

RECORDS

TERRITORY

Northern Territory Archives Service Newsletter

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From the Director

This edition of *Records Territory* brings to you information about a range of recent and current projects and initiatives being undertaken by the Northern Territory Archives Service.

Considerable focus has been directed to community forums and education about our community research and oral history services over the last few months. This has culminated in the recent announcement of the NT History Grants for this year by The Hon. Peter Toyne, Minister for Corporate & Information Services.

On the Government Recordkeeping front, we have been especially busy assisting agencies to transfer their records management databases to align with the government administrative restructure implemented last November. Records management system upgrades, thesaurus revision, delivery of records training, and review of records storage and disposal procedures have also been the key recent activities.

Staff of the NTAS have also been busy planning for the implications of the impending Territory information legislation. The Information Bill is expected to be enacted soon and compliance with the archives and records management provisions of this legislation is of major significance to the NTAS and government agencies.

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NT History Grants

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

- Julie Marcus - *The Indomitable Miss Pink: a life in anthropology*
- Shirley Brown - *Legends of the Red Heart: twenty-six heroes of Inland Australia*



Details of the successful recipients for this year's History Grants can be found on page 5.

NEW ACCESSIONS - KARL NYLANDER

A small collection of letters written by Karl Nylander, first government storekeeper, was donated recently to NT Archives Service. The letters were collected by a Miss Anderson in New Zealand to whom Karl wrote the letters over the period 1910 - 1923. Linda Bell, our Archivist, Records Services, provides below some insights into what has proven to be a fascinating collection that provides not only a glimpse of the personality of the man, but also observations on life and government in the Territory at that time

This small but remarkable collection of letters (NTRS 2022) covers Karl's plans to move to Australia after gaining a position with the Government Survey Department in 1912. There are two years worth of letters (9 letters) while still in New Zealand, and the remaining 8 letters cover his arrival and life in Darwin.

Karl was born in 1876 and migrated from Russia to New Zealand in 1909. The circumstances of his leaving Russia aren't made clear in his letters, but he mentions family he left behind (mainly his mother whom he sent money to) and alludes to some scandal or reason he left. He mentions his despondency in New Zealand, probably linked to his inability to gain employment, and refers in later correspondence to paying off a debt accumulated while in New Zealand.

His letters are very enjoyable reading, aside from slight difficulties with his English in his early letters. He has a dry wit and humorous turn of phrase, as well as a romantic style of descriptive prose which makes his descriptions of life and the country in the Northern Territory very interesting to read. In one of his early letters (while still in New Zealand) he mentions

... the people in the old country is silly, they think here are cannibals or other kind of men-eaters on the streets" (Letter 10 November 1910, p.2).

But he himself suffers from the same lack of information, when he refers to moving to Australia to work.

My cable states that I will be with a surveying and exploring Government party and so I think I will love some 5-8 months

under God's blue sky and with apes and snakes as company and malaria as friend. (Letter 28 June 1912, p.1)

His letters from Darwin are entertaining reading, are infrequent and he covers quite a time period in each letter. In his second

letter from Darwin (8 March 1914), he states that working on survey gave him the opportunity to see the country, but that there was no future for him.

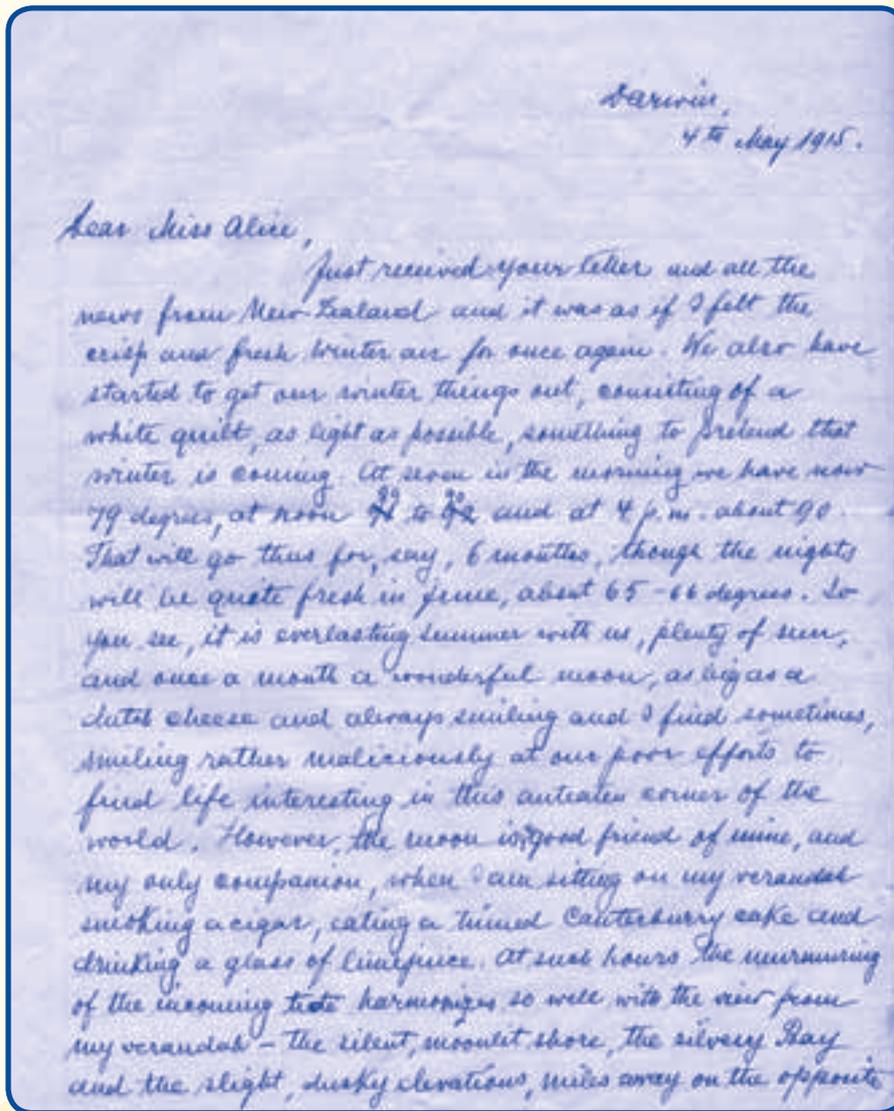
But fortunately I got into a row with my Surveyor, he using a language towards his men, of whom I was one, - a language though worthy of the Northern Territory, but still too much for me to be suffered. So as I was sick of the whole game and had some few pounds to live on for a while, I said to him what I thought of him and his manners. He got very haughty and I laid my tools down, resigned at once and offered him a fight as a gentleman. (Letter 8 March 1914, pp 3-4)

