



The

Citation

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE
MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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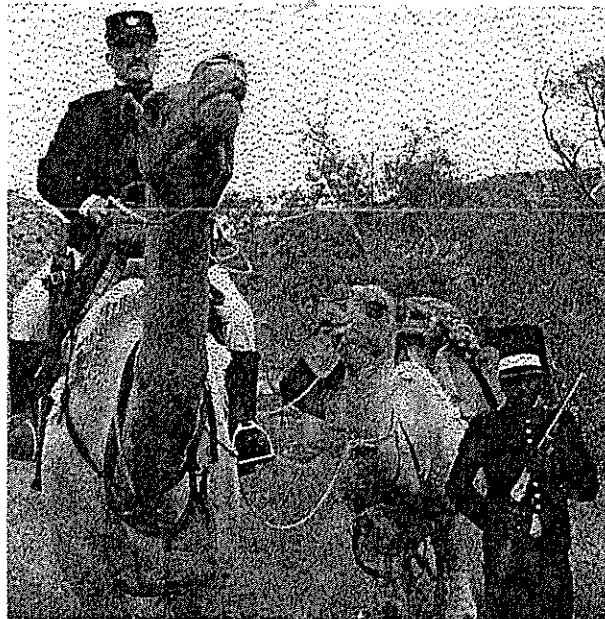
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Secretary	Mrs Jan Woodcock
Treasurer	Mr Danny Bacon
Curator	Ms Janell Cox
Committee	Mr John Rowe
	Mr Denzil McManus
	Mrs Val Watters
	Mr John Woodcock



May 2003 marks the 50th anniversary of the last Police camel patrols in Central Australia – more stories and information in the next Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the latest edition of Citation and my first as President.

I am very proud to be involved with the Society and look forward to working with everyone in the Society to progress the fine work done by the previous Committee under President Dr Bill Wilson.

Plans are now underway to commemorate the 120th anniversary of the death of Mounted Constable Shirley who died near Attack Creek in 1883.

I can also inform you that work on the upgrade of the Museum is being scheduled in conjunction with the Department to ensure a more accessible and congenial museum environment.

Our Oral Histories project is proceeding according to plan. A number of our volunteers have conducted interviews for this project including John Rowe, John Woodcock, Andy McNeill, Danny Bacon, Steve Bird, Janell Cox and Francis Good. I would like to thank them and those who participated in the interviews for contributing their valuable time to this project.

It is important that we also recognise the work of all of our members without which we could not preserve and publicise our rich and colourful police history and tradition.

I would also like to thank our major sponsors – the Northern Territory Police Force, TIO and the Police Credit Union. I ask you all to remain active in the Society and to encourage others to do the same and spread the word about the Museum and the Society to those who are interested.

Doug Smith

CURATOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

Since taking up this position at the last AGM a great deal has been achieved within the Museum.

Training Modules:

- Cataloguing and Significance - provided by the Museum & Art Gallery of the NT
- Paper Conservation and Preservation – provided by the Museum & Art Gallery of the NT
- Preventive (Metals) Conservation Workshop – provided by the Museum & Art Gallery of the NT
- Oral History Interviewing Workshop – provided by the Northern Territory Archives Service – Oral History Unit

Travelling Exhibitions:

- “In Honour of Courage” – Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin
- “Police Stations of the Northern Territory – 1870 to present” – Alice Springs and Darwin
- “Historical Commemoration of the sacrifice of an outback policeman” – Katherine

Along with the research and preparation of the above exhibitions, we are still travelling our “old” exhibitions. The “Policing the Tablelands” exhibition has now been to Alice Springs, Borrooloola, Katherine, Mataranka and Darwin.

Professional Development:

- I attended the Museums Australian National Conference in Adelaide to undertake professional development for the furtherance of our Museum.

This visit also provided me with the opportunity to introduce myself to the members of the SA Police Museum and to have extensive discussions in relation to both our collections. As a result of this meeting, we have now got a mutual agreement on the exchange of information. They have also offered to us a copy of their database for us to utilise for our collection. This should be in place in the very near future.

Preservation and Conservation:

- Preservation of files and photographs commenced in January 2002. To date we have completed 60 individual police officers' files, which includes in excess of 300 photographs. These files all vary in size with some having more than 50 items in them.
- Cataloguing of newspaper clippings has commenced, including clippings dating back to the 1950s and some even earlier.
- Preservation of Police magazines and official documents dating back to the 1950's.
- Preservation work has also commenced on the saddlery items.

Volunteers:

I would like to thank our small but very dedicated group of volunteers who have been working on the above projects over the past year. Special thanks must go to Steve Burke, Val & David Watters, Rosemary & John Rowe and the late Bill Jacobs. They have spent many hours assisting me with these tasks. We invite more of our members to become involved as we have a large task ahead of us that will only be achieved with assistance.

