



the CITATION

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Letter to the Editor.

In the December 1997 Citation Newsletter, the President Peter Thomas, in his Report 1997, states in relation to the rank of Mounted Constable : "The Mounted" was dropped in 1993". This is not correct. Reg Mc Caffery, John Fitzgerald and I were appointed 5/1/1935 with the rank of Mounted Constable. One of the conditions of our appointment was that we had to be able to ride. I had plenty of experience.

Later appointments were Peter Brown 31/12/1935, Jim Mannion 29/3/1936 and Jack Stokes 30/12/1936, but I do not know if they had the rank of Mounted Constable. In the September 1991 issue of the Northern Territory Police News is my article Police, Plaintiff and Cattle Duffers Borroloola 1923 for which, details of charges and penalties against the local white duffers was obtained for me by retired Inspector Frank Cronshaw, then still in Darwin, from the Borroloola Police Station journals in the Archives. Frank did a very thorough job in researching the journals and I was greatly assisted by his contribution.

I was stationed at Borroloola from September 1935 to April 1936 and again from April to August 1937. I remember receiving a personal memo from Darwin Headquarters to the effect that the rank of Mounted Constable had been abolished and we had reverted to just ordinary constable. I asked Frank Cronshaw to see when the term M.C. before an officials name ceased in the Borroloola journals. He replied that Frank Sheridan, then Officer-In-Charge, ceased to use it in October 1935. The same should have been for my entries, although I have an idea that I received the memo in 1937.

Today, I have confirmed by making a telephone call, that Walter (Wally) Greville who would have had the rank of Mounted Constable and been appointed before me, died some 20 years ago in Adelaide.

He had been stationed at Borroloola and returned to Darwin in January 1935 soon after my arrival that month. I was associated with him for 12 months or more in Darwin. He later went to Hatches Creek and resigned from there by about 1938.

Other than myself, there may be only one other former Mounted Constable still alive but I have not heard of him since he left the service about 59-50 year ago.

As further and conclusive proof on the Mounted Constable rank date question, I have before me my copy of my letter of appointment dated 20th December, 1934. Department of Interior, Canberra. A.C.T. which states: "I desire to inform you that approval has been given for your appointment to the office of Mounted Constable in the Public Service of the Northern Territory". It goes on to say the salary scale is 312 -408 pounds starting at 276 pounds per annum because of cost of living figures, date of appointment from 5th January, 1935, uniform allowance 12 pound per annum, depart Sydney by the S.S. "Marella" on 5th January, 1935 and other details. The letter is signed J.A. Carrodus for Secretary." This seems enough on the Mounted Constable question!

In the Newsletter page 4, the continuation of Terry Borcell's story of Tony Lynch's career, under the heading "note" is stated: "Also, in Darwin in May 1923, A.V. Stretton and J.H. Kelly were photographed in front of a substantial building with a solid timber verandah." The location of that photograph is near the verandah of the Borroloola Police Station and is of Actg. Sgt. Stretton of Rankine River and Sgt J.H. Kelly, Borroloola. The occasion was the hearing of the cattle duffing cases, the full details of which are in my article previously mentioned. The Police and Plaintiffs photograph was taken at the same location. The Stretton and Kelly picture appeared in Bert Mettam's article, "Early Days, Reminiscences of an Old Timer", as told to him by retired Inspector Ray Bridgeland, then stationed at Roper River as a Mounted Constable

The date, May 1923, is wrong - it should be April 1923. Borroloola journal entry: "Wednesday 25th, April. Sgt. Stretton, Messrs. Broadbridge, Watson, Ellis, Lowe, Carter, Gibbs and M.C. Bridgeland departed."

There is some history here which you may like to publish in full in your March Newsletter.

Kindest regards, and best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Riley.



BOB DARKEN

On the 19th February, 1942 Constable Bob Darken was stationed in Darwin.

On that date, Darwin was to receive the first of a series of bombing raids by the Japanese.

The following is his recollection of what occurred.

WAR COMES TO DARWIN

Back in Darwin and at 10 minutes to 10 on the morning of the 19th February, 1942, history was made when Australia was attacked from the air.

The Japanese planes struck at Darwin with devastating force. I was in court when I finished my evidence, I was excused and came out onto the verandah facing Darwin harbour. I heard the noise of aircraft approaching and immediately spotted three formations of nine planes in each formation. I knew they were Japanese bombers and then remembered my mate, Dave Mofflin who had been on night work and was asleep in the barracks. As I raced over to the barracks, I could see quite a number of bombs falling. They looked like little silver bubbles. I got Dave out of his bed and when we reached the dining room of the barracks, we received a direct hit on the front of the building. The explosion blew us out the back and fortunately for us, finished under a tank stand made of cement. The tank, which was full of water was blown to pieces and we never saw it again.

