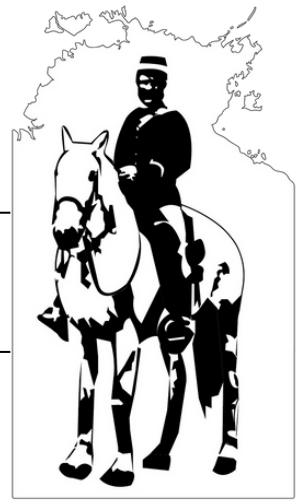


CITATION

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE MUSEUM AND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY INCORPORATED

MAY 2024



ODE TO THE RETIRED OFFICER

BY PAT KING USING COMPUTER ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

"Badges hung up, uniforms laid aside,
A chapter closed, a new one to abide.
Years of service, of duty and might,
A legacy of courage, shining so bright.

Through streets and alleys, they walked the beat,
Keeping us safe, with a watchful repeat.
Their hearts and minds, forever on the line,
Protecting and serving, with a dedication divine.

Now they rest, their duty done,
Their service honoured, their stories won.
Their legacy lives, in the lives they've touched,
A debt of gratitude, forever clutched.

So here's to our retired police, with thanks and praise,
For your service, your sacrifice, your dedicated ways.
May your days be peaceful, your hearts be light,
Your legacy shining, like a beacon in flight."

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

DR GARY MANISON APM

The police force was established in the Territory primarily to protect the builders of the Overland Telegraph in the North and pastoralists in the South from the native population. The relationship has been primarily one of conflict for many of those early years. Ironically, the first police officers killed in the execution of their duty were members of the Native Police Corps (cont.)

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who were killed in Central Australia by other aboriginals. The story of one of them, Native Constable Peter, who was speared to death at the Finke on 10th January 1890, is featured in this edition.

As I continue my research on the history of Aboriginal members of the NT Police it becomes patently clear that this group have made a significant contribution to the Force over the past 150 years, with little recognition. Hopefully, I will be able to remedy this situation when I publish a book on the topic in the future. In the meantime, several of the articles in this Citation will help to provide greater recognition and understanding of the role made by this group of Territorians.

Dr Gary Manison APM



COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

COMMISSIONER MICHAEL MURPHY APM

Reflecting on Growth and Progress in the NT Police Force

Dear Readers,

It is with great pleasure that I address you through the pages of Citation, our cherished conduit of history and progress within the Northern Territory Police Force.

The recent announcement of funding for an additional 200 police officers marks a significant moment in our force's history and I find it fitting to reflect on our journey thus far.

The announcement symbolises not only a commitment to public safety but also an acknowledgment of the ever-evolving needs of our communities.

As we expand our ranks to beyond 1,800 members in the coming years, we strengthen our ability to serve and protect, ensuring that the Northern Territory remains a safe and secure place to call home.

To fully appreciate this occasion, let's cast our minds back to the inception of the Northern Territory Police Force.

Established in 1870 when Inspector Paul Foelsche and six more officers from South Australia arrived in the Territory, those early days were punctuated by the formidable obstacles our officers faced, the least of which were an unbelievably harsh terrain and vast distances.

Yet, through unwavering dedication and perseverance, they laid the groundwork for the force we are today.

With a steadfast commitment to upholding the law and serving the community, they forged a legacy that continues to inspire us.

Fast forward to the present day, and we have evolved into a modern and dynamic organisation, equipped to tackle the diverse array of challenges confronting our society.

From combating crime to fostering community engagement, we are continually adapting and innovating to meet the evolving needs of our ever-changing landscape.

As we celebrate this milestone, let us not forget the sacrifices and contributions of those who came before us. Their legacy serves as a reminder of the enduring values that define our profession – integrity, courage, and compassion.

In closing, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every member of our force, past and present, for their unwavering commitment to serving the people of the Northern Territory.

Safe policing

Commissioner Michael Murphy APM





Dear Readers,

As the Editorial Team at Citation continues to delve into the vast sea of stories, we find ourselves constantly captivated by the narratives we uncover. The dedication of our researchers - Jan Woodcock, Margaret McCarthy, and David Hutchinson - is truly commendable. Their enthusiasm for unearthing captivating tales is infectious, often leading us down delightful rabbit holes of discovery.

Marilyn Evans, our steadfast typist, finds solace in each story she brings to life, sheltered from the chill of the NSW South Coast winter. Joanna Bennett, our resident computer guru is bringing the team's efforts together to present the newsletter in a pleasing format.

In this month's edition, we invite you to explore the intriguing world of tracking, alongside the gripping continuation of the Mataranka Plane Crash story. We are also excited to announce that Frank Saunders has generously contributed several captivating narratives that will grace our pages in the editions to come.

As we gather reports, stories, and images of Cyclone Tracy, we are reminded of the profound emotional impact of that time. In the lead-up to the 50th Anniversary, we feel it necessary to issue a gentle reminder: the forthcoming newsletters may contain content that could evoke strong emotions or memories. Should you find yourself in need of support, please don't hesitate to reach out to your GP or a trusted counselor.

Thank you for joining us on this journey through history. We are honored to share these stories with you and look forward to the adventures that lie ahead.

Warm regards,

Pat King
Editor

TRACKING AS A FINE ART

CITATION DECEMBER 1965

TRACKING STORY WRITTEN BY EXPERT AS AT DECEMBER 1965

The story "Tracking as a Fine Art", is the work of a man who is himself an expert in the art of tracking. In fact, in conjunction with Sudarshan Singh, he has written a book with that very title, "The Art of Tracking". It deals comprehensively and scientifically with tracking in India. While an expert used to working with experts, it can be seen that Mr Lahiri was very favourably impressed by the skill of the justifiably famous Northern Territory Black Trackers.

Tarakumar Lahiri is an Indian, born in 1920, and his short but intense study of the Trackers at work was made possible by the Colombo Plan.

He is at present Instructor at the Government of India's Central Detective Training School in Calcutta. From 1940 to 1948 he was with the Criminal Investigation Department, Patua, as Senior Fingerprint and Footprint Expert; from 1948 to 1956

he was Instructor on scientific aids to the detection of crime at the Central Police Training College, Mt Abu; and from 1956 until his Australian visit, last summer, he was attached to the Intelligence Bureau, New Delhi, and was Instructor (Deputy Central Intelligence Officer) in Forensic Science at the Central Detective Training School, Calcutta.

Whilst in Darwin he was mainly attached to Sergeant Lionel McFarland and Denzil McManus. This was not a particularly scientific or expert liaison, perhaps, but there are other things than mere science in Darwin, and Mr Lahiri thoroughly enjoyed himself.



Indian Police Inspector T. K. Lahiri, of Calcutta.



Trackers at Hooker's Creek (Peter Jabananga and Henry Jagamara) showing footprints in dusty ground.

By arrangement with the Commonwealth International Training Centre, Canberra, I was taken to a settlement known as Hooker's Creek, in the Northern Territory. I was accompanied from Darwin to Hooker's Creek by Mr Dennis Daniels, a Welfare Officer of the Northern Territory Administration. We worked together at Hooker's Creek, and he was most helpful in explaining to the Aboriginal Trackers the points which I wanted to be educated while gaining an understanding of their tracking techniques.

Prior to departing from Darwin, I was given a preliminary "run-through" on tracking with the aid of Sergeant McFarland, of the Northern Territory Police Force, Dennis Daniels and Tracker Thompson Tithanboy.

But Hooker's Creek, some 400 air miles South-west of Darwin, offered infinite possibilities for studying native tracking in an environment where it is still very much part of the life of the Aborigines. Away from the settlement the country is semi-desert and game is scarce. Tracking skills is an essential part of the bush native's existence in these parts.

At Hooker's Creek there are approximately 280 men, women and children of the Wailbri tribe. The settlement is in charge of Mr John Cooke, a former Member of the Northern Territory Police Force. I was there for twenty-four days and I found both Mr and Mrs Cooke extremely helpful and kind to me during my stay.

I was introduced to two Trackers of this settlement named Peter Jabananga and Henry Jagamara.

Peter had had several successful trackings recently, and in one of these exploits he tracked several cattle thieves over a long track and led the Police to the place where the thieves were camping with the stolen cattle. Henry has been a Police Tracker at Tennant Creek and Hatches Creek - some three hundred air miles to the South-east of Hooker's Creek - for about eight years, and he has a vast wealth of experience in tracking (although, now, he works as a cook in the settlement).

I found these two Trackers to be uncanny in their observation and subsequent deduction. Throughout my association with them I was conscious of their perfect co-ordination of mind and eye when they were following tracks. What impressed me most was their ability in apparently searching out small marks of a part of a footprint (where there was nothing, according to our eyes) over hard, gravelled surfaces, or bare rocks, or grassy ground. I can very well express my opinion that Indian Trackers fail to track on hard, rocky surfaces, though they are equally efficient on sandy and dusty ground. But Australian Aboriginal Trackers have apparently found out the observable marks over hard, rocky surfaces and over hard or soft grass ground.

This vastly superior type of tracking technique is probably due to the fact that they have had to survive by tracking insects, lizards, beetles, snakes etc., which formed their diet during their nomadic existence.

Tracking Technique

I found very little difference in the tracking technique of the Aborigines in Australia to that of our Indian Trackers ("Khojis"), especially over soft ground, like dusty and sandy surfaces. The observations and subsequent deductions are more or less on the same lines. But, as I have already said that the Aborigines have perfected their techniques of tracking over hard, rocky surfaces and over thick vegetation and grassy surfaces, I will deal with these matters rather than the preliminary techniques which are explained in the book "The Art of Tracking".

Tracking Over Bare Rock Surfaces

While moving over such surfaces I asked Henry whether he could track, step by step, any footprints on them. He at once obliged me by offering demonstration. I then segregated Henry under close watch and asked two Aborigines to walk over the surface bare-footed, and subsequently with riding boots on. To me (after my long experience in tracking with Indian Trackers) there appeared to be no "observable mark" (no footprint outlines or outlines of a part of a footprint) on those rough, hard boulders.

On being called, Henry methodically tracked the barefoot prints almost step by step, and the shoe prints similarly, and later on correctly named the two Aborigines. (He was not previously aware that these Aborigines had walked over the boulders nor was he aware that they had been in or departed from the area).

This almost uncanny power left me thunderstruck, and I cross-examined Henry for over a week to find out what he saw on the boulders. Now, as I see, I feel that his contentions are reasonable, and can be well explained into cogent hypotheses in tracking – but to understand these hypotheses one would require constant practice, clear observation and quick deduction.

