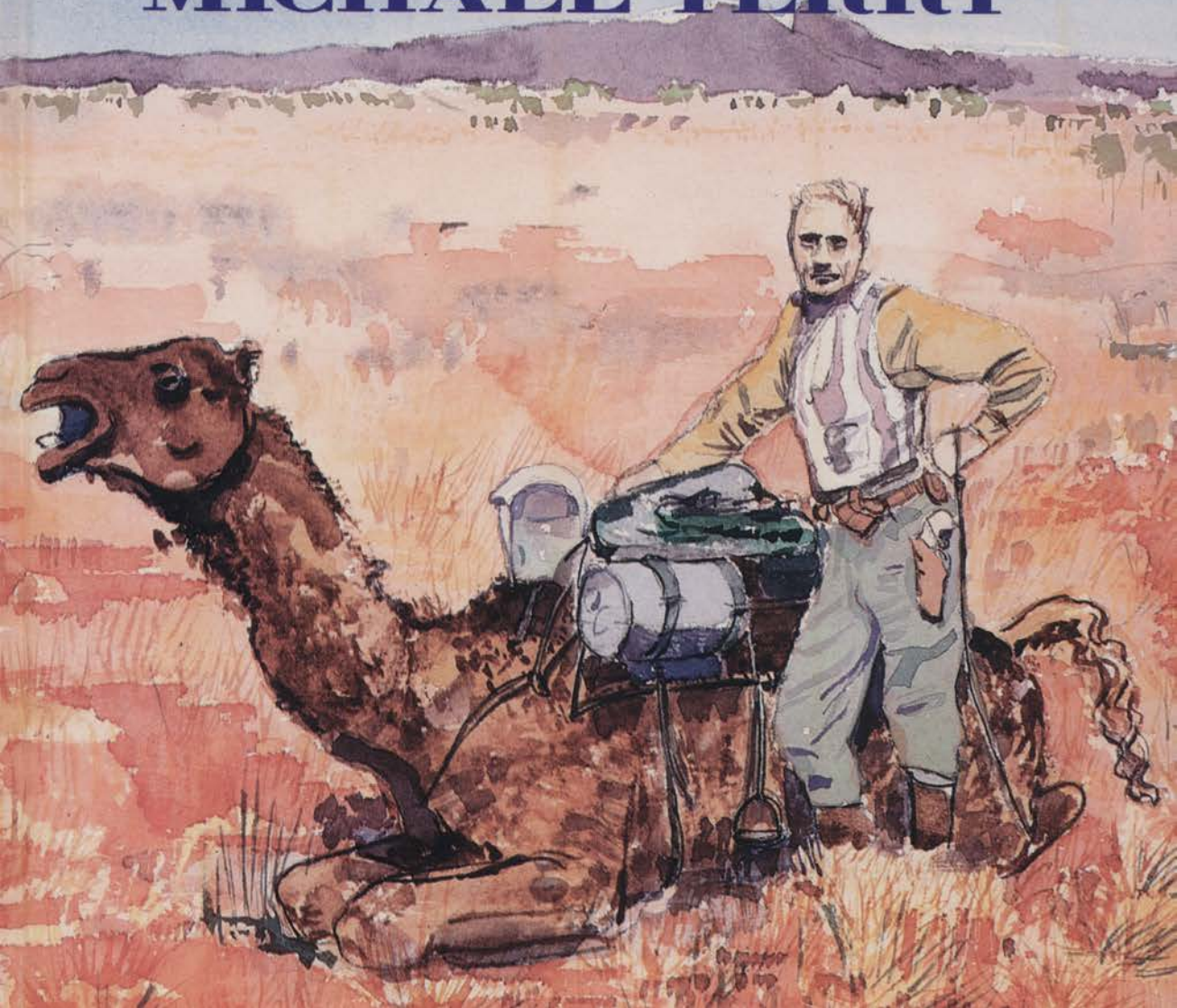


THE

# LAST

*Explorer*

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF  
**MICHAEL TERRY**



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# The Last Explorer

# The Last Explorer

The autobiography of  
MICHAEL TERRY, FRGS, FRGSA

*Compiled by Charlotte Barnard*



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**Michael Terry, author of:**

Across Unknown Australia

Herbert Jenkins, London, 1925

Through a Land of Promise

Herbert Jenkins, London [1927]

Hidden Wealth and Hiding People

Putnam, London [1930]

Untold Miles

Selwyn and Blount, London [1932]

Sand and Sun

Michael Joseph, London [1937]

Bulldozer

Frank Johnson, Sydney, 1945

The War of the Warramullas

Rigby, Adelaide, 1974

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Michael Terry  
1937

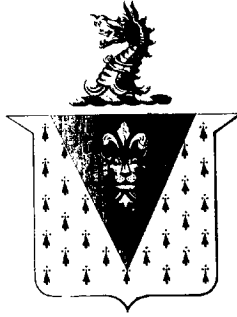


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*Michael Terry:*

The Coat of Arms of TERRY, granted in the  
year 1426, above the motto  
FOY POUR DEVOIR

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to  
My Mother and  
Sir Archbald Weigall,  
Arthur Watkin Wynne and  
Dr J O LaGorce

# A TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL TERRY

from

Jim Macdougall, CBE

Before Michael Terry died in 1981 I had written a memoir for inclusion in his autobiography; a tribute to a man who had been a friend for most of my adult life. It was an amiable piece recalling my first encounter with him in the 1920s when I was a young Australian freshly arrived in Fleet Street to join Mr Keith (later Sir Keith) Murdoch's London staff of the Melbourne Herald. One of my earlier assignments was to report the announcement at an office in Shaftesbury Avenue of an expedition being planned by Lord Apsley and Michael Terry to explore Central Australia. For any Australian this was a daunting undertaking, but here were two Englishmen taking on a formidable challenge. I recall that day vividly. Lord Apsley was everything which British nobility of the time represented - a dignified man of consummate ease and assurance; Michael Terry tall and handsome with a strongly-moulded jaw. That jaw bespoke the determination that was to be his strength throughout the subsequent years. When I spoke to him after the announcement and asked him if he realised what he was undertaking, I was speechless on learning that he had already roamed much of the length and breadth of Australia but nothing quite as daring as that which was being planned with Lord Apsley.

As I said at the beginning, the former piece which I had written for Michael Terry was not a too-glowing tribute as I did not wish to disconcert him with superlatives which he might have found embarrassing. But now that he has left us, I begin to realise just how eminent he was. He has already been described as the last in the long and honoured line of Australian explorers and that, indeed, he was. The lure of the far horizon was always with him and the beckoning call of the unknown never left him. The mystery of life, its beauty, its challenge, victories and rewards, the eloquent silence of the great deserts of Central Australia and the magic of nature formed the symphony of his thoughts. These he transcribed into many books and scientific publications, and now that they have become the legacy of an adventurous mind they will be read with even greater interest.

The Englishman whose spirit became captive to the silent emptiness of the Australian Outback was born in County Durham on the Tyneside and spent his youth variously in school in Sussex and Birmingham. I do not know what it was in his learning that led him to find an endless joy and reward in the harshness of a waterless land of saltbush, spinifex and mulga; nevertheless, such was implicit in the soul of Michael Terry. After service in the first World War he was invalided to Western Australia in 1919 and as his health improved he heard the siren call from Australia's Dead Heart. It is an aside that he might well be known as the Founding Father of Truckies, for in 1921 he started the first truck-run in NSW, from Grafton to Glen Innes.

It was my pleasure to have known him and to have shared on so many occasions in the memories of a myriad pleasures and adventures (many of them strenuously earned) which were, in his later life, to be the playground and Dreamtime of his mind.

Jim Macdougall

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Macdougall". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the printed name.

## FOREWORD

At the time of his death in 1981 this autobiography of my brother Michael Terry lay in an unfinished state. He had often told me that he wished it to span the years before, between and after his fourteen expeditions, principally within Central Australia, as he felt that the account of these travels had been fully documented in his six expedition books.

In working from his manuscript and records in order to complete the book, I have endeavoured to follow his wishes and accordingly have included in the narrative only those instances from his travels which he himself considered to be of true significance.

And so this, the autobiography of my brother which I have completed on his behalf, is presented in his memory by his sister

Charlotte.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlotte." The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

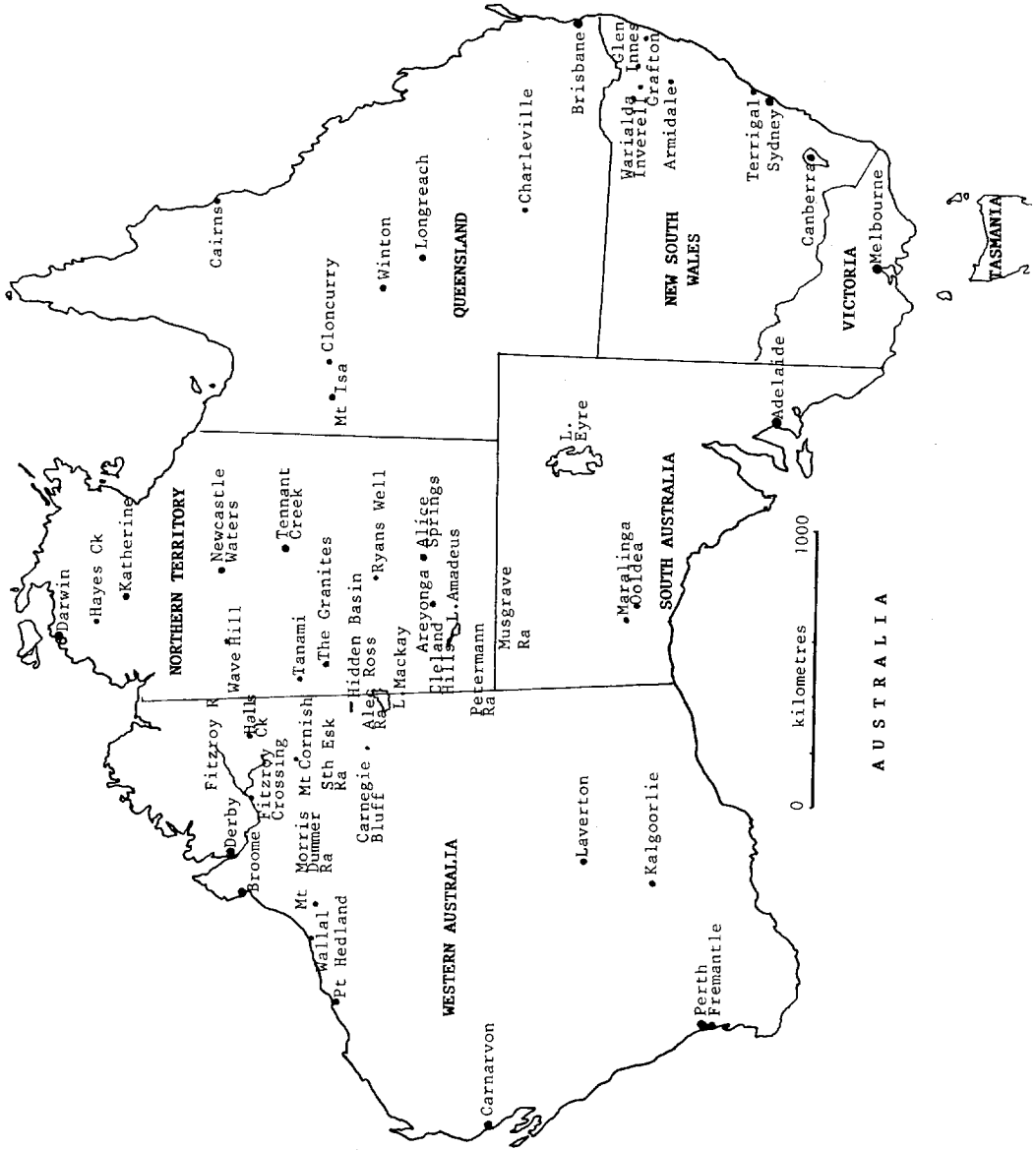
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Our thanks are due to the many people and organisations which helped in the production of this book. Some may be specially mentioned and they include Mr Paul France of Alice Springs, Mr Vernon O'Brien of Darwin and Mr A T Wells of Canberra for contributions to the text. Ms Kathy Knight, Pergamon Press, for comments on the layout and style, and Ms G O'Loghlin for help in the production stages. Others made photographs available and they include Dr W J Peasley, Mr Peter Muir, Mr Dick Kimber, Mr Steve Strike, Mr Len Beadell, Mt Isa Mines, the NSW Department of Main Roads and Qantas. Other photos were from the Terry collection in the National Library, Canberra or from Mrs C Barnard's collection.

C. Barnard  
P. Loveday



# MAP



## CHAPTER 1

# Kipper Country

There's a divinity that shapes  
our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.  
Hamlet Act 5; Scene 2.

Thus is epitomised the life-story as it unfolds in good times or in bad, in well-planned advance or mistaken direction, in near-death or in the vitality of good health.

Assume that you are standing on high ground and letting your gaze wander over the prospect below. For that, figuratively, is how I feel as I now pause on my look-out of fourscore years surveying life's landscape levelled out with its creeks, forests, plains and distant ranges looking so easy to encounter. But down there I know, and have known since my early years, lurks a hostility, a malevolence, which the whole aspect may at times so readily assume; and yet it can compensate by becoming so good a friend when once mastered and safety finally regained. And here I remember that both Hindus and Buddhists hold to a belief in predestination. Their followers believe implicitly in reward or punishment according to the quality of our performance in the life preceding this one. So it runs through my mind, when assessing this current spin, how tough the last one may have been and is this one to end in a great big bang, blowing me to heaven or hell? Rather than prolonged fadeout.

### Something about my Mob

At first I had intended to head this part 'Family Background' but that seemed too stiff, too formal, so instead I have used Australian slang which has, indeed, become part of me after these 58 years in the continent I have learned to love, particularly its folk who live away from the Big Smoke.

The family of Terry is descended from three brothers from Château Thierry, some 80 km NNE of Paris who arrived in England with William the

Conquerer and in that same year under the surname of Thierry appear in the Roll of Battle Abbey (England). These Norman-French founders of the family are then encountered in the Winchester Domesday Book of 1086 under the monkish Latin name of Terricus; later to become known by the anglicised version Terry.

Over the generations Terrys have found homes across the oceans away from their homeland, as I have done. When and where they landed in Canada, India and even Argentina is vague; but I am equipped to deal with the American and Australian arrivals in historical sequence.

Stephen Terry (1590-1666) born at Barnet, north of London, reached America in the MARY AND JOHN in 1630, ten years after the MAYFLOWER bore the first Pilgrim Fathers from Plymouth. Initially he settled at Dorchester, Massachusetts, and died at Hadley, not far distant. He left a widow, Elizabeth and daughter Abigail who married Joseph Kellog and thus became the ancestress of Frank Kellog, US Ambassador to England in 1924 and originator of the Peace Pact.

Samuel (1633-1730) landed at Boston when only 17 years old and was immediately apprenticed. Ten years later he married Ann Lobdell and thus is credited with founding the American families of Terry. Son Nathaniel (1760-1844) went through Yale, became a judge, member of Congress, Mayor of Hartford, Connecticut, and finally General of Militia. A nationwide organisation called the Daughters of the American Colonists has called its Los Angeles Chapter after Colonel Nathaniel.

And so to Australia. Apparently a first arrival was John Terry (1771-1844) of the Yorkshire Wensleydale branch of the family from Askrigg who came out in the SURREY in 1819 which was one of the first ships to bring out free settlers. He was given a grant of 600 hectares of land by Governor Macquarie, 500 of which were at Macquarie Fields. John however moved on to Tasmania with his family where he, his wife and eleven children were on the Hobart List of National Settlers in February 1820. Just for esprit de famille I would enjoy genealogists taking a leaf out of the book of American researchers to nominate the founder of the Australian families of Terry. Such eligibility would be birth in Australia and the date thereof. Among John Terry's numerous family were sons Thomas (born England 1804) and Ralph (born England 1815) and so it would be their Australian-born sons whom I would vote for as being the founders of the family from which so many Australian Terrys are descended. I myself, born in England in 1899, made Australia my adopted home after the first World War.

## Childhood

Childhood memories, many and varied, are of the north-east coast of England and of the Tyneside, for my elder sister and I were born in Gateshead, County Durham, alongside the River Tyne which separates that county from its northern neighbour, Northumberland. In 1892, two years prior to his marriage to my mother Catherine Neagle, my father had been commissioned in the Royal Fusiliers (Volunteers) and, being a Railway Engineer by profession, he had become Manager of Hawthorne Leslie, the second largest engineering firm on the River Tyne. Then when we were still youngsters the home was switched to Benwell, a western suburb of Newcastle-upon-Tyne across the river. My mother, herself from beside London's river Thames, seemed to find a natural home in the bracing - if not at times bleak - north east coast and most holidays were spent within the county itself. I can well remember Hexham, a small market town some 35 km west from Newcastle which lay on the line of the Roman Wall - that fortification which Roman Emperor Hadrian when he came to Britain in AD119 ordered to be built right across the north of the island and which, manned by the legions of Rome, was constructed to keep out the raiding Picts and Scots from the North. This fortification ran, and today still runs in part, from the Solway Firth, a branch of the Irish Sea, eastwards right across Northumberland and finally to Newcastle (Pons Aelii, the Bridge of Aelius during Roman times) where a suburb is aptly named Wallsend. Along the length of the Wall camps, compact military sites, were built for the accommodation of Roman soldiery, and although their ruins now lie desolate it was whilst mooching around among ruins such as these that I collected fragments of Roman pottery - treasure trove from the Roman Wall.

It was on one such Roman Wall holiday that I was taken to Hexham Church. Even today some of its history sticks, for I remember staring long and hard at a Roman tombstone preserved within the church and genuinely inscribed to a Roman legionary. It was a carved stone tablet with its figures still wonderfully vital - the mounted soldier himself (the inscription even gave his name: Flavinus, a soldier of the cavalry regiment) with short Roman sword at his waist, standard in the right hand and riding rough-shod over the prostrate figure of an enemy which in this case was some luckless bearded Pict or Scot looking thoroughly wretched as surely anyone would look in such a predicament. A legacy of Roman might - or ruthlessness, depending on whether you were on the horse or under it.

Emperor Hadrian certainly went ahead and fenced off northern Britain to keep out the Scots but, by Jupiter! we are thankful he didn't keep out the kippers. For I believe it was those folk north of the Border who perfected the method of making the herring so delicious - the kippered herring.

It was at Craster, a coastal village 48 km or more upcoast from Newcastle where we used to watch the North Sea trawlers bring in their

herring catch for the fisher-girls to split and gut. Then the kippermen got busy on them. The fish were threaded on wooden poles and hoisted high within the triangular beams of huts 6 m to apex. The oak shavings thick on the floor were then set alight, the door slammed shut and the smoking of herring into kippers was under way. Sometimes the door would be opened for a sniff of the process. I shall never forget the delicious odour and have been a kipper-addict ever since although saddened that now kippers are an exported tinned 'delicacy'.

I also remember when I went on an expedition to the Cheviot Hills which mark the border of Scotland. On a walk the two guides came across a grouse lying dead under a fence with head in England and tail in Scotland. At the farmhouse we plucked and prepared it, put clay all over it and the lot went into the oven. You should have been there when the carver cut into the perfectly baked meal.

Our next venture was something highly illegal - salmon spearing which was achieved by conniving with the locals. Lookouts were placed on hilltops overlooking the burn in case the Sheriff's men were out to spy. A line of men, each carrying a long hefty stick with a bundle of kerosene-soaked rags firmly tied on the end, entered the water shoulder to shoulder and, with their flares alight, moved slowly up stream. The flames illuminated the shallow water to the bottom and in a moment I saw darting salmon fleeing up stream. When sufficient salmon were mustered a halt was called, signalling the spearers to get at them. Quickly I learnt to pick a miss from a bull's-eye by the sound of the spearhead hitting bottom. If harsh, it was a miss; if a softer contact you had a prize. The evening's catch was several bags of salmon as heavy as a man could carry.

That same year I went to Chillingham, about 24 km inland from the North coast where I was fortunate enough to see the famous Wild White Cattle which roam the 147 hectares of Chillingham Park. The origin of these animals is obscure; they are thought to be descended from the European aurochs of prehistoric times and are the purest surviving members of the wild cattle which once roamed the great border forests of northern Britain. In the thirteenth century a strong stone wall was built encircling part of the lands of Chillingham Castle and one of the herds may have been enclosed, probably for food. The wild cattle have been in Chillingham Park for the past seven centuries and during that time, as far as is known, no outside blood has been introduced. The animals still retain the characteristics of their wild ancestry and have never been domesticated. Although in early times no record of the herd or its members is known, there is a mention of My Lord's Beastes in an inventory of 1692. The cattle resemble the Shorthorn or Ayresshire breeds, but are smaller. Straight-backed, these huge animals (the live weight of a bull is about 509 kg; a cow about 356 kg) can be deceptively active and it is recorded that a bull made a standing jump of two metres.

It was the spread of their horns which really caught the attention when viewing the herd from afar across the stretches of parkland; they grow out wide, then upwards with a final inward curve of the tips which gives them such a distinctive feature. The Chillingham Wild Cattle Association has been formed to protect this unique herd, the cost of maintaining the cattle being borne by its members aided by contributions made by more than 6,000 annual visitors.

A Geordie is a Tynesider and while England has many dialects, none are as distinctive as that of my home place. The intonation is unique and the local lingo of the Geordie often puzzles newcomers. When the Vikings began raiding from Scandinavia in the mid-seventh century their Norse phraseology permeated the local tongue and has lingered. 'Gannin' hyem?' is phonetically similar to the Norwegian for 'Are you going home?' In a tram I once heard a minor argument concluded when a husband bawled at his wife 'Hard awa', yer boosy nickers and gang doon th' loonon!' Translated, it meant 'Clear out, you busy-body and go down the lane'. Today we say 'Beat it and get lost'.

In 1908 I went to Prep School near East Grinstead in Sussex. The Head was Mr Stanley de Brath. This meant travelling 483 km alone from the north of England and crossing London from one main-line railway station to another by horse-bus, quite an undertaking for a eight-year-old. At East Grinstead Station a master gathered me and the other boys who were travelling to the school into his care and we were taken to Preston House Preparatory School or to Charters Towers, its familiar name, for the School was seldom known by its formal name but rather after the building which housed it. The story behind this stems from Queensland's Charters Towers, once an important gold-mining town, now inhabited mainly by pubs and goats, which I visited after World War Two. In 1872 the new town was named after Mr Charters, Gold Commissioner of North Queensland. A local, prompted by the striking resemblance which the surrounding country bore to the rocky peaks or tors on Dartmoor in England, added the word to the town's name and so it became Charters Tors. Over time it became known as Charters Towers. Then a digger who had made a fortune returned to Sussex where he bought quite a mansion which he renamed after the place which had served him so well. Early this century the house and grounds were bought by Stanley de Brath who converted it into the Prep School where I was educated till 1913. Many years after I left it became Charters Towers Girls' School. In 1945 the school was moved to Bexhill, near Hastings in Sussex, under the same name.

This new boy was rather an odd man out, as Headmaster de Brath planned the school for the sons of men who had served in India in the Army or Civil Service. I went there because the Latin Master was Father's brother. The boys got to work on 'Terry' and came up with 'Terrier'. Strictly hush-hush, they nicknamed him 'The Old Dog' and me 'Pup'. How I treasured that long after I had left! My uncle was markedly severe with me, to dispel

favouritism, I suppose. Our French mistress, Miss Beatty, was a holy terror. Our fear when her class was imminent gave us 'tummy rattle' because any displeasure meant a report to the Head and a caning. She concentrated on teaching us not so much written French as the spoken language - la langue française. This has stuck with me all my life and In 1913, when my godfather took me to Belgium to see the Ghent Exhibition I was mistaken for a French boy. At school we were notified of punishment by a notice on the board outside the dining room where anxiously, on the way in to eat, we could see what would happen after the meal. The good boys had blue stars, the bad ones red, and when the latter were too many we were caned just after the good fare. The bad boys lined up outside the Head's study, listening to many a dreaded swish... swish... all on the outstretched palm of the hand. We dared not whimper, even when the split cane raised a nasty weal on the wrist. I was even beaten on the backside by a master called Hardy (who later became a well-known actor) for something I had done wrong at stumps. In those days corporal punishment was all too common whereas today it is banned. On reflection, however, I think it did help to shape little boys to take their place as citizens later on in the piece.

There were, of course, plenty of joyous times - especially a moment of glory during a return cricket match at Cophorne School. Right on the boundary the ball came soaring and I dared not let the side down. Arms extended forward, cupped hands touching, I shut my eyes awaiting the awful fumble. To my amazement the ball came to roost right on target. The catch of the season.

In 1910 all the boys were assembled in a darkened room to watch a night sky spectacular - Halley's Comet. The glowing orb was first recorded as having been seen in 87 BC. It is depicted in the Bayeau Tapestry where King Harold of England and others view its rare return in the fateful year 1066. Astronomer Edmund Halley calculated its orbit in 1682 and when he became Astronomer Royal the comet was named after him.

Each Christmas at the end of term we put on a play in French for parents and friends. Early in my five years at Prep I joined the cast and was always allocated exactly the same part - a terrific Man at Arms standing stock still and never saying a word. I diligently learnt the stance when Sergeant Nye came to drill the Cadet Corps which included target practice with carbines.

Late in 1912 I went up to London to sit for the Entrance Examination for Rossall, the great Public School in Lancashire where my father and his brother had been pupils. Groups of youngsters wrote at separate desks. When an examiner approached and stood beside me I went into a flap with visions of being suspected of cribbing or some other dread crime. It seemed an age before he spoke. 'Are you Terry?' 'Yes, sir' I managed to gasp. Oh, the relief when he replied 'I am Christy. I was your father's House Master'.

I got a scholarship for Rossall but it came to nothing. Instead, my Godfather, Canon Adderley, arranged that my second school was to be King Edwards in Birmingham, also one of the Greats. I believe he fixed this because of a former attachment he had for my mother, whose photographs certainly depict her as a beauty. When he was up at Oxford he and others formed a group dedicated to devoting their lives and their means to helping the poor.

In 'Brum' I lived with my godfather and during that time he often took me to Ham Hall where his brother, Lord Norton, lived in high style. There I was scared in case my big feet should knock over one of the numerous small tables in the rooms or that I should incorrectly use the silver tools on the great dining table. I shall always remember the ancestral home as it was then - not as it is today, a major electricity generating station. Initially, at my new school, I took rather a dim view of being a day boy after being at boarding school. King Edwards was housed in a huge rather grand old building in New Street, the principal thoroughfare in Birmingham, where standards were of the highest and I do not recall the cane being used. I joined Heath's House in January 1913 directly from Prep school and my two and a half years at King Edwards I shall always cherish for the fine way the school was run and those whom I got to know there. Several became life-long friends although I have seldom seen them since those days, for I came to Australia in 1919 and have made only three brief visits home since then. Bill Slim was a pupil at Heath's in 1911. His outstanding ability and his campaigns in World War Two led him to the top - Field Marshal and Viscount Slim and six other honours. From 1955 to 1960 he was Governor of Australia.

In July 1914 I came home for keeps, or so it seemed at the time. Actually, it presaged my two most significant years. Father, who had previously transferred to the Royal Engineers (Volunteers) had risen to the rank of Major. At the outbreak of war - when Territorials were incorporated into the Regular Army - he was called up, resigned his civilian occupation and almost immediately was appointed Commanding Officer, Royal Engineers, Tyne Defences. By September the next year, still in command of his old Unit (renamed 526th Field Company) he saw service in France and was in action at Beaumont-Hamel, Doullons, Monchy Salient, the Somme Battle (Ancre) and, in Belgium, at Ypres. At the end of the war he was appointed to the Allied Railway Mission to Poland to supervise the reconstruction of their railway system on the western, the German, frontier. When on the move he was assigned a private railway carriage for use as his headquarters. He achieved such a good job on the reconstruction of their railway system that the Polish Government affirmed that he would be offered the appointment as their Commissioner for Railways. Upon discharge from the Army he continued in this expectation, even refusing a tentative offer of the post as No. 1 of the Singapore Fire Brigade. But in the uncertain course of post-war Polish politics his expectations on that score were never fulfilled.



August 1914 brought me my first sight of the World War One enemy. We had been to a 'picture show' and left at about 8.30pm when the late evening sky was clear. Then, to our amazement, we saw a Zeppelin flying sedately at a height of about 150 metres up the Tyne. It was the first German Zeppelin to invade British airspace in that war. No bomb was dropped, no anti-aircraft gun fired. The incident on 17 August, just two weeks after the declaration of war, was merely a reconnaissance and although not an exciting incident at the time, it is viewed as quite an historical event today. Subsequently in the early hours of 11 December 1914 a Zeppelin did drop two small bombs at Gosforth Park on the northern outskirts of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. A month later on 19 and 20 January 1915 enemy airships bombed eastern England and on 15 April 1915 the Tyneside and places nearby took 31 bombs but without fatal casualties (though a woman and child were injured) as they failed to explode. According to the official record, a German plane dropped the first bomb on English soil at Dover on 24 December 1914. It proved merely to be an incendiary. Thus recorded, it would seem that poor old Kipper Country has been missed out in the history books of World War One.

The stable of our home at Benwell happened to house a Wolseley car which had been lent to my mother to help her in her war work. But it lacked a driver so she attacked this problem by sending me to driving school where they had a tough Daimler chaindrive tourer which included a crazy gear change. Soon I was proficient and drove the Wolseley for Mrs Terry. At the same time I was swotting with a 'crammer' to get me through Matriculation and so into the Bachelor of Science (Electrical Engineering) Course at Newcastle College, University of Durham. After 15 September I entered Newcastle College at the immature age of 15. But I quit when the first term ended at Christmas. I had planned to study the electrification of railways but my Agent of Fate pushed me into the motor business and so completely changed the direction of my future. Hence, when it seemed right to leave home, I did so in the orthodox manner with little money in the pocket and a bundle on my shoulder. It was, indeed, the most altruistic effort of my life and was made to help Father who, on a Major's pay, would not have to be responsible for the home, its occupants and myself at University.

The Labour Exchange sent me away at once to the Mitfords, near Acklington, 40 km north of Newcastle. Barn Hill House was enormous, where the under-chauffeur lived in the gardener's cottage. A uniform when on duty and servants' fare for him; no roast joint, omelette or luscious pudding. The bedroom was tiny and bare with a narrow bed without a counterpane. Washing was, of course, in the back yard, winter and summer.

Having had riding lessons at home I just had to get on a horse. This I achieved, bareback, after work hours. When I gave the beast a tap in the ribs with my heels, it went off at a flat gallop across the field towards a lonely tree where it swerved hard right and I hit the ground with a hard thud, dislocating



Michael Terry's father, Major A M Terry, RE  
(centre front row) with a group of fellow officers



December 1918  
His sisters Frances and Charlotte,  
wearing his Russian gas mask and tin hat



His mother, Mrs A M Terry



The former home of the Terry family,  
'Dummer' House, in Hampshire, England  
(from the Terry collection, National Library, Canberra)



Preston House, where Michael Terry  
went to school 1908-13

the left shoulder; a disaster, indeed, after wages had just begun. Next morning a doctor put it back painfully and then strapped the arm in a sling. Work went on, with the head chauffeur easing tasks in every way he could. Too soon, and with the arm still immobilised I was summoned to The Presence and, despite pain and handicap, asked to drive one of the cars south to Essex, as it was needed by a relation living there. Like an idiot I did just that, though it was about 483 km at risk as hand starting was the only method then used. What price a back-fire? How about a collision? Should there be a flat tyre could another tube be replaced on a lonely stretch of the road? Several times a mile, at every gear change, the steering wheel was unmanned and, like the horse, the car was free to go where it listed. Nevertheless, delivery was made, despite hazards. Then came the anti-climax back at Barn Hill for Mrs Boss announced: 'You have done very well and have proved that you can drive incapacitated as you are. I am afraid we have no further use for a second chauffeur. Here is a week's notice.' Thus, with arm in a sling and clothes in a bag tied round my neck I got myself to Blythe 16 km north of the Tyne just about broke and to obtain work with the arm in a sling I had to pretend that the body was whole.

