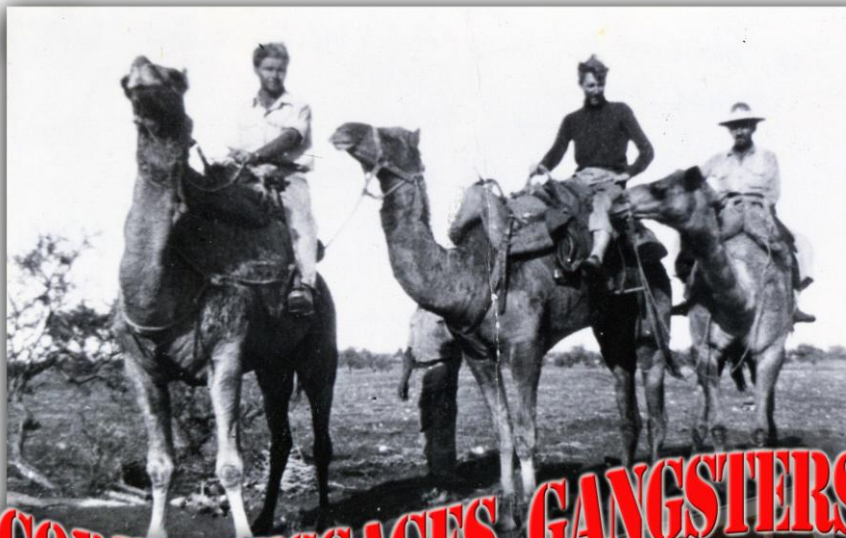


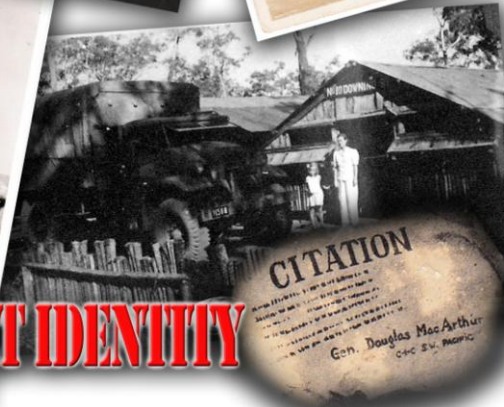
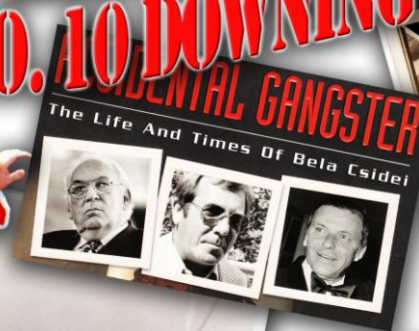
# Citation

*The Newsletter of the Northern Territory  
Police Museum and Historical Society Inc.*

*Issued: November 2010*



**CODED MESSAGES, GANGSTERS  
AND NO. 10 DOWNING STREET**



**SANTA'S SECRET IDENTITY**

**CITATION**  
Gen. Douglas MacArthur  
CSC 2nd Marine

## CHIT CHAT

### IDEAL STOCK SQUAD TRAINING



It seems **John Stockman** was an apt pseudonym for former NT policeman **Bert Mettam** in the *Hoofs and Horns* magazine (see **May 2010 article, P25**). Bert, 91, died in Adelaide on August 6. Citation was able to speak to him in the last months of his life and he told us wondrous anecdotes. When he was a boy in Darwin he knew the pound keeper as the pound was near the back of his residence at **Myilly Point**. Bert delighted in watching the horses, goats and cows brought to the enclosure. At times he mounted a stray nag and pretended he was a cowboy. He knew the names of most of the horses in Darwin. Some of the impounded horses were clever, learning to lean against the gate in a certain way to spring it open, enabling escape.

By observation and listening –his mother said he was an eavesdropper- he built up considerable knowledge about stock, their brands and owners. Not many cows were kept in Darwin, he told us, because they required a lot of grass for fodder and there was not much about in the Dry. Goats, however, could eat just about anything. The biggest goat herd in Darwin belonged to the Director of Mines, Edward Copley Playford. Nicknamed “Cop,” he was a tall man with a beard, a great bushman. As he had three daughters and lots of grandchildren, there may have been a big demand for milk.

We were hoping Bert might be able to identify two people in a photograph in a horse and cart at the Darwin Botanical Gardens which appeared in the highly illustrated book, *Australia Unlimited*, circa 1907. As his relatives, the Holtzes, had been closely connected with the Botanical Gardens and the Darwin suburb of Ludmilla had been named after his great aunt, Ludmilla Holtze, it was thought he may have been able to identify the couple in the cart. A blow up of the same photograph, mounted and framed, bearing the caption **The Botanical Gardens in the Northern Territory**, turned up in an antique shop in Glenelg, Adelaide, some 20 or more years ago.

The photograph of the couple was taken from the rear so that their faces were not visible. Enlisting the help of Dr Tony Kelly in Adelaide, we were able to get the photo taken to Bert. While he could not identify the couple in the cart, he said it was a shame the horse had also been snapped from the tail end. If the horse had been photographed face on, he probably would have been able to recall its name. We’ve heard about police mug shots helping to solve mysteries, but calling in Mr Ed, the photogenic horse, to help identify homo sapiens would have established a whole new chapter in modern detection techniques.

When he quit the Northern Territory Police Force in the 1950s on medical advice, because of his skin cancer and the impact of the climate on his condition, Bert felt almost homesick in Adelaide. As a result, he made an arrangement with R.M.Williams, the bush outfitter who became a national identity, to visit Alice from time to time and measure up police officers for uniforms. “I had no training at all as a tailor,” he admitted. “It was just an excuse to get back to the Territory.”



While back in his old stamping ground he gathered material for his John Stockman *Territory Letter* column in Hoofs and Horns. Another source of information for stories was an Adelaide publican who owned two cattle stations in the Centre.

Commenting on the current police uniform, which includes what he termed “silly little caps” not suited for the climatic conditions, he said broad brimmed hats provided more protection.

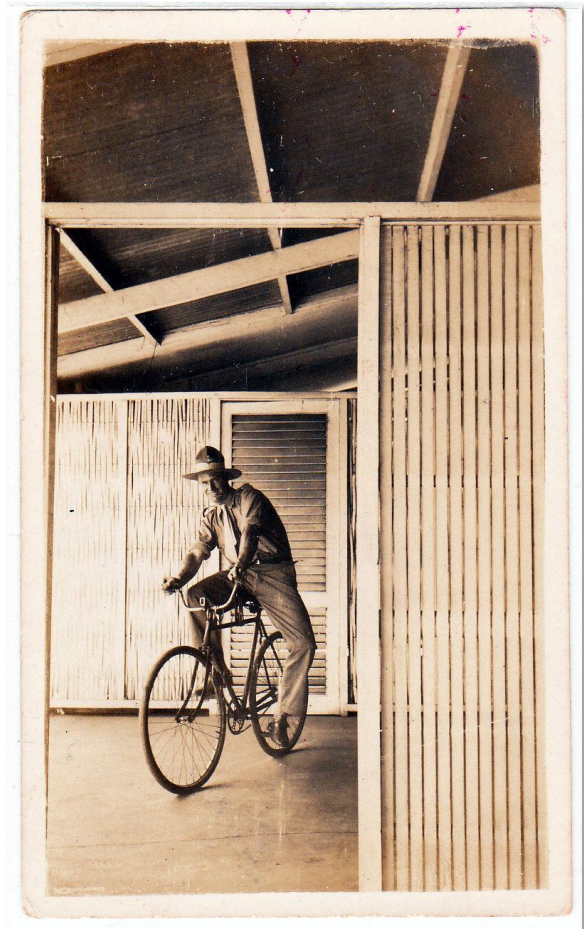
While his skin cancer troubles had a lot to do with his ordeal as a prisoner of war on the Thai-Burma railway during WW11, other police officers over the years had developed cancers. It was highly desirable, he maintained, that officers receive as much protection from the sun as possible. The widespread use of cars in police work had probably resulted in the wearing of caps. Riding horses on patrol soon brought home the message that you needed to protect yourself from the sun, he added.

### THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF RILEY

The late Valentine Arthur Blomfield “Peter” Riley, who died on August 17, aged 97, was an interesting letter writer. In his Police Museum file is a separate folder containing general correspondence of his with a range of informative gen about the force, historical events, commentary and his research. He joined the force in January 1935, arrived in Darwin from Sydney aboard the *SS Marella*, and experienced the March 1937 cyclone which battered the town.

One of his letters tells of the unfortunate death of Constable Clapp who accidentally shot himself, bled to death and was buried in Katherine. Clapp’s mother came out from England to see her son’s grave, Riley wrote, and became the cook at the police barracks in Darwin. She, like a number of

officers, including Riley, came down with dengue fever.