Grant Applications:

I have been involved in applying for a number of Grants both Federally and locally seeking funding for projects that we are conducting or proposing. They include:

- **Regional Museums Support Program 2001/2002** through the Northern Territory Government to assist with staff salary and conservation products - \$15,000 plus 10% GST received
- **2002 Year of the Outback Grants** through the Northern Territory Government – applied for funding for the Condon Commemoration in Katherine – unsuccessful
- **2002 Northern Territory History Grants** through the Northern Territory Government to record the working histories of police men and women who have served ten years or longer in the Northern Territory Police Force – applied for \$5,000. Closed 3 May 2002 – received \$4,000.
- **Community Support Program** through the Darwin City Council to research and prepare an exhibition titled “**The Role of Police in Darwin during World War II and assistance provided during regional conflicts**” applied for \$3,000. Closed 31 May 2002 – Decision has been made that this application be forwarded to the organising committee for the 2003 Bombing of Darwin commemoration.
- **Community Heritage Grants 2002** through the Australian National Library to undertake storage and environmental control of the photographic collection held by the Northern Territory Police Museum – applied for \$7,000 – Closed 28 June 2002 – Decision not made until October 2002.
- **Living In Harmony Community Grants Program 2002** through the Federal Government for research, preparation and travelling of a photographic exhibition dealing with the role that Aboriginals have played in policing the Northern Territory since 1870. Applied for \$50,000 – Closing 26 July 2002 – Decision not made until October 2002.

Along with these Grant Applications I also applied for a Bursary to attend the Museums Australia Conference in Adelaide through Museums Australia. I received the maximum amount of \$500

in relation to this and as a result of this Bursary; I also received \$385 for the registration fees through the Northern Territory Branch of Museums Australia.

I have also worked with John Rowe in preparing a “Marketing Plan” for the Museum seeking sponsorship from Corporations. This document is still being developed and it is anticipated that they will be sent out in November/December 2002.

This concludes my report for the 2001/2002 year.

Janell Cox
CURATOR

A MATTER OF IDENTIFICATION – FATAL CROCODILE ATTACK – BORROLOOLA 7 SEPTEMBER 1986

Police throughout the world are often given the task of establishing the identity of persons who have died in suspicious or unusual circumstances. The task in this matter was particularly difficult when the deceased person was killed and eaten by a huge crocodile. The story unravels as follows.

At about 7pm on Saturday 6 September 1986 Lee McLeod (alias Rusty Wherret), a ringer who had been working in the Borroloola area, left the local hotel with a mate, Dennis Vowken. Both were in an intoxicated condition at the time. They proceeded to Rocky Point, some distance from the hotel, to a boat ramp on the McArthur River, behind the township. On arrival they consumed more alcohol, finally falling to sleep on the bank of the river.

When Vowken awoke at about midnight he could not find McLeod in the immediate area, although McLeod's shirt was still there. Vowken felt no concern and left the area. Late on Sunday 7 September Vowken worried over McLeod's absence and reported him missing to the Police.

Borroloola lays 270km east of the Stuart Highway and is approximately 700km south east of Darwin. It is situated some 67 km inland from the sea and is located on the banks of the mighty McArthur River. The “Loo” as it is affectionately known by locals, swelters in tropical heat, humidity and flies, being typical gulf cattle country. Even though isolated it is a fisherman's haven and also attracts a fair share of residents who revel in isolation, challenge and independence. The population of Borroloola at that

time was about 100 Europeans and 200 Aboriginals. In addition to the barra, the river also plays host to a more sinister resident, the estuarine crocodile or "salties" as they are locally referred to. Legislation was introduced in 1972 to totally protect all crocodiles from hunting, allowing them to grow into exceptionally large animals and to move closer to inhabited areas than normally would have occurred in earlier times.

After receiving the reported disappearance of McLeod, police conducted a cursory search of the area to no avail. Because McLeod's shirt was located on the bank of the river, police speculated that he may have gone for a swim, got into difficulties and drowned.

A systematic search was conducted throughout Monday 8 September, and continued until police located severed human legs approximately 300 metres upstream from where McLeod and Vowken had slept, on Sunday 7th September.

It was known that a large saltie in excess of 5 metres and known as "Gus" by the locals inhabited this portion of the river and was suspected as the culprit for the attack. At this stage police notified the Crocodile Task Force of the Conservation Commission, who arrived in Borroloola on Tuesday 9 September with a trap and their operational crocodile boat. They immediately set their trap and commenced night searches without success.

At 2200 hours on Wednesday 10 September the Task Force systematically searched Gus' territory and noted a terrible stench, which they believed, came from the breath of a crocodile, consistent, they said, with a crocodile ingesting human remains.

At 0030 hours on Thursday 11 September they located and harpooned Gus who towed their boat up and down the river until 0200 hours when they shot the crocodile as it charged the boat. The crocodile was towed to the boat ramp where the police met them. An autopsy was conducted immediately and police took possession of human remains.

Gus was a huge crocodile who measured in at 4.87m even though the last 11 vertebrae were missing from his tail. Dr Graeme Webb, the Crocodile Expert, estimated that with his tail intact he would have measured approximately 5.05metres. Gus weighed just over a tonne and was estimated to be 60 years old.

