



# the CITATION



Northern Territory Police Museum & Historical Society Inc

## The Mystery of the Timber Creek Police Cell

Sue Harlow, Regional Museums Coordinator, Museum and Art Gallery of the NT

*Most readers would be familiar with the early police cells that were once common at police stations from Tennant Creek to the Top End. There are a few of these galvanised corrugated iron buildings around the Territory with their distinctive rectangular shape, cream colour, uniform size and curved roof. Several of these cells still survive but no longer perform their original function. They are still in situ at Roper Bar, Anthony's Lagoon, Pine Creek, Maranboy, Daly River (?) and one in the back of the National Trust's hospital museum at Tennant Creek. One of these cells has become a contentious issue and claims of ownership and talk of repatriation have been going on for sometime.*

The issue in question relates to the cell at Maranboy. Having had an interest in Maranboy history and published on the subject, I have had several people approach me about the cell. There has been discussion about transferring the cell from its present site at Maranboy to various other locations, since as far back as the 1980s.

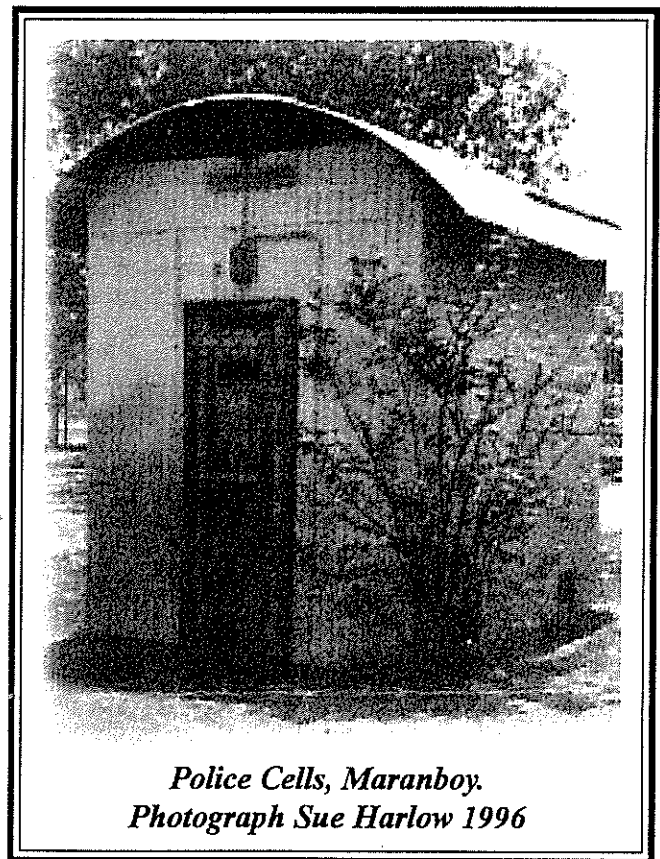
Several of the many police officers who have had past associations with Timber Creek firmly believed that this particular cell at Maranboy was moved from Timber Creek to Maranboy in 1977, hence the talk about having it 'returned to their rightful home'.

The person on the trail of the real story behind the mystery of the cells is Camille Fogarty the curator of the 1908 Timber Creek Police Station Museum.

There are three separate police stations/residence complexes in the Timber Creek police precinct, the two older stations belonging to the National Trust. The first was built in 1908 to replace a bough shed office/residence. The next was constructed in 1935. The latest building is the modern police complex nearby. For many police, retired and current serving members and their families, this precinct is also an important part of their own personal history.

Discussions concerning the origin of the Maranboy cell have been going on for some time. A vacant concrete slab outside the 1935 police station indicates that the cell was moved, but to where? It has always been the general belief that the cell was transferred from Timber Creek to Maranboy. Camille decided, that if indeed the Maranboy cell was transferred from Timber Creek, it was time to lobby to have it returned to the vacant concrete slab. To get to the bottom of this mystery Camille began to make her own inquiries as to the whereabouts of the original Timber Creek cell. Her contact with several current and retired members of the police have revealed an intriguing series of events some of which gave rise to the belief that the Timber Creek cell is now at Maranboy.