We were very fortunate and received only minor injuries. After a few minutes, we decided to go to the police station to see if anyone was hurt there. On the way, a large bomb fragment came down and I felt the wind of it as it missed my head and buried itself in the ground. We dug it up some days later and it is now in the Alice Springs R.S.L. Club. We were then strafed by a Jap Zero fighter, firing tracer and cannon shells. However, we were again lucky as we missed getting hit by a couple of feet.

Some days after that first air raid, we saw something red in a tree down by the wharf. We decided to check it out and were very surprised to find it was Dave's inner spring mattress which he had been lying on just seconds before it had been catapulted into the sky. I'll never forget Dave's reaction to seeing his mattress in the tree. He put his arm around me and casually said

"Thanks mate." I said "What for?" To which he replied. "You stupid bastard, you saved my life." My reply was "Yes, what a stupid bastard I am. We sometimes make silly mistakes Dave."

After the first raid was finished, I went to the Post Office as I heard it also had received a direct hit. It was not a very pleasant sight to see a lot of people I knew blown to pieces. One girl Iris Ball, I had been talking to that same morning. The two Mullins girls, Mrs. Young and others I knew were all dead. One chap was blown in the air and lodged in a tree.

Sandy Mc Nab and myself put them all in the back of a truck and had them transported to the morgue.

A few weeks later, a Royal commission was held in Darwin by Justice Lowe, assisted by Mr. Alderman Q.C. I gave evidence at that enquiry. Many years later, a video was made of those events in Darwin. I have a copy of it.

The last job I did with Dave Mofflin in the police force was in Darwin in 1942. A Jap fighter plane had been forced down on Melville Island due to engine failure. A native named "Green Ant Paddy" was caught taking tucker from the mission to the Jap pilot.

The pilot was brought to Darwin and later transferred to a prisoner of war camp at Cowra in N.S.W. where he died during a mass escape bid.

Green Ant Paddy was arrested and brought to Darwin. He was handed over to Constables Brown and McFarlane but escaped. Judge Wells who was in charge in Darwin at that time sent for me and told me to find Green Ant Paddy, lock him up and bring him before the court. He must be caught. At this particular time it was expected that the Japs would land troops and we didn't want Green Ant Paddy to be at large, as he, being aware of the position would no doubt go out of his way to assist them.

Dave and I started searching behind the old D.M.F. barracks near Vestey's beach. More by good luck than good management, we came upon a young Aboriginal up a tree. He was obviously a lookout and when we coaxed him down. I told Dave to hold him while I went ahead and located the main camp.

There were about a dozen blacks in the camp and when I sneaked up, I saw Green Ant Paddy with a loaf of bread under his arm. as I approached to within a few yards of Paddy, he jumped up and pulled a knife out of the bread and threw it at me, hitting me in the left shoulder luckily, handle first. The blacks all scattered and I took off after Green Ant Paddy who had about 40 yards start.



Just then, some Japanese planes came over and dropped anti-personnel bombs (daisy-cutters we called them). I immediately dived flat on the ground but Green Ant Paddy copped a near direct hit and as a result, there wasn't much left of him. Sometime later, a Jap bomber got a direct hit from one of our anti-aircraft guns and burst into flames. We watched the figure of one of the crew bail out, but his parachute caught fire and he plummeted down onto the sandy beach never to bomb Darwin again. All the others in the plane finished up in a similar fashion as the plane blew up. It was good for once not to be on the receiving end.

Before the Japanese raids in Darwin, I was always chosen to be the body guard for V.I.P's and was the minder for Robert Menzies when he visited Darwin.

Also the Duke of Gloucester, Air Marshall Sir Brooke Popham, General Douglas Mc Arthur and Billy Hughes. By far, the best of the bunch was Mr. (later Sir) Robert Menzies. He was always friendly and would love to talk about sport, mostly cricket.

One night I was in the Administration car with him and the Administrator, C.L.A. Abbott. Abbot had a box of cigars, opened it, took one himself and handed the box to the Prime Minister. Abbott was about to retrieve the box when the P.M. passed it to me. I took one, even though I didn't smoke cigars. That was the difference between the two men.

General Mc Arthur on the other hand was too full of his own importance to speak much to an ordinary policeman. So very few words were spoken between us. I was pleased to see the last of him. The Duke of Gloucester talked a bit - mostly a lot of non sense. Most of the time he was drunk and even when sober didn't appear to me to be very intelligent, but his wife was a lovely woman.

Billy Highes, who was deaf as a post would switch his hearing aid off at times when he didn't want to be bothered with anyone which was pretty often. he wasn't the nicest little man one would ever meet.

After many air raids, later I and the other police were transferred from Darwin to Alice springs at the end of May, 1942.

Lou Hook (later killed near Pine Creek) and myself came to the Alice in my old Ford V8 car. All we had to eat on the trip down was a tin of beetroot. So when we arrived at the old Stuart Arms Hotel, dirty, thirsty and hungry, we decided we needed a cold beer. So into the pub, where we met for the first time, Ted Hayes, Louis Bloomfield, Bob Purvis and Bob Buck who were altogether, so we joined them in having a beer or two.