Houston Boswell, a retired Colonel known to his equals as 'Hou Bou', never spotted that I could not use the left arm to lift anything or open a door and so he took me on. The worst part during my short stay in his service was sleeping in an attic on a hard mattress minus the sling.

There is only one main memory of my next job as chauffeur which was at a large house away up the Tyne where I ate in the servants' hall. I cultivated the butler and was suitably rewarded for he used to call me into the pantry after dinner to share grand left-overs from the gentry's table excluding of course grog, as I was then teetotal.

During the summer of 1916 I was employed by the Dugdale family at Dutton Manor at Longridge near Preston in Lancashire. Here Mrs Dugdale lifted me up the social ladder with a guest's bedroom and needs and it was whilst at their home that I saw a ghost. I give the facts to establish my bona fides. Before, however, relating this experience let me think back to the parents and any likely legacy which one or the other may have bequeathed to me in the realm of what is now termed Extra-Sensory Perception.

My father, conventional, did not (and here I must add did not, as far as my knowledge of him went) dig below the surface. But in retrospect I appreciate that my mother was what we would term being attuned to things generally unrevealed. Thus I inherited from her the latent occult side of my nature and the ability to be a 'receiver'.

As a dull wet afternoon was fading into evening, I was sitting in the billiard room whilst two others played the game. I was facing the long window but after a while felt compelled to turn and look back towards the closed door

at the far end of the room. To my amazement there appeared the vague figure of a man, a short man, which seemed to materialise beyond the doorway, then enter through the closed door and move across the room to pass and fade into the fireplace as though its stonework did not exist. The players who stopped their game when I started to stammer something like 'I think I've seen a ghost...!' told me that I sat rigid, white as a sheet. Of course, they laughed and held me up to ridicule. But a few days later other friends visited Dutton Manor and for a laugh at my expense the experience was related to them. They then asked me to describe my vision and, feeling rather foolish, I said that the old chap was not much more than about five feet high with a rather pronounced chin, wore an unusual broad-brimmed hat, a short jacket and wide pantaloons. Imagine how I felt when, very quietly, the visitors replied 'You have undoubtedly described our grandfather who hanged himself in that wing of the house before it became the billiard room.' Thus my acute awareness of that apparition has stood up, not to proof in the scientific meaning of the word, but to verification, and the mental picture of that figure is as sharp today as it was 60 years ago and I assume will always remain so with me.

At the end of that summer I left Dutton Manor, bought a Rudge Multi motor-bike and, cocky as Larry, rode the 240 km to Birmingham where I contacted my old school friend, Allan Perry-Keene(1) whose father was general manager of the Austin Motor Works at Longbridge south of the city. There I started in the Road Test Department. Allan found digs for me opposite where his family lived and, the works being about three kilometres distant, the Rudge came in handy.

How different car production is today, with the moving assembly line where the cars, completed, are driven off at the far end! In my day the chassis was pushed from the assembly shop into the road test area where it was prepared for the road. Magneto and carburettor-setting were the worst of our problems. Then a wooden body was bolted on for the tester and load and, these tasks completed, the embryo car was taken on to the road where Charlie Coventry, the head tester, put the whole vehicle through its paces, driving it along a set course while I sat beside him. The whole operation could take up to two hours until he was satisfied and a report filled in. During such tests he educated me in controlled skidding and the coordinated use of steering and brakes which later in Russia saved my life. After road test the chassis went for its final body test and a further testing out on the highway. I can still 'see' Lou King drive stern first out of his bay which was parallel to ours and zig-zag for the laneway between buildings at 32 km per hour with never a crash.

Besides tourers we tested armoured car chassis by the same drill. Actually, they were light trucks where the test body, a huge assembly of bolted planks, carried a seven tonne load of concrete. The test complete, the twin turret armour was fitted, which included an aperture for the driver to observe ahead whilst being protected from bullets and shell splinters. These armoured

cars had dual controls for the second driver who, seated behind No. 1, faced backwards. He had duplicate clutch, brake and accelerator pedals and steering wheel. Hinged armoured doors beneath the turrets were open just enough to allow him to look about as he might have to reverse at 48 km per hour. The drill was to reverse into action so that, in trouble, the vehicle could make a quick getaway.

I saw Russian officers in uniform when they checked new vehicles ready for shipment to our then ally. Once the machines had been passed they were driven to Liverpool for shipment and it was these runs that I looked forward to with such enthusiasm. But alas, I got into strife during a road test when coming down a steep and slippery hill, for my machine skidded so badly that she heaved over onto two wheels and seemed about to capsize. I had scrambled half out of the driving seat before she plonked back onto four wheels. That ended my life as a tester, and from then on it was engine building for me. I hated it at first although the change proved most beneficial in later life. It taught me how to bed a crankshaft, fit rings, swing connecting rods and make my own bearing scraper. In those days before precision machining it took two and a half days to swing four connecting rods and bed the shaft, especially as the inspector undid my finished bearings before passing them. The 'spots' on the white metal had to be correctly distributed to ensure that the new bearing did not run hot and melt before it was free - that is, run in. Swarf grooves had to be properly placed to absorb any surplus metal moving under high friction. Connecting rods had to rest horizontal, yet by an agreed jerk they had to stop vertical. Those were times when internal combustion engines were built to last.

But here I must digress to tell you that I was just about the greenest thing in matters of sex when I left home so abruptly to sally forth into the wide wide world. Background, home life and school tuition all combined to keep me completely ignorant in matters of sex and it all added up to the fact that I had no understanding (despite vague thoughts filtering through) about the dual purpose of that certain part of the male body and mine in particular; and as for the female body - terra incognita. Thus pitfalls abounded and I stumbled. It was at the Austin Motor Works that the men in the Road Test Shop tumbled to this - how, is still a mystery to me but obviously not to them - and here I made my first gaffe. The chap on the bench beside me casually produced a case with a flap lid which he opened to show me the contents. Side by side were several long things of semi-transparent material. The open end was rolled back a little and the closed end had a blob about the size of a cherry stone. 'Beauties, aren't they? And what do you think of them?' he asked me pointedly. Having not the slightest idea what they were I replied, 'I wasn't brought up on them...' thinking they were something to do with a woman's breasts. Dead silence. Then loud guffaws resounded right along the bench. I had been introduced to my first french letters....

Gradually May 1917 approached when I would be 18 and eligible to volunteer for the war. Thoughts naturally veered towards armoured cars. This I mentioned to Allan Perry-Keene's father who happened to know the Locker Lampson family. I had no idea that Oliver Locker Lampson was Senior Naval Officer Commanding Royal Naval Air Service Armoured Cars, then in Russia.



The Chillingham wild cattle



Air Vice-Marshal  
Allan Perry-Keene CB, OBE



## CHAPTER 2

# Prelude to Ekaterinburg

On 16 May 1917 I became a Petty Officer in the Royal Naval Air Service Armoured Cars, two weeks after my eighteenth birthday, and a few weeks later I was in Russia, at a time when events were moving swiftly towards the October Revolution and the murder of the Tsar.

Basic dates leading to the murder of Tsar Nicholas II, his wife, his son, members of the Imperial family and their servants (total 11) and a pet dog now follow. Soon after the Soviet order had been carried out the Germanic town name was altered to the Slav Sverdlovsk after Jakob Sverdlov, in charge of the Cheka Detachment (Secret Police). Until mid-1918 Russia used the Julian calendar which was two weeks behind the Gregorian calendar. For the sake of simplicity I use the latter.

<u>1917</u>	15 March	Abdication of the Tsar.
	26 March	Stalin to Petrograd after three years' Siberian exile.
	16 April	Lenin to Petrograd from Switzerland after nine years' exile.
	April	Trotsky to Petrograd from USA.
	July	Provisional Government under Kerensky. The Army collapses.
	13 August	Tsar and wife ordered from Tsarskoye to Tobolsk, Siberia.
	8 November	Bolshevik October Revolution. Kerensky deposed.
<u>1918</u>	17 April	Tsar and wife ordered to Ekaterinberg.
	May	Kerensky left Russia from Murmansk.
	July	Tsar soldier guards replaced by Cheka police.
		All prisoners shot.

Once I had joined the Armoured Car squadron in Russia, I learnt that strictly amongst ourselves we were 'Fred Carno's Navy' after the famous comedian of that time. This hit the spot because we never flew an aircraft or went into battle in a warship. We wore khaki but being officially Navy we used its ranks and spoke the correct naval language and had the traditional rum. Our depot in the Ukraine was 402 km from the Black Sea but we could not go 'on leave': we 'went ashore'. Our depot was, of course, the Sea Base. Mine was the lowest rank: pay, six shillings a day. My ship's number was 503 and my official Admiralty number was F29724.

I doubt whether Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, realised what fun he bred for us when he sponsored the formation of our service. He had been the driving spirit behind the acceptance of tanks by the army when it was proved that motorised vehicles could carry machine guns. This initially horrified the War Office but Churchill's drive forced acceptance. Similarly, when he heard about armoured cars his comment could have been 'Good idea!' Then came the question of which branch of the Service could adopt us and one can imagine the resultant perplexity until someone came up with 'Well, what about the Royal Naval Air Service?' And that's how my 'ship' may have been launched.

Once passed by the doctor, we sailed from Liverpool for Archangel in a merchantman and arrived sometime in June. En route, the war thrust its ugly face near us when in quiet sunshine we were steaming up the Little Minch, a wide waterway between the Outer Hebrides and the Isle of Skye, a tanker about three kilometres astern suddenly went up in a big way. Prior to the attack there had been no warning of a U-boat. Had the Germans known that we were a floating magazine with our cargo of ammunition to deck level and armoured cars (destined for the Russians) thereon, they would surely have gone for us instead of the wretched tanker.

Archangel meant three things. The Medical Officer warned that no vegetables or fruit bought from a stall were to be eaten unless cooked because flies were lousy with dysentery and typhus. Smallpox was also evident. I was fascinated to be able to read newsprint in the open at midnight in the Land of the Midnight Sun although the old orb was not actually visible. And the mosquitoes were horrible. They seemed to be as large as blowflies and came at you with 'get out of my way or I'll knock you over!' Our uniform, of course, armoured us from the brutes but they got at the face and relished the pale skin of hands and wrists. Yet later, when I came to Australia, I found that they had benefitted me, having created a kind of immunity.

To digress for a moment, I heard that a smart bit of work was accomplished during the arrival of our main force, Squadrons 1, 2 and 3, in 1916 when they were landing Navy Rum. Evidently they had forgotten that Vodka had been banned for the duration and assumed that rum was reasonable for a friendly force. However, Customs refused 'Nelson's Blood' and it had to

be reloaded. Then some bright person had a red cross painted on the 40-gallon casks which were then reloaded as 'Antiseptic Fluid' - and got away with it.

Soon, thank heavens, a train took us to the Tsarist Capital of all the Russias - and free of mosquitoes. On the Nevsky Prospekt, the main thoroughfare of Petrograd, we were quartered in a good hotel until the train left for Moscow. The delay suited us for it would certainly have been an oversight not to see something of the 'Venice of Russia'. Petrograd (as the city was known in my time) was built upon 19 islands in a marsh at the head of the Gulf of Finland towards the end of the 17th century. They are connected by bridges or canals, with the broad Neva River flowing through the centre. Tsar Peter the Great, having named it St Petersburg, moved his court from Moscow to the brand new city. It remained the capital of the Tsars of all the Russias up to the start of the German War. Then it rid itself of the Germanic name in favour of the Slav, Petrograd, Peter's City. On 31 August 1914 Nicholas II moved to Moscow, the tradition being for the Tsar to seek the Church's blessing in the Kremlin at the outbreak of the war. In 1924 the Soviets renamed the city Leningrad.

There are two strong memories of the journey to Moscow. At or near villages along the route Austrian prisoners-of-war in their blue-grey uniform were to be seen living with the inhabitants, evidence of the good feeling of their war masters who had released them from captivity, supposedly on parole, until the fighting ended. The other was the undeviating straightness of the 644 km of railway track. The story goes that the route planners were confused by the Tsar who just ruled a direct line from Moscow to St Petersburg. Thus the engine hauled our train uphill and downgrade willy-nilly, without detours to level out the rails.

The final stage of our 2,657 km to Kiev, capital of the Ukraine, holds more memories. For the first time I saw shrapnel bursting high up in the sky to the west of Mogliev. Two Red Cross trains lay wrecked on sharp curves at the bottom of embankments to bridge approaches. Evidently their drivers had arrived too fast.

We were a mixed outfit - part carriages, part goods trucks, these latter being in strife several times because they had inferior wheel bearings, just plain metal to metal, which should have been lubricated fairly often - at least more often than was the case with ours. But that did not trouble the Russians so long as they could get away from a station without the wheels actually squealing. Then soon it would be 'there she goes again - just listen to that!' Time and time again we knew that a bearing had run dry. Did that stop them? No. Water from the engine could have been used to cool the bearing or grease used to ease the friction. Instead, speed was turned on in order to reach the next station and its water tower. Inevitably wheel heat built up dangerously until flames belched and the doomed truck caught fire. Then they did something about it. The wretched thing was uncoupled further up the line

and, released from the remainder, left to burn itself out. Once cool it was manhandled off the rails again and, with the offender abandoned, we were a going concern again.

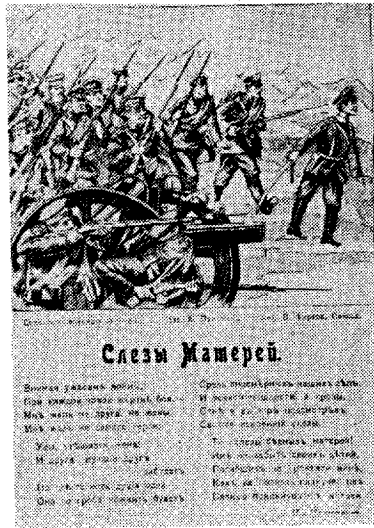
Eventually we de-trained at a wayside halt some 20 versts (approximately 23 km) before Kiev. Possibly for security reasons the railway stations in Russia had been sited some distance from the actual towns. Also, the Russian railway gauge had been laid down at 5 feet at their border, versus the European system of 4 feet 8 1/2 inches, to halt foreign trains penetrating their country.

Transport waited to take us to the Sea Base several kilometres west near the village of Brovari and the main road to Kiev. Here we met the war-hardened main force, its transport and its armour. Soon I learnt that men from many lands wore 'my uniform'. I recall especially Gawler, Sholl, Lefroy and Walford (all Upper Deck) from Western Australia; Wells Hood of Adelaide (Upper Deck also), Pursell from Sydney, two from Victoria, two born in China of English parents and a mob of Irishmen. The balance was, of course, English. Many had been in the Duke of Westminster's Armoured Car Regiment in Africa.

Transport was a real hodge-podge, the result of wartime shortages. Staff cars were Lancias, while the lower deck used Model T Fords. Armour was carried by Rolls Royce, Lanchester and Model T Fords, all with single turrets. The heavies, the 5-tonne Pierce Arrow trucks, also carried single turrets and mounted a 3 kilogram gun. Last but not least there was the Austin double-turret. There were also Belgian armoured cars and French gunners; they were token forces to show the Russians that they had support against the Germans in addition to the valiant armies fighting on the Western Front.

We were issued with a Russian gas mask which consisted of a face mask attached to a tin container by a rubber tube. But we could not get used to them. The weakness was the plug at the base of the container which had to be pulled out when they were worn in action or the wearer would suffocate when the Germans put over a rare wave. I was caught in one when a barrage of small shells burst with a kind of minor plop, spreading a white mist across a sunken road where we stood ready to advance. It was some sort of experimental gas, probably being tried out first on the Eastern front. Anyway, my mask did not cope properly with the result that I got a touch on the lungs, a contributing factor to my eventual discharge.

'Shore leave' in Kiev was grand for it is surely one of the best situated towns in the world. The approach was over a long river bridge then up a zig zag road for some 92 m to the plateau where the city lies. The northward panorama across the steppes was immense - vast stretches of ripening wheat dotted with occasional tiny villages. At our feet, far below, the mighty Dneiper River flowed towards the Black Sea. The city itself constituted a fine



As so few of the soldiers of the Tsar's army could read or write, a printed letter including lines from a poem was handed out to them for the sender to add his mark.

### A Mother's Tears

Harkening to horrors of the war,  
At each fresh victim of the battle  
I do not pity friend or wife  
Neither do I feel pity for the hero.

Alas! the wife will consolation find!  
And closest friend will friend forget  
One soul alone somewhere exists  
That will remembrance carry to the grave.

Amid our hypocritical affairs  
Banality of every shape, the daily round,  
Tears, holy and sincere, in all the world  
I chanced upon but of a single kind.

These are the tears of sorrowing mothers!  
They can no more forget their children  
Lost on blood sodden battlefield  
Than can the willow hold up high  
Her weeping branches.

N.A. Nekrasov (2)

collection of public and private buildings and thus I remember it as it was 60 years ago; but 27 years later the Nazi armies vented their spleen on the luckless place and the capital of the Ukraine was then virtually destroyed.

In Kiev the Government chemist shops displayed the notice: 'Ici on parle française' but I never found one that did. Whenever a woman was unusually well-dressed and walking provocatively it was a sure bet that she was 'on the job'. Street stalls abounded with luscious fruit which, heeding the warning, we dared not buy. The shops which specialised in Service decorations had wonderful window displays without any control over the buyers. For a few roubles (worth about two shillings) I was able to buy the First and Second Class medals of the Cross of St George, the former being equivalent to our Victoria Cross. When I eventually got home they were much admired, especially considering what I had paid for them.

What we call a wine cellar was of course an inevitable target for the Lower Deck. Caucasian wines really do hit the spot, but I stuck to a soft drink called Qvass, rather like cider. The firewater vodka, a colourless spirit distilled from rye, was 92 per cent alcohol. Despite the ban, it was made on the sly and sold behind doors. The Russian delight in mystery was amply illustrated when the management got wind of an impending police raid. Instead of opening the door of our cubicle to warn the vodka drinkers to get glasses out of sight, a hurried note was pushed under it!

We moved to the Line near Proscurov (now Khmel'nitsky), 240 km south west of Kiev and found ourselves amongst Russian troops in a big way where we were contacted by our new friends. The Caucasian Cossacks (Kafkaski Kazahi) opened their arms to comrades with their English armoured cars (Angliski Bronirovany Automobil). Then we learnt through our Polish interpreter (who, like nearly all his countrymen was bilingual) of their conviction that English blood flowed in their veins for it seemed that forgotten centuries ago English Crusaders reached the Caucasian Mountains, settled there and married local women. Thus we were accepted where these warriors, who faded from history after the wars to recover the Holy Land from the Mohammedans, had ceased wandering. Our unexpected friends must not be confused with the Don Cossacks who, if similarly named, are a dissimilar breed belonging to the River Don, east of the Dneiper.

Our comrades (Tovarishii) brought their horses along on several occasions just for fun and how we enjoyed those gallops! Best of all there was a spur-of-the-moment race between the two of us; being much better horsemen, they won.

In her book entitled Nurse on the Russian Front, Florence Farmborough records that in July 1917 when the 17th Russian Army was in full retreat we, the Armoured Car Division, 'did splendid work in the Bezezany Sector of the front against German, Austro-Hungarian and Turkish troops where they held

up the advancing enemy and covered the retreat'. Initially, our armour was positioned across the principal lines of enemy attack in a do-or-die attempt which would have collapsed when ammunition ran out. But General Brusilov provided a buffer by placing his men between the enemy lines and our armour and so saved the day. I shall always remember Russian troops, well behind the line, throwing poor wretches out of a Red Cross train and clambering aboard themselves, glad of the opportunity to get to Omsk, Tomsk or anywhere far from warfare. One of our cars shot down a German fighter which luckily did not burn. The driver ran to the stricken plane and was able to retrieve its magneto which was fitted with platinum make-and-break points, a unique change-over in World War One and this he used to replace one of ours, made of tungsten.

It was the Cossacks who revealed to us what one of their countrywomen had achieved fighting with the Women's Battalion of Death. Through our interpreter we learnt that a girl, wearing man's uniform, had killed three German machine gunners and shot two others; then, under heavy fire, had given first aid to casualties in her squad. She was awarded the Cross of St George, First Class.

Florence Farmborough also tells the remarkable story of Yasha Bachkarova, the renowned Serbian patriot who formed the Women's Battalion of Death. With her husband she served in uniform from the start of hostilities. Her husband killed, herself twice wounded, she fought on. Then when the situation deteriorated and desertion within the Russian ranks set in she joined them - but for a totally different reason: so that she could get to Petrograd and Moscow where she recruited more than 2,000 volunteers - aristocrats amongst them - to form the Women's Battalion of Death. They even 'went over the top' like conventional soldiers and Yasha herself was decorated three times for valour. Latterly, however, as patriotic fervour declined their numbers diminished to a mere 250.

Yet what heroines!

This will surely stress the importance of the contribution of women's work in Russia. Whatever the regime, it is they who can always be relied upon for hard work. In the early days of the October 1917 Revolution men would assemble to talk politics while their wives, many of them farm-wives, after completing the housework had to tackle the farmwork, feeding the animals and seeing to the crops. Even today photographs show them digging drains, road-mending and humping heavy loads as well as being in every field of professional work.

Now back to *Angliski Bronirovaniy Automobil*. Soon after the Russians ceased their anti-German hostilities, nearly all our 1916 vintage went home to Blighty for their well-earned leave. They travelled via the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok and so to the USA where they were amongst the first

to be seen there wearing English uniform. We, the unlucky ones, were sent into winter quarters in Kursk in order to prepare fighting and transport vehicles for the next move and about 100 of us railed the 400 km with everything the squadron possessed and moved into the old Cavalry Barracks.

We moved into Kursk before winter 1917 when the sunflowers were still edible. Russians love eating the seeds which they call semishka. I goggled at a pavement-walker who held one of the bright yellow flowers, probably about 30 cm in diameter, picking at the edible core. He fed the seeds into one side of his mouth while husks fell from the other. I tried some of the seeds which were definitely worthwhile but one must be experienced to keep up the steady flow, in and out, in and out, and I never achieved it properly.

There is another worthy habit in Russia: the Banya or public baths. Home baths did not then exist. As the barracks only had a dish-wash we 'went ashore' on Saturday evenings. Down town I paid a few kopecks (100 to the rouble) at the entrance to the baths. There were differing rates for the huge all-in bath place, the semi-private for two persons or the special single bath - and all with really hot water. Inside door No. 2 the girls (barishna) lined up - naturally, for a rouble or two extra. Having by then not broken the ice I shared a bath-for-two with a member of our team. Afterwards, we took an open single-horse drosky ride to the music of the little bells tinkling from the wooden arch above the collar. How I loved that sound! Better still was the three-horse sleigh (troika) with its three sets of bells where we glided silently across the deep snow wearing full winter rig plus black bearskin headgear with earflaps and fringe to protect the eyes which was issued to replace the service cap, useless in sub-arctic weather.

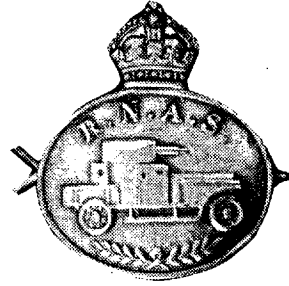
I was regularly on duty as driver of a staff car at the country home (dacha) where the Upper Deck were billeted, returning to Barracks after dark. One night, in pale moonlight, I came to a village en route about 8 km from the Barracks to find that the peasants (moujiks) had blocked the roadway between their huts with carts. Having noted my driving routine the plan obviously was to bail me up for my clothes. I dared not stop and, equally, I could not crash the barrier head-on because the radiator would be knocked out of action. In a flash came the decision to skid sideways into the obstruction, accepting that broken shafts and smashed woodwork could prove very nasty - even fatal. Nevertheless I put the car into a skid and she went sideways slap into the villagers' light carts. Crash... bang... smash. Bits took wing everywhere. Then, blessed silence, a clear road ahead and the radiator pointing where it should. Charlie Coventry of the Austin Motor Works had saved me.

One day whilst I was working on a truck engine it backfired in the carburettor and flames enveloped the works. As I tried to control the blaze the left sleeve of my jacket became entangled with the result that my hand was badly burnt. The thumb was burnt to the bone and the back of the hand a horrid mess. Surgeon-Commander Wells Hood decided that he would have to

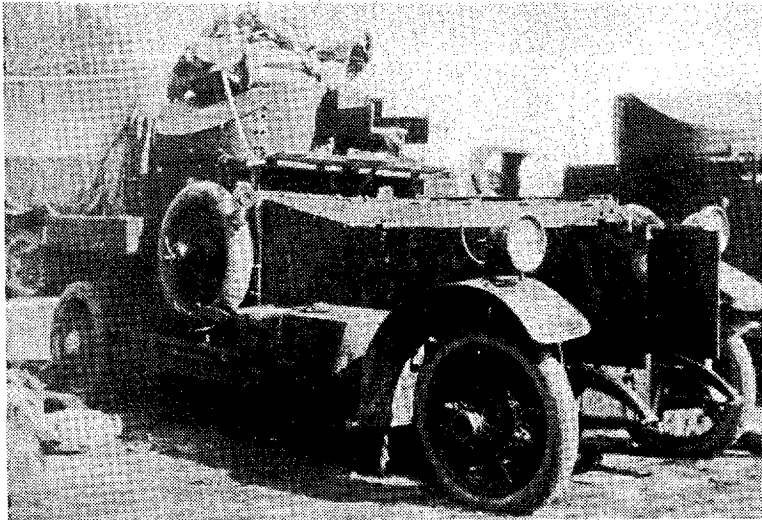




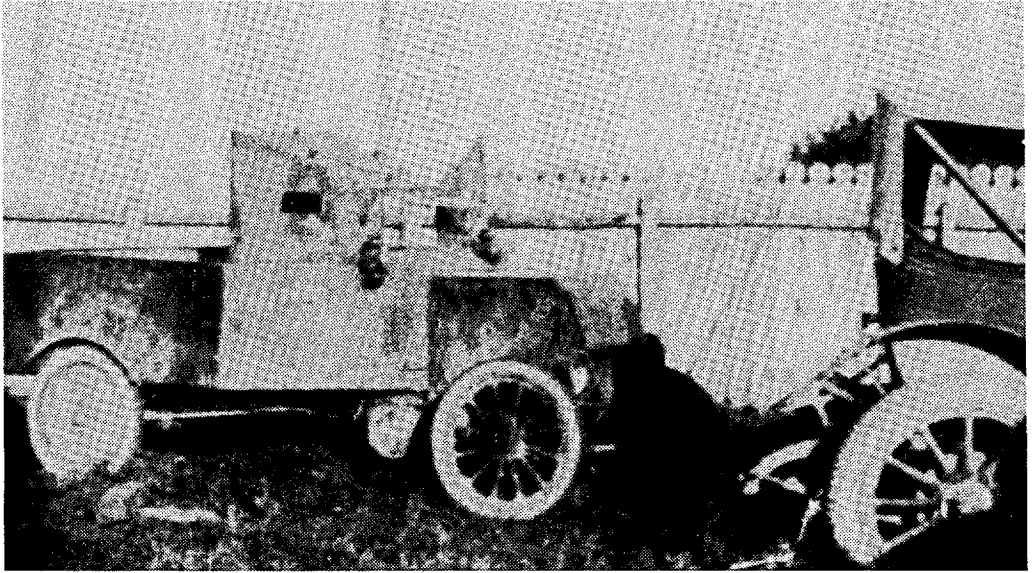
Petty officer Michael Terry  
of the Royal Naval Air Service  
Armoured Cars, in uniform  
after service in Russia 1917-18



The medallion of the  
Armoured Car Unit



Rolls Royce Armoured Car, Royal Naval Air Service



RNAS Model T Ford Armoured car



Farewell to Barishnas  
in national costume when  
the Armoured Car Unit left Provvari  
for winter quarters at Kursk

amputate at the wrist. First, however, he would experiment so he built a cage from finger tips to elbow, wrapped a large bandage round the whole and left it to nature to heal without medication. Incredibly, in a fortnight the burnt flesh was able to be removed from the hand. Ointment then accelerated repair and in about six weeks the hand was usable with care. Today, thanks to his treatment, the hand shows no sign of the damage it suffered so badly those years ago.

When the Kursk landscape was in the grip of winter things began to hot up almost at our front door. Shortly before Christmas Bolshevici arrived at the barracks seeking a guarantee that our armour would not be used to join in a scrap which was pending between the two factions, pro-Allies and pro-Germans, and to this our Naval Officer agreed. Then on Christmas Eve I was on the 10 pm to midnight guard duty at the gate when Petty Officer England relieved me. I went straight to bunk and was sleeping peacefully when about 8 am scuffling at the door raised hell. In an instant Russian troops fairly dripping with arms - rifles, revolvers, villainous knives and sabres - rushed in and started rummaging through everything. My gun was seized. Outside, others could be seen clambering around and over our duty armoured car and when we tried to get out to stop them the sentries yelled 'Nyet!' - 'No!' And all this on Christmas Eve during the season of peace and goodwill but as they used the Julian Calendar, by their reckoning it was only 11 December. To cut drama short, about mid-morning we, the 100 victims of this treacherous attack, were lined up shivering in little more than underclothing whilst in front of us the once-friendlies now stood with rifles resting in the elbow waiting for the command to shoot. I can recall endeavouring to stand as resolute as the others and trying to bolster up my mini-courage by repeating to myself 'I must be brave, I must be brave...'

At this juncture Major Charles of Imperial Intelligence who was with us in the barracks took over. Besides speaking Russian fluently, he understood their mentality and evidently he started arguing them out of their intent. After what seemed an eternity one of their group suddenly shouted 'Angliski nichevu!' 'English don't matter!' Thus Major Charles was our saviour and, believe me, his name remains remembered for ever by me. Though released from immediate death we were never re-armed and were imprisoned behind sentries in our quarters. We learnt that our captors, of the pro-Allies faction, when getting the worst of the scrap, decided they needed our armour and, rushing the barracks, had shot my relief when he tried to stop them at the gate. Our future looked grim indeed. Then we decided to try and disable all vehicles; firstly the armour, secondly the transport. Having managed to get on fairly friendly terms with our keepers we managed to slip past the sentries when engaged in any sort of talk which would divert their attention and achieved our aim by removing magnetos.

A week later Moscow thrust pro-German troops into the conflict. We sat up all one night listening to the battle down town, fully aware that if these latter won, we would surely be shot in the morning. Then later came sudden orders with the announcement that a Red Cross train was at the station to get us out of the country. I never found out how this had been arranged but assume it was some kind of political pressure. Once rounded up, we were allowed to take only the clothes we stood up in plus a kit bag. The train consisted of cattle trucks with red crosses painted on the sides; evidently a passport to safety. Within were bare boards; no windows, no bedding and 2,560 km to Murmansk. Bare luck, but it had to be taken as it came. It was deep winter when we left Kursk and grimly cold in our unheated boxes on wheels. Our 'special' never stopped at any station where there could have been a hot-water boiler for making tea and some food. At the Arctic Circle things got worse. As soon as the train stopped, wheels froze to the rails; the driving snow melted directly it hit the warm wheel flanges and ran down to the rails, forming ice wedges fore and aft. These had to be unfrozen by using acetylene torches, as large as our modern wall-type fire extinguishers, to enable the train to travel again. At any such stop if the truck doors were slid open the bitter outside air penetrated. I got frostbite in the toes mainly because our calf-length field boots were inadequate. The Russians, wearing knee-high felt boots with wooden pegs in the soles, did not suffer in the same way. Ours, with direct ground contact, were capable cold conductors.

