

progenitor



Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory Inc.

The Family History Place

GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY INC



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FRONT COVER: June Tomlinson and the Honourable Peter Styles, Lord Mayor of Darwin.

The recipient of The City of Darwin Citizen of the Year Award at the 2026 Australia Day ceremony, June has dedicated more than 43 years to helping countless people rediscover past and present family connections and support numerous Indigenous Territorians in their quest to discover their roots.

She joined the Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory in 1982 and for the majority of time has held the Secretary's position sometimes amalgamating the position with others.

June is an accredited Record Agent with the Australasian Association of Genealogists and Record Agents. Since joining the Family History Library June had helped in the establishment of its library, assisted in the creation of indexed Northern Territory records to make finding relatives easier.

June has travelled interstate and internationally on multiple research trips to the UK and Ireland, and attended major genealogy congresses in Australia. In 2003 the Australasian Congress on Genealogy and Heraldry awarded the 2006 Congress to Darwin. June was the Convenor to a very successful event of 400 attendees. Papers presented at this Congress were of high value to researchers and they were able to browse through a bookshop of family history stalls whilst attending the Congress.

Also arranged for this event was dinner during a Harbour Cruise and not forgetting the amazing BBQ on the lawns of the Casino. Normally the dinner during Congresses is a very formal affair in an upmarket venue. Delegates had an amazing time under the stars with a sunset to match no other.

Adelaide River War Cemetery.

Lt John David Miller, Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. 1 Cdn Special Wireless Group. 16th September, 1945. Age 28. Son of Clifford and Jennie Miller; husband of Mary Jean Dorothie Biller (nee Beach) of Kingston, Ontario, Canada. G.D.3

LIEUTENANT J.D. MILLER

John David Miller was born in 1917, enlisted in the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals as a Signaller in 1935, and died in Australia in 1945. He left behind his wife, Mary Jean Dorothie Miller (nee Beach) and his parents, Clifford and Jeanne Miller. All were from Kingston, Ontario.

On 1 July 1944 then Lieutenant (Lt) Miller was detached from No. 1 Special Wireless Station, Leitrim, Ontario to No.1 (Canadian) Special Wireless Group (1CSWG). He, along with Captain (Capt) HL Hall, Capt RE March, and Lt. JH Legere were the first four members of the Group.

On 18 April 1945, after months of training and travel, he arrived with 1CSWG at McMillan's Road Camp, Northern Territory (NT), Australia. The NT Force Band played the troops into the camp.

On 16 September 1945, while serving as the Technical Maintenance Officer and Sports Officer for 1CSWG, Lt Miller was admitted to hospital. There he was placed on the dangerously ill list and, that evening, died of what was later diagnosed as acute encephalitis.

On 18 September 1945 he was buried in the grave No GD 3 in the Adelaide River War Cemetery. His funeral party was composed of eight members of the Technical Maintenance Section as bearers; eight Unit officers as pall bearers; the Chief Signal Officer (CSO) of the NT Force, a member of the CSO Staff; two buglers, two drummers, and a firing party of approximately 40 Unit personnel. Chaplain Clayden, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), conducted the service.

Writing in the November 1999 issue of the Maple Leaf, Lt Paul Doucette, a Public Affairs Officer then with the Australian based Canadian Contingent of the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) wrote:

REMEMBERING THE ONE

CAMP TWO CAN DO, Darwin, Australia—In 1945, near the end of the Second World War, the South Pacific was a nasty place for Canadian Lieutenant John Miller, who contracted encephalitis and died September 16, 1945 while serving in Northern Australia with the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals (RCCS). The 28-year-old Kingston, Ont., resident was deployed on a classified mission to the Darwin area with the RCCS Number One Special Wireless Group. The details of the squad's South Pacific duties are not clear, but it is known the group was later sent to East Timor to help with the surrender of the Japanese. As a tribute to Lt Miller, the only Canadian soldier buried at the Adelaide River War Cemetery, south of Darwin, CF members deployed to northern Australia to provide support for the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) held a memorial ceremony November 8. "It was great way to help mark this year's Remembrance Day," said Chief Warrant Officer Eric Inglis, who organized the special service as part of the Canadian Airlift Task Force's Remembrance Day ceremonies. "It was a special experience for all of us who were there."



Reference: More information can be found on the following—

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/service-records.html>

SIGNALMAN DERMOTT JOSEPH GREEN

Though little else is known about him at this time, records indicate that another member of 1CSWG, Signalman Dermott Joseph Green, age 26, was drowned while surfing at Maroochydore, Queensland, Australia on 3 March 1945. He is buried in Woombye-Palmwoods Military Cemetery.

