ronan (1962: 223-4), at about the time that Matt Wilson took over the Depot store his (Tom’s) mother received £150 from her brother’s estate. She lent the money to Matt ‘on an unspecified profit-sharing basis’. This would have been the foundation of Jim Ronan’s share in the Depot store in later years. Wilson also was a partner with Jack Frayne on the Kunja/Coomanderoo block and later held leases over a number of small blocks near Timber Creek. One of these blocks was Skull Creek which he held in partnership with Jim Ronan. The Skull Creek brand was 4W4 (Ronan, 1966: 46). Another was block 2157 which he sub-let from Bovril in or before 1928 (Chairman of Directors to Martin, 31-4-1928).

A budding missionary named Robert Love who in 1912 worked as a stockman in the region so as to assess the condition and treatment of the Aborigines, described Wilson as ‘a filthy old mernonger’ who ‘had a surprisingly good selection of standard novels and poets’ (Love, 1912-14: 115). The word ‘mernonger’ appears to be a variation of ‘Murlonga’ or ‘Myrnonga’, a word in an East Arnhem Land Aboriginal language which refers to a white man who sexually and in other ways exploits Aboriginal women (Ramson, 1988: 410). Love probably learnt the word from missionaries who’d been working in the East Arnhem Land region.

Surveyor Boulter who worked around the Depot in 1913 observed that:

Matt Wilson walked with a very noticeable limp, the result of a bullet wound inflicted during the famous 1893 Shearer’s Strike in Queensland, he Mat was a
prominent Figure in the strike. Tho his appeared to be a lonely life at the Depot, he was a cheery fellow and always ready to do his fellow man a good turn. There were frequent visits to his store by stockmen from near and far, the great attraction being the firewater in stock, this of course was a costly luxury for Mat did not sell it on city prices you may be sure (Boulter, nd.).

For many years Wilson acted as the local Justice of the Peace. In December 1920 he was the defendant in a breach of promise case in Darwin. After several court appearances (Northern Territory Times, 18-12-1920, 21-12-1920, 6-1-1921). Wilson was acquitted of the claim and the plaintiff ordered to pay costs. In 1925 he wrote to the Administrator of the Northern Territory advocating the establishment of an Aboriginal reserve in the Victoria River district (Wilson, 12-11-1925).

Wilson shot himself on January 28th 1931 (Northern Standard, 3-2-1931). On his death the Northern Territory Times reported that, ‘The house flag at Messrs. A. E. Jolly’s was flown at halfmast today in honour of the passing of Mr. Matt Wilson, of V. R. Depot, who was one of the firm’s oldest and best customers’ (Northern Standard, 3-2-1931). He was aged 73 when he died so he would have been born about 1858.


Charlie Darcy. Owner in 1932 (Morey, 1977c: 19) and in 1937 (Ogden, 1989: 27). For additional biographical details see entry under Newry.

George Murray. Owner from June 1935. He also took over PL 2449 from Matt Wilson’s estate (Ogden, 1989: 26). His name first appears in the Durack diaries in 1912 and Mary Durack lists him as ‘V.R.D. drover for many years came from Cardwell Qld died Qld with cancer’ (Durack, nd.). Note: There is something wrong with my information as Darcy and Murray are owners at the same time. Ogden (1989: 27) suggests Darcy was possibly a partner with Murray and Liddy. She also said that Harry Huddleston was a partner – it all needs checking.

Paddy Quilty. Owner-manager from July 1938 when he bought it from George Murray, Harry Huddleston and Tom Liddy (TCPJ, 12-7-1938), until his death in 1938. Upon Quilty’s purchase Skull Creek was incorporated into Coolibah station. For additional biographical details see entry under Bradshaw.
SPIRIT HILL

The station came into being in the following way: Charlie Henderson bought Bullo River in 1963 and became partners with his cousin, Gus Trippe, in 1970. They decided to dissolve their partnership in 1976 and wanted to divide Bullo River in two, with Trippe (pers. comm.) taking the undeveloped western portion of the station in return for his half share interest. However, the Lands Department would not allow the division because they didn’t believe two viable stations would result. Accordingly, Trippe ‘paid Auvergne $100,000 for their grazing licence which abutted Bullo and went all the way to the Western Australia boundary. The total area of this marriage was 960 square miles.’ According to John Nicolson (pers. comm.) the block Trippe bought was actually part of Newry and was originally called the ‘Sandy Creek Block’.

Nicolson said an oil exploration company had put down a deep bore in the 1950s which became known as the Spirit Hill Bore. This bore was flowing and was supposed to be on the Newry block but Trippe had a survey done and discovered the bore was not on the block at all – it was about five miles out. As a result Trippe was able to get £5000 knocked off the purchase price. With the additional land the subdivision was allowed to go ahead and on the suggestion of his wife Nancy, Trippe (pers. comm.) decided to name his portion ‘Spirit Hill’.

Part of the deal between Trippe and Henderson was for Henderson to deliver a certain number and quality of cattle to Spirit Hill. Trippe claimed the cattle owing to him was not what he got. It was a ‘gentleman’s agreement’ but when Henderson died in June 1986 Trippe sued Bullo River for what he claimed was owed to him. He won.

Spirit Hill officially became a station in its own right on July 1st 1977 (PL 812; see files at Office of the Placenames Committee, Darwin). Trippe eventually sold the lease to Reg Durack, but Reg didn’t hold it for long, selling out in 1987. The station was taken over by the Northern Territory Government and has since been divided, the western part designated a forthcoming irrigation area (Ord River stage 2) and the eastern part a Conservation Zone.

Gus Trippe, OA. Part owner-manager from 1977. Unless otherwise stated the following information was provided by Gus Trippe himself or comes from the NT News (10-10-1990). He was born in 1920 and brought up in Maryland, USA. He spent seven years in the US Army, rising to the rank of Major. After the war he stated a shipping business in the Philippines. In 1954 the Australian commercial attaché in Manila reported that the Australian cattle industry had severely limited markets. Trippe and his cousin, Charlie Henderson, moved to the Territory where they set up a company, North Australian Development, and re-established the live cattle export trade to Hong Kong and the Philippines. Their business flourished until 1963 when export abattoirs opened in Darwin and Katherine.

In 1956 he bought Jindare station west of Pine Creek which he held until 1966. He also bought a half share in Elsey station but fell out with his partner and sold his share. He also held interests in Montejinni, Dungowan and Kingston Rest station in the Kimberley.

Trippe set up other companies – North Australian Stevedoring and North Australian Shipping and Trading, and later had interests in Offshore Fisheries and Besser Industries.
His cattle ships needed backloading to the Northern Territory and he developed a trade in cement, timber, building supplies and bitumen, mostly from Taiwan. When the live cattle trade faltered in 1962 Trippe turned to exporting scrap iron. He did well, exporting scrap metal from the Darwin wartime defences, the old Vestey meatworks at Bullocky Point, and locomotives from the defunct North Australian Railway.

When a building boom began in the Territory in the late 1960s Trippe began importing bagged cement from Taiwan, and in 1967 he established a company called Norcement and built a bulk cement plant at the Darwin wharves, the first such plant in Australia. The bulk plant saved costs and earned contracts across the north, including the construction of the Nabalco Bauxite operation and the township of Nhulunbuy.

In 1984 Norcement joined forces with Adelaide Brighton Cement in opening an advanced cement grinding plant at East Arm. Their hope was to provide cement sleepers for the proposed Darwin-Alice Springs railway, and cement for the Jabiluka and Koongara mines. Only the railway project eventuated but this was long after Trippe had sold his interests to Adelaide Brighton in 1990. He also sold his cattle properties. In 1986 he was made a member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to the Northern Territory. He retired to southern California and died there in 2000.

**Reginald Wyndham Durack.** Owner-manager in 1987-89. Reg and his wife Enid worked the property from November 1987 to May 1989 and although he regarded it as a good station, well improved, Reg’s heart was never in it. His children were not interested in cattle station life so in 1989 he decided to sell out (pers. comm., Reg Durack). For additional biographical details see entry under Auvergne.

**Rob Kelly.** Manager in 1996. He ran Spirit Hill from Carlton. The Northern Territory Land Corporation bought it in 1996 and it has since been divided with the major part being declared a conservation area (pers. comm., Barry Scott).
SPRING CREEK

SPRING CREEK

Spring Creek appears to have been established in the 1890s by Joe Fegan (Buchanan, 7-11-1950). The earliest mention of his name in the district is in the Wyndham Occurrence Book in 1897 (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station], 1895-1897, entry for 25-6-1897). The earliest mention of Spring Creek in the Wyndham Occurrence Book is in 1905 (Wyndham Police Station, Journal of Patrols, 1901-1906, entry for 2-3-1905). In 1905 Spring Creek was owned by Rudolph Phirchowski and Joe Fegan (Durack 1983: 123). Buchanan (7-11-1950) says that the station was later purchased by T. Cole and B. Ogden who in turn sold it in the early 1920s.

In October 1920 Spring Creek was advertised for sale in the Northern Territory Times (19-10-1920). The station and improvements were described as:

New Galvanised House of two rooms and passage, with twelve foot Verandah all round. New Kitchen, large twelve foot verandah one side; Stone Storeroom and Outhouses, large Horse Paddock, new Branding Yard (draft four ways); Broncho Yard and minor improvements. Area, approximately eighty thousand acres. The country is principally grassy ridges and valleys, well watered by springs and waterholes. No stock, with the exception of one hundred head of Mixed Cattle … PRICE: Three Thousand Pounds (£3000).

The station appears to have been bought by a man named N. Finlay or Finley. A visitor in 1939 was told that Finlay had decided to make Spring Creek his home and had built a new homestead with ‘a porcelain toilet seat and septic tank’ (Hilgendorf, 1994: 38). A report written by Gordon Buchanan on November 7th 1950 says that after some years Finley sold to W. Skuthorp who sold it to Vesteyes in 1946. However, the Timber Creek police journal records in August 1941 that Spring Creek ‘was recently acquired from “Finley” who is a suspicious character’ (TCPJ, 13-9-1941).

In 1950 it was part of the Turner Grazing Co, Ltd and at that time it was run as an outstation of Ord River, but it had a separate camp and overseer, and was not supplied by either the Ord or Turner (Buchanan, 7-11-1950). According to Len Hill (pers. comm.), from 1965 the station was managed from Nicholson.

In 1950 the homestead complex was described as:

Homestead. Timber frame, C.G.I. roof, asbestos walls, cement floors, containing two main rooms, ceiled but unlined 12’ verandahs all round on which are situated large lounge-dining room flywired, flywired sleepout, laundry and W/C – this is a septic system and the only one met with up to date. This is all in good order and condition. Kitchen. Timber frame, C.G.I. roof and walls unlined and unceiled, cement floors with verandah along one side and is in fair order. Beefhouse. Timber frame, C.G.I. roof and flywired, cement floor. Very fair order. Store. Timber frame, C.G.I. roof and walls, earth floors containing store, saddle room, tool room and garage has verandahs on three sides and is in fair condition only. Bathroom. Timber frame, C.G.I. roof and walls cement floors small but in reasonable condition. Outside “pit” type W/C, good condition. Natives shower-room and lavatory, fair condition (Buchanan, 7-11-1950).
Barry Kelly. Manager (when?)

M.B. Ogden. Manager? (WHPJ, 7-6-1920).

Billy Skuthorp. Owner-manager in about 1940. He had previously bought Bungle Bungle, Tikalara and Hann Spring stations, and had been a storekeeper in Wyndham. In 1946 he sold Spring Creek to the Turner Grazing Company Pty Ltd (Vesteys) (Clement, 1989: 6).

‘The Swamp Hog’. Manager in 1947 (Beckett, 1998: 62). This may have been Charlie Arnold who was known as ‘The Swamp Hog’ when working on VRD (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz). In 1910 there was a Charles Arnold working on Ivanhoe who then went over to Denham River, but whether this was the same Charlie Arnold is unknown (Letter Book 1901-1912, letter dated 19-7-1910. SROWA).

Len Kiehne. Overseer for three years up to November 1950 (Buchanan, 7-11-1950; Gordon, 1992: 140). He was described by Buchanan as having ‘been on the property in that capacity [overseer] for three years as [sic] is reputed to be a very fair cattlemaster’. An anonymous correspondent to the Stockman’s Hall of Fame newspaper (March 2001) gave dates of 1955-56 for Kiehne’s time at Spring Creek and classed him as manager. For additional biographical information see entry under Limbunya.


Cec Watts. Overseer in about 1956-1958 (Hamill, 2000; pers. comm., Len Hill), and manager in April 1964 (Hooker Pastoral Company Records, NTAS NTRS 9 A7281). For additional biographical details see entry under Turner station.

John Davis. Overseer, c1959-60 (pers. comm., Len Hill).


Graeme Wicks. Overseer, c1975-76 (pers. comm., Len Hill).

Mike Shaw. Manager (or owner?) 2005 and currently (2017). His wife’s name is Jane.
STURT CREEK/DENISON DOWNS

STURT CREEK/DENISON DOWNS

The block that eventually became known, first as Denison Downs and later as Sturt Creek, was originally taken up by William Henry Stretch, William Lewers, J.S. Foster and John Weekes (Buchanan, 1997: 123; Bolton, 1953, Appendix 2). In 1890 Foster wrote a report on Sturt Creek which contained the following paragraph:

the Sturt Creek country was taken up in 1887; and, during the same year, we left Normanton, Qld. with 750 head of cattle and 30 horses. After a long trip via the tableland, we finally reached our station in Oct, 1888, with 550 cattle. We had lost a good many with pleuro and Red Water. Our horses did not suffer much en route, except when crossing the border between Sth. Australia and this colony, and there they cost us one pound per head. This we thought a great injustice. The cattle after their long march soon started to mend, and in a very short time we were able to send in a draft to the Kimberley goldfields (Bolton, 1953: Appendix 2).

According to Walter Rees (1945: 3) the cattle to stock Sturt Creek were bought from Frank Hann, owner of Lawn Hill, and as they passed near Johnsons Lagoon on VRD (now on Humbert River) they suffered an outbreak of ’pleuro’. R.T. Maurice (1904) visited Sturt Creek station in 1902 and stated that it was formerly known as Denison Downs. This name derives from the name ‘Denison Plains’ bestowed on the region by Gregory in 1856 (Gregory, 1981: 141). Maurice also recorded that there were 10,000 cattle on the run.

The first homestead was built near Bindi Bindi waterhole, but was later moved some distance downstream. A new homestead definitely had been built at a new site by 1910 and most probably before 1901 as there is a mention of ‘old Sturt Stn’ in a police patrol.
report in that year (Report Book & Journal [West Kimberley], 1900-1902, copy of Corporal Freeman’s journal). Copley and Patterson, owners of Ord River station, bought Sturt Creek in 1904 (Bolton, 1953: 117) and sold out to Vestey’s in February 1914 (NAA ACT, A3/1 NT14/5459). Bolton (1953: 234) says that, ‘In conformity with the Land Act of 1917’ Vestey’s formed Sturt Creek station, but there was a Sturt Creek station years before this.

**William Henry Stretch.** Pioneer and owner-manager from 1888 to 1904. According to Buchanan (1933: 198), Hill (1951: 174) and Durack (1983: 383), Stretch arrived with cattle in 1887. This conflicts with the statement of Foster (cited in Bolton 1953, Appendix 2) who said they arrived with the cattle in October 1888. According to Flinders (2016: 76). Stretch was 6 foot 3 inches tall and a brother of the then Bishop of Roma. He also records that Mrs Stretch was on the station and that she had been a Miss Gratton-Rivers of Euroa (Flinders, 2016: 76). R.T. Maurice mentions meeting Mrs Stretch when he visited the station on his epic camel crossing of the continent in 1902 (Maurice, 1904: 39). Flinders also claimed that Stretch sold out to Copley and Co in 1907 but Bolton (1953: 117) says it was 1904 when the property was sold and that Stretch and his partners moved out of the district at this time.

**John Weekes.** Partner to Stretch. Bolton (1953: 114) states that Weekes had been a ‘student of art at a Parisian atelier, and provided a very passable imitation of French cooking’. He was still on the station when R.T. Maurice passed through in 1902 (Maurice, 1904: 39).

**‘Ramrod’ Smith.** Acting manager while Stretch was away (Buchanan, 1933: 208).

**Horton William Atkinson.** Manager in 1906 (Weir, 1906: 359; Moore, nd.; see Atkinson, nd.). For additional biographical details see entry under Ord River.

**Donald Bannerman.** Manager in 1910 (Moore, February 1958: 49). He also worked on Margaret, and outstation of Ord River (Moore, November 1958: 31). It’s likely that Mount Bannerman to the west of Sturt Creek was named after him.

**Ludlow J. ffrench.** Manager in 1915. He had previously been on Booboorie and Coonamble (*The Pastoral Review*, 16 November 1915: 1024). According to Matt Savage (Willey, 1971: 105), who was a stockman on Sturt Creek at the time, ffrench (spelt as shown) was a huge man who was:

- six feet four inches tall and weighed more than eighteen stone.
- He was a trained boxer, and because of his size he was just about unbeatable by anyone in Kimberley. But as a manager he had much to learn; he was a sheep man, and wonderfully ignorant about cattle.

**Ted Hesse.** Manager after ffrench, ‘a natty little bloke who would polish his boots every morning ... in the mustering camp he insisted that the men address him as “Mr Hesse”.’ He later owned a sheep property near Kunji Park in Western Australia and according to Mat Savage he fell down a well there and died (Willey, 1971: 109-10).

**W.E. Richards.** Manager before 1916. In *The Pastoral Review* of June 16th 1916 he was listed as a volunteer in the 7th Field Artillery Brigade, AIF. This source described him as
'late manager of Sturt’s Creek Station, W.A. and Gordon Downs Station, N.T., son of Mr. W. E. Richards, Sydney.'

**Joseph Condren.** Manager before Wilkinson (pers. comm., Cec Watts).

**Clarrie Wilkinson.** Manager from 1917 after Condren left and went to Billiluna (pers. comm., Cec Watts; see also Cole, 1988: 168), again in 1939 (Hilgendorf, 1994: 47) and again in 1942 (‘Training of personnel in sparcely populated areas’). Clarrie came to the Northern Territory in 1914 (Clarke, 2008: 93). According to Cec Watts, Clarrie also managed Turner and Marrakai stations. Morey (1977a: 12) states that Wilkinson was:

> One of the greatest of them all ... Wonderful marksman, superb horseman and outstanding cattleman ... Clarrie managed Marrakai for many years. During the off-buffalo season he would fill in as relieving manager on one of the Vestey’s stations, and was one of the best liked men in the Territory.

While on Marrakai in the 1920s he introduced Townsville lucerne (NTAS NTRS PL 746 Marrakai, pt. 2). He was at Sturt Creek in 1920, capacity unknown (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 2124). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) said Clarrie was manager of Sturt Creek on several occasions. According to a letter written by the manager of Gordon Downs, Clarrie was manager in 1936 (Parker, 1937: 47). Matt Savage said Wilkinson was manager there when the Japanese bombed Wyndham (1942) and that when he retired from managing he took up contract bull shooting on Vestey’s stations (Willey, 1971: 146-147). In 1960 Wilkinson told Tony Clarke that he shot 14,000 brumbies on Wave Hill in one year (Clarke, 2008: 93). Ron Ball (Ball, 2002: 27) met Clarrie on Auburn station, Queensland, in about 1949. Ball said Clarrie had taken up a block adjacent to Auburn and was working as head stockman on Auburn to finance his own place. Len Hill (pers. comm.) also places Willmington on Sturt Creek, c1949-50.

When he retired he spent his time moving between the various Vesteys’ stations, a policy Vestey’s had for all their retired long-term employees (Clarke, 2008: 93).

**John Francis ‘Jack’ Barry.** Manager when Condren was murdered on Billiluna in 1922 (Bolton, 1953: 214). He was still there in September 1923 (WHPLB, 27-9-1923) and in 1925 (Terry, 1927: 169). It may have been Jack Barry who was mentioned in the Wyndham Occurrence Book on January 15th 1896, although they gave his name as James. Barry followed diverse occupations. As well as station manager he built yards, ran cattle and was a drover – in 1918 he took 1000 Ord River bullocks to the Darwin meatworks (Northern Territory Times, 27-7-1918) and in 1947 he was reported as going with Fred Tyrone to lift a mob from Go Go station (Hoofs & Horns, June 1946: 7). He also indulged in occasional cattle stealing. For example in 1928 he stole a mob of cattle from Wave Hill but when the police caught him at Hooker Creek they couldn’t prove a connection between him and the cattle in the area so he escaped arrest (Hall, 1970: 181-5). In 1915 Jack applied to take over GL 85 on the Roper River headwaters west of Maranboy, a block which included Providence Hill (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 3, GL85). Gordon Buchanan lists a Jack Barry as manager of Turner station but provides no date (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers).

Stan Jones, former manager of Gordon Downs, said that Jack Barry had once been head stockman at Birrindudu. Stan tells the following story:
I saw this old fella at Halls Creek … I said, ‘Who’s that old fella there?’ and they said, ‘That’s old Barry. He used to run Birrindudu’. And ah, then Byrnsie [Jack Byrne], when I came home I was saying, ‘I struck an old fella who was here long before you Jack’. And ah, he said, ‘Who was that?’ I said, ‘Jack Barry’. He said, ‘Oh’, he said, ‘He was a cunt of thing, Stan.’ And I said, ‘What, how do you make that out?’ He said, ‘He had a stud’ – that’s what they used to call the gins. He said, ‘He had a stud and she cleared out and she ended up at Turner, and he went across and flogged her back with the whip’, he said, ‘on the horse back, and she died when she got back’ (taped interview at Katherine, August 2000).

Barry’s name is commemorated at Jack Barry’s yard and on Jack Barry’s Boab, both on the East Baines River in the Gregory National Park. Jack had a brother named Frank who was found dead in a sitting position at the foot of a tree at Kelly Creek, Wave Hill, in 1911 (Northern Territory Times, 14-7-1911) and it’s likely that Barrys Knob near Kelly Creek was named for Frank.

**George Renton.** Head stockman in about 1929 (Cole, 1988: 168). In 1938 aged 42 he was charged with the attempted murder late the previous year of a cook, Tom White, at Margaret station near Halls Creek. It was claimed that he had ‘attacked John Egan, with the butt of a rifle and that White was struck on the head when he protested against the assault on the manager’ (Northern Standard, 25-3-1938). Donald Howard, who met Egan when he was in the Ord River and Wave Hill country in 1948, said (pers. comm.) that you could still see where he had been hit with the rifle butt. The jurors at his initial trial could not agree on a verdict. He was immediately retried and this time was acquitted (West Australian, 23-3-1938: 18). By his own account Renton had been tried for attempted murder of an Aboriginal, ‘Wild Harry’, at Camooweal in November 1929. He had been acquitted on this charge, too (Perth Daily News, 26-3-1938: 23).
Tom Cole, the author of *Hell, West and Crooked* (1988), worked with Renton when Renton was head stockman on Sturt Creek. Tom said that Renton was ‘a bloke who used to go crazy in drink, he’d go stone raving mad in drink – he was a very dangerous man’ (cited in Cole, nd, transcript of taped letter to Charlie Schultz, Schultz family papers).

At the time of his trial Renton had two blocks of land in the Kimberley, one of 35,000 acres and another of 20,000 acres (*Daily News* [Perth], 26-3-1938: 23). According to Sandy Cole, ‘He broke his neck in a fall from a horse’ (Sandy Cole, cited in the transcript of Tom Cole’s taped letter to Charlie Schultz, nd., Schultz family papers).

**Wason Byers.** Manager after Wilkinson (Willey, 1971: 149; Cole, 1988: 171) but the exact date is unknown. Len Hill (pers. comm.) thinks Byers was manager in the late 1940s. It was while on Sturt Creek that he was attacked by bush Aborigines. He escaped injury and followed the attackers into the desert to seek revenge. He certainly managed to shoot some Aborigines. One account suggests that he killed 26 (pers. comm., Dick Scobie). For additional biographical details see entry under Coolibah.

**Syd Bonnell.** Manager in 1946 (*Boab Bulletin*, February 1998: 10). It was probably Bonnell’s wife who Beckett (1998: 52) said had, in 1947, been at Sturt Creek for eleven months with virtually no contact with other white women and with no children. Beckett said that by 1949 the ‘Burnells’ (sic) had moved to Sydney. Another source says that Bonnell went from Sturt Creek to Brisbane (Street, 2000). For additional biographical details see entry under Limbunya.

**Keith Pendergast.** Manager from c1947-48, after Sid Bonnell. He was a bookkeeper at Nicholson, Ord River, and other Vestey stations and later was a travelling bookkeeper for the Naughton stations. He then tried his hand at droving, with disastrous results (pers. comm. Cec Watts; pers. comm., Len Hill). His wife’s name was Violet (Michener, 1956: 67).

**Fred Mork.** Manager 1950 to end of 1951 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; pers. comm., Len Hill; Beckett, 1998: 89; *Hoofs & Horns*, June 1950: 33). Cec looked after the Sturt for about three months after Fred went over to Limbunya, until the Naughton’s could come up from the Margaret River station. For additional biographical details see entry under Limbunya.

**Eric Crissol.** Manager, c1950-51 (pers. comm., Len Hill).

**Ron ‘The Poddy Calf’ Urlam.** Manager of Sturt Creek around about 1951-52 (pers. comm., Cec Watts).

**Roy Norton.** Manager in 1952 (pers. comm., Cec Watts). For additional biographical details see entry under Montejinni.

**Harry McCullagh.** Manager? (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers). An anonymous correspondent to the Stockman’s Hall of Fame newspaper (March 2001) claimed that McCullagh was never manager at Sturt Creek. For additional biographical details see entry under Limbunya.

Frank Hargraves. Manager, c1953 (pers. comm., Cec Watts). Cec said that he (Cec) ‘ran the Sturt camp for a month or so after Frank injured himself in a fall at the Hall’s Creek races. Frank went on to manage Carlton Hill.’ For additional biographical details see entry under Carlton.

Bill ‘Dinny’ Crowley. Manager, c1960-63 (pers. comm., Len Hill; pers. comm., Patsy Applebee). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) said that Crowley also managed Margaret and Spring Creek, and had been head stockman at Banka Banka in 1946. He was also on Flora Valley, Mistake Creek and Turner. An anonymous correspondent in the Stockman’s Hall of Fame paper (March 2001) claimed that Crowley represented Australia in rough riding with Colonel Cowper. An Australian Dictionary of Biography entry on Cowper (Rutledge, 2001) makes no mention that he was involved in or organised a rough riding exhibition overseas.


Neil Dudgeon. Manager c1967-70 (pers. comm., Neil Dudgeon). His wife at that time was Barbara. Norm Watts has Neil’s photos – he lives in Albany (or used to).


Merv Wortley. Manager of Sturt Creek from 1990 to 1998. Merv was brought up in the Windorah area, southwest Queensland. In January 1986 at age 17 he became head stockman at Ruby Plains. In 1990 he was made manager of Sturt Creek which then an out-station of Ruby Plains. At the end of 1998 he returned to Ruby Plains as manager and is still manager there today (2017). Merv’s wife Jenny came to Western Australia in 1976 and in 1978 she joined her parents on Mabel Downs where her father, Harry Riggs, was manager (website, https://kentsaddlery.com.au/2008/01/ruby-plains/, accessed 10-9-2017)

David Hamilton. Manager (when?)
TEXAS DOWNS

Located in range country between the borders of Ord River and Lissadell, it was formed by Mortimer John 'Texas Jack' Kelly early in 1897. In May 1897 he left Wyndham for Texas with a wagonload of stores (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1895-1897). In 1906 Texas was described as ‘comprising some 50,000 acres, it is to a large extent hilly country interspersed by well grassed flats, which are possessed of good fattening properties’ (Weir, 1906: 241).

According to Flinders (2106: 91) in 1934 Texas was an outstation of Lissadell station. By 1946 it was owned by J. Naughton, whose company also owned Lissadell, Mabel Downs and Alice Downs (Boab Bulletin, February 1998: 10).

'Texas' Jack Kelly. Part owner-manager from 1897 to 1919. The Timber Creek police letter book, letter dated 3-3-1906, mentions ‘Mortimer Kelly Texas Dns’. Kelly was described by Doug Moore as, ‘a likeable chap but a confirmed cattle thief (thought nothing of in those days.)’ (Moore, nd.). He had previously worked as stockman on Ord River. In 1908 Kelly and Bob Sexton purchased Bedford Downs. Kelly remained on Texas while Sexton managed Bedford (Clement, 1989: 3, 20). Kelly was married, with his wife living on the station by 1906 (Weir, 1906: 241).

Tom McLaughlin. Boundary rider in 1901. Following the killing and subsequent burning of two Aborigines in September 1901, Constable Thompson went from the Argyle police camp to Texas Downs to arrest McLaughlin. However, when he arrived McLaughlin got the drop on him with a rifle and refused to be arrested (Thompson, 5-11-1901). He defied arrest for several years and when finally was brought to court there was only one witness alive. This witness couldn’t be located and McLaughlin went free (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1904-1906, entries for 27-9-1905 and 14-11-1905. SROWA Acc 741-8). When Major began killing whites in the area in 1908 McLaughlin was employed by the police because of his intimate knowledge of the country (Clement, 1989: 22).

Billy Madden. Stockman before 1907. He is first mentioned in the Durack diaries as a stockman on Argyle and Newry in 1899 (list by Mary Durack of first appearance of names in the Durack diaries, copy in possession of DL). For additional biographical information see entry under Newry. See also Willeroo section.

Roy Settatree. Stockman during Kelly's time (ie before 1919; Clement, 1989: 22) For additional biographical details see entry under Pigeon Hole.

Charlie Lincoln. Stockman during Kelly's time (ie before 1919; Clement, 1989: 22). For additional biographical details see entry under Bullita.


Fred Terone. Manager after 1926 (Clement, 1989: 22). For additional biographical information see entry under Carlton.

George 'Geordie' Nicholson. Manager in the early the 1930s (Clement, 1989: 22).
**R. Timms.** Manager in the early 1930s (Clement, 1989: 22).

**Jimmy Klein.** Head stockman in 1934. Said to been appreciated by the Aborigines for his just treatment, he stayed on Texas until 1973 (Clement, 1989: 22). For additional biographical information see entry under Waterloo.

**Barry Kelly.** Manager in late 1970s/early 1980s (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner).
TOP SPRINGS

Sid & Thelma Hawkes. Opened a store there in 1952. Johnny Stacey, who picked up stores there in April 1953, said (pers. comm.) that it was then only a bark hut, a tent and a hawker’s van. Later the store was in a Sydney-Williams hut. The Hawkes also had a block east of Montejinni which included the Yellow Waterholes. Thelma ran the store while Sid ran a hawker’s van and the transport arm of the business.

C. J. HAWKS & CO.
TOP SPRINGS, N.T.
GENERAL STOREKEEPERS
Outpost Radio, 9 T.D.
Specialising in Saddlery, Stockmen’s Clothing and Rifles
The Store in the Back of Beyond that Keeps the Outback Supplied.

The first advertisement for Hawks’ store, 1955.
In 1960 races were held at Top Springs. A day after the races ended Thelma contacted Constable John Gordon alleging that, ‘£3,500 in £10 notes had been taken from a briefcase in her wardrobe, & that she was sure that her husband S.J. Hawkes had taken it’. Gordon remarked that Sid and Thelma had been fighting for the past three years and ‘apparently things have come to a head’. He advised Thelma that her husband would have as much right to the money as she would and that he did not want to become involved in their domestic affairs. Thelma then claimed that some of the money belonged to the race club (TCPJ, 3-10-1960).

This was a different matter. Constable Gordon questioned Sid Hawkes who denied any knowledge of the money and told Gordon that Thelma probably had the money in her car which was packed for a trip to Darwin. When Gordon told Thelma that he wanted to search her car she was very reluctant to let him do so. When he insisted on the search Thelma fainted. Gordon knew that Ivor Hall was planning to go to Darwin with Thelma and searched his car, but found nothing. Thelma then wanted to call the whole thing off but Gordon searched her car and found £2000-odd in cheques and about £1300 in notes. He also searched the store and the room of employee Norman Douglas, but found nothing. Gordon believed that Thelma was trying to use the police as a weapon against her husband and said that, ‘Mrs Hawkes has the reputation in the country of being a rogue as far as money is concerned.’ He added that, ‘according to her husband she has been double crossing him for several years & it is only recently that he has discovered it.’

Sid and Thelma split up at this time. Sid took over the transport business while Thelma took control of the roadhouse and stayed on at Top Springs for many years. She had to deal with many hard men and women, drunk and sober, black and white, and consequently became quite a hard woman herself. She was known, among other unflattering names, as ‘the Armstrong Vampire’. However, some old drovers remembered her fondly and said that she was very good to them.

Thelma died at Top Springs on May 10th 1981 at about 69 years of age and was buried in Katherine General Cemetery (Northern Territory Deaths register). When she died Constable Dailly from Wave Hill came to investigate. While taking charge of any valuables he discovered a very large stash of cash. He handed $52,000 to the Public Trustee, but kept over $20,000 and buried it in his garden at Wave Hill. Seven months later, by chance, it was dug up by the police dog. The Aboriginal gardener saw the money blowing across the yard and quickly reported it to his boss, Senior Constable Bruce. Under questioning Constable Dailly eventually admitted taking the money. He was convicted and sentenced to two years jail, to be released after six months and placed on a two-year good behaviour bond (White, 2005: 48-50). Local folklore has it that he had a partner who shared in the proceeds but who denied being involved, and as there was no evidence beyond an unsupported allegation no charges could be laid.
Bolton (1953: 234) and Buchanan (18-9-1950) say that Turner was formed in about 1920 when Ord River was divided by Vesteys. Cec Watts (pers. comm.) said that Turner was formed by Burt Lawson in the late 1940s. However, Doug Moore (February 1958: 49) says that Bert Lawson came to the 1915 Ord River races from ‘Turner Camp’. When Turner became a station it had Bungle Bungle as an outstation (Boab Bulletin, February 1998: 10). Len Hill (pers. comm.) believed that from 1965 Turner was run as an outstation of Nicholson. In 1967 Turner, along with Ord River, was resumed by the Western Australian government with the aim of reducing siltation of the Ord River dam through erosion (Kelly, 1971: 55).


**Jack Barry.** Manager in very early times (pers. comm. Cec Watts; Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers). For additional biographical details see entry under Sturt Creek.

**Ray Skeltrea.** Manager in 1923 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1629).

**Joe Case.** Manager in 1925 before going to manage Burnside station near Brocks Creek where he replaced ‘Mr Rankin’ (Northern Territory Times, 10-11-1925: 3).

**Jack Egan.** Manager from 1926? (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1633). This needs confirmation. Jim/Jack Egan is also reported in Hoofs & Horns (June 1946: 7) and the Boab Bulletin (February 1998: 10) to have been manager of Turner in 1946, and Doug Moore (North Australian Monthly, 1958: 49) says Egan was on Margaret River in the early 1900s. This shows that he is not to be confused with his brother Joe who was manager of Ord River for many years. A woman who visited Turner in 1939 described Jack as ‘a tough customer who nearly bit our head off, but then introduced us to all the
whites he could find, gave us tea and shouted loudly as he talked.’ She excused his behaviour because ‘it must be a shock to these lonely fellows to find they have to suddenly deal with a young white woman in shorts, I suppose’ (Hilgendorf, 1994: 37).

**Clarrie Wilkinson.** Caretaker-manager, according to Cec Watts (pers. comm.). For additional biographical details see entry under Sturt Creek.

**Charlie C. Harris ‘The Silent Stockman’.** Manager in 1948 and to at least the end of 1949 (Barnes, 1948). According to Cec Watts (pers. comm.), Charlie began as a jackeroo on Wave Hill in 1937-39 and was head stockman on Gordon Downs in 1939. At the outbreak of the Second World War he joined the Navy and served throughout the Mediterranean and Southwest Pacific. After his time on Turner he managed Gordon Downs (and Birrindudu) in 1950-1952 and later acquired land at Julia Creek and Cobar. He died at Cobar in November 1979 (pers. comm., Cec Watts). His wife’s name was Carmel and according to Beckett (1998: 67) she was the first white woman to live at Turner.

**Joe Walker.** Manager about 1950, after Harris (pers. comm. Cec Watts; Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers). For additional biographical details see entry under Gordon Downs.

**Bill Atkinson.** Manager before Russel, according to an anonymous correspondent to the Stockman’s Hall of Fame newspaper (March 2001). Bell (1992) places him there from early 1954. He’d previously been manager at Nicholson (Bell, 1992).

**Les W. Russell.** Manager, c1952-54 (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers; pers. comm., Len Hill). He was relieving manager at Waterloo in 1954 and manager of Nicholson in 1954-55. Billy Harney says that from Turner he went to Willeroo as overseer. Billy says he was a ‘gin burglar’ who once had a fight with Len Keihne over an Aboriginal woman, June Frith, and that Cec Watts sacked Keihne over this. In 1954 and 1955 he was manager of Nicholson (WHPJ, 15-11-1954, 6-11-1955). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) said that Russel had once been head stockman on Wave Hill, and that he died at Julia Creek.

**Brian Eagan.** Overseer, c1952-?? (pers. comm., Len Hill). He also was overseer at Mistake Creek (pers. comm. Cec Watts).

**Frank Willmington.** Manager (?) 1956 (WHPJ, 9-11-1956). For additional biographical details see entry under Lissadell.

**Cecil T. ‘Chisel Watch’ Watts.** Manager in 1957 to 1961. Unless otherwise stated the following information comes from the Boab Bulletin (February 1998: 10-11). Cec was born in Sydney on October 28th 1926. He attended Glebe Public School and then the Ultimo Central Technical School. At age 15 he left home and spent nearly four years working on a Narrabri sheep and wheat property. While there he did a book-keeping course by correspondence. He then headed north, working briefly on Coniston and Banka Banka stations before reaching Darwin where he found work as a second year jackeroo with Vesteys. His first position was on Vestey’s Nicholson station. Over the next seven or eight years he worked on all of Vestey’s Kimberley holdings as well as on Birrindudu in the Territory. In 1949 he was head stockman on Turner.
Late in 1954 Cec gave station work away and for a year worked in Johnstone’s store in Halls Creek. At the end of 1955 he and the shopkeeper’s daughter, Dawn, eloped and were married at Dirranbandi. He then rejoined Vestey’s and in 1956 was sent to Spring Creek, then an outstation of Ord River. After a year and a half he was appointed manager of Turner which he later described as ‘a quiet place, off the beaten track’. Cec and Dawn spent three years there before taking over the management of Ord River station for four years.

Early in 1965 he was appointed Pastoral Inspector for Vestey’s Northern Territory and Western Australian stations, taking over from Eric Durack. In this new position his home base was in Darwin, and to cover this vast area Cec learnt to fly. When the last of the Vestey stations in Western Australia was sold in 1981, Cec and Dawn moved to Rockhampton where Cec worked as General Manager of the company’s Australian operations until he retired in 1986. On retirement the company sent Cec and Dawn on a holiday through Europe, England and on to Russia where they took the Trans-Siberian railway to Mongolia and China. Later Cec acted as guide for bus tours through outback areas he knew well and was involved in a number of community organisations (North Queensland Register, 5-3-2015).

Cec Watts, Gordon Downs, 1952 (Watts collection).

Cec (pers. comm.) said that his nickname was the result of someone who didn’t know him writing a letter to him for an Aboriginal who’d been sent to the leprosarium at Broome. Because of the Aboriginal’s accent the letter writer misunderstood the name and
sent the letter addressed to ‘Chisel Watch’. Cec (pers. comm.) used to write for *Hoofs & Horns* under the pseudonym of ‘Cambridge’. He died on February 21st, 2015, at the age of 88 (*North Queensland Register*, 5-3-2015).
UINDAIT (MIDNIGHT)

The remains of Uindait homestead, the ‘little fortress of stone and iron’ (Lewis collection).

The name ‘Uindait’, pronounced ‘Yoo-in-dite’, is a Malngin language word, the name of a Dreaming site somewhere on Uindait Creek. In a letter written by Surveyor Wells in 1907 he refers to Uindait as ‘Wyandotte’ followed by ‘Mindyit’ in brackets (Wells, 28-11-1907), so it’s virtually certain that the name ‘Midnight’ is a corruption of ‘Uindait’.

Uindait station was originally taken up by Jimmy Wickham and Jack Duggan on July 2nd 1903 (O’Keefe, 12-12-1904). It was held under pastoral permit 22, in Wickham’s name only (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 1, PP 22/1910). From June 10th 1906 to June 10th 1912 Wickham also held pastoral permit 111 (block 22A), a long, narrow, north-south strip along the western end of the Humbert block (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 3, PP 111/1915).

At Uindait Wickham built a substantial homestead of local basalt rocks, with a bush timber frame, two doorways and several windows. The roof, and probably part of the walls, were of corrugated iron – ‘a little fortress of stone and iron’ as described by Ernestine Hill (1951: 399). He also built two stone-walled yards and other stone structures. Wickham had his wife Olive and several children with him.

The homestead was on the east bank of Uindait Creek, on the western side of Limbunya, but when L.A. Wells surveyed the area in 1907 it was shown that it was actually on the Mount Stirling block, held by Beasley and Patterson (Wells, 28-11-1907). It seems likely that Wickham then built another homestead further to the east on Midnight Creek (the headwaters of the Wickham River) where the remains of hut constructed in an identical manner to Uindait homestead can still be seen. It would appear that he transferred the
name of his first homestead to the second site and the corruption of the name (Midnight) became applied to the creek there.

I have very little information about Duggan. In August 1909 he left the partnership (TCPJ, 3-8-1909). It may be that he moved to a block immediately south of Katherine which was taken up by a John Duggan in 1908 (file in the Office of Placenames, Darwin). In 1912 he and Jack Newton ‘were charged with having assaulted Nobel an aboriginal native. Defendants asked for an adjournment for one week to obtain counsel [sic] which was granted’ (PCPJ, 11-8-1912). Duggan was also known as J. Geaghan (PCPJ, 20-10-1914).
After Duggan left a man named Thomas Hanlon joined Wickham. One source describes Hanlon as a tall and solid man, whose ancestry was reputedly Chinese, the name Hanlon coming from ‘Han Loon’ (Scherer, 1993: 25). In March 1910 Hanlon tried to register the brand OIQ for use ‘on the Humbert River’. The Police refused to register it as it was ‘too like other brands’, namely the VRD brand, G10 (TCPLB, 1911-1925, entry for 14-3-1910).

Ernestine Hill (1951: 298) said that in 1911 Wickham and Charlie McManus took the second mob – 300 mixed cattle – down the newly opened Canning stock route (West Australian, 26-4-1911: 7) and it was on this trip that they found the murdered bodies of the preceding drovers, Shoesmith and Thompson (Lucanus, 6-9-1929: 6). Newspaper reports indicate that it was another droving team, led by Cole, that found the bodies (Western Mail, 7-10-1911; West Australian, 26-4-1911). Bob and Sandy Wood, researchers of Canning stock route history, say that an old Canning drover, Ben Taylor, told them that Wickham, Beasley, Patterson and possibly Hanlon took cattle down the Canning (pers. comm., Wood and Wood; see Terry, 1927: 152). They say that Taylor is ‘most reliable’, and that he owned Lamboo station in the Kimberleys for many years and knew all the old-timers around Halls Creek. According to the Woods, the police and newspapers of 1911 refer only to James Wickham and three companions.

Wickham and Hanlon were partners on Permit 22 until July 2nd 1912 when it was taken over by the executors of the estate of W.F. Buchanan and came under control of Wave Hill (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 1, PP 22/1910). Permit 22A had been taken over by W.F. and C.H. Buchanan a month earlier, on June 10th 1912. On July 2nd 1914, C.H. Wright bought the rights from Buchanan on behalf of Vestey Brothers and the blocks became part of Limbunya station (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 1, PP 22/1910). Wickham, Beasley and Frayne were all bought out in 1910 but probably had time to muster and dispose of their cattle (White, 31-12-1910; McBeath, 1910). A correspondent to the Townsville Register in 1953 (October 10th) suggested that, ‘The little station owners often clubbed together when droving their cattle’ and it seems likely that Wickham and Hanlon, and Beasley and Patterson (of Mount Stirling), had combined their herds to take them down the Canning. Frayne chose to shift his cattle to a new place in the Pine Creek district.

After selling Midnight, Wickham and Hanlon shifted their operations to a block on the Frew River held by Hanlon, who’d taken it over from Warrington Rogers (Johns, 31-12-1911: 36; NTAS NTRS F199, Box 5, PP 297/1912; NTAS NTRS F199, Box 4, PP 193/1914). In 1916 Wickham and Hanlon were arrested for the theft of a mob of over 130 Lake Nash cattle (another report said over 600 head). During the trial in April 1917 Hanlon was acquitted but Wickham pleaded guilty, was convicted, and sentenced to five years with hard labour (Northern Territory Times, 14-12-1916 and 19-4-1917). He was released in August 1919 (Northern Territory Times, 27-9-1919).

