

RECORDS

TERRITORY

Northern Territory Archives Service Newsletter

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From the Director

The most notable event for the Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS) since the last edition of Records Territory was the passage of the Information Act through the Territory Parliament in October 2002.

As well as providing the Territory with privacy principles and an access to information regime, the Information Act provides a legislative basis for management of the Territory Government's records and archives.

The Information Act assigns the NTAS with responsibility to establish standards in recordkeeping and to assist government agencies to comply with the standards. The Act also provides the NTAS with the authority to manage the Territory's Archives and a process by which to provide community access to them.

The Information Act comes into place on 1 July 2003. The next edition of Records Territory will focus on implementation issues associated with the Act.



Greg Coleman
Director NTAS

NT History Grants

The Northern Territory History Grants for 2003 were advertised in The Australian and local newspapers in mid-March. The grants scheme provides an annual series of financial grants to encourage and support the work of researchers who are recording and writing about Northern Territory history.

These grants are intended to assist with expenses incurred whilst carrying out research projects. Such expenses may include costs for travel, administrative/technical assistance, stationery, research fees and copying charges. Funding for the purchase of equipment and assets is not considered appropriate. Applications for this year's grants closed on 2 May 2003.

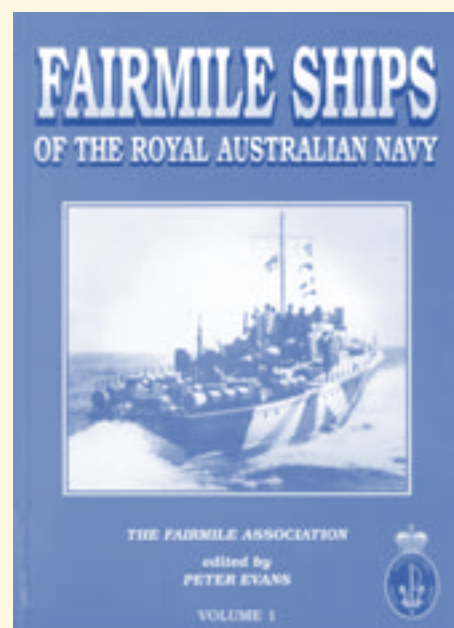
Please contact Cathy Flint at the NTAS (contact details are on the back of this newsletter) if you have any queries.

We congratulate the following History Grants recipients for completion of their research projects for which they received part or total assistance from the History Grants program

- Velma Leeding - *Groote Eylandt Genealogies: Warnimamalya Warnimikirra Ani-Langwa Ayangkidarra*
- Peter Evans (Ed) - *Fairmile Ships of the Royal Australian Navy*
- Jack Frawley - *People got a gun : the 1914 Melville Island Inquiry*
- Bill Bunbury - *A view from the North* (This consists of five feature stories on aspects of Northern Territory history on the ABC's Radio National program Hindsight from March to June 2003)

CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|----|
| • NT History Grants | 1 |
| • New Accessions - Fleetwood Collection | 2 |
| • Records Disposal Forums | 3 |
| • Aboriginal Advisory Group (AAG) | 4 |
| • Staff Notes | 4 |
| • Oral History - Conferences | 5 |
| • Trim System Management | 5 |
| • Obituary - Barbara James | 6 |
| • Search Room | 7 |
| • Spotlight ... Borroloola | 8 |
| • Research in Progress | 11 |
| • Who's Who | 12 |



NEW ACCESSIONS - FLEETWOOD COLLECTION

The NT Archives Service was recently given permission to copy a remarkable photographic collection (totally 435 images) belonging to Alex Fleetwood.

Alex Fleetwood was born in Bordertown on 20 November 1916 and joined the 27th Australian Infantry Battalion (AIF) South Australian Scottish Regiment in 1940. He played the bagpipes in the 27th Pipe Band, and doubled as a stretcher bearer at the Regimental Aid Post (RAP).

Alex's unit left for Darwin from Warradale on 9 December 1941, two days after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour. He was initially stationed at Winnellie and, late in 1942, moved to the 49-mile. Late in 1943, Alex found himself on loan to the railway without pay where he worked as a fireman until late 1946 when he was discharged at Alice Springs. He then returned to South Australia.

The first album of photographs was created by Alex's then fiancée, Gwenyth (who later became his wife), who received the undeveloped film from Alex and had the photos developed in Adelaide. Alex was almost court-martialled and Gwenyth was taken to court when the content of the photos were seen by the chemist who developed them. Amongst the photos was one taken of some of his army mates with a Vickers machine gun. There was no restriction on photos being taken in Darwin at the time, but authorities in Adelaide were more strict and thought the photograph breached regulations. Alex, an avid photographer, developed the remainder of his photographs himself. This impressive collection includes photographs of Alex's army service, his pipe playing, and his work on the railway.



Top: NTRS 2026, no. 66, Fleetwood Collection, Alex playing pipes 30 Jan 1942

Left: NTRS 2026, no. 231, Fleetwood Collection, US Houston, 18 Feb 1942

Below: NTRS 2026, no. 157, Fleetwood Collection, Lockheed over Darwin, March 1943. Taken by Aubrey McGean, photographer RAAF



Among his collection is a unique photograph of the US Houston on 18 February 1942 in Darwin Harbour (NTRS 2026, No 231). The ship left Darwin early on 19 February 1942 thereby escaping being sunk during the first bombing raids on Darwin, but unfortunately it was sunk in the Java Sea a few days later. There is also an interesting aerial photograph of Darwin taken from a Lockheed in March 1943 (NTRS 2026, No. 157). There are photos of Alex playing his bagpipes in 1942 (NTRS 2026, No. 66), and working on the railway (NTRS 2026, No. 334). There are also some remarkably artistic



NEW ACCESSIONS - FLEETWOOD COLLECTION

images, including one of his friend Keith beside a lagoon at sundown, with reflections of clouds in the lagoon and dramatic shadows. (NTRS 2026, No. 42)



NTRS 2026, no. 334, Fleetwood Collection, Alex and troop train, Pine Creek, 1943



NTRS 2026, no. 42, Fleetwood Collection, Keith beside pond 4 June 1942

This collection will be a valuable addition to our personal records relating to World War 2 in the Northern Territory.