*‘Peter’ Riley mounted on the police bicycle outside his bedroom at the Darwin barracks in 1935.*

Riley recounted how in the early 1950s he was successful in getting improvements like an overhead fan and mosquito nets for the Katherine Police Station, a hotbox, where officers tried to be out of before 10am. The Government Secretary, Reg Leydin, drove the Administrator’s car into Katherine and asked Riley if he could get a replacement tyre for the spare, which did not look the best. Pete scouted around, got a better tyre from a garage, and used some “human psychology” on Leydin and lobbied for a fan for the troops and mosquito nets for prisoners who were attacked by mosquitoes and Singapore ants. Through his vast knowledge, Riley was able to supply information about the designer of the long gone Parap Police

Station and other police establishments constructed along similar lines at Daly River, Timber Creek, Wave Hill (see photo on page 19), Brock's Creek and Roper River.

Alice Springs journalist, Alan Wauchope, acknowledged Riley's help in supplying information for the *Old Alice Column* in the *Centralian Advocate*. Attached to a 1988 letter of Riley's is a photograph of

Darwin's first black maria vehicle. In other correspondence he comments on the German aviators who nearly perished when their plane went off course on a flight to Darwin, cattle rustler Captain Starlight and the 1883 Constable John Shirley tragedy.

After a service at the Buderim Crematorium Chapel, family and friends gathered at the Big Pineapple to swap yarns.



*This image is at the side of the Darwin Police Station on Bennett Street in 1951. The vehicle shown is Darwin's first 'Black Maria' or 'Paddy Wagon'. In front is Superintendent Littlejohn. In the second row, left to right, is Sergeant V.J. Mutch, Constable R.G. Hughes, Inspector W. McKinnon, Administrator F.J.S. Wise, Sergeant Riley. In the back row is Constable H. Lullfitz, Constable J. Cooke, Constable T. Hollow (others as yet unidentified).*

**Who is the Santa on the Cover? He is a well-known police officer who frequently played this role. Clue – His Nickname partly describes his previous occupation!**



# Dots and Dashes of a Lucky Life

**\*Escorted by two burly police officers - Constables Tony "Tiny" Dean and Ron Brown - a slim teenager with a kitbag chained to his wrist went to and from the Commonwealth Bank each afternoon in Darwin to transact business for the Native Affairs Branch. He was Les Penhall, 18, who had arrived in Darwin from Adelaide on November 29, 1941.**

In Adelaide, he had been number 27 on a list of 32 who had passed the third division clerical exam and worked in the Adelaide Post Office telephone accounts division. There was a practice in those days that if you did not obtain a permanent position within a year you had to re-sit the entry exam.

As time passed without a permanent post, he being such a low man on the employment totem pole, not wanting to go through the exam again, Penhall inquired about joining the Navy. He was firmly told not to waste time applying as he was in a reserved occupation. Along came a notice calling for three volunteers in the Darwin Administration / Native Affairs, so he promptly applied and was soon heading north to an uncertain future.

One of his tasks in Darwin involved collecting the mail from the post office where he knew all the staff who were from Adelaide, including Mr and Mrs Bald and their daughter, Iris. Iris had worked in the same telephone accounts section as he at the Adelaide Post Office.

Going for the mail, he often met Iris who had been seconded to the Taxation Department. Another girl who collected mail was Flo Wright, from the court house, who became the first wife of lawyer Dick Ward, later a judge of the NT Supreme Court. Life subsequently changed quickly and dramatically for Penhall.

At first living at the Hotel Darwin in a barracks- like shed with push out

windows, mosquito nets and a wash basin, he later moved to the school teachers' mess in December when it was clear that teachers would not be returning because of the deteriorating war situation.



*Les Penhall and his wife Scottie*

In what seemed a grand adventure, Penhall was told to investigate the situation at Delissaville, across the harbour, in case the settlement had to be evacuated. On Boxing Day 1941, he set out with bushman Bill Harney, also in Native Affairs, and two Aborigines, in a small dinghy driven by a five horsepower motor. They had to wait for the incoming tide to return because of the puny motor.

Time was rapidly counting down to a momentous event in the history of Australia – the bombing of Darwin. Every Wednesday afternoon Administration staff were given time off to dig slit trenches. "It was so hard, we could only get down to about three inches," he told *Citation*. "The whole of Darwin peninsula was like that." As a result, the trenches in the city were of little use when the moment of truth arrived

in the shape of extensive pattern bombing and strafing.

On the fateful morning of February 19, Penhall made arrangements with Iris Bald and two of her girlfriends to attend the Star Theatre that evening with him and some of his mates. Sitting at his desk in the Administration offices on the Esplanade shortly before 10am, one of Penhall's workmates, Jim Pott, said to look at the planes coming in, and then the drone of engines was heard. Penhall took one look, shouted that the planes were not ours, and saw what looked like silver darts falling - bombs. Penhall ran out the back of the building, past the police barracks, across Mitchell Street, heading for the cliff which fell away to the beach. Bombs were exploding in many places. In the dash to safety he saw a bomb fall on the post office less than 90 feet from him. Nine Post Office staff including Iris and her parents were killed during the raid, one bomb falling in the trench in which office staff took shelter. (There is a memorial plaque on the floor of parliament house marking the spot where the staff were killed).

As he dived down the cliff, a piece of shrapnel tore a hole in the sleeve of his shirt and caused a minor wound to his left arm. Zeros started to machine gun the anti-aircraft battery on the Darwin Oval opposite the Hotel Darwin. Penhall recalled: "I could hear the bullets actually zipping through the tree tops, and just kept my bloody head down. Funny thing, all I really thought of down there was to protect my head. I did not want to be hit in the head."

During the thunderous explosions, gunfire, and scream of engines, Penhall looked towards Talc Head, across the harbour, and saw the USS Peary sinking. "It just slowly, slowly sank into the sea. I have a memory of the anti-aircraft gun, an oerlikon, I

think, on the stern, still firing as the ship went under the water. An amazing sight! [In recent years he saw a painting depicting the sinking of the Peary, going down stern first, which did not accord with his vivid memory of the fighting ship's final moments.] The harbour was alight. The British Motorist, an oil tanker, was hit and the oil was set alight by incendiary bullets fired by Zeros. A lot of the people in the water burnt. We helped for a short period trying to pull some of these people out of the water. Lots of them were buried on the foreshore between Government House and the wharf and later dug up and reburied."

It still angers Penhall that the first bombing of Darwin was described as Australia's day of shame because some Servicemen and others fled the city. When interviewed for a TV series called Australia's Day of Shame, he strongly denied the disparaging message of the title, and was recorded as saying many brave acts had been performed. At the sounding of the all clear, Penhall went back to the office and gathered there with some of the staff. They were told to go to their accommodation at the schoolhouse mess from whence they would be picked up and evacuated to Alice Springs. About four or five in the afternoon, one of Penhall's Post Master General (PMG) friends, with a ute, Neville Keech came to check on his well being. (Penhall would later become Keech's best man at his wedding). As there had been no further instructions from anybody, his friend told Penhall to hop in the ute and with two other PMG employees, Laurie Hickey and Boris Kennedy, they drove out of the shattered town.

On arriving at Parap, there was an Army checkpoint where they were told that it was Code Black - invasion imminent - and they were told to "keep on going until you get to Adelaide." They later interpreted

this instruction to be Adelaide River, not the South Australian capital. The night was spent in the 17- mile quarry where they were attacked by mosquitoes, not invading Japanese. Next morning, because they did not have much petrol, they decided to return to Darwin.

Arriving back at the Administration office on February 20, the Superintendent of Police, Alf Stretton, was there with Constable Greg Withnell. With the two police officers, Penhall went to the Department of Works and they loaded files and other items onto a truck. That night Penhall returned to the schoolhouse mess, took a mattress and a mosquito net down to Frog Hollow and camped there. Next morning, Constable Withnell and Superintendent Stretton arrived and he and three other clerks Jim Pott, Con Parker and Martin Joseph, clambered onto the back of the vehicle and set out for Adelaide River. On arrival, there was an air raid alert and they drove off into the scrub to avoid any attack.

When they returned to Adelaide River in the morning an Army officer wanted to induct all four young men, including Penhall, into the army. It happened that the Administrator, Charles Lydiard Aubrey Abbott, also the Commissioner of Police, was in the town and told the Army man that they were his staff, could not join the force, and were going to Alice Springs.

The truck, still under the control of Superintendent Stretton, was put on a railway flattop and they boarded the train for Larrimah. At Mataranka, the train had to be split to enable it to get up a hill. Penhall thought they were being left behind when he saw the locomotive head off, but it came back. At Larrimah, the group stayed in a staging camp which catered for the convoys heading north from Alice. Petrol for the truck was obtained from the Army and they resumed the trip

along the unsealed track which was the highway, frequently pulling over for northbound convoys, the four sitting on top of the records showered with dust. By the time they got to Aileron they had been on the road for six days and hoped they might get a proper bed, not a Cyclone stretcher or a horsehair mattress. Unfortunately, there was a message waiting for Superintendent Stretton at Aileron requesting him to come straight to Alice as he was required urgently. They drove through the night, arriving in Alice about 1am, there being only one light on in town.

As there was no way of getting accommodation at that hour, Penhall spent his first night in the police cells on a bed which was a flat board which folded out from the wall on chains. Eventually other accommodation was found, including the maids' quarters at the back of The Residency. The Native Affairs Department took over the house next to the police station. An unflappable and friendly person he had dealings with in Alice was Constable Raymond Reece Bridgland, "Bridgie".