According to Lester Caine (pers. comm.) who once worked with Hanlon, while Wickham was in jail Hanlon sold the property but never gave Wickham’s share to Olive Wickham, and was always frightened Jimmy would catch up with him. Consequently he always hid from newcomers to his camp or wherever he worked. Hanlon was later said to be on Huckitta station (Scherer, 1993: 25). This is likely to be correct as in 1929 he was involved with the discovery of a supposedly ancient human skull on his property ‘in the Jervois Ranges’ (Griffiths, 1996: 65-66). He was also involved in sensational though unfounded
claims of a fabulous silver-lead deposit in the same general area (Northern Territory Times, 29-10-1929: 1).

After his release from jail Wickham visited the Victoria River country as the Wave Hill police journal of October 23rd 1920 records that:

Messrs James Wickham & C. Johennesen arrived from Hatches Creek with 27 Camels in route to Rosewood Stn. Wickham reports having come through desert from Tennants Creek hitting Tanami road at Winneke, country very dry camels 8 days without water, Wickham had no guide.

In 1923 Wickham was rumoured to have been killed by Aborigines in the Tanami. A police investigation was launched and the rumours found to be untrue (NTAS NTRS F589; Smythe, 24-9-1923). He worked as a stockman on Rosewood in 1925 (Letter Book 1901-1912, SROWA) and in the late 1920s he had Willowra, a block on Lander Creek in the Tanami Desert (Scherer, 1993: 19). He spent much of his later life prospecting in the Tanami region and in Central Australia. He was regarded by his white contemporaries as a highly competent bushman and by central Australian Aborigines as a white man who treated them with particular severity (pers. comm., Dick Kimber). He died in 1949 (Hoofs & Horns, December 1949: 8).

About the time that Wickham and Hanlon left ‘Midnight’ station the police who’d been stationed at the Tanami goldfield shifted there and established a temporary camp. Initially the police lived in tents (Waters, 6-2-1912), but also used Wickham’s ‘homestead’ which they described as a ‘grass hut with verhand all round’. They built a temporary beef house and the intention was to build them an angle iron and corrugated iron station building (Johns, 8-1-1912). There was a last minute change of plans and in 1913 the station was instead built at Bow Hill, eighteen kilometres north-northwest of the first Wave Hill homestead. At the time the Inspector of Police wrote:

I tried to arrange for them to be put up at Wave Hill Cattle Station, where police and station hands would be of mutual assistance (as it now requires one of the constables to remain in charge of the camp on account of its isolation), but for some reason the manager objected. When a permanent site is fixed, suitable accommodation will be necessary (Waters, 1913).

Police officer W.F. Johns’ unpublished memoir (Johns family papers) indicates that he named Bow Hill after the town in South Australia where his parents lived. After the police left, Uindait/Midnight homestead was never again inhabited except, perhaps, when musterers from Limbunya were working in the area.
The remains of Midnight homestead as it was in 1989 (Lewis collection).
The original lease for Victoria River Downs was applied for on December 2\textsuperscript{nd} 1879 and received by the Lands Department on December 24\textsuperscript{th} 1879 (Cahill, 8-2-1906). The leases were stocked for CB Fisher and JM Lyons in September 1883 (Parsons, 11-11-1884: 2). Their company, called The North Australian Territory Company, included English shareholders (Stevens, 1891: 27).

According to Paddy Cahill (The Register [Adelaide], 18-12-1905):

in the end of 1883 Mr. Lindsay Crawford and the late Mr. Sam Croker were looking out for site on the Victoria River or the Wickham River on which to form a head station. They were riding along the Wickham River, and before they were aware of any danger a shower of spears were thrown at them; but luckily none took effect. This happened before there were any stations on the Victoria River. The country was then almost unknown. The blacks were bad in those days.

‘HTH’ (Hely-Hutchinson), citing Alfred Giles’ diary, said that two early lots of cattle passed Springvale destined for VRD (The Pastoralists’ Review, 15-3-1906: 40). The first lot of cattle was brought over by Bluey Buchanan who was on the Roper River with a herd of 7000 in 1882. The second lot was 1500 head of breeders with Drover Farquharson who was on the Roper in October 1882. Alfred Giles’ diary recorded that William ‘Wattie’ Gordon passed Springvale on July 24\textsuperscript{th}, 1883, with another 3,400 head for VRD (Giles, nd.: 187).
Early in 1885 1000 head of Fisher and Lyons cattle were mustered at Red Lily (Elsey) by Hay and Mork and taken to Victoria River (Northern Territory Times, 28-2-1885). These could have been exhausted cattle left behind by other drovers. In 1887 a mob of 83 shorthorn bulls was purchased, ‘bred by Mr Hann of Mayvale & Lawn Hill Stations … The Bulls are now at Powell’s Creek and will take the new road [the Murranji Track] to the Victoria Stations, straight out, instead of having to go round by the Roper’ (Stevens, 11-7-1887).

According to Rees (1945: 1) the original brands of the cattle taken to VRD were MN5, GG6, WW2, FC3 and RL2, the latter being the Arundel brand of Travers and Gibson. The FC3 and GG6 brands were on cattle originally brought from Queensland to Glencoe (Northern Territory Times, 22-3-1884). Rees said that the famous VRD G10 brand was originally the brand for all Fisher and Lyons properties in the Territory – Glencoe, Marrakai, Daly River, Gerowie and VRD – and that it was used on both horses and cattle.

In May 1885 a mob of about 1000 head in charge of Drover Anderson arrived on the station (Northern Territory Times, 13-6-1885) By June 1886 another 1,700 weaners had been sent to VRD from Glencoe (Parsons, 30-6-1886: 1) and in 1887 another 1000 head were taken to VRD from Marrakai by Fred Mork (Rees 1945: 1). Mork was for some years a drover employed by VRD and in between jobs he was employed on wages at VRD (Stevens to Goldsbrough Mort, 17-3-1891). Altogether 6000 head of cattle were taken from Glencoe to stock VRD (Buchanan, 1997: 86). By 1889 there were between 13,000 and 14,000 cattle on the station (Stevens, 1889: 2).

In 1889 it was decided to try sheep on VRD and even before they arrived the VRD general manager, H.W.H. Stevens, was worrying about them (and his men) being killed by Aborigines, saying (Stevens, 3-3-1890):

I only trust we shall be able to Keep them from ascertaining what sheep are.
You will understand by this how much the work on the station is increased, & the risk that every man has constantly to run when out round the Cattle, often 20 to 30 miles from one of his mates.
Yours faithfully
H.W.H.Stevens.

If surviving documents tell the whole story his concerns were unfounded as there is no record of losses of sheep to Aboriginal attack.

In November 1890, ‘1,005 picked maiden ewes were shipped from Mr. James Booth’s New South Wales Station pers s.s. ”Tsinan,” and, arriving here [Darwin] in December with only a loss of three head, were at once drafted off to Victoria Downs’ (Stevens, cited in Kintore, 1891: 27). They were sent by train to the end of the line and then overlanded ‘on the hoof’ in charge of drover Fred Mork (Stevens, 8-1-1891). At the beginning of 1891 they were reported to have arrived at Delamere station in good condition with the loss of only 47. They had been on the road for a month and had to be swum across the Katherine River (Northern Territory Times, 16-1-1891). From Katherine, Mick Fleming – one of the Fleming brothers who later took up Illawarra station – accompanied the sheep and drover as he knew the road (Stevens, 8-1-1891). In January 1892 another 1,180 ewes arrived, making a total of 2,172 sheep on the station. By late 1893 there were 3,260 sheep on the station (Dashwood, 1893: 1-2).
All the sheep were pastured on the open downs country south of Pigeon Hole and along Camfield Creek. A hut on Camfield Creek in 1891 may originally have been built for the shepherd (Stevens, 23-10-1891; Stevens, 1-6-1891). An experienced sheep man named James Mavor was hired to look after them and to teach the other station hands about sheep husbandry (Stevens, 17-3-1891). The wool was taken by wagon to the Depot and shipped from there. According to H.W.H. Stevens, ‘general opinion is that the wool is good & clean for travelled and shepherded sheep. Unfortunately we could not get sufficient packs out in time so that a large portion had to be compressed into a wagon, and thus brought to the Depot’ (Stevens, 23-10-1891).

In October 1893 Goldsbrough Mort decided to abandon the idea of sheep raising, citing as the reason the prohibitive cost of shepherding and guarding the sheep against dingos and blacks (Northern Territory Times, 27-10-1893). However, Tom Pearce claimed the sheep were sold because, ‘the manager [Lindsay Crawfورد] was a telegraph operator, managing a cattle station, and did not want the sheep there’ (The Pastoral Review, 16-9-1914). By February 1894 VRD had sold the sheep to Joe Bradshaw and a total of 4,558 sheep and lambs were delivered to Bradshaw station (Northern Territory Times, 16-2-1894; Dashwood, 1894: 3). Bradshaw proved to be a hopeless place for sheep and within a decade there were only a few still alive (see entry for Bradshaw station).

The original VRD leases appear to have included country well to the north of the present northern boundary. A report on VRD written for Goldsbrough Mort by B. Blair in 1889 (24-10-1889) mentions the ‘Gregory River section’ of the run. Blair also mentions a block of 400 square miles held by WF Buchanan in the centre of the VRD leases and urged Goldsbrough Mort to take up 1000 square miles of vacant country near the southern boundary, east of the river. He suggested that if the latter area could be obtained it could
be swapped for the block held by Buchanan. An early map shows that Buchanan held a block centred on the Hutt Springs area, within the VRD boundary, and this would be the block Blair was referring to (NBA, Map F247). The proposed land swap must have gone ahead as subsequent maps show the area as belonging to VRD.

For the first eleven years, VRD was managed by Lindsay Crawford. Of relations between the blacks and whites while he was there, Crawford (1895: 180) stated that:

Blacks in the neighbourhood very hostile—constant attacks and reprisals ... during the last ten years, in fact since the first white man settled here, we have held no communication with the natives at all, except with the rifle. They have never been allowed near this station or the outstations, being too treacherous and warlike.

This state of affairs is supported by Alfred Searcy (The Register [Adelaide], 18-12-1905) who remarked that:

no man was allowed to go out alone on Fisher and Lyon’s station on the Victoria River. At least two men had to be in company, and the amount of money spent in ammunition was pretty considerable. What helps to encourage the natives in their lawlessness is the difficulty that attends their capture. The ranges afford a splendid getaway.

It’s also supported by H.W.H. Stevens who wrote in 1890 (22-7-1890) that, ‘living in the Territory has many disadvantages. The climate is not a desirable one and there are many surrounding dangers inseparable from working amongst the Blacks, and more particularly on the Victoria River where special precautions are necessary’.

In 1886 Crawford reported, ‘that William Jackson, a bullock driver, employed on the road to Fisherton depot, had been speared by the blacks. The wound, which is in the man’s neck, is not considered dangerous, or likely to prove fatal’ (Northern Territory Times, 1-5-1886). The Reverend Tenison-Wood’s description of the wound made Crawford’s prognosis seem optimistic (SMH, 28-5-1887), although Jackson did in fact recover: ‘A stone-headed spear had gone right through the base of the tongue and out at the other side … of course there was retaliation on the natives. They were followed up with the aid of some blacks from Palmerston, and severely punished’.

In 1887 Stevens wrote that, ‘The Blacks have been very troublesome both on the river & the Depot road. They are a bad lot and require constant watching on all parts of the run’ (Stevens, 11-7-1887). Four years later, only ten miles from the homestead at Stockyard Creek:

The recent murder of Mr. Crawford’s blackboy Bob was most cruelly perpetrated. He, in company with two other station natives, were out after horses, and when going through a ravine, with Bob in the lead, a spear was thrown from above which entered behind the shoulder and went through his body, the point coming out in front below the abdomen. Bob pluckily pulled the spear out and walked back to the other boys, and shortly afterwards died (Northern Territory Times, 3-4-1891).

This was probably a ‘blackboy’ listed on the pay sheet for May 1891 as ‘Bob Herbert’ (Pay sheets, NBA 2/876/22).
Three years after the station was first stocked the Kimberley gold rush took place. This provided a market for some of the first cattle turned off the station, but it also brought problems. In a report dated July 11th 1887, H.W.H. Stevens wrote that:

Mr. Crawford has also had to exercise the greatest caution to prevent the hundreds of overlanders, who have passed through to Kimberley from making away with the Station horses & killing the cattle for beef. A muster of the horses in April showed no losses. Where men have passed without money beef only has been supplied to them to prevent them helping themselves.

Stevens wrote again in October 1891, saying, ‘Thefts committed by gangs of horse stealers passing thro’ the country en route to Kimberley and W. Aust. have, on some runs, been enormous. Mr J.A. Macartney our neighbour on the Victoria has lost over 100 head in this manner’ (Stevens, 9-10-1891).

VRD cattle taken to the goldfields were sold to Mr. Fox who butchered them for sale to the miners. The miners paid for the meat with gold and early in 1887 it was reported that, ‘Owing to the heavy & late rains Mr Crawford … has been prevented from going out to collect more than £1000 worth of gold, in payment of cattle supplied to Mr. Fox in Western Australia’ (Stevens, 30-4-1887). It’s said that Crawford brought this gold (or another payment) back to VRD and kept it in a tin under the kitchen table where it narrowly escaped discovery by the ‘Ragged Thirteen’ when they raided the VRD kitchen on their way through to the goldfields.

According to Joc Makin (1992: 64) the first homestead was built at Stockyard Creek, although he also mentions that early maps show two homesteads, the other being on Gordon Creek. Gordon Buchanan (Buchanan, 1997: 114), who was in the area from 1884, states that in 1886 the homestead was at Gordon Creek. In a report by Bob Watson, manager from 1896 to 1899, he said, ‘Gordon Creek is a Crk between the Head Stn & the OutStn. The first head station was built on this creek’ (Watson, 25-3-1899).

The same map that shows Buchanan’s block at Hutt Springs also shows an ‘Out station on the east side of Camfield Creek above the junction of Bullock Creek, ‘Croker’s Camp’ at the northern end of Longreach Waterhole, an ‘Out Station’ on Stockyard Creek, and the ‘Head Station’ at the present location on the Wickham River (NBA, map F247).

Walter Rees (1945: 1), a stockman on VRD for many years from 1887, also claimed that the first homestead was built on Gordon Creek and that Stockyard Creek was an outstation. He describes the buildings and improvements at the Gordon Creek homestead as, ‘a small meagre hut, blacksmith’s shop, horse yard and a small horse paddock.’ Another source describes the ‘Gordon’s Creek’ homestead as ‘Good substantial hut 20x15 horizontal slabs iron roof 8 feet verandah paved with stone’ (‘Particulars of Victoria River Downs Station’, 1896).

Rees’ and Buchanan’s statements are confirmed in the diaries of Ricketson and Stockdale. These men had been seeking land in the Kimberley and arrived at Victoria River homestead on January 1st 1885 in a starving condition. From their descriptions and from a sketch map in Ricketson’s diary there can be no doubt that the homestead was on Gordon Creek (Ricketson, 1884-85: 270-75, map p. 320). Ricketson’s arrival at and
description of VRD homestead is worth repeating here for the insight it provides into life on this frontier:

we came in sight of a house and stockyards &c. As we neared the place, two chinamen and a lot of blacks came out to look at us. Two tame Emus were wandering about the house and a perfect army of dogs announced our arrival. A young fellow with only pyjamas on came out to the door, and Stockdale said "Good morning. My name is Stockdale — would you be kind enough to allow us stay here tonight?" Certainly — the young man said whose name is Armstrong ... It was very hot under the galvanised roof and Mr. Armstrong lent me a pair of pyjamas ... The blacks employed on the station carry revolvers the same as the whites. They have a large number of dogs who remain quite passive during the heat of the day, but as soon as nightfall sets in they are as active as Kittens, and bark, howl and fight all night long.

Archaeological remains at Stockyard Creek indicate a much larger complex of buildings existed there than at Gordon Creek so Gordon Creek was probably not the head station for very long. In a hand written report dated June 1st 1891 (Stevens, 1-6-1891), the Stockyard Creek homestead complex is described as:

Hip roofed house 30’ x 20’ Iron roof paper [bark] walls. 10 ft verandah. Good Kitchen. One Building including Beef room, Saddle room, Men’s room 50’ x 12’ all papers. Small Blacksmith’s shop lean to, bellows etc. Complete. 1 set Cattle yards Capable of working 1500 head of Cattle. 1 Sq mile paddock.

In the same report Gordon Creek is listed as an outstation and there is another outstation on Camfield Creek consisting of a ‘Men’s hut with iron roof 15’ x 12’ slab sides, small horse yard. Paddock with 2 miles fencing. Tail yard holding 1200 head of Cattle’ (Stevens, 1-6-1891). Other sources mention an outstation on Horse Creek, the location of which is unclear. In 1894 the Gordon Creek hut became the first police station in the Victoria River region (GCPJ, 27-5-1894). It was abandoned again in 1898 (GCPJ, 5-4-1898).

In a report on VRD written by R.G. Everett in January 1888 he reported that a new homestead was being constructed by Chinese carpenters on the Wickham River and he recommended that the buildings at Stockyard Creek be used as an outstation (Everett, January 1888). Two reasons have been given for the shift from Stockyard Creek to the Wickham. Everett suggested that:

it would bring it [the homestead] to the center of the run and along the Wickham there is plenty of paperbark timber for sawing and building purposes. The present site of station is not good, alongside a creek liable to go dry, and the flat where the buildings are has every indication of being subject to floods.

The other is that, ‘establishing the homestead on the Wickham was primarily on account of the high freight on station supplies’ (Rees, 1945: 2). The new location was only 40 kilometres (25 miles) closer to the Depot and the saving on freight would hardly seem worth the trouble of shifting. The water and potential flooding problems are more compelling reasons for the shift — the new location was on permanent water and was not flood-prone. It also would not be cut off from the Depot by floods in the Wickham River.
Contemporary documentary evidence indicates that Stockyard Creek continued in use as an outstation until at least 1893 (Everett, January 1888; Derby Police Occurrence Book, 1891-1893), and an account written in 1951 by an old stockman who’d been on VRD in 1896 refers to Stockyard Creek as ‘the Victoria River outstation’ (‘Culkah’, *The Pastoral Review*, 16-11-1951: 1253).

By October 1889 there were apparently two outstations — probably Gordon Creek and Stockyard Creek, but could include the hut on Camfield Creek (Sundry papers, NBA, 2/876/7), or the huts at Camfield Creek and Horse Creek. The buildings at Stockyard Creek apparently were gone by March 1899 as a report by Bob Watson (25-3-1899) mentions a horse paddock, a substantial stock yard and a well about twelve miles from Gordon Creek, and says that, ‘The Out Stn was originally in this paddock’.

Makin (1992: 64) states that, ‘the slab hut [at Stockyard Creek] was later moved eastwards to Montejinni outstation, in an endeavour to open up fresh country’, and Montejinni was established during Ronan’s time (1900-1903). Descriptions of the buildings at Stockyard Creek indicate they were clad with paperbark rather than slabs, so if a ‘slab hut’ was shifted to Montejinni it may in fact have come from Camfield Creek or Gordon Creek, both of which were described as having slab sides (Stevens, 1-6-1891; ‘Particulars of Victoria River Downs Station’, 1896). The Camfield hut is not mentioned by Bob Watson in his 1899 report so it may no longer have existed at that site. By 1899 there was an outstation on the Victoria River ‘about 40 miles from the Head Stn’ on a waterhole about four miles long (Watson, 25-3-1899). This was probably the Longreach outstation.

In 1884 the first boatload of stores was taken to the Depot, referred to in one report as ‘Fisherton’ (*Northern Territory Times*, 1-5-1886) and in another as ‘Lyonsville’, the names of the original owners of VRD (*Northern Territory Times*, 4-5-1889). To meet the boats Crawford had first to find a route from the homestead to the Depot. In so doing he established the track through Jasper Gorge, the first recorded traverse of the gorge from one end to the other (Crawford, 1884: 1-2). On the way he overshot the Depot and stumbled upon Gregory’s Boab on which he carved his initials, still to be seen there today. It’s unknown whether these stores were taken back to VRD by wagon or by packhorses.

As well as the supplies brought in by boat, two wagons loaded with supplies came out from Katherine (Ricketson, 1884-85: 276). According to W. Rees (12-7-1945), ‘In the first years of settlement the station had 3 bullock teams. All the bullocks had to be geld[ed] and were not much in use other than for the carriage of stores once a year.’ The bullock teams were soon abandoned and in 1887 contractor carrier John Mulligan took over the work with horse teams. After Mulligan and Ligar were attacked in Jasper Gorge (see below) it appears that station teams were used once again, remaining in use until teamsters Brumby and Burt Drew arrived in the district in the late 19-teens (TCPJ, 8-1-1917). VRD and contract camel teams were also used (eg, TCPJ, 22-5-1908, 10-8-1913, 30-8-1915, 17-4-1916, 25-6-1917).
In 1885 seven boatloads of stores were taken to the Depot (Parsons, 30-6-1885: 1) and station teams were definitely used to take the stores to the homestead. Also in this loading were stores for Ord River, Wave Hill and Willeroo (Northern Territory Times, 13-6-1885). In 1886 it was reported that, ‘Mr. Peter Fox has started overland to the Kimberley goldfields with two splendid teams of horses, and he intends to pick up five tons at the Victoria River, which he will take on to the diggings’ (Northern Territory Times, 28-6-1886). Apparently Fox employed others (possibly his brother) to bring the teams across as he was butchering on the goldfield while the teams were still coming (Northern Territory Times, 16-10-1886). Boats continued to take stores to the Depot until the outbreak of the Second World War, 53 years later (eg, TCPJ, 12-4-1898, WHPJ, 1-11-1914, 20-11-1919, 12-5-1927, 22-10-1937; Northern Standard, 2-6-1939: 2).

In June 1886 Goldsbrough Mort advanced C.B. Fisher £100,000 upon security of his Northern Territory properties and in November the company took possession of them. At this time the station was said to have 8000 mixed cattle, 173 bulls, 147 horses, 2 horse wagons, 1 express wagon, 1 dray, and 10 miles of fencing in two paddocks (Sundry papers, NBA 2/876/24).

In 1890 Goldsbrough Mort purchased VRD from the liquidator of the Fisher and Lyons company and in April 1900 they sold the station to G.S. Yuil and Co., Forrest, Emanuel and Co., and Kidman Brothers, for £27,000. There is no evidence that Kidman, the famous ‘Cattle King’, ever visited VRD himself, but there is a creek, a spring, a yard and a knob on VRD which bear his name (pers. obs.; Durack 1983: 69). Bolton (1953: 115) said there was a merger between Emanuel and Kidman ‘early in 1901’ and that they bought Carlton station the following year.

VRD was held in 16 shares by the following people: Isidore S. Emanuel, 4½; Sidney E. Emanuel, 4½; S. Kidman, 5; W.F. Buchanan, 1; and B.J.H. Richards, 1 (The Pastoralists’
Review, 16-4-1909). One improvement made while VRD was in the hands of Emanuel, Kidman and Co. was the introduction of new blood to the herd. This was a consignment of 350 bulls, brought from Queensland to VRD by ‘Jumbo’ Smith, who was ‘Brown of the Bulls’ in Jeannie Gunn’s We of the Never Never (Ronan, 1962: 198; White, F., 21-2-1942).

In 1905 it was reported that:

Mr. Townshend [the VRD manager] has a herd now of about 50,000 head of cattle, and intends bringing it up to 100,000, which is, he considers, the proper complement for the run. From 10,000 to 11,000 calves are branded every year, and the output from 4000 to 5,000 bullocks, 5 per cent. allowed for decreases on the station. Everything about betokened good management (The Observer [Adelaide], 4-11-1905).

In 1906 a correspondent wrote to the Northern Territory Times (21-9-1906) with respect to cattle stealing and the need to pay constant attention to cattle branding. He said that:

Larger herds, such as the V.R.D. station, are harder to keep clean, especially after being allowed to get out of control as in past years. But this state of things is being changed, as the present manager puts all his energy and horseflesh into mustering and branding his cattle instead.

This suggests that the VRD herd was out of control by 1906 and adds weight to Watson’s claim in 1895 that the herd was out of control under Crawford’s management (Watson, 5-12-1895).

A report in 1908 stated cattle numbers at 76,540, branded increase at 17,298 and 773 head of horses on the run (Herbert, 1908: 4). By 1911 brandings had increased to 21,000 calves which, it was remarked, would make the VRD herd from 110,000 to 120,000 cattle (Northern Territory Times, 3-3-1912).

From at least 1901 representatives of the English firm, Bovril Limited, had been examining the possibility of buying Australian cattle stations (The Argus, 23-45-1901). Eventually the company bought Victoria River Downs, the station changing hands in April 1909. The purchase price was £180,000 and formal takeover was made in June 1909 (The Pastoralists’ Review, 16-4-1909). The reason given for the purchase of VRD and other stations in Australia was:

the threatened predominance of Chicago interests in the Argentine, and the fear of “Bovril” that the immense meat interests of the United States already established in South America would “corner” the available yearly surplus cattle of the latter place, and dictate terms to those handling meat extract in Europe. To guard against this possible shortage of raw material is the main reason for the purchase of Victoria River Downs (Northern Territory Times, 7-5-1909).

The 1909 Prospectus for the sale of VRD described the station as comprising, ‘12,060 square miles (7,718,400 acres), held from the Crown as to 10,954 square miles for 42 years from 1901, and the remainder yearly, the annual rent being £823/18/0d.’ (NAA
ACT, A1 1909/11995). The company accountant, who provided a list of annual profits over the previous four years, said:

I certify that after charging all the expenses of the business including managing partner’s remuneration, and providing for depreciation on Homesteads, Out-stations and Stockyards, or Redemption of Crown Acres, the profits are as follows:

for the year ending December 31st, 1905, £20,534.12.9
“ “ “ “ “ “ 1906, £28,615.18.11

A report in 1921 stated that, ‘Victoria River Downs Station comprised some 12,000 square miles, carried about 119,000 head of cattle, and disposed of from 8000 to 10,000 head every year’ (SMH, 21-6-1921). A report in The Age ([Melbourne], 4-10-1921) quoted the manager, Tom Graham, as saying that:

he held 12,000 square miles at present. There were 170,000 cattle on the station, and 25,000 were branded each year. If bores were sunk and the station utilised to its fullest capacity, at least 350,000 cattle could be carried. The company was now boring for water on its back country.

In 1926 it was said that: ‘The following stock was on the station – Cattle 168,844; horses 1,181; mules 132; donkeys 71; camels 57; goats 164’, and that:

There is a splendid garden at the station where the following fruit and vegetables thrive: – Grapes, Paw Paw, cape gooseberry, cabbage, beets, root, [sic] cauliflower,
turnips, carrots, parsnips, Tomatoes, radish, butter beans, watermelon, pumpkins, cucumber, celery, broad beans, silver beet, lettuce, climbing beans, bananas, sweet potatoes, onions, sorghum and a number of young trees. English potatoes were grown but were not a great success. The food supplied to the men is excellent, and well-cooked. Fresh meat is available almost always as about 4 or 5 beasts are killed at the station weekly (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926).

In 1934 the station was said to be 11,356 square miles, to have an estimated 20,000 wild bulls. The cattle were described as weedy and inbred (NTPLIC 1934, Victoria River Downs).

While it held the lease Bovril doesn’t appear to have invested a great deal in improvements. This, plus the size of the station, meant that the livestock and feral animals couldn’t be controlled. In one year after the Second World War, 20,000 scrub bulls were shot and in 1954 30,000 wild donkeys were shot (Sun Herald, 8-5-1960). In 1952 a man and his daughter on a motorcycle trip around Australia were chased by wild bulls on VRD (NT News, 13-11-1952).

Donkeys and wagon at Victoria River Downs, about 1914 (Flo Martin collection).

A new homestead was built in 1931 (VRD Ledger 3). Morey (1977c: 20) says that:

a new manager’s residence, attractive and comfortable, with a green roof was adjacent to the old two-storey homestead. Downstairs, this [old homestead] had been converted into a large dining room, kitchen and cook’s quarters. Upstairs was reserved for guest’s sleeping quarters with one particular section for the police patrols.
This new homestead replaced one which had been built in 1907 (Artaud, 31-12-1907: 26). A 1934 report described the new homestead at VRD as:


This homestead is still in use. The same report described the old homestead as:

Two stories 3’ x 45’ G.i. on bush timber. Ground floor. Four rooms and living space. Earth floor covered with rubberoid, 12’ paper bark over hang one side, flagged floor First floor 15’ X 27’ with 9’ verandah all round divided into two rooms with 9’ X 9’ room in one corner of verandah. H.W. floor throughout.

A visitor in 1938 wrote glowingly of his experience at VRD:

in their spacious homestead surrounded by the greenest of lawns, bright flowers, trees and brilliant flower-beds, the manager (Mr. Alf Martin) and his capable wife entertained us nobly. Sunday dinner in the big cool dining room with neatly dressed lubras handing round plates and tureens and intelligent-looking native girls rhythmically pulling the punka fans was an unforgettable joy (Northern Standard, 11-10-1938).

Four years later an American visitor described the homestead, vis:

I was sitting on the cool verandah of a pleasant bungalow, buried in a shadowy vault of red-blossoming sub-tropical trees. Inside, the mauve and dark-brown coloured wood-work lent the ceilings the touch of old English inns. For comfort one might have been in Melbourne suburbia …
This is a tropical oasis superimposed upon the yellowing steppeland. The homestead is surrounded by flower and vegetable gardens, by tennis courts and a golf course; it faces a regular main street, on the other side of which are the bungalows of the married book-keeper, the married engineer, the unmarried saddler, and the office and store buildings (Laytha, 1-3-1942: 7).

The VRD Aborigines enjoyed no such comfort. In 1967 another writer described the Aboriginal ‘housing’ as:

dirty little humpies [that] look as if a good push would knock them down. Sheets of old corrugated iron serve for beds, supported by empty oil-drums; a few rags of clothing are flung over bits of string attached to nails in the wall; strips of sacking make the doors; earthen floors are littered with old tins, stale crusts and trampled cigarette packs; a mongrel dog scratches in a corner (Huxley, 1967: 249).

The VRD leases were due for renewal in 1945 and the government had advised that they were planning to resume part of the property (Martin, 17-2-1944). To try and circumvent this, as early as 1943 a strategy of dividing the station in two was being considering (Martin, 18-5-1943), but nothing was ever done and in 1947 the Federal Government resumed about half of VRD (Barklay, 3-3-1948).

In January 1950, possibly as a response to the resumptions, VRD developed a plan for the station ‘to be divided into three sections – one for bullocks, one for breeding and the third for weaning’ (Hoofs & Horns, January 1950: 8). Lexie Simmons (formerly married to VRD employee George Bates) has an idea that VRD manager Hartley Magnussen wanted to divide VRD into two stations and establish a new homestead somewhere in the Pigeon Hole-Mount Sanford area. She thinks her then husband George might have been considered as the manager of this new station.
By November 1950 the frameworks of buildings had been erected at the new homestead site but further progress was extremely slow. By July 1951 it was reported that, ‘a bore equipped with a mill has been sunk at the new site and three buildings are in the course of construction. However, covering materials not yet to hand and supply is most indefinite’ (Evans, 10-7-1951, cited in Evans, 20-6-1958: 2).

In 1952 Evans (6-12-1952c) reported that:

The Manager [Hartley Magnussen] plans to replace Gordon Creek and Pigeon Hole out-Stations by a new out-Station and to bring Moolooloo stock camp into the Station. A beginning has been made on the new out-Station. Windmill and framework of the main building is up, but no progress has been made in the past twelve months.

Mr. Magnussen advises that he has the steel frames of a number of buildings for the native ‘Compound’ at the head Station, and the new out-Station, stacked in the Station yard, but his company are unable to obtain sufficient corrugated iron for Station buildings. He has now been instructed by the Managing Agents for Bovril Estates in Australia (The Australian Mercantile Land and Finance Company) to suspend work on all improvements on account of heavy stock losses last year (owing to loss of stock feed due to bush fires) and probably heavier losses this year.

In 1954 Native Affairs officer Lovegrove (c1954: 7) reported that for several years up to late 1953 or early 1954 there had been a tentative plan to move some of the outstations – ‘Gordon Creek and Moolooloo to the Head Station’ and ‘Pigeon Hole about 20 miles nearer the Head Station to a place known as Pinjara.’ Anzac Munnganyi (pers. comm.) said that this was at Hutt Spring. In spite of the fact that work had begun on a new homestead at Pinjara Lovegrove regarded this tentative plan as an excuse the station used for not having built accommodation for the Aboriginal workers at Pigeon Hole and Moolooloo, as required by law. He added that the new VRD manager, Scott McColl, was opposed to the location because it was on a black soil area. Apparently nothing more was done at Pinjara and by June 1956 the plan had been dropped. At that time it was said that a contractor had been employed to dismantle the Pinjara buildings and re-erect them at Pigeon Hole (Quirk, 26-4-1957). The building that was supposed to erected at Pinjara was described as, ‘Twelve double married couples quarters’ (Evans, 6-12-1952c), but whether such a building was ever re-erected at Pigeon Hole is unclear: there was no sign of it there in 1977 (pers. obs.).

The area resumed from VRD was divided into three blocks – Killarney, Camfield and Montejinni – which were put up for ballot in 1952 (Hoofs & Horns, February 1953: 39). After the blocks were allocated to their new owners VRD was given a certain amount of time to muster its cattle from the resumed areas – there was a huge number of cattle involved – and this led to what is probably the closest thing Australia has had to a range war.

Because there was little in the way of boundary fencing in the district in 1953 there were plenty of cattle from the neighbouring Vestey stations, Delamere, Berrimbah and Wave Hill, wandering on the resumed areas. Consequently, in March or April VRD organised for Vestey to help with the mustering. Vestey advised that they were willing to supply four mustering and two holding plants and would be ready to act in the middle of May. Killarney also offered to help with the mustering on a contract basis, an offer which was
later taken up. By legal requirement VRD then notified the owners of Montejinni, Camfield and Killarney that they would be mustering on the resumed blocks (McKechnie, 17-4-1953). Some of the new owners were ‘not too pleased’ about the musters, but for reasons unknown all of them ‘expressed great hostility’ towards Vesteys. The co-owner of Camfield, Jim Edwards, even threatened bloodshed if Vesteys were involved in the muster. His threat was dismissed because it was thought that, ‘having been a prisoner-of-war of the Japs, he may be a little unbalanced’ (‘W’ to Lord Luke, 3-6-1953; see entry for Edwards under Camfield).

Because Vesteys could make more mustering plants available than VRD it was agreed that any cleanskin cattle would be divided equally. The deal was that when the two stations took their branded cattle, VRD would take all the cleanskin cows with calves and for every such ‘wet’ cow, Wave Hill would get two cleanskins (McColl, 11-6-1953). The joint muster began on May 20th. Prior to this date VRD’s plants had already done two weeks rigorous mustering. McColl and Fisher agreed that their plants would be flat out doing another four weeks so they decided to make an all-out effort and to end the muster on June 20th (McColl, 24-6-1953). The dates on or cited in correspondence dealing with subsequent events appears to have inconsistencies, but the sequence of events seems clear enough.

As best can be worked out, by about mid-June VRD had carried out three musters on Camfield, ‘from which we have 510 bullocks and about 1,100 branders, and have handled in the vicinity of 5000 cattle’ (McColl, 11-6-1953), but Edwards continued to make threats and must have instructed his head stockman, Jim Nelson, to obstruct any future mustering because:

On Saturday 13th our men had cattle in hand on Camfield when they were held up by Nelson and his men. When our plants attempted to drive the cattle off, it appears Nelson galloped into them and scattered the mob. He said they would continue the same tactics so our men held up till I could be informed of it. I went to Wave Hill and brought the Policeman over and then proceeded to Nelson’s camp on Camfield. Edwards arrived there that morning also and when he was accused of disturbing our muster countered by charging that our plants had some of his cattle in our mob and had been taking them on to Victoria River. This was not so but it was his head stockman’s word against ours, we seemed to at a deadlock. I told Edwards that the present muster had neared its end on the other blocks but as we had missed two musters on his country due to holdups, we would carry on there until we had done the two musters.

The two musters were completed with no trouble, but because of Edwards’ continuing threats McColl was seriously concerned about trouble with future work on Camfield and advised McKechnie (McColl, 24-6-1953) that:

As soon as the plants go in there again I am sure there will be further trouble and probably violence. I imagine the course of events will be that Edwards’ men will cause obstruction to our musters, we will charge them under the Police Ordinance and the muster will be held up till the case is tried in Darwin.

On June 15th Edwards met the VRD head stockman at Racecourse Yard (at the old Longreach outstation site) and told him he would not stop the mustering but would claim
all the cleanskins. He added that he would waive his claim if Vesteys withdrew its plants (McColl, 11-6-1953). Because of Edwards’ threats, further work was delayed until Scott McColl arrived and told his men to continue. McColl then flew by chartered plane to Darwin to seek legal advice and was told that VRD was completely within its rights to muster cattle on the resumed land, including cleanskins (McColl, 11-6-1953; Lyons to McColl, 5-6-1953). When he returned to VRD he found that work had again been halted by Jim Nelson, and Nelson handed him a written claim for the cleanskin cattle. McColl told his men to continue mustering and advised Nelson that any interference would be met with police action.

By June 24th the VRD and Killarney plants had come to a standstill, the horses exhausted and unfit for further work. The Willeroo plant was so worn out that Wave Hill manager Tom Fisher sent it home, leaving behind several horses that were too weak to travel and fearing that some that might make it back would die later. After ‘re-equipping’ three plants, Vesteys and VRD tried to resume the Camfield muster, but was again met with ‘severe opposition from Edwards’ men who refused to allow our plants to take off any cleanskin cattle’ until they were shown written proof that VRD was the rightful owner of the stock. As a result the mustering plants were withdrawn and it was considered ‘unlikely that any further musters can be attempted until after the next wet season’ (McKechnie, 16-7-1953). McKechnie asked Scott McColl to convey his appreciation to the VRD headstockmen and stockcamps for the work they’d done and McColl commented that, ‘They stuck to us through a difficult time and did their part of the job well.’ He added that:

In the month we were working on the resumed country the combined plants moved off approximately 14,000 head of cattle of which Vesteys share was a little over 3000. The total branding was 5627 – of these Vesteys share was 2055, so we finished with 11,000 head of cattle, including the 3572 we branded and 1200 bullocks (McColl, 19-7-1953).

Although McKechnie (16-7-1953) declared that, ‘we have every intention of collecting all the cattle which rightly belong to Victoria River Downs, even though this may take several years’, this was not to be. The 1953-54 wet season was extremely poor which severely limited the possibility of mustering work in the following dry season, and, ironically, the resumed blocks received more rain than VRD and ‘great numbers’ of VRD cattle moved there, including of course, large numbers of cleanskins. Camfield and Montejinni took advantage of this and (unlawfully) branded cleanskin cattle throughout the wet season.

When the 1954 dry season arrived VRD did manage to muster about 1800 bullocks on the resumed areas before conditions became too dry, and was actually assisted where possible by the new owners (McColl, 21-6-1954). There was a better season in 1955 but by then VRD had reconsidered its position. On July 20th 1955 the Assistant General Manager of AML&F wrote to Scott McColl saying:

It is quite evident that these selectors are going to get quite a lot of cleanskins, but of course we have always felt that it would be impossible for Victoria River Downs to thoroughly brand this country, and at the same time look after the cattle within the Lease boundaries of the station. From the number of cleanskins which are to be
observed on Victoria River Downs proper we think you will agree that there is actually more than can be coped with there, without going on to other people’s land. It seems that we will have to be content to get the branded cattle off this resumed country and the unweaned calves to which we could establish ownership (NBA 119/7).

To add insult to injury, in 1954 Wason Byers, who the year before (though undoubtedly guilty) had escaped conviction for stealing VRD cattle, began contract mustering on Camfield (Hoofs & Horns, February 1955: 12; WHPJ, 8-2-1956; see entry for Byers under Coolibah).

So, how many cleanskin cattle did the owners of the resumed blocks reap? Gerry Ash, a stockman who worked on VRD from 1951 to 1954, described VRD (pers. comm.) as having the largest uncontrolled cattle herd in the world, and in 1957 the geographer F.H. Bauer remarked that, ‘VRD, with such a large herd of cattle, were on the whole, hopelessly out of hand’. In other words there were immense numbers of cleanskin cattle on the resumed areas and on VRD in general. In spite of the numbers of cleanskin cattle VRD and Vestey’s managed to muster, Charlie Schultz, who lived in the district from 1928 to 1971 and knew all the station managers and was privy to local news, recalled that, ‘On Montejinni they did a muster and branded over 5000 head, I think it was. It was the same on Killarney – they branded near enough to 4500 and on Camfield 5500’, a total of more than 15,000 (Schultz and Lewis, 1995: 198). Johnny Stacey said that during the first wet season after VRD had mustered the resumed area, about 10,000 head returned to the resumed areas.

*The VRD homestead complex, 1955 (Walkabout collection).*
VRD remained in Bovril’s hands for forty-six years until Victorian millionaire William Lionel Buckland, one of the founders of Ampol, bought the station in 1955 (Hoofs & Horns, July 1955: 4). He retained the station for five years and then sold it to the L.J. Hooker Investment Corporation Limited on May 4th 1960, although he retained a considerable shareholding in the property (SMH, 5-5-1960; Press release from L.J. Hooker, 4-5-1960). Buckland, who died aged 64 on November 22nd 1964, had also owned Carlton Hill, Rosewood, Legune, Walgra Downs and other stations (The Pastoral Review, 16-12-1964: 1321; Australian Financial Review, 5-5-1960; Press release on Hooker’s purchase, 4-5-1960).

When L.J. Hooker bought VRD the station was described as, ‘5,494 square miles fronting the Victoria and Wickham Rivers, giving 120 miles of permanent water in addition to bores and wells. Average rainfall 23½ inches (from 1908); at present carrying 90,000 head of cattle’ (Press release on Hooker’s purchase, 4-5-1960). From this supposed 90,000 head there was a turnover of about 6000 bullocks per year which fetched an average of £15-19-00 each or £90,000 per annum (Sun Herald, 8-5-1960).

In a report on VRD commissioned by Hookers before purchase (Anon, 1959) the homestead was described as:

A village on the Wickham River. There are five houses or so called houses. The homestead is a comfortable wooden building 30 years old, three bed rooms with two sleeping out bed areas on the verandahs, drawing room, dining room, bathroom & kitchen. Another bathroom is handy down stairs. Each bed room has a set in basin and both bathrooms have hot and cold water. The bookkeeper, black-smith and cook use houses. There is a set up house for visitors with stove bathroom refrigerator etc. There is a hospital, men’s quarters, recreation room with billiard room and table tennis plus darts. Offices – manager & bookkeeper – Post Office. Store, cellar, blacksmith shop, saddlers shop, mechanic shop, butchers shop, outside men’s kitchen and dining rooms. School room bakers oven and piles of the most wantonly bought materials I have ever seen. Cases and cases of windmills, 20,000 steel posts still on hand, about 2,000 reels of barbed wire, hundreds of coils of plain wire, tank material by the ton and to top everything, neatly lined up under cover, under lock and key, are sixteen pedestals for septic installation. A good lot of bore casing pump casing and pumpheads.

Mind you all this is in good order and is most valuable material but Bovril overbought in an almost scandalous manner, luckily to your advantage.

Hookers immediately started a program of improvements on its new properties. On VRD they planned 600 to 700 miles of fencing ‘to provide necessary grazing and holding paddocks for economic working of this unique cattle run.’ The company also planned to introduce selected herd bulls on the various properties (Press release on Hooker’s purchase, 4-5-1960; SMH, 5-5-1960). By August 1962, 350 Poll Shorthorn bulls had been introduced from Alroy, sixteen bores had been put down, eight of which were successful, and over 400 miles of new fencing had been erected (The Territorian, December 1967; Chronicle [Adelaide], 16-8-1962).
In the first four years of Hooker’s ownership over 25,000 donkeys were shot. In one five month period in 1963 6000 were destroyed. In the same period 10,000 scrub bulls were shot (The Territorian, vol. 1, No. 10, December 1964). Former Stock Inspector Dave Napier said that in 1960-61 20,000 donkeys were shot. Ernie Rayner worked on VRD in 1960-61 and claims that 75,000 feral animals were shot on VRD in 1960. Getting at the wild bulls (and mustering in general) was a difficult and dangerous occupation as a visitor, Elspeth Huxley (1967: 246), remarked:

I marvelled that any horse could keep his feet for two minutes, even at the sedate canter which was quite enough for me. The surface is all quartz and ironstone in broken, upended heaps and layers, as if you were to gallop across a precipice lying on its side. The horses’ hooves ring on the rocks and you must keep dodging trunks and low boughs … It is into this country that the stockmen ride at full tilt to head off wild bulls.