Retired police officer John Gordon was stationed at Maranboy in the early 1950s and recalled that the cell in question was already at Maranboy during the time he was stationed there. He sent Camille a photo of the Maranboy cell taken in 1953



*Police Cells, Maranboy.  
Photograph Sue Harlow 1996*



*If you have a story you would like to share with others then please contact*

*Sergeant Garth Macpherson on,*

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*or*

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which indicates that the cell was in the same position next to the old police station/residence. (This police station is the second police station built at Maranboy and was originally constructed in 1917 as the Australian Inland Mission hospital. It became the police station/residence in 1931 and is no longer in use). Camille recently visited Maranboy and took a photo of the cell from the same angle as taken by John Gordon in 1953. Comparing these two photos and specific details such as a dent in the eaves of the roof, indicate that the cell at Maranboy was already in situ in 1953.

Camille contacted Timber Creek local police constable Dave Hutchinson who consulted the Timber Creek police journal/day books. The first mention of the moving of the cell was dated 20 December 1977 with the following entry (probably written by First Class Constable Harry Simpson or Constable Stevens):

Assisted Sgt 3/c Hughes and Constable Finn in demolishing the old Police cells at the old station during afternoon"

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> December 1977

Assist Sgt Hughes and Const Finn with old Police cell for transfer to Maranboy. Sgt Hughes departed station at 1.30 pm."

So the Timber Creek cells left Timber Creek on 21 December 1977.

Following this discovery Camille requested the police consult the Maranboy journal for information on the cell's arrival at Maranboy. Surprisingly there were no entries in the

Maranboy journal confirming the arrival of the cells at Maranboy. A report by Peter Spillett, *Review of Heritage Projects throughout the Northern Territory*, dated September 1980, mentions only one cell at Maranboy. One of Camille's many contacts remembers seeing the cells on the back of a transport vehicle in Timber Creek but where it went from there is a mystery.

Camille has endeavoured to locate the missing cell by making various inquiries but has come to a dead end. Can any reader shed light on this mystery? Did the cell actually arrive in Maranboy? Does any reader recall seeing two cells in position at Maranboy?

We would welcome any information on the whereabouts of the Timber Creek cell. Camille can be contacted on 8975 0671 or myself on 8999 8161.

**VALE**  
**Barrie John SMITH**

**08.02.37 – 27.01.01**

We regret to advise members of the recent death in Darwin of former member, Senior Sergeant Barrie Smith. Barrie joined the NT Police on 07.10.68 and retired on 08.07.92.

He served in Darwin, Pine Creek and Elliott then returned to Darwin where he spent the greater part of his career. Apart from General Duties policing, he was involved in Planning and Research, Public Relations, Personnel and Training, where he also served a time as Cadet Master.

Many of us will remember Barrie for his thoughtfulness and consideration of new members and helping us over the 'rough spots' in those early days.

Our sincere sympathy to his wife Pauline and Children Barrie Jr., Andrew and Marie.

**VALE**  
**Graeme Joseph "Lovey"**  
**BROWNING**  
**Registered number 44**

**16.08.33 – 29.01.01**

Another recent sad loss in Queensland was former Senior Constable Graeme "Lovey" Browning.

Lovey joined the NT Police on 07.11.54 and retired on 01.08.89.

He served in the following centres – Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs, Mataranka, back to Darwin, Nhulunbuy during the construction days, Pine Creek, again in Nhulunbuy and finally Darwin prior to his retirement.

Lovey was one of the great characters of the job, not being a great one for protocol. I personally found him to be jovial and easy going with a very friendly nature.

Very few of his postings would have been considered 'easy', particularly early in his career.

Sincere sympathy to his wife Bev and daughters Kim and Susan.



**Graeme Joseph**  
**"Lovey"**  
**BROWNING**



## A BALAMUMU MURDER

by

*Creed Lovgrove*

*8th March 1995*

On the 2nd June 1952 a telegram arrived in Darwin from the outpost radio at Yirrkala Mission.

It read,

Denataff, Darwin.

Native female about 45 years murdered stop Midway Melville Bay and Arnhem Bay stop People concerned now at Mission.

(Signed.) Tuffin. Yirrkala.

The head office of the Native Affairs branch sprang into life. The police had been told of the murder and were considering how to arrange transport for a Constable to travel to Yirrkala to investigate. Policy demanded that a Protector of Aborigines be present during the questioning of Aborigines in an indictable offence. As I had not yet arrived at Melville Bay in the landing Tank Ship "Teewha," the Director, Frank Moy, wrote to my immediate boss, the District Superintendent, Gordon Sweeney, on the 2nd June 1952,

"Police will arrange when transport can be arranged, to investigate. As Mr. Lovegrove is not due at Gove for some time it will no doubt be necessary for you to proceed."