RECORDS DISPOSAL FORUMS

A series of Records Disposal Forums are being presented by the NT Archives Service to provide information, training and feedback on records disposal issues including:

- appraisal and sentencing of NT government records
- creation and review of records disposal authorities
- secondary storage of records with service providers
- transfer of records to NT Archives Service
- Use of TRIM Records Management System for disposal of records
- keeping records of disposal action in agencies

Venue: NT Archives Service
Conference Room
2nd Floor Cavenagh Court
25 Cavenagh Street
Darwin

Time: 2-4pm

Day: Wednesday

Dates: 30 April 2003
25 June 2003
27 August 2003
29 October 2003

Presenter: Margaret Quan

Agenda and discussion papers will be sent to Records Managers and interested staff prior to each forum. All staff are

welcome and are invited to suggest issues for discussion.

Forums will also be conducted in Alice Springs and Katherine. Dates and venues to be advised.

Margaret Quan
Records Retention and Standards Coordinator
Phone: 8924 7494
Fax: 8924 7660
Email: margaret.quan@nt.gov.au



Pat Parry-Jones (Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development) and other workshop participants identifying problems with preparation, boxing, and listing of records for transfer to NT Archives Service.

ABORIGINAL ADVISORY GROUP (AAG) and community workshops

The Aboriginal Advisory Group on access to Northern Territory Government Records has met since the last newsletter and there has been one change in the membership of the group. We welcome Margaret Furber who rejoined us in October 2002 at our meeting in Alice Springs.



AAG meeting held in Alice Springs Oct 2002 (this photo includes AAG members, NTAS and NAA support and a member of the Central Australian Stolen Generations and Families Aboriginal Corporation)

*Back l to r Phyllis Williams, Greg Coleman, Cathy Flint, Margaret Furber, Heather Shearer
Front l to r Zita Wallace, Rosie Baird*



Community workshop, Julalikari Conference room, Tennant Creek, October 2002

Community Workshop at Tennant Creek:

A joint "How to Research at Archives" was conducted by Cathy Flint, Northern Territory Archives, and Phyllis Williams, National Archives, in Tennant Creek at the Julalikari Council conference room on Monday 21 October. A group of thirteen Warramungu people and research/project staff from the Nyinkka Nyunyu Cultural Centre attended. The group are researching Warramungu history and gathering historical materials that include written documents, photographs and oral histories from both archives to go in their Cultural centre. Some of the group have travelled

to Darwin more than once to visit the reading rooms of both archives for their research.

This new cultural centre, which will include an arts and craft centre, a café and a display/interpretive area, is an exciting and inspiring venture, and the Aboriginal Advisory Group hopes to be able to hold one of its meetings in the centre once it is complete. At this stage, it is planned to open in July 2003.

Retta Dixon information in the Mitchell Library

Recently Ronald Briggs, Indigenous Services Librarian with the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, forwarded information about papers of the Aborigines Inland Mission (AIM). The collection is incomplete but includes various records from the Retta Dixon Childrens Home, Darwin. There is a content list available from the Library's PICMAN catalogue on the internet at: <http://www.slnsw.gov.au/picman/about.cfm> Type 'Retta Dixon' as a keyword.

Ronald Briggs' contact details are:

Mitchell Library
State Library of NSW
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Telephone: (02) 9273 1577 Email: rbriggs@sl.nsw.gov.au

STAFF NOTES

Caitlin Mitchell has been helping out in the Search Room retrieving archives for community and public researchers and making copies available. Caitlin has continued to service the growing demands of our customers in this area as more archives are accessed for a range of research and community projects. Caitlin's duties also include retrieving records for government agencies.

Helen Barnes, who has been working on records management system projects for the past year or so, has now been appointed to the position of Records Management Training and Support Officer. Helen's primary responsibilities in this position include the coordination of records management system training and the provision of system user support.

Matthew Cunliffe has been appointed to the part-time position of Audio Technician with the Oral History Unit. Matthew provides technical services for all sound recordings which are recorded and deposited in the Archives. There are now over 1 300 recordings in the collection.

Wilma Carlow and **Beth Moloney** are currently working on a project to prepare government-wide records management standards and to advise agencies on the standards in accordance with provisions of the Information Act which will come into effect in July 2003.

Linda Zagorskis from the Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs has been acting in the role of Records Policy Coordinator while Beth Moloney has been focussing on preparation for the Information Act. Primary tasks in this position include assisting agencies with records policy and thesaurus development.



Caitlin Mitchell



Matthew Cunliffe



Wilma Carlow

TRIM SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

We wound up year 2002 with a TRIM User Group Christmas lunch that was well attended by agency TRIM users. The year 2003 is shaping up to be another busy year for the TRIM Support Team.

The NTPS restructure on 13 November 2001 has generated a significant records conversion effort. Five new TRIM databases have been created and around 820 000 records have been converted. The five "super" agency databases, (Department of Justice, Department of Education, Employment and Training, Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs, Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment and the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development) are now in production. The records conversion exercise was completed in February 2003.

A paper detailing the technology options available to NT government agencies when moving to electronic document and records management was distributed in September 2002. This has generated interest in agencies that are considering moving to electronic document and records management. The Information

Act, which was passed during the October 2002 sittings of the Legislative Assembly, has also been a catalyst for agencies to review their information assets and recordkeeping practices and processes.

Records Systems Projects Update

The project to upgrade TRIM Captura to build #302 and the DB2UDB client software is still progressing.

The Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development began implementing Webdrawer access to its new TRIM database in March this year.

TRIM server upgrades and planning the move to TRIM Context are the priorities for the next financial year. We hope to commence the rollout of TRIM Context in July 2004.

For further information, please contact the System Manager, Jeanette Collins, or the TRIM System Support Officers, Celina Hodge or Helen Barnes.