In the Stuart Arms one day, a very excited lady who was the Manager said that the chap in Room 4 had threatened her with a revolver. "I think he's gone mad!" she said. So along I went to Room 4 and there I saw a chap whom I had known in Darwin. He had been evacuated after a couple of Jap air raids and was completely 'bomb-happy'. He aimed the revolver at me and told me to keep away or else he would shoot me. The revolver was a .38 caliber but looking down the barrel, to me it appeared to be like a cannon.

He kept it pointed at me and blabbered that he would have to kill me if I came towards him. When I was only a matter of a few feet from him, he fired and I knocked the gun from his hand, laying him out on the bed. I felt sorry for the poor bugger but a lot more worried where the bullet had hit me but I felt no pain and no impact from the bullet striking me. When I examined the gun, I found to my relief that the bullet had stopped at the end of the barrel. Evidently, the bullet had been wet or in some other way faulty. He was taken under escort to hospital and then to Adelaide for psychiatric treatment.

Lou Hook and I were one day returning to Alice Springs from Bond Springs Station and when coming through the hills, we noticed an army truck with a lot of smoke coming from underneath it. We drew level with the truck and told the driver to pull over as his vehicle was on fire.

There were flames coming from underneath so Lou and I started putting it out by shovelling sand on it which was a bit difficult. Eventually, we got the fire out and looked around for the two drivers.

After some time, we saw them about 50 yards up the road behind some big rocks. We had a few heated words with them for leaving the future of their vehicle to us.

After we cooled down, one of the drivers said "it's OK for you blokes if you want to be heroes but we don't get paid five bob a day to put out a fire on a truck loaded with three tons of mortar bombs."

Perhaps if we had known what the contents of the truck was, we would probably been with them behind the rocks!!!

Please send stories and items of interest
to Garth Macpherson
C/- Community Relations.
P O Box 2630
Alice Springs. N. T. 0871

1858



POLICE CAREER OF

ROBERT & GORDON STOTT



Sgt. Robert Stott
1912

Alice Springs

He went to Alice Springs in 1912 as a Sergeant and in 1927 he became Commissioner of Central Australian Police. In those days the Northern Territory was divided in two.

Following his death in 1928, the Commissionership reverted back to the Administrator in the Government Residence, Darwin for overall control.

Robert Stott was affectionately known as "The Uncrowned King of Central Australia." This is entirely due to his long and varied service throughout the Northern Territory and in particular, Alice Springs.

There is a story that relates to this matter that in the early 1920's a dignitary of some standing from a southern State was visiting Alice Springs School.

The dignitary went through the usual procedure of asking the children simple, every day questions that they would be able to answer simply and correctly. He then asked the question "And what is the name of the King?" He was met by a spontaneous and confident reply from the entire school - "Bob Stott."

Robert Stott served almost 46 years in the Northern Territory and Stott Terrace, Alice Springs as well as Mount Stott, 150 miles or 240 kilometres northeast of town on Derry Downs are named after him.

He was on leave in Adelaide, prior to retirement when he was hit by a Glenelg mail train at Wayville on 5th May, 1928.

He died the following day aged 69 years.

He left a wife Agnes and three children. His son, Gordon also served as a mounted constable.

Gordon Cameron Healslop Stott.

Born 14th January, 1905; joined the Northern Territory Mounted Police on 18th December, 1924.

Like his Father, Robert, he served all over the Territory and these stations included: Rankine River, Mataranka, Katherine, Pine Creek, Darwin, Tennant Creek, Roper River, Timber Creek, Maranboy, Elliott, Newcastle Waters and Daly River.

His was a checkered career, being twice suspended from duty, once for assaulting two natives and once for being under the influence whilst on duty. Both charges were subsequently dismissed.

He was also the recipient of several commendations and letters of appreciation during his length of service.

He became the first policeman on the new Tennant Creek Goldfield in 1934. His Police Station was a bough shed and he camped on a swag beneath a tent fly. His kitchen was on open fire with no such things as a refrigerator. Water was scarce and ordinary bore water cost 3 Shillings (3/-) for an 8 gallon tin. Quite a large sum in those days.

Gordon Stott was promoted to the rank of Senior Constable on 9th March, 1950. He had no desire to seek further promotion, preferring to stay in the bush and as he once stated to the noted author, Douglas Lockwood - To gain promotion it would be necessary to live in a comparatively big town like Darwin or Alice Springs. "I preferred the outback to promotion and I never persevered with exams. I'll probably stay in the bush until I retire."

The article by Douglas Lockwood appeared in the "Citation" dated December 1965.

It is worth noting that Gordon Stott passed away on the 14th December, 1965, exactly one month short of his 60th Birthday and 4 days short of completing 41 years as a member of the Northern Territory Police.

Robert Stott served 46 years, and when combined with Gordon, they gave 87 years to this Police Force.

An impeccable record by anyone's standard.



Gordon Stott 1959
(Long Service Medal)



S/C Gordon Stott,
in his 41st year of
service at Daly
River Police
Station.