He also informed His Honour the Administrator of the incident.

Two days later he wrote another minute to the District Superintendent,

"Police are awaiting transport to Yirrkala, Methodist Overseas Mission (M.O.M) vessel. Mr. Lovegrove can await her arrival and conduct investigation on Branch behalf.

- (1) Radio Mr Lovegrove care Yirrkala to await arrival of Police.
- (2) Written instruction to Mr. Lovegrove to be sent by hand of investigating Constable outlining action Mr. Lovegrove is to take."

Soon after the L.S.T. "Teewha" departed, Melville Bay, Constable Raabe arrived at Yirrkala without the written instruction mentioned above. The investigation started and I was thrown in at the deep end, a young and inexperienced Cadet Patrol Officer.

The first thing was to find out who knew what about the alleged murder. We learned from Doug Tuffin, the business manager, that the main informant was a mialk (mee-alk - an adult Aboriginal woman.) named Yakayak who had left the Mission a few days earlier. She was with Mawalin's mob hunting about 50 Kilometres South of Gove airstrip, Mawalin was an elderly Aboriginal leader who later became famous for his traditional art and whose paintings were much sought after.

We decided that our first job was to trek down to Port Bradshaw and find out what Yakayak had to say. Few of the adult Aborigines spoke English and as neither Gordon or myself spoke the local dialect it was necessary to use the late Roy Marika, M.B.E., as an interpreter and guide during part of our enquiries.

Roy was a clean cut and very astute tribal man in his late twenties. A quarter of a century later he was to become a shrewd leader of his people: well able to "mix it" in negotiations with powerful mining company executives, politicians and public servants in the interests of himself and his people. Roy was the younger brother of Jacky Milirrpum whose name became etched in history as a result of the famous petition on stringy-bark sent to the Australian Parliament and the first land rights type case before Mr. Justice Blackburn, "Milirrpum versus The Commonwealth Government and Nabalco."

Roy's personality in later years is probably best illustrated by this story told to me by the late Doug Allom who, as the most senior Welfare Officer in the Northeast Arnhem area, was close to him. Doug was often embarrassed by Roy's habit of ringing the boss of the alumina plant at

Nhulunbuy to ask him to send a car over to the Mission to pick he and his wife up for shopping. His request was usually successful. One of the top executives was selling off his personal effects before leaving Nhulunbuy. Included was a sleek launch. Roy suggested that the launch be given or sold to him. This left the vendor in a quandary as he knew he was likely to come off second best in negotiations, given the delicate position of the mining company vis a vis its mining interests and Aboriginal land ownership in the area at that time. As it happened he didn't succumb and there were no hard feelings on Roy's part. Doug Allom said to Roy,

"You embarrass me Roy when you are always asking the mining company to do things for you. Why do you do it?"

Roy, quite unabashed, replied,

"Doug; I have found that balandas (white fellas) find it hard to say no."

I was told that even in those days in the traditional Yulgnu setting that existed, Roy was prepared to be a "go between" or "hit man" in some of the complicated relationships that existed within the clans. For instance it was said that even on Wonngu's behalf, Roy sometimes precipitated a fracas to involve the old warrior's grown up sons who transgressed traditional boundaries in amorous relationships with their tribal, but not consanguinal, mothers. To know that Wonngu was the leader of the fearsome Balamumus would be to know that this was no mean task.

Indeed on one such occasion Roy was speared in the forearm by a stingray spear wielded by Wonngu himself. This type of spear is a very cruel, short shafted, anti personnel weapon with half a dozen or so stingray barbs projecting from a lump of sugarbag bees wax. The barbs break off when the spear is jabbed into the victim. They can only be removed by sliding a scalpel down beside the barb to allow it to be withdrawn. Roy said to me,

"Phew!! I never tasted anything like that before."

These stories exemplify the personality of this outstanding man who was to become our guide and mentor, off and on over the next month or so.



At dawn, on a typically chilly dry season morning, Doug Tuffin drove Gordon Raabe, Roy Marika, another Yulngu man, Djinini and myself to Gove airstrip. It was still dark when we commenced walking to Port Bradshaw. Although we bypassed Cape Arnhem where we knew Djining, Wonngu's eldest son was camped with his mob; we travelled to our destination by a circuitous route, checking out various places where Mawalin's mob may have been hunting. As we came within sight of the great white sand dunes of Port Bradshaw and crossed the tidal flats of the bay, we came across the fresh barefoot tracks of eight people. Roy had no difficulty in naming the owners of those tracks as we trudged across those damp flats in the late afternoon.