Karl goes on to describe his trek back to civilisation:

The country looked its best at the end of the rainy season, the valleys were full of beautiful ferns and the mountains in their green glory

looked very inviting ... You cannot imagine what it is to sit near a fire, to listen to all the mysterious noises of the bush, to smoke a pipe, to worship the moon and to think, that one is for 70-80 miles the only white man. (Letter 8 March 1914, p.4)

This same letter also describes his involvement in a court case against the Manager of the Batchelor Demonstration Farm. Karl acted as a translator for a Russian family who pressed charges against the manager, following incidents involving the wife and daughter of the family, while working on the farm. Although the manager was



NEW ACCESSIONS - KARL NYLANDER

not found guilty, he did lose his job. Along the way, it appears that the family had been persecuted and charged with liable. Karl seems to have taken quite an active involvement in the case, including committing perjury while translating for the sixteen-year-old daughter by stating testimony he had heard earlier from her as her words, when in fact she had frozen on the stand. Karl also appears to have quietly sought support for the family from the Russian Embassy, a Russian newspaper and the Russian government.

Karl worked as a bookkeeper for the Public Works Department and acted as Secretary to the Administrator (Dr Gilruth). He was also Clerk with the Director of Mines during a ...*journey to the mines in the back country ... covering some 800 odd miles on our journeys* ... (Letter 8 March 1914, p.12). He also acted as Chief Clerk in the Public Works Department, and Government Storekeeper.

In his letter of 8 November 1914, Karl mentions a plethora of engagements following a recent influx of women to Darwin and his hopes, or rather lack of belief, that the marriages will be solid due to the reasons for marrying in a place with such little choice for companions:

In spite of the war, we still live here as before and amuse ourselves as best we can. Some more ladies have arrived and the town is full of engaged couples. The marriage market is at its height and all my friends who are yet single, seem to think of entering the holy bonds. In some cases, I am glad of that but in some others again I rather disapprove of their choice. But, girls being rare here, they take what there is to take, some of them will be sorry in later years, I am sure. (8 November 1914, p.3-4)

He also discusses his duties in running the office and government store. In his next letter (4 May 1915) he talks more about living in Darwin and his bachelor lifestyle, including his pet dog. He mentions the evenings spent on his verandah:

...the murmuring of the incoming tide harmonizes so well with the view from my verandah – the silent moonlit shore, the silvery Bay and the slight dusky elevations, miles away on the opposite shore. I usually have at such times an interesting conversation with my dog, who is half dingo, half something else and whose half caste intelligence is pointed chiefly towards mischief and slyness, the usually prevailing intellect of human and animal beings in the Northern Territory. (Letter 4 May 1915, pp 1-2)

In later correspondence, he talks more about his work: he seems to work very long hours, and his social life seems very limited. He talks about the war and news from his family and friends in Russia. He also mentions the departures of local men to fight in the war.

His letters end in 1923. Karl remained in Darwin and apparently worked as Government Storekeeper until 1940 when he died. NT Archives also hold his probate file (E103 File No 49/40, Karl Waldermar Nylander)

Karl is also referred to in an Oral History Interview with Deric Thompson who spoke highly of Karl as a skilled accounting man (NTRS 226, TS 426). It appears that Karl never married, but his contribution to the Territory is acknowledged through the street named after him in the Darwin suburb of Parap.

RECORDS DISPOSAL FORUM

A series of Records Disposal Forums are being presented by 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: 17 July 2002
21 August 2002
25 September 2002
23 October 2002
20 November 2002

Presenters: Margaret Quan
and Linda Bell

The agenda will be sent to Records Managers in each agency prior to each forum. Please advise additional contacts requiring notification each month.

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Liam Phillips
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ABORIGINAL ADVISORY GROUP (AAG) and community workshops

The Aboriginal Advisory Group on Access to Northern Territory Government Records has had a few changes in membership lately. Please find below details of current members.

Ann Ronberg: Community representative, Central Australia.

Valerie Day: Community representative, Top End.

Rosie Baird: Link -Up, Top End

Zita Lawrence: Link -Up, Central Australia

Greg Coleman: (Northern Territory Archives Service) Northern Territory Government.



AAG meeting held in Katherine in May 2002 (includes AAG members and support staff from NTAS & NAA)

Left to right: Greg Coleman, Rosie Baird, Zita Wallace, Phyllis Williams, Cathy Flint, Ann Ronberg, Katherine Goodwin, Valerie Day.

The Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS) and the National Archives of Australia (NAA), Darwin office, have conducted a number of joint workshops to inform the stolen generation community in the Northern Territory about the types of records held at both archives, the procedures involved in accessing them including agreements that have been put in place to make access to records easier for Aboriginal people (or their agents) who need to establish linkages to family and country because of past separation policies.