ORAL HISTORY

The Northern Territory Police Museum and Historical Society was a recipient of an NT History Grant in 2002. It received \$4 000 to record oral history interviews of Northern Territory Police members and their spouses. This project is now well under way with an ambitious schedule of interviews. To date, about forty interviews have been recorded with retired members of the NT police force by project members who are themselves ex-police officers. Several attended a workshop here at the Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS) last year, and the project has been developed in close consultation with the NTAS.

All of the society's interviews are recorded on minidisk, a convenient digital medium. Given the large number of interviews, the majority will not be transcribed but, as an alternative, the society has compiled detailed content listings for each. The original minidisks will all be archived in the oral history collections of the NTAS, and the NTAS has copied each to CD for use by researchers. Copies of the sound

recordings and content listings will be available both at the society's Darwin museum and at the NTAS.

The content listings are an essential part of the project, and are the means by which material in the interviews may be located by researchers. Apart from browsing 'hard' copies of the listings, electronic versions may be searched on the Archives' computer-based text-search facility (ISYS) at the NTAS Search Room. Minidisk is a digital recording medium, so each recording is encoded with elapsed playing time, and this data is also carried on the CD copy. Consequently, each point detailed in the listing can be shown with the playing time at which it is found in the recording, so researchers can quickly find any point on the CD copy of the original sound recording that matches the information they want to hear.

Also as part of the project, six interviews with retired police officers have been recorded recently in Alice Springs and Darwin by Francis Good on digital audio tape (DAT) for the NTAS. These, together with several

of the longer interviews recorded by the project volunteers, will be fully transcribed by the NTAS, and copies of the recordings and the full transcripts will be available both in the Archives' collections and at the Police Museum. These transcripts also carry the elapsed playing time data found on the CD copies, so researchers can always refer back to the original sound recording if required – for example, if it is necessary to locate sound material for broadcast or use on the Internet.

The NTAS oral history collections of course already hold many interviews recorded with ex-police officers by Francis Good and other interviewers who have contributed work to the collections. Different NTAS collections contain many and varied police records, including journals, photographs and some personal collections. Archives relating to police yield a very wide range of information, since officers served in many different and often remote locations and, especially in early days, played a variety of roles. Two interview extracts below illustrate these aspects. *Continued...*

ORAL HISTORY

Terry BOXALL (commenced 1946). NTRS 226, TS 1061

▶▶ 3, @ ca. 31:00

Well, I would say that I did quite a lot of things that are done now, here, by government departments that have been created since. For instance, after I'd been on the beat for a while, in uniform, Alfie Stretton made me Collector of Public Monies. Those days, the police licensed and accepted fees for all the firearms in the Northern Territory, all the motor vehicles in the Northern Territory, all the drivers' licences in the Northern Territory.

Now, they all ended up back on my desk at Bennett Street, as they came in from all of the country police stations and from everywhere. Alfie Stretton himself, upstairs, kept the principal registers of everything, the documents that I took up to him. He'd be starting on them at four o'clock in the morning.

So I used to collect monies for registering all of those things and none of them are handled now by police. Monies [also] used to go through my hands for payments for dingo scalps.

Frank MORRIS (commenced 1973). NTRS 226, TS 1056

CD 1, ▶▶ 2 @ ca. 28:00

I served a period of time at Finke, on the old railway line, when it was still controlled by a European policeman. The police station is still there now, but it is manned by an Aboriginal policeman. The Finke—I liked the Finke very much. In fact, looking back at my career in the force, at the stations that I worked at, it was one of my favourites, if not my favourite.

Not the station per se, but the environment, the police district on the edge of the Simpson Desert, the station people. It was the true, true outback, and you were really on the edge of the Simpson Desert. The people there, everybody relied on everybody to survive. It was just par for the course.

You used to think nothing of driving a hundred kilometres, or hundreds of kilometres to help somebody who may be broken down in their motor vehicle or needed assistance. You'd think nothing of helping somebody mustering a few cattle. I'm not referring to 'in police time', I might add. [Laughs]

But, you know, these sort of things, everybody sort of helped everybody. Small communities, the only way they could really exist is by community



L to R Terry Boxall, Peter Riley (see p.9 for extract of Peter's oral history interview) and John White in the NTAS search room in Sept 2002

spirit, otherwise - - and I'm referring to black and white at Finke. Of course there was certainly a lot of Aboriginals who still lived very traditional on the fringe camps and that.

There was a fettlers camp there. There was a couple of nurses, several school teachers. There was a hotel at Finke at the time. The old Ghan used to come through there, and that was an excitement for the town every week when it came through and stopped, and the tourists get off the train and photographed the Aboriginal people, and the old Finke Hotel, and whatever else there was to photograph—which wasn't a lot.

CD 1, ▶▶ 3 @ Ca. 5:15

There is a formal arrangement between Western Australia and South Australia, whereas I had a warrant

card and sworn into each of those States to operate when crossing borders. So at the time of my postings down south at Kulgera, Ayers Rock, etcetera, I was able to cross borders.

The purpose of a Special Constable's Card is not in pursuance of trivial offences. It's there to be able to be called upon if needed in urgent events. ... For example, if I apprehended somebody in West Australia or South Australia, I would then have to proceed with that person to a police station in that state, and go through the formal process of an extradition, but I still had the jurisdiction as a police officer in that state to do that.

Sometimes there were incidents where it was so close to the border—but there's no borderlines in the desert—that you possibly could arrest somebody across the border by ten or twenty kilometres, and you honestly wouldn't know, especially if you weren't on roads, if you were just pushing through the bush, looking, following tracks. So, you know, commonsense came into that.

But if you definitely had a location, such as the weather station at Giles, or Warburton, or Amata in South Australia or somewhere, you would make the apprehension in that state. It entailed large driving, because if it was made in South Australia I would have to travel back to Oodnadatta, in those days. Marla didn't exist as it does today. If it was made in West Australia I had to travel to Laverton, which was only two hundred kilometres north of Kalgoorlie.

