LOOKING BACK
The Northern Territory in 1888

Historical Society of the Northern Territory 1988
Front Cover Photograph:
One of the first N.T. Cricket Teams.
N.T. Historical Society Collection.
LOOKING BACK
The Northern Territory in 1888

Edited by
Val Dixon

Historical Society of the Northern Territory
1988
Foreword

I am delighted to be able to write a brief foreword for the work which follows and to thank, on behalf of the Historical Society of the Northern Territory, some of those who made it all possible.

Since its foundation the Society has been principally concerned with encouraging research on significant aspects of the Northern Territory's past. It has published several books and has also organised annual programmes of meetings addressed by expert speakers and a wide variety of field trips to places of historical significance. Over a year ago the Society Council decided that it should bring together the research efforts of a number of its members in a special publication to mark the two hundredth anniversary of European settlement in Australia. Various themes for such a publication were considered but in the end the Council concluded that it should follow an approach adopted in the multi-volumed Australians: A Historical Library and consider one year, 1888, as a 'slice' of our past. The Council was also concerned that its publication should not simply be of a commemorative character but ought to deal with the Territory in 1888 'warts and all'. In this way, it is hoped, Looking Back, The Northern Territory in 1888 can make a useful contribution to existing knowledge and understanding of the Territory's early history and how some of that history can be viewed in a wider national perspective.

Looking Back would not have been published without the untiring efforts of its editor, Val Dixon. The first suggestion for the book came from Val, she chose and liaised with the authors and she also supervised the book's production, including doing much of its typing.

There are others whose work must also be gratefully acknowledged. The staff of the Printery and the Publicity Office at the Darwin Institute of Technology provided most useful assistance. Publication was made much easier as the result of a grant from the Australian Bicentennial Authority's People on the Move project, administered by the National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory). Last, but by no means least, I must thank the authors. All produced their contributions quickly and efficiently, often in the midst of many other activities. It is also worth mentioning that no author has received or will receive any payment for his or her efforts. All agreed that any profits from the sale of Looking Back will be used for the Society's future publications.

David Carment
President
Historical Society of the Northern Territory
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Contributors

TONY AUSTIN MA (London) MEd (PNG) is Senior Lecturer in Education at the Darwin Institute of Technology. He has published in the areas of Aboriginal/European contact history in the Northern Territory and aspects of educational history in Papua New Guinea. Prior to joining the NT Department of Education as a curriculum specialist, he worked in higher education and curriculum development in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

LEITH BARTER has lived in Darwin since 1976 and has been a member of the Historical Society since that year. He is currently lecturing in Library Practice at the Darwin Institute of Technology and is a practising librarian at the State Reference Library. He is currently studying for a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in History at the University College of the Northern Territory.

DAVID CARMENT BA(Hons) NSW,PhD(ANU) is President of the Historical Society of the Northern Territory and Senior Lecturer in History at the University College of the Northern Territory. He has published widely on aspects of Australian political history, the history of Central Queensland and the history of the Northern Territory. He is also active in the National Trust in the Territory. A former Director of that organisation, he is now a member of its Council and Executive Chairman of its Cultural Heritage Committee.

DON COLGRAVE is Principal Lecturer in Music at the Darwin Institute of Technology. He is a graduate (BA, Dip, Ed) of the University of Tasmania and later completed a degree of Music at the University of Western Australia. Since arriving in Darwin in 1979 he has been active in arts, theatre, choral music and the co-ordination of all Darwin music examinations for the AMEB. His principal research interest is the historical development of community music activities and music education programs in the NT.

MARGARET CLINCH is a Librarian with a variety of working experience, including the NSW Supreme Court Library, tertiary libraries in the NT and New South Wales, and the State Library of New South Wales, particularly the Mitchell Library. At one stage she was Officer-in-Charge, Research at the Mitchell Library. Margaret came to the Northern Territory in 1972 as foundation Librarian of the Darwin Community College. She is currently Project Officer in the Office of the Director and is also responsible for DIT Archives. Currently studying NT history, she already has graduate library and archive qualifications from Australian and Canadian institutions. She has written several historical articles. She compiled the Guide to NT Research Resources, a widely used bibliography and locations list, for the NT Government whilst on secondment to NARU in 1981.

VAL DIXON first came to the Territory in 1955 and as the wife of a Stock Inspector/Station Manager lived in remote areas in the NT, the Kimberley area of Western Australia and Cape York Peninsula in Queensland. She is enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts Program at the Darwin Institute of Technology. She is Secretary and Publications Officer of the Historical Society and is interested in promoting historical research in the NT.

TIMOTHY GEOFFREY JONES is a graduate (B. Comm.) of the University of Melbourne. Prior to self government for the Territory he was, for a number of years, the Public Service Inspector for the Northern Territory, and well known to many Territorians, Public Service and otherwise. His publications are Pegging the Northern Territory: (a history of mining in the NT) (1987) and The Chinese in the Northern Territory (to be published in 1988).

DR KEVIN LIVINGSTON is currently Head of Humanities, and responsible for the History program in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Capricornia Institute, Rockhampton. He was formerly Co-ordinator of the NT External Studies Centre at Darwin Institute of Technology (1983-87). He was awarded research grants in 1987-88 by the NT Government's History Award Committee and by the Darwin Institute of Technology Research Committee which enabled him to do research in Australian and State Archives in Adelaide, Melbourne and Canberra, on which he has drawn for his contribution to this book.
JACQUELINE O'BRIEN F.C.N., O.A.M. is a member of the Nurses Registration Board and has been a Nurse Educator for many years. Born in the Territory, she has contributed a number of entries on nurses to the Territory Dictionary of Biography.

VERN O'BRIEN L.S., O.B.E. is a surveyor and former Surveyor General, Director of Lands and the first Secretary of Mines on Self Government. He began his working life in 1946 and on retirement turned his wide knowledge of the Territory history to writing articles on its pastoral holdings and research of local toponymy. He is Chairman of the NT Place Names Committee.

JENNY RICH is a graduate of the University of Western Australia and now lives in Sydney. She became interested in the history of the Northern Territory whilst researching the history of the Brown family. Her publications include an award-winning family history book Gum Leaf and Cow Hide (1986), Brown's Mart, Darwin: a history. (1988) and some entries in the Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography (to be published in 1988). She is currently doing research for another book about the Northern Territory, with the help of a Northern Territory History Grant.

STEPHEN A ROSE first came to the Northern Territory in 1958. He has been involved in mapping and surveying of the remote areas and in recent years has been working with computerised mapping and land data bases. He is a Member of the Australia Institute of Cartography, a Member of the Institution of Surveyors, Australia and a Member of the Australian Computer Society and has been with the Historical Society since the mid 60s.

BETTY WOODS came to Darwin to join the Public Service as a stenographer, firstly with Mr E Tambling and later with the Government Secretary, Mr R Leyden. After a break of some years she re-joined the Public Service and worked in various departments, including Mines and Water Resources, Police and Community Development. She has done much voluntary work for the community, particularly in the History Section of the NT Museum as general history has always been her special interest. She has been a member of the Historical Society for four years.
ERRATA

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Transport 1888 by Janet Dickinson

CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID CARMEN BA(Hons) (NSW), PHD (ANU)

JANET DICKINSON has lived most of her life in the Northern Territory. Her education was undertaken at the Darwin Primary and Darwin and Alice Springs High Schools; the latter was because Janet's family had moved from Darwin to Batchelor in 1954, a distance of 100 kilometres and there were no hostels in Darwin for students. Janet is currently studying for her Bachelor of Arts Degree at the University College of the Northern Territory. She has published two books; Grand Old Lady of the Territory about her grandmother, Jessie Litchfield, and Litchfield's Gold, a biography of the Territory explorer, Frederick Litchfield. Janet is married and has three children and one grandchild.

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Northern Territory Administrator's Report for the Year 1988
South Australia Government Resident's Report on Northern Territory for the Year 1888

South Australia, Northern Territory: Office of the Government Resident, Palmerston, January 1889.

Sir - I have the honour to place before you my report upon the affairs of the Northern Territory for the year 1888.

PASTORAL

I am glad to state, notwithstanding a very hostile influence, to which I shall refer at length, the figures connected with the pastoral interest, show a very satisfactory result. The area held under lease on December 31st 1887 was 251,680 square miles. The area declared stocked was 200,864 square miles. The pastoral rents received during 1888 amounted to £26,371. The rents received for 1887 were £16,664. There is only an increase of 47 miles in the area declared stocked over the area of 1887. The difference of rents received however, amounts to £9,707. This increased rental is due to the fact that a considerable area of land having been held under lease for more than seven years, the annual rent has increased from sixpence to half a crown a square mile.

Gratifying, however, as these figures are, it cannot be said that the year fulfilled the expectations of pastoral development which were formed at its commencement. This is to be attributed chiefly to the persistent fatal disease, locally called "Red water". I agree... on the urgent necessity of something being done. I am however, disposed to recommend that a thoroughly expert veterinary surgeon, who is also an analytical chemist and a botanist, should be engaged to spend a wet and dry season in the dangerous district, gather his data, and report his conclusions. It would, probably, greatly facilitate the work of such an expert if a committee of practical stockowners and station managers were appointed to co-operate with him. If... suggestion be adopted for levying a tax on incoming cattle, the appointment of such a committee appears only equitable.

MINING

The year 1888 has been one of unprecedented activity in taking up mineral lands, 564 mineral applications for licences have been received for an area of 38,671 acres. This is more than the total area previously applied for in the Northern Territory. The number of mineral licences now held is 604 for an area of 43,370 acres giving an average of over 71 acres for each licence.

The number of mineral leases held is 76, for an area of 18,142 acres, or an average of 223 acres for each lease. The total revenue derived from mineral rents, excepting gold, during 1888 is £459. In these figures only three leases are included from Central Australia. The number of gold leases held on December 31st was 150, the area being 2,113 acres. The rent received during 1888 being £1,366. The total rent from mineral and gold rents being £5,652. These figures, except in the case of the three leases mentioned, do not include the area or the revenue of Central Australia. The revenue from that district is £1,406, making the grand total £7,058. When we turn from the area and the rents, in which strong speculation is discernible, to the produce of the different metals by mining, the results are very unsatisfactory. This will be given under the various headings. It must, however, be noted that the railway has proved a most attractive field of labor to the Chinese. Now that the labor provisions of the Acts, and the regulations are to be enforced, and in consequence of the early completion of the railway earthworks, genuine mining by leaseholders will be compulsory, and the results for 1889 should show a signal advance.

AGRICULTURE

The report of Mr Holtze is cheering, and gives satisfactory evidence that the climate, soil, and conditions of the Northern Territory are well suited to the growth of the best plants which are cultivated in our latitudes elsewhere. The results of experiments and cultivation at the new garden prove conclusively that the failures which have done so much to retard agricultural operations have arisen from the choice of unsuitable sites and ignorant management.
The piece of land occupied by the garden is only a sample of hundreds of similar areas at the foot of the hills throughout the mineral country, and within easy reach of the railway.

It appears to me the best policy to secure settlement upon and the cultivation of these lands, and also the arable lands on the banks of our rivers, is the one contained in the new Land Bill, viz., selection before survey, with careful marking of boundaries, prepayment of survey, and sufficiently, but not too stringent, cultivation clauses.

So far as agricultural efforts beyond the garden is concerned there is little to report, and that little is not satisfactory. Mr Brandt has resolutely held on his way at Sheal Bay with both sugar-cane and tobacco.

At the Daly, Mr Brown had a fine crop of maize, but the cost of chartering a launch to bring it to a market is of course too heavy a charge to be borne, and for the present he has abandoned cultivation.

The Daly River Plantation Company have finally gone out of existence. The plant at Delissaville and the Daly has been sold to Messrs. D. & J. Daniels, and the suitable part will be removed to be employed in mining work.

The Chinese gardeners in the neighbourhood of Palmerston, now that Mr Holtze periodically inspects their holdings, are paying their rents with greater regularity. There has been a plentiful supply of vegetables and some fruits for the town. The lease of the two acres of land at Peel's Well realised £9 per acre. The lease is for seven years.

GOVERNMENT RESIDENT'S VISIT TO THE MACARTHUR AND ROPER RIVERS

In accordance with the instructions of the Hon. the Minister, I left Port Darwin on April 11th in the contract steamer Adelaide for the Macarthur and Roper rivers specially to inspect the townships of Borroloola and Urapunga.

We called at the revenue station at Bowen's Straits. The site appears to be well selected as a calling-place for the Malay proas. The buildings are substantial and suited for Customs purposes. Mr E.O. Robinson, the landing waiter in charge, is the very man for the work, having a thorough knowledge of the coast and having a great influence over native races. In Brown [sic] Straits there are some noteworthy islands, which challenge attention and invite prospecting. On Cotton Island there is a large outcrop extending for a great distance. Groote Eylandt and the Sir Edward Pellew Group, too, are worth examination. On approaching the low mangrove-covered coast there was no break anywhere to indicate the outlet of the large river Macarthur. One unsuccessful trial was made in the steamer's boat by Captain Edwards to find the channel. The next from a more westerly starting-point and by assistance of a couple of sapling beacons enabled us to enter the tortuous channel and eventually enter the wide mouth.

The Palmerston's landing is about twelve miles up stream. Here we anchored, and next day, with Captain Edwards, we rowed to Borroloola, a distance of twenty-eight miles. There are some rock bars, the worst being five miles from the town. The upper reaches of the river are very picturesque with high banks and large trees. On examining the site of the surveyed town, I found, as I had been led to expect, that the part north of Rocky creek was not suitable, a large sandstone outcrop and low-lying places liable to inundation rendering a considerable area utterly unfit for building upon. I entirely concur in the condemnation of the north site expressed by Mr McMinn. The part south of Rock creek is admirably suited for a town. The magistrate's quarters and the police station are erected here on good sites. The eighty-one allotments are quite sufficient for present purposes.

There were reports of mineral outcrops and specimens of lead ores conveying silver were shown. Mr Karl Steiger gave us an assay of one mineral specimen, 50 ounces of silver and one ounce of gold to the ton. One quartz assay gave 1oz.12dwt. to the ton.

The expedition of collecting revenue on the Queensland Border was very obvious. There is no doubt that Borroloola will be a town of considerable importance, and Port Macarthur the inlet for the supplies for the stations south-east and west, and for telegraph stores. On the return voyage we called at the Roper River. The entrance here is quite as difficult as at the Macarthur river. It being necessary for safe and speedy navigation, I recommended that a buoy should be placed in the fairway of the entrance to each, and that the necessary number of beacons required to indicate the channel be erected. Tenders were called for and the work has been satisfactorily done at a cost of £681. The township of Urapunga at Leichhardt's Bar is on a well selected site; but as in the cases of Burrunie and Borroloola, is much too extensive. Here, also, the natives are reported as very destructive and defiant.

THE MACARTHUR RIVER AND THE QUEENSLAND BORDER

In consequence of some difficulties in connection with the seizure of the Eleanor by M.C. Donegan, acting landing waiter, it was necessary for a principal officer of Customs to visit Borroloola. Mr W.G. Stretton, whose name had been for some time before the Ministers for permanent appointment there, was sent on August 11th. Since then Mr Stretton has been stationed at Borroloola, and has been appointed a magistrate.

I feel satisfied that this appointment will prove of great value to the district. Mr Stretton has had a long experience as a constable; he was in the post officer here for some years, and subsequently attained position of landing waiter in the Customs.

VISIT OF THE HON. THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION TO THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Hon the Minister arrived in Port Darwin on March 2nd. The following week was spent in going through the different departments, and visiting the Government institutions. The botanical gardens, the gaol, the hospital and the quarantine quarters were inspected. Deputations were also received, and the heads of departments were interviewed.

On the 9th. by a special train provided by Messrs. C. & E. Millar, a party, consisting of the Minister, the Government Resident, Inspector Foelsche, and Mr N.C. Evans, secretary, and M.C. Smith, orderly, started for an up-country trip. The train was able to get as far as the 72nd mile, the line being found in splendid order. From the head of the line vehicles took the party to the Adelaide river. Then followed what used to be the regular series of horseback
journeys - first to the Howley, thence to Grove Hill, thence to Burundie, where the hospital warden's office and police station were inspected.

From Burundie the journey was taken to the Union, and from thence to Pine Creek, where Mr. O. Jensen, J.P., showed his customary hospitality. From Pine creek, by way of the Union, the Eveleen was reached, after two long days' travel and two longer and rougher journeys, to and from Coronet Hill, through what is known as Hanschilt's Rush, were undertaken by the Minister.

It was at first intended to go as far as Maud creek, but the time at the Minister's disposal did not admit of this.

The return journey from the Eveleen was by way of the Flora Bell, and through Spring Hill to Burundie.

From Burundie a detour was made to see the copper deposit on the North Australian Company's ground, and also to see Mount Wells itself.

From the Howley a journey was made to Mount Shoobridge, to see the tin lodes.

It is the fashion with certain persons to write of these journeys through the country as "pic-nics". I am sure the long hot days of riding in the sun, the camping-out and the culinary charms of "bouillii" do not present any inducements even to those who feel it to be their duty to see the country for themselves.

On this journey the Minister in every place came into contact with those who were best acquainted with the country, and he heard from those who have lived up-country many years the story of their complaints and their recommendations.

After returning to Palmerston, a trip was made up the Adelaide river as far as the Beatrice Hills.

THE CHINESE

As I predicted in my last year's report, the Chinese question in Australia forced itself for settlement early in 1883. As Port Darwin is the first port of arrival from China, we are kept in quick touch with Chinese affairs. It was apparent that from some cause there was a considerably larger emigration of coolies actual and prospective to Australia. The increase to Port Darwin was very marked, to which the period of arrival and the character of the coolies give additional significance. The Asiatic population the Northern Territory increased during 1887 by 2,124, about 150 being Cingalese and Indians. I erroneously stated these at 860 in last year's report. These latter and about 300 Chinese were introduced by Messrs. C.E. Millar at their own cost.

The Chinese arrivals in December 1887 were 314; in January 1888, 416; in February to 15th, 271-1,001. As these are wet season months and the number of men working on the railways were heavily reduced, there was evidently some cause at work not apparent on the surface. That was, I am of opinion, the anticipation that Australia would probably follow the policy of the United States, and either stringently limit, or, perhaps, rigidly exclude, the ingress of Chinese coolies altogether.

With the large influx of Chinese during 1887, we were overpopulated. At no time, so far as the returns furnished me show, have there been more than 3,000 Chinese employed on the railway. The Customs returns showed a Chinese population February, 1888, of 7,048. This number is, however, without deduction for deaths, in the bush and elsewhere, which have been surprisingly few. Of course, there are the storekeepers, gardeners, packers, houseservants, &c. to be counted. How the large number not so included lived, can only be surmised. The number, however, of hangers-on to and followers of, the Chinese camps is surprising. Idlers, gamblers, opium-smokers, &c. seem to be able to fill a living from the actual workers.

But it is not that we were becoming overpopulated alone, serious as that was. In addition, we were continuously invaded with smallpox. Commencing with the Whampoa, which arrived on January 15th, and ending with the Changsha which arrived on February 15th - within a period of a month - six steamers arrived either with smallpox cases actually on board, or having had smallpox patients on board, after leaving Hongkong, which were landed at Singapore or Sourabaya.

It is now well known that a severe epidemic of smallpox broke out in Hongkong in the month of November 1887. The Jubilee celebrations were held in that month; and it was computed that over 50,000 Chinese flocked into Hongkong from the mainland, bringing from the villages and river sampans a pestilence of variola.

THE ABORIGINES

There have been no incidents of note in connection with the native tribes in the settled country of which Palmerston is the centre. There have been no serious tribal quarrels, and no attacks upon Europeans. The Larakeeeyahs still hang about the town and, judging from appearances, obtain sufficient food without hunting or toil. Apparently also they are invincible as ever against christianizing influences. On the Daly river the mission is said to present more promising features.

The condition and claims of the numerous tribes can scarcely be said to be fairly considered by the vote of £850 per annum, which is all the Parliament allots for them. As pastoral settlement progresses the natives will be pressed away from their favourite haunts. I still think it would be humane to proclaim a reserve in each tribe's country and to frame an Act which should specially define aboriginal rights and protect the aborigines. Some effort should be made to preserve the black population of Australia. The great difficulty is their antipathy to regular work. They are careless children of the sun and wilds, content with the food for to-day. They have none of the tastes or aptitudes which make a Papuan a villager and a cultivator. Work has never been a recognised institution with them or their "old men" before them.

THE PALMERSTON AND PINE CREEK RAILWAY

The unusually late and light wet season has enabled the contractors to push ahead with the platelaying as well as with the earthworks. The same causes gave them command of any number of Chinese, as the country has been so dry that alluvial washing has been impossible.
During the year 1888, the railway works of every description have made steady progress. The line was formally opened for traffic to the Adelaide river (77th mile) in the month of June. On September 1st it was opened to the Howley Station (100.5 miles), and on December 1st to Burundie (124th mile).

NORTHERN TERRITORY EXHIBITS AT THE MELBOURNE CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION

When it was decided to hold this Exhibition, a committee was formed to arrange for a Northern Territory court. Mr J.G. Knight was again appointed Commissioner. The kiosk with its contents was brought from Adelaide, and many fine fresh exhibits of minerals and products were secured.

One of the most conspicuous of these was a splendid case of very rich gold quartz, specimens from Mr Olaf Jensen’s claim at Pine Creek. The show of raw and prepared products from the Botanical Garden was also very effective. Mr Knight has shown his usual skill and inventiveness in the arrangement of the court and from the frequent notices in the press of the colonies, the Northern Territory exhibits were among the most attractive in the whole exhibition.

I have, &c.,

J. LANGDON PARSONS,
Northern Territory Administrator’s Report for the Year 1888

Office of the Administrator of the Northern Territory

Sir, I have the honour to forward my report as Administrator of the Northern Territory during the Year of Grace 1888.

A DECADE OF SELF- GOVERNMENT

1888 marks the two hundredth anniversary of European settlement in Australia. Here in the Territory it also marks the passage of ten years since the granting of self government to our part of the Commonwealth. During the past decade, much progress has been made and although some might view the end product as the result of decisions taken in haste there is no doubt that rapid advancement was essential once self government had been assumed.

The population of the Territory has grown steadily and it is particularly pleasing to see the harmonious amalgamation of so many races at a time when this is the exception around the world. The contributions made by migrants from many lands to the lifestyles and development of the Northern Territory cannot be too highly praised.

RAILWAY

Although the railway link has been completed between Port Augusta and Alice Springs, we still await the building of the Alice Springs to Darwin line, seen by many Territorians as an essential ingredient in our future success.

However, the north/south road has finally been sealed and this improvement in land communication has led to an upsurge in visitations by people from other States to the many attractions the Territory has to offer.

MINING

Our mining industry, almost quiescent for a short period in the recent past, has been revitalised due to a marked improvement in world commodity prices. In particular, the gold price is such as to actively attract prospecting in new areas and re-examination of old abandoned sites.

PASTORAL

The Pastoral industry, which has suffered much through the depredations of drought and the inroads made by Brucellosis and Tuberculosis appears to be upon a sound footing and given the unflagging willingness of our country people to work in order to secure their future I have every confidence that they will long remain a lynch pin of our economy.

OIL AND GAS

The discovery of significant oil and gas deposits both on-shore in the Territory and in our off-shore regions has led to a turn around in our fuel supplies and will, in the future, do much to attract industry to the Territory. Many tracts of land have still to be explored and vast areas of the ocean bed also fall into this category. Given foresight and a willingness to gamble by our various mining consortiums, fossil fuels will also play a major part in our future.
BLACK AND WHITE TERRITORIANS

In this year of Looking Back, in particular with regard to the relationship between white and black Australians and the talk of a Treaty between blacks and whites, the Territory continues to try to meet the hopes of Aboriginal Territorians in regard to land rights. Our Land Commissioners have laboured hard and long in order to come to terms with the aspirations of a culture so very different to that of our European inhabitants. I have every confidence that with goodwill on both sides and a willingness to compromise away from dogmatic positions, a result will ensue which, while not being of total satisfaction to any, will be acceptable to all.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM

I must also mention in my Report, the striking impact upon Territory life and the Territory economy which is occurring through the quantum leap forward in our tourist industry. For so long the Territory has been a hidden treasure savoured by its inhabitants and sometimes jealously guarded by them against outside visitors.

Now, through enlightened promotion by Government and aided by the spin-offs from Mr Mick (Crocodile) Dundee films, not only have other Australians but also many thousands of foreign visitors come to our Territory to share nature's delights.

I conclude my bi-centennial Report by saying that I have every confidence in the Territory's future. This confidence stems not only from the many advantages we have in regard to our natural resources but primarily through my perception that the Territorian is a person who is unwilling to accept failure and will strive to the last ounce of sweat and blood in order to make our Territory a Jewel in the Commonwealth Crown.

I have, &c.,

E. JOHNSTON
The Northern Territory and South Australian Politics in 1888

by David Carment

In 1863 some 140,000 citizens of South Australia were granted control over the Northern Territory, a vast and still largely unexplored region. This came only six years after South Australians achieved responsible self-government from Britain. While falling far short of full political independence, the South Australian legislature was given power to control and direct an executive. The colonists' own representatives were presented with powers over the land fund, immigration, customs and many other matters of policy and administration. South Australia was to be ruled by ministers who only held office at the pleasure of the colony's parliament. They were answerable to their colleagues and constituents, not to someone in Britain. Under the South Australian Constitution Act of 1856, there were an elected House of Assembly and an elected Legislative Council. Money bills originated in the former chamber, it being that chamber which also largely determined the fate of governments.1

This system of government had important implications for white residents of South Australia's Northern Territory. The introduction of full manhood suffrage for the House of Assembly in March 1857 meant that potential political power belonged to some of the least educated and poorest sections of the community. Until the late 1880s there was chronic political instability in the colony. Between 1857 and 1893 there were no less than forty different governments, some of which were reconstructed more than once during their brief life span. Only three governments survived for more than two years. At each of the general elections conducted before 1884, no more than two-thirds of the members of the House of Assembly were re-elected, indicating that politically fickle voters partly had themselves to blame for the chaos which sometimes resulted in Parliament. In the period until 1893 ninety three men served as ministers. Hardly surprisingly, the day-to-day conduct of administration was frequently left to bureaucrats, not all of whom were capable or honest.

Between 1857 and 1890, 250 different men were elected to the House of Assembly. Among them, the largest single occupational category comprised pastoralists who also dominated the Legislative Council. 225 members of the House of Assembly in the same period were either self-employed or employers. Payment for members of the parliament was only introduced in 1887. Voting for parliamentary elections was voluntary and before 1890 the proportion of those eligible to vote who actually enrolled averaged 72.8% and the proportion of the latter who voted was 46%. There was not until the 1890s anything like today's professionally-led and tightly disciplined political parties. Most of the issues which pre-occupied electors and politicians did not polarise people ideologically. The main issues debated related to such matters as public works, trade, education and public health. By the mid 1880s, nevertheless, the beginnings of later arguments on subjects like working conditions, defence and immigration were emerging in South Australia.

From its incorporation into South Australia until 1888, the Northern Territory was part of the Flinders electoral district for the House of Assembly and the Northern district for the Legislative Council. Its first separate members in the House of Assembly did not take their places until 1890. South Australian governments already had a poor record in dealing with the Territory. Political grand-standing and vested interests disadvantaged policy making for the Territory. (2) White Territorians grumbled but there was no movement formed, as in North Queensland, to press for political separation. In 1884 businessmen in Palmerston formed the Northern Territory Reform Association, which aimed to act as a local pressure group. (3) But it was neither energetic nor long-lived. At the general election of that year there were 423 electors for the Territory yet few bothered to vote. (4) J Moule and A Tennant were elected to the House of Assembly though neither was a Territory resident. (5) From June 1887 until June 1889, the South Australian Government remained under unchanged leadership, that of Thomas Playford, marking a period of most unusual political stability. Throughout the period the Minister responsible for the Northern Territory was the Minister for Education, J.C.F. Johnson. (6) J L Parsons was the South Australian Government Resident in Palmerston. (7)

The Playford government was no more popular among white Territorians than any other. It pursued a policy of reducing administrative costs in the Territory to the extent that the expense of its maintenance was reduced from £53,000 in 1884-1885 to £31,900 in 1887-1888. (8) Playford and his colleagues did, however, win some support for their anti-Chinese stance. As will be explained below, it was partly due to anti-Chinese sentiment in the Territory that the government summoned an Intercolonial Conference for the purpose of drafting
inter-colonial uniform legislation to ensure the restriction of Chinese immigration to Australia. The Conference was held in Sydney in June 1888, resulting in South Australian legislation in December that year curtailing Chinese migration to the Territory. (9)

The only newspaper in the Territory through which local political views could be expressed was the Northern Territory Times and Gazette, owned by Palmerston businessman V. L. Solomon. Solomon later on went into the South Australian parliament and very briefly was Premier of the colony in 1899. The pages of the Times for 1888 indicated strong local concern with particular questions and frustration at the unwillingness of many Adelaide legislators to understand the Territory's needs. If the Times for 1888 is a reliable guide, white Territorians then had similar feelings about politics to those which prevailed a century later. They complained quite bitterly about the government thousands of miles away, they worried about their proximity to the masses of Asia and they had a parochial and exaggerated opinion of their own political importance.

Such feelings were exhibited early in 1888 when it became known that the Minister responsible for the Territory, Johnson, was to make his first and only visit. The Times was sceptical. The Minister, its editorial of 21 January claimed, had 'done nothing during his official or private career, to deserve any mark of recognition or respect at the hands of the community of this Territory'.(10) Despite such strong words, in April, about fifty Palmerston residents gave him a banquet at which Johnson extolled his government's supposed achievements. These included the legislation to give the Territory separate parliamentary representation, promotion of agriculture and mining and sound financial management.(11)

On 20 April, the day before his departure, he gave a long interview to the Times. He spoke highly of the Territory's mineral and agricultural prospects, some of which he had examined at first hand during his visit. He provided many specific examples of mines inspected in the Pine Creek district, explaining also that 'patches of land, ought to be capable of growing many tropical and subtropical products'. Other subjects canvassed included proposed sites for light houses, Palmerston's water supply, the number of public servants in the Territory, a proposed government assay office, telegraph rates, a hospital for Burrundie, the completion of quarantine station buildings on Channel Island, the need for a savings bank in Palmerston, mineral regulations, the railway line to Pine Creek, roads and Chinese immigration. The Minister expressed himself as thoroughly satisfied with the result of his trip. It would 'enable him to assist in legislating for the Territory in a much more satisfactory and intelligent manner than if he had never seen the place, and moreover, having seen the Territory had created in him such an interest in it and in its welfare, that whether in the Ministry or in his place as a private member, he should always be a representative of this part of South Australia'.

Despite his apparent optimism, Johnson either quickly changed his mind or was totally untruthful. In 1895 he informed the Northern Territory Commission that his 1888 visit had so depressed him that on returning to Adelaide he advised his ministerial colleagues to move the South Australian border north of the MacDonnell Ranges and give back the rest of the Territory to Britain! (13)
The most emotional political question concerned Chinese migration. A *Times* editorial on 28 January contended that there was 'utter want of order and discipline existing among Chinese on our goldfields and the immediate necessity for a sweeping and radical reform'. Some South Australian legislators were accused of ignoring the real situation: 'If ever a birthing was being undermined, the right of Australians to this part of the Australian soil is being slowly and surely undermined now', the *Times* asserted. 'In attempting to make ourselves heard, we must remember that we are not a colony, but a portion of a province that is making itself a laughing stock throughout the whole of Australia'. (14) This outburst followed what the *Times* described as 'a large representative meeting' held in the Palmerston Town Hall on 11 January where 'a resolution was passed condemnatory of the apathy of the parliament of South Australia, in not passing measures for the restriction of the indiscriminate immigration of Chinese into the Northern Territory, also appealing to the governments of its neighbouring colonies, and the Federal Council, for their support in our efforts to induce the Parliament of our Mother Colony to legislate for us on the lines indicated'. (15) At the same time a committee was set up to formulate a petition embodying the meeting's views. Solomon took the petition with him on a tour of the southern colonies, interviewing Sir Henry Parkes, other influential politicians and newspaper editors on the subject. (16) The rising hysteria from the Territory had a noticeable impact. As mentioned earlier, the governments of South Australia and other colonies took note of Territory concerns and later in the year restrictive measures were enacted. (17)

The only parliamentary elections including Territorians during 1888 were for the Northern District of the Legislative Council, of which the Territory was a part. These were very low-key. None of the candidates personally campaigned in the Territory and only two, J Darling and R D Haselgrove, placed advertisements in the *Times*. Both promised, if elected, to support 'local' Territory representation in parliament. (18) Darling topped the poll with 1341 votes, second was J V O'Loghlin with 1159 and both were declared elected. Haselgrove was sixth in a total of ten candidates. (19)

During 1888 both houses of the South Australian parliament passed legislation which became the South Australian Northern Territory Representation Act. This established direct Territory representation in the House of Assembly. Although the principle had been opposed for various reasons until the early 1880s, most legislators supported it in 1888. (20) O'Loghlin expressed a widely held view when he told the Legislative Council that the Territory could not be adequately represented while attached to and part of a southern electorate. But there were some vocal critics in the Council, R C Baker argued that 'the Territory would never be developed without Asiatic labour' and the Europeans then resident in the Territory were 'nearly all in the employ of the Government, and outside of the Civil Service, there were very few electors to be represented'. Dr S J Magarey conceded that in principle the Territory should have separate representation but in practice it would cost too much. (21) The Act received Royal Assent in early 1890 and in the general elections of that year Solomon and Parsons were returned as the first Territory members of the parliament. (22)

The Government department singled out for greatest criticism by Territorians in 1888 was that controlling posts and telegraphs. 'There is', the *Times* maintained on 20 October, 'no department in the Public Service... which causes so much irritation to the public by ridiculous red-tapeism'. Numerous complaints were made: the telegraph office at the Shackel should be moved to a place where more people lived; some offices were understaffed; a competent official who disagreed with his superior was exiled to Southport, which 'in its balmy days had been compared to 'a Hades upon Earth'; country residents were not being provided with regular mail services; there were problems with the deferred telegram service; there were unnecessary delays in the delivery of letters. 'If no notice is taken of these complaints', the *Times* concluded, 'let the people take the matter up, and call for a full inquiry into the working of the department'. (23)

In 1888, Territory political life largely conformed with the later findings of the historian John Hirst that during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century almost everything in South Australia, including politics, revolved around its only significant urban centre, Adelaide. Yet, as Hirst conceded, this was by the 1880s starting to change slowly and later there was something of a shift in power from Adelaide to other areas. (24) Certainly, in 1888 an Adelaide based government was making decisions which took little account of Territory views yet, as the case of Chinese immigration indicated, there was some consciousness among politicians of the more significant Territory concerns. The decision to allow Territorians their own parliamentarians also showed a growing awareness among South Australians generally of the Territory's special political characteristics.

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NOTES


5. Ibid

6. Ibid, p.235

7. Ibid., p.158

8. Ibid

9. Ibid, p.178

10. *N.T.T.G.*, 21 January 1888

11. Ibid, 7 April 1888

12. Ibid, 21 April 1888


14. *N.T.T.G.*
MELBOURNE CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION

From the *North Australian* 20/10/1888:

The N T court at the Melbourne Exhibition was organised by J G Knight in Melbourne and H H Adcock in Palmerston. The exhibits included coral, rubies, native weapons, an avenue formed with forty feet bamboos, sugar cane, two handsome screens displaying Mr Foelsche’s photos, butterflies, tortoise shell, meridian anthills, pearl and other shells, two baskets of trepang, native grapes, specimens of products from the Government Gardens, soils, seeds, tobacco leaf, five decanters of vegetable oils, rice, minerals and drawings by native artists. J G Knight commented: ‘for five days in the week the place is as dull as Glasgow on a Sunday and on the other day (Saturday) when some 25,000 people are present, instead of circulating amongst the different courts, three parts of the visitors lounge up and down the Grand Avenue of Nations and flirt so furiously as to almost drive me to join the crowd ... I assure you that your Commissioner has a very trying time of it and that it requires all his self denial and virtue to keep straight’.
Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company and other Palmerston Businesses in 1888

by Jenny Rich

The Darwin building known in 1888 as 'Brown's Mart' was built by Vaiben Louis Solomon in 1885 on lot 411, Smith Street, Palmerston, nearly opposite the Town Hall. It was the warehouse and place of business of the firm V L Solomon and Company (auctioneers, shipping agents, land and estate agents, stock and station agents, importers, agents for Lloyds of London and Customs House agents) from about June 1885 until September 1887. The architect is believed to have been John George Knight, who designed other Palmerston buildings including the Town Hall, part of Fannie Bay Gaol, the Courthouse and police station.

Most commercial buildings at that time were constructed of timber and iron but local stone was used for Solomon's new building. It was 38 feet wide and 85 feet deep, with a central hall, two rooms at the back and two rooms at the front. The Northern Territory Times of 27/6/1885 described it as 'the largest and finest stone store yet raised in Palmerston ... unquestionably the finest warehouse yet erected in the Territory'. The building became known as 'Solomon's Warehouse' or 'Solomon's Emporium'. Solomon edited and printed the Northern Territory Times in premises at the rear of the store, which had a separate entrance from the right of way between his 'Emporium' and J T Bull's store next door. The English Scottish and Australian Chartered Bank, known as the tin bank was on the other side of Solomon's Emporium.

In September 1887 Victor Voules Brown, John Alexander Voules Brown and Herbert Henry Adcock entered into partnership, trading as Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company. They secured V L Solomon's stone store for their new business as auctioneers, customs, shipping and general commission agents. They also provided offices for the Eastern and Australian Steam Ship Company (of which V V Brown was the local agent) and North Australian Lloyds (of which H H Adcock was the local agent). Part of the building was devoted to a Mining Exchange, where mineral samples were exhibited and labelled; mining meetings were also held there. As well as providing the venue for auctions, agency business and the Mining Exchange, many local organisations used the building for meetings. It became known as 'the Mercantile Mart' or 'the Mercantile Auction Mart'.

By 1888 Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company was one of the main European-run businesses operating in Palmerston. They advertised in the North Australian of 14/1/1888: 'Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company (V V Brown, H H Adcock, J A V Brown), auctioneers, importers, shipping and commission agents, Smith Street, Palmerston, proprietors of Mercantile Bond, Northern Territory Mining Exchange (where specimens from mining properties in the Territory can be inspected), offices of North Australian Lloyds and Eastern and Australian Steamship Company'. Unlike many of the other local businesses, Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company did not have any branch stores in country settlements.