Things took a nasty turn at Kandalaska 161 km before Murmask. By this time the Bolshevics back at the barracks in Kursk had found how our vehicles had been disabled and had telegraphed for our immediate return, despatching another train to pursue and recapture us. This certainly looked like the end. But no. When leaving the barracks we had been allowed to take our rifles but no ammunition. Some ratings had, however, been able to secrete revolvers plus ammunition in their kit bags and as our train, then unfrozen, was being shunted before facing north they managed to board the engine cab and prodding the unarmed fireman and driver in the ribs, got us going. In retrospect the last stage of this journey was not unlike a 'Keystone Comedy' - our train steaming ahead like mad fleeing before the other one teeming with our pursuers. Actually, the hours were a huddle of misery until we arrived at Murmansk where HMS GLORY hove into sight. A signal having previously been received aboard her, Marines were landed whereupon the Russians decided that there was a better war down south and the sight of their backsides speeding away was the grandest thing I remember.

Aboard HMS GLORY, Flagship of the White Sea Fleet, we were warm and well fed. It was when a boat was taking me out to the battleship that my kitbag fell overboard and like a hunk of metal it plunged out of sight and with it the two magnetos, mementos of the Kursk sabotage, which I had planned to sell once back home. So that opportunity had sunk beneath the waves.

Waiting for transport to England was tedious. Three minesweepers tied up alongside represented our first chance. I was actually aboard one of them when I was hailed back to the *GLORY*. Inaudibly I cursed my bad luck that a sure trip to England had vanished. It was, however, a lucky break, for three days out the little minesweeper hit a mine and was lost with all hands.

During the long wait for home-bound transport I was able to learn something about Murmansk. Our anchorage was 81 km up the Kola Inlet from the Barents Sea, 242 km north of the Arctic Circle and 383 km nearer the North Pole than Archangel. Lying some three kilometres from us was the Russian cruiser *ASKOLD*, a spectacular sight with her five funnels. Our sailors christened her the 'Packet of Woodbines'.

I was intrigued to watch sea ice forming. At first almost-touching opaque plates appear on the surface which gradually enlarge into an undulating cover to the sea. As the freeze continues they coalesce into a thickening sheet where all movement decreases until the ice is firm enough for traffic. I also saw reindeer-drawn sleighs; no reins, only a long thin pole with which to tap the animal on the side of the head to turn it one way or the other.

At last we found ourselves aboard *HMS HUNTLANT* and ready to sail. We left without escort and I subsequently learnt that being thus without protection our course was set almost within sight of the enemy coastline in order to remain inside the cordon of patrolling U-boats. A gamble which paid off well. The first home land sighted was, of all places, the coast of Northumberland and when we entered the Tyne, my home river, you could easily have knocked me overboard for she was, I swear, shouting 'Welcome, hinnie!' to me.

On disembarkation I was sent to Chatham Naval Hospital where the medical opinion in assessing my damaged lungs was that I might become tubercular if I remained in the English climate. I was discharged, given a permanent pension plus a paid passage to either California or Western Australia where it was predicted that the warm climate could help to repair the lungs. My mate of the Armoured Car Service, Archie Pursell of Sydney, who sang the praises of Australia, influenced the choice. My final discharge came through in November 1918.

I sailed from Bristol on 20 December and landed at Fremantle, Western Australia on 31 January 1919, just three months before my twentieth birthday.

As the curtain falls on World War One I must append a paragraph. At the start of April 1918 the Royal Air Force took over both the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service and our squadrons were then reformed as units within the Army Motor Machine Corps. And also a word about the volunteers who formed the North Russian Relief Contingent, the last anti-Bolshevik force, who landed at Archangel on 12 July 1919. The thousand

therein included Royal Fusiliers, Machine Gun Corps and 400 ex-AIF Diggers. They were in action at Volagda. Two VCs of the campaign were won by A P Sullivan (Crystal Brook, South Australia) and S G Pearse (Mildura, Victoria). Bill Baverstock (Mosman, Sydney) a long-time friend who died in a motor accident at the end of 1976, gave me these facts, having also been in Russia. He wanted to form a Sydney Club for Servicemen with Russian experience but we both realised that the age factor meant that few, if any, would or could join.

## CHAPTER 3

# Below the Equator

The eight weeks passage aboard SS MILTAIDES from England to Fremantle (the port for Perth, Western Australia) was memorable for the nineteen year old who, apart from the journey to Russia, had not been out of his homeland. Crossing the Mediterranean, we headed for Port Said and the entrance to the Suez Canal. Overnight at Port Said probably meant little to the sophisticated traveller of that time but for me it had a touch of magic, of the Orient, especially after dark with the figures of the men hurrying past almost shrouded in their long flowing garments. Near Ismailia sand-dug trenches and dugouts on the canal bank were still in evidence and marked where Turkish forces had attempted to seize the Canal. According to AIF records, the last Turkish raid was on 30 November 1915.

The introduction to Colombo, our next port of call, presented us with a problem. Although MILTAIDES was lying close to shore, orders were that no one was allowed ashore. Nevertheless, some Australians amongst us decided that it was idiotic to miss our first real Indian city and using tactics broke ship, myself amongst them. What a night we made of it - where shops and hotels were flaring bright for custom. I went on a shopping spree and bought all kinds of very conventional things, yet so greatly prized at the time, such as a set of elephants - carved, I hasten to add.

And so to my Promised Land, to this Continent of the Southern Sky where everything was so new and exciting but where the first move after landing at Fremantle at the end of January 1919 was to find bed and breakfast. After a few misfires I settled for a tiny pub at the top of Murray Street in Perth. Next, I got out my passports to employment which I had collected before embarkation, such introductions being essential back in England. I had letters of introduction from my SNO, Commander Locker Lampson and others. Actually, these were not a requirement in Australia, but this I had to learn. I also had a letter from H F Moss, Office of the Agent-General for Western Australia in London to Cecil Hunt of Kings Park Road in Perth and this I now posted. That same afternoon I bought my first felt hat to replace the emblem of the new chum - the cap. Having heard 'Pommie this' and 'Pommie that' on the voyage out, I nursed the usual inferiority feeling and expected a hunk of Australian masculinity to swagger up, sing out 'Pommie bastard!' and bash me because I wore a cap. Hence the immediate felt hat.

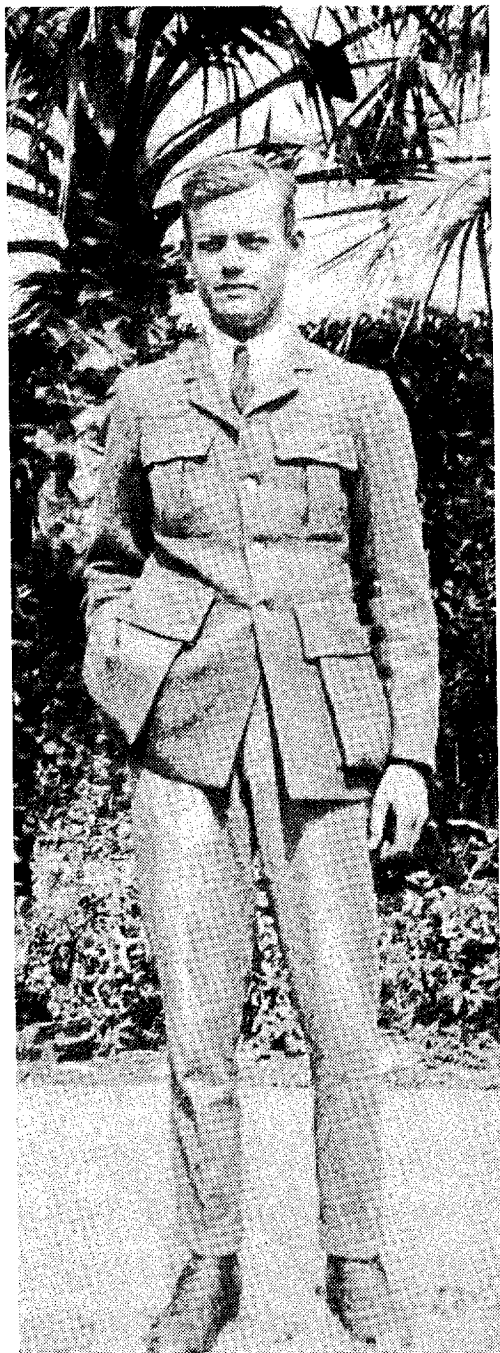
It was a welcome surprise when Cecil Hunt and his daughter Vera enquired for me at the pub after breakfast the very next morning. With little ado they invited this stranger to stay with them, Mr Moss, back in London, having written the right words. Yesterday, attack feared; today, the glad hand. For several weeks I lived with the Hunts as one of the family until dire necessity indicated a job. Cecil Hunt was a pioneer motorist and his daughter Vera a car-competitor, especially in the hill climb up Perth's Mount Street on Saturdays, the only steep city grade. Imagine that happening today.... Thelma Thorn, Vera's friend, attracted me immensely and it seemed just right for me to teach her motor bike riding as that meant a pillion seat for me with my arm firmly around her waist. I met so many of their friends that when Winterbottom Motors of Murray Street engaged me I was almost sorry. Being a mere mechanic who went to the garage in overalls I could no longer live en famille, so I moved to Mrs Gawler's Boarding House where I was surprised to learn that she was the mother of Jeff, once an officer in our Armoured Cars who was, at that time, away in China.

My main job with Winterbottom Motors was to deliver Dodges to farmers and to teach them the rudiments of driving. One of my pupils was memorable. He just could not stop the car on target. A customary single entrance-door at the front of his garage would have been a disaster, so to regulate his uncontrolled entry therein and his bashing ahead through the other wall we arranged a second exit at the far end for him. The last I saw of him was when he was shuttling the car backwards and forwards trying to gain the desired garage roof coverage. He just went on repeating this hazardous operation until, finally successful, he switched off and subsided, satisfied.

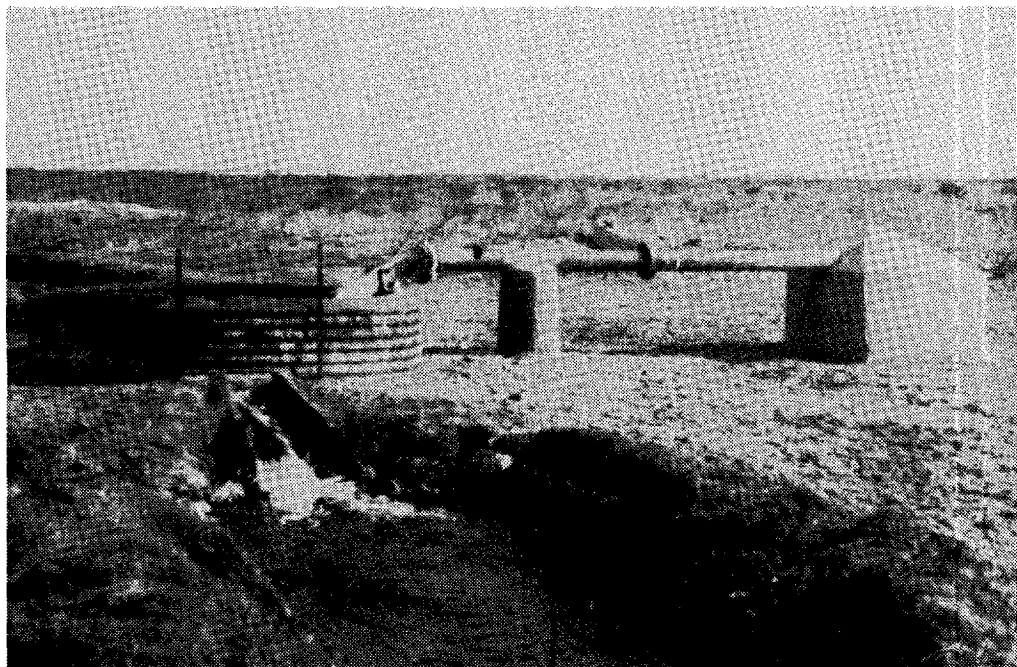
During another delivery the motor cut out because the magneto make-and-break points were sticking. Whilst I was correcting this a horseman halted alongside to watch and became rather talkative. Of course when I spoke he recognised my raw Pommie voice. Finally he commented: 'You're not a Groper, are you?' Having not the slightest idea what a Groper was I assured him that I was one indeed. Later at the homestead I learnt that the word Groper is short for Sand Groper (a small bird peculiar to Western Australia) and slang for anyone born in that State. Another trap for the new chum.

Having saved quite a bit of money and aiming to start my first bank account, on a certain Friday I carried the precious cargo with me to work. It was in the pocket of my jacket which I hung amongst others at work and which I was ready to collect again at noon. But when that time came, to my horror the pocket was empty. To cap the lot, at paytime I had been given a week's notice for working only five and a half days instead of the usual six days. I had explained that I went to Fremantle Base Hospital every Saturday about my disability but they could not have cared less. I had enough money left to pay the usual week in advance when I gave notice to Mrs Gawler that evening of my impending departure. Except for some loose money I was stoney broke in a

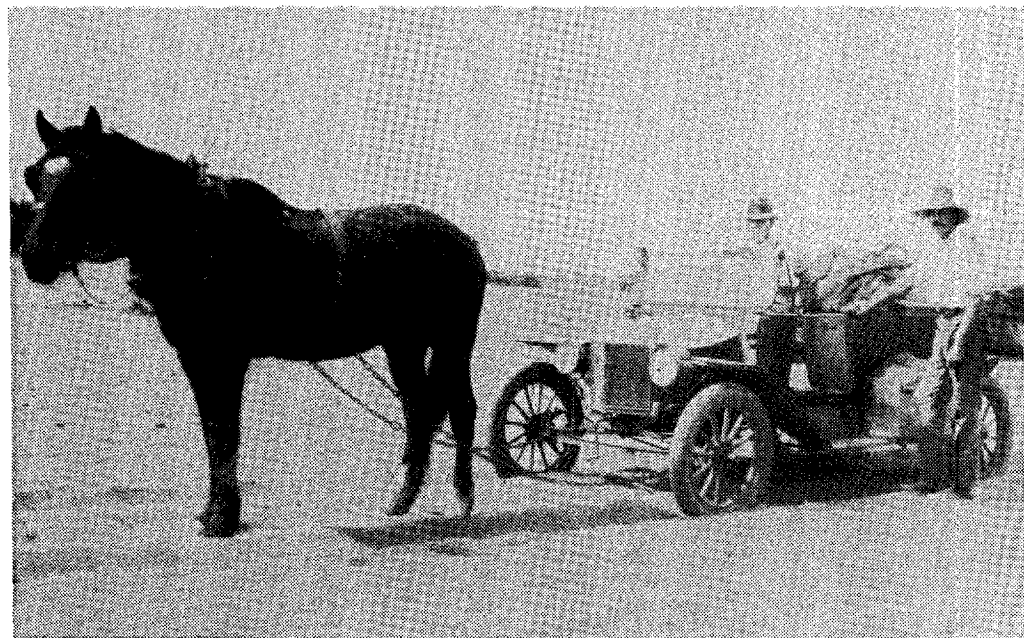




Michael Terry,  
wearing Armoured Cars khaki jacket,  
Perth, February 1919



Artesian bore, Warrara Station,  
Gascoyne River, WA, 1919



Pulling a vehicle across the  
Gascoyne River, WA, 1919

strange land. It seemed the end of the world. Then I suddenly remembered Charlie French, a sheep squatter from the nor'west who was in town. Having sought him out, he offered me a job, saying that he would be going back to his Cardabia Station in a few days. I nearly wept with relief. I had no idea where Cardabia Station was or what my work would be although I did mention a knowledge of cars. Now it is clear that the crisis in Perth was the best thing that ever happened to me for without it the motor trade would most likely have been my future. Instead, it directed me into a new way of life by forcing me out into the bush which, quite unknowingly, was to become the abiding interest.

For most of the 1,300-odd km north to Cardabia, Guy McLeod (Minilya Station) drove with Charlie. Koolanooka, a railway halt too small for a station and with only a shed, was an overnight spell which certainly lived up to the first part of its name - whether Aboriginal or just sarcasm on a white's part - for it was the coldest camp ever. We slept in swags on the shed floor after tucker aboard the car. Motoring at sun-up in an open tourer was pure hell for someone plagued by frostbite in Russia. When we bailed up for morning tea I had to haul off boots and socks as my feet were giving me a great deal of trouble with the toes aching badly. That was, happily, the last attack I suffered for Australia with its kindly warmth has since then restored circulation. In the local pub at Gascoyne Junction which lies 161 km upstream from the mouth of the Gascoyne River we encountered Nor'westers en masse - men who dressed differently, had another pitch of voice, were sun-bronzed and, being cattlemen, talked stock.

From town we headed north again after the car had been pulled across the wide sandy river bed by horses which for me was a unique experience. Finally the twisting track led us to Cardabia near Point Cloates, a direct 1,130 km upcoast from Fremantle. The homestead was only a mile from the Indian Ocean - and what a place: quarters for men, kitchen block, sheep pens, stockyard, shearing shed, machinery shed and blacksmith's shop. The cook, a kindly old chap, was a Chinaman and there were black natives amongst the white stockmen.

Every night we were invaded by myriads of yellow crabs which came in from the ocean and soon I became quite used to them in and about the sheds. But somebody did not - and that was Charlie's brand-new wife, an actress who had overlanded from Perth. Before breakfast time screams filled the air when Mrs French awoke to find crabs running about the floor and even up on the bed....

One day when out on a sheep muster my attention was suddenly and violently held when beyond the crest of a red sandhill there appeared a weird kind of head - some prehistoric monster surviving in this Southern land? - and when it gave a doleful kind of howl I nearly quit the saddle. I was beholding my first camel Down Under which was a complete surprise to me for I had

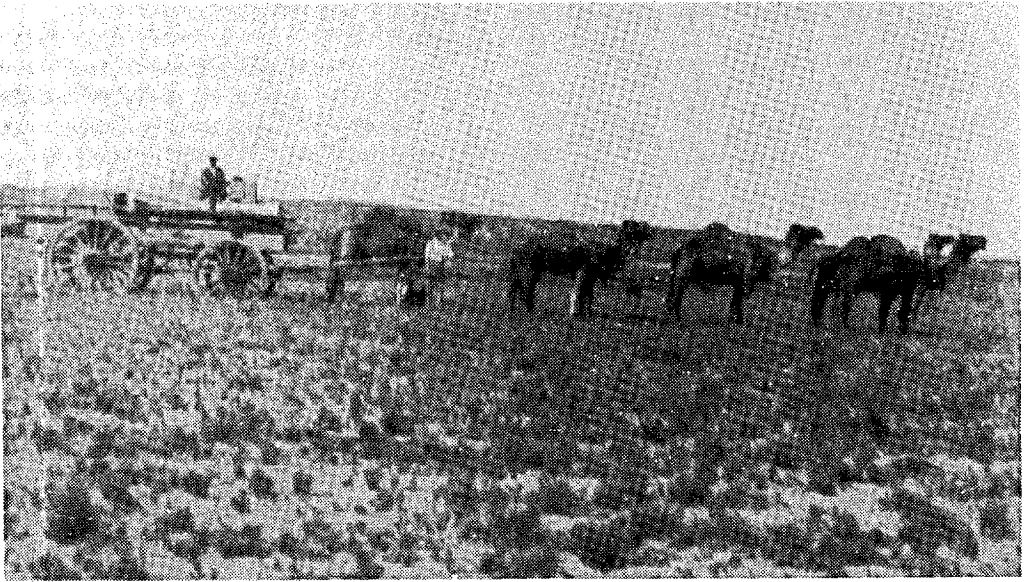
never even heard that 110 one-hump Arabian camels had been imported from Afghanistan into South Australia in 1866 and had since spread throughout the inland. The Aborigines called them the 'Emu Horse' - an apt description, for the animal has a head like an emu and four legs like a horse.

I was sent solo by the boss to an outcamp some 11 km from the homestead to ride fences, inspect for broken wires and so on and to check stock coming to water. The supply issued from one of the deepest artesian bores in the Commonwealth, 1,200 metres. From the bore warm mineralised water flowed endlessly into open conduits through the paddocks and also into a horse-scooped 'tank' where the horses drank near my temporary home. Charlie had told me that sometimes fish came up from the bore-head and maybe I would have the luck to catch one. But, he told me, it would be sightless, without eyes, which was Nature's way of discarding something no longer of use in the utter darkness of the bowels of the earth. However, my luck was out for I never saw one. I had also been advised to bathe in the bore tank after a long day in the saddle and it certainly was a first class revive. That sun-warmed artesian water, nicely mineralised in Nature's way, was a marvellous tonic and ten minutes' splashing about in it banished every ache.

One really hot noon I was lying on the wooden stretcher after a meal when suddenly I heard a thud! thud! against the corrugated iron of the water tank which formed one side of the hut. A 2 m long black snake (the first I had ever seen out of a zoo) was rearing itself against the metal, perishing for water. I never moved, watching until, to my great relief, the horror quit and wriggled out of sight. I certainly walked warily after that though I never saw the snake again.

These contacts with Nature were, of course, spread over the months at Cardabia. Much of my time was spent in repairing ailing machinery whilst shearing was in progress. One job took me away in Charlie's six-cylinder Buick tourer to bring in a small team of shearers. On the return journey when we encountered creeks and sandy patches I changed down at speed by double-declutching into lower gear. This routine so impressed one of the men that he sang out: 'You're wasting your time, mate. You'd do far better going east and getting into the motor trade'. Being keen on adventure and change I continued to think about this until shearing cut out when the boss announced: 'Sorry, but there isn't really enough to keep you busy. I'm afraid you'll have to take your cheque'. In a flash I realised that his main interest in me was as a mechanic and not as a potential stockman and as this coincided with the new horizon I had in mind following the shearer's remark I took my cheque more in hope than in sorrow.

The first stage of my plan saw me 145 km south in Carnarvon. But there the news was bad, for a shipping strike killed an immediate passage to Fremantle. Rather than waste my cheque I contacted the ganger in charge of levelling sandhills for a meat works, the first on the Gascoyne. He took me on



Camel team, Cardabia Station, WA

**AUSTRALIAN WORKERS UNION**  
 1919-1920 4559

**West Australia Branch**

Mr. *M. Terry* —  
 of *G. P. O. Perth*  
 is entitled to all the benefits of Membership and the protection of the  
 Union while loyal to its principles for the year ending Sept. 30, 1920.

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Worker Print, Sydney *Nov. 20* 19*19* Issued by *G. H. Matthews*

**MEMBERSHIP TICKET \$1**

Members must renew in the first shed or on the first pay day after the Annual Convention

Terry's AWU ticket 1919

and I got my Australian Workers' Union (WA Branch) Ticket No. 4559 dated 20 November 1919 which I still treasure. Wages, if fair, were not over-generous for an eight-hour shift in shadeless summer heat on the end of a long-handled shovel. It was a back-and-muscle job to level the ground for the work's foundations. Today, of course, machines would handle the tons of sand to be shifted. Horse scoops were used for the loaded sand and it was more than welcome - heaven, indeed - when the ganger told me to drive one of them. Once the scoop was loaded it was little effort to walk behind the horse and once arrived at our destination, release the scoop's contents, Gee up! and be off again. A few weeks of this and a ship from Singapore had me aboard and I remember that the passage to Fremantle included top curries on the menu created by an experienced oriental cook.

In Fremantle I was again dogged by a strike, this time on the railway. As land transport was out, the witching waves beckoned. I got digs near the wharves, spending tedious days searching for a craft to take me on board. At last I noticed one full of troops still in their khaki returning from the War. I watched as numbers of them disembarked and others returned to the ship from their day ashore. A judicious question here and there established the fact that the vessel was due to sail on the morrow. Absence of any gangway control gave me an idea. So I said to myself - 'Here's a free trip east'. Accordingly next morning, dressed as a digger and with kitbag on shoulder I walked up the gangplank and aboard as though the ship were mine - and got away with it. It didn't matter whether the journey ended in Adelaide or Melbourne provided I got 'over the hump'. So I settled down to a free passage including free hammock and free meals. To increase the safety margin I took the gamble of getting friendly with (of all people!) the Military Police. My stars must have been in the right ascent for the 'enemy' accepted me as a qualified passenger and I walked ashore at Port Melbourne, bought a second class rail fare to Sydney and was beside the Harbour next morning.

(As a story on the side, I became quite friendly with one of the Military Police aboard and cunningly obtained his name and home place before disembarking. I was thus able to invite him to my farm at Terrigal New South Wales shortly before I sold it in 1960 when I told him of my ocean exploit of 40 years before. We laughed and had another drink.)

Thanks to the stowaway act I had 30 pounds on arrival in Sydney. Having dumped my kitbag at the station I walked apprehensively out into the prosperous and busy city towards I knew not where, and where I knew not a soul. The search for work began in Castlereagh Street where I noticed several car dealers who might be interested in me as a driver or mechanic. At my first port of call I saw the Manager and went through the usual interview procedure, telling him that I had been a road tester in the engine building shop at the English Austin Motor Works and as a final touch that I had been with Winterbottom Motors in Perth.

'That's fine.' Then suddenly he fired at me: 'What's your religion?'

Thoroughly surprised, I told him I was Church of England. He immediately pulled open the door and almost spat at me: 'This is a Catholic firm!' and slung me out. If ever there was a migrant who was surprised, then it certainly was I.

The same day I applied to another firm, went through the same drill and had the same query fired at me afterwards. Gulping with apprehension I told the truth and on this occasion it was well received. 'A good thing. Wouldn't have a bloody tyke here!' Unfortunately there was no vacancy so as I walked away I asked myself what was afoot in this extraordinary city. Had I known it then, I had walked right into a period when it was rare for a few to assemble without failing to discuss the clash amongst the followers of Christ. The schism even spread to the school children and I can recall their war cries:

Proddy dogs jump like frogs  
in and out the water  
When the RCs ring the bell,  
all the Proddies go to hell.

It was my name, so typically Irish-sounding, that frequently led to the false assumption that I must be a Roman Catholic. Later in 1928 when Maurice Hamer, an Adelaide stockbroker, was promoting subscriptions for the impending Port Hedland to Melbourne expedition a top public servant, convinced from information he had received that he was on to a good thing, approached Hamer with the offer of financial support. Although at that juncture the subscription was about to be closed, Hamer made an appointment for him to call again later in the day to see whether his name could still be included. The prospective shareholder was, however, on the doormat ahead of time with 'I've changed my mind' and Hamer told me later that obviously he had heard that I was not of his faith.

Back to my first day in Sydney. It was now towards evening and all the pub accommodation was too costly for someone not earning in the Great City. At the Park Street intersection I got a glimpse of Hyde Park and, later, of the trees and green expanse of the Domain and this prompted a thought. I collected the kitbag, bought some food (probably a couple of homely meat pies) and selecting a sheltering tree in the Domain, gave the world a miss. Camping out - a clear sky, a warm summer night - what better?

Next morning the first try brought success. After a brief interview Harry Hart of Dalgety's Motor Department, then in Phillip Street, promised work when the Sydney Motor Show opened on 29 March 1920. The agencies were to be Hudson and Essex cars and White trucks. The pay was to be about seven pounds a week plus commission on sales. But my problem was sleeping and eating until I became a salesman the following month. Cremorne supplied bed

and breakfast and I went ahead to explore the city, around Circular Quay mainly, for cheap meals. On good days there were two; on bad, a singleton. The first find was Chanery's Fish shop in Hunter Street which provided a plate of mixed fish for a shilling. Now gone, it has been replaced by a milk bar; gone, too, is the pub free lunch provided that you had a glass in the hand. I remember Hotel Francois in George Street long before it disappeared into the maw of Wynyard Underground Station, where the carver in a long white apron handed you over your plate of meat plus vegetables. Memorable.

As at home I had been strictly educated as regards Church attendance - twice on Sundays - I sought out a Sunday morning Service. An elderly lady, possibly surprised to see an unattended young man, spoke to me after Service and asked me to lunch. Thus Mrs H F T Bode, widow of a senior Government Railways official, began a friendship which lasted until her death not so long ago. At the same time I tracked down my old Armoured Cars mate, Arch Pursell, and when I walked into the office of A B Pursell and Sons, Insurance Brokers, the occasion was mutually terrific.

Before starting with Dalgety's my war disability growled again which resulted in a spell in hospital at Victoria Barracks. On 14 February 1920, from my verandah bed I saw Ross and Keith Smith fly over Sydney at the termination of their England to Australia spectacular. Records establish that their flight took less than 30 days and thus entitled them to the 10,000 pounds Commonwealth Prize. Sydney being an excitable city, I quite expected sirens wailing, car horns blaring and divers other noises signifying welcome. But she remained mute - or I was deaf.

Out of sheer financial desperation I surprised Dalgety's and delighted myself by selling several cars during the Show. Dalgety's manager, Harry Hart, put me on their staff and by Christmas I had banked nearly 1,000 pounds which allowed me to move myself from the suburb of Cremorne into a top boarding house at Wollstonecraft.

In that long ago, folk came to the city by horse. There used to be a lovely black stallion tied up daily to a post at the corner of Macquarie and Bridge Streets and two hansom cabs were parked in Bridge Street between Pitt and George Streets.

The US representative for White Trucks was in Sydney on a visit to Dalgety's and he possessed a steam car of that same make. He drove me around in it, including the steep grade up Phillip Street from Circular Quay and here, as a demonstration, he stopped halfway and then restarted. I expected extra revs before the brake was released and the clutch gripped, followed by the buck-jump start of a petrol car. None of that: just a muted 'sissss' and we moved smoothly uphill gathering speed. It is an event still vivid.



On 16 June 1920 the Prince of Wales arrived in HMS RENOWN. A few days later, standing on a soap box in Macquarie Place, Bridge Street, I watched him drive by in an open tourer escorted by a motorcade. Little did I dream what fate held in store for me just six and a half years later; for on 5 January 1927 I was received by the Prince at St James Palace, London. On that occasion I recalled the Sydney sighting, which amused him greatly.

Harry Hart appointed me Dalgety's Northern Rivers representative, based at Lismore. Competition was fierce between our Essex cars and the rival Hupmobile. Whenever car tracks led from the dirt road towards a farm house I chased them in case the competitor had found a prospect. Luckily, several times I was the first to score. The months chasing cocky farmers who might become motorised led me all over the place, and this resulted in my becoming aware of local agitation about the outdated transport then in operation to the New England Tableland and a plan to start a regular truck service between South Grafton and Glen Innes formed in my mind.

In Sydney I approached my accountant friend, Arthur Herriott, who approved of the venture and he introduced me to a business acquaintance who agreed to become a partner. We decided to trade as the New State Transport Company. The wording 'New State' was chosen as a reference to local sentiment for at that time the Federal member, Dr Earle Page, then in the dawn of his political career (which later provided a knighthood) was battling for a new state in northern New South Wales. My partner and I agreed to buy a 4-tonne reconditioned Leyland truck which had been an RAF transport vehicle, and when shipment to the Clarence River was imminent, I resigned from Dalgety's.

## CHAPTER 4

# Demon Chauffeur

Here is the tale of two ex-Service things which got together and started a peace-time enterprise. Number one - myself, and Number two - the 4-tonne Leyland truck, completely reconditioned after service in France and, like myself, shipped out passage paid to Australia. When motor transport was in its infancy in New South Wales, I and my partner Gus Bolton founded what was probably the first regular truck route, 161 km from the Clarence River to the New England Tableland.

I christened the truck 'Mrs Terry' in hope that she would have offspring as business developed. Across her 'bosom' I had a signwriter paint THE NEW STATE TRANSPORT COMPANY, No. 1. In retrospect I realise that I took much for granted; that we would tackle all the problems of the road including the initial 900 metre climb without a test run. Here I bridged the gap between recklessness and prudence by yarning with a chap called Robinson who was running Service cars (six-cylinder Cadillac tourers for passengers plus trailers for luggage), covering much of the same route. His summary was that a good driver with a capable vehicle could certainly tackle the run successfully, provided that the small wooden bridges over numerous creeks did not collapse. Structurally they were sound except for the bridge-decking which was built to carry horse-driven timber jinkers. The problem would be our loaded truck with its 8-tonne capacity. Robbi said: 'Rush 'em and trust to luck. Don't even stop till you're over and on solid ground.'