It is reasonable to say that when a man (say, 150lbs in weight) walks on a rocky surface which has not been polished like marble, the movement and the weight in motion act like two forces, scratching and dragging and thumping at regular intervals by the two feet, with the toes as claws, and the heels as hammers. These movements in their turn make certain marks on these rocky surfaces. The toes in motion, with their nails, make scratch marks, drag marks and kicking marks in their forward march, showing the direction of travel. And when these obvious marks are found (of course, by a master Tracker), a close scrutiny shows the smoothing of the surfaces; and, in some cases, faint ridge marks of the heels over moss or thin dust could be seen.

Where rocky surfaces are covered with small pebbles embedded either slightly or deeply on the thin covering of moss or dust, in addition to the more obvious marks of the scratching and smoothing as described above, one finds the dislodgement of pebbles from their seats. And these, while being dislodged from their original seats (by the toes or by the planter surfaces of the foot) bare a slight trail up to the place where they lie. These slight trails are the deciding factors in tracking over such surfaces.



The stick's end points to the dislodgment of a pebble from its seat by the foot of an individual while walking over it.

Smooth Rocky Surfaces

Where the surface does not show the type of clues described above, Trackers here have special observation techniques. They look for spitting marks, or marks of animal or human excreta or of urination etc., which attracts ants and other insects. The presence of such give them, sometimes, an idea of the type of animal concerned and the number of human beings around those animals.

Tracking over grassy ground interspersed with light dusty surfaces involves two separate types of observations; one – noting the inclination of some grass stumps against the surrounding grass stumps, and the other – noting the foot impressions on the soft dust, either interspersed with the grassy growths or on clearer dusty ground. It is rather curious to note that a Tracker working on these types of ground can almost accurately say the time elapsed since the footprints were made by the difference in the angles of inclination made on a particular type of growth of grassy stump. I tested this observation myself by pressing upon a particular type of growth and comparing its inclination with that of the untrodden stumps immediately, at the end of an hour, and at the end of twelve hours. Unless the stump is trodden several times, it attains its original position (i.e., before it was trodden) in about twenty-four hours; but during the rainy season and winter they attain their original position much earlier.

Thick Vegetation in Dusty Areas

The technique of tracking over thick vegetation and grass, with a layer of soft dust below the vegetation, is rather difficult to follow. The stumps are not overgrown and the surface appears thickly and smoothly covered with grass or vegetation.

(Imagine a coarse but thick lawn). Nevertheless the Tracker follows the tracks correctly, as I verified it myself. What baffles me is that such thick lawn-type ground acts like a cushion to one's tread, and does not leave any visible mark of a depression a few minutes after treading over it. While asking a man to walk over this type of ground I found rather obvious depressions over the places where he set his feet, and could distinguish them for a few minutes. Yet when I wanted to back-track the same steps, I was lost - but not the Tracker. He correctly followed apparently undisturbed surfaces till he came to the place where the tracks originally started. I brooded over this matter all the time I was at Hooker's Creek, and persisted in my questioning of Tracker Henry - yet I am still in the dark. I can only give a vague idea of what the Tracker sees over such ground.

The vegetation receives the weight of the man but cushions his tread inasmuch as the vegetation itself retains in original appearance, but not so the soft dusty ground below the vegetation. The outlines of the footprints may not appear on the vegetation but the ground underneath could reveal, by feeling with a finger, that its level is lower than the level of the ground below the untrodden vegetation. I was observing the Tracker prodding the earth below some vegetation with his fingers, and subsequently feeling the vegetation around by pressing his palm. These actions of the Tracker gave me this idea, though vaguely, and I have thereby come to the above conclusion.

In Bushy, Sandhill Country

Tracking is rather easy in bush country where the terrain is sandy, with innumerable sandhills, and small shrubs interspersed with grass and other growths. There would be very few human tracks other than the ones actually being tracked, and therefore would present little difficulty. The Trackers could say where a person stopped and looked behind by noting the two footprints of the same person impressed abreast, and not one after the other. The two footprints would show definite twisting movements, showing that an individual was looking behind, turning either towards his left side or right.

On a sandy track the Tracker also suggests the time elapsed since the prints were made. This is not a very difficult problem provided there has not been much breeze or rain. When an impression is fresh, the border lines show sharp edges, and a few lumps of sand may be found around the impression, lying at the sides where they were displaced during walking. This means that the prints are fresh (any time between a few minutes to six hours or so). After the night and early morning dews, etc., obliterate the

sharp outlines, numerous criss-cross marks appear, suggesting the time since an individual walker over the area to be overnight, i.e., during the previous day. If an impression is made during the night time, but towards early morning, wet clods of earth with dry sand inside the impression may be found, and the Trackers are very observant in noting these.

In Gibber Country

In very rough and hard ground covered with fairly large-sized stones, or gibber, as the Aborigines call them - they may be up to five or ten pounds in weight - tracking has its own problems. Here the Trackers look for places where the planter surface has smoothed the rocky surface's light dust by the walker either dragging his foot or occasionally kicking the ground. These marks, if seen, even minutely, are indicative of an individual's tread over such ground. As the pieces of rock are heavier to kick forward, these are not so obvious except in some cases where, due to a good kicking during walking, a heavy rock may roll forward on account of the downward gradient of a particular surface. Here the Tracker cannot always find each footprint mark on the hard rocky surface, but for a stretch of, say, one hundred yards, he may easily mark at least fifty footprints.

A master Tracker never fails, and acquires the ability to track very quickly. On one occasion I pitted my skill with Henry while tracking an unknown person's footprints over a stretch of about fifty yards. I took about fifteen minutes to cover this distance, while Henry could find it in about three minutes, almost running along the tracks.

The Trackers' ability in finding out sex and height from foot impressions is really wonderful. While realising that they adopt the same technique in such deductions as our Indian Khojis, yet they are rather quicker and more pertinent in their views.

Over to Beswick

Before returning to India I was fortunate to be able to see Trackers at work in a quite different type of bush country on Beswick Settlement - some 260 miles south of Darwin. Here I had the services of Don Bununjoa, who had been a Police Tracker at Mataranka Police Station for about four and a half years.

Don was able to demonstrate some further worthwhile points on the subject of tracking on hard, rocky surfaces. When a human being walks on hard surfaces covered with a light layer of dust, he lifts on his sole some of the dust, and may impart dust or vegetation (small particles of pebbles, etc., clods of dust, small torn pieces of grass or other

vegetation), on the prints made by him. This extraneous matter on the print is also observed over hard surfaces where these remains no appreciable dust to show a print. Thus such matters sometimes lead the Tracker through the correct route. Small marks made by boomerangs, spears or sticks while walking are also observed during tracking.

Don also demonstrated and explained his tracking technique in thick grass. From this, I understand that the toes and the heel make two fulcrums during a man's walk. The heel, having more pad and being much flatter than the toes, actually depresses the grass over a bigger area than the short individual depressions of the toes. The heel depresses the grass in rather an even manner, without any petal of grass being either scratched or torn or smoothed, whereas these types of marks are inevitably made by the toes on the grass.

The toes, in addition to the above marks, bend the tips of the petals in such a manner that these tips point towards the ground below, while the heels simply depress and smooth the grass over which this part of the foot is pressed.

Another point to determine the marks of the soles of shoes or the planter surface of bare feet on grass is to observe clods or small particles of sand or dust which the soles carry from the sandy and dusty surfaces over which an individual walks while passing through thick, grassy grounds, and carries sand etc., in his soles and imparts it on the grass petals.

Tracking Animals

This is rather easy and need not claim much attention here. However, it is interesting to note that a Tracker knows whether the horse he is tracking has a rider or not. When a horse is being ridden, it scratches the ground more noticeably with its hoofs than when it is running free. Such marks are distinct and obvious to a Tracker. Whether the horse canters, gallops or trots the tracks that it makes have distinct direction, and curves and show a straight pattern of travel. But when a horse simply grazes, or trots or gallops by itself, it does not make a regular pattern of direction or a straight trail mark. No sooner is it caught and led than it again makes a distinct trail pattern by its hoofmarks. Moreover, the human footprints would show where the horse was caught and led by the walking man. Similarly, the marks made by a ridden horse would show where a stray horse was caught and lassoed.

Horses can also be identified by their hoofmarks. When a horse is broken from its wild nature, and

subsequently harnessed for riding, it attains an individuality in its trot, canter and gallop. Though some other horses may have the same general shape of hoof, yet the individuality in its walk, trot, canter and gallop shows a distinct pattern of treads and other distinctive features in its hoofmarks on the ground. As a horse is quite a heavy animal, tracking its hoofmarks, even on hard, rocky surfaces and thick grassy grounds, presents no problem to the Trackers.

Cattle, etc.

Cows, pigs and the like are not at all difficult to track. The Trackers take some of their first lessons in tracking cows, pigs, etc., and master this in their infancy. First, they distinguish the type of cattle by their distinctive hoofmarks, and then they observe each beast's individual gait so as to identify the particular cattle and it is an everyday affair for an Aboriginal Tracker to find and bring in absentee cattle and horses that have strayed from camp, paddock or yard.

Life-Saving by Tracking

As a diversion from the technicalities of tracking, I would like to conclude this article with a reference to a tracking feat performed by Don Bununjoa shortly before I met him at Beswick. He was largely instrumental in saving the life of a white man, Gary Hall, who became lost in arid country around Western Creek, some three hundred miles south of Darwin. Hall became separated from a cattle mustering party and was missing for several days before the matter was reported to the Police. Efforts by his companions had failed to find any trace of him. It was in the middle of the Dry season - and in the middle of a dry area at best of times.

Eventually the Police were called to the area, and Tracker Don and other Aboriginals accompanied Sergeant Knight, and Constables Browning and Kain, in a search that lasted several days before Hall was found, barely alive, some fifteen days after his disappearance. He was without food for the whole time, and had no recollection of when he may have last had water. In desperation he had cut the throat of his horse, a couple of days before he was found, and had drunk some of its blood. Don located the tracks of Hall's horse eventually and the tracks were followed for a full day. The tracks led Don through a bushfire, over ground that had previously been burnt out, over rocky surfaces, grass and rough black-soil country. After the dead horse was found, Don followed the boot tracks of Hall until the party at last rescued him.

(Typed as printed in CITATION - December 1965)

'ABORIGINAL TRACKING EXCELLENCE'

BY CONSTABLE FRANK SAUNDERS REG 190 KATHERINE NT 28 DECEMBER 1965

I started duty early Sunday 28TH December 1965 in Katherine and there was a phone call shortly after I had opened the Police Station. It was from the owner of Katherine Stores, Cyril Cox. This was a general store in Katherine, selling everything from groceries to electrical goods.

He informed me that on arriving to open up for the day, he found a rear door broken into and a large amount of items stolen.

On my arrival at the store I found a huge mess inside and a trail of goods had been spilt or dropped along the laneway across the road to a stormwater drain opposite the store. It appeared that the drain had been used to store everything being stolen from the shop.