Workshops held so far have been in Alice Springs (May 2001), Darwin (September 2001) and Katherine (May 2002). The Katherine workshop was held at the Wurli Wurlingang centre and was attended by approximately 30 people. The next workshop is planned to be held in early October this year in Tennant Creek.



Community Workshop, Wurli Wurlingang centre, Katherine, May 2002

PROMOTING THE NTAS TO THE COMMUNITY:

Promotion of the NTAS to the community has taken place over the last few months with presentations to a wide range of groups. All presentations covered issues such as the difference between libraries and archives, the processes involved in using archives generally, the range and types of records we have, with some examples, and the services we offer. Below are details of some of these presentations.

Casuarina Senior College history students: assignment on the Depression in the Territory in the 1930s with an emphasis on using oral histories



Teacher Fran Davies and students from Casuarina Senior College in NTAS search room with Françoise Barr, Archivist, Information Services

NTU undergraduate history students: required to do an assignment using primary records

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Education: emphasis on production and use of oral history

NT Writer's Centre workshop: Researching and Writing real life stories

Joint NT Archives /National Archives workshop during **Post Graduate's week** at Northern Territory university

Joint NT Archives /National Archives workshop at **Katherine Public Library:** Researching the Territory using Archives

Joint NT Archives /National Archives workshop at **Wurli Wurlingang Centre, Katherine:** Researching your story: an introduction to archives for Aboriginal people interested in tracing their personal, family and community histories

ORAL HISTORY - CONFERENCES

It's time again to think about the next biannual national conference of the Oral History Association of Australia. Last year it was in Canberra, and next year will be the Western Australian Branch's turn to host the four-day event, from 4 to 7 September 2003, in Perth. The WA branch says the title, **From All Quarters**, signifies inclusivity, encompassing delegates and presenters from all geographical areas; presentations covering all topics with an oral history component; delegates at all levels of expertise and experience. Papers and workshops will range over the whole field of oral history theory and practice. Examples might include:

- Reviews and sound bites from completed projects
- Planning and progress on long-term projects
- Demonstrations of best practice and methodology
- Virtual tours of oral history collections
- Works on latest equipment
- The role of the oral historian in education
- Profile of oral history practitioners and their work
- Archiving and preserving oral history records
- Any other topic with an oral history focus

The call for papers closes 30 August 2002, with acceptances notified by 31 October 2002. The conference registration brochure will be issued in June 2003. The call for papers leaflet can be obtained from Francis Good in Darwin. To register interest in making a presentation, contact either:

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Incidentally, Francis Good of the NTAS will be editing the OHAA's *Journal 2003*, which will be released at the conference. Papers being

presented at the 2003 conference, if they are to be published in that issue, should be submitted by 28 February 2003. Other articles can also be considered, and, in particular, book reviews are always welcome.

In February this year, the Australasian Sound Recordings Association (ASRA) hosted a National Sound Archiving Conference in Canberra. The National Library of Australia and ScreenSound Australia (formerly the National Film & Sound Archive) have now invested in computer-based systems that will replace storage of archival recordings on discrete media (tapes etc.), whether the original was digital or analog, with digital versions managed in large-scale digital object storage systems. Significantly, these sound files will employ digital sampling rates and bit-lengths that are far higher than those found in audio-CDs or digital audio tape (DAT). The latter present problems in properly capturing sound that is at the upper end of frequencies that can be detected by the human ear, and also sound at even higher frequencies that can still affect the quality and ambience of sound at frequencies within our range of our hearing. Sound digitised at lower rates can also inhibit digital reprocessing for restoration or production work at later stages, an important aspect of archiving original sound recordings for posterity. Francis Good can provide a short paper on the conference and some implications for oral history work at community level.

There is now a broad range of digital recording equipment available for oral historians to choose from, and each solution has its advantages and drawbacks, as well as implications for the rest of the project. The ASRA conference, and views expressed on the e-mail discussion list H-Oralhist show that, worldwide, there is a bewildering diversity of opinion and preference at times, but anyone thinking of buying new equipment now needs to employ more caution and research than ever before. NTAS staff, as always, are happy to discuss and advise. Please contact Francis Good.

NT HISTORY GRANTS 2002

The NT History Grants were announced by the Hon Peter Toyne, Minister for Corporate and Information Services in late July. Congratulations are extended to the following recipients of this year's grants.

David Baker of New South Wales: \$2,000 to research a personal account of the Hydrological works and developments in the Top End, 1955-1957.

Alan Powell of Darwin: \$1,850 to research the story of American Army Engineers in the Northern Territory, 1942-1943.

Robert Ellis of Toowong: \$2,650 to research a history of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority, 1980-1989.

Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory, Inc: \$3,300 to research the Pioneer Register of the Northern Territory.

Cathy Robinson of Canberra: \$2,700 to research buffalo histories from Oenpelli.

John Dargavel of Canberra: \$2,000 to research the history of the paperbark forest lands of the Northern Territory.

Shirley Brown of Alice Springs: \$3,000 to research the biographies of famous Australians and their experiences in the Alice Springs region.

Northern Territory Police Museum and Historical Society: \$4,000 to record oral histories of NT Police members and their spouses.

Kate Lance of Melbourne: \$2,000 to research pearling luggers of the Northern Territory, 1920-1940.

Sally Ingleton & John Moore of Melbourne: \$3,000 to research a documentary script about Olive Pink.

Bill Bunbury & Geoffrey Bolton of Perth: \$5,000 to research a regional history of Northern Australia (the Kimberleys, the Top End and Far North Queensland).