Having obtained a light load I made the first venture early in 1921. Except for creaks and groans from bridge deckings, there were no alarms. But during the ensuing months there certainly were plenty of narrow squeaks along the way and to the roadside folk, really appreciative in finding themselves serviced by a regular truck run, I became known as the 'Demon Chauffeur'.

Early in the run I signed on Snowy Ward, a tall, massive chap who was a nephew - so he told me and which I believed - of Thunderbolt the Bushranger(3). During quiet evenings beside the camp fire he gave me the inside story of his historic relative. It was the same old tale you get from the locals wherever Knights of the Bush roamed when Australia was young; holding up stage coaches, raiding homesteads, stealing stock and robbing banks

- all to the same pattern of robbing the rich to help the poor. Later, when staying with friends near Benalla, Victoria, deep in the Kelly country I heard the same song. Even the publican there had a novel twist. Whatever the hour, provided that you rubbed a finger up and down the door crack and sang out 'Ned Kelly!' it was Open Sesame to grog.

Sometimes at Buccarumbi, on our truck route between South Grafton and Dalmorton, we would switch off to pan for gold. Not that we were enriched by the panning dish but it was a diversion to try and get some colour out of the alluvial. A couple of kilometres from Dalmorton an old hand used to bail us up even if there was no loading for him. I guess he had had more failures than success with the lasses for his cabin walls were plastered with newspaper clippings of lovelies. Then one day there was his note stuck in the roadside mailbox reading: 'To the driver mota transport. Please get me a bag of sulferph.' Knowing that there was a 'ph' somewhere in the word he just stuck it on the end with the result that to this day I cannot spell the word without looking in a dictionary.

In the tiny Dalmorton pub they often talked of 'Tressider's Lost Find', a gold-working deep in the hills which rendered high values and was therefore kept a hundred per cent secret. Consequently when Tressider died his secret went with him and all subsequent attempts to relocate his find have so far failed. But even so, I have often wondered whether a few months of searching - planned in a definite direction from the rumoured base - might not be really rewarding?

Occasionally along the route we would encounter a culvert leading over a creek and on the adjacent level banks the logs stacked by the timber getters lay waiting to be loaded on to the horse-drawn jinkers for transport to the mill. Those culvert bridges posed no problem for them even if the decking were aged or loose. But there were several disquieting bumps and noises when 'Mrs Terry', fully loaded, crossed over them. For two of the really suspect bridges, on the return trip from Glen Innes I loaded planks and spiked them into the necessary places.

Many kilometres of the truck route were no more than sections of high shelf-track carving its way beside the Little River; a towering mountain on one side with an almost 92 metre drop on to the other down to the water below. I well remember the hazards of negotiating that part of the road to Glen Innes and I want you now to travel that same stretch with me where we encounter a near-fatal accident.

There has been much heavy rain and such maintenance as the road gets is done by a man with a shovel who slops mud into wheel holes. The result is a slippery surface and my truck, with its solid rubber tyres and back-wheel brakes only, is now approaching the curve of a steep descent. Suddenly round the corner to the right appears an old tourer, approaching uphill. On seeing

our huge truck he gets the wind up and stalls, about a metre out from the rock wall. I cannot stop for the down grade is steep. All I can do is to drop into low gear - no brakes - and just shave past him and leave the rest to fate. As we get alongside him my offside wheels spin out and beyond the edge of the road and the truck gives a sickening lurch outwards and towards the river way down there among the trees. There is only one way to win; swing the wheel hard right just as we shave past the tourer. Snowy Ward is not aboard with me and it is his relief who gives a howl of terror, flings his arms round my neck and bloody well nearly swings the steering wheel over left. I dig him in the ribs which dislodges him and I am able to straighten out and with all four wheels hopefully aboard the road again, coast down to the level flat below and pull up. Once our pulses have quietened and we are breathing normally we both walk slowly back to the near-disaster spot and there see a rut, some 45 cm deep and about 4.5 metres long dug out by the wheels as they went overboard. Needless to say the temporary hand quit immediately we got through to Glen Innes.

After the Swinging Ridges, away from the Little River and across the Mann River came a terrific zig-zag climb past the Devil's Lookout whence the view is magnificent. On reaching Bald Knob we had ascended 825 metres in 8 km and were then on the fine open New England Tableland. On the way up it was normally slow steady going. In rain, four steel chains were rigged around the back tyres but once, on the steepest grade amid a mass of mud, the armoured back wheels spun uselessly. Luckily a road-mender with a four-horse dray came along and hauled the truck on to a drier stretch of road surface.

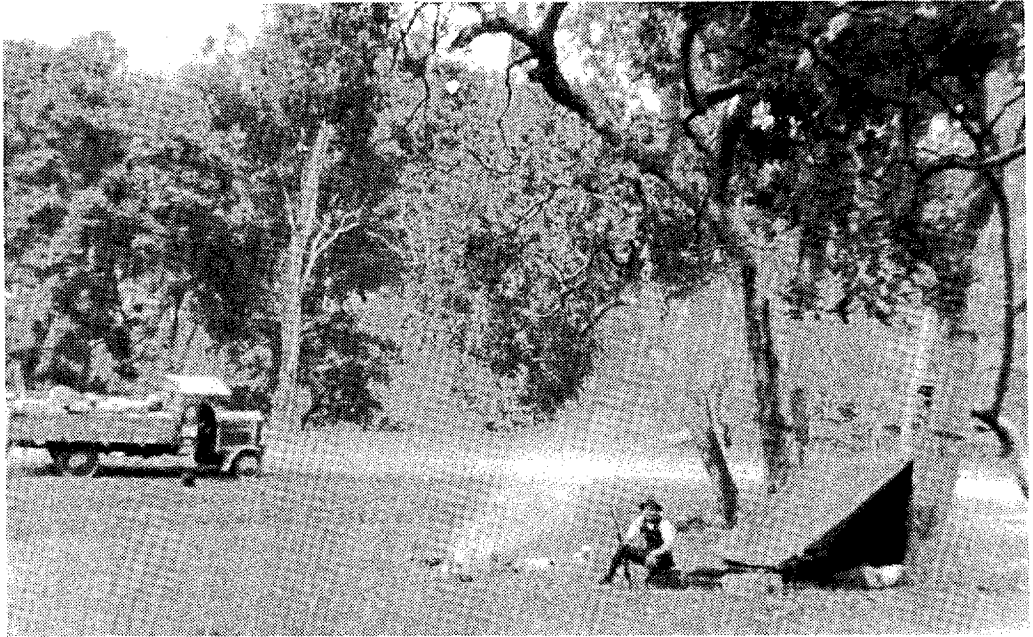
Excessive use of steel chains resulted in deep grooves being cut right through the rubber of the tyres to the underlying steel. There being no local hydraulic press capable of forcing the two damaged steel-plus-tyre sets off, the lot had to be shipped to Sydney. The ensuing idleness was both expensive and exasperating but had to be coped with until all was roadworthy again. But there was more trouble ahead, for soon after when on Big Hill, 8 km after passing Bald Knob, a horrible grinding in the back axle bespoke real trouble. I found that a cross-shaft bearing between the propeller shaft and the crown wheel had given up the ghost. I examined the offending part disconsolately which seemed to indicate a lonely walk back to Bald Knob. But within the hour a passing Service car enabled me to hand over the wording of a pre-paid telegram which they were willing to despatch for me to Sydney urgently requesting a replacement bearing. For the following three interminable days in the wilderness, silent except for the howls of the dingoes and with never a passing vehicle from Glen Innes, I lived on my roadside emergency rations and wondered what the hell lay ahead. Then, Glory be, another Service car came humming along merrily bearing the invaluable part, and within the day we were mobile again.

According to season, back loading from the Tableland was corn, potatoes and chaff. Two specials were a load of boots from a Glen Innes factory to the

Clarence and a load of furniture to Dorrigo, 81 km off route south. But a definite 'unspecial' faced me and that was the abrupt ascent from the Mann River to the Tableland where the quick change from mildness to harshness was more than my system could take in winter, the lungs then not being quite recovered from war service. In South Grafton I had got to know the Chairman of the Lands Board and one weekend he arrived to rout me out of my hotel for a drive to seaside Yamba. Frankly, I was feeling rather ill but considering the kindness of his intent, off we went. Next morning I was really ill and the doctor who was called had me in hospital straight away. I was down with pneumonia and hospitalised for about three weeks but have little memory of it, then or now. On my discharge Matron told me: 'You have been so close to the Pearly Gates that we tried everywhere to contact a relative, for we did not want to bury you in a lonely grave.' Yet after a brief convalescence I was driving again.

Now for some more events during runs to the coast. Near Newton Boyd, which is - or was - a tiny place with a post office, a pub and little else, I decide to stop where a steep downslope leads towards a river. I switch off, pull hard on the handbrake as the brake shoes (rear wheel brakes only) are worn and provide insufficient hold. Clambering out, I walk towards a lonely tree to boil the billy. Suddenly 'Mrs Terry' - she's a 4 tonne truck plus a 4 tonne load - starts to move. I gallop back to her and can see that the visible short arm is over-centre at the drum, no shoe being left. Well, this isn't news so I climb back into the cabin, put her into gear, release the handbrake and then go aft to kick the offending arm up from the horizontal to release it. To my horror, despite engine resistance, the truck continues to move and I realise that the downslope is steeper than it had seemed. Like a rabbit I jump back into the cabin to hit the footbrake but, like a clumsy fool, catch at the steering wheel and swing it hard right. We start to career down the slope gathering speed and when fatal disaster seems inevitable we crash into a tree - that very same tree - and the billy is a write-off. The cabin woodwork has taken the shock and has me jammed in the driver's seat where I hardly dare move, fearing the body has been crushed. Slow movement helps to prove that limbs can be moved so I slowly climb down to the ground again, aghast at the narrow escape. As I recover I go ahead to pull away smashed bits of woodwork so that I can restart, reverse, circle around and, somewhat battered, finally regain the road.

Much later I delivered the first telephone box to Newton Boyd from Glen Innes and helped to position it beside the store. That was all right - but not the next delivery which consisted of a load of 100 bags of chaff plus a heavy box of gelignite. Outside the post office I eased off the lead ropes and clambered up on top to lower the 18 kg box of explosives to the roadway. To my alarm a few of the chaff bags slipped and the dangerous thing was about to follow them when thankfully, I was able to grab at the box. At my yell onlookers rushed to help me secure the near-disaster and lower it peacefully to terra firma. Had it plunged the 7 metres or so to the ground there would not



Terry camped between South Grafton  
and Glen Innes 1921



The New State Transport Company's truck  
after being pulled up a steep greasy grade to  
Devil's Lookout on the Glen Innes road, 1921.

have been any Newton Boyd, truck or wretched me, just a big hole in the ground after a big, big bang.

And now for the Dalmorton Tunnel, the last road episode. I used to buy chaff in Glen Innes for sale in Grafton which allowed a sufficient profit to cover normal freight charges. Initially I bought from an Australian store but as the bags supplied were not up to standard I switched to Chinese suppliers where the load was always as good as the handful proffered as a sample. So with about 113 bags of chaff on board the truck is highloaded with the height from road level governed by the clearance within the Dalmorton Tunnel which has to be passed through on the run ahead back to the Clarence. So once arrived, I stop at the entrance to the tunnel, climb to the top of the load and judge that we should be clear. I have got to give it a go or reverse back over half a mile to a flat section to unstack the entire top level in order to reload which is no light task solo. So keeping my ears back I go ahead but halfway through the darkness comes an awful crunching and ripping. Unsuspected jagged rock in the tunnel roof is tearing the top layer of the load and cascading chaff is taking with it most of my anticipated profit in Grafton...

Here we come to the old rhyme about all work and no play making Jack a dull fellow so I balanced out any impression you may have of endless truck toil with excellent friends at both ends of the run. At GNS (the railway's abbreviation for Glen Innes) I got to know the Tindal family, especially daughters Dorothy, Ann and Freida. Mother was a dear and when I became ill during a visit to their home, without any ado she put on her Army Nurse's uniform to tend me during my indisposition.

I also met the sisters McGregor, Helen and Gwen, and found myself invited to join them in an invitation to a special 'do' in the Town Hall for which evening dress was required. But I had none. Then Helen remembered that she had her brother's 'tails' - he had been killed whilst serving with the AIF - and like a dear she got them out for me, and they fitted perfectly. So off we drove into town by sulky to enjoy ourselves. Then, as a bonus, next morning I was given the entire outfit - my first evening rig.

In due course I also met Tindal cousins in Armidale. Dorothy was, alas, a widow, her husband another war casualty. With her two children, Arch and Betty, she made a home briefly for me. The youngsters were just about knee high to a grasshopper and I fondly recall taking them for walks, a tiny hand in each of my massive paws. Years later, during the Japanese Darwin air raid of World War Two, Arch Tindal, by then a Wing Commander RAAF, was killed and in memory of his valour the new airfield near Katherine was named Tindal Airfield.

When the Gwydir Highway was opened in 1960 conditions for the long-distance motorist were definitely upgraded compared with what they were when I knew the Grafton to Glen Innes run. At just under 40 km from Glen

Innes and 8 km before Bald Knob the new highway starts to swing north, yet attains Grafton within 161 km; that is, 13 km less than the old road. Traversing much more tolerable country, its curves and grades are indeed kindly - in fact, a modern speedway. Had it existed in my time there would have been no transport route to pioneer.

And so on to about mid-1922 when drawn by the wish to see more of this wide wide land below the Equator I sold my partnership in the New England Truck venture and moved on to Longreach and into a new era of my life.



## CHAPTER 5

# Reaching Out

June 1922 found me in Longreach, central Queensland, where I left the train from Brisbane before tackling the next stage, 48 km on to Wellshot Station where I was sure of a job in the woolshed. But, as I was to find out, Longreach was evidently without a spare bed for the night, all pubs being booked out for Race Week. So it seemed as though I would have to unroll my swag in some odd corner and make the best of it. Rather miserable, I slunk into a small cafe and happened to ask the waitress if she had any idea as to how my problem could be solved. The bright lass pointed across the street and exclaimed: 'Try your luck over there. A couple of men who mess around with an aeroplane have a huge verandah and not a soul camped on it.' And that is how I met Hudson Fysh(4) and Paul McGuiness(5) - 'Huddy' and 'Ginty'. Bless her.

I have been able to gather one or two human and appealing instances concerning Fysh and McGuiness from some of the events of their early days, those months of battling when, after a series of pioneering flights, they were seeking to establish a regular air service. Once, with their plane in the open, they tied it down with rope and slept in their swags alongside, quite unaware that the local goats were busy eating the fabric of the wings. Less enterprising chaps would have seen this as the end. But not they. From a produce store they got thick brown paper plus tarred bags which they sewed on over the chewed up parts. Praying that the plane would be airworthy, Huddy took off on a solo test; gently, cautiously, hardly clear of the ground. Hallelujah - it worked!

A hangar then having been built at Longreach, a cat evidently used to curl up and sleep in the plane and pilot Moody discovered this rather too realistically during a flight when at 1,000 metres his 'passenger' decided to wake up and thereupon jumped onto his helmet - he just had time to make a grab for it before it tried to jump overboard which would have been - end of pussy.

It was chiefly through the financial help of Fergus McMaster, a grazier of Brisbane, that the air service was founded. Both Fysh and McGuiness had been commissioned to survey the Longreach to Darwin land route lying along the path of a possible Australia to England air route. Driving a Model T Ford

they got to Katherine where they parted, Fysh staying on to plan airfields. McGuiness, on his way to his Queensland home, happened to meet McMaster in Cloncurry and that chance meeting proved to be the cornerstone in the affairs of our pair. It stimulated a sequence of financial events which culminated in the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Limited being founded on 16 November 1920. Five months after I met them they started a regular service of 929 km - Charleville to Cloncurry, flown in two stages.

From then onwards the sky was the limit. Ginty dropped out but Huddy went on and up till he reached the top. We did not meet again until during World War Two when he was Chairman of QANTAS in Sydney. His staff was then about five thousand. But - and this is the main thing - he was just the same dear person I had known those twenty-two years previously. I re-met him in Hunter Street, Sydney, and to my delight he had not altered in character; concisely, he was still a 'simple' man in the finest meaning of that oft-abused adjective.

Before leaving Longreach, through an introduction, I met some very nice people and was asked by them to a dance where I would surely have been out of place in khaki trousers and open-neck shirt. But luckily I had brought some other clothes with me - just in case. So I was able to turn up 'looking proper'. Later that evening, on some excuse or other, I left the dance early and changed back into bush gear, dropped the suitcase with its precious contents with someone I knew, and set off to hump the swag to Wellshot Station. Some miles out of town I camped for the night and pulled the blanket over my face. But I had a strange awakening soon after sun-up: voices and someone uncovering my face. To my amazement they were several women from the dance who, seeing what was probably a poor old swaggie, were now looking down with surprise on the young man they had known the night before. As was understandable, the story followed me around for quite a time, though not maliciously.

At Wellshot the annual sheep shearing was in full swing, the shearing shed buzzing with 40 stands. After the two-day silent walk the activity seemed immense, especially as the annual competition for the top tally of Australia was firing all hands into speed. Teric Teric Station near Blackall (then the largest station in Queensland with possibly more than 405,000 ha) was the rival. We won, with, if memory is right, 108,000 shorn. I was only a shed hand: one two-hour run picking up bags, the next standing at a table sorting them into first and second locks and also bellies. That was heaven after the rush of getting the bags from the shearers. The wool-pressers, poor devils, often worked until 11 pm in order to bale the daily shearing for road and then rail transport.

Came the finish - and just the kind of job I welcomed. The Kelly brothers of Inverell, New South Wales, and Nigel Love had collected 7,000

wethers from Beaconsfield Station and were driving 'On the outer Barcoo where churches are few'. Riding daily behind them was heaven again. One day, resting at midday, I squinted up and saw a crow in the tree just above. The cunning one, to test if the body he was espying were alive or not, started to break off twigs and drop them around. Aware of the stunt I never blinked an eye. Then it flew down, landed very close to have a look-see and when I moved, with a squawk it was airborne in a flash of wings.

I quit the outfit at Blackall and reached Winton where I found myself with nothing to do. Originally, when in Glen Innes, a friend, Carden Seaton, and I had planned to cross the north with pack horses, even as far as the Westralian coast (6). But when we had met by arrangement in Longreach the drought said No! to the project definitely, so the answer seemed to be casual work until the clouds opened. Then he went his way and we lost touch and did not meet again until World War Two after he had done a very worthwhile job behind the Japanese lines in New Guinea. He was then Colonel of Intelligence.

It was while I was working at the local garage in Winton that I heard a great deal concerning that huge tract of territory stretching away to nowhere and as yet largely unexplored - the Northern Territory. My thoughts centred on some way of getting out there to have a look at the country for myself and that brought up the question of transport and the idea came gradually but with growing conviction - why not the motor car? No one had ever taken a motor car east-west across that land before, but why not use one to get either north to Darwin or endeavour to get right across to Broome in Western Australia and thus cross the continent? An ambitious project. Which should it be? A flip of the coin settled my indecision. Heads for Broome; tails for Darwin. Heads won.

But when I mentioned the idea around in the hope of finding a companion for the journey I met flat discouragement. 'Can't be done. Trackless country, apart from a few hundred miles of bush track. The interior's never been properly surveyed and maps just don't exist. And water? - Well, maybe or maybe not. And how the hell are you going to manage for fuel?'

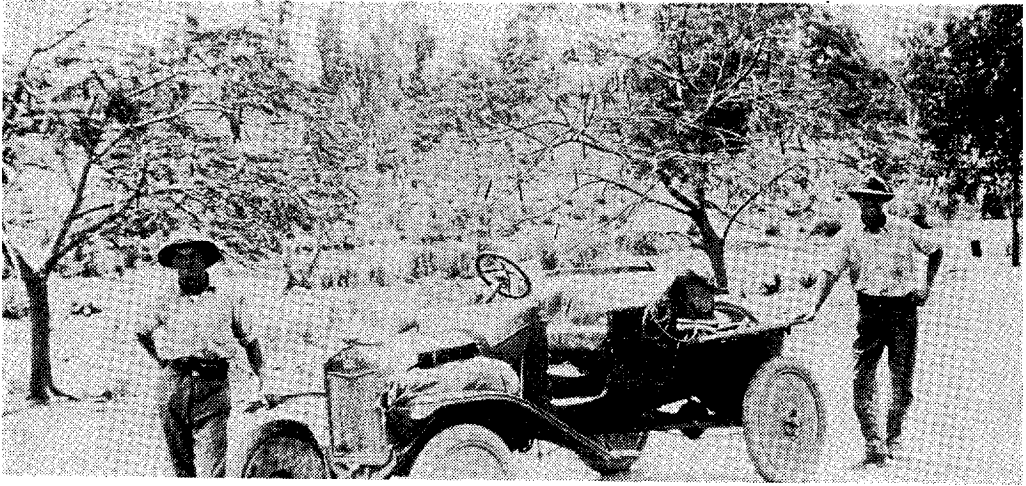
All sound advice, yet the more determined I became to go ahead with my plan. The problem was to find someone to join me. I almost made a nuisance of myself hunting around. Then, through a chance meeting with an Englishman, Hansard Yockney, who was an overseer on a sheep property some 10 km north of Winton, I literally 'bumped into' his cousin, Richard Yockney, in the local pub and he agreed to team up with me, to make a common fund of our savings and to take on the venture for better or for worse. Thus I found Richard Yockney, who proved to be the staunchest companion all the way, even to saving my life later on during the venture.

Our plans went ahead and centred round an old car - a 1913 Model T Ford hardly fit to run after its 10 years of service but, so the owner assured us, with ding-dong works. The purchase was made and the intervening months until February 1923 were occupied by preparing 'Lizzie' (as we named her) for the trials ahead; we virtually rebuilt the vehicle and the frame was strengthened for tough roadless sections. Our scheme was to stop at homesteads on the way and earn money for further fuel and provisions. And so we finally set forth on our quest: 'Left for unknown destination 6.2.23' was chalked by someone on the front wheel of 'Lizzie' as we took off and one grinning well-wisher dubbed us the 'Mutt and Jeff' explorers - a title that went with us for many a mile.

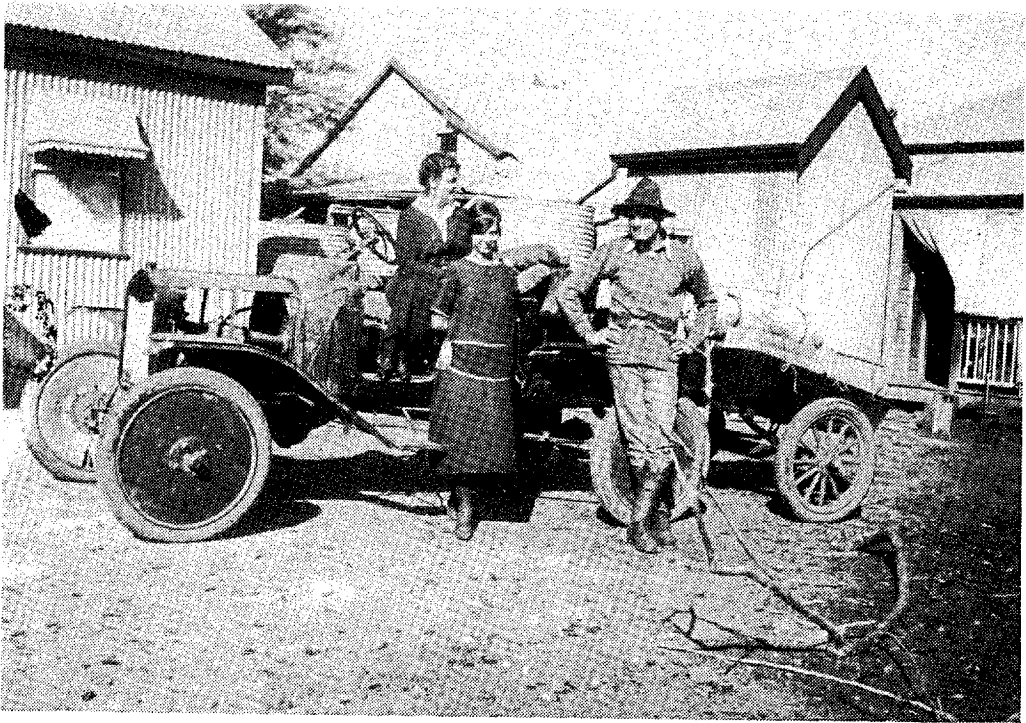
Well, we did it, Dick and I. Nine months later we arrived at our destination, and in thinking back over this (now historic) first east-west crossing of Australia (Winton, Queensland, to Broome, Western Australia) perhaps one of the most momentous experiences was when luck brushed our shoulders during an encounter with a fortune en route. Camping with some cattlemen droving in from the Northern Territory they told us of two 'rock busters mucking about a few miles up the track' (typical stockmen's attitude versus prospectors). Following their directions we found the track-side camp of the two prospectors JC Miles and W Simpson who made their discovery in March 1923. Somewhat hesitantly we asked if we could visit their prospect and were made welcome to do so. We followed them to their find at Lagoon Creek, a wide outcrop of silver-lead which they had named the Racecourse Mine after an oval outcrop of rock on a bare patch of hillside.

Both were keen to bombard us with the values and prospects of their find and capped the lot by advising that as the block alongside theirs was for pegging out, then why not by us? But in our ignorance Broome seemed a worthier object and we did naught about it. Little did we realise that the photograph I took that day before we said farewell to those two who were then bagging their first ore consignment on that scored hillside records the birth of the now famous Mount Isa Operation which was assessed as the most important discovery of silver-lead in Australia of that decade. That block which might have been ours proved to be one of the richest in the ground and subsequently changed hands for 10,000 pounds. Today's price - ?! And we, blinded, just drove on and away from a fortune.

In case you are wondering how the two 'Mutt and Jeff' explorers got on together out in the wilds of Northern Australia, let me say that things went well with us. As the miles bumped by we usually managed to deal with difficulties as they came along and solve our problems. One such I remember occurred at Rankin River, a place which at that time possessed only two buildings, the police barracks and the store, and scattered homesteads. Here we learnt that the local annual races were to take place which might give an opportunity to obtain work.

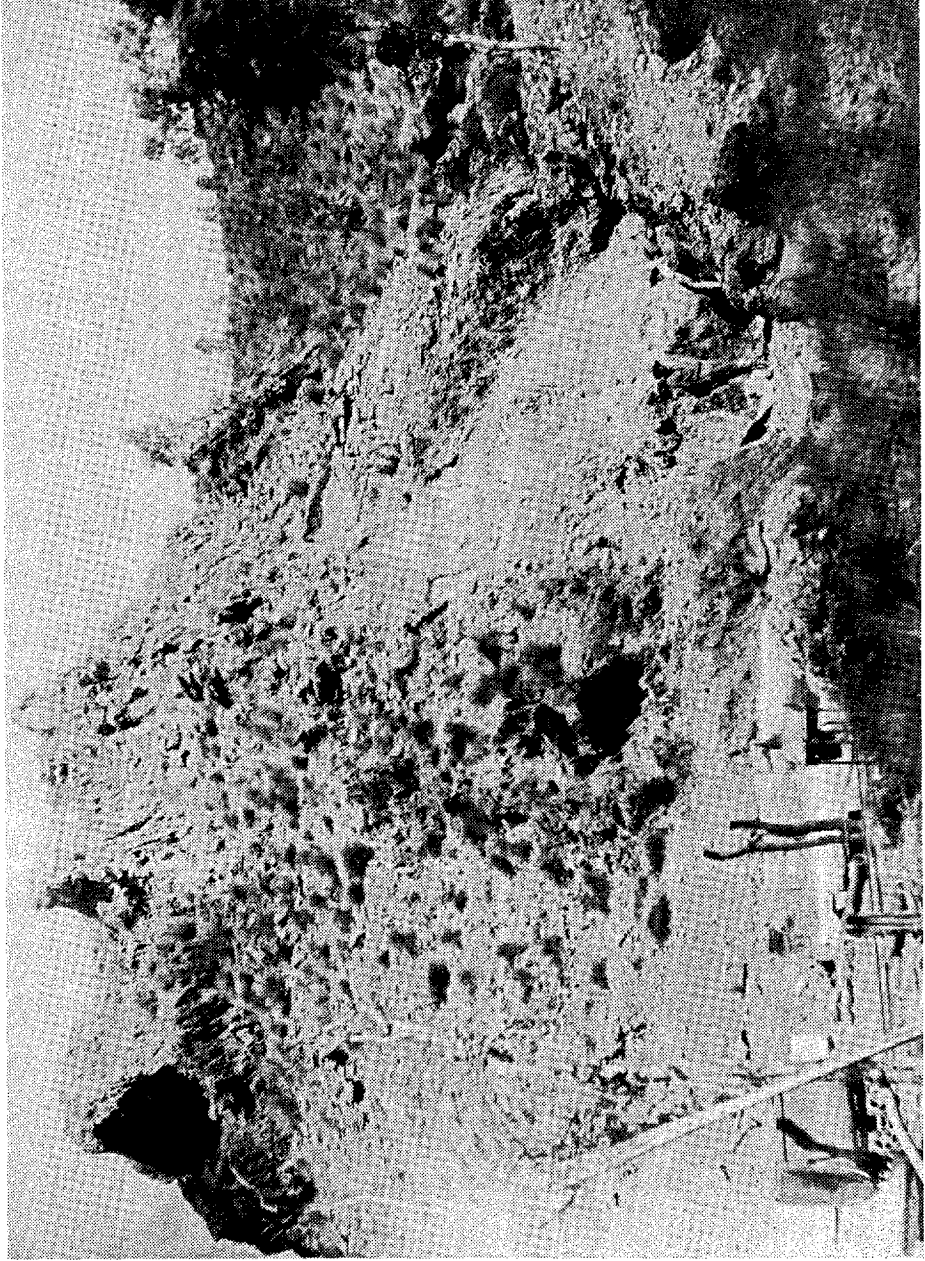


Dick Yockney (left) and Michael Terry with the 10 year old Ford which they drove from Winton, Qld, to Broome, WA, in 1923



Two friends with Terry and the Ford and its trailer at the start of the journey

(Both from the Terry Collection, National Library, Canberra)



The Racecourse Outcrop, looking Southeast, not long after  
Michael Terry and Dick Yockney visited it in 1923  
(Photograph courtesy of Mt Isa Mines)

Next morning we had a muster of all the garments we possessed, for our depleted wardrobe would not permit of dual purpose. It was voted that I should attend the races - which I did, dressed in the best of our wardrobe, leaving poor old Dick to stay hidden in the creek all day as he was not then fit for public gaze.

I do remember that things did boil up somewhat once - some minor matter probably blown up out of all proportion - and we nearly resorted to fisticuffs; in fact, Dick was just about to black my eye, when it was suddenly all over as he remembered he couldn't drive! Surely the maddest scrap ever in the wilderness.

It was later on in the journey that our luck did nearly peter out for we ran short of supplies of benzine for 'Lizzie'. We had had to scrounge fuel supplies from cattle stations as and when we could along the way. Having been unable to buy sufficient for the 217 km ahead to Soakage Creek, the last lap before getting to our first cattle homestead in Western Australia, we had taken a calculated risk in being able to reach that point on our dwindling supply - and had lost out. We were stuck. So when 'Lizzie' died on us we shouldered swags, took the small map we had been able to obtain showing general directions to the homestead plus our small supply of food and water and set out to walk the trackless 48 km ahead by compass. Only the lightest gear was carried. No blankets, just a small sugar bag holding some johnnie cakes, meat, tea, sugar and a gallon of water was carried in a tin which had previously held old engine oil but had been boiled out to get rid of any remains.

Thus we set out across the plain but walking became very tiring when the sun gained strength. By midday both of us were thirsty and we decided to stop for a spell. Whilst I was lighting the fire to boil the pot Dick took a small drink from one of the other vessels. Suddenly he spluttered and almost threw the tin away from him. Hell - the water was contaminated. Some of the oil had still remained in a corner of the tin and although we now boiled and strained it through a shirt several times, the horrible taint of burnt oil remained. We reckoned, however, that we could manage till we hit the homestead, probably that evening. Then a lovely, deep drink...