A survey of the two local papers, the North Australian and Northern Territory Times, revealed the following activities at 'the Mercantile Mart' during 1888:

**AUCTIONS**

V V Brown was the Company's auctioneer. He carried out auctions at 'the Mercantile Mart' and sometimes at the premises of the owners of the goods. The auctions were often held on Saturday afternoons when many people were free to attend. The items for sale often included household furniture and effects of people leaving the Territory, or goods from businesses which were closing down. Occasionally V V Brown travelled to country towns to carry out auctions: for example in November he went to Burundie to auction items for the railway contractors C and E Millar.

Items sold at the Company's auctions during 1888 included bedroom suites, boats and boat building material belonging to boat builder Ah Young, bottled fruits, buggies, spring and hand carts, dishonoured cheques, cigars, cordials, children's cots, dining room furniture, tip drays, donkeys, fourteen 200 pound sacks of flour, all the gear of the government cutter Flying Cloud, glassware, guns, harnesses, horse feed, horse teams, jams, lounge furniture, a mangle, meat, a meat safe, opium, the Palmerston Club Hotel, perfumery, pianos, pickles, preserves, rifles, salad oil, sauces, tobacco, turpentine, watches and wine.

While most auctions were successful, the North Australian of 1/12/1888 reported that the Company's recent auction of railway stock and material at Burundie had been anything
but a success: ‘Remarkably low prices were offered all round and the auctioneer was therefore obliged to withdraw nearly the whole of the lots. The fact is there is at present no demand in the country for horses of any kind...’.

A new aspect of business was reported in the Northern Territory Times of 3/11/1888: ‘Having purchased the whole of the samples of merchandise forming the equipage of Mr Fleming, commercial traveller for Messrs. S Hoffnung and Co., [the Company] conceived the happy idea of holding a fancy fair in the Town Hall where the goods could be well displayed and afford intending purchasers an opportunity of thoroughly inspecting the various articles offered for sale’.

**THE MINING EXCHANGE**

When Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company was founded, its partners established the Mining Exchange as an important part of their business, mining being one of the major interests of all three partners. They displayed mineral specimens from all over the Territory and encouraged local mining companies to hold meetings there. In February 1888 V V Brown returned from a trip to Bynoe Harbour and brought samples from several tin selections for display at the Mining Exchange. Other mineral samples displayed during the year were from C Clarke’s Bynoe Harbour tin mines.

The Northern Territory Times of 8/9/1888 reported:

There is a rumour up country that specimens sent to the Mining Exchange for exhibition are used for filling up private collections. This is not the case... with very few exceptions, visitors to our town are taken to inspect the specimens at the Mining Exchange and we have repeatedly heard expressions of surprise at the variety and richness of the exhibits...

Several sales of properties have been brought about by the inspection of specimens on view at the Exchange. It is to the benefit of the country at large and the claim holders in particular that specimens illustrating new discoveries should be on view in a public place.

In January 1888 Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company became the agent for the newly formed Bynoe Tin Company, prospecting and working mineral selections recently taken up at Bynoe Harbour. The Northern Territory Times of 5/5/1888 announced that an organisation called the NT Mining Association was being formed to give aid to working prospectors, to purchase interests in claims being developed, to furnish reliable reports and assays of all minerals of commercial value, to act as promoters of bona fide mines proposed to be floated in the Australian colonies or in England and to generally assist in promoting mining enterprise. H H Adcock was appointed Secretary and the committee met at the Mining Exchange.

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*The Mining Exchange: Port Darwin Mercantile Agency Company in 1888. The men standing around the doorway include VV Brown, JAV Brown and HH Adcock. NT Historical Society.*

In June the Company became broker for the new Excelsior Gold Mining Company, of which H H Adcock was one of the promoters. In the same month they supplied mineral samples for the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition, as agents for the Leviathan Tin Company, Bynoe Tin Company, McKinlay and Mount Wells Tin Mining Company, NT Mining Association, Excelsior claim at Bridge Creek, Lady Alice reef at Union and the Port Darwin Gem Prospecting Company.

Another activity carried out at the Mining Exchange was the sale of mining properties and mining shares. During 1888 their sales included a one sixth interest in the Leviathan tin mine at Bynoe Harbour for £80, a one quarter interest in Clarke and Hains’ tin selection at Bynoe Harbour for £50, a one sixth interest in Flora Bell silver selections for £500, 80 acres adjoining Flora Bell silver claim for £500 and a selection of 100 acres close by for £500, a one sixth interest in the Leviathan tin mine at Bynoe Harbour for £150 and another one sixth interest in the same mine for £125.

News of new mining developments was posted outside the Mining Exchange. For example the North Australian of 21/4/1888 reported: ‘A little mining excitement was caused by the telegraphic announcement
posted outside the Mining Exchange about the floating of the Flora bell silver mine and disposal of shares’.

The Company also took an active role in lobbying the Government Resident, J L Parsons, about mining matters. For example in March they wrote to him expressing concern about a group of Chinese going overland to the ruby fields and in July they suggested that there be no payment of import duty on mining machinery which could not be made in South Australia.

**SHIPPING**

At the beginning of 1888 W E Gay was the agent and V V Brown was the sub agent for Eastern and Australian Steam Ship Company, but by mid April Brown had replaced Gay as agent. E and A was under contract with the South Australian government to carry Her Majesty’s mails between Adelaide (via Melbourne, Sydney and Queensland ports), Port Darwin and Hong Kong. E and A’s ships included the Airlie, Catterthun, Guthrie and Tannadice, as well as the hulk Belle of South Esk. V V Brown, as agent, dealt with the company’s Palmerston freight, mail and passengers in one of the offices at ‘the Mercantile Mart’.

The *Northern Territory Times Almanack and Directory* of 1888 advertised that the offices of Port Darwin Navigation Company were also located at ‘the Mercantile Mart’. This company had several vessels including Dawn, Jessie Anderson and Levuka, as well as the steam ships Aihol and Maggie. In May 1888 V L Solomon and Company advertised a one half interest in Port Darwin Navigation Company, for sale by private contract.

Notices were often posted outside ‘the Mercantile Mart’ about the expected arrival and departure of ships and mail.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES AT ‘THE MERCANTILE MART’ IN 1888**

In January the Mercantile Bond was made a bonded warehouse by Her Majesty’s Customs Collector and in February V V Brown was granted permission by the District Council to plant some trees opposite the building. The Company announced in March that they had been appointed railway forwarding agents for Millar Brothers and that receiving stores with offices had been erected at the stacking ground and at Adelaide River. They also called tenders for carriers to cart goods from the railway forwarding depot at Adelaide River to various mining camps and townships. The *Northern Territory Times* of 31/3/1888 reported: ‘Present tariff for merchandise is 1/- per mile or £4 to Adelaide River’. In July the Company announced it would issue tickets for the new Palmerston and Pine Creek Railway, acting as agents for C and E Millar and in August they took racing patrons to the racecourse beach at Fannie Bay in their steam ship Maggie. In October the Company issued a suit for damages for slander against J A G Little, Post and Telegraph master, but this was later allowed to lapse and no further details appeared in the papers.

Occasionally they advertised jobs in the country. For example they advertised in the *Northern Territory Times* of 18/2/1888: ‘Applications will be received . . . from experienced bushmen willing to undertake the leadership of a party of 500 or more Chinese to the ruby fields at MacDonnell Ranges . . . tenders will also be received from carriers for cartage of baggage and provisions for the proposed party of Chinese to the ruby fields’. This advertisement resulted in a stern announcement by the Government Resident, directed by the Premier, that ‘under the *Chinese Immigration Act* if any Chinaman approaches within a thousand miles of Adelaide on South Australian territory he will have to pay a poll-tax of £10, including all Chinese going to the ruby field in MacDonnell Ranges’ (*Northern Territory Times* of 25/2/1888). Another of their job advertisements appeared in the *North Australian* of 17/11/1888: ‘Wanted. European male cook. Must be a steady man and able to do good plain cooking for a country hotel’.

In November the lease of lot 411 was transferred from V L Solomon to J A V Brown - Leonard Waterhouse ‘of parts beyond the seas’ remained the owner. Prior to this there must have been some sort of informal leasing arrangement with V L Solomon.

**THE PEOPLE AT ‘THE MERCANTILE MART’ IN 1888**

Victor Voules ‘Vic’ Brown, John Alexander Voules ‘Jack’ Brown and Herbert Henry Adcock were the three partners in Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company in 1888.

V V Brown arrived in Palmerston from South Australia in late 1876 and since then had been involved in various auctioneer and agency businesses, including V L Solomon and Company, his own company and Adcock Brothers, as well as doing some building work. He was an active member of many local organisations and for several years during the 1880s was a Councillor and Chairman of the District Council.

In late December 1887 he and T H Harwood (assayer) were lost near Bynoe Harbour while on a trip to see some tin claims. They were seven days without food and owed their lives to some Aboriginal trackers. Vic wrote to his sisters 8/1/1888: ‘We had only one Igguana, about five dozen large periwinkles and five Eugene apples between us for the whole seven days. I tried what sort of a feed could be made of marsh flies but found they were no good eating - something like a bit of tin foil. We could catch nothing else, having no firearms or tomahawk with us and scarcely any clothing left - my singlet having been torn up for feet rags. The only things of my own that I came home in were a pair of dangaree trousers and a straw hat . . . I feel certain that both of us would have perished in a couple of days at farthest, from want and exposure had they not picked us up’.

In 1888 V V Brown was a Councillor, President and handicapper of the N T Racing Club, member of the Board of Advice for Palmerston School District, had many mining interests and was very active in the N T Reform Association and Port Darwin Cricket Club. By this time he and his partner Eliza Sarah Tuckwell, daughter of Territory pioneers Edward ‘Ned’ Tuckwell and his wife Eliza, had three children, one of whom had died. Of his children by his first wife Julia nee Solomon, three were living in Adelaide, oldest son Emanuel ‘Man’ was at Burrundrie and second son Alfred was in the north west of Western Australia.
Herbert Henry Adcock arrived in Palmerston from Victoria in the 1870s and worked for various businesses including V L Solomon and Company, his own company and Adcock Brothers. By 1888 he was managing underwriter for North Australian Lloyds, Councillor, Chairman of the Local Board of Health, Secretary of the N T Reform Association, committee member of the Port Darwin Cricket Club and Secretary of the committee organising the N T exhibit at the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition. He also had many mining interests. In June 1888 he married Ellen Annie Pickford, daughter of James Pickford (licensee of the Family Hotel in Palmerston). Unlike many of his contemporaries, Herbert neither drank nor smoked.

In September 1887 H H Adcock and V V Brown had resigned from Adcock Brothers and assigned their assets to the liquidators of the Town and Country Bank - Adcock Brothers had a large loan from the Bank. Herbert's brother William continued in the firm of Adcock Brothers and in March 1888 Adcock Brothers was adjudicated insolvent. The main person cited was William Adcock but H H Adcock and V V Brown were also included in the adjudication and they both felt obliged to resign their positions on the District Council. In April 1888 the liquidators from the Town and Country Bank recognised their error in including V V Brown and Herbert Adcock in the insolvency, publicly apologised to them in the local and Southern papers and offered to refund any costs they had suffered.

J A V Brown first arrived in Palmerston from South Australia in 1873 and since then had been involved in mining, carting, building, store keeping and hotel keeping in the Territory, Western Australia and South Australia. He was Clerk of Palmerston District Council from 1883 to 1885, then again from July 1888 until 1894. In 1888 he was licensee of the Exchange Hotel in Smith Street, Clerk of the District Council, member of the Local Board of Health, had various mining interests, was a member of the Port Darwin Cricket Club and starter for the NT Racing Club and Athletics Club. His wife Eleanor had found life in Palmerston not to her liking and was living at Brighton, South Australia with their four children.

OTHER EUROPEAN-RUN BUSINESSES IN PALMERSTON IN 1888

Other European-run businesses which advertised or were mentioned in the North Australian and Northern Territory Times during 1888 or were listed in the Northern Territory Times Almanack and Directory for 1888 included:

- Adcock Brothers, corner of Mitchell and Bennett Streets (agents for China Navigation Company, Taylor’s effervescing saline and Berkley’s Fever and Ague medicine; their branch store at Burrundie was closed about June 1888)

- Philip R Allen and Company, Mitchell Street (importers, general storekeepers, wine and spirit merchants, custom house, shipping and commission agents, agents for the ‘Gibb Line’ of China and Australian Steamships, British-India Steam Navigation Company’s Indian and Australian Line, New Zealand Fire and Marine Insurance Company, O Brandt’s Lager beer, Eveleen Silver Mining Company and Port Darwin Tin Mining Company; branch stores at Burrundie, Eveleen, Grove Hill and Southport; branch stores at Southport and Grove Hill were closed during 1888 and a new one opened at Eveleen)

Prominent Businessmen of Darwin.

- Aplin Brown and Company Limited, Mitchell Street (importers, stock and station, land, commission, custom house agents, agents for Townsville Lloyds, Macknade Sugar Company, John Dunn and Company’s Superfine and Eclipse Steel Roller Flours)

- C W Hughes and Company (stock and station agents, land, custom house, shipping and general commission agents, agents for North Australian Steam Navigation Company, who in March became part of Rundle Brothers and Company; their Southport branch store was closed in about June 1888)

- Jolly and Luxton, corner Smith and Bennett Streets (importers and general storekeepers; branch stores at Southport and Roper River closed during 1888; other branch stores operating at Wyndham and Borroloola)


It was the custom for European storekeepers to employ Chinese coolies to deliver goods by hand and sack trucks. The Northern Territory Times of 28/4/1888 reported: ‘It would help if the various European storekeepers would impress on their Chinese coolies that hand and sack trucks must not be run along the footpaths but on the roads. At present they carefully avoid the roads because they are too dusty and run on the footpaths. A little more of this will make the footpaths as bad as the roads’.
In August Adcock Brothers, Rundle Brothers, Aplin Brown and Company and Jolly and Luxton advertised that from the first of September they would close at 1 pm each Saturday instead of each Wednesday as previously. Individual European businessmen and businesswomen in Palmerston in 1888 included:

— Herbert Henry Adcock (of Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company)
— William E Adcock (of Adcock Brothers)
— A G Beresford (licensed surveyor, Mitchell Street)
— R D Beresford (solicitor, Mitchell Street)
— J A V Brown (of Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company)
— S Brown (blacksmith and wheelwright, Smith Street)
— Samuel Brown (proprietor of the Coffee Palace, Smith Street)
— Victor Voules Brown (of Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company)
— William Villiers Brown (partner in Aplin Brown and Company Limited)
— John Thomas Bull (storekeeper, Smith Street)
— W Chancellor (carter, Smith Street)
— N F Christie (manager of the local branch of the English Scottish and Australian Chartered Bank, Smith Street)
— David Daniels (land, mining and commission agent, Cavenagh Street)
— Deane (joint proprietor of Palmerston Bakery, Cavenagh Street)
— H M Debross (carpenter, joiner and general contractor)
— W Devine (blacksmith, wheelwright and farrier, Mitchell Street)
— H Dudeney (carter, Smith Street)
— O Granowski (proprietor of Port Darwin Iceworks)
— Walter Harrison (licensee of the Terminus Hotel, Cavenagh Street)
— W J Harrod (baker, Cavenagh Street)
— L Hellemann (carter, Smith Street)
— J C Hillson (manager of the local branch of the Commercial Bank of Australia, corner Smith and Bennett Streets)
— T H Harwood (assayer, gold and silver refiner)
— E P Hopewell (licensee of the Palmerston Club Hotel, corner Esplanade and Mitchell Street)
— Mrs E P Hopewell (who took over the Palmerston Club Hotel when her husband died in May 1888)
— C W Hughes (who became a partner in Rundle Brothers and Company in March 1888)
— Robert Alexander Kerr (storekeeper)
— C Killian (proprietor of N T Boot and Shoe Depot, corner Esplanade and Smith Street; branch at Burrundie)
— C J Kirkland (joint proprietor of the North Australian)
— W Lawrie (manager of Palmerston Butchery)
— Alfred Lewis (proprietor of Port Darwin Bakery)
— Ed. Luxton (a partner in Jolly and Luxton)
— G W and J Martin (blacksmiths and wheelwrights; opened a branch at Adelaide River in 1888)
— G W Mayhew (joint proprietor of the North Australian and agent for Photo Engraving Company, Angus Buggies and Alfred Shaw and Company’s pianos and organs)
— George McKeddie (a partner in Philip R Allen and Company)
— J M Neilson (photographer, Smith Street)
— T O’Connor (acrated and cordial manufacturer, Knuckey Street)
— James Pickford (licensee of the Family Hotel, Smith Street)
— S Ranford (general carrier)
— Oscar F C Reichardt (licensed surveyor architect and agent; declared insolvent in 1888)
— H A G Rundle and R R Rundle (of Philip Allen and Company then partners in Rundle Brothers and Company)
— Mrs Ellen Ryan (who was planning to build a new hotel in Palmerston but in September withdrew her application for a licence)
— Siede (joint proprietor of Palmerston Bakery, Cavenagh Street)
— H W H Stevens (manager of pastoral properties, Bennett Street)
— R M Stow (solicitor, Mitchell Street)
— J J Symes (solicitor, Esplanade)
— Mrs Eliza Tuckwell (proprietor of a boarding house in Mitchell Street)
— V L Solomon (proprietor of the Northern Territory Times, agent and auctioneer).

CHINESE-RUN BUSINESSES IN PALMERSTON IN 1888

The following Chinese businessmen advertised or were mentioned in the two local papers during 1888 or were listed in the Northern Territory Times Almanack and Directory for 1888:

— Ah Tan (storekeeper, Cavenagh Street)
— Ah Tong (proprietor of the Cavenagh Street forge)
— Ah Young (boat builder)
— Goa Chong Loong (tailor and hat maker, dealer in all kinds of European goods, Esplanade, near the Joss House)
— Hang Gong (storekeeper)
— Hong Far Loi (storekeeper)
— Kachong (barber, Cavenagh Street)
— Kwong Woh Cheong (storekeeper and importer, Cavenagh Street)
— Kwong Yee Lung (storekeeper, Esplanade)
— Man Hing (baker, Cavenagh Street)
— Sin Kim Loong (importer and general storekeeper, corner of Cavenagh Street and Esplanade)
— Soey Sing Cheong and Company (importers, general storekeepers and aerated water manufacturers, Cavenagh Street)
— Sue Loong and Company (storekeeper, Cavenagh Street)
— Sui Cheong Lung (tailor, hat maker and dealer in European goods of all kinds, Esplanade)
— Sun Gee Lee (proprietor of Palmerston coffee House, Cavenagh Street)
— Sun Hing Kee (importer, general storekeeper, carpenter and contractor, timber merchant and labour agent, corner of Bennett and Cavenagh Streets)
— Sun Hop Lee (wassheman, Bennett Street)
— Sun Mow Loong (storekeeper, Cavenagh Street)
— Tom Bow (carpenter and cabinet maker, Bennett Street)
— Wing Cheong Sing (taylor and outfitter, Bennett Street)
— Yam Yan (storekeeper)
— Yee Kee (importer and general storekeeper, Cavenagh Street)
— Yot Sing (storekeeper, Cavenagh Street).

The above list shows that most of the Chinese-run businesses were located in or near Cavenagh Street. Another non-European business was Silva Abayawira and Company (contractors, labour agents and general merchants).

Some Chinese customs were not popular with the European population, particularly those that disturbed their peace and quiet. The Northern Territory Times of 4/8/1888 reported a complaint ‘that the District Council should cease to issue permits for the discharge of fireworks to every celestial who opens a store or has a birthday’.

POSTSCRIPT: ‘THE MERCANTILE MART’
1888 — BROWN’S MART 1988

One hundred and three years after it was built in 1885, ‘the Mercantile Mart’ still stands on the corner of Smith Street and Harry Chan Avenue, but it is now called ‘Brown’s Mart’. The building was badly damaged in both the 1897 and 1974 cyclones, has been repaired and restored several times and is now one of Darwin’s few remaining old stone buildings. In 1988 as you look down Smith Street towards the Esplanade, Brown’s Mart is separated from Christ Church Cathedral by a beautiful shady park. Across Smith Street are the ruins of the Town Hall, one of the many local buildings which did not survive Cyclone Tracy in 1974.

Brown’s Mart remained the place of business for various members of the Brown family until the late 1930s. Since then its occupants have included the Bank of New South Wales, the Royal Australian Navy, Crown Law Office and Northern Territory Police.

In 1969 and 1970 the building was under threat of demolition, but after representations by many people and organisations, including architect Robin Boyd, the National Trust of Australia (NT), the President of the Arts Council of Australia (NT Division) and the Darwin Theatre Group, the Northern Territory government decided to preserve the building and to make it available for use as a community theatre. Brown’s Mart Reserve (number 1325) was gazetted in the Northern Territory Government Gazette of 29/6/1971. Since 1971 it has also housed Brown’s Mart Community Arts Project Incorporated, which is concerned with encouraging and initiating community-based arts projects which can become self-sufficient and self-generating. The Mart relies on sponsorships, subsidies, community support and the enthusiasm of its volunteers in planning, preparing and presenting arts events in the community. The building is administered by Brown’s Mart Trustees and an Executive Officer. It is on the Commonwealth Government’s Register of the National Estate. In 1988 the Northern Territory government is carrying out restoration and upkeep of the building and a history of the building is to be published, with the financial help of the National Trust of Australia (NT)’s Bicentennial ‘People on the move’ programme.

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MELBOURNE CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION

From the Northern Australian 5/5/1888:

A meeting was held to discuss representation of the Northern Territory at the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition. J G Knight was in the chair and the following committee members were elected: H H Adcock, Baxter, Beresford, V V Brown, Cecil Browne, Cruickshank, Daniels, Deane, Elphick, Ffrench, the Government Resident, Griffiths, J C Hillson, Holtze, James, Jensen, Johns, Ker, J A G Little, Nash, Judge Pater, H Roberts, Saunders, Alfred Searcy and J J Symes, with H H Adcock to act as secretary.
Salvation through Education and Training
Teutonic Industrial Missions to Aborigines

This is a re-write and revision of an article which first appeared in Northern Perspective 1986 Dry Season.

by Tony Austin

During the first 150 years of White settlement of Australia very few attempts were made by governments to educate Aborigines, although in each of the capital cities of south-eastern Australia an initial effort - however half-hearted and short-lived - was made to provide schooling. In the Northern Territory, the only schools established by the Government were in institutions for Half-caste children in Darwin and Alice Springs from 1913 and 1914 respectively. Schooling for other Aborigines was left to Christian missions.

In 1888 there were two such missions in the Territory. German Lutherans W F Schwartz and A H Kempe established the Hermannsburg Mission Society on the banks of the Finke River in 1877. Jesuits, led by Austrian priest Anthony Strele, established a station in 1892 at Rapid Creek, 10 km from Darwin and, between 1886 and 1899, made three attempts to establish a permanent presence in the Daly River region. Both denominations sought to establish industrial missions, but without the specialist personnel and business acumen required for success.

During the second half of the nineteenth century industrial missions emerged throughout the colonised world as proselytisers and colonial authorities alike sought to mould native peoples in something approaching the economic image of the working classes of industrialised Europe. The first general statement of British educational policy in colonial areas was a report made in 1847 by the Education Committee of the Privy Council to the Colonial Office. It encouraged, among other things, the establishment of industrial schools in the colonies. In subsequent decades the growth of industrial education in the British colonies was given impetus by ordinances providing for financial support for industrial schools, for example, in Fiji in 1880, the Gold Coast Colony in 1887, and Lagos and Rhodesia in 1889.

As with industrial institutions for orphan and delinquent children in the Mother country, 'industrial' activities were designed to train young people in semi-skilled and skilled occupations and to imbue them 'habits of industry and thrift' and a belief in the 'dignity of labour'. Middle class politicians, government officials and prelates at home and abroad considered this training necessary to 'save' urban poor and colonial youth from 'idleness' while at the same time providing a semi-educated labouring and servant class to support middle class economic endeavours.

In the colonies of Africa, Asia and the South Pacific, missions often preceded the establishment of a government colonial presence. Their primary concern was to convert the 'heathen'. Industrial missions were commonly designed to attract people to the mission station, to segregate their children from the heathen influence of their parents and educate them to the point where they could read the Scriptures. They aimed to induce those whose parents led 'nomadic' lives to settle into village life, marry among themselves and form Christian communities which were self-sufficient and provided a workforce for the newly established colony. 'Industrial' activities covered a wide range of occupations including rural labour, skilled horticulture and stock raising, and semi-skilled and skilled carpentry and other trades of use to the mission and employers. Other activities involved the manufacture of items for sale such as textiles, clothing, furniture and boats. Actual sales, however, were likely to result in criticism of missions by European entrepreneurs claiming unfair competition.

An underlying, though unarticulated, additional reason for concentrating on industrial education was the belief that less intellectual effort was required of people who were believed to be less intelligent than Whites. European Social Darwinism - those sets of social beliefs that evolved out of Charles Darwin's findings - included a ranking of humanity with Caucasians at the top and Aboriginal Australians commonly placed last. In the Northern Territory, Aborigines' intelligence could be relegated below that of monkeys (1). A visiting journalist writing in the 1880s of the alleged intellectual superiority of one Aboriginal group over another, added hastily, 'but it is after all as the intelligence of a mule to that of a donkey' (2).

During the late 1880s these beliefs began to be modified a little as the conviction grew that Aborigines were a child race, with child-like minds and manners. A Lutheran churchman put it this way:

'It is a child's intellect, a fearfully neglected child's intellect, that meets the missionary. That intellect is not eager for being worked on - it is not responsive; it wants to be left alone. It has been pressed down to this brutal level by surrounding circumstances. The claims of human nature are very poorly satisfied out here in the wilds of Australia. Hence the starved intellect, the starved spirit in a starved body. (3)
By the time the Select Committee of 1899 began taking evidence on Charles Dashwood’s feckless Aborigines’ Act, the belief had become an axiom in popular and official thinking. But, whereas in south-eastern Australia it had become increasingly common for Whites to attribute limited intellectual prowess to Aboriginal people, Territorians were reluctant to do so. As sub-Protector of Aborigines, F J Gillen explained to the Select Committee, ‘the Australian Aborigines are the lowest in the scale of barbarian races, as well as the lowest in human intelligence’. Certainly he toned down the assertion upon further questioning. But he insisted that a Black child, brought up in the most favourable middle class White environment, would eventually revert to the life of a ‘savage’ - regeneration was hopeless (4). Yet Gillen was one of the small minority of Territorians concerned to see some good in Aborigines, fight for their protection and for the preservation of much of their traditional life. Those traditions were anathema to missionaries, however - the Lutherans, especially. They must be eradicated. Pastor A H Kempe described traditional religious beliefs as ‘silly fables... which are so naive and absurd that every child must recognise them for what they are, namely, nothing but lies’ (5). The Jesuits were a little more tolerant of traditional beliefs - those at least that seemed to show some consistency with Christianity. Fr Donald Mackillop, for instance, was prepared to attribute to Aborigines religious ideas, as distinct from mere superstitions and expressed some regret that they must die out (6). Both denominations held that the Aboriginal groups of the late nineteenth century were inferior to those of the remote past. The language of the Daly River Ngolekwangga people (called ‘Mulluk-Mulluk’) was considered so beautiful, so ‘philosophical’, that ‘it forces the conclusion that this despised race in time remote and in other lands was very much higher in the social scale than we now find it’ (7). Anthropologist T G H Strehlow, son of Hermannsburg missionary Carl Strehlow, concluded that the Aranda were ‘merely the painstaking uninspired preservers of a great and interesting inheritance’ (8).

Missionaries considered Aborigines to be ‘cruel’ and ‘treacherous, indolent and lazy’; they would ‘ wheedle and coax to gain their ends and tell a string of fibs’; they were ‘deficient in courage’, and without ‘generosity and nobility of mind’ (9). The Jesuits were less extreme in their condemnation than the Lutherans, but both missions understood the circumstances that had forced much current behaviour on Aborigines. As Mackillop wrote in 1888, in a violent reaction to a negative report from the Government Resident and a cut in the government subsidy:

Those who revile the blacks are for the most part the men who degrade them, or who lord it over them in the style of the eastern despot. Such men have not
seen, and never will see, the nobler traits of the native character. The fact is, our own glorious colonising system is working here as it works, and has worked, elsewhere in Australia. We are not merely looking on; we are murdering the native tribes more cruelly than if we yarded and shot them. They are cruel often and treacherous, but very much may be said to palliate, if not to excuse, the dispossessed and often starving savage. We have might, of course, and powder and lead, but when these will be no longer needed our future historian will have to confess that other and more deadly means of destruction enabled us to get through the fearful work so soon. (10)

The Lutheran and Jesuit Missions were equally concerned to protect Aborigines from the depredations of settlers. For their efforts they - the Lutherans, in particular - earned the general disapprobation of White people and at best grudging Government support. Missionaries condemned Aboriginal beliefs and suspicions but they were more inclined than other Whites to attribute to Black people some intellectual potential. Fr Strele, in telling pseudo-Darwinian prose, considered Top End Aborigines to be superior to Centralians: after all, their appearance was 'far more (save the colour) like the Europeans' and the mental faculties are well-developed' (11). Hermannsburg's Louis Schulze believed the mental capacities of Aranda people were lying dormant:

It is only necessary to develop these [mental capacities], and to show them the use and advantage of doing so, but, unfortunately there is nothing on which they can exercise their talents. What advantage can it be for a youth to learn if he has no prospect of obtaining a position corresponding to his attainments?... To reflection they are quite unaccustomed. To train them to reflect, or to habituate them to think, requires a great deal of trouble... The concrete is comparatively easy for them, but as soon as the abstract is touched upon it is impossible to keep their attention... for they deviate in all directions. (12)

These mental deviations notwithstanding, both Lutherans and Jesuits wasted no time organising schools for the children. They were confident, as the Lutherans put it, that Aborigines could 'be trained to become instead of hurtful, useful to the settlers as well as to believe in Christ; and the work of the mission is therefore not only beneficial to the natives themselves but also the pioneers of civilization in those remote regions' (13). Above all, they would learn to read and so become receptive to Scripture while, at the same time, learning to forsake their parents' traditions and beliefs.

At both missions bilingual education was attempted. The evangelisers understood that children would become literate in their own language far more easily than in a foreign tongue and would be more receptive to the Word of the foreigners' God delivered in their own language. Moreover, concentration on the vernacular would enable missionaries to better understand the people's culture, thereby revealing elements that were compatible with Christianity or, what was considered more likely, weak points at which Christianity could be directed. In fact, only in 1888 was English language introduced into the curriculum at Hermannsburg. In 1880 an Aranda reader, Allolinga Angaxa, was in use, printed at government expense. A decade later, however, this was officially frowned upon. When the mission sought a reprint the Minister rejected a publication in 'the dialect of a fast disappearing race': they should be taught in English. However, while English was taught as a subject, it was not until after the turn of the century that it became the language of instruction and then under protest. At Rapid Creek, prayers and hymns were translated into the Larakia language, the latter set to 'gay tunes' which were said to be sung with enthusiasm by the children (14). In 1885, with the acquisition of a printing press, the first pages of lessons and songs were printed. When the first Uniya Station was opened by the Jesuits on the Daly in 1886, Ngolokwangga was made the official language.

In addition to religion, oral language and reading, writing, arithmetic, singing and geography were taught. The girls learned sewing - at Hermannsburg from the wife of one of the missionaries, and from one of the priests on the Daly where, however, little provision was made for educating girls while the priests awaited the appointment of sisters. Methods appear to have emphasised rote learning, since both missions remarked on the retentive memories of pupils while the Lutherans, in particular, wondered at the inability of pupils to work things out, arithmetic especially (15).

Formal schooling was intermittent. The penurious Jesuit station lacked adequate facilities, suffered agricultural setbacks and so was sometimes unable to feed its flock. Hermannsburg suffered the same kinds of problems and the quality of schooling appears to have varied greatly from year to year depending on who was responsible for the teaching and how much time he could devote to the task in light of competing priorities.

Pupils' attendance was a major problem also, fluctuating according to the seasons and how much it suited parents to leave children in the care of the mission. When admonished for their irregular attendance, Aranda pupils showed that motivation was a major factor, replying 'What for the lessons? Why do we always have to learn to read and write?' (16). Good rains, in the Centre especially, meant fewer pupils in ensuing months as people had less need to gather about the station for food even though from the outset the Lutherans bribed children to attend with a morning issue of rations before lessons began. The same difficulty was encountered at Rapid Creek, as Strele explained, missing it seems, the deeper significance of an occasional ramble:

... there is some obstacle to [pupils'] progress in the innate love of their parents to a wandering life. The latter take a ramble now and again into the bush, and as a matter of course take the children with them. The children, however (we have the authority of the parents themselves for it), give them no peace till they return to the station again. (17)

To what extent absenteeism at Hermannsburg was the result also of the mission's discipline policy can only be surmised. But inculcating discipline was a major aim of schooling, as the mission's Adelaide-based Superintendent explained. Much can be inferred about the Mission's
overall aims and the attitudes of its prelates, although the statement was not made until 1910:

the purpose of the school is mainly discipline. When the children come to school at first they do not know what it is to obey. White children have learnt obedience already at that tender age, but the indolent nature of the black prevents him from exercising any authority over his children. So, these little ones must be trained - the eye, the ear, every limb must get used to discipline. It would not do to let the young generation grow up into a habit of disobedience and disrespect, for in 10 years' time they would be unmanageable and a danger to the little community. When there are only two or three whites in such an isolated place, surrounded by over 100 blacks, it is not by brute force that they can manage them, but by instilling respect of authority and implicit obedience into them. Therefore, discipline is the main purpose of the work of the school. (18)

This was an old refrain and one that ignored both the suitability of traditional child-rearing and the extreme self-discipline required of adults by Aboriginal customs. The mission had long been accused by outsiders of treating its Aborigines harshly and the accusations would continue for several decades. For their part, ethnocentric missionaries insisted that discipline was necessary since "Indolence and laziness are their greatest faults, and the cause of many others... To get them to work is difficult; and still more to keep them at it" (19). In contrast, the Northern Territory Times attributed the willingness of Rapid Creek pupils to learn to kindly treatment and the absence of strict rules (20).

In addition to affecting attendance at school the climate determined the success of agriculture which was critical to the missions' industrial endeavours. Agriculture was necessary to feed people on poverty-stricken mission stations and, for a long time, dominated the industrial side. The Lutherans had at the outset begun raising cattle and sheep, but Aboriginal involvement appears to have involved very little formal training in the various facets of the pastoral industry. Students who completed formal schooling at Daly River were sometimes apprenticed to priests to learn a trade. But agriculture was the key both to survival and the establishment of Christian settlements, and gardening activities were required of school children as well as adults. As Lutheran Superintendent Kaibel explained, 'Our aim in educational work should be to make our proteges independent of our charity, relying for the sustenance of themselves and their families on their own exertions' (21). But the Centralian climate mitigated against sustained success in agriculture.

Not that it was always kinder to the Top End mission. At St. Joseph's, Rapid Creek, as many as fifty men, women and children lived in rudimentary housing and tended tobacco plants, bananas and pineapples. However, numbers were typically much smaller than this as the attractions of nearby Palmerston proved strong. Living in penury, suffering ill health and undertaking unaccustomed tasks, Strele, the Austrian scholar turned pioneer and farmer, wrote a quietly optimistic report in 1883. Clearing of land and planting of crops was accomplished with the help of Larakia men who were proving increasingly reliable:

They work from 8 o'clock to 11 am and from 3 to 6 pm. They receive three times a day rations of rice or potatoes, tea sugar and flour besides tobacco... For fishing and hunting the Aborigines are furnished with hooks and occasionally with guns by the Missionaries. It is thought better not to endeavour to make them give up all their old customs and manner of life at once... (22)

But Rapid Creek was abandoned in 1891. It had been in decline for some years as missionaries concentrated their attentions on Daly River. The latter was considered to hold out more hope for success since it was far removed from the corrupting influence of Palmerston. The inexorable attraction of town for the mission's Aborigines, coupled with conflict between the Larakia and other groups, forced the closure. From 1888 the main educational and industrial effort was made at Daly River where, however, problems continued. Two missions - Old Uniya, on better agricultural land, struggled on until 1899 when the Catholic mission to the Aborigines was abandoned for over a decade. Initially, though, there was hope that a Christian settlement could be established on the Daly, drawn from the school children who numbered as many as 50 in 1895, though only half that number attended at any one time.

Year after year, prior to the capitulation of the mission, reports were optimistic about endeavours to 'settle the aboriginals on the ground and turn them into a farming population' as a prelude to 'bestowing Christian civilisation upon them'. As families did, from time to time, settle for reasonable periods, the missionaries expressed confidence that 'the advantages of a settled life compared with the manifold miseries of a life of vagabondage [would] become evident to the minds of other aboriginals'. As Mackillop explained:

The ultimate fate of our mission lies with our settlers - those who support themselves and their families by the labor of their hands in their own little farms. We have only five such families at present, but this is not to be wondered at since the settlers have to submit to regulations very hard to black nature. Four out of these five may be considered successes; the fifth has no firmness of character, but has a good wife - one of our school girls.

Mackillop at one time described the settlement idea as 'a kind of socialism': 'Out of the labour of the whole adult community something is taken in the way of tax for education purposes and the general expenses, and the balance goes entirely to the workers, who know that the more industrious they are the better it will be for them individually' (23).

Ultimately, though, future success depended on the children for whom the missionaries had an optimistic regard far in advance of that of the general northern populace. In 1889, although the school was struggling, the missionaries maintained:

Our first intention...seems good, i.e., to set up and consolidate a colony of families in a regular
settlement, and to build up the school on this. So we shall not have a constantly changing school role, of children collected from all sides, who, after a while, and before they have received any solid fruit from their schooling, will slip away. For the children belonging to the families settled with us, will also be as permanent as the parents. With such we do not so easily lose all the results of our time and labours. So we must be patient...

Marriages between children thus educated would follow, and more children. It was this generation with which the Jesuits felt they would have real success. Meanwhile, the policy of instructing the older people was carried on only so as to win their confidence and trust so they would send their children to school (24). Admission of adults to the station was permitted only on the condition that children were sent to school. The children slept in dormitories but were allowed to spend time with their parents during the afternoon and evening and during school holidays.

Young married couples, however, failed to remain on their farms for long periods. Infidelity among baptised Aborigines was an ongoing source of disappointment for the missionaries. Marriages failed and the educated went bush. The venture collapsed.