Nicholas Gill of Wollongong: \$3,500 to research the Central Australian pastoral industry and the 1958-1965 drought.

Megg Kelham of Alice Springs: \$2,000 to research and document the Pine Gap Women's Peace Camp, 1983.

Darryl Butler of Darwin: \$2,000 to research the Desert Rose, a history of the Northern Territory University's solar car, 1986-2001.

Justin O'Brien of Jabiru: \$4,000 to research new documentation about the Coniston killings of 1928.

Howard Smith of Yirrkala: \$3,000 to study the history of the contact art of North East Arnhem Land.

James Warden of Alice Springs: \$4,000 to research the administration of Justice in Central Australia, 1925-1940.

TRIM SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Since the NTPS restructure on the 13 November 2001, agency records staff have been actively setting up their TRIM databases to match the changed responsibilities / functions for agencies. The formation of the five super agencies and the setting up of the new agencies' TRIM databases has taken time and considerable planning for agency records staff and the TRIM Support staff at the NTAS. All affected agencies are planning to have their new databases in production by 1 July 2002 or soon after this date.

The NTAS has been assisting agencies in moving records between databases as functions have moved and in providing a work environment at the NTAS where records staff can set up new databases. Numerous meetings have been held to review the current status of database setups to ensure agencies are able to meet the 1 July target. The finalisation of all record movements required from the restructure is not expected to be accomplished until the end of 2002.

IT Outsourcing and TRIM/Content Manager

The NT Government, under the contract with IBM (for the provision of a document and records management solution), is locked into "per seat" licensing for TRIM. This has created challenges for both the NTAS TRIM System Support Team and the desktop service providers CSC (Computer Science Corporation) and CSM (provide desktop support services to Education Department only). IBM/TOWER have agreed to allow the NT Government to have TRIM listed as category 1 software (ie part of the Standard Operating Environment) which will simplify desktop rollouts of TRIM in the future. The agency TRIM System administrators and the NTAS TRIM Support team will continue keeping records of "per seat" licence holders for agency TRIM users.

This change will ensure consistent software levels of TRIM throughout the NTPS and make future upgrades simpler. We are currently upgrading TRIM Captura to build #302 and the DB2UDB

client software. This is the first time TRIM has been upgraded since the outsourcing of desktop services and provides a challenge for the new service providers in establishing appropriate methods for delivering the software in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy.

Records Systems Projects Update

Webdrawer – this provides agencies with a web interface to TRIM for enquiry users. The Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment, the Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs and the Department Business, Industry and Resource Development will be joining the NT Power and Water Authority and the Department of Corporate and Information Services in implementing Webdrawer.

Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM)

The Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs is planning the implementation of Electronic Document and Records Management using the governments recordkeeping solution – TOWER's TRIM and IBM's Content Manager (as the electronic object store). The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment is progressing with the rollout of EDRM in the agency.

The upgrade of the Content Manager software (electronic object store) in all agency implementations of EDRM is currently being implemented. The upgrades include the object stores situated in the Department of the Legislative Assembly, the Department of Corporate and Information Services (Health records) and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment. This upgrade also includes the upgrade of the client content manager software on appropriate user desktops.

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



GOVERNMENT RECORD KEEPING POLICY REVIEW

In response to the recent endorsement of the new Australian Standard for Recordkeeping, and in anticipation of the proposed NT information legislation, the NT Archives Service is to review the *Records Management Policies & Guidelines for the NT Government*. The review is planned for completion in early

2003. The new policies will be released as standards to complement the information legislation.

Proposed new topics include a metadata standard for records, and a recordkeeping standard for government functions that

are outsourced. Further proposed changes include the integration of electronic records issues into all topics, rather than as separate policies. The review will also look at the management and implementation of the NT Government Thesaurus and Disposal Schedules.

Spotlight on.....Northern Territory Police Force

The history of the Northern Territory police force began with the appointment of Paul Foelsche as Sub-Inspector of Police in the Northern Territory of South Australia on 16 December 1869. Inspector Foelsche sailed from Port Adelaide on the "Kohinoor" with Corporal F. Drought and Troopers W. Stretton, R. Kappler, H. J. Boord, H. Q. Smith and J. Massey, arriving at Port Darwin on 21 January 1870. Prior to this period, there had been several attempts at settling the Northern Territory and the responsibility for law enforcement at these short-lived settlements (eg Melville Island, Port Essington) rested with the military.

The history of the Northern Territory police force is one of isolation, hardship, loneliness, violence, heroism, danger, sadness and humour (J. R. Johns, *Patrolling the "Big Up"*: edited by Darrell Lewis, Historical Society of the Northern Territory, Darwin). It was for a long time a small force scattered across a large land mass as police stations were slowly established in remote areas of the Territory. As the police were often the only official government figures in these remote areas, they regularly found themselves undertaking a number of additional duties such as Clerk of Local Court, District Registrar for Births, Deaths and Marriages, Temporary Stock Inspectors and Protector of Aborigines. As a consequence, our archival records relating to the police in the Northern Territory are not only an important source of information about law and order issues, but also provide a much broader picture of what was happening in the communities in which the police were working.

The strength of the holdings at the NTAS relating to the police force is predominantly in the government and personal collections including oral histories.

Our *List of records holdings relating to the Northern Territory police force* is available on our website and in our search room.

Examples of some of these records are given below.

ORAL HISTORY - RON AGNEW BROWN NTRS 226, TS 469

Born in 1916, Ron Agnew-Brown, known as Ron Brown, or "Brownie" to his mates, left behind farm life in northern NSW, and the Depression, when he joined the NT Police in 1939. He describes the rough, hard-drinking Darwin of the time, and the shock and carnage of the early Japanese bombing raids on the town and harbor.