By 1967 Hookers had introduced a total of 1500 Poll Shorthorn bulls and also, beginning in 1964, established a trial herd of Brahman cattle. Harry Bladwell, the General Manager of the Hooker Pastoral Company, stated that since the company had acquired VRD it had invested $1.52 million in the property. This consisted of fencing the boundary and sixty-six paddocks with one thousand miles of fencing, sinking thirty-six new bores and building several turkeys nest dams, building many new yards and renovating old yards (73 yards in use), installing five spray dips, renovating or rebuilding all existing buildings and erecting many new buildings, and vastly increasing plant and machinery. There were 2000 horses on the station (The Territorian, vol. 1, No 10, December 1967: 26).

Hookers retained VRD until August 1984 when they sold it for $11·6 million to Jon Nominees Pty. Ltd., a company owned by Peter Sherwin and family. The legal owner of
VRD was Sherwin’s son. At the time of sale VRD was said to cover 1.2 million hectares or 12,950 square kilometres and to have 100,000 cattle (Border Morning Mail, 4-12-1984; SMH, 8-3-1997). Sherwin’s company was acquired by Robert Holmes a’ Court via a corporate takeover in October 1989 (Makin, 1992: 162; NT News, 15-2-1996).

Sherwin was described in one newspaper account as ‘a notoriously irascible cattle harvester who would rather pull down fences than build them … [and who] … reportedly spent only $50,000 a year on capital improvements on Victoria River Downs’. A Heytsbury spokesman claimed that under Sherwin VRD was 60% uncontrolled and that cattle numbers were anywhere from 65,000 to 120,000. Because of uncontrolled stocking he was accused of ‘the degradation of 1% of the continent’ (SMH, 8-3-1997).

On taking over VRD Heytsbury changed how the station was run under both Sherwin and Hooker Company. In mustering the emphasis was changed from helicopters back to horses and the company began to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on capital improvements, including water, accommodation and fencing (SMH, 8-3-1997).

**Pepperell.** Manager? There is mention of a manager named Peppiral (sic) in 1884 (Tucker, 1988: 62-63). Pepperell is also mentioned on a station pay sheet in May 1887 (Pay sheets, NBA 2/876/22), and in the Northern Territory Times of October 2nd 1886, where he is described as being the drover in charge of 200 VRD ‘fats en route to the Kimberley diggings. He may have been a caretaker-manager while Crawford was absent. A man named James Pepperill, ‘well-known in the Territory’, died suddenly at Menzies in Western Australia some time in 1895 (Northern Territory Times, 3-1-1896).

**Lindsay Crawford.** Manager from the stocking of the station on July 15th 1883, until late 1894 or the beginning of 1895 (Willshire, 1896a: 38, 101; Dahl, 1926: 189). He appears to have stayed on the station for several months, probably to help the new manager, Jack Watson, familiarise himself with the property.

Crawford was born in South Australia in about 1852, the son of J.F. Crawford, a South Australian brewer (Northern Territory Times, 22-3-1901). He is believed to have begun work with the South Australian Telegraph Service on October 1st, 1867. He left the service in 1869 to take up brewing, first in South Australia, later in New Zealand and in 1873 in the Northern Territory. In the Territory he also tried gold mining, but by 1874 he had rejoined the Telegraph Service. In June 1877 he opened a store at Southport but a year later he rejoined the Telegraph Service. He resigned again in April 1882. Between May and July 1883 he was with Ernest Favenc exploring the Macarthur River district (SMH, 12-11-1883; Favenc and Crawford, 1884). At the end of this exploration Crawford went to work on Richmond Downs in Queensland, but soon returned to the Territory to become the first manager of Victoria River Downs (Progenitor, September 1983, vol. 2, no. 3: 12).

In a report to Goldsbrough Mort in 1891 H.W.H. Stevens said of Crawford that:

> It is needless to say that his work is and always has been of an exceptionally arduous & hazardous nature, owing to the number of stock, the difficulties brought about by distance, & the constant hostility of the natives, often necessitating the performance of work which falls to the lot of few station mgrs (Stevens, 17-3-1891).
While on VRD Crawford is said to have been, ‘repeatedly warned by the natives that they intended to kill him if opportunity offered’ (Northern Territory Times, 22-3-1901). He was lauded as a great station manager by Constable Willshire (1896a: 38), but B. Blair who wrote a report on VRD in 1889 recommended various changes and said that, ‘To bring about a change of this Kind, it would probably be advisable to appoint a new Manager, as it is evident the present one has drifted into a most extravagant system that must be altered’ (Blair, 24-10-1889).

Lindsay Crawford (source unknown).

Around the time he left VRD he received a request from Sir James Frazer for information about the habits of Victoria River Aborigines. Part of his reply was later published by anthropologist Sir Edward Charles Stirling, vis: ‘Blacks in the neighborhood very hostile — constant attacks and reprisals … [and] during the last ten years, in fact since the first white man settled here, we have held no communication with the natives at all, except with the rifle. They have never been allowed near this station or the outstations, being too treacherous and warlike’ (Stirling, 1895: 180-82).

After leaving VRD Crawford rejoined the Telegraph Service and in March 1901 he died of ‘exposure’ on the Overland Telegraph Line, 18 miles north of Newcastle Waters (Northern Territory Times, 22-3-1901). According to E. Gore, Crawford was known in the North as ‘the Wymackareri chicken’, a name probably connected to his time in New
Zealand (Adelaide Observer, 11-1-1896). Some years after his death a writer commented that, ‘Crawford did much good work in the Territory, and one of his best deeds was, with the assistance of Jack Watson, to make it possible for white men to travel in most parts of the empty north without fear of being murdered to make a Myall’s holiday (North Queensland Herald, 20-5-1911).

John ‘Jack’ or ‘Long Jack’ Watson. Manager after Crawford left, from March 1895, until his death in April 1896. It appears he was on VRD from January 1895 (Watson, 5-12-1895; TCPJ, 24-2-1895), probably so that Crawford could introduce him to the run. He remained as manager until his death by drowning in April 1896 (TCPJ, 15-4-1896). For additional biographical details see entry under Auvergne station.

Robert Molesworth Watson. Manager from May 29th 1896 to mid-1900 (Donaldson and Elliot, 1998: 21; Northern Territory Times, 22-6-1900). Bob was born in Melbourne on September 29th 1858 (Watson family records). A little of his background appeared in an obituary published in the Melbourne Grammar School magazine, The Melburnian, of May 15th 1913. This states that he was one of nine sons of Mr and Mrs George Watson. His father George was a renowned starter at Flemington Racecourse in Melbourne. During his working life Bob managed various stations, the last of which was Chudleigh Park on the Atherton Tableland 140 miles north of Hughenden. A traveller who met Bob at Hughenden remarked that, ‘Mr. Watson himself takes a prominent place in sporting matters and was noticed to act as starter in some billy-goat races which took place in the main street. So much for heredity’ (Capricornian [Rockhampton], 3-8-1912).

His employer at Chudleigh Park was Hugh Ross who is quoted in the obituary as saying:

I can conscientiously say that during my long experience in pastoral affairs I have never had a more capable, energetic or honest worker. Although he never had the robust physique of many of his brothers, his pluck enabled him to do what many stronger men might legitimately have shirked. As an example of this, only a month or two before he had to cave in, and when he must have been even then very sick, he was branding horses at the station one evening, when a stockman from the neighbouring station brought in word that the tracks of a notorious cattle thief had been seen on our respective boundaries, and that apparently he had got away with some cattle. Bob immediately discontinued the work he was at and got ready for a daylight start in the morning with his blackboy and stockman. They picked up the tracks and followed them for three days, travelling from daylight to dark, and eventually caught up to the thief. The latter knew every inch of the wild, hilly country, and knowing someone would probably be on his tracks, travelled day and night, and on one of his camps that Bob came to, on the second day, he found several knocked up stolen horses that had been abandoned after having been ridden to a standstill. The thief knew his business well, for when he wanted an hour or two’s sleep, he used to drive the cattle on half a mile or so, and then ride back to rest, and it was on one of these occasions that they came upon him. He had no cattle actually near him, but the blackboy, seeing tracks going on ahead, followed them up, and found 30 head of cattle belonging to the next station, and only one of mine. The thief, of course, disowned any knowledge of the cattle, so there was no hope of a conviction. He, however, told the stockman that if they had come on to him on the second night (that is, when he had the stolen horses), that he would have shot the lot of them; and knowing the character of the man, I am satisfied he would not have
hesitated to have done so, and in that wild country he might easily have evaded capture .... So highly did I value his [Watson’s] services, that when I knew for certain he could never return to the station I disposed of the property.

Bob took over VRD after his brother Jack drowned. His reason for leaving VRD was the sale of the station to Emanuel, Kidman and Co. in 1900. Before coming to VRD he was manager of Marion Downs in southwest Queensland, and his brother Bill was manager of Currawilla station in the same region (pers. comm., Jan Cruickshank; see also the Graziers’ Review, 16-6-1925: 381 and 16-2-1925: 1451). He left Darwin for Victoria, via Western Australia, in October 1900 (Northern Territory Times, 5-10-1900) and later went on to manage Milungra station in the Queensland Gulf country (Linklater, ‘Notes on Victoria River Station 1895”).

When he was on VRD Bob apparently didn’t know of the newly developing ‘open bronco’ method for branding cattle without a yard. In a report he wrote in 1899 (Watson, 25-3-1899) he said:

Insufficient yard accomoditation [sic] has been a great drawback, necessitating many long drives which wastes much valuable time.

The Climate is against working stock in a yard all the year round & we look on eight months of the year, From March to October as the only ones available to brand up in.

As the time is so limited & the heard [sic] a large one. Plenty of yard accomoditation is an actual necessity to keep the heard as it should be kept.

This suggests that the open bronco method, developed by H. ‘Compie’ Trew on Glen Helen station in 1891 and a few years later on Clifton Hills, had not spread a far as Marion Downs by the time Bob left there early in 1896, or else Bob thought the method of no use.

Bob married Matilda Newcomen Morison on July 10th, 1895. His wife, ‘Mrs Bob’, was the first white woman to live on VRD. A son, George John Molesworth Watson, was born on May 23rd 1896 (family records). According to Makin (1992: 89) and Durack (1983: 381), George was the first white baby seen in the district. Bob died in Sydney on February 16th 1913 but ‘Mrs Bob’ was still alive in 1942 and living in Sydney (SMH, 21-3-1942).

Tom Cahill. According to a sworn statement he made on March 19th 1893, he was manager of Stockyard Creek outstation, VRD, in February 1892 (Occurrence Book, Wyndham Police). He is also documented in the VRD records in May 1887 as having driven 200 ‘fats’ to Delamere. He was given the use of two boys and horses for six weeks and one day at £8 per week (Receipt signed by Thomas Cahill, May 23rd 1887). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

Edward B. ‘Ted’ Lockett. Storekeeper in 1885 or 1886 (Swan, 1991: 105), stockman in May 1887 (Pay sheets, 1886-1892). In 1889 he was wanted for embezzlement and was believed to have gone to the Northern Territory. He was described by the police as ‘a stout man about 27 years old, about 5 ft 7 in. Dark Brown Hair scanty, Dark Eyes, Sallow Complexion, Scar on right hip from recent Spear wound’ (Report Book and Journal (West Kimberley), 1887-1889, entry for 26-4-1889). Later it was learnt he had instead gone to
the ‘Pilbara Gold Fields’, and steps were being taken for his arrest there (Report Book and Journal [West Kimberley], 1887-1889, entry for 13-9-1889).

**T.F. Armstrong.** Acting manager at Stockyard Creek when Stockdale and Ricketson arrived there on January 3rd 1885 (Ricketson, 1884-1885: 272-6; Stockdale, nd., entry for New Years’ Day, 1885).

**Walter Norman Rees.** Stockman from 1887 to about 1897 (Rees, 1945; West, 1951). Walter Rees had a brother, W. Collin Rees, who in January 1887 was manager of Beatrice Hills station, also a Goldsbrough company (Northern Territory Times, 2-1-1887). Also, a man named J. Rees was one of five who perished on the Barkly Tableland east of Attack Creek while investigating rumours of the killing of ‘Captain Starlight’, Harry Readford (The Age, 15-11-1883). Through the absence of initials in some early documents it’s sometimes impossible to know which Rees is being referred to.

In 1894 and January 1895 Rees was a head stockman on VRD (Willshire, 1896a: 38, 100). While stationed on VRD his two ‘boys’, Pompey and Jimmy, cleared out with rifles and joined the ‘bush’ blacks. He helped Mounted Constable Willshire search for them until news came that the two runaways had been murdered because they had been helping the whites. Rees then accompanied Willshire to the murder scene to bury the bodies and retrieve the rifles (GCPJ, 23/27-3-1895).

By October 1898 Walter was buffalo shooting with Ben Martin and they were hosts to ‘Banjo’ Patterson (Northern Territory Times, 14-10-1898). According to Linklater (1997: 70) one of the Rees brothers was also at one time a teamster. During one big wet season his loading became wet and he had to hang bolts of cloth – the makings for a bride’s trousseau – on bushes and trees to prevent mildew forming. In 1900 one of the Rees brothers was droving with Fred Mork, having delivered 700 ‘fats’ from Hodgson Downs to Auvergne (Northern Territory Times, 23-6-1900).

When Mounted Constable Willshire was leaving his posting at Gordon Creek on Victoria River Downs, Walter Rees wrote a testimonial letter to him (Willshire 1896a: 99). In this he stated that:

> personally I take a great interest in the natives, and think more should be done for them. They are losing more of their game-producing country as the settlers stock the land, and have to be content with the roughest of the country, where they obtain but a poor living.

Walter Rees lived to be a very old man (still alive in 1950) and spent his final years at Shellharbour in NSW (West, 1951). A few years before he died he wrote to the manager of VRD and provided some reminiscences of his time there (Rees, 1945). In an early photograph of the Depot store his name is visible carved on a big boab that used to grow there.

**James Logan Ledgerwood.** Head stockman in 1895 (Willshire 1896a: 88). Ledgerwood was born in Scotland in about 1850 (NT census for 1891). I don’t know when or where he arrived in Australia, but he was well known in western New South Wales and Western Queensland by the late 1880s and was in northern Australia by at least 1893, working on John Costello’s ‘Valley of the Springs’ station in the Gulf country (Costello, 1936: 162).
While there he was attacked by Aborigines and suffered a minor spear wound (*Northern Territory Times*, 10-3-1893).

While head stockman on VRD he was one of the leaders of the ‘punitive expedition’ against the Aborigines who’d speared teamsters Mulligan and Ligar and looted their wagon (*Willshire*, 1896a: 75). One source suggests that sixty Aborigines were shot by this party (see entries for Mulligan and Ligar, below). Ledgerwood was later involved in the search for the teamsters ‘boys’, Major, Harry and Billy, who were said to have instigated the attack. By chance he came across them somewhere on the station and a fight ensued, with Major being shot dead. The other two ran off but Legerwood pursued and captured them (*Willshire*, 1896a: 89). However, while bringing them to the Gordon Creek police station they were able to make their escape (*GCPJ*, 8-7-1895). Eventually Billy was killed by the ‘wild blacks’ and Harry was arrested at Powell Creek (*Northern Territory Times*, 30-8-1895, 6-9-1895). Tried for attempted murder, Harry was acquitted due to lack of evidence (*Northern Territory Times*, 6-9-1895).

The first Victoria River district policeman, W.H. Willshire, dedicated his book *Land of the Dawning* (1896a) to Ledgerwood and on page 88 gave the following details about him:

Jim Ledgerwood ... stands 6 feet 4 inches, and weighs 14 stone. He is now over 40 years of age, and can put 12 feet 4 inches to his credit at one standing jump. He is still a rough rider of no small importance, and has ridden in his time two thousand colts. He broke in horses on Narrulko, Springfield, Lake Nash, Yanga Lake, Mount Howard, Durham Downs, &c., and was backed by Messrs Armstrong and Fooke in Bourke, N.S.W., to ride against any man anything with skin and hair on ... He is prepared any day to run a foot-race with young or old ... He fought several men and beat them in Bourke ... and will fight the best man in the Northern Territory ... He is also a veterinary surgeon ... a first class drover, and has had the management of stations. One I remember him being on was Hodgson Downs.

*Buchanan* (1933: 148) confirmed Willshire’s opinion of Ledgerwood’s riding abilities by describing him as one of the renowned roughriders of the North. Buchanan also says (1933: 149) that for many years Ledgerwood advertised in the papers challenging ‘for a large sum, to buckjump-ride anyone who cared to take him on’. His challenge was not made over ‘many years’ but only in 1888. An example of Ledgerwood’s challenge from the *Referee* (17-5-1888) is reproduced below.

In July 1900 Ledgerwood and a man named J.A. Wallace were given a government grant of rations and other goods to assist them in a prospecting venture ‘towards the Roper Country’ (*Ramsden*, 7-7-1900). They later sent back the tea that came with these provisions, saying that it was not fit for human consumption and asking for it to be replaced (*Ledgerwood and Wallace*, 26-7-1900).

In March 1901 the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation in South Australia made enquiries as to the whereabouts of Ledgerwood, who he described as a miner based at Wandi (*Searcy*, 22-3-1901) and in response Mounted Constable R. Stott advised that:

James Logan Ledgerwood left this District for Booroloola District to look for work about the beginning of last December. He was then penniless, he has left a number
of unpaid debts which he contracted amongst the business people about Wandi & Pine Ck. Last August he was imprisoned for one Month for contempt of court, by some of his creditors (Stott, 27-4-1901).

ROUGH RIDING CHALLENGE.

1. Jim Ledgerwood, of Bourke, am open to ride against any man in Australia on a rough horse, bare-backed, or on a Sib. saddle, for £100 a-side. Conditions to be that any rider accepting this deft must ride as I do, one hand on the reins, and give the horse his head, whip and spur options.

I am also open to ride more unbroken colts in a day of nine hours than any man in Australia, and am willing to back myself in this department also for the sum of £100.

Any answers through the Referee will be promptly attended to. Man and money always ready at my address, Lennon's Hotel, Bourke.

(Signed), JIM LEDGERWOOD.

Having seen Mr. Ledgerwood, I am quite willing to believe that he is a whole team and a yellow dog under the seat with horses. He is a typical Australian rough rider, standing 6ft, 3in. and weighing 14st. Sib. A nice sort of man for a colt to try and master, truly. [Ed. Referee]


In the Booroloola district he obtained work on Wollogorang station. The manager at the time, H. Anning, also mentions Ledgerwood’s great buckjumping ability and says that when a man who knew Ledgerwood heard bets had been laid that Ledgerwood would be thrown by an outlaw horse he said, ‘If it’s Long Jim Ledgerwood, you might as well give him the money … Ledgerwood’ll ride him bareback’ (Graziers’ Review, January 1929: 1195, 1197). Anning also describes Ledgerwood variously as, ‘the best bush saddler I have ever seen; better in many respects than a regular tradesman’, ‘a fine axeman, and a tireless worker generally’ (Graziers’ Review, January 1929: 1195, February 1929: 1317).

From Wollogorang Ledgerwood went to Arakura station, then one of the most remote and dangerous stations in the Northern Territory (Graziers’ Review, May 1929: 237). It’s unknown how long he stayed there but by 1905 it was reported (The Capricornian [Rockhampton] 10-6-1905) that:
The Arafura people are not having too good a time of it. Out of some 20,000 cattle altogether put on their country, they cannot muster much over 5000 now, and these are probably rotten with tick and redwater. I now understand it is the intention of the syndicate to take them back to where they came from—Hodson Downs and The Elsie. It was a foolish move to take the cattle from good, clean, healthy country on to the sour grass of the coast. Yet you sometimes read in the papers that, in the opinion of the Arafura head serang, it was time the meatworks were started. What are they going to treat? Mosquitos, niggers, or ticks. Most assuredly not cattle; for they have not got them, and their herd is diminishing every year.

The station was abandoned by 1906 though it took another year or so to muster the remaining cattle (Artaud, 31-12-1907: 26). By 1909 Ledgerwood was working as a drover in the East Kimberley, bringing 459 bullocks into Wyndham from Ord River (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1908-1910, entry for 24-9-1909). Doug Moore (February 1958: 49) places Ledgerwood at the 1915 Ord River races but this cannot be correct because Ledgerwood died of pneumonia at the Ivanhoe Stud station on February 16th 1910 (Letter Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1904-1906, entry for 25-2-1910).

John Fox. Teamster. He may have been a private contractor rather than a station employee. He carried stores between Katherine and VRD (probably all the way from Darwin), and was in business from at least October 1886 because he was involved in a fatal spearing incident on Delamere at that time. While camped on the headwaters of Gregory Creek, Fox, Fred Williams (a prospector heading for Kimberley) and Mat Cahill went fishing. They were surprised by the blacks—Williams was speared through the neck and killed while Cahill was wounded in the back (Northern Territory Times, 2-10-1886). Fox is mentioned again in 1887 when he bought rations to VRD (Sundry papers, NBA 2/876/22).

Fox died in 1890 and is buried at the second VRD homestead at Stockyard Creek (headstone inscription; Rees, 1945: 3). Rees also mentions that a traveller, W. Noun, was buried there. Mat Cahill lived until 1908 when he shot himself about ten miles north of Katherine (Northern Territory Times, 19-6-1908, 29-6-1908).

Peter Fox. Peter Fox also was a teamster in the Victoria River-Halls Creek area in 1886. He was almost certainly a relation of the John Fox documented above. It was reported in the Northern Territory Times of August 28th 1886 that, ‘Mr. Peter Fox has started overland to the Kimberley goldfields with two splendid teams of horses, and he intends to pick up five tons at the Victoria River, which he will take on to the diggings.’

Later he was reported to have gone to the goldfields with Lindsay Crawford, purchased the mob of 197 VRD cattle taken there by Pepperell, and set up a butchering business at ‘the Brockman and Panton’ (Price, 1991: 204). Meanwhile his teams were said to have ‘called en route at the Victoria Depot for the loading taken round for him by Stevens’ (Northern Territory Times, 16-10-1886). While on the goldfields he was active in horse racing. Donald Swan (1991: 113) says that at a race meeting at Ruby Creek in the late 1880s ‘the famed Peter Fox rode Tou Rou.’

George Hannyngton Ligar. Teamster and stockman in 1895. In the Timber Creek Police Journal entry for January 16th, 1895, he is listed as a boundary rider. In a letter he wrote,
reproduced in Willshire’s *Land of the Dawning* (1896a: 100) and dated January 1895, he described himself as a stockman. In 1895 Knut Dahl described Ligar and his mate as being:

> two white men who spent the whole year at Victoria Downs, but did not belong to the salaried staff of the station. They reared their own horses and did some fencing work for the station. But the main objective of their stay was to cart the station stores the seventy-five miles from the Depot annually during April and May. This was indeed a profitable business. They were paid twenty sovereigns per ton, and as the provisions of the station might exceed twenty tons the job was considered quite remunerative (Dahl, 1926: 188-89).

According to an early Northern Territory trooper, Augustus Lucanus, Ligar had ‘been a lieutenant in the Hussars, and was a great elocutionist, full of Shakespeare’ (Lucanus, 24-8-1929: 6). On September 19th 1872 he was sworn in as a Northern Territory trooper but four days later he was dismissed through drunkenness (South Australian State Records Office, P.C.O/1872/941). Buchanan (1933: 153) confirms that Ligar had once been a trooper and relates how he once ‘lost’ a Chinaman he’d arrested, so he grabbed the next Chinaman he saw and placed him before the court. The ‘ring-in’ was convicted. August Lucanus, another (former) Territory policeman claims that he was the one who did this (Lucanus, 17-8-1929: 6) and considering how short Ligar’s career as a trooper was, Lucanus’ claim is more likely correct.

Ligar’s problem with drink was ongoing. Alfred Searcy, an early Sub-Collector of Customs in the Northern Territory, said that Ligar,

> had a failing, and that was lifting his little finger, and would at times become somewhat eccentric. He had served in the New Zealand war, where he received a bad wound in the head. I remember once one of his fingers offended him, so he shot the top of [sic] it with his revolver (Searcy, 1909: 205).

At various times he was convicted of being drunk and disorderly, and charged with petty theft (and acquitted). His weakness for drink resulted in a varied career, including being jailed for three years for arson late in 1879 – he had burnt down several miner’s huts at Yam Creek (*Northern Territory Times*, 27-12-1879). Upon a petition from nineteen residents from Yam Creek (Government Resident to Minister of Education, July 1880), his sentence was cut by half (Minister of Education to Government Resident, August 1880). At various times he worked as a boundary rider (GCPJ, 16-1-1895), a fencer (Dahl, 1926: 188-89), and a stockman (Willshire, 1896a: 100), including a stint at the notoriously dangerous Florida station in Arnhem Land (Gaunt, 6-7-1934). In the 1891 census he described himself as a stockman, living at Florida station (NT census for 1891).

Ligar’s drink problem probably also led to the now famous fight with Aborigines in Jasper Gorge. In May 1895 Ligar and James Mulligan set out from the Depot with two wagonloads of stores for Victoria River Downs. On about the 19th the two men camped at ‘TK Camp’, so-named for a large boab with Tom Kilfoyle’s initials, ‘TK’, carved on it (Hill, 1951: 235). This tree used to grow at the western end of Jasper Gorge, on the creek flats near the junction of Slatey Creek and Jasper Creek. As they sat around their campfire the teamsters were attacked by a large group of Aborigines and severely wounded, one
account states that Ligar was hit in the back and face while Mulligan was speared in the thigh (Lucanus, 24-8-1929: 6).

Barricading themselves among stores from the wagons, they were besieged for more than two days, keeping the Aborigines at bay with rifle fire. Blood from the wound in Ligar’s nose clogged the mechanism of his Winchester and as both men were gradually weakening from exhaustion and blood loss, they decided they had no choice but to abandon the wagons to the blacks and seek help.

Fortunately the Aborigines had not killed or driven off the team horses. Mulligan and Ligar were able to catch mounts and ride to the Depot where they expected to meet Bradshaw’s boat, the ‘Ark’. Finding no one at the Depot they continued on to Auvergne where help was obtained. From Auvergne they were taken by boat down the Baines River to Bradshaw station. The Log Book of Bradshaws Run records that on May 27th, ‘Mssr Mulligan and Ligar were bought in the whale boat to the station in a half dead condition having been attacked by a horde of natives some days before and were severely speared’. From Bradshaw the wounded men were taken by boat sixteen miles down the Victoria River to the ‘Ark’, but it was stuck on a mudbank so they were returned to Bradshaw.

On May 30th the Log Book recorded that from Bradshaw, ‘Young with an armed party proceeded to “TK” camp to ascertain the fate of Mulligans wagon and loading, found a large number of whitemen assembled, so returned in a day or two to the station.’ After various delays, on June 5th Mulligan and Ligar were placed on the SS Victoria in Blunder Bay and taken to Darwin (Northern Territory Times, 14-6-1895, 28-6-1895). According to one source the boat they travelled on was the first motorised vessel to come to the Victoria River (‘Culkah’, The Pastoral Review, 16-11-1951: 1253). Both men eventually recovered sufficiently from their wounds to resume work.

The day after the teamsters abandoned the wagons, Mounted Constable Willshire arrived from VRD. Aborigines were still looting the wagons but retreated to the sides of the gorge when they saw the trooper approaching. Willshire found everything covered in blood from the teamster’s wounds. He at once sent a message back to VRD and then began gathering looted stores from the slopes of the surrounding ranges. He didn’t know whether the teamsters were dead or alive, and at one stage set his tracker to diving in the nearby waterhole, and firing his gun off over the water in the belief that this would make any bodies float to the surface. Later he found a note written by one of the men stating that they had decided to seek help for their wounds at the Depot (Willshire, 1896a: 75-77).

The next day nineteen men turned up from VRD, including the manager, Jack Watson, ‘Big Jim’ Ledgerwood, Aboriginal and white station hands, and a party of diggers enroute to the Kimberley goldfields. All began to retrieve whatever of the looted goods could be found. When this party arrived Willshire left to follow up the wounded teamsters and provide what assistance he could. At the Depot he found a note from them stating that they had gone on to Auvergne and at Auvergne he found that they had gone on to Bradshaw, so he returned to the wagons (GCPJ, 26-28th May, 1896).

Back at the gorge Willshire found that Jack Watson and a large party of men had gone out into the ranges after the blacks. In the South Australian Records Office a there is a newspaper cutting of this event with a hand-written annotation stating that 60 Aborigines
were shot by this party. People allegedly massacred while engaged in a ‘corroboree’ at Kanjamala, about twenty kilometres south of the gorge, may be victims of this punitive party (pers. comm., Big Mick Kanginang).

When Watson sent his quarterly report for May, June and July 1895 to Goldsbrough Mort & Co. (Watson, 1895), his comments on the events in the gorge were a masterpiece of brevity:

On the 14th of this month the Blacks were invited to a picnic in a place called the Gorge, by Mulligan. As they did not think he treated them with sufficient liberality, they speared him and his man and chased them away from the wagons and took what they wanted, which was much.

Most accounts suggest that Mulligan’s and Ligar’s ‘boys’, and possibly the ‘boys’ ‘lubras’, were in league with the attacking blacks, and they were blamed for a number of shots which were fired at the teamsters while they were besieged. The ‘boys’ had certainly cleared out by the time Willshire arrived on the scene, taking saddles and six to eight horses with them. One of these ‘boys’, Billy, alias ‘Snowball’, was killed by the ‘myall blacks’ soon after the attack on the whites, and his ‘lubra’ abducted (Northern Territory Times, 6-9-1895). The other ‘boy’, ‘Mulligan’s Harry’, made his way back to his country at Powell’s Creek where he was arrested in September 1895 and charged with assaulting Mulligan and Ligar. Although Harry was said to have admitted being involved with everything except the actual spearing, the charges against him were dismissed by the judge who:

vigorously denounced the conduct of Ligar and Mulligan towards their blacks, expressing the belief that much of the loss of life and limb recorded [in the Territory] was brought on by the conduct of white men in supplying liquor to natives and chastising them for every offence they committed (Northern Territory Times, 6-9-1895).

In October 1901 Ligar passed through Timber Creek enroute to Western Australia (TCPJ, 27-10-1901, 29-10-1901). He took up employment on Carlton station and died at the ‘Bend of the Ord’ on December 26th 1901. He had been, ‘suffering with Disintery [sic] for the past four months and was persuaded [sic] to go into the Hospital for attendance but he refused to go as he said if he went into the Hospital he would be sure to die & he has also been Drinking he was 63 years of age’. In his will Ligar bequeathed his estate to a sister, Grace Helena Crowder of Weatherford, Parker County, Texas (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1899-1902, entries for 27-12-1901 and 29-12-1901).

In 1951 Elizabeth Durack wrote an item for Walkabout magazine in which she talked about ‘Leichhardt’s Bottle tree’ on the Bend of the Ord. Leichhardt was, as far as is known, never on the Ord River. I suspect that she misheard or mis-remembered the name and it actually was ‘Ligar’s Bottle Tree’ – it was probably was carved with his name after he died there. In her article Elizabeth said that this tree had long since died and fallen down (Durack, 1951: 43). There is also a billabong on Manbulloo station that bears (or used to bear?) his name (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1894; Basedow diary, 26-6-1922). Mulligan died north of Katherine in 1900 (see entry below).
John Mulligan. Teamster who carted stores from the Depot to VRD from 1886 to 1896 (Stevens, 23-10-1891; Northern Territory Times, 8-11-1889, 7-10-1892 and 31-1-96, Willshire 1896a: 77). Mulligan was born at or near Armidale, New south Wales, in 1858 (Northern Territory Deaths register). In June 1894 he carried the first wool from the Bradshaw flock to the Depot where it was taken by boat to the Red Gauntlet at ‘The Dome’ (a distinctive hill hear the Angalarri-Victoria junction) for transport to Darwin (Log Book of Bradshaws Run). This wool had been shorn in the bush while the sheep were being taken from VRD to Bradshaw.

As described above, in May 1895 Mulligan and George Ligar were attacked in Jasper Gorge and both men were seriously injured. Both men received treatment in Darwin and Mulligan had to go south for further treatment (Mulligan, 14-3-1896). It may be that this event caused Mulligan to give the Victoria River country away. In January 1896 he advertised that he was moving his teams from Victoria Downs to Maude Creek (Northern Territory Times, 31-1-1896), but in April or May of 1896 he was back on the VRD (perhaps to pick up possessions) because his camp there was raided and a Winchester rifle, a lot of ammunition and other items were stolen (Northern Territory Times, 15-5-1896).

Mulligan died north of Katherine at Fergusson River on April 27th, 1900. According to evidence given at the inquest into his death he had been in the habit of injecting himself with chlorodyne (an opiate) to ease the pain of the spear wound in his leg he’d received during the Jasper Gorge attack. On the day he died he wrote several letters and burnt some documents. In the evening he ‘vomited much blood’. He told his Aboriginal assistants that ‘he was tired, sad, and was going away to his own country’. He was buried at Pine Creek (Northern Territory Times, 4-5-1900).


Richard Lesson (Lisson?). Head stockman in October 1896 (TCPLB, 1894-1911, entry for 23-10-1896) and still there in about September 1896 when he suffered a serious accident and had to travel to Darwin (Meldrum, 27-10-1897). There is a Lesson Creek and Lesson Spring running east out of the Fitzgerald Range which is north of VRD homestead and now on the Kidman Springs Research Station.

Joe Fegan (Fagan). Head stockman. Fegan was on the station by 1885 and was on the station books as a head stockman by March 1887 (Pay sheets, NBA 2/876/22). He was still there in March 1891 (Stevens, 17-3-1891). In 1891 it was reported that, ‘Fegan has full charge of some 5 to 6000 head of Cattle at the outstation at Horse Creek & has been in steady work for the past six years without often a single days spell for weeks on a stretch.’ Where the ‘outstation at Horse Creek’ was is unclear.

Later he left VRD and took up Spring Creek station in the Ord River country. At various times (1897, 1900) he was teamstering, taking a load of horseshoes from Wyndham to Argyle (Wild Dog) police station, a loading for Wave Hill in 1897 (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1895-1897, entries for 25-6-1897 and 26-6-1897), and loads of rations to Ord River station and to Wild Dog police camp in 1900 (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1899-1902, entry for 6-8-1900 and 13-12-1900).
In April 1899 he was reported for supplying ‘supplying grog to natives’. The police found ‘2 boys & one gin’ in Fagan’s camp and Fegan himself ‘in a very bad state from the effects of excessive drinking’. However, the Aborigines denied Fegan had given them grog and he escaped with a caution (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1897-1899, entry for 16-4-1899).

In 1909 Fegan arrived in Wyndham from Wild Dog and left his ‘half-caste’ daughter Gracie there ‘to be forwarded to Beagle Bay Mission’ (Wyndham Police Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1908-1910, entry for 30-6-1909). He was the grandfather of current Aboriginal leaders, Mick and Pat Dodson. Reminiscent of Charles Dicken’s famous novel, Fegan had previously (1881) worked for a drover named Harry Twist in western Queensland (Ronan, 1962: 173).

Ah Pock. Cook in January 1898 (TCPJ, 8-1-1898).

Dave Suttie (Suttee). Head stockman during the time Bob Watson was manager (SMH, 21-3-1942). He was ‘Dan the Head Stockman’ in Jeannie Gunn’s book, We of the Never Never (Durack, 1983: 416-17; SMH, 14-2-1942). According to Mary Durack (1983: 416-17), ‘Suttee’ was born in Victoria about 1850 and came to the Territory from Queensland in 1896. Billy Linklater claimed that Suttie had worked under Bob Watson on Marion Downs, Qld, and came to VRD when Bob became manager there (nd., typescript in Watson family papers). The timing of arrival in the region of both men suggests that this is true.

According to S.E. Pearson (Hoofs & Horns, January 1951: 48) Suttie stayed on after Watson left, but couldn’t get on with the new manager so left and became head stockman on Bradshaw. Suttie’s name doesn’t appear in the Log Book of Bradshaw’s Run, which covers the period 1894 to 1901, but it does appear in the Timber Creek police journal on October 23rd 1903: ‘About 6 p.m. a man named David Suttie arrived from Bradshaws Run & camped on Ck. He is going to Auvergne Stn for some cattle belonging to Mr Bradshaw.’

Mary Durack (1983: 416-17) says that Suttie was head stockman on Elsey after being on VRD and that after the Elsey manager, Aeneas Gunn, died in March 1903, Suttie became joint manager there with Herbert Bryant. This suggests that he went to Elsey before he went to Bradshaw.

Later still Suttie became a stockman on Ord River and at times he worked for the Duracks (Durack diary, 15-9-1906 – 21-7-1907, entry for 7-12-1906). In 1911 he was ‘at the Margaret’ (Booty to Cahill, 5-11-1911). After a binge at Wyndham on January 29th 1912 Suttie was found dead on Capsize Creek, four miles from Ivanhoe station (Durack, 1983: 416-17). At the time of his death he was 62 years old (Shaw, 1991: 164; Notes compiled by Flo Martin, Martin family papers, copy in possession of DL). Doug Moore (July 1958: 13) says that Suttie was found ‘lying dead with his hat over his eyes and his pipe in his mouth.’
Justin Curr. Bookkeeper and horse breaker. In May 1900 he refused to attend the trial of Frank, an Aborigine charged with the murder of Bridget at VRD (TCPJ, 2-5-1900). He left for the south the same year (Durack, 1983: 77).

Charlie Sweeny. Stockman and VRD teamster in the early days, being first mentioned in the Timber Creek police journal on September 28th 1900. He is also mentioned as being in a race meeting at Victoria River in November 1904 and in 1906 (Northern Territory Times, 30-12-1904 and 12-1-1906). Sweeney was a ‘half caste’. VRD elder Big Mick Kangkinang told me that, ‘Charlie Junee’ was a ‘murdering bloke’ from Queensland. He was a mate of Harry Flinders, another ‘half caste’ from Queensland and one with a reputation for violence against ‘bush blacks’ (Adelaide Advertiser, 19-12-1905: 5). Sweeney and Flinders were noted for horse breaking and for being excellent yard builders. Both men were yard building on Lissadell station in 1902 (Adelaide Observer, 19-12-1905). The last mention of Sweeney in the Victoria River district is in the Timber Creek police journal of April 4th 1914. He was then at Willeroo with 29 head of horses.
which were inspected, but the journal doesn’t say if he was working there or travelling through.

Sweeney is not mentioned again in the police journals through to 1918, after which time the journals are lost until about 1934. He is not mentioned in the post-1934 journals either and it seems likely that if he had been in the Victoria River district from 1914 to 1918, or after 1934, he would have been mentioned at some time.

In his autobiography, Jack Gibbs (1995: 8, 94) mentions that a man named Charlie Sweeney came to St. Vidgeon Station to work for his father, Jimmy Gibbs, in 1915. Jack goes on to say that the Charlie Sweeney on St Vidgeon originally came from Queensland, that he left St Vidgeon in 1924, and that he died at Channel Island (the leprosarium in Darwin) in 1947 from the effects of a broken hip (Gibbs, 1995: 94). It seems highly likely that this is the same Charlie Sweeney discussed here.

**Kew.** ‘In charge’ in April 1900 (TCPJ, 3-4-1900). He was probably ‘in charge’ while the manager was out on the run.

**Robert Wilkinson.** Storekeeper. He died at VRD in March 1901 (TCPJ, 12-3-1901).

**Thomas C. Cusack.** Head stockman from 1900 (Ronan, 1962: 174; see also Makin, 1992: 95; TCPJ, 25-2-1905). He was caretaker-manager between the departure of Jim Ronan in January 1904 and the arrival of Richard Townshend in mid-March, 1904 (Makin, 1992: 97). Ronan (The Territorian, February 1965: 4) states that Tom Cusack ‘took over when Dick Townshend went ‘home’ to England to confer with the Bovril people’. This was in the period 1911-1912 because first, the Timber Creek police referred to Cusack as manager of VRD in June 1911, and second, in mid-1912 Mounted Constable Tom Turner referred to Mrs Cusack as ‘the manager’s wife’ (Turner, nd; TCPJ Notes, 28-6-1911; see also The Advertiser [Adelaide], 31-8-1912: 20). Townshend was away ‘south’ for six months in 1916, but it’s unlikely that Cusack was in charge at this time – entries in the Timber Creek police journal refer to Ivor Hall as manager on April 4th 1916 and again on May 23rd, 1916.

In 1921 at Oodnadatta Cusack gave evidence to the Commonwealth Public Works Committee inquiry into the north-south railway line and was described as ‘late manager of Victoria River Downs Station’ (SMH, June 21st, 1921). Apparently Cusack had settled in Oodnadatta and bought the only hotel, The Transcontinental (The Pastoral Review, 15-1-1921). He was married, his wife reported as dying on September 6th, 1917 (Northern Territory Times). On the 13th of April 1924 Tom was killed in a collision between his car and a train in Adelaide. He was remembered by one who knew him as ‘a fine type of bushman, and a splendid cattle manager, and what bushmen term a “white man”’ (The Register [Adelaide], 15-4-1924).

**Dennis James Ronan.** Manager from about June 1900 to January 1904 (Makin, 1992: 90-91; Northern Territory Times, 22-6-1900 and 5-2-1904). He took over from Bob Watson when Goldsbrough Mort and Co. sold out to Emanuel, Kidman and Co. in April 1900. According to his biographer son Tom, Jim Ronan was born in Bendigo on July 14th, 1859 (Ronan, 1962: 11). At the age of twelve he left home with the intention of travelling to New South Wales (Ronan, 1962: 16). He worked in a variety of jobs for some years and moved ever north.
By 1878 he had settled in to cattle work, an occupation he followed for the rest of his life. In the early 1880s he was manager of Sedan, known as ‘the Welford bullock run’, in the Barcoo district of Queensland (Ronan, 1962: 2). He also drove Welford bullocks to southern markets (ibid: 6-7, 61-2). By 1887 he had gone as far as Croydon in north Queensland (Ronan, 1962: 63). He worked for Kidman as a station manager, horse buyer and drover, shifting cattle off Coorabulka.

In early 1900 a syndicate which included Kidman took over VRD and Ronan was given the job of manager (The Pastoralists’ Review, 16-4-1909; Ronan, 1962: 145). One of his jobs with Kidman and Co. was to inspect Mantinea and Carlton as a possible bullock depot for VRD. He chose Carlton.

After three years on VRD he was replaced as manager by his old mate, Dick Townshend (Northern Territory Times, 5-2-1904). Subsequently, he spent seven years managing Napier Downs in the Kimberley and a further nine years on a property to the west of Napier. He died in 1942.

**William H. ‘Billy’ Butler.** Head stockman in January 1905 and for much of the time up to 1921 (TCPJ, 3-1-1905; VRD Ledger 2 and VRD Ledger 3). He was acting manager some time in 1914 while Townshend was absent (Northern Territory Times, 21-1-1915). At the time Townshend returned Butler was described as ‘acting assistant manager’ (Northern Territory Times, 21-1-1915). For additional biographical details see entry under Humbert River.

**Chas J. Chambers.** Bookkeeper before November 29th 1907 (Northern Territory Times, 21-9-1906; TCPJ 26-10-1907). Chambers, described as ‘an old bushman’, had been an assistant surveyor in northern South Australia and at one time was part-owner of Macumba station in South Australia (Northern Territory Times, 29-11-1907). In 1906 he was a member of the North Australia League, a civic organisation in Darwin (Northern Territory Times, 29-6-1906). He had been a resident of the Victoria River region since about 1900 (Northern Territory Times, 21-9-1906). In October 1906 he was acting secretary of the Victoria River Racing Club (Northern Territory Times, 7-9-1906). By October 1907 he was working as cook on Auvergne station (TCPJ, 26-10-1907).

On October 14th Chambers left Auvergne with John Skeahan and John Darcy to go to Wyndham. The next day on the West Baines River they met James ‘Mulga Jim’ McDonald of Ord River station, an old friend of Chambers. McDonald and Chambers had not seen each other for some time and to celebrate their meeting they ‘hit the grog’. Late in the afternoon Darcy, Skeahan and Chambers continued towards Wyndham, but after a while Chambers decided to return to McDonald’s camp. Skeahan and Darcy left Chamber’s packsaddles and horses at ‘Keep station’ (Newry) and told the station hands to expect Chambers to pick them up. Chambers never arrived at Keep. One of his horses turned up at Auvergne on October 18th. Another horse arrived there on October 21st, this one with a bridle improvised from a silk handkerchief around its neck and two pieces of string attached to act as reins (TCPJ, 12-11-1907).