Birth 21 Jan 1919

Halifax, Halifax County, Nova Scotia, Canada

Death 3 Mar 1945 (aged 26)

Maroochydore, Sunshine Coast Region, Queensland, Australia

Burial

Woombye Cemetery

Woombye, Sunshine Coast Region, Queensland, Australia

FROM TROVE trove.nla.gov.au

*Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser (Qld. : 1922 - 1954),
Friday 9 March 1945, page 1*

CANADIAN SOLDIER LOSES LIFE IN SURF

PLUCKY RESCUE ATTEMPT BY COMPANIONS

After surfing with companions at Maroochydore from about 3 p.m., tragedy came at about 5.30, when Private Dermott Joseph Green, a Canadian serviceman (married), who had only been in Australia a fortnight, was drowned in the surf on Saturday afternoon last.

The soldier (26 years of age), born at Nova Scotia (Canada), was the weekend guest of Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Smith, of Buderim Mountain.

In company with another Canadian soldier and Mr. and Mrs. Smith's daughter, he had been surfing for some two hours when he was suddenly drawn into a deep gutter, and being unable to swim found his difficulties accentuated. His companions swam to his assistance, but the undertow had become so strong that all three were in danger of being engulfed. Several times they attempted a rescue, but in the last effort Green slipped from their grasp and disappeared. Others assisted in a search, but the muddy nature of the water added to the difficulties. A little time later Green was discovered in shallower water, and then brought to shore about 15 minutes after he had been last seen.

Aided by others and life savers, work of artificial respiration was immediately proceeded with, and a doctor from Mooloolaba summoned. Efforts at resuscitation proved unavailing. Green leaves a wife and two children.

The funeral took place to the Palmwoods-Woombye cemetery on Monday, some 27 men and 3 officers of the deceased's unit attending at the graveside.



NORTH AUSTRALIA OBSERVER UNIT (NACKEROOS)

by Eddie Webber, originally written for The National Trust NT

Allied troops in Timor were in retreat and Darwin was being bombed on a daily basis. The Japanese were advancing rapidly sweeping all opposition before them and it was thought that invasion of the Australian mainland was imminent. Military personnel were discussing the redeployment of existing troops to the southern states, as it was felt that there were insufficient resources to defend the whole of the North Australian coastline.

The formation of a North Australia Observer Organisation was discussed at length by the Australian and United States Military Services with input from the Flying Doctor Service of Australia and EJ Connellan legendary pilot and founder of Connellan Airways.

Major W.E.H (Bill) Stanner, anthropologist who had in 1932 studied Aboriginal groups in the Northern Territory, was tasked with the evaluation of the situation and recommended the formation of the North Australia Observer Unit (NAOU). Stanner had worked in Kenya pre-war and had studied the Boer War commando's effectiveness during the South African conflict. In 1972 at interview Stanner recollected that,

The Unit was organised somewhat on the lines of a Light Horse regiment but with commando – type flexibility. It had a strategic and tactical role with duties of reconnaissance, scouting and coast – watching and was widely dispersed on and off the coast and inland, between Cambridge Gulf and the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Having made the recommendation Stanner was then given the role of commander and directed to oversee the formation and operation of the Unit.

The North Australian Observer Unit (2/1st NAOU) was formed and became known as the Nackeroos a corruption and combination of NAOU and Jackeroos. By necessity due to seasonal conditions, the large area to be patrolled and the lack of roads, the NAOU was largely a horse mounted force.

NAOU set up headquarters (137 men) at Katherine. Company **A** (117 men) was based on the Roper River, Company **B** (143 men) based on the Ord River straddled the WA/NT border and Company **C** (105 men) straddled the NT/QLD border from McArthur River to the Norman/Gregory Rivers in Queensland. (While the War establishment was 465 all ranks actual ration strength was 502 men).

Most of the men were volunteers, recruited from the eastern states and were selected for their bush skills, horsemanship, independence of character and ability to use their own initiative. By living off the land for long periods and forming close links with the Indigenous population, they would be able to provide the eyes and ears that would detect the enemy forces on the Australian mainland.

Major Stanner requested the NT Police Force provide police officers along with their Police Trackers due to their knowledge of the bush and their experience in living in the isolated and remote regions of the NT.

At full strength the NAOU numbered 450 men with 16 of these being serving members of the Northern Territory Police Force. Between 1939 and 1945 the total authorised strength of the NT Police force numbered 62, but the actual numbers were considerably less for the duration of WW11. Fifteen men left to enlist in the Armed Services while initially, another twelve with Aboriginal trackers and Aboriginal personnel were seconded for duties with the NAOU for a period or in some cases for the duration of the war. Another 50 Aborigines worked directly with the Nack-

eroos, on a varying number of duties including as labourers, guides, horse handlers, boat handlers and crewmen. This was separate to the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit of 50 Aboriginal Yolngu men commanded by anthropologist Squadron Leader Donald Thompson, to patrol Arnhem Land.