It is of note that approximately 5 months earlier an Aboriginal swimming across the river late at night with a carton of beer, was attacked by a crocodile,

mouthed and "spat out", causing him to lose the carton. He was medivaced to Darwin for treatment. It is not possible to establish if Gus was the culprit in this matter

The remains of McLeod were found headfirst in the stomach of Gus. The digestive juices of the crocodile had already reduced bone matter to the consistency of rubbery gristle, flesh to jelly-like substance and skin bleached and rubbery-like in texture. The remains were returned to Darwin for Post Mortem examination. The contents were examined in the Darwin Mortuary. Both arms were intact but as previously mentioned, the skin was reduced to a jelly-like consistency. There were no signs at all of papillary ridges but several pieces of epidermis had very clearly defined ridges, although some deterioration had taken place.

As in all Coronial Inquests, positive identification of the deceased is of paramount importance. It would have been impossible for anyone to visually identify McLeod after such a horrific death. It then became a responsibility of the police to satisfy the Coroner of the identity of the deceased person.

Police had located some of McLeod's papers and established that he had previously been fingerprinted in Queensland. The task of identification was then handed over to the experts in the Fingerprint Bureau. A request was made to their Queensland counterparts for a set of impressions.

Sergeant 2/c Denzil McManus, Officer in Charge of the Bureau and Senior Constable David Prowse attended at the Mortuary, took possession of the epidermis and returned to the Fingerprint Bureau to commence the painstaking work.

The skin appeared to be from the right and left thumb, left index finger and part of the left palm. The skin was thoroughly washed in warm water and dried very well before dusting with black powder, which was wiped off with methylated spirit, leaving a deposit of black powder between the ridges. This procedure itself took a considerable amount of time, as the experts were cognisant they may destroy the skin.

The skin was then placed between two sheets of microscopic slide glass and photographed on Pan-X film with oblique lighting, then again with transmitted lighting. Both procedures were successful and police were able to use these photographs to match them against the fingerprints taken in Queensland. As a result they were able to positively identify the remains as that of Lee McLeod.

While DNA identification is now a new science which can be used to assist identification of deceased persons found in such circumstances, the work conducted by Northern Territory Police Fingerprints experts, Sergeant 2/c McManus and Senior Constable Prowse was acknowledged as exacting and expert work, given that the epidermis used in the procedure had almost been destroyed by the digestive system of the crocodile.

It is also testament to the determination of the members involved in identifying the remains of Lee McLeod. The Coroner would have accepted that the remains were too putrefied to identify, but the dedication and professionalism of the members persevered until the successful result was obtained.

Inspector MV Burke the Divisional Officer in charge of the Police Division, in his correspondence pertaining to the crocodile attack, summed up the matter succinctly.

"It's a little sad when all the circumstances are viewed in retrospect. A chance meeting of man and beast resulted in a horrific, agonising exodus from this world by McLeod, and the tracking, harpooning, overpowering and final destruction of one of nature's relics of prehistoric times. A relic it might be, the oldest who maintained sovereignty over his particular "territory" for the last 15 odd years, ever since their kind were protected from being shot into extinction. This dominance only being maintained by fighting off all-comers until man, a creature from another element trespassed his domain, presenting himself as prey at a time when food was an apparent priority. There is no doubt had Gus fed in the days preceding his encounter with McLeod or, for that matter, had McLeod's reasoning not been clouded by alcohol, there would have been no cause for writing this account."

Acknowledgment is also made to the Northern Territory Conservation Commission in accessing their file on the incident.

1. Mr McManus with the crocodile head



2. Senior Constable Prowse



3. Photograph of semi-digested skin used in the identification process



**PART 2
HOMICIDE AT BORROLOOLA-
WRITTEN BY GORDON BIRT**

This article carries over from the October 2001 edition of Citation, kindly submitted by Garth McPherson.

In the Gulf of Carpentaria there was only one tide every twenty-four hours, and this caused a rise and fall of no more than seven feet as far as its influence extended up the Macarthur. When patrolling to the eastern side of the river we rode our horses over at a place called Burketown crossing, about a mile upstream. Here the river narrowed and we crossed on some flat rocks.

The tide raced through and it could only be traversed at low tide, no more than knee deep for a horse. This was the main route to the town of Burketown, in Queensland. At best it was only a buggy track and negotiated by few motor vehicles, other than those with four-wheel drive.

After about two months I had a visit from my friend, Sergeant Tony Lynch from Anthony's Lagoon. He brought a Chrysler utility, which I was taking on trial with a view to buying. He asked me the whereabouts of Johnson, and whether I had any trouble with him. "No Tony, I get on well with him. I can't understand how he caused the police any trouble here. At present he is away down the river on a canoe trip or else I would introduce you. He left his cat with me to look after."

Tony returned to his station on the monthly mail truck. At first I only used his utility for short trips down the river to the five-mile and other fishing spots. One day it broke down about a mile from the station. I sent a tracker to get Johnson and he came immediately, and soon located the fault. Refusing any payment he said "You did me a good once and I am always pleased to help you anytime."