So the triangular area that we policed in those days was from Alice Springs to Oodnadatta to Laverton and back to Alice Springs. In fact, it even expanded more than that when we went into the Gibson Desert. ...

Obituary - Barbara James

Our condolences go to the family and many friends of Barbara James who passed away on 31 March, age 59, after a brave battle with cancer.

Barbara was born in Nebraska, USA, in 1943, and came to Australia in 1966. She lived and worked in Canberra until July 1967 when she came to Darwin. Barbara began her working life in the Northern Territory as a journalist, an occupation which later led to her work as an author, historian and research consultant. Her particular interests and areas of research were women and history/heritage issues. She was also an active member of an extraordinary variety of community groups and had a strong background in political work as a result of serving as an adviser to Bob Collins when he was Leader of the Opposition in the NT (1982-1985) and when he was a Minister in the Federal Labor government and as a Shadow Minister.

Barbara is the author or co-author of several published social history works, including the award winning *No Man's Land: Women of the Northern Territory*. Barbara had been close to finishing work on a revised edition of this book at the time of her death and hopefully it will be possible to finish that work and have the new edition published.

Barbara's memory will be upheld through several collections at the NTAS, including an oral history interview. This interview was recorded in September and October 1989 in Darwin by Francis Good. Barbara also donated copies of a number of letters, documents and photographs.



Barbara, November 2002.
Photographer: Gavin Perry

SEARCH ROOM

We get by "with a little help from our friends"

In our day-to-day work in the NTAS Search Room there are a number of people and some unpublished works that are always proving to be of enormous help in assisting with identification of events and records and we would like to acknowledge these invaluable resources below.

- The Northern Territory and its police forces 1869 - 1978 by Bill (William) Mc Laren, 1916- 2000 (Unpublished manuscript, 2 volumes plus index)

The late **Bill McLaren** was appointed NT Commissioner of Police in March 1967 after serving in the Victorian Police Force for almost 30 years. Both Bill and his wife Flora became deeply involved in the Darwin community and, when Bill retired as Commissioner in October 1978, he was asked to set up security at Parliament House in Canberra. Bill and Flora moved to Canberra for three years and returned to Darwin in 1982.

Bill was an active member of many organisations in Darwin, but still managed to find time in his retirement to undertake the research necessary to produce this manuscript. Apparently he received some funding from the NT government in the mid-80s to assist in the writing of the history of the police force which involved travelling interstate to several archives. Bill's meticulous referencing of the primary sources in the manuscript makes this work a valuable resource. It has been bound and indexed and, although it is a strictly chronological history of the police in the Northern Territory, it has proved to be a very useful reference tool for researchers in respect of verification of Territory dates and events in a wider historical context.

- **Len Cossons** Index to probates and transcribing of some police records:

The late Len Cossons joined the Northern Territory Police Force as a Probationary Constable in December 1950. He achieved the rank of Sergeant by November 1961, and moved up the ladder to Sergeant First Class in 1967. He was promoted to Inspector in 1971, and to Superintendent in 1975. Len continued to progress through the ranks to become Assistant Police Commissioner in 1980. Len met Eileen Gaden in the 1950s and they were married in 1952. They served at a number of remote bush stations, including Lake Nash, Harts Range, Ranken River, Anthony Lagoon and Pine Creek. Len served with the police force in a number of roles, in the CIB and as Sergeant First Class in charge of Alice Springs.



Len Cossons

During his retirement, Len spent 2 to 3 years at the NTAS working as a volunteer on behalf of the GSNT, indexing the probate records from 1911 to 1994. He also began transcribing police journals and other records of the Ranken River, Anthony Lagoon and Adelaide River police stations as well as indexing Pine Creek police records (1887 to 1948), the Borroloola Inquest Book (28 Dec 1889-10 Nov 1930) and Newcastle Waters Police Station Mortuary Book (1893-1951).

Whilst at NTAS Len had his own office and participated in all staff activities, social or otherwise. We simply cannot imagine how the staff in the Search Room at the NTAS coped before the compilation of the probate index, as it has enabled quick and efficient access to records that otherwise would have been very difficult to find. We will be forever grateful to Len.

Vern O'Brien

Vern came to the Northern Territory in 1946 from Queensland. He worked as a clerk in the Department of the Interior for 2 years before being among the first intake of 4 cadet surveyors for the Department of Lands and Survey in 1948. Vern worked for the department until his retirement in 1981. His early years as a field surveyor culminated in his appointment as NT Surveyor-General in 1966 and, subsequently, as Director of Lands.



Vern O'Brien

Vern's active survey years, 1950 to 1961, took him to 200-odd pastoral stations where he was involved in delineating some 6000 miles of pastoral boundaries. Whilst undertaking this survey work, he took an active interest in the National Trust from its inauguration in 1958 in Alice Springs. His survey work enabled him to appreciate and record important historical locations in the Northern Territory. His records in this regard proved invaluable for later heritage assessments of remote locations.

Vern was a member of the Northern Territory Place Names Committee from 1982 to 2001 and was one of only three Australian members of the UNGEGN (United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names). These experts are able to contribute to the standardisation throughout the world.

After he retired Vern became a member of the Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory (GSNT) in 1981. His years in the Department of Lands, particularly in the survey area, and his extraordinary knowledge of land tenure issues and historical sites throughout the Territory, are of immense value to the society. The important work that the GSNT has undertaken in the compilation of the Pioneer Register is a fitting culmination of work that Vern began when he became aware of the importance of historical locations and people as a surveyor in the bush.

Vern regularly uses the NTAS Search Room to access records relating to the valuable work the GSNT is doing on the recording of graves throughout the NT as well as work on the Pioneer Register and other similar projects.

He is always generous and patient with constant and varied requests from archives staff relating to land tenure, people and places of the Northern Territory and is also extremely generous in sharing his expertise and knowledge with other researchers in the NTAS Search Room. Thank you, Vern.