One of Penhall's first tasks was to sort out those valuable Works Department files brought all the way from Darwin. Where files seemed incomplete or missing paperwork, Penhall creatively wrote: **DESTROYED BY ENEMY ACTION.** "This got me out of a lot of trouble," said Les, with a laugh.

Superintendent Stretton also had problems with the police files which had been brought from Darwin. He officially reported the loss of police records made it difficult for the force to function properly. The West Australian Police Department wrote seeking information about the effectiveness of trenches during the Darwin bombing. Replying, Superintendent Stretton said without

trenches the death toll in air raids would be higher. The ideal trench was about four feet deep by two feet wide and should be a safe distance from a building. Persons should crouch in the trench and not place their backs against the walls as the concussion was so great the earth shook for a great distance-“acres”. A covering of logs and galvanised iron to provide protection from machine gunning would be beneficial. He further advised that bomb craters in Darwin varied from 15-30 feet and that no incendiary bombs had been dropped in Darwin.

Penhall helped draw up a list of the names of crewmembers from ships sunk in Darwin who were evacuated south on convoys, many of them Chinese and Malays, who wore name tags. During the month he spent in Alice he had meals at the Stuart Arms Hotel and avoided being run down by the son of General Douglas MacArthur. The famous US general, who passed through after fleeing the Philippines, was accompanied by his wife and young son. The boy, about four by Penhall’s reckoning, had a three –wheeler bike of some kind, and made a nuisance of himself by riding it round and round inside the Stuart Arms Hotel, running into people’s legs and sideboards. Mrs MacArthur seemed a nice woman, but the general did not mean much to Penhall at the time. From memory, he felt the general’s party was only in town for two days before going south.

Summoned to an office one day, Penhall was greeted by an Army officer who said, “Your father wants to see you.” Penhall’s father had re-enlisted and was in the Adelaide military HQ. Les found himself drafted into the Army and on a train with 19 others bound for Adelaide. Along the way the train pulled into a loop line from time to time to make way for trains heading north. At these stopovers the

Army had two coppers, one with hot water for a cuppa and the other containing stew.

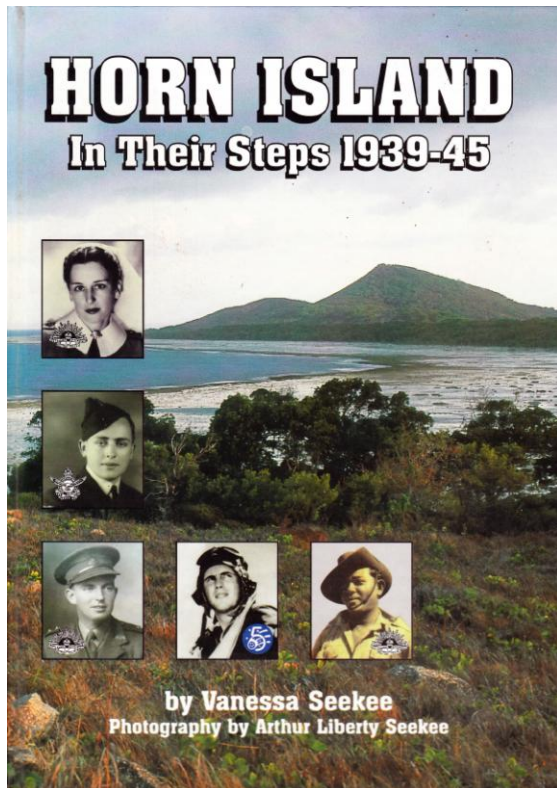
Part of his basic infantry training in Adelaide was carried out at Fort Largs, now the South Australian Police Force Academy, and he also galloped around the Victoria Park racetrack on foot with a heavy pack on his back. Trekking 35 miles with a full pack in 24 hours was part of the endurance training.

A signaller with the 74<sup>th</sup> Mobile Anti-Aircraft Searchlight Battery, he was sent to Horn Island, in the Torres Strait, Australia’s furthest north operation airfield, said to have been the second most bombed place after Darwin. The Japanese first bombed the island on March 14, 1942, not long after the first raid on Darwin. When Penhall arrived at Horn Island aboard the *SS Islander*-later sunk by the enemy- in January 1943, the feeling was that the Japanese, in New Guinea, would island hop down through the Torres Strait to the mainland. The main airstrip on Horn had been completed in 1940 and work then started on a cross strip. This made the island an important base in the battle against the Japanese, Allied bomber and fighter raids launched against the Japanese from there. Searchlights were set up on nearby Tuesday and Wednesday islands to help protect Horn Island from attack. When planes were making night raids on the Japanese, a searchlight was positioned vertically into the sky as a beacon to guide home returning aircraft. Each searchlight group consisted of 12 men. Many members of the Torres Strait Light Infantry served and passed through Horn Island, including members of singer Christine Anu’s family.

[The 2002 book, *Horn Island 1939-1945*, by Vanessa and Arthur Liberty SeeKee, mentions Penhall. In a special presentation inscription to Les, the Seekees wrote: “Thank you for what you did here in Horn



Island during World War Two. The 74<sup>th</sup> Mob SL Bty and yourself won't be forgotten"]



Penhall's sister, Nanette, her name inspired by the musical show, No, No Nanette!, on turning 18, joined up and served in the 58<sup>th</sup> AA Searchlight Battery, consisting of women, which allowed male soldiers to be released for other wartime duties. She co-wrote *Candles in the Sky*, an unofficial history of the Australian Women's Army Searchlight group which served in South Australia and on Rottnest Island, Western Australia.

Not yet eligible to be demobbed, Les Penhall nevertheless found himself flown back to Alice Springs in 1946, his discharge arranged by the Director of the Native Affairs Branch, E.W.P Chinnery, who had been a senior officer and government anthropologist in New Guinea. Postwar Alice was still an army town when he arrived back but it was being wound down and preparations were being made for war surplus auctions.

Chinnery proposed that he become a Patrol Officer and he was sent to Sydney University to do a course conducted by anthropologist, Professor A. E. Elkin, at the School of South Pacific Administration. Professor Elkin had a big influence on the treatment of indigenous people, especially in the NT, at times making critical comments about conditions and court cases. Others to take the course were Syd Kyle Little and Ted Evans. Professor Elkin liked to chat with the Territory trainees at morning tea and find out about conditions in the NT. He had many dealings in the 1930s with author Xavier Herbert who presented him with a copy of his 1938 prize winning novel about the Territory, *Capricornia*.

Becoming a Patrol Officer was a career change which brought Penhall into close contact with many Aborigines, police, the magistracy, Mr Justice Kriewaldt, lawyers, journalists, Japanese pearlers and numerous characters. In 1947 he was stationed at the new Yuendumu settlement where the kindergarten teacher was Bernice Loon who later married Rex Battarbee, artist Albert Namatjira's mentor.

While Les and his wife were on their honeymoon, a driller struck water near the Yuendumu settlement, broke out a bottle of Scotch whisky to celebrate, and the supply became known as Penhall's Bore, shown as such on modern pastoral maps drawn by the Lands Branch. At the time, Mrs Penhall thought it wonderful that the Penhall name had been immortalised by a bore.

As he was also a Protector of Aborigines, Penhall regularly appeared in lower courts to represent defendants, especially on Monday mornings. His responsibilities included circuit court rounds to Tennant Creek with various magistrates, including Messrs. Crang, Lemaire and "Scrubby"

Hall, coming into contact with most of the police officers in the process. At times he bunked down for the night in a police cell at Tennant Creek.

In the 1950s, horses were still tied to the old hitching rail outside the Stuart Arms Hotel, called the Stupid Arms. Not far away, in the middle of the road, was the Billy Tree, eventually removed because it was regarded as a traffic hazard. It may have derived its name because drovers could tie their horses to the hitching rail and boil a billy under the shade of the tree.

Opposite the hotel was the Wallis Fogarty store where Albert Morcom, whose family had been involved in the Charters Towers goldfield, North Queensland, worked as a storeman; Les got to know him well. Over the years Morcom had taken his annual holidays at Borroloola. When the

Borroloola Police Station was closed down, at the end December 1948, arrangements were made for Morcom to be caretaker of the rundown building, look after a Tracker and act as postmaster for the grand sum of ten shillings (\$1) a week. He became one of the Borroloola identities and was a regular contributor to the *NT News* in Darwin.

A novel experience for Penhall was a camel patrol of stations in the Finke area. Then he went on the last police camel patrol in Central Australia with Constables Tony Kelly and A. J. Millgate looking for an Aboriginal man who absconded after murdering a woman. Penhall, with Constable Millgate, drove to Curtin Springs Station in his specially fitted out Chevrolet truck to rendezvous with Constable Kelly who was travelling with a string of camels and some Trackers.



*\*Penhall, Kelly and Millgate on last camel patrol.*

Penhall took the battery from his truck and it was placed on a camel to enable radio contact. At the time, Penhall was worried that the battery could be jolted and acid splash on the camel, causing it to bolt. During the manhunt, Penhall and Constable Millgate climbed Ayers Rock (Uluru ) and found a tobacco tin, with 11 names scratched on it, sitting on top of a cairn, so they added their names. Over the years Penhall amassed many anecdotes about police officers carrying out their duties in a large part of the nation with limited resources and immense responsibilities. No names, no pack drill, Penhall actually piggy- backed for several days a tenderfoot police officer who badly lacerated the soles of his feet. For this devoted action he should surely be considered for official recognition similar to that given Simpson's donkey at Gallipoli.