Camped near the river was a young man called Bill. I have forgotten his surname. A companion called Brennan had been with him, but had left overland for Roper River with a party of Aborigines before my arrival. Bill was an occasional visitor at the Police Station, and sometimes stopped to have tea at my invitation. On the last occasion he announced he would be leaving for Queensland on the next mail truck.

The day the truck left it stopped, as usual, at the station to pick up the mail. Bill spoke to me confidently "You want to watch that Johnson. He has no time for coppers." "I get on alright with Jack." I replied. "I knew him before I came here." "He reckons he is the champion cop beater-up." Bill continued. "Did one over in Queensland so he says." "Perhaps he did," I retorted "I wouldn't condemn him for that without knowing the circumstances." Bill went on, "He is a standover man. I am glad to be getting out of here or else he and I would be having a showdown." The truck then left. Its final stop before quitting Borroloola was always the hotel.

A few hours later Johnson called at the station and inquired if I had lost a revolver. "Not that I know of. Wait until I check the firearms," I replied. After checking I said, "Yes. There is an old .45 missing. It is obsolete but still on the property list." Johnson then said "I have been told that before the mail left the Pub today Bill was flashing a revolver in the bar. He said that he pinched in from the copper." "Thanks Jack. I will get a message away on the wireless straight away."

I sent a message to Constable Hughie Deviney at Rankine River, requesting that he search and question Bill when the mail arrived there. A few

days later Deviney radioed that Bill had been arrested and tried. He was sentenced to three months hard labour in Fannie Bay Gaol. The revolver would be returned on the next mail. I told Johnson the news and thanked him for his timely information. "That's alright," he replied. "When I heard what Bill had done I discussed it with some others and we decided that you were too good a copper to have a mongrel like that put it over you."

John had a mistress, a happy-looking Aboriginal woman of about thirty years of age. Her name was Florida, and she belonged to the Mara tribe from the Roper River district. She had been trained for sewing and domestic work at the Roper River Mission.

Many men in the district lived openly or covertly with Aboriginal women.

The Aborigines Ordinance provided heavy penalties for white men convicted of keeping Aboriginal women as mistresses, or even having sexual intercourse with them. But this law had rarely been enforced at Borroloola and other areas remote from Darwin.

A few weeks after the revolver incident Tracker Donegan said to me, "That Florida, sweetheart longa Jack Johnson, you know that she is a widow woman and her man been die long time ago." "Yes," I replied. "I have heard that." Donegan continued, "That man been have a brother, Dick. Blackfellow law say that Florida now belong to Dick and I hear that he is coming to get her soon."

That information caused me considerable thought. Johnson was living with the girl illegally and any tribal husband claiming her must have my support. How would Johnson react to that? I was soon to find out.

The month of September 1939 rolled on. On the third the German armies invaded Poland. Britain declared war on the Nazis, and Australia and other countries followed suit. World War II had commenced in earnest. O'Shea and Johnson continued their nightly visits to the station to listen to the radio news. Frequently I typed a bulletin of the latest news and sent a native 'foot walker' across country for 60 miles to Horace Foster at Manangoora. On my last patrol he had requested this service.

September passed and the month of October commenced. The "dry" season was ending and the initial signs of the "wet" with its northwest monsoons appeared. Occasional thunderstorms frequently yielded much thunder and lightning with little or no rain. The country was still dry and

vehicles raised clouds of bulldust. The climate was hot and sticky and many experienced the discomfort of "prickly heat", a kind of rash. Tempers were frayed and all longed for the rains to commence in earnest, and the dry grasses to be replaced by the green.

Sickness broke out and my two permanent Trackers the two Charlies were afflicted with a kind of influenza. They were put to bed and I treated them with what I could find in the medicine chest. Donegan, who was "sitting down" in the bush camp, was hastily summoned and put on the pay roll. I also had a white patient, the cook from Robinson River Station, "Red" Tom Connelly who appeared to be suffering partly from the after effects of a drinking spree, and partly from the flu. He had been staying at the pub, going through his pay-cheque. When this was exhausted he was ferried across to the other side of the river in a canoe to pick up his "plant" of three or four horses to return to his job at Robinson River, after a day or two. Aborigines had reported that he had not left but was laying in his swag in the shade, not far from the river. I went across, had a look at him and then persuaded him to return to the Station with me, where he was given a bed in the spare room. I doctored him with the influenza mixture and occasional nips of whisky for his "hangover". My rest at nights was often disturbed by his raving and shouting.

The day after I took the redheaded cook in, Tim O'Shea arrived from Katherine in his utility truck, and stayed with his brother as usual. He brought a passenger, Aboriginal Dick, whose intention was to claim his Aboriginal wife, Johnson's mistress, Florida.

Next day, Dick and Florida called to see me. Dick explained that they both intended to return with Tim O'Shea to Katherine on the following day.

Trouble was expected from Johnson as he had made threats. Dick was a tall Aboriginal of about 30 years of age, and spoke good English. Florida said she was eager to go with him, and added that she would have left Johnson before only that she was frightened of him. I assured them that they had nothing to fear from Johnson and said I will call and see him to find out his attitude.