In 1945 he took over the Finke police district, a huge area south of Alice Springs which stretched over state borders, and was patrolled on camels. He vividly describes some of these patrols, the essential help of Aboriginal trackers, especially on rescue missions, the scarcity of water, the building of the first airstrip at Finke, and the native and feral animal life of the region..

The interview was recorded by Francis Good at Kingscliff, NSW in October 1987.

In this extract from the transcription of the interview we are given an insight into the issues faced by Ron during his time in the Finke

Ron, I'd like to start talking today about your time in the Finke River Police District, or the Finke Police District. When were you transferred down there?

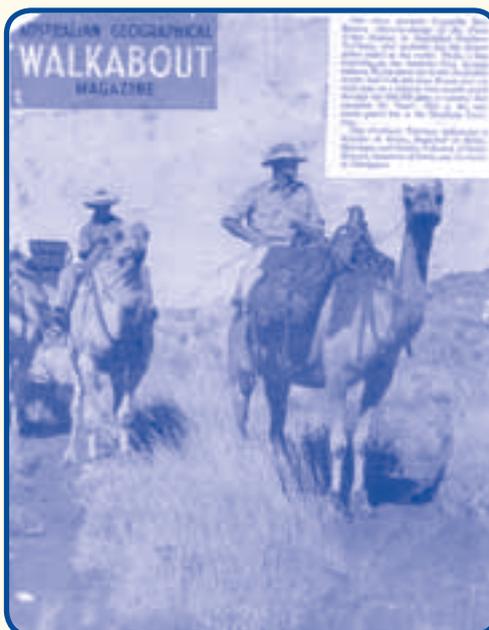
I was transferred down there from the Top End of the Territory in 1945.

How did the transfer come about?

I think they were a bit short of camel drivers. It wasn't the sort of occupation that many people were keen on doing, especially people who were brought up in the city area, or from a police college. As I was brought up in a rural area, and had been used to handling horses, I think that was one of the reasons, and I was a bit keen myself, to learn.

So you didn't know a great deal about it?

I knew nothing about camels at all. I thought: they were animals; they couldn't be that much different. But how wrong I was. [Laughs]



NTRS 876 item no 4, Ron Agnew Brown Collection, Walkabout magazine, March 1953. Cover photograph featuring Ron Brown and the Police Camel Patrol

Right. So how did you travel down to Finke?

By police truck, utility. That is to Alice Springs. And then, from there to Finke, by train, the old Ghan.

Who were you relieving on that beat?

I was relieving a police officer named Joe Mutch.

How long had he been there?

I think he'd been there about twelve months.

And before him?

Before him (I don't know whether this is the right order), there was Kennett, Jack Kennett and Bill McKinnon.

Bill was there for a long time, was he?

Bill was there for a long time, yes.

And when you arrived at that station, was your predecessor still there?

Only for a short space of time, for twenty-four hours, the handing over, and then it might have been a couple of

continued next page

Spotlight on.....Northern Territory Police Force



NTRS 1641, No 11, Ron Brown Collection, Finke Police Station and outbuildings, 1938/39

days perhaps. Joe Mutch told me what the duties were, what the patrolling area was, and described how it was accomplished in three different patrol areas, and the various duties we had to perform, in that short space of time, and also showed me [what] the bookwork entailed. We had a go, and I had to sign for all the stores that were handed over, and check on that—my camel gear and office equipment and that sort of thing.

Right, as far as the camels would go, it was then up to you to work out how to control the beasts.

That is right, that is so right. But I was fortunate in taking over the Aboriginal staff, and there was a fine old Aboriginal tracker named Mick Doolan¹, who taught me an awful lot about camels,

and how to handle them, and the problems I faced on camel patrols.

For instance, when I first went there, I decided to get experience pretty quickly, and I thought: 'I'll do a small trip, yes.' I did a short patrol, about fifty miles north of Finke, to a place called Horseshoe Bend Station. It was in December, I think. It was in a very hot month, anyway, and the camels

were playing up, and I didn't know what to do.

So I said to the tracker: 'What's wrong with these camels?' He said: 'Oh boss, that sand's too hot. They can't stand this heat on their feet.' The way he spoke, it was: 'More better we hoosh them down and wait till it gets cooler in the afternoon,' which I followed. We just hooshed them down in the scant shade of mulga trees, and waited.

Later that afternoon, we went on towards Horseshoe Bend, but we didn't arrive there until the following day. But those are the sort of little hints that you pick up from the experience of your tracker.

Right. Well, could you now describe what your patrol area was?

In area? In area, it was approximately somewhere around about a hundred and six thousand square miles. I don't know what that is in metric. I'm one of the old timers in measurements. I don't know what it is in metric measurements.

It also included—apart from that area in the Territory, which in area ranged from the Queensland border to the West Australian border, and from near Alice Springs to the South Australian border—but also, I was a special constable for South Australia, which entailed going down and patrolling some of the stations in the north part of South Australia.

How far south would you have ranged?

Oh, probably about fifty miles south of the border, both east and west of the railway line. Andado Station -- Not Andado, Mount Dare Station, Teyon, Aringa Station (that was Kidman's station) to Rosehill (Doug Fuller's Station) and Sundown Station, Kitto's station in South Australia. He had another part of his station joining it in the Territory. Sundown was where that murder took place a few years ago. And then back into the Territory, and on to Ernabella Mission, which was in South Australia.