The crusading journalist, Jim Bowditch, of the Alice Springs newspaper, the *Centralian Advocate*, and later the *Northern Territory News*, said Penhall knew more about NT Aborigines than anybody else. Penhall represented Aborigines appearing in court on petty charges and arranged and briefed lawyers, often Dick Ward, in indictable cases. NT Supreme Court judge, Mr Justice Kriewaldt, before sentencing an Aborigine, called Penhall as an expert witness and closely questioned him in an attempt to see if there were any extenuating circumstances. Because of his job, Penhall investigated most incidents involving Aborigines, and often briefed police before they went out to make inquiries.

One day he received an urgent telephone call from an English medico, Dr Bert Welton, at the Alice Springs Hospital, who said his blood was needed and to come quickly. Responding, Penhall found himself flat on his back making a direct transfusion to a Haart's Range miner who

had attempted suicide by shooting himself in the chin. The unfortunate man died despite the transfusion.

While on leave during the war, Penhall had become a mason, introduced by his father, and has now been a member for 69 years. In Alice Springs, Reverend Harry Griffiths of the Methodist Church, was also a mason and meetings were held in the church, Masonic regalia stored underneath the altar. [Recently Penhall received a bar to his masonic medal marking 65 years membership, making him the longest serving mason in the Territory]

Penhall was in the group which started a roneoed newspaper, the *Dead Heart*, which was well received in Alice. Despite the title, the publication was designed to show that the town was anything but dead, its name being a reference to its geographical position. The idea for the paper surfaced at a creative Friday night drinking session. Others in the publication venture were Noel Lynagh of the Lands Branch, who moved back to Darwin soon after, Fred Gubbins, a former Patrol Officer, and Miss Janet Buchanan who typed it up to be run off on a roneo machine owned by accountant Jack Owens. Penhall, a co-editor, had a shortwave radio and picked up sporting news for the paper. Publication ceased after 30 issues due to the launching of the *Centralian Advocate*, now a Murdoch paper. Penhall's involvement in sport saw him playing Aussie Rules against Henry Peckham, tall and well-built, who became a prominent Adelaide footballer, son of Henry V. Peckham, "The Fizzer" in *We of the Never Never*. Wide ranging patrols of the outback brought Penhall into contact with police officers, including Jack Mahoney, Hugh Deviney, Greg Ryall. His specially fitted out Chev truck had lockers on either side, one for food, the other for spares, with sleeping space in the middle. Over the top was a canvas cover and there



was a battery operated radio. During trips through the Barkly Tablelands he would call in at the Camooweal Police Station, in Queensland, near the border.

Former mounted policeman, Ted Morey, at the time working in Native Affairs, unexpectedly turned Penhall into an overnight drover responsible for the removal of 100 horses from Ti Tree to Tennant Creek when Morey had to dash back to Beswick.

An elderly Alice resident, Johnny O'Keefe, who had been a bootlegger during prohibition in America, gave Penhall a recipe for home brew. The late Mona Minahan, an outstanding Centralian, who ran stores and the Riverside Hotel in Alice, drove supplies out to miners. Penhall would send her an order for a shirt and she would send him a bottle of rum in a hollowed out loaf of bread. Miss Olive Pink, greatly interested in Aborigines, who made life difficult for many public servants, wrote many letters of complaint. Yet when Penhall and friends played tennis on courts near her residence on a hot day, she produced a jug of home-made lemonade for them. Professor Elkin had known her from earlier days and, apart from dashing off an occasional sharp letter to him, she sent him a metal hatbox with strict instructions not to open it until she gave him permission.

When Albert Namatjira became famous through his paintings, he was given a truck by well wishers, which he could not drive, so a son drove him about. The artist also had a cheque book, but became overdrawn at the bank to the tune of about 900 pound (\$1800) because so many people asked him for money. On being approached by the bank about the problem, Penhall and his superior, Bill McCoy, a first world war veteran, spoke to Namatjira. He agreed to give them his cheque book so that anybody who wanted money from him had to

approach them for approval. In Penhall's opinion, Namatjira liked this arrangement because it took a lot of pressure off him, he being constantly pressured for money.

Furthermore, Penhall and the other officer kept a watch on the sale of his paintings, signing their names and date on the back so as Namatjira received the benefit of the sale. Members of the Namatjira family at times painted the background to some pictures which were finished off by Albert and sold as his work. In 1953 Penhall was transferred to Elliott and Constable Gordon Stott, stationed there, would say he felt like some "chook", whereupon a Scrub Turkey was shot and cooked. Such birds were protected at the time.

While based at Elliott, he had to go to Tennant Creek and was given some mail to deliver to the Phillip Creek settlement. Arriving there, he was greeted by two anxious single teachers who quickly asked him if he was married. Why? Because a 15 year old girl was about to give birth and they felt he was the ideal person to deliver the baby.

A man of action, he ordered water to be boiled and, by the light of a Hurricane lamp, rapidly read Dr V. H. Webster's guide to bush medicine as the girl went into labour. Much to his relief, he noticed the baby was coming head first and would not have to be turned. He delivered a healthy girl and cut and tied the umbilical cord. After the stress and tension of the birth, he realised why he had ordered hot water at the outset: it was needed for a soothing cuppa. Aboriginal widwives, who had not become involved in the birth at the outset, because it was felt the mother had associated with a white man, then took over on seeing the child was Aboriginal. The baby was named Julie, after Les's own daughter.

Naturally, Penhall had extensive dealings with the energetic new head of the former Native Affairs Department -the NT Welfare Department- Harry Christian Giese, who was given the task of bringing in big changes in the treatment of Aborigines. Giese held meetings with key groups involved with Aborigines, such as missionaries and pastoralists, to inform them of the new regime. Penhall was present at one such meeting with the Centralian Pastoralists' Association in Alice Springs in the early 1950s which led to rumblings against Giese. In attendance were the Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck, and the NT Administrator, Mr Frank Wise. Covering the meeting was reporter Jim Bowditch who told this writer Giese pulled no punches. Bowditch said Giese informed the gathering the period of misuse of Aborigines was finished and that a proper award would be brought in to cover workers in the pastoral industry and elsewhere. The audience, he said, sat there in stunned silence. After the meeting, Bowditch heard cattlemen voice criticism of Giese, saying he was a city man who knew nothing about Aborigines and they would have to get him removed.

From Western Australia, where he had been involved in physical education, Giese ate health foods like peanuts and sultanas. In later years, he was known to get about squeezing a tennis ball. His appointment to the Territory post had been made during the reign of Paul Hasluck, also a West Australian. It was often claimed that Giese was related to Hasluck, so had his full backing. However, Penhall asked him directly if he was related to the minister, and received an emphatic no, thus shooting down yet another widely muttered Territory myth. Penhall found Giese sincere, demanding and a good orator.

An order went out from Giese that wholemeal flour would be issued to settlements instead of white flour. The

Aborigines looked at the new flour and said it was "all the same bloody chook"- meaning poultry mash. So they pulled fly wire from houses and sieved out the wholemeal grains. As a result, there was an abrupt end to the supply of healthy wholemeal flour.

When Minister Hasluck visited Melville Island it was decided to take a canoe from Snake Bay across the strait to Bathurst Island. Giese stood in the canoe, one foot on land, pushed off- and the vessel turned turtle. On another occasion, Giese, wanting to visit Beswick one weekend, went to Katherine, found the Waterhouse River flowing, stripped off to swim to a dinghy on the other side, dived in and found the water was only 18 inches deep.

Many people, Penhall said, were critical of the Welfare Department, mostly pastoralists, because they felt it was interfering with what they were doing. To a certain extent, Penhall said the patrol officers were arbitration inspectors making sure that terms and conditions for the employment of Aborigines were followed. To do your work, you had to be diplomatic. He got on well with station management in the Barkly region, owned by large pastoral companies, where they would listen to what you he had to say and either agree or disagree about some things. The only police officer with whom he had some difficulty was Constable Vic Hall who had firm views about the bad treatment of Aborigines by Europeans, an attitude expressed in his books.

Penhall was brought to Darwin in 1955, the sole officer with responsibility to patrol Arnhem Land. He boarded *HMAS Junee* which checked the Japanese pearling fleet. A large mother ship serviced about 20 luggers; to get aboard the vessel, a swaying 20ft rope ladder had to be climbed. The Japanese feted the naval skipper and produced large bottles of made

in Japan genuine Scotch whisky and various exotic dishes. Not happy about the precarious ladder, Penhall did not partake of the imitation whisky.

There had been reports that the Japanese went ashore on North Goulburn Island during neap tides, when they were unable to dive, and would careen their boats. They were also said to recruit girls from Goulburn island who were thrown overboard and told to swim ashore, but these rumours could not be proved. Large stacks of empty sake bottles were found on North Goulburn. Penhall and Ted Evans provided the first lectures on Aboriginal matters given police recruits.