By September all groups were in place just in time for the wet season build up and seasonal flooding of the Northern Australian monsoon season. Transport consisted in the main of horses, donkeys, mules, light blitz trucks and eight boats under 15 metres.

Their armament was the left over rifles, shotguns, a small amount of firearms of varying calibres from other countries and whatever personal firearms could be scrounged.

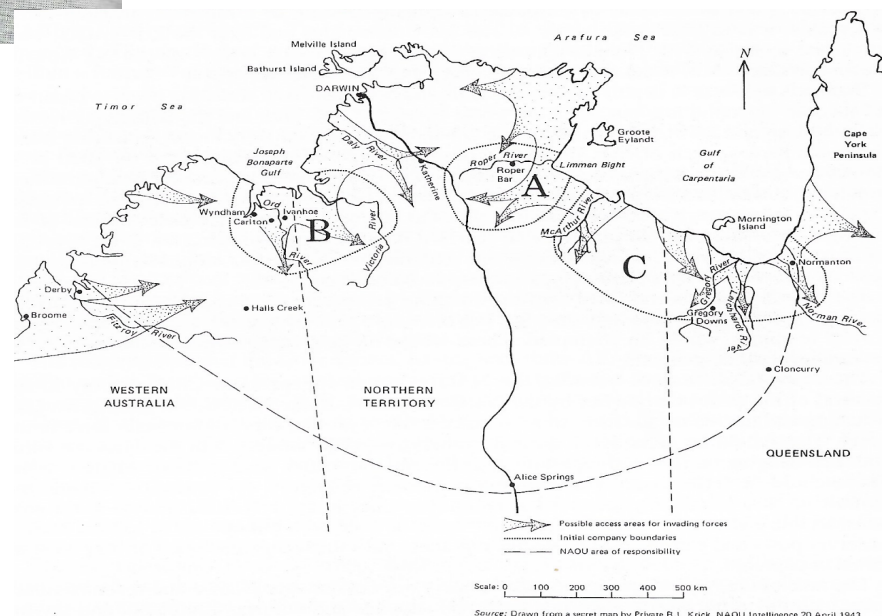
Most pistols issued to the NAOU officers were in unserviceable condition. New .38 calibre pistols were not available and the NAOU was issued with 20 German Luger 9mm pistols captured in the Middle East and brought back to Australia by the A.I.F.

A Communication received in Katherine H.Q. 10 May 1943 highlights the difficulty of the situation.

"9mm ammunition has been issued (to the NAOU) for Lugers through Mt Isa to C-Company but is not available for HQ, A and B-Coys. 20 Lugers are held and ammunition is urgently required. As the unit may be one of the first to meet Jap landings the position require investigation and if ammunition for Lugers is not available they should exchange for .38 pistols in good condition as it is understood that the .45 pistols previously supplied are unserviceable. An alternative is to obtain ammunition from captured enemy stores".



The 14 m ketch *Toorbul* at anchor McArthur River washing day.



In October 1942 a mounted patrol of A Company set out from Roper Bar to meet members from C-Company from Borrooloola, at Maria Lagoon and to familiarise themselves with conditions, waterholes and gauge grazing and feed available for the horses. The going was extremely hard through rough country and thick scrub and it took 5 days to cover the 210km. The performance of the horses was poor with two breaking down through sickness and two because of heat fatigue. Out of necessity, three mounts and one pack horse were borrowed from St Vidgeons Station to complete the trip.

While the A- Company patrol struggled south to Maria Lagoon, a C- Company patrol battled the 232 km north meeting at Maria Lagoon on October 13. There were difficulties en route with horses absconding at night wishing to return to better water. This caused a loss of time with the weather being very hot and many of the horses suffered from the lack of water. In consequence 12 horses had to be put down as there were too many dry camps where waterholes had been missed. There had been no formal training for officers, most of who were from interstate with little understanding of the climate, terrain, debilitating diseases, Aboriginal people and there were no reliable detailed maps of the region. While there were no standard procedures for mounted patrols into isolated areas in the dry season, Stanner had instructed officers that the best advice he could offer was to follow the routine of the drovers. These being ; early starts at picaninny daylight, avoid travel in the heat of the day where possible, pay attention to grazing and fodder for the horses, select Aboriginal guides who knew the area and in particular location of waterholes.

Unfortunately the patrol to the Limmen Bight River had paid little attention to this advice and ultimately paid the price. Jack Twyford the radio operator for the group wrote on return from the Limmen with a deviation to Mount Young to assess as an observation post and to look for water.

"the remainder of the trip was a nightmare. Riding day and night, some horses in a dry sweat all the time and that is a bad thing to happen as they were as dehydrated as we were".

The patrol had travelled 432 kilometres in 18 days



Cp.I K Ledingham, Peter, MC. E Heathcock and Mack set off on patrol searching for missing American airmen.

