The Fleming ruins and photographs introduction

The research, text and photos in this file come as a result of my friendship with Tom Price. Tom was the then senior agricultural extension officer for Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries Department and was living at the Douglas Daly Experimental Station (DDES), for which he had been appointed manager. Where he was living and working was part of the NT Government’s Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority (ADMA) project farms development. When visiting farmers in the area, he was driving across country one day and came across some station ruins.

On our next visit to his home at the DDES, Tom took my son Bradley and I to the ruins. He was a family friend and we often visited him. Tom then suggested that I undertake some research on the area.

After doing the research Bradley, my cousin Teddy Fogarty who was visiting from Alice Springs, and I once again visited Tom and went to the site. I don’t recall the date of the first trip, but the photos of the second trip are dated October 1982.

The photographs were taken using Teddy and Tom’s cameras, hence the different size in the photographs.

Then in 1986, as part of a National Trust Darwin Branch (as it was then) field trip, Tom again took us to the site. The group met at the Douglas River bridge and with Tom in the lead, the convoy of cars followed him along a fairly rough track to Mick Fleming’s old station site.

In a report of the Field Trip for the National Trust Newsletter I wrote in part,

‘a good time was had by National Trust members and friends on a field trip to the Douglas/Oolloo area on Sunday 28 September 1986. About 30 people (minus the two lost ladies) and two dogs set out to inspect the site of Mick Fleming’s old station and sites on Oolloo. Tom Price and Paddy Liddy acted as guides on the expedition and were generous with their knowledge of the history of the area’.

Paddy Liddy was one of Tom Liddy’s three children. Tom Liddy eventually owned the Fleming pastoral leases. Reference should be made to Bradshaw via Coolibah: The history of Bradshaw’s Run and Coolibah station and They’re Off! Horseracing in the North, publications by Pearl Ogden. Both publications give an extensive history on Tom Liddy and his family. I think he is also mentioned in Legs’ more sweeter than tail, a history of the Fogarty family, as Tom and the Fogarty’s were great friends, from their days as Cobb and Co coach drivers in Queensland.

George Brown (later Lord Mayor of Darwin) advised the group that the magnificent banyan tree was approximately 100 years old. He also thought that the seed from which the tree grew was probably dropped by birds as the tree was not common to the area.
The National Trust field trippers lunched at Fleming homestead site and then went to see the ruins of Tom Liddy’s Ooloo station.

Most of the early research for this project has been misplaced. It was done pre-computers and not a lot remains in my collection. The copied archival material has a CRS prefix so I assume that I did the research, as part of my Tom Liddy work, at the then Commonwealth Archives. I assume also that all the pastoral records would now have gone over to the Northern Territory Archives Service.

This is not a full history of the Flemings or the Liddy family. It was put together around the remaining photograph collection so that it could be given to the Northern Territory Library.

My thanks to the late Tom Price and Paddy Liddy and also Reg Wilson (who still lives in Darwin), all of whom contributed to my original notes. Reg Wilson is the son of Arthur Wilson, executor of Mick Fleming’s estate. He was a surveyor for the Lands Department in Darwin.

There was much visual evidence to be found on Mick Fleming’s homestead area of Douglas station. Apart from the stone remains of the kitchen then was some saddlery gear and equipment, fruit trees and the remains of agriculture and irrigation. On Tom Liddy’s Ooloo land there was evidence of yards and equipment.

Not much to show really for decades of hard work by those who struggled for survival and success, with very little money, no assets on which to fall back on and no markets for their cattle.

Tom Price, Bradley Ogden and Teddy Fogarty at Mick Fleming’s ruins
Photo taken by Pearl Ogden October 1982
Tom Price died as the result of a vehicle accident on his way to the Douglas Daly in January 2000. He is remembered with much affection by Bradley and myself.

I felt that the explanatory text about the photographs was better here, with the photographs, than in the main text.

Bradley Ogden and Teddy Fogarty at Mick Fleming’s ruins
Photo taken by Pearl Ogden October 1982

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NB: The full collection of photographs from the field trip to the Douglas/Ooloo area on Sunday 28 September 1986 are held in the Pearl Ogden Manuscript Collection (MS25) and can be accessed by visiting the Northern Territory Library.