A rare opportunity presented itself in Darwin when Penhall bought from a Chinese vendor a Mini Minor car bearing the number plate 41. As Penhall had first arrived in Darwin in 1941, it was a highly desirable buy for him. One of those who hitched a ride in the Mini was the large Anglican priest, Father Gwynne Jones, also known as the Liquor Vicar, who caused the small vehicle to tilt somewhat like Mr Bean's erratic auto when he plopped down inside outside the Darwin Club and ordered Les to drive him home to the vicarage. Penhall's present car still sports the number 41.

Awarded a Churchill Fellowship, Penhall went overseas in 1971 to study the impact of alcohol on indigenous communities, which took him to Canada, the US and Mexico. Passing through London he met up again with Dr Welton, then working in Australia House, who had called him in for the urgent blood transfusion in Alice which failed to save the man who had deliberately shot himself.

After Cyclone Tracy, Penhall helped set up the backdrop at the ampitheatre for the special concert in which Rolf Harris performed, his act including Jake the Peg,

the three legged man. He and Harris got along well. On Australia Day 1983, Les was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for public service.

Now retired and living in Darwin, Penhall, 87, takes an interest in current events. As the result of the Peter Falconio murder case, he contacted police and suggested his body could have been dumped at the old Ivy Mine, north of Barrow Creek, about four miles from the murder scene. Penhall said alluvial tin there had been worked by Aboriginal families who put the tin into jam tins which were sold to Jimmy Hereen who came every so often and bought their output. Holes were gouged in the hill in the process and it was possible Falconio's body had been placed in one of them. Penhall said he did not believe that anyone would cart a body for a great distance.

Commenting on the many police he met during his time in the Territory, Penhall said they were mainly outstanding men, a different breed. One of Penhall's abiding memories is sitting on the steps at the Haritos store in Darwin having a quiet beer with Inspector Bill Littlejohn, watching the world go by. In Alice, at the golf club, a senior police officer advised him to stick around as the keg, announced as being dry, actually had six more inches of foaming fluid left; Clive Graham-" a really good bloke"- was known as the " Boy Scout" because the crown on his hat was shaped like a lemon squeezer.

Penhall's knowledge of Aboriginal culture came to the fore when shown a 1930s photograph of author Xavier Herbert in his Darwin residence with a display of artefacts on the wall behind him. He pointed out that some of the spears were Tiwi, the barbs being "male"- on one side only. If female, the barbs would be on both sides. Stones, he said, could be both male and female.



Les and his wife, “Scottie” have a communication skill which almost no modern couple possess: they both know morse code. Mrs Penhall, nee Effie (a name about which she is not enamoured) Scott, served as a wireless telegraphist at the RAAF headquarters in an old Toorak mansion, Melbourne, during WW11. It was a centre of great activity with encoded messages flying backwards and forwards to the islands and London. She entered this high pressure hub, where everybody was sworn to secrecy, at the age of 18.

It was the RAAF way to call everybody by their surname, so she became Scottie, better than Effie, and it has remained in vogue ever since. Scottie said she was terribly disappointed when the war ended because working for the RAAF had been so satisfying and exciting; she had to go home to mum and dad in Adelaide. Her mother told her that she should go to Alice Springs to help her sister, married to Fred Gubbins, one of those involved in the *Dead Heart* publication, who was expecting her second child. The pay was a mere two pound (\$4) a week.

Eventually, Scottie was employed at the *Centralian Advocate* newspaper office, owned by Charles “Pop” Chapman, who had made his pile at the Granites goldfield (see article this edition ). One of Chapman’s sons, Gordon, also worked

there. A weekly newspaper, it was collated every Friday night and friends were brought in to help do the job, manager Ron Morcom, a linotype operator, no relation to Albert Morcom, turning on a special supper for all hands. Journalist Alan Wauchope, known throughout Australia for his regular contributions to the *Australasian Post* magazine, interviewed the petty cash tin each Monday. To be written up in the Advocate’s social news was a thrill for residents.

In an unsolicited testimonial, Les said that, when it comes to morse code, his wife is “brilliant”, able to take 25 words a minute, more than his maximum of 19, which in his case were usually staccato commands like, Fire! They had baffled their children by conversing with each other through messages in morse dots and dashes.

To demonstrate their morse skill, they read a message on an old Welsh topographical postcard depicting the Betws-y-Coed Miners’ Bridge, gateway to Snowdonia, across the Llugwy River, used by lead miners, which *Citation* produced. On the initial examination, it was found that it had been sent by a romantic person with the morse for X - kisses – repeated over and over on two edges. With yet another brace of farewell sloppy kisses, it was found that it had been sent from Jack to Selma. It read:

***Dear Selma.***

***I think you will have bother to read this. As I had with yours –I hope you will be able to understand more than I had with yours (Was Selma’s another sloppy message of undying love in morse?).***

***I hope you will be able to understand it by next Saturday. Will mean six extra kisses from me. No room to write any more on this card, so I will say goodbye for the present, with best wishes.***

***Love, Jack***



\*Morse code postcard decoded by Penhalls

## The Bleak House Tragedy

A foundation member of the Alice Springs RSL Club- started in a hut at the foot of Anzac Hill- Les Penhall obtained a liquor licence from magistrate, J W. "Fatty" Nichols, who said it would be granted after obtaining an application form with the signatures of 51 ex-servicemen. Surprisingly, this proved difficult, because in that early postwar period there were not that many former Servicemen in town, despite thousands having passed through in the war years.

Those based in Alice during the war had not been regarded as ex-Service. Penhall canvassed far and wide, including cattle stations while on patrol, and eventually got the required number. The place thrived, eventually becoming the Memorial Club, which played a major part in the town's social and sporting life.

The first barman/manager was retired ex-policeman, John William "Jack" Kennett, who had joined the force in 1928. One of the places where he was posted was the

Charlotte Waters Police Station, the large, former Overland Telegraph Line stone building, called "Bleak House" because of its desolate surroundings, reached by a difficult drive over "treacherous" sandhills. While at Charlotte Waters, 33km south of Alice, Constable Kennett's family was unknowingly exposed to deadly diphtheria in early 1936.

His wife and four of their five children were stricken. Two girls, Rossly and Joyce, died. It was a tragic ordeal spread

over many heart-breaking weeks with cars bogging down in the sand, the Kennett baby dying in her mother's arms, planes



making mercy dashes delayed for various reasons.



*In the "Bleak House" courtyard circa 1933/34, Constable Kennett and his wife pose for the camera. - Two of their children are shown with Kennett's 1930 Pontiac used extensively on police duties from 1932-38 in Central Australia. Photos supplied by son, J.A. Kennett.*

The terrible event received considerable national coverage in the media.

An *Adelaide Advertiser* report of February 17, 1936 was headed: CALL FOR PLANE FOR SICK CHILD /Flight Through Dust Storm To Alice Springs/DIPHTHERIA EPIDEMIC FEARED / Second Machine Takes Serum To Farina.

Two "perilous flights" against blinding dust storms were made from Adelaide in a desperate bid to save the children. Constable Kennett chartered the first plane, owned by A.G. Bond, of Bond's Tours, in a bid to have his daughter flown to Adelaide for urgent treatment. Five minutes after the plane left Adelaide, a

message came through from Alice requesting supplies of diphtheria anti-toxin serum be flown to the town because of the fear of a diphtheria epidemic in Central Australia.

Another plane responded to that urgent request and tried to overtake the first to get it to return for the medical supplies, but after flying 100 miles failed to sight it and had to return. The Adelaide Aero Club then sent another plane with the serum and after a rough flight finally made contact at Farina with the first flight. It was, tragically, too late to save the second child. Constable Kennett had to reopen the grave of the first child to bury his second daughter.



At one stage the surviving family members were quarantined in Alice and residents pushed meals through a hedge to keep them fed. The Kennetts donated the marble font at the new Church of the Holy Ascension in Alice in memory to their daughters with the text message: Suffer the little children to come unto me.

As a result of the traumatic episode, a doctor recommended that the Kennetts be moved from Charlotte Waters because of the traumatic episode. Administration agreed, but it took a year before it came to pass.



*Kennett evicts Sharkey*

The NT Police and Historical Society archives include a file with photographs of Constable Kennett and some members of his family. There is a view of Constable and Mrs Kennett, both ramrod straight, posing for the camera at Charlotte Waters. Another photo (above) is identified as being Constable Kennett evicting a person called Sharkey from the Mataranka Hotel in 1929, with the added information that Sharkey later became a Communist union boss on the eastern waterfronts. Lawrence Louis "Jack" Sharkey did indeed become a notorious figure in Australian industrial relations. In 1929 he became the secretary general of the Communist Party of Australia and editor of the *Workers' Weekly* and the *Tribune*.

He was convicted for sedition after telling a journalist in 1949 that if Soviet forces entered Australia in pursuit of aggressors Australian workers would welcome them. The High Court upheld the conviction and he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, later reduced to 13 months.

During the inquiry into the Petrov Affair, which had involved the dramatic disarming of Russian guards by police at Darwin Airport and the rescue of Mrs Petrov, it was claimed Sharkey had been given \$US 25,000 by the Soviets. Bleak House crumbled and was pulled down, much of the stone put to good use by surrounding stations.

Constable Kennett retired due to ill health in 1947 and died in 1950, survived by three sons, Jack, Jim and Joe. Kennett Court in Alice Springs honours Constable Kennett and his family.