The Lutherans managed to maintain a precarious presence in the Northern Territory, although the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, which founded the station, withdrew in defeat in 1894 to be followed quickly by the Immanuel Synod. Their successes in the period around the 1880s and 90s involved harbouring Aranda people from the depredations of settlers and some police officers and trackers, thereby inadvertently also assisting the maintenance of traditional cultures. The missionaries were contemptuous of most White settlers for their treatment of Blacks and castigated both civilians and police. In their turn they were accused of harsh and unchristian treatment of their wards, of harbouring cattle killers and of educating Aborigines to the point where they simply became more adept at what were considered to be their innate criminal indulgences and developed an excessively high opinion of themselves. Education, as far as most Whites were concerned, was undesirable.

It is difficult to assess the effects of the missions' educational endeavours. It is apparent that any educational successes of the Lutherans were hard-won. Aranda traditional forms of education had served the people well for many thousands of years and they resisted alien forms of schooling. Both the resistance and the traditional styles of learning which got in the way of European schooling, tended to be interpreted as evidence of a lack of intelligence brought about by the 'savage' environment and traditions in which children were raised. However, these selfless Centralian missionaries, unlike most Whites, did not consider Aborigines to be inevitably unintelligent: if children could be removed from their parents they, and especially their children, could be taught European ways. But, while the children demonstrated readily enough that they were intelligent and capable of learning, they were generally unwilling to spend sustained periods in school: thirty pupils at any one time was very good going. Lamented one teacher, the scholars have 'a knowledge of the Gospel sufficient probably to baptize them, if only they showed more earnestness and a greater desire for it'. Kaibel anguish:

There is no doubt, the instruction of these children is one of the most difficult labours imaginable. It must be said to the honour of these cultivated men and women, who with unselfish zeal have chosen for their vocation the education of the lowest of the human race, that their self-sacrificing efforts are not without avail. To try to lift even a remnant of this quickly dying out race to a higher level, is no more cheap philanthropy, but a most noble sacrifice. (25)

That sacrifice paid dividends to the extent that the Lutherans could claim that in secular subjects children progressed at least as fast as their peers in Germany. They spoke well, too, of children's general 'moral improvement', though the propensity of older girls to indulge in 'immoral' behaviour with White males had to be deplored (26).

Outsiders, on the other hand, were less impressed by what they saw. E C Stirling, a member of the Horn Scientific Expedition which visited Hermannsburg in 1894, found no evidence of 'an abiding improvement either mentally, morally or physically in the people. Professor Baldwin Spencer, another member of the expedition, was equally pessimistic about the value of an alien education:

To attempt as has been tried at Hermannsburg and elsewhere to teach them ideas absolutely foreign to their minds and which they are utterly incapable of grasping simply results in destroying their faith in the precepts which they have been taught by their elders and in giving them in return nothing which they can understand. (27)

Sub-protector Gillen was another who saw no benefits in education: 'I paid a visit to the Hermannsburg mission to try to find out whether their teaching had left some impression upon the minds of the younger people. I could not find an instance in which any one of them had grasped the truths of Christianity'. Nor did it have any effect of their moral condition (28).

His successor, Thomas Bradshaw, on the other hand, wrote a glowing account of the children's attainment, though he visited some years later than the period under review: 'Most of their reading was Excellent, whilst the handwriting would have been creditable to most white children of a similar age, and the addition of columns of figures was good, showing that there is more than a 'possibility' for them if their Education be commenced Early Enough'. But Bradshaw saw that the absence of suitable employment mitigated against a desire by the young to attend school. There were no jobs for females and, even if a young man managed to find work as a stockman, 'he finds no encouragement to continue living a (morally) clean life, and must be made of sterner stuff than the majority of whites of his own age, if he preserves any of the Missioners teaching, after living amongst station hands for any length of time' (29).

Eventually a dearth of jobs, the knowledge that educated Blacks were no better paid by pastoralists than the uneducated and, moreover, that there was a decided
prejudice against mission Blacks on the properties, caused the missionaries to pay even greater attention to religious education at the expense of the secular.

The Jesuit effort, while it lasted, tended to be better regarded - at least by the editor of the Times. Early in 1891 the newspaper printed three letters written by Aboriginal children to Fr Mackillop. Astonished by the quality of the prose, the editor concluded that the 'dying patience, perseverance, and care which must be exercised in tutoring such savages and retaining their attention to the dull routine of scholardom, must be very great indeed, while the transition from blind ignorance to comparative knowledge, such as these letters imply, could only be accomplished by teachers whose earnestness in their work soars above very other consideration' (30). Several years earlier, though, Government Resident J L Parsons had spoken cynically of efforts at St Joseph's, Rapid Creek. The only hope for children, he agreed, lay in segregation from their parents, but parents would have none of it. As a consequence, the Larakia people 'appear to be entirely unaffected by the efforts for their evangelization by self denying fathers and brothers'. A meeting of elders, he said, had concluded that 'Religion along Rapid Creek no good'. Parsons, dispirited by increasing disease and alcoholism amongst Darwin's Blacks, felt that not much better could be expected at Daly River; the race was doomed and he opposed government grants to missions engaged in a futile task (31).

The mission did fail, though in the years leading up to closure reports contained frequent references to the good work of the school. Nearly 25 years later, a government Inspector of Aborigines was impressed to find that the effects of Jesuit training among Daly River Aborigines was still in evidence. He was pleased to report that 'an intelligent woman' who had been taught by the mission had 'expressed great satisfaction' when told of government plans for Aboriginal welfare. He found the people entirely receptive to the idea of establishing a government-run farm for Aborigines in the area and painted a glowing picture of the work being done by 'Berinken' people on a Daly River farm (32). The agricultural message and methods of the Jesuits appear to have persisted to some extent and certainly to have made it easier for White farmers to work in the area.

Christian missions to Aborigines in the Northern Territory were required to exercise much more patience than they would have liked. Attempts to educate and train Aborigines and to establish industrial settlements were much less successful than Christian proselytisers had come to expect from their South Pacific experiences. The physical environment was less conducive to success. The traditions of Aboriginal people mitigated against early acceptance of the sedentary lifestyle presupposed by the industrial settlement idea and the strength of traditional beliefs proved commendably resistant to the imposition of a foreign religion. Even more commendably, perhaps, those who did accept the foreigners' religion, were able to do so without forsaking their own. Still, the missionaries had seen enough to begin to learn that Aborigines were intelligent and that the intelligence could be channelled along European ways of thought and behaviour if only children could be removed from any semblance of a traditional environment. That, though, was more easily said than done. As for most other White Territorians, the failure of the northern mission and the indifferent results at Hermannsburg was sufficient to reinforce their sense of intellectual and moral superiority and their conviction that education was wasted on Blacks and harmful to Whites' interests. Nobody seems to have thought seriously about seeking Aborigines' thoughts about their academic future.

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Looking Back at Nursing

by Jacqueline O'Brien

Turning back the clock a century and examining 'a slice history', as historians tend to say, of the advances in the nursing profession up until 1888 leaves one with the mental picture of frontier women who mostly came up by ship from Adelaide to staff the small hospital in Palmerston and provide the only nursing care available in the north with the only doctor and the Resident Medical Officer.

The story of the building of the first hospital in Palmerston (Darwin) in 1874 and the fourteen years of initial development of nursing services, however meagre, spells out the limited assistance given by the overstretched South Australian Government in colonizing its own Northern Territory, as far as back-up health services were concerned, to new settlers. Admittedly the great Overland Telegraph construction was a costly enterprise in communication right across Australia but its completion in 1872 and the finding of a goldfield at Pine Creek brought many flocking north to make their fortune, only to encounter the harsh conditions of fever and diseases - and limited medical assistance if you were a settler in an area out of Palmerston. As pressure began to mount in 1873 for the provision of a hospital, the new settlers, who arrived on the Kohinoor in 1870, after George Goyder's major survey of Port Darwin was completed in 1869, were joined first by those on the Telegraph Line construction and maintenance and then by gold seekers.

Nursing at the British Settlements

When we look at the Territory and its first civilian hospital one must not forget what occurred in the past in terms of 'nursing care' in the British settlements which were part of the Colony of New South Wales. These were located at Fort Dundas in 1824, at Melville Island, Fort Wellington at Raffles Bay in 1827 and Victoria Settlement at Cobour Peninsula in 1838-1849. This was in the period before Florence Nightingale came on the world stage during the Crimean War in 1854.

Those British outposts in the north, then part of New South Wales, were manned by marines, soldiers and convicts, were supplied by Royal Navy ships and were posted there to ensure there was a British presence in the area to deter any Dutch or other annexations in the north. To maintain these 'forts' or locations in the north, the health of the officers and men of the marine and other regiments was vital to their continuing presence there. However, other factors, such as fever and the depredations of the Tiwi aboriginal tribesmen, caused their eventual abandonment.

Fort Dundas

When Fort Dundas was established on Melville Island in early 1825, Assistant Surgeon Dr Charles Turner MD of the Royal Artillery reported the erection of 'a good weatherboard Hospital containing 16 beds which was completed in March 1825'. He was concerned that the deprivation of nourishment in the supplies to the Colony

Map of Fort Dundas.

had operated to cause the principal disease - scurvy. 'no supplies of fresh meat, fish, turtle or kangaroos had been procured. The supply of lime juice was exhausted as also the less efficacious remedies of mineral acids and cinchona bark. I have since used a solution of saltpetre and vinegar with some good effect'.

Major Campbell, in June 1827, spoke of a 'tolerable degree of health of the settlement. Although we had constant cases of dysentery and hemeralopia (diminished vision in bright sunlight due to poor diet) the latter disease being very prevalent among the soldiers, sometimes one third of the number on a guard are affected
with it and yet my limited force will not allow me to dispense with their night duties'. On the sick list at Fort Dundas were convicts, military and Royal Marines who figured in the returns under medical treatment. Captain Barlow, in reporting in August 1825, said the hospital was unoccupied and the great improvement in health was due to the small quantity of salt meat consumed. A large number of cattle was expected from Batavia and Timor.

Colonial Assistant Surgeons were posted to these remote stations, such as Dr John Gold, who died at Melville Island along with Mr Green, on 2 November 1827, at the hands of the Tiwi tribesmen.

**Fort Wellington**

In October 1827, Captain Henry Smyth reported from Fort Wellington on Raffles Bay, the second settlement formed concurrent with Fort Dundas, on the improvements which included 'a hospital fit for the reception of 13 patients comfortably was completed in August, exclusive of the surgery and storeroom'. Assistant Surgeon Davis, Medical Officer of the 39th Regiment, requested the appointment of Lance Sergeant Drew, of the same Corps, to the situation of Overseer of the Hospital and was induced to pay him one shilling and three pence per day. Private Thomas Williams acts as Hospital attendant as he washes the linen used by the patients and was credited with six pence per day. These extracts from the Historical Records of Australia give some references to the primitive beginnings of medical and health services in the two British 'Forts' and their temporary hospitals. These buildings did not survive the ravages of time, but the records at least give some idea of the problems faced by the marines, the soldiers and the convicts who were banished temporarily to these outposts on our northern coast.

![Image of Fort Wellington](Image)


**Victoria Settlement**

When the young Queen Victoria came to the English throne in 1837, Victoria Settlement was named by Captain Bremer at Fort Essington, in this her coronation year. The third British outpost was to have an eleven year presence on the north coast. Early in the settlement's history, in March 1839, the Frenchman Captain Dumont D'Urville visited the new town in the *Astrolabe* and the *Zelee*. By June the Commandant of the north, Captain Bremer, had sailed south on the *Alligator* anxious to speak with authorities about the future of the new settlement. At Victoria, the finishing touches were given to a new storehouse and a hospital with the Assistant Surgeon in charge. Before things had gone too far, the great hurricane of November 1840 had arrived to shatter most of the buildings, including the hospital. Doors and shutters were blown away and a lot of equipment for the hospital damaged. The hospital had a shingle roof with an unfinished roof at the back. Progress was slow. Finally approval was given for a soldier to make bricks to repair the new hospital. Surgeon A A Bankier of the Pelorus, a visiting vessel, agreed that the men were in good health 'but they would suffer from scurvy.' complaints and sores within six weeks if fresh meat were not available'.

By 1841 the new hospital was practically complete, except for the finishing of the cabins. The layout of the hospital, as later examined by archaeologists, is shown in diagram (1) together with a photograph of the remains of the hospital in what is to-day Gurtij National Park. Passing ships brought many problems. Early in 1843, a visit of the 1073 ton vessel the *Manlius*, with a crew of 36, brought eleven men suffering from scurvy who were admitted to the Victoria Hospital. Then there was the arrival of the HMS *Fly* with surplus stores, but with 19 men sick. Quinine had affected a noticeable change in this group's condition. Surgeon Whipple was relieved by Surgeon Sibbald and at the settlement many marines were admitted with fever. Even Captain Chetwode of the Royalist died there as a result of fever. Sick lists were running at 16 a month and Sibbald was kept very busy. John McArthur, the son of the Commandant, feared for his life but recovered eventually. The arrival of the Cadet bringing a relief crew of Marines, their wives and children, added a new dimension to the nursing of the sick in this remote settlement. The book *Forsaken Settlement* really captures the frustrations of the outpost's battle against the elements and the struggle to provide a hospital for the men, women and children who lived there, to enable them to survive.
Miner's Hospital, Yam Creek, 1879. National Library, Foelsche Collection.

Palmerston Hospital 1890. Showing Matron's quarters and Da Costa wing. State Reference Library, Peter Spillett Collection.
It is not known whether the women, the wives of the Marines, had assisted in the later years of this hospital with some of the nursing or in fact had assisted the Surgeons who had laboured to bring some relief to those afflicted. As further research is done on the lives of those who were at Victoria, more will be learnt of how this hospital functioned. During the dry seasons, many went down with fever and the young were no exception. Emma Lambrick, the wife of Lieutenant George Lambrick, lost her baby son in April 1845, and gave birth to a third child at the settlement. Marine Private William Norman lost his wife on the voyage over, arriving with his baby son to reside at the Married quarters for a term of duty.

Today the ruins of this Hospital at Coburg remain as the first place where 'nursing care' per se began at a Hospital or aide post in the tropical north. Perhaps it was a beginning in its primitive way or a forerunner (like the temporary 'Fort' hospitals at Raffles Bay and Melville Island) of what was to be our health services in the north.

Dr Tilson had attempted in 1845 to set up a recuperation centre on Croker Island and also later at Coral Bay, Port Essington. He is believed to be the first person to extract cajuput from paperbark for its medicinal value. In 1848, Dr John Crawford was the next to go down with the fever. In his delirium, he tried to advise Lieutenant Lambrick and others who were helping, on how to tend to the sick who were with him in hospital. Crawford survived to leave the settlement, but Tilson died there. Dr Tilson had earlier ministered to the medical needs of Ludwig Leichhardt and his party when they arrived at the settlement in 1845.

Finally the British administration came to an end as the cost of maintaining a presence in the north was no longer warranted and so went with it any of the futile attempts made by MacArthur to encourage a northern colony. The remnant of the stone hospital serves as a reminder to the Northern Territory that followed of the vain past endeavours at 'nursing the sick' in Australia's tropical north.

South Australia's Northern Territory
The Northern Territory was born in June 1863 as a creature of the Colony of South Australia and there was a pregnant pause in northern development between 1849 and 1863 when the new administration moved in to set up its capital in the north. The site took some time to resolve, but finally, after the Finniss Royal Commission into the first Northern Territory Expedition of 1864-66 at Escape Cliffs, George Goyder laid down the Town of Palmerston and civilian development began in 1870.

The Nightingale Nurses in Australia
The fourteen years from 1874 to 1888 was the initial phase of the development of nursing services in its limited form in the Territory. Turning back again to what happened after the Victoria Settlement, we note the Crimean War began in 1854. At this time, in Sydney Infirmary, Sir Arthur Roberts, who was to be the founder of the first Clinical School in medicine, was reported as saying that he has been impressed with the inefficiency of nursing arrangements. Looking overseas, he placed before the Colonial Secretary, Sir Henry Parkes, a request that Miss Florence Nightingale of Crimean war fame be asked to send out a 'Lady Superintendent' with some trained nurses. Some students of the history of nursing acknowledge that Roberts introduced professional nursing into Australia. Action on this move took some time. In the meantime, Florence Nightingale's school was established at St Thomas's Hospital in London in 1860. Miss Lucy Osburn and her little band came out to the Sydney Infirmary in 1868. Her trained nurses were given the title 'Sister' and paid fifty pounds per annum. Lucy Osburn insisted on cancelling the old rule which allowed nurses to nurse only women and decided her sisters would nurse both male and female patients. By 1882, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney opened. In 1885, 30 student nurses were training and by 1887 there were 40.

Changes in nurses' uniforms were not dramatic during this period and Miss Osburn's staff of 1868 wore trains which were fashionable before 'Mr Lister and his germs' were generally recognised. The first nurses at Royal Prince Alfred in Sydney in 1882 wore dresses reaching the floor. The pictured dress of a Northern Territory trained Nursing Sister of 1888 indicates what was worn even in the humid climate of Palmerston.
Palmerston Hospital

Events following the training of Nightingale nurses from Britain and the establishment of the main colonial hospitals in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide made it possible to draw on trained nursing staff from Adelaide when the first civilian Palmerston Hospital was established at what is now Packard Street. When George Goyder departed after his major survey, which established Palmerston in 1869, Doctor Robert Peel and Dr James Stokes Millner carried on until the new settlers and their families arrived on the Kohinoor in 1870. Both Doctors Peel and Millner recorded daily diaries of events in 1869 and 1870 which covered medical treatments, the work of the survey staff and even weather observations. Drugs from stores brought forward in the Moonta from Adelaide made it possible for these two doctors to provide medical care for the survey group in that first dry season at the 'Camp' near Fort Hill (below to-day's Government House). 'Medical comforts' were listed in the Archives docket of 1870 and were sufficient to ensure a healthy survey party.

After the completion of the Overland Telegraph Line in 1872 and the gold finds at Pine Creek, the influx of miners going south via Southport and Rum Jungle to the goldfields continued and there was extreme pressure on the South Australian Government to support a move for a Hospital to be erected at Palmerston. Public Works in hand in 1874 were almost nil. Moves were made to elect a Hospital Committee with the aim of subscribing amounts of money to go towards building a Hospital. The Government wanted a joint management group made up of subscribers and government appointees.

Eventually, on 11 April 1874, the South Australian Chronicle recorded details of the contract for the first Palmerston Hospital -

A contract has been taken for the building of a Hospital and work is going on speedily. It cannot be too soon at the service of the public for there is a good deal of sickness, especially up the country. There is scarcely a day passes without the arrival of one or two patients in Palmerston suffering from scurvy or fever; and during the last fortnight two deaths have occurred at Union Reef...

From two concerts given these last two weeks about forty pounds has been realised (towards the Hospital). The Hospital will cost over 800 pounds when completed. works in hand are almost nil.

The Federal Government in later years recorded the funding of the Hospital by subscriptions, mainly by the efforts of an Adelaide philanthropist, Miss Louisa Da Costa, a sister of Benjamin Da Costa, an early colonist.

"The first part of the building erected was a long narrow structure of wood and iron, now used as Asiatic wards, built by Robertson and Stewart for 650 pounds. A philanthropic lady, Miss Louisa Da Costa, who took a keen interest in Port Darwin, hearing that a Hospital had been built there, asked for a photograph of the structure, so that she could form some idea of the style of the building. Shortly after receiving same she donated some 500 pounds for a stone wing to be added to the wooden structure. Miss Da Costa asked that another photograph should be sent when that wing had been completed. This request of the lady's was complied with, and she at once forwarded another 500 pounds to construct a similar wing on the other end of the building. The building as we know it now was completed in 1876 at a cost of 1650 pounds. The female ward (built by Lee Sing for 337 pounds), the kitchen block and nurses home, were added at different times, these buildings being finished in 1888."

The first Matron, Alice McGuire, was appointed on 1 May 1874 and travelled up by ship. The hospital was complete by June of that year and was added to over the years by bequests from Miss Da Costa, until it appears as shown in the photograph of 1888. Alice McGuire (nee Martin), in her application, mentions service as a nurse in India between 1862 and 1871 and gave an Adelaide address (Bridge Street, Kensington) in April, 1874. During the four year period, the Matron and two children were joined by her husband, who assisted at the hospital. She resigned on 23 July, 1878 and was relieved by Mrs Jane Manson.

In those early years of the Hospital, progress was slow and there were considerable changes in nursing staff and doctors. Matron McGuire and Matron Manson who followed, served for twelve of the 14 years to 1888 and Matrons Freda Reinhardt and Jane Meissner served between 1886 and 1888. The Palmerston Hospital still had no laundry, operating theatre, bathrooms or female ward in 1886. A small house was built for Matron Manson in that year and sleeping quarters for two male night attendants in the hospital. The yearly report of 1886 'pays tribute to the Matron for making patients comfortable under tremendous difficulties - the two attendants doing their best and were always dependable upon being at their work on time and were strictly sober at all times and she hoped in time they would make useful men'. In 1887, 81 patients were discharged, 58 being cured.

Burrundie Hospital

The establishment of the Miners Hospital at the Shackel (Yam Creek) was an attempt, in 1878, to meet the miners' needs on the gold fields. The request for the hospital there began in 1872. Dr Astles was appointed in 1873. In 1884, his replacement, Dr J H Houston, perished as a result of heat stroke near Tumbling Waters on his way to the diggings and the goldfields were left until 1881 without medical care except that provided by the Palmerston Medical Officer in emergencies. When Burrundie was gazetted in 1884 as the Territory's second town in the goldfields area and the rail link to Pine Creek was nearing completion, there was a move to centre the Hospital there. Residents were very bitter about previous delays. By early 1888, Doctor Percy Woods at Palmerston went on leave and Doctor Henry Bovill had the responsibility of improving facilities at Palmerston as well as providing for the opening, after some thirteen years of agitation, of the hospital at Burrundie. Upon Dr Wood's return to Palmerston in July 1888, Doctor Bovill was transferred to Burrundie. By this time there were 2000 on the mining fields. Dr Bovill constantly wrote to the Government Resident for better facilities in Palmerston and for basic requirements at Burrundie to allow the new Matron Mrs Isabelle Johnston to commence duties there on 1 August 1888. By the end of the year, the hospital had proved too small to cope with
the population of gold miners and employees of Millar Bros, the contractors for the Pine Creek Railway.

It is difficult to believe that the South Australian Government, which had embarked upon major enterprises like the Overland Telegraph Line, could find it difficult to provide funds to develop some degree of medical facilities to aid mining development in their newly acquired Northern Territory. Burundie survived as a site for a hospital until June, 1890. Dr Percival J W Ternau was appointed after Bovill in June 1889 and Dr A P A Lynch in November 1890 when the hospital as such closed. In subsequent years, tombstones in the Burundie Cemetery, engraved with the names of little Ruth Beckwith of Burundie and Robert Murray of the Katherine Telegraph Station, bore witness to what occurred as a result of the decision to close the hospital and leave those remaining families without any back-up medical facilities.

The Year 1888

Dr Percy Woods, who had been appointed the Medical Officer at Palmerston in December 1884, was also Protector of Aborigines (at £500 per year) and was responsible to the Government Resident. He had spent a year in the goldfields from December 1883. It was during the time of Dr Morice in 1884 that leprosy was discovered at Palmerston for the first time. The victims of the disease were Chinese immigrants who were subsequently deported to China. Later, after 1888, Dr Woods was to become involved in a controversy over a leper patient which led to the promulgation shortly afterwards of the 'Leprosy Act'.

The Medical Officer had to deal in 1887 with an outbreak of smallpox brought in by Chinese arriving by sea from infected Asian ports. This led to considerable local resentment. The Board of Health sought the help of the Government Resident and Dr Woods took prompt action with mass vaccinations. It spread to the aboriginal community, even as far as Central Australia.

The Doctor was due to take some leave in early 1888 and was clearly anxious to have a break from the north. Dr Henry Bovill was to relieve him. The Matron, Jane Meissner, was also due for long leave, after some nine years service with Matron Manson and others previously, but had to await the approval of the Minister in Adelaide. This was given in March 1888 and the Government attempted to recruit some nurses and a Matron in Adelaide. Meanwhile temporary help was arranged. Dr Bovill began the process of documenting all the necessary requests to the authorities for hospital and staff accommodation, both for Palmerston and Burundie. The hospital staff at Palmerston consisted of a Matron, two nursing attendants, a wood cutter and a general hand and was in need of an additional hand to carry water from the well to the hospital. There were no funds available to employ such a person so all staff continued to carry the water.

During the year, the Chinese population was almost 4000 and opium was widely used, folk medicine was used and diseases were rife. Supplies to Palmerston came from sailing ships and often only at 6 monthly periods or longer. By the end of the year, negotiations were well advanced for the hospital to purchase its 'own cow' for milk supply. It was to be grazed in the Fannie Bay area.

By the end of 1888, the appointment was made of Matron Isabella J Birkett, from Burra Hospital, who arrived to commence work on 1 December along with Nurse Kate Gaffney. Some furniture was acquired in Adelaide to accompany the nursing staff to Darwin so some relief was finally in sight.

It is clear that in the years of the British settlements there was minimum nursing facilities at the old brick hospital at Victoria at Port Essington. Assistant Surgeons, many dying of fever themselves, did most of the treatment. After the Palmerston Hospital was erected by public subscription and the generous donations of Louisa Da Costa, on-going maintenance and staffing by the South Australian Government were spasmodic, with constant clashes between the Colonial Surgeon (and later Medical Officer) at Palmerston and the Government, through their Resident. The very meagre attempt to provide some nursing facilities at Burundie in 1888 was later to fail two years afterwards.

Perhaps the major project - the Overland Telegraph Line construction- had depleted the South Australian Treasury of funds to enable anything further of a developmental nature to be accomplished in those formative years of the Territory. It is a pity that stagnation, even in those early primitive nursing services, crept in to frustrate the best intentions of the Matron and the Medical Officer. Whilst in the year of our Bicentenary, it is possible to compare our present day health and nursing facilities with those of a hundred years ago and to wonder how things would have developed if Governments and local officials had had moderately better funding to ensure that nursing care was dispensed and loss of life prevented. With the move this year to a new approach to nursing training, it is interesting to reflect on the comparable positions of the Matron of 1888 (14 years after the first Palmerston Hospital was established) and the Matron of 1988, in either a Government run service or a privately run hospital. To a major degree, the progressive change in nursing care and those administering that care has been in the control of Governments, Colonial or State, and the funds they were, or are, prepared to allocate to the promotion of health and the well being of the public they serve. The lesson learnt is that the lives lost before the Palmerston and Burundie Hospitals came into being could have been saved if some more positive attitude had been taken to health and nursing services in those early years. The nurses of today have their problems but those who followed in the tradition of Florence Nightingale in the north had greater difficulties to encounter with accommodation and hospital facilities.

When Matron Birkett arrived from the Burra Hospital in 1888 to face the task of nursing patients at Palmerston, her future was not the rosiest, with smallpox, leprosy etc. evident. Whilst her colleague at Burundie was to see her hospital close by 1890, later centres took its place as the Commonwealth later took over from South Australia's stagnating years and attempted, in the 1930s, to catch up in the Territory. The story of nursing here began with hardship and frustration depended a lot on the personalities dispensing nursing care and the government of the day that had the ultimate responsibility for funding that care. History will put the record straight and time alone will tell whether the effort over the last one hundred years by all parties concerned has been, after all, worthwhile.
Music in Darwin, 1888

by Don Colgrave

The Year 1888 was a lean period for local music making. Since 1883, most public musical activity had been organised by the Palmerston Dramatic and Musical Society. In its first three years of operation, this group presented ten major concerts and assisted with several charity functions but, during 1887, the regular return south of key members meant that a program could not be arranged.

However, Palmerston was not without some music. A few members of the ailing Dramatic and Musical Society together with friends at the Railways presented an entertainment at the ‘Town Hall in February 1888 under the name of the ‘Railway Amateur Minstrels’ (1). This performance, like most of those at the time, included a piano solo by Mr Legge, Mr Mayhew’s cornet solo and songs of both serious and comic nature. The piano at the Town Hall had been bought by the Dramatic and Music Society in 1883, a Vogel walnut upright, at a cost of £100. Every two years or so a piano tuner travelled north from Brisbane and spent a few weeks in Palmerston tuning and repairing the town’s instruments.

A visiting theatrical company, in February, presented a 5-play season, including ‘East Lynne’, at the Town Hall and Messrs Mayhew and Legge were employed to provide musical interludes at each performance. Mr Henry Kilian performed a similar role for a gymnastic troupe in July.

However, the major musical event of the year, and one of the most exciting for at least the next 30 years, occurred in September. Harding’s Mikado Opera Company was one of many English touring groups which spent a year or so on a world tour, usually playing in South Africa, the Australian capitals, South East Asian cities and then home via Suez. They arrived in Palmerston on 3 September direct from an 8-night season on Thursday Island and immediately settled into the Town Hall for their season. The local population had received notice of their impending arrival only a few days earlier, (2) yet all of the nine performances except one were played to full houses.

The Company opened on 4 September with ’Mascotte’ and then rested and rehearsed for two days. Then followed ‘Girofle-Girofia’ 7 September, ‘Maritana’ 8th, ‘La Fille de Mme Angot’ 10th, ‘The Mikado’ 11th, ‘The Bohemian Girl’ 12th, HMS Pinafore’ 13th, ‘Le Cloches de Corneville’ 14th, and, finally, ‘Olivette’ on 15th September. All these were established works of the London and Paris popular theatres and the effects of such a concentrated season of musical entertainment on the Palmerston audiences must have been intoxicating as well as exhausting.

The Harding Company could not have travelled with much stage equipment other than costumes because they were ready to embark the next day bound for Sourabaya and Batavia. The musical director, Mr Trimmell, advised Palmerston in the pages of the Northern Territory Times that he would return on the Menmuir within a few weeks and would tune and repair the town’s pianos. Musicians needed to be versatile in 1888.

Advertisement for annual picnic.
The remainder of the year, according to the *Times* was barren of any further public musical activity. Although no reference was made in the press to music at the Wesleyan Church, the church choir had been active in 1887 and in 1889 appointed a new musical director (3). It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the choir participated in, at least, some of the services at the Wesleyan Church during 1888.

Fortunately for Palmerston musicians and audiences, the Dramatic and Musical Society was reorganised and revived during 1889 and by March of 1890 could boast an active membership of over sixty.

2. ibid. Vol 14., No.774, 1.9.1888.
Transport 1888

by Janet Dickinson

When South Australia was given control of the Northern Territory, it decided to colonize by sea. That meant a long sea voyage via Western Australia or, more often, around the east coast. Once there, the inhabitants of the new site were at the mercy of the whims of the South Australian Government. If it saw fit to send up a ship with fresh stores and new people so be it, but if it chose not to, then the pioneers starved; not only for food, but for news of their loved ones in the south.

The original idea to populate the north had been to expand from the south along Stuart’s track. The overland telegraph line did and several pastoralists took up properties in the Centre, such as E M Bagot of Undoolya and J Gilbert of Owen Springs in 1873. Stock had already been taken up the same track and Bagot had one of his drovers take cattle up to the Pine Creek gold fields several years later after he had floated a gold company. But it was a long hard haul for the wagons which travelled the track, with long dry spells and the bogs after rains. The South Australian government had been asked to build a road and had deferred. Eventually it started to build a railway line but progress was very slow. One section was started from the south and another section commenced at Palmerston and snaked southward but horse and bullock drawn wagons still had to be used to cart out supplies and bring ore from the outlying mines and properties into the line. The teamsters fees were often exorbitant; far more than the landholder or miner could afford to pay and still make a profit.

When goods from the south were shipped to Port Darwin they had to be offloaded onto another vessel and taken to the shore where they were often just left. If the cargo was to go inland to a mine or property there were two ways of getting it there. It could be loaded onto a wagon and carted over the rough Fred’s Pass road, which was impassable during the wet season, or it could be unloaded onto smaller craft and then taken across the harbour to the little town of Southport. The cost was often twice that of freighting the goods all the way from Adelaide. (1) It was shorter and much quicker to go by boat and most passengers preferred to make the trip that way, over the harbour and up the Blackmore River to Southport. Since there was no landing place or jetty at Southport and the government wouldn’t do anything about it, the local business people set to and built one. (2)

The price charged to transport freight by wagon from Southport to points south, say to Pine Creek goldfields, was £60 a ton. If the ‘wet’ was in progress perishables could not before they were transported because the tracks were closed for months on end. Bullock teams were usually used to transport goods and they were slow. Horse teams were also used but could not haul heavy loads. Many of the miners couldn’t afford to pay for transport so they walked to the mines, sometimes taking their goods in wheelbarrows or push carts.

The only way the miners could get to the fields, after arriving in Darwin by boat, was via the track along the Telegraph Line. Some came overland from Western Australia and Queensland. They were warned against coming without provisions, drays, stock, tools and firearms to last them from 12 to 18 months because these things just weren’t available in Palmerston, but still they came. Prices of goods skyrocketed. Many prospective diggers couldn’t even afford to leave for the goldfields. They expected the Government to feed them and transport them south. (3)

In Central Australia the Arltunga goldfields were still drawing miners from South Australia. These people had to travel by train as far north as they could go and then either ride horses and buggies or walk all the rest of the way. Goods and machinery were hauled to the mines and to the new town of Stuart (Alice Springs), via the track north from the rail head by bullock or horse teams.

In 1888 Port Darwin was claiming Imperial recognition as a coaling station and Federal quarantine Station. It was receiving some attention because of its special position and the fact that China and the Far East had been declared ‘subject to quarantine’. With the introduction of limits on Chinese immigration, Port Darwin still had to contend with incoming ships. From January 15 to Feb 15 1888, six steamers arrived from China with small pox on board or cases that had been off loaded at Singapore or Sourabaya. 400 people were in quarantine. In Darwin harbour every available hulk was hired and stationed near Quarantine Island in an attempt to confine the disease. The attendants of the hulks were unskilled, but were the only persons available for the job. (4) Port Darwin looked an ideal spot because of its isolation. It could protect the rest of the colony from incoming diseases and illnesses.
Mail Carrying in the NT. National Library. Birtles Collection.

A later form of transport, Alexandria Station. NT Historical Society.
The railway line was opened to Burra by the end of 1888 and the Telegraph office and other buildings were transported from Southport. The Adelaide River Railway Station was opened in 1888. Miners began to complain of the cost of freight on their ore - 4 pence per ton per mile as against 1 1/2 pence charged in South Australia. The miners wanted to pay only 2 pence saying that a railway in a new area should not make a profit but should help in the development of the region. The request was finally agreed to. With the railway almost complete, fear was held for the problems of unemployed. It was generally felt that the Chinese men who had worked on the line would not remain to settle in the area. In fact many of them did, and became well respected citizens.

The mines went through several boom and bust situations between 1873 and 1884. Investors became wary and stopped sinking their money into ventures with the result that some legitimate companies failed.. (5) They also had other problems to contend with. The cost of provisions, freight and wages were astronomical. Roads were impassable in the wet, and in the dry it was impossible to work some of the mines because there was not the water needed to wash the dirt. Cheaper and more reliable transport was needed if the people in the north were to survive.

Finally, the Government decided to build a railway line to the goldfields in the hope that it might help. Chinese were employed as their labour was cheaper and the authorities felt that they would work better in the tropics than Europeans. The line bypassed Southport, and meant the death of that port. It also missed The Shackie with a similar result. (6) The cost of freight on the train was certainly cheaper than by bullock wagon if the mines were close to the line, but outlying mines still had to pay high cartage to get it. Freight was 2 to 3 shillings a ton a mile, and Warden Playford felt that, since roads were good and feed plentiful for most of the year, prices were unreasonably high.

As Newman said in 1875, the Territory 'has been, and will be again, one of the best countries on earth for a sober, industrious labouring man to quickly realize sufficient money to place him in a position above cringing to his fellow-men for leave to toil.' (7) So long as some of the problems of bureaucratic bungling, loneliness and the high cost of living could be overcome. It is almost as relevant today as it was between 1864 and 1888.

The Territory was governed from afar by people who did not know the problems nor understand them. The isolation, the weather and the cost of living and working in the Northern Territory could have been made bearable if shipping movements had been more regular, freight had been more reasonably priced, and restrictions of bad legislation, such as mining laws and land tenure, were more flexible. Exploitation by southern get-rich-quick people, not to mention the owners of vessels that plied between Palmerston and Southport and the teamsters between there and the goldfields, caused more than enough problems. The building of the railway should have alleviated those problems, but by the time it was built confidence had dwindled and the damage had already been done. Perhaps if the line had been built earlier things might have been different. If it had been built to take in existing towns like Southport and The Shackie, where people had built houses and stores etc, confidence may have been greater. Many of the people who had come to the Territory to exploit it learned to love it and stayed to make it their home. They learned to adapt to the weather and make the most of their adopted land. Some chose to remain because they had nothing to return to in the South. Others left to take up their lives where they had left off, only to find that something about the Territory was calling them back. Then again, there were others who could not get away from the Godforsaken place quick enough; they caught the first mode of transport out.

Transport was a very important part of the Northern Territory. For some people it was the means of getting themselves to a property or mine to earn a livelihood. For others it was a way of making a living, often at the expense of someone else. (If supplies or machinery had to be moved from one place to another and a high price was being asked to transport it, there was no other way of moving the goods so the asking price had to be paid - no matter how high it was. The alternative was that the machinery or supplies stayed where they were, and on occasions that did happen.) Transport was also a means of allowing others to return to where ever they had come from after they realized that the Territory was not for them. In 1888 the Railway line was seen as the method of transport that was going to open up the outback and mean a prosperous and bright future for all in the Territory. It was going to be a link between Adelaide in the south and Port Darwin in the north. It is still waiting to happen!

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Postal and Telegraph Services in the Northern Territory in 1888
by Kevin T. Livingston

The Overland Telegraph Line: Symbol of the Territory

The story of the building of the Overland Telegraph Line (1870-72) which linked Adelaide to Darwin, and the folklore that came to surround it were well established by 1888. In the words of the historians of the Territory's postal services, the O. T. Line became 'the symbol of the Territory from the outset'. (1) It was a symbol embellished and reinforced by other well-known writers on the Territory, such as Mrs Aeneas Gunn and Ernestine Hill. (2)

The O.T. Line was the main reason confirming South Australia's acceptance of the Territory as 'its great northern dependency' - to use the words of the Hon J C F Johnson, the Minister responsible for the Northern Territory in 1887-89. (3) There is little doubt that the main European settlement at Port Darwin - the town of Palmerston - and the other main Territory towns which developed from the small European enclaves around new telegraph stations in the early 1870s owe their establishment and their permanency to the South Australian Government's momentous decision in mid-1870 to collaborate with a British Cable Company and build the cross-continental telegraph line linking Australia to Europe. By 1888, Territorians had come to accept the O.T. Line as a part of life - something they almost took for granted. By 1888 other issues - the Chinese question, the mining, pastoral and agricultural industries, and, to some extent, Aboriginal - European relations - were regarded as more important, at least judging by the space given to these topics in the newspapers and the government reports.