I decided to have a native tracker take a look at the scene, so I went to the Sorrento Café where I was aware of an Aboriginal man, Joe Mudpitt, who worked at the café and I had been told he was an excellent tracker who had been used previously as a Police tracker.

He agreed to track for me for as long as I wanted.

I received an approximate list of the stolen items from the store later that day and apart from food, liquor, cigarettes and clothing, I noted a rifle and ammunition were included. That afternoon I went with Joe to the store area, where he soon informed me that there were two men involved and that they were carrying heavy loads away from the ditch into the bush nearby.

Joe tracked slowly until we reached the edge of town and we finished for the day. After collecting Joe again early next morning we resumed tracking from where we left off and after some hours we came to a campsite. There were cigarette butts, food etc. around the cold campfire site. We tracked again until late afternoon and then resumed again the following day. This time we tracked to another campsite and I thought we were getting closer. However it rained overnight and I was concerned about the tracks washing away, but Joe followed the tracks down to the Katherine River area known as the low level crossing, where we again found remains of a campfire with rubbish consistent with the stolen property and due to the dark we finish again.

Next morning we found the tracks went down towards the river and Joe said they had probably

crossed to the opposite side. Sure enough, on moving over to the opposite bank Joe picked up the tracks again, "Yes here same track, two men" he informed me. I remember being totally amazed and impressed at the time. Off we went along the river bank, following occasional tracks here and there, according to Joe.

After some time Joe suddenly turned towards me and signalled me to stop and be quiet. He then silently pointed ahead of us, where thick bushes and low lying trees were spreading along the bank.

I walked carefully and silently to where he was standing and looked through the foliage, and there were two men lying on blankets on the riverbank amongst all sorts of goods from the store including a .22 rifle.

I had been signing out a Smith and Wesson revolver from the station safe on a daily basis so I crept through the bushes nearby and ordered them to stand up with hands in the air. The look on the faces was quite a sight and they slowly rose and did just that. Joe had joined me and the men remained quite docile and even put handcuffs on themselves. We walked back to the low level and the Toyota ute.

Back at the station, Geoff (Gob) Shervill, was on duty and he accompanied the tracker, myself and one of the offenders to retrieve the goods. I still have the Darwin News clipping of the report of the Court trial in Darwin. From finger prints of the two defendants, we found that one man had a very extensive criminal record. They were travelling from Queensland and had hitchhiked to Katherine, arriving in the early hours of the morning when the town was asleep and decided to break-in.

Their defence at trial in Darwin was that they were just very hungry and had not eaten for so long and had no money left.

As reported in the newspaper on the day, the Judge stated "one does not eat transistor radios when hungry"!

It was a great experience to see firsthand how good Aboriginal trackers could be and the assistance they could provide to law enforcement in the bush environment.

I have newspaper cuttings from the Northern Territory News of the committal and trial proceedings.

THE SECRET WEAPON

ARTICLE AS PRINTED IN "THE DRUM" (DATE UNKNOWN)

Assistant Commissioner McNeill and Police Aide Gavin SPENCER attended at the 64th World Association of Detectives Conference held in Sydney in September this year. There were over 160 Detectives from West Germany, Canada and other European countries when our representatives addressed the conference.

Mr McNeill spoke on the Northern Territory Police Trackers, and Gavin spoke on learning how to track. Parts of those speeches have been reproduced for the interest of readers.

There are many tales to be told about the ability of Police Trackers in tracking criminals and rescuing lost persons. In Alice Springs as a young detective in the late 60's on almost every job that I went to, I took as my scientific man, the Police Tracker. I was very much aware of trackers ability to read tracks and recognise people from their footprints.

In the Top End, at a settlement on Bathurst Island, I had tested aboriginal school children in their ability to read tracks by having two children walk around under a tree out of sight and without the knowledge of other children. I would then bring the other children over to the tree and ask them to name who had left the tracks behind. 10 out of 10 was the average score. These children were between 7 and 13 years of age.

In the mid 60's a similar experiment was conducted by a visiting Indian expert, Inspector T.K. Lahiri, of Calcutta, at a settlement called Hooker Creek. There he was given a demonstration of trackers' ability to track over bare rock surfaces. This demonstration was performed by Police Tracker Henry Jagamara and the Inspector reported as follows:

"I then segregated Henry under close watch and asked two aborigines to walk over the surface barefooted, and subsequently with riding boots on. To me there appeared to be no observable mark (no footprint outlines or outlines of part of a footprint on those rough hard boulders). On being called, Henry methodically tracked the bare footprints almost step by step and the shoeprints similarly and later on correctly named the two aborigines. He was not previously aware that these aborigines had walked over the boulders nor was he aware that they had been in or departed from the area. This almost uncanny power left me thunderstruck."



Gavin Spencer (Police Aide), Winston Gregory (World Assoc. Detectives), Ass. Commissioner Andy McNeill

Inspector Lahiri was also intrigued by the ability to the tracker to accurately state the time elapsed since the footprint was made and his ability to nominate sex and height from the footprints alone.

In Alice Springs I have witnessed Police Tracker Teddy Egan Jungala at the scene of a stolen motor vehicle, walk around the motor vehicle, find a footprint and exclaim 'that one belong to Tommy Nugamara'. A quick trip to the local aboriginal camp located Tommy Nugamara who quickly admitted to having stolen the vehicle. Tales of this nature abound.

There is a classic tale of Police Tracker Larry Jabaltjara in 1971 tracking an escapee from Alice Springs prison and, whilst following his tracks along the riverbank in an area known as the eastside, Larry suddenly declared that he had found his wife's tracks. Whilst this was very interesting we were interested in arresting the escapee and told Larry not to worry about his wife but to follow the escapee's tracks. However Larry declared he would not follow the escapee's tracks until he found out what his wife was up to. We consequently followed Larry's wife's tracks to an abandoned building near the riverbank where we found his wife with a European ringer (stockman, cowboy) engaged in some extra marital activities. The European ringer took off with great haste and Larry's wife was admonished in no uncertain manner by her husband. Larry resumed tracking and indeed we caught the escapee the same day.

On another occasion, in an area some 130km from Alice Springs, between two settlements known as Hermannsburg and Areyonga, a Police Constable was driving across a riverbed when the Tracker riding in the back of the utility banged on the roof

and asked the constable to stop. On doing so the constable was informed by the Tracker that in the riverbed he had observed his father's track. The constable turned the vehicle around, went down the riverbed on directions from the Tracker and sure enough came across a group of aborigines amongst whom was the Tracker's father. The father and son had not seen each other for something like three years.

Trackers find it almost impossible to put into words how they know a particular footprint belongs to a particular person.

Tracking does not come naturally to aborigines. It is an art which is taught to most aborigines at an early age, although as I have suggested the art is fast dying. At one stage it was a necessity to survival to be able to track. Women are equally as good, if not better, in tracking than men, perhaps because the women are experts at tracking small animals and reptiles such as mice and lizards.

A point that has always fascinated me about the tracking skills of our aborigines is how they can not only recognise a footprint as belonging to a particular person, but that they also have the ability to describe unknown persons by their footprints. For instance, they will give height, weight and even have a guess at the age of the person who's left the footprint. They can also tell whether a horse has a rider or is riderless or is being led and of course they can describe to you how and when the man or beast has gone faster or slower, turned around, stopped, looked behind, and many other things.

Relating descriptions of new tracks to other aborigines can cause problems at times. For instance an aboriginal Tracker from the Top End of the Northern Territory at a place called Daly River, visited Alice Springs area and there saw a camel, an animal which he had never seen before. He returned to Daly River and was attempting to describe this animal to a group of his peers without success and was in danger of losing face and his reputation. He could not for the life of him draw the camel or draw its track or describe it satisfactorily to the other members of this tribe. Finally he grabbed a naked piccaninny from a mother nearby, walked over to a patch of sand in front of the other aborigines, smoothed the sand with his foot and plonked the baby's posterior on the sand. He then raised the baby in the air, and revealed a relic of a camel's broad soft foot. No further words were needed as the imprint said it all.

Police with a tracker on an occasion in the Mary River area of Arnhem Land in Northern Australia, were looking for a stolen vehicle. They found the

vehicle bogged on a black soil plain. The Tracker informed the Police Officer there'd been some aborigines near the truck and they had apparently tried to push the vehicle out of the bog, no doubt at the request of the person who stole the vehicle. The Tracker also advised that the offender was a white man, gave some other information in relation to his build, emphasising he was a very big fellow and stated that he and the aborigines were headed off west. The tracks were followed and came to a grass area where, according to the Tracker, the offender and a girl, who he described, had lain side by side and proceeded to get acquainted. The Tracker's description was rather more earthy and quite explicit.

The tracks were followed further on and later in the day the Police Officer and Tracker came across an aborigine from Arnhem Land with his three wives and seven children. One of the wives was very small, called Kitty, and fitted the description provided by the tracker of the girl who had lain with the offender in the grass. She was questioned and described the incident quite freely. The Tracker was correct in all details and the offender was in due course apprehended.

In Alice Springs in the mid 60's a 70 year old woman was reported as having wandered off from her home at about 1.30am one very hot summer's morning. The temperature was about 40 degrees centigrade, that is over 104 degrees Fahrenheit. The Police Trackers were called in at first light and within two hours had followed her a distance of eight kilometres to a hollow in the MacDonnell Ranges.

She was in a very bad condition when found and carried from the area by Police and Trackers and admitted to hospital, however, she recovered fully. No doubt if the Trackers had not been available it would have been almost impossible to find the lady who would have perished in the heat of the day.

Strange things do happen also. In the mid 50's a Tracker on at least three occasions attended break and enters in the Alice Springs Township. At the time, Alice was a very small town and on each occasion tracks were clearly visible even to the eye of the Police Officer. The Tracker however claimed he couldn't recognise the tracks and appeared confused and kept shaking his head and muttering things like 'Maybe I'm gone a bit silly'. On the fourth occasion the tracker was again brought to the scene of a break and enter and shown clear footprints and asked if he recognised the tracks. On this occasion the tracker said 'Might be I'm bit silly boss, but that fellow's in jail'. Subsequent investigation revealed that the offender was indeed in jail but was

escaping on a nightly basis and committing the offences. The tracker was very much relieved to find out that he wasn't going off his head.

Another classic tracking story involves a European who arrived in Alice Springs some years ago and commenced to carry out a number of break and enters around the town. Among the items he stole were a number of watches from a local shop and a very expensive camera owned by a visiting professional photographer. These two offences were reported one night in January 1953 and the Police Officer-in-Charge took Tracker Charlie with him to the scene of, in the first instance, the watch theft.