Number 2 Platoon of A- Company was based at Gulnare Bluff on the northern side of the Roper River at the mouth. It was an excellent observation Point offering splendid views of the river and Limmen Bight coast. It was established to report on the anticipated approach, arrival, strengths and movements of the Japanese invasion forces. The Bluff was however surrounded by coastal

plains and mangrove and values of the position had to be weighed against the dangers and drawbacks. The area was the unhappy home of millions of mosquitoes which attacked anyone who dared ventured there. The mosquitoes were aided by swarms of sand-flies. Water had to be delivered in 44gallon drums and rolled to camp. Water was often rationed with the only saving grace being the capture of water from early wet season showers in tarpaulins. The only relief from mosquitoes was with smoke or at night where heavy cheesecloth nets excluded mosquitoes but not sand flies. The heavy cheesecloth also restricted air flow and men lay in a lather of sweat all night. The water ration was barely enough to replenish the amount of sweat lost. Corporal Peter Huskins wrote; *"It was the worst place I have ever been in my life. It was surrounded by mud and if you put your foot down on what you thought was solid , and put your weight on it, suddenly you went down to your knees in stinking bluey, greasy mud ,and then you had to pull your foot out again."*

Gulnare was abandoned for wet season 1942-43.

Number 9 Platoon of C-Company based at Borroloola while at full strength consisted of twenty men commanded by Lt. Romney Cole and was given specific core tasks along with their surveillance and reporting duties. Radio contact was maintained on a 24 hour basis with the Gregory Downs HQ.

Reconnaissance of the Sir Edward Pellew group of Islands with observation bases being established and or maintained on South West and Vanderlin Islands.

Explore local approaches, such as the way to Manangoora.

Reconnaissance of region Manangoora to Wollongorang

Reconnaissance of the region Borroloola to Limmen Bight River

Reconnaissance of Borroloola – Katherine area to ascertain an alternative supply route.

Those based at Borroloola included Sgt Rex Waterhouse, Cpl Keith Ledingham, Cpl Ted Patinson, Signaller Jack Twyford, Troopers Dud Parker ,Clarrie Fordham, Bluey Campbell, Lawrie Bailey , Noel Collier, Bun Forrester and Trackers Publican Charlie and Mack , Constable Ted Heathcock and Police Sergeant Bill McKinnon.

There were three small towns in the C-Company patrolled area, these being Normanton, Burketown and Borroloola. Australian forces were fighting a rear guard action on the Kokoda Track and the fall of New Guinea would open the way to the invasion of the Australian mainland. It was felt that the Japanese would look to capture and secure the strategically placed RAAF base at Cloncurry.

Jack Twyford's initial impression of Borroloola was, *"It was a small place, comprising a police station where Trooper Heathcock kept law and order, performed the mail service and was the pedal radio operator and administrator. The second most important place was a hotel where Johnny O'Shea was the publican and the beer supply was infrequent and brought in on the Liesha. Charlie Havey, an old man ran the local store "*. Ted Heathcock was to play an important part in the recovery of Sgt Grady Gaston and the body of Lt Dale Grimes airmen from the US B24 Liberator Bomber which crashed in the Gulf of Carpentaria in December 1942. Ted's wife Ruth had been evacuated as non-essential personnel at the commencement of the bombing of the Australian mainland. Ruth was awarded an M.B.E. for her part in the attempt to save the life of Horace Foster at Manangoora in February 1941 by paddling and sailing in a dugout canoe from Borroloola to Manangoora in the wet season, with Roger Jose to render assistance after a shooting accident.

Due to their isolated location and the fact any resupply and or assistance in the advent of invasion 9th Platoon at Borroloola would be pretty much on its own. As with other platoons in the Gulf region they were to act initially as a rapid response team then revert to surveillance like bush shadows hiding and moving their HQ and signal camps daily if necessary to avoid detection by Japanese patrols. Once the Japanese patrols started to hunt the NAOU operatives in earnest, it was recognized that it would only have been a matter of time before they were eliminated.

In 1942 Japanese naval superiority in the region had been broken with defeats at the Battle of the Coral Sea May 8 and Midway June 3 causing the Japanese military to rethink their invasion strategy for New Guinea. With a sea borne assault on Port Moresby now blocked then the alternative to capturing their objective was, a landing at Buna on the North side of the island and advancing overland to Port Moresby on the Kokoda Track. With their supply lines stretched to the limit and resupply and reinforcements denied to the invading forces they became bogged down by the dogged resistance and were forced to retreat with the advance of the Australia forces.

As the Japanese were pushed back, the threat to the Australian mainland waned and the loneliness and boredom set in as the NAOU continued reporting the Japanese air raids and reconnaissance flights. Many were keen to become involved in front line action and the role of the NAOU was coming to an end. NAOU posts around Darwin and Wyndham were in operation until the end of December 1942. The unit was finally disbanded on the 27th March 1945 at Singleton NSW.