NTRS 234, CP 871, Mannion Collection, Vestey's office, Bullocky Point. Police and Vestey's reps addressing rolling strikers, 1918

NTRS 234, CP 879, Mannion Collection, Sgt J.J. Mannion and tracker Toby, 1957



Spotlight on.....Northern Territory Police Force

ORAL HISTORY - BOB DARKEN NTRS 226, TS 768

BOB DARKEN was born in Parkes NSW in 1919. He came from a farming background and was a keen sportsman. In 1939 he came to the Northern Territory as part of the Darwin Mobile Force. When this was disbanded at the outbreak of war he joined the Northern Territory Police Force.

Mr Darken witnessed the early bombing raids on Darwin during 1942. He gives details about his first-hand experiences during the raids, his own close calls and the many casualties. He recalls the destruction caused by widespread looting, and the inability of the small police force to prevent it.

In 1943 he was transferred to Tennant Creek and spent time also at Katherine, Roper River and Harts Range police stations. He talks about the varied duties of police in isolated postings. Bob and his wife Vicki Darken moved to the dusty and rugged Harts Range police station in 1945, a station with a police district covering 60,000 square miles.

In 1950 he left the police force and purchased Simpson's Gap Station. After many years of hard work, drought and some disappointments, he and Vicki Darken sold the station to the government. Bob Darken stayed on as curator of the newly formed national park until he moved to Alice Springs in 1979 to take up the position as Chief Wildlife Officer for the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory.

This interview was recorded by Francis Good in Alice Springs in 1994.

In the following extract of the interview Bob describes how he managed to travel to the Roper River region to do a three month relief job there, and describes (with some humour) one of the crises that occurred during this time.

Now, its while you were at Tennant Creek that you did an extended -- well, about three months, I think, service out at Roper River. Yeah, that was more-or-less a relieving job to go to Roper. I had to relieve a chap named Greg Withnall. We didn't have any transport much in those days, and I started off from -- hitch-hiked a ride from Tennant Creek to Mataranka actually. There they'd sent a plant of horses in from Roper River, and I rode out to the Roper. It was during the wet season, and a pretty miserable trip out there.

I got as far as Elsey Station and I met up with the fellow named Bob Farrer, who was the post -- he used to take the mail out to the back blocks out there -- Roper Valley Station, the different stations out there. He'd [get to] Mainoru, which was the furthest he'd go, I think. But Bob wasn't a very talkative fellow. I think two or three days riding out there and swimming about eight or ten creeks and rivers, I think Bob spoke about eight words all the way. A very good bushman, but he was one that certainly didn't get on your nerves through too much talking.

So I got out to Roper to relieve Greg Withnall, and then he couldn't get back out from Roper because of the fact that it was too wet, and he had an old motor car. Eventually he got out by horseback. But it was so wet that there wasn't much to do.

Old Jimmy Gibbs was a nice old fellow who owned Urupunga Station, and Jimmy -- oh, I'd only been there a few days I suppose, and a blackfeller came up and said: 'You'd better come down to Urupunga, that old man proper sick.' The Roper was in flood then, so we swam across that. It was too rough to get horses across, and it was a bit too rough for me really, but I eventually got across it. I'm not the best of swimmers.

Then I walked down to Urupunga, which only took a matter of two or three hours I suppose. Urupunga is on the Wilton River, which runs at right angles into the Roper. When I got there, old --

When I got down to Jimmy's he was sitting crouched over. The

station was a bough shed actually -- it was only about eight feet high and probably twenty yards by twenty yards square, and it was all boughs and branches and things that made it up. It was a nice cool place actually, because the breeze used to get through it. [Laughs] I don't know how he'd get on if there was a thunder storm.

Anyway, Jimmy was sitting there and he had a terrific big carbuncle on his back and he couldn't move. It was like a big -- oh, a big red apple with a yellow top on it. An awful looking thing it was. He said: 'Can you help me?' I said: 'Yes, I can help you Jim, but its going to hurt. I'm going to have to get my pocket knife out and cut it.' He said: 'I don't care what you do, as long as you -- its really painful.' And Jimmy was a tough old fellow, and I could see that he was suffering.

So I got a tin and boiled up some water, and put my pocket knife in it and sterilised it to the best I could. I said: 'Now, hold on Jim', and I lanced the top of this thing. It was like an explosion, the core went up and hit the ceiling -- the branches. Jimmy let out a sigh, and he said: 'I've never felt better in my life.' Anyway, I got some bluestone and some water, and I cleaned this thing out. Then I got a needle that he'd used for cantle lining saddles and that, a bent needle, and a hair out of the horse's tail, and I sewed it up -- cleaned it up and sewed it up. According to Jimmy, I was the best mate he ever had in his life, and we got on really well together.

NTRS 876 item no 6, Ron Agnew Brown Collection,
Illustrated London News, April
23, 1949



Illustrating the varied work of a "Mountie": The Constable is listening to evidence given by an Aborigine at a Court of Summary Jurisdiction



In charge of the Northern Territory Station at Hart's Range: Constable Robert Darken

Spotlight on.....Northern Territory Police Force

NTRS 1734, Tasman & Eileen Fitzer Collection, 1939-1955

This collection is comprised of copies of extracts from letters written by Tas and Eileen Fitzer about police work and life in remote areas of the Northern Territory. The letters were written to a Bruce Painter in Christchurch, New Zealand

**Police Station
Brocks Creek N.T.
27th May 1947.**

I think I will try and go back to 1945 when Eileen last wrote to you. Well, we were due for our first leave together that year in December, having only been married the previous April. Eileen had prepared a beautiful Christmas dinner and we were both terribly excited, when out of the blue, on Dec. 22nd I got the following pedal wireless telegram. "Const. Fitzer on receipt of this telegram arrange to leave immediately with all horses, plant and trackers for Adelaide River stop Search for missing Airmen 60 miles North East Pine Creek stop Wire immediately date you arrive Adelaide River stop report to Darwin for final instructions. Superintendent of Police.