So we continued, walking on springy tufts of spinifex grass but by evening no sign of habitation and the arid country still as limitless as ever. Again we referred to the directions we had obtained. Reflection made it clear that on the most conservative basis we had covered 29 km. Thus the homestead should not be more than 24 km away; a comforting thought to tide us through the cold night. Yet we knew something was wrong, very wrong.

We ate our meagre rations and drank oily tea that evening in silence. Altogether we spent a miserable night; no blankets and only cotton shirts and trousers which were no protection against the cold. We even tried burying ourselves in the spinifex to gain warmth. Some was obtained, but mostly

imaginary. Next morning by midday I was ashamed to discover signs of weakness and thirst was becoming a trial. Sipping the oil-laden water supply did little to allay it and only brought on nausea. It was useless. Better to discard it.

Towards afternoon the going changed and we were now shuffling through deep red sand and the thought came welling up that unless we could keep going and find water we were going to perish. Everything possible that could be discarded was just dropped on the track, until, through blurred vision, I discerned a depression and what looked like greenish bushes. I could hear the twittering of birds. A sign of water. I got myself forward to a partly-hidden creek and flopped down on to its bed - but my face was only buried in dry sand. That just about knocked the stuffing out of me. I got up and saw Dick stand, swaying, on the creek bank. No need to communicate. He realised I had not found water. Then he gave a hoarse cry and stumbled down into the creek bed further away. A miracle; his eye had caught a gleam. He had found water.

Our salvation was, indeed, only a tiny soak where we gulped the water down, all advice about drinking sparingly gone to the winds. Then we started shivering and were violently sick, but a spell flopped down in the sand brought slow recovery and the water was sipped slowly.

Water had been found, but hunger remained. Our meagre stock of food was nearly exhausted. The temptation was to remain just lying by the soak but every hour meant less reserve strength for getting ahead. Night came on - hellish hours when we both lay shivering and even the blacks' dodge of sitting between two fires was no comfort. As the morning star faded and whilst handing out our pitifully small ration of food, I remember glancing at Dick's face and realised he thought our number was up. Numbly, I thought the same. As we sat there, dishevelled and blackened by crouching over the fire, we must have looked two miserable scarecrows in the first grey light of the morning.

It must have been about midday when I happened to be in the lead, that, brushing between two thick bushes with a stick, I literally fell across an old cart track. Then we found others, but the situation was perplexing for some ran west-east whilst others were in the opposite direction. Our gamble was to decide which way to go, following this freak sign of human presence. But, to our utter dismay, the main track petered out, giving way to vague marks, winding about the bush. Later we discovered trees where posts had evidently been cut from their trunks and realised that these were timber-getters' tracks. If we could hold out long enough it made good sense that the tracks would lead towards the station and habitation. In vain we searched but couldn't pick them up again; nor, scanning every corner of the view, could we discover any clearing and the white gleam of corrugated iron roofs.



There was only one thing to do. Get back to the precious soak. Here we held a council of war and as I realised that Dick had a walking reserve greater than mine, for this last struggle back to water had taken almost all my strength, I put the proposition to him that instead of dividing our last morsel of food he should take it and have a shot at getting through on his own to habitation. He argued at first, saying that we should perish together and it took all my halting arguments to persuade him. Finally he more or less muttered the words: 'I'll do it. But I hate it'. So we shook hands and as I watched his weary figure plodding away through the bush I thought I had seen the last of any human being.

I sat down and took stock of my worldly possessions; a quart pot, a revolver, pipe, tobacco and matches.

Close by was an old black's gundhi. I cleaned it out and dragged in wood for the night's fire. I spent the night curled up inside the shelter with a small fire as close as was safe. It was like the others, a long drawn-out misery, with every tale of starvation flitting through my mind. Smoking helped to tide over the hours.

Next day I noticed two galahs come to the soak for water and perch on a bush not far ahead. At least an hour was spent crawling to get within sure range. Finally, I was so close it seemed impossible to make a miss. Resting the revolver on my arm, squinting along the sights with my nose almost on the barrel, I tried to steady the swaying gun. I could almost taste galah as I pulled the trigger.

Immediately I dropped the gun and clapped my hands to my eyes. God! I was blind. With my face too close to the breach the burning powder had stung my whole face and eyes. At last I dared to drop my hands and open my eyelids. I could see! Sight was blurred, but it was sight.

I started going off my head at times, hearing a man singing and wheels creaking through the bush; so realistic, that I raised myself up, yelling to them to come back.

Then the temptation to shoot myself grew almost overpowering. I fought down the first spasm and went to throw away the ammunition, but thus I would sling away any chance of salvation should some animal come by. Also, there was perhaps a chance of blacks coming along. I could signal them. Hostile or no, they would have been welcome. They would have glorious food.

There is no need to talk more about that lone vigil. As I lay propped up under a tree near-exhaustion clouded the hours. I put my head down and drifted into sleep, for hours maybe, when I suddenly awoke, sensing something had occurred. At last my eye was riveted on something black and shining, half hidden in a bush. I stared at the apparition. Then it moved and whisked

about. I was watching a horse's tail. Now I could see the whole horse, and what is more, a fully dressed black on its back... and there appeared through the scrub 100 m away a buckboard with two horses. Mad with joy I blazed three rounds into the air. But neither the rider nor the turnout took the slightest notice; they seemed to be continuing along the track and about to pass me by. I tried to follow but kept falling over - by now they had seen me so I just flopped down and let them come up. Charlie Kemp of the Northern Territory Police and, God bless him, Dick.

Soon brandy and milk pulled me round and a couple of hours later at Soakage Creek homestead I had a morsel of glorious steak and damper. Then more and more at intervals until later I had a large piece of juicy grilled steak in one hand and a slice of damper in the other. I sighed for very joy.

Dick would never tell me his story or talk much about the time he had in getting through but I did manage to get the whole thing pieced together. In the baldest, simplest language, he managed to re-locate the horse track which he followed until a fence barred his way. Previous experience told him that he had found a horse paddock but there he collapsed. He just lay, face to the ground, where he was found by some station boys who ran to the homestead, fetching three white men back at once. In the terse official report of the police trooper, who was one of them, it states:

Man found in state of collapse. Nearly perished.

Directly he pulled round, Dick told them of his mate. Horses were mustered, a buckboard loaded and they were away. Well, the rest you know, or I would not be here to tell of it. How Dick ever managed to do that distance will always be a mystery to me. It may have been that his life at sea and vigorous physical training since his discharge (he was always keen on boxing) gave him just that extra stamina to keep going and thus save my life (7).

There was an incident at the soak which I shall always remember. My pipe had been lost in the excitement of the rescue. I got the trooper to get his boy - Yerry - to look for it. Calling him over he said, pointing to the spot, 'White feller bin lose'm pipe longa that feller waddi'. Although he hunted, as only a black feller can, the pipe could not be found.

The black came over to his boss. 'White feller pipe no more. Me look all about, nothing find'em. Mine bin got'em pipe, close up new feller. White feller bin want'em'. Thus he offered me his greatest treasure, the only pipe he possessed. I told him, 'No more, Yerry. By'em by me bin get'em new feller pipe longa station'. And so the incident closed, helping to show what a sportsman a black feller can be.

We were able to get a 36 litre drum of benzine back to 'Lizzie' and without any other major mishaps reached Broome on 4 October where we drove into town giving vent to hearty yells for very joy. We had done it. We were actually there, with the deep blue of the Indian ocean in full view, the climax of the first Winton to Broome motor crossing. Once the populace had got over the shock of our appearance (and our noise) they realised the tidings and rallied round us inspecting 'Lizzie' and standing us innumerable drinks. That night I slept on the first soft bed for nearly eighteen months. It was so uncomfortable that I had to take the blanket off, and rolled in it, slept blissfully on bare verandah boards.

In a week's time, after a thorough combing of the district, a purchaser was found for 'Lizzie'. But we hated parting with our faithful friend, for by carrying us and our load so faithfully without a stumble by the way she had become part of us. God bless her.

\* \* \*

In December of that year I was back in Sydney again where, prior to Christmas, I received an invitation to a party given by Bertha Clay, daughter of Dr Clay, and afterwards Lady Jordan. That evening, spent at her home in Neutral Bay, a harbourside suburb, certainly changed my whole life. As it was during a time before television and such-like had arrived to supersede old-fashioned entertainment, the evening was passed in lively conversation or songs round the piano and to keep things going I related bits about the Model T Ford car in which Yockney and I had been the first motorists to cross Australia from east to west. I recounted how it had taken us nine months as we had to work our passage, being broke, and how at every homestead where my trade was useful we had earned a bit, enabling us to get supplies of benzine for the stage ahead of our journey. I told of things along the way, how we met our first wild buffalo and wild blacks, and how we nearly died of thirst in the desert. Later, as the party was breaking up a stranger who must have been absorbing my yarn, asked me: 'What are you doing about the press rights?' 'Well, nothing', I replied. 'As a matter of fact I'm thinking of getting a job with a motor firm, having been trained at the Austin Motor works in England'. 'Never mind about that,' was his response, 'Will you come and see me in the SUN Office tomorrow morning?'

At 10 am the next day I walked into the building in Castlereagh Street. Feeling strangely apprehensive I asked for Mr Wynne and in no time faced him across his desk. Next, I met Frank Ashton, SUN Editor, who having plied me with pertinent questions, asked me to deliver two newspaper articles for his paper. That evening in the boarding house where I was staying in Elizabeth

Bay Road, I mentioned to an older man about this bolt from the blue that had struck me and said I had no idea of how to write a newspaper article. He then offered me the services of his typist at his office in Phillip Street. It was there the next day that I walked up and down, talking, talking, while she typed at machine-gun speed. The result, my first faltering steps into the world of writers was accepted by the SUN who paid me overnight for it, as I was due to leave within a few days for America. The reason for my departure was that friends had insisted, particularly Arch Pursell, that once I got myself to Detroit, Henry Ford would give me unlimited money for the story of our 'Tin Lizzie' in the Australian wilds...

I marvelled then, as I do now, at what resulted from that evening in Neutral Bay. As the actors came on stage they presaged a complete veer in my life from the ordinary to the extraordinary. Firstly, my hostess who had asked me to her party; Richard Windeyer (later Sir Richard, QC) who gallantly facilitated my efforts to get my writing down on paper and, lastly, dear old Arthur Watkin Wynne, who 'found' me, being thus the greatest of them all (8).



Arthur Watkin Wynne

## CHAPTER 6

# Sky the Limit

Two and a half weeks after leaving Sydney by ship I found myself installed in an hotel in Market Street, San Francisco for a three-day wait for the Detroit train. It was during this time that I just managed to escape death. Being a stranger in 'Frisco I was unaware of the antics of the Municipal and Private tramways grinding their respective ways outside my pub. When an uphill tram jerked itself to a halt, by habit I started to cross the street and just avoided its competitor, seconds before out of sight, which was nearly on top of me. It darned well nearly chewed me up.

On the journey to Detroit the railway line crossed the Great Salt Lake, Utah, and midway across the 50 featureless kilometres whichever way you looked, no land was in sight. Later, when the train bailed up for an hour or so at Ogden, Utah, I decided to nick up to town for a meal. Having done so, I lit my pipe for a quiet smoke. But directly the match was lit a policeman banged his truncheon on the pavement and started quickly towards me. Wondering what the hell I had done wrong, I bolted like a scared rabbit for the station where I discovered that smoking in Mormon City was, and I assume still is, taboo.

Exit from Detroit Station was up a ramp and at street level a voice was exclaiming: 'Say, boys, I tell you she's one fine city. Welcome to Detroit!' Having entered the first pub across the square, in the entrance I encountered half a dozen of the toughest-looking guys ever who glared in silent study. My immediate reaction was that they were there to rob the newcomer. Anyway, nothing alarming came of it, although I slept with locked door that night just in case.

Having an introduction from a Cincinnati solicitor to Henry Ford, in due course I presented the letter at his office. I still have the envelope: 'Mr Henry Ford. Introducing Mr M Terry'. The result was that I spoke with the great man himself. He listened patiently to my piece about his car in the wilds of the Northern Territory of Australia. When it seemed that he was impressed, I drew breath for him to reply. He did.

'You are a fine adventurous young man and have done what many of us would like to do. But, after all, the Ford has done what I always knew it could.' He did not even wish me good luck when I crept away, tail between legs.

I had, however, learnt a lesson which stood me in good stead: get a vehicle manufacturer in before the trip, not after. And I think it appropriate here to interject one of Henry Ford's own maxims: learn from the past to improve the future. I did.

All I got from Detroit was an article I wrote for the DEARBORN TIMES about Expedition No 1. And also another lesson about the American businessman. I had contacted two of them during my stay there to discuss a proposition I had in mind. In the course of our talk they seemed friendly enough, wondering possibly what they could make out of me. Next day I passed them in the street. No recognition. It was as though we had never met. My guess was that, having discussed the idea I put to them, their reaction was - wipe him.

In New York I met our Frank Hurley, the photographer, and also some very hospitable Americans who, knowing that I was en route for England, introduced me to their aunt who was due to travel aboard the same trans-Atlantic ship as myself. During the crossing things flowed smoothly and on arrival the upshot was that she pressed an invitation on me to dine with her as soon as she was settled in her London flat. For me, it was then ashore and home to see the family, living near London, where the promised invitation from shipboard aunt caught up with me and so launched me into my first skirmish with sex.

At her flat near Piccadilly Circus she certainly turned on a very special dinner à deux plus every indication that I, too, was very special for she seemed intent on getting nearer and nearer to me despite the fact that there was a large grand piano stationed right in the centre of the room which I kept using as a sort of backstop. Then she really turned on the works and the climax I shall never forget. With eyes like huge black organ stops she started chasing poor innocent me about the room. Fearing something quite dreadful was about to happen I kept her circling around that piano until finally I manoeuvred things and had aunt on one side of it and the door on mine. Like a flash I ripped it open and tore down the stairs as if hell itself were on my heels. I was staying temporarily in Chelsea, a long return run at night, and the heart was only just slowing to normal when I got back after so mysterious and frightening an experience. Could it, I gulped, have been the prelude to murder? Believe me, when a middle aged woman lusteth after a young greenhorn she can look terrible.

It was not long after that I met Kay at a London dinner party. Her tactics were so apt and so wise that my defences were gently dissolved during

our frequent meetings until I became eager to investigate the unknown. At last it was I (or so it seemed to immature me) who made the running until, trembling with excitement, we bedded. And soon it seemed that I was the initiator in our pleasurable pursuit. Had there been no forced break in our relationship possibly we would have ended up on the right side of the law. There would, however, have been a barrier to be pushed aside. Her husband was in the theatre world, on the management side, and his current domicile was in the United States where he let it be known that he had a lass. Kay told me that he boasted quite cheerfully: 'I'm a transatlantic bigamist'.

Now to take up the tale again. Enterprise being Mother's middle name, I found that she had already prepared some ground for me and had contacted Mr Arthur Hicks, Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society in London until his death in 1945, who gave me a warm reception, thanks to all the build-up. The climax was that I was invited to give a paper on 5 May 1924, just two days after my 25th birthday.

The evening began with a dinner in a Bond Street restaurant, the Guest of Honour being a mere puppy. We then crossed the street to the Aeolian Hall. En route I encountered what I thought to be a bad omen so that when my sponsors walked under the ladder propped against a building, they looked back in amusement as I dodged round it via the gutter. My paper was entitled 'From East to West Across Northern Australia'. Afterwards, from among the group an older man said to me, 'Terry, you have spoken well this evening. You obviously have a bent for exploration. You should do more of it'. My reaction was that he was being merely polite. When we parted I asked one of the Committee: 'Who was that who spoke to me?' and learned that he was Sir Archibald Weigall, Governor of South Australia. Accordingly, as a new Fellow, such advice from an experienced one was taken seriously, which altered my life thereafter (9).

For the next seven months I careered all over the place seeing Tom, Dick and Harry about support for another trip, from Darwin to Port Hedland in Western Australia via the Canning Desert. As there was no record in my favour except the Winton to Broome crossing the answer was consistently negative. Came a certain Friday in December when, despite free bed and board with the family, I accepted defeat, having used up all my savings. And fruitlessly, so it seemed. 'Curse Weigall', I thought and decided to try for a deck-hand's job to work passage back to dear old Australia. But Fate, I am convinced, stepped in, for the very next morning there arrived a letter from the National Geographic Society, Washington, USA, enclosing a cheque for \$US500 in payment for a piece I had sent them 'on spec.' entitled 'Across Unknown Australia'. But although two on that Society's editorial staff at the time - Dr J O LaGorce, Vice President and Associate Editor, and Gilbert Grosvenor - liked the article it never got into print. Evidently their editorial policy was to publicise Australian cities rather than the bush. That letter, dated 24 November 1924, is among my treasures.



Funds now being renewed I was able to try again. Miraculously, henceforth it was 'yes' everywhere. The Royal Geographical Society did the expedition the honour of awarding me the Cuthbert Peel Grant and consented to supply instruments including hypsometrical apparatus to determine height above sea level. They also recommended a qualified surveyor who had recently received instruction in the Society's Survey School. A number of people, searched out after a long quest, clubbed together to provide additional capital. Lord Apsley, who had previously been in Australia, also helped with funds and his interest in settlement possibilities induced him to join the outfit.

Pathé Frères of cinema newsreel fame agreed for one of their cameramen plus all necessary equipment to come along to record our travels. Colonel Kuhne (War Office Experimental Section) influenced Guy Motors to supply two of their trucks (named GUY Roadless Vehicles) equipped with trailers. The trucks were fitted with rear caterpillar tracks in place of wheels and a performance-record under Australian bush conditions was required. These he agreed to have shipped to Port Darwin. The A. J. Stevens Motor Cycle Company lent one of their machines plus sidecar as emergency transport and general scout. These bikes, English built, had earned for themselves a good reputation for use in the Australian inland.

So it was back to Australia for me to complete plans for the four month expedition. With equipment arrived and members finally assembled, we left from Darwin in July 1925 by rail to Katherine where the expedition proper started. Bush folk were amazed when they saw our trucks with their two back axles, and I can remember a black stockman being highly amused when he saw so many wheels. He laughed: 'Two wheels longa head. Two fella longa belly. Two more come up longa tail. My word, him all about cranky that one motor!'

Our main landmarks during the crossing to Broome were the South Esk Tablelands, Mount Cornish, the Fitzroy River and so on to Broome. Once at our destination I left the party by air for Perth. This hurrying ahead on my part was to make arrangements for both members and equipment, due to follow by sea, and also to get press articles under way. And it was in December 1925 that Norman Brearley(10) took me 'under his wings' and opened new horizons for me by flying me along the then-longest regular passenger service route in the world: Perth/Derby - 2,300 km.

I was properly scared before boarding the de Haviland at Broome. The pilot, Bertie Heath, was in the cockpit whilst the propellor was hand-swung to suck fuel into the cylinders. At the warning cry 'contact!' the swinger so positioned himself that when the motor fired, the propellor would not catch him whichever way it rotated. Suddenly there was a back-fire and the carburettor belched flames. This new chum jumped to the conclusion that the whole wretched plane was a write-off. Bertie, however, switched off and immediately someone was ready with a wet bag to stuff around the seat of the

fire, killing it calmly. After we took off I churned with fright thinking that any moment we might plunge earthwards burning. Thus it was almost a relief to be really airsick over the 90-Mile beach.

For many years Norman Brearley and I have been good friends and here follows what he has done for civil aviation in the outback. When peace came in 1918 he bought two surplus airplanes from a London Disposal Centre and had them crated for shipment to Fremantle whilst he and his wife came home by sea. On 2 August the following year, our Victorian, by then based in Western Australia, gave the first exhibition of modern flying at the West Australian Cricket Oval, 3 km from Perth. Exactly two years later (and 12 years after Blériot had flown the English Channel) the Federal Government granted him 25,000 pounds a year to fly passengers and mail Geraldton/Derby. With Australia's first Commercial Licence and airmail contract, he formed the West Australian Airways and started that service on 5 December 1921 with six Bristol Tourer Bi-planes - the first regular air service in Australia. In January 1924 the route was extended south to Perth, the State's capital city, and for the next ten years the following was his team: Len Taplin, Jimmy Woods, Eric Chater and Stan Brearley (Norman's brother). All of them were ex-war pilots. The airline grew so soundly that by 1929 the network extended to Adelaide with a route-total exceeding 4,800 km.

As a footnote, it was three years after that first flight of mine that on another expedition I engaged Jimmy Woods, piloting a converted two-passenger Bristol Fighter, to fly me inland over the Canning Desert. Again, airsickness tore at my guts. Having lost, it seemed, whatever tucker should have remained inside, I was ready to die when the motor died. In deathly silence we dived steeply towards the desert sandhills several hundred feet below. Indeed, I almost welcomed the prospect of a good hard thud into the face of Mother Earth, when suddenly our power returned. Jimmy passed a quick note: 'Sorry. Late changing tanks'. I have since learnt that my flight was the first over the Canning Desert. Be that as it may, I can only recall being no use to man or beast for hours after we landed at Wallal Station homestead. Nevertheless, I am now a conditioned air passenger who loves the speed and comfort of today's aircraft.

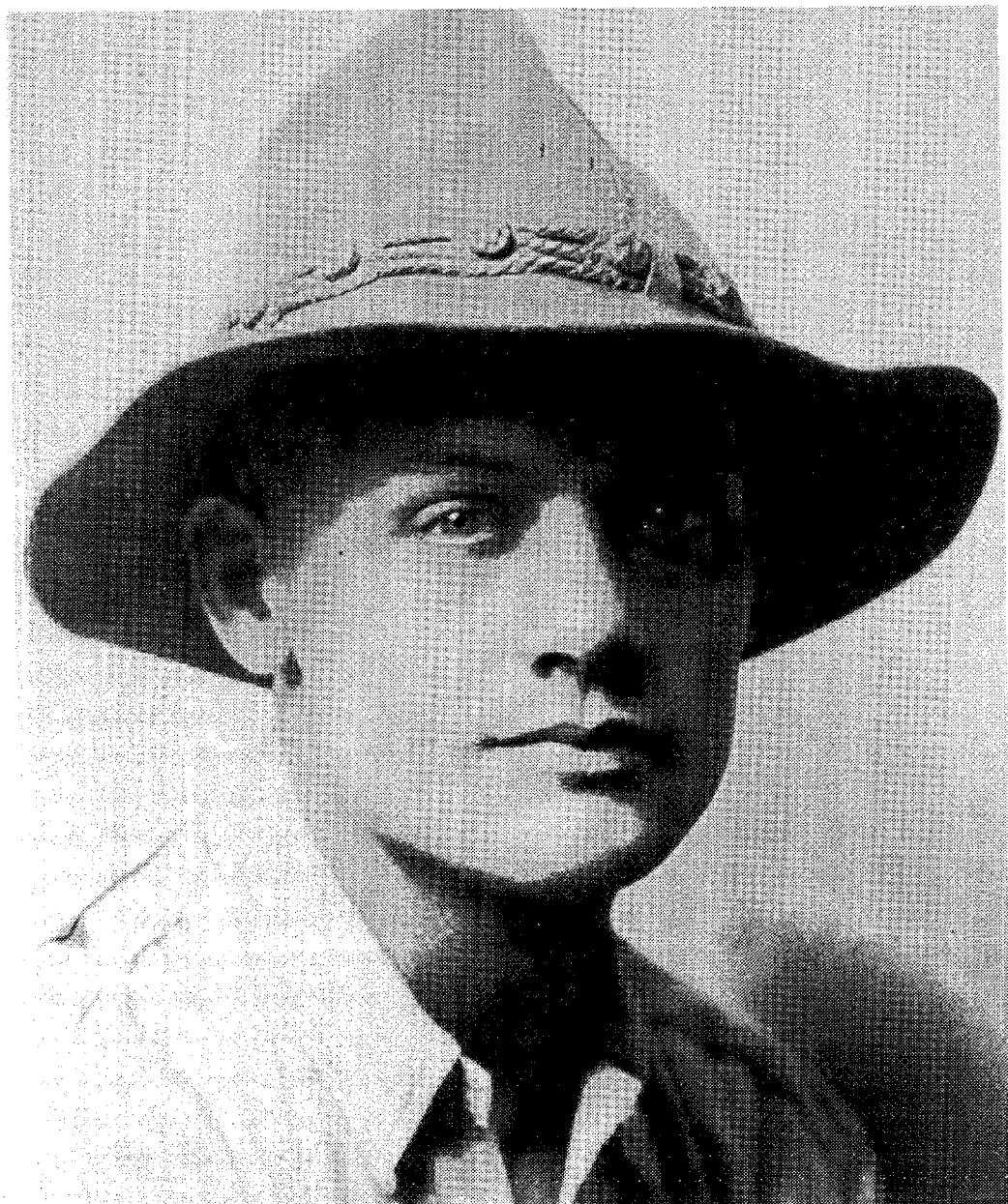
Having sailed in the LARGS BAY to England on 17 February 1926, I was again in London in early April where I shared a flat in Glebe Road, Chelsea, which is a name that has cropped up again for me now as I write in Glebe, a Sydney suburb. There was much to be done in clearing up loose ends: the War Office report, a paper to be prepared for the Royal Geographical Society, newspaper articles and the book (11).

Then in May that year came the General Strike - a complete nationwide stoppage throughout England which put a temporary halt to my activities. Lord Apsley telephoned asking me to join him at his temporary headquarters which was housed in a large tent erected on the Horseguards' Parade behind Whitehall, where our work was principally concerned with security.

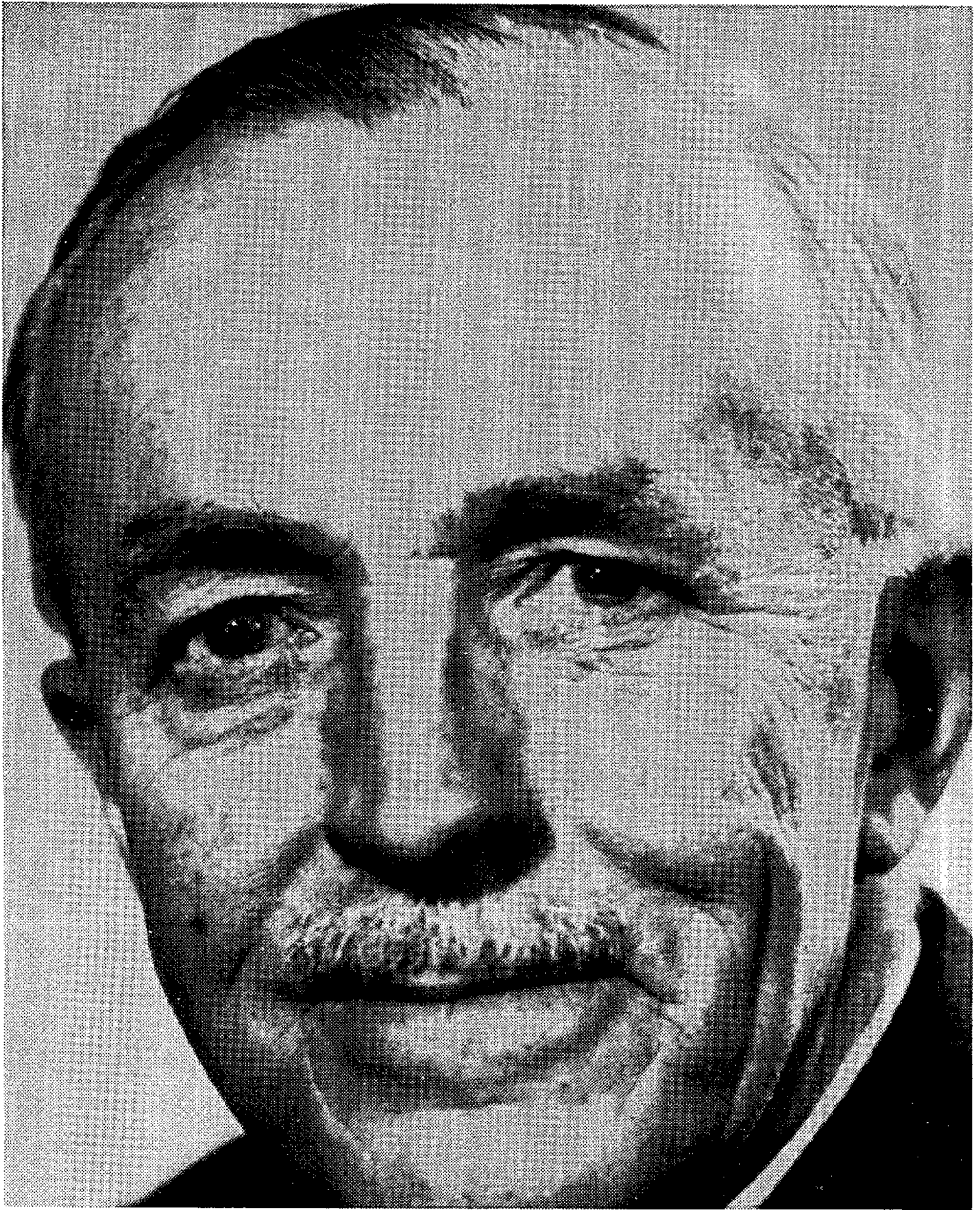
After that brief yet very nasty national upheaval, there was a party given in Lord Beaverbrook's flat, top floor of the DAILY EXPRESS building in Fleet Street, where, among the many attractive women present, I met Lady Mountbatten and was most favourably impressed with her looks, despite newspaper photographs. In 'the tent' I had also got to know Lady Dorothy Hanbury, wife of Sir Cecil, the Member for Dorset. The outcome was the first of many weekends I spent at their home at Kingston Maurward, 2 km out of Dorchester. Dorothy had really amazing house parties - not the least riotous yet highly entertaining without formality. Here I met Rosita Forbes, wife of Colonel McGrath. We had much in common as she had made a name for herself as a traveller, rivalling Clare Sheridan. It followed that I met her brother Tony Torr and his wife Maude. And thereby hangs a tale. They knew the Mitfords of Guyzance, Northumberland, and thoughtlessly I admitted 'knowing' them also. Out of the blue it was suggested that we should raid them. I just had to kill that - having been their former chauffeur!

Rosita, or Sita, as her friends called her, had a most kindly streak. One weekend when we were staying with Dodo Hanbury where Neville Chamberlain and other politicians made the going very heavy, Sita took pity on me. 'Michael, this is not your meat. Let's go for a walk'. How glad I was to accept her invitation. Another time she invited me to lunch in her London house to meet another guest, having rather assumed that neither of us would evince much interest in the other. Yet when I met Evan Morgan, Viscount Tredegar, descendant of Henry Morgan the Welsh-born buccaneer of 17th century fame, for reasons unexpected a common bond seemed forged between us and it followed that I often enjoyed a weekend at Tredegar Park near Cardiff.

Slowly the strings attached to the expedition were tied up except those concerning the film of the venture which had been made by Pathé Frères. They had already asked me to be ready for the Big Day. Meanwhile, having delivered the report on the performance of the Guy Trucks to Colonel Kuhne there came another surprise in the form of an invitation to watch a Salisbury Plains demonstration where several makes of the new six-wheel trucks which interested the War Office for cross-country work were to be tried out. I didn't guess at the time, but evidently he had something up his sleeve for me for at the final and toughest section of the route he suddenly asked me to drive the lead vehicle. Afterwards, I found myself in conversation with one of the spectators who looked not unlike a tough Australian. He talked about the performance of the vehicles, commenting specially on the final stage of the demonstration. 'That's good of him to come and speak to me', I thought. The incident was, if I may put it that way, Weigall at the Royal Geographical Society all over again, for when I asked Colonel Kuhne his name, most surprisingly he informed me: 'That's Morris of Morris Motors'. I was again able to talk with him during the morning lunch and mentioned about the plan I had for crossing Australia west to east when funds could be raised. Although he seemed only slightly interested I undertook to report any worthwhile



Terry in bush hat,  
a London photograph, 1927



Wing Commander Lester Joseph Brain, RAAF

progress, especially from the Australian end, where the hunt for backing would soon take off. I remember using the word 'soon' even though the plan was at that stage quite indefinite. But there was already a light shining in the future for me.