In 1982 a memorial was erected at Larrakeyah Army barracks acknowledging the contribution of the Aboriginal men and women who worked with the NAOU in defending North Australia.

“In honour of the loyal brave and devoted service of about seventy Aboriginal men and women from the Kimberley, the Northern Territory and the Gulf Country of North Queensland who were enrolled in 1942 by Major W. Stanner”.

Police Officers seconded to the NAOU.

Abbott	William Lester	Constable	Brocks Creek
Bowie	Sidney James	Constable	Alice Springs
Fitzer	Tasman Charles	Constable	(On Leave)
Graham	Clive William	Constable	Rankine River
Hall	Victor Charles	Constable	Alice Springs
Heathcock	Edward Joseph	Constable	Borroloola
Johnson	Albert Douglas		
Johnson	Alfred Stanley	Constable	Pine Creek
Langdon	Walter	Constable	Wave Hill
Mahoney	John Joseph	Constable	Arltunga
McKinnon	William	Acting Sergeant	Darwin
Murray	William George	Constable	Barrow Creek
Riley	Arthur Bloomfield	Constable	Lake Nash
Stokes	John William	Constable	Maranboy
Stott	Gordon Cameron Heaslop	Constable	Timber Creek

Borroloola is still involved in surveillance operations through Norforce, which evolved from the initial North Australia Observer Unit, with participation from locally recruited men and women.

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Trumpeters Corner Jandowae Queensland

Alfred Walter 'Wally' Underwood 1911-2011

'Wally' was born in Warwick in 1911 to Arthur and Lucy Underwood. His family moved to a 550ha block of land at Kogan which they named 'The Pines'. Young Wally spent the first five years on the property with his par-

ents, grandparents and eleven uncles and aunts before moving to a property near Tara. They then moved back to 'The Pines' for a short time before going on to Brigalow.

From about 13 to 23 years of age, Wally lived and worked in the Pelican, Nudley, Burncluth, Canaga and Chinchilla areas, eventually moving to Tara where he worked in a ringbarking gang. After managing his father's property for a while, he joined the Air Force when WWII broke out and served in New Guinea. After his discharge from the RAAF he met and married Eileen Pacey and went on to have four children.

Wally was the last of the "Trumpeters", a group of 21 soldier settlers who took up a government offer to work the land between Warra and Jandowae after World War II. In 1949, he drew a block and called the property "Wee-wunya". He cleared the land and set up the first dairy in the district living in it until he was able to build a house for his family. Although well intentioned, the soldier settler scheme was doomed to failure as most of the blocks on offer were too small to be profitable.

"The Trumpeters" got their name from Jandowae barman Mick Brazier. Soldier settlers who drew blocks in the land ballots after WWII would meet in his pub, tell their yarns and "blow their own trumpets". Mick was in the habit of taking out an old trumpet he kept under the bar and blowing on it to silence the trumpeters when their gatherings got too rowdy. Brazier greatly admired the soldiers and in 1950 put up a sign at the corner of the blocks drawn by Bill Johnson and Wally Underwood. He thus named the site "Trumpeters' Corner". The sign featured an old trumpet and the initials of the 21 settlers from the area. In 1961 a brass plaque featuring the full names of the



Trumpeters was donated by Ivy Body, widow of Trumpeter Percy Body, and the site was gazetted as an official place name.

Wally was 100 years old at the time of his death. He was survived by three of his children - Des, Linda and Wendy - and his grandchildren and great grandchildren. Wally was laid to rest at the Toowoomba Garden of Remembrance.

CALL OUT FOR ALL WRENS

Facebook site WRNS, WRAF and WRAC

This is a private Facebook site to join

Penny Hammerton of Lincoln u3a is on a quest to find female u3a members who joined the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) between 1946 and 1981. She says "For 35 years after the Second World War ended, women who joined the WRNS – known as 'WRENS' – trained at HMS Dauntless at Burghfield near Reading in Berkshire. Here, their essential details were recorded in ledgers, but in 1981 the base was closed and these records went missing.

Initially, it was thought they had been sent to HMS Raleigh in Torpoint, Cornwall (which had become the WRNS training base), but sadly these ledgers have never been found.

My friend and fellow Wren Mandy Powell made it her lockdown project to track them down, but so far they have not come to light.

So instead she set up a page on Facebook, asking for ex-Wrens from that period to come forward, as well as name others who were in their division.

"We're sure that there are many former Wrens in the u3a, and we would love to hear from you. While there is a complete history of World War 11 Wrens, for those of us who served afterwards we fear it will be as if we never existed."