That night I visited Johnson and said "Jack, I hear that Florida has left you and is leaving for Katherine tomorrow with her new husband." Johnson retorted, "I don't care where she goes, if she likes to run off with a blackfellow that's her doing. She is damned ungrateful, as I have done a lot for her. I will have nothing to do with any of them."

Tim O'Shea left next day for Katherine with his two passengers. Not a word was heard from Johnson.

A couple of days later I was driving past the Hotel and Johnson's Store, heading towards the Police Station. When near the store I was startled by two loud reports of a firearm being discharged nearby. I stopped the Utility and saw Johnson outside his premises with a long barrelled .45 revolver in his right hand. "What's all the shooting about, Jack?" I asked. "I was trying to scare the pub goats away Gordon. Johnnie lets them wander and they keep coming onto my property". I said, "When I see O'Shea again I will mention it. Don't fire any more shots about here, it is dangerous".

That night an agitated Johnnie O'Shea called on me. "You will have to do something about Johnson," he quavered. "He has been threatening to shoot me and using dreadful language."

I told O'Shea about the shots fired that afternoon, and Johnson's complaints about the Hotel goats.

"Goats be damned," exclaimed Johnnie. They were nowhere near his place. The goat shepherd, Jemina had them down along Rocky Creek. Johnson meant to scare you when he fired those shots. It is more than a coincidence he fired just as you were driving past."

"Anyway he didn't scare me," I assured O'Shea. "When I was at Tennant Creek I came up against gunmen, or would-be gunmen, on more than one occasion, and I'm still alive to tell the tale. I will have a talk with Johnson and let you know later."

"Take your gun with you," the hotelkeeper advised.

"I think I can handle it without resorting to firearms," I replied.

"Don't say I didn't warn you," retorted O'Shea.

It was with mixed feelings that I walked down to Johnson's store later on. Surely O'Shea was exaggerating, as he and Johnson always appeared to be on friendly terms. I was reluctant to take any drastic action against the latter on account of his assistance to me in the stolen revolver case, and for other reasons. Perhaps I could smooth out any trouble when I talked to Johnson. I certainly hesitated to antagonise him by carrying a revolver.

Johnson was lying, fully dressed, on his bed in a room at the rear of the store when I entered at his invitation, after knocking at the door. I told him

the substance of O'Shea's complaint and asked the cause of the trouble between them.

"O'Shea is a liar." Johnson exclaimed. "I only threatened to shoot his goats if they trespassed on my property again."

I pointed out that he could not take the law into his own hands in that fashion.

Johnson then burst out. "It is Johnnies brother, Tim, who started the trouble. He put that boy up to take Florida away. She was a good worker and he only wanted her as cheap labour in one of his pubs."

"Nonsense", I retorted, "I knew some time ago that Dick was coming to claim her. Under tribal law she belongs to him, as her former husband was his brother. It just happened that he got a lift out of here with Tim O'Shea."

"Nothing can make me believe that Tim O'Shea wasn't behind it all," was Johnson's rejoinder.

"Even if he was, I don't see why you are taking it out on Johnnie, who had nothing to do with it," I said.

"They are all tarred with the same brush," Johnson replied.

"Look Jack," I advised. "We are only a small white community here amongst a larger Aboriginal population. There is no reason why we all shouldn't enjoy a peaceful life without any trouble. You are upset about Florida, and I am sure you will get over it in time. My advice to you is to go away for a while, a canoe trip down the coast perhaps. Then when you have calmed down you will see things in their right perspective."

After leaving Johnson I ran into John O'Shea outside. I told him that I had spoken to Johnson and that he seemed all right now. I advised the hotelkeeper to go to bed and not to worry. "I am not sure that he is all right. Can you lend me a gun to defend myself with?" O'Shea asked.

Just then Johnson rushed out of his store shouting "you Bastard O'Shea, dobbing me in with the police again. I will get you and your precious brother if it's the last thing I do." He aimed a blow at O'Shea but I grabbed his arm and it failed to connect. In the same instant Johnnie lashed out with a large electric torch, striking Johnson on the face.

"Let me go Gordon." Johnson yelled. "You held me while he hits me."

Breaking away from me Jack rushed in to his premises and returned immediately brandishing a large revolver.

"I will get you both for this." He shouted. "I'll burn the damned pub down first."

Speaking quietly I said, "put that gun down Jack." Johnson pointed the weapon at me and yelled. "Stand back Gordon. I'll shoot you if you try to stop me."

I stood back and he rushed around the back of the hotel. I ran towards the police station. Looking back I saw the reflection of flames behind the hotel.

Before reaching the station I met Tracker Donegan coming towards me. I told him what had happened as we both raced into the office. I quickly loaded a .45 service revolver and a .303 rifle and returned to the hotel with the tracker.

Both the hotel and Johnson's premises were in darkness. I called out and John O'Shea emerged from the rear of the hotel. "I don't know where Johnson has gone", he said. "I saw flames behind the pub as I was running back to the station," I said. "Yes, Johnson set fire to some papers in the storeroom. After he left I ran in and put it out with a few buckets of water. Have a look."