The Timber Creek police were notified on October 26th that Chambers was missing and two days later Mounted Constable Dempsey and trackers set out to investigate. On November 1st Dempsey found Chamber’s badly decomposed body near the track through
Desmonds Passage (Argument Gap) and buried it at the foot of a boab tree. Later he erected rails around the grave and fixed a piece of flat galvanised iron with Chamber’s details punched into it to the tree. Chamber’s died about three miles from the nearest water. Dempsey remarked that, ‘Deceased was subject of palpitation of the heart if liquoring too freely’ and if ‘deceased were attacked by heart trouble and prostration he could not have walked three miles in the dreadfully hot weather we were experiencing in this district at about the time deceased died’ (TCPJ, 12-11-1907). I relocated the ‘Chamber’s grave boab’ in 1995 but by 2013 it had died and disappeared. However, after a prolonged search, in 2014 I found the site and fixed the galvanised iron plaque to a star picket driven into the ground.

The plaque on the Chamber’s grave boab, photographed in 1995 (Lewis collection).

**Lloyd.** Bookkeeper and storekeeper in 1912 (Turner Papers, nd.).

**Richard Townshend.** Manager from mid-March 1904, after the departure of Jim Ronan in January (Northern Territory Times, 5-2-1904; TCPJ, 16-3-1904), until August 1919. Townshend came to VRD from Goyder’s Lagoon in South Australia, on request of Jim Ronan (Ronan, 1962: 145). Between the departure of Ronan and Townshend’s arrival, Tom Cusack was caretaker-manager (Makin, 1992: 97). In 1912 Townshend was described as ‘late manager’ (VRD Ledger 1, p. 275). This suggests that he had resigned his position, but in fact he was in England (The Advertiser [Adelaide], 31-8-1912) and he definitely returned to continue running the station. While he was away Tom Cusack was acting manager (see entry for Cusack, above).

Townshend must have been away late 1914 and early 1915 because there’s a report that ‘acting assistant manager’ Billy Butler handed the management back to him in January 1915 (Northern Territory Times, 21-1-1915). In late 1915 Townshend appears to have suffered an accident to his arm and from the beginning of 1916 he spent six months leave in the south (Northern Territory Times, 15-6-1916). While he was away Ivor Hall was
acting manager (TCPJ, 4-4-1916, 23-5-1916). Ill health forced Townshend to leave VRD in 1918 (or 1919?) and he died in Sydney in May 1922. He was survived by his second wife, Marion (Northern Territory Times, 27-5-1922).

Townshend was married twice while on VRD. His first wife died on the station on April 29th, 1911. A message about her illness was being taken to the Darwin doctor by the packhorse mailman, Henry Peckham (‘The Fizzer’) when he drowned at Dashwood Crossing (see entry for Peckham under Auvergne).

It’s quite likely that Townshend introduced the open bronco method of handling cattle without a yard. This is because he came from Goyder’s Lagoon station in northern South Australia, adjacent to the station upon which the technique was developed by H Compton ‘Compie’ Trew in the mid 1890s (Lewis, 2007b: 17-22). It’s therefore highly likely that he knew Trew and had seen the technique in action during joint musters.

Francis Ignatious ‘Frank’ Brazil. Bookkeeper from 1913 to 1915 (VRD Ledger 1; VRD Day Book, vol. 1). He was on Waterloo in March 1911 (TCPJ Notes, 17-3-1911) and may have been a ‘travelling bookkeeper’ for Vesteys. A Frank Brazil worked for Donald McIntyre on Dalgonally in Queensland some time before 1912 (Browne, 1959: 252) and his name was included in a list of ‘well-known pastoralists’ who were visiting Darwin in August 1912. All of the others listed were managers or owners of Territory stations (Northern Territory Times, 23-8-1912).

In August 1901 he was in a droving team that passed through Timber Creek, working for Connor, Doherty & Durack (TCPJ, 22-8-1901). He arrived in Wyndham from Fremantle on the S.S. Tangier in March 1902 (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1899-1902, entry for 1-3-1902) and in October 1902 he was with Drover Alf Martin (later manager of Carlton and VRD) bringing cattle through Jasper Gorge for CD&D. At Sundown Creek he and Martin ‘had words’ and Brazil quit, arriving at Timber Creek by himself on October 1st, 1902 (TCPJ). He camped at Timber Creek for a day and then went on to Auvergne (TCPJ, 2-10-1902, 3-10-1902).

By February 1903 he was working as a barman at the Six Mile Hotel at Wyndham (Police Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1903-1904, entry for 15-7-1903). In July 1903 Mrs Lily Johnston accused him of assaulting her at the Six Mile Hotel and using insulting language. He was later ‘fined £1 & Costs for disobeying an order of the bench’ (Police Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1903-1904), but the next day Mrs Johnston was ‘using abusive and threatening language towards Frank Brazil’ (Police Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1903-1904, entry for 28-7-1903). In court on August 11th 1903 she agreed to be of good behaviour for four months with a surety of £10 (Police Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1903-1904, entry for 11-8-1908).

In 1907 he was charged with public drunkenness and escaped with a caution (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1907-1908, entries for 15-5-1907 and 17-5-1907). In July 1908 he was charged with ‘illegally pointing a firearm’ and fined £2 with costs or two months gaol (Rough Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police] 1907-1908, entries for 23-7-1908 and 24-7-1908). Mary Durack comments that he was ‘around number of years – went to Victoria River’ (Durack, nd.). His name is mentioned in 1914 in the Timber Creek police journal (15-4-1914).
During the First World War Brazil served in North Africa with the 5th Regiment, 2nd Brigade, A.I.F. (*Northern Territory Times*, 8-6-1916, 7-12-1916). Whether he survived the war or returned to the Territory has not yet been determined.

**Ivor Townshend Hall.** Manager in April and May 1916, according to the Timber Creek police journal (4-4-1916, 23-5-1916). For additional biographical details see entry under Bradshaw.

**Tom Graham.** Manager from 1919 until 1926 (Makin, 1992: 104). He took over after the departure of Dick Townshend and died on the station on August 2nd 1926. While on VRD Tom was a Justice of the Peace and as such he was the judge in various criminal matters, most, if not all, involving Aboriginal offenders. Tom also established a race course and according to a visitor in 1925:

> racing enthusiasts ride five hundred miles to attend his two days’ racing, which offer large sums in stake money. We were there a fortnight before the meeting, and it made one’s mouth water to see the pick of the station-bred horses which were being kept for the races. None of them were fed on corn, of course, and the only time Northern Territory horses are groomed is before a race, and none of them are shod except in very rocky country. One grey mare, standing about 16.1, was one of the most perfect looking hunters I have ever seen, and her value was under ten pounds! The average price of a horse is four pounds (Apsley, 1926: 100).

Another account describes how:

> On New Years Day an impromptu sports meeting for the blacks, with a £16 programme consisting of 17 events, was held. A very enjoyable afternoon was spent and was attended by a fair crowd including five ladies. Possum, an abo. from a mustering camp pretty well won the programme (*Northern Standard*, 19-2-1926).

In a ‘tribute’ published in the *Northern Territory Times* (28-9-1926), after his death, the following information was provided:

> One of the most unassuming of men, he possessed grim determination, cool judgment, and ability. His father came out from Scotland in the early days to manage a sheep station in Victoria. When the rush for country in Queensland took place, John Graham travelled with a flock of sheep from Victoria and settled on the edge of what is now known as ‘Peak Downs’. Here he formed two stations for his firm — Clifton and Aphis Creek — and it was at the latter place that Tom was born in 1863. Years afterwards Mr John Graham joined the late CJ Beardsmore, Esq., in Clive Station and here the family lived for years. After the father’s death the sons carried on ‘Clive’ but eventually it passed into other hands, the boys striking out for themselves. They all became noted horsemen and bushmen, the whole seven of them. Duncan, the eldest, was selected as guide to Baron Von Mueller’s expedition, when that explorer started out on his last expedition to search for traces of Burke and Wills [incorrect], and strange to say, it was left to Tom Graham, many years later, to find the last camp of the ill fated explorers on the Bynoe River near Magoura, for the Geographical Society.
For many years before he married, Tom followed droving taking big mobs of cattle into NSW from Queensland. Since then he has managed various stations. He took over Magoura for the QME & A Co in 1904 which position he held for 11 years. He came to the Northern Territory for the Northern Agency Limited in 1918 as cattle approver, was appointed Manager of Victoria Downs for the Bovril Australian Estates in succession to the late Mr Townsend in 1919 and was made attorney for the Company in 1924 which position he held until his death.

It is not generally known that Mr Graham belonged to an ancient Scottish family, his father being a collateral descendant of the great Montrose (James Graham, Earl and Marquis 1612-1650) one of the noblest figures in Scottish history. Another Kinsman John Graham of Claverhouse (Viscount Dundee) the hero of the battle of Killiecrankie and about whom the famous song "Bonnie Dundee" was composed.
Ever since the 13th century the Grahams have been the unofficial wardens of the northern marches, gave Scotland its first primate, and another became Viceroy when James the sixth ascended the British throne. They attained peerage in 1451. As might be expected coming from a family of soldiers, Mr Graham was a very keen observer and a thorough organiser and in his younger days was a graceful horseman. Right up to the time of his death it was a pleasure to watch him drafting cattle on a camp. His presence of mind was wonderful, nothing was allowed to disturb his equilibrium. Writer has known him to get out of many tight corners by his coolness and courage in time of danger. A man of strictest integrity whose word was his bond. He was a firm but just employer and a first class cattle man. Mr Graham was the first chairman of the Carpentaria Shire Council, a J P for the state of Queensland and also for the Northern Territory. He was a cousin to Professor William Graham Weir of Melbourne whose daughter Dr Laura Weir is well known in Central Queensland. Devoted to duty, Mr Graham died at his post. It may be truly said of him that his watch word was service. A wife, five sons, two daughters are left to mourn their loss.

An obituary in the Graziers’ Review (16-9-1926: 784) says that Graham was:

a member of an old Dawson family, and was connected with stock from his earliest years, that as a boy he was engaged in droving around the Dawson district and as a young man took over the management of Hidden Valley, a portion of Mt McConnell [near Normanton], for the Australian Joint Stock Bank. Later he moved out to the Gulf, taking over the management of Dagworth, near Georgetown. He was after manager of Magoura, for the Queensland Meat Export Co., and in addition bought for the company in the north and west. Vestey Bros., Ltd., secured his services after this, and sent him into the Northern Territory to supervise the droving of their cattle from the various stations to the works. From this position he went as manager to Victoria River Downs, owned by the Bovril Estates Ltd., and continued in that capacity until his death. Some weeks before the end he had a seizure, which necessitated a special trip on the part of Dr. Leighton Jones, Government Medical Officer of the Northern Territory. The late Mr. Graham was known an exceptionally active and capable stockman, and continued in active work right to the end, although he must have been quite 70 years of age. He married Miss Martin, of Charters Towers, by whom, with his family, he is survived.

In 1922 one of the Graham children became seriously ill and was only saved by the chance arrival of Dr Herbert Basedow, who’d been out to Humbert River station investigating the oil potential of the region (Basedow diary, 24-7-1922; Northern Standard, 11-8-1922). As an example of the remoteness of the region and the difficulty of obtaining supplies, Mrs Graham was once reduced to making her own hairpins out of fencing wire (Apsley 1926: 100).

A stockman and drover named McDonald who was on VRD when Graham was manager reckoned that, ‘In the managers [sic] office he had a cupboard which was full of blackfellows skulls’ (Campbell, 2014: 9). An early 1930s photo of the new VRD homestead shows the walls decorated with spears (and boomerangs?; Bovril collection photo, Edinburgh City Council Archives). Local Aborigines say that he was known as Tumpin which they say means ‘big belly’.
Gus Anderson. Gus was on VRD by June 1910 (VRD Day Book, 1909 to 1916). According to Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.), he was a Norwegian who jumped ship and eventually landed at VRD. Charlie remembered him as an all-round handyman who could do anything. Station records seem to confirm Charlie’s opinion. As well as windmill mechanic, at various times Gus worked as a cook at Pigeon Hole and Mt Sanford, a contractor, a caretaker, and at the head station as a blacksmith, handyman and gardener (*Hoofs & Horns*, October 1953: 67; Journal in account with Victoria River Downs station: April 1945 to Jan 1948). He remained on VRD until his death by suicide on Boxing Day, 1956 (TCPJ, 26-12-1956).

William M. Sedgewick (‘Sedgie’). Stockman, head stockman, and possibly overseer. He began work as a stockman on VRD in Dick Townsend’s time, on April 28th 1913. He was a head stockman by 1915 (VRD day book, 1909 to 1925, vol. 1). From March 1920 he was head stockman at ‘Weaner Camp’ (VRD diary 1920), and he was head stockman at Moolooloo from March 31st 1923 to November 1925 (VRD diary 1923, 26-3-1923). Exactly when he left VRD and to what capacity he rose is unclear although it appears he was gone by the end of 1925. In the *Hoofs & Horns* magazine of October 1953 (p. 67) his death from a fall from the Katherine River bridge is reported, and he is described as having been overseer on VRD ‘in Graham’s time.’

George Candy. Bookkeeper in 1922. Apparently he did a ‘quarterly round’ of bookkeeping for Bovril Estates (*Northern Standard*, 17-11-1922). Probably he spent several months on VRD, Carlton and other Bovril properties.

Carl Linderoth. General station hand or contractor, and described in the Melbourne Age (17-9-1913) as a ‘Norwegian mining prospector’. He first appears in the VRD records on March 31st 1911 and was there throughout most of the period up to at least 1942. For much of the time he worked under contract but at times he worked for wages as a labourer, stockman, boundary rider, a mule teamster and cook (at Moolooloo). Older VRD Aborigines pronounce his name as Colin Drob’, which can cause some confusion to a white listener.

Before coming to VRD, in 1909 he joined the Tanami gold rush and spent six months there (Trials for Murder, NT. ‘The King against Linderoth. Murder’). For a year or so he was on Bedford Downs (during Bob Sexton’s time 1908-1920; 1920 census, Clement, 1989: 3, 4; Linklater and Tapp, 1968: 123-25). In 1921 he was a stockman on Bradshaw station (*Northern Standard*, 5-5-1921). While there he was in the party that searched for the missing Bradshaw manager, David Byers (*The Advertiser* [Adelaide], 4-5-1922).

Eddie Connellan, who met Carl at VRD in July 1938 wrote in his diary that he ‘runs the mule team here. His main job is to bring the loading from the Depot. Old Karl is well educated and has a history. As with most of the ‘death adders’, however, that history remains a closed book to most’ (Connellan, 1992: 105).
Part of Carl’s ‘history’ includes a trial for murder. In 1913 he was travelling from VRD to Wave Hill with two Aborigines, Paddy and Dick, the latter being an ‘old fellow white longa hair.’ At the jump-up two miles from Black Springs one of the wagons broke down and a wheel had to be taken to Pigeon Hole for repairs. At the trial Paddy gave evidence that at Black Springs Carl tied Dick to a wagon wheel, beat him on the head with a rock held in both hands and, when Dick fell down, kicked him in the ‘bingey’ (stomach). He then chained him by the neck to the tail board of the wagon. The next day they all continued their journey but Dick was very ill and ‘sing out all same lumpy bullock’ (groaned). The next day he was worse and ‘roll about longa saddle’. Everyone except Dick made it to Pigeon Hole that night. The next day they began the return trip to Black Springs and Paddy found Dick dead about 13 miles from Pigeon Hole (Trials for Murder, NT. ‘The King against Linderoth. Murder’).

The death was later reported to Mounted Constable McDonald at Timber Creek and in company with Dr Fry a post mortem was carried out. The doctor discovered that deceased had a fractured skull, several fractured ribs, and also was suffering from a diseased lung. He couldn’t say whether the fractured skull or the diseased lung was the cause of death. Mounted Constable W.F. Johns escorted Linderoth to Darwin. Johns had no doubt that Linderoth was guilty and said he had violent temper (unpublished memoir, Johns family papers), but the jury took just three minutes to decide that Linderoth was innocent (Bevan, 25-9-1913).

Another part of Linderoth’s history was his discovery of a pair of trousers on the road between VRD and Delamere. The trousers contained a piece of tobacco which indicated that they belonged to a white man as no Aboriginal would throw tobacco away. On further investigation he discovered the skeletons of two white men lying naked on the white ant-
eaten remains of their swags. The dead men were identified as travellers Hughie Temple and W.E.G. Cockburn who apparently had died from thirst and exposure (Northern Territory Times, 11-6-1914).

**Jack H. Roden.** Bookkeeper from October 14th 1922 to June 30th 1949. Before going to VRD Jack was in the Northern Territory Civil Service in Darwin. While there he was ‘an active member of the clerical section of the A.W.U., and no doubt as a result of his activities in this direction was pushed out of the service’ (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926). Jack first came to the Victoria River district in 1922, working as a mechanic and driver for Dr Herbert Basedow, a geologist investigating the potential for oil deposits on Humbert River station (Basedow diary, 1922). It appears he was offered a job on VRD at this time and returned there as soon as his job with Basedow was finished.

Initially he was employed as both bookkeeper and mechanic (VRD diary 1922, 14-10-1922). Jack married Belle and she arrived on the station in about June 1924 (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926). They had only one child, a daughter, Doris. Jack was known to local Aborigines as Kurtip which they say means ‘short fella’.

Apparently Jack was forced to resign after Magnussen became manager. In a report by Lord Luke on his visit to VRD in 1948 he wrote, ‘The chief stumbling block [to Magnussen’s new methods] is Mr. Roden who has been there too long, is far too much tarred with the Martin brush and has, on more than one occasion, been dishonest in store matters’ (Report on a visit to Australia by Lord Luke, June 1948, [page 3]). Given that Magnussen is reputed to have been dishonest in ‘store matters’, it’s possible that Lord Luke was told by Magnussen that Roden was dishonest in order to misdirect blame about shortcomings at the store, and to get rid of him as one who could pont the finger at him. Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) believed that Roden thought he could become manager of VRD after Alf Martin, but that he was denied this because he ‘knew too much’. He died in Brisbane in 1958 (Martin, 1985: 59). According to Flo Martin (nd.) his last wish was that his body be cremated. This was done and his ashes were scattered over the Victoria River Downs country.

**James Alfred Martin (‘Hell-Fire Alf’).** Manager from August 1st 1926 to May 5th 1945 (Hoofs & Horns, February 1951: 39; Victoria River Downs, VRD Ledger 5, 1909-1944). Alf was born in 1877 to engine driver Alfred (?) Martin and Rachel Edwards. At age 17 he and a prospector friend travelled to the Coolgardie goldrush in a buggy. He and his brother Jack first came to the Kimberley in 1900 and were joined there by three other brothers, Archie, Frank and Billy (Hoofs & Horns, January 1951: 43). Alf first worked as a drover for Connor, Doherty and Durack, beginning with them on August 4th 1900 (Durack, nd.). In 1908 he passed through Timber Creek on his way from Carlton to VRD to pick up a mob of cattle. He had taken drover Egan’s place as boss drover after Egan became sick (TCPJ, 7-4-1908). In a letter he wrote in 1928 he claimed that he had worked on Auvergne for two years (White, 5-6-1931).

In 1909 he joined the English meat company Bovril Australian Estates, and managed Carlton Hills station for them for almost seventeen years (Martin, 1985: 9; Durack, 1983: 382). Morey (1977c: 21) states that while he managed Carlton, Alf also controlled Ningbing and Legune stations. From Carlton Alf was sent to manage VRD where he remained until May 1945.
In 1906 Alf met Beatrice Florence Edwards who was working as a waitress at Mrs Flynn’s Three Mile Hotel, Wyndham, and they were married Perth on December 11th 1906. At the time of his marriage he gave his occupation as butcher. Eventually Alf and ‘Beau’ had eight children: George in 1908, Florence in 1909, Jack in 1911, Ethel in 1913, Ted in 1916, Mildred (1917), Jim ‘Four-Eyes’ (1919) and Stan ‘The Womp’ in 1922 (Martin, 1985: 9; pers. comm., Marie Mahood). Ethel died on April 23rd 1923 at Carlton station, aged 10, and is buried at Wyndham (Martin, 1985: 17).

In 1913 Alf’s brother Archie was part of a punitive expedition that went ‘East of Keep River’ after the killers of Rudolph Philchowski (Durack, 1983: 287-280; Makin, 1992: 116). For additional biographical details on Philchowski see entry under Argyle.

L-R: Belle Roden, possibly Alf Martin, Jim Martin, Jack Roden (behind), Stan Martin, Doris Roden, Roy Settatree, Mildred Martin and George Martin (Roden collection).

I haven’t yet been able to learn of any Aboriginal nickname for Alf, but he had a European nickname – ‘Hellfire Alf’ – derived from his style of ‘Hell-driving’ (Connellan, 1992: 108). According to Doug Moore (nd.), Alf bought MP Durack’s car and:

When learning to drive he was very nervous. His brother Jack said to him, ‘You’re getting very proud – you passed me the other day in the bus and never took any notice of me.’
‘Where were you?’
‘I was standing by the side of the road.’
‘Look here if ever you want to see me you want to stand right in the middle of the road.’

An American visitor, Edgar Laytha, noted (March 1942: 7) that:
Mrs Martin had to repeat year after year, month after month, day after day, the very same words to the very same servants. Even now, every day they have to be told anew what to do because every night they forget. Constantly engaged in perpetual thinking, the great lady has very little rest. I watched her around the place when she was repeating, all the four days I spent at Victoria River Downs, the same words in a commanding manner: “Nellie, sweep the verandah … turn off that tap … clean the boots … clean the bath … fill the box with wood … carry water to the paddock … Charlie, clean up that rubbish … clean up the leaves on the lawn … Charlie, you haven’t watered the trees outside to-day…, do it now, go … do it now … I want it!

It’s unlikely that the ‘servants’ forgot their tasks every night. More likely is that they were bored and that they had little respect for Mrs Martin. When I asked Dora Jilpngarri whether Mrs Martin had an Aboriginal name, she laughed and then told me that Mrs Martin was known as ‘Yirrimi’. This was because of her constant question after giving instructions, ‘You hear’em me? You hear’em me?’

Alf was described by Eddie Connellan in 1938 as ‘an extremely conservative man’, a view apparently shared by others. In late 1933 or early 1934, Alf had expressed his opinion that the introduction of ‘Zebu’ (Brahmin) cattle to Australia would ‘dam the industry if persisted with’ (Northern Standard, 26-1-34). Subsequently, a correspondent calling himself or herself ‘Festina Lente’ (‘make haste slowly’) ridiculed Alf’s claim (Northern Standard, 13-2-1934) and Gordon Buchanan (Northern Standard, 1-5-1934), who possibly was ‘Festina Lente’ himself, had a similar point of view:
I would like to congratulate “Fertina [sic] Lento” on his excellent letter. He is evidently fully acquainted with the position on Victoria Downs. It is doubly refreshing to see anyone contradicting asinine statements of the like made by Mr. Martin, as these jacks-in-office appear to be able to say anything and get away with it these days. … Mr. Martin has been manager of V. R. Downs for so long, that he thinks evidently that that fact alone should lend weight to any stupid words he might like to utter. I beg to differ. … Mr. Martin thinks he’s the man who put the B in Bovril. I remind him that he’s going the right way to put the B on Bovril.

Morey (1977c: 21) states that, ‘Lord Luke ... sent Alf and his wife, first class with all expenses paid to the Argentine. Here Bovril Estates had huge cattle properties, and Alf was to study their methods and recommend any improvements.’

In the mid-1940s Bovril handed management of its Australian Estates to the Australian Land and Mercantile Finance Company (AML&F). According to C.G. McKechnie who carried out an inspection of Bovril’s properties for AML&F in 1944:

Mr. Alfred Martin, who has managed Victoria River Downs for the past 18 years, has been used to very rough conditions throughout his many years of station management. Because of this and his advanced years I would not expect him to grasp readily any up-to-date methods that are required in running the property and which, later on, will have to be introduced if Bovril Australian Estates Ltd. is to improve its position. …

Mr. Martin is well on in years and only a short while ago suffered a very severe illness which has left its mark. Apart from these disabilities, his methods are very
much out of date and I would say that the efficient management of Victoria River Downs is quite beyond his capacity. …

Mr. Martin has two of his sons employed on the property. James, the elder, holds the position of Sub-Manager but he does not appear to have had very much stock experience and, from what I saw of him, he is far from being energetic. Stanley, the other son, is Head Stockman at Pigeon Hole and, although I did not see him at work I was not otherwise impressed with him. When a change in the management takes place, the future employment of these two young men would not be desirable (McKechnie, 13-6-1944).

Alf left VRD on May 5th 1945 (VRD diary 1945). He was granted an ‘allowance (pension?) by Bovril in recognition of his 35 years service to the company. Initially he lived in Katherine but while seeking medical attention in Perth he died on November 23rd 1950 (Carment, 1992: 133-34; Hoofs & Horns, January 1951: 43).

Charles Augustin Yorke ‘Cay’ Johnston. Said to have been relieving manager some time after 1938 (Kowald, 1996: 173-75). Cay was also relieving manager on Rosewood from November to January, 1963-64, and again in October-November 1964 before Dee Bostock arrived there as the new manager (Russell, 18-11-1964). He was previously manager on Alexandrina (Young, 1990: 13; Kowald and Johnston, 1992: 71).


James H. Martin. Head stockman at Centre Camp in the 1930s or 1940s. Probably should be James N. Martin. Jim was born on VRD in 1919. After World War Two he established Martin Brothers Transport. Later he was manager of Mataranka station for ten years and was president of the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association and founding president of the Katherine Show Society. In the 1950s he tried to enter Federal politics and three times contested the seat of Elsey in the NT Legislative Council. He died in Katherine hospital in December 1975 (NT News, 5-12-1974).

Stanley Arthur Martin. Head stockman at Centre Camp, time unknown. Overseer in April 1944 (WHPJ, 14-4-1944).


Frank Spencer. Head stockman at No 1 Camp (Centre Camp) in 1932 (Morey, 1977c: 21). In February 1951 he was acting manager of VRD while Magnussen was on holidays (Hoofs & Horns, February 1950: 38). For additional biographical details see entry under Gordon Creek.

Roy Settatree. Assistant manager (Northern Standard, 21-6-1935). For additional biographical details see entry under Pigeon Hole.


Hartley Magnussen. Manager from March 26th 1945 (VRD diary 1945; Hoofs & Horns, February 1951: 39) to April 1953 (VRD diary 1952). He arrived with his wife and two children (VRD diary 1945). Jock Makin (1992: 183) reckons he was manager from 1945
until only 1950, but records I’ve seen extend his time on VRD to April 1953. He was replaced by Scott McColl ‘after nine years’ (Hoofs & Horns, May 1953: 55). Among the VRD Aborigines he was known as Tiliyut, a ‘nighthawk’ which cries out ‘tiliyut, tiliyut, tiliyut’. They say he had a throat ‘like a brahmin’ (a marked dewlap?).

When Magnussen first arrived on VRD a report by an anonymous writer stated that:

They [AML&F] made a considerable sacrifice in appointing Mr. Magnussen as Manager of V.R.D. – I am not only grateful for that, but I have a profound admiration for his sterling qualities. He must, however, have better assistance than he has yet gathered around him – far too much detailed work is still devolving on him. The chief stumbling block is Mr. Roden who has been there too long ... An adequate replacement is difficult in those parts, but I hope it will not be long before one is found. I should say that most of the V.R.D. team are now loyal to Magnussen, but his methods are (rightly) revolutionary and have administered an overdue jolt to the complacent crew he found there. There have been many changes for the better in personnel (Report on a visit to Australia by Lord Luke, June 1948: 3).
If they ever existed Magnussen’s ‘sterling qualities’ soon evaporated. Various people who were on VRD when Magnussen was manager have told me that he was an extremely unpopular man. According to Charlie Schultz, Magnussen was a terrible snob, an opinion confirmed by Marie Mahood (1995: 5-6). Marie, who worked as the storekeeper on VRD in 1950, said (pers. comm.) that he was known as ‘the old black sheepdog’, which seems rather tame considering other statements I’ve heard, but perhaps at the time the sheep reference was a severe put-down in this cattle country. In her book Icing on the Damper (1995: 8-9), Marie states that while she was storekeeper the manager had a scam going whereby he added items to the list of purchases made by employees, charged them, and pocketed the extra money. Marie was sacked after she discovered the scam and told the employees what was going on, and although she doesn’t name the manager she was only on VRD in Magnussen’s time.

Under Magnussen’s regime men began to leave VRD. After Magnussen left the October 1953 Hoofs & Horns (p 67) reported that, ‘It is rumoured that several of the old hands will be returning to the Wickham now that there has been a change of management’. One of the men who left after Magnussen took over was Frank Spencer who’d been there for 26 years. Marie Mahood told me that he left when Magnussen ordered all the old stockhorses to be sold as pet meat rather than pensioned off. She added that, ‘as far as cattle-work work was concerned, Frank really ran the station. Magnussen rarely left the homestead, he was a sheep-man, anyway’.

Magnussen also had a bad name with Welfare Patrol Officers. In 1951 Patrol Officer Evans tried to improve working conditions for Aborigines at VRD, particularly with respect to Aboriginal women carrying buckets of water up the very high and steep bank from the river to the homestead. He approached Magnussen on the issue and later wrote (Evans, 23-7-1951, cited in Evans, 1958: 3):

Those who have no dealings with Mr. Magnussen cannot appreciate the extreme difficulty one has in discussing aboriginal matters with him on a reasonable basis. He regards himself as “The Law” on Victoria River Downs and one gathers the impression that he will not tolerate being told what to do on any matters whatsoever. … Mr. Magnussen stated that in his opinion the work occasioned no distress and was a fit duty for lubras. I reiterate my remarks in my report of last year that Mr. Magnussen regards the natives as being little better than an animal and I cannot escape the impression that he will fight attempts to improve their conditions to the last ditch. … I have yet to spend a more unpleasant time on any Station in the Northern Territory than my sojourn at Victoria River Downs as it is obvious that my visit is regarded as “a necessary evil”, not only by Mr. Magnussen but also by his immediate staff at headquarters.

Evans noted that the women would spend an average of two hours daily carrying water and that each load weighed 80 lbs. He added that at Gordon Creek outstation the water was carried about 250 yards and up a bank about 35 feet high, and at Pigeon Hole the distance was about 450 yards and the bank climbed about 25 feet high. At one stage Evans asked Magnussen if he would ask a white man to do the work. Magnussen said ‘yes’, so Evans said, ‘Then get a white man to do it’ (Evans, 10-7-1951, cited in Evans, 1958: 2).
Magnussen left VRD early in 1953 without windmills or pumps being installed at the outstations. In June 1958 Evans remarked that, ‘eight years after my first protest about the water-carriers at Gordon Creek and Pigeon Hole, these outstations are still in existence and innumerable female natives have been the beasts of burden providing the water needs of the European staff meanwhile’ (Evans, 20-6-1958: 5). This situation changed shortly afterwards when bores at both outstations were finally equipped with windmills (Ryan, 1958b: 5).

Another of Magnussen’s shortcomings was that he ‘considered vegetable gardens unnecessary and consequently no fresh vegetables are available to natives’ (Lovegrove, c1954: 5). Whether the white station staff somehow could access fresh vegetables is unclear.

One thing that Magnussen did which was popular was to re-instituted the VRD races (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz). This appears to have been done in 1950 because an entry in the August 1951 Hoofs & Horns (p. 36) says, ‘the second meeting of the Victoria River Downs Picnic Race club was held in the last two days of June’. After leaving VRD at the end of April 1953 Magnussen was reported to have, ‘a small sheep property out from Victor Harbour’, South Australia (Sweeney, 1947: 12; Hoofs & Horns, May 1953: 55 and July 1955: 4; Makin, 1992: 183). His name is commemorated in a rude comment written on a water tank at Murranji Bore (Lewis, 2007a: 133).

James V. Wright. Head stockman at Centre Camp from April 24th 1945 to October 1945 (VRD Ledger 5, Victoria River Downs Ledgers, 1909-1944).

Rolly Bowrey. Head stockman from January 14th 1946 to May 2nd 1946 and again from August 1st 1947 to October 11th 1947. From January 2nd 1948 to September 10th 1948 he was employed on VRD as a saddler (VRD Journals, April 45 to Jan 48). For additional biographical details see entry under Humbert River.


He was regarded as a ‘master axeman’ and was known as ‘Broad-axe Bob’ (pers. comm., Lexie Simmons). He married E.M. Sharp, the VRD school teacher in 1947. Patrol Officer Sweeney reported in October 1947 that, ‘Mrs Nelson is interested in the natives and had desired to include the half-caste and even native children in her school but the management [ie Magnussen] objected. The manager’s policy is to treat the half-castes as aboriginals.’

In 1958 he travelled to Gayndah in Queensland to inspect a farm for possible purchase. He bought the farm and shifted there in 1959 (Quirk, 29-4-1959). Unfortunately his farming venture failed and in 1960 he applied for the position of overseer on VRD. In a letter to William Buckland (Quirk, 8-4-1960) Jack Quirk recommended against employing Nelson again, saying that:

He is a very hard man to get on with, or should I say to get anybody to go and work with. Very moody, bad tempered, and so on. It is nothing to see Bob if things are
not going as they should, throw his hat on the ground jump on top of it, and curse each and everybody connected with it.

*Bob Nelson with pet bird. The horse has a ‘stand back bridle’, used on a horse that’s inclined to rub off an ordinary bridle (Knox collection).*

Nelson was on VRD in the early 1930s and is said to have been on VRD for a total of about 30 years. He retired to the Catholic Mission at Daly River and spent his declining years there.

**Reg P. Sammon.** Head stockman at Centre Camp from December 15th 1947 to June 12th 1948 (VRD Journals, April 45 to Jan 48).

**A.G. Dann.** Head stockman (at Centre Camp?) from December 3rd 1948 to April 23rd 1949 (VRD Journals, 28 Oct 48 – Sept 49).

**‘Holy’ Joe Tufnall.** Position unknown. Listed by Gordon Buchanan under station owners and managers but this appears to be incorrect (Buchanan family papers).

**Frank Bellchambers.** Mechanic in 1949 (Gordon, 1992: 126). He is remembered by Lexie Simmons (pers. comm.) as a wife-beater.

**Peter Cornish.** Mechanic in 1949-50 (Gordon, 1992: 131).
Adair Sutherland ‘Scott’ McColl. Manager from February 1953 until July 1955 (Hoofs & Horns, June 1953: 55, March 1955: 12, May 1955: 6, July 1955: 9). Makin (1992: 183) reckons he started on VRD in 1950, but this is incorrect. Born at Goondiwindi in southern Queensland in 1925, he was a jackaroo on his parent’s property, Royston, Goodiwindi, where he worked with stud shorthorns. He next worked for three years as overseer on a nearby property. Before coming to VRD McColl had spent six years as a stockman on Brunette Downs (Australian Shorthorns, October 1955: 51; Makin, 1992: 136). While there he was thrown from his horse and suffered a broken leg (Hoofs & Horns, March 1949). It was under McColl that the VRD feral animal problem was systematically attacked (Frank Johnston collection, NLA, caption on photo).

He was only on VRD for two and half years (Barnes, 12-1-1953). McColl’s wife Mary suffered ill health while on VRD and was advised to return south so McColl resigned when Buckland bought VRD (1955). ‘Bolivar’ Hudson was considered for his replacement but the job eventually went to Jack Quirk (Buckland, 22-12-1954). In 1955 he was appointed assistant to the Pastoral Inspector of AML&F. Later he was manager of Maneroo station near Longreach. He died in 1998 or 1999.

Frank Dwyer. Saddler in 1949 (Gordon, 1992: 126). He had a bad leg and had a hopping gait (pers. comm., Lexie Simmons).


Keith ‘Kelly’ Dixon. Head stockman at Centre Camp from May 6th 1950 to May 29th 1951 (Monthly reports from camps and out-stations on VRD, 1951-1958), he was gone in 1951 (Hoofs & Horns, March 1951: 39). Marie Mahood believed this to be incorrect.
She said he arrived on VRD shortly before she left there in mid-1950 and may have been head stockman at Gordon Creek.

**Doug J. Scobie.** Head stockman at Centre Camp from June 1951 to September 1951, and possibly to May 1952 (VRD Journals, Nov 50 – Sept 51 and Nov 51 – Sept 52).

**W. Barry Barr.** Head stockman from February 2nd 1952 to February 3rd 1953 (VRD Journals, Nov 51 – Sept 52; Barr, 1995: 8).

**Colin Cedargreen.** Saddler from the end of February 1950 to July 1951 (VRD Journals, Nov 50 – Sept 51). Cedargreen grew up in Bundaberg and learnt saddling from his father from the age of 10. Before coming to VRD he worked for six years as a saddler for the Fairymead Sugar Company, and for six months with R.W.V. Wright in Mackay (*Hoofs & Horns* April 1985: 62).

According to an old mate of his, Geoff Allen (pers. comm.), Cedargreen ‘cut his throat over a lubra’. Paul Vandeuler (pers. comm.) said he did this in the men’s quarters at VRD, and Marie Mahood (pers. comm.) said it happened in 1950. Records indicate that they are both wrong. The facts of the case are that in November 1953 Cedargreen, described as 26 years old and reasonably well educated, arrived at Wave Hill with Elsie (aka Mona), an Aboriginal woman he had taken from Limbunya (Penhall, 26-11-1953). Colin Wardel, who was at Wave Hill when Cedargreen arrived there, told John Stacey (pers. comm.) that Cedargreen had Elsie hidden in a 44 gallon drum, but she was seen by the manager, Tom Fisher. Fisher notified the police who came to the homestead and took Elsie back to the police station, and as the police drove away Cedargreen ran behind the vehicle calling out, ‘Mona! Mona!’

Native Affairs Officer L. Penhall later recorded that Constable Cronshaw didn’t press charges against Cedargreen at the time because Cedargreen said he would approach the Native Affairs Branch at Elliott to request that he be allowed to marry Elsie. That’s what he did, but before he arrived at Newcastle Waters the general manager for Vesteys, Jack Quirk, had advised the Acting Director of Native Affairs in Darwin of the circumstances. Instructions had been sent to Penhall to arrange for Cedargreen to be arrested and charged with removing a ward without consent and cohabiting with her (WHPJ, 24-11-1953; McCaffery, 27-11-1953; Penhall 26-11-1953).

In spite of the charges Penhall noted that Cedargreen was still determined to marry Elsie and said he would go to Darwin to try to obtain permission to marry. Penhall further noted that Cedargreen, ‘had not advised his parents of the step he is contemplating. I am of the opinion that for his own sake, permission should not be granted, however as I do not know the girl in question, I hesitate to make a firm recommendation in the matter’ (Penhall, 26-11-1953). No evidence has been found that Cedargreen went to Darwin to seek permission to marry.

On December 1st 1953 the Wave Hill police journal noted that at Elliott Cedargreen had been fined £4 by Native Affairs for taking Elsie away from Limbunya without the Protector’s consent, and had been cautioned to stay away from Elsie. He remained at Wave Hill, perhaps still hoping to marry Elsie, but on April 24th 1960 he shut himself in his room at Wave Hill homestead and cut his throat. He was buried at the ‘old station’, ie, in the graveyard on the river (WHPJ, 25-4-1960).
Tex Moar. Head stockman ‘in charge of a camp’ (Centre Camp) in 1951 (Hoofs & Horns, April 1951: 41; VRD Journals: Nov 50 – Sept 51). According to his entry in Stockmen (Anderson, 1991: 18-19) Tex was born in Queensland on January 30th, 1927. At age 16 he went to Stapleton station where eventually he became head stockman. In 1946 he was working as a drover taking cattle from Newry to Wyndham and by 1951 was head stockman at Centre Camp on VRD. The following year he was manager of Jindare station and married the owner’s daughter. Then he went back to (packhorse) droving, taking Jindare cattle to Queensland and 600 fat bullocks from VRD to Wyndham.
He worked variously as a contract musterer, buffalo, pig and brumby hunter, managed stations (including seven years on Jindare) and owned at least two stations (Roper Valley and Dorisvale). In 1955 he was taking his horse plant to the South Alligator River area for the North Australian Uranium Corporation. When he reached the South Alligator it was in flood and while waiting for the floodwaters to subside one of his horses was attacked by a crocodile. Tex grabbed his gun and rushed to help the horse, but he slipped and accidentally shot himself in the leg. With difficulty he managed to crawl back to camp, mount a horse and ride eight miles to the Northern Hercules Mine where he received assistance. This is the story as reported in the *NT News* (3-3-1955), but in conversation with Tex in about 2000 he intimated that he had actually been in a gun fight and that the other man ended up in a terminal condition. Whether he was telling me a tall story or the truth will never be determined.


*Tex Moar and Ernie Rayner ‘bullfighting at the Katherine races in 1962. This was a popular entertainment where two men would shoulder each other and knock their heads together like bulls, a sport likely to end with bruises, missing skin and damaged necks (Rayner collection).*

**Robert W. Barnes.** Improvements overseer from July 28th 1950 to August 9th 1951 (VRD Journals: Nov 50 – Sept 51; *Hoofs & Horns*, November 1951: 49). Bob was previously head stockman at Mount Sanford from October 1945 to October 1946, head stockman at Centre Camp (?) from June 1949 to June 1950 (VRD Journals: 28 Oct 49 – Sept 50), and was overseer at Wave Hill in 1947 (WHPJ, 24-7-1947). In 1947-49 he may have been ‘contracting’ (contract mustering?) around Newcastle Waters (*Hoofs & Horns*, November 1946: 49; Gordon, 1992: 134). When Billy Harney was a kid at Willeroo Barnes put him
on a piebald horse. Tom Fisher saw this and sacked Barnes on the spot because it was Tom’s personal horse.

**John H. Bladwell.** Head stockman at Centre Camp from February 16th 1953 to February 22nd 1955 (Monthly reports from camps and out-stations on VRD, 1951-1958). Bladwell began work as a stockman on VRD on April 5th 1952. In August 1952 to November 4th 1952 he was employed as a pumper and from December 2nd 1952 to February 3rd 1952 he was a pumper/stockman. Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.) says he later owned a droving plant and was droving for Vesteys.

**William George Bates.** Overseer during 1953-55 (WHPJ, 28-7-1954; *Hoofs & Horns*, March 1954: 41 and September 1955: 14). He was born at Aramac in 1924 and grew up in Hughenden where his father was a mailman. When George left school at 14 he joined the postal service, but he had a grandparent who was overseer on a station and this may be where he got into station work. Bates was on VRD from 1945, working first as a stockman at Montejinni until June 8th 1946, then head stockman at Gordon Creek from August 19th 1946 to October 31st 1946, and head stockman at Mt Sanford from November 28th 1946 to April 5th 1952. He married Alex (‘Lex’) Gurr who’d come to VRD from Adelaide to join her sister, Nat. Lex and George married on September 20th 1949 and raised four children before they divorced in 1970.

Bates left VRD in 1952 because he didn’t like Hartley Magnussen, the VRD manager. According Lex, Magnussen actually forced several VRD employees to leave by picking a fight with them and then sacking them. She thinks he did this because he was facing the sack himself for incompetence at running the station, particularly his mishandling of the resumptions issue, and wanted to cover his tracks. Bates became manager of Mistake Creek station, but when McColl took over after Magnussen left early in 1953 he asked Bates to return to VRD (pers. comm. Lexie Simmons; *Hoofs & Horns*, October 1953: 67). According to Billy Harney (pers. comm.), during a joint muster at Mistake Creek he had a fight over cattle with the manager of Waterloo, Don McLachlan. Both men wanted a larger share of the cleanskins to make up their numbers for the Wyndham meatworks. Bates lost the fight. On his return he became overseer from August 2nd 1953 to September 1955, and then manager at Mount Sanford until December 31st 1958 (pers. comm., Lexie Simmons). He left VRD in 1958 to become cattle manager on the Beswick Aboriginal Reserve (Quirk, 9-9-1958).

Lex Simmons describes Bates as a noted cattleman, like Charlie Schultz, Rolly Bowrey and Dave Fogarty. She said he always got more than his quota of calves and bullocks, and was always called on to do a final muster through the Montejinni country to top up the bullock numbers for the drovers. When he was managing Mistake Creek he was disappointed with his muster there until he was told he had got more cattle than anyone else before him (pers. comm., Lexie Simmons). Anita Campbell (pers. comm.), who knew George on Beswick, described him as ‘a lovely bloke’. Others who knew Bates didn’t like him as a man or a cattleman (pers. comm., Mick Bower). In his later years Bates lived for a period in Atherton, but in 2001 he moved to Darwin to be with his children. He died there in 2002.
Elsie Tyndall. Assistant bookkeeper in 1950 (pers. comm., Marie Mahood).