Frank Barrett and **Gordon McIntyre**, Native Title Unit, Department of Lands Planning and Environment (DIPE)

Thanks must also go to the staff at the Native Title Unit, (DIPE), who manage and maintain an in-house Paradox database that consolidates historical land tenure records held in numerous paper registers and other paper records. It is designed to compliment the official LAIS (Land Administration Information System) that the Department already has, whilst providing a repository for those historic records not compatible with LAIS. There are currently more than 61 500 records, each with 40 fields.

The willingness of the staff at the Native Title Unit to occasionally interrogate their database on our behalf has proved to be of invaluable benefit for researchers having difficulty tracking down historical land tenure records. It is also a great example of inter-departmental cooperation in providing access to important historical information to the research community.

Spotlight on.....Borroloola

Borroloola and the surrounding district have kept reappearing over the last six months as research topics for a number of researchers using the NTAS. As well as this, there was the launch last September of Nicholas Jose's new book *Black Sheep: journey to Borroloola* and, in June, there was a documentary feature by Jan Wositzky on Books & Writing on Radio National about Borroloola's supposed Carnegie Library. We therefore felt it was an appropriate time to highlight the records we have in our collection relating to Borroloola.

The town of Borroloola, 50 kilometres from the mouth of the McArthur River in the Gulf of Carpentaria, was proclaimed on 10 September 1885. Borroloola is situated in the traditional lands of the Yanyuwa, Mara, Karawa and Kurandji people. An understanding of the town's geographical location will perhaps demonstrate the remote nature of the town – it is situated 1 000 kms south-east from Darwin on the Northern Territory side of the Queensland border.

Borroloola is a small town with a colourful past. The often wild and eccentric nature of the town and its inhabitants has been romanticised in the past by popular authors such as Ernestine Hill, Douglas Lockwood, Bill Harney and Ted Egan. The Yanyuwa people divide the contact history of the region into the following six sections – macassan time, "wild times", police times, welfare times, land right times and tourist times. (Richard Baker, *Land is Life*, 1999).

Borroloola's population is now approximately 700 people with the majority of these being Aboriginal. Although it remains a service centre for surrounding pastoral properties, the town's main industries are now tourism and mining.

Our list of records holdings relating to Borroloola is available on our website and in our Search Room.

Examples of some of these records are given below.



NTRS 1854, no 1400, Historical Society of the Northern Territory (Greenwood Gillstrom), S.S.Waihoi, McArthur River [photo apparently taken sometime between 1901-1904]

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW -

Ruth Heathcock, NTRS 226, TS 240

In February 1941, Horace Foster, who lived on a saltpan lease at Manangoora, accidentally shot himself in the leg. By the time word had got to the Borroloola police station and it had been discovered that the Flying Doctor was unable to land due to long grass and boggy conditions, it was five days since the accident occurred. Constable Heathcock was away at the time, so his wife, Ruth Heathcock, who was a trained nurse, decided she would attempt to reach Horace by canoe. Consequently Ruth, Roger Jose and his Aboriginal wife and two Aboriginal helpers paddled a dugout canoe 75 miles to Horace. The voyage took three days and nights as the wet season conditions were stormy and treacherous. **Below is an extract from Ruth's oral history interview where she describes the conditions.**

There was a Police Station called Borroloola and I had a very interesting incident there. One outstanding one along with similar experiences that I had at the Roper. But this night two natives came in, it was in the big monsoon wet when the McArthur had flooded about fifteen mile each side, so it ran thirty mile wider. It's a big rushing torrent of water in the monsoons. Rain would fall there, six inches in twenty minutes, and you would find that in a tropical storm the roof of your storeroom would run and your preserved fruits were all floating around your feet with snakes and every other thing around you and the storm lifted suddenly, you would look out and you couldn't see, from a quarter of a mile from the police station, you couldn't see the river for gum trees, they had all been sliced off by a giant axe and they

were just
big white
stumps.
Well it took
us days,
some days
going down

the big flooded McArthur River in their canoe. My own native girl, Foster's native girl and boy and another bushman, they said he was a blackfellow but he wasn't, he had been married for many many years to a native girl and he took the status of a blackfellow because he was married to a black girl in those early days and he came with me and his name was Paul Roger Josey [Roger Jose]. And we went under the most trying conditions down that sixty mile of McArthur River, we came to the open gulf and on the trip down the canoe would be lifted out like this and we thought that that was a great big tree that had floated down but instead of that we would see the head of a huge twenty foot croc floating with his mouth full of carcass of some kind. With other instances pretty similar we got to the gulf and then there was camping overnight, half in the tree and half out because there wasn't anywhere dry to camp. Then out to sea to get around a point of land that was seven mile out in the gulf and the sea snakes, mating season they looked like big bundles of rolling snakes. And with the sea snake, instead of a pointed head, you get a big round head and two eyes on the side

of his head he looked like he's wearing glasses. There were hundreds of them, they'd come to the canoe and the paddlers would pull up their oars and quietly get past these wretched bundles. It was night time and they would be luminous, it was the most hideous experience I can remember. There were swordfish, great nineteen foot sword on the end of their nose that could chop you and the canoe in pieces. Well about two days out in the open gulf to get around this point of land, then follow the coast again until we got to the McArthur River, I've forgotten how many miles up, but it was quite a long way. We got to where the Foster homestead was and I said to the natives 'what an awful odour, probably killed goats', they've all got goats up in those parts, they kill them for their food 'and they haven't bothered to cart the carcasses away' and as I was going up the side I saw this carcass put his head up and say 'Thank God Mrs Ted you got here'. Here he was with his leg, from his knee to his thigh all green and yellow smothered in ants. Well there was only one thing to do, wash all the ants away with salt water and, of course, I'd

Continued...