I looked inside a door while O'Shea illuminated the interior of the storeroom with his torch. I saw some blackened papers and several planks of the board floor were charred.

"Lucky you got to it in time or the whole place would have gone," I said.

Next morning I drove the utility to Johnson's store. Prior to leaving the station I buckled on my gun belt with a loaded .45 Webley revolver in the holster.

Before I could enter his premises Johnson came out of the door carrying a .22 rifle and a shotgun that he handed to me saying, "I suppose you are taking away my firearms." I put the weapons in my car and said. "Where are your revolver and .303 rifle?"

I loaned the .303 to George Butcher, I can't find the revolver and think I must have dropped it somewhere last night. Did you see what I did with it?" he muttered. "Come inside and have a look. You won't find it here"

A quick search in the store and living quarters by me failed to locate the missing weapon. Surely I thought, he must think I am naïve to believe his

story about losing it. It must be concealed somewhere and I only had his word about loaning the .303 rifle to the manager of McArthur River Station.

As I was leaving Johnson called out, "You have taken away my guns but I have something else that will fix you." I said, "What do you mean?" "You will find out", was the reply.

That afternoon I drove across Rocky Creek to see the local Justice of the Peace, Charlie Havey, at his store. After Charlie had hunted a crowing rooster from the end of the table we commenced our talk. Owing to the prevalence of hawks, Charlie reared his chickens inside the kitchen and after the birds attained full size they still kept coming indoors.

I gave Mr Havey a summary of what had happened in regard to Johnson. I also told him that I had dispatched a radio message to Darwin Headquarters requesting assistance to make an arrest, as the offender was a dangerous character. I then swore an information before the JP charging Johnson with arson and Mr Havey signed a warrant for his arrest.

"When are you going to pick him up?" The storekeeper asked.

"Tonight. He made some more threats today and hinted that he had a secret weapon. I can't wait until Darwin sends assistance, if they ever do."

"Every footstep I hear I think it is him gunning for me, and it will have to be resolved one way or the other."

"Don't try to take him without your gun," the JP advised. "I am sure he has hidden his revolver somewhere. He often has it shoved in the back of his belt, so don't assume he hasn't got it if you can't see it."

"Yes Charlie, I will be armed. Do you think he would shoot?"

"You never can tell. He has threatened several people here at different times. I heard that he shot someone in Queensland, but got out of it on the plea of self defence."

I said, "when I arrest him I will call him outside and cover him with my revolver. If he submits quietly it will be all right. But if he tries to get back inside I am afraid that I will have to let him have it."

"Yes," said Charlie, "outside in the open, with him under cover, you would be a sitting shot. Especially as it is moonlight tonight."

That evening I walked to Johnson's store carrying a loaded .45 service revolver. Tracker Donegan was with me with a loaded .303 rifle in his arms. The tracker was only a gun bearer in case Johnson ran inside and was firing back at me. My plan then was to retreat out of range and return his fire with the rifle. Why I did this operation at night was on account of the lack of cover between Johnson's store and the police station. During daylight he could watch every move I made.

Stopping outside Johnson's door I called out, "are you there, Jack?" A voice answered, "Yes." "Come outside a minute, I want to see you," I requested.

The place was in darkness but Johnson emerged almost immediately. I pointed my revolver at him saying loudly, "Jack Johnson I arrest you on a charge of arson. Will you come quietly please?" I spoke unhurriedly but my heart was thumping. What would he do? Was he carrying a weapon or was it hidden inside?

Johnson looked startled. He stepped forward and I jumped back as I thought he was going to grab my gun. Then he suddenly jumped back towards his doorway shouting, "No, I am not going. No bloody copper will ever take me."

In a split second he would have been inside. A deafening report followed as I fired at the fleeing figure. I could see nothing at first but heard some heavy breathing. John O'Shea appeared at my side and I asked him to bring a light as I thought I had shot Jack Johnson. The publican shone his torch in Johnson's doorway and I saw the tall figure lying just inside.

O'Shea and Tracker Donegan helped me carry the inert form and lay him on a bed. Johnson was breathing quickly and said, "I am done Gordon, I am done." After a minute or two he stopped breathing and I could tell that he was dead. I examined the body and found a gaping wound in the stomach. Paradoxically it did not bleed much.

I covered the body with a blanket and then borrowed O'Shea's torch while I made a search for Johnson's revolver or any other weapons. The search was unsuccessful, as no firearms were found.

"I am sure he must have planted his gun somewhere," I said to Johnnie. "Why was he so anxious to get inside?"

I locked up Johnson's property and returned to the police station. I then got the car out and drove

down to see Charlie Havey and reported the killing to him in his capacity as Justice of the Peace.

"Don't worry Gordon," the JP advised. "That chap had it coming to him. It was either you or him and I am glad that it was him."

Next morning I radioed Darwin Headquarters that I had shot and killed Johnson when he resisted arrest on a charge of arson. The operator at Cloncurry base said, "Hang on a minute, I have one for you."

