Memories from Atnyem Kwaty (Ryan’s Well) and Glen Maggie Homestead
This information was collated by Teresa McCarthy for the Northern Territory Library for the Anmatyerr community history project 2008.
Ned (Edward) Ryan was born in 1835 and died in 1893. He was the foreman of a work crew that spent from 1885 to 1890 (8 years) sinking wells in Central Australia. Ryan’s Well was sunk in 1889 as part of a South Australian Government* strategy to encourage settlement in its ‘northern territory’. A number of wells were sunk along the Stuart Highway, these were Ti Tree Well, Ryan’s Well, Prowse Gap Well, Burt Well, Claraville Well, Paddy’s Hole Well, Police Well (Heavitree Gap), James Range Well and Ooraminna Well.

* (the Northern Territory was governed by South Australia at that time)
Glen Maggie station was established by Sam Nicker and family as a sheep and cattle station in 1914. The homestead that still stands today was built in 1918 and replaced the previously established mud houses. From 1921 Glen Maggie homestead served as a store and telegraph office for the growing population in the area. The population of the area had increased in the 1920s due to the increased number of miners travelling to the Granites in the Tanami Desert in search of gold. In 1929 Glen Maggie Station became part of Aileron Station when it was purchased by Norrie Claxton. The Glen Maggie homestead building was abandoned in 1935 and the telegraph equipment was moved to Aileron.
Eric Penangk’s Memories of Atnyem Kwaty (Ryan’s Well) and Glen Maggie Homestead

Eric Penangk was born on Glen Maggie station in January 1927, his parents Tom Pengart and Ruby Mpetyan worked on Glen Maggie Station. Eric’s father’s job was to draw water from Conner’s Well, Ryan’s Well and Prowse’s Gap Well using the families horses (‘Masala’, ‘Lion’ and ‘Dollar’) and later their camels ‘Kangaroo’, ‘Ginger’ and ‘Jack’. Tom Pengart was assisted by his cousin Cubagee Jack from Pine Hill area. The entire family would travel to the various wells and stay at the well for a number of weeks.

Eric’s mother looked after the goats on the station and she would take them on long walks to find pasture. Eric can recall going with his mother on these long walks. The goats were used for milk and meat. There was a ‘cool room’ behind the homestead where slaughtered goats and cattle would be hung. The walls of the ‘cool room’ were made of cloth that would be dipped in water, this would act as an ‘air conditioner’ as air passed through it keeping the meat cool.

Eric can also remember that the station owners would occasionally kill a bullock and give it to the Aboriginal people on their station. Eric and his family (and other Aboriginal families) lived in camps in the vicinity of the Glen Maggie homestead. They would get their rations from the homestead. As a young boy Eric also worked digging gravel and placing it on trucks to be used in the creation of the Stuart Highway.
A bucket used to draw water from the wells. This photograph was taken at Ti Tree Well and shows the type of buckets used to draw water from the wells.

Image from the Northern Territory Library

Photograph taken at Prowse Gap.

Image from the South Australian Museum
Reference

This information was gained from the information plaques at Ryan’s Well and Glen Maggie tourist stop and from an interview with Eric Penangk on Wednesday 22nd October 2008 during a field trip to Ryan’s Well and Glen Maggie Homestead.