Spotlight on.....Borroloola

given him an anaesthetic and made him reasonably comfortable and he was and I knew he had tetanus, this was nearly the sixth day since I got the message. And while I was working, from where I don't know, but two surgeons stood beside me and they looked like ordinary men, hair on the back of their hands, long hair, one was a redhead, one was a blackhead and I had all the gear, the splints and everything, because I knew what I'd need from what

the doctor had left me and I don't know how long it took but in seemingly no time that leg was splinted beautifully. Foster was coming out of the anaesthetic and he said 'Oh God'. He thought he had broken his leg. Little did he know that I had great pieces of splintered bone and all that. So we tried to send him to his camp and there was no pedal wireless or anything down there but fortunately the trading boat came

along and he had a wireless on there. He rang through to the same doctors that couldn't land previously and they landed on the sixth, seventh or eighth day and they said there isn't much hope, he's very far advanced in tetanus but he was fully conscious. I had taken the teeth out from his clamped jaw, extracted his teeth from him and he was chatting away to the doctors. Within a very short time stuttered and went to heaven.

NTRS 270, Gordon Birt Collection, Autobiographical manuscript covering years in the NT Police Force 1929-1943



NTRS 1518, no 35,, Gordon Birt Collection, Const. G.R.Birt, Jan 1934

Gordon Birt served in the Northern Territory Police Force from 3 July 1929 until he was retired on medical grounds on 31 August 1943. The two extracts below from his 2 volume autobiographical manuscript provide some details of two separate times when Gordon was stationed at the Borroloola Police

Station. The first extract was when he went to relieve at the Station in July 1939 while Const Ted Heathcock took 12 months long service leave and the second one is when he was working with Const Heathcock in the early 1940s.

Borroloola, on the McArthur River, 45 miles up from the sea, had once been a busy port, but was a ghost town many years before my arrival, with only five white inhabitants, all male. Of course there were many Aboriginals there, the Yanular tribe camp being on the opposite side of the river; a shuttle ferry service being maintained with dugout canoes. Next day Heathcock drove us in the car to meet publican John O'Shea at the hotel,

and storekeeper Charlie Havey, a justice of the peace, whose business was about half a mile away in the opposite direction to the hotel.

Next to the hotel there was another building, formerly a store, which Heathcock explained was occupied by a man called Jack Johnson away at the time visiting one Horace Foster who had a salt gathering business on the Wearyan River, about 60 miles east. Johnson, with limited stocks, still did some storekeeping and trading with the Aboriginals, Heathcock added. From files at headquarters I knew that Johnson had clashed with Heathcock's predecessor, Constable Frank Sheridan, breaking the latter's ribs in a fight, and complaining to headquarters that Sheridan attacked him, asserting that the constable was drunk at the time. An enquiry by Superintendent Stretton at Borroloola did not substantiate this, but Sheridan was transferred. Also I heard that Johnson once threatened to shoot young Constable Peter Riley, second man to Sheridan, while the latter was away on patrol.

.....It was now July 1942 and soon after I arrived, Constable Heathcock left on

the annual patrol to cattle stations east of the McArthur River, terminating at Wollgorang right on the Queensland border. The few white inhabitants said they were glad to see me back, but the welcome from the Aboriginals was astounding. They crowded around me shaking hands, and patting me on the back so much that it became embarrassing. Charlie Havey still ran his store, and I occasionally encountered "dangerous Dan" and "The Freshwater Admiral." Another character was erudite Roger Jose, married to full-blood Aboriginal woman from the Daly River. Bearded and mostly bare-footed Roger, a mystery man, was evidently well-educated. He was continually borrowing books from the library.



NTRS 1518, no 25, Gordon Birt Collection, Birt with Aboriginal friends at Borroloola 3 June 1982. Mr Mussolini, Chairman of local Aboriginal council on right

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW - V.A.B.(Peter) Riley, NTRS 226, TS 1073

V.A.B.(Peter) Riley was appointed to the Northern Territory Police in 1935 arriving in Darwin from New South Wales on the passenger liner Marella. Peter was transferred to Borroloola in August/September 1935 to be what was called 'the second man' - the second man did all the patrol life. The interview describes Peter's experiences as a policeman in the Northern Territory including a number of remote postings.

The interview was recorded by Francis Good at Darwin on 25 September 2002.

The extract below gives us Peter's impression of Borroloola from a young

man's point of view and an interesting comment about the Borroloola library.

..... So, your time on that posting, did you enjoy it?

Well, I probably enjoyed some of it. It was a desperate sort of a place, in a way. Well, I mean, there was nobody there of my age. All the rest of the people there were old people.

I mean, O'Shea, he was a fairly elderly man. Havey was an elderly man. Johnson, well he was beyond middle age. Sheridan was beyond middle

age. I mean, I was the youngest person there. There was nobody there that I could associate with at my age.

[There was a redeeming feature in the way of books to read in the library of the McArthur River Institute. I have diary entries where I was compiling a typed catalogue of authors and titles. Mrs Whitaker, in her book, devotes a page to the library. The Officer-in-Charge, Borroloola Police Station was honorary librarian. I served in that capacity when there in 1937 and can claim to be the only one living today.]

Spotlight on.....Borroloola

F 436 (3), W.G. Stretton Collection, Gazette cuttings and notes of appointments 1887-1908

W.G Stretton was amongst the first police officers to serve in the Northern Territory arriving at Port Darwin in Jan 1870. He left the police force to work on the construction of the Overland Telegraph and then turned his hand to mining before returning to the police force in 1876 where he served until mid 1887. In Sept 1887 he joined the Customs Department as a landing waiter and was appointed to Borroloola where he remained until 1894 during which time he was appointed to a number of positions. The cuttings below provide details of some of these positions.

Government Gazette.

Chief Secretary's Office,
Adelaide, Sept. 26th, 1888.

HIS Excellency the Governor in Council has been pleased to add the name of **WILLIAM GEORGE STRETTON, Esq.**, of Borroloola, to the Commission of the Peace.

By Command,
J. G. RAMSAY,
Chief Secretary.

Chief Secretary's Office, Adelaide, May 1st, 1889.

HIS Excellency the Governor in Council has been pleased to appoint **William George Stretton, Esquire, J.P.**, of Borroloola, to be a Commissioner for taking Affidavits in the Supreme Court of South Australia.

By Command,
J. G. RAMSAY, Chief Secretary.

Chief Secretary's Office, Adelaide, February 27th, 1889.