The ground in the vicinity of the shop was hardpacked, only a scanty layer of dust and not at all healthy for tracking, apart from the fact that it was dark and Charlie only had a torchlight to assist him in his search. However, he managed to pick up some tracks and followed these tracks out of town and down in to the riverbed. There buried in sand were found two display stands which had previously held the watches. The following morning the Tracker was taken back to the riverbed to continue tracking. At the same time Police in their enquiries questioned the suspect who was boarding in a local hotel. A camera, answering the description of a stolen camera, was found in the suspect's room and an exposed film found in the camera was handed in to be processed. The stolen watches were also located in the suspect's room but he insisting he was innocent. He was wearing a pair of crepe sole shoes and of course they were his own shoes as he protested they weren't stolen and yes he was willing to put them on and walk around. He did this in the yard and Tracker Charlie had one look at the tracks and said that's the same tracks as that man who pinch them watches. The suspect would have none of it and still protested his innocence. Meantime the film was developed and low and behold it showed the suspect had unwittingly taken his own photograph whilst playing around with the camera in the room from which it was stolen. This combined with the tracking evidence was too much and the suspect confessed. He spent the following 24 months in the Alice Springs Gaol, no doubt lamenting about being skilfully tracked by an old Australian, and foolishly tricked by a new camera.

In Alice Springs during 1955 a young lady was walking across a footbridge over the Todd River and was attacked by a male person and raped. The offender was tracked from the river, over a bitumen road, through a supermarket and back down to the dry riverbed where he was found asleep. He was subsequently charged and convicted of the offence. Earlier this year, in very rough country near a place

called Areyonga, approximately 230 kilometres west of Alice Springs on the edge of the desert country, the rapist of 1955 became lost in dense inhospitable country. For three days he was once again tracked and eventually found alive by the Police Trackers from Hermannsburg. This particular man experienced both the advantages and disadvantages of Police Trackers.

On September 21, 1968, an aboriginal named Larry Boy murdered a female aboriginal by hitting her with an axe and also severely injured a European male. This incident took place at Elsey Cattle Station which is situated approximately 400 kilometres south of Darwin. During the next 38 days, Larry Boy was tracked by Police and Police Trackers, but being an expert tracker himself, he managed to elude Police for the entire time. The break came on the 39th day after Larry Boy had been to Elsey Station during the night and stolen bread, meat and sandals. He was apparently carrying the sandals, however, because his bare footprint was picked up near the station's school house and then a leaf was found by one of the Trackers on the ground near the track. This particular leaf came from a tree which was only found in a jungle area some distance from the station. This indicated to the Police Trackers that Larry was using a branch off the tree to brush his tracks out wherever he went. However, each night around the station area all roads were graded, that is they were smoothed out, with the express intention of picking up tracks left by Larry Boy. On this particular night this worked because a big toe mark identified as Larry Boy's was found in the middle of the road and this was followed to some caves in the jungle area where a tree was growing which had leaves similar to that which were picked up near Larry's tracks at the station homestead. At the entrance of one of the caves a branch lying on the ground and this was obviously the branch that Larry Boy had been using to brush the tracks. Larry Boy was located in the cave and subsequently charged with the murder and aggravated assault. The reason I recount this story to you is that the Police Trackers who had done an excellent job were ultimately unable to give verbal evidence at the enquiry, and it was only after many submissions by the prosecutor that their written statements were able to be submitted. The reason they were unable to give evidence is that both were in a fight on the day preceding the trial. Both had their jaws broken and wired up and were therefore unable to speak.

At about lunchtime, on an October day in 1967, the Officer-in-Charge of Kulgara Police Station, situated some 280 kilometres south of Alice Springs, received a brief message from the Manager of Erldunda Cattle Station, 72 kilometres to the north, which

indicated that a young German, Gerry Heinen, who had been working on the station as a Jackaroo, that's a trainee cattleman, had disappeared into the bush from a camp near a bore, 96 kilometres west of the homestead. The Police Officer and his Tracker, Peter Ammadarra, were soon on the road and heading for ERLDUNDA Station.

At the station they were informed that Heinen, who had only arrived from Adelaide 10 days before, had gone to the bore with the manager to trap horses. The Manager left him there overnight with plenty of food and water but on his return the following morning the manager was unable to locate him. He did find, however, a pathetic note scrawled on a swag cover. A swag is a bedroll. The note read "Peter, my girlfriend in Adelaide is pregnant and I have to go to her, will be back in 2 weeks, will explain later. Sorry". Having heard the story, the Constable and Tracker, headed for the bore where they followed the wheel tracks of the station manager's motorcycle through the thick bush and finally came upon the Station Manager who was searching for tracks of the missing man.

Police Tracker, Peter, quickly picked up the tracks and followed them through thick scrub and over loose sandhills for about 19 kilometres. At this point they struck a bush road, skirting a very large salt lake, and leading to a bore about 13 kilometres further on. Heinen had followed the road for about 5 kilometres before suddenly swerving off towards the dry salt lake, probably deluded by a mirage into believing there was water there. The Police party split up, Tracker Peter leading on foot into the shimmering white blaze of the lake surface while the Police vehicle skirted slowly around the edge. In the centre of the lake tracker was able to point out where Heinen, desperately thirsty, had dug for water. The seep in the hole was incredibly salty. The tracks left the lake and headed back into the sandhills. However, the dreadful need for water had driven Heinen once more back to the lake. By this time it was starting to get dark. The Tracker continued to follow the tracks, followed from across the salt lake to the far side, while the Police vehicle made an enforced 13 kilometre detour around the lake. At the far side the tracks headed once more into the bush and the search party was forced to halt for the night.

At first light the following morning the desperate search began again. Soon Tracker Peter pointed out a partly eaten "paddymelon", which is a tasteless wild melon, looking very similar to a watermelon. It had been eaten earlier the previous morning, hours before Heinen had even been reported missing. This was not reassuring news for the searchers as it meant Heinen must have left his camp about

midday the previous Saturday and the man had been walking non-stop for about 18 hours without water. He had eaten a melon and that had been about 24 hours ago. The Constable knew that he had to find Heinen by midday that day if the man was to survive.

The tracks began to twist meaninglessly across the country now. After another 8 kilometres, they led into another salt lake where Heinen had again dug for water and then had slept. It was now 7.30a.m. and the temperature was already 37 degrees Celsius or almost 100 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. Tracker Peter followed the tracks into a large sandhill and read the story as it unfolded in the sand for the Police party. He indicated Heinen had fallen to his hands and knees, clawing his way up the loose sand of the dune. At the top he had slumped full length and rolled helplessly to the bottom where he had lain there senseless for a long time before dragging himself to his feet and staggering on. Hope for Heinen was fading swiftly. His tracks were becoming harder and harder to follow and now left the sandhills and headed out on to a big stony plain. The grim hunt for the thirst crazed man became a tense battle between the incredible skill of the Black Tracker and the hard unrewarding surface of the plain.

After about 4 kilometres the tracks turned sharply towards a small creek bed. Heinen had dug vainly for water. Leaving the creek, the Police Tracker pointed out, where blinded by exhaustion, the lost man had walked into a tree and fallen unconscious. Incredibly, he had regained his feet and set off across the 9 kilometre plain. He reached the sandhills, found them impossible to climb and staggered back onto the plain towards the distant salt lake. Close to the lake he was literally dragging his feet and stopping every few steps. But the Tracker knew he was not more than an hour or so behind the exhausted man.

By the time the searchers reached the salt lake Tracker Peter had been tracking nonstop for more than 5 hours and was himself close to exhaustion. It became little easier when the tracks led onto the salty surface of the lake and were more easily visible. They led up the salt lake towards a shimmering mirage then swung suddenly towards the bank again. One of the party cried out as a little way ahead a figure staggering out from behind a bush and pitched to the ground. It was the missing man, Gerry Heinen, The Constable looked at his watch and found it was 11.30a.m. half an hour to the midday deadline that he'd set and there was little doubt that Heinen would have died shortly after that.

In two days, wearing high heeled riding boots and with nothing but salt water to drink, Heinen walked an incredible seventy five and a half kilometres.

During his ordeal Heinen had lost about 12 kilos in weight. His fingernails were starting to lift due to body dehydration, his skin was as dry as parchment, his nostrils were full of sand, his mouth was cracked with salt from the water he had drunk, and his lips were swollen and cracked. He was given a few sips of water and sucking at a wet rag he was able to talk a little. He whispered to the Constable, "My girlfriend is pregnant, I have to get to her". Within a short time the Royal Flying Doctor plane was called in. He was airlifted to Alice Springs, and eventually to Adelaide and his pregnant girlfriend. He would not have survived without the skills of the Aboriginal Police Tracker.

GAVIN'S SPEECH

BY GAVIN SPENCER, JABALTJARI

Since I left school at Yuendumu I started working as a motor mechanic, Youth Worker and Social Security Officer for Yuendumu Community, then the Assistant Manager for the Mining Company.

In 1985 the Community nominated me to be a Police Aide and I started work as a Police Aide until 1988 when I resigned to take over a Manager of Yuendumu Community Store and then took up employment as a Field Officer for the Royal Commission Into Deaths In Custody. I was approached by Police to become an Aide again in Alice Springs which I took and am now doing shift work in General Duties.



Learning to Track

Basic Tracking is taught by the women when the children are about 6 or 7 years old to look for bush tucker like small animals and grubs.

When the children are about 10 or 11 they join the hunting party with the men to track and hunt larger animals like kangaroo, emu, snakes, perentie and wild cats.

They are taught how to know which direction the animal is going, how old the tracks are and what type of animal they are tracking.

They are also shown how to hide and to get close to

the animal they are hunting by covering their body with mud and tracking towards the wind because the animal can smell the body sweating. They are also shown how to throw spears and boomerangs.

Tracking

As the boys go through initiation they are shown how to track animals, humans and dreamtime stories.

- They are shown tracks made by animals and people.
- How old the tracks are.
- What country they are in (skin group).
- What sex animals are by checking the droppings.
- Checking in rough country by chipped stones, stamped insects and ants and broken bush.

When tracking people they are taught:

- How old the tracks are
- If person is man or woman
- If person is old or young
- To know if something is wrong like limping or staggering
- To learn if person is big or little or heavy or light.
- And to learn how to think like the person he is tracking.

To maintain the skill he must use it as often as he can. If he doesn't use it all the time he is lost.

Recently I was called on by a Sergeant to track some footprints left near some stolen vehicles. The vehicles were new and only recently stolen from a yard in Alice Springs.

I began tracking the footprints and the Sergeant asked me if they were aboriginals or white fellas. I told him they were white fellas but I don't think the Sergeant believed me. I followed the tracks through rough country for about six kilometres to a house in the outer suburbs of Alice Springs. The offenders were inside and as a result 2 white men were arrested for the offences.

The Sergeant was surprised to see they were white men as I had told him earlier.