*Kennett and party mending OTL pole*

While discussing morse code, Les Penhall pointed out a little known fact that NT police played an important part in keeping

the vital Overland Telegraph Line operational, saying they were part of what he termed the Overland Maintenance Force. Cables arriving from overseas in Darwin had to be sent down the line, repeated at each relay station, so it was imperative the line be operational.

The NT Police Museum and Historical Society Museum contains photographs of

police repairing the Overland Telegraph Line, some poles bent and damaged by storms.

One such photograph, (previous page) shows Constable Jack Kennett and party mending an OTL pole at Charlotte Waters circa 1930s, two of his children helping.



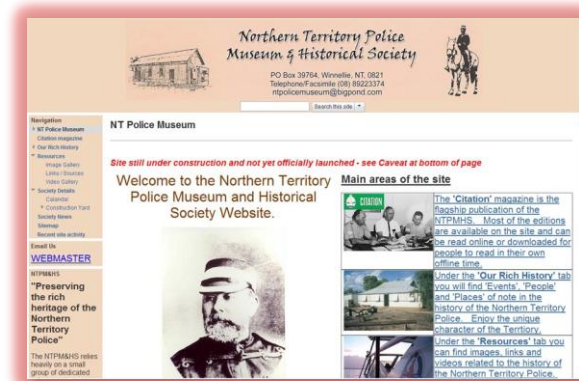
*Peter Riley with his children at Wave Hill – 22/9/1947*

## *NTPMIHS Website*

The website was launched in October. The link is below:

<http://sites.google.com/site/ntpmhsociety/>  
(if this is an electronic copy just click)

Let us know what you think  
[ntpmhs99@gmail.com](mailto:ntpmhs99@gmail.com)





# A Grim Citation with Amazing Coincidences

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA  
SPECIAL CLOTHING COUPON ISSUE  
SERVICE PERSONNEL

Form Rg. D 3  
Place securely with your personal papers  
NO REPLACEMENT will be made if this sheet is lost.

Issued to  
*Cpl C.H. Ledwidge*

Signature of Holder:  
*C. Ledwidge*

Official No. of Holder:  
*VX 91694*

25 COUPONS

See coupons below. This upper portion of the sheet has no coupon value.

No. Q 74976

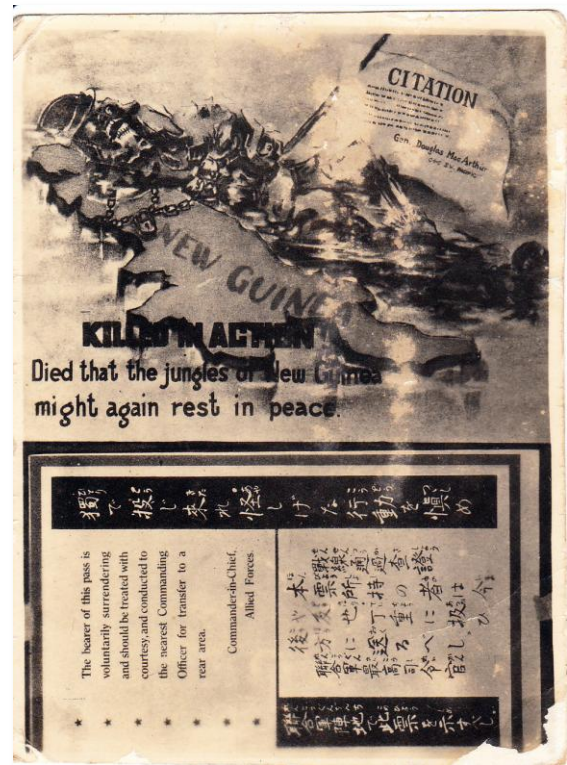
FOLD HERE

CLOTHING	CLOTHING	CLOTHING	CLOTHING	CLOTHING
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**Mystery Package Reveals Unusual Stories**

Many and varied are the objects and ephemera that are received by the Northern Territory Police Museum and Historical Society for cataloguing and research. One small packet of odds and ends brought to light an amazing coincidence. At first glance, and a quick check, a case of unfair treatment of an early police officer surfaced and will be followed up.

Then a small faded photo attracted our attention when CITATION was noticed near an outline of New Guinea. On closer examination, under a magnifying glass, it revealed a grim scene of what appeared to be the corpse of a soldier, either Allied or Japanese, flat on its back, a sword or stick erect, on which was impaled what could be interpreted as a white surrender flag, with the heading CITATION, a message from General Douglas MacArthur.



The corpse is chained to New Guinea. Other text reads: **KILLED IN ACTION! Died that the jungles of New Guinea might again rest in peace.** Underneath, run horizontally, in Japanese and English, is a copy of a pass declaring the bearer had voluntarily surrendered and should be treated with courtesy and conducted to the nearest Commanding Officer for transfer to the rear, signed Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces.

Yet another WW 11 item in the packet, a clothing ration sheet, had been issued to Corporal C. H. Ledwidge. A well-known Darwin photographer is Barry Ledwidge, connected with the Charles Darwin University and proprietor of 4.22 Images, so we showed him the item and other small photos of soldiers, including one with a donkey in Bethlehem. Looking at



writing on the back of one photo, Barry said it looked very much like the handwriting of his father, Grantly Ledwidge, who had been a long distance bike rider and racer of greyhounds.

After Barry scanned the items and communicated interstate with members of the Ledwidge clan, it turned out the person on the ration sheet was one of his uncles, Corporal Christopher Henry Ledwidge, who had served on Thursday Island during the war. News of the discovery caused much excitement. C.H. Ledwidge's son, Ian, has the Chanter Estate Vineyard, at Moama, NSW, on which he has a large war museum, including several tanks. Copies of the items will be displayed there.

Another of Barry's uncles, Arthur, who was at Tobruk, also fought on the Kokoda Track and was saved by a souvenired Japanese diary he carried in a chest pocket which deflected a bullet. That diary was later cast in bronze and included in the Brisbane Cenotaph. Barry Ledwidge has actually seen the Japanese diary in Brisbane. Subsequent examination of the pictures scanned by Barry and sent south has almost certainly identified Uncle Arthur standing next to the donkey in Bethlehem. The soldiers had just been through the Church of the Nativity.

Naturally, the Ledwidges in several states and Barry here in Darwin are elated at the find. They, like us, would like to know where the items came from. The packet was passed to us by former Museum treasurer, Chantal Fischer, of the Northern Property Unit, Berrimah Police Station, who has left the Territory. They had been sent to her by a person who in a brief note said the items had been sent to her in the mail "for some unknown reason."

In discussing the coupon ration book with Barry Ledwidge, we also showed him a small, battered booklet INSTRUCTIONS TO AIR CREWS, from the same package which contains notes on living and travelling in New Guinea, Papua and New Britain. It contains survival tips for airmen who made forced landings during the war in the South West Pacific.

In it are instructions on how to survive in Arnhem Land. On seeing this, Barry showed us a mounted and framed photograph of a map, the original drawn on parachute silk, showing flight paths in and out of Darwin, with info on likely landing places in emergencies.

In addition, Barry showed us a collection of Cyclone Tracy photographs he took which includes shots of police in action using commandeered vehicles, one a Mini Moke.

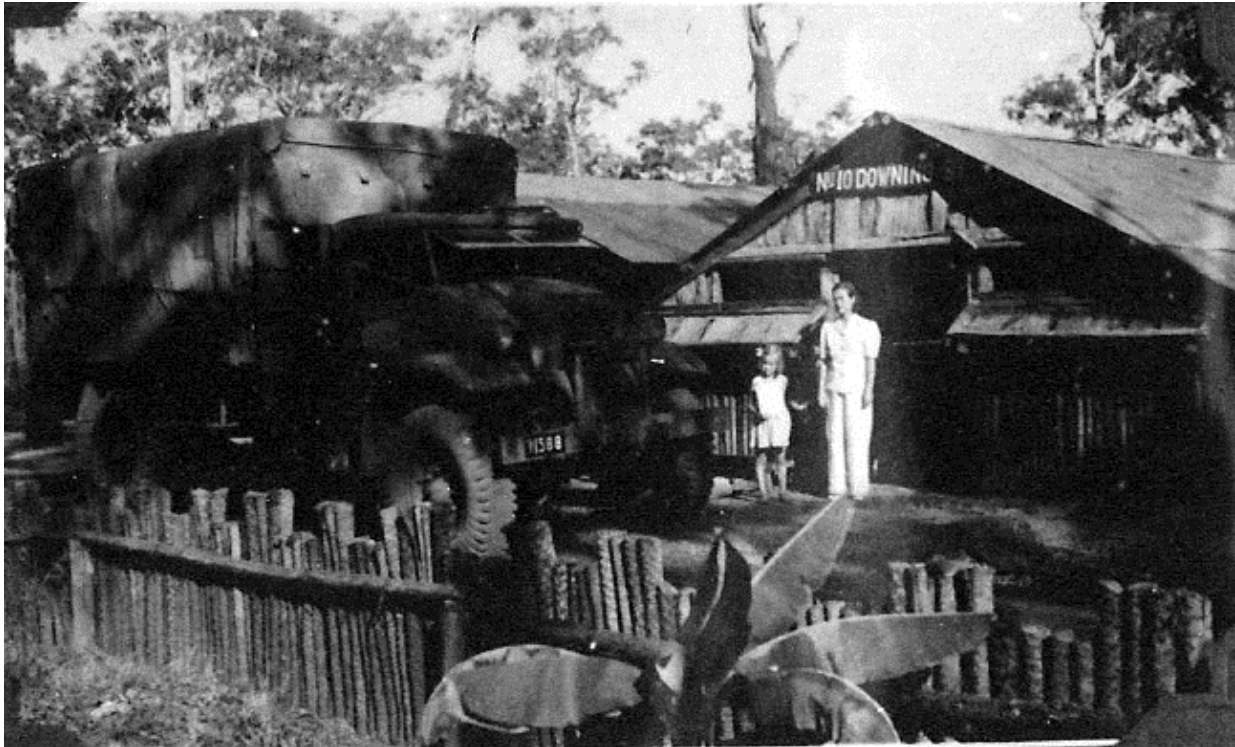
So a small package has resulted in some fascinating discoveries. At times it is like CSI Miami in the Museum. We are still relentlessly chasing a few more leads and discussing the possibilities over coffee and Saus Grant's Scotch fingers.