HIS Excellency the Governor in Council has been pleased to appoint **Mr. William George Stretton, of Borroloola**, to be an officer of Customs.

By command,
J. G. RAMSAY, Chief Secretary.

Appointment.

WILLIAM GEORGE STRETTON Esq., to be Customs Officer, also Harbour Master, Postmaster, and Deputy Protector of Aborigines, at Borroloola, from August 1st, 1888.

J. LANGDON PARSONS,
Government Resident.

22nd April, 1889.

Chief Secretary's Office, Adelaide, January 8th, 1890.

HIS Excellency the Governor in Council has been pleased to appoint **William George Stretton, Esq., J.P.**, of Borroloola, to be a Special Magistrate for the Province.

By command,
JOHN A. COCKBURN, Chief Secretary.

Return of all moneys received & expended by M & Stott for and on behalf of native Constables at Borroloola for quarter ended Sept 30th 1910

| Date | Name of native Constable | Amount Received | Date | Expended | Total Amount |
|---------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------|----------------------------|--------------|
| July 20 | Harry | 14 10 | 27/10 | Board Harry & his labra 48 | 6 |
| | | | | 1 lb tobacco | 7 6 |
| | Fred | 14 10 | | Board Fred & his labra 48 | 6 |
| | | | | 1 lb tobacco | 1 6 |
| Aug 20 | Harry | 14 10 | | Board Harry & his labra 48 | 7 |
| | | | | 1 lb tobacco & pipe | 10 |
| Aug 21 | Fred | 14 10 | | Board Harry & his labra 48 | 6 |
| | | | | 1 lb tobacco | 18 |
| Sept 10 | Harry | 14 10 | | Board Harry & his labra 48 | 6 |
| | | | | 1 lb tobacco | 18 |
| Sept 20 | Fred | 14 10 | | Board Fred & his labra 48 | 6 |
| | | | | 1 lb tobacco | 10 |
| | | | | Labra dress | 28 8 |
| | | 107 12 | | | |

R. Chin Kahan of Garden Area.

*Trans from Lands & Survey Dept.
Barrow 22/4/18.*

*To. Officer in charge Police
Borroloola.*

Forwarded through the Insp. of Police

I have to inform you that Chin Kahan of Borroloola has applied for a Miscellaneous Lease of about 4 Acres for growing Vegetables on Kooly Creek.

Before dealing with his application I shall be glad to receive from you a report regarding his Nationality and whether in your mind there is any reason why his application should not be granted.

*(Sd) H.M. Lowe
Secretary of Lands*

Forwarded to M & Stott for report.

*Deo Insp. of Police
G.H. Richardson
Act Insp.*

Returned to Inspector of Police with report attached.

J. G. Stott

11/4/18.

E275 Borroloola Police Station, outwards letter book.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS:

As usual, the variety of research projects undertaken by researchers using the Northern Territory Archives Service's Search Room is extensive. We asked the researchers who used the NTAS in the recent months to write to us about their projects. The following responses were submitted.

Jill Barnes (Tourism in Central Australia with a particular focus)

Jill is a PhD candidate with the Department of History at the University of Sydney. Her PhD dissertation is looking at how Central Australia, and more specifically Uluru/Ayers Rock, have been represented in tourism marketing images since the 1920s, the different meanings attributed to these images over time, and the changing imperatives of the various institutions, disciplines and interest groups that were responsible for producing these images. This intellectual history traces the different ideologies that have been encoded into tourism images of Uluru, and it considers issues including cross-cultural representation, the production of place and sharing of space, and intellectual property rights.

Baiba Berzins (History of tourism in the Northern Territory from the 1920s to the 1980s)

Baiba is working on a history of tourism in the Northern Territory, concentrating on the period from the 1920s to the 1980s when the Territory was under Commonwealth government control and during which tourism began to emerge as a significant industry for the Territory economy. The study looks at the various types of people who came to visit, the entrepreneurs and enterprises involved in providing transport, accommodation and promotion, and government policy and action in relation to tourism and national parks. The NT Archives Service holds important records relating to the history of tourism, including many oral history interviews with people who played a role in the industry or with people who observed the changing nature of tourism over the years.

John Dargavel (Paperbark forests and the Wagait)

The first stage of John's research on the environmental history of the paperbark lands of the Northern Territory has focussed on the history of the Wagait area 80 kms south-west of Darwin. While its deep meaning to the Mak Mak Maranunggu people is now celebrated in Country of the Heart by Deborah Rose and clan members (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2002), John has looked at the history of how the land was allocated. He felt that this was important because the people were only able to claim it under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 because it had remained as a reserve.

John's story starts in 1892 when the Wangites Aboriginal Reserve was declared. It traces how neighbouring pastoralists grazed it under licence and how they sought to have it revoked on several occasions. In 1963 the reserve was reshaped, enlarged and renamed as the Wagait reserve. The story then traces its transition to pastoral use by Aboriginal people and the final recognition of their ownership.

It was possible to link the Wangites/Wagait reserves to the pastoral lease and grazing licence records only because of the excellent co-operation between the Northern Territory Archives Service and the Northern Territory's Native Title Unit (see page 7 for more details re this unit). The policy and administrative aspects were traced through National Archives of Australia in Darwin and Canberra. Once this stage has been submitted for publication, the research on the history of the paperbarks will be written up.

Erwin Drewes (Havlik material on Batchelor)

Erwin has been examining the Historical Society of the Northern Territory's collection of videos by Bernie Havlik to help prepare for the celebration of the Batchelor Area School 50th anniversary which will take place in June 2003.

Mike Flanagan (Forced landing and subsequent rescue of a RAAF survey aircraft)

Mike is currently researching the forced landing of a RAAF survey aircraft in the Anthony's Lagoon/Mallapunyah district in 1951 and the subsequent rescue of the pilot and navigator. Members of the NT Police Force played a prominent part in bringing out the crew in difficult circumstances. An earlier project, dealing with the loss of a young RAAF spitfire pilot in the Top End, will be published soon in the Aviation Historical Society of Australia's quarterly journal.