Nevertheless, there had developed by 1888 a mythology about the O.T. Line - the vast distances it covered; the heroism and patience of the men who built and operated it. Territorians and South Australians were proud of their feat in constructing and maintaining the Line, and very conscious that the Australian colonies were dependent on their Line for the miracle of the telegraph connection with Britain and Europe. The Line had become a very useful reference point for public figures in South Australia and the Northern Territory to draw attention to themselves and their colony in the context of intercolonial and international politics. They used the Line as a standard reference in speeches and addresses, especially when they wanted to draw attention to the strategic importance of this communication link. Thus, when the Territory's Government Resident, Hon J L Parsons, visited Adelaide in 1887 and gave a public address, entitled 'The Northern Territory and Eastern Asia' at the Adelaide town Hall on 19 May 1887, he referred to the Overland Telegraph in these terms:

The electric wire has been stretched from the shores of the southern ocean to those of the Arafura Sea, and there the cables span the intervening waters, so that Australia is in instant communication with the rest of the civilised world. Each morning thanks to the enterprise of the press, we can read the news of the whole world. Everyone will admit that it was the possession of the Northern Territory which was at once the inspiration and the facility by which the Overland Telegraph became an entirely South Australian institution. (4)

Charles Todd: Postmaster - General

Parsons concluded his reference to the O.T. Line by congratulating the South Australian Postmaster-General, Charles Todd, and noted that Todd had recently received 'due recognition in England for his great and arduous work' in supervising the construction of the Line. Parsons was referring to Todd's visit to Germany and England the previous year, when Todd had been acclaimed by the members of the Royal Colonial Institute when he addressed them in London in February 1886. The main theme of Todd's address was the building of the O.T. Line. (5)

In 1888 Charles Todd was still the Postmaster General and Superintendent of Telegraphs, as well as the Government Astronomer in South Australia. He had become a legend in his own lifetime largely because of his brilliant leadership and organising skills in supervising the building of the O.T. Line built within two years in 1870-72. By 1888 Todd had been in South Australia for 32 years. He was a vigorous 62 year-old, of slight build and bright eyes, but a man of many parts: an astronomer, meteorologist and surveyor, interested and active in many areas of science and technology. Todd's fame in his own lifetime, and since, has rested rather too narrowly on his achievements in
telegraphy, especially the building of the O.T. Line, including the Territory section, the Port Darwin Line. (6) His all-round brilliance as a scientist and technologist and his leadership in forging intercolonial and national communications systems remain to be sketched in the yet-to-be-written complete biography of this pivotal figure in the history of science and technology in Australia. Here it is important to note that Todd remained responsible for the overall administration of the Port Darwin Line - the telegraph services in the Territory - as well as the Territory’s postal services throughout the whole of his career that ended with his retirement in 1906, only a few years before his death in 1910. (7)

**John Little: Postmaster and Telegraph Stationmaster**

The other major personality in the story of the Territory’s postal and telegraph services in this period is John Little. First appointed the Telegraph Stationmaster at Port Darwin in August 1871 during the construction of the Line and before the cable had come ashore at Port Darwin, Little became the first official Postmaster at Palmerston in March 1873. In 1888 he was 45 years of age, a large man who was a strict disciplinarian. He had not yet reached the halfway point in a long career in the Territory that was destined to last as long as Charles Todd’s though , unlike Todd, Little was to die in office at the age of 63 in May 1906. By the late 1880s, Little had settled into his routine of administering the local postal and telegraphic services in the town of Palmerston and supervising the up-country mail services, as well as making regular journeys on horseback in his role as ‘Senior and Inspecting Officer’ of the northern section of the O.T. Line and the telegraph stations and their staff as far south as Attack Creek, over 600 miles south of Port Darwin. Little maintained regular mail and telegraph contact with Adelaide and Charles Todd, to whom he reported on policy matters or those which involved some controversy. (8)

**Port Darwin or Palmerston**

The confusing and inconsistent use of the different names of 'Port Darwin' and 'Palmerston' (the name given for the township) for essentially the same European settlement is well illustrated in the dual role that Little performed as Telegraph Stationmaster and Postmaster from the early 1870s. When the formerly separate Postal Telegraph departments were amalgamated in South Australia in 1870 under Charles Todd, the inconsistency had been formalised. As Williams and Collas explain in their history of the Territory’s Postal Services - referring to the use of postmarketers cancelling the stamps in the 1870s - while
First Telegraph Station at Port Darwin. NT Historical Society.

Planting the first OT Pole at the Corner of Cavenagh Street and the Esplanade, 1870. Australian National Library.

Telegraph Station, Yam Creek, 95 miles from Southport. NT Historical Society.
Port Darwin was the name used for the Territory's Telegraph service:

On the postal side, the name was Palmerston, as it had been in the days of the non-official post office, although in many records it was shown as Palmerston, Port Darwin. The name of Palmerston was never really popular and within 25 years after settlement was seldom heard, though it lingered a little longer in print. So far as the post office postmark was concerned, the earlier type which had included the expression 'Northern Territory' became outmoded when other post offices were being opened in the Territory from 1873. It then became necessary for a distinctive postmark to be provided for Palmerston and this came into use late in 1873. Sometime before 1878, it was replaced by a postmark reading 'Port Darwin N.T.'(9)

Thus, ten years later in 1888 'Port Darwin' had not only become the more common and more popular term for the European settlement on the Port Darwin harbour, but the phrase 'Port Darwin Line' had in practice come to embrace both the postal as well as the telegraphic services.

Consequently, we will use 'Port Darwin' rather than 'Palmerston' when referring to the main town at the Top End of the Northern Territory in 1888 - now, of course, known simply as Darwin.

The Year 1888

Though Territorians generally were inclined to take for granted the O.T. Line, and the residents of Port Darwin to take for granted the postal and telegraph services available in the town, nevertheless the year 1888 was an interesting one in the history of communications in the Territory. If we look in depth at this one-year slice of history we discover communication patterns that were established in the middle of the first generation of European settlement in the Territory. We discover not only the way the colonial post and telegraph bureaucracy operated but also how important ordinary people regarded their postal and telegraphic services. They provide an interesting case study on the theme of Territory-South Australia public administration. Under Charles Todd, South Australia's Post and Telegraph Department (of which the Territory was an integral part) was the most progressive and most developed of the Australian colonies in offering postal, telegraphic and other information services including up-to-date weather information. This fact should make this story of the Port Darwin Line in 1888 of wider interest than simply a slice of Northern Territory history.

Documentary Sources

We can discern quite a lot of information from a range of documentary records dating back to 1888. There are many items on postal and telegraph matters in contemporary newspapers, especially Port Darwin's weekly newspaper, the Northern Territory Times and Gazette - owned by the formidable V.L. Solomon - published every Saturday. There is also the Adelaide Advertiser and some surviving volumes of newspaper clippings. Charles Todd's writings are another major source. During 1888 items relating to posts and telegraphics in the Territory which required a response from the Minister were referred to Todd, whose minutes and memos to the Minister are preserved in the public records of South Australia. In addition we have the major reports on his administration that Todd wrote in 1884 and 1896, published in the South Australian Parliamentary Papers. (10) In each of these lengthy reports, Todd included substantial sections on the separate areas of the postal services and the Overland Telegraph Line in the Northern Territory. Finally, there are well researched books published in recent years - some already cited - which are listed in the appended references.

First Complaints for the Year

The year began quietly for the staff of the Post and Telegraph Department working in the largest building in Port Darwin on the corner of Mitchell and Bennett Streets - the complex of three buildings joined by covered walkways that housed the telegraph station and postal room controlled by the South Australian administration and the adjoining British Cable Company's offices and living quarters. Because the cable company in the early 1870s was the British Australian Telegraph Company (BAT), the British staff had come to be known locally as 'Bats'. By 1888, the company was actually the Eastern Extension Australasian and China Telegraph Company Limited. (11) The Wet season was rather late in starting in 1888. It was not until 28 January that the Times and Gazette reported the arrival of the 'late heavy rains'. A couple of weeks later on 16 February, during a fierce storm 'a blinding flash of lightning accompanied by deafening peals of thunder played havoc with the weak nerves in Palmerston' and 'lightning travelled along the wires in to the Telegraph office in Palmerston, and along the wires into Mr Hopewell's telephone fusing some of the wires' (12) The first telephones had been installed only the previous year, including one connecting the Fannie Bay Goal and the telegraph station - so this was the first 'Wet' the local users of the telephone had experienced since its installation.

Before the first month of the year had passed the first public complaints about the post office had been aired in the newspaper. The first was the occasion of the public holiday on Thursday 26 January. Clearly the Times and Gazette did not consider Anniversary Day (as our present Australia Day was then called), or Centenary Day as it was called in that year of the centenary of British settlement in Sydney, to be worthy of a holiday. The Times professed to be puzzled as to why the post and telegraph department in particular should be closed for business on that day.
is to be closed for every little celebration that is held, we shall very soon have about two holidays a week, which, with interruptions on the line, on an average of two other days, will reduce the working days to three out of every seven. (13)

In fact, despite the implication that the post office was closed on the whim of the local officials, they were no doubt following orders from Adelaide, where government offices and the banks closed for the 26 January holiday while most private businesses continued trading. The divisions within the South Australian and the Territory communities about whether or not to observe the public holiday reflected the weariness that had followed six months of celebrations for the South Australian Jubilee - the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the colony. (14) These Jubilee celebrations had ended only on 7 January. The very same issue of the *Times and Gazette* which complained about the public holiday on 26 January had carried an 'Adelaide Letter' which made no reference to the Centennial but included references to their recent Jubilee. It was only in a separate column ('Colonial and Intercolonial') that there was a reference to the Centennial celebrations being held in Sydney proving highly successful. (15) Though some South Australians travelled to Sydney for the main week-long centennial celebrations, held from 23 to 29 January, the only interest Territorians showed in any Centennial event was in the setting up of a Territory exhibition at the very successful Melbourne International Centennial Exhibition which opened later in the year on 1 August and lasted for nine months, attracting 28 national exhibits. (16)

**Visit of the Minister from South Australia**

The Territory did have one link with the gathering of people in Sydney during the Centennial week - in the person of the Honourable Joseph Colin Francis Johnson, Minister of Education in the Playford Government of South Australia. He was government minister responsible for the Northern Territory. Johnson, who was accompanied by Charles Todd, represented South Australia at an important intercolonial postal conference that took place in Sydney in the week 19-26 January. (17) As a separate article in this book recounts, Johnson travelled on to Port Darwin via Brisbane and other Queensland towns after the Sydney conference, though Todd did not accompany him. In this article, we will note only those aspects of the minister's visit to Port Darwin which throw some light on the operations of the Post and Telegraph Department in the Northern Territory.

The public issues which dominated the news during Minister Johnson's six-week visit to the Territory were Chinese immigration, mining, pastoralism and agriculture. The administration of postal and telegraph services did merit some mention in the Minister's own public statements, and he interviewed John Little, Postmaster and Superintendent of Telegraphs, along with nine other heads of government departments as part of his overall assessment of the Territory's public service. In his report, written about a month after his departure from Darwin, Johnson stated that he was 'on the whole satisfied that first the Government has an efficient staff of officers... and, secondly, that the service is in no department overmanned'. His condensed versions of his interviews with the different heads of departments have yet to come to light, so we are unable to discover what matters he discussed with John Little.

In his public statements about the post and telegraph services the minister drew cheers at a public banquet when he said that 'it had been determined that the up-country mails should be conveyed to and from the head of the road by train, thus giving an extra day in Palmerston to answer letters'. (19) In an interview with the *Times* on the eve of his departure on 10 April, Johnson noted that the need for a Savings Bank in connection with the Port Darwin Post Office had been 'brought prominently before him'. He had obtained a report on the subject from Mr Little and would consult Mr Todd on the matter in Adelaide. (20)

**Administration of the Overland Telegraph Line**

 Soon after the Minister's departure, the Government Gazette section of the Port Darwin newspaper carried notices about the schedule of waste lands reserved and dedicated for public utility around the telegraph stations along the O.T. Line. (21) These reservations, in each case 25 square miles around the telegraph station, illustrate the extent of the Post and Telegraph Departments' land holdings in the Territory. In addition there had been significant capital investment in the construction of these Territory telegraph stations. In his 1884 report Todd provided a detailed description of the O.T. Line's buildings, and referred to these reserved lands. Permanancy was the most characteristic feature of these buildings from Charlotte Waters, close to the South Australian - Northern Territory border, to Port Darwin. Large stone buildings, each with at least eight rooms, had been constructed in the early 1870s providing offices and staff quarters at the major telegraphic stations: Charlotte Waters, Alice Springs, Barrow Creek, Tennant Creek, Powell's Creek, Daly Waters and Port Darwin. There were substantial wooden puddings also at Elsey, Yam Creek and Southport. (22)

Even more interesting is Todd's brief reference to the large tracts of land reserved since 1874 for the grazing of sheep, cattle and horses at seven of the stations: Charlotte Waters, Alice Springs, Barrow Creek, Tennant Creek, Powell's Creek, Daly Waters and the Katherine. In an accompanying table Todd recorded the number of sheep, cattle and horses kept at each station - with sheep numbers ranging as high as 3,400 at Alice Springs and with generally 20-30 horses at the larger stations. In 1884 there were more than 5,000 sheep and 277 horses kept on the Telegraphic Station reserves. (23)

It was not until 28 March 1888 that these extensive land reserves were formally proclaimed: hence the series of notices that appeared in the Government Gazette in late April-early May 1888. In his detailed study of the Katherine telegraphic station, the late Claud Leonard has traced the long protracted history - extending from 1888 until after the Second World War - of the various attempts made to persuade first the South Australian Government and later the Commonwealth Government
to surrender certain parts of the Katherine Telegraph Reserve to local users. The first formal breakthrough occurred in 1887 - 1888 when Barney Murphy was given permission to open his 'Pioneer Cash Store' and 'Sportsman's Hotel' at the Katherine. It seems that general agreements had been reached in 1887 and that the formal rental agreement was finalised in 1888 when Charles Todd set the ground rental at £12 per year. (24) This case of the Katherine Telegraph Reserve serves to reinforce the significance of the O.T. Line in the history of main Territory towns.

Staffing and Finance

The post and telegraphic department in the Territory employed more staff in the 1880s than all of the other government departments combined. In 1886-7 there were 53 employed on the O.T. Line and 49 in other government departments. (25) In August 1888 the Times and Gazette estimated the numbers to be about equal: 'We estimate the number of officers in the N.T. Department at from fifty to fifty-five, and in the O.T. Department at the same, or say from one hundred and five to one hundred and ten altogether.' (26) While the position of postmaster and head of the telegraph station had been combined in the one person at each station for many years, 1888 saw the drawing of a clear distinction between the finances of the combined postal service and telegraph services in the Territory, as they were administered by the South Australian Government. In May 1888, the Minister, Johnson, preshadowed the change introduced on 30 June, when he noted in a minute drafted after his return from the Territory that, though he had laid the matter of additional subsidies before his cabinet colleagues, they were 'indisposed to agree to any further subsidies at present for the Northern Territory mails'. (27)

In his 1896 report, Charles Todd recorded the formalising of the new financial arrangements which differentiated between the postal services and the telegraph services operating on the O.T. Line. Basically, from mid-1888 the Territory's administration (that is, its own budget) met the costs of all mail services and received all postal revenue, whereas the South Australian Government regarded the O.T. Line as its undertaking and paid for the telegraphic operators in the N.T. as well as in S.A. In Todd's own words:

The Northern Territory Department, up to 30th June 1880, bore the cost of inland mail services between Port Darwin and post offices corresponding with it viz. Southport, Yarn Creek, Pine Creek, Union Reef etc. as well as the cost of sea services. On June 30th 1888 an agreement was entered into by which the Northern Territory Department paid the cost of all the services north of the parallel of 26 deg south latitude, and received in return the whole of the postal revenue from all offices north of the same parallel. (28)

Towards the end of 1888 Todd advised his government minister that the most convenient administrative arrangement was to credit all postal and money order revenue due to the Territory at the end of each quarter and that the Territory should credit the Department for all telegraph revenue. Seven years later, when asked 'has the telegraph line been financially a success?' - while giving evidence to the South Australian Parliament's Northern Territory Commission - Todd responded:

It is now working its way very well out of a difficulty. For some years it was a continued loss, but now it considerably more than pays working expenses, which have very considerably decreased.

Asked how a balance sheet would look showing 'the interest and working expenses on one side and all revenue on the other, how would it stand?' Todd frankly replied: 'We would have to show a very large deficit'. He then made it clear that the whole expense of the O.T. Line and the Telegraph services within the Northern Territory had been borne by South Australia. Nothing had been charged to the Northern Territory for its construction, maintenance and operation.

It is thought that the Northern Territory should not be charged with any portion of the cost, as the line has been regarded as a South Australian undertaking. The Northern Territory pays the salary of the officers in the post offices, but the revenue goes to the Territory; but it does not pay the telegraph operators. (29)

Local Rates on O.T. Line

In mid-1888 there was a campaign by a lobby group in Adelaide for a reduction in the rates charged for local, intra-colonial uses of the Overland Telegraph, as distinct from the rates charged for international and intercolonial users. In early July there was some correspondence with the Minister, including a letter from a stock and station agent claiming to reflect the views of people around Alice Springs. The Adelaide Advertiser reported that a deputation representing the Adelaide Chamber of Commerce visited the Minister. It was the Chamber's 'decided opinion that the rates now ruling the Northern Territory 'were altogether too high'. They called for a uniform rate of one shilling for a ten word telegram for the whole of South Australia and the Northern Territory. They were not satisfied with the 'small reductions' suggested by the Postmaster General, Charles Todd, who had recently recommended a rate of 1/- for ten words within South Australia, 2/- to and from Alice Springs and 3/- to and from Port Darwin. In a memo to his minister, Todd agreed that while it was 'really a question of policy and revenue', he did not regard it as an economic proposition to accept the Chamber's case. To do so would, he estimated, lead to a loss of £4,000.

Todd maintained that the new rates could only be sustained 'on the distinct understanding that our charges on cable telegrams will remain the same until the rates are altered - unless the other colonies will bear part of the loss'. (32) By the end of August the Minister had informed the Chamber of Commerce that the Government regretted that it was 'unable to adopt the suggestion of the Chamber that a uniform rate of 2/- be fixed for Northern Territory messages'. (33) There the matter rested.
Maintenance of the O.T. Line and the Cable

Todd was more preoccupied in 1888, as in other years, with maintaining the O.T. Line for international cable traffic. In his major reports he devoted space to progress made in the re-poling of the O.T. Line, with iron poles replacing the wooden poles which were being demolished by termites. (34) He also reported on the breakdowns - whether because of damage to the land line, which was his responsibility, or breaks in the underwater cable, which was the responsibility of the British Cable Company. (35) Despite the *Times and Gazette*’s disclaimer in March 1888 that ‘the interruptions of communications have been much magnified’, 1888 was not a good year for the Cable Company. (36) A total of 30 days were lost during the year because of cable breakages, as compared with no days lost in the preceding or succeeding years. In fact, in the 12 years from 1878 to 1890 only one year had a worse record than 1888 - 1886, when the cable was not operating for 53 days. So, too, the hours lost because of interruptions on the Port Darwin land line were more or less comparable with other bad years - 147 hours were lost in 1888 as against 138 in 1887 and 184 in 1889. The reasons for the eight separate interruptions to the land line transmissions during 1888 included the usual spectrum of causes: thunderstorms and lightning (three times), a bush fire, line cut by a man to obtain assistance, and Aboriginal interference north of Daly Waters - ‘wire off three poles, insulators smashed, and 30 yards wire cut by natives’. This last mentioned incident in 1888 was the last reported damage on the O.T. Line caused by Aborigines - at least to the mid-1890s, the period covered by Todd’s reports. By the late 1890s it appears the O.T. Line was no longer a novelty for Northern Territory Aborigines. (37)

Postal Mail Services

In his two major reports on his department, Charles Todd’s first references to the Territory were the sections on the ‘Northern Territory’s Postal Services’, in which he summarised the contracts entered into with steamship companies to carry mails by sea and with other contractors to carry overland mails up-country. (38) People in the Territory in 1888 no doubt awaited the arrival of the mail steamer or the nomadic mailman leading his packhorse, just as Mrs Gunn and the other characters in the ‘Never-Never’ greeted the ‘Fizzer’ with his cry of ‘Mail-oh!’ at the turn of the century. (39) For Postmaster-General Todd in Adelaide, advertising tenders for mail contracts in the Northern Territory, and for John Little in Port Darwin keeping track of the closing times for the mails, were never-ending routines. There were regular notices about closing times for the mails or contracts for the mails in almost every issue of the *N.T. Times and Gazette* throughout the year. By 1888 the Eastern and Australian Steamship had settled into its routine of six round trips a year, conveying the mails between Adelaide, Port Darwin and Hong Kong. Their contract current in 1888 dated from January 1884, when the Company, after previously being paid 400 pounds per round voyage during the previous two years, was now paid ‘the nominal sum of one farthing per round trip’. (40) Clearly the company’s steamers were doing good business carrying other freight and passengers. When the S.S. *Guthrie* arrived at Port Darwin on Monday evening 25 June 1888 from Sydney and Queensland ports she brought a large batch of 16 mail bags. (41)

The departure times of the steamers were very carefully monitored not only by the shipping agents, but also by the local citizens anxious to catch the last possible mail clearance. As we shall note shortly, the regulations regarding the departure of the ships carrying the mails were to cause a major controversy before the end of the year. People were not slow to complain about what they regarded as shortcomings in the services of the post office. Despite the fact that 1888 was the year that letter carriers began mail deliveries to residences within Port Darwin, the local newspaper in late September carried a diatribe about the telegraph and postal services available in the town. (42)

When the Government granted the request of the people of the Territory, and reduced the price of telegraphing, by introducing the deferred rate for telegrams between the Territory and South Australia, the concession was hailed as a boon, but we now find the value of the alteration very much reduced by the rule that deferred messages shall only be delivered by ordinary postal delivery, which is limited to once in every twenty-four hours. This question of the delivery of deferred messages, and also the absurdity of there only being one letter delivery a day in Palmerston, should receive the attention of the business people who are the most inconvenienced. Such matters should be properly represented to head quarters either by means of influential deputations, or a few judiciously irritating questions in the House of Assembly, which might tend to show those who have forgotten the fact that the post, telegraph, and other public departments are paid by the people, and are for public convenience, and not to be made a source of irritation, obstruction and annoyance by red tape or conservative obstinacy. (43)

This criticism directed at a post office open six days a week hardly seems warranted.

Violence on the Frontier

After the violent skirmishes which had taken place over the years since 1870 between groups of Aborigines and the Europeans who arrived in the Territory to work on the O.T. Line and later in mining and pastoralism, the year 1888 appears to have been free of any major racial violence affecting telegraph operators. The main report of violence during the year which affected an officer working on the O.T. Line, was in fact, a murder of a white man by another white settler. Alan Giles, the 39 year old stationmaster at the Tennant Creek telegraph station telegraphed the Port Darwin police on 19 November from Powell’s Creek, to report that he had witnessed the shooting of the European cook at Renner Springs cattle station after a quarrel with another European over money matters. Giles, who was ill at the time, managed to transmit his eye-witness report only days before he himself died on 23 November. The *Times and Gazette* in Port Darwin, which carried
reports of the murder and the death of Giles and then the murder trial in December, suggested that the 'shock of seeing a man shot down in cold blood' worsened Giles' illness and brought on his own death (39).

Though there were no reported racial conflicts affecting O.T. Line staff during 1888, there was obviously unease in the Powell's Creek area among the European settlers. In a memo to his Minister in early December, Charles Todd was clearly responding to pressure for a stronger police presence when he wrote that 'a constable and one native constable can be accommodated at Powell's Creek'. Referring also to 'a tracker' he added the comment: 'I learn that police protection is urgently required at Powell's Creek'. He presumed that the Northern Territory Administration would pay for their rations. (40) Thus, though the worst excesses of violence appear to have subsided, it was still a potentially violent frontier in the Territory in 1888.

End of the Year Complaints

During the last two months of the year, when the heat and humidity made life very unpleasant in the tropical parts of the Territory, there was an outbreak of complaints in the newspaper against the post and telegraph department in Port Darwin, mainly directed at its head, John Little. Perhaps the outbreak can be put down simply to the traditional 'build-up' to the 'Wet' season, but there is no doubt that the postmaster and his officers suffered their worst criticism of the year.

The first issue that arose related to the confusion caused by the use of two different time standards in Port Darwin. The newspaper in Port Darwin stated the problems in unrestrained language, quoting a correspondent who had drawn attention to

the absurdity of our having what he terms two correct times, one being local or Northern Territory time and the other Adelaide Observatory time. The local Post and Telegraphic offices adopt Adelaide time in all their work while other Government offices and banks take local time. (41)

The writer went on to point out the difficulties caused in business matters, especially in areas such as banking and disputes over land applications and mineral claims. The newspaper clipping was sent to Adelaide, where Charles Todd was asked for a comment by the Minister. Todd needed no encouragement. As he wrote in his lengthy memorandum, it was a subject on which he had given 'very considerable attention', having been the subject of his recent presidential address to the Institute of Surveyors. He noted that it was the practice in all the Australian colonies to adopt the 'observatory time' for their telegraph and railway systems. Thus Adelaide time was the standard time for the whole of South Australia, Melbourne for Victoria and so on. He strongly advised the minister that to use the local Port Darwin time would complicate telegraphic business. Todd then transferred his attention from the Territory and South Australia to the Australian colonies as a whole, suggesting 'one standard time, say NSW, for all four colonies [Qld, Vic, NSW, SA] would be a great advantage or if we included WA, Adelaide time throughout Australia and Tasmania might be adopted with advantage'. He referred to North America where, as recently as 1883, five standard time zones had replaced 75 local times. He concluded by calling for the matter to be discussed at an intercolonial conference such as the new Federal Council.

Todd's concerns about this issue of standard time zones elicited no positive response from either his own minister or the Attorney-General, to whom the matter was referred. (42) The resolution of the confusion surrounding local versus capital city (observatory) times and the multiplicity of time zones across the Australian colonies lay in the future. A second outburst against the Post and Telegraph Department in Port Darwin which appeared in the Times and Gazette at the beginning of December, highlighted a local rather than a national problem: 'Who is responsible for the present chaotic affairs in the stamp department of the Post Office and whose stupidity is to blame for allowing mail after mail to leave Adelaide without fresh supplies'. (43) A few days earlier an unsigned note had reached the minister in Adelaide drawing attention to the 'great public inconvenience' caused through the 'mishandling of the Postal Department in neglecting to supply the Port Darwin Post Office with stamps and newspaper wrappers. The correspondents stated that for some time the citizens had been reduced to using half penny and penny stamps but by then everything but postcards had been exhausted. Charles Todd informed his minister that the problem had been caused by a delay in the mail steamer, but that the Postmaster in Port Darwin had been able to 'meet immediate wants by borrowing a good supply from the Government Resident'. Todd assured the minister that an additional issue of stamps would reach Port Darwin within a few days. (44)

There was yet another complaint in the Times and Gazette about the post office before the end of December, this time about the inconvenience caused during the holiday season by 'having only one postal delivery per diem'. According to the 'Times, on the day before a holiday business people would either have to post their letters before 10 am or deliver them by hand, or have them delayed another 48 hours. 'How much longer' asked the writer, 'are we to sit and endure these annoyances?'. (45)

The newspaper's continued diatribes against the Post and Telegraph Department really reflected the animosity of its proprietor, V.L. Solomon, towards the Postmaster, John Little. This is revealed in the long undisguised attack on Little in the same issue of the newspaper, the final one for 1888. In a two column article 'Post Office Vagaries', Solomon attacked Little over two separate issues - the first related to Little's alleged failure to provide the rainfall returns registered at the various telegraph stations by the Friday before the publication of the Times and Gazette on Saturday. Solomon concluded his account of events with a personal attack on Little:

'It appears from the above official information that there has not yet been any rain, or at any rate not enough to register at any of the telegraph stations on the line between here and Alice Springs.
Surely this must be a mistake, or can it be that the rain does not fall at telegraph stations.

We have not yet received a reply from Mr Todd to our telegram on the same subject, which was sent earlier in the week. We suppose that as we paid for it, it reached him all right. As for the individual who occupies the position of senior officer at this end, we are fairly sick of him and his boorish ways, and think it was nearly time that he was relegated to his proper position.(46)

This was not the end of Solomon's vendetta against Little. He devoted even more space in his newspaper to a second issue: an account of Little's strict interpretation of the regulation that six hours notice of departure of mail steamers had to be given to the Post Office authorities. The Times and Gazette published correspondence dated 17 December 1888, addressed to Charles Todd from the agents of the S.S. Maggie complaining bitterly about Little's 'personal spite' in enforcing the regulations which obviously had not been enforced for some time. In a letter to Todd the shipping agents berated the Port Darwin Postmaster, whom they openly named, for his alleged mismanagement:

There is little doubt that the adverse comments that appeared in the press directed against John Little emanated from the newspaper's proprietor, V.L. Solomon. Clearly, there was a clash of personalities involved. Both Little and Solomon were strong, forthright characters. Little was described by his contemporaries as a big man, a man of energy and a public servant with administrative talent. He was also regarded as a strict disciplinarian who could be unreasonable and intolerant in his views and his demands on others. (48) There appears to have been a degree of unreasonable obstinacy in his enforcing of the powers in this episode with the shipping agents in late December 1888. Whatever Charles Todd made of the affair we do not know. At least there is no documentary evidence to hand so far to show whether he supported his chief officer in the Northern Territory on this occasion. It is hard to imagine that he would have done anything to undermine Little's authority.

In any case, Todd and Little had the satisfaction of having a final word in the public relations stakes at close of 1888. The first issue of the Times and Gazette in the new year carried Todd's official announcement of a reduced postage rate for mail sent to the United Kingdom via Plymouth from 1 January - letters 4d. for 1/2oz. and postcards 2d. The notice was posted on the board at John Little's Post Office.(49)

In the same issue the Times and Gazette carried a lengthy leading article, 'Retrospect of the Year 1888'. In several references the newspaper was comparatively generous in its appraisal of the services of the Post Office and Telegraph Stations. It commented favourably on the work that was in progress on the relocation of some of the telegraph line to the new Port Darwin - Pine Creek railway line. It was also pleased with the regular mail boat to Borroloola, the Roper River and Wyndham and the new overland mail service extended to the Evelton Mine and Maudie's Creek. The article played down the major interruptions to the 'cable connection with the rest of the world', suggesting that the breaks, which were in fact quite lengthy, had occurred only twice during the year. Perhaps it was the spirit of Christmas and the holiday season, but there were no complaints about John Little and his department. (50)

There were other things to complain about. Though rather late in putting in an appearance, the Wet Season had arrived. The rain had brought the mosquitoes: As the Times and Gazette recorded on 5 January 1889, Palmerston and district have been subjected to a plague of mosquitoes that have rendered life almost unbearable. Never in the memory of the oldest inhabitant have they been so bad for so long a period. (51)
Thus 1888 ended and 1889 began with life continuing as the 'Wet' and its accompanying discomforts distracted the Port Darwin citizens from their usual worries, such as their perennial complaints about the public service.

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34. See Todd's 1884 Report loc.cit., p.149, and calls for tenders for repoling sections of the O.T. line with iron poles in NTTG 7 July 1888.
36. See NTTG, 21 July 1888 and especially 10 November 1888.
37. See tables in Todd's 1884 Report, pp.278-80; and his 1896 Report, pp.72-73.
38. Todd has recorded a number of Aboriginal-European clashes that took place in 1870s in his 1884 Report, pp.149-150.
39. NTTG 24 November, 1 December, 29 December 1888.
40. Todd's memo to Minister, 5 December 1888, Jan GRS3/1888, No.1141, PRO SA.
41. See newspaper clippings (undated) with the memo of Todd to the Minister 27 November 1888, GRS3/1888, PRO SA.
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PALMERSTON AND PINE CREEK RAILWAY

From *Northern Territory Times* 14/7/1888:

‘On and after Monday 16th July this line will be open for goods and passenger traffic between Palmerston and Adelaide River and all intermediate stations daily, Sundays excepted ... Goods received and delivered and passenger tickets issued by Port Darwin Mercantile and Agency Company, agents for C and E Millar’.
Chinese immigration to the Territory began in 1874 when the South Australian Government imported 187 labourers from Singapore to provide labour for gold mines. When their year’s contract expired, most remained to mine gold on their own account. As word of the Territory’s goldfields spread in the East, some thousands of Chinese emigrated from Macao, Hong Kong and other places to the Territory. Some of the immigrants were of the merchant class who, finding scope for profitable business, tended to remain and, as the years passed, became a powerful and influential force in the commercial and mining industries of the Territory. These early Chinese came to the Territory to mine gold or to provide stores and services for miners. They had no reason to keep written records so a large part of their history must forever remain unwritten.

At the beginning of 1888, the Chinese in the Territory outnumbered Europeans by nearly six to one - the total population was 1010 Europeans and 5837 Chinese. At this time, the Territory was the only part of Australia where Chinese immigration was unrestricted. Following the arrival of over 1000 Chinese in December 1887, Government Resident Parsons warned of the probability of continuing Chinese immigration at this or higher levels and recommended that severe controls be imposed by South Australia.

For reasons mentioned below, 1888 was to be a year of great significance in that the seeds of the ‘White Australia’ policy were sown, a powerful moving force deriving from the situation in the Territory.

Rainfall in 1888 was unusually low, making alluvial gold mining difficult or impossible and severely restricting reef mining. Fortunately, construction of the Palmerston to Pine Creek railway line provided employment for a large number of Chinese otherwise they would have been destitute. (The maximum work-force on railway construction was 2970, almost all Chinese). The recorded population figures give 50 European and 800 Chinese engaged in mining compared with about twice as many in earlier and later years. These figures should be treated with caution as they seem to have included merchants, teamsters, market gardeners and operators of gambling houses, hence the true number actually engaged in mining operations would be substantially lower. As an aside, one Chinese planted ten acres of rice at Union Reefs and his harvest yielded 400 bags which sold at fifteen shillings a bag.

The merchant group was rapidly moving into a situation where they controlled a great deal of the trade and commerce of the top end of the Territory. Advertisements in the *North Australian* and *Northern Territory Times* appeared for over a dozen Chinese merchants, offering services ranging through contracting, carpentry, blacksmith, gunsmith, washing and ironing, general stores with European and Chinese goods, bread-baking, restaurant and tailoring, in short practically every known service. One of the advertisers was Hang Gong, to be famous in later years for a tin mine bearing his name. His son, Arthur Hang Gong, was the Territory’s first policeman. The merchants were also well represented on the goldfields, one example being an advertisement by Chin Ah Din which indicated that he had a general store at the Eveleen Silver Mine and would supply charcoal and firewood. He also owned several mines including the Eureka and No.10 South Union.

This commercial activity by the Chinese displeased the European storekeepers of Palmerston, who could see their profits disappearing into Chinese hands, and they began a campaign of agitation against the Chinese. At about the same time, the Hon T Playford, Premier of South Australia, returned from a visit to Sydney and reported that there was a strong feeling in all the colonies that Chinese immigration should be restricted. He said the feeling in Queensland was particularly strong as that colony feared that when the Pine Creek railway was completed, many of the Territory’s Chinese would migrate overland to that colony.

The South Australian Government was spurred into action by an advertisement in the Palmerston press for a number of Chinese to go down to Central Australia to work on a newly discovered ruby field. There was a suggestion at the time that the advertisement was a hoax. Whether it was or not, the South Australian Government became alarmed at the prospect numbers of Territory Chinese eventually moving to Adelaide and entering into competition with European workers. The Government promptly declared that, in future, all Chinese arriving in the Territory would have to pay a poll-tax of £10. Any who crossed an imaginary line 200 miles south of Port Darwin would pay a similar tax. News of this decision reached Arltunga where a lone Chinese turned up with the intention of growing vegetables, a sorely needed commodity, but the miners, fearing an influx of Chinese, demanded his removal.
In Palmerston, a public meeting was called to consider the Chinese question. A resolution was passed that an appeal should be made to the Governments of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria as well as the Federal Council for assistance in having restrictive measures taken by South Australia. V L Solomon was selected to visit the colonies concerned. He was well received in this mission and his public addresses well attended. This was the same Solomon who for years had employed Chinese at his mines, to his considerable profit.

The South Australian Minister for Education, the Hon J C F Johnson was sent to the Territory to investigate the Chinese question. His conclusion was that they were in almost complete possession of the known goldfields and every kind of labour was completely in their hands, and his report went on to say 'There are certainly a few European stores, a butcher and a baker, but the tailors, bootmakers, carpenters, jewellers, gardeners, clothes washers, house servants and other occupations are monopolised by Chinese. It is an inevitable result that where the Chinese are numerous, Europeans cannot live, the reason being that owing to their secret societies and trade guilds, they are able to control the market. They have two prices for everything, labour included - one, the higher, for Europeans; the other for their own countrymen'. The Minister concluded that there were far more Chinese in the Territory than the labour market needed.

The next and final stage in the restriction of Chinese immigration resulted from an Inter-colonial Conference in Sydney in June 1888, chaired by Sir Henry Parkes. The delegates decided unanimously to limit Chinese immigration by restricting passengers on ships to one Chinese for every 500 tons. This decision by the four colonies seems to have been the first major issue on which they had a unanimous opinion and it is believed that this influenced the British Government favourably towards Federation.

The South Australian Government then introduced legislation to carry out the decisions of the Conference. This caused lively debate, some speakers saying Chinese labour was essential for the Territory's development and asking why it should be stopped in the interests of a few storekeepers. Another speaker drew attention to the fact that, up till then, 102 Territory Chinese had been naturalised. No more naturalisations were approved after 1888.