"That's so and so and his wife, and that's so and so and his wife," he recited as we followed the tracks. It was the first time in my lifetime association with Aboriginals that I really appreciated the extent to which they could not only read, but interpret the meaning and the implications of tracks. It was as though they were reading from an objective and factual report.

We also came across a resting place near the beach with the ashes of the camp fire still hot and a part eaten shark near the fire. Roy knew we were getting close to Mawalin's camp and after climbing a tall sapling he suggested that we make camp and surprise the group in the early morning.

I must say that I felt uneasy about raiding the camp at dawn. It seemed to me to be unnecessarily dramatic and a bit sneaky. I would have been more comfortable observing the proper conventions of our "temporary rone" by announcing our arrival and being invited in. Apart from that I thought it was a bit ridiculous for four of us, two Yulgnu and two Balandas, to surround a widespread camp to rush in and capture about twenty men, women and children. However the prospect of such a raid seemed not to worry our two Yulgnu friends and I suspect they looked upon it as a bit of a joke. After all, Mawalin was Roy's eldest brother and Roy would make sure nothing went wrong. Besides that, he would dine out "on the story of how he and two balandas had sneaked up and surprised

his "pop relation".

The initial reaction to our sudden appearance was panic with women rushing hither and thither and men reaching for their spears and woomeras. Roy settled them down with quick reassurances. They soon kicked the fires alight and amidst much laughter and chatter we sat down to pannikins of tea and a sharing of the Macassan pipe with the much loved Narali) supplied by the young Native Affairs bapa (father). Me!!!

The two main witnesses Yakayak and Bangboi were with the party so off we headed, back to the Gove airstrip in Indian file.

The circuitous walk to Port Bradshaw on the previous day must have been about 60 Kilometres but our return was by a direct route and would have been a little over half that distance. The walk was strenuous as a cyclone of a couple of months earlier had laid many branches across our path and this made walking more difficult than it would normally have been. Nagalya and Ngowa, the suspects' were at the Mission so questioning was able to begin.

The following story, which unfolded, is an extract from my report of 1952,

"In about the middle of March this year a party of about thirty natives were returning from the Cato River to Yirrkala Mission after an absence of about six months. Three days before arriving at the Mission they camped in the hilly country to the west of Melville Bay. The next morning and during some of the afternoon they hunted out from the camp, returning there about 3 p.m. When they broke camp they commenced travelling in small groups in a South Easterly direction.

One of the groups consisted of one male Aborigine Nagaiya, four female Aborigines, Ngowa, Yakayak, Bangboi, and Ngoik Ngoik and two children. Ngoik Ngoik who was blind and suffering from fever (probably malaria), had to be led by one of the other natives. She was unable to keep up with the rest of the party and when she complained of being tired and sick she was left behind to rest in the care of Bangboi. Nagaiya, Ngowa, Yakayak

and the two children continued travelling. They had gone for about another two miles when Bangboi caught up with them, saying she had been unable to Persuade Ngoik Ngoik to continue travelling, so she left her behind.

Nagaiya went back to get the sick lubra. He took with him, a shovel nose spear and a woomera. When he found Ngoik-Ngoik she was sitting in the same place as he had left her. He shook Ngoik Ngoik saying,

'Wake up they have all gone away.'

She told him she did not feel well but he still tried to get her to come along saying, 'Come on, there is no one with us, I am a little bit frightened because it is nearly sunset.'

She swore at him and he then stabbed her once in the right shoulder, holding the spear near the blade and using it like a knife. The point did not penetrate but the blade of the spear caused a fairly deep wound at the junction of the shoulder and the neck.

She screamed and continued swearing at him as he left her and went back to the other lubras.

Nagaiya told Ngowa what had happened and Ngowa then returned to find Ngoik Ngoik. She found her alive where Nagaiya had left her. Ngowa then struck Ngoik Ngoik across the shoulder and back with a stick about three feet long and about two and a half inches in diameter. She left Ngoik Ngoik still alive and returned to get Yakayak saying to her,

"I could not find Ngoik Ngoik, more better you come with me Yakayak and we look together. Might be we find her."