Tom Tiberio. Italian cook at Centre Camp in 1950-1954 (*Hoofs & Horns*, March 1954: 41; pers. comm., Marie Mahood). He was also cook on Ord River in 1960-65 and was afterwards at Nicholson (pers. comm., Cec Watts). Tom ‘liked the hot stuff’ – curry and chilli (pers. comm., Stan May). He died at Halls Creek.

Natalie Gurr. Bookkeeper and school teacher at various times from February 3rd 1948 to January 5th 1952.

Lex Bates (née Gurr). Storekeeper in 1949 (Gordon 1992: 126). She and Natalie Gurr were sisters. After she and George Bates divorced she married a man named Simmons (pers. comm., Lexie Simmons).


Joe Mahood waiting for Colin Carmody to finish saddling up Anzac for him at the Negri races, 1950 (Mahood collection).

According to Marie Mahood (pers. comm.), in 1963 in partnership with Bill Wilson and Milton Willick, Joe applied for a lease to a large area of Mitchell grass country deep in the Tanami Desert. This area had long been known to some cattlemen but never taken up because of its remoteness and lack of reliable water. The official in charge of issuing such leases apparently was convinced that all of the Tanami was a howling wilderness. He kept asking them, ‘what do you want that mongrel country for, it’s only mongrel country out there’, and refused to give them the lease. Eventually the partners complained to the Northern Territory Administrator and in short order they had their lease! Because of the obstinate official and his constant cry of ‘mongrel country’ they decided to call the new station ‘Mongrel Downs’.

Eventually circumstances led Joe and Marie to sell their (51%) share in the property. They made their way to Queensland where new stations were being opened up in the Brigalow country between Roma and Charters Towers. They obtained a block of newly cleared
country which became Cattle Camp station. Joe was killed in a helicopter crash there in 1990 (Mahood, 1995, and pers. comm., Marie Mahood).

‘Sailor Jack’ Enar Svend Gade. Pumper on VRD and ‘well known on many other stations’ (*Hoofs & Horns*, March 1954: 43). The Wave Hill police journal (29-10-1944) describes him as ‘Danish alien Gade who had been cooking at musterers camp on Wave Hill’. He was still on Wave Hill in July the following year (WHPJ, 16-7-1945). ‘There is a bore on Wave Hill called ‘Sailor Jack Bore’. Marie Mahood (pers. comm.) says he used to make ships in glass bottles as a hobby. While on VRD he had a camp at Fisher’s Bore (and possibly elsewhere; pers. comm., Stan May).

Gerry Ash (pers. comm.) said he was a great walker and this is confirmed by the Wave Hill police journal. On January 21st 1938 the journal records that, ‘Jack Gade from Denmark and Jack Williams per foot walk from Port Hedland arrived on 19th inst left this date for V.R. Downs enroute Darwin.’ Again, on December 31st 1945 the journal records that, ‘Danish alien S. Gade left on foot for Halls Ck.’ Gerry Ash also said that Sailor Jack had a blowfly tattooed on his penis, the decoration done while he was drunk (confirmed by Stan May). He died at Newcastle Waters in 1954 (*Hoofs & Horns*, March 1954: 43).

Bill Parry. Bookkeeper 1953-59. He also was on Brunette in 1959-60 and Newry about 1960-62, then went to Gunegadoo near Tamworth (pers. comm., Honour Parry; *Hoofs & Horns*, November 1956: 6).

Dan Thorn. Head stockman at Centre Camp from May 1955 to August 9th 1955.


Cammy Cleary. Head stockman at Centre Camp from June 20th 1956 to June 30th 1957 (VRD Day book, NBA 87/3/1-11) and in 1961 (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner).

Bill Tapp. Boundary rider until July 1956. He then became head stockman at Centre Camp (*Hoofs & Horns*, July 1956: 9). For additional biographical details see entry under Killarney.

Ian ‘Lofty’ Barton. Head stockman from January 1st 1953 to September 30th 1953 (VRD Day book, 1957-March 196). Ian came from Adelaide to Centre Camp as a new chum in March 1950. From August to September 1950 he was a cook, then a stockman again from November 4th 1950 to April 12th 1951, a pumper again from August 1951 to January 1952, a stockman/pumper from January 1952 to April, a stockman again from April 1952 to September 1952, and a pumper again from September 1952 to February 1953. In early 1954 he was head stockman at Mt Sanford. Gerry Ash (pers. comm.) says that Lofty was one of the stockmen present when Camfield confronted VRD during the resumptions in 1953. He left VRD in 1956 (*Hoofs & Horns*, June 1955: 7 and January 1956: 11; pers. comm., Marie Mahood).

B. Scheimer. Head stockman at Centre Camp from May 9th 1957 to July 1st 1957.

J. Lynam. Head stockman at Centre Camp from September 9th 1957 to April 29th 1958.

Ron McNamara. Head stockman at Centre Camp from May 31st 1958 to June 3rd 1958.

H. Salter. Head stockman at Centre Camp from at least August 1958 to ?

Jack Alfred Quirk. Manager from at least September 1955 (his pending appointment was known from at least July 1955) to November 1959 (*Hoofs & Horns*, July 1955: 4 and September 1955: 14; Makin, 1992: 183; Buckland, 10-11-1959). Though his position as manager finished at the end of November, apart from a Christmas break he remained on the station as ‘acting manager’ until the new manager, George Lewis, took over in August 1960 (Buckland, 6-4-1960).

Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that Quirk was a ‘tall skinny bloke’. A station report (Anon, c1959) described Quirk as:

A capable first class cattle man with years of experience. By sheer ability he rose from spare boy to stockman, drover, headstockman and manager; the last two positions on Comet Downs then owned by well known Mick Ryan. Then to Vestey on buffalo shooting-come-cattle property to Wave Hill their biggest management,
and so to Pastoral Manager. Almost illiterate he writes stiltedly and reads about as a primary school child. He knows his job inside out and up to every occasion, coming from a poor family of very Irish stock. He has proved every lesson he learned and pigeonholed it in his mind. This has made him inflexible in addition to his stubborn nature. He dislikes change and anything however good finds no favour with him unless he has proved it years ago.

He treats his staff well, is a good leader but has the Territory touch of “laissez faire”. One yahoo, who cursed in filthy language bullocks being inoculated and beat them unmercifully with rails in a moronic and inane fashion, forced me to call the Manager’s attention to his brutality. He did tell the yahoo to desist from beating their heads in an endeavour to send the cattle forward, as it might make them into lumpies. Later he agreed about this man’s complete lack of understanding and brutality, but said “What can you do? If I sack him I only get another”.

He cajoles rather than directs but can and does get things done. His cattle put off this year bears tribute to him. Still he is in the Indian summer of management and naturally he wants to get results without bother in the end of his term. Quirk will be a hard man to replace.

The same report praised Quirk’s wife:

His wife has a favourable press everywhere. She works hard, attends to detail. She is very capable working blacks, looks to their ailments and keeps everything under her care in fine order. Unfortunately, she is sick and must leave the Territory before next summer. She will be irreplaceable, since she works the blacks with care and looks to every detail; everything is done to her direction at the same time in the same way every day. No women will adopt her meticulous methods and the blacks will need to be retrained to suit the newcomer if she needs the best out of them.

Charlie Schultz (Schultz and Lewis, 1995: 168) remembered Quirk as ‘a bit of a bully’ and says he was known as ‘Stand-over Jack’ and ‘Bulldozer Quirk’. I’ve met men who agree with Charlie and others who strongly disagree. Bill Stewart, manager of Rosewood in the late 1950s-early 1960s, wrote in 1959 that, ‘Quirk has a very unenviable reputation in the Territory, although he could be quite competent’ (Stewart, 30-7-1959). A Native Affairs officer who had dealings with Quirk remarked that:

The Manager’s [Quirk’s] attitude to employees is antiquated. He is not unjust nor unkind but he has made no concession to modern thinking and ideals in regard to station management. His system of control is just as feudalistic as the methods prevailing forty years ago. He is not pleased with any interference that might suggest improvements (Ryan, 1958b: 6).

Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.) said that Quirk was a ‘standover man. He came at me when I asked for more money’.

Cec Watts (pers. comm.) says that, ‘Jack Quirk was the Pastoral Inspector for Vestey’s NT and WA properties during some of the war years and up until 1955. He also managed Wave Hill for a time and Mrs Quirk was remembered for setting up a very good library on the station’, with all the books properly numbered and catalogued. His position as Vestey’s Pastoral Inspector is confirmed by Janice Calley (2000) whose father, Bob McLachlan, took over from him in June 1955.
As well as Pastoral Inspector for Vesteys, Quirk had been manager of Manbulloo in the 1930s to 1940 (Cole, 1992: 213), and manager of Wave Hill in the early 1940s (Mann, nd: 14; Berndt and Berndt, 1987: 40-41). Morey (1977d: 19) says that when Quirk was manager of Manbulloo he also had Willeroo and Delamere under his control. There is a ‘Mount Quirk’ west of the Rosewood station airstrip which is probably named after him. Old Aborigines who knew him pronounced his name as ‘Mr Quack’. Quirk died in 1961 in Brisbane from a cerebral haemorrhage, aged 64 (NT News, 5-8-1961: 6).

George ‘Spear Grass’ Lewis. Manager for L.J. Hooker from the time he took over from Quirk in August 1960 (Anon, 1960), until at least 1968 (TCPJ, 22-3-1968). Lewis started on Brunette Downs in 1934 as head stockman (Taylor, 1984: 201) and eventually became manager there before leaving to take over VRD in 1960 (Makin 1992: 143).

George Lewis, 1961 (Murry-Rayner collection).
According to Makin (1992: 140-144) Lewis was manager until 1968 when he retired, and the Timber Creek police journal reports him finishing at VRD and going back to Queensland in March 1968. He is mentioned as manager in the July 1962 issue of Hoofs & Horns (p 6). Hoofs & Horns magazine (March 1965: 8) says he left the management of VRD to become the Pastoral Supervisor for L.J. Hooker in 1965. This may be correct, but Peter Harpham said (pers. comm.) that Lewis managed Moola Bulla station from 1969 to 1972. Lewis was known to local Aborigines as Jirinjirin (‘little bloke’), the name of a small burrowing insect commonly used a fishing bait. It’s found in damp ground and makes the constant sound, ‘Jirin, jirin, jirin, jirin’, (pers. comm., Dora Jilpngari).

He’s described in an unreferenced quote in Makin’s book (1992: 143) as ‘a wiry, whipcord man of immense energy and few words’. Makin himself (1992: 144) goes on to describe Lewis as being a highly respected cattleman and a legendary figure in his own lifetime, and mentions his great enthusiasm for horse racing at which he was highly successful. Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) also mentions Lewis’ enthusiasm for horse racing and said that for the VRD races he ‘used to pull in big logs, put ‘em around the track and light fires. He'd start to light the fires round about, oh, about five o’clock in the afternoon and by that time it had got a go on and all the place was warm’. After the 1961 race meeting there was ‘half a ton’ of booze left over so to get rid of it and forestall any drinking trouble later on Lewis told his white employees to drink it. Needless to say there was quite a party (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). Charlie Schultz said that when the Aborigines gained drinking rights Lewis said, ‘it’s goin’ to be black against white if we don’t look out’ and it was decided not to hold races at VRD in future. Eugene Kostin (2002) says Lewis had the nickname ‘Spear Grass’ but he doesn’t say why.

Peter Pedwell. Head stockman during 1960-68 (Makin, 1992: 183; Hoofs & Horns, July 1962: 6). He was also known as ‘The Speckled Hen’, because of his freckles. Pedwell was described as ‘Station overseer’ in 1962 and mentioned as having won the Bracelet in the 1962 VRD races (The Chronicle (Adelaide?), 16-8-1962).


Lieutenant Colonel Robert S. ‘Bob’ Millar. Manager or Assistant Manager from January 1st 1965 (TCPJ, 27-7-1965) to 1968. The Canberra Times (11-12-1964 p 10) reported on December 11th 1964 (p. 10) that:

Lieut.-Col. R. S. Millar, Commanding Officer Northern Territory Command, has been appointed manager of Victoria River Downs Station. He retires from the Army on December 31 after 26 years’ service, and will take up his new job on January 1.

Lieut.-Col. Millar, who was raised on his parents’ 3,000-acre property near Canberra, will take over a property of more than three million acres

Makin’s The Big Run (1970: 167) describes Millar as assistant manager and doesn’t place him in the list of managers he provides in later editions (eg 1992: 183). According to a Hoofs & Horns article (March 1965: 8), Lieutenant-Colonel R.S. Miller took over as manager after Lewis left early in 1965. Elspeth Huxley in Their Shining Eldorado (1967: 246) met manager Millar at VRD in 1965 or 1966. This claim is supported by Welfare Officer Mick Ivory (Ivory, 7-10-1965) who mentions Millar as manager in September
VICTORIA RIVER DOWNS

1968, and by Cec Watts (pers. comm.) who says that Millar was manager there during L.J. Hooker’s ownership, but is not supported by an entry in the Timber Creek police journal which has Lewis as manager until at least March 1968 (TCPJ, 22-3-1968). Makin has the manager after Millar, Ian Michael, beginning at VRD in 1968, so if Millar was actually manager he must have been there for three years. Possibly he and Lewis were there at the same time and Millar’s title as manager was incorrect, and he had a different role on the station.

Ian Michael. Manager during 1968-1974 (TCPJ, 22-3-68; WHPJ, 28-4-1968; Makin, 1992: 183). Unless otherwise stated the following information comes from Jeff Hill’s Horsebells and Hobblechains (2003: 220-26) and from a Tribute to a true bushman, by Laurie pointing and family members (2017).

Ian was born and educated in the Eudunda area (South Australia). Inspired by Idriess’s book on Sydney Kidman, Cattle King, in 1953 he bought a Landrover and swag and he began to work his way north. His first job was on Mount Willoughby station, west of Oodnadatta (South Australia). Next he worked for a time on Kulgera station just over the Northern Territory border and then drove a truck between Alice Springs and Darwin. Leaving this job, he spent twelve years as a stock inspector, working throughout the Territory with the exception of the Victoria River district.

He married Margaret Mundell in 1960 and spent four years as the manager of the Arid Centre Research Station in Alice Springs. In 1966 he began work on Victoria River Downs as assistant to manager ‘Spear Grass’ George Lewis (see entry for Lewis under VRD). After two years he became overall manager, a position he held until he resigned on June 21st 1974 (NT News, 21-6-74). He regarded his time on VRD as ‘the most challenging and exciting period’ of his life.

During his time on VRD the station Aborigines went on strike and left for Daguragu to join the Gurindji and others who had gone on strike in 1966. After they left all their homes – some mere humpies – were bulldozed. According to a report Michaels wrote in 1972, ‘The condition of the “humpies” was indescribable, absolute filth and stench and the only practical move was to bulldoze almost all the V.R.d. buildings into nearby break aways, just leaving a few “just in case”.’ Exactly what ‘just in case’ meant was not explained. Years later he (pers. comm.) was particularly unhappy with the version of this event (based on contemporary records and Aboriginal testimony) as told in Deborah Rose’s Hidden History, and said she ‘ought to get her facts right’. His version of what had happened is that after the Aborigines left he went to inspect their ‘village’ and decided that some of the structures were ‘in a putrid state’ and for the sake of hygiene should be bulldozed. He pointed out these particular structures to one of his employees and told him to destroy them but to leave the others. He then went on a flight around the station and as he returned he was shocked to see a big red scar where the camp had been – his employee had taken it upon himself to destroy the lot. Ian told me he thought he’d ‘do his job over it’ but fortunately for him this never happened. The fact remains that when the Aborigines returned to VRD soon afterwards they found all their homes and whatever belongings they’d left behind were gone.

Ian is likely to have been even more unhappy with Pearl Ogden’s book, Chasing Last Light which documents the beginning of helicopter mustering on VRD. Ian was the manager at the time and, like everyone, he was inexperienced with the technique and
apparently didn’t do things in an efficient manner. The helicopter pilot, Stuart Skoglund, was so disgusted with Ian that, according to Ogden (2000: 29), he later (rather unfairly) described him as a ‘dumb bastard’.

In mid-1974 Ian resigned and became general manager of Willeroo and Scott Creek, then owned by the Northern Agricultural Department Corps. However, the company was in financial difficulties and soon went into receivership, so Ian and his family left for Queensland. Settling in Bundaberg, he became a real estate agent and in 1982 he established his own real estate business. Ian was a founding member of the Camooweal Drover’s Camp Festival and regularly attended this annual event. He died at Bundaberg in January 2017.

**Gilbert McAntee.** Manager from 1974 to 1984. Most of the following information comes from *Pastoral Properties of Australia* (Taylor, 1984: 130). Gil was born at Wondai (Queensland) in 1938, the son of dairy farmers. He left school at fourteen to work on the family farm which was then in the grip of severe drought. Between sixteen and eighteen he worked as a horse breaker on another farm, and then he moved to Westgrove station north of Injune, in Central Queensland. In about 1963 he worked for a year with an earth-moving company before becoming a ringer on Boam Downs. At 28 he became manager of a mixed cattle and sheep farm. Soon afterwards he was able to buy the old family farm and also an adjoining 250 acre block. In 1971 Gil became assistant manager of VRD and in 1974 he became manager, staying in the position for twelve years. When the property was taken over by Peter Sherwin in August 1984, McAntee stayed on for about a year before leaving for his Queensland property. While they were at VRD Gil’s wife Gwen ran the VRD store and recorded weather details. They are now retired and living in Toowoomba.

**Bevan Gitcham.** Assistant Manager (overseer) from July 1974 to March 1979 (pers. comm., Evonne Gitcham; information from Bevan Gitcham, recorded on my behalf by Darryl Hill). For additional information see entry under Legune.

**Gary Schubert.** Manager during 1985-88 (pers. obs.). He was formerly the manager of Pigeon Hole. During Schubert’s time as manager a number of young Aboriginal men were employed in a station stock camp. According to one of these men, the cook who prepared the meals for the stockmen was adding new ingredients to left-over stew, but the old stew went off and he added curry in an unsuccessful attempt to disguise the taste. The men realised the curry was off and complained to Schubert. Unfortunately, their Aboriginal accent led to a misunderstanding. When they said ‘f----n curry no good’, Schubert thought they were abusing him, saying ‘f----n Gary no good’, so he allegedly punched the complainant (pers. comm., Ricky Snowy). As a result, all the men quit.

**Dennis Twine.** Manager during 1988-89 (pers. obs.; Makin, 1992: 183), and previously manager of Mount Sanford from 1979 to 1987 (pers. obs.). Twine first came to the Territory from Queensland to work as a mechanic on Rosewood in 1970, although he had no formal mechanic’s ticket (Twine, 12-2-1970).

While he was manager of VRD he was involved in a dramatic incident when representatives of the Northern Land Council attempted to drive to Pigeon Hole outstation to consult with Aborigines who had lodged a land claim over a section of the Coolibah-Wave Hill stock route (Rose, 1991: 255-56). The then owner of VRD, Peter Sherwin,
issued orders that access for Northern Land Council staff was to be denied under the excuse that the roads to Pigeon Hole were private station roads. During the confrontation that followed over two consecutive days in April 1989, gates were locked and motor vehicles placed across the road to prevent Northern Land Council employees and lawyers from driving in to Pigeon Hole, and a party that began to walk beyond a locked gate was harassed by a hovering helicopter which blew up dust all around them. Before this party reached Pigeon Hole they were served with a court order preventing them from proceeding any further.

The gates on the roads into Pigeon Hole remained locked and access could only be made by contacting the manager of either VRD head station or Pigeon Hole. Aboriginal people living at Pigeon Hole had to ask the manager for the gates to be unlocked if they wanted to leave or return. After returning from one trip they found the gates locked and had to drive along the fenceline to find another way in. Consequently they decided to give up leaving Pigeon Hole. When the issue went to court and the judge heard from one of the Aboriginal claimants about the situation regarding access to and from Pigeon Hole he remarked:

The story this woman tells is a story of their being imprisoned there; the men are only allowed out to work, they can’t get visitors and they can’t visit other people. I find that extraordinary that people could behave so savagely in 1989 against fellow human beings. If it’s true – it’s an extraordinary thing (Judge Nader, cited in Rose, 1991: 258)

Before the case could be resolved VRD changed hands and the new owner (Robert Holmes a’ Court) allowed access (Rose, 1991: 258).
Percy Crumlin. Manager from 1989 to late 1990 (pers obs; Makin, 1992: 183). Described by some who knew him as ‘a no nonsense bushie’ and ‘a bloke who’s been around more a few dry gullies’ (Makin, 1992: 169). Due to manpower shortages during the Second World War, at age 14 Crumlin had his own droving plant. He became head stockman on Alroy and then went to Nappamerrie. In the 1950s he married Laura and they had four sons. In the early 1960s he returned to Alroy as manager. About 1976 he took control of Barkly Downs and then Lake Nash for King Ranch.

According to Makin (1992: 169, 172), during his year on VRD he ‘tested 128,000 head of cattle’ (for tuberculosis and brucellosis) and ‘turned off 28,000 head’. He also improved the quality of the VRD herd by bringing in 250 Brahman bulls. From VRD he was transferred to Glenprairie station north of Rockhampton. In later years he became a pastoral consultant, including for Heytsbury Pastoral Company. Eventually he retired to Emerald, Queensland, where he died on December 21st 2015. By his own request his remains were buried at Mt Isa (Makin, 1992: 183; Condon, 2012).

Jim Coulthard. Manager from late 1990 to 1994 or 1995 (pers obs; Makin, 1992: 183). Before coming to VRD he was ‘owner-operator’ of Bow River station. Later he managed Meda station then and Go Go station for six years. In the 1960s he began using helicopters to muster cattle on Bow River, the first in the Kimberley to do so (Francis, 22-3-2006).

From VRD Jim and his wife, Maureen, spent time with the Heytsbury Company in Perth. They returned to VRD in about 1998 or 1999 where Jim was the company’s General Manager of its Northern Territory and Kimberley properties (pers. comm., Maureen Coulthard).

In 2006 Jim was awarded the North Australia Beef Research Council’s ‘producer medal’ (http://www.abc.net.au/site-archive/rural/qld/content/2006/s1598290.htm, accessed 2007).

Paul Brosnan. Overseer at Centre Camp from 1991 to 1994 (Makin, 1992: 183; pers. comm., Maggie Lily, 1994). Before Centre Camp he was manager at Pigeon Hole.

Bruce ‘Bacon Head’ Wreford. Manager for a short period before Clifford took over. A story from his time on VRD concerns a collection of old leather goods from the days of horseback mustering and bronco work – pack saddles and bags, bronco collars, etc. This gear had been found at the various outstations and gathered in to the head station by the owner of VRD, Janet Holmes à Court. One day Wreford allegedly ordered one of his men to take all this equipment down to the station dump and burn it. The employee took it all to the dump but didn’t burn it. His intention was to come back later and remove it a safe place but when he came back there were fresh vehicle tracks on the road in to the dump and all the gear had been burnt. Apparently when Mrs Holmes à Court learnt of this she was, to say the least, not too happy. Wreford left VRD not long afterwards and went to Killarney as manager. He allegedly was sacked there too, this time for killing trees around the homestead and for other ‘eccentricities’ (pers. comm., Norm Forster).

Before managing VRD he managed Gregory Downs for the Australian Agricultural Company (pers. comm., Norm Forster) and later managed Brighton Downs and Austral Downs for the same company. In total he spent about two decades with the AA Co. (Fiona
Mark Clifford. Manager, 1996. Before becoming manager of VRD he was manager of Pigeon Hole. In 2005 he went to manage Moolooloo and then Birrindudu (pers comm., Mark Clifford; pers. comm., Barbara Jackson, Yarralin Town Clerk in 1996; NT News, 29-1-1998). His wife is named Julie.


John Brosnan. Manager in 1998-2000 (pers. comm., Darryl Hill). A brother to Paul, he had previously been at Pigeon Hole and from VRD he in 2005 he went to Eva Downs, another Heytsbury property (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

Jim Kerr. Manager from about May 2005 until August 2006. He was ‘made redundant’ there after he disagreed with Paul Holmes a` Court about the treatment of staff. He was later quietly told that the two events were directly related. He had previously been manager of Willeroo.

Russell ‘Rusty’ and Julie Richter. Managers from August 2006 until at least 2017 and ongoing. At the same time Mark Clifford, who’d been manager of VRD in 1996, took over from Jim Coulthart who’d resigned his post as General Manager of Heytsbury’s pastoral properties in the Territory and East Kimberley.


Rusty was first employed as a station hand on Flora Valley Station and Julie on VRD Station in the same capacity. Both have progressed through numerous positions within Heytesbury Cattle Co. and since 2010 Rusty has held the position of General Manager and more recently as Operations Manager while their family has been based at VRD.
WALLAMUNGA

The 988 square mile Wallamunga block appears to have been part of the Vestey empire until it was resumed. Peter Sherwin then obtained it in a ballot in 1958 (Hoofs & Horns, December 1958: 61). In turn Sherwin lost Wallamunga to Robert Homes a’ Court when Holmes a’ Court took over Sherwin’s company in 1989 (pers. comm., Dave Napier). As of 2017 it remains in the hands of Holmes a’ Court’s Heytsbury Holdings.

In the 1950s Jacky Byrne, who’d worked on Birrindudu for some years, told Mick Bower that during the 1952 drought 3000 cattle died on Wallamunga.
Waterloo was originally taken up by Tom Deacon and his wife, but the date when this happened has not been pinpointed. Charlie Flinders (2016: 88) said that Waterloo was taken up in the mid-1890s and the Wyndham police noted that on, ‘Oct. 16th 1895 T Deacon arrived in town at 2 pm from Urandangie, Qld., with a dray & six mares. Left all his horses & his wife at Rosewood Stn’ (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1895-1897, entry on 16-10-1895). However, whether Deacon took up Waterloo in 1895 or whether he worked in the region before taking up the land in the late 1890s or in 1900 needs to be determined.

The date for the stocking of the run is clear. In a report by Mounted Constable Edmund O’Keefe in 1901 he states (O’Keefe, 30-11-1901: 28) that:

Mr Thomas Deacon, who took up some country south-east of Rosewood Downs, has just put some stock on the new station, which is called Waterloo, and this appears to be good country; the horses are doing well on it, and just now there is abundance of feed and water.

Also, the Timber Creek police journal mentions ‘Waterloo or Deacon’s place’ for the first time on October 12th 1900.

The name Waterloo is said to be a reference to the ‘unrestrained slaughter’ of local Aborigines by police after the spearing of ‘Big Johnny’ Durack near Mount Duncan in 1886 (Pollard, 1970: 30; see also Moore, nd.). For biographical information on Big Johnny, see entry under Rosewood. Michael Terry also heard about a fight between a group of white men and 100 Aborigines ‘by Waterloo Hill’ after the spearing of ‘J Larry’ Durack (Terry, 1928, entry for October 30th). Doug Moore also recounts that, ‘Waterloo Station was named on account of the battle with natives there years ago. Ammunition ran
out so there was wholesale slaughter of natives. This told to me by my boy Jerry who escaped – he hid in an ant-bed then sneaked away in the dark’ (Moore, nd.: 6).

There was another slaughter of Aborigines on or near Waterloo after the spearing of Constable Collins in 1893. When Collins and Constable Lucanus were on patrol from Wyndham they visited P.B. Durack’s station on the Behn River. Durack showed them where the blacks had killed fourteen bullocks and used the tails as fly whisks. The constables got onto the trail of ‘half a hundred bucks, and no gins’. As they followed the tracks they discovered more dead cattle and two dead horses. They came upon the camp in the morning and Collins was speared in the stomach. One account says he died within half an hour and was buried on the spot (Lucanus, *Daily News* [Perth], 5-9-1929: 6), but another says he died the following day (*Northern Territory Times*, 20-10-1893). Twenty-three Aboriginal men are said to have been shot in the minutes after Collins was speared (*Northern Territory Times*, 10-11-1893). Not satisfied with the killing of 23, a large party of police and bushmen went out again to arrest or disperse other Aborigines in the region. Over the next two months they travelled 678 miles and shot another 30 men (SROWA CSO, Acc 527, file 90/1894).

In 1993 local Aborigines showed me two places close together on Collins Creek where they had been told this massacre occurred, but no trace of Collins’ grave was found at either place. If 23 men were shot there would have been more than 23 shots fired and therefore a large number of empty brass rifle and pistol cartridge cases at the site. I scanned the ground with a metal detector for some distance out from the creek at both places but could not find any old cartridge cases to pinpoint the site.

Deacon lived at Waterloo with his wife until his death at Button’s Gap on Ivanhoe station in 1905. According to Mary Durack his death occurred on May 25th 1905 (Durack 1983: 134; Durack, nd.), but according to the Timber Creek police it occurred on June 28th 1905 (Artaud, 14-6-1906).

At the end of 1908 it was reported that, ‘The Waterloo homestead is now about five miles from the old site. A house and outbuildings, a four-mile paddock, and a well have been erected – the well sunk at the new site’ (Dempsey, 31-12-1908: 19). In 1910 it was reported that Whittaker had sold ‘Calvert Downs’ to Waterloo (White, 1910: 24). Mrs Deacon was Whittaker’s sister. She stayed at Waterloo after Tom Deacon’s death and eventually married Amos Skuthorp. In about 1916 the Skuthorps sold Waterloo to Vesteys and presumably left the district.

In 1934 it was reported that Waterloo and Limbunya (an outstation) comprised 3,908 square miles. There was only one bore on the place, at Limbunya. According to the books the station was carrying 27,558 head of cattle. The Waterloo portion of the run was:

in the same condition today as when the first settlers entered the country in the eighties as far as fresh water is concerned and very little different in any other direction when it is considered that the estimated total value of the structural improvements is only £2,059 (NTPLIC 1934, Waterloo).
This report goes on to say that:

It is obvious that this Company has done practically nothing to improve the carrying capacity of this run since entering into occupation years ago ... we were informed that during a recent drought heavy losses would have been suffered had it not been for the generous action of a neighbour who permitted the whole of the stock from the Waterloo end of the run to be agisted on part of his leased land, and rather a casual and humorous aspect of this act of generosity is that in discussing the matter with the lessee concerned he seemed to have very little knowledge of where the cattle were on his run or the number etc., showing conclusively that there is plenty of room in the country for more stock (NTPLIC, 1934. Waterloo and Limbunya, p. 2).

In 1961 a new homestead was built some miles from the old (Kettle, 1967: 81).

**Thomas Deacon.** Owner-manager from at least October 12th 1900 until he died at Ivanhoe Station in 1905. According to an (undated) entry in MP Durack’s 1904-1905 diary Deacon was born in Queensland in 1855, went to western Queensland in 1870, was in Urundangie in 1886, and came to Western Australia in 1895.

Tom arrived in Wyndham from Urundangie on October 16th 1895. He’d come over with his wife but had left her at Rosewood while he went in to Wyndham (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1895-1897, entry for 16-10-1895). In December 1896 he came in to Wyndham with Hasty Burns and a mob of 800 Ord River cattle for CD&D (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1895-1897, entry for 3-12-1896). Before taking up Waterloo he was owner of a block he named Picanniny station, possibly near the ‘Bend of the Ord’ (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1897-1899, entries for 4-9-1899 and 19-11-1899). Later he and his wife adopted a baby girl (named Sophie?; Durack, 1983: 136).

**Mrs Deacon, (née Whittaker).** Manager (as far as I can determine) from the time her husband Tom died in 1905 until she married Amos Skuthorp (Durack, 1983: 390).

**Amos Skuthorp.** Owner-manager from the time he married the former Mrs Deacon until they sold out in 1916 (Durack, 1983: 390). See entry for Amos under Limbunya.

**Thomas Woodland.** Manager. Woodland’s infant daughter, Joan Ella, died at Waterloo in October 1915 aged 10 months (BHPLB, 21-10-1915).

**Sir Alexander Cockburn-Campbell.** Manager from 1918 until at least 1926, according to his son, Thomas Cockburn-Campbell (1985). However, it seems likely that he was manager of Manbulloo in 1921-22. For additional biographical details see entry under Argyle.

**Jimmy ‘The Red Bull’ Klein.** Head stockman under Cockburn-Campbell (senior), in the early or mid 1920s. Cockburn-Campbell (junior) described Klein as being:

around the mid twenties at that time [early 1920s] and was known throughout most of his life as the Red Bull. This nickname was not derived from his aggressive manner but from his sexual abilities. No one was safe with the Red Bull. He was a
very cheerful person, short, stocky, lively and quick on his feet. He wasn’t a champion rider but he held his own when working stock. In the yards he was slippery and could leap from ground level to the toprails and keep out of trouble. ... He worked the Natives in a merry and free manner, yet firm. Jimmy’s red hair had begun to recede but this didn’t seem to make a great deal of difference to him. He was a likeable person and many people enjoyed his presence (Cockburn-Campbell, 1985: 65).

Klein later was manager of Texas station for many years. Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) said that Klein was ‘one of the best cattle men that came to Australia. He came from ah, Queensland there near ah, a place called Alpha’. Charlie also remarked that Klein had an overactive sex drive.


H.C. Giles. Manager in October 1922 (Adelaide Register, 25-10-1927)

Joe Case. Manager in 1932 (Morey, 1978e: 16), 1934 and 1936; TCPJ, 15-8-1934, 3-11-1936). According to Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) Chase was an American sent out to inspect properties. He stopped here and eventually died in Darwin. Morey also states that he was an American, but Hoofs & Horns magazine (November 1957: 57) has an obituary notice which says that Joe was a Canadian who came to Australia in 1911 and who’d worked on Willeroo as well as Waterloo.

Charlie said that Joe introduced broncoing from the USA and Cec Watts (pers. comm.) heard that Joe introduced broncoing to the Kimberleys, but they are undoubtedly wrong as the technique was in use there earlier than his arrival in 1911. Morey describes his use of the lasso and says that along with three other American cowboys he was brought out to Brunette Downs to teach the stockmen American roping techniques, but the technique never caught on.

Mick Griffiths. Head stockman some time before 1936. Mick was reared in Derby. His career involved three trips into the desert from the northern end, at least one of which was as a truck driver for one of the expeditions in search of Lasseter’s Lost Reef. He also was a horse breaker on Inverway and had rope spinning act in a Wild West show in Western Australia. He spent two years in Tennant Creek and made a ‘remarkable recovery’ from tetanus and pneumonia after Clyde Fenton took him to Alice Springs (Adelaide Advertiser, 3-8-1936).

Jack F. Colbert. Bookkeeper in 1932 and 1935 (Morey, 1978e: 17; WHPJ, 6-12-1935). According to Morey, and to Hilgendorf (1994: 46), Jack claimed to be the father of Claudette Colbert, an early Hollywood movie star. Morey said that Jack had a photo of Claudette and that the family likeness was obvious. When Eddie Connellan visited Gordon Downs in September 1938 he met:
Old Jack Colbert, with his precise pointed beard and flowing white moustache, Van Dyke style, slender well manicured fingers and high-domed ‘French Professors’ forehead. I had not believed the claim that he is Claudette Colbert’s father, until I saw him, but the likeness is most remarkable, so perhaps it is true (Connellan, 1992: 141).

However, according to Hesperian Press founder and editor, Peter Bridge (1997: 139), Claudette Colbert was a stage name so Jack Colbert is unlikely to have been her father.

Myra Hilgendorf (1994: 46), who visited in 1939, described him as:

about 73, spry, witty, with sharp brown eyes and a goatee beard. He goes for a walk with an elegant black cat waving its wild tail, quite a surreal site in this bare country. He is well-educated, has travelled the world and tells his stories with never a flicker of a smile. But alcohol was his problem. It is not allowed on Vesteys Stations, except at Christmas. The men say he drinks whiskey by the bottle, but never shows it.

Colbert was on Ord River in 1941 (WHPJ, 8-8-1941) and his headstone at the old Ord River cemetery details that he died on October 11th 1943, aged 71.

F. Harvey. Storekeeper in October 1936 (TCPJ, 3-11-1936).

A.J. Alios. Manager in 1938 (TCPJ, 8-12-1938).

Richard (Dick) H. ‘Rodeo’ Hayes. Manager from 1936 (Hayes, 2008: 219) until at least May 1942 (WHPJ, 7-5-1942). By June 4th 1942 the Timber Creek Police Journal referred to Dick Hayes as a ‘buyer for Vestey’s’. In 1940 Hayes reported to the Timber Creek police that he was having trouble with the ‘Sandstone bush blacks’ and ‘that there were a great number of sick & Diseased blacks in the Sandstone’. He requested that the police patrol there ‘& endeavour to take them away’ (TCPJ, 28-7-1940). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

Bradley. Manager in February 1943 (TCPJ, 12-2-1943).

Milton Willick Manager in July 1942 (TCPJ, 14-7-1942. For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

Kershley. On Waterloo in 1943 (TCPJ, 20-7-1943, 14-10-1943).

Colin Austin. Head stockman in September 1944 (TCPJ, 5-9-1944).

Terry Carew. Head stockman in the 1940s (Northern Territory Library photo collection, PH 106/0104).

Jim ‘The Bloomin’ Coot’ Hagen. Manager from July 1940, according to the Timber Police journal (28-7-1940), although this conflicts with the dates for Hayes. He was definitely manager from June 1943 to March 1949 (TCPJ, 4-6-1943 and 7-10-1945; Sweeney, 1947: 7). When Beth Beckett (1998: 61) and her husband Ken passed through in 1947 Jim’s wife Edie and their two sons were living there. From Waterloo he went to manage Gordon Downs. He later left Vestey’s employ and went contract dam-sinking.
Beckett says that he never swore but would say ‘the bloomin’ coot of a thing’ and that this led to his nickname.

**J. King.** Manager (?) in 1944 (TCPJ, 20-4-1944).

**‘Snowy’ J. Hogg.** Cook. He suicided there on April 10th 1944 (TCPJ, 12-4-1944). His (now unmarked) grave is said to be on the creek near the old Waterloo graveyard (Alan Hagen, pers. comm.).

**Syd Bonnell.** Manager post-war (pers. comm., Cec Watts; pers. comm., Len Hill). An anonymous correspondent to the Stockman’s Hall of Fame newspaper (March 2001) claimed that this was Bonnell’s first job in the north so he may have been on Waterloo as a stockman or Jackaroo before the war and manager some time post-war. For additional biographical details see entry under Limbunya.

**Don Hubbard.** Bookkeeper in October 1947 (Sweeney, 1947: 7).

**Ted Griffin.** Bookkeeper in June 1944 (TCPJ, 10-6-1944). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) confirms that he was bookkeeper at Waterloo and said that he was bookkeeper at Flora Valley during 1946-1948. When he left the Territory he returned to Melbourne where Cec Watts saw him at the Vesteys Meatworks in Footscray in 1950.

**Jim A. Turner.** Manager from at least September 4th 1949 and in October 1949 (Evans, 23-12-1949: 9; Gordon, 1992: 138). Turner had a wife and child with him on Waterloo.

**Don Robertson.** Manager in August 1950 and probably through to 1952. Don and his wife had ‘recently’ (pre-August 1950) been managing Banka Banka station (*Hoofs & Horns*, May 1951: 48; Gordon, 1992: 161). By May 1951 he was reported as about to leave Waterloo to take over management of Newcastle Waters (*Hoofs & Horns*, May 1951: 48; *NT News*, 2-8-1962. For additional biographical details see entry under Newcastle Waters.

**George Bruce.** Mechanic in May 1949 (Gordon, 1992: 138).


**Bob ‘Barbed Wire Bob’ McLachlan.** Manager from January 1952 to June 1955 (Calley, 2000; Evans, 24-11-1952; WHPJ, 4-5-1953, 31-3-1954). His daughter Janice Calley (2000) says he took over from Clarrie Wilkinson who was relieving there. Native Affairs Officer Ted Evans reported in 1952 that:

> All the natives on Waterloo appear to be well contented and happy and it is obvious that Mr. McLachlan has a sympathetic knowledge of natives and their habits. Whilst in the employ of the Department of Native Affairs in Queensland he established and set on their feet two cattle properties taken over by the Queensland Government for the training of aboriginal people. Among his charges there were many so called incorrigibles who were sent to him for employment. He obviously gets on well with his native employees (Evans, 24-11-1952).
Bob’s daughter Janice provided the following details about her father, in the Stockman’s Hall of Fame paper (Calley, 2000). Bob was born at Jerilderie, New South Wales, in 1906, the fourth of eleven children born to Duncan McLachlan and Mary Jane (née Coleman). The family moved to Illfracombe in Queensland in 1910 where Duncan became the Shire ‘ranger’, among other things inspecting the drover’s herds as they passed through the district. At thirteen years of age Bob began work as the cook’s helper with a sheep drover. Later he spent time working on various stations including Wellshot, Tara, The Rand, Portland Downs, Rodney Downs and Brutus Creek. His jobs ranged from jackaroo, stockman, dam sinker, general station hand and drover. When the depression came he ‘humped his bluey’ along with thousands of other job seekers.

Bob married Sadie Moorfield in 1931 and over the next twenty years he worked in a variety of jobs in central and western Queensland, including on the railways, in a meatworks, as a horse breaker, station manager, farmer, and as overseer of Woorabinda Native Settlement. He also helped set up a new Aboriginal settlement called Foleyvale, west of Rockhampton. A back injury in 1948 led him to move to Brisbane where he worked for a period at the CSIRO Animal Health Station at Yeerongpilly.

In January 1952 he joined the Vestey organisation and took over management of Waterloo. After three and a half years there he shifted to Darwin to become a Pastoral Inspector for Vestey’s, taking over from Jack Quirk. He held this position for a year, the job being taken over by Eric Durack. Then he managed Manbulloo for three years which still included managing Willeroo and Delamere from Manbulloo. Then he was at Flora Valley for seven years (1959-66). He retired in 1967 and after travelling around Australia for nearly ten years, he and Sadie retired to Perth where he died in 1983. His wife Sadie, who was born in 1909, died in 1988. Together they had three children – Donald, Robert and Janice.

Waterloo verandah, 1953-54. L-R: Dave McConnel (vet), Bob McLachlan (manager) and Mike Hand (bookkeeper) (Calley collection).
Janice McLachlan setting the table for Christmas dinner at Waterloo homestead, 1952. Note the punkah, made from cowhide. At each chair are party hats made from newspaper (Calley collection).

**Don McLachlan.** Head stockman from 1952 to 1956 (Calley, 2000; Evans, 24-11-1952). He was Bob McLachlan’s son. Don was born in Longreach in 1932 and in 1945 as a teenager in Brisbane he took up boxing under the direction of Jim Finn. His family moved to Brisbane in 1948 and Don became a professional boxer at the Brisbane Stadium. Illness forced him to give boxing away so he moved to Waterloo where he became head stockman, but he retained his interest in boxing and had many a fight in the Territory (McLachlan, 1993: 10). One of his fights was with George Bates. According to Cec Watts, Don ‘busted up’ Bates for taking Waterloo cattle. This would have been when Bates was head stockman at the neighbouring Mistake Creek, from late 1952 to about mid-1953.

Don also spent some time horse breaking on Ord River station. He left the Territory in 1956 (Calley, 2000) or 1958 (McLachlan, 1993: 10) and went back to Queensland. He remained in Queensland for the rest of his life where he gained a good reputation as a cattleman and a fighter. He married and raised a family. Injuries from the fall of a horse
forced him to retire on a pension to Charters Towers where he died in 1988 (McLachlan, 1993: 10).

**Steve Egan.** Cook in the 1950s (McLachlan, 1993: 10).

**Jack Gallagher.** Stockman in 1952 (Evans, 24-11-1952). He had recently come from Limbunya station (Evans, 21-11-1952).

**Les W. Russell.** Relieving manager from December 1954 to February 1955 (Calley, 2000). For additional details see entry under Turner.

**Doug Houghton.** Head stockman c1956-58 according to Len Hill (pers. comm.) who also says that Houghton was a ‘Well respected Middle Aged Head Stockman’.

**Ron Irlam.** Manager after McLachlan, beginning in June or July 1955 (Calley, 2000).

**Bernie Jansen.** Manager in 1961 (TCPJ, 26-5-1961) and 1963 (WHPJ, 29-10-1963). He had previously been head stockman on Gordon Downs (pers. comm., Stan Jones) and manager of Mistake Creek, and later was manager of Nutwood Downs and the east Kimberley station, Dunham River (Dayes, 2008: 20-21).

**Robert Harold ‘Bob’ Napier.** Manager from 1965 (Melbourne Herald, 23-2-1965) through to at least 1970 (TCPJ, 18-6-1970). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) reckons Napier was manager there from 1965 to about 1973 and Des Stenhouse (pers. comm.) says Bob was there for seven years, which would make his term from 1965 to 1972. He had previously managed Mistake Creek (Dayes, 2008: 20).