Dr Nicholas Gill, School of Geosciences, University of Wollongong (The 1958-65 drought in Central Australia.)

This drought had a great impact on a modernising pastoral industry and had significant financial and environmental effects. The drought still features in debates over land use in Central Australia. This Northern Territory History Grant funded research focuses on government perceptions and responses to drought but also examines aspects of pastoralists' responses. It includes issues such as drought recognition and definition, the evolution of policy, difficulties in administering drought policy of the day, and drought payments to pastoralists.

Stephen Johnson, PhD candidate, School of Social Science, University of Queensland (Impact of tourism in south-west Gulf of Carpentaria and other relevant issues)

People's attitudes and practices have a direct impact on the health of the physical environment: an observation that at first glance appears to state the obvious. However, upon closer examination, it appears that this obvious truth is one that specialists and lay people alike frequently overlook. Moreover, the very concept of what constitutes healthy country is often contested.

In order to find answers to some of these questions, Stephen is currently conducting research into the environmental perceptions and practices of various stakeholder groups in the south west Gulf of Carpentaria. His primary focus at this stage is on the advent of tourism (or more precisely, eco or cultural tourism) in the region and how these ventures impact on the environment and on local residents, particularly indigenous people.

This research is being conducted in close collaboration with the Yanyuwa people and the results will be published in the form of a PhD thesis. Funding and other support has come from the University of Queensland in industry partnership with the Cooperative Research Centre for Tropical Savannas Management (TS-CRC). The underlying principle behind these partnerships is to sponsor a multi-disciplinary approach to research in the area, whereby the voices of all interested parties are heard, and real time contributions are made to existing knowledge, concerning the maintenance and restoration of healthy ecosystems.

The staff and material at the Northern Territory Archives play an integral role in achieving these aims because of their careful documentation of the history and attitudes of indigenous and non-indigenous Territorians, since settlement.

Noel Kentish (Life of Len Kentish)

Noel is researching the details of his father's life from his birth in Melbourne in 1907 to his death by execution at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Forces on Dobo on 5 February 1943. Noel's interest is particularly focussed on the last seven or eight years of his father's life. This was a period when he and his wife were residents of the Territory, firstly in Darwin, where they arrived there in 1934, and then

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| | |
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RESEARCH IN PROGRESS Continued

on South Goulburn Island, all the time working with the Methodist Church.

His fate was closely linked with the Royal Australian Navy in so far as he was captured by the crew of a Japanese aircraft of the naval air arm when they sank the "Patricia Cam" on which he was travelling on 22 January 1943. In 2001, a RAN diving team attempted to identify a wreck near the Wessel Islands, believed to be the "Patricia Cam", but ocean conditions prevented clear identification.

Kate Lance (Pearling Luggers of the Northern Territory 1920 - 1940)

Darwin's pearlshell industry was never as large as that of Broome or the Torres Strait, but it had a significance that went beyond its size. It had three phases, roughly 1895-1923, 1925-1941, and 1946-1960. This work concentrates on the second phase, between the Wars, when an exodus of Broome master pearlers, escaping restrictive legislation and crippling licence fees, came to 'free and easy' Darwin to try to make a living. Tracing the history of their wooden pearling luggers -- the workhorses of the industry -- from photos and information on their origins, styles, owners and eventual fates, clarifies much about the cycles of prosperity and the lingering influence of pearling in the Northern Territory.

Matthew Lucas (Comparison of volunteer divisions from the UK, Australia, Canada and possibly New Zealand during the second world war)

Matthew will be starting his MPhil/PhD at Birmingham University in the UK in September 2003. The work will focus on the combat experience of the various formations on the western front from 1916 to 1918.

He will look at whether it was that different for the nations mentioned, why are the Dominion forces seen as the best the British had, and if they are, why is this so? Were the commanders, such as Monash, Currie etc that much better? Most of the early research has been done at the War Memorial in Canberra, followed by work in state libraries in Sydney and Melbourne. New Zealand research was done in Auckland and Christchurch libraries and the War Memorial Museum in Auckland. In Canada research will be conducted at the Ottawa archives and war museum. In the UK, mainly the PRO, Imperial War Museum and Liddle Hart centre will be looked at, as well as various regimental museums. Research will also include news coverage including more recent coverage of April 25 and November 11. The work is in a very early stage, so no definite direction has been taken. Whilst at

the NTAS Matthew accessed a number of personal collections relating to World War 2 in Darwin.

Pearl Ogden (The people of the VRD region)

Pearl is writing a history of "The People of the VRD Region" (working title) with a particular focus on the Crowson family who took up Montejinni in 1952. There will be a greater emphasis on photographs in this work. Useful files at the NTAS include pastoral lease correspondence files, oral history interviews and a wonderful collection of photographs put together by John Roden of VRD station.

Bev Phelts (History of water development in the Northern Territory)

Bev's research is toward a PhD thesis examining water development in the Territory and its historical relationship between the first British settlements, exploration, agriculture and pastoralism.

Kathy Seton (Cultural issues which impact upon land claim processes and joint management initiatives in this community)

Whitefella Law, Blackfella Law, Where's the Emotion: Anthropology, Legal Pluralism and Relations to Country.

Working in and around Borroloola in the south-west Gulf of Carpentaria country, this study centres on assessing Yanyuwa peoples' views and experiences of the process of claiming land under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, and the impact and value of the outcomes that have been achieved through this claiming process. With some lands returned, and more grants still being negotiated, Yanyuwa people are currently dealing with important issues surrounding the appropriate joint management of their land, seas and resources. This project aims to develop a clear understanding of the cultural issues that impact upon land claim processes and joint management initiatives in this community. Funding is provided through the University of Queensland and the Cooperative Research Centre for Tropical Savannas Management (TS-CRC).

Peter Vallee (Pastoralist, Aborigines, missionaries and police in early Central Australia)

Peter is researching the history of the relations between pastoralists, Aborigines, missionaries and police during the early period of white settlement of Central Australia, roughly 1880-1900, focusing on the Swan-Taplin inquiry of 1890.



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