What really put the clamp on Chinese immigration was a smallpox scare in August 1888. New South Wales declared Port Darwin an infected port thus effectively closing it to inwards shipping and this caused an urgent review of quarantine arrangements. The result was that the South Australian Premier directed that, in future, the quarantine period of 21 days was to be served by passengers and crew on the vessel on which they had travelled, after arrival at Port Darwin. This, of course, raised passage costs considerably and from then on the Chinese population began to fall. From a maximum of 6122 in 1888, the numbers fell to 4432 in 1889 and continued to fall in subsequent years, but at a lesser rate.

It should not be thought that agitation against the Chinese in the Territory derived from racial animosity. In contrast with other colonies, where the Chinese were a minority, in the Territory they were a great majority. By and large, and particularly on the mining fields, the two racial groups lived in harmony. Perhaps a good example is the Annual Race Meeting on the goldfields where Chinese and Europeans alike competed in such events as 'the greasy pole' and there was invariably one race 'for horses owned and ridden by Chinamen'. It is quite clear that the agitation was started by V L Solomon and some of his store-keeping friends and the essential motivation was profit.

Although in later years most of the Chinese left the Territory, several of the merchants remained, some being naturalised citizens, and of these, some became the forebears of some of Territory's present-day Chinese families.

By 1888, the merchants had erected substantial two-storey buildings in Cavenagh Street, the Chinese centre, and there was a Joss House, a centre for worship and a centre for social activities. The traditional Chinese New Year festivities were always held and included a procession with the dragon, gongs, cymbals and exploding fireworks. The opening of a new store was always accompanied by fireworks and occasionally the process resulted in the store catching fire. This happened at least once in 1888.

Chinese New Year Celebrations. NT Historical Society, Widdup Collection.

There were also signs that the merchants were developing a social conscience. About some of their less fortunate compatriots. A public meeting at the Joss House, instigated by Mr J G Knight, secretary to the Government Resident and a natural humanitarian, resulted in the forming of a Chinese society to be known as the Chinese Sick Relief Society with three main objects - to establish a hospital for the treatment of the sick and the infirm, to afford outdoor relief to destitute persons and to promote sanitary reform. The society was to be managed by a committee of influential merchants and to be independent of Government aid. A subscription list was started and before long the hospital became a reality.

At the end of 1888, Mr Quong Tart visited Port Darwin on his way for a visit to China. Quong Tart was a distinguished citizen of Sydney and carried with him letters of introduction from Sir Henry Parkes. For his services to the Chinese in Australia, the Emperor of
China had conferred on him the dignity of a Mandarin of the Fifth Rank. Quong Tart addressed a public meeting at Palmerston saying, amongst other things, that the recent agitation was not entirely a racial question, but rather the outcry of the labouring classes against the injustice of having their markets swamped with cheap Chinese labour.

In concluding, he expressed the wish to see European and Chinese pulling together and burying all dissensions. Looking at to-day's Darwin, Quong Tart's wish has most certainly come true.

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CHINA TOWN

From the Northern Territory Times 22/9/1888:

'The District Council in their capacity as Health Board are at last bestirring themselves for the suppression of municipal nuisances. On Thursday afternoon, the District Clerk and his trusty henchman (Seefield) had a field day amongst the Chinese latrines knocking down and burning no less than four of them on the vacant acres off Cavenagh Street ... we hope the crusade against nuisances will be kept up.'
Attitudes to Northern Territory Politics 1885-88, as revealed by the Northern Territory Times and Gazette

by Leith Barter

This article represents the results of a study of the Northern Territory Times and Gazette for the years 1885 to 1888 (1) undertaken to reveal the attitudes and actions of the inhabitants of Palmerston with respect to parliamentary politics. A preliminary check through the newspaper files from the 1870s and 1890s had revealed that the mid to late 1880s was a crucial period for the Northern Territory for a number of reasons. Significant new developments, including the construction of the Palmerston to Pine Creek Railway and consolidation of the mining and pastoral industries, had ensured that Territory colonists remained optimistic despite recurrent setbacks. It is important to note, however, that these developments occurred against a backdrop of depression in South Australia, a circumstance which undoubtedly severely hindered the sustained development of the Northern Territory. Throughout this period, the Territory was, of course, subject to a 'tyranny of distance' since parliamentary control emanated from Adelaide, the remote, southern, colonial capital. More radical movements were seeking a total separation of the Northern Territory from South Australia.

The year 1885 began with the revelation that W E Adcock, a merchant involved with the successful and influential Palmerston firm of Adcock Brothers, had turned up in Townsville, North Queensland, advocating the separation of the Northern Territory from South Australia. According to a report in the NTTG (2) quoted from the Townsville Herald of December 13, 1884, Adcock had been commissioned by a number of the leading residents of Port Darwin to put forward this suggestion and to ascertain whether the people of North Queensland would be interested in joining together with Northern Territorians to form a new colony. In coming out strongly against Adcock's actions, the NTTG branded the Queensland report as 'bumptious, inaccurate, misleading and unwarranted' and declared that there was no factual basis for Adcock's claim that he had the authorisation and support of Port Darwin residents. Although not denying that there had been problems resulting from South Australian administration of the Northern Territory, the report strongly affirmed that 'the best interests of the Northern Territory are wrapped up in the maintenance of our connection with South Australia'. Reasons put forward for maintaining this connection included the fact that South Australia had already invested nearly half a million pounds of borrowed money to establish the Territory. Tens of thousands of pounds belonging to individual South Australian investors had been lost on failed mining and agricultural ventures. It appeared, however, that the tide was about to turn because the South Australian Government had just accepted a tender for the construction of a badly needed new railway jetty and the tenders for the construction of the Pine Creek Railway were to be called for in a couple of months. The NTTG report rightly considered the moment as being a most impolitic time to be indicating that Territorians intended to 'cut the painter at the first opportunity' and it closed by declaring that it was 'the duty of the inhabitants of Palmerston to emphatically decline to follow the self constituted lead of anyone who would bring about such a suicidal coalition'.

If Adcock possessed any supporters in Palmerston, they were conspicuous by their silence over the next few weeks. The issues raised by his interstate activities received no further comment until April of 1885. In that month, (3) it was revealed that Adcock had authored an article in the February issue of the Victorian Review putting forward similar views to those which he had shared with his North Queensland audience. In again branding agitation for separation as a suicidal policy, the NTTG reminded its readers of its previous arguments and vigorously denied Adcock's assertions that Territorians were 'taxed nearly three times as heavily as the people of South Australia...and have the misfortune to be tied to the poorest, least important, and worst governed colony of the Australasian group'. Adcock was further castigated in the next issue of the NTTG (4) when it was revealed that he had told the South Australian minister for Justice and Education, the Minister responsible for Northern Territory affairs, R.C. Baker, that there were only 85 Europeans involved in mining in the Territory and thereby diminishing the legitimacy of Territory demands for better services and facilities in the goldfields. The newspaper's response was sarcastic and vociferous: 'W E Adcock, the successful merchant; W E Adcock the LECTURER; W E Adcock the POET; W E Adcock the BRILLIANT ESSAYIST, is on the pedestal... Was it Adcock's place, even suppose there were only six men engaged in mining pursuits, to point out the fact to the Minister? Should he not, as one of a firm of leading merchants here, be one of the last to point out such a bad state of affairs'. At least the NTTG was being unusually frank and candid by maintaining that, irrespective of the facts, it was very bad form to bite the hand that feeds you.

48
Throughout the remainder of 1885, the position adopted by the NTTG was one of general optimism. On 29 August, (5) the paper insisted that 'the Territory has seen its darkest days. We take a cheerful and hopeful view of the country's future, and we feel sure, if people will only fairly argue questions of public interest, sink personal abuse, and unite in pushing the Territory ahead, a great deal may be done towards hastening that prosperous future which all their grumbling and discontent is powerless to prevent'. By September 19 (6) the paper was able to assert that the 'White Elephant of the past twelve years has at last been recognized, by experts and far seeing politicians, as a more valuable addition to the Colony of South Australia's possessions than was at first supposed, and it consequently does not require much prophetic power to foretell a speedy awakening from the lethargic state into which the settlement has fallen'. It is difficult to explain the source of this sustained optimism. By this time, the depression was already having a marked effect upon South Australia's ability to maintain her commitments to the Territory. Nothing at all had eventuated regarding the letting of the Pine Creek Railway tenders and, by November (7), the financial crisis in South Australia was causing widespread alarm. It would seem, however, that Territorians were not prepared to extend much sympathy towards the mother colony in its hour of need; the NTTG was more concerned to argue that South Australia's financial troubles must not be allowed to unfairly affect the progress and advancement of the Territory.

In spite of the NTTG's strong pro-South Australian line during early 1885, there were many kinks beginning to appear in the armour. The timid criticism of late 1885 soon turned into a torrent of abuse and, at the beginning of 1886, the paper began an all out attack on the South Australian Government, mainly because of procrastination on the Pine creek railway project (9). By late January, (10) the Territory was stated to be 'pushing its way against the combined disadvantages of gross misgovernment and all its attendant evils' and it was claimed that 'week after week we find some fresh evidence of the selfish desires of our South Australian legislators' and the 'muddling mismanagement of South Australia'. These were strong words, indeed, considering the paper's stance during the previous year and the criticism that had been heaped upon W E Adcock. Although it was recognised that the Territory lacked a suitable level of population, the proprietors of the NTTG called for preliminary steps to be taken towards setting up a separation league and admitted that, despite having 'hitherto scouted the idea of any attempt to initiate an agitation for separation from the Colony of South Australia as premature and unwise', the situation had changed to such an extent that they were 'at last forced to admit that the Northern Territory will never do anything but drag on a miserable existence, while it is hampered by its connection with a Colony having nothing in common with the settlement, and understanding nothing about the requirements of its distant dependency.

(11)

During the middle of the next month, (12) the cudgels were taken up again and it was intimated that South Australian legislators had no concern at all for the Territory or its industries. More importantly, it was pointed out that the two members who represented the Territory in the South Australian Parliament probably did the best they could so far as their limited knowledge of the Territory would allow.

What the Territory desperately needed were two representatives who would represent the Territory alone: 'men who will devote their whole time and energy to the study of the place and its government, and who will not rest until special legislation had been introduced to put a stop to the host of disadvantages under which the settlement has struggled since its first establishment'. Continued procrastination on the Pine Creek Railway, followed by the news that the South Australian Government whilst calling for fresh tenders had announced a later completion date of 1891, did nothing to allay mounting Territory fears of neglect by South Australia. The NTTG not only accused the South Australian Government of pocketing the Railway loan money so as to benefit from the interest for as long as possible, but it loudly proclaimed that 'the men who are ruling our country are more fit for the interior of a lunatic asylum than a legislative chamber'. Not even the greatly maligned W E Adcock would have used such strong language.

During April (14), the NTTG carried a telegraphic report of a letter which had appeared in the Adelaide Register suggesting selling the Northern Territory 'White Elephant' to Victoria for £25,000,000, a sum which was calculated to be sufficient to get rid of South Australia's mounting debt, as well as returning a small profit. The bottom line was that the Northern Territory would undoubtedly separate from South Australia as soon as it was able to prosper on its own account. As can be imagined, this letter had the effect of setting the cat amongst the pigeons. The next issue of the NTTG (15) carried a strongly worded response refusing the logic of such a course of action and maintaining that, in any event, the writer had grossly exaggerated the magnitude of the Northern Territory's indebtedness to South Australia. During the remainder of 1886, the paper kept up regular doses of criticism of South Australia's role in retarding the development of the Northern Territory. What was needed was a transcontinental railway linking Palmerston with the southern colonies. (16) South Australia was taken to task for lacking the enterprise and foresight to support such a scheme. One of the major issues which emerged during this period was the question of Chinese immigration. Although this had been initially supported by the South Australian Government, the residents of Palmerston feared being buried by a deluge of Chinese immigrants and sought, at the very least, the imposition of a poll tax upon all incoming Chinese. During July (17) the news that the South Australian Legislative Council had thrown out a Bill providing for a 10 pound poll tax caused a strong reaction in Palmerston. The NTTG was given yet another excuse for repeating its call for initiating a 'movement towards separation which every true friend of the Territory desires'. (18)

During early October, the call for separation reached a fever pitch, especially when it was revealed that a South Australian member, Henry Scott, had placed notice of a motion before the Legislative Council stating that 'it is desirable that the Northern portion of the Northern Territory should be established as a separate colony or joined to some other Colony in North Australia'. (19) One can only assume that the motion subsequently failed because the NTTG remained curiously silent about its outcome over the next few weeks. What is interesting, however, is that support for separation was flowing in from many quarters. A letter from an Adelaide resident,
Henry Taylor, was published on October 23. The letter claimed that, among other things, 'there is no hope for you in the Northern Territory unless you at once and for all take over the Government of your own country' (20) The same issue of the NTTG carried news from Townsville where support for North Queensland separation had been growing steadily. It also appeared that another correspondent, Alfred Dewhirst Gore, had written to Townsville's Separation Council suggesting that the Northern Territory, and perhaps even the northern portion of Western Australia, should be attached to North Queensland. According to the NTTG this was going too far and Gore was attacked for his 'unblushing impudence'.  

(21) It was considered that the Northern Territory was large enough to form a colony in its own right. The great optimism of 1885 had not been sustained throughout 1886 and there were plenty of grounds for Northern Territory complaint. The only event which had pleased Territorians was the final acceptance of a tender for the construction of the Pine Creek Railway in May. (22) Even this was a mixed blessing because the news had been tempered by the revelation that the successful tenderer, Millar Brothers, had been selected on the basis that Chinese labour was to be used as well as European, a situation not to the liking of the Territorians.  

The year 1887 began with news that the Government Resident, J L Parsons, had been sent to Adelaide to consult with the minister responsible for the Territory. (23) This was considered undesirable and wasteful since Parsons had regularly inundated the Minister with telegrams advocating much needed reforms. As these had been consistently ignored, there seemed little point in recalling the Resident to Adelaide for consultation. The February 5 issue of the NTTG (24) carried in a column headed 'A Few Hints to South Australian Legislators: Territory Requirements': no less than seventeen requirements which the settlers of the Northern Territory want, are entitled to, and intend to have. The list ended with the threat of separation should the requirements not receive adequate attention from the South Australian Government. The catalogue of concerns was an interesting one which included a fair mix of parochial concerns and wider, more philosophical issues. Included in the list were such matters as a proper approach to the new ship jetty, additions to the Palmerston Hospital, the need for a Quarantine station, light houses at Point Charles and Point Emery and better country roads and bridges. Both the Land Act and the Mining Act needed to be overhauled so as to better serve Territory needs. Most importantly, the call for two parliamentary representatives to solely serve the Territory was repeated.  

It is clear that early 1887 was a period of considerable political ferment and discussion in Palmerston. The February 26 issue of the NTTG carried a report of a public meeting on the question of Territory representation in the South Australian Legislative Council. Many speakers were less than happy with the performance of the current representatives elected from the District of Flinders (the whole of northern South Australia and the Northern Territory). In any event, what was needed was separate Territory representation. The meeting closed by drawing up a list of questions which were to be circulated, via the Adelaide press, to intending candidates in the next election. The replies, published in subsequent editions of the NTTG (26) make interesting reading. It is evident that political questions continued to exercise the minds of Palmerston residents throughout 1887 and the NTTG had frequent occasion to repeat the call for separation. (27) The only thing which tempered these calls was a growing realisation that South Australia had perhaps changed her mind and was at last beginning to place a greater value upon her ownership of the Territory. (28) Nevertheless, the year closed with the December 31 issue of the NTTG threatening that 'impediments to our progress must be removed or... our discontent and cry for Separation will increase and develop into open rebellion and absolute separation, from a Colony that is unjust to itself as well as to us'. (29) The very same issue carried the important news that a Bill had been passed during the last session of the South Australian Parliament which would give the Territory direct representation by way of two representatives to be elected at the next general elections. Although it was calling to Territorians to realise that the next election was two years away, this major gain almost certainly ultimately had the effect of lessening and muting further calls for separation. In other respects, 1887 had been a good year, perhaps the most important year the Territory had passed through, especially since substantial progress had been made on the Pine Creek Railway. (30)  

Due to the events and minor gains of 1887, the following year commenced on an optimistic note. The Pine Creek Railway was forging ahead, and by the end of 1888 was to reach Burrundie, leaving only 22 miles to be constructed. (31) Other advances were being made in the mining and pastoral industries. Tangible evidence of the changed attitude of the South Australian Government was provided when the Minister for Education, the Minister responsible for the Northern Territory, J C F Johnson, visited the Territory during March and April in order to inspect the mineral fields, government departments, etc. The occasion permitted much rhetoric and provoked considerable discussion on the Territory's future (32). It is noteworthy that a careful examination of the files of the NTTG for the remainder of the year failed to unearth any further demands for separation; the last such demand had been made in February when discussion centred around the need to reform the Territory's mining laws. (33) As the end of the year saw even this request acceded to, (34) it was obvious that the Territory was beginning to enjoy an improvement in its relations with the mother colony. The inhabitants of Palmerston, though not letting up entirely on their criticism of South Australian control, silenced their demands for separation and looked forward to the forthcoming general elections which would see two Territorians elected to the South Australian Legislative Council.  

Despite the maintenance of a constant barrage of criticism and abuse directed towards the South Australian Government, Territory colonists did not consistently view separation as a panacea for the Territory's problems during the period lasting from 1885 to 1888. This period began with an unequivocal denial that a separation movement even existed in the Northern Territory; a clear statement was issued branding such a policy as suicidal. By the beginning of 1886, however, a major change of heart had occurred and the Northern Territory Times and Gazette came out in support of separation from the 'mother' colony. This demand, at first advocated only tentatively, was echoed much more forcefully throughout the remainder of 1886 and 1887. The situation changed yet again during 1888. After February of that year, despite sustained further
criticism of the South Australian Government, the threat of separation appears to have disappeared into the background. The optimism of Territory colonists had, by that time, been substantially buoyed up by the fact that good progress had been made in a number of areas, especially in the construction of the Palmerston to Pine Creek Railway. Even the South Australian Government itself had given clear indications that it had relented in its attitude towards Territory development. In any event, it is probable that the Territory had neither the population, the leaders (bar one or two outstanding figures) nor sufficiently viable industries to support a successful separation movement. The threat of separation was more likely merely a rhetorical weapon available to the colonists for urging support for their essentially pragmatic and parochial demands. With respect to gaining direct representation in the South Australian Parliament, however, Territory demands were more consistently voiced to the extent that, during its final session for 1887, that Parliament had passed a bill giving the Northern Territory two representatives at the next general elections. This important gain undoubtedly also lessened the need for any further talk of separation.

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An appreciation of the state of the Territory's mining industry in 1888 requires some understanding of events in earlier years.

BACKGROUND

The first discovery of gold in the Territory was in a post hole dug for the Overland Telegraph Line at Yam Creek, not far from the present Hamlet of Grove Hill. This led to a wave of speculation in Adelaide in the early 1870s with companies being floated almost daily and men, horses and machinery rushed to the Territory before any assessment was made of ore reserves or mining costs. The inevitable result was that by early 1875 almost every company had collapsed. The unknown hazards of climate and terrain had resulted in costs far higher than any-one in Adelaide had imagined.

In an effort to assist some of the few remaining companies, the South Australian Government arranged for the recruitment of 187 Chinese labourers from Singapore, on a year's contract. When the contracts expired, almost all the Chinese went mining on their own account, either alluvial or as employees on quartz reefs. A group of powerful Chinese merchants emerged, the principal one being Ping Quo who had mines extending over many parts of the goldfields, employing some hundreds of his compatriots. During the late 70s and early 80s Chinese immigration to the Territory was considerable and eventually they outnumbered the white population by three to one.

Although all the early companies failed, they conferred one lasting benefit for the mining industry. The few genuine European miners managed to buy good machinery very cheaply, machinery which they otherwise could not afford. It was these men, such as Adam Johns, Phil Saunders and David and Isaac Daniels who then formed the basis of the European side of the mining industry for many years. Most of the other Europeans took up leases and rented them to Chinese under the tribute system, doing no work themselves.

By the mid-1880s there were over one thousand Chinese engaged in mining pursuits and only about fifty Europeans.

Tin was discovered at Mt Wells in 1881 and rich silver-lead at Flora Bell in 1884. These discoveries led to a revival of company interest in the Territory.

THE MINING INDUSTRY IN 1888

During 1888 the outlook for the industry took a decided turn for the better. The South Australian Government had authorised construction of a railway from Palmerston, as Darwin was then called, to Pine Creek in the expectation that the resultant lowering of transport costs would result in increased mining activity and that this would trigger development of other kinds. By the end of 1888 the railway had reached Burrundie, the place selected as the capital of the mining district. At that stage, the demise of Southport, the previous supply centre for the mining districts, was complete. According to the Northern Territory Times Almanac and Directory, in 1888 Burrundie township had stores owned by PR Allen and Co, Post Office and Telegraph Station, a Mining Warden's office occupied by C W Nash, the Pioneer Hotel, a Police Station and a Goldfields Hospital where Dr Bovill was the resident surgeon and Mrs Johnstone the matron. Mine managers Thomas and Trezise seem to have resided at Burrundie and other writers of the time mention the presence of Chinese stores.

The Territory in general, and its mineral potential in particular, received a great deal of favourable publicity during the Adelaide Jubilee Exhibition in 1887-88. Mr J G Knight, secretary to the Administrator, and to which office he later succeeded, designed a stand on which rich mineral specimens, including gold nuggets, were displayed. This was seen by a great many people, including men of influence from all over Australia. Soon after, Mr J F C Johnston, the Minister for Education, visited the Territory to see for himself the state of the mining industry and to examine the question of Chinese immigration. The Millar brothers, who had the contract to build the railway, provided a special train to Adelaide River from whence he proceeded by horse. Two observations made by the Minister were that the roads in the mining fields were a disgrace and that the Chinese were in almost complete possession of the known goldfields. He was however, impressed with what he saw and reported very favourably on the country's mineral potential. The Minister also realised that existing mining laws were inadequate, allowing speculators to tie up large
tracts of land for years without doing any work. On returning to Adelaide he introduced amendments which made speculative lease holding much harder.

The end result was that 1888 was a year of great activity in the taking up of mineral lands in the Territory. A total of 564 applications were lodged, including 124 for gold mining leases. Hopes for substantial mining development were high.

GOLD

The premier gold producer in the Territory was Olaf Jensen at Pine Creek. He had acquired machinery and leases cheaply from the old Telegraph Company. His main reefs, Eleanor and Kohinoor, were rich, and over the years, Jensen acquired over £20,000 worth of machinery and buildings, all of which came from his mines. He built cottages for his European workmen and employed a number of Chinese and was highly regarded as a good citizen and employer.

French and Browne, a Melbourne firm, set up a crushing battery at the junction of Maude Creek and Fourteen Mile Creek in 1888, the intention being to crush for the public, employ only Europeans and not crush for Chinese. French and Browne were practical engineers who hoped for success that would enable them to supply and erect mining machinery on the goldfields and to set up a supporting foundry in Palmerston.

Millars, the railway contractors, became impressed with the Territory's mineral potential and bought up almost the entire Union Reefs goldfield, Coronet Hill, a copper mine at Pine Creek and a tin mine at Bynoe Harbour. During 1888, they embarked on a scheme of major development at Union Reefs which included tunnelling, shaft sinking and a mile or so of tramway linking the mines to the railway line. Here was an organisation with extensive gold reefs, plenty of capital and ready access to cheap Chinese labour and if ever the Territory's goldfields were to be proven, this seemed to be the occasion.

The Port Darwin Gold Mining Company is of interest only because it was the forerunner of a number of speculative English companies which in later years left a stigma on the Territory's mining industry which remained for many years. This company was floated in London in 1886 by Hugh Watt, who was later to be connected with the Horatio Bottomley group of companies; the company sent some machinery to the Territory but did no work of significance.

The Chinese gold miners, merchants and men, had a very bad year in 1888. It was one of the driest years on record, with barely enough water for drinking, let alone alluvial dishing, on many parts of the goldfields. In previous years, up to 1200 or so Chinese could be found scattered over the mining fields from Adelaide River to Pine Creek, most washing alluvial dirt but quite a number working for the merchants. Some of the latter owned leases but most tributed them from Europeans. The arrangement was that the merchant would rent the lease at an agreed percentage of gold recovered, at times up to 30%. With so little water available in 1888, alluvial mining and except in a few isolated cases, reef mining, was well-nigh impossible. To quote from Warden Nash's 1888 report, "It is quite a melancholy spectacle to travel through whole lines of reefs such as Pine Creek, Union, Yam Creek and indeed the whole of the mineral districts and find only an odd Chinaman or two working small tributes". Fortunately for the Chinese, the railway construction provided a considerable number of them with work, otherwise most would have been destitute.

For some years there had been agitation to restrict the immigration of Chinese to the Territory but during 1888 matters were brought to a head by the appearance of an advertisement in the Northern Territory Times for Chinese miners to go to the recently discovered ruby fields in Central Australia (the 'rubies' turned out to be almost worthless garnets). It was never positively established whether the advertisement was a hoax or not, nevertheless, the South Australian Government, fearing that large numbers of Chinese might eventually make their way to Adelaide, imposed a poll-tax on every Chinese crossing an imaginary line 200 miles south of Palmerston. It was not clear how this line was to be policed, or by whom. Then V.L. Solomon, a local storekeeper became the Territory's spokesman on the Chinese question and gave anti-Chinese lectures in southern capitals. The very same Solomon had for years employed Chinese on his own mines at Mt Wells, Daly River and Mt Shoobridge, to his own profit.

An intercolonial conference was held in Sydney, one result of which was that the South Australian Government imposed restrictions on Chinese immigration to the Territory. From 1888 on, the Territory's Chinese population began to fall, and continued to do so. Up to 1888, 102 Chinese had become naturalised South Australian citizens but after that year the South Australian Government refused to grant any further naturalisations.

Total recorded gold production in the Territory for 1888 was only 8,193 ounces, compared with 16,191 ounces in the previous year, no doubt due to the abnormally low rainfall.

TIN

During 1888 the mining of tin showed promise. Its price in January 1888 was unusually high at £166 a ton and this undoubtedly encouraged exploration for the metal. Over succeeding months the price fell to £98 where it stabilised but at this price, even with the high costs of the Territory, profitable operations were possible.

The original discovery at Mt Wells had been floated by the Daniels Brothers into the Port Darwin Tin Co which bought buildings and some machinery from the defunct Delissaville Sugar Company. During 1888 the company embarked on a programme of shaft-sinking, tunnelling and the construction of a 1 3/4 mile pipeline to the McKinlay River. They also began construction of a tramway to connect the mine with the battery. For the year, the company produced 40 tons of 71% tin concentrates. Fever, almost certainly malaria, was a problem with Europeans and Chinese alike.

Not far from the Port Darwin Tin Co were leases held by the North Australia Tin Co originally held by an Adelaide syndicate and then sold to an English group. During 1888 a ten head battery was erected as well as excellent quarters for manager and men. The original syndicate were paid
The "Wheat Margaret" Gold Mine, Extended Union, N.T., N.T. Historical Society.

Adam John's Battery, Union, N.T., N.T. Historical Society.
£70,000 for the leases which eventually proved to be quite valueless.

V.L. Solomon owned tin leases at Mt Shoobridge which he was successful in floating in England, together with a copper mine at Daly River, into the Palmerston Copper Mining Company. The consideration received by Solomon was £40,000 in cash and fully-paid shares. The new company ordered expensive machinery. Cornish miners were engaged and the manager, Captain Dunstan arrived in July 1888. During the following months quite extensive plant and winding machinery was erected and a large Cornish boiler assembled and riveted together with the expectation that substantial production would commence early in 1889.

Not far away, whilst shooting kangaroos, George Barrett discovered rich tin. He did practically no work on the lease himself but tributed it to Beetsen in 1888. The latter, with a workforce of Chinese using ironbark stampers on a stone bed, crushed 25 tons of ore in 12 months for the recovery of £2,000 worth of tin concentrates.

The discovery of high grade tin at Bynoe Harbour in 1888 resulted in the floating in Melbourne of the Finnis River Tin Mining Association in the same year. Some machinery was bought and carted to the mine but isolation, the wet season and labour problems quickly absorbed whatever cash the company had and operations ceased. Also in 1888 a local group which included S T and V V Brown, Palmerston storekeepers, made another discovery of tin at Bynoe Harbour and formed the Leviathan Syndicate in which C G Millar had a one-sixth interest. Only a little mining work was done, seemingly with the intention of making money by floating a company rather than by mining.

Adam Johns, a prospector who had been in the Territory since the early 1870s with D Delroy, made another find of tin in 1888 at Mt Tolmer, 30 miles north-west of Adelaide River. He had accumulated a little capital from earlier mining ventures and with Phil Saunders, installed a steam engine and other machinery. In the twelve months the group recovered 46 tons of concentrates which just covered costs. Due to isolation and attendant costs, the group could see no future in the operation and advertised the plant for sale.

COPPER

Millar had the Copperfield mine, four miles from Pine Creek but awaited completion of the railway, in the meantime sinking shafts and doing development work.

At Daly River, Solomon's mine, the Wheat Danks, was taken over by the same company which bought his Mt Shoobridge tin mine. Machinery arrived during 1888 and shafts were sunk, which revealed ore grades ranging from poor to 30% copper. With the copper price at £80 a ton, the outlook for profitable operations at both mines was good.

SILVER-LEAD

The Flora Bell silver-lead mine was floated in Sydney in 1888 with £20,000 capital. Shafts were sunk to test the lode before ordering machinery to dress the ore - an unusual approach in the Territory as most companies did the reverse. A trial shipment of ore yielded 75 ounces of silver and 6 hundredweights of lead to the ton. Strings of native silver were encountered in one of the shafts.

The Flora Bell mine was situated on a ridge to the south of the McKinlay River and not far from Burrandie. The mine residence was built entirely of local materials - saplings as uprights with a thatched grass roof and interwoven bamboo strips for walls. The beds were canvas stretchers. The mine's staff comprised 5 Europeans - general manager, underground manager, assayer, engineer and blacksmith with 18 Chinese workmen. Additional to salaries and wages for the staff, this small operation had to provide for the Sydney directors' fees and head office overheads. Expenses came to about £700 a month as against a total revenue of £727 from 99 tons of rich ore over six months. Not surprisingly operations continued only for a year or so until the capital was exhausted when the pumps, winding machinery and everything else about the mine were sold to A E Jolly for £550, barely scrap metal price.

The Flora Bell mine is also of interest because during 1888 W H Corbould was employed there as assayer and jackeroo. In later years he was to be very prominent on the Australian mining scene and went to found the original Mt Isa Mines company. In his memoirs he said that he knew the Territory as well as, and probably better than, most and concluded that at that time there was no scope for profitable business for some 200 miles south of Palmerston for several reasons including poor soil, three months of heavy rain annually plus a long dry season. He assessed the mineral areas as too small and scattered, smaller in extent and seemingly of no great depth although possibilities existed of large areas of wolfram and tin. His assessment probably was the reason why he turned down an offer from one of his Chinese friends, Quong Lee Chung, of a share in a silver-lead mine. According to Corbould, Quong later made a great deal of money out of that particular mine.

The McKinlay and Mt Wells Company was essentially an Adelaide based stock market company with leases a few miles from Mt Wells. It lay idle for years but during 1888 a trial parcel of ore was sent south for treatment. 22 tons yielded 156 ounces of silver to the ton and 70% lead. Profit on the parcel was £626. Work was then suspended pending purchase and installation of a pump.

The Eveleen Silver Mining Company was floated in Sydney to work what were believed to be rich silver-lead lodes some miles distant from Pine Creek. During 1888 development work went on steadily and machinery was erected, including two Tangye steam engines, one for pumping and one for winding and substantial production was exported in the following year.

A report reached Palmerston of the discovery of large lodes of silver in the McArthur district, not far from Borroloola. Eighty-four applications for mineral licences were received but most were made by station employees who could not afford the expenses of development and the shipping of ore. Nothing of significance eventuated, almost certainly due to the extreme isolation of the locality and costs and difficulties arising from this.
THE SCENE AT THE END OF 1888

The railway now provided relatively cheap transport, several companies were getting ready for production and each had access to a supply of cheap Chinese labour. Millars' operations at Union Reefs gave every indication of becoming a large and continuing gold mine with adequate capitalization. The future for mining looked promising indeed.

THE SCENE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS

Unfortunately for the Territory, every one of the companies mentioned above failed. Millar without giving any reason, closed his mines and sold them to the Chinese for a few thousand pounds. Whether he ever intended a continuing operation, or first to do enough work to enable him to float his mines, is not clear.

The other mines failed for several reasons including under-capitalisation, expensive and at times quite unsuitable machinery, inadequate investigation of ore reserves before shipping machinery and, probably the greatest single factor, exceedingly poor management. For example, of the manager of the Mt Shoobridge tin mine, Knight said in his annual Government Resident's report "The latest manager was a shocking example even for the Territory, and nothing short of solid tin would have paid for working under his auspices".

During the next several years after 1888 most of the expensive machinery brought to the Territory by the companies referred to was bought by the Territory's hard core of genuine "battlers" such as the Daniels brothers and the Chinese merchants.

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PALMERSTON CEMETERY

From the North Australian 7/1/1888:

'During the performance of a burial ceremony on Tuesday last, the water soaked into the grave so rapidly that to keep the coffin in its place while the service was being read, it was found necessary to have a man standing on it. We are told that the stench arising from this drainage of the adjoining graves was abominable'.
Old Days — Old Ways
by Val Dixon

Methods of cattle management to-day differ greatly from those used one hundred years ago. Indeed in the last twenty years what with increased costs and a shortage of skilled labour, the pastoral industry has made more and more use of modern technology and helicopters and four wheel drive vehicles are often used in place of the mustering camps of old. Here we will look at 'the old way' as it was done in 1888.

Cattle were mustered by stock camps which left the station at the beginning of the 'season' and stayed out on the run for months at a time, rounding-up cattle and driving them to selected areas for branding and drafting for sale. These stock-camps usually consisted of twelve men - ten men mounted, a cook and horse-tailer. The day's mustering was worked out the night before when the area to be mustered was decided upon and the method of approach determined by the direction of the wind: the noise and smell of horses and men were borne on the wind, so it was necessary to work down-wind of the cattle to avoid signalling the approach of the musters.

The horse-tailer caught and unhobbled the horses while the men ate breakfast. Then the musters rode out before daylight, taking the quiet cattle which had been held the night before with them and mustering other cattle into the mob along the way. Often the cattle merged easily with the mob but when older cattle or rogues - cattle that had evaded muster before - disrupted the mob, the man with the fastest and strongest horse rode to the head of the line of cattle and wheeled them by bumping his horse against the first beast and turning him and those following until eventually they formed a ring. The men would then keep them moving in a decreasing circle until the confined space forced them to settle down. This method of control is known as "ringing" and is the origin of the term "ringer" to denote a stockman.

With the musters gone, the cook and horse-tailer packed up and moved on to an arranged dinner camp where a meal was prepared and a change of horses readied for the men. Meals consisted of stews, steak and roasts as long as the fresh meat lasted and then corned beef (eaten alone or in stews, curries and fritters) when it ran out. Bread was baked in bedourie ovens or in the coals. When there were no small holding paddocks to put the cattle into at night, the men ate in shifts and took turns at watching the mob in the open. When sufficient cattle were mustered, drafting was done on horseback. Men rode through the main mob cutting-out cattle according to their categories e.g bullocks destined for the meatworks were drafted off into a smaller mob whilst the remainder, the cows, calves and bulls were yarded for processing in the brornocho yards.

These yards, remains of which still exist in many areas of the Territory, were used for branding cattle. These remains are of historical interest as they are a record of methods of handling cattle not used to-day. They were constructed in eight foot panels, thirty-three to a side. Ironwood was used for the posts with woolly-butt the most popular timber for the top and belly rails. When sufficient cattle were mustered, the men spent a couple of days in the yard branding calves. The roper, mounted on a strong horse or mule, would lasso the animals one at a time and drag them to the broncho panel, where they were branded, horns tipped, and the males castrated. The branding irons were kept hot in a fire near-by. A number of irons were used and one man was assigned the job of running the brands to the men. A broncho panel consisted of a rectangular frame and a right angled frame placed together with a slight gap between the two. The roper would drag the rope along the side of the triangle and drop it into the gap so that the head of the beast could be held to enable the men to secure front and hind legs. The placement of the panel differed according to whether cattle were branded on the near or the off side.

The rodeo sport of bull-dogging is the competitive version of a practice that was fairly common in stockcamps. Men often jumped off horses and threw beasts just for the sheer fun of it but the expertise gained by sky-larking was gainfully used when beasts refused to stay with a mob and became aggressive. There were two ways to throw a mickey (young bull). Either one man would chase after the beast, jump to the ground, grab its tail and throw it - or a rider would gallop past, pull it off balance by the tail whilst another rider would dismount and immobilize it by tying two legs together with a bull-strap which he wore around his waist like a second belt. The beast would then be de-horned and let go into the mob, where he usually stayed. A leather bull-strap, pocket knife and horn-saw were standard equipment for these men.

On Humpty Doo Station, close to a waterhole where two hills converge, stand the remains of an old yard, known as Brumby Yard, which was used as a trap yard to catch
wild horses. It dates back to the late 1800s and is thought to have been built by the original owner, Will Lawrie, whose Pastoral Lease for 57 square miles was taken up in 1878. The posts are approximately 8ft high and notches show where the original rails were set into the uprights. Two lines of posts form a tunnel into the opening of the yard. Strips of calico were strung from these posts for some distance to form wings into which the horses were driven. The main purpose of the exercise was to regain station horses, usually mares, that had joined the brumby bands. Horses were mustered, brumbies and station horses together, driven to the yard where quiet horses were drafted off and brumbies disposed of. Trap yards such as these were widely distributed throughout the Territory. A slightly different version was used for trapping cattle.

The Persistent Fatal Disease...called 'Redwater'

The Government Resident's Report of 1888 devotes considerable space to a phenomenon which was causing anguish to everyone connected with the pastoral industry at that time. Parsons says '...it cannot be said that the year has fulfilled the expectations of pastoral development which were formed at its commencement. This is to be attributed chiefly to the persistent fatal disease, locally called "Red water".'