As they headed back towards Ngoik Ngoik, Ngowa went in a direction so as to miss the body. Yakayak would not be led however and followed the native track. She was on her own when she come upon the body of Ngoik Ngoik near the native track. She could see where the body had been dragged for about ten yards from the track and there was a cut on her right shoulder and much blood on the back and head. There was also a lot of blood on the grass and on a stone and stick, which



she assumed had been used in the attack upon Ngoik Ngoik. She believed Ngoik Ngoik was dead and she was very frightened as she hastened back to the camp. Ngowa joined her before she reached the camp but she did not tell Ngowa nor anyone else what she had seen, believing that if she did, her life would be in jeopardy.

By this time it was dark and Nagaiya, Ngowa, Yakayak and Bangboi and the two children continued on about two miles where they joined the rest of the group and camped for the night.

The party of natives continued on to Yirrkala Mission arriving there two days later, which was approximately the 18th March, 1952.

The report goes on to say,

“Four trips were made to the vicinity of the alleged murder and on each occasion a fairly extensive search was made for the remains of Ngoik Ngoik.”

That brief comment fails to do justice to the extent and nature of those patrols. We had to cross Melville Bay in a 3.6 metre bondwood dinghy without the benefit of an outboard motor. Rowing about eight kilometres across the bay with five adults and their meagre gear and about 15 centimetres of freeboard was both a strenuous and worrying experience. It was even more so when on one occasion a large turtle almost as big as our boat, surfaced a few yards in front of us. As quick as a flash, Djinini, stood up and started tearing off his shirt.

“What are you going to do?” I said.

“Catch that turtle,” he replied.

“What will you do with it then?”

“Put it in the boat,” he said as though that should have been obvious.

“Like hell you are,” Gordon and I both shouted.

I am sure Djinini thought we were timid fools.

On another occasion as we approached the beach across the Bay from Drimmie Head the sea was quite choppy and some of us jumped out of the dinghy in waist high water and pushed the boat the last couple of

hundred metres into the beach.

We carted our things up above high water mark. I wandered over the sandbank to look at the small tidal creek that ran behind the beach. I noticed two large salt-water crocodiles in the creek. A little later as we were all sitting with our belongings, the reptiles swam out of the mouth of the creek and swam parallel to the beach until they were opposite us. The next thing we knew there was a very large crocodile crawling up the beach towards us. Gordon unsheathed his pistol and fired about five shots at the monster while I got away one shot from my single shot .22 rifle. I don't think either of us scored a hit but we startled it. It spun around and raced back to the water, and headed out to sea at great speed. It was nerve racking to realise that a short while earlier we had been swimming with those crocs.

About three quarters of the way across the Bay on the Cape Arnhem side there was a very small island and we invariably pulled in and stretched our legs. On each of the eight occasions that we passed it we usually boiled the billy or cooked some rice while we rested. On one occasion we had no fresh water so we made tea and cooked rice-using seawater. The rice was passable but the tea was terrible.

The rowlocks on the dinghy were a bit rusty and on the third trip across the bay this wore through the oars which snapped. We had to row from then on with a very short pair of oars, which made things very difficult.

From the beach opposite Drimmie Head we had to trek about 20 kilometres up into the high country in the hinterland of Arnhem Bay. My report goes on to say,

“On the last patrol, Constable Raabe and myself were taken by Yakayak to the place where she had last seen the body. Nothing was found there however but several bones were found about half a mile east of this spot and three vertebrae were found in a bower birds nest on a cliff edge about three hundred yards north of this spot. These bones have been sent to the Darwin hospital for identification, and Constable Raabe has told me that it is now very doubtful whether these bones

are those of a human being. It could be seen where sheets of bark about ten feet long had been removed from two stringy bark trees about twelve inches in diameter within a hundred yards from the place shown to us by Yakayak. It has been suggested that the body may have been removed by natives travelling from Yirrkala Mission to Arnhem Bay, which is the burial ground for many natives of this district. It must also be remembered that this area was ravaged by hundred mile an hour cyclone from the 2nd to the 5th April 1952 and about 16 inches of rain was recorded. This, together with the help of dingos, wild cats, hawks and other carion could have caused any remains to be scattered far and wide during the three months since the murder was alleged to have taken place.”

The significance of the stripped stringy bark trees was, that one of the burial practices of these people was to wait until the body had been stripped of all flesh by nature and then to disinter the body and place the bones in a stringy bark tube of about 20 centimetres in diameter and about one and a half metres long. This would be taken to the burial grounds on Cape Arnhem, where the container would be painted with protective dreaming motifs and ceremonial burial practices observed. That is one of the reasons mourning lasts so long in this area.