In 1965 Bob upset Rosewood station by not giving notice of his intention to travel Waterloo stock through Rosewood. Pat Shaw, General Manager for Rosewood owner LJ Hooker, wrote to Roy Bell of Vesteys, owners of Waterloo:

> Some years ago a mutual agreement was made between the two stations for your cattle to truck in our yards at a charge of 10 cents per head. This part we still have no objection to but we do object strongly to the attitude adopted by your Manager, Bob Napier in so much as he never bothers to give notice of his intention to travel the stock through our property and lacks the courtesy of even asking if he can use our Faradays yard for the first night and the trucking yard the second night. The first our Manager knows about any movement is if they happen to hear telegrams to and from the carriers or your Darwin office, or run across them on the run, as I did the other day. If you desire to carry on with this arrangement would you please instruct your Waterloo Manager to give the proper notice of intention to travel and request permission to use the yards at least two days prior to the entry to the property. After all, this is only normal courteous practice (Shaw, 15-7-1968).

**Frank Willmington.** Manager in 1969, for four years (pers. comm.). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) reckons Willmington may have been acting manager in 1969 because Bob Napier was full-time manager then. For additional biographical details see entry under Lissadell.
Bill Perry. Manager early in 1977, for about six to eight months (pers. comm., Des Stenhouse).

Des Stenhouse. Manager from August 1977 to October 1981 (pers. comm., Des Stenhouse). For additional biographical details see entry under Fitzroy.


John Quintana. Owner-manager in 1989-2004. Most of the following information comes from articles by Heather Brown in the *Weekend Australian* of September 16th-17th, 2000, and by John Condon in the website *Beef Central*, 27th of March 2013. Note: there is a mismatch in some of the information provided in these sources.

Quintana was born in Idaho in 1948 (or 1950?), the middle child in a family of five children. As a boy he developed a love of horses and hung around with old cowboys, and at age eight began to ride steers in local rodeos. By thirteen he had progressed to bull riding. He left home at 14 and according to Brown began work moving store cattle from Mexico to US feedlots. Condon says he began this work much later. He continued bull riding as well, as much as a means to make money as for the fun of it. At age twenty-one (or twenty-five?) he became the world champion bull rider.

Quintana married for the first time at age eighteen. At the time he won his world title he and his wife, Donna Lynne, had a son and a daughter and were living in Oregon, training horses and running bull-riding schools. He also had begun to trade cattle from Mexico, and appeared in commercials for beer and jeans. In about 1978 he spent a couple months in Australia running a few bull-riding schools, and he returned in 1987 and bought Waterloo.

For nine years Quintana ran Waterloo and it turned out to be ‘the hottest place in the world’ and nothing like he imagined it would be. Experienced stockmen were hard to find and he had to adapt to mustering with helicopters. He bought the station with an estimated 9000 head, but in the first two years he took off 11,000 head and still had 7000.

Frustrated with the poor market situation in Australia, in 1991 Quintana established the Wallco Pastoral Company and in 1992 began to export live cattle to the Philippines and later to Vietnam and other countries. From an initial 400 head, by 1997 he was exporting 100,000 cattle worth fifty million dollars and won the Northern Territory Exporter of the Year award. To assist in this trade he bought Carbeen Park near Katherine as a holding and farming area. The 1997 ‘Asia crash’ almost broke the company, but eventually Quintana was able to recover. In 1999 Wallco won the Northern Territory Export Award for Agribusiness for the second time. His markets then included Vietnam, Indonesia and the Middle East.

In 2001 he and several Asian partners bought Killarney station from Brian Oxenford for $21 million. A few years later Quintana sold his shares in Killarney and Waterloo, and also sold Carbeen Park. He then left the Territory and shifted to Toowoomba. There he bought a feedlot near Warwick and several large irrigated properties further west. He was
a silent partner in a cowboy entertainment centre at the Great Western Hotel in Rockhampton. In March 2014 he died in a plane crash near Roma.

As well as a great cattleman and entrepreneur, Quintana had a reputation for being ‘difficult’. I visited Waterloo in 1989 with the intention of locating and recording historic sites for the National Trust. When I arrived Quintana was absent and I received permission from his then wife, Mary, to document the remains of the old Waterloo homestead, several kilometres from the current homestead site. Later I met Quintana and he refused me permission to document another site. He was the only station manager in the Victoria River country who ever refused permission for this type of work, all others being welcoming and interested. A few months later a Northern Territory Conservation Commission officer said that after my visit Quintana had taken the station bulldozer out to the site I had documented and razed the remains. I’ve since revisited the site (2010) and confirmed the destruction. The same officer alleged that others had been refused permission to enter Waterloo, including an old retired ringer who’d worked there years before and who wanted to revisit his old haunts. Quintana is also alleged to have used a gun to threaten Aborigines living on an excision on the west side of Waterloo and told them to leave because he suspected them of killing Waterloo cattle.

Mick Lawler. Manager in 1996. His wife’s name is Wendy (pers. comm., Darryl Hill).

The original leases for Wave Hill were applied for on December 2nd 1879 and received by the Lands Department on December 24th 1879 (Cahill, 8-2-1906). These leases were taken up by Nathaniel Armstrong ‘Bluey’ Buchanan in 1879 but according to Tom Cahill, a close associate of Buchanan, Wave Hill was not stocked until December 1883 (Country Life and Stock and Station Journal, 9-4-1926: 7). Wave Hill is sometimes said to have been the first station stocked in the Victoria River district, but there’s some doubt about this and it appears that VRD may have been stocked earlier, in September (Parsons, 11-11-1884: 2).

The first cattle were taken onto Wave Hill by Sam Croker (Country Life and Stock and Station Journal, 9-4-1926: 7). Tommy Cahill delivered the second lot:

In 1883 I went from Dagonally Station, on the Flinders, out to Wave Hill, on the Victoria … We delivered the cattle early in 1884, and towards the end of that year Messrs Hugh and Walter Gordon and myself took 3000 odd cattle from the Dougall River, Cloncurry, to Wave Hill, and delivered them early in 1886 (SMH, 19-2-1921).

Cahill also mentioned that:

When we first went out west … we only had Gregory’s journal to guide us … Gregory described the country in the Northern Territory to Mr. Nat. Buchanan, who took up a large area on the strength of Gregory’s description … It may be interesting to mention that in taking up this country a mountain was picked out on the map, and a line drawn for a distance of 30 miles to the southward; another line was carried 30 miles to the eastward; still another 30 miles to the northward, and a further 30 miles
to the westward, reaching the starting point. All the land within this square was taken up.

Giles (nd.: 175) reported that Sam Croker passed Springvale on March 29th, 1883, with 400 heifers for Wave Hill, but he adds that Croker was subsequently held up for months through want of water on the route. Giles later mentions that on June 29th 1883 Croker’s cart arrived from his camp on Scotts Creek (Giles, nd.: 186) which implies that the Wave Hill cattle were being tailed there waiting for the wet season to begin so they could be taken on to Wave Hill.

In March 1885 it was reported that there were 1,500 cattle on the run and another 2000 en route (Parsons, 31-3-1885: 3). By December it was reported that there were between 4000 and 5000 head on Wave Hill and that from a mob of 3000 hundreds had died from Red Water after passing ‘westwards’ from Springvale (Parsons, 31-12-1885: 2).

Tom Cahill (SMH, 19-2-1921) recalled that when the goldrush to Halls Creek in 1886 provided a market for beef:

in 1887 Mr. Gordon and I took 200 head of fat cattle up to the goldfields. We made a shed of boughs, in which Sam Croaker [sic] slaughtered the cattle. We also cut down a gum tree, from which we made a butcher’s block. We then sold the meat in a rough-and-ready fashion to the miners.

Cahill also remarked that, ‘When we first went up there we used to get our rations sent from Port Darwin by boat to Gregory’s landing on the Victoria River. From there we had to take them for about 300 miles on packhorses, but afterwards we opened up a road and had a team.’

In Cahill’s time (1903) and Egan’s time (1923-25) the Wave Hill brand was 62U; it was also used on Delamere (Northern Territory Times, 29-5-1903; pers. comm., Cec Watts). In 1887 stores were being carried from Wyndham to Wave Hill by ‘Mr Tucker’ (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1886-1888, entry on 2-11-1887).

Early in the 1890s at least two mobs were taken 1,400 miles from Wave Hill to the Murchison goldfields (Flinders, 2016: 74; Buchanan, 1997: 136-7). In 1896 ‘Wave Hill finished branding for the year with a tally of 6,100’ (Northern Territory Times, 28-2-1896).

Nat Buchanan had formed a partnership with his brother, W.F. Buchanan, in about 1883 or 1885 and because Nat was so often away in the bush his brother had power of attorney. In 1887 H.W.H. Stevens wrote:

I understand Buchanan’s Station, adjoining the Victoria Run, is to be placed upon the market. The reason is that there are too many shareholders in it & Mr. N. Buchanan is therefore, anxious to dissolve. The three [sic] founders, W.F. Buchanan & N. Buchanan are all interested & I have it on good information that they would be glad to sell (Stevens, 11-7-1887).

Wave Hill and Elvira, another jointly owned station in the Kimberley, were put on the market, but W.F. Buchanan bought the stations himself at a low price, thus becoming the
sole owner (*Northern Territory Times*, 23-2-1894). It’s possible there was something underhand in this action but no records remain to cast light on the event. Of interest here is the comment of G.M. Smith who in 1926 (*Country Life and Stock & Station Journal*, 2-3-1926) claimed that he had known W.F. Buchanan for fifty years and also knew Nat, and that neither brother had ever mentioned the name of the other.

Tom Cahill says that in the early years:

> Our nearest mail station at that time was the Katherine Telegraph Station, which was 300 miles away to the north-east; while Hall’s Creek, on the Kimberley goldfields, was an equal distance away in another direction. Sometimes the drovers brought our letters in, but when we wanted to send away mails we had to send men with packhorses, and it took them close on 12 days to cover the journey (SMH, 19-2-1921).

In February 1896 it was reported that:

> A monthly mail is now running between Wave Hill and Ord River Station, to meet the Wyndham Halls Creek mail. They got tired of waiting for the South Australian Government to establish a mail to the Victoria via the Katherine, so Wave Hill instituted a service on its own account (*Northern Territory Times*, 28-2-1896).

By 1926 there was a six weekly mail service from Katherine, with packhorses in the wet season and trucks in the dry. Vesteys also ran a private service from Wave Hill to Halls Creek, linking their stations to the west and servicing Inverway station and Owen Cummings at Hooker Creek (Henry, 1989: 6).

In February 1905 it was reported that:

> During this season Wave Hill has branded 12,000 young calves, and sent 7000 cattle Queensland way, and 600 fats to Western Australia ... Rats are very numerous here this year, and they have fairly cleaned out the station garden; they have even saved us the trouble of digging up a nice patch of potatoes which we expected might last us till Christmas. Barring the rats – greedy varmints – there is nothing much to complain about, and the health of everyone out this way is excellent (*The Pastoralists’ Review*, 15-2-1905: 928).

When L.A. Wells carried out the first official survey of the Victoria River district in 1906-08 he discovered that the northern boundary of Wave Hill was 40 kilometres (25 miles) too far north. This meant that for more than 20 years Wave Hill had been using something in the order of 2500 square miles that really belonged to VRD, all well-watered Mitchell grass country capable of carrying 20,000 cattle (*Northern Territory Times*, 23-3-1906).

By 1908 cattle numbers on Wave Hill were estimated to be 55,000 with a branded increase of 15,000, and there were 700 head of horses (Herbert, 1908: 4). Also, it was reported that, ‘About seven miles of fencing – three-wire – has been erected at Wave Hill; also a windmill, store, and blacksmith’s shop’ (Dempsey, 31-12-1908: 4).

In the *Northern Territory Times* of January 9th 1913 it was reported that, ‘In late southern exchanges is advertised for sale by auction at Sydney, on a date in June, 1913, of the
Wave Hill Station, N.T., comprising 10,415 square miles of country, containing about 75,000 mixed cattle and 1400 head of horses. This is an executors sale.

One source puts the date of Vestey’s purchase as July 1913 (Northern Territory Times, 7-8-1913). Another source states that the station was bought in February 1914 by the Union Cold Storage Company, a Vestey company. Sir William Vestey travelled out to the station by motor vehicle during the dry season of 1914 (Northern Territory Times, 3-9-1914). The first General Manager for Vesteys was Walter Marshall (Northern Territory Times, 3-12-1914).

In May 1914 128 bulls, two Suffolk Punch draughts, and seven stallions arrived in Darwin en route for Wave Hill (Northern Territory Times, 14-5-1914). In December 1914 it was reported that, ‘Five hundred bulls passed here [Wollogorang] last month travelling from Ifley Station to Wave Hill, drover W.W. Braitling in charge’ (Northern Territory Times, 3-12-1914). For additional biographical information on Braitling see entry under Paschendaele.

Christmas sports – an Aboriginal tug-o-war at Wave Hill, 1915 (Simpson collection).

1914 was a very dry year on Wave Hill with a correspondent to the Northern Territory Times reporting that, ‘Wave Hill has lost half its herd I believe, and a large number of horses.’ The same correspondent also reported that transport of boring equipment from the Depot to Wave Hill had been held up because of the poor condition of the draught horses (Northern Territory Times, 21-1-1915). This boring plant was on the station and operating early in 1915 (Northern Territory Times, 13-5-1915). In the Northern Territory Times of July 27th 1918 it was reported that, ‘The Wave Hill firm are pushing on with their improvements ... At present a number of windmills of large size are going forward to that place.’
In 1921 the manager, Mr Taylor, was reported as saying (The Age [Melbourne], 4-10-1921) that:

He had about 8000 square miles of country under his control, 61,000 cattle and 1500 horses. Two thousand cattle were branded each year. The run was not fully stocked up. Thirteen bores had been put down, in ten of which good supplies of water had been struck.

A report written in 1934 discussed the Wave Hill stud herd:

In order that it will be understood what the term ‘stud herd’ means, it is explained that certain paddocks enclosed by very poor fences (through which the scrub bulls pass at will) are used for the purpose. The best types of station cows, and these comprise various colours and not very high quality, are mated with bulls, the progeny of those introduced between the years 1922-1933, or if any of the original bulls are alive, they are included. When it is considered that, during the period mentioned, only 60 bulls were introduced, and the bulk of these ordinary herd bulls, it can be understood on how unsound a basis the stud herds are established ... In addition to the weakness by way of the non-introduction of suitable and sufficient new blood, hundreds of cleanskin bulls were seen on this and other runs of the same interests, the result of which must be obvious (NTPLIC, 1934. Report on Wave Hill).

Relations between the settlers and the Aborigines were hostile from the beginning. Tom Cahill said that, ‘At first the natives were very wild and used to give us a lot of trouble, killing our cattle’ (SMH, 19-2-1921).

A report in 1891 stated that:

On Buchanan’s run, especially, they are exceptionally bold, and it is estimated that they kill on an average one beast a day for ‘tucker.’ Cattle and horses come alike to them, and during the last year or so they have slaughtered some most valuable mares on the Wave Hill run, besides a high-priced stallion which it would be extremely difficult to replace. The boldness of the blacks is extraordinary, and their plans are so well matured that, although the station hands keep careful watch, they find it impossible to surprise the marauders, who, if pressed closely, make into the limestone country, where horses cannot travel (Northern Territory Times, 3-4-1891).

In 1899 an overlanding cyclist reported that:

when he arrived at Wave Hill Station he found the homestead in ruins, the buildings comprising it having been burned to the ground whilst the manager, Mr. T. Cahill, was away on the run. The fire had taken place ten days before he knew anything about it. Mr Cahill is of the opinion that the fire was the work of the natives, who have been pretty troublesome on the station lately (Northern Territory Times, 15-9-1899).
Also in 1899 it was reported that:

the blacks made a most determined assault on a cattle mustering party at the Wave Hill station, in the Victoria River District .... we gather that Mr. T. Cahill, the station manager, and several of the station men (principally blackboys) were out one day in the vicinity where 'Paddy the Lasher' was murdered a couple of years ago. Whilst they were camped at dinner, a mob of blacks stole up unobserved, and before the cattle party were aware of their presence a shower of spears were sent in amongst them, but without striking anyone. The party quickly rose to a fighting attitude, on seeing which the blacks beat a retreat. The occurrence took place in broad daylight (Northern Territory Times, 20-1-1899).

Eventually the general hostilities stopped. According to Tom Cahill, who was manager until 1905, ‘they gradually got civilised, and as we used to give them meat whenever they wanted it they stopped killing our cattle’. Local Aborigines were employed in stockwork by 1910. Drover Burgess (Northern Territory Times, 10-6-1910) made the following observation:

There were only two white men and about thirty blacks. The natives were real wonderful workers. Both the men and the gins are experts, and throwing and branding went along like clockwork. Amongst the women were three black gins, who were doing the best work I have ever seen on the face of a cattle camp. The gins are the best workers on horse back—far before the boys ... The minute you cut a beast out on the edge of the camp there was a gin to take it away from you. One little halfcaste girl about fourteen was a splendid hand at the game. I never saw better work than she was doing ... The blacks only work during the branding and mustering, and when the busy season is over they take off their clothes and return to the bush until again wanted.

During much of Vestey’s tenure the company had a bad reputation for the conditions of employment, particularly but not solely for Aboriginal employees. On February 15th 1928 Mounted Constable Sheridan received a report from Wave Hill stockman Laurie Pumpa that the Aborigines were working with very little clothing (TCPJ, 15-2-1928). Pumpa said he ‘had often complained to the management but they took very little notice’. Sheridan himself had previously encountered an arrogant attitude from Vestey’s local representative, the Wave Hill manager: ‘McGugans attitude one of contempt to Protector intimating protector Nil in comparison Northern Agency influence’ (WHPLB, 29-9-27).

The day after Pumpa’s report, Sheridan inspected the Aboriginal clothing at No. 1 Camp. Later he sent the following telegram to Cecil Cook, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Darwin:

It has been correctly reported Wave Hill stockboys working in clothes ragged. [There has] been no boys clothing in Station store this year [and] no prospect [of receiving] any until after wet season stop they have no waterproof swag covers they are compelled [to] sleep wet blankets only one waterproof overcoat among nine stockboys No. 1 camp they are watching cattle during storms wet through all nights believe similar position all camps employing stockboys be suspended until suitable clothing arrives.
Chief Protector Cook responded five days later (TCPJ, 21-2-1928) saying, ‘Agency forwarding berkmere covers stop Personally inspect camps [with] minimum inconvenience as far as compatible spirit ordinance.’

Thirteen years later things were little better for employees in general. On April 29th 1938 the Northern Standard reported that on Wave Hill:

Information to hand reports that all is not well among employees. It is stated that a short time ago there was so much trouble that stockmen, jackaroos and halfcastes were about to leave in a body, but the management very shrewdly transferred the men to other stations.

One of the men who recently came to Darwin from Wave Hill asserts that the chief cause of discontent is the shortage of foodstuffs during the wet season. Potatoes, onions, and other essential commodities were not available to employees, despite the fact that the Pastoral Award provides for theses to be part of the menu. This a constant source of complaint from Wave Hill stockmen, and employees say that the position now regarding the food supply has become intolerable.

The reputation of this station is such that many station workers refuse to take employment at any of Vestey’s station, and it has become necessary to bring jackaroos from the south to fill the positions. These men come under agreement, but they are also dissatisfied with the conditions, and there has been nothing but trouble since the last batch arrived some weeks ago.

By 1945 conditions for Aborigines at Wave Hill were grim, as the following report by Wefare Officer Bill Harney shows (Harney, 29-6-1945):

On my recent patrol and filling of pro-formas Wave Hill, I was amazed at the lack of welfare and hygiene at this station.

Camps
These camps are unsightly and unsanitary, the ground is covered with bones, tins, and filth while the wretched little humpies of old iron were the only shelter the old people had away from the hot sun or the cold wind.

The sanitary arrangements are nil – over 200 natives easing themselves on the plain and along the creek about 40 yards from the station homestead itself. Showers are not provided and water is scarce when stock drink at the trough with its scanty supply.

No wood is carted for the old people who must gather bits of wood as best they can from the countryside to cook their rations and if it was not for the care of Mrs. Quirk who is a nurse I am afraid deaths would be a lot more numerous than at the present time.

Only one thing seems to be the function of the natives of these parts, a toiler, day in and day out without future or hope; the elders receiving rations in return for services done; and although I was told the ration was as mentioned in the Pro forma, yet all I saw was the tea, sugar, flour and beef; while the native works for bread and beef with tea and sugar from the kitchen, with brownie, I was told when they work at the branding and it is hard work.

I cannot stress too strongly the [poor] housing and hygiene of the natives at Wave Hill.
A report Harney wrote a month later (29-6-1945) is worth reporting at length for the light it throws on the conditions of the Aborigines and the attitudes of many whites throughout the Victoria River region in the immediate post-war period:

Natives and Welfare

I encountered and inspected over 700 natives in this patrol and of that number 307 are working on the stations as stockmen, yardbuilders, teamsters, domestics, assistant mechanics, butchers, truck-drivers, etc. The hours of this work is from daylight in the morning to late at night for every day in the week and the only holiday is when they are on walkabout, which in the wartime very rarely occurs. As usual with all these places a native is only looked upon as a labour unit, the health of the people only looked at, not from the human angle, but because sickness means a lowering in the labour unit, and this causes concern. Just as a horse with a sore back must be treated because it cannot be worked efficiently otherwise. Thus a good stockman with failing eyesight is looked after but should this happen to the A. & I. [aged and infirm] such is not the case.

Housing

In all cases with few exceptions the housing conditions and supervision of these natives and their dependants is deplorable, any houses built by the native must be done in their own time after work hours. The material they get for this is wood gathered in odd sorts of ways such as off the wood heap or with the help of some sympathetic white truck driver, the iron is bits of cast off pieces or petrol tins flattened out and nailed on with nails from packing cases. Believe me, it is indeed pathetic to see these people trying to build a nice place while all the time their Managers, police and all join in with the everlasting cry of ‘If you build houses for them they won't live in them.’ At Wave Hill I saw a lot of new galvanised iron in a shed, yet the huts of the natives beggar description. At Birrindudu Station no shelters at all, and as I explained elsewhere in my other report the dependants were not maintained at this place, the excuse being that they could not get rations to feed dependants. Perhaps Mr. Hudson will show by the books that rations have been given in this period, but (I have heard from good authority that the rations are booked out, but kept to buy dog scalps from natives which same scalps are sold in West Australia at a good price.) I suggest a letter be sent to head office of Vestys Sydney to warn them about the treatment of natives by their managers and stockmen, and point out to those in charge that native labour in the future rests on the treatment of natives today.

Mr Quirk of Wave Hill and the Pastoral Inspector of the Stations in the North complained to me about the natives health on Wave Hill, but only smiled when I pointed out the dirty native camps and lack of latrines in that area. He seemed to be surprised that things like this was needed for natives. What is needed is not so much the education of the natives on hygiene, but the education of whites in charge regarding their obligations to these people whom they employ.
Imagine conditions such as these. The natives working all day, every day, no wages, just bread and beef with tea and sugar, his wife if young is worked too, children also work if old enough. He is not asked to leave his wife and family just to do things and too frightened to disobey because he has nowhere to go to. Often old natives told me of their treatment and their desires but it was with lowered voice as though the trees had ears and the arm of the boss was long. Police are sometimes called to shoot their dogs, yet they rarely see the dirty camps and demand of the managers to clean it up. What is urgently required is correct supervision of natives on stations, or failing that wages to be paid all employees with good houses provided and their dependants gathered to suitable reserves and their welfare assured. Such a place is the Catfish with its big water holes and shady trees. In that place all young native women and girls could be protected, not as today where young women are regarded as part of the wages paid to keep men on the station. It is an old native saying in the bush that native women can retain their virtue only by having the speed of Costle the sprinter and the endurance of Nurmi long distance runner. Supervision of natives on reserves or the stations is the answer to native welfare and this must be forced on the people who employ natives, not as a useful help but as a means of profit.

Endowment

On most stations (Vestys) the managers did not want this Endowment, giving as an excuse it is ‘too much trouble’ and would ‘give a bad example to other natives who do not get wages’ ‘Make the mother lazy’. But on two stations owned by Connor, Doherty, and Durack the managers, Mr. H. K. Fuller of Newry Station and Mr. R. Durack of Avergne [sic] Station, were willing to help these mothers by keeping a separate account for each mother, and buying her things for the children from the stores. I suggest that recommendations be made for Endowment be paid to these places ...

Rosewood Station

This station is near the West Australian border and is managed by the owner, Mr. Pat [Jack] Kilfoyle and it is a curious mixture of good and bad native welfare. His own station natives ... are provided with nice huts and a good bath-room with concrete floor, they are not paid wages and are given good rations, the same as whites. These natives are properly cared for. Another group of natives work at this place, they are the temporary employees. The agreement with these natives is that they are paid wages, but must find their food for their dependants, also houses. This food they can purchase anywhere they like, station store, or town. They live on the creek near the road in little humpys are not supervised by the station, and each year they are paid off after the work has finished. They are West Australian natives from the Forrest river mission and have half-caste wives and children. These half-caste women were educated and well-spoken and looked out of place in these shacks with the natives. (I only quote this to point out the mission view of this area) and strongly urge against this form of thing in the Northern Territory.
Remarks

From the report I have no hesitation in saying that native welfare is bad on these stations. Their health seemed good to me, but everywhere I went I found myself up against strong opposition whenever I mentioned a better spin for the natives. The excuses were ‘Spoil the natives’ ‘Bad enough as it is’ ‘Never live here’ (this apparently from the Casanovas), ‘They must die out; leave them alone,’ ‘Won’t live in houses’ ‘Don’t like vegetables’ (apparently these people have never seen natives dig up yam.)

On the 10th June I returned from Patrol and now submit this report in the hope that something will be done for these unfortunate people, who have carried the full weight of the pastoral industry ever since it started, yet who live today in the same conditions as they did over sixty years ago.

Giving good service and loyalty to a master who – in most cases – only looks upon them in the same category as the animals that feed on the runs that were once the tribal area of these people.

Bill Wyatt, a white stockman who worked on Wave Hill in 1947 recalled that:

Vesteys gave out six bags of flour for eleven men: nine blackfellers, a head stockman, and a jackaroo, and also for a cook, which made twelve men. Four bottles of Holbrooks sauce, four bottles of tomato sauce. I forget how much cream of Tartar and soda. Four tins of fruit. You wouldn't give the blacks tinned fruit so the two of us would have one tin of fruit between two every Sunday. They were your sweets. That's all you got, and a bit of rice, and tinned cabbage – open them up and they'd go black. And hard beans and peas. You had to soak them for a week before you could eat them, and if we chucked them out, the horse would eat them – what he could. And any amount of beef (Read, 1979: 12).

In February 1924 the Wave Hill police reported that:

on the 9th and 10th inst.: heavy rain fell on the outer Environ of Wave Hill, more particularly toward the head of the Victoria River; but in my opinion a cloud burst in close proximity to the junction of the McDonald and Victoria Rivers, to cause such a phenomenal rise in the river at this site. On the morning of the 11th inst: the river was in heavy flood and continued to rise rapidly until 3 p.m., when it reached the verandah of this station; at this juncture, the trackers and myself stacked everything well clear of the ground, locked the station doors, and made camp for the night on a ridge a mile distant – having to wade thro water for more than half that distance. After spending the night in the rain without covering (M.C. Heathcock had tent-fly in use), we returned to station about sunrise on the 12th inst.:, and was occupied until noon trying to start a fire to cook food which we had not had since noonday previous; The rest of the day was spent in salvaging sundries; the tracker and his lubra commenced to carry out some of the silt and refuse that covered the station floor 2 ft. deep, and were kept busy for eight days cleaning up the place. … The flood water reached to the height of 4 ft. in Police Stn.: which is situated on the highest flat country in the locality, – being considerably higher than the Wave Hill Cattle Station Homestead, which was completely wrecked by flood; the estimated
WAVE HILL

damage to Buildings, Stores, Windmill, Tanks, Stockyards, and fences Etc: being £10,000.
During the flood, the Station Employees, including the Pastoral Manager – Mr. Moray –, took refuge on the roof of their highest building. Except Davidson who spent the night in a tree. They all experienced a loss in some shape or form.
Teamster Drew with Bracey and Ashwin also spent the night in a tree, up which the water arose 14 ft; Drew’s losses amount to £300 – Some of his teams collars were found below Victoria Downs Stn:– his large waggon was rolled over several times and deposited against a tree 200 yds: from his camp. These three men all lost their camp equipment – only a few articles being recovered recently.
The M.C. lost several articles of clothes and rations, also a few goats to the total value of 30£; the inconveniences of which is a greater loss than the value proper, as no rations can arrive from Victoria Depot for two months. There are no vegetables at the cattle or police station; and no canned fruit or vegetables at hand.
All timber in river channel and flats is borne down or carried away, and gullies overgrown with weed and quinine bush are covered with silt – the odour from same savours of sickness in the near future – particularly fever. …
The local camp natives spent the night of the flood in trees and on high ground. The M.C. swam to cattle stn: on the 16th inst: and found no human life lost, or persons injured.’ (Heathcock, 28-2-1924).

According to former Wave Hill manager, C.D. Kelman, while marooned the men on the roof, ‘boiled tea over and over’ (Kelman, pers. comm. to David Nash, 7-6-1990).
Additional details were published in the Northern Territory Times (18-3-1924):

For a couple of days before the final onrush of water the river had been rising steadily but nothing out of the ordinary was expected, and serious indications did not manifest themselves until the morning of the catastrophe, when it was quite impossible to do more than attempt to save the stock of flour stored in a building adjacent to the headquarters house, on a lower level. The waters however, rose so rapidly that the effort had to be abandoned before one quarter of it had been placed on the tables of the manager’s residence, from where it was subsequently washed away. The balance representing approximately 150 bags was fortuitously saved. As the flood rushed through, the bags rose and floated with the intact store a distance of 50 yards where it settled down under the lee of the main building, and remained until the waters subsided. At this time there were nine whites including Mr Moray, manager Joe Egan, bookeeper Jack Marshall, head stockman Davidson and his brother, saddler Jack Burke as well as station hands, Len Adams Lawrie Pumpa and another at the homestead. This number was augmented by four aboriginals and two Chinese who subsequently took refuge with the Europeans on the roof of the wagon shed, where they were marooned from four o’clock in the afternoon until one o’clock the next morning. Meanwhile the waters played ducks and drakes with the other buildings and swept all the station collars and floatable material into the Never Never. Burt Drew camped between Wave Hill and the Police Station had a similar experience, and lost his horse collars and the light gear belonging to his team while he took shelter in a tree. Other Aboriginals in the vicinity lodged their women folk in the high growing timber and stood by stoically until the torrent took them off their feet, and carried them in some instances 10 miles down the river.
According to Reg Durack (pers. comm.) who knew Burt Drew well in later years, Drew had to make substitute collars by wrapping flour bags around the metal hames.

Wave Hill homestead after the flood. The log on roof is the high water mark. February 1924 (AIA collection).

The flood prompted a shift from the original location to a new location on the grasslands some miles away on Horse Creek, so-named because many brumbies used to run there (pers. comm., Ronnie Wave Hill). The Aboriginal name for the new homestead area is Jinparra. According to Michael Terry, who visited Wave Hill in 1926, it was planned to call the new homestead ‘Canberra’ (Terry, 1927: 111), but whether this was a local joke or was a serious suggestion is unknown.

The water supply at the new homestead site was poor and unreliable. A report written in 1934 remarked that, ‘Towards the end of the dry season there is no water for the vegetable garden (the crops simply perish) and it is only with extreme care that sufficient water is available for domestic purposes’ (NTPLIC 1934, Wave Hill). Plans were afoot some time before 1962 to shift the homestead to its present location (Dorling, July 1962), but this was not done until mid-1969 (WHPJ, 24-6-1969). Buck Buchester told me there were plans to build this new homestead at a site on the edge of the range overlooking the police station. This is confirmed in a report by J. Dorling who wrote in 1962 that, ‘the station has had plans to move for some time … The proposed new site is to overlook the Victoria River and the Police Station, and a new road has already been graded to the site and levelled off. It is proposed the station will be moved in 1963.’ Paul Vandeleur (pers. comm) said that the chosen site was on the south side of the existing road and that the move was delayed because a bore put down at the site struck a good flow but it was found to be salty. Boring for water continued elsewhere for some years but without luck (Milikins, 1965: 2). Eventually it was decided to relocate the homestead at Number 1 Yard where a good water supply already existed. Reg Hart (pers. comm.) who mustered cattle on Wave Hill for some months in 1935 said that Number 1 Yard is the place where they used to hold the cattle.
During the 1930s Wave Hill was raided by Cooper and Simpson, cattle duffers who took the stolen stock across the Tanami Desert. On several occasions their activities were detected before they could get away and in one instance the police were hot on their tracks when they met the cattle coming back – there was not enough water for the cattle and the thieves had to let them go (WHPJ, 29-10-1934 to 7-11-1934, 17-1-1935 to 22-1-1935, 1-7-1936).

In 1925 the Commonwealth Government installed a wireless station at Wave Hill, ushering in, ‘a new era in communication in the far out-back’ (The Age, 13-10-1925). The first messages were sent on October 13th (Northern Territory Times, 13-10-1925). Jack Henry (Henry, 1989: 5) became the first wireless operator in 1926. Years later he wrote that:

in an effort to overcome the lack of communications in outback areas of the Commonwealth, the Government of the day had installed 2 by 2 kilo-watt radio transmitters at strategic points, one at Camooweal to give access to the Eastern land-lines and the other at Wave Hill to give access to the Territory and South Australia via Darwin, to the Western land-lines via Wyndham. The transmitter … had its limitations, particularly in the summer or ‘wet season; It was just impossible to communicate with Darwin and Camooweal after noon because of very heavy static and Wyndham was worked with the greatest of difficulty … Radio-telegraphic traffic was very meagre; its service was mostly used by Wave Hill and Victoria River Downs Stations for sending in their monthly reports to head offices at Darwin and Sydney. There was very little private traffic.

Wave Hill homestead and buildings after the 1924 flood (AIA collection).

Jack Henry also described general conditions at the homestead in 1926-27:

Entertainment was non-existent except for the postmaster’s banjo which he handled quite well. After dinner at night everybody moved over to the front verandah of the
manager’s residence and reclined into deck or squatter’s chairs and indulged in general conversation for a few hours before heading off for bed. At 7 pm the postmaster copied off the news via short wave radio and this would be discussed by all. The congregation at these discussions would consist of the manager and his wife, the post master, station storekeeper, head stockmen and jackeroos and any visitors who might have dropped in. Visitors were few but always welcomed. Weekend entertainment was also non-existent except for a game of cards or chess. Sometimes a poker school might be set up at the post office, depending on who was about at the time and what interest could be mustered.

Hunting was not encouraged because of the possibility of shooting stock which, of course, was a ‘no-no’. Also the Aboriginals had a lien on any stray game. Fishing was seldom indulged in as there didn’t seem to be any real incentive for the pastime. Meals were good and substantial. Fresh meat three times a week, and well cooked by a Chinese Cook (Gee Gang), plentiful supplies of fresh green vegetables from two gardens, one at the homestead run by a Chinese gardener, Lum Fook, the other at the old Police Station run by another Chinese, Chin Ah Lai. Potatoes came in 36lb tins and were de-hydrated but they cooked up nicely; no butter, plenty of milk from a good milking herd. Meals were at a common dining table presided over by the manager and his wife who did the serving between them. In summer time a Punka was operated by a bevy of Aboriginal house girls. Our cook was very good at bread-making and he also made an excellent brownie only he called it ‘blownie’. Stray bits of excitement came along now and then such as a wandering snake but they were very seldom. Main excitement would be the arrival of the mailman from Katherine and the arrival of motor trucks with the station stores and rations. There was always a good supply of newspapers, magazines and pictorials which kept us with plenty of reading matter until the next mail delivery. And there was always the occasional grass fire as an added excitement (Henry, 1989: 6-7).

Cattlemen used to be able to tell which station cattle came from just by their build, horn shape, etc. Wave Hill cattle were regarded as, ‘terrible cattle to walk ... When they were settled down, they’d still walk – walk over your fences. They were that used to it. But they were noted for that’ (‘Cay’ Johnston, cited in Kowald & Johnston, 1992: 72).

The wet season of 1952-53 failed. Water was so scarce on Wave Hill that the station was facing the loss of thousands of head. Vesteys ‘converted two huge army tank carriers to move cattle from their Wave Hill Station’ (Kowald & Johnston, 1992: 149), 4000 cattle were moved to Delamere and Willeroo (Ryan, 1953) and 500 herd bulls were due to be trucked from the station on Kurt Johannsens’s road train, when good rainfall late in April saved the situation (Hoofs & Horns, July 1954: 8).

Native Affairs Officer Ted Evans reported in 1952 that, ‘In September, forty stock-boys were put off the Wave Hill payroll’, the only station in the district to do so. However, after he spoke with Vestey’s Pastoral Inspector, Jack Quirk, the station agreed to maintain them until normal walkabout time at the end of November (Evans, 4-12-1952). Evans also commented that:

Droving activity was practically at a standstill, the only mobs moved being three small ones from Victoria River Downs to Wyndham and a full mob from Inverway to Brunchilly. There was considerable inter-station movement, such as from Wave Hill to Willeroo (5000 head) and from Gordon Downs – Birrindudu to Lumbunya
WAVE HILL

(9000 head). However for the bulk of the year, station managers contented themselves with moving cattle to waters and feed in an endeavour to minimize losses. Even brandings were restricted, and in some cases abandoned completely. Accordingly the amount of work done on most stations was well below normal. The Negri race meeting was abandoned, the only meeting for the year being conducted at Wyndham.

The wet of 1953-54 failed again and it was reported that, ‘Trucks have been transporting feed to save £50,000 worth of herd bulls on Wave Hill’ (Hoofs & Horns, July 1954: 38). Apparently there was more water on Wave Hill than on Delamere and Willeroo so the horses from the latter properties were shifted to Wave Hill. When they were eventually mustered after the drought broke there were over 2700 horses in the yard (pers. comm., Rob Sampson).

In 1955 it was reported that:

Wave Hill is commencing a big programme [sic] of improvements which it is expected will almost double the carrying capacity of the property. They have had a former grazing licence of 500 square miles converted into a Pastoral Lease on which there is something like 17 bores to be sunk (Hoofs & Horns, September 1955: 9).

This ‘former grazing licence’ is likely to have been the Cattle Creek block. The program of improvements may have been part of a deal between Vesteys and the Government whereby the Government did not resume as much land as they originally intended, provided the remaining land was developed. By 1962 the station area was 6158 square miles, a vast reduction from the original 10,415 square miles (Dorling, 16-7-1962).

On October 1st 1975 a huge horse sale was held on the station at Number 25 Yard. Described as, ‘the largest company horse sale in Australia’ and ‘the biggest and best line of horses ever to be sold in the Territory’. Over 600 were on offer. These comprised ‘about 400 TVH Wave Hill brand and 200 DJT and TLP Kirkimbie and Limbunya. There will be 200 broken horses (all ages), 250 unbroken mares and geldings (average age four years) and 150 brood mares (some with foals at foot and some in foal)’ (Northern Territory Newsletter, August 1975: 23).

The Wave Hill police reported in 1956 that there had been a short ‘strike’ by Aboriginal stockmen:

Const Cronshaw received report at 9 am that aboriginal stockman at No. 2 Bore were refusing to work – Station Manager Fisher requested Constable’s presence while he investigated matter. Constable to Cattle Stn. then No. 2 bore in Wave Hill Stn. vehicle – in attendance whilst manager reminded trouble and fined originator stockman Donald (WHPJ, 19-7-1956).

The Vestey company sold all of its remaining north Australian stations in June 1992 (The Weekend Australian, 18/19-7-1992). Wave Hill was bought by Brian Oxenford’s Western Grazing Company for a rumoured $8 million.

‘Greenhide’ Sam Croker. Manager. In 1883 Croker, and Hugh and Wattie Gordon, took the first mobs of cattle into the Victoria River district to stock leases held by Bluey
Buchanan. After he arrived he remained as first manager of the station. For additional biographical details see entry under Auvergne.

**Gordon Buchanan (senior).** Manager for twelve months beginning in 1889 (Buchanan, 1997: 129; 132). There is confusion in the records about who was manager or when, with Gordon Buchanan, Tom Cahill, Jim Cullen, Hugh Gordon and Sam Croker all being cited as manager at various times in the 1880s and 1890s. In September 1909 Gordon and his son, also Gordon, paid £5-19-9 for a 100 square mile block 15 miles north of Tanami Rockhole. At the same time they paid £5-19-9 for another 100 square miles on the western side of the first block and slightly further north (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 4, PP207/1910).

**Hugh Gordon.** Manager, according to Buchanan (1997: 132), for about two years, beginning some time in 1890 and finishing by the beginning of 1892.

**Jim Cullen.** Manager or overseer in 1893 and 1894. Buchanan (1997: 140) says he was manger but Willshire (TCPJ 15-8-1894, 189: 86) says he was overseer and that Cahill was manager. According to Buchanan (1997: 140), Cullen preceded Tom Cahill as manager (ie before 1894?). He was described by Buchanan (1933: 145) as:

> equally skilled and vigorous [as Tom Cahill] in yard or on cattle camp, [and] was ... physically and temperamentally, a more solid type. His knowledge of bush work was many-sided, and the fruit of much varied experience. Born at Bathurst, his horsemanship as a boy brought him engagement in circus troupe; but he soon drifted to northern Queensland, droving and "breaking" on the way. There he learned mining, fencing, and yard-building, callings for which his powerful physique well-fitted him. His quick temper earned him many fights, and he acquired a reputation for pugilistic ability ... He was as hard as nails.

Cullen was on the Kimberley goldfield as early as 1887 (Halls Creek (Elvire Creek) Police Occurrence Book, 1887-88, entry for 9-10-1887). After the takeover of Wave Hill by W.F. Buchanan in 1894, Cullen left and went with Bluey Buchanan to Flora Valley (Buchanan, 1997: 140). In 1896 or 1897 he accompanied Bluey on his search for a stock route between the lower Sturt and the Oakover River (Buchanan, 1997: 167).

He appears to have been back on Wave Hill in 1898 as the Wyndham Police Occurrence Book reported on November 24th, ‘James Cullen in Wyndham riding horses and packs from Wave Hill.’ In February 1900 he had the contract to take mail between Halls Creek and Wyndham (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1899-1902, entry for 1-2-1900). Later he became part-owner of Bohemia Downs, a cattle station near Fitzroy Crossing, and he died on F.C. Booty’s Lamboo station in about 1932 or 1933 (Buchanan, 1933: 146).

**Tommy Cahill.** Head stockman at Wave Hill and manager there from 1895 to 1905 (and possibly at various times before 1895). According to Pearson (Hoofs & Homs, June 1949: 14), Tom was born at Dalby in Queensland on January 22nd 1858, and that he and his brothers Paddy and Matt went to school in Toowoomba. The census of 1891 give his birthplace as New South Wales (NT census for 1891).
Tom and Paddy were in charge of the first cattle brought across to stock Wave Hill in 1883 (Buchanan, 1933: 78). The following year Tom was with the first cattle to Ord River, bought over by Nat Buchanan (Bolton, 1953: 29; Swan, 1991: 94).

In 1883 he became head stockman on Wave Hill, and he was probably acting manager for short periods before becoming manager in his own right by August 1895 at the latest (letter written by Cahill in August 1895, cited in Willshire 1896a: 101, wherein Cahill signs himself as manager of Wave Hill; Cahill, 19-2-1921; Mallinson, *Quirindi Advocate*, 3-10-1958; Buchanan, 1933: 145; Willshire 1896a: 86). He first appears in the Durack diaries in 1902 and is noted as having been manager of Wave Hill from 1899 (Durack, nd.). He is described as manager of Wave Hill in a letter of introduction given to him by the Darwin Manager of Goldsborough Mort on November 11th 1897.

Gordon Buchanan (1933: 145) described him as follows:

[as a cattle station manager ] in his time was unexcelled and perhaps unequalled. Blue-eyed, with aggressive nose, he was five feet two inches high and stout and stocky—a ball of exuberant vitality ... He had the gift of imparting to men and boys something of his own skill and vim in the working of horses and cattle without raising antagonisms... Not raging and swearing when things went wrong, he always had a cheerful and speedy adaptation to the new situation ... Summed up, Tom Cahill was a stockman with great managerial ability.
Another description comes from Pearson (*Hoofs & Horns*, June 1949: 14) who worked with Cahill on Wave Hill early this century:

A superb horseman, strong and active as a panther, Tommy had a high-bridged nose that lent him an aristocratic appearance. Combined with the clear, light-grey eyes of the Celt, there went, in later times, an iron-grey walrus moustache ... a terror to cattle-killing natives, but one of the best all-round cattle men we ever had in Australia.

Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) never knew Cahill, but one of his Aboriginal workers, Fishook, did. Fishook said to Charlie, ‘you didn’t know ‘im that Tommy Cahill? …By Christ, him little fella but him can fight that fella. Any big blackfella, alright, he come up, he’d fight’im, knock ‘im into shape that fella.’ Charlie recounted a saying about Cahill: ‘He could muster his bullocks and belt his blacks’. Charlie added that, ‘you were no good in that country in those days unless you could show ‘em who was boss. You know, yet those old boys and that, they thought the world of their old bosses you know? Bloody amazin!’

In a sworn statement tendered during a court case at Wyndham in late 1892 or early 1893 Cahill gave his address and occupation in February 1892 as ‘station manager Stockyard Creek, Victoria River’ (Derby Police Station Letterbook Oct 1892-June 1893, sworn statement by Cahill in ‘The Case Against Martin’). He appears to have still been on VRD in May 1894 because he was sent to the Depot with horses to meet Mounted Constable Willshire. This was when Willshire arrived on the ‘Crayfish’, on his way to open the police station at Gordon Creek (GCPJ, 20-5-1894). He’s also documented in the VRD records in May 1887 as having driven 2000 fats to Delamere. He was given the use of two boys and horses for six weeks and one day at £8 per week (Sundry papers, NBA 2/876/22 [9]). It’s worth noting that ‘Culkah’ (J. Kyle-Little), writing in *The Pastoral Review* of November 16th 1951 (p. 1253), says that credit for establishing the VRD herd should go to Cahill, rather than to Crawford. It’s possible that he left VRD at the same time that Crawford left, in March 1895.

He was reported as arriving in Wyndham from Wave Hill on the 16th of June, 1898, and departing for Wave Hill on July 15th 1898 (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station], 1898). He appears to have left Wave Hill very late in 1904 and to have gone to Toowoomba to inspect a dairying property he had recently purchased (*Northern Territory Times*, 12-1-1905; *Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, 20-1-1906). He was back on Wave Hill by May 1905 (*Northern Territory Times*, 14-7-1905) but appears to have left the station for good later that year. He also held shares in Gordon Downs (*Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, 20-1-1906).

As well as managing Wave Hill, Tom was manager of Delamere in 1902-1903 (TCPJ Notes, c30-5-1902; *Northern Territory Times*, 29-5-1903), both stations being owned by W.F. Buchanan at that time. Whether he was managing both Wave Hill and Delamere at the same time is unclear, but seems likely. A photograph of him was published in the *Sydney Stock and Station Journal*, February 3rd, 1922: 7. Tommy married a ‘Miss Turvey’ in Sydney in May 1906 and they embarked on a twelve month honeymoon in England and Europe (*Newsletter, and Australian paper for Australian people*, 26-5-1906, p. 10). He died in 1931 (*The Pastoral Review*, 16-6-1932: 566). A ‘half caste’ man, Arthur
Cahill, who was killed in a fall from a horse in 1931, may have been a descendant of Tommy Cahill (*Northern Standard*, 30-1-1931).

**Sam Kelly.** Stockman (?) (Durack, 1974: 355).

**Horace Bennison.** Stockman (?) (Durack, 1974: 355).

**Pierce George Kelly.** Stockman and head stockman, 1901-1905. According to his obituary he came to the Territory from Queensland in 1898 and went to Wave Hill at that time (*Northern Territory Times*, 23-12-1924), but a news item in 1905 states that he had been on Wave Hill for four years (*Northern Territory Times*, 14-7-1905). It’s possible that there was more than one Kelly (perhaps his brother Joe?) on Wave Hill and that confusion has entered this compilation.

Pierce was heavily involved in organising the race meeting held at Longreach outstation, VRD, in 1905. In 1914 he was manager of Delamere (TCPJ, 6-1-1914), in 1916 the manager of Pigeon Hole (*Northern Territory Times*, 11-5-1916) and by 1921 he was manager of both Delamere and Willeroo (*The Age* [Melbourne], 4-10-1921). He left Willeroo at the end of 1923 to work for his life-long friend Mick Fleming at Douglas station. Some time in 1924 his health began to fail, he was hospitalised, and eventually he decided to travel south on the Montoro. When the ship arrived at Thursday Island he was so ill he disembarked and returned to Darwin on the Marella. A few days after arriving back in December 1924, he died in hospital (*Northern Territory Times*, 12-1-1905 and 23-12-1924). He had daughters, one of whom, Lily, later married Wilfred le Rossignoll of Darwin (*Northern Standard*, 15-5-1936).

In a 1921 report (*The Age* [Melbourne], 4-10-1921) he described himself as having been on Wave Hill for 24 years, but this conflicts with the dates given above. Someone’s date somewhere is wrong. Perhaps he meant he arrived on Wave Hill 24 years earlier, and was misreported?

There is a Kelly Yard on Wave Hill, the original of which was built by Pierce and his brother Joe (Pearson, *Hoofs & Horns*, November 1949: 22). There is also a Kelly Creek and possibly a Kelly Knob on Wave Hill, but whether these were named for Pierce and/or his brother Joe, or some other Kelly, is unknown. He is said to have had a son named Tom Kelly.

**Thomas Wakelin.** Blacksmith and carpenter. He was one of the first in the Kimberley, there before August 9th 1887 (Occurrence Book [Wyndham Police Station] 1886-1888, entry for 9-8-1887). He was travelling west with Major Wilson when Wilson died at VRD homestead on December 18th 1895 (*Northern Territory Times*, 28-2-1896). Wakelin worked on VRD sporadically from at least 1909 to 1923. In August 1909 he left employment at Wave Hill and near the ‘big rock’ in Jasper Gorge, Aborigines, including ‘ex-police boy Bamboo’, threw spears at him (TCPJ, 22-8-1909; *Northern Territory Times*, 17-11-1922; Linklater, nd., typescript in Watson family papers). He had worked as a carpenter on the Elsey homestead when Jeannie Gunn was there in 1902 and was ‘Little Johnny’ in *We of The Never Never* (*SMH*, 14-2-1942).

Wakelin left VRD in December 1923 (VRD diary 1923, 8-12-1923) and drowned on January 4th 1924 while trying to cross his packhorses through floodwaters at the King
WAVE HILL

River near Manbulloo (SMH, 12-2-1942). Blackboys said a crocodile pulled him under and his body was never recovered (Northern Standard, 12-2-1926).

Marcus Harold Seale. Apparently better known as Harold, he was manager of Wave Hill from at least March 1906 (Northern Territory Times, 23-3-1906) until his death in April 1915 (Northern Territory Times, 15-4-1915). He was born at Parramatta, NSW, in 1879. Before coming to the Territory he worked on W.F. Buchanan’s Killarney station and at Terrick Terrick station near Blackall, Queensland (Northern Territory Times, 15-4-1915). Pearson (Hoof & Horns, June 1949: 15) says that ‘Jack Seale’ took over management of Wave Hill after Tommy Cahill left, which seems quite likely. According to Jock Makin (1992: 104), Seale took the first car to Wave Hill, ‘just before the outbreak of the first World War’. This is likely to have been the trip made to Wave Hill by Sir William Vestey when he was investigating possible purchase of the station (Northern Territory Times, 3-9-1914). Seale died from ‘double pneumonia and pleurisy’ in Darwin at the age of 36 on April 10th 1915 (Northern Territory Times, 15-4-1915). His name is commemorated at Seale Gorge and Seale Yard, both on Daguragu station, formerly part of Wave Hill. He was the father of at least one part-aboriginal child, James (BHPJ, 31-12-1915; WHPJ, 26-5-1932).


Hunter Loder. Manager from 1915 (BHPLB, 5-28-1915) to July 1920 when Oswald Quinn took over (AIA [Vestey's] collection, caption on photo 1854; WHPJ, 1-12-1920; see also VRD diary 1920, 23-5-1920). He may have taken over as manager after the previous manager, Harold Seale, died in 1915, or possibly when Vestey's took over in 1914.

At Banana Spring on Gordon Downs, August 1923. L-R: Hunter Loder, Jim Egan, Alex Moray and John Newmarch (AIA collection).

Loder was in the district as early as November 1909 when he attended the race meeting at Longreach outstation, VRD, where he was honorary secretary of the Victoria River
Amateur Race Club (Northern Territory Times, 28-1-1910). At the time he probably was working on Wave Hill; he certainly was on Wave Hill in 1911 (TCPJ Notes, 24-4-1911).

On September 5th 1918 he was shot and wounded by ‘Boomerang’ Jack Brady (WHPJ, 24-9-1918) who was later acquitted of attempted murder (Northern Territory Times, 29-3-1919; see entry for Brady below). By 1923 Loder was manager of Nicholson (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 2004). He died in Darwin in June 1929 (Northern Territory Times, 21-6-1929).

‘Boomerang’ Jack Brady. Horse breaker and stockman in 1918 (WHPJ, 24-9-1918). Born in April 1864, very little is known about his early life. Before coming to Wave Hill he was in Charters Towers in about 1883 and he had broken in horses on Nockatunga Station in southwest Queensland (Scherer, 1993: 14; Mallam, 7-3-1919). Ronan (1962: 171-73) mentions a Jim Brady taking cattle from the St George district to form Marrakai and Glencoe in about 1878 but this would have been too early to have been Boomerang Jack. A ‘J. Brady’ was working on Rosewood in 1913, but whether this was ‘Boomerang Jack’ is uncertain (Letter Book, 1901-1912, page 21).

Brady became a renowned horse breaker and was known as ‘Boomerang’ because of a bent leg. According to Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.), and Barker (1966: 119), Brady had suffered a severe break of his leg and it had set with a bad curve. Scherer (1993: 14) refers simply to his ‘bandy’ legs, while Nightingale (January 1957: 18) suggests that all his limbs were curved, an unlikely probability. Boomerang Jack was on Wave Hill by 1916 because in that year he wrote from Wave Hill to the Lands Office requesting a map of Northern Territory pastoral leases.

At Wave Hill on September 5th 1918, Brady was involved in a drunken brawl over a ‘half caste’ girl. The manager, Hunter Loder, knocked Brady down and kicked him, breaking three ribs and a cheekbone, and then chained him up (Mallam, 7-3-1919). Understandably, Brady was not happy being treated this way and exclaimed to Loder, ‘don’t kick me, I am not a blackfellow’ – apparently whites at the time considered it acceptable to knock Aborigines down and kick them. Brady had been out on the run earlier that day and had a revolver in his trouser pocket because ‘there were blacks about’. He reacted to the assault by pulling his revolver out and shooting at Loder, wounding him in the shoulder (Mallam, 7-3-1919). He was later arrested and charged with attempted murder (BHPJ, 24-9-1918). Taken to Darwin for trial, he unsuccessfully tried to counter-charge Loder with intent to do grievous bodily harm.

Brady was acquitted (Northern Territory Times, 22-3-1919; Memorandum, nd., Home and Territories Department) and returned to the district, but shifted his base to Inverway station (WHPJ, 27-11-1925, 13-1-1926). In October 1926 the Wave Hill police reported that, ‘J. Brady arrived from Inverway burnt 13 scalps dingo for J. Brady & issued certificate for same’ (WHPJ, 23-10-1926). He remained at Inverway until late 1926 and then set out overland for Queensland to visit his sister for the first time in decades (Schultz and Lewis, 1995: 116).
Brady’s grave on the vastness of the Barkly Tableland, c1950 (Mahood collection).

Brady died on Christmas day 1926 while crossing the Barkly Tableland (Northern Territory Times, 11-1-1926). The cause of death is said to have been beri-beri (pers. comm., Charlie Schultz) or malarial fever (Farwell, 1950). His headstone has the following inscription:

JACK BRADY
Died 25th Dec. 1926

Erected by his sister
Mrs Whittaker

He would have been 62 years of age. Johnny Stacey (pers. comm.) said that his father, Norman Stacey, regarded Brady as his best mate and that they had worked together on Alexandria years before. Every year when Norman took cattle past Brady’s grave he cleaned the grass off it. Victoria River Aborigines say he was known as Kurupatu but what this means is unknown.

Oswald J. Quinn. Manager and a Justice of the Peace in 1920. He must have started there after July 1920 because Hunter Loder was still manager in July (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 1853). Quinn was born at Yarraldool station in Queensland, in 1880. His first ‘responsible position’ was as overseer on Auburn station in Queensland, and he later spent 12 years as manager there. He became manager of Ord River in 1915, but enlisted with the A.I.F. Field Artillery Brigade in 1916. He spent three years on the western front where he was twice wounded and also severely gassed (The Pastoral Review, 16-2-1921).
On his return to Australia he took up the position of manager of Flora Valley station (*The Pastoral Review*, 16-2-1921). Within a year or so he became manager of Wave Hill. According to Doug Moore (nd.), Quinn was ‘a bugger to drink’ and a big man – ‘seventeen stone and gaining weight’ – so instead of a horse, Moore gave him a riding camel. In December 1920 the Wave Hill police reported that:

About 11 a.m. P.G. Kelly Esq Sub Manager of Wave Hill crossed the River on a raft & informed the M.C. that O.J. Quinn Esq manager of Wave Hill was very bad with fever & asked the M.C. if he would go over to & see him. The M.C. went over to Wave Hill & found Mr Quinn in bed looking very bad. He informed the M.C. that he had been bad for about 3 weeks he considered that it was the fever that was wrong with him, but he also stated that he had been badly gassed whilst at the war & was afraid that it may be affecting him also. About 5 PM Mr Quinn seemed to be much better & informed the M.C. that he thought he was on the mend. The M.C. then returned to his Stn, but about an hour after Mr Kelly again sent up for the M.C. & on returning to Wave Hill the M.C. found Mr Quinn in an unconscious condition & breathing very heavily. The M.C. remained with Mr Quinn all night about 5 am on the morning of the 2nd he became very much worse & gradually sank lower till 6 am on the morning of the 3rd when he expired.

*Oswald Quinn* (*The Pastoral Review, 16-2-1921*).

Llewellyn. Bookkeeper from November 1920 (VRD diary 1920, 10-11-1920).

F.R. ‘Reg’ Taylor. Manager from at least September 8th 1921 to February 1923 (VRD diary 1923; The Age [Melbourne] 4-10-1921; AIA [Vestey’s] collection, caption on photo 1790; WHPJ, 5-12-1922). He was described in the report of a visiting parliamentary delegation as ‘an exceptionally fine type of man – keen, capable and enthusiastic’ (The Age [Melbourne], 4-10-1921). Taylor had left Wave Hill before February 1923 and was replaced by Egan (WHPJ, 16-2-1923). He probably left to become manager of another Vestey station, Manbulloo, because the manager there in 1924 was named Taylor (Northern Territory Times, 11-1-1924).

Joseph Egan. Manager from February 1923 to 1926 (VRD diary 1923; WHPJ, 16-2-1923; Apsley, 1926: 118). Egan may have been relieving manager at Wave Hill in 1930 (AIA [Vestey’s] collection, caption on photo 1614). For additional biographical details see entry under Ord River.

Jack Marshall. Bookkeeper in June 1923 and on October 14th 1926 (AIA collection, captions on photos 1719 and 1948; see also Northern Territory Times, 18-3-1924).

Davidson. Head stockman in 1924 (Northern Territory Times, 18-3-1924).

Jack Bourke. Saddler in 1924 (Northern Territory Times, 18-3-1924). A man of this name is said to have shot himself at Goose Hill (Shaw 1991: 110).

Donald Steven Rankine. Manager by August 1926 (WHPJ, 10-8-1926). He left for Willeroo in November 1926 and was manager there in 1928 (Northern Territory Times, 20-7-1928; Hall 1970: 75). He was replaced at Wave Hill by McGuggan (WHPJ, 5-11-1926). Given the short time he was at Wave Hill he may only have been a caretaker-manager. At this time he was a Justice of the Peace. Before Wave Hill he was manager of Burnside station near Brocks Creek (Northern Territory Times, 10-11-1925: 3).

Parker. Head stockman on October 14th 1926 (AIA [Vestey’s] collection, caption on photo 1719). This may be the Jim Parker who was a drover for VRD in 1926 (Northern Standard, 19-2-1926).


Cook. Bookkeeper in 1927 (AIA [Vestey’s] collection, caption on photo 1722).

Alexander McGuggan (McGuigan). Manager from the end of 1926 to 1931 and from 1936 to 1938. McGuggan took over at Wave Hill after Don Rankine left on November 5th 1926 (White, 5-11-1926; Northern Territory Times, 13-8-1926) and was there until at least 1931 (AIA [Vestey’s] collection, caption on photo 1693; see Wave Hill police journal, 23-7-1927, 29-9-1927, 2-8-1928 and 15-7-1929; Cole, 1988: 92). He was manager of Anthony’s Lagoon in 1935 (NAA ACT, A1 38/5230) and manager of Wave Hill again in October 1936, and apparently through to December 1938 (WHPJ, 19-10-1936, 30-11-1937, 8-1-1938, 30-6-1938, 10-9-1938, 21-10-1938 and 20-12-1938; NAA ACT, A284/1 B5244).
According to C.D. Kelman, McGuggan was called ‘Black Jack’ or ‘Black-something’ (Kelman, pers. comm. to David Nash, 7-6-1990). McGuggan was probably the manager who Morey refers to as demanding that a coat and tie be worn at the dinner table, in spite of the heat and humidity (Morey, 1978f: 17). He’s listed as leaving Wave Hill for Brisbane by plane in March 1939 (WHPJ, 3-3-1939).

**John H. Newmarch.** Manager in 1933-34 (WHPJ, 9-5-1933, 25-7-1933, 16-7-1934; Fenton, 1947: 3). Reg Hart (pers. comm.), who helped his father take cattle off Wave Hill in 1934, said that Newmarch was manager at that time. For additional biographical details see entry under Manbulloo.


**Owen Cummins.** Stockman, from at least 1932 until at least 1949. According to Ted Evans (nd) who met Cummins a number of times and compiled a short biography of him, he was born at Dargo Flat, Victoria, on the September 13th 1874. He became a drover in the Victorian Alps, Snowy Mountains and Riverina district. When he arrived in the Northern Territory is unknown, but there’s evidence he was on the Pine Creek goldfield by 1894 working as blacksmith, wheelwright and farrier (Evans, nd).

From May 1914 to July 1917 he worked on Victoria River Downs (VRD day books, 1909 to 1925, vol. 1). In 1923 he applied for a grazing licence over a block in the Tanami Desert south of Wave Hill (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 16, GL581). His application was approved (GL356) but in 1924 lack of water forced him to relinquish it and take up a block at Frog Valley (GL 375), named by Tom Pearce during his construction of a road from Wave Hill.
to Tanami (*South Australian Register*, 23-3-1911). Apparently Cummins also relinquished this grazing licence in 1928 but there was some mix up and the Lands Department kept requesting his rent money. Cummins wrote:

I must try to explain I did not intend to hold that country after 1928 nor do I intend holding it now I made a mistake when I paid the dog tax on it as the dog man was dogging me up so long that I thought I must have owed the money for 28 but I see by the receipt it is for 29 so I will have to get a refund so to save me any further trouble you can give him back the receipt which I am enclosing and tell him to collect [sic] the money and shout (Cummins, nd. [received 10-12-1929]).

In about 1932 he was on Wave Hill in charge of the station stallions and he remained there for many years (Charlie Schultz, pers. comm.).

*Owen Cummins, 78 years old* (*Pix*, 18-10-1952: 12).

Albert Lalga, an old Mudbura man from Montejinni, pronounced his name (to my ear) as ‘Old Home-coming’. Albert told me that Cummins was one of the men who shot Aborigines in the early days. If Cummins was in the Victoria River country in the 1890s or very early 1900s he could have been involved in fighting the blacks. However, Aboriginal people were still living in the bush in the Tanami Desert into the 1930s and
1940s (Berndt and Berndt, 1987: 15-17, 30-32) so when Cummins took up the grazing licences there he could have come into conflict with desert people.

Another Aboriginal man, Bill Wongiari, also knew Cummins and had an opinion about him completely opposite to that of Albert. According to Bill (Evans, nd), when a massacre occurred at Blackfella Knob, Cummins and another white man helped people escape to Inverway. He insisted that Cummins was ‘a good man’

Because he came from the Dargo High Plains, some believed Cummins to have been the original ‘Man from Snowy River’. When he was dinking he would make this claim, but when sober he completely disavowed the idea (Evans, nd.; *Hoofs & Horns*, February 1951: 38). Cummins died in his camp near the site of the original Wave Hill homestead on August 25th 1953 and was buried in the old Wave Hill cemetery (WHPJ, 25-8-1953). His brand was ETQ; in 2000 this was held by ‘Fox’ Lumsden of Kalkarindji. Cummins name is commemorated on a water tank at Murranji Bore and on a small monument to ‘the Territory’s own Man from Snowy River’, at Kalkaringi.

**Harvey.** Bookkeeper in 1932. He’d recently been transferred from Nicholson station (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 2018). He may also have been head stockman in October 1934 (WHPJ, 31-10-1934).

**Roy Bartlam.** Head stockman in October 1934 (WHPJ, 31-10-1934). For additional biographical details see entry under Delamere.

**Ah Kim.** Cook who died there in December 1934 (WHPJ, 5-12-1934)

**Charles Schultz.** Bookkeeper in 1934 (WHPJ, 5-12-1934). This is not the Charlie Schultz who owned Humbert River.


**Keith G. ‘Tiger’ Goddard.** Manager in September 1935 (WHPJ 24-9-1935) and mentioned in the TCPJ on April 11th 1936. According to McGrath (1987: 114-15) Goddard didn’t stay long because he couldn’t handle the blacks. He’d been manager of Flora Valley in 1926 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, caption on photo 2063). Goddard had also worked on Ningbing in the very late 1920s or very early 1930s and according to one source the nickname ‘Tiger’ was applied because ‘he was one of the quietest, most inoffensive men you’d ever want to meet’ (Weller, 1979). Gordon Buchanan mentions that he was ‘ex TRS’ (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers).

**Bruce Bardon ‘Bolivar’ Hudson.** Manager in 1936 (WHPJ, 1/2-7-1936, 10-7-1936). By October McGuggan was manager again so Hudson may only have been relieving manager (WHPJ, 19-10-1936). For additional biographical details see entry under Gordon Downs.

**Spencer Hindmarsh.** Manager? Possibly at Nicholson, not Wave Hill (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers).

**R.T.J. Lee.** Head Stockman in 1939 (WHPJ, 18-4-1939).
Major Ross. Manager? Possibly at Nicholson, not Wave Hill (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers).

Jack Jones. Manager? (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers).

Eric Nicholson. Manager? He was there until September 1939 when Kelman arrived (Kelman pers. comm. to David Nash, 1990). Cec Watts (pers. comm.) said his nickname was ‘The Swamp hog’ and said, ‘He snorted a bit and apparently his table manners were pretty basic’.

Jack Beasley. Studmaster (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers). For additional biographical information see entry under Mt Stirling.

Arthur Drew. Mechanic (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers).

Ernie Holmes. Head stockman (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers).

Frank Willmington. ‘Under-manager’ in September 1942 (WHPJ, 25-9-1942). For additional biographical details see entry under Lissadell.

Cecil Dalrymple ‘Kel’ Kelman. Manager from August 1939 (WHPJ 25-8-1939) to 1943. He was on Wave Hill in June 1939 (WHPJ, 28-6-1939; Hilgendorf, 1994: 30-31). Frank Willmington (pers. comm.) reckoned Kel took over from McGuggan. Kel was born on July 17th 1896. In 1915 he left Australia and served in the 14th Battery, 5th Brigade, 2nd Division Artillery. In about 1936 he married Bessie Viola Newbigging of Peak Hill. He worked for AML&F until A.S. Bingle gave him an introduction to Vesteyes and in 1939 he took up a position with Vesteyes as manager of Wave Hill. He said it was ‘lamb to the slaughter’, an opinion confirmed by Len Mann (nd., p. 10) who said that when Kel arrived at Wave Hill, ‘he had never had a position like this & knew nothing about the job.’ He became a JP in November 23rd 1940 (WHPJ, 23-11-1940).

Bessie accompanied Kel to Wave Hill and in 1942 after eleven years of marriage she became pregnant with their first child. Eventually a daughter, Margaret Dalrymple, was born, but when she was eight months old she suffered convulsions and died on February 6th 1943 (WHPJ, 6-2-1943). Bessie was heartbroken and refused to live at Wave Hill any longer. Kel handed over management of Wave Hill to Len Mann and he and Bessie then shifted Rockhampton where Kel became a manager based at the Lakes Creek station, headquarters of the Vestey company, Western Grazing Pty Ltd. He had responsibility for ten Queensland stations.

Bessie died in 1948 and for a period (1949) Kel was back in the Territory as ‘improvements manager’ for Vesteyes. He may have gone or been sent back to the Territory to help him get over her death. Later he married Jean Rudd and was still married to her at the time of his death. He retired from Vesteyes in 1964. Kel said that in his time, according to the books there were 52,000 head of cattle on 8000 square miles. He said there were 300 blacks on Wave Hill and his personal servant was a man called Daylight (Kelman, pers. comm. to David Nash, 7-6-1990; Mann, nd.: 10, 13). Kel died in 1990, aged 94. Aborigines say that he was known as Liriyi which they say means ‘when people look sideways’
Alison Semour Bingle. General Pastoral Manager of all Vestey’s properties from 1937 to 1956 when he handed over to Peter Morris (Hoofs & Horns, February 1957: 6; Bingle, 1986: xvi). Bingle is said to have once been talking with drover ‘Wirrawarra’ Mick Cusens when the topic of venereal disease came up. Bingle told Cusens that ‘you’re not a real man until you’ve had the pox six times’ whereupon Cusens stuck out his hand and said, ‘meet superman’! Before he died in 1971 Bingle wrote a manuscript about his life, later privately published by his widow (1986) and titled, This Is Our Country.

N.J. May. Head stockman 1940 (WHPJ, 4-11-40).

Archie Warrington Rogers. Saddler in 1941-44 and probably into 1948 or beyond (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 35, GL 1104). Rogers had served with the 5th Light Horse in World War One and after two and a half years was discharged as ‘medically unfit’. In 1927 he ran the Pigeon Hole camp and in 1934 the Moolooloo camp on VRD (VRD Ledger 4; pers. comm., Buck Buchester). He was said to have been a very good cattlem
and at one time a Kidman stockman. In the early 1930s he was in partnership with Walter O’Connor on Elgie Cliffs station in the Kimberly (Bond, 16-5-1944). Charlie Schultz (pers. comm.) remembered him as a man who was keen on gadgets.

While working as a saddler on Wave Hill, in 1944 he applied for a lease over a 1260 square mile block along Winneke Creek, south of the station (NTAS F28, Box 35, GL 1104; WHPJ, 9-6-1944). He claimed that he wanted to acquire the land for his nephew who was then serving in New Guinea and that he would hand the land over to his nephew when he returned (Abbott, 6-4-1944). This nephew probably was Joseph Henry Rogers who later formed Black Hills station in the Tanami in partnership with Ralph Valke or Balke (WHPJ, 27-6-1963; Hoofs & Horns, September 1963: 20). See entry on Black Hills station, above.

The Vesteys Pastoral Inspector, A.S. Bingle, telegrammed the Lands Department and stated:

> Definitely oppose Roger’s application, no permanent water on block, really should also cancel Schull’s grazing licence, if necessary include areas [in] our lease stop Applicants imagine wild horses in area, will only be nuisance stop have no finance to develop country, further, interfere our policy development (Bingle, 4-4-1944).

F.R. Tyson, the Secretary of the Northern Agency (Vesteys), wrote to the Registrar General strongly protesting the application. Tyson sent him the opinion of Jack Quirk, manager of Wave Hill, who’d been asked, ‘do you consider Rogers suitable applicant’. Quirk had replied, ‘No, on no account’ (Tyson, 8-3-1944).

In internal correspondence a Lands Department officer stated,

> I have been given to understand that Rogers is an erratic man prone to the use of physical force, particularly in dealing with Blacks. I further understand that the partnership with O’Connor in a small property – over the Leopold Ranges in western Australia in a locality notorious as a hide-out for cattle rustlers – situated in a straight line between Halls Creek and Wyndham, was dissolved because of Roger’s cruelty in shooting in the foot the partnership cattle whenever they strayed, his argument being that if so shot they would not stray.

This officer noted that as Rogers did not have a registered brand he couldn’t have any cattle and he recommended that the application be refused, but he suggested writing to Rogers to obtain further particulars (Piggott, 9-3-1944). Rogers wrote to the Department explaining that he would be able to get cattle from his ex-partner, O’Connor, that he had £500 cash and that his ‘silent partner’ also had £500 cash and a droving plant (Rogers, 17-3-1944).

The police at Wave Hill and at Halls Creek were then asked to comment on Rogers’ character and both gave him a positive assessment. The Halls Creek constable remarked that:

> The shooting of the beast in the foot may have been when Rogers was drunk and I too have heard that he was at times very bad tempered although I have never seen him in a temper myself.
The District in which Elgie Cliffs is situated (the Partnership Station) is in a bad part of the District and has a bad name in reference to branding each others calves (NTAS NTRS F28, Box 35, GL1120).

On behalf of Vesteys, Bingle (4-4-1944) made one last attempt to have Rogers’ application refused, stating to the Lands Department that:

We understand the reason behind these applications is that the parties concerned imagine that there are a certain number of brumbies (wild horses) running in that area. They intend to engage in the occupation of trapping these and selling them to various droving plants operating in the area.

We feel certain that it is not the intention of these applicants to consider developing the country, for it is necessary to make permanent water in the areas, as the present water only lasts a few months. When that water disappears the wild horses move over on to a lake at the back of our Gordon Downs property.

The type of land included in the areas applied for comprises some really good grazing country, which is adjoining that country which we are at present opening up with our boring plant, and we would be quite prepared to take a long term lease of this country, which is at present the subject of the applications for Grazing Licences.

In spite of Vesteys’ ‘strong protest’ and subsequent ‘surprise’, on May 23rd 1944 Rogers was given Grazing Licence No. 1104 over the area (Piggott, 26-5-1944). It seems likely that Warrington Rogers did hand the lease over to his nephew who used it to form Black Hills station with his partner Balke, but this is not completely clear.

Richard (Dick) ‘Rodeo’ Hayes. Manager in September 1941 (WHPJ, 1-9-1941; Hoofs & Horns, August 1949: 13). C.D. Kelman had heard of a Dick Hayes being sacked from the company (Kelman pers. comm. to David Nash, 7-6-1990). This may have been because of an alleged cattle stealing incident described to me by Charlie Schultz. Frank Willmington (pers. comm.) reckons Dick Hayes was never manager of Wave Hill and his opinion was supported by Cec Watts (pers. comm.). Possibly he was a relieving manager or perhaps he was only there a short time before being sacked. He had previously managed Roper Valley station (Hoofs & Horns, 1949: 13). In 1946 he became manager of Rosewood (Hayes, 2008: 220).

Leonard William Mann. Manager in July 1942 (WHPJ 22-7-1942) and to at least November 1943 (WHPJ, 12-11-1943). He was sworn in as a JP in August 1943 (WHPJ, 2-8-1943). He took over after Kelman, but didn’t stay long. According to Kelman (pers. comm. to David Nash, 7-6-1990), Milton Willick then took over, but Len states that after Mann left, Jack Quirk was manager for three or four years (Mann, nd: 14). For additional biographical details see entry under Willeroo.

Jack Quirk. Manager for three or four years from 1943. Len Mann (nd.: 14) claimed that Quirk was Pastoral Inspector for Vesteys and took over Wave Hill as relieving manager when Mann went on leave. Mann resigned and Quirk had to stay at Wave Hill for several years until a replacement could be found. This would fit with the claim that Milton Willick took over in 1946. It’s also supported by Berndt and Berndt (1987: 40-41) who state that Quirk was acting manager in 1944, and by the Wave Hill police who list Quirk as manager in April 1944 (WHPJ, 11-4-1944).
Welfare Patrol Officer Bill Harney visited the station in 1945 while Quirk was manager, and was appalled at the conditions the Aborigines were forced to live under (Harney, 29-6-1945). For additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

**G.C. Burgon.** Manager from at least June 1946 (WH PJ, 20-6-1946, 14-7-1946) until September 13th 1946 when the Wave Hill police reported that, ‘Mr G.C. Burgon & wife left Wave Hill for Q’ld.’ (WH PJ, 13-9-1946).

**Milton Edward Forbes Willick (‘The Big Spaniard’).** Manager from September 1946 (WH PJ, 10-9-1946) to at least July 1950 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; see also Sweeney, 1947: 10; Evans, 23-12-1949; Beckett, 1998: 87; WH PJ, 2-7-1950).

Willick was born on July 16th 1912 (Stockman’s Hall of Fame archive, No. 79). He’d been manager of Waterloo in 1942 and Nicholson from 1943 to 1946 (Connellan, 1992: 218; Boab Bulletin, February 1998: 10). During 1942 and 1943 he supplied Eddie Connellan with all the beef Eddie could carry to Tanami in his plane to feed the miners and Aborigines who lived there. This was supplied free of charge, without Vestey’s knowledge (Connellan, 1992: 218). Milton became a JP on November 10th 1946 (WH PJ). In 1948 Milton, Frank Willmington and Harry McCullagh organised what Cec Watts (pers. comm.) thought were the first Negri Races, but races were held on the Negri from the 19th to 21st of August 1925 (WH PJ, 18-9-1925).

*Milton Willick, Phyllis Willick and Harry at the Negri Races, 1950 (Mahood collection).*
In 1947 there was trouble between Willick and the Aboriginal stockmen. Native Affairs Director F.H. Moy wrote to the Administrator of the Northern Territory to advise him that:

The manager informed me that earlier in the year four natives from their no. 2 Camp left and said they were just like white men and could leave the job when they felt like it. Then the natives of No. 3 Camp made application to him for an extra blanket and issue of towels, mirrors and razors. The extra blanket was issued but the other articles were unobtainable. Later the manager was informed by his overseer that the natives were not going to work and their spokesman was interviewed by the manager who alleged that when their discussion was over a native named JERRY passed the remark “We are just as good as you …… whites”. The manager turned and asked him to repeat it and the native struck him. A fight ensued and eventually the native gave up. Other natives came down from the camp with their spears and the white staff also gathered round. It is difficult to get a coherent story other than there was a lot of shouting and yelling on both sides but as far as I can ascertain the only people using physical violence were the manager and the native Jerry. The result is that all natives except seven have returned to work and these seven are just sitting around the camp (Moy, 10-9-1947).

Moy added that, ‘The manager, Willock, is a man in his early 30’s. He remains completely aloof from all his employees both white and natives.’ Moy was also quite critical of Millck’s wife, Phyllis:

His wife is a young woman completely unsuited to outback conditions. She has no interest in the running of the property or the welfare of any of the employees. She is the type of girl who should never have left a southern suburb. She has control of the domestic staff and keeps them on the move all the time. The day starts at about 5.30 a.m. and they do not finish up until 9 p.m. or later. They are efficient but they perform their tasks with a bad grace.

Perhaps Phyllis was better than Moy believed or was a quick learner because four years later the Pastoral Review (15-12-1951) said that ‘Mrs Willick is a good stockwoman and can kill and dress a bullock.’

By 1951 Willick and Damien Miller were the lessees of Argadargada station (Hoofs & Horns, April 1951: 43 and August 1951: 43) and by 1952 Willick had gone to Hamilton Downs (Hoofs & Horns, October 1952: 42). He was a part-owner of Hamilton Downs until the station was divided into three. He then became sole owner of the section which modestly he named Milton Park (pers. comm., Marie Mahood; Clark, 2001: 3). In 1962 he was a member of the party that opened a stock route across the Tanami Desert from Bililluna to Alice Springs (Sunday Mail, 14-4-1962: 3). In 1963 he became part-owner of Mongrel Downs with Bill Wilson and Joe Mahood (pers. comm., Marie Mahood).

Beth Beckett (1998: 91) says that Milton originally came from Sydney and began work with Vesteys as a bookkeeper. She says he worked hard and played hard, was quietly spoken and a true gentleman. His nickname was ‘the Big Spaniard’ (Gordon Buchanan, Buchanan family papers). He married Phyllis Evelyn on October 20th 1940. Phyllis
originally had come from Brisbane to act as governess for her cousin’s children (Beckett, 1998: 91).

**J.M. Jones.** Acting manager in June 1951 (WHPJ, 30-6-1951). The Wave Hill police referred to him as ‘Vesteys’ manager’ and alleged he was having sex with various Aboriginal women at Wave Hill. In respect to the incidence of cohabitation at Wave Hill, a report written at the end of 1952 by Native Affairs Officer Ted Evans states that there had been action taken against a former acting manager the previous September which, although unsuccessful, would have had a good effect on the other white employees. Evans then goes on to name this acting manager as Jones (Evans, 5-11-1952).

**C. Hayward.** Possibly caretaker or assistant manager in November 1950 (WHPJ, 10-11-1950).

**Ken Cameron.** Manager from the end of 1950 (after Willick) until early 1952 (WHPJ, 18-5-1951, 6-6-1951, 26-10-1951; Evans, 5-11-1952). From Wave Hill he went over to Rockhampton to manage Fitzroy Vale (pers. comm., Cec Watts; Evans, 5-11-1952). An article in *Hoofs & Horns* (May 1951: 47) suggests he began on Wave Hill in April or May 1951. He’d previously run Flora Valley from about 1946 to 1950 (pers. comm., Cec Watts; *Hoofs & Horns*, May 1951: 47 and August, 1951: 43).

**Alan Willick.** Bookkeeper in October 1947 (Sweeney, 1947: 10).

**Jim Croker.** Head stockman at No 3 camp in July 1951. He is said to have been a nephew of Sam Croker, the first manager of Wave Hill (*Hoofs & Horns*, August 1951: 44). However, there is no evidence that Sam had either a sister or brother in the Territory so perhaps Jim was really Sam’s son. Jim was killed in a fall from a horse during a race at Katherine in May 1952 (*NT News*, 24-5-1952). He was alleged to be the father of Sandy Croker (Evans, 12-7-1950: 6).

**Lyn Hayes.** Head stockman, c1952-68 (pers. comm., Len Hill). For additional biographical details see entry under Willeroo.

**Peter (Sabu) Sing.** Head stockman, c1952-68 (pers. comm., Len Hill).

**Jim Tuff.** Head stockman, c1952-68 (pers. comm., Len Hill).

**Chips Garrard.** Head stockman, 1960s (pers. comm., Len Hill).

**Peter Hagen.** Overseer before August 1951. He was head stockman on Wave Hill in June 1950 (WHPJ, 29-6-1950). He married Doreen Grey in 1951 (*Hoofs & Horns*, August 1951: 45).

**Miss Dorf Grey.** Bookkeeper in August 1951 (*Hoofs & Horns*, August 1951: 45).

**Colin Wardle.** Head stockman in 1951 (*Hoofs & Horns*: June 1951: 40).

**J. Bell.** Assistant Manager in 1955 (WHPJ, 26-12-1955).

Originally from Kyogle in New South Wales (pers. comm., Peter Harpham), before he took over at Wave Hill, Tom had managed Willeroo, Delamere and Manbulloo from a base at Manbulloo. Later he became Vesty’s Pastoral Inspector (Hoofs & Horns, July 1955: 10). Peter (Sabu) Sing remembered Tom in his younger days as being, ‘a very good horseman. He was regarded as one of the best horsemen in the Territory’ (Sing, cited in Ogden, 1992: 54). By the time he got to Wave Hill he had gained weight and his Aboriginal name was Julukut – ‘big guts’.

Molly Courts, the wife of the policeman at Wave Hill, says (2008: 109) that, ‘there was a strict dress code and manners to adhere to in the dining room’. Tony Clarke, who was a jackeroo on Wave Hill in Fisher’s time, described the way the evening meals were arranged at the main homestead:

The place was run by bells, one bell half an hour before a meal giving people time to clean up – then the second bell for the meal. There were two dining rooms one for the whites and one for the blacks. The main dining room near the homestead was for the silvertails. The manager Tom was not married at the time, the nursing sister acted as hostess, overseer and head stockman who had been promoted from jackeroos, jackeroos and any important visitors ate there. The other dining room in the kitchen was for the cook, bore mechanic, saddler, ringers, butcher, baker, horse breaker and handy man …

After the first bell for tea at night the people eating in the main dining room would wait in the smoko area – it was part of the managers and guest quarters, it had paperbark walls for coolness … After the second bell Tom would leave his quarters [and when he arrived] All would stand up and then follow him into the dining room in seniority, Tom first and myself last. The meal was usually roast or corn beef and some nights stew or curry … After tea we would all return to the smoko area for coffee, leaving there to go to the rec room before retiring. The lighting plant was turned off about 10 o’clock (Clarke, 2008: 84).

Fisher married an Irish woman, Anne, in 1961, his third marriage. He was manager of Wave Hill when the Gurindji strike occurred in 1966, and event that, ‘nearly broke Tom’s heart’ (Hayes, 2008: 223). Neil Dudgeon (pers. comm.) who was a young ringer on Wave Hill in Fisher’s time remembers him with the greatest respect and is adamant that Fisher respected the Aboriginal stockmen and that they respected him. He remembers Tom as something of a father figure to his young stockmen. During television coverage of the annual Gurindji Freedom Day celebrations statements have been made such as, ‘Tom Fisher bin treat us like a dog’. I met Neil shortly after such coverage was aired on television and Neil’s emphatic reaction was, ‘Ohh, that hurt me! That really hurt me!’ Neil says that Fisher expressly forbade any of the white employees from having sexual relations with the Aboriginal women and he (Neil) made the point that the stockmen, black or white, were seldom in at the homestead where the women were. His statement that Fisher kept control of his white employees is supported by Molly Courts who said (2008: 109) that Fisher ‘held a tight rein on the conduct of all his young Jackaroos’.
Lauris Farrow was on Wave Hill from 1956 to 1962 and knew Tom Fisher well. According to Lauris (Farrow, nd., 4) Tom, ‘was a benevolent dictator. The station was very well run, with attention to cleanliness, tidiness, punctuality and civility’. She added (p. 5) that, ‘Throughout the territory [sic] Tom was known as an excellent cattleman and manager. For a short stumpy man he rode a horse beautifully. He was boss and all, particularly the blacks were submissive to him. In return we all knew he would do his best for the company and ‘his people’.

Under Tom’s management the station was regarded as ‘dry’ (no alcohol), but Lauris (nd., 4) remarked that:

after a carrier arrived Tom and others did have binge drinking sessions. Every now and then, late at night, ‘the call’ would be sent around to the ‘inner circle’ from Tom … to attend at his home. He would be inebriated. We joined him, drinking out of silver tankards … At first, quite a jolly time. The time dragged on and on, we waited and waited for him to drop into a drunken sleep, eventually he would and then we’d slip away to our cots.

Sister Ellen Kettle, who visited the station in 1954 and 1955, described Fisher as, ‘a very capable manager, [who] had managed to establish and maintain among his European staff, a comradeship which did not exist to the same extent on any of the other large company-owned stations’ (Kettle, 1967: 64).

Generally speaking, Fisher may well have been benevolent and respectful towards the Aborigines – Lauris Farrow said that when he knew Welfare Officers were coming he and Lauris’ husband Cec would tell the Aborigines to hide their ‘half caste’ children, but she also recalled seeing Tom kicking an Aboriginal man, ‘Algi’ (Elsey?), while he was on the ground and then telling him clear out. She presumes that Tom had first knocked him down (Farrow, nd., 9).

Rob Sampson. Head stockman in 1954-58 (Sampson, pers. comm.). According to Geoff Allen (1998), his nickname was ‘The Millionaire Stockman’.

Rob Sampson, Wave Hill, late 1950s (Sampson collection).
Frank Johnson. Bookkeeper in December 1955 (WHPJ, 4-12-1955).

Bob McLachlan. Travelling manager for Vesteys in 1955 (Hoofs & Horns, July 1955: 8). For additional biographical details see entry under Manbulloo.

Cam Chisholm. Overseer in 1956 (WHPJ, 1-3-1956) through to 1958. He was gone by May of that year and went to the Western Australian Lands Department (Buckland, 20-5-1958).

Arthur Proudfoot. Assistant manager (new) in March 1956 (WHPJ, 1-3-1956).


Len Brodie. Head stockman in 1963 (WHPJ, 27-1-1963). As of about 2000 he was living on Springvale Road, Katherine (pers. comm., Dave Napier and Cam White).

Neil Dudgeon. Head stockman 1963-66. He was later manager of Sturt Creek (pers. comm., Neil Dudgeon).


Charlie Curry. Manager after the Aboriginal walk-off (pers. comm., Billy Harney).


Jim Ward. Assistant head stockman in 1964 (WHPJ, 3-8-1964). For additional biographical details see entry under Argyle.

Buck Buchester. Head stockman, 1969-83 (pers. comm., Buck Buchester). For additional biographical details see entry under Moolooloo.