The symptoms of Haemo-albuminuria or muir-ill (redwater, blackwater) were fairly well documented; animals would pass blood-red water and, in the final stage, become heated to the extent that they would rush about and charge with little provocation. Upon post-mortem, the bowel contents were found to be hard and dry whilst the bladder was swollen with reddish-black coloured water. The gall, liver and kidneys were also affected. 'Redwater' is the common name for the most recognisable symptom of the disease, caused by the organisms Babesia bigemina and Babesia argentina, which produce dead blood cells in the urine. Another organism, anaplasma also causes a fever (Anaplasmosis), but does not cause 'redwater'. (1)

The cause of the disease was to puzzle pastoralists and veterinarians alike for some years - in the meantime, several theories were put forward; movement of stock from one place to another over different soils, vagaries of temperature, poison weed or poor diet resulting in a weakening of the kidneys were but a few. (2)

However, the disease that almost decimated the pastoral industry in the 1880s was caused by a tiny parasite with the unlikely name of Boophilus microplus or cattle tick. First mention of it was made in 1875 by John Lewis, of Coburg Peninsula, who observed that a buffalo cow he
had shot at Mountnorris Bay was covered in 'real cattle tick'. (3) No-one at that time made the connection between the tick and the disease of 'redwater' but the northern area became a place to be avoided.

In August 1887, Foster and Lewers, en route with 750 head of cattle to stock their lease (Denison Downs) near Halls Creek in the Kimberley District, decided to 'take the Tableland route instead of the coach road, as redwater [fever] is reported to be very bad on that track'.(4) Although this move saved the mob from 'redwater', several animals were affected by Pleuropneumonia, with which they had become infected whilst moving through the Burketown area of Queensland. The cattle were yarded and a primitive form of inoculation was performed. This involved slaughtering infected animals, drawing off the fluid from their lungs and injecting this into healthy beasts to render them immune to the disease. Fifty head were lost to pleuro (5) and one is left to conjecture what the losses would have been had the herd been exposed to 'redwater' instead.

The cattle tick lays its eggs on the ground where they may lie dormant for several months before seasonal conditions are suitable for them to hatch out into larvae. They then climb up pieces of grass and attach themselves to passing hosts. The females commence to engorge blood and after fertilization, drop off their hosts and fall to the ground, where they lay eggs and the cycle starts again. The cycle takes 28 days to complete. The ticks were borne by cattle in travelling mobs that were dropping fully-engorged females along stock routes to lie in wait for the next 'hosts' and this explains the swiftness of the spread of the disease. (6) In the early weeks following the first outbreak of 'redwater' 1200 head of cattle died. Horrified pastoralists were helpless against a disease of which they had no knowledge and which proceeded to wipe out 80% of the northern herd within the next ten years. (7)

After ten years, whatever cattle remained in the north had built up an immunity to the cattle-tick and danger to the herd existed only when cattle from 'clean' areas were introduced to areas where ticks were established. Cattle travelling from 'clean' areas to 'icky' areas were inoculated against the disease and the practice continues to this day.

The cattle tick has not been eliminated one hundred years later; rather a system of control operates in which cattle are dipped regularly to ensure that the health of the animal is not affected but that a degree of immunity from disease is maintained.

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2. Govt Resident's Report 1888.
5. Ibid
6. R F Dixon
7. Pike, p.90.

BATHING

From the Northern Territory Times 3/3/1888:

The paper reported on the dilapidated state of the bathing enclosure at Fort Point. 'If it were put into proper order it would prove a great boon to the ladies of Palmerston who are prevented from taking sea baths by its present unsafe condition. Should it be repaired, as we hope it will be very shortly, it will be very easy to regulate the bathing hours for males and females and prevent the annoyance caused by men walking past while ladies are bathing.'
The Nation Builders
Pioneer Pastoral Attempts in the Territory

by Vern O'Brien

The inland exploration phase in the Northern Territory started with Leichhardt's expedition into the hitherto unknown tract of country between the Gulf of Carpentaria and Western Queensland, stretching into what has been called, in the pastoral sense, the 'Gulf District'. Leichhardt had skirted along the Gulf, crossing some main streams, including the Mc Arthur River and the Roper River. Augustus Gregory, coming from the western side, opened up more unmapped country in the area of the Victoria River which was named by Wickham and Stokes in 1839 after the young Queen Victoria. Wickham and Stokes' report prompted Gregory's expedition at the behest of the Royal Geographical Society in London in 1855. Gregory's bid to cross the Territory via Elsey Creek and the Mc Arthur River from west to east to the Burketown area tied in with Leichhardt's 1844-45 journey. From the south, in 1860, came the Scottish explorer, John McDouall Stuart who explored central Australia and established the northern route up the centre of the Territory to Point Stuart. This route was ultimately used in setting out the Overland Telegraph Line from Palmerston (Darwin) in 1870-72.

This criss-cross of routes across the Territory had in twenty years filled in some of the facts about the country which was part of the Colony of New South Wales until 1863. At that time South Australia felt, as a result of Stuart's three journeys, that there was something of value in these waste lands and that a move towards annexation of their 'Northern Territory' would be worthwhile. Stuart had recommended to the British Government that this country in the centre and the north should be called 'Alexandra Land' after the Princess of Wales. But the fledgling Colonial Government, free from the stain of its convict neighbour colonies, decided to stick to its own view that the area to the north of South Australia should be annexed as the 'Northern Territory of South Australia'. The Northern Territory it has been since then, even though it was cut adrift from South Australia as a troublesome appendage in 1911, after its first 68 years, and remained under the control of the Commonwealth for 67 years until Self Government was granted in 1978. These initial explorations led to the use of these routes for the movement of stock to occupy these newly found lands, of which there were glowing reports by Stuart. The annexation by South Australia was a logical move after the success of Stuart's journey from South Australia to the north coast which established the known links with that colony.

Queensland had been busy developing its western region and stock were already on the Queensland/Northern Territory. This followed Landsborough's route on their western limits. Landsborough had seen and named the Barkly Tableland (after the Governor of Victoria) in 1861. He had touched on a vast Tableland and followed down the Herbert River (later called Georgina) in December of that year. His second journey of exploration on the Cloncurry and Flinders Rivers in 1862 resulted in a race for the magnificent pastoral country encountered by him.

When the Northern Territory was annexed in 1863, the first application for land within the region came to Adelaide from a number of sources in the eastern states. This 'transition decade' - if I may call this period such - needs more positive research by students of the history of NT pastoral development. Whilst the area of over half a million square miles was annexed, no established base existed until Finiss was sent up with the NT Survey Expedition to Escape Cliffs in 1864. The problems then encountered delayed attention to pastoral claims lodged in the ensuing years and an examination of these is of particular interest in respect of the Queensland interface with the Northern Territory (and the Barkly Tableland) at that stage. The period of the 'squatters' began in the Territory, but it is difficult from the record to say exactly when it began. It does appear that stocking of the Barkly Tableland, at the Ranken and the James River (which drain a large area of Mitchell grass downs country), had begun in 1865 and 1866. The Scottish born pastoral entrepreneurs from Queensland were moving in on rich pasture lands, whilst the South Australians were getting around to replying to their pastoral claims. A little later some of Irish extraction, with their love of good horses and stock, joined in to test out these new lands.

John Lorne Campbell Ranken was born in Ayrshire Scotland in 1829. His brother George was a nephew of the George Ranken who came out to Sydney and Bathurst in 1821 from Scotland to found a pastoral enterprise at Kelloshiel, Bathurst. John Ranken and his brother had gravitated north to Rockhampton in 1859. 'John Ranken and his cousin Lorne was at Afton Downs, but had to abandon it for want of water' according to George Sutherland (1913) in Pioneering Days.
At some stage, about 1865/66, Ranken appears to have moved across to the Barkly Tableland in the area of the Ranken and James Rivers. Through a manager at Burketown, in July, 1867, he certified that their Lornsdale Run in the NT was stocked with 2500 sheep before William Landsborough JP. Further, Ranken declared, in November 1867, that 'the Runs at Lorne Creek have been stocked by sheep belonging to George Sutherland'. So the Rocklands early owners were agisting sheep at Lorne Creek and Ranken River in the Northern Territory. Ranken apparently joined with John Sutherland (from western Queensland) who was a manager for the Costello estates and had formed a station on the Georgina River where Rockborough now stands.

John Ranken went back to Sydney in 1869 to join his brother and J Bowie Wilson in a financial agency business. He married a daughter of Major Hill of the Indian Army in April 1877 and died in Sydney in January 1888.

The Brown Brothers
In July 1866, the Brown Brothers, James and Alexander, of Newcastle, through their man on the Barkly Tableland Francis Edmond Nash, were applying for contiguous pastoral claims in the NT called Alexander No.2,3,4 & 5. Nash described the land at James Creek and Happy Creek as being, in fact, on Lake Nash. Sutherland, writing in 1913, is vague about when the events occurred, but the stocking declarations suggest that Nash was looking after the Brown interests in 1866 on the Lake Nash of today. He comments that -

The first to arrive was Nash, who took up Stoney Plains (believed to be Lake Nash), some forty miles down the River. Then came John Lorne Campbell Ranken and his cousin Lorne. They took up country on the Ranken and the Lorne (these watercourses in the NT are still called after them). Steiglitz Bros. followed and squatted down below Nash. The latter had a partner called Greig, and Mrs Greig and her little daughter accompanied their husband and father - the first woman to live on the Barkly Tableland (in the NT).

Nash took up Stoney Plains in 1866 and had little success as wool was low in price and the cartage on it to Burketown, plus the high freight to Sydney around Cape York, was prohibitive so that even the most stout hearted settler was compelled to abandon holdings and drive stock back hundreds of miles to set up posts on the Georgina River. Mr Francis E Nash and William Turner Greig were later, in 1876, to hold leases at Montague Downs and Cambridge Downs on the Flinders River. An anecdote by Robert Gray, in 1913, speaks of his reminiscences in North Queensland -

Mr Greig who was at this time one of the partners in Cambridge Downs arrived at our station one morning from Townsville. He had a cart loaded with rations; his daughter also was with him. On crossing the creek, three miles before reaching the station he managed to capsize his cart. His daughter falling beneath it had a narrow escape; the guard on one side falling on a bag of flour instead of on her chest, she was saved from a terrible fate.

So Steiglitz and Greig at Lake Nash in 1866 went back into Queensland after the Stoney Plains (Lake Nash) venture. There is some sketchy account of the first pastoral families, Mr and Mrs Greig and daughter, who lived at Lake Nash when the survey groups were pegging out land for the first SA settlers at the abortive Escape Cliffs at a time when Finiss was being recalled to Adelaide. Merv Hartwig, in his thesis on the Centralian Pastoral scene, comments on the Queenslanders and confirms the position I have described above -

Queensland squatters occupied 4 to 5000 square miles of the Herbert (Georgia) River country during 1866-68, but it was not then known that this country lay within the Northern Territory and drought and depression soon caused it to be abandoned.

Any study of this segment of the Territory's early pastoral history points up the early impact of the entry of stock into the Territory immediately after the explorations of Leichhardt (1845), Gregory (1856), Landsborough, naming the Barkly Tableland, (1861) and Stuart (1862). The last entry, from South Australia to the north coast, convinced Stuart of the value of pastoral lands there and much of the credit for the ensuing annexation by South Australia in 1863 must go to him.

The Lake Nash Homestead, 1889. O'Brien Collection.

Some of the early pastoral claims were made in 1868 by James and Alexander Brown from Newcastle, as mentioned above. Extracts from the Queensland Archives show how Landsborough, from Burketown, approved of the stocking of some of the lands on the Border (not surveyed until 1884) by Ranken and James and Alex Brown. Many of those who came north with Goyder in 1869 were quick to claim areas of land, including Hood, Millner, Masson, Beeton etc., but these were disallowed as they were Governors servants and by reason of that employment were prevented from obtaining a lease. By 1872, when the Overland Telegraph was well under construction, E M Bagot, as one of the contractors, applied for pastoral lands near Alice Springs (Undoolya) and this was the first to be approved, followed by that of Joseph Gilbert (Owen Springs). The Overlanders who brought stock from Queensland involved Wentworth D'Arcy Uhr (who pioneered the Gulf Stock Route). Although a series of pastoral claims ensued in the north between 1872 and 1878, Glencoe (now Ban Ban) was the first station to be established and stocked in the north and the grave of its first manager, Thomas Nelson, lies in the deserted Union
Town cemetery north of Pine Creek as a tribute to the early contribution he made to the pastoral scene. Along the two main stock routes from Queensland and the North/South Stock Route from South Australia stock began to pour into the Territory, destined for the newly granted pastoral leases. Whilst the tabulated list below is not an exhaustive one, it does show the progressive advance of the pastoral stations developed along the central Overland Telegraph Route and on the Barkly Tableland area which was opened up to a large degree by the additional explorations of Nat Buchanan (1878) and Ernest Favenc (1883). The pressure from Queensland is particularly evident in the 1882 to 1885 period, when vast tracts were opened up and large herds were gathered together and driven north by the drovers of a century ago. At one stage Fisher and Lyons had 11000 head on the move coming north.

The first forty cattle stations in the Northern Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Station</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undoolya</td>
<td>1872-6</td>
<td>Alexandria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owen Springs</td>
<td>1872-3</td>
<td>Creswell Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idacowna</td>
<td>1872-3</td>
<td>Avon Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocklands</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Austral Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henbury</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Corella Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Nash</td>
<td>1878-82</td>
<td>Bauhinia Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glencoe</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Wollgorang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springvale</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Victoria River Dns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt Burrell</td>
<td>1879-82</td>
<td>Wave Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen Helen</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Delanere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daly River</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Alroy Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatrice Hill</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Brunette Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsey</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Newcastle Waters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macarthur River</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Ord River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hodgson Downs</td>
<td>1884-5</td>
<td>Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvert</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Rosewood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willeroo</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Walhallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renner Springs</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Eva Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempe Downs</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Bond Springs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown Point</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>Auvergne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst Amos and Broad's pastoral claims started in 1881, they were able, with the help of Favenc in 1883, to commence to stock their claims and by 1884 Macarthur River Station (and Broadmere) were stocked in a vast area under lease. At one stage, by 1888, they had 24000 sq miles held under pastoral title. Ross Duncan's text indicates the progress of settlement and stocking and shows 251,680 sq miles held under lease in 1888 - 200,911 sq miles held and declared stocked with 218,874 cattle, 107,078 sheep 8598 horses etc. Amos and Broad had 10,000 head at the Mc Arthur River in 1888 (which was to increase to 21,000 by 1898) on this vast spread of 24,000 sq miles. Whilst the Brown Bros from Newcastle (NSW) enterprise was a minor stocking of sheep on the Barkly Tableland in 1867/8, that of the the Amos and Broad Group from Sydney was a massive effort of men and stock to the north and not recognised to any degree as being one of the cattle kingdoms of the north. The later cattle empire of Kidman, which spread over three states and the Territory, certainly was expansive, but that of Amos and Broad must also be regarded as a remarkable pastoral effort of 100 years ago.

In examining the tabulation, I have shown the Lake Nash stocking as commencing in 1878-82 by John Costello, as distinct from the early stocking by Francis E Nash at Stoney Plains and Lake Nash with sheep in 1866 etc. The entry of some of the early Irish pastoralists is covered in some extracts of P S Cleary's *Australia's Debt to the Irish Nation Builders* and mentions the Costellos the Duracks, the Skeehans etc.

John Costello was born in 1838 at Yass, New South Wales. He learned all about cattle on his father's station. He was also a daring horseman, a useful accomplishment in the bush. When he was twenty five years of age, he decided to strike out for himself and his plans were not petty. The topic of the day was the Burke and Wills expedition, and Costello made for Waroo Springs in central Queensland, between the Paroo and Warrego Rivers. Becoming dissatisfied with the lack of water in that region, he and his young wife trekked out west into the then unknown 'Never Never' where he could peg out square miles of virgin country. He used to give great cattle stations to his friends as one gives birthday presents.

After a few years, perhaps because the arrival of others cramped his style, Costello bought a couple of small stations near Rockhampton, in settled country, but they were merely jumping off places for his big adventure. Gathering all his stock, he set out for the far north-west, beyond the Queensland boundary. With the Overland Telegraph in sight he took up about three thousand square miles of fine pastoral land at Lake Nash near the Barkly Tableland. That was not enough for his energies, and his next exploit was to drive two thousand cattle and a number of horses from Rockhampton, past Burketown, to the Roper River in the 'land of the great grey water', where he found himself owner of an estate bigger than Ireland. It began two hundred and fifty miles south of the Roper and ended on the shores of Arnhem Land. There, in the Valley of Springs, adventure followed adventure. In the wet season, hostile blacks took heavy toll of the cattle and killed more than one of the station hands. Costello himself stopped an occasional spear. Snakes, alligators and ticks kept men and stock wide awake; malaria, beri-beri, dysentery and red water fever threatened them with death. The treacherous caked mud flats of the Gulf country where a horse might sink to his girth without a moment's notice made travelling difficult.
Yet Costello and his wife stuck at it for several years. He spent £500,000 on improvements, which was not difficult when the cartage of rations and materials from Burkettown cost $150 a ton and little or no vegetable food could be grown locally. Then the cattle market broke, the Queensland Government increased rents for country never surveyed, visited or policed, and Costello had to give consideration to abandoning the Gulf and retire to Lake Nash.

When Costello took his wife and young family to Lake Nash, driving them in a waggonette by way of Gladstone, Bowen and Burketown, he recognised he was not the first there and found traces of an earlier occupation. Over twelve years before Costello went there, Greig and Nash, accompanied by Mrs Greig and her little daughter, had made their home at Lake Nash and had abandoned it because of the drought in the later sixties.

Michael Costello’s book The Life of John Costello gives some interesting snippets of information about the founding of the Valley of Springs in the 1880s and how the whole family went there to expand their pastoral empire beyond Lake Nash, but the leap frogging into the rough Arnhem Land was not a successful venture, as described above. Costello, who had decided in 1884 to take up the additional lands in the north, explored it and decided on forming his head station about eight miles up the Limmen River from the crossing and on the bank of a clear running stream fed by numerous hot springs. After a twelve months trip back to Ireland, the ancestral homeland, he went back to Rockhampton, brought out some shorthorn bulls and a beautiful stallion, Tallboy, the son of a Sydney Cup winner. Captain McLellan of the s.s. Activity was charted to go up the Limmen River ex Queensland and Costello landed station equipment and weatherboard houses. Costello returned - ’an incredibly short time after he left Valley of Springs when he was back once more, riding Tallboy one autumn afternoon of 1885’.

In the 1887 report of the Government Resident, Valley of Springs depastured 8000 head of cattle and Costello was interested in further acquisitions from Acres and Sutton. Magistrate W G Stretton from Borroloola visited Valley of Springs and Bauhinia Downs and remarked on the former property.

It is situated in a most beautiful and picturesque gorge, with a plentiful supply of good water. There are several ranges of hills, which form excellent boundaries for large paddocks. The valleys between these ranges are splendidly grassed and well watered, extending in some instances between seventy and eighty miles. One in particular, that on which the station is situated, running from the Parsons to the coast, a distance of about 90 miles.

In the period under question, 1888, the Irish pastoralist was to make a bold move in expanding from his Lake Nash holding and by introducing stock and horses, some
from Ireland, to improve his herd. Red water fever and the depredations of Aboriginals etc were to mitigate against the success of Valley of Springs. Little is known of these brave attempts to stock country near Arnhem land, which had only just been explored by David Lindsay a few short years before. The location of the station a 'deep picturesque gorge' (now on Nathan River Station) has not been clearly defined as during the hundred years since 1888 - the time of this pioneer attempt - little has survived and the area is still considered remote.

Florida Station was an acquisition of the eminent pastoralist/explorer John Arthur Macartney from Queensland who was in the forefront of opening up new pastoral lands in the north. Macartney was born at Creagh Castle in County Cork in Ireland in 1834 and came out to Australia in 1848 as a young lad, the son of the Rev Dr H B Macartney. Later he was an associate to the Victorian Judge, Sir Redmond Barry, in 1852. He went to Port Curtis in 1857 and developed his Waverley Station in 1860, 125 miles from Rockhampton. He became a partner of the Dublin bachelor E G Mayne and he married Flora Dunlop in 1861.

Macartney was a man of particular principle. His daughter, Anne Macartney records in the Queensland Women's Historical Association in 1959:

The blacks did not trouble my father; he always said we must remember we came on their land with our stock and buildings and disturbed the game on which they lived; so naturally when they were hungry, they killed our cattle or sheep. Every now and then my father drove a bullock near to the black's camp and 'coo-ee' to them, then shot the bullock and pointed to his mouth then to theirs. Very soon they were feasting on the bullock.

The Central Queensland pioneer colonist is regarded more as an explorer than a squatter. Macartney wrote an account of his explorations in 1909. In recognition of this, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. A second attempt was made in 1903 by Captain Bradshaw on the remnants of Florida Station, named after Macartney's wife Florida, but this also failed. These attempts were immense in concept - large pastoral empires which were part of the building of a nation in a remote corner of Australia.

North Australian Pastoral Company

Some of the more arable Mitchell grass plains of the Barkly Tableland did in fact survive after 100 years. An extract from D B Waterson's article in the Royal Historical Society of Queensland's Journal, Volume 12 No.6 of November 1986, mentions McIllwraith, Collins and Forrest, who held the main land areas of Alexandria prior to and after the NT/Queensland Border Survey of 1884. This survey was to mark whether Queensland or the Northern Territory were the prime beneficiaries of land rent to be paid along the Border. Costello admits he paid rent to both Queensland and the South Australian Governments to ensure ownership. When the Border was surveyed, he was able to obtain a refund from Queensland for rent paid for his Lake Nash (Northern Territory) holding.

In the next 25 years, he explored virgin country in western Queensland, the Gulf and the Northern Territory, two stations showing up in the NT listings in the chain of stations, rivalling the fame of James Tyson. Whilst he held a number of Queensland properties up to 1875, his Territory estates comprised Florida, 10000 sq miles on the Castlereagh Bay in Arnhem Land, The Pastures at Maud Creek and Auvergne (8000 sq miles).

Hugh Heber Percy, Macartney's partner in Diamantina Lakes Station, went out with him in 1877, hired the s.s. Active from Millar, who built the rail line, and examined the Florida head station with its manager Mr Randell on Glyde Inlet. David Lindsay had only just explored Arnhem Land internally some four years before but it did not prevent the entrepreneur from moving in to commence on the stocking of the area. He was obviously one of the 'Irish Nation Builders' who, like Costello, had made valiant attempts to open up these large tracts for pastoral use. They had both used the coast and coastal rivers, like the Limmen and the Goyder, to enter their lands by ship. Whilst many rivers were to be named in later years, the suggested name Macartney River of 1887 was abandoned, probably because this enterprise later failed.


McIlwraith was an Ayrshire Scot who migrated to Melbourne and the Mount Alexander goldfields in 1854, and prospered as a government railway engineer in Victoria, while retaining family shipping interests. In the sixties, he moved to Queensland where, after initial pastoral forays, he embarked on a wide range of speculative and developmental investments of which the Queensland National Bank, North Australian Pastoral Company and McIlwraith and McEachern were the main concerns.

Deemed to be apparently risky, holdings of 23,000 sq kilometres of the South Australian Government’s Alexandria and Soudan leases, this largely Queensland-based pastoral and sugar lands enterprise long outlived the other company that I am examining. In one form or another it lasted for well over a hundred years, a comparative rarity amongst Queensland-based corporations. This enterprise was established in 1877 under the impetus of Thomas McIlwraith in partnership with William Collins of Tamrookum Station near Beaudesert; William Forrest, a director of the leading Queensland mercantile firm of Moreheads Limited; J H B Warner, a London financier and sir William Ingram Bt the proprietor of the Illustrated London News.

Some of the risky pastoral claims were held over until an auction was held in 1884 for blocks along the border and McIlwraith, Forrest and Collins secured the bulk of the leases at Alexandria. The Company has certainly survived, although a great percentage of its 11,000 sq miles pre-war spread was reduced by resumptions and later subdivisions. However, the areas originally held by J L C Ranken with sheep at Lorne Creek still remain part of this major holding since 1877.

The foresight of these ‘nation builders’ was remarkable for sheer achievement even though in some cases it led to failures. These cattlemen who came from Scotland and Ireland, had a broad vision in terms of development of the pastoral industry. Their attempts ‘closer in’ to settlement had marked success. On the remote stations, they made a valiant start at nation building in the period under review. Although some of the properties were later returned to those traditional aboriginal owners who held the land before the Europeans came, all are indicative of the time when this cross section of pastoral pioneers came in from Queensland and South Australia in the wake of the explorers to establish their herds in the Northern Territory.

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I Found It!
A brief account of Advertising in the NT Times and Gazette in 1888
by Margaret Clinch

Introduction

In 1988, our lives are impinged upon almost continually by advertising in every possible medium. There are radio, television, newspaper and a variety of other messages, displays designed to inform, and for the most part have us spend our money in exchange for the goods and services offered by the advertisers.

This article remarks upon advertising in the Northern Territory in 1888. The comments are specifically confined to advertising in the Northern Territory Times and Gazette. Directories, handbills, posters, signs at premises, together with 'word of mouth' information can be presumed to have played an important role in advertising, as well as the newspaper.

This article provides no comprehensive history and description of newspapers in Northern Territory life at this time, as separate coverage is provided elsewhere in this volume. The comments and observations about advertising are those of a lay person, and do not derive from a background of expertise in editing, journalism or marketing.

For practical purposes, this study has concentrated on the Northern Territory Times and Gazette for January-March 1888. After some general considerations, an overall comparison is made between the issue of the Northern Territory Times and Gazette for Saturday 7 January 1888 and the Northern Territory News for Saturday 9 January 1888. Some general observations are made in conclusion.

Historical Background

In 1888, the Northern Territory was governed as the northern province of South Australia. The population may be approximately estimated from the census figures shown below for 1881 and 1891:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NORTHERN TERRITORY</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male Chinese</th>
<th>Est. European</th>
<th>PALMERSTON</th>
<th>PALMERSTON Houses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>3347</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>3451</td>
<td>2722</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>501</td>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>4560</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>4898</td>
<td>3392</td>
<td>1506</td>
<td>1021</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A - Palmerston District covered two square miles
B - The Aboriginal population is not included here

Clearly, the population was very small, with a great excess of Chinese over Europeans. The Chinese went mainly to the Burundie/Pine Creek area for the goldfields. There were very few women in the Northern Territory, even in the centres of population.

The Northern Territory Times Almanac and Directory for 1888 provides a business directory which lists the centres of activity as follows:-

- Palmerston
- Southport
- The Road
- Port Darwin Camp and Grove Hill
- Twelve Mile - McKinlay
- Burundie
- Union
- Pine Creek
- Katherine
- Borroloola

The District of Palmerston is located where central Darwin now is, and covered two square miles. The city was originally surveyed by G W Goyder in 1869. Palmerston was also located at the northern end of the important Overland Telegraph link with overseas communications, completed by Charles Todd in 1872.

The main industries in the Northern Territory at this time were mining, particularly gold mining, and cattle raising. These industries had been subject to good and bad cycles since their establishment in the 1870s. There was some activity in the southern part of the Territory adjoining South Australia. It is apparent that the attention of the Northern Territory Times and Gazette was focused on the northern half of the Northern Territory.

There was no real road linking the southern with the northern half of the Northern Territory. The difficulty of overland travel placed an emphasis on the sea transport of goods to Palmerston and then to various other settled parts...
of the Territory. The main centres of population were the goldfields at Burundie, Union and Pine Creek. Southport, since it provided closer shipping access to the goldfields was an important port until the completion of the Palmerston - Pine Creek railway in 1888 (3) after which it declined rapidly. Similarly Borroloola was a regular port for the eastern region of the Territory, particularly for the supply of cattle stations.

The importance of the Overland Telegraph in Northern Territory life at that time is shown in the richly descriptive reminiscences of D. E. Kelsey who was a Palmerston resident at that time. (4) This volume, together with two other readily available volumes provide photographs of Palmerston and other centres at the time. (5,6) Life at the goldfields was primitive, but efforts were made in Palmerston to construct public works such as the jetty, major buildings such as the Town Hall, and permanent business houses. The Territory was most fortunate in having a number of public spirited citizens of great energy. The pages of the Northern Territory Times and Gazette for 1888 tell of the social and cultural activities enriching life at this rough frontier.

The Northern Territory Times and Gazette was established in 1873, and in 1888 was published each Saturday by V L Solomon from an office in Smith Street. Its rival, the North Australian was established in 1883, and was also published weekly. (7)

The Northern Territory Times and Gazette normally consisted of four pages at a cost of sixpence per issue. Subscriptions could be bought as follows:-

Subscriptions in advance:-
Per Quarter.......................... £.s.d.
Per Annum.......................... 0.6.0

Not paid in Advance
Per Quarter ......................... 0.6.6
Per Annum .......................... 1.6.0 (8)

Northern Territory Times and Gazette
Advertising - an overview

In a general sense, advertising means to make known and create an awareness. (9) In 1888, the newspaper still acted as government gazette, as well as functioning as a general newspaper with local, Australian and overseas news. As stated in the issue of the 7 January:-

It is a tendency to relegate advertising in the mind to a subservient position, regarding it, in the media as essentially inferior to the news. Vaiben Louis Solomon clearly regarded advertising of equal importance in the process of informing the community. It appears that he anticipated that major advertising would be forthcoming from South Australian interests. Advertising revenue was of major importance to the economics of the newspaper, since the local population was so small. In 1891, there was a total population of 4898, of whom 3392 were Chinese immigrants.

The charges for advertising were:-
Half inch or less ...................... 2s.6
One inch ................................ 5s.0
Every Additional Line ............... 6d.

Advertisements ran for a number of consecutive issues, and new copy was required to be provided by Thursday evening at the newspaper office. (11) The four crowded pages of each issue, contained approximately two pages of advertising, including the Government Gazette.

Categories of Advertising

In 1888, the Government Gazette section of the newspaper occupied the columns of each issue. Typical announcements concerned the sale, transfer and control of mining licences; notice of sale and ownership of pastoral leases; calls for tenders for the construction of public buildings and roads, and for the transport of supplies to Overland Telegraph Stations via the Roper River and Borroloola; rewards for information concerning murders; arrangements for the quarantining of vessels; appointments to government positions; the noting of new shipping hazards; the issuing of death certificates for deceased Chinese, and customs arrangements. There is a mixture of large and small advertisements, but all are succinctly worded.

Other non-commercial advertising includes announcements relating to such matters as births and deaths, shipping arrangements, illegal trespass and removal of stock, meetings of the Palmerston District Council, the annual general meeting of the Palmerston Institute Library, and the breaking off of arrangements with former associates. Whilst government announcements occupy a large and distinct area, the latter announcements are small, and usually under the heading 'Public Notices'.

Commercial advertisements occupy about 1.5 pages of each issue. They appear mainly as 'Business Notices' or 'Public Notices'. Many of the commercial advertisements under the 'Public Notices' heading are for branded products being promoted probably nationally or internationally. These are mostly medicinal remedies of the universal panacea type, such as Wizard Oil and Holloway's Ointment. (12) It is not clear why they are segregated in this way from other commercial advertisements, but they tend to the verbose, and more persuasive, depending largely on an autobiographical story-line or an extended description of the merits of the product and its miraculous relieving effects on young and old. These were possibly the work of copywriters in advertising agencies and nationally syndicated. Some medicinal advice and remedies were available through the mail, and might well have been valued by those who lived or travelled in the
remotest districts of the Northern Territory. This type of
cCommercial advertisement did not usually specify where
the product might be obtained locally. This may indicate
that they were paid for interstate by the manufacturers of
the particular products. In many instances, these
advertisements were headed by a block with the brand
logo, and occasionally there was an additional illustration
in the text. Often these advertisements were couched in
a way similar to short stories, seemingly indicating that
readers literally devoured newspapers from end to end once
they became available. These advertisements would have
brought major revenue into the newspaper and must have
been worthwhile to the advertisers, because they continued
to run them.

Under the heading, for the most part, of 'Business
Notices', but sometimes as 'Public Notices' were
commercial advertisements of local origin. They covered
such matters as the sale of 50 bulls; accommodation in
Southport, Bridge Creek, Adelaide River and Katherine;
cordials and aerated waters, bakeries; butcheries; general
stores; banks; shipping arrivals and departures from
overseas and interstate, and such local ports as Macarthur
River, Roper River and the Cambridge Gulf; agistment at
Springvale Station; carriers; lightermen; shipping agents;
importers; stock and station, land and mining agents; and
tailors, etc. These were for the most part concerned
with local businesses. Mingled with these notices, was some
brand advertisements eg. brown moleskin trousers and a
particular brand of musical organ.

V L Solomon's businesses were variously advertised. One
advertisement described one of his companies as
importers, shipping and customs house agents, and as
having on hand 500 tons of merchandise. (13) In the
same issue there was an advertisement for 'Plain and
Fancy' printing at the Northern Territory Times (14),
whilst on the front page was an advertisement for the
Northern Territory Times Almanac and Directory for
1888. (15)

Advertising in 1888

It would be easy to assume from a comparison of the
Northern Territory Times and Gazette with the Northern
Territory News, for 1888, that advertising was naive in
1888. This impression is given to some extent by the
usual single column breakdown of advertisements, with a
few two column exceptions, the tendency to catch the eye
with various typefaces and spaces and the general absence
of decorations, illustrations and blocks.

The period was however an important one in the life of
newspapers nationally and internationally. The period of
growth in England from 1750 onwards was described by a
specialist in advertising history as follows:

All this time advertising was a growing art, and
advertisements were beginning to make themselves
manifest as the main support and chief source of
profit of newspapers, as well as the most natural
channel of communication between the buyers and
sellers, the needing and supplying members of a
vast community. (16)

The abolition of an advertisement duty in England in 1853
led to a proliferation of advertising and a development of
expertise. The author contrasted the work of professional
advertisers in identifying markets and placing their
advertisements, with that of the casual advertiser. This
expertise spread overseas, since the author complimented
the American and colonial presses, and recognised the
reporting of news and advertising of Melbourne's Age and
Argus newspapers as being of international standard.
'Colonial newspapers are plentiful and good, and the best
of them filled with advertisements of a general character at
fairly high rates'. (17)

During this period, newspapers were produced in
provincial centres as well as in capitals. They were the
main regular source of news, since radio and television
were unknown. They were available by subscription,
individual purchase and in public reading rooms such as
libraries, clubs and mechanics institutes. The reading
public was thus greater than the circulation figures might
have indicated. With the small population, in the Northern
Territory, particularly of Europeans, the value of
advertising revenue to the Northern Territory Times and
Gazette would have formed an important part of income.

Purchases of advertised items in the case of some
commercial advertising, particularly branded items, could
be made by mail, as well as, or instead of locally.
Because of the small circulation of the Northern Territory
Times and Gazette, it is possible that some advertisements
for branded products were syndicated nationally by
advertising agencies, or to a particular group of
newspapers. This would require more research to
substantiate.

Comparison with Modern Advertising

Since 1888 the advertising industry has developed in
sophistication. There is a range of media to be handled, the
variety of goods and services has grown exponentially,
the population has expanded in size and grown less
homogeneous. Copywriters have become acquainted with
market analysis, layout and design, buyer psychology and
motivation, and triggers to purchasing. Developments in
printing allow more flexible layouts, different print faces,
the sharing of copy between newspapers, and have made
illuminations easier to incorporate. Newspapers are larger
and the space given to commercial advertising is larger
too.

One modern writer in the field of advertising lists the
following five criteria as together forming a measure of
successful advertising:-

Attract Attention
Compel Interest
Create Desire
Inspire Confidence
Promote Action (18)

How relevant are these as a measure of commercial
advertising in the Northern Territory Times and Gazette in
1888? Some general comments are made here in this
context.

The newspaper was small and since it was published only
weekly, it was probably read from beginning to end. To
those outside centres of population, the information in
advertisements might be as interesting as the news.
Whilst it is true that interest may have declined because of the repetition of advertisements, the reading population was changing and growing.

The need for the modern-day expertise in copywriting was less in 1888, because of the lack of proliferation of the media. Similarly, in the Northern Territory in many cases there was only one supplier of particular goods and services. Therefore the advertisement was a matter of information rather than a method of competing.

Advertisements for branded products often do bear a relationship with the five advertising points listed. They may use blocks with brands and illustrations, or eye-catching headings such as:-

'3,000 dols. Lost'...
'Baby Saved' ... and
'Prosecute the Swindlers!!'

to attract attention to an advertisement for Hop Bitters which is disguised as a piece of news. (19) They may develop curiosity and demand, by identifying a personal need, and build confidence, often through outlandish testimonials tuned to match the general psychology of the readership, or part of it, and then make it easy for them to take action to buy. For example, in the issue of 7 January 1888, the 'I Found It!' strategy is an attention-getter. These words are found as headings apparently at random in the 'Public Notices' section of the paper, in one instance adjoining the announcement of a running race, and in another, adjoining a declaration concerning the Palmerston Local Court of Insolvency. In the same general area, the words 'It's all over now with the Ladies' and 'Those Girls at School' are tantalizingly placed among the text in the columns. Once the attention is focused, a half column advertisement for an evening of most desirable family entertainment including music, drama and recitation at the Town Hall becomes visible in the 'Public Notices'. Then when the appetite has been whetted, confidence is inspired by such statements as:-

'On this occasion
a brilliant programme
will be presented'

and

'Also Mr Charles Godfrey's
latest London hit'

The action step is spelled out thus:-

prices as usual
Front Seats 5s. Back Seats 2s.6d.
On this occasion
children will be admitted
at half-price
Doors open at 7.30;
commences at 8. (19)

Shipping advertisements use illustrations as headings to attract attention, but otherwise make brief statements about service, and directions for action. These simple ship illustrations had been used as eyecatchers in newspapers for over one hundred years.

In the case of locally generated business advertisements, there are frequently similarities between those of 1888 and those of 1988. For example, both the advertisements below reflect at least a considerable proportion of the five advertising criteria mentioned previously.

7 January 1888, p.2

The
Q.C.E. HOTEL
Adelaide River

---0---

CHARLES HAIMES

Begs to inform his friends
and residents
of the Northern Territory
that he has purchased
and thoroughly renovated
the above hotel and offers
superior accommodation
to all who may favour him
with their support.