January 1927 was memorable, for during an afternoon of that month I was received at St James' Palace by the Prince of Wales, the summons having come through Sir Godfrey Thomas, Private Secretary to the Prince, whom I knew. At St James' I expected a scant few minutes but it extended to more than half an hour. The Prince immediately had me at ease and soon we were exchanging views about stock raising and comparing conditions in Australia with those in South Africa. Then came a knock at the door and his equerry entered: 'Sir,' he said, 'may I remind you that you are overdue at the House of Lords'. 'Well, let'em wait' (or words to that effect). 'Just now I'm more interested in talking to Terry,' was the Prince's reply.

Some time after, when night-clubbing with friends in Deane Street, London, I again saw the Prince, three times to be exact, each time on the dance floor and when passing close he said: 'Enjoying yourself, Terry?' Naturally I was gratified that he remembered me and my name. Pause a moment, please, and appreciate the marvellous facility of the House of Windsor in this respect which gains them such esteem and respect.

Four months later I again saw Sir Godfrey Thomas. It was prior to the release of the documentary covering my 1925 (second) Northern Territory expedition. The film was about to be presented at a private showing and I was hoping that HRH would consent to be present on that occasion. Most happily, the Prince did agree and I think he must have influenced half the Royal Family to join him. What a job I had arranging the seating list... So on 31 May 1927 the New Gallery Kinema in London's West End saw the private showing (strictly invitees only) of 'The Grip of the Wanderlust'. The cinema was packed, including, of course, expedition members and friends. Before the film was screened, I spoke an introduction from the stage, then descended to sit beside the Prince. Afterwards I escorted him to his waiting car but en route there was minor strife. A dense crowd had packed the pavement leaving only sufficient passageway for the Prince and myself. Suddenly they broke ranks and surged around us. Thankfully the Police intervened and put the matter right.

Outside the New Gallery Kinema the crowd had evidently mistaken me for Captain Lindberg who had just flown the Atlantic and was, by press report, due to be received by the the Prince. Actually that happened on 1 June, the day after the showing of the Wanderlust film on 31 May.

I have delightful memories of the whole occasion. Press photos showed the Prince and myself walking side by side towards the car and the enlargement which I received through Sir Godfrey was signed 'Edward P'. I

also have others, showing the expedition members then in London: Apsley, Prescott, Redknap (Pathé Frères) and myself. Jolly, Syme and Smitheram were in their homeland, Australia.

All of this being accomplished, I taxied to Sloane Square to lunch with friends, a really weary chap after all the excitement of addressing royalty and seeing the film.

Among the many who had been at the cinema that morning was Sir Alan Cobham. I had met him previously, prior to his England/Australia flight of 1926, and in conversation the idea had occurred to me that it would be fun if he would fly a letter of mine to a Melbourne lass. This he consented to do and on 3 October 1926 I received what is perhaps the first air-mail reply from Australia. Its envelope is inscribed 'Carried by Alan Cobham on his flight from Australia'. That air delivery was made eight years before regular airmail began across the world. It now reposes in the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney amongst the collection of Postal Rarities given by Ernest A. Crome and thus is safely preserved for all time.

## CHAPTER 7

# The Expedition Years

With all the loose ends concerning Expedition Number Two tied up and warmed by the hope that Sir William Morris would lend transport for Expedition Number Three, I rolled my swag in London and headed for Australia again. This time it was Melbourne. During the following seven months, as we prospectors say, 'I chased the elusive weight' - short for pennyweight, a gold measure. I combed Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney for backing based on my estimate of expenditure outlay: fuel, travel, wages, instruments, plus a margin for unexpecteds. Then in 1928 I met Sir William Morris again, this time in an Adelaide hotel during his business trip out here. After we had talked for some time he finally agreed to lend two 6-wheel Morris trucks from his Melbourne agent. Thus I achieved transport for my third planned expedition.

That seven-month hunt, told in some seventy-odd words, entirely disregards the false trails, refusals, disappointments and delays which dogged my footsteps until the sun broke through at last. To put the business side on a proper basis, Melbourne Accountants formed a company and named it ADMELSE Pty Ltd and allotted shares according to subscriptions. I had meant to call it ADMESY - until some bright lad exclaimed: 'But they'll call it 'AD'EM EASY!' That saved me from a real gaffe.

The 1928 expedition started from Western Australia. Our route from Port Hedland lay through Broome, Halls Creek, Tanami, the Granites, Alice Springs then on to Adelaide and Melbourne, a total of 4,968 km excluding 518 km in side trips. The total distance finally covered was 5,500 km in this the first motorised crossing of the heart of Australia, which serves to illustrate its true immensity (12).

During the seven months field work until the trucks were finally returned to Melbourne, we plotted and named forty topographical features between the border of Western Australia and the start of settlement along the Lander River, 290 km north-west of Alice Springs. Only some of them were actually our own discoveries but nobody as yet had given them geographical precision or names. All my work was accepted by Commonwealth Mapping (now the Division of National Mapping, Department of National Development & Energy) for inclusion in their maps.



I have always felt, however, that claim to discovery should be tempered by the thought of giving justice to some unknown bushman who, on quests without record or possibly known objective, had traversed those regions where surveys and charts were not available. For the interior of Australia is traced with the tracks of such men who have come, seen and conquered - or lost out - leaving no lasting record of their deeds and thus the information does not get to the outside world. So I have always gone warily myself when talking of new country, new discoveries.

I have on many occasions been asked: 'But why was nothing named after Terry?' I have explained that, quite rightly, the Royal Geographical Society would scowl upon such opportunism for publicity. Their dictate is that an explorer's work suffices as his monument. There is, however, no objection to bestowing place-names which have a personal connection. Whilst in the region of the South Esk Tablelands in 1925 we had climbed Mount Cornish (so named by Carnegie) where we erected a cairn of stones to record our ascent. From its summit a range of hills, hitherto unmapped and lying 48 km west, was sighted and plotted which I named the 'Dummer Range' after the former home of the Terry family in England - Dummer, near Basingstoke in Hampshire. This naming was subsequently confirmed to me by the Lands Department of Western Australia.

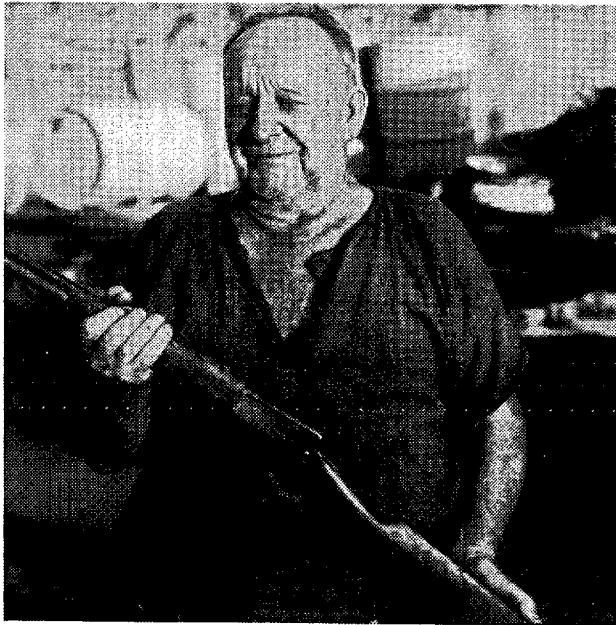
To commemorate benefactors and friends the first on the list during the Port Hedland to Melbourne crossing was Mount Morris in honour of Sir William Morris which lies 129 km east of Wallal Station on the 90-Mile Beach between Hedland and Broome. Mount Grimwade was named after Sir Russell, the shareholder who donated a special medical kit and the Hamer Hills after my friend Maurice B. Hamer, the Adelaide stockbroker, who took me by the hand and fathered me into the good graces of mining promoters and influenced so many Crow-Eaters (South Australians) to back us. Where we did find gold the site was named after Irene Vambrugh, the English actress, who had given me a lucky threepenny bit when we said good-bye in Melbourne. Hence the IVY leases.

It was after the expedition's crossing of the Tanami Desert that our six-wheeler trucks halted at Ryan's Well and at the small cattleman's homestead 104 km north of Alice Springs and near the Overland Telegraph Line - right in the centre - we encountered the Nicker family: Sam and Elizabeth Nicker, son Benjamin and his sister Margaret. Others of the family, Jane, Claude, and Eugene, were away at the time. It was son Benjamin who was destined to be with me on my future expeditions, covering untold miles within the Centre during the ensuing years. And if ever one of Australia's sons merited an epitaph, then it is surely Ben Nicker, Inlander Exceptional, who is the central figure of this Special Memory of Mine.

Ben, then 20, was a six-footer, lean and hard as the Northern Territory can make its sons. His voice, broken, went curiously high-pitched if he became



Bill Bird  
(from the Terry Collection,  
National Library, Canberra)

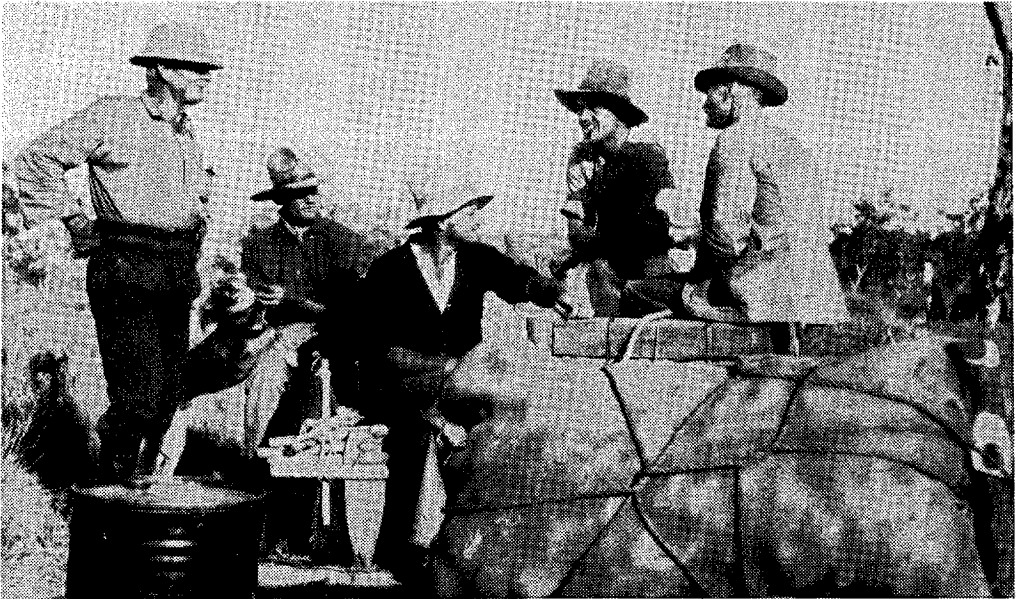


Sam Hazlett jr  
with Michael Terry's rifle,  
Halls Ck, 1980



Ben Nicker

(From the Terry Collection, National Library, Canberra)



Expedition departing 1933,  
Stan O'Grady on the left

excited by what he was saying. He had of course no feminine streak in him - how could he, born on the MacDonnell Ranges at Arltunga, 105 km east-north-east of Alice Springs amongst gold miners, teamsters, horses, camels and Aborigines. Even as a teenager he was known as the toughest in the country and a top bushman. As he seldom wore a hat he had a large tousled mop of hair and was so sun-tanned that his face was almost black. These broad strokes on the canvas should suffice for you to visualise a real Inlander. Yet before I settle into the Saga of Ben here follows a highly condensed version of his family's perserverance and courage after they had quit Jundah 242 km SSW of Longreach, Queensland, en route for the exciting new goldfield at Arltunga.

In 1903 they set out in a two-horse buggy and when they did finally arrive at Arltunga in December 1905 (having travelled via Birdsville, the Spencer Gulf, Oodnadatta, then north-east to Arltunga) they had overlanded almost 2,400 km in less than two years. Their daily average must have been about 48 km and this I consider a major feat of the Inland, setting aside exploration expeditions and the like. At that time all provisions for the Arltunga gold-field had to be overlanded from Oodnadatta, the termination of the rail from Adelaide. Enterprise being his main characteristic, Sam was able to produce a small range of fresh food including vegetables and eggs (he even obtained a few milk cows) and these he supplied to the short-of-tucker miners. On his rounds of the goldfields he always carried a set of balances as the miners paid for their goods in gold dust: what else?

With Arltunga petering out, in 1908 the restless Nickers now with four children moved to Alice Springs where Sam with his indomitable courage managed in various ways to keep the dingo from the door. At the outbreak of World War One they headed north again. This time their outfit included a light cart for the family and a horse-dray for the goods. But near Ryan's Well the dray horse bolted and collided with the cart - and the whole outfit was immobilised. So that was that. But never-to-be-beaten Sam decided to take up land thereabouts and to raise cattle (13).

I now concentrate on Ben and his first major feat in the desert. In 1923 and aged only 15 he went bush with a companion and their plan was to take horses to Western Australia via the Tanami goldfield. But near there they parted bad friends and Ben decided to return home solo with two of the horses, rifle and ammunition and scanty essentials - tea, sugar and possibly some flour. For the rest he had to rely on bushcraft for birds, animals, fruits and vegetables and, of primary importance, water. This in trackless unknown country. Security was his greatest problem for the blacks were tricky along the way, alert to the presence of the white man - as, indeed, this white man was alert to theirs. Thus he kept away from his previous horse tracks in case angry tribesmen might follow with evil intent. When he let his horses loose to feed at night he did not bell them which is a usual habit of bushmen to aid finding them at sunup but only hobbled them, relying on tracking to reclaim them in

the morning. With horses hobbled and the evening meal over, he unrolled his swag yards away from the remains of the campfire lest spearmen attracted by the firelight or glowing ash found him an easy mark. Having no compass in that unmapped hugeness, by day the sun guided him and by night the stars if he had to travel after sundown. Should you think these measures spell over-precaution you are well off beam. Just five years later a group of us with the two trucks were night-attacked and it was only because the Aborigines set fire to the spinifex grass that warning came early to us. Whilst the other four of our group, armed, stood guard between the trucks, I got through the spinifex and close enough to let our attackers have our warning shots as they had let us have theirs in the form of spears. No casualties, but they had already killed Fred Brooks, badly wounded Nugget Morten and had had a go at Randal Stafford and Harry Tilmouth. This subsequent incident drives home the risk that Ben took in valiantly facing thirst, danger and direction-finding - all completely alone.

When sister Jane became over-worried about her brother's absence, she borrowed the car from her father and drove to Napperby Station where she guessed Ben would pass if he ever got out of the desert. Hoping some news would reach her, she was preparing to have a meal when, blow me - in walked Ben. He had come back with the two horses, alive and well. He had safely completed the finest, riskiest solo venture in Inland history, so I claim; 483 km, as near as I can figure without exact knowledge of where he actually started his return journey. Even more amazing, not one of the family mentioned this feat, nor did Ben, during our two long camel expeditions. It remained for Margaret to mention the subject quite casually some 15 years ago, 30 years after the event. Now she, via Dick Kimber also of Alice Springs, has made it possible to record her brother's greatest feat.

During two of my subsequent Central Australian expeditions in 1932 and 1933, the five of us - Ben, Stan O'Grady who was the prospector with our outfit (14), myself, with the two blacks and a dozen camels were bush for about 14 months in all. I found Ben to be the steadiest chap, deeply knowledgeable in bush lore of every sort. To him, to be a bushman was not just a question of instinct so much as observation and remembering. No two trees, no two antbeds, no two hills were to him exactly the same; all was recorded in a mental picture. When I finally paid him off at Laverton on the Westralian goldfields with his cheque and fare back to the Alice, he decided to have a look around Kalgoorlie. One morning when he and his mate were walking down Hannan Street he came across a boy sitting on the pavement crying bitterly.

'What's up, son?' asked Ben.

'They've taken me pup!' was the reply.

The van standing close by was evidence that the Town Dog Catcher was collecting. 'We'll soon fix that!' exclaimed Ben and grabbed the unfortunate Catcher, jamming his head under an armpit whilst his companion flung open the van door. Out rushed all the bitzers, bull-pups and hounds which went howling, yelping and barking down the street in their surprising new-found freedom. Next morning both law-breakers were up before the Beak but there was so much laughter in Court that the Magistrate let them off with a caution.

At the outbreak of World War Two, Ben was working on Mount Doreen Station, 360 km north-west of The Alice with another long-term cobbler, Bill Braitling whom I had first met in 1923 on the Murrarji Track. Directly the war news came by radio, Ben galloped into town with four other volunteers and boarded the first train south, to enlist as a gunner (Number SX 403) at Mount Barker near Adelaide. Later he became a Sergeant, 2nd Third Regiment.

After the capture of Tobruk during the North African campaign he served in Greece. Here, at one stage, his unit was pinned down by German guns and their emplacements could not be located. Ben went to his C/O and volunteered to 'go bush' for three days, being sure he could solve the problem. His request was refused. Nevertheless, after dark he slipped out of the lines. The first evidence that his mates then had of his whereabouts came when the sound of exploding grenades reached them, the flash of explosions marking enemy gun positions and giving direction and distance for gun laying. Then his C/O had a problem. Should he recommend a VC or a Court Martial for disobeying orders? This he solved by failing to do either, which certainly suited Ben.

Finally he was wounded, a shell splinter lodging in the lower back but he refused to report himself a casualty and by the time the division left Greece for Crete, gangrene had set in. Possibly expert medical attention (which from all reports seems to have been sadly lacking in his case) could have saved him. But - and here I find it hard to stifle my anger - evidently it was not forthcoming for he died in Athens Daphne Hospital.

Thus needlessly, as some would avow, a top Australian went to his last camp on 19 April 1941. His widow (an English girl) and his family here in Australia were heart-broken when the news came through.

And now you may know how greatly I grieve for the loss of Ben Nicker. Old hands at The Alice when I revisited in 1961 spoke his epitaph:

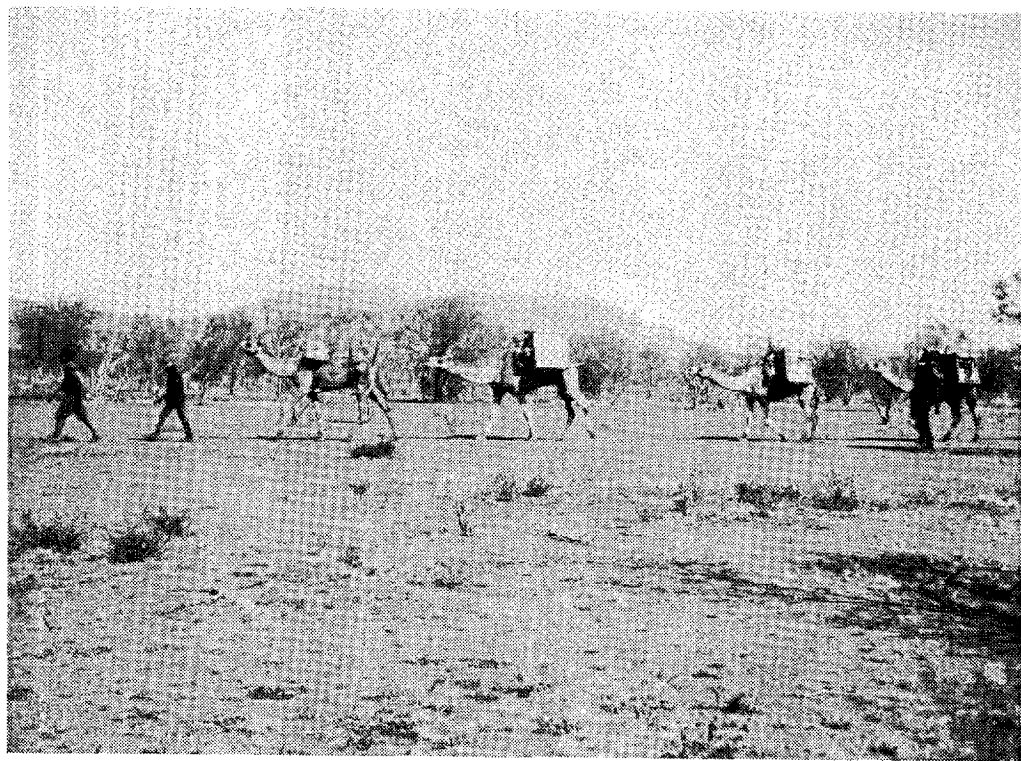
'Ben should never have been allowed to go to the War. He was too fine a bushman'.

With the 1928 expedition finalised, the following year saw Jack Young and myself out at the Jervois Range (282 km north-west of Alice Springs) during a rush to peg leases at a silver lead find and I was there on behalf of my Adelaide company for that very reason. We had arrived the hard way, by light truck along tracks totalling more than 320 km.

Early one morning soon after arrival we were hugely surprised to see a plane circling over the mulga obviously looking for somewhere to land. Suddenly the pilot dropped a smoke bomb for wind direction, evidently having spotted some clear ground which was not much larger than a football field. Two tall trees obstructed the approach he favoured. We held our breath as the madman seemed about to commit suicide. But not him. At the final moment of approach he angled the plane, one wing pointing to hell, the other to heaven and, as if a happy bird, he nipped through. Heading for the wall of mulga scrub and fallen trees he seemed dead set on bashing right into them. But no again. Once landed, he slowed to a halt apparently no more than two plane-lengths from disaster. It was the smartest judgement I have ever seen aircraft-wise before wheel brakes and reverse props were introduced. The pair of 'maggots' aboard his craft (for thus prospectors mis-name magnates) admitted having been terrified when their pilot seemed about to rip off the wings as he headed for that wall of scrub.

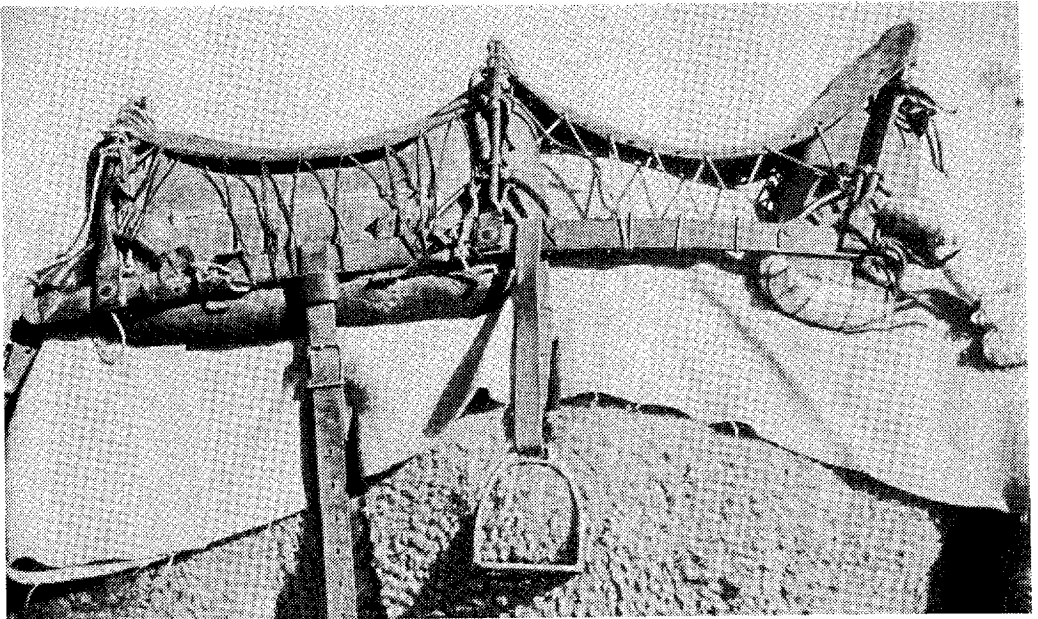
Thus I met Lester Brain (15), QANTAS pilot, who had brought the aircraft so confidently and correctly to safety. Later, he got his machine airborne again and into clear skies where nature's terrestrial hazards may be eluded.

We must now turn back five months to fill in Lester's story and revert to the mis-adventure of Kingsford Smith and Ulm when their near-empty airplane tanks had forced them to land beside the Charley River 217 km north east of Alice Springs and to the subsequent deaths of Anderson and Hitchcock when their search and rescue plane KOOKABURRA failed them somewhere west of the Overland Telegraph Line north of Alice Springs. One hundred and sixty kilometres north of that town Anderson and Hitchcock had been seen to change course and then head north westerly towards Wave Hill Station across about 564 km of unoccupied country. When the KOOKABURRA became overdue, Search Headquarters sent RAAF search planes to scour the area outward from Alice Springs. And four days later, Lester Brain with his Atlanta joined the hunt. Having got to Newcastle Waters 240 km due east of Wave Hill, he decided to search from the homestead towards Alice Springs in a general south-east sweep. It was then that he sighted a thin smoke to the south-west and decided to investigate and thus he came upon the missing KOOKABURRA relatively undamaged in desolate country and was the first to alert Search Headquarters about the tragic deaths of Anderson and Hitchcock. Soon RAAF aircraft met him at Newcastle Waters where he guided them to the site 290 km south-east of Wave Hill.

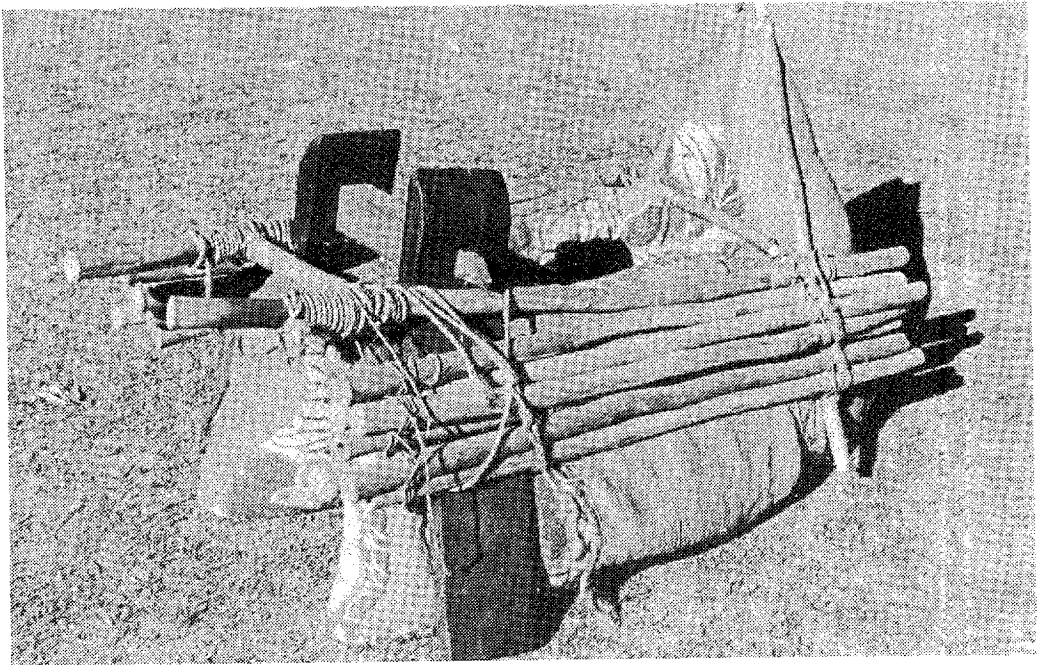


Camel train at Vaughan Springs  
(from the Terry Collection  
National Library, Canberra)





Riding saddle, mounted



Original style pack saddle for camels

(Photographs courtesy Steve Strike,  
Alice Springs)

Flight Lieutenant Eaton then organised a land party at Wave Hill to record on site everything possible about the tragic end of Anderson and Hitchcock. With the help of a black tracker they found the former's body in scrub a few hundred yards from the plane. Part of the aircraft's rudder was removed which recorded the pencilled diary of their awful sufferings after the forced landing on 10 April of that year. It told of their attempts to get airborne but after two days of abortive attempts they tried to live amid heat, dust and flies. Finally, the remains of both men were brought back; Anderson to Sydney and Hitchcock to Perth. On 1 August 1961 Northern Territory surveyors found the KOOKABURRA which had rolled over and been burnt out in a desert fire. Nature had intervened in the 32 years it had remained in the Tanami desert and only the upturned spoked wheel caught the eye of Vernon O'Brien the surveyor and Rod Dixon the stock inspector as they were examining the pastoral potential of this desert tract.

So when we met, Lester and I, at Jervois Range that September in 1929, he had already found the KOOKABURRA five months previously and had been awarded the Air Force Cross a month afterwards, and had now returned to QANTAS flying. I am therefore proud of our friendship, if interrupted at times by our occupations, which dates back almost 50 years.

It was at the conclusion of this 1928 motor expedition when visiting Adelaide that I met Jim Mollison who at that time was an instructor at the South Australian Aero Club. This was of course before he flew to fame with his Australia - England flight followed by his England - Capetown flight and before he married Amy Johnson.

I had the habit of going out to Parafield Aerodrome quite often and thus could not fail to encounter the airman. We got on very well and spent quite a lot of time together to the evening when we were at a pub in Glenelg some way out of town. Just before 10 pm we hurried to catch the last tram, the only transport back to the city about 11 km distant. Arriving at the last minute we were almost near enough to clutch at the wretched tram when the doors slammed. So I leapt at an open window and clung on like a bag of rubbish with one elbow through the window. As we gathered speed I kept looking back and at the same time had to watch out for an overtaking motorist. At the next stop I naturally went to ground and boarded conventionally through one of the doors. The last I had seen of Jim was when he was running in the false hope of also getting aboard. Alas, being due for the Northern Territory at sunup I was unable to find out how he fared.

It was not until ten years later that I heard the end of the story. When I was in England in 1938 we met again, quite by chance, at a house party at the home in Wales of Evan Morgan, Viscount Tredegar. Surprised greetings over, we picked up the threads of our last parting and I was relieved when Jim told me that he had been saved from that long trek back by getting a lift to Adelaide.

From mid-1929 onwards it was plain murder for the willing prospector. Being the Depression years, people were desperate to get out of the financial bog. My rating in Adelaide being at a high level, all too soon after return from one gruelling expedition and just when I was planning a break there would be a ring from someone with an idea about gold or any other mineral that was thought to be viable. Then soon I'd be away bush again - now, as I look back it was cruelly soon - using the 25 cwt Morris truck and usually accompanied by a prospector. Returning empty-handed, I'd be apologetic to my backers who were invariably grateful for the attempts based on their ideas. 'And where are you going next?' they would ask. 'Over to prospect in Melbourne' I'd reply. As expedition leader my pay included keep and an interest in any payable find. My white companions received appropriate pay and once out bush we had nowhere to spend the money. So in my case a year away meant a sizeable amount in the bank - riches indeed during the Depression. In fact, the upturn in my affairs began then and has been maintained ever since.

During those seven years when the pressure was on I led eleven expeditions and I feel convinced that the Lucky Spirit must have whispered in the Ear of Fate quite a few times or I would not be here to recount those near-misses which could have rung down the curtain for me; for in my travels death glared at me and my companions, I nearly died of snake venom, became a bush casualty and was attacked three times by blacks during those inland ventures.

In 1930 I went to the Musgrave and Petermann Ranges. This particular expedition was planned with camel support for the truck. The risk of going out with the truck only was too great, for the best of machines can break down. Therefore supporting transport was included: a string of camels which provided members of our team with the means of spreading out to prospect, for our quest was for minerals, especially gold. Subsequently I went to the Devonport and Warburton Ranges, Tennant Creek, out from Colley (South Australia) and three times to Tanami. Nickel, copper, potassium nitrate and low grade gold were found but nothing clearly payable. It was regrettable that our labours led to no worthwhile commercial result for nine-tenths of the field work was mineralogical stock-taking. On the other hand, work of a very positive nature was accomplished which included mapping, geological data, rainfall records, collection of subsoil samples and entomological specimens, all of which amounted to a sizeable contribution towards the expanding knowledge of this continent.