Eil and I looked at each other and neither spoke for several minutes, all our plans had cracked. I thought the thing over and said to Eil. "Well Eil, I feel as if I should go straight away, apparently they were some soldier lads flying home for Christmas and if I can get into the area early before the rains I may be able to do some good.

Well that day the Trackers and I mustered up all the horses and mules, whilst dear old Eil, cooked and baked all day. We never shod the horses but just threw everything into the Pack bags. Flour, sugar, tea, salt beef, shoeing gear etc. etc. and the following morning at daylight, the trackers and self with 26 horses, five mules and six pack saddles and gear left. This was the last time I saw Eil for seven weeks. This was December 24th and our wet season had just begun.

Christmas Day found us in the rain, with horses belly deep in muddy bog and nearly every creek a Banker. This means the packs have to be taken off, a canvas boat made out of your flys and everything boated over and the horses swim across. Well we battled along and at last reached Adelaide River, and on to this station, Brocks Creek on 28th.....



NTRS 1641, No 11, Ron Brown Collection, Constable
Tas.V.C Fitzer (NT Police Force)
[and wife Eileen] Sydney - Easter, 1942

NEW INFORMATION BILL BEFORE THE NORTHERN TERRITORY PARLIAMENT

Following an extensive consultation and public information process, the Northern Territory Government's Information Bill was introduced to the Parliament by the Minister for Justice and Attorney General, Dr Peter Toyne.

The Bill was tabled in Parliament on 23 October 2001 and opened to public comment for four months. 500 hard copies of the bill were distributed as well as copies downloaded from the Government web site. 55 formal submissions were received that helped shape the final detail of the legislation.

There are four key elements to the Information Bill:

- rights of access to government and personal information
- privacy principles to protect personal information
- the appointment of an independent statutory Information Commissioner to oversee the use of the Act
- legislative guidelines for keeping and managing government records and information

Dr Toyne said the Territory's Information Bill has moved ahead of other jurisdictions. It is framed to meet the challenges of electronic information management and it coherently combines both access to information and privacy provision into one piece of legislation – no other legislation in Australia does that.

The submissions made to Government on the draft Bill have been taken on-board, particularly in areas such as retrospectivity and exemption certificates. In response to these submissions, the retrospectivity has increased from 5 years in the draft Bill to 10 years in the final Information Bill, and the ability to issue exemption certificates has

been moved away from government agency issues to now rest with the Chief Minister.

Within two years of implementation of the law, access to government information could extend back to self-government if the applicant can show that the information has public interest implications. Access to personal information will go back to self-government.

To enable adherence to the new legislation, Government agencies will be implementing new record keeping practices and informing all public sector staff of requirements under the Information Bill.

An independent Information Commissioner will be appointed to oversee the new privacy and access to information regime. The Information Commissioner will be responsible for promoting good information privacy and access to information practices. This includes monitoring how the public sector responds to requests for access to information, and how it protects the privacy of personal information.

Provision for an independent Information Commissioner has been made in the 2002-2003 budget with an allocation of \$220,000 to establish an Office of the Information Commissioner.

The Department of Corporate and Information Services will also allocate \$150,000 to implement the record keeping components of the Bill.

The Information Bill will be debated in the October sittings of Parliament. The Bill will come into force as soon as extensive education throughout the public sector on legislative guidelines for keeping and managing government records and information have been conducted.

An electronic version of the Bill is available by accessing the following website address <http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/register.html>

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS:

Provided below are details of some of the current projects being undertaken by researchers in our search room.

Dr Peter d'Abbs was the recipient of a NT History Award in 2000. The working title for his research is: "H.C. Giese and the administration of the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration, 1954-1972". The study will focus in particular on the influence of H.C. Giese's education, training and previous experiences and on the ways in which he defined and implemented his role as Director of Welfare.

Grahame Ball, a former pilot in the Northern Territory, is researching the history of the Northern Territory Aviation.

Since the mid-1980s, **Jeff Corfield** has been conducting ongoing private research into the history of the "string band" era in Darwin, and associated generational family music traditions amongst the Darwin mixed-race community. Jeff also has a broader personal research interest in the music and folklore of the transient pearling and fishing communities of the top end and also in the droving days of northern Australia. Whilst living in Darwin during the 1980s, he recorded the music of several old-time string bands players, most notably Mr Valentine McGinness. The original recordings are now lodged with the Northern Territory Archives Service in Darwin. Music and interview material from those recordings formed the basis for a special presentation at the 2002 National Folk Festival in Canberra, entitled "String Bands and Shake Hands - the Days of Old Darwin Town", as a tribute to the life and music of Val McGinness. Another presentation of "String Bands and Shake Hands" is planned as part of this year's Festival of Darwin program which is held in August. Jeff is currently working on a small publication on the life and music of Val McGinness, to be produced as part of the Pioneer Performer's Series published by Carawobbity Press. Somehow Jeff also finds time to be involved in a research program entitled "Maritime Songlines" organised and coordinated by Dr Karl

Neuenfeldt of Central Queensland University, Bundaberg.

Toni Tapp Coutts is writing a book about her father, Bill Tapp who came to the NT in 1947 as a jackeroo at Elsey Station and went on to draw Montijinnie Station in partnership with Bill Crowson in 1953. The government of the day had excised three properties off Victoria River Downs Station, - Montijinnie, Killarney and Camfield - and put them up for tender in the early 1950s. Bill Tapp later sold his share to the Crowson family and bought Killarney in 1960 from Eric Izod and Ivor Townshend Hall. In 1960 he married June Clements-Forscutt, a divorcee with three young children, and they went on to have 10 children and built one of the most modern cattle properties in Australia. In January 1992 Elder Pastoral Company decided to recover debts and put him into receivership. He died 5 months later and the family fought a battle in the NT Supreme Court to try to keep the family home. Toni's main use of the NT Archives Service is to trace the dates and times when the pastoral leases were bought, transferred etc.