If you can assist in this appeal to save the records and history of the WRNS during that period, please email: ddpwrens@gmail.com

CORONATION AWARD

As Britain celebrates Queen Elizabeth II's 100th birthday, it seems fitting to reminisce about her coronation and its celebration in Australia.

A Coronation Award of £40 was made to several indigenous Territorians. These included a man only recorded as **Bruno**, born at Bond Springs station near Alice Springs. He worked for the Sar-goods for many years and received his award for 'loyalty and service to pioneers of the area.'

Another recipient was **Nat Warano** of Phillips Creek who worked on the Overland Telegraph Line extensions and served as a tracker for many years. He was a leader and diplomat of the Warumungu people. In later years, he achieved fame for his artworks – carving coolamons, spear-throwers, shields and water carriers, painting them with men dancing in ceremonial dress and body paint as well as men hunting with boomerangs and spears.

Jimmy Moonah of Delissaville (about 85 in 1953) received his award for being a loyal employee in the Native Affairs Branch. **James** aged 70 taught a group of pre-school students at Roper River Mission for 20 years. He was an evangelist who held a licence from the Bishop to take services and worship in the mission church.

Tieyon Jack (about 70) of Jay Creek was continuously employed in Central Australia as a stockman and always displayed an outstanding ability in this calling.

Nym Tjukinja (about 90 years of age) was employed erecting the first Overland Telegraph Line from Powell Creek northward. He died of senile decay at Newcastle Waters aged 92 on 19 April 1954.

Puti (about 75) directly assisted in the foundation of Bathurst Island Mission and in the years that followed contributed considerably by example and endeavour to consolidate the mission.

Line Party Bob (more than 80) was employed caring for horses of the party which constructed the Overland Telegraph Line. He was an Arrente man who is mentioned in documents at Santa Teresa and in Baldwin Spencer's *The Arunda*.

Bob Welsh (about 75) was a former police tracker born at Hermannsburg. **Peter Alice** (about 70) was a former police tracker living in Alice Springs.

Willie Walaliba (about 60) is now the captain of a mission lugger Larrapan. In 1943, he was acting captain of the mission boat, which carried supplies to Arnhem Land despite enemy action. He served on mission luggers around the Arafura coast since 1921.

Evangelist **Moses** (about 84) who has been blind since he was 20, assisted in translating the whole of the New Testament into Aranda language and worked as evangelist among the Aranda tribe for the last 30 years.

Thanks to Trove and other sources, our society can add these names to our Pioneer Register and we can share their achievements.

Ruth Sheridan

GAYNDAH RAIL BRIDGES.

Regarded as engineering feats of the time, the 12 bridges are on the Mungar to Mundubbera Rail Line in Southern Queensland. The historic rail bridges opened access to Queensland's oldest town of Gayndah and construction commenced in 1905 and was completed in 1914.



In the early 1900's Queensland Railways experimented with new designs in bridges of mass concrete and was a pioneer in the construction of reinforced concrete bridges in Australia. This is generally attributed to the influence of engineer William Pagan, Chief Engineer of Railways 1901-1911.

William Pagan (1894-1924), a Scottish-trained engineer with international experience in railway survey and design, joined Queensland Railways in 1882 and rose to Acting Chief En-

gineer from 1 September 1901, then Chief Engineer from 1 March 1902 until his appointment on 1 June 1911 as Deputy Commissioner for Railways, a position he held until his retirement in 1917.

Deep Creek (Chowey) Bridge

The elegant Deep Creek Bridge (Chowey), built in 1905 near Degilbo, on the line to Gayndah in the Burnett River District, is



built entirely of mass concrete. The central 24.4 metre span concrete arch was third longest span of its type built in Australia.



Ideraway Creek Bridge

With the depression in full swing, Pagan sourced and reused the falsework, or temporary support structures, from Townsville's Burdekin River Bridge to construct a main span known as a pin jointed fishbelly truss. Ideraway Creek Railway Bridge looks like an upsidedown Harbour Bridge and spans 46 metres.

Steep Rocky Creek Railway Bridge

Crossing the Burnett River and the Steep Rocky Creek was an engineering challenge with the line crossing the Burnett River, and tap the Ideraway lands, terminating on the river bank opposite Gayndah. The main feature of the new extension was a bridge over the Burnett River, some 300 yards or 400 yards in length. The bridge was on the low-level principle, as a high level bridge would double the length and make the cost almost prohibitive. The site selected was said to possess considerable scenic beauty. The exact spot is on a basalt crossing, on either side of which are large lagoons, in which fish and fowl abound.

To meet these requirements, Pagan drew up an innovative design for a bridge with reinforced discontinuous arches, the first of its type in Australia when it was built in 1907.

Spanning 366 metres, the bridge has five concrete arches and an 8metre joist at either end.

Each arch of the Steep Rocky Creek Bridge was formed with timber and filled with concrete mix sourced from the creek below.