The message was in reply to my urgent message requesting assistance to make the arrest. It simply said that Sergeant Littlejohn was leaving Darwin by tomorrow's train and would proceed to Borrooloola to investigate. Littlejohn, I knew, was on his way to Anthony's Lagoon to take over that station from Sergeant Lynch, who presumably was waiting there for his relief to arrive. Why Lynch could not have been sent to help me is beyond my understanding.

After I had finished with my radio work Tracker Donegan took me across the other side of the river in a canoe. I there called at the home of a man called Fred Blittner and he agreed to dig a grave for the burial of the deceased. I asked him if he would care to prepare the body for burial, sewing it up in the blanket, but he emphatically declined.

Blittner was a little tawny fellow of middle age with a drooping "Henry Lawson" type moustache. On account of having once skippered a lighter on the McArthur River, his nickname was "The Fresh Water Admiral." Every year he took a contract to dredge the river channel at Blackfellows Crossing after the "Wet". He used Aboriginal labour for this work with Pilot Harry as foreman. One of the old pilot's daughters was Blittner's "housekeeper", so it was all in the family. I assured Blittner that the Administration would pay him the contract price for the grave digging.

Later I went to Johnson's store with some hessian and twine to sew the body up for burial. The body was lying still under its blanket covering.

I was distressed to see the tabby tomcat belonging to the deceased sitting on the bed with the body. That was enough to cause me to rush in to the pub for a couple of quick brandies before I commenced my macabre task. I put the cat on the floor and it rubbed around my legs while I sewed up the body of its dead master. The cat knew me, as I looked after it once while Johnson was away on a canoe trip.

When I had finished my sewing job I picked up the cat and carried it back to the police station. Tracker Publican Charlie's wife Elsie met me at the kitchen

door. She said, "What's the matter Djulama, you sorry belonga Jack Johnson?" (The local Aborigines had given me the name of Djulama). "Yes, I am sorry belonga Jack, but now I am more sorry belonga this pussy cat. We will have to give him a home here," I replied.

In the afternoon I loaded Johnson's body in the back of my utility truck. Tracker Young Charlie, now recovered from his illness, and Fred Blittner's Aboriginal assistant, Francis, helped me. Steady rain had commenced to fall as we drove off. Francis guided me to where "the Fresh Water Admiral" was waiting by a newly dug grave, about half a mile from the hotel, and towards Burketown Crossing.

Standing in the light, but continuous rain I read a burial service before we lowered the body into the grave.

When we had finished filling it in all were wet and cold. I produced a bottle of rum and Blittner and I enjoyed a couple of nips. I also gave the two Aborigines a nip each as a reward for their valuable assistance, which they appreciated.

Two days later, just after breakfast, I heard the noise of a plane. A bi-plane with "NT Medical Service" inscribed on it, landed on the landing strip near the police station. The pilot was the well-known "Flying Doctor," Clyde Fenton, from Katherine. His passenger was Mr CK Ward, a Darwin Magistrate, whose intention was to conduct an inquest on the death of Johnson. I had previously been advised by radio from Darwin that the two above mentioned would be arriving.

Witnesses at the inquest were myself, Johnnie O'Shea, Donegan, Charlie Havey and Alec Bethune ("Dangerous Dan"). The latter was a last minute addition who testified that Johnson had told him he was going to blow up O'Shea, Havey and myself with fulminate of mercury, a powerful explosive.

The Coroner questioned me about the deceased's missing revolver, which still had not been found. I had established that Johnson's statement about loaning his .303 rifle to George Butcher was correct. I also produced an entry in the station journal, made in 1937, by a young constable who was temporarily in charge while Constable Sheridan was away. This officer recorded that Johnson had come to the police station and threatened to shoot him, concluding with the words, "There will be lead flying here yet." Subsequent events proved that Johnson spoke no truer words but, unfortunately for him, he was on the receiving end of the bullet.

The constable wrote that he took no action owing to lack of witnesses. Apparently Johnson had intervened on behalf of John O'Shea, who had been cautioned by the young officer for allowing Aborigines to hang around the hotel.

The finding of the Coroner was that the cause of Johnson's death was "justifiable homicide", thus vindicating my action.

During the hearing John O'Shea's brother Tim arrived from Katherine by car and was a spectator in the body of the court.

Before the plane's departure I got Dr Fenton to have a look at my patient, Tom Connolly. He confirmed my original diagnosis that the station cook was suffering from influenza and left some medicine. My other patients, the two trackers, had recovered.

Dr Fenton, with a nurse, had visited Borroloola earlier, soon after my arrival and before the Heathcocks left to pick up another patient, the cook from McArthur River Station, who had broken his shoulder after falling from a horse. The doctor asked me how the cook, one Jim Maynard, now back on the job, was getting on. "The damn fool." I said, "He walked out of Darwin Hospital before they could operate on him and couldn't get back here quickly enough. Hired a taxi to bring him all the way from Katherine. I am sure that his shoulder gives him a lot of pain. He sometimes talks about looking down the barrel of a rifle and pulling the trigger." (In 1940 he did this and I gave evidence at his inquest).

As a man and doctor I had the greatest respect for Clyde Fenton. Although he had sometimes kicked over the traces when off duty in Darwin, as a bush medico, he took his job very seriously and could not do enough for his patients.