Two subsequent expeditions, 1932 and 1933, were with camel only. Unlike other travellers in the interior who have used camels initially, and then switched to motorised transport, I did it in reverse. True, the 'humpie' is slower, but then one prospects more carefully and the sandhills don't bother it.

When the ascent is steep, the camel folds its front legs and keeps hind legs straight to prevent toppling backwards; down a severe slope it braces front legs, folds back legs under its belly and so keeps level down the soft loose sand. Otherwise it would roll over, smash legs and ruin the load.

My 1932 outfit, which consisted of Stan O'Grady, Ben Nicker, our camel boys Lockey and Jack, a string of camels and myself, was bush for some nine months from starting point near Alice Springs to the last unloading near Kalgoorlie, Western Australia. During this journey we marched 3,213 km at 4.5 km/hr without encountering another white man.

Our route took us to Lake Mackay and we were probably the first of our kind to see it from the ground since it had been reported only two years previously by the Mackay Aerial Survey. It was a time when our water reserves were desperately low. A bad season and very dry. And it was here that Stan O'Grady literally stumbled upon a well in the north-west corner of Lake Mackay which we then named O'Grady's Well in his honour, having no means in that instance (as in some others) of ascertaining the Aboriginal name. Here he certainly introduced us, myself especially, to a real desert mystery for when we had hauled out the mass of debris to enable us to reach a small supply of water, barely enough for our needs, we realised that it was a most curious excavation. It was the largest, most outstanding native well any member of the party had ever seen and must have taken years to construct.

Undoubtedly ancient, it was roughly circular: 3 m in diameter and some 9.15 m deep to the point where we reached water level. The well consisted of a tunnel excavation constructed in an ingenious corkscrew manner which is much easier and safer especially in sandstone and was not sunk with vertical sides as the modern miner uses. How far the shaft penetrated is unknown. I would certainly have liked to clean it out to the bottom as this might have yielded a clue, or clues, as to its originators. This enormous excavation - enormous because no Aborigines I have ever met or heard tell of have the tools or experience to cut such an excavation in desert sandstone - makes me doubt strongly whether they could have achieved the work. Yet it was undoubtedly man-made. It is intriguing to speculate on the possibility of a more advanced civilisation having once been in these parts, a people more highly skilled than the present-day desert dwellers, a people remote in time who lived in a pre-arid age. I still wonder whether we three had been gazing down upon the work of as-yet unrecorded inhabitants of this continent.

During the time we were travelling the desert we had seen no game, no birds, and had come across no Aborigines; the entire land seemed lifeless. Yet any newcomer who thinks he can travel the sandhills unseen or unnoticed is mistaken. He is under watch from the Aborigines all the time.

Days later I climbed a red sandhill beside that huge white saltpan, Lake Mackay, and was excited to pick out through the glasses a distant range about

56 km westward, as yet unknown to white men. I named it the Alec Ross Range in honour of the (then) last surviving member of the exploring parties of Ernest Giles. A tall, imposing range which at that distance was beset with mirage, yet it could be right there that we, as gold-hunters, could expect prospects to be favourable as it lay on a possible strike southwards from the Tanami goldreef. I had not been atop that crest for five minutes, scanning the range, when I became aware of a dramatic event such as many a wanderer of the inland can experience - a thin column of smoke arose from the spinifex. I had been spotted and the Aborigines were using their own method of signalling my presence. As distant answering smokes went up I knew word had gone out that the white man had arrived.

This brings me to speak of the conjecture which surrounds the phenomenon of these 'mulga wires'. For however remote the desert it is always full of blackfellows' news. Nothing can happen, no traveller can pass, no event of any significance take place without the details being known literally hundreds of miles away in the space of a few short hours. Responsible bushmen are of the opinion that when news of importance is to be spread through the bush such smoke signals are the means of summoning the distant blackfellow to attend them who then, by his answering smoke 'says' he is ready to receive their message. The 'talkers' are then able to convey the important news by means of their telepathic powers. And many white men who have travelled the inland agree that such telepathic powers are part of the Aborigines' make up. Believe me, this rapid passage of news across the distances of the desert is the wonder of all who have been so far out into the blue.

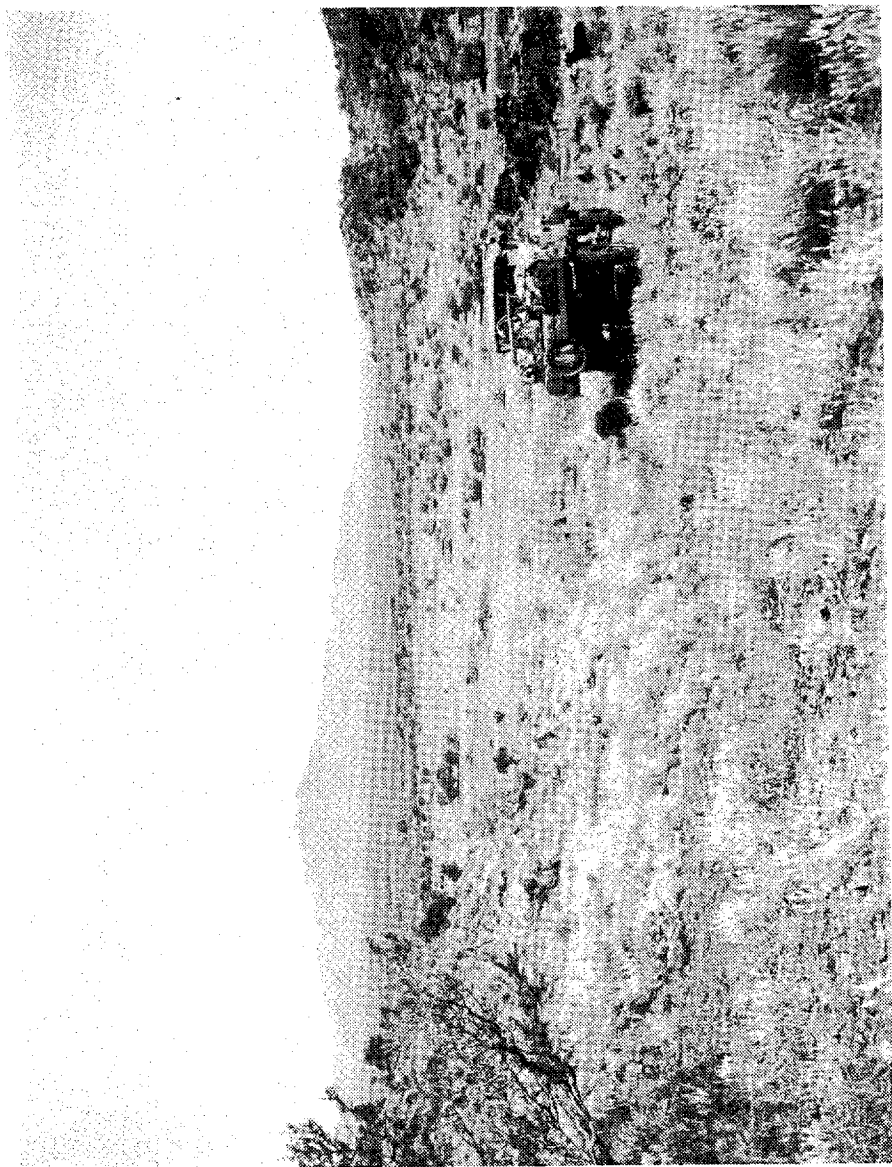
And now back to our outfit and our immediate problem: water and more water. The camels had already been too long without a drink and it would be at least three days' hard riding to reach that tantalising range ahead - and once there, could we count on finding water? Here was a situation where a leader of experienced bushmen should not, I contend, give an order but put the problem to a vote. Stan felt 'Well, let's give it a go and try to get there'. Ben voted it as too risky. As he put it, 'If she's dry we'll never get back to Inta-Amoru, our only permanent water'. So mine was the casting vote and it was tough to have to be the decider. Having battled thus far into the desert were we now compelled to flee from it? I sat on that sandhill crest smoking the pipe for long minutes, thinking over what those two experienced men of the desert had said. What if the range were dry? I knew that if the camels did not have water within a few days we would walk into trouble and none of us get out of it alive. Silently cursing, I voted on Ben's side.

What a miserable decision! With that range ahead to tempt with the hope of water and gold. But judgement, experience, must always be the unseen guiding hand.



Aboriginal group inspecting truck,  
Tonkinson Range

(from the Terry Collection, National Library, Canberra)



Musgrave Range, towards Jacky's Pass

(from the Terry Collection, National Library, Canberra)

So we retreated - and only just made it back to our known water. During that forced march we rode and we rode, watching each camel as signs of distress became all too evident in the team, yet marvelling at the steadfastness of their gait as they went on and on, travelling 402 km in 16 days which is probably the Australian record dry-stage. Towards the end Bonny, one of the camel team near to perishing, kept banging her head against every stout tree; Old Man kept lying down until we had to resort to whips to make him follow his mates. Whenever we halted the camels hung around our water canteens - now at a perilous low level - sniffing, sniffing at the water therein. On a previous day's march I had been tempted to dump the loads. But I dared not for our forced-march pace gave us no respite to hunt for bush-tucker and we would end up foodless in our desperate attempt to reach water. When at last we did get to our Promised Spring we bailed out by bucket 180 litres of water for each camel. They arrived as thin as church mice with no visible belly and we were able to watch them, with a silent salute to each animal, walk away well and truly blown out.

And now for the sequel. A year later, in 1933, we were out again with camels from Alice Springs where no white man had been, increasing our camel tally to just over 4,830 km. This time we did achieve our purpose and reached the Ross Range. There I talked with bush blacks and questioned them about the Range's rockhole. And this is what I learnt: 'This fella him all bin about die twelve moons'. Thus I knew that the rockhole within the Range had been completely dry a year ago.

I told Stan and Ben the news. 'The Range was dry all right last year. We just missed a lovely smash.'

They both looked thoughtful. 'Oh, dry, was she?' was their only comment.

My mind flashed back to that sandhill council of a year ago, to that final choice of the words 'yes' or 'no', for in their balance had hung life in its sweetness or death in its most gruesome. Had we gone ahead, we would have surely perished.

Weeks later, as we rode along the south flank of the Petermann Range many blacks were walking parallel to us in the foothills. We could hear them calling but they remained hidden in the rocks and would not come near to make friends. Even after all these years, in memory I can still hear those calls; the shrill 'pou...pou...' of the lubras intermingled with the deeper voices of the menfolk. And here I can do no better than recount what befell us in the words of the book I wrote which tells of those gold hunting expeditions with camels in the dry lands of the Centre (16).

'Close to Gordon Spring we came upon many tracks; saw where about thirty bucks had sat down for a while. Jack, one of our Aboriginal camel boys,



scrutinised the tracks carefully. 'Cheeky mob. Properly cheeky mob. My word, Tiger longa this mob. Bad bugger that one,' he added.

'Raiding party out from the Petermann,' Ben commented. 'Led by that bad cow, Tiger.'

'Long as they keep the locals busy, we don't mind,' I said, 'they can fight all they like so long as they leave us alone'.

At length at Sladen Waters we sat down. The environs of the camp were dense with scrub; indeed, it was difficult to discover a small area of stones where we could camp in a clearance and have even ground for say a hundred yards on either hand. In the late afternoon of a perfectly normal day the routine of camp proceeded. Everything was washed up by sundown and Stan put a damper into the camp oven before the stars came alight. As darkness came on, the scrub around our sleeping place became a dark wall, seemingly dense and impenetrable in the diffused light of the stars. Noiseless in its peace the bush rested and by 8 o'clock each man was ready to turn in. Ben had already spread out his blankets and Stan and I stood by the glowing coals around the oven waiting for the scone to be baked. The boys, Jack and Locky, invisible in the darkness, were already in their swags on the far side of the loads.

Suddenly there arose a terrible commotion. With howls of dismay the two of them leapt from their blankets, ran towards us, bumping into boxes and hurting themselves. I have heard men frightened in war but never did humans give voice so loudly as Jack and Locky. Thinking one of them had been bitten by a snake we stood aghast for a second or two, paralysed by the sudden uproar.

'What name?' I called out.

In a voice choked with fear Locky cried, 'Black feller come up!'

Now thoroughly stirred we glanced quickly on every side, dismayed by the threat of attack to come but how or from where, no one could tell.

'Which way come up?' I fired the question at them 'Mob?'

'Two feller. Run away little bit!' gasped Locky. 'Jack me look out. See 'em two feller come up longa stone. Might 'em kangaroo. By 'em by two feller walk close up, sit down longa bush that way. Nothing kangaroo. Black feller alright. Quick feller jump up, run up longa camp, close up tumble down longa me, longa Jack. Oh fright, properly fright! Sing out longa Boss!'

'Come on, get the loads into a circle at once and pile the saddles on top!'

Speedily the heavy boxes were shaped into a little fort and as we worked, Locky shrieked 'Look out! Black feller! See 'em?'

I peered into the darkness where every stick, every bush seemed to have human shape.

'Hear 'em, hear 'em, Boss! Bin laugh longa mulga!'

It is Gospel truth. The raiders, who had swung around and bolted into the mulga twenty yards away were laughing like kookaburras at the scare they had given us.

Kneeling behind the cover of the breastwork each man watched, listened and watched again. But the heavy silence of the bush now mocked unbroken.

Soon the boys were able to repeat their story in more detail which told how close to tragedy the outfit had been. Evidently they had watched as two forms approached over the stones. At first they seemed like a pair of kangaroos. The forms halted by a low bush - then suddenly leapt up and dashed towards camp. With spears raised high to hurl they all but ran on top of the boys, unnoticed and hidden in the dark. Too terrified to give warning at first, Lockey and Jack lay until the raiders were almost on top of them. Then sudden shrieks - which so alarmed the spearmen that they swung off and dashed into the scrub. Next morning we saw where small stones had been dislodged, as if a runner had turned at high speed but of definite tracks there were no clear indications because of the mosaic of pebbles all around. Near the range, however, was an imprint like that of a kurdaitja boot (17). And other dislodged stones convinced us that the boys had not suffered from imaginities and that Stan and I, as well as Ben, had been close to death. The raiders had run in to about 9 m from where we stood in the glow of the fading fire to make sure of a killing. Thus they could not have missed and had they not been disturbed it is pretty certain that we might not have lived.

Well, for reasons readily understood, watch was kept that night. I, on the final spell before daylight, was never so glad to see darkness disperse and to observe the bush become clear and safe in the red hues of a lovely dawn.

\* \* \*

Months later we rode into bad snake country where King, our favourite camel, was bitten and died in eleven minutes. In his death throes, with his poor blue tongue hugely swollen and lolling out, the frantic beast was trying to bite at the offside hock where the snake had struck. After he died, to determine exactly what had happened, I lifted the foot to examine just where the fangs had penetrated. I probed amongst the hair of the hock and in so doing evidently some of the poison lying around the wound must have brushed into an open cut on my finger, I went to the canteen, turned on the tap and

after a quick wash wiped the 'cleansed' finger on my trousers. About an hour later as we rode most horrible symptoms set in: stomach pains, a real ache down the spine and along each thigh with shivering and breathing difficult; all of which shrieked that snake poison was getting to work in my luckless body. Had I realised the danger in the first place, a ligature could have been applied to arrest trouble. But now it was too late to invalidate the poison in the blood stream. The only thing to do was to stick it out and avoid panic. King had died in eleven minutes. How long for me? I rode in silence, smoking furiously to keep calm. Gradually symptoms eased off. The body was coping with the poison. But it was the longest hour in my life until I was sure of being round the corner. I told the others what had happened when we off-loaded for the night's camp. Bet your life they marvelled at not having had to bury me.

During the last lap to Laverton, Western Australia, 564 km, my riding camel, Rocket, proved very troublesome. I had difficulty in controlling him and on one occasion even before I was decently in the saddle he reached out his neck and tore the rope reins through my fingers, burning them cruelly. Since that time I had, however, been controlling him fairly successfully until that day when, having just mounted, the unexpected jumped in - the nose line tore in two. Rocket's head jerked forward. He was free. He stood stock still for a moment - then out went his head again, away went legs and roaring like a bull he was off at full gallop, racing over the plain and out of control. Leaping small bushes in his stride he rushed under trees - seconds of terror when we were approaching what seemed certain disaster. With a major collision just ahead came a mighty swerve and I nearly left the saddle. Finally the pace began to ease, dropped to a trot, to a walk.

'Whoosh, you brute, whoosh!'

Thereupon he obeyed, sat down quietly and began to howl - as I nearly did myself from the sudden flaming pain which darted through my back on dismounting.

After this interlude, however, Rocket and I settled our differences and things went well for me with him.

A few days later I was leading him across burnt mallee scrub where tracks showed that snakes were about, I whoosh'd him down and walked ahead to make sure as far as possible that the coast was clear for the team following a mile behind us. Since the death by snakebite of poor old King, our camel, we had all been very much on the alert for snakes; quite unreasonably, perhaps, but we felt we could kill every one on sight in revenge for his death. And this certainly was snake country. One even had the 'hide' to curve across Ben's forehead as he lay in his swag wooing sleep; but 'he didna say nuffin, him being that kinda bushie'. It was just then that I spotted a fresh unmistakable snake track and all too soon there was a 6 footer, green with a copper head which, sensing us, swung towards my camel in a flash. It had to be killed or Rocket,

senseless in his ignorance of the danger, could be struck. I grabbed the only thing available, a length of burnt mallee which was the worse type of weapon for the job on hand for, brittle, it would break on impact. Which it promptly did when I first slashed at the vigorous snake. But I did manage to kill it with a mighty twisting stroke and at once a frightful pain shot through my lower back and spine - a sure signal that, combined with my previous back trouble after Rocket's bush bolt, a major injury had set in. Despite the intense pain I managed to remount my Emu Horse ( as the blacks so aptly named the camel on first sight) but as we moved off swinging to the animal's gait sent such a burning shooting through the spine that I was NBG.

Clearly the outfit was up against a top problem for I could neither walk nor ride. The answer came next morning: a chance in a million. Charlie Cable, who had been following our party some way behind, arrived in his truck which was piled with camping gear and amongst it was, of all things, a supply of mattresses. When he had previously visited us in the Warburton Ranges with such a load we had all laughed like kookaburras, for the mattresses were destined for the comfort of the city-dwelling aeroplane passengers who had then been due to arrive any day for yet another hunt for the ridiculous Lasseter's Lost Reef. Of course they chased a blue duck and were now returned home by plane, leaving Charlie to get back solo to Laverton. And now here he was with his precious mattresses which we had so hugely scorned. So they got me fixed up in a stretched-out position amongst that blessed bedding and thus I was transported to Laverton if not in comfort then in minor trouble from the inevitable bumps and humps of the track - the same track I had broken two years previously.

In due course Charlie delivered me into the care of Matron Hart at the hospital in Laverton and into the luxury of lying in clean pyjamas twixt fresh sheets. From there I was transferred to Adelaide where X-Ray found that the hip bone had fouled the spine and the fifth lumbar was split half across. Combined with the previous injury the whole thing had flared up when I twisted sideways so violently to smash down on that snake. Had injury been more severe, I might have ended up a cot case - or just have had to lie down and die out bush because no Guardian Angel - who happened to be named Charlie - had appeared.

\* \* \*

Throughout all my years of exploration it had always been my greatest wish some day to achieve a truly outstanding discovery; I felt the Golden Spurs had yet to be won. I would now like to recount what I consider to have been the most significant discovery of my life and thus, finally, how those Spurs became mine.

More than forty years have passed since, when yarning around the campfire on a Station in Western Australia, I first heard bush talk of a hidden place, a fabled valley, green and fertile, a kind of Lost Garden of Eden way out in the back of beyond; a place where no man had to hunt for tucker or fear that waterholes would run dry. Nobody knew where or when this tale had originated but it was very old. Most regarded it as an Aboriginal legend with a few European trimmings and it certainly captured my imagination. The Aborigines themselves spoke of it - not with fervour, for the facts of their life tended in the days I write of to make them stoically philosophical. They just put it in their own simple way, saying that it was 'good country; mob tucker; mob water; many sleeps east'. A 'sleep' is their poetic word for a full day, especially a day's travel. They even had a name for the valley: CHUGGA-KURRI.

Some years later at Ooldea on the Trancontinental Railway I found myself talking to some Aborigines and thought to ask them about Chugga-Kurri. Yes, they had heard of it - a place of everlasting plenty, 'many sleeps north'. That started me thinking, for it was interesting that to the Aborigines of the west the place should be 'many sleeps east' whilst to those at Ooldea, 'many sleeps north'. Did it point to some location? And I began to wonder if this fabled valley might not indeed be a reality.

Thinking back over the years spanning my 14 principal Central Australian expeditions (1923 - 1935) I can recall that instances of precognition, for which I seem to have an affinity, have come my way - some in the intervals between the expeditions themselves. In 1932 I had several dream-warnings of danger ahead and these came as a foretelling of events which subsequently took place. One I remember which occurred in Adelaide stands out. Waking up one fine day I knew that something would go amiss - a day when sun and surf beckoned at Victor Harbour, 81 km distant. I drove over-carefully, halting at every cross-road for a car accident seemed the most probable. No motorist was ever more prudent. So when I switched off at the beach I was telling myself not to be an old goat having imagnitis. Soon I was in that marvellous surf, rode a grand wave and shot beachward happy as a porpoise. My undoing, however, was a severe backlash at the end of the run which dumped me bang into the hard sand so fiercely that the shoulder was dislocated. I can even remember the actual date when I subsequently lay a-bed in hospital for the radio news announced that Jack Lang, then Premier of New South Wales, had been foiled of his job of opening Sydney's Harbour Bridge in March 1932 because DeGroot of the New Guard had slashed the ceremonial ribbon with his sword from horseback, thus forestalling the official opening.

Other instances of precognition, which invariably came in dream form, have made me aware of being a 'receiver', of being in tune with future happenings and it is to tell of a memorable event that I now continue my tale.

In 1933 I had set off on a gold-hunting expedition from Brook's Soak 240 km north west of Alice Springs with my companions Stan O'Grady and Ben Nicker. We had travelled west and again I stood atop that lonely sandhill from where, the previous year, we had sighted that distant and unobtainable high country lying west of Lake Mackay, the Alec Ross Range, and from where we had begun our perilous retreat. Now, with eyes turned towards the Range, I became aware of a great flock of migrating crows passing overhead. I looked up. I had never seen so many. It was an excellent sign - a sign of water. So we continued our journey prospecting as we went and finally came to the Ross Range itself and it was during that time that I again knew myself to be a psychic 'receiver' for during the night of 6 July 1933 I had a dream-message from a girl I had previously known in England. We had been close, very close, at one time and so vivid was the message that in writing up the daily expedition log for the one and only time I entered a personal note (18). 'Had a remarkable dream about Vera last night. She was in a state of heavenly happiness. She did not communicate by word but her expression was unmistakable. This is the second almost psychic message I have had from her.' There the matter rested until I met her again in London and asked, 'Does 6 July 1933 mean anything to you?' She replied that she had been married on that day in London and later told me that she had been thinking of me on the very day.

As a sequel I have been able to obtain from the South Australian Museum where the expedition papers are lodged a photocopy of the full-page log entry for 7 July 1933 which gives the co-ordinates for the expedition's Camp No. 50. Thus I can prove that the whole thing is not just a bushman's yarn when he was completely apart from radio or telegraph. My entry establishes my exact location when I 'saw' Vera and from this I was able to calculate, with the help of QANTAS, the Great Circle distance from London. The result: an instantaneous 14,400 km Extra-Sensory Perception.

I am now convinced that the psychic message with its aura of happiness came to me as a premonition of my own elation in what was about to be revealed as the culmination of my desert wanderings.

For several days we had not seen any Aborigines but well knew they were about for suddenly a tall column of smoke went up about three miles distant; slender at first, then more dense, to ascend slender again. Obviously 'smoke talk' was going on and doubtless about us. We could hear their high-pitched calls 'Wipella pou.....wipella pou.....' ('Wipella' was the nearest they could reproduce 'White fellow' and 'pou.....' that long-carrying trailing sound with which the desert Aborigines customarily end their call.)

We moved north-west until we reached Carnegie Bluff, the eastern-most point reached by the Carnegie Expedition from the west in 1897. The average altitude of the desert in that area is about 500 metres above sea level. Yet in a day or two I noticed some kind of general depression in the mirage. The far-

away scene was, as ever, vague within blue immensity. Distant points danced in the mirage, shrouded by heat haze - yet there was a definite sinking in the earth-level.

About noon the following day I rode on quickly and when my camel reached the top of a sandhill I just gaped in astonishment at what I saw lying ahead of me. To the east lay a line of sandstone cliffs, hundreds of feet in height. The ground sloped gently down towards them and at the foot of the cliffs arose scattered clumps of tall gum trees. As I sat gaping, motionless on my camel, a flock of white-winged corellas flew over me. A sure sign of water. Then through the heat haze I could perceive threads of shining lines near the cliffs like green snakes in the desert. And I knew what they were: creeks. In that moment of anticipation and tingling with excitement I urged Dick, my riding camel, down the long gentle slope towards the cliffs. He responded eagerly, moving with that silky shuffle of a willing camel which smells water. Soon I came upon the abandoned campsite of a party of about fifteen Aborigines. Their tracks showed they were moving north and were not far ahead of me for the ashes of their fire were still warm. This made me wary for I knew through the disturbing silence I was being watched. So I loosened my revolver in its holster ready for emergency. Thus I rode for about two miles, my camel maintaining a fast shuffle whilst all around the signs of water and fertility increased. Ti-tree appeared. There was golden wattle in full bloom. A sandy creek. A pool of water. Then a patch of thick scrub and low bush, tropical in its luxuriance, barred the way. Dismounting, I pushed my way through - to emerge with glorious suddenness on the edge of a lake some 110 m long and about 8 m wide. I gazed at it, entranced. Water, the sheen of cool, cool water and in such quantities as to be almost unbelievable in that type of desert country. All around the edge was greenness and except for great numbers of birds I seemed to be utterly alone. It was like a dream of beauty and coolness suddenly come true.

Different men react differently to the same set of circumstances. My reaction was to tear off my clothes and leap joyously into the water and into the undreamed pleasure of a swim in the desert. I had forgotten all about the possibility of hostile Aborigines. My revolver lay unheeded in its holster on the sandy margin of the lake.

After I had bathed I scrambled out and still dripping with that wonderful water my first job was to light a signal to Nicker and O'Grady. But so profuse was the herbage around about, so new, so green, that kindling for a smoke was almost difficult to find - an incredible circumstance, a complete reversal of the desert conditions we had known. After scratching around I was able to light a signal. As soon as they came up Nicker was so excited when he saw the water that he jumped in fully clothed...

Later we three, Stan O'Grady, Ben Nicker and myself, stood on the rim above that rich and fertile valley and just looked and looked at what lay before

C50

9.00 am 28.662  
3.00 pm 28.502

10.6 miles 101

had Medium E  
Clouds clear by

Friday July 7

Having dolled & plotted position at 8.34 we continued on the  
 bullock track plain until arriving at the east end of the objective  
 range at 11.18. To my great surprise it was of decomposed  
 gneiss very like the hills at Black Shaft with plentiful  
 E-W track quartz reefs. A number of rocks including  
 at least being evident east. I started to trim the fox on the  
 lunch camp while I, more as routine than in hope,  
 rode the southern scarp face of the range in search for  
 water. Saw washbeds some the old camel dung & an old  
 black pad leading into a valley entering the hills. Ran  
 this 1/2 mile up & disturbed a flock of birds watering  
 at a few water in a natural well. Immediately pleased  
 at the discovery I signalled by smoke my discovery & rode  
 over to them. After food & Grady and I prospected the  
 vicinity of the Blue washbed. Water for the team & camp  
 near Howell & to purpose a stream further. At 3.30 we  
 reached camp & although the quartz we tried was very  
 lumpy & somewhat micaceous we could see the run  
 of country extending for anything up to 10 miles east.  
 Therefore when we were it must be that way in hope  
 that a change for the better occurs. My position is now  
 apparently 4.5 miles N. 10° W of surprise P. Hill I cannot  
 be sure of it as the datum is now the Granite as determined  
 by us in '08. Therefore only a p.p. is available.

Hydrocarbon water stream about 1/2 mile east of site. The man is a native of Mooroomby. Hydrocarbon  
 She means a bog? This is the second time we have together managed to find a bog.



our eyes. It seemed that at last, quite accidentally, a legendary place known to the blacks - 'Good country; mob tucker; mob water..' had been found.

We were gazing upon the fabled CHUGGA-KURRI.

We spent several days exploring Hidden Basin as I called it (for, true to its name, it is completely hidden) and the surrounding country but as we were not scientists but gold prospectors and had people backing us we could only spend a certain amount of time in the valley. Nevertheless, from the superficial study I was able to make, it was pretty clear what had happened. My aneroid showed that the floor of the Basin lay at 200 m above sea level - that is, about 200-300 m lower than the surrounding country. We estimated that the red sandstone cliffs were 100 m high with an upward slope at their summit. A considerable downward movement of the sandstone strata must have occurred ages ago with the result that the horizontally bedded sandstone had been shorn off to form the cliffs on the eastern margin while elsewhere the beds had been sharply buckled into anticlines and synclines (19).

I have often been asked whether the water in Hidden Basin is permanent. I believe with some evidence that it is. The Basin is full of wild life, mainly marsupials and birds. Significantly, we found the tracks of several ibis in the moist sand. Now, the ibis is an inhabitant of large open pools and marshy ground and does not, like the ducks, migrate over long distances to get to water. Where, however, the water in Hidden Basin comes from I do not know. As it lies so much lower than the surrounding country and is so extensive, it is maybe in the nature of a huge soak. All I know is that the wattle still blooms in that hidden valley and the half legend that I had heard tell of so long ago turned out to be true.

\* \* \*

Back once more in Sydney where I made my headquarters, time seemed to have slowed down in the late thirties and with the desert beckoning me again and again to return, I found myself looking around for a more satisfactory way of life than mischief in the Big Smoke. I knew that Stan O'Grady and Ben Nicker, as myself, had previously worked out plans to ride from the centre to the West Australian coast. For this venture we knew that at Alice Springs a riding camel and saddle cost (at that time) about 12 pounds and an equipped pack-camel about 8 pounds. The three of us, who had been steadfast mates during my previous expeditions, knew well how to live off the meats, veges and fruits of the bush, meaning that stores for so long a trip would be light. In 1932 we three had left civilisation with six months' rations - and had stayed bush for nine tummy-content months.