There was an unfortunate incident that occurred during this last search for the body. Gordon was feeling a little frustrated at the fruitlessness of our searches and while Djinini, Yakayak and myself were searching the head of a small gully, there was a sudden loud explosion. Gordon had fired off his pistol, which startled us all. I looked back at him and a few seconds later when I looked back at my two companions, there was only one there. Yakayak had disappeared as though she had been swallowed up by the earth. We saw no more of her during that trip. We found out later that she was so frightened by the shot that she just took off running and did not stop until she got to Djinings Camp on Arnhem Bay late that night. I estimate that the distance she travelled in that time was about 25 Kms. Not bad considering she was obviously pregnant. That foolish action on the part of my fellow officer



could have left us with some difficult questions to answer. As it turned out, Djining returned her to Yirrkala next day as he did not want strange balandas traipsing down around his camp.

It was not unusual during investigations of this kind for the stories told by suspects and witnesses alike, to be many and varied. This case was no exception. I got the impression that this was not a matter of blatant dishonesty with all its connotations of cowardice, but rather, a view that, "If balandas want to come out and stick their nose into Yulgnu business, we'll lead them a merry dance and make them earn their keep."

There was no pretence on the part of the suspects that they were innocent and Nagaiya in particular made it clear that he was looking forward to Fannie Bay prison where he had been incarcerated for a couple of years in the 1930's.

Nagaiya was a fairly high profile Aboriginal warrior for those days. He is mentioned in Alex Smith's book "The White Missus of Arnhem Land." Smith says that during the police patrols to North East Arnhem Land in 1933, the late Constable Ted Morey reported further rumours about the two white women from the wreck of the M.V. "Douglas Mawson" to the effect that 'Wonngu was supposed to have one and,

"Other stories allege that Nuckiar (Ngarkaiya, Nachiar) and Marra-watta, (Wonggu's sons) possess them."

In 1934 Nargaiya with his brothers Mau and Natjalma were convicted of the murder of three Japanese pearlers at Caledon Bay and sentenced to 20 years hard labour in Fannie Bay gaol. They didn't serve 20 years. They barely served two. During the investigation into the Caledon Bay murders a member of a police patrol, Constable McColl was speared to death on nearby Bickerton Island. The suspects of both incidents were in Darwin for trial at the same time. Tuckiar, suspected of killing McColl was found guilty and sentenced to death. He was later acquitted on appeal and then disappeared.

He is thought to have suffered a

revenge killing but by whom has never been established conclusively, nor has the outcome of his disappearance. The Tuckiar case and the perceived harshness of the sentence awarded to the Caledon Bay murderers caused a nationwide reaction. Many people believed there had been serious provocation in both cases. Wild talk about punitive measures exacerbated public reaction.

In due course, as Alan Powell records in his book of historical events in the N.T., "Far Country, the anthropologist, Donald Thompson was set up by the government to be a "Peace Embassy" to the Balamumu. In 1936 he gained the release of Wonngu's three incarcerated sons and took them back to their father. As a result he developed a close and lifelong friendship with this fierce and formidable old man and his family. Powell goes on to tell us that five years later with World War Two upon us and Thompson as Squadron Leader in the R.A.A.F, he was persuaded to set up an observer force amongst the Yulgnu of Caledon Bay. He says that Thompson thought it was ironic that these men had to be convinced that they could now kill Japanese who landed in their country without the fear of being visited by a punitive party.

"Life sure is strange; ain't it?"

This background of the main suspect is an indication that Nagaiya was no stranger to violence and that he was fearless of the consequences.

Though I was obviously no "Poirot" and despite the varied nuances in the stories we were told, I was expected to speculate as to the motive for the suspected killing. I reported as follows,

"Three possible motives for murder have been suggested by these investigations. The first one by the male suspect, Nagaiya. The majority of the group travelling to the mission was apparently suffering from malaria, which is quite prevalent in the Yirrkala area. Among these sufferers were Ngoik Ngoik and Nagaiya. Ngoik Ngoik must have been very ill, as she was complaining of aching all over her body and that she could not travel far without resting.

It is known that she was suffering from defective eyesight to such an extent as to necessitate her being led. Up to the time of the alleged murder (I was told) there had been very little rain in the district and surface water was scarce. The natives could not rely on the small springs from which they usually managed to get their water, and were travelling with haste to reach a permanent fresh water creek.