I also admired the magistrate, Mr Charles K Ward, whom I had often given evidence before in the Darwin Police Court. Mr Ward was on loan to the Commonwealth from the New South Wales Government. He returned to his job in Sydney during 1942. Recently he upheld the appeal of the young schoolteacher, William White, against being called up for National Service, after this courageous young man had been incarcerated in a military prison.

The day following the inquest I was just about to enter Johnson's premises when Tim O'Shea appeared. "And what would you be doing?" he asked in his inimitable Irish voice. "I am going to make an inventory of Johnson's effects for the benefit of the Public Trustee who will be

administering the estate." I said. "Do you mind if I give you a hand?" I would like to look through the place." Replied O'Shea. Johnson was a bit of a bower bird and I think he might have taken tools and things which belong to the hotel." "I would be glad of your assistance Tim. For all of Jack's faults I would be surprised if he was dishonest and I don't think you will find any of your property in his place."

O'Shea busied himself counting tins of groceries and other goods from shelves in Johnson's store while I wrote down the details. After cleaning out one shelf, he lifted a piece of calico at the back and then pulled out a revolver. It was the same wicked looking long barrelled Colt that Johnson had threatened me with. Tim handed it to me saying, "Is that what you were looking for?" I broke it open and saw that it was loaded in all six chambers. "Well that is a relief," I said. "I wish I had found it before the inquest, I will report the matter to Darwin."

The revolver was included in the inventory. None of O'Shea's property was found on the premises and Tim was satisfied. However he found several photos that he examined minutely. "What do you make of these?" he said, handing them to me.

Several of them pictured Johnson posing in the nude with a female Aboriginal, also naked. Others showed the same female exhibiting parts of her anatomy in various postures. She was not Johnson's ex mistress, Florida, but another woman renowned for her lascivious tendencies even in that land of easy morals. "Why the man was a pervert," I exclaimed. "If that is not pornography then I have never seen it."

"When Johnson first arrived here," said O'Shea, "his first row with Constable Sheridan was over being refused permission to visit the blacks' camp to take photos. Sherry must have seen through his claim to be an anthropologist." "Pornographist would be a better description," I added.

Back at the station I was busy preparing a report on the shooting of Johnson and the subsequent coroner's inquest. I praised the conduct of temporary Tracker Donegan and the assistance he gave me. I also mentioned that Chrysler Utility No 1591 was used to convey the body for burial. This report and one for the Public Trustee were despatched to Darwin in the next mail.

During the weeks that followed I gradually recovered from the shock of the killing. My patient "Red" Tom got over his illness and was ferried across the river where he mustered his horses and headed for Robinson River.

When the monthly mail arrived there was a large official letter for me from Darwin and two others in strange handwriting. One was from a woman who claimed to be Johnson's divorced wife. She mentioned that he had treated her cruelly and was not surprised at his manner of death.

The other was from a single girl living in New South Wales who had been a pen friend of the deceased. Before reading the epistle from headquarters I wondered what the reaction of the "top brass" to the shooting would be. Would I be censured for not waiting for Littlejohn to arrive before attempting the arrest?

The memorandum acknowledged receipt of my report. Tracker Donegan was to be rewarded for his conduct by a grant of three pounds. Then followed a query concerning the ownership of utility No. 1591, and a statement that "records showed it was registered in the name of Sergeant AP Lynch of Tennant Creek." If it had been sold in my district why was a transfer not made? I was enjoined to treat the matter as urgent. Not a word about the killing. "What a relief," were my thoughts. "All headquarters is worrying about is whether a blooming motor car is registered or not."

Actually, at first I had only taken the vehicle on trial. Just before Johnson blew his top I had decided to purchase it, but in the excitement of what followed I forgot to send in the necessary form to effect transfer. I will put their minds at rest by doing this in the return mail. Everything back to normal!

Do you have a story?

John & Jan Woodcock are always looking for a tale or two to include with Citation. Please forward them in for inclusion in a future edition.

VOLUNTEERS

Once again, we are looking for volunteers to assist – a couple of hours once a month is all we need – the more people that we can have taking an active role in our Museum will provide us with better services.

It is anticipated that in the not too distant future, we will be able to open our Museum to the general public, therefore, there is a lot of work being undertaken with this aim in mind.

ORAL HISTORIES

The Oral History Project is now well underway with interviews currently underway in Queensland, South Australia, Alice Springs and Darwin. Members in Victoria have also been contacted for interviews to be conducted in the near future.

Our members who are conducting the interviews are volunteers and we would like to thank them for their valuable time in assisting us with this very worthwhile project.

Interviews will be conducted in Western Australia in late May early June next year and at this time we anticipate that some interviews will also be undertaken in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory sometime next year.

If you do not receive a letter, don't worry, as we can only do a limited number at any particular time, we will be in touch when we have someone visiting your area.

If you believe that you may be able to assist in doing interviews, please contact us to discuss what is required etc.

Once again, thank you for your participation in this worthwhile project.

Janell Cox
Curator