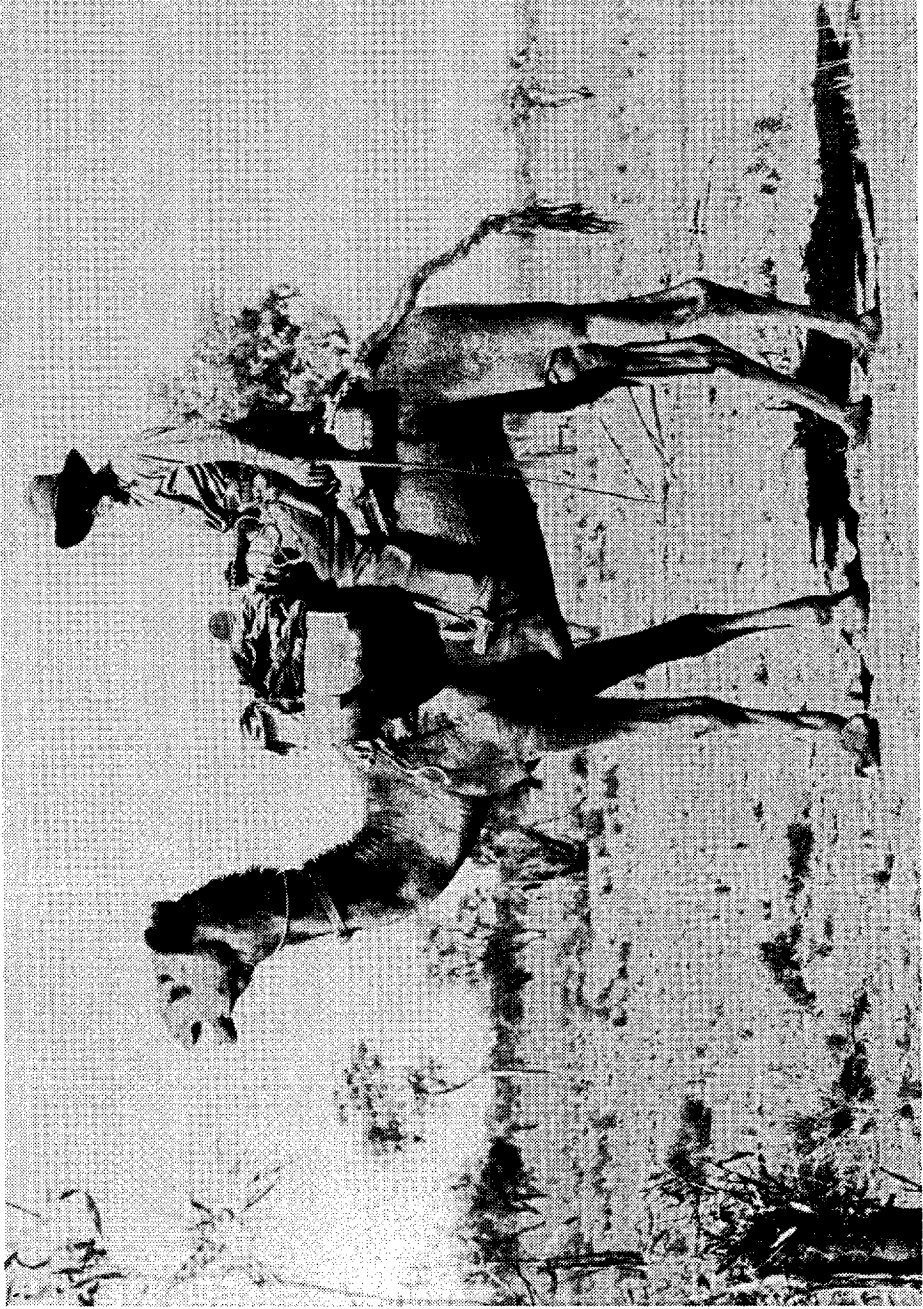
Then in 1938 came the time to signal, 'well, what about it?' Stan wrote full agreement. Likewise Ben, who sent me the grandest telegram I have ever received: 'Yours to the last pituri cigar'. As you may not grasp the meaning of such a bush message and its import, let me translate. Pituri is a wild-growing tobacco-like plant which is chewed by the blacks. Whites, so far as I know, haven't got round to it - and certainly not to trying to make a cigar of it! What Ben signalled me was that however tough the crossing might be, he would be with me all the way. So all seemed set until a dentist's report showed that, having been overlong on the hard-tucker, insufficient-vitamin diet of the previous expeditions, complications had set in for me and a rather long job of dental treatment was needed. Bitterly disappointed, I had to call the whole thing off and relinquish the prospect of being again with my mates and riding the animals which we all understood and, what may seem strange, loved. My great wish had been to get away into the desert again, to that majesty of silence in its timeless repose. Perhaps what I have already told in the books I have written gives an understanding of this great longing of mine.



The Hidden Basin or Redcliff Pound  
(photograph R G Kimber, Alice Springs, June 1980)



A Terry exploration party,  
Christmas 1930



Michael Terry riding his camel 'Dick'  
on the 1933 Central Australia expedition

## CHAPTER 8

# Global Trot

In April 1938 I sailed in SS VINIMATE for London, taking advantage of the 'all-in' fare which included sea to Genoa, rail across France, the Channel ferry and thence rail to London.

The voyage included all the usual diversions: from Suez overland to Cairo and the Pyramids, lunch at Shepherds, Athens and the Parthenon. And about 2 km out of that latter city a visit to Penski's Museum where the display of life-size figures all dressed in the garments of historic periods, ancient to modern, caught my attention. But it was at Piraeus that I really allowed myself to get 'bitten'. From a bumboat alongside our ship arose the shout: 'Berra, berra good randi!' as a bottle was waved. My payment descended and the prize was hauled aboard. The result on opening it? Rather like weak tea despite the fancy label.

Naples of course meant Pompeii. Disappointment, however, met us on our Saturday morning visit as the ancient city was officially closed. But a knowing guide collected a youngster familiar with a back entrance so, clambering over walls and ducking between obstacles, silent lest curators were about, we were rewarded by being able to view parts usually denied to the ordinary visitor. We saw building after building as well as the famous baths, the tepidarium and the calidarium, where our concentration was mostly centred on the wall paintings - decidedly pornographic. But not so the small boy. He just kept darting about to make sure that the coast was clear. Thanks to his vigilance, we got back to the car without arrest.

Before leaving Sydney I had written to a Russian friend, Princess Marina Chavchavadze, and in Genoa I was delighted to receive word from her that she was with her brother, Prince George Chavchavadze and his wife, Princess Elizabeth, at Castello Vincigliata, about 11 km out of Florence, and she included an invitation for me to stay with them. I accepted, saying I would telephone from the River Arno. The Chavchavadze family had probably been the largest landholders in Georgia until the October 1917 Revolution banished them. Princess Marina came to Genoa to pick me up and soon we were sighting their magnificent dwelling, the best preserved medieval castle in Europe, perched on a high point overlooking the lovely Italian countryside.

When I met these Russian friends again two years later in a London hotel they had lost all their dwellings. The Germans had occupied Princess Marina's Paris house and Mussolini had seized Vincigliata. They were then en route for USA where Prince George, a pianist and composer since childhood, made his début in America in 1941 at the Boston Town Hall and his success was immediate. Subsequently at the end of the war the family did get back its 'bricks and mortar' but not for long in terms of real happiness and wealth for in 1962 Prince George and his wife were killed in a motor accident in the French Alps, both aged 57.

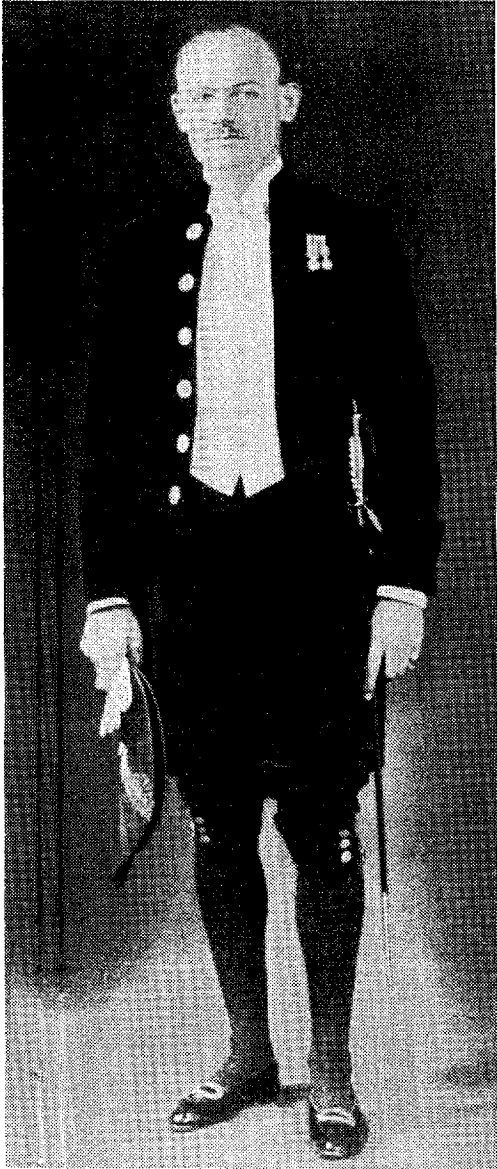
Rome came next for me, where I stayed with a Foreign Office friend, Tony Torr, who was serving with the British Legation there. On the Rome platform Tony greeted me as though it had been only a week since we had previously foregathered and not eleven years. During the drive to their house on the Via Bottega he told me that he and his wife had another guest staying with them. Thus I met the German Princess Maria Dagmar von Wolff. Evidently her ailing lungs necessitated life in Italy, but whatever was amiss she was grand to look at. Another frequent caller, chez Torr, was an Italian princess whose name I forget, but never her remark. One afternoon she said to me: 'Michael, I do like getting a litle droonk. It is like sitting in cotton-wool...'

Some time later when I was travelling by train to rejoin the Torrs in Venice, I ran into strife at the Booking Office as, in my amateur Italian, I tried to explain my planned journey via the twisty Italian rail system. There were muttered calculations as the booking clerk examined and re-examined my steamship/rail ticket ex the VINIMATE. Distances already travelled were calculated and compared with payment. He remained frowning. Then a light shone in the darkness as he exclaimed: 'Ah, si! Possibililissimo!' Completely, utterly possible. Surely the best superlative ever, which enabled me to rejoin my friends at the Hotel Daniele beside Venice's Grand Canal.

Tony arranged for a gondola to be in attendance alongside our hotel day and night and late one night we four glided along one of the smaller waterways beside a group of young Italians wandering the canalside. They were singing arias from Rigoletto and I have never heard such captivating music in any theatre.

All too soon a two and a half month sojourn in Italy had to cease. Murmuring 'Arrivederci, Italia', I boarded a French train at Mondano and was in London a few days later where I was reunited with the family for a while, then living in Surrey. But needing a base in town, I was fortunate enough to find a furnished flat in north-west London and, excepting visits to the family, this was my base until 1940.

The ensuing months were a jumble of events including articles for editors and broadcasts for the BBC. Following an assignment for the journal THE



Michael Terry, in court dress,  
when presented to King George VI,  
February, 1939

Wedding photograph,  
May 1940





ST JAMES'S PALACE, S.W.

June 3rd, 1927.

My dear Terry,

Many thanks for your letter

I am so glad it was possible after all to arrange for The Prince to come to the film, and His Royal Highness desires me to say how glad he was to do so and how interested he was in it.

I was only sorry that I was unable to be there myself.

Yours sincerely,

*Gasper Thomas*

Michael Terry, Esqre.,

Letter from St James's Palace confirming the  
Prince of Wales's attendance at the showing of the  
film Wanderlust



SPHERE, I went to Marseilles and to the old-town area of Nice to obtain special-angle stories and photographs. Some half way between Marseilles and Toulon there was a most diverting stopover at Bandol, a small fishing port which the Provençals call Bandola. The beauty of the place was enhanced by the chance meeting with a London lass with time on her hands which just completed the picture - for us both.

At home I found the family saddened by the fact that Father was not at all well. As yet, home nursing sufficed. It was his wish, plus the suggestion of relatives, that I should seek the honour of being presented to King George VI. This would follow a family tradition for both Father and his brother had been so honoured by a previous monarch, and in view of Father's increasing ill-health I assured him that I would seek to have his wish carried out.

I was sponsored by Sir Charles Weigall for the levee which took place on 28 February 1939. Today, the ceremony mainly bestows greater social status whereas in earlier times it entailed a declaration of one's loyalty. As I was leaving my flat on that February morning at about 10 am, clad in velvet kneebreeches with gleaming buttons on the long jacket, buckled shoes and folded cocked hat in hand, the small lift boy looked perplexed. Then: 'Is it Napoleon, sir?' To be thus mistaken for fancy dress certainly deflated my ego.

Sir Archibald drove me along the Mall to Buckingham Palace, past strings of parked cars. At the gates of the Palace, Grenadier Guards saluted. I noted this priority and later over lunch learnt that he held the office of King-at-Arms, a senior court official. Once within the Palace we separated. I was ushered into a large ante-room where with the many others we queued around its walls to be checked at intervals as to the correctness of dress by officials, one to each section of apparel - shoes, double stockings on legs so that no flesh showed, sword in place, breeches correct, white waistcoat with proper buttons, white shirt collar and tie, white cuffs showing, white gloves and hat in right hand, decorations properly in place.

Once in the presence of the Monarch one marched three steps forward, turned left to face the King, bowed with a stiff spine and inclined the head only. The presentation being thus ended in a few seconds, I was able to walk freely and with long strides out into an adjoining room.

In early April, Father's health became a matter of grave concern and he had to be admitted to hospital, where he died on 25 April 1939, aged 75. Our loss was truly grievous.

Later that year I was invited by Sir Nigel Rycroft to stay at Dummer House near Basingstoke in Hampshire. His father had bought the property in 1866 from Stephen Terry who was the last of our family to reside there and it was after this family home that I named the Dummer Range in Western Australia. I got to know Rycroft well; in fact, after a time we got our heads

together as conspirators to hatch a plot. It was centred round a 'Terry Legend' connected with Dummer House. During the Cromwellian Wars my ancestors had been Royalists and when it seemed that Cromwell's forces were approaching that part of the country, a goodly quantity of the family's treasures was secreted down a well and had never been recovered. I knew something of the story, which in fact still persists in the village. But better still, here is how authoress A M W Stirling tells the tale in her history of the Terry Family (20).

In a paddock adjacent to Dummer House was then a well-house protecting a great well, nine feet in diameter and sunk 360 feet into the chalk. In this was generally to be found water to the depth of 30 or 40 feet and a wooden bucket holding 60 gallons was drawn up by a huge wheel worked by a donkey, sometimes assisted by a man who walked beside it. This wheel, similar in construction to that at Carisbrook Castle, was one of three in Dummer used to work wells on which the parish depended for water, the second being at Dummer Down Farm and the third in the village street...but the wheel at Dummer House was much larger in structure than any of the others; and into the blackness of the great cavity beside it the villagers used to gaze with awe and recount with bated breath the tale of the untold treasures which had lain since the Civil Wars hidden in its gloomy depths - great tankards of silver and gold, great bags of money, though of an obsolete pattern, great flashing jewels dimmed with the mud of ages - all of which belonged to Squire Terry...and lay so near, but unattainable.

The writer however, then adds an unhappy footnote to the effect that 'when Dummer passed out of the possession of the Terry family, the next owner, by a regrettable act of vandalism, destroyed the ancient well-house and filled up the well.' Even so, Rycroft and I determined to do something about it, and our angle for getting round the treasury claim of Treasure Trove (meaning small benefit to the finder) would be that recovery was mine by right of descent. That's how confident we were. We made a detailed survey of the three wells wherein the wealth could lie and decided where Trial Shaft No 1 was to be sunk. In fact we had actually prepared for draining the site when Hitler marched and the whole plan had to be shelved. So there the whole thing lies, as the opportunity for a further endeavour has never come my way.

On 3 September 1939 World War Two broke out. I volunteered for work with London's Air Raid Precautions (later renamed Civil Defence) being unacceptable for uniform through World War I disability.

The next milestone is certainly worth recording, for on a visit to Dorset cousins, at dinner one evening I met a girl, Ursula Livingstone-Learmonth. In due course I met her parents and the climax was that on 8 May 1940 Ursula

and I were married at St George's Church, Hanover Square, London, with my Godfather, Canon Adderly, conducting the service. My Best Man was Evan Tredegar, so I was valeted by a descendant of a buccaneer.

For reasons which should be kept private, within three troubled months, it became clear that unless I got my wife away to Australia where she would be amongst strangers and therefore drawn closer to me, the future looked bleak. Being wartime, no-one could leave England except on official duty. I saw a Colonel of Intelligence about the problem and he intimated that there was a 'useful job', possibly within Intelligence, that I could undertake in Australia. At his behest, and within 48 hours, a passage was fixed for the two of us to Australia via New Zealand. We sailed prior to the commencement of the Battle of Britain which started on 23 August 1940, just as we had Jamaica in sight, and we arrived in Sydney on 8 October 1940.

## CHAPTER 9

# Australia Menaced

Once returned to Sydney we were fortunate enough to get a flat where, from its windows, I was proud to introduce my wife to an extensive view of the Harbour. I took every chance to make her aware of her new country and my friends, whom she professed to like. Thus things seemed to be moving along smoothly for a few months until a cable from her father practically ordered her to return as he was sick. Things between us were becoming tenuous in the extreme, and a senior man in Dalgety's who was acting as agent for her father turned on the heat on his behalf, telephoning with various implications. Facing up to the train of events I pretended to accept the fake situation realising that it presaged a final, not temporary, break. Thus I subsequently watched her ship disappear through the Heads and bade adieu to happiness. Finally, in November 1944, the marriage was dissolved, the termination of four and a half fruitless years. The Great Spirit having dealt so kindly with me during the then 40 years of my life, there remains no resentment. Probably it was a time of testing which was taken, I hope, to His satisfaction.

I readjusted by taking a smaller flat in Darlinghurst and threw myself into the counter-intelligence work which had been assigned to me. With my useful knowledge of Russia, my task was to 'get in with the 'Reds''. This entailed my attending their meetings and also other public functions. But soon I became aware that my diligence was giving rise to unwarranted speculation and even acquaintances were chipping me about my 'Red friends'. Then when the boss, having lost confidence in me, even accusing me of 'going Red', asked me to terminate my services, I felt I just had to make a break with my 'background' or face trouble. There remained for me attendance at a rally to promote the People's Army, as in Russia. On stage at the Maccabean hall, Darlinghurst, my turn came to speak. Concisely, I ended with: 'But, if there is any political import in this proposal, then I am absolutely against it!' and hoped that my words would be reported. It worked. The very next day I met three known Reds in town and they walked past me as if I didn't exist.

During this period there were fourteen attempts to get into uniform. But the doctor always said no to the body, the consequences of World War One. During one attempt the RAAF at Woolloomooloo was really unkind with the Twirling Chair Test. To be accepted for flying duties one should be able to

take one and a half circles in the open chair. I flopped sideways too soon. 'No flying duties for this entry.' Next, the stethoscope signalled 'No entry at all.' Had the chest examination been taken first, then several very uncomfortable hours regaining equilibrium would not have occurred.

I was, however, successful in joining the National Emergency Staff in Sydney with Roy Hendy, the Town Clerk, at its head. His office in the Town Hall was our headquarters. Those were anxious days, when a possible enemy attack on Sydney had to be faced. In such an event, with the Army too occupied to handle civilians, my number one duty would be to stop any overloading of the Western Highway with motorists thronging there en route for the Blue Mountains.

Later I was commissioned by the Department of Main Roads of New South Wales to write a book recording the role and achievements of that Department during the war years. Thus I am able to relate the following account of how Tocumwal Air Base came into being.

In the event of Sydney or Melbourne being captured (and at that stage of the war it was realistic to face the possibility considering the speed of the Japanese advance towards Australia), the Air Force badly needed a base for aircraft repair, maintenance and operation. Firstly, a site isolated from the coast and 'captured cities' had to be pinpointed. The Murray River town of Tocumwal was chosen by the General Staff, being 242 km north of Melbourne, 564 km northwest of Sydney and 81 km from Deniliquin. There, 52 sq km of stockraising land was seized; 39 sq km for hangars, workshops and living quarters and 13 sq km for runways. The Base was designed for several functions; to receive and uncrate aircraft from overseas, to overhaul those weary from use and to repair the damaged. Three hundred cottages - Yankee Town - were scheduled to house the Americans who would man the enterprise.

In the early days of 1942, affairs in Tocumwal drifted along little faster than Old Man Murray; cattle grazed quietly and sheep were busy converting grass into fleece. But on 6 March of that year rustic quiet was abruptly shattered by the rattle of caterpillar tracks and the sudden arrival of over 2,500 men, 400 of them from the Department of Main Roads, to start work on the construction of the Air Base, plus a host of machines and materials trucked to the site. War had come to Tocumwal with a rush, where the initial Department of Main Roads Secretariat grew up in an abandoned cinema. The creation of this Air Base was, in its time, our most remarkable civilian achievement. It was the fastest in that or any other location for just 56 days after the mad rush began the backbone of construction was broken, proving once again the effectiveness of our engineers and their teams. Tocumwal then suffered its second invasion for it was again swamped by men, machines and supplies; this time it was the Americans who had arrived to man the Base and were whizzing about all over the place in their jeeps. I recall the comment of a US Army Airforce Major: 'Well, I've seen some fast jobs in my country, but nothing of the speed that you are putting into this one.'

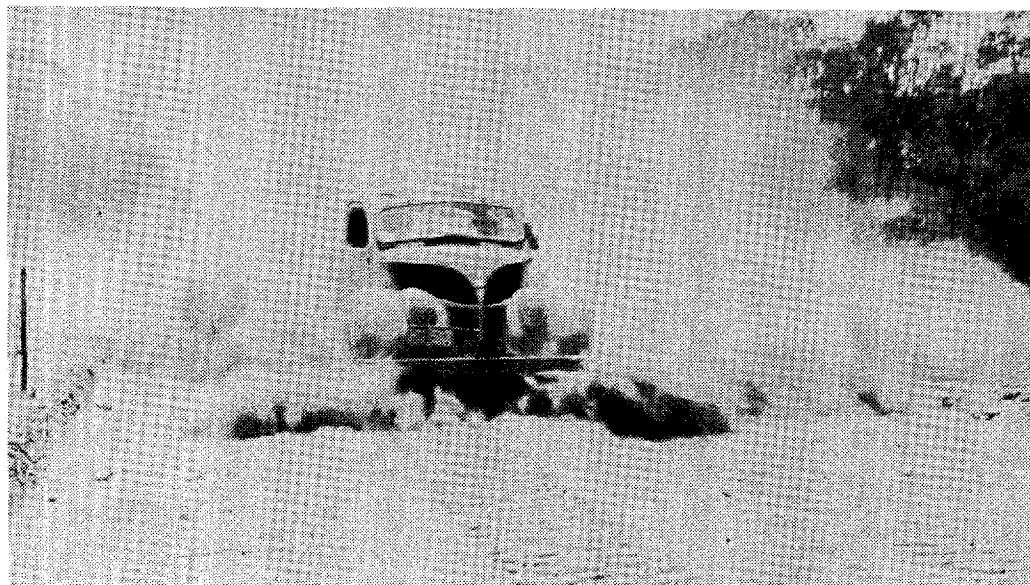
When Commissioner Craig co-opted me to write the war role of the Department of Main Roads of New South Wales I can recall his saying to me, '...and of course you will realise that roadmaking was man's earliest organised project. The Romans conquered Britain by their roads, but following along them came their culture, their civilisation. Human progress is partnered with road construction.' And so I turn the history card back 200 years ago when there were no roads in Australia. Only the primitive trails of the Aborigines, remote from the oceans, leading from waterhole to waterhole, from plain to gorge beyond, beaten and worn into the dry sand, had been their secret ways for thousands of years. Prior to the arrival of Cook and the Europeans a network of tracks existed throughout the continent. The quest for pituri, a narcotic plant which black men chewed until white men brought their substitute, tobacco, had resulted in trails connecting its best growing areas with tribal hunting grounds and pituri runners travelled long distances to gather supplies. Other trails developed in the search for ochre used for daubing the bodies of those taking part in corroborees. These blackfellow trails became the forerunners of the State highways of today. The intimate knowledge which the first inhabitants, the Aborigines, possessed of their homeland undoubtedly helped the first newcomers to Australia to select the best route from point to point. Then came the explorers, prospectors and graziers to spread out, some steering from headland to lonely hill like a sailor navigating new waters, and many helped in their daunting task by friendly dark-skinned pilots. Camps developed, and supplies had to be got through, with the footwalkers, horsemen, bullock wagons and horse drays following until the Machine Age thrust itself out into the bush and the first venturesome motor cars stumbled amongst rocks and gullies, the forerunners of the bulldozers, those new leaders in the attack to create a way for all the paraphernalia of Australia-at-war.

My subject now is the creation of the Darwin to Alice Springs roadway. Prior to 1940 Darwin had no backdoor; its tropical hinterland was as yet unconquered. Since 1870 when the first of the 36,000 wooden wire-linked poles forming the line of the Overland Telegraph went up, there had existed only the twisting bush track running alongside the Line. To give Darwin its backdoor the Army decided that an all-weather road link had to be rushed the 1,536 km south to Alice Springs which was the railhead from Adelaide. On 17 August 1940 Federal Cabinet authorised its formation and it was named after the Centralian explorer MacDouall Stuart but eventually shortened to the Stuart Highway. Construction of the road began in April 1941 and early in 1942 the project was declared a Military Road. Its creation was divided into three sections; South Australia railed men and plant to Alice Springs for the southern section. Queensland railed its outfit to Mount Isa, then overland to Newcastle Waters, which became its base for the central section. New South Wales shipped its men and machines to Darwin for the northern section - the toughest part.

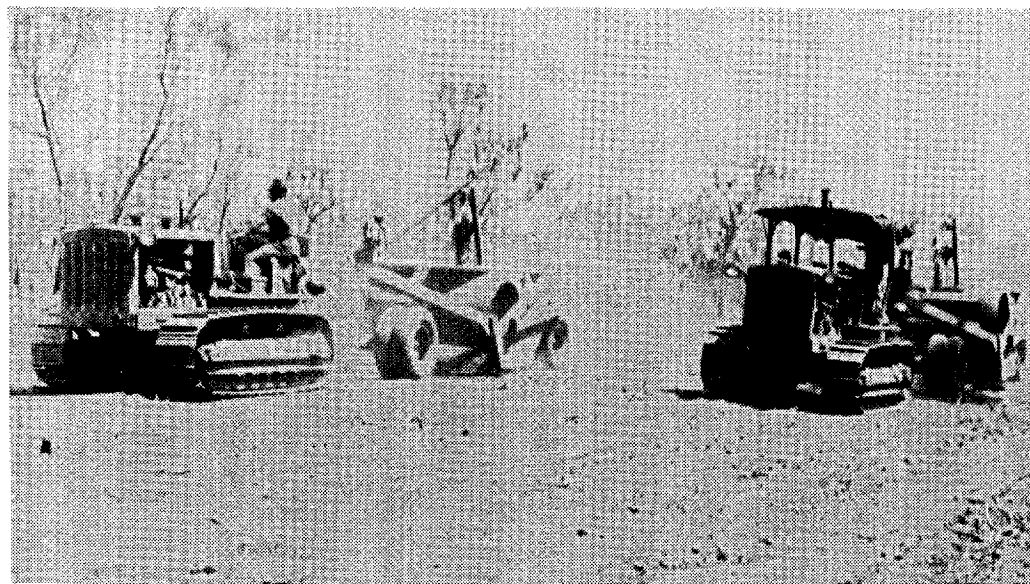
Early in 1942, after the bombing of Darwin, I flew from Sydney to Hayes Creek, 188 km from Darwin, where the Department of Main Roads was in the process of establishing its base: Main Roads City. My invitation, to collect material for the book, had reached me as: 'If you want a spell from city discomforts, Hayes Creek is the place. It has the **ONLY COLD SHOWER** in the Territory.' So I obeyed the summons.

At Main Roads City men and plant were then starting to move into their headquarters. The offices were designed for tropical conditions and here I found the Brain Boys dealing with endless estimates, charts, accounts, reports - all the involved organisation woven into the fabric of road construction. I soon moved out to the road construction itself, among the on-site men toiling in the shadeless blaze of the northern sun where the grey bulldust, enemy of the dry season constructors, was churning again - dust and more dust, creating misery for men and machines. It gritted the mouth, the teeth, the nostrils. We wiped it out of our eyes, raked it out of our hair and scraped it from our bodies...

Back in Sydney again and equipped with all the material I had gathered about the progress of the Department of Main Roads in the Top End, I settled down to complete my sixth book, entitled **BULLDOZER**, dedicated to 'the Fellowship of the Slide Rule and to the Men of the Grey Bulldust'. And then I was on the track again but this time with a different, more definite purpose, for the months in the Northern Territory had directed my thoughts to a quest for my own bit of land.



Utility of the NSW Department of Main Roads  
raising 'bull dust' on an unfinished Stuart Highway,  
at Daly Waters, Northern Territory, 1940



Bulldozers and scoops of the Department  
of Main Roads shaping the shoulder of a  
section of the Stuart Highway, 1940

(Photographs courtesy of the  
NSW Department of Main Roads, Sydney)



## CHAPTER 10

# Amid Tall Trees

Once having finalised BULLDOZER I felt a lingering loneliness now that my erstwhile wife had finally gone and the Decree Absolute lay ahead. A yearning for another sort of creative activity directed my footsteps to that reliable mate, the bush. During the week I was busy writing and preparing material for a series of broadcasts I was able to give and at weekends I would be off with a swag on my back enjoying meals by the wayside and nights beneath the stars for company. I was on the track of that bit of land of my own which I was seeking. From the Colo River the search veered to Terrigal, some 56 km upcoast from Sydney. There I found 12.5 ha approximately 6 km from Terrigal itself, along the highway towards Avoca. Its trees were magnificent, possums abounded and the third largest colony of bellbirds in the state tinkled all day. In June 1944 I bought the lot, unfenced and uncleared.

At first I walked there daily from Terrigal until an ex-army tent was rigged and a Dodge tourer converted into a Utility. The first job was to open a way through the bush for the construction of a short road leading to the planned house-site. Cutting right across the line of this roadway was a gully which had to be bridged strongly enough to take a quarter-ton lorry fully loaded. Reg, who was my helper, having felled, barked and sawn two trees of the required length to span this gully, I hired a bullock team to haul them into position in the trenches dug on either side. Discarded railway sleepers from Gosford Railway Station were trucked to site and we spiked them into place, rigging high side-rails. We were in business, ready to get transport through and start on the house, a sawn-timber framework with walls, partitions and corrugated roof of fibro cement. The one large room with its open fireplace was part kitchen, part living room. I suppose you could have called it 'open plan' except that I had no notion of such a term. A line of poles supporting a power line running right across the property from the main road supply meant that I could switch on to the 20th century, for I had electricity connected.

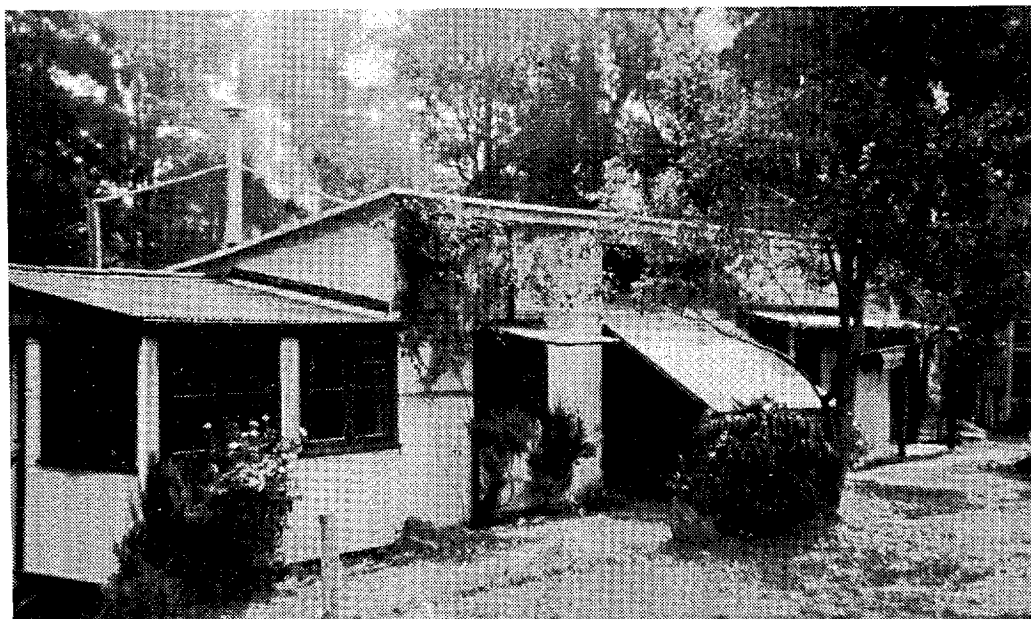
The war being by then over, and hearing that my sister Frances (Biddey to the family) was on her way from England, I built more accommodation - an extra wing to serve as my own quarters and another section with bedroom for my expected resident. A 4,500 litre rainwater tank was erected with tap lines to sink and bathroom.

It was just five years after zero-hour (as I named the day when I first started work on the property) that Biddy arrived and she was truly amazed at the 'sophistication' of DUMMER for thus I had named my spot in the Australian bush. Because it was this pioneering work in establishing my bush home