When Bangboi came up with the message that Ngoik Ngoik was still resting behind, Nagaiya, who was also sick, went back. He tried to induce her to travel and when she swore at him he speared her. His reasons for spearing her were:

1. It was almost sunset and he was getting frightened that he would have to travel in the dark.
2. He was always carrying her and he was getting tired of her.
3. He was wild because when she swore at him she said something that no native woman is permitted to say to a man.

The second motive, jealousy, would probably apply more to Ngowa than to Nagaiya. Ngoik Ngoik and Nagaiya were husband and wife. Nagaiya is the son of the old man of the tribe, Wonngu, and Ngowa is one of Wonngu's many wives. Ngowa is therefore Nagaiya's stepmother as well as his paramour. The amorous relationship was by no means a secret, and as a result Ngowa and Ngoik Ngoik were on very unfriendly terms. Ngowa was jealous of Ngoik Ngoik because the latter was Nagaiya's wife and was getting food that would have gone to her. When she returned to look for Ngoik Ngoik and found her wounded and sick, and knowing that Nagaiya had been the one who had done the spearing she apparently could not resist the temptation to add to Ngoik Ngoik's misery by assaulting her before leaving.

The third motive, suggested by one of the witnesses, Yakayak, brings the tribal aspect to light.

During the period of six months that this particular group of natives were away from the Mission, they drifted between Caledon Bay, Blue Mud





Bay and Arnhem Bay and the Cato River, following ceremony grounds for corroborees and hunting as they went. While they were in the vicinity of Caledon Bay, one of the boys, Yungarin, ran away with Nagaiya's blood sister, Muluwa.

Muluwa had been given as a wife to Bulambi by her father, Wonngu, and naturally the family group, especially Nagaiya, were most indignant about the elopement. Learning that the two had gone to Arnhem Bay, the rest of the group immediately followed, apparently with the intention of retaking Muluwa. On reaching the Cato River, they learned that Yungarin 'was hunting crocodiles further around the coast. A message was sent to them requesting that they return to the Cato River, which they did.

On their arrival at the camp, Nagaiya cast two shovel nosed spears at Yungarin, both of which missed the target. Nothing else happened then and Yungarin and Muluwa returned to Arnhem Bay with the main group of natives. When this group decided to return to Yirrkala, Yungarin and Muluwa remained at Arnhem Bay and are now with a group of natives who are building an airstrip for Mr. Shepherdson in the Arnhem Bay area.

It was while the main group of natives was returning to the mission that the murder was alleged to have taken place.

Ngoik Ngoik was the blood grandmother of Yungarin, eldest living of that line.

Yakayak said she heard Nagaiya say that he would kill Ngoik Ngoik and the rest of that tribe (including Yakayak herself) to revenge the elopement of Yungarin and Muluwa. After they returned to the Mission she heard him say,

"I killed Ngoik Ngoik, I sorry for Bulambi, my sister really wife belong to Bulambi."

It is the custom of natives in North East Arnhem Land to vent their anger on the relative (preferably the eldest of the line) of a wrong doer if the wrong doer is not available, and sometimes even when the wrong doer is available.

On questioning Nagaiya regarding this theory he denied that the fact of Yungarin and Muluwa running away had anything to do with his spearing of Ngoik Ngoik.

If, as Nagaiya originally stated, Ngoik Ngoik was still alive when he left her, I think the first suggested motive would be the most likely. Had his motive been revenge I feel sure he would have made sure she was dead before he returned to the group.

Much later, after we had all returned to Darwin, I was told by the Police that the suspects had now admitted that Ngoik Ngoik was in fact dead when they left her. If this was not just another smokescreen, another leafy branch dragged across clear tracks to obscure them, the motive of revenge becomes far more significant.

These are volatile people with a set of mores that few people who have never grown up subject to them and been steeped in them, will ever properly understand. The group dynamics are complex. A fierce and often ruthless, old leader. Too many wives with an unbelievable generation spread. Probably a hundred children ranging in age from babes in arms through virile men and women to elderly leaders in their own right. Sons and daughters in law who had loyalties outside the group. There was Yakayak whose consanguinal grandmother was the murdered woman and whose brother Yungarin was the target of revenge in a "Romeo and Juliet" like primitive setting. The other main witness, Bangboi, was the daughter in law of the deceased: married to Mulial a son by an earlier marriage. She would have had an obligation to be resentful of the killing. I don't think there would be any doubt that every one of them would have clearly understood the motive.

But this young Cadet Patrol Officer, flatteringly called Bapa (Father) by those to whom he was a good bite for a pipeful of that much loved Narali, will never be sure what the motive was.