Another time I was off duty and I was called on to look for a missing lady from a settlement close to Alice Springs. She had been missing for about five days. I located her tracks quickly as she had a funny walk. The tracks were very old, making it hard to track but after many kilometres through scrub and rough country I located her but unfortunately she had passed away.

Gavin Spencer
JABALTJARI

IMPROVISED WEAPONS USED IN EAST TIMOR 1999

BY SENIOR CONSTABLE KYM CHILTON

On the 30th August 1999 an Independence Referendum was held in East Timor. Indonesia at that time had control of East Timor. The referendum was organised by the United Nations Mission, E.T.

The locals were given the choice of greater autonomy with Indonesia or independence. Voters rejected the autonomy leading to the separation from Indonesia and as a result this led to mass violence and destruction.

On the 15th September 1999 United Nations raised the International Force East Timor (INTERFET) to control the violence and to re-establish the infrastructure that had been completely destroyed.

The early years from 1999 saw much violence from different factions and particularly from formed pro Indonesian militias that were against the East Timorese independence. The Timorese took up arms against the resistance of the militias and used anything they could obtain for weapons to resist.

On the 18th May 2001 I attended East Timor with the Australian Police assisting the United Nations and as was a Senior Crime Scene Examiner with the Northern Territory Police Force I was given the role of Team Leader of the National Investigation Unit, Crime Scene Identification Section in Dili.

I was the first crime scene examiner to do this role and to set up the Forensic Crime Scene Section with five other Police members from overseas and local.

During my time in E.T. Several improvised weapons were seized, some being used. These weapons, some shown, were spears, knives, arrows (without bows) firearms etc. The firearms as can be seen are called Ratikans by the Timorese. They are very crudely constructed. Some used old water pipe as the barrels, some having double barrels. The pipe had holes drilled for a wick mount and the barrels are mounted on crude shaped wood by using old bike tubes and or rope etc. The ignition process was crushed match heads or powder from obtained bullets etc. The ignition wicks were made up of



Photo: Crude made arrows and Machete with scabbard made out of whatever was available.

material that had been soaked with crushed match heads. The projectiles were whatever they could obtain, i.e. rocks, nails, small bolt nuts, ball bearings etc etc.

The mind boggles thinking how these weapons were ignited and could be used. I was told by the locals that some had been known to explode causing death or serious injuries to the user.

COORAPINNI

BY JACK STOKES

MARANBOY is a tin-mining centre about 250 miles by road south by road of Darwin. There is a Government battery there and also a police station. Previously, the police station had been the Australian Inland Mission Hospital. When the Hospital closed down, the Police took over the building.

From 1940 – when I took over from Vic Hall – to the end of the War I was, off and on, the constable in charge of Maranboy. A large part of Arnhem Land was included in it and patrols to Mainoru Station were a regular thing. During a lot of the War, it also included the Mataranka Police District.

It was my practice, whilst at the police station, to ride round the mining field each Sunday morning. In the normal course of official duties I often visited the individual mines at other times but on Sunday I liked to go round all of them and have a yarn with the miners. There was nothing in the nature of surveillance about it, it was more a form of recreation and it probably helped the miners as they used not infrequently tell me their troubles and get some sympathy or action as a result. In those days – as I suppose it still is – a bush

policeman tried to be a friend to those in his District, a good listener, an adviser and often a Father Confessor too. At all events I used to enjoy my Sunday ride on Midnight – the black Police gelding featured by Vic Hall in “Bad Medicine” – and for the last few hundred yards home I used to let him have his head. He could really run.



Jack Stokes on Police Horse "Midnight" in his Maranboy days.

One Sunday morning in 1941 I was riding round the field and came to the “show”, as the mines were known, owned by Jack Fotinos, a Creek. Whilst I was nattering to him he said, “I saw that Murdering Dick going past here this morning”. From the way he said it, I knew I should have known all about “Murdering Dick” but actually the name didn’t mean a thing to me. I said, “Oh yes” and left it at that. However, after leaving Jack, instead of going round the other mines, I rode back to the Station. There I looked up the C.O.R. (Criminal Offence Report) file – they were known as the C.O.R.’s. in those days – and very soon knew, all about Dick (Coorapinni). I should have, too, for I had typed out the C.O.R. about him myself not long before I left Darwin, but he was just a name to me then.

He was an Arnhem Land aborigine who murdered a white man somewhere in the region of the Wilton River and was caught by Const. Hoffman, brought to Darwin, convicted and sent to Darwin Gaol – we always knew it as Fanny Bay Gaol. He escaped and was not recaptured – hence the C.O.R. It was known he had got back to Arnhem Land but nothing had been heard of him since. From what Jack Fotinos said, it looked as though he had got a bit cocky after a spell of freedom and had come back to civilisation – such as it was.

Const. Hoffman, by the way, created the vacancy in the Force which I filled. I had to wait for him to resign before I could get in. Nothing like that these days when all Police Forces are under strength. In those days, though, the authorised establishment of the Force was only 40 men to deal with the same area of over half a million square miles and its inhabitants, and vacancies were rare.

But to return to the story. As soon as I realised who “Murdering Dick” was, I called the tracker – an aborigine name Paddy Laffan who got his name from Dick Laffan, a famous horseman of the old days in the Territory – and asked him if he had seen Corrapinni. He said he had and that he was heading towards Roper Creek, about five miles to the west of the police station on the back track to Katherine.

I told him to bring up Midnight for me and get a horse for himself, which he did. We left almost at once taking only a torch – as I reckoned we would not be back before dark – a revolver and some handcuffs. It was a clear, sunny afternoon with no sign of rain.

When we got to Roper Creek, Paddy went across it and reported back that Coorapinni’s tracks were on the other side and that he was walking towards King River – some miles further on still on the track to Katherine.

We rode on but it was night before we got to the King. Again I sent Paddy across the other side but he reported there were no tracks there, having looked by the aid of the torch. I decided that Coorapinni must have gone to the Chinese garden, up the King a couple of miles. (This was a garden run by two elderly Chinese who grew almost everything – and magnificently. I remember particularly their navel oranges – large, thin-skinned with very little yellow in the skin and full of juice – which were as good as any I have ever eaten. Incidentally, one of the Chinese dies later and the other had to bury him before I got there, some days after, as the latter's message to me was somewhat delayed due to the aboriginal motto, "There's always tomorrow").

It seemed to me the best thing we could do was to stay where we were till about 3a.m. and then go to the garden and raid the aboriginal camp – which I hoped we would be able to find by the light from the camp-fires. It was probably not much use raiding it before dawn – and it could have been risky – whilst if we rode in before the aborigines were properly asleep our quarry might depart hastily and like a shadow at the sound of the horses. So we tied up the horses, used the saddles as a pillow and went to sleep on the ground.

At some time after midnight, I woke – being steadily soaked by heavy rain. I decided the rain was good cover for a raid and as we had no protection from it, we saddled up and set off along a bridle track headed towards the garden and running roughly parallel to the King. Paddy was in the lead and some time later he stopped and got off his horse. I couldn't see him, but I knew he had stopped because I bumped into him. I asked him what was the matter and he said he didn't know where he was. I didn't blame him, for it was one of the blackest nights I have ever known and it was raining steadily all the time. I clearly remember that I put my hand before my face, and I could not see it. However, at that moment, there was a flash of lightening and I saw we were still on the bridle track and close to a rivulet which ran into the King. I had been there some time before, and recognized the spot. I thereupon went in the lead on Midnight, told Paddy to follow and gave Midnight his head. I couldn't see but Midnight didn't miss a beat and Paddy's horse followed midnight. The upshot of it was that we eventually came out at the garden some time later. It was still some hours to dawn.

The garden was in a small valley with a plateau above. The drop into the garden from the plateau, although not high, was very steep and the house in which the Chinese lived was just at the foot of the drop. Immediately above, on the plateau, was a shed

in which they kept their truck, implements and other things. Paddy and I got the horses up on to the plateau and tied them up some distance away. Then we came back and tried to get what shelter we could from the rain by leaning up against the shed. It was locked and there was no overhang so there we stayed – wretched, cold and wet – till we could at last discern in the east a suggestion of lightening of the blackness. Then we descended to the Chinese quarters.

In front of these, on the same level, was a small shed. I thought we would have a look at this first as there was no sign of an aboriginal camp. Later we could wake the Chinese and make some inquiries. I whispered to Paddy to open the door of the shed quietly, see if there was anyone inside, and let me know the result. He did this and then whispered to me that Corrapinni was in there, asleep. I then told him to open the door, let me in, and shine the torch. He did so.

Upon entering, I saw what looked like the form of a human being under a blanket. The blanket, however, completely covered the figure. I thought that I could pick out where the head was and dropped full length flat on the figure and grabbed it by the throat with both hands. Naturally there was a violent convulsion under the blanket – having 14 stone of human being drop on one and then being grabbed by the throat is probably not the most gentle way of being wakened.

I said, "Policeman – quiet now. You savvy – quiet, lie still". The convulsions subsided. I said, "You pullem out your right hand now, slow fella". The hand and arm came out from under the blanket, Paddy gave me the handcuffs and I put one on the wrist. Then I said, "Pollem out nother one hand now". The left hand came out and the other handcuff was put on that wrist. Then, holding the chain between the cuffs, I pulled back the blanket.

It was Coorapinni all right – and lying alongside his right side was a shovel spear. We knocked up the Chinese, told them the story, had a feed and a cup of tea and left for Maranboy. By then the rain had stopped and we had a pleasant ride home to Maranboy. Coorapinni walked at the side of Midnight handcuffed to the stirrup iron as the handcuffs we had were those with a length about two feet of chain between the cuffs. He was quite happy by then, smoked my cigarettes and seemed unconcerned by his capture.

He went back to Darwin and to gaol again. When he came out I made him my tracker and he was a good one. It was always the way – the aborigine who had what it took to kill a man also had what it took to be a good tracker. Probably it is the same today. 16

One can be lucky, I was. Firstly, with the remark of Jack Fotinos, then Paddy Laffan's having seen Coorapinni, then Coorapinni's having gone to the Chinese garden, then that he had camped in the shed instead of the aboriginal camp and last but by no means least, that I had, quite unwittingly, given him no opportunity to use the spear he had under the blanket.

But how Paddy Laffan knew it was Coorapinni under that blanket is beyond me. Still, as I said, one can be lucky.

A GREEN HORN IN THE BUSH

BY JOHN DEANS, ALDGATE, SA

Joyce Johnson has already written her story about Hatches Creek, but this is the tale of what happened to a poor Pommy B, who fell in to the hands of the N.T. Police.

At least I can say we had a true "bush" wedding at the Bungalow – the real Alice Springs. "Skipper" Partridge did the deed. Nearly all the guests were Police or Sisters from the hospital. It certainly wasn't a fashionable reception – just a real good old Territory party, with a trestle table out on the lawn and a case of beer donated by "Ly" Underdown. Jack Stokes and John Donegan cranked the gramophone and we danced on the verandah.