FROM TROVE

Advertiser (Adelaide, SA: 1889 - 1931), Friday 17 June 1910, page 8

QUEENSLAND'S. RAILWAYS. PRESENT CONSTRUCTION-A MILES A DAY.

Mr. W. Pagan, the Chief Engineer of the Queensland Railways Department, reached Adelaide on Thursday, and will proceed to-day by the RMS. Osterley on a six months' holiday to Scotland and the Continent Mr. Pagan will make enquiries into railway matters, as he had an honorary commission from his Government to keep a look-out for ideas which might be copied with advantage in Queensland.

Chatting with a representative of "The Advertiser" at the South Australian Hotel on Thursday afternoon, Mr. Pagan, who is a typical son of the "land o' cakes," gave some interesting particulars concerning the railways in Queensland. He has been connected with the department for 28 years, for the last nine as Chief Engineer. He expressed pleasure at having visited the offices and car barn of the Adelaide Tramways Trust, and remarked that everything had been most efficiently designed and was quite up to date.

Northern Territory Railway.

Questioned regarding the public feeling in Queensland concerning the proposed railway-line from Pine Creek to Oodnadatta, Mr. Pagan said "Public opinion in my State is universally in favour of the deviation of the proposed line from Pine Creek through the Camooweal district in the direction of Bourke, in New South Wales. It would then serve the south-western portion of Queensland."

OBITUARY

Mr William Pagan. Southport Queensland

Daily Mail (Brisbane, Qld. : 1903; 1916 - 1926), Wednesday 10 September 1924, page 9

The death occurred here today of Mr William Pagan, formerly deputy Commissioner and one time chief engineer of the Queensland Railways. Mr Pagan was born in Scotland 74 years ago, and coming to Australia he joined the engineering branch of the Queensland Railways in 1882. He rapidly rose in the service, and became in turn district engineer at Cairns and district engineer at Maryborough. In 1889 he was promoted to the position of principal assistant engineer, and in March 1902 was called to the highest office in the engineering branch of the service – chief engineer. On the death of Mr Thallon, Railway Commissioner, in 1911, Mr Pagan was appointed dep-

uty Commissioner and in 1915 he went in that capacity to take charge of the Northern Division. He retired from service in 1917.

References

More information on the bridges on this rail line: HRP.Degilbo-Mundubbera Railway Bridges.Nomination.V10.Changes by AC.October 2016.pdf

With the assistance of Greg Hallam, Historian, Queensland Railways.

Trove

ABC News

FAMILY HISTORY JOURNALS

A reminder to members that a selection of Australian and International Genealogical journals to which we subscribe are available through the GSNT website at <https://gsnt.org.au/> Access requires a password, obtainable from any committee member.

Australian Journals Online

NSW – Armidale, Botany Bay, Burwood, Casino, Coff's Harbour, Cowra, Goulburn, Inverell, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Manning, Milton/Ulladulla, Orange, Parramatta Female Factory, Richmond Tweed, Shoalhaven, Wyong, Young.

NT – NT Historical Society, Chung Wah Society.

ACT – Ancestral Searcher

QUEENSLAND – Caboolture, Caloundra, Cooroy-Noosa, Gladstone District, Sunshine Coast, Gympie, Hill End & Tambaroora, Ipswich, Maryborough, Redcliffe, Redland.

SA – SA Genealogist

VIC – Benalla, Colac, Echuca, Geelong, Mildura, Mornington, Narre Warren, Swan Hill.

International Journals Online - British Columbia, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Glamorgan, Nottinghamshire, Manchester & Lancashire, Scottish Genealogy Society, Yorkshire.

In addition, there are **Print Copies** of the following titles available in the GSNT Library.

Australia – Blue Mountains, Botany Bay, Broken Hill, Cape Banks, Cowra, Forbes, Inverell, Liverpool, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga.

International – New Zealand Family Tree, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cleveland, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Yorkshire.

Browsing these titles for the places you know that your ancestors lived can provide excellent information on time and place. You might even find a reference to YOUR ancestor. A case in point is my browsing of The SA Genealogist a few years ago where I discovered a reference to Captain John Sheridan. I duly contacted the author of the article and discovered what happened to the lost boy – Barney Sheridan and another part of my husband's family tree.

Ruth Sheridan

Preserve those family stories!

Family history is more than dates. Family stories (while they might not always be completely truthful), deserve to be recorded as they can give clues to the occupation and personality of your ancestors and flesh out the story of their life. It is also useful to see how some of their traits may have been passed down the generations.

The eulogy given at a funeral I attended recently gave facts about the deceased's life (previously unknown to me), as well as vignettes outlining the person's early life.

John Bligh, known to all and sundry as JB, started life named Olwyn (Olly) Vivian Bligh. He was born on 12 February 1939 at Cherbourg Mission in Queensland to mother Mavis Bligh.