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## Past Citations

Nearly all of the old citations have been placed onto the website. Including this one by the time the print version does the rounds. It can be read online or downloaded. Being electronic the documents can be easily searched for names, places and other keywords. Gradually most key stories, articles and images will be available via the website. <http://sites.google.com/site/ntpmhsociety/citation-magazine>

# Territory House of Fame



Darwin appears to have had a branch of number 10 Downing Street-the British Prime Minister's office - with a "Rolls Royce " parked nearby. The evidence for this claim is in the photographic collection of the late Inspector "Camel" Bill McKinnon which is held in the NT Police Museum and Historical Society archives. Clearly visible in the above picture is a large sign displaying the famous address in Darwin. The caption describes the house and Roller - an Army blitz truck - as being in an abandoned military camp, possibly near the McKinnon residence in Schultze Street, an old style abode with push out windows, in which they lived from 1946 - 1949.

**First Citation Gremlins** - The first edition of the Citation in 1964 was delayed by events. A report in the Northern Territory News said there had been 'first issue gremlins in printing and transportation arrangements'. Citation, consisting of 52 pages would arrive in time for Christmas. It was believed to be the first attempt of its kind in Australasia. The magazine had originally been conceived as a pre-Christmas annual, and a second edition would be produced mid-year if demand was high. Copies would be ordered by contacting the editor, Inspector Jim Mannion, at Police Headquarters. The Centralian Advocate wished 'Inspector Jim' every success for the Territory's latest literary baby. Alice reporter, Alan Wauchope, described it as one of the best adventure magazines in the world.

# The Hermit, Santa and the Mafia

**The area around the cave in which the so-called Hermit of Redbank, Bill Masterton, lived in on Wologorang Station, in the NT's Gulf country, near the Queensland border, has been heritage listed. Masterton was visited by several police officers on patrol over the years and the late Constable John "Pastry" Wilson, based at Rankine River, a lay preacher for the Anglican Bush Brothers, read the burial service for Masterton when he died in 1961, aged 91.**

There is a suggestion that his wife's wedding ring was buried in the grave which was edged by rich copper ore by Aborigines who worked at the mine. Masterton said his soul, winging its way to Heaven, would pass through a natural archway near his cave when he died.

The productive pen of the late Mounted Constable Ted Morey produced an article about the Hermit of Redbank. Born at sea coming from Scotland to New Zealand with his parents, Masterton was the long jump champion of NSW in the 1890s. A newspaper of that period said he had the strongest legs in NSW. On being informed that Masterton had died after falling and hitting his head, Constable Wilson set out in a Land Rover on unsealed, rough tracks for the mine.

There was a large mango tree growing outside the cave and a nearby spring. Inside was a hammock made from kangaroo hide and timber. Constable Wilson found an album of photos and yellowing newspaper cuttings inside. In 1977, Wilson, then a Darwin real estate agent, who served as Darwin's Santa Claus for 38 years, said he understood Masterton had sold the mine for about 19,000 pound (\$38,000), weeks before his fatal accident. At the time of the sale, he said he was going to return to Sydney and atone for the 41 years he had neglected his family.

In Sydney he was going to stay with a daughter, Maisie Clarke, not seen since 1920, when he returned home after the death from cancer of her mother. Telling the family he would see them later, he went back north, never to return. In a copperplate script on pages from a receipt book, Masterton wrote to Maisie that same year. It read:

My Dear Maisie,

Your letter came today and I was very pleased to get it. I was glad to hear Silvia and Jim (another daughter and son) were being kept at school. As for Victor (another son), I haven't heard from him; most young men at his age are foolish. They mostly do the wrong thing. I am sorry to hear about your knee, you must certainly look after it. As for you learning dressmaking, I don't mind that, it will do you no harm. But I want you to practice all you can at writing, spelling and arithmetic and read good books, and always read the papers so that you will become acquainted with the news of the day and become well-informed. Later on, how nice it will be for me to take my girl about if she can talk correctly about things. The same applies to Sylvia.

Everything here is right. A big mining man has been here and leaves tomorrow. The proposals will be sent later. I intend going to the coast next week. I must consign a lot of copper that has been down there for 12 months and get it away. You may tell your



Uncle Dick that we struck splendid copper ore the other day in a cross cut 54ft down and is sufficient to get mining men to put money into it, in a big way. In fact, the man who is here is very much impressed. He told me I could easily earn 20 pound a week for the next 10 years going on just as I am; but, of course, I don't want that! What I want is a great big company, hundreds of men working, which will eventually lead to a big town and a railway and my name associated with the lot.

Now, my dear, I have a lot to do, I must leave this afternoon for the mine, which we call the Camp. I generally ride over but on this occasion I brought the buggy and four horses as I had to bring the mining man over to catch the coach. One of these days I will bring you up for a trip and, coincidentally, you can see your Father drive four in a hand up hill and down dale and all thru the scrub.

As soon as I get the copper away that I have at the coast I shall send you some money, but you must be patient for a while. I want you to write every fortnight and ask Sylvia to do the same. I want those letters from my two little girls and when you see Jimmy you can get him to write also, from time to time. You can enclose his letters with yours. Remember me to Uncle Dick and the boys and give my love to Auntie Dolly and accept a kiss for yourself and for Sylvia.

Forever yours,  
Your affectionate father,  
W.R. Masterton.

Maisie said her father, "a bit of wanderer," had once gone opal mining at Lightning Ridge, and wanted to make a fortune mining. In a letter he sent the family some years before he died, he talked of moving on, and that he would like to go to China. Following his death, which received considerable media coverage, Mrs Clarke received a letter from the general manager of the Zinc Corporation, A.J. Keast, who told her he had visited her father in 1940

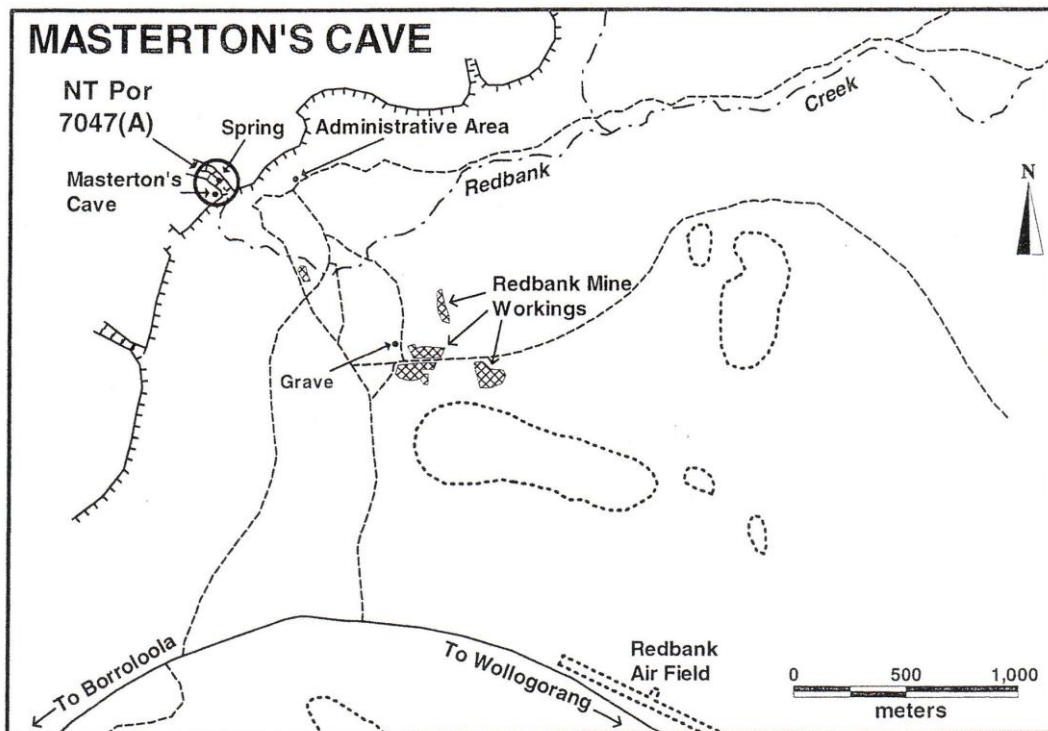
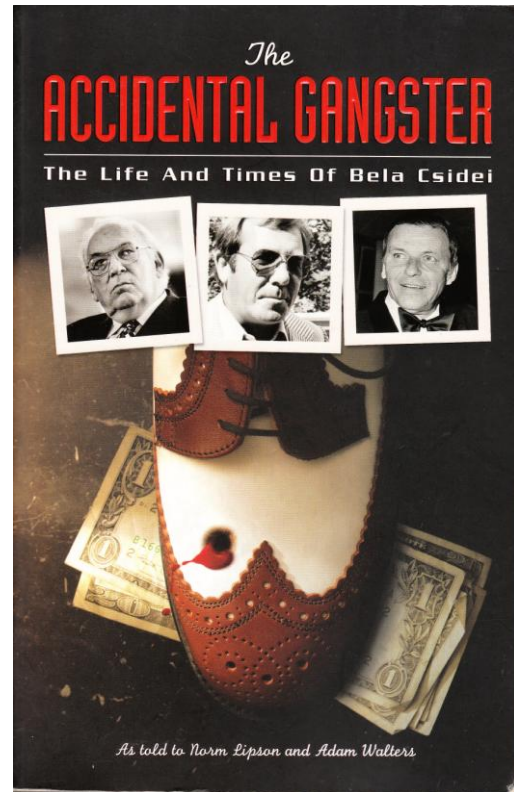
with the idea of possibly optioning the copper mine. The Japanese war had intervened and negotiations had been broken off. Keast wrote that he, his wife, and two geologist had flown to Burketown, and then drove 190 miles to Redbank. The cave had been "the acme of orderliness and good taste." During the negotiations, before war broke out, Keast had sent a Tiger Moth plane to Burketown and Masterton had been flown to Broken Hill, NSW, to discuss terms for the option. As the guest of the company, Masterton had been shown large mines in action and saw talkie movies for the first time.