Next day we set out for Hatches with all our worldly goods in the back of the old ute. We camped under the O.T. line and took three days to get to Hatches. Jack Stokes sent a wire "If Deans Not Yet Arrived – Suggest You Search." Cheeky cow! Did he reckon we were going to hot foot it to work and duty in the middle of a honeymoon?

My dearly beloved got a rude shock when he found his "Pom" had never seen a kangaroo outside a zoo before, and couldn't roll a swag. But he thought right to the end that he taught me to cook over a campfire, when actually I learned years before at despised Guide camps in the U.K. Boy, was it hot! We had a blow out and the jack sank through the bitumen as if it were butter. At Murray Downs we spent half a day in the water hole.

I don't quite know how I imaged Hatches Creek would be, but any ideas of mine were coloured by Welsh coal mines with overhead derricks and gantries and slag heaps. I just never imagined a "field" five miles long with scattered camps consisting of bough sheds and mines that were literally just holes in the ground. At least the Police Station was a good solid house. It was not the one where Joyce Johnson lived but three miles further on at Kangaroo Water Hole. It had been built as a hospital by the indentured Chinese who were moved to the Wolfram Field from some island when war was declared. It had big wide verandahs and was very cool, being made of puddled antbed, and

the inside walls had at the top 12 inches of flywire to assist the circulation of air. It was a lovely house and I feel very sad that it had since burnt down. There was a big "flat" in front of it and then the water hole. We had a nice garden with the goat and horse yards beyond. But the old Police "camp" – the camp set up by Clive and Jane Graham before the war – had been across the creek. Tiny took over from them and nearly every night we had to go across and inspect this site. I could tell you just where all the tents and the iron kitchen were! Joyce Johnson tells me the dixies and huge iron kettle from this "Tiny" must have been a giant to need such huge cooking pots.

Life at Hatches Creek was usually very peaceful and uneventful, with the main plane once a fortnight and the trucks from Wallis Fogarty's once a week. Incidentally, when Tiny died, I had a card, all the way from Canada, from Frank Rowett who used to drive this truck.

Tiny and the Trackers – Mick and Chubbity – attended to the Police horses and duties and I attended to the Post Office and the sick. These latter were usually minor, but could sometimes be dramatic – like the Sunday morning when one chap was cutting the week's wood and the head flew off the axe and buried itself in his mate's knee. Well, in those days there were no medical radio calls on Sunday, so I just had to stitch up that knee, and later sent him to the Alice by plane. He was fortunate – I had proper sutures and needles by then and a local anaesthetic. Once before I was caught with a badly gashed forehead and nothing but black linen thread and an ordinary needle. Luckily, the patient in that case had been "on" the brandy and didn't need an anaesthetic; anyway he didn't get one! The Tracker's mother-in-law rolled in the fire and badly burned one arm. I brought her down and housed her in a cell, so I could dress it daily, until, when it was almost healed, she vanished. I asked Mick where she had gone. "Serve 'im right – let 'im go and dead in the bush," he said. He couldn't bear his ma-in-law.

Registering of motor vehicles was a very humorous, albeit exasperating chore, at Hatches.

There were several vehicles on the field which were allegedly "cars". They were known as "the flea". "the buggy" and so on, and were real bitzers.

The conversation would go something like this:

Tint: "Good-day Jack, what can I do for you?"

Jack: "I want to register my bomb."

Tiny: "Right, now what make?"

Jack: "Well, I don't rightly know. It's a Chevy engine in a Ford chassis and she's got Dodge wheels."

Tiny: "Oh hell! Well, what's the engine number?"

Jack: "Well, it's like this - you know that old engine that was lying out the back of McKenzies? Well, I took that and Ben Poist gave me some pistons and Rou Khan gave me some more spare parts."

Tiny (groaning): "Come and have a cuppa tea, Jack."

But "the flea" was a Godsend when we got a big rain and all the creeks came down. When the plane could not land, they put six blackfellows on the job and they carried "the flea" across all the creeks, she was so light.

When the Census was on, we lined up all the blacks and began to fill in their papers for them, but we got some funny answers. To cap it all, when one chap was asked his wife's name, he dashed outside and said to his mate, "What name that old woman of mine?" I got vague answers to ages, so when one earnestly told me his wife was "little bit middle aged", I put it down as 35 (?)

I think the sunsets at Hatches must be some of the best in the world. And who wants the pictures or TV when they can sit on the verandah and see the sky aflame in colours no technicolour can match? - not me!. I spent the best years of my life at Hatches and made some of my best friends there. I was so very thrilled to see and hear from them when Tiny "slipped his hopples".

PART 2 AIR CRASH - MATARANKA - 1956

CONTINUED FROM CITATION FEBRUARY 2024

The following is a transcript of the report by Constable A.J. Gordon following the search and rescue (SAR) of the pilot following this crash. His report provides an insight into SAR operations in 1956 and the paucity of equipment available at the time.

Police Station

MARANBOY NT

Officer in Charge

Northern Division DARWIN NT

11th October 1956

REPORT OF: Constable A.J. Gordon

RELATIVE TO: Plane crash 28 miles S.W. from Mataranka and search for Pilot, Roy Moffatt.

I have to report that at about 6pm on Friday 5th October 1956 I received information from S/Sergeant Smythe of Katherine that an aeroplane, piloted by Roy Moffatt, had crashed about 28 miles south west from Mataranka and that Charles Miller, who was flying in another plane with Moffatt, reported that Moffatt appeared to be uninjured when he circled Moffatt's plane after the crash.

Continued...

In this search, for instance, had I been able to muster a couple of Police Land Rovers with two way radio and with Captain Slade in the air in radio contact with us, I have no hesitation in saying we would have been at the scene of the crash about midday on Saturday instead of about 10am on Sunday. Then we could have conducted a

systematic search and if necessary radioed in for a plant of horses to come out and meet us at a given point, and any other assistance we required could have all been done from out bush instead of us having to come into Mataranka to make contact with anybody.

When we started off on Monday with three Land Rovers and a radio we felt that we were really getting somewhere. Before that, with no radio, it was just one frustration after another. Until the powers that be in Canberra realize the importance of the Police and make enough funds available to provide necessary equipment, the residents of this Territory will never receive the full protection of the law to which they are justly entitled.

When war breaks out the fighting services have priority over everything and the less important services have to go without. Maintaining the peace, which is the duty of the Police, is just as important as fighting for it, and like the fighting services, the Police should have first priority on all things. I have stated above that all police stations should have portable radios. It maybe said this would cost too much and that such expenditure would not be warranted. If one person's life was saved by the use of them, then they would have paid for themselves. A human life is priceless, so any amount of money that is spent for the protection of life is not wasted, and our citizens are entitled to the FULL protection of the Police.

Asking a member of the NT Police Force to perform a 100% efficient job is like asking a mechanic to overhaul a bulldozer and only giving him a screwdriver to do it with.

Regarding the organization of future search parties. I understand from Inspector Bowie that until the ground party reached the crash, it was the responsibility of the RAAF. After that the responsibility fell on the Police to find Moffatt. At this stage I think it would have been better had Inspector Bowie moved to Mataranka and controlled things from there.

Just before I left Mataranka on Monday, the Army jeeps returned from the crash and I overheard the Major in charge ringing his headquarters and said, "Nobody seems to be in charge here, everything is in a shambles". As I was just on the point of leaving I did not enter into a discussion with him but I told him where we were going and asked him to go down the old fire ploughed road I mentioned previously for about 25 miles and work west and north from there and we would work south and west from there. He did not do this as he set up his headquarters down near the Warlock Ponds on the road to Williams Yard. I'm not suggesting for one minute that the Major did not want to co-operate with the Police. As I said, I did not have time to go into a lengthy discussion with him, but had Inspector Bowie been on the spot he could have done this. Also there are always a lot of well meaning people offering assistance and if there is nobody in authority there to guide them they can become a liability rather than an asset. Inspector Bowie of course should have had a radio and been able to keep in constant touch with me in the bush.

A good supply of maps is another thing that should be readily available. I did not have a map of the locality when I first visited the crash. I signalled to the Lincoln to drop a map at the scene of the crash

and they dropped a note saying they would advise Darwin that I needed one. I thought they would have had a few spare maps in the aircraft but apparently they didn't.

Another item of equipment that should be on strength at all police stations is a prismatic compass. Of all the police stations I've been to I've never seen one. Now that recruits in this Force are receiving some training, I think they should receive some elementary training in the use of a map and compass. My knowledge is very elementary but it proved very valuable on this trip.

Fortunately it is very rarely that anybody does get bushed up here, but it is a thing that can happen at any time and the machinery to conduct an efficient search party should be ready to put into operation with a minimum of delay. It is only by the Grace of God that Moffatt was still alive when we found him. Had it not rained on Sunday night I doubt if we would have found him alive. As I mentioned earlier, a lot of valuable time was wasted in the early stages of the search. Moffatt must have a very strong constitution to stand up to what he stood up to. A lot of people would not have lasted as long as he did, therefore it is imperative that a search party should be well organized and put into operation without any waste of time.

Another point I wish to mention is the necessity for Police Officers to be conversant with their district. This can only be accomplished by regular routine patrols both by horse and motor vehicle. Routine patrols now seem to be a thing of the past which is detrimental to the efficiency of Police in the bush. For a Police Officer to know his district thoroughly and everybody living in it, is half the battle. I know very well had I known the country in the area of this air crash, it would have made my job a lot easier and saved a lot of time. Apart from anything else, routine patrols have a good moral effect on the community and also prevent a lot of crime from taking place.

The last suggestion I have to make is the necessity for a helicopter to be based at Darwin. I don't know how many of this type of aircraft are in Australia, but if any part of Australia needs one, it's the big open spaces of the north. A helicopter based Darwin could be used for the whole of the north of Australia for search and rescue work.

Finally I would like to make mention of the people who rendered valuable assistance to the Police in this search.

First of all there is Mr Reg Rattley of the Mataranka store and Post Office and the two Misses Desailly.

Their place was like a hive of bees during the whole of the search as it was used as a centre of operations for all concerned in the search. Mr Rattley spent nearly all the time on the telephone and rendering any other assistance he could in the way of organization and the two ladies performed sterling work in the kitchen and store, attending to the needs of all those who swarmed around the place. These people have always been a great help to the Police and without them there the policing of Mataranka and district would be very difficult.

Then there is Mr Eric Swaine of the Works Department, Katherine, who placed himself and Land Rover at my disposal the whole time. Mr Peter McCracken, stock inspector of Katherine gave assistance with his Land Rover on the Monday and Tuesday. Mr McCracken is an excellent type to have on a search of this nature. He is a good bushman and good horseman, and I very much appreciated his services. Mr Ron Ryan of Welfare Branch at Katherine was too sick to join the search himself but he willingly made his Land Rover available and Mr Val King of the Works Department, drove it. It was Mr King who actually first found Moffatt's tracks. Ken Hewitt and Sailor Bennet from Darwin were also in our party.