Sarah Fairhead is doing a PhD research on the consequences for Indigenous people of the connection between defence service and national identity in Australia with the following working title: "Indigenous Citizenship and National Defence, 1939 to 1969".

Dr John Kadiba is researching the history of Fijian missionaries who served in Arnhem Land from 1916 to 1988. John wrote a report on Fijian Missionaries in 1993 and he is extending this work into a publishable format. He is particularly motivated by this project as he believes the history of the Fijian missionaries has never been fully documented and forms an integral part of Northern Territory history, especially as it relates to the history of missions in Arnhem Land.

Dr Mark Harvey from the Language and

Media Unit at the University of Newcastle came to NT Archives Service looking for information about Aboriginal place names on Koolpinyah Station.

Dr Tim Prenzler of the School of Criminology at Griffith University in Brisbane is writing a book on the history of the women police in Australia. The book covers the period from World War One to the present and is organised around key milestones in the achievement of equality for women police - such as initial appointment, equal powers, equal pay, uniforms, removal of recruitment quotas and removal of the marriage bar. At each point, Tim is trying to find out why changes occurred when they did, what social forces influenced the changes, and who the key decision makers and lobbyists were. His sources include police annual reports, union journals and parliamentary debates. A major source is police correspondence held in archives.

NT University undergraduate students - Dr Bill Wilson lectures in history and politics at the Northern Territory University. He gave an assignment to a group of his students which required them to choose a topic relevant to Northern Territory history prior to 1911. Several students used the NT Archives Service to research the following topics: the Fannie Bay Goal, the creation of the Palmerston Hospital, the early history of the Palmerston Hospital, the history of the Vic Hotel, Aborigines/European relationships from 1870 to 1911, the Native Police Force and Chinatown.

Fay Lawrence and Robert Walker are researching the history of the Australian Democrats in the Northern Territory and the title of their project is "Australian Democrats - Celebrating 25 years". This celebration will be happening in November this year and will include a lecture by Fr Frank Brennan followed by an anniversary dinner.

STAFF NOTES

In the last edition of Records Territory we welcomed Margaret Quan to the team. We now have a photograph of Margaret to show that she really does exist. Margaret has taken up the role of Records Retention and Standards Coordinator where her key tasks are to advise agency clients about records retention and disposal and to manage the government records storage contracts.



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AUSTRALIAN STANDARD FOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT – AS ISO 15489

The International Standards Organisation Records Management Standard ISO 15489.1 and its *Guidelines*, ISO TR 15489.2 were published in October 2001.

ISO 15489 was developed in response to consensus among participating ISO member countries to standardise international best practice in records management using the Australian Standards AS4390, *Records Management* as the starting point.

The international standard was adopted by Australia in February 2002 to replace its own standard and is known as AS ISO 15489 *Records Management*.

According to Michael Steemson, Principal of The Caldeson Consultancy and member of the Australian delegation to the ISO authoring sub-

committee, the standard and its guidelines is an amazing document. He writes:

.....a condensation of the records world's experience and expertise. It reveals that although the world may use a variety of methods, there is an agreed best way to undertake the principles of good recordkeeping ... the process (described in the guidelines) will in time become the basis of all records systems, a boon for recordkeepers all over the world. [INFORMAA Quarterly vol 18 no1 February 2002 p28.]

The standard can be purchased from Standards Australia and is an essential document to be made available for reference by all recordkeepers.

REGISTER OF RECORDS DISPOSAL SCHEDULES

As reported in earlier issues of Records Territory the following general disposal schedules have been approved by NT Archives Service for administrative records common to all NT Government agencies.

2000/8 (Admin) *Disposal Schedule for Administrative Records of the NTG*

2001/2 (FM) *Disposal Schedule for Financial Management Records of the NT Government*

2001/6 (HRM) *Disposal Schedule for Human Resource Management Records of the NT Government*

A register of all approved disposal schedules including both functional and general disposal schedules is available from NTAS.

Contact Margaret Quan on ph: 89247494 or email: margaret.quan@nt.gov.au for more information.

SECONDARY STORAGE OF RECORDS

Contracts for Records Storage and Disposal Services for NT Government Records were signed in 1999 to provide agencies with quality, value for money services in a low risk environment. The contracts are for a period of five years from commencement with an option to extend for a further five years.

The contractors services are provided in compliance with *Australian Standard AS4390 – Records Management* which has been superseded but remains consistent with the new *Australian Standard AS ISO 15489 – Records Management*.

Contacts for Secondary Storage Service Providers are:

Alice Springs
Mr Drury Piper
Centralian Records Management
12 Hele Crescent
Alice Springs NT 0870

Phone: 8953 3566 **Fax:** 8953 4474 **Mobile:** 0408 824 083

Darwin

Mr Les Bullard
Pickfords Records Management
889 Stuart Highway
Berrimah NT 0828

Phone: 8931 1262 **Fax:** 8931 0069 **Mobile:** 0438 600 793

Email: les.bullard@pickfords.com.au

Revised procedures for secondary storage with service providers are being prepared to ensure consistency across government agencies.

Contact Margaret Quan on ph: 89247494 or email: margaret.quan@nt.gov.au for more information.

NT Archives Service:

Street Address: 2nd Floor, 25 Cavenagh St Darwin NT 0800

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