The Proprietor's long experience
in the trade
will be sufficient guarantee
that all Wines, Beers, Spirits
will be the best
obtainable on the market. (20)


D H M.
DARWIN HOME MAINTENANCE

24 hrs - 7 days per week
279521 - 851390

Specialists in:-
Floor & Wall Tiling - Painting & Decorating
Carpentry - Joinery - Pergolas
Carports - Plumbing - Electrical

We have qualified tradesmen who will
fix that waterproofing problem

PO Box 41054 - Casuarina

WE ARE YOUR
EMERGENCY
TEAM

In other examples drawn from 7 January 1888, there are cases where attention is sought from certain types of readers, such as 'to teamsters and others' or 'to speculators
and others. Desire is developed by such statements as ‘Hot rolls and scones... cakes of all descriptions... biscuits in all varieties’. Interest is compelled by such statements as ‘Blacksmith, wheelwright and farrier’ and then confidence and action in turn by ‘Workmanship guaranteed - a trial solicited’ and ‘Opposite B.A.T - all orders promptly attended too’. We may have been re-assured too, by the fact that the English, Scottish and Australian Chartered Bank had its ‘head office [at] 73 Cornhill, London, [and] Branches and agents in each of the colonies, G.B. and the East’. (21)

To some considerable extent, therefore, it is possible to illustrate that the five modern criteria for satisfactory advertising do fit the advertising found in the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* of 7 January 1888.

What comparisons can be drawn between advertising in 1888 and 1988?

To some extent specific aspects of this question have already been answered. However, it is interesting to make some more general comparisons between the *Northern Territory News* of Saturday 9 January 1988 and the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* of 7 January 1888.

The 1888 newspaper consists of four pages of which one and one half to two pages comprised advertisements, including government announcements.

The 1988 newspaper consists of 48 pages of which ten pages comprise classified advertisements, whilst other major advertisements are positioned throughout the paper.

In 1888 charges were based on 5/- per inch, but advertisements were repeated.
In 1988 charges are based on $9 per 20 words in line format, or $5.20 per centimetre per column. (22)

In 1888 most of the front page of the newspaper consisted of advertising.
In 1988 the front page of the newspaper is reserved for headline news.

In 1888 the advertising headings were:-
  - Government Gazette
  - Business Notices
  - Shipping Advertisements
  - Public Notices
In 1988 the main advertising headings are:-
  - Births, Deaths and Marriages
  - Public Notices
  - Positions Vacant
  - Motor Mart
  - For Sale
  - Lawn Sales
  - Real Estate
  - Accommodation Available

In 1888, a higher proportion of the advertisements are placed by individuals, and not by governments or business interests. Some advertisements appear in 1888 which may not have been accepted for publication in 1888.

How much does advertising in the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* tell us about NT Society at the time?

Taking our broadest definition of advertising, which includes announcements, as well as commercial advertising, we find that we can learn a great deal about life in the Northern Territory in 1888. There is much government activity, and we learn something of businesses which were operating and of goods and services which were available. In some instances, price rates are sometimes even indicated.

When a check is made through the *Northern Territory Times Almanac and Directory for 1888*, it is made clear that not everybody advertised in the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*. For instance, whilst Wing Cheong Sing and Soey Sing Chong were Chinese businessmen who did advertise, there were eight Chinese storekeepers in Palmerston according to the Directory (23) and the Directory may have been contributory rather than listing all businesses.

In spite of this limitation, it is clear that a *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* published during 1888, without advertisements, would have left us much more in the dark about life in the Northern Territory at that time than we are now. There are times when we should feel positive about advertising and this is one of them.

REFERENCES

5. Stevenson, I. R., *The Line That Led to Nowhere*
6. Lockwood, D., *The Front Door*


**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


One hundred years after the landing of Captain Phillip at Sydney Cove in 1788, the little settlement at Port Darwin was twenty years old. In 1839 the harbour had been discovered by Lieutenants Stokes and Forsyth - who were in the ship's boat out from the Beagle which was anchored at Shoal Bay - and named after Stokes' old friend and shipmate, Charles Darwin. In 1869, it was chosen to be the site of the fifth British settlement on Australia's northern coast, after the failures of Port Dundas, Raffles Bay, Port Essington and Escape Cliffs.

Like its predecessors, isolation and the great distances between the settlement and the nearest Australian colonies were the greatest obstacles to be overcome, and until the Overland Telegraph Line was completed in 1872, the seaways were the main line of communication with the outside world by land. Access from the southern colonies was over almost impenetrable terrain or very rough tracks, only to be faced by the most determined and intrepid spirits.

Darwin Harbour had been considered a suitable site for the next settlement attempt. Once the hazards of entering the harbour were overcome - and explicit instructions were promulgated on navigating the approaches and negotiating the shallows caused by the extremely high rise and fall of the tides, the many sandbanks, rocks etc., - it offered deep and protected anchorage for ships of large tonnage, and traffic could radiate out from it, not only to Australian ports, but to all corners of the globe, Java, Singapore, India and China. In 1888, the Suez Canal was opened to ships of all nations thus encouraging trade between Europe and Australia and placing Port Darwin in a strategic position.

In this year also, Port Darwin's suitability for fortification as a strategic defence position and potential coaling station was persistently being advocated by Lord Brassey.

Port and navigation improvements were in progress and vessels were berthing at the new 'railway wharf'. Marine charts were improved although the first surveys of early explorers were still heavily relied upon.

Slowness and infrequency of supplies of essential food for survival and equipment for the development of industries were a major problem, as they were to remain for many years to come.

The long northern coast, extending from longitude 129 deg east to 138 deg east lies entirely in the tropics and in the path of the monsoons. It was largely deserted by Europeans except for the occasional fortune-seeking adventurers who had camps on the coastal rivers. Along the 900 nautical miles of coast edging the Timor and Arafura Seas to the West and the Gulf of Carpentaria to the East were scattered seacraft of every description - Aboriginal canoes, picturesque fleets of Macassan proas, Chinese sampans, fishing and pearl-lugging, small Australian government vessels (schooners and cutters) and, in the outer seaways, colonial and international passenger and trading steamships. Cargo consisted of such items as food, minerals (concentrates of copper, gold tin), buffalo hides, pearlshell, tortoiseshell, trepang, oysters, prawns and opium. Fish and prawns were dried and sent to China and Melbourne. As well as the supplies of bricks, coal, bridgework, galvanised iron, jarrah, chaff, stores, etc. which arrived on the S.F. Hersey, on 5 March 1888, were items particularly poignant to Darwin inhabitants one hundred later. These were 18 railway wagons, 2 water tank wagons, 1 locomotive and tender, 80 tons of railway iron, 86 tons explosives. The arrival of this shipment was to have a substantial impact on the development of the Territory as might the arrival of such items today!

There was development and optimism in many fields in the Northern Territory at this time, in agriculture and especially in the pastoral and mining industries and services were extended along the coast to meet the demands for supplies to lonely outposts. Mail, food and equipment were carried in small and often unsavoury craft which skirted shoals, reefs and mangrove fringed mudflats, with few navigational aids to mark the hazards. Buoys and beacons were often swept away by high tides and makeshift markers, e.g. ten-gallon drums and beer barrels, were sometimes the only guide to mark the mouth of a river.

Because shipping was the lifeblood of the growing colony, it would be reasonable to assume that coastal lighting would be regarded as a number one priority, but in 1888 there was no lighthouse along the northern coast, although the east coast of Queensland was well lighted and to the west the coast of Java had a complete lighting system. In 1888 reports were being considered by the Marine Board from the Harbourmaster, Naval captains and captains of trading vessels, that lights be erected at Cape
Fourcroy, Cape Don, Emery Point and Point Charles - Emery Point at the entrance of the harbour being considered to have the highest priority. In spite of the obvious need the first lighthouse was not completed until February 1893 and that was erected at Point Charles. Shipwrecks were not infrequent and it could be expected that the building of lighthouses would be awaited with impatience by the settlers but when the crate containing the Pt Charles structure arrived from Chance Bros. in England it was stored for quite a period before being unpacked. From the beginning the Territory has earned its reputation as being the land of 'wait a while' or 'plenty of time'.

For many years after the discovery of gold in the district of Pine Creek, Darwin Harbour was a hive of activity as men and equipment were transported to Southport (described as a dull, shambling, commonplace little village) on the Blackmore River. Small lighters and ketches conveyed goods up the river and other craft included a small cutter, an steam launch, a schooner, and small paddle steamer. Vessels of 200 tons or more could negotiate the Blackmore.

Southport was at one time bigger than Palmerston and was much closer to the goldfields. It was easier to ferry the cargo across the harbour and up the Blackmore River than pull it over the rugged bush tracks. However, in 1888, the railway line from Palmerston to Pine Creek bypassed Southport and by the end of 1889, when the railway was completed, that township languished and died, and river traffic ceased.

In 1888 the Chinese population peaked in the Northern Territory (approx 6300 compared to 1144 Europeans) but as the revenue from gold began to fall and also the South Australian Government's legislation was brought in to restrict alien immigration, the number of Chinese began to dwindle. Chinese emigrants began haggling for steerage or deck space on ships back to their native country, although the trip back was often too rough for old and tired travellers and many died on the way. The shipping companies contracted to deliver the returnees dead or alive and as they were unable to bury the dead at sea, the dead were disemboweled and stuffed with ogkum, so that the returning ships were often akin to floating hearses.

Then there were the trepang fishermen from the Celebes. For centuries Buginese or Macassan fishermen had journeyed annually to the north coast of Australia, mainly in their search for trepang, but by 1888, because of the imposition of customs duty and licence fees by the SA government, these numbers were diminishing. However smaller fleets were still setting off from Macassar at the start of the north-west monsoon and dipping through the tropical waters of the Java Sea along the chain of islands to Australia. During December, January and February they worked their way from Coburg Peninsula to the Gulf of Carpentaria, fishing for the valued sea-slug in shallow waters. At the beginning of the Dry Season, the catch, after being boiled in vats, smoked and dried in smoke houses on the beaches, was loaded on the proas for the return voyage. Most of the trepang was later bought by the Chinese. Because of intermarriage between the Macassans and Australian Aboriginals, Aboriginals were sometimes passengers on the return journey. Trade also took place between them - turtle and pearl shell (and occasionally pearls) bartered for coins, iron, liquor and tobacco.

Over the years the construction of the proa has not changed a great deal. They were 'wooden vessels with high square stern and low blunt bow, of varying lengths, usually of about 25 tons burthen; their bamboo cabins so arranged on the high poop that the vessels resembled floating pigeon houses'. Sides, deck roof and yards were made of bamboo, the sails of matting, and many of the ropes and hawsers of plaited cane. Although of rather clumsy appearance, when they sailed before a favourable monsoon and the great matting sails were bloated by the wind, they were 'formidable and fast'. The proas were provided with dug-out canoes each capable of carrying ten men. The crew consisted of about 30 men in all. The only garment usually worn by the seamen was a waistcloth.

Mr Alfred Searcy, Sub-collector of Customs, had many often hair-raising adventures to relate in connection with his efforts to intercept smugglers and to track down and collect licence fees and duty from proas and other vessels as well as camps along the coast, sometimes travelling in unseaworthy craft, an example of which was his voyage in the Ellengowan in 1887. In January, 1888, he accompanied Mr D'Arcy Uhr, on the s.s. Actice bound for the Goyder and McArthur Rivers, on completion of which voyage they reported - 'On the whole, an enjoyable trip. As was to be expected at this time of the year, the weather was much against us, but we had a very good little sea boat and reached home all the better for our month's outing'. This journey involved calling at the Revenue Station at Bowen Strait to investigate detained proas to see that their papers were in order, deliver Mr Uhr and party to the Goyder River to search for Cypress Pine, then proceed to the Roper and McArthur Rivers. 'Proceed' meant battling with rough sometimes mountainous wet season seas, negotiating the tricky entrance to the McArthur River - a small-boat crew had to enter the river, cut mangroves and mark a channel as they came out so the Actice could sail through. These mud flats and mangroves extend for some distance round the mouth of the river, and channels are altered to some degree on every flood. Some of the party had to wade waist deep through crocodile infested waters, with the occasional wild buffalo, snakes and swarms of mosquitoes. On returning to the Goyder it was found that two Malays in Mr Uhr's party had been ambushed and murdered by hostile Aboriginals and their cutter capsized and lost. One would not have to be faint-hearted to be 'the better for it!'

The S.S. Adelaide was scheduled to take buoys and appliances for buoying and beaconing the entrance of the McArthur and Roper Rivers in August. The acquisition of the Adelaide must have been a very welcome addition to the Northern Territory coastal transport in 1888 - a strongly built and compact little vessel and a great improvement on her predecessors. Passenger accommodation for 12 was all on deck. Its crew consisted of Captain and Chief Officer, (Europeans) and 8 Chinese. It was registered in Hong Kong under the Imperial Act. The length overall was 112 feet, beam 18'4", depth of hold 76" with draught of water 6' with 100 tons of cargo aboard. Her bunkers had space for 19 tons of coal. Crew accommodation was below deck on the bows. On the
foredeck were offices and lamp room and an improved steam windlass. She was rigged as a fore and aft schooner and had steel wire rigging. Two 15' boats were carried on the davits. It was provided with the usual telegraph and steering gear and also a direct acting tiller in case of accident to the wheel. Built in Hong Kong by G Fenwoc and Co. of the very best material - the framing almost entirely of a heavy hardwood and the planking of seasoned teak. This was part of the description in the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 21 April 1888.

Entertainment was not lacking in the little settlement in spite of the difficulties of isolation. In August, Harding's Mikado Opera Co. arrived in the Port on the *Menmuir* bringing 'culture' to the inhabitants. It was also advertised that the S.S. *Maggie* will leave Gulnare jetty at 10.30 on Saturday morning with passengers for Fannie Bay races. Single tickets 4/-, return 6/-. The 29 ton steamier *Maggie* had been brought to Port Darwin for trade between Southport and the Kimberley and was now used for miscellaneous work such as conveying a party consisting of CG Millar, VB Brown, Elphick, Christoee, Seary, Stow and S T Brown to look at the tin country in the neighbourhood of Bynoe Harbour.

In spite of a smallpox epidemic raging in China, steamship companies still brought hundreds of Chinese to the Northern Territory, disregarding health regulations and putting at risk the health of the settlement. On 11 February the *Tartar* arrived from Hong Kong with 107 Chinese passengers and 100 tons of cargo. Smallpox broke out on the way to Singapore and all hands were landed there, the ship was fumigated and the crew vaccinated. The smallpox cases were left in Singapore and the rest proceeded on the vessel. Four more cases were landed at Sourabaya, and on arrival at Port Darwin a suspected case of smallpox was reported. The man died overnight. On 13 February there were 313 persons in quarantine in Port Darwin, 9 cases of smallpox, 294 suspected cases and 10 attendants.

Another method of dealing with suspected smallpox sufferers was experienced by Mr Wong Ah Toy when (according to the story in the *NT Times and Gazette*) he arrived on the SS *Whampoa* in 1888. On arrival at Pt Darwin this ship was placed in quarantine and anchored out in the harbour. After some days in quarantine Mr Ah Toy was taken ill with suspected smallpox. Two other passengers, fearing a long period in quarantine if the outbreak became known, tied the sick man to a board, provided him with yams, and sent him off into the water. Before casting their victim off, they signed papers stating that if he did survive the journey to shore they would give him some money but if he did not survive the ordeal they would send the money to his relatives. The victim was in the water at least seven hours before striking land and it was 17 days before he was found. The villains were later charged with attempted murder.

Following is a schedule of arrivals and departures of vessels to Pt Darwin during 1888...

*Shipping Schedules for Port Darwin during 1888, taken from the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 1888*

**January**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inward</th>
<th>Vessel's Name</th>
<th>Captain</th>
<th>Tonnage</th>
<th>Where From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lugger Mars</td>
<td>Morriez</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Caunack W.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lugger North</td>
<td>H Nute</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Caunack W.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lugger Wybolln</td>
<td>H Hitch</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Caunack W.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Lugger Sora</td>
<td>G Sewin</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Caunack W.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lugger Orion</td>
<td>Doolen</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Caunack W.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Schooner Pearl</td>
<td>E Fox</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Wydham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>S.S. Dickyn</td>
<td>Arthur</td>
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List of Vessels in, and trading from, Port Darwin during 1888

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Palmerston to Pine Creek Railway 1886-1889

by Stephen Rose

South Australia was granted temporary jurisdiction of the Northern Territory in 1863, the year following John McDouall Stuart's successful crossing of the continent.

South Australia sponsored settlement at Palmerston - first sited near Escape Cliffs at the mouth of the Adelaide River. A poor choice, made by Colonel Boyle Finniss in 1864, it was moved to the better site at Port Darwin. It was first settled by Europeans when Surveyor-General George Goyder and his survey parties arrived in 1869. In 1911 the name was changed by the Commonwealth of Australia from Palmerston to Darwin.

Pine Creek became a gold field after gold was discovered by men sinking holes for Overland Telegraph poles in 1871. The Overland Telegraph was completed in 1872.

A London syndicate offered to build a land-grant trans-continental rail system (north-south) as early as 1858. At the time, no one had even crossed the continent, so the offer was refused. Several other offers, both from within Australia and overseas, were made after the completion of the Overland Telegraph but none were accepted as too little was known of the country's potential. The Government was loath to give away possible rich mineral lands.

By 1879, South Australia had accepted that a railway was required to develop the North - its acceptance of this idea may have been helped because there was an alternative proposal to build a trans-continental railway through Queensland to Port Darwin. Surveyors had been sent to the north in 1878 to make detailed surveys of the proposed routes to Pine Creek so estimates could be made. The first estimate for 213 kilometres was put at more than £1 M 1.1. By 1883 revised proposals recommended a route of 238 kilometres at a cost of £959,300, plus the building of a jetty at Port Darwin for an estimated £51,600. This estimate was accepted and led to an Act authorising construction of the Palmerston to Pine Creek Railway - No.284 of 1883.

Tenders for construction of the jetty were called and by late 1884 the tender of Mr Wishart for £39,817.16.8 had been accepted, completion to be within 75 weeks of signing. Meanwhile final surveys and design were being made of the railway in preparation for the calling of tenders, which was done in April 1885. When these closed in November all tenders were higher than the estimates, so new tenders were called, using either European or Asian labour. After delays, protests and changes of Government, a contract for construction of the railway was signed on 11 May 1886 with C and E Millar of Melbourne. It was for £605,424, using coolie labour, and was to be completed by May 1891. Prior to this contract another contract for the levelling of the station yard and building of a railway line from the jetty to the stacking yard had been let to a Mr Daly of Adelaide. Tenders were also called for the unloading, transporting and stacking of railway construction material that was due to arrive from Europe.

Work by Millars began in August 1886 as a local unemployment relief for disgruntled diggers from the Kimberley goldfields. 208 diggers left by ship in November. These Europeans were replaced by Chinese and Tamil labourers. By the end of December some 25,000 tons of railway equipment had been landed, including 20,000 tons of rails manufactured by Krupps at their Essen steelworks.

The first locomotive, a 0-4-0 saddle tank built by the Baldwin Company of Philadelphia, U.S.A., arrived in December 1886 and began operations on 20 May 1887. This locomotive, known as the Sandfly, stands restored on the Interstate railway platform in Adelaide, S.A.
During 1887 two other 2-6-0 locomotives arrived to haul all the construction materials; another arrived in the middle of 1888.

Actual work on the line had been slow so Mr Charles Millar arrived in April 1887 to take personal control of the project. He built up the work force to 369 Europeans, 2,970 Chinese and Indian coolies, 137 horses, 72 bullocks, 165 mules and donkeys, four locomotives and four stationary engines.

Good progress was made during the year with plate laying reaching McMinn's Lagoon (20 miles) on 20 August, Elizabeth River (25 miles) on 3 September, Southport (37 miles) on 24 September, 46 miles on 15 October and by 17 December the rails had reached 70 miles, just 6 miles short of Adelaide River; halted by the 'Wet' season. Major bridge sites such as Elizabeth River and Darwin River were bypassed on temporary ramps. These crossings became impassable once the rivers rose. The 'Wet' caused washouts and other damage so that up to 300 men were employed making repairs.

In April 1888 construction work began again. Adelaide River (76 miles) was reached by the end of the month. The lack of completed bridges slowed progress; there were 310 bridges and floodways built between Palmerston and Pine Creek. The Howley (100 miles) was reached in October - only 20 miles from Pine Creek. The three major bridges at Elizabeth River (3x60 ft spans), Darwin River (3x60 ft spans) and Adelaide River (5x100 ft spans) were completed before the commencement of the 'Wet' of 1888.

The first loading of value occurred in September when mining machinery was railed to Fountain Head and 100 tons of silver bullion was sent from a mine at Grove Hill to Palmerston.

South of Burrundie the line crossed the McKinlay River and its tributary, Snaddens Creek, five times in seven miles - each had to be bridged. Eventually rails arrived at Pine Creek in May and the final rail was laid on the 15 May 1889, just two years after the first rails were joined. It was during the last year of the project that Millars had their first fatal accident when five wagons loaded with ballast were struck by a locomotive. Two Chinese coolies were killed. Previously there had been another serious accident on Boxing Day 1888 when an embankment six miles south of Howley gave away as a train was passing. The engine and wagons overturned, but the passenger car remained on the track. Despite the fact that some 30 Coolies and Aboriginals were riding the wagons, nobody was injured.

On the 30 September 1889, seven months before the required date and 65 years after the Territory's first settlement, Millars handed the line over to the South Australian Railways.

Although the builders of the Palmerston to Pine Creek railway had no formidable ranges to cross or tunnel, they did have to cross several rivers. These were normally quite small during the 'Dry' but rose to deep raging torrents during the 'Wet'. The contractors were several weeks, by ship, away from suppliers or pools of labour. Europeans found the pre-wet and wet season climate debilitating and did not want to work. The local 'white-ants' or termites could quickly reduce any untreated timber to a hollow facade within a short time. This was the reason that steel sleepers or ties were used. Overall, it is remarkable that contractors with no experience of the north were able to complete the task in only two and a half years and for a tender less than the estimates. The line survived with little up-grading until 1976 when it was closed down.
Racing was popular in Palmerston from the earliest days of European settlement. Mrs Harriet Daly (nee Douglas), daughter of the first Government Resident, arrived with her family in 1870 and a few years later she described the picnic race meetings which were often held on holidays in the 1870s:

When a general holiday was given, the whole community left camp en route for Fannie Bay, leaving the settlement in charge of the police. Many of the labourers had their wives and children with them. They all joined the party and went off in spring drays seated on mattresses [sic.]; the waggonette took my mother and the children and everybody else rode, making quite a cavalcade, followed of course by a specially chosen escort of Larrakias, who never failed to include themselves in what was going on. The provisions were packed over night and sent down by boat . . . When the party arrived at their destination, the horses were unsaddled and unharnessed, and the business of the day began. A tent was pitched, and dinner served inside it. And then horse races took place. These were sometimes very amusing, and caused no end of excitement. Willy was one of the jockeys, we found some others amongst the camp boys, and any deficiencies were supplied by putting up a black boy or two . . . The shooting matches were very popular . . . women and children roamed about the beach, picking up shells, bits of coral and sea eggs . . . The day’s outing generally wound up by the seine net being hauled on the beach and a fine supply of fish was taken home with us. Fires were lit and huge pots of tea were made before the party was broken up; at five o’clock a move homewards was made . . . and by seven we were generally back into camp once more (Daly 1887 pp. 61 - 65).

There is conflicting information about the date of the first official race meeting in Palmerston. According to the calendar of events in the Northern Territory Times Almanack a public meeting was held in Palmerston in July 1874 at which it was decided to form a Turf Club and three weeks later races were held at Sandy Creek.

Dudley Kelsey, who arrived in Palmerston in 1873 as a boy of eight, said that the first race club in Palmerston was formed in July 1875 and the first race meeting was held at Fannie Bay on 9th November 1875. He described the course:

It was a rough circular course of about seven furlongs, cleared of undergrowth by natives. Forked sticks were driven into the ground to support long rails for jumps of three feet six inches. Nearly all the town turned out for the occasion, some being conveyed by the steam launch Dot . . . Later this course was abandoned and was used for a Chinese garden. Another course was cleared on a flat a little further north, not far from the beach. This was a very picturesque spot, and between the beach and the course many Darwin residents made the place a picnic ground. Shortly after this a new course was selected east of the Government Goal at Fannie Bay and near the railway workshops. This was a flat circular course and many good horses put up some fine records on it. It was here that Darwin’s first Race Club Grandstand was erected; a crude affair, with a framework of rough timber and a platform about fifteen feet from the ground. A ramp led up to the platform which sloped to the back, and long rough seats were fitted to seat about a hundred people. The roof was covered with boughs and grass to keep off the sun. To make this building more secure, it was lashed firmly to a large ironwood tree on the south end, and the side of the platform and ramp were latticed with bamboo . . . When the wind blew the structure often swayed badly and many of the occupants felt thankful for the support of the tree. People all joined in the outing and Race Day was looked on as one large picnic. Hotels provided special catering for their friends, with a ‘free house’ under long cool boughsheds. Arguments and dissatisfaction after the first day’s meeting on the course often resulted in a second (and even a third) day’s meeting to run off matches made by over-sanguine horse owners. And although betting was against the law, it seemed to be overlooked. (D E Kelsey 1975 pp. 34 - 35).

In April 1882 the Northern Territory Racing Club was formed in Palmerston and the main activity of the Club became the organisation of an annual race meeting, usually held at Fannie Bay early in August. The Club’s annual race meeting became the main event on the Northern Territory racing calendar and was one of the main
Northern Territory Racing Club

SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING

SATURDAY, AUGUST 4TH, 1888.


PRESIDENT: V. V. Brown, Esq.


STARTER: Mr. J. A. V. Brown.

CLERK OF SCALES: Mr. J. T. Bull.

HANDICAPPER: Mr. V. V. Brown.


PROGRAMME:

HANDICAP BUMBLE RACE of 50 sors, 1 mile, over eight jumps, 30th, 6th, 9th, 12th. Nomination, 54; acceptance, 6.

MAIDEN PLATE of 50 sors, one mile, for all horses that have never won an advertised prize exceeding 20 sors. Entrance, 1 sor.

PALMERSTON CUP: A handicap of 120 sors; second horse to receive 20 sors. Nomination, 2 sor.

NOVEL SELING RACE of 25 sors, one mile, winner to be sold for 10 sors, and any surplus to go to the Club. Entrance, 1 sor.

RAILWAY STAKES HANDICAP of 30 sors, one mile. Nomination, 1 sor; acceptance, 1 sor.

FLYING HANDICAP of 50 sors, three-quarters of a mile. Nomination, 2 sor; acceptance, 1 sor.

FORGED HANDICAP of 10 sors, with 3 per cent deducted from winners. Nomination, 1 sor.

HACK RACE of 1 mile, for untrained horses only.

Nominations, enclosing entrance, name, age, pedigree, and performances of horses, and colours of riders for Palmerston Cup, Flying Handicap and Railcap, will be in the hands of the Hon. Sec. at the terminus Hotel, Palmerston, before 4 p.m. on Friday, 29th June.

Weights to be declared in N. T. Times and North Australian one week after nominations and acceptance three weeks after nomination.

Night of General Entry, 27th July.

No protest will be entertained unless accompanied by a fee of five guineas, which will be forfeited if protest is considered frivolous.

The decision of the Stewards in all cases to be final.

The V. R. C. Rule will be strictly adhered to.

G. W. MAYHEW.
Hon. Sec. & Treasurer.

Advertisement for Annual Race Meeting.
present 'supplemented by the heathen Chinese, the slaves of Hindostan and the dusky aboriginal'. Since the banks and other places of business closed at about 10 am, there was nothing to prevent the whole of the population of the township from turning out. 'Every available vehicle in the township was requisitioned, from heavy drays to pony, phaetons, numbers went by water in the Maggie and several sailing boats, while the race train and "shanks" ponies were also well patronised. . . Messrs Millar Bros. very kindly started a special train from the head of the road and gave their employees a holiday, to enable them to see the racing. A train also ran in the morning from the stacking yard to the nearest point on the line to the course and returned in the afternoon . . . There was a good deal of straight out betting on the course on the different events but we understand the book makers did not reap the expected harvest . . .

Racing commenced at noon with the Handicap Hurdles, for which there were three starters. 'Whether it was that the horses had never been schooled over the course, or that they would not jump hurdles without wings, we do not know, but the race was a complete farce, and at one time it seemed as if they would never pass the first hurdle, for they refused repeatedly . . . Morathella got tangled up in the fourth hurdle and fell . . . Silver and Joker refused and ran past all the jumps . . . Morathella recovered from the fall, was the only horse to complete the course and was declared the winner. There were five starters in the second race, the Maiden Plate, for horses which had never won an advertised prize exceeding £20. A protest was entered against the winner Mr Haines's Our Boy, on the ground that he had already won public money under another name. This was admitted, but as the amount won was only £10, the protest was dismissed.

After lunch the main event, the Palmerston Cup, took place over the distance of a mile and a half, with prize money of 120 sovereigns. Mr A Baxter's Cygnet led from the start and came in an easy winner by almost six lengths in two minutes 54 and a half seconds, the best time on record in the Territory. The next event was the Novel Selling Race, the winner of which was to be sold for ten sovereigns, with any surplus going to the Racing Club. Mr G Martin's Discount was the winner and was later sold for £31, the Club thus gaining £21. Next came the Railway Stakes Handicap, won by C Haines's Straight Shot, and the Flying Handicap, with prize money of 50 sovereigns, in which Messrs Haines and Baxter matched stable against stable for a considerable wager. Baxter's Cygnet was the winner.

A boy's pony race over a quarter of a mile was won by Cecil Freer on his pony Creamy while Charlie Arnold on his bay pony made a good second. 'The only other entry, Freer's Darkie, left his rider Becker to walk home from near the start while he had a run on his own account'. Of the seven entries for the Forced Handicap, five were scratched and one did not appear, leaving Mr Cook's Joker a walk over winner. The meeting ended with a Hack Race for untrained horses, won by G W Martin's slippery little mare Ella.

This brought to a close a very successful meeting, probably the last racing on the old course for by next year the Club hope to have the new course in order and to be able to hold the races there. The meeting passed off very pleasantly, without any hitch or disagreement to mar the good fellowship of those assembled and happily without any serious accident of any sort . . . It certainly eclipsed any meeting of former years: the added money in prizes was much greater, the attendance of people was larger, the principal times were faster and the general interest in the races appeared to be more lively than in any preceding year . . . The running in some instances was controlled by private wagers between stable proprietors and it was perhaps somewhat of a drawback that the majority of the horses engaged were the property of two owners [C Haines and A Baxter] . . . Clerk of Scales Mr Bull was obliging and attentive to a fault; Mr T Nelson made a most efficient judge; Mr J A V Brown secured admirable starts all day, and, what is strange under the circumstances, not a solitary fight happened all throughout.

The settling up took place in the evening at the Terminus Hotel, in the presence of about sixty people. Secretary G W Mayhew and President V V Brown handed over the various winnings: Mr Baxter won £142/10/-, Mr Haines £71/5/-, Mr G Cook £60 and Mr G W Martin £33/15/-.

'Mr Baxter ordered champagne, when various toasts were proposed and duly honoured. The proceedings were enlivened with songs by various members of the company and a pleasant evening was spent'.

Some of the racing crowd took full advantage of Mr Harrison's drink booth at the course and the North Australian of 11/8/1988 reported that two men, 'probably of good cheer, had attempted to walk back to town after the races, but instead walked three times around the racecourse and finally camped at the booth'. So ended the 1888 meeting of the N T Racing Club.

The local papers made no further mention of racing in Palmerston until December when the N T Racing Club was informed by the Government Resident that instructions about the setting apart of a piece of land for recreation and race purposes had been sent to the Surveyor General in September and the matter would be attended to without further delay. Thus the year ended on a high note with the expectation that a new racecourse would be announced early in 1889.

COUNTRY RACE MEETINGS

Many informal race meetings were held at the settlements on the gold fields in the 1870s and gradually some of the Territory's country settlements began to have regular and well-organised race meetings. According to the Northern Territory Times Almanack the first race meeting at Pine Creek was held 27/12/1875; Whitaker states that the first race meeting at Borroloola was held in 1887 (Whitaker 1985 p. 2), while the North Australian of 21/1/1888 reported that the first annual race meeting at Katherine had been held over the Christmas/New Year holiday.
The two local papers mention several country race meetings during 1888:

In February the Northern Territory Times reported that there had been a race carnival at Borroloola which extended, with other jollifications, over three weeks. One calamitous result of the extended celebrations was that Borroloola ran out of beer. About one hundred people attended a race meeting at Alice Springs on Good Friday, Saturday and Easter Monday and in July there was another race meeting at Borroloola. On August 30th the first annual meeting of Burrundie Turf Club was held, and the second annual meeting of the Katherine River Turf Club was held on December 31. V V Brown travelled from Palmerston to Katherine to act as handicapper and the programme included a number of unusual events, including a Novel Cigar Race, in which all riders were to light their cigar, saddle their horse and mount after the starter’s flag dropped and return to the Judge’s stand with their cigar in smoking order.

As well as formal race meetings, there were also occasional one-off informal events, for which large stakes were not unusual. For example the North Australian of 7/1/1888 reported that a trotting match had been arranged between a horse belonging to Mr Finlayson of the Railway Department and a nag owned by Mr C Haines. Stakes of £50 a side were posted and the race was to take place on the Adelaide River racecourse when the track was fit to race on. The North Australian of 14/4/1888 reported that three horse events had been decided on the Adelaide River racecourse - Mr Haines lost all three and had to hand over £115. On the Monday after the annual meeting of the N T Racing Club, three private matches were run on the Fannie Bay racecourse.

OTHER SPORTS

The first cricket club was formed in Palmerston in 1874 and the Port Darwin Cricket Club was established in 1882. At the Club’s annual general meeting in January 1888 the secretary reported that the Club was in a sound financial position and that eight new members had joined. The following office bearers were elected: J A G Little (President), N F Christoe (Secretary/Treasurer), H H Adcock, A G Beresford, J A V Brown, V V Brown, Cairns, N F Christoe, T Cooper, Elphick, G W Mayhew, V L Solomon, J Stirling, R M Stow and W Wedd.

In February the Club announced that it would make some extensive and costly additions to their ground ‘to increase the public attendance at matches and create more interest generally in cricket’. The works included erection of two permanent booths ‘of a more pretentious character than the dilapidated sheds now on the oval, one for players, the other for visitors’. The ground was also thoroughly weeded. The cricket season opened in March and there were games nearly every Saturday afternoon and sometimes on Wednesday afternoons as well. The crews of visiting ships were often challenged to a game of cricket.

According to Alfred Searcy, many of the local Aborigines loved playing cricket too, especially the children: ‘The youngsters as a rule were lively, cheerful mischievous little devils and great mimics. Cricket was a favourite game with them and it always seemed to me that there was infinitely more fun in watching a crowd of these black nippers at the game - their paraphernalia simply consisting of two sticks, a couple of rusty kerosene tins and a ball of rags - than in viewing the biggest cricket match ever played’ (Searcy 1909 p. 349).

Athletics meetings were also very popular in Palmerston and over 250 people attended the Easter Athletic Sports held on Palmerston Oval on April 2nd 1888. The officials included J T Bull (judge), J A V Brown (starter), V V Brown (handicapper), G W Mayhew (secretary), H H Adcock, S T Brown, N F Christoe, J C Hillson, W Lawrie, G W Mayhew, R M Stow and J J Symes (committee). The events included a maiden race for all runners who had never won a prize, throwing a seven pound hammer, a running long jump, stamse race, the Palmerston Easter handicap over 150 yards, putting an 18 pound stone, high jump, 100 yards handicap and the old man’s race for men over 40 years. ‘Many ladies were present, but being unwilling to leave the pavilions, they saw but little of the competitions’. Rodney Spencer won the Maiden race, N F Christoe threw the hammer 92 feet and W Wedd won the Easter handicap. The settling up was held at the Exchange Hotel, with the various prizes being handed out by V V Brown. Another Athletics meeting along similar lines was held on November 10th at Palmerston Oval.

Special running races were held occasionally. For example in January Rodney Spencer and R Hildebrandt raced at Adelaide River for £50 and in February a large group of Palmerston spectators gathered to see the same men race 200 yards down Cavenagh Street for £50 a side; upwards of £400 was staked on the race, which Hildebrandt won. In July Wedd and Baxter had a foot race at Adelaide River and there were various other races between two runners reported during the year.

Other sporting clubs which were active during 1888 were the Archery and Rifle Clubs. The Palmerston Archery Club was one of the few sporting clubs to include both men and women as members. Mrs Parsons was the lady president and Mr Whitelaw was the captain and secretary. The Darwin Rifle Club held its competitions at the Club’s Palmerston rifle range. Early in 1888 four new
shelter sheds were erected at the range and in June Judge Pater was elected president and E Elphick secretary/treasurer.

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Northern Territory Times January to December 1888


POSITIONS VACANT:

From the Northern Territory Times 16/6/1888:

‘Applications will be received until Thursday July 5th for persons willing to accept the appointment of Clerk of the District Council. Salary 250 per annum. P R Freer, District Clerk, Palmerston 15th June 1888’. [the successful applicant was J A V Brown]

POSITIONS VACANT

From the Northern Territory Times 10/3/1888:

‘Wanted: a night gard for the Gaol at Fannie Bay. Height not less than 5 feet 9 ins. Applicants must furnish testimonials to sobriety and qualifications for the position. Wages 9/- per day, seven days in the week. Applications to be sent in not later than Saturday 24th March, addressed to the Deputy Sheriff, Palmerston’.
The survey of Alice Springs began in 1888 and resulted from pressure in Adelaide from storekeepers and miners at the ruby fields. Two sales were held in 1889 in Adelaide and the Government Resident's Report gives the sale but a brief mention:

LAND SALES SAPP 28 of 1889

Two sales of allotments in the Town of Stuart, near Alice Springs, were held in Adelaide, the total amount realised being 670 pounds five shillings.

The Survey Department Report of February 1889 in Palmerston did not make mention of the Alice Springs sale, as it had been promoted by the Lands Office in Adelaide.

David Lindsay as a young surveyor had come to the Territory in 1876 and was to make a major exploration of Arnhem Land in 1883. Later in 1886 he was in the Simpson Desert, then at the ruby fields in 1887. He was asked by the South Australian Government to survey the area. He spent some time surveying the new townsite of 'Stuart' in August and September 1888 and endorsed the plan of survey of 13 October as having completed there, being 104 lots and a Cemetery reserve. The town was to be named 'Stuart' and the gazeting of auction blocks took place on 29 November, 1886 (page 1293 of South
Australian Government Gazette. The notice gave rise to the sale of the first four block lots 77,78,79 & 80 in Todd Street including two Lots 78 & 79) to be granted to William Benstead. As one of the original pastoral managers of the Barrow Creek Pastoral Company, he had married his wife Tryphena at Hermannsburg and Benstead wanted to set up his establishment here in Alice Springs. He had been pressing this issue with Adelaide seeking land further north on the Todd River towards the Telegraph Station. The auction of the four lots was held on 31 January, 1889 at 20 pounds 5 shillings each to (1) Frederick Stone, the builder (Lot 77) (2) William Benstead, the storekeeper (Lots 78 & 79) and (3) Charles Augustus Oldham, the agent of Adelaide (over Lot 80). Eight more lots were to be auctioned on 4 September 1889 and included grants for F B and T A Wallis. Subsequent freehold grants were made in the 1891-1908 period.