Dr Stanbury and wife were in Mataranka on the Saturday morning and they accompanied us out to the crash. Mr Lance Carew of Mataranka was also with us on that occasion, also Mr Froggatt of Mataranka cattle station. Thanks are also due to Captain Jack Slade for the fine work he performed in the Drover aircraft. As I mentioned earlier in this report, with a radio in the truck and Jack Slade in the air we felt we were really getting somewhere. It was only a matter of asking Captain Slade to fly over and assist, and he was there without any delay.

The Fordham brothers, George and Norman, assisted with their horse plant. It is unfortunate they were not

available at the time of the crash, but they were out on the run mustering and could not be contacted. They knew every inch of the country and they would have been very useful in the early stages of the search.

The Reverend Stewart Laing of Katherine also placed himself at my disposal on the Monday. His vehicle was not suitable for going bush with, but he had a radio and I asked him to remain at Mataranka in case I needed him. He then teamed up with the Army as their radio was on the blink and he rendered valuable assistance there.

The Army personnel did a good job. It is quite likely they saved Moffatt's life as he was following their jeep tracks when we found him. Had it not been for that jeep track we may not have found him in time. It is unfortunate that the radio equipment the Army had was not in good working order. The ideal portable radio is the one put out by Traeger, and if all Police Stations had one it would make our work a lot easier.

I forgot to mention that Constable Browning from Katherine was also in the search. He accompanied the Army Jeeps on their visit to the crash and he was in our party on the Monday but had to return to Katherine on the Tuesday so he was not with us when we actually found Moffatt.

I would also like to thank Mr J. Caston and D. Cole of Department of Civil Aviation for the use of their portable radio. I think I have now mentioned all those who assisted.

I am still living in hopes that some day the Northern Territory Police will be a self contained unit that will be able to function efficiently without having to beg and borrow equipment from other sources.

(Signed) A.J. GORDON

THE AFTER LIFE

GARRY CASEY



When did you join NT Police? 13 October 1975

When did you retire? 6 March 2009

What is a memorable moment for you?

There are a few but I think being selected as the NT rep for the National Police Memorial working party and then as the Catafalque Party Commander for the dedication of the National Police Memorial

What inspired you to join and then to stay?

I was sort of hounded after coming back from South Vietnam and (cont.)

completing National Service and I was playing rugby league for South Darwin which was basically a Police team – Coach was Mick Palmer later Commissioner. Mick also my recruiting Sergeant. After Cyclone Tracy I was transferred to Brisbane with the NT Govt and I wanted to go home. There was an ad in the Courier Mail for Recruit Constables. I rang and Mick answered and I was in.

Who were some of your mentors and greatest influencers?

I would have to say the following Commissioners were influential – Mick Palmer, Brian Bates, (Brian was very supportive of me after my breakdown in 1999 – His words - “I want you back at work but only when you are ready”. (He always joked about Mark and I and referred to us as Upper and Lower Case), Paul White (RIP), Jack Ilett, Grahame Charlwood and Denver Marchant whilst I was in CIB.

How does it feel to be retired?

Great – I survived! Miss a lot of the people.

What did you do to prepare yourself for retirement?

Got more involved with the other branches of the Dept., namely Emergency Service and Fire & Rescue.

How are you looking after yourself now?

Have moved to Qld and purchased a lovely place in Southside (Gympie). Involved with the Vietnam Veterans Assoc and as a Board Member of the Gympie RSL Sub Branch. I'll also look at the Rural Fire Brigade in the area.

DIED IN THE LINE OF DUTY

NO BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF THIS MEMBER ARE KNOWN.

On 9th January 1890, Mounted Constable William Willshire's camp came under heavy attack by unspecified numbers of Aborigines who killed one of the Aboriginal Police Officers.

"They managed to drive one long spear through the body of the native named Peter. He died the following afternoon. The attackers were all identified by their footprints next morning by a native constable who called out the names to whom the footprints belong," Willshire reported to Inspector Besley.

Mounted Constable Willshire only referred to Peter as “his native” but given he oversaw the Native Police it is safe to assume he was a Native Constable.

Native Constable Peter holds the very dubious honour of being the first member of the NT Police to be murdered in the course his duty. As far as we know, no one was ever held responsible for the murder.

He is honoured with a plaque on the National Police Memorial which was dedicated on Police Remembrance day 2022.

DIED WHILE SERVING

POLICE TROOPER THIRD CLASS HENRY WILKINSON

Date of Birth – 29th June 1847 in Canada

Date of Death – 10th February 1876 - aged 29 years

Police Trooper Third Class Henry Wilkinson joined the South Australian Police on the 11th August 1873. He transferred to the Northern Territory arriving in Palmerston on the SS Gothenburg on the 1st November 1873.

Police Trooper Third Class Henry Wilkinson served at the Southport Police Station Camp and at Palmerston.

Police Trooper Third Class Henry Wilkinson was found drowned at Southport, on the Blackmore River, 28 miles (45kms) southwest of Palmerston.

INTELLIGENCE reached Palmerston on Thursday that P.T. Wilkinson had been found drowned at Southport. On enquiry we ascertained that he had been missing for about a day, during which he had been diligently searched for by blacks and P.T. Brooks. The doctor has gone up to Southport, and of course an inquest will be held.

A BUSH GENTLEMAN

Colin Cox, one of the most gentle and genuine men ever in the Top End, raised his family at Pine Creek. He came from Sydney in the 1890's with his father, a boat builder. From Darwin they went to the goldfields at Yam Creek and then to Pine Creek. Colin was a master builder, but could turn his hand skilfully to any trade, and the completed job was a masterpiece. He build the original Manbulloo homestead and a new Police Station at Pine Creek – in the main building no nails; timber dovetailed and interlocked. This building has been replaced only within the past couple of years.

The hotel at the Old Crossing became delicensed. It had been run once by Tom Pearce, "Mine Host" of "We of the Never Never". Mrs Kate Nott took it over later, and ran it for many years as a store, with a storekeeper's licence. Joe Gaynor, a tremendously powerful man, carried on as blacksmith, substituting a shady tamarind for the traditional chestnut tree. Increasing business caused the post office to move from the Old Crossing to a 12' x 10' hut near the new railway station. George Lim – now of Darwin, and a near millionaire – opened a store and eating house. "Stuttering" Bill Ellis erected a bough shed on the bank of the river and plied his trade as a saddler. "Little Teddy" opened a baker shop. Jack Brumby, south of the town, a butcher shop (fresh beef on killing day; after that, dry salt beef). Bill Carter opened up as a baker near O'Shea's pub in a tiny shop bedecked with unique advertising signwriting. A handsome young doctor, W. Bruce Kirkland, was the Katherine medical officer, and the only one for 200 miles north, or 800 miles south. There was no hospital. The surgery and operating theatre were a couple of rough old railway huts. This breezy, humorous and most capable of medicos attained the rank of Colonel in the Second War and later was Chief Medical Officer of the Territory.

A new Police Station was being built, but an old second-hand angle -iron office-courthouse and two lock-ups were erected first. They were a definite priority. It was a rough, lawless, boisterous township and the lock-ups were filled night after night.

Mounted Constable – later Sergeant – Bob Wood was officer-in-charge at the Old Crossing. He used to drive in to town in the morning in an old buggy drawn by two horses, and return at night. The junior constable had a bunk in the Court House, ablutions at Tim O'Shea's, and meals at Mrs Conway's eating house. Bob Wood was the first to occupy the new

two-storey Police residence – replaced in recent years, as also was the wicked old office-courthouse-cells complex. Bob planted a number of trees in the surrounds, including a magnificent and widely admired tamarind, and a line of poincianas which made a dazzling splash of colour when in flower. Sergeant (later Inspector) Jack Lovegrove, one of the finest men ever to wear the uniform of the Northern Territory Police, moved into the old station at the Crossing.

John Newmarch took over the management of Manbulloo after Sir Alex Coburn-Campbell. Henry Fairfax Finnis, a descendent of Boyle Travis Finnis, first Government Resident of the Territory, became headmaster of the newly opened school. Both station manager and school master were Justices of the Peace, and both got heartily fed up with presiding in the squalid, furnace-like angle-iron Courthouse and being abused by the red-eyed, the unshaven, the scruffy and the odiferous.



Trivia Night

25 June 2024 at the
Darwin Ski Club

Time: 5:30pm
Date: 25th June 2024
Location: Darwin Ski Club,
20 Conacher St,
Fannie Bay NT 0820



Figure: Early 1940s Police Van

STATION STORY

BOGGY HOLE POLICE CAMP

(Note: This camp was also referred to as Boggy waters, Finke and Tempe Downs camp)

The Boggy Hole Police Camp was established in December 1887 and closed in May, 1891. It was situated on the eastern Bank of Finke River, near Boggy Hole

Boggy Hole is the name given to one of the permanent waterholes (billabong) on the Finke River, situated within the now Finke Gorge National Park in James Range and located 110 kilometres southwest of Alice Springs, as the crow flies.

Boggy waterhole, in spite of its name, is a stunning permanent waterhole just a few hours drive from Hermannsburg. The site features many potential camping areas set amongst the scenic river red gums, white sand, and green grass. The area is also steeped in history, located across from a historic police camp that was once the residence of notorious Mounted Constable W. H. Willshire.

Until 1887 the area was patrolled by mounted police and a Native Police corps from Alice Springs, who provided protection to the early settlers and attempted to prevent the killing and theft of cattle by the Aborigines.

In April 1887 the Native Police Corps was disbanded but not long after there was an outcry from pastoralists concerning cattle killing, theft and murder in the Tempe Downs and Finke River area. As a consequence, Commissioner of Police, William Peterswald, approved in December, 1887 the re-establishment of a Native Police Corps of six Aboriginal police trackers under the command of Mounted Constable William Willshire to Mounted Constable Willshire. Their task was simple and unambiguous, "to protect the pastoralists and put an end to the cattle spearing"

Given the title of Police Patrol for the Interior, Mounted Constable Willshire with the Native Police corps established a permanent camp site at Boggy Hole waterhole, where the camp became known as the Boggy Hole police camp. It was a short distance from Tempe Downs station and was specifically set up to protect the settlers. Patrols were conducted through the MacDonnell Ranges and as far north as Barrow Creek and such other areas due to the fear of attack from Aborigines.

Willshire remained based at Boggy Hole until May 1891 when he was arrested and charged with murder, following an enquiry conducted by Mr Francis. Gillen J.P. of Alice Springs into the shooting at Tempe Downs of two Aborigines on 20th February 1891. It was alleged that Willshire had given orders to the Aboriginal Constables to shoot and kill several Aboriginal suspects wanted for murders committed on white settlers up to two years earlier.