Mining consultant, the late Joe Fisher, MLC, said Redbank was rich in copper and there were radio-ctive areas nearby. He heard a company had tried to buy the lease from Masterton, but he was more concerned about the welfare of the Aborigines who had helped him mine the ore over the years. Fisher added that he felt certain that there would have been special conditions in the contract covering the well-being of the Aborigines when Masterton eventually sold the mine. No member of Masterton's family ever received anything from the sale of the mine.

Surprisingly, Redbank Copper Mine is mentioned in *The Accidental Gangster The Life and Times of Bela Csidei*, as told to Norm Lipson and Adam Walters, Park Street Press, ACO Magazines Ltd, Media Publishing Pty. Ltd. Csidei, involved in a number of mining companies, said the one asset he would like to have kept was the Redbank Mine. Csidei had become involved with Wollogorang long after Masterton had died. In 1977 Wollogorang was raided and three men arrested; police seized more than 700 cannabis plants and all three appeared in Darwin Magistrates' Court. Csidei was named a "marijuana mastermind", which he denied, and charge with conspiracy. It was claimed during the hearing that Bela needed \$30,000 quickly,

\$10,000 of which was to pay off a loan from Mafia hitman, Jimmy “The Weasel” Fratianno. Csidei did a stretch in Berrimah and his book, an illuminating read, contains some fascinating Darwin content.

When Pastry Wilson (he had been a pastry cook), was spoken to in 1977, he said he would try and track down the album with its cuttings which he had found in the Hermit’s cave. After all these years, we recently spoke to his widow, Mrs Val Wilson, in the wild hope that she might know the whereabouts of the album. Not unexpectedly, she had no knowledge of the album. During our talk with her, Mrs Wilson said each Sunday after church she goes to the Pastry Wilson Park, in Palmerston, named in his honour, and has a quiet conversation with him. Today the region, including the Hermit’s Redbank Mine, stretching into Queensland, is the centre of intense mining interest and there is talk of many millions of dollars being spent to open up new mines.



Map of Masterton’s Cave



# Katherine Flood Flashback

A large file on the 1998 Katherine flood, the worst natural disaster since Cyclone Tracy, has been received by the NT Police Museum and Historical Society. The massive flood was caused when Cyclone Les formed into a tropical depression that hovered over the Katherine River catchment area for three days, dumping 17 inches of rain. On Australia Day January 26 the Katherine River peaked at 20.4 metres, 1100 homes and 500 businesses were inundated.

Water was 2.5 metres deep in the CBD and damage was estimated at \$130million. Three police vehicles were flooded and a flood boat capsized while carrying sandbags. The river current was so strong that a 40hp outboard could just make headway. Fridges, freezers, telephone boxes and wheelie bins below the surface were some of the hazards.

It was said the flow rate - 12,000 cubic metres a second - would have filled Sydney Harbour four times in 12 hours.

The images below show the extent of inundation and the emergency response operations based from the Police Station at Katherine East. A rescue helicopter is shown landed on the Stuart Highway in front of the station.



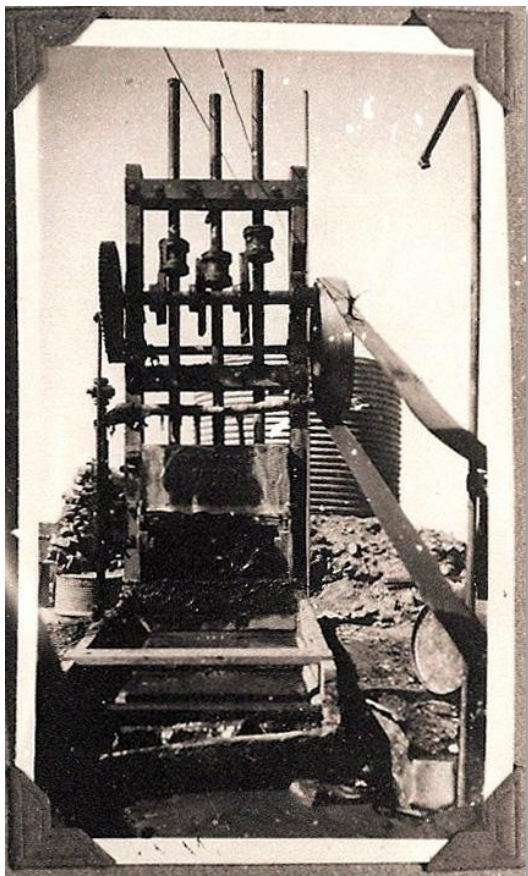
*Flood images*



# The Great Central Australia Goldrush

The Granites goldrush of the 1930s caused immense interest in a nation beset by the Depression and a number of police were involved in keeping law and order and escorting visiting officials to and from the area over a number of years. Last May's edition of *Citation* carried an extensive feature about nomadic journalist /author, Ernestine Hill, who played a major part in that short lived boom. She was accused of exaggerating the extent and significance of the field.

The Northern Territory Police Museum and Historical Society files, especially photographs from the Inspector W. "Camel Bill" McKinnon collection, provide an insight into the goldrush



*Chapman's original battery*

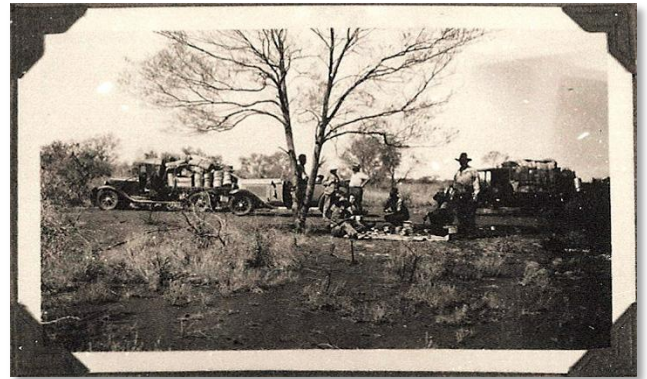
A caption on a sheet of contact prints says it shows the Granites Goldfield, 400 miles

north west of Alice, in 1934. It goes on to say the field had "started and finished in 1932", except for Mr C. H. "Pop" Chapman and family, who recovered a lot of gold in subsequent years. Mr Chapman, it continues, had been a water and oil driller in the Roma area of Queensland, and maintained there was oil there, presumably meaning Roma, now a known energy producing area.

Chapman put his drilling skills to use at the Granites where he had a swimming pool and a vegetable garden. McKinnon is shown breakfasting on the track to the Granites with Commonwealth geologist, Dr Woolnough, E.S and A. bank manager, Bruce Clezy, and the Deputy Post- Master General of South Australia, E.P. Ramsay. The party lunched with transport drivers on the same day. One view shows repairs being carried out to a vehicle on the Stuart Highway while being watched by inquisitive wild donkeys (below).



There are several snaps of the goldfield, including Chapman's original crushing battery. In 1926, the Government Assayer tested two samples from a prospector at the Granites on a claim about 65 miles south east of Tanami, which were found to be rich enough to raise hopes that a payable reef could be nearby. The Tanami region is now an active gold producing area.



*Lunch during a trip to the Granites*

On a recent visit to the Darwin Airport there were two flights listed as arrivals due from the Granites. It would seem that Ernestine Hill deserves a belated apology.

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*Note: The 2010 AGM was held recently and changes to key appointments have been reflected in the table below as they are understood to be now. The official minutes will be published on the website in the near future.*

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