The first grants were executed by Thomas Playford, the then Treasurer and were issued in late March and early April, 1889. So the names Benstead, Trephina, the Stuart Arms, Wallis Fogarty etc. became part of the local nomenclature to survive for a century. The Town of Stuart continued until the change in 1933 to Alice Springs. The little Stuart Cemetery had been surveyed in 1888 but probably was not gazetted for this use until mid 1890s. Some who died in that early period were buried at the Telegraph Station on the Alice Springs waterhole.

The Town of Alice Springs, originally named Stuart after the explorer who made his trek across the MacDonnel Ranges to open up Central Australia in 1860, was to become the second largest town of the Territory, although Palmerston (1869), Burrundie (1884) and Borroloola (1885) preceded it, when the first two auctions were held in January 1889.

THE DEMISE OF SOUTHPORT

From Northern Territory Times 31/3/1888

'The once busy little township of Southport will soon exist only in name on the map. For some time past, since the railway was laid past the Darwin Crossing, there has been a steady exodus of residents from that town. Sun Mow Loong closed his business, Samuel Brown demolished his hotel and removed to Darwin, Adcock Brothers intend closing their stores there and will probably be followed by P R Allen and Co., which will leave only a few Chinese storekeepers and the telegraph officials ... A few years ago Southport considered itself the “hub” of the Territory and was certainly a busier place than Palmerston but now it is fast reverting to the state in which the pioneer prospectors found it in 1872, a wilderness of grass with a few deserted huts scattered about'.
The lives of Northern Territory Aborigines in 1888 were changing rapidly. The populations of many groups had already been decimated as a consequence of colonisation. The survivors lived in a variety of circumstances. Some lived wretchedly in semi-permanent camps in and around settled areas. Significant numbers found employment in the pastoral industry. Many had never seen white people and maintained their traditional way of life. Few, however, were unaware that their lands had been invaded by settlers from the south. None can have thought well of the often brutal and usually uncaring way they were treated by the foreigners. But that treatment - if not the attitudes that caused it - was about to start to change.

The attitude of southerners towards Aboriginal people was captured in an 1888 editorial in the Melbourne Age:

It seems a law of nature that where two races whose stages of progression differ greatly are brought into contact, the inferior race is doomed to wither and disappear... The process seems to be in accordance with a natural law which, however it may clash with human benevolence, is clearly beneficial to mankind at large by providing for the survival of the fittest... All that can be expected of us is that we shall make his last days as free of misery as we can.

(1)

Frontier perspectives as captured only a few years earlier by the *Northern Territory Times* were quite different. Provoked by the killing by Blacks of four White miners on the Daly River, the editor wrote:

Backward the natives must move before the tide of civilisation or, if they will not give place peaceably, and show that their natures are as dangerous as the venomous serpent, even as every man will crush a snake under his heel, so must the hand of every man be raised against a tribe of inhuman monsters, whose cowardly and murderous nature renders them unfit to live.

(2)

The contrast is a fair reflection of the difference in attitude of northern and southern folk a hundred years after the arrival of the first fleet. Southerners had largely done away with their Aboriginal 'problem': the war won, the threat to White colonisation and economic progress eliminated, they could indulge their feelings of guilt with some degree of benevolence. Moreover, they could bring pressure to bear on the north to alter its attitude towards, and treatment of, Aborigines.

From the late 1880s, in fact, a barely perceptible change began to take place in race relations and government policy in the Northern Territory. Pressure from the south forced Territorians, however reluctantly, to adopt a more humanitarian attitude towards its share of the 'dying race'. In 1888, the war in the north was still being fought. Isolated settlers, miners and pastoralists still lived in constant fear for their lives. Aborigines, appalled by the invasion of their lands, the desecration of their sacred sites, the despoothing of their food and water sources by rapidly spreading herds of cattle and infuriated by the seduction, abduction and rape of their women, still had the numbers, the bushcraft and the will to provide determined, armed opposition in many parts of the Northern Territory.

By now, out of necessity, they commonly engaged in guerilla action as the breech-loading repeating rifle in the hands of the colonisers had ensured an early end to pitched battles. As the *Times* correspondent in the McArthur River area noted in 1890, 'This coast road is not safe for footmen and horsemen ought not to go singly. These blacks know their marks so well that two horsemen rarely see them'.

(3) A despairing Thomas O’Neil wrote:

Our trouble up here is the infernal blacks. They are coming in mobs, and every one has a bundle of spears. They will demand 'om-lom' under a threat to give it quick. Then when I give them some and go to my work they will break my hut open and take all I have. There is not one black up here but is guilty of robbery and house breaking. It is all very well to say 'poor blacks' but let anyone come in the bush by himself and try to make his living, then they will see how they tyrannise over him.

(4)

O’Neil was reluctant to use his gun in the face of these demands. But Alfred Searcy outlined a letter he had from a man who had been badly wounded in an attack in the Gulf country. The writer explained, 'I now shoot at sight; killed to date thirty-seven'.

(5)

South Australian governments regarded the Territory merely as a vast field for economic speculation and settlement. (6) Tough, rough and not always pleasant settlers (7), encouraged by governments, came to make
money, unmindful and often ignorant of the fact that the
land made available so cheaply belonged to Aborigines.
They were even more ignorant of the vital spiritual ties of
Aborigines with their country and of the finely tuned
ecological balance that made traditional economies
extremely precarious in many parts of the Territory.

Settlers' fear and ignorance combined with feelings of
unbridgeable ethnic superiority to justify harsh measures
against Aborigines who stood in their way. European
racist ideologies dated back to the eighteenth century
notion of a Great Chain of Being which ranked all
creatures in a hierarchy of ability and development. Since
the Enlightenment a body of theory had developed
eulogising material progress and European colonising
prowess. The development of anthropological theories
following the publication of Charles Darwin's revelations
in The Origin in 1859, appeared to provide scientific
confirmation that Aborigines epitomised humanity in its
earliest stages. Social Darwinism vindicated those who
maintained that terms like 'savage', 'primitive' and 'Stone
Age' accurately and sufficiently described Aboriginal
people.

In the NT, it became a simple matter to adopt an
extreme position and regard Aborigines as somehow
less than human. They were commonly compared with
lower forms of life and treated accordingly. Pine Creek
miner, businessman and pastoralist J Little, when he led
a party in savage reprisal following the Roper River
killing of two whites, justified his actions by
contending that Blacks were nothing but 'treacherous
savages whose nature more resembles that of wild
beasts than human beings'. (8) A Norwegian academic,
who visited the Jesuit Mission at Rapid Creek in 1894,
compared Aborigines with herds of apes roaming the
forests of Arnhem Land (9). The official view was put
by Government Resident Parsons, on the eve of the
Centenary when, approvingly, he quoted the view of
respected station manager and pioneer Alfred Giles:

It is about time that people in the southern
colonies... (especially the philanthropists...) who
have probably never seen a wild tribe of natives,
should be made aware that the blackfellow is not the
'noble savage' he is depicted, that if he lacks one
thing more than another it is virtue. Moral laws
they have none; their festive dances and corroborees
are of the most lewd and disgusting character, their
songs, rites and ceremonies utterly revolting and
fiendish.(10)

B T Finiss, the Territory's first Government Resident and
his successors were instructed to make every effort to get
on well with the Aborigines and to avoid provoking
hostility, though they were to demonstrate that they were
'able to repel, and, if necessary, punish aggression' (11).
In the South Australian tradition, a Protector of
Aborigines was appointed, for many years the most senior
government medical officer. He too was enjoined to do all
in his power to foster harmonious relations with the
Blacks. But conflict was unavoidable. Many attacks by
Aborigines were quite simply in defence of their lands
against an invader. Others were in retaliation against
White reprisals for theft. Yet, in Aboriginal tradition,
taking food, knives and other artefacts from Whites must
have seemed an entirely reasonable form of reciprocation
for losses of game in a culture in which reciprocation was
a critical part of social and legal relationships.

Increasingly, conflict arose over sexual encounters
between the overwhelmingly male settlers and Black
women. Aborigines could view these indulgences with
boreance and even encourage them since, traditionally,
strong ties of kinship could be established thereby. But,
again, kinship ties involved reciprocation which settlers
usually either failed to comprehend, or refused to
acknowledge. When some women chose to remain with
White men, there could be trouble. Nor were the
relationships always established peacefully: the practice
of 'running down', raping and often abducting women,
many of them very young, was a common cause of
conflict. Police Inspector Foelsche estimated as late as
1898 that more than 50% of crimes of violence by
Aborigines could be attributed to Whites 'detaining gins
forcibly or otherwise' (12)

Many attacks by Aborigines, however, were simply
inexplicable to Europeans. We shall never know how
many were provoked by unwitting desecration of sacred

Inspector Paul Heinrich Mathias Foelsche. NT Historical
Society.

sites, for example, or failure to honour traditions that were
not understood. But the European view that Aborigines
were treacherous by nature was reinforced. In the quarter
century from the promulgation of the Northern Territory
Act, those who reacted in a quite unrestrained manner
appear to have outnumbered the more understanding and
humane settlers. They received a good deal of assistance
from police.

The Police Force was established in 1870 when Inspector
Paul H Foelsche arrived in Palmerston with a corporal and
five mounted troopers. A vast territory, concentrations of sometimes lawless European and Chinese miners, a thin spread of pastoralists and drovers and unknown numbers and congregations of hostile Aborigines was more than this force could hope to handle. Even by the turn of the century, the force was miniscule: one inspector, one sergeant, seventeen constables and thirteen trackers manning eleven stations (13). It is hardly surprising then that they proved uncompromising in their 'pacification' role - to use the euphemism employed to describe their dealings with Blacks. It is even less surprising when it is considered that, in 1875, the administration began recruiting troopers from the ranks of former telegraph workers to replace officers who had resigned to search for gold. The new men had harsh ideas about how to deal with Aborigines as a consequence of experiences like the surprise attack by Kaititja warriors on Barrow Creek Telegraph Station in 1874 in which the Station Master and a subordinate died. Furthermore, police were frequently forced to rely on the assistance of civilians in the search for Blacks in breach of White laws. Thus when, in 1875, Foelsche sent a party in pursuit of Aborigines who had attacked Whites on the Roper River, killing one and wounding two, his cabled instructions to Corporal Montagu were:

All that can be identified as being of the attacking party are to be captured either dead or alive, the slightest resistance, attempt to resist or assisting the guilty parties to escape must be met by prompt actions without waiting to be molested. I cannot give orders to shoot all natives you come across but circumstances may occur for which I cannot provide definite instructions. (14)

Montagu described the actions of a party, led by civilian J Little, which shot two Aborigines who 'were unidentified at the time':

I am informed by P.J. Farrell that these Natives would have got away & that Mr Little asked him (Farrell) what they had better do. He replied that they had better fire, as the natives had commenced running and they were not certain that they were not mixed up in the affair...

Not to be outdone, the Corporal added, 'We came on a small camp of Natives, saw one very old man and some Lubras and Piccaninnies - destroyed what weapons we could find and broke up the camp'. (15) Groups were 'dispersed' over a period of six weeks by parties of police and civilians riding through the region shooting Aborigines at random and burning their camps. (16)

Little himself was of the opinion that it would have been better to dispense altogether with police regulations which Blacks were unable to understand. Since it was almost impossible to arrest them and since they were 'only held in subjection by fear', any aggression 'should be met by a prompt and decisive blow against the offending tribe and so teach them to respect the lives and property of whites and to know their power'.(17)

The Territory's weekly newspaper agreed. As the police parties set off, an editorial expressed confidence that the culprits would not deliver themselves up:

and we feel equally sure that the party will save themselves the trouble of bringing their prisoners such a distance to serve no sensible purpose. The only things that have hitherto proved of any value in bringing the niggers to their senses have been dogs and revolvers; and we trust the party now gone out will not be afraid to use them. (18)

For two decades the Times advocated lynch law, insisting that it was little use bringing prisoners to town 'to be fed, clothed, housed and kept in comfort at Government expense for the rest of their lives, or to send them to Adelaide to be tried', as happened to Central Australians. Even in the unlikely event of a conviction and hanging, the lesson was lost on up-country natives. Far better, said the editor, in reflection of popular sentiment, to inflict such a severe punishment as to 'strike terror into the hearts of all marauding tribes' as a deterrent.

Downright cruelty, on the other hand was not condoned. For instance, the paper spoke out strongly in a case where police, in 1875, subjected a prisoner, in irons, to unnecessary hardship enroute to Palmerston. (19) Nevertheless, the paper acknowledged that what existed in the Territory was a state of war. Aboriginal lands were being invaded and the people had a 'perfect right to... do their best to obstruct our passage through it'. So it was necessary to 'go into actual warfare with them and fight them on their own principles. Shoot those you cannot get at, and hang those that[i] you do catch on the nearest tree as an example to the rest...' (20)

There seems little doubt that this attitude resulted in many more deaths than the records reveal. And, while the authorities would on occasion deplore the actions of vigilante groups, they did little for a long time to rein in the police and the settlers. Government Resident Price, in particular, was at pains to justify police action, notwithstanding and undeterred by gentle admonishment by the Minister Controlling the Territory. In justifying police action he believed he could fairly state that no injustice had been done to Aborigines whose evidence in court, in any case, was 'utterly unreliable as they rather pride themselves in not telling the truth in a Court of Justice'. (21) No doubt, one may infer, it was both more likely to result in justice and more salutary if wrong-doers were simply shot by police.

The alternative to being shot was scarcely more pleasant. Prisoners were customarily walked in neck chains, often considerable distances from their place of capture, to prison. Upon conviction, people who knew nothing of walls or enclosed spaces were incarcerated. When Fannie Bay Gaol was built in 1884, imprisonment included the use of ringbolts, restraining chains and leg irons. Ultimate release from gaol meant a walk home, alone, sometimes hundreds of kilometres and through country that tradition told Aborigines was alien territory and dangerous. It is a reasonable bet that many never made it.

Sometimes, indeed, they never made it to goal in the first place. Oral tradition has this to say about how Mistake Creek, in the Victoria River country, a couple of kilometres east of the Western Australian border, got its name. Sixty prisoners, it is said, were being taken by police to Wyndham to answer charges of cattle stealing. The police received a telegram instructing them to release
the prisoners, who were innocent, and go after another man:

Well of course when they received a telegram to let the Aborigines go they had made a mistake arresting them and putting them on a chain, and instead of letting them go they shot them and burnt them. (22)

It was the aftermath of an incident at Daly River in 1884 which signalled the slow start of a long end to unrestricted police and civilian reprisals in the Northern Territory. For this engagement turned the national spotlight on race relations in the North. Both Montagu and Little were again involved.

Four Europeans, two of them 'highly esteemed pioneers', were brutally and inexplicably killed at the Copper Camp on the Daly. The White community, including Government Resident Parsons, was outraged. (23) When the news of the killings reached him in Adelaide the Minister promptly ordered police to seize any members of the tribe who committed the...murders, that can be found, especially the chiefs, and hold them as hostages until the actual murderers are given up.'(24) But hostage-taking was not on the minds of police. In a report, the frankness of which Montagu was to regret, the Corporal described how, after finding and destroying a native camp whose occupants were not seen, he and his party came across a number of Aborigines by a lagoon:

The women and children ran away, but the men, taking their spears and woomeras, retreated to the water. Some of them were recognised as known Woolwongas... One of them, while in shallow water was in the act of throwing a double wooden spear at Mounted Constable MacDonald, and it was only his quickness of firing that saved his life. A spear passed through the top of Mounted Constable Cox's singlet and grazed his neck... None of those who took to the water are known to have got away. It is supposed there were between twenty and thirty men in the camp...

The Corporal concluded:

What the other parties out have done I do not know, but I believe the natives have received such a lesson this time as will exercise a salutary effect over the survivors in the time to come. One result of this expedition has been to convince me of the superiority of the Martin-Henry rifle, both for accuracy of aim and quickness of action. (25)

The report, and the last sentence in particular, provoked howls from the editors of, and letter-writers to, Adelaide's dailies. The Aborigines' Friends Association sent a deputation, which included 'a number of influential citizens', to the Minister to demand an enquiry. (26) The Adelaide Register deplored the cold-blooded nature of the reprisal, describing it as 'an outrage upon the civilisation about which we boast.' (27) The Observer agreed. (28)

Back in the Territory, the southern outcry was dismissed by Parsons as the eruptions of 'mealy-mouthed philanthropists unmindful of the enormity of the deed and the unmitigated greed of the perpetrators of the original murders'. He received unrestrained support from White Top End residents. Subsequently claims were made that the number killed was far in excess of the 20 or 30 Montague admitted to. Estimates at the time ranged from 70-150. Estimates to-day put the figure much higher. The truth will never be known. But to White N.T. residents, the alleged scale and nature of the dispersals was inconceivable. As the venerated pioneer Alfred Giles exclaimed:

Had savages been sent out to punish savages, we might well believe in such stories, but when we know that Europeans - and what is more, Englishmen - were engaged, under responsible and well-qualified leaders, the whole thing becomes not only incredible, but positively insulting to the honour and manliness of the well-known men who conducted the parties. (29)

Publicly, Palmerston Whites could not have agreed more. However, as the truth was revealed in bars and living rooms, people may well have had cause to ponder on the implication, by a respected pioneer in their midst, that the engagement was indeed inhumane.

Southern public pressure forced the Minister to appoint a Board of Enquiry. Led by a member of the official punitive party, A.P. Baines, the Board exonerated those involved after they denied they had seen any dead bodies and Montagu denied much of the substance of his original report.

Around this time Foelsche was under pressure to form a Native Police Force such as those which earned infamy in Queensland, Port Phillip, and New South Wales. But Foelsche was one of the pioneers who made an effort to learn something of Aboriginal cultures and he had, in 15 years, developed some sympathy with Aborigines living traditional lives. He more or less doggedly refused to succumb to the pressure. However, he did dabble briefly following the Daly River incident, though before the enquiry, Aboriginal trackers had long been used successfully as part of the 'pacification' program in the Centre where they were much more than trackers. Now Foelsche experimented with a small force in the Katherine region, but cautioned, 'it is to be borne in mind that the system termed 'dispersing the natives' which simply means shooting them, is not to be practised and for this the officer in charge will be held strictly responsible'. (30) The 1886 southern outcry probably ensured that a force was never really established. However, trackers were still used to telling effect, especially in the Centre against killers of cattle. For this was the next phase of the conflict and it started to escalate towards the end of the 80s.

'Dispersals' of the Daly River kind demonstrated the military superiority of armed and mounted Whites. In response, Aborigines began to concentrate on the enemies' property rather than their persons - and especially on stock. Cattle had been killed often enough in the past for food. Now, however, Blacks began more consciously to attack herds, as Foelsche realised, 'partly for food and partly to mark their displeasure at the squatter monopolising all the waters'. (31) By 1910 the Willeroo Station in the Victoria River country claimed to be losing thousands of head each year. Indeed, so successful was the butchering that many pastoralists, their livelihood
precarious at the best of times, were forced off their runs. Gordon Buchanan, riding from the Victoria River to the Katherine in 1901, found that 'Willeroo, Delamere and Price's Creek stations, because of the cattle killing and other depredations by the blacks, had all been deserted’. Runs had to be abandoned in many other parts as well (32).

The new tactic appears to have been particularly successful in the more sparsely inhabited but infinitely harsher Central Australia. There the matter came to a head in 1890. The infamous Mounted Constable Willshire, waging his own battles both with Aborigines and with Lutheran missionaries doing their best at Hermannsburg to both convert and protect the Aranda, complained that wholesale killing had got quite out of hand and could not be controlled without more police. Worst of all, he complained, 'these demons seek refuge at the Mission Station when pursued hotly, it is the refuge for all outlaws in the whole district'(33). In both his causes, Willshire, in 1890, won the support of the Minister Controlling the Territory, though not the Adelaide press. His efficient band of trackers was as unrestrained as the mounted constable himself in shooting alleged cattle killers. They were carefully recruited to take advantage of tribal and community ethnocentrism and zealous too, no doubt, in the knowledge that dismissal left them adrift among an alien and hostile people. Further, it has fairly been contended that the sudden acquisition of power without responsibility over fellow blacks corrupted them. (34) As a sign that things were changing, the point was reached by 1898 where trackers were no longer issued with carbines or rifles - only revolvers. (35) But the tiny police force remained under intense public and political pressure to protect pastoralists' property so it was hardly surprising that excesses continued. In a small community the policeman, no less than anyone else, has to get on with his fellows.

The terminal treatment meted out to cattle killers had much to do with the belief that gaol was no deterrent to them (36). Perhaps of equal significance is the fact that those accused had to be walked such long distances to trial. This caused great inconvenience both to police and to settler witnesses and was a clear inducement to more expeditious forms of justice by means of summary corporal or capital punishment. Shooting could be - and often was - justified speciously on grounds of self-defence or resisting arrest. The same kind of reasoning helps explain why pastoralists often took the law into their own hands. (37) In East Arnhem Land the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Company employed for a time gangs of Blacks supervised by a White man or Half-caste to shoot down Aborigines on sight. One of the leaders boasted that his party killed dozens of 'wild blacks' around 1905. (38)

No white man during this period was hanged for murder; any kind of conviction for mistreatment of Blacks was rare. Government Resident Charles Dashwood, in his campaign to have protective legislation enacted, demonstrated the problem when he recounted an incident near Rum Jungle during J L Parson's time as Government Resident. Three carters claimed to have shot some Blacks
Aboriginals at Port Essington. N.T. Historical Society.

Aboriginals at Coburg Cattle Co. Station. NT Historical Society.
in self defence. Two Mounted Constables who investigated the matter concluded that the carters had 'attacked the native camp and shot them without any justification'. It was rumoured that 'on the occasion of the reported outrage ten natives were killed, consisting of men, women and one child'. Inspector Foelsche agreed with his officers' findings. But no official action was taken. The Minister believed there was insufficient evidence for a successful prosecution for, as Dashwood subsequently explained, there was simply no chance of a successful prosecution against people who shot Blacks in the back blocks, notwithstanding the presence of 'many intelligent natives who can give a fairly accurate account of what takes place'. (39) Not dissimilar cases occurred in Dashwood's own time as Government Resident.

'Heathen' Aborigines were not permitted to give evidence under oath in a court of law. This, when added to their reputation among Whites as unmitigated liars, caused their evidence to be discounted. So action against Whites was bound to fail, while accused Blacks had little reason to expect justice. Besides, the gulf between Aboriginal law and British law, underpinned by theories of abstract justice, was such that people who were obviously guilty or innocent in Aboriginal tradition, might be judged quite differently by an alien form of evidence - both hard and circumstantial. Police brought in witnesses for the Crown only. Witnesses for the defence were rarely, if ever, called. The pomp and ceremony imposed on its victims by the courts caused confusion as did linguistic difficulties. Non-Kriol speaking witnesses were cross-examined in a sophisticated form of an alien language usually in the absence of competent interpreters. On top of this, prior conviction in the press was assured as the Times invariably failed to use terms like 'alleged' in quoting police and other witnesses for the Crown. It was more circumspect when allegations concerned Whites.

The first clear signs of a change in race relations were calls for an Aborigines' Act. It was Charles Dashwood who first made a determined effort to induce the South Australian Parliament to introduce protective legislation. Appointed Government Resident in 1892, he brought a tough but somewhat more humane influence to bear on the situation. Perhaps he sensed that the time was ripe for change. A predecessor, J L. Parsons, had called for legislation as early as 1885. It would be another quarter of a century before legislation was enacted. However, the kinds of measures mooted by confused and despairing bureaucrats following the Daly River embarrassment, resemble the substance of the Act of 1910, promulgated a mere three weeks before the Commonwealth took control of the Territory. More efficient court procedures were needed. The substitution of corporal punishment for imprisonment would, it was argued, prove salutary. Protection was sought to prevent exploitation and kidnapping of Aborigines - men, women and children - for pastoral work. Restriction of movement would bestow considerable benefit. Limiting the number of Blacks in closely settled areas would reduce their demand for rations and their access to opium, alcohol and those Asians and Europeans who demanded the sexual services of Aboriginal women. All in all, concerned government officers sought considerable powers over the lives of Aborigines in the name of control and humanity.

By the late 1880s a number of factors brought home to those in power the need for change. Women and children, kidnapped by drovers overlanding cattle to the Territory and later given away, maybe even sold, were often abandoned in Palmerston when drovers, their work complete, sailed south. Abandoned people who became ill were a financial burden on the Government which had to care for them in gaol or in hospital. So an end to kidnapping was demanded. Employment agreements which required the repatriation of employees and the provision of food, clothing, lodging and medical care were called for. (40) As it happens, conditions such as these were being instituted on many stations as they came increasingly to rely on black labour. As Charles Rowley has shown, even the most unskilled labour is an essential commodity where no other labour is available. As Aboriginal stockmen and women displayed enviable ability - horsemanship, a capacity for long hours in unremitting heat, coupled with few demands for reward - station owners realised that their labour force had to be trained, husbanded and 'given opportunities to reproduce'. (41) By 1892 most runs were dependent on Black labour. In the Anthony Lagoon area, for instance, it was reported at the turn of the century that most of the stations were worked by Black men and women with the exception of a manager and one or two White stockmen.

Aboriginal labour was also a matter for concern in town. As dusty - or muddy - little Palmerston began to grow in size, the realisation also grew that Aborigines could provide cheap and efficient domestic service. However, the fact that few chose to humble themselves in this kind of occupation and the knowledge that good workers often left their employers at short, or no, notice, resulted in demands for employment agreements which protected employers.

The labour situation in the Territory was, by the end of the 1880s, reaching the stage where policy makers could start to think in terms of moulding Aborigines in their own economic image. We have, in fact, an inking of the policies of assimilation which implied, first and foremost, economic assimilation and which were to dominate the thinking of politicians and bureaucrats for the better part of a century to come. More immediately, it led to increasing demands from Whites for an end to the already parsimonious distribution of rations except to the young, the old and the infirm. Others in and around the towns should be made to work for their food, clothing and tobacco - certainly not for cash, which Aborigines were considered incapable of spending wisely. Virtually no-one advocated the abolition of rations altogether for it helped cut down on theft (43) and was a cheap and easy way of safeguarding the public and bureaucratic conscience. However, it attracted people to Palmerston where, according to C E Herbert, it 'pauperises' and 'demoralises' recipients 'and tends to destroy their usefulness' rendering them unwilling to assist in housework and other labours 'which would increase their usefulness and respectability'. (44) The Minister agreed. (45) As Government Resident from 1905, Herbert would make it much harder for people to get rations.

The pitiful condition of increasing numbers of Blacks in and around settled areas, especially Palmerston, impinged constantly on the minds of the urban well-to-do. It, in addition to pressure applied in the south on southern politicians, was a major cause of Whites acceding to demands for change. Increasing alcohol and drug abuse, as
a forlorn people sought to drown their undoubted sorrows, was coupled with sexual abuse. Chinese and Europeans in Palmerston used addictive substances to pay for the services of Aboriginal women increasingly dependent, along with their menfolk, on drugs. This state of affairs was accepted with some equanimity since the view prevailed that Aboriginal women suffered, as Foelsche put it, from an 'inborn inclination to prostitution.' 'All women were', he said, 'addicted to this vice'. (46) The self-righteous might look down their noses at the 'low types' who associated with Aboriginal women, but since many public servants were to be counted among 'coombes' (47) not a lot was said.

The White public became really concerned only when assaults on very young girls became known, when venereal diseases began to spread and when mixed-blood babies began to appear. Protector Dr. F Goldsmith lamented the difficulty of securing convictions for assaults on young girls, 'the difficulty arising, firstly from the unwillingness of Jurics to accept the evidence of blacks in charges against white men, and secondly from the impossibility of proving the exact age of the child'. (48) A number of well-publicised cases in which non-Aboriginal males escaped conviction doubtless caused otherwise womanless men to feel they could act with impunity. The spread of venereal diseases was a growing cause for concern, not least as it posed a threat to the White population. Down on the Barkly, Mounted Constable Thorpe, an officer who felt a genuine concern for Aboriginal people, believed the spread of venereal diseases was less than casual:

A very silly yet general impression exists among some ignorant bushmen that when suffering from gonorrhoea all that they need to do is to impart the disease to some female, then the severity of such disease upon themselves will be greatly modified, or perhaps totally cured ... A very severe punishment should be meted out to these scoundrels ... I have seen poor young gins, mere children between 11 and 14 years of age, suffering from syphilis in all its stages. The old blacks assured me that white men had run them down and ruined them.(49)

Sexual contact also meant babies. In fact, it was the presence of growing numbers of babies of mixed descent - referred to condescendingly as 'half-castes' - that was to be the most cogent factor in bringing about belated 'protective' legislation: the guilt associated with the nature of White's conquest over Blacks gradually turned to shame about the fact that children, living either in urban penury or as 'savages' in the bush, had White blood in their veins. Initially, this shame manifested itself in descriptions of Half-castes that were even more damning than those of other Aborigines. Popular sentiment branded them as 'a very undesirable breed, with the white man's intelligence and the aborigine's cunning and treachery all combined.' (50). By the late 1880s, however, half-castes were just beginning to make their presence felt in numbers: it was
generally believed that previously the children were killed. (51) If so, the situation was changing with a growing Half-caste population an inescapable reminder of sexual practices that must officially be frowned upon.

Conclusion

In 1888 very little was being done by the Government to protect or help Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. A Protector of Aborigines had existed since 1863. He was supported in the Top End by sub-protectors who were mainly police officers or customs officials. However, not until 1891 did official knowledge of the treatment of Aborigines in the Centre result in the appointment of telegraph officers as sub-protectors there. The protector himself was, until 1908, always the most senior Medical Officer in the Territory. These were busy men who, in addition to their medical duties and work as protector, were also appointed to other positions. They rarely travelled outside Palmerston and, even if they had not shared prevailing White views and ignorance of Aborigines, could have found little time to devote to their work as Protector. Government Resident Dashwood described the office as 'only one in name' (52) and South Australia's Governor, Sir George Le Hunte, following a visit in 1905, deplored the inadequate and 'purely nominal' role of the Protector. (53) The one protector who did try to take his role seriously was Colonial Surgeon Dr R J Morice who worked in Palmerston between 1876 and 1884. He incurred the wrath of Whites from the Government Resident and the editor of the Times down by condemning injustice, unfairness and corruption. He was suspended and eventually sacked when, in defiance of a directive from Parsons, he arranged for the defence of the Aborigines arrested for the Daly River killings. (54)

The Government paid two hundred pounds a year to the Lutherans at Hermannsburg and the Jesuits with stations at Rapid Creek and Daly River, for their efforts to 'civilise' Aborigines and protect them from the excesses of settlers. Another two hundred pounds was set aside for expenditure on Blacks - mainly for the purchase of rations. Apart from mission leases, there was talk of establishing government reserves and the first, totalling 390 square kilometres, was established in 1888. No schooling was provided outside of mission endeavours.

By no means all settlers treated Aborigines badly and some were prepared to speak out against those who did. Individual settlers, police officers and other officials provided medical and food relief for indigent people whose traditional lives had been so severely disrupted. It was common for employers to claim to treat workers with kindness but equally common for them to express astonishment at Aboriginal ' ingratitude' when the exploitative wages of flour, tea, sugar, tobacco and clothing was insufficient to induce them to remain employed. 'Kindness' in fact, generally amounted to treatment that did not constitute mistreatment.

Nevertheless, 100 years after the first fleet, the scene was set for slow and painful change. Pressure on parliamentarians by humanitarian groups and the popular press in Adelaide, the arrival of Charles Dashwood as Government Resident in 1892 and a gradually dawning set of awarenesses in Darwin itself, prompted by the visibly wretched condition of many Aboriginal people, combined to establish the climate in which change could occur. Dashwood, the longest serving Government Resident, commenced a concerted campaign for an Aborigines' Act. He succeeded in inducing the South Australian Government to appoint a Select Committee which, following a lengthy and well-publicised investigation, rejected the call for an Act. His successor, C.E. Herbert, who was not quite the humanitarian Dashwood was, nevertheless continued demands for legislation and was eventually successful.

An Act in 1910 would formalise the very considerable power government authorities had assumed over the lives of Aboriginal people. It would provide Aborigines with a little more chance of just treatment in the courts, though this would continue to depend more than anything else on the good will of the Bench. It would provide for a small reduction in the incidence of exploitation in the workplace, but not by requiring the payment of cash wages. It would provide, futilely, for measures to be taken against Europeans and Asians who sought to exploit alcohol and drug dependent Aborigines. But it would continue to provide Aboriginal people with little cause to feel that they had gained anything from the colonisers' presence.

Acknowledgement

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REFERENCES

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ABORIGINES

From Northern Territory Times 26/5/1888:

'There was a grand muster of aboriginals at the Protector of Aborigines' quarters on Thursday morning last, when the usual distribution of blankets, in honor of Her Majesty's birthday took place. However, owing to the non-arrival of the usual bale of blankets, the distribution was not a general one, only the aged, infirm and particularly deserving natives getting their blankets this time. The rest will have to wait till a fresh supply arrives from south.'
Despite cyclones, termites, neglect, a war and various other destructive elements, a surprising number of structures used by white Territorians in 1888 still survive a hundred years later. They are now a most important part of the Territory's cultural heritage.

The structures described in this article include all those known to have existed in 1888 although in some cases they have been substantially changed since then. Not included are archaeological evidence at mining sites, such as Artunga and Pine Creek, buildings in an early stage of construction, such as the Pine Creek Railway Station, or cemeteries and graves.

**DARWIN**

*Government House showing the upper storey which was eaten out by white ants and removed. The second storey was not replaced but a new roof was added - circa 1874.*

**Government House, The Esplanade**

In 1888, this building was known as The Residency and housed the South Australian Government Resident, J L Parsons. The first part of the building was constructed in 1870. The 'House of the Seven Gables' known today was commenced in 1879 to the design of G R McMinn. The name was changed to Government House in 1911, and since then it has been the home of successive Administrators of the Northern Territory.

**Remains of Post Office, Legislative Assembly Buildings, The Esplanade**

Darwin's Post Office in 1888 was built in 1872. A solid stone structure, it was largely destroyed by Japanese bombs in 1942. Part of its wall is incorporated in the present Legislative Assembly buildings.

**Police Station, Court House, Cell Block and Annexes, The Esplanade**

In 1888, these buildings were the headquarters for the Northern Territory's small legal system. Of stone construction, they were built in 1884 to the design of J G Knight. Restored after being severely damaged in 1974 by Cyclone Tracy, they now contain offices for the Administrator and his staff.

**Brown's Mart, Smith Street**

In 1888 Brown's Mart was being used for commercial purposes. It was built in 1885 and is now a theatre. The architect was probably J G Knight and stone construction was used.

**Old Town Hall, Smith Street**

Built of stone in 1883, in 1888 this building was the headquarters for the Palmerston District Council. It was severely damaged by Cyclone Tracy and only parts of the original structure remain.

**Facade of Commercial Bank, Smith Street**

The stone Commercial Bank was built in 1884. Distinctive arches framed its verandahs, which still surround a larger and newer building.

**Fannie Bay Gaol, Ross Smith Avenue**

Some of the buildings in the Gaol complex, now a museum, were built between 1883 and 1888. The stone infirmary and masonry cell blocks were designed by J G Knight. In 1888 this was the only substantial prison in the Northern Territory.
The Esplanade, Palmerston showing the Residency and Gaol. NT Historical Society.

The Esplanade, Palmerston showing the Court House and Medical Officer's quarters. NT Historical Society.
ADELAIDE RIVER

Adelaide River Railway Bridge

The bridge, now no longer used, was built in 1888 as part of the North Australian Railway. With five spans, it was constructed on a lattice girder frame. It was the largest bridge on the Darwin to Pine Creek section of the railway line.

Adelaide River Railway Station

This corrugated galvanised iron building, now a visitor centre, was built in 1888 with timber frames and a concrete floor.

BORROLOOLA

Former Borroloola Police Station

Constructed in 1886, when Borroloola was a river port and drovers' camp, the station buildings are now a Museum and Library. The buildings are timber framed with corrugated galvanised iron sheeting to the external walls and floors. The floors are made of flagstone, concrete and timber.

VICTORIA RIVER DISTRICT

Original Victoria River Downs Homestead

The first homestead at Victoria River Downs was occupied between 1883 and about 1890, before the main homestead was established. Only ruins remain today but they include stone floor slabs for the house, kitchen and mess, the remains of a forge and two graves.

Victoria River Depot Area, Timber Creek

Remains of a river landing and store are located at a point where in 1888 boats unloaded supplies for Victoria River stations. The depot was first used in 1884.

Gordon Creek Police Station

All that remain today are the ruins of a detached kitchen and horse yards. The police station and residence were built at Gordon Creek in 1888 to subdue Aboriginal resistance to the white settlement of Victoria River Downs.

CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

Heavitree Gap Old Police Station, Heavitree Gap, Alice Springs

The station was built in 1885 and re-built of stone in 1888-1889. It is now under the control of the Conservation Commission as an historic site. In 1888 it housed Mounted Troopers and Aboriginal trackers who participated in expeditions against local Aboriginal people suspected of killing cattle.

Alice Springs Telegraph Station

The single-storey buildings were constructed of local stone in 1871-72 and in 1888 included barracks, telegraph room, postmaster's residence, kitchen, observatory and store rooms, most of which remain and are now open to the public. In 1888 the telegraph station was the focal point for communication and authority in the Alice Springs district.

Barrow Creek Telegraph Station

Powell Creek Telegraph Station

Tennant Creek Telegraph Station

All these stone buildings were constructed in 1871-1872 and in use in 1888. Together with the Alice Springs Telegraph Station and other stations which no longer exist, they were the only places of permanent European occupation along the Overland Telegraph Line in 1888. The buildings are now used for other purposes and are not open to the public.

Bonney Well, Bonney Creek, Stuart Highway

Constructed in 1879, in 1888 the well was an important watering point for people and stock travelling along the Overland Telegraph Line. It comprises a stone well, the base of a tank stand and an abandoned tank.

SOURCES:

The Heritage of South Australia and Northern Territory: The Illustrated Register of the National Estate, Melbourne 1985.

Site Files, National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), National Trust Office, Darwin.