Figure 1: Location of Boggy Hole Police Camp

Mounted Constable Willshire was subsequently suspended and in July 1891 tried at the Port Augusta sittings of the Supreme Court. After a short trial Willshire was acquitted of the charges and in July 1891.

The Northern Willshire was subsequently reinstated in the Force; however, following his arrest in May 1891 the Boggy Hole police camp was disbanded. In August 1891, Inspector Besley, Officer in Charge Far Northern Police Division based at Port Augusta, directed that future patrols of the Tempe Downs area would be conducted each five weeks from Alice Springs with a patrol party comprised of one mounted constable and not less than three Aboriginal constables on horses or camels. Two years later however, following complaints that "the Aborigines in the interior have been getting more troublesome", a police station was established in May 1893 at Illamurta Springs, being about six kilometres south of the previous Boggy Hole police camp site, and remained open until 1912.



Figure 2 - Remains of Boggy Hole Police Station

Mounted Constable Willshire went on to serve both in South Australia and the

Northern Territory Police until aged 56 when in 1908 he resigned at the rank of senior constable and was appointed nightwatchman for Adelaide's newly completed Gepps Cross abattoirs. He died in 1926 at the age of 74. He justifiably remains a contentious figure in early NT History.

THE 1949 LAKE NASH WALK OFF

BY MARK MCADIE

The 1949 Lake Nash Walk Off is a historically significant event that highlights the early struggles of Aboriginal workers in Australia against unfair labour practices. This event preceded the more famous 1966 Wave Hill Walk Off led by Vince Lingiari and marked an important moment in the fight for Aboriginal labour rights and self-governance.

Background and Walk Off

Before the walk-off, Aboriginal workers at Lake Nash Station were compensated only in flour and treacle, despite providing nearly all of the labour at the station, which was owned by the Queensland National Pastoral Company. Dissatisfied with this arrangement and after years of being underpaid, Banjo Morton and seven other Alywarra men demanded wages in cash. This demand led to their decision to walk off the land in February 1949, initiating the protest.

Role of Constable Jack Mahony

Constable Jack Mahony, stationed at Lake Nash at the time, played a crucial role during this period. His responsibilities included overseeing the employment conditions of Aboriginal workers as a Deputy Protector of Aborigines, a common duty for police officers in remote areas of the Northern Territory. Mahony supported the workers' grievances, recognizing the legitimacy of their complaints about unfair treatment and inadequate compensation. He documented these events in his police journal, ensuring that there was a formal record which he forwarded to the Native Affairs office:

"In my opinion, these Aboriginal stockmen have a good and just complaint and should receive correct value for the work performed. The main point today is that the station is practically 100% Aboriginal labour. The stock camp definitely is.

I've written in these terms but it's evident the place is so isolated for even Native Affairs to worry about. Am forwarding a report to Native Affairs. My reason for this entry is that it will be on record for future reference and will not be disregarded as with possibly Native Affairs."

Aftermath and Resolution

After living off bush tucker for months, the workers negotiated with Charlie Paine, the station manager, who offered them £4 per month, with half in cash and the rest into a trust fund. The workers accepted this offer and returned to work at Lake Nash Station in May 1949.

In June 1949 Constable Mahoney received a letter of praise for his role in the walk off from the Director of Native Affairs in Darwin. More recently, His role was recognised on a webpage about Banjo Morton and the walk off at: <https://www.banjomorton.com.au/chapter-1>

Long-Term Impact

The struggle did not end with the resolution of this walk off. Issues regarding unpaid wages and mismanaged trust funds continued to affect Aboriginal workers across Australia. On July 9, 2019, seven decades later, the Queensland government agreed to pay \$190 million in reparations to Aboriginal workers for unpaid wages and stolen trust fund monies, acknowledging the longstanding financial injustices faced by these communities. However, similar compensation from the Commonwealth government, which had jurisdiction over Northern Territory indigenous peoples from 1918 to 1978, has not yet been offered.

This event at Lake Nash Station is an essential chapter in the broader narrative of Aboriginal rights in Australia, demonstrating early resistance against exploitation and the ongoing struggle for justice and recognition.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please let us know your thoughts on this newsletter or tell us what type of stories you would like to read. Send your contribution to citation.newsletter@proton.me

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor - Citation By email

Dear Pat,

Having read the article on the old "Two Bob" hat Badge written by Kym Chilton - I have more information to add which will fill in some of the gaps. The following passage of the December 1964 Edition of the Citation:

"The Northern Territory Police Force used to wear a round, bronze-coloured hat badge, embossed with the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, topped with a crown, and with a scroll at the base inscribed with the word "Police". So far we have been unable to find out just how long that badge was in service - whether it came in with Commonwealth control or was introduced at some later period."

You will note the similarity to this passage of Kym's article:

"To date I am unable to find any written archival information etc from that period retaining to the badge"

In the December 1965 edition of the Citation in an article entitled "Editor Badgered" a response to the quote above:

"Unfortunately, a copy of Citation" landed in the Fraud Squad Office in Adelaide and F.C.C. Tony Howlin instantly detected our false representation. He has one of the old badges and politely intimated that the lettering was simply "N. T.P." and set along a rubbing to prove it. Other badge owners, or former wearers, confirm this, so should now be able to take the record as having been satisfactorily straightened out. Vic Hall, by the way, designed this particular badge and was given a quid by Commissioner Dudley for his trouble!"

The upshot is, if this is to be believed (and there is no reason to doubt it). The "two bob" badge must have been designed and introduced sometime between Hall commencing with the NT Police (he joined on 5/11 1924) and George Vernon Dudley's separation date which was 11/12/1927. This a three year window.

In Vic Hall's book "Outback Policeman" he states:

"The major met me on the verandah soon after my enlistment, and asked me to demonstrate my artistic ability by designing a replacement for the Police Badge. In the Commissioner's opinion the present insignia "stunk". I did so and was awarded with ten shillings."

This then places the design part of the process to late 1924 or early 1925 (shortly after Hall's enlistment). You would therefore expect that the badge was introduced in 1925.

In any case, this badge was not to be worn for very long. A notation on a file related to the Police Uniform Regulations 1930 reads:

"Note: Home Affairs have instructed the N.A. [North Australia] authorities to adopt the same badge as the ACT Police, hasn't yet been notified in the gazette - 28/1/30."

In 1930 the then North Australia Police adopted a new uniform, and the ACT Police Badge was adopted.

The 'two bob' badge was therefore in use from circa 1925 to early 1930. Having established this there is a new question - Vic Hall designed the "two Bob" Police Badge in 1925 to be "a replacement for the Police Badge. In the Commissioner's opinion the present insignia "stunk". - What did that Police Badge look like?

Mark McAdie

Dear Citation Team,

I read with interest your recent request for interesting and historical stories for "Citation" and maybe you will be interested in the attached. Feel free to edit and use however you like, if you wish to use at all.

I enlisted in September 1962 Reg. no. 190, and served in Alice Springs, Anthony Lagoon, Katherine, Timber Creek and Darwin. I resigned and left for Victoria a month or so before Cyclone Tracey hit Darwin. I am now retired and reside in the ACT.

In May 2023 I returned to Darwin on holiday visiting Katherine and Timber Creek. I was surprised to see my old Darwin house in Rapid Creek looking much like I left it, but the Katherine house was gone. However, I found the old police house in Timber Creek locked up, still standing but my old police office and post office under the house was no longer there. I was amazed to see my old pump shed, engine remains and bore water well still present and I was able to have access to the house to look around. The old original police house nearby, now the Timber Creek Police Museum, was interesting as I had it set up as a gym while stationed there.

I have sent some old photos and other items to the museum since my visit.

Good luck and best wishes to everyone.

Regards

Frank Saunders
Reg No 190

CALL FOR STORIES

CYCLONE TRACY 50TH ANNIVERSARY

CYCLONE TRACY SPECIAL NEWSLETTER

A SPECIAL EDITION OF CITATION WILL BE PRODUCED AT THE END OF THE YEAR AS WE COMMEMORATE 50 YEARS SINCE CYCLONE TRACY.

YOU ARE INVITED TO FORWARD SHORT STORIES FOR THIS EDITION. STORIES MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN 30 SEPTEMBER 2024.

Send your stories to citation.newsletter@proton.me

If you have some memories of your time with NT Police we would love to share them via this newsletter. Stories can be humorous or serious, but please don't send anything that might offend.

Please send your contribution to citation.newsletter@proton.me

Don't worry if the grammar or spelling isn't quite right as we proof read all documents before publication.

The stories of your time with the NT Police are very much enjoyed by our readers and also contribute to the history of the NT Police Force.

MERCHANDISE

If you are interested in the history of policing in the Northern Territory, the NT Police Museum and Historical Society has two publications and a coin you can purchase. These items make great gifts!

To purchase yours go onto the website store at:
<https://www.ntpmhs.com.au/all-products>



POLICE LEGACY



NORTHERN TERRITORY
Police Legacy

We Remember Them

NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE LEGACY RELIES LARGELY ON THE DONATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS, PARTICULARLY THE SERVING AND PAST MEMBERS OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE FORCE.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DONATE TO NT POLICE LEGACY, YOU CAN DEPOSIT DIRECTLY INTO OUR ACCOUNT:

NAME: NT POLICELEGACY

BANK: BENDIGO BANK

BSB: 633-000

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NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE LEGACY INCORPORATED IS A DEDUCTIBLE GIFT RECIPIENT WHICH MEANS THAT DONATION MADE TO US OF \$2.00 OR MORE ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

JOIN OR VOLUNTEER

JOIN THE NT POLICE MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Any membership based organisation is only as good as its members. If you know someone who would like to join the Society or volunteer please ask them to contact us at citation.newsletter@proton.me

You can also find out more by going to the website where membership applications can be downloaded.

<https://www.ntpmhs.com.au/all-products>

CONTACT US

Email: secretary@ntpmhs.com.au

Citation Email: citation.newsletter@proton.me

Phone: (08) 8947 2458

Facebook: www.facebook.com/NTPMHS/

Postal Address:

PO Box 1595
Berrimah, NT, Australia, 0828

Website: www.ntpmhs.com.au

Physical Address:

House 3, Peter McAulay Centre
814 McMillians Road
Berrimah, NT, Australia, 0828

(Museum visits by APPOINTMENT ONLY)

CITATION TEAM

Editor:	Pat King
Assistant Editor:	Mark McAdie
Layout:	Jo Bennett
Typist:	Marilyn Evans
Research and Support:	Dr Gary Manison Kym Chilton Margaret McCarthy David Hutchinson Jan and John Woodcock Col Webster