The investigation had run its course. Nagaiya and Ngowa were arrested and the two prisoners were taken to Darwin by Constable Raabe in late July in a light aircraft. I was able to hitch a ride. In Darwin, in the absence of

a corpse and a dearth of witnesses on hand, the prisoners were charged with, and pleaded guilty to, assault. They were sentenced to four months imprisonment with hard labour.

I hope the minor charge and the seemingly inappropriate sentence for the deliberate killing of a fellow human, were not indicative of a male chauvinistic attitude that it was a mere woman who had suffered, and a black one at that. What if the plot had involved a crippled white woman, stabbed in the neck by an errant husband and bashed with a blunt instrument by his lover? If, despite the absence of a corpse, the lovers had admitted to the killing. It is hard to escape the feeling that the outcome, would have been quite different.

I was so glad to get home. Whilst the novelty of the two jobs I had undertaken was exciting and stimulating I had been worried about my wife. By now she was seven months pregnant. While I was away she had spent some time in hospital with toxæmia and oedema with the possibility of convulsions with great risk to the baby. As it turned out on the 7th of October we were blessed with a beautiful daughter who has been a joy to us ever since and is still so, 42 years later.

My superiors seemed to be satisfied with my report. I was asked,

"Is Wonngu likely to extract retribution now that the liaison between Nagaiya and Ngowa has been high lighted?"

"Is there any likelihood of Nagaiya's and Ngowa's relations pursuing the feud?"

I replied,

"I do not think Wonngu will extract retribution because of the liaison between Nagaiya and Ngowa. This type of thing exists between other of his sons and younger wives and while he disagrees with this (he knows his sons are the source of his power.)"

"I think the time lag between when, Ngoik Ngoik was killed and when this killing was brought to light together with the fact that disciplinary action has been taken by the police will be a damper on any further feud in connection with this murder."



Upon his release from Fannie Bay Gaol Nagaiya was to be committed to Snake Bay Settlement on Melville Island under powers vested by law in the Director of Aboriginal Affairs, and Ngowa was to be returned to Yirrkala.

I suspect they had got wind of the likelihood of the committal.

Upon their simultaneous release from Fannie Bay, Nagaiya and Ngowa disappeared and all efforts to trace them at the time, failed. I had visions of the

fate of Tuckiar, whatever it might have been. But this was a quite different case and as far as I could see there was no one between here and Yirrkala who had any interest in taking revenge on either of them. Nevertheless it was with some relief that, on checking the Register of Wards (Govt. Gazette proclamation of 1957) a few days ago I found the following:

pp 262 Nagaiya - Group. Wamud.  
- Tribe Juba. -M. Born 1910. (The Tribal name Balamumu -meaning Sea People-

is the local name for these people while they are residing at Caledon Bay.)

Nawa -Group. Bangaridjan-Tribe. Gamarang F. Born 1906. So they made it home. I was glad for I had grown to like this fierce and volatile warrior. If he is still alive 43 years later, at 85, I wonder if he is still a "Gay Lothario" with a fist full of shovel nosed spears.

*Creed Lovegrove*  
8-3-95.

*Letter from*  
*Andy McNeil*  
*Dated 27th February 2001*

I read with interest the comments on the photograph of the full compliment of N.T. Police Officers on Parade in Citation Volume 6, No.5. As Sid Bowie has already stated the occasion was the presentation of the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal to Gordon Stott, who also appears in the photograph.

The event took place in July, 1960 and I also took several colour slides on that day. I have recently scanned the slides and have attached the scanned photographs. One depicts the Officers and Gordon Stott as shown in the photographs already reproduced. One is of Inspector "Hanger" Bill McKinnon and the third depicts an unusual sight in those day and I suppose even now. This photograph shows a group of our blokes marching in front of the Bennett Street, Police Station.

They marched around to the Administrator's Residence to take part in the Medal ceremony for Gordon Stott. Shown marching from front to rear are Sergeants 3/c Lionel "Yo" McFarlane, and Tim Tisdell. Constables Peter Young, Jim Berry, "Truthful" Terry Eakin, Colin "Killer" Kain, Tom Zydenbos, Ian Simos, Vic Hoy and one bloke who is hidden behind Simos. As you are aware six of those marching are unfortunately deceased. The whereabouts of the others I do not know but maybe they will see this photograph and hopefully it will bring back fond memories of their time in the "Job".

Regards,  
*Andy McNeill.*