Frank William Willmington. Manager in 1967-68 (Bostock, 2-3-1967; WHPJ, 14-4-1968; Hardy, 1968: 175-76; pers. comm., Cec Watts; NT News, 19-4-1968). Frank had been overseer or ‘under manager’ in 1942 (WHPJ, 25-9-1942; pers. comm., Bill Cusens). For additional biographical details see entry under Lissadell.

Ralph Hayes. Manager from March 1969 until 1979 (Memorandum by de Vos, 23-3-1969; WHPJ, 6-6-1970). He was born in February 1936, the eldest son of Mary and Dick ‘Rodeo’ Hayes. Ralph’s first six years were spent with his parents on Waterloo station.
From 1946 his father was on Rosewood and later on Roper Valley. When his parents split up (some time after 1942) Ralph went to live at Manbulloo. He was educated in Alice Springs, Brisbane and Katherine.

He was first on Wave Hill as a ‘trainee stockman’ (jackeroo) in about 1956 (pers. comm., Rob Sampson; Ogden and Steele, 1995: 12). He became head stockman there in July 1962 (Hoofs & Horns, July 1962: 6). A visitor to Wave Hill in 1962 was told by Ralph that after his experience of ‘Zebu infused’ cattle on another station, ‘It will be a long time before any other breed of cattle will be as good as Shorthorns in this country’. He said that ‘cattle are hard enough to handle without making it harder still by introducing “foreign wild blood”’ (Adams, 1962: 988). Since 1962 every station in the Victoria River district has converted to Brahman or Brahman-cross cattle.

Cec Watts (pers. comm.) says that Hayes was head stockman and overseer until 1964 when he left to become manager of Gordon Downs. He was manager there from 1964 to 1969 and then went to manage Wave Hill (Hayes, 2008: 223). According to Thea Hayes (2008: 228), citing a tribute to Ralph in the Northern Territory Hansard Seventh Assembly first Session 21/02195, he was described by his friends as ‘an introvert, a gentleman, a good man, a good boss, and a man of integrity and honour … [and] … held in high regard by his peers’. Ogden and Steele (1995: 12) say that:

Ralph was appointed manager of Wave Hill at a time when sensitive handling of race relations were needed and Ralph provided good advice to the Aboriginals who were the recipients of the excision from Wave Hill which became the Gurindji’s cattle venture.

The majority of the Aboriginals that walked off, all came back to work for Ralph Hayes. He had grown up with many of them and he was fair dinkum to them.

This quite probably is true. Ralph had grown up with Aborigines, could speak Gurindji language, and had long-term close relationships with many. Because of this, when he took on the management of Wave Hill three years after the Wave Hill walk-off he went to Daguragu and was able to obtain all the Aboriginal workers he required. However, when I met Ralph at Wave Hill station in 1975 and shared morning smoko with him and the other employees, he was making loud comments about the ‘drunken rock apes’ (ie the Aborigines) at Daguragu, and sneering at the name ‘Daguragu’ itself by using a sarcastic, sing-song voice to pronounce the name, ‘Dah-goo-rah-goo’. In 1975 there was widespread hostility towards the pending Northern Territory Land Rights Act, so Ralph may have felt some need to be anti-black in the presence of his employees.

In 1975, 39 years after Bill Harney’s damning report on Aboriginal living conditions on Wave Hill and nine years after the walk-off, a number of Aborigines were again employed on the station. They and their families were living in angle iron, cement-floored huts a hundred metres or so from the homestead complex. There were two toilet-shower blocks at this camp. One was on the uphill side of the camp and because of broken pipes, effluent was flowing through the middle of the camp. This had been going on for long enough to create a wide boggy strip with long green grass extending the length of the camp. In the other block, located to one side of the camp, all the toilets bar one were blocked and contaminated water lay in pools on the floor. As a result, children were relieving themselves on the ground within the camp area. Ralph Hayes was either unaware of or
paid no regard to these appalling conditions which not only threatened the health of the people living there, but also the health of the station employees at the nearby homestead.

Ralph married Thea McGovern at Wave Hill in August 1961 (Courts, 2008: 155-56). They had sons Anthony, David and Jason, and daughter Penelope. They left Wave Hill in 1979 and shifted to a property near Toowoomba. Over the following fifteen years he worked on Bidji Park, Toogoolawah and Murrawah. Ralph died of lung cancer at Toowoomba on February 2nd 1995, aged 59 (Hayes, 2008: 226-27; Ogden and Steele, 1995: 12).

Dick Jansen. Manager, c1973 to 1979 (pers. comm., Len Hill: Dayes 2008: 13-48). This clashes with Ralph Hayes’ time as manager so Jansen may have been overseer. He and his wife Jenny retired to the Clermont area, Queensland.

Graeme ‘Paddlefoot’ Fagan. Manager in the early 1980s (pers. comm., Darryl Hill). While manager he is alleged to have shot retired bronco horses and good stock horses, and burnt the old bronco gear (pers. comm., Buck Buchester). Later he was working at Mudginberry. I met Graeme in 2008 when he was with Lands and Planning in Darwin and he told me that as Vesteys sold each station any records at that station were taken to Wave Hill. Wave Hill was the last of the Vestey stations to be sold so by the time it was sold there was a very large and historically valuable collection of records there. When he was manager there he had to clean up the place for its impending sale. He said that he contacted the Stockman’s Hall of Fame and offered them all the records. The Hall of Fame was interested in obtaining them but never managed to organise to collect them. In frustration at their inaction, he had all the records taken ‘out on the flat’ and burnt. The only item he kept was the Wave Hill Improvements Book, a very large volume documenting every piece of infrastructure on the place, with photographs. On the proviso that I make a copy for him (which I did) he agreed that I could take this book to the Butlin Archives in Canberra, which has a wonderful collection of pastoral records from stations around Australia (including a great collection of records from the neighbouring Victoria River Downs). The Improvements Book has now been digitalised and can be accessed on the internet via http://archives.anu.edu.au/exhibitions/treasures-anu-archives/wave-hill-station-improvements-book.

Mark ‘Fox’ Lumsden. Acting manager at times (pers. comm.).

Gavin Hoad. Manager, wife Trish. Manager from the time Vesteys sold the station in about 1992, through to 2010 (NT News, 2-6-2010). They are now (2017) based at Maryfield, near Larrimah.
First taken up in about 1884 by Robert Cowley Cooper and Henry Gould Stuckey (and possibly a man named Galloway (Northern Territory Times, 4-6-1886). Cooper was born on a property near Lake George, New South Wales, which had been granted by the Crown to his father. The property was called Willeroo, the name of the curlew in the local Aboriginal language, and later the same name was given to the land taken up in the Northern Territory (The Pastoral Review, 15-4-1914; Tom Pearce to Billy Linklater, 27-5-1950).

In June 1885 it was reported that, ‘One thousand five hundred head of cattle belonging to Messrs. Cooper and Stuckey have arrived on the Victoria river to stock country there’ (Parsons, 1-7-1885). The Northern Territory Times of August 29th 1885 reported, ‘Messrs. Cooper and Stuckey’s mob has also arrived on their country, which is situated between the Victoria and Delamere stations. As both these mobs had teams with them they have made quite a track.’ (Northern Territory Times, 29-8-1885). Giles (letter to Drover Rose, 14-9-1905) mentions that Drover Galloway delivered the first cattle to Willeroo. In 1889 Willeroo livestock bore the brands U2Y, RS2, R7C, 66U and A1 followed by a sideways S (Northern Territory Times, 27-4-1889).

In April 1892 it was reported that, ‘One station owner, at least, has of late been seriously contemplating the withdrawal of all his cattle from his extensive runs in consequence of the incessant and increasing troublesomeness [sic] of the wild blacks’ (Northern Territory Times, 15-4-1892). This was almost certainly the owner of Willeroo. The first manager, Sid Scott, was killed by blacks later that same year and in August 1895 Cooper and Stuckey relinquished the lease. At the time it was said that:

One cause of the failure of the station is said to be that the hostility of the blacks has prevented the herd from being systematically worked, and from what we know of the records of that district it does appear as though the natives had particular designs on Willeroo, for their depredations were most frequent. It is possible that Mr. Cooper took very little interest in the station after the brutal murder of W.S. Scott, the then manager, about three years ago, for as far as we can discover operations
have since been carried on in a very easy-going fashion (*Northern Territory Times*, 23-8-1895).

The decision to throw up the lease must have been made well before August 1895 because in 1894 the Willeroo cattle were sold to Joe Bradshaw for what was said to have been a very low price (*Northern Territory Times*, 23-8-1895). The cattle were mustered by Jock McPhee (‘Tam-a-Shanter’ of *We of the Never Never* fame; *SMH*, 14-2-1942) and became the nucleus of the Bradshaw herd (*Log Book of Bradshaws Run; Northern Territory Times*, 23-8-1895).

In December 1895 the ‘recently abandoned’ station homestead was described by Government Resident Dashwood as follows:

> The Station is situated on the north bank of McClures Creek which comes away from the Eastward. The buildings [consist] of a two roomed galvanised iron house, the roof of which had recently been blown off, a low rough iron pla [sic] for a kitchen & a small meat house, also a stone enclosure, large basalt stones piled up about 8 feet high, no roof. This was used as a harbour of refuge from the attacks of natives. On the opposite side of the creek a small piece of ground had been fenced off for a garden. The improvements are of very little Value. The only water supply seemed to be a small soakage in the creek (Dashwood, 1895).

In November 1894 an Aboriginal named Mahdi was murdered by blacks at Willeroo. Reports at the time said that:

> Mahdi was a boy Constable Wurmbrandt brought to these parts from Alice Springs some years ago. Of late he had been employed as a stockman and tracker at Willeroo station. He was noted for his cruelty to the local blacks, and the general impression here is that he played for what he got (*Northern Territory Times*, 14-12-1894).

This article went on to say that three Aborigines had been arrested for this crime and that after they had arrived in Katherine an old Aborigine came up to the police station. Constable Burt went out to meet him, ‘but when the Constable had got within fifteen paces of the black fellow the old villain deliberately hurled a barbed spear at Burt, who by promptly ducking, caused the spear to do nothing more than graze his face.’ After throwing the spear the old man got away.

In July 1896 the *Northern Territory Times* reported that a man named Johnson had been attacked on Dead Finish Creek and his horses driven away. He and his black boy were under siege from daylight until midday when George Ligar arrived. Together they then tracked the horses for twelve miles and found one with a spear wound in the neck (*Northern Territory Times*, 3-7-1896).

During the 1890s, ‘The niggers were so aggressive as to occasionally spear horses and cattle alongside the stockyard, and on one occasion they had the cook – a Celestial – besieged for days while the others were away’ (*Northern Territory Times*, 15-6-1900).

In 1898 Jock McPhee was reported to have taken up Willeroo for the purpose of mustering cattle to supply Bradshaw station, and to have mustered over 300 head that year (*Kingston, 1-2-1899: 23*). McPhee certainly was on the station, but who held the lease
has not yet been determined. According to Billy Linklater in his biography, *Gather No Moss* (Linklater and Tapp 1968: 50):

Jock McPhee held the fort alone for three years on Willeroo after Sid Scott had been killed there in an unprovoked attack by the blacks in 1892. One day when it was raining spears, McPhee walked out, picked some up, handed them back and told the blacks to go away like good boys or he would have to send the trooper after them. They went.

The station was reported as being restocked in 1900. In June 1900 the Timber Creek police (22-6-1900) reported that, ‘Messrs Littleton and Madden arrived from Wyndham en route for Katherine [they have] taken up Old Willeroo Run, and going to settle there’. They had taken up lease 2137 (96 square miles) and paid the rent to 1905 (NTAS NTRS F670, vol. 3, GL 2137; *Northern Territory Times*, 10-8-1900), but a news report in the *Northern Territory Times* on September 21st suggests they abandoned it almost immediately:

Mr. Madden, who, in conjunction with his partner, Mr. Littleton, has lately taken up some country in the Victoria River District, complains bitterly of the ferocious and mischievous character of the blacks in that neighbourhood. He states that his partner and himself took up this country with the intention of stocking, but after his recent experience of the character of the blacks, he feels rather doubtful as to whether they will proceed with their enterprise.

On May 7th 1901, Mounted Constable O’Keefe mentioned ‘Magnus and Watson and a man named Brady was at the old Willeroo Station on Sunday’ (TCPJ Notes). This suggests that a new homestead was established by this time so it appears that either McPhee, or Littleton and Madden, shifted the homestead from its original site on the headwaters of Gregory Creek, to the present-day site.

People were active on Willeroo into 1901 because the *Northern Territory Times* reported on April 5th that a man named Charles Rix had accidentally shot himself at Willeroo. Later the ‘Katherine correspondent’ to the *Northern Territory Times* reported that, ‘I have just received a letter from Willeroo station that one of the mares has been killed and eaten by the blacks quite close to the camp’ (*Northern Territory Times*, 4-10-1901).

The next owner appears to have been Tom Pearce. According to Hewitt (1996: 234-236), Tom Pearce took up a block of 100 square miles in 1897 which became the basis of his future Willeroo station, but this appears to be incorrect. Willeroo was visited by the Governor of South Australia George Le Hunte in June 1905 and a ‘correspondent’ with the Governor’s party reported of Willeroo that, ‘It is at present only a stockman’s hut and cattle yards.’ He went on to note that, ‘Among the horses there we saw two Arab stallions bred by Sir J.P. Boucut, and a Suffolk punch stallion … This station has only recently been started by Mr. Pearce. It has at present 1000 head of cattle and 400 horses’ (*The Observer* [Adelaide], 4-11-1905).
During 1905 Pearce built two large paddocks, three wire yards and a dam across the creek at the homestead, and it was his intention to build a new homestead the following year (Johnston, 31-12-1905: 24). A ‘six-roomed house, kitchen and pantry’ were completed in 1907 (Rowe, 14-2-1908: 27).

Pearce retained Willeroo until selling out to Vesteys in 1915 (Hewitt, 1990: 234-36). In 1921 Pierce Kelly described Willeroo as being 2800 square miles with about 8000 cattle (The Age [Melbourne], 4-10-1921). By 1932 the property was being run as an outstation of Manbulloo, then owned by Vesteys (Morey, 1977d: 19). Vesteys held the lease until 1952 when the station was resumed by the Government. It was thrown open for lease applications in 1959 and described as:

- a maintenance area of broken tableland country with lightly timbered stony ridges and rocky outcrops and semi-coastal rank areas in the northern portion.
- The annual rental of the block is 3/- per square mile, and the estimated carrying capacity is 8,000 head of cattle. There are two bores and two wells fully equipped, a homestead, men’s quarters, store, etc., a station drafting yard and seven broncho yards, a bullock paddock and five paddocks around the homestead (Hoofs & Horns, August 1959: 46).

In 1941 the station brand was ZTQ (TCPJ, 6-4-1941).
By the 1960s Willeroo, which at that time included Scott Creek, and the neighbouring Dry River station were owned by Bryce Killen. In 1968 he decided to form a public company, Northern Agricultural Development Corporation (Dayes, 2008: 23). This company had big plans for farming and apparently invested $16 million in capital works, including the clearing of large areas on Scott Creek for sorghum production. In 1969-70 14,000 head of VRD cattle were purchased to increase the size of the Willeroo herd (Dayes, 2008: 23). The farming project failed and by 1974 the station was in the hands of a liquidator (Northern Territory Newsletter, December 1977: 5). Whether any subsequent owner continued with sorghum growing is unclear, but at least some of the cleared country has since reverted to savannah (pers. obs.).

In 1977 the Northern Territory Cabinet backed a proposal to establish a government owned ‘management group’ which would buy Willeroo and Dry River. This purchase would cover ‘all improvements, an extensive range of farming plant and about 16,000 branded cattle including thousands of Brahman cattle’ (Northern Territory Newsletter, December 1977: 5). After negotiating the sale for ten months the owner sold the station to Western Development, a company owned by American Luke Wise and family. The purchase price was understood to be $1 million (NT News, 24-10-1979).

In April 2014 Willeroo, at this time owned by the Sultan of Brunei, was sold to an Indonesian buyer believed to be a company named Great Giant Livestock, one of the biggest importers of Australian livestock (http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/property/grass-is-greener-as-rains-set-ideal-sale-conditions-for-big-stations/story-fnko7zi0-122688694889).

William Sydney Scott. Manager from mid-December 1886 (Northern Territory Times, 8-1-1887) to October 1892. According to Tom Pearce it was Scott who gave the name Willeroo to the station. Scott was killed by the blacks at ‘McLure Rocky Waterhole’, on the VRD road seven miles from the station, on October 11th 1892 (Northern Territory Times, 11-11-1892, 6-1-1893). He was 30 years old. Evidence at the scene indicated that ‘the blacks crept along under cover of the bank of a creek and speared him unawares when sitting down at the foot of tree and then he ran to another tree for protection against stones & spears.’ His body had been terrible mutilated, ‘the arms certainly, if not the feet, being chopped off with a tomahawk and the front and top of the skull smashed in’ (Palmer, 1-11-1892).

Accounts vary as to what happened in the days after the murder. Apparently a station ‘black boy’ and the Chinese cook escaped and headed for Katherine, and on their way in they met Lindsay Crawford and his ‘half caste henchmen’ travelling towards Victoria River Downs. One account says that when he arrived at Willeroo Crawford found no Aborigines at the homestead but later discovered that there were, ‘thirty or forty camped in the horse paddock, about half a mile from the station. Mr. Crawford and his party charged their camp, and found Mr. W.S. Scott’s saddle and bridle and some other things’ (Northern Territory Times, 11-11-1892). Another account says of Crawford that:

It was he who, when the niggers murdered poor Scott on Willeroo, avenged his death in a terrible manner, and the “gruelling” he gave the myalls on that occasion is still spoken of by the niggers in those parts as the Israelites of old oft told to their children the horror of the wrath of the Lord, when he sent plague,
pestilence, and famine into their land as a correction for their misdeeds (The Evening Telegraph, 27-7-1912: 40).

By the time Crawford arrived at Willeroo the homestead had been looted, the blacks stealing four Winchester rifles and 300 rounds of ammunition, two dozen pairs of boots, twenty bags of flour, four or five bags of rice, 60lbs of tobacco, pipes, matches, two dozen pairs of new dungaree suits, four new rugs, all of Scott’s clothes, blankets and rugs. They also killed thirty or forty chooks and threw them in heaps (Northern Territory Times, 11-11-1892). This was in addition to the Martini-Henry rifle and cartridges they took from Scott’s body (Northern Territory Times, 21-10-1892). They also abducted a little Aboriginal boy named Crawford and a young Aboriginal woman named Alpha. Alpha was said to speak good English and to come from the Blue Mud Bay area (Northern Territory Times, 21-10-1892). Nothing is known of their fate.

Syd Scott, c1890 (Katherine museum).

About a day after Crawford arrived at Willeroo a group led by Mounted Constable Brown arrived from Springvale and set about securing what was left of the station and tracking down the murderers (Northern Territory Times, 21-10-1892). Scott’s brother, George Edward Scott, who’d been working on the station with him but had gone to Darwin a few days previously, returned to Willeroo to assist police after the murder. On a previous
occasion he himself had been speared at Willeroo, but only wounded (unprovenanced newspaper cutting, 17-10-1892). According to reports at the time, their search for the culprits (other than those apparently killed by Crawford and his men) was unsuccessful because the blacks had split up and headed in various directions (Northern Territory Times, 25-11-1892).

Scott’s remains were brought in to the station and buried there (Northern Territory Times, 4-11-1892). Eight years later Fred Mork was attacked at the same place where Scott was killed but managed to escape (Northern Territory Times, 22-6-1900; see entry under Delamere).

Palmer. The unofficial caretaker of Willeroo after Scott was murdered (Northern Territory Times, 21-10-1892).

George Edward Scott. Manager in June 1895 (Log Book of Bradshaws Run). George was the brother of W.S. Scott who probably took over management after his brother was murdered and stayed to wind up Cooper and Stuckey’s affairs.

Jock McPhee. In 1896 he was reported to have taken up the abandoned lease in August 1895 (Northern Territory Times, 18-9-1896). He definitely had a 400 square mile lease in 1896, the rent paid for four years (NTAS NTRS F670, vol. 3, lease 1889). Possibly this was to forestall any other would-be leaseholder so that he could muster the remaining cattle without interference. He had a camp on Gregory Creek in 1900 from which he could muster Willeroo cattle (TCPJ, 19-11-1900). At the time of his death (1910) he was described as a stockman (Katherine Mortuary Records, 1887-1941). For additional biographical details see entry under Bradshaw.

Andison (Bob Anderson?). Manager (new) in May 1905 (The Observer [Adelaide], 4-11-1905; Le Hunte, G. 1905: 6). If ‘Andison’ was ‘Bob Anderson’, he’d been a drover in the Territory in the early 1900s (Northern Territory Times, 30-1-1903, 30-8-1901) and at times also a station manager – he took over the management of Elsey station in 1904 (Northern Territory Times, 18-3-1904).

Frank Henry Kruger. Manager from at least 11-8-1905 to at least April 1911 (Northern Territory Times, 11-8-1905, 4-11-1910; TCPJ Notes, 22-4-1911). He was a nephew of Tom Pearce (TCPJ, 10-2-1905). Kruger was the manager when Nipper shot Lee Gunn, the Chinese cook, and an elderly Aboriginal woman at the homestead (Northern Territory Times, 18-8-1905). Nipper was later speared at the ‘Dreaming Stones, a short distance upstream from the Flora River-Mathieson Creek junction (pers. comm., Billy Harney). In 1910 he paid £28-16-0 for a 576 square mile block, the southern boundary of which was in the Murranji country, 26 miles east of Hawk Knob (NTAS NTRS F199, Box 5).

Thomas Henry ‘Honest Tom’ Pearce. Owner-manager from 1897 to 1915 (The Observer, 4-11-1905; Northern Territory Times, 4-8-1905). Unless otherwise stated the following information comes from Hewitt (1990: 234-6) and from a file in the Mitchell Library (Pearce, 30-5-1946, ML 296).

Pearce was born near Strathalbyn in South Australia in 1862. He received no formal education but managed to teach himself the rudiments of reading and writing. He left home at 14 on one horse and leading another. He went to Mt Eba via Port Augusta and
spent eight years there. After working as a station hand and drover in Central Australia, he arrived in the north in the early 1890s. By 1897 he had obtained a lease over part of old Willeroo. Pearce must have installed a manager because he was engaged in various other business activities – hotel keeping in Katherine, carrying stores to the stations by bullock teams, running the Katherine turf club, and working on a road-making and well-sinking contract between Pine Creek and Tanami.

In 1903 he married Mary Jennings at Palmerston and in 1907 the couple moved to Willeroo. One of the improvements Pearce tried at Willeroo was construction of a dam across a creek near the homestead. This was washed away in a storm soon after it was built (Northern Territory Times, 18-1-1907).

Tom Pearce in old age (Pastoral Review, 15-11-1941).

In 1913 the Northern Territory Times (27-2-1913) reproduced part of a letter written by Pearce:

We had a splendid storm last night, the finest downpour we have had this season. There was naturally much rejoicing this morning, everything looked so fresh and
fair, and the creek running a “banker.” But – lying dead in the yard we found five good-grade Arab stallions bred on the Station. All apparently had been stuck dead by the same flash of lightning. For a moment general rejoicing – the next moment joy banished in one act!

Pearce and his wife remained there until 1915 when they sold out to Vesteys and went to live in Sydney. Mary died from bubonic plague in 1919 (Northern Territory Newsletter, July 1977) and Pearce returned to the Territory, working as a cattle station manager in Central Australia. By about 1930 he had shifted to Scotts Creek, a village near Adelaide, where he remained until his death in January 1952 at the age of 90. His ashes are believed to have been buried in the Elsey station cemetery (Hewitt, 1990: 234-6; Northern Territory Newsletter, July 1977). His name is commemorated at Mount Pearce, north northwest of Kathleen Falls on the Flora River (Bowman 1:100,000 map, co-ords 762751). He was ‘Mine Host’ in Jeannie Gunn’s We of the Never Never (SMH, 14-2-1942).

Robert Andrew Muir. Manager on July 6th 1918. He may have been the first manager under Vesteys, from 1915. Without doubt he is the same Muir who was manager of Delamere in 1917 and therefore the two stations were being run as one. While at Willeroo Muir’s Aboriginal wife, Nellie Namarwod, gave birth to a son, William Daniel (James, 1992: 137). This son (Billy) was killed during cyclone Tacy (pers. comm., Johnny Stacey).

By the mid-1920s, in company with Albert Schultz and (Charley?) Peterson (Northern Standard, 25-8-1925), Muir was prospecting in the Tanami Desert. They found gold at the ‘Granite Hills’ (Northern Standard, 20-1-1926). In September 1925 he was reported to have brought in some samples from Tanami which indicated that, ‘gold was spread over a fairly large area’ (Northern Territory Times, 18-9-1925). On the way in from this trip, Albert Schultz died at Green Swamp Well. His death was reported to the Wave Hill police by Muir (WHPJ, 27-7-1925). Apparently whatever gold they found was inadequate to make a living or the area was already leased to someone else, because in 1927 Muir was reported to be working on a cattle station near Barrow Creek (Northern Territory Times, 7-1-1927).

Muir’s brother was Ernest Claire Muir, alias Sonny Muir, alias Jim Campbell, the infamous cattle duffer who had operated in the Victoria River district until 1908 (see entry under Mayvale; James, 1992: 137). Ion Idriess (1939: 78-79) mentions a settler in the Kimberley in about 1933 who had a brother who was speared in the Territory. In the early 1940s an elderly ‘Bob Muir’ owned a station called Dengan or Phillips Range station, in the central Kimberley between Mt Barnett and Mt House (Bohemia and McGregor, 1995: 127, 130, 210-11, 216), so it seems likely that Robert Muir left the Territory and became a cattleman in the Kimberley.

There is a boab on the upper East Baines River with the name ‘MUIR’ and the number ‘XXIV’ carved on it (XXIV = 24 = 1924?). The East Baines was used as a road between the Depot landing and stations to the south, and probably further south to the Tanami. It’s probable that the inscription was carved by Robert Muir (Lewis, 2000: 104-06).

Dunn. Storekeeper on June 27th 1921 and May 2nd 1922 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, captions on photos 1895 and 1913).
**Pierce George Kelly.** Manager by June 30th 1921 (AIA [Vesteys] collection, captions on photos 1899 and 1910). He was described as being manager of both Willeroo and Delamere (*The Melbourne Age*, 4-10-1921). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

**Rooney (or Roney).** Manager in 1925-26. Rooney was a married man with his wife and three children on the station (Apsley, 1926: 95; Battle, 1925; *Northern Standard*, 12-2-1926 and 19-2-1926).

**Donald Stephen Rankine.** Manager of both Willeroo and Delamere in 1928 (*Northern Territory Times*, 20-7-1928; Hall 1970: 75). For additional biographical details see entry under Wave Hill.

**William Arthur Hall Crowson.** Manager from about 1931 (Morey, 1977d: 19) to at least September 1934 (*Northern Standard*, 9-10-1934). He died at Wave Hill on May 23rd, 1935 and was buried on a rise overlooking the homestead (WHPJ, 23-5-1935).

**Roy Henry Bartlam.** Overseer, 1934-1936 (*Adelaide Advertiser*, 30-7-1936). For additional details see entry under Delamere.

**Jim Bennett.** Manager in 1936 (TCPJ, 27-9-1936). For additional biographical details see entry under Delamere.

**Len Mann.** Manager when John Newmarch was general manager for Vesteys, based at Manbulloo (1936-1938). Unless otherwise stated the information for Len Mann comes from an unpublished manuscript written by Mann (nd.).

Len was the manager when Tom Fisher first arrived in the region and he claims he had to teach Tom everything except ride a horse. While he was at Willeroo Mann also was in charge of outstations Birrimbah and Delamere. These each had a head stockman with Aboriginal stockmen and a cook. Later Mann became ‘relieving manager’ for Vesteys, taking the place of various managers who were due for six weeks leave after a three-year working period.

First he was on Sturt Creek. While there he made the first airstrip to take Connellan’s Percival Gull aircraft. From Sturt he rode a camel to Gordon Downs to relieve a bookkeeper and he made an airstrip there as well. Next he went to Marrakai station and then to Nutwood Downs when the manager, Paddy Lunn, shot himself in the foot while trying to shoot a scrub bull. After Nutwood he was relieving manager at Nicholson. During this time, for some months Mann also served as cattle buyer for Vesteys. In July 1939 he was relieving manager at Gordon Downs (Hilgendorf, 1994: 46).

While he was managing Willeroo two young women (cousins) travelling around Australia arrived in a utility. Their names were Jean Murch and Bloom Allen, and they stayed for several days. Jean and Len hit it off and on December 7th 1940 they were married in Darlington, Victoria. After honeymooning in Geelong, Melbourne and Sydney, Len was offered and accepted the management of Nicholson. He and Jean spent two years there before shifting to Wave Hill. They were only on Wave Hill for about a year before taking leave and returning to Jean’s family’s farm in Victoria. Jack Quirk was relieving manager while Len was away and when Len resigned from Vesteys no replacement manager could
be found. Quirk had to stay there three or four years. According to Jim Brennan in the Stockman’s Hall of Fame newspaper (March, 2001), after leaving Wave Hill in 1944 Len bought a property named Kooringa between Chinchilla and Miles, and later moved to Mingoola, near Tenterfield. He and Jean had two sons, Colin and Val.

**Clarence Patrick ‘Paddy’ Lunn.** Manager in 1937-39 (anon, Stockman’s Hall of Fame newspaper, March 2001). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says that Lunn married Sheila O’Shea and was on Nutwood station where he was killed in a fall with a horse. His marriage to Sheila and position at Nutwood is confirmed in the *Northern Standard*, (15-10-1940).

**Claude Burton.** Manager or overseer before Watkins (pers. comm., Billy Harney)

**G. Vic Watkins.** Manager in 1942 (TCPJ, 24-8-1942, 9-12-1942. Billy Harney (pers. comm.) thinks his surname was actually Watson. For additional biographical details see entry under Auvergne.

**Ross.** Manager in 1943, ‘recently taken over’ (TCPJ, 22-11-1943).

**Bill Hamill.** Manager in 1945-47, according to an anonymous correspondent to the Stockman’s Hall of Fame newspaper (March, 2001).

**Jack Gorey.** Head stockman in October 1947 when the station was managed from Manbulloo (Sweeney, 1947: 3). Billy Harney (pers. comm.) says Gorey had been to New Guinea to fight the Japanese.

**Jack Liddell.** Head stockman in 1952. His wife was employed there as a cook. The following year Jack and his wife were transferred to Helen Springs (Ryan, 1953: 2). For additional biographical details see entry under Bradshaw.

**Doug Horton.** Overseer in 1952 before transferring to Wave Hill (Ryan 1953: 2).

**R. McLennan.** Overseer in 1953, replacing Jack Liddell (Ryan, 1953: 2). He had his wife and two children on the station where his wife was employed as a cook.

**Tom Humphrey.** Manager in 1955. At Willeroo Tom had a wife, Merle aka Terry, and two children, his wife being a niece of George Kinevan (Beckett, 1998: 181). For further information on Kinevan see entry for Rosewood.

**Rolly McPherson.** Head stockman? In 1954 or 1955 (pers. comm., Don Corcoran).

**Mick ‘Horizontal’ O’Neil.** Head stockman in December 1957 (*Hoofs & Horns*, December 1957: 4). For additional biographical information see entry for Fitzroy.

**Jack D. ‘Bend ‘em Back’ Pender.** Manager in 1961 (TCPJ, 9-7-1961) and 1962 (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). There are two stories to account for his nickname. One is that he always reckoned that when the cattle rushed he could get to the lead and ‘bend ‘em back’. The other has a sexual meaning. He was married to Doreen. By February 1965 he had taken up the St Vidgeons block in the Roper country (NT Cattleman’s Association,

**Grant Unstead.** Head stockman under Pender (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner).

**Ernie Rayner.** Head stockman in 1962, under Jack Pender (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner). Ernie also worked on Coolibah/Bradshaw (1958-59) and VRD (1960-61). In July 1963 he married Pauline Rayner, daughter of Peter Murray, the owner of Coolibah-Bradshaw. Between 1963 and 1968 he was a stock inspector based at Top Springs, and from 1972 to 1975 he and Pauline owned Ballongilly station.

**John (or Bob?) Barnes.** Manager 1963-64? He was married to Pam? (pers. comm., Ernie Rayner).

**Maitland James ‘Lyn’ or ‘Shorty’ Hayes.** Manager in 1964-1966, for the Northern Agricultural Development Corporation. Unless otherwise stated the following information comes from Patsy Hayes and Dick Gill’s portrait of Lyn in *Horsebells and Hobblechains* (Hill, 2003: 21-40). Lyn was born in Wyndham on April 4th, 1939, the second son of Richard and Mary Hayes (née Taylor). Their first son was Ralph, born in 1936 (see entry under Wave Hill). Both his parents were highly accomplished horse riders. The family moved to the Northern Territory in 1937 where Dick became the manager on Waterloo station.

Soon after the outbreak of the Second World War, Mary and their children went south to Brisbane where she gave birth to a third son, Richard Maitland. They didn’t return to the Territory until 1947, by which time Dick was manager of Rosewood station. He had plans to buy Rosewood but became ill and died, and the sale fell through. Mary then accepted an offer by the Manbulloo manager, Tom Fisher, for her to become the cook there. Later she became the cook on Helen Springs. Believing it would be too difficult to raise her three boys together at Manbulloo, Mary sent Milton to his grandparents in Brisbane and Lyn to a Catholic boarding school in Alice Springs. Ralph remained with her on Manbulloo where he became firm friends with Peter ‘Sabu’ Sing.

By the 1960s Lyn, Ralph and Sabu were working together on Wave Hill where Tom Fisher had become the manager. While mustering there Lyn was thrown from his horse which then rolled on him, breaking his leg severely. His horse bolted back to camp and Lyn lay in the blazing sun for three days before he was found, close to death. He was in Darwin hospital for many months while his leg healed.

After recuperating for a period in Katherine, Lyn went back out to Wave Hill where his mother was now the station cook. On Wave Hill the normal practice was for the cook to attend the Christmas dinner, but for some reason Tom Fisher decided to change the rules and exclude Mary from joining in. This resulted in a blazing row, with Mary hurling a cooked bush turkey at Tom and hitting him in the head, and Lyn heaping abuse on him and resigning.

Lyn worked for a time for ‘Cowboy’ Ted Collins in Katherine and then became head stockman on Limbunya under Ray Jansen (see entry for Ray under Limbunya). In the early 1960s he became manager of Willeroo, but in 1966 he left to become a contract

In about 1974 Lyn formed a partnership with Ernie Rayner to establish an abattoir and butchery at Katherine. Eventually the business went into receivership and Lyn went into the sand and gravel business, and also a quarrying venture. He took in a partner who eventually caused the business to fail. Lyn returned to contract mustering, chasing buffalo in Kakadu National Park, but this was not successful.

Regarded as a hard worker and a good boss, Lyn engaged in many wild exploits, many of which, for legal and possible litigation reasons, cannot be placed in print. One which concerns a secret wet season trip into the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve to muster wild cattle which were plentiful there. The trip involved Lyn and his men putting up with frequent storms and mustering across swampy and flooded country. Their blankets were often fly-blown and they often had to sleep on wet ground. In spite of these difficulties, Lyn and his team managed to muster a good sized mob and bring it back to Katherine (pers. comm., Mick Bower). Mick Bower said that Lyn was a firm believer that people should be in control of their destiny and take responsibility for their actions. He took his own life in March 1995.

Gerald and Enid Dayes. Manager from 1966 to 1972 (Dayes, 2008: 23-25; McBean, 2008: 122-23). In 1968 at Willeroo the Scott Creek section of the station was cleared (1968) and farming operations commenced. Jock and Pip Bremmer became the managers of Scott Creek while Gerald continued to run the cattle part of Willeroo. Also, a lot of new fencing was erected and bores sunk on Willeroo. From early 1976 to late 1977 Gerald was head stockman on Delamere. Then he and Enid went to manage Camfield (Dayes, 20087: 28-32.

Charlie Edgar. Manager (when?). He also ran a stock camp on Innesvale for Ian McBean (pers. comm., Mick Bower).


Tom Cuskelley. Manager, 1974-76 (Cuskelley, 2008: 215. The following information comes from this source). Tom was born in Toowoomba on March 13th 1948 to parents Jim and Vonnie. In 1950 Tom’s father drew a soldier’s settlement block near Moura and with two brothers and two sisters Tom grew up there, attending Moura primary school and Theodore high school. He left school in 1962 and began work with a stock and station agent in Theodore, but in December 1962 he obtained a job as a jackaroo on Helen Springs where he remained for four years.

His next position was at Manbulloo, then being managed by Bernie Warren. In 1968 Bernie Warren became manager of Mountain Valley station on the Roper River, and Tom went with him. Four years later Tom went to work on Mainoru. By this time he was married with a one year old daughter. In 1974 he became ‘cattle manager’ on Willeroo.
The station went into receivership in 1975 but Tom was able to stay on while the company tried to trade its way out of debt.

In 1976 Tom and his family returned to Queensland where he went on to manage various cattle stations over the next fifteen years. He spent five years as a stock agent in Biloela and then became a cattle auctioneer with Elders in Moura, where he lives today (2017).

**Don Lawrence Laidlaw.** Manager, 1980s? For a few additional details see entry under Kildurk.

**Luke Wise.** Owner-manager from about September 1978 to October 1981 (*NT News*, 24-10-1979; Chase and Meehan, 1983: 44). He managed Willeroo himself until October 1979 when he decided to employ someone else as manager and to devote his time to another property, Benmara. For few additional biographical details see entry for Delamere.

**Mark Clifford.** Manager? from 1988 to 1993 (Clifford, pers. comm.). For a few additional biographical details see entry under VRD.

**Brian Gough.** Manager for two years from about 1993 (Gough, 2008: 254).

**Dave Muller.** Manager in 1997 (pers. comm., Des Stenhouse).

**Jim Kerr.** Manager in 1999, with wife Fiona (pers, obs.). He left early in 2005 to take over management of VRD.

**David Bowman.** Manager for the past 16 or 17 years (pers. comm., Billy Harney).
WOMBUNGIE

Leslie Verdun Turley. Head stockman in 1950-51. He had been head stockman on Fitzroy station before 1950 as he was trapping brumbies there in October 1949 (Gordon, 1992: 141). Wombungie was originally an outstation of Bradshaw-Coolibah. Turley was the first head stockman there after Wason Byers reopened the outstation in 1950. He left Coolibah towards the end of 1951 and the outstation was temporarily closed down (Hoofs & Horns, January 1950: 44; Evans, 6-12-1952c: 2). In 1952 he was working with a ‘road gang’ (Evans, 1-10-1952).
ABBREVIATIONS

AIA  Australian Investment Agency (Vesteys)


CPP: Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers.

GCPJ: Gordon Creek Police Journal.

ML: Mitchell Library

NAA ACT: National Archives of Australia, Australian Capital Territory.

NAA NT: National Archives of Australia, Northern Territory.

NBA: Noel Butlin Archives.


NMA National Museum of Australia

NTAS: Northern Territory Archives Service.

NTPLIC Northern Territory Pastoral Leases Investigation Committee

NTPLA: Northern Territory Pastoral Lessees Association.

NTRS: Northern Territory Repository Series.

NWPJ: Newcastle Waters Police Journal

PCPJ: Pine Creek police Journal

Pers. comm.: Personal communication

Pers.obs.: Personal observation

SAPP: South Australian Parliamentary Papers.

SHOF: Stockman's Hall of Fame.

SMH: Sydney Morning Herald.

SROWA: State Records Office of Western Australia.

TCPLB: Timber Creek Police Letter Book.
TCPJ: Timber Creek Police Journal.
TCPJ Notes: Timber Creek Police Journal Notes.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Victoria River Doomsday Book has been compiled over nearly four decades and during this time a great many people have assisted in various ways. The core of the book is based on historical documents held in various state and regional archives – newspapers, government records, diaries and photographs – and I am indebted to the staff of these institutions for their help in locating sources. A number of long-term residents of the Greater Victoria River district read and added information to entire drafts of the Doomsday Book at different stages of its evolution. They include Andrew Barker, Mick Bower, Darryl Hill, Marie Mahood, John Stacey, Cec Watts and Rodney Watson. Their contributions have expanded and greatly enriched the final product.

A great many others read the sections on particular stations where they had personal experience. Because of the large number of people involved I’ve listed them all alphabetically. Without doubt there will be some people whose names I have lost or forgotten and I apologise if they find that their names are not included. Included or not, my thanks go to all who have contributed. They have often provided insights into and ‘brought to life’ the personalities and events of Victoria River district history. Those whose names I have in my notebooks and correspondence or who I can still recall are:

Geoff Allen        Stuart Duncan        Gavin Hoad
Dave Allworth      Jeanette Dunn        Ian Hoare
Alan Andrews       Elizabeth Durack      Rod Hollingsworth
Patsy Applebee     Reg Durack
John Armstrong     Chris Edwards
Gerry Ash          Denise Edwards
Betty Atkinson     Pat Elliott
Wayne Bean         Graeme Fagan
Happy Berlowitz    Loris Farrow
John Bradshaw      Lloyd Fogarty
Bobbie Buchanan    Camille Fogarty
Buck Buchester     Norm Forster
Caroline Butcher   Anne Forster
Geraldine Byrne    Ros Fraser
Lester Caine       Glen Galvin
Jan Calley         Joyce Galvin
Anita Campbell     Dick Gill
Doug Campbell      Bevan Gitcham
Paddy Cannon       Evonne Gitcham
Paddy Carlton      Rob Glenn
Donna Cattanach    Lee Graham
Cathie Clement     Tac Hall
Mark Clifford      Alan Hagen
Sam Cook           Bill Hamill
Don Corcoran       Billy Harney
David Cornish      Peter Harpham
Maureen Coulthard  Reg Hart
Jan Cruickshank    Patsy Hayes
Bill Cusens        Brian Hill
Neil Dudgeon       Len Hill

581
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bert Mettam</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Old Tim Yilingayarri</td>
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<td>Glenn Young.</td>
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## BRANDS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRAND</th>
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<tr>
<td>Auvergne</td>
<td>M8M – Macartney and Mayne’s brand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billiluna</td>
<td>UD7 – used for many years up to 1950s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bradshaw</td>
<td>MTQ – supposedly used during Miller brothers time but given his initials more likely in Tom Quilty’s time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billy Braitling</td>
<td>THE</td>
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<td>Coolibah</td>
<td>QTM and MTQ – the Q would cover VRD’s Bull’s Head brand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delamere</td>
<td>62U – also used on Wave Hill during W.F. Buchanan’s time and later in Vestey’s time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flora Valley</td>
<td>UOX</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humbert River</td>
<td>BTB – since Billy Butler’s time (1914-19) and into Charlie Schultz’s time (1928-1971)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inverway</td>
<td>APT – c1920</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ivor Hall</td>
<td>ITH – used by Ivor Townshend Hall when he was on VRD and later on Killarney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jack Beasley</td>
<td>JB conjoined – this is also how he signed his name.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jim Campbell</td>
<td>Ø88, Ø40 and Ø30. These brands would cover many other brands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Killarney</td>
<td>ITH – until 1996 – formerly was Ivor Townshend Hall’s brand on VRD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirkimbie</td>
<td>DJT – 1975</td>
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<td>Limbunya</td>
<td>TLP – 1975</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lissadell</td>
<td>IUT – Mt Marlow, Qld, 1883</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ord River</td>
<td>⊙55 – from at least 1893 to at least 1914.</td>
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<td>Owen Cummins</td>
<td>ETQ – recently held by Fox Lumsden at Kalkarindji.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosewood</td>
<td>JK conjoined – used in Jack Kilfoyle’s time &amp; still used, but also ‘TRW’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skull Creek</td>
<td>4W4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tom Cole</td>
<td>TAN – Drover Rodney Watson registered it later.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VRD</td>
<td>MN5, GG6, WW2, FC3 and RL2 – on cattle from Queensland, 1880s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VRD</td>
<td>G10 until April 1907, but still in use in 1934.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VRD</td>
<td>Bulls Head from April 1907 – originally the brand for all Fisher and Lyons properties in the Territory which were Glencoe, Marrakai, Daly River, Gerowie and VRD – and used on both horses and cattle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wave Hill</td>
<td>62U – in Cahill’s time (1903) and Egan’s time (1923-26)</td>
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<td>Wave Hill</td>
<td>TVH – 1975</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willeroo</td>
<td>U2Y, RS2, R7C, 66U, and A1 followed by a sideways S – in 1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willeroo</td>
<td>J41 – 1890s, ZTQ – 1941</td>
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