Olly watched a Tom Mix cowboy movie in which some fella was put on his horse under a tree, with a noose around his neck and then the horse being given a big belt on the backside so that it ran out and the fella was hanging on the tree. Olly thought this was a great game so he put his cousin Peter on the horse under the jacaranda tree, with a rope around his neck and gave the horse a whack. His granny came screaming out of the house and was trying to hold Peter up in the air until other people came to help. A family story ... but how likely to be true? Aunty Freda and Aunty Tiny (his mother's younger sisters) confirmed the memory.

Olly went to school in Maryborough, but got the strap most days. One day he decided to run away from school. He climbed in his bedroom window so that his mum would not know that he was home, and found that the school principal had beaten him to it and was sitting on his bed.

He loved boxing. At age 11, his aboriginal uncle told him if he ever caught him with a cigarette, he would not train him anymore. He never smoked all his life.

All he wanted to do was be with his uncles on the mission, working with horses and cattle. However, his mum and non-indigenous stepfather insisted that he start an apprenticeship, which he did in 1954. The paperwork claimed that the apprenticeship was as a stonemason. JB remembered learning how to etch lettering on to headstones.

JB and Shirley wanted to get married but as they were underage, their parents would not give permission. Only the Salvation Army would perform the marriage. They had two children but they were brought up by the grandparents and the marriage eventually failed.

Other jobs he did included cutting asbestos sheets into rectangular pieces to use for roof tiles with a handsaw and standing at the end of each row of peanuts so the crop duster pilot would know which row he was spraying next with DDT. When he complained about the spray hurting his eyes, the farmer gave him a free straw hat, to keep the DDT off his face.

He cut cane by hand in Childers, and then worked on stations around Julia Creek and Richmond. He was also head stockman on a government research farm somewhere in central Queensland.

Later he drove a mail run out of Mt Isa to all the surrounding stations. There were 29 gates to open so he used to pick up any drunk person on the street and ask them to come for a ride. Then he would make them open all those gates.

Eventually he took a more permanent job in Townsville driving trucks, graders and bulldozers. Whilst living in Townsville he took up with girlfriend Kay who came up to the Territory with her two children. He and Kay lived in a tent work camp for years while JB was working on improvements to the Stuart Highway. Tracy and Mark (known as Bully) were born. They went to live in Batchelor when JB became ill from working on the grader in the dust. He became janitor at the school and served there for 25 years, retiring in 1995. In 1992, he married Sue and they lived on a property at Eva Valley, out from Batchelor.

Widow Sue Bligh summed JB up as ‘a mischief maker and wild spirit to the last.’

Written using information gleaned from Sue’s eulogy read at JB’s funeral held at Coomalie Community Cemetery on Tuesday 12 May 2026.

Ruth Sheridan

EARLY NORTHERN TERRITORY TEACHERS

Ian Malcolm Congdon was born at Kadina South Australia to parents Thomas Clifford Congdon and Mary Elizabeth Agnes Sampson on 2 March 1930. He taught at Keppoch School in 1950. He taught at Tennant Creek in 1951. His wife was Anne Matheson.

Ian Congdon died on 5 January 2000 at Port Broughton.

Electoral Roll

Natalie Marlene Cook was born on 20 October 1934 to parents Allan George Cook and Gladys Adelaide Pearl McSkimming. She was a governess on Kulgera Station (NT) from 1956 – 58. She married Ronald Beecher Pople on 10 May 1958. She died on 26 June 2023.

Wikitree

Desmond John Cormack was born at Stirling North South Australia on 3 November 1914. Before WWII he taught at Tooligie Hill (1938) and Wardang Island (1940). He was a pilot in the RAAF, awarded a DFC. In 1949 he taught at Blanchetown. He was head teacher at Croker Island in 1955.

Cormack died 23 April 2003. He was buried at Centennial Park Cemetery South Australia Plot: Derrick Gardens, Path 57, Grave 1428B. His name is honoured on the Orroroo and District Roll of Honour WW2.

NAA ID 4379546

Kathleen Cormier (known as Kath) was born on 7 November 1917 in Adelaide to parents Francois Joseph Cormier and Alice Mary O’Donohoe. She was educated at St Aloysius College Adelaide. She received a BA degree in 1943. Before that, she taught at Woodville Infants (1939), Largs Bay Infants (1940), as assistant teacher Pirie Infant School (1941) and Alberton Infants (1942). She taught in Darwin in 1951.

Kath Cormier died on 20 September 1997 and was buried on 23 September 1997.

Trove, Ryerson Index.

SPECIFIC RESEARCH INTEREST.

New Member of the Society Ms Burton is researching the following:

David Roy Baldock, NT Transport Pioneer, 1930 to 1960.

Please let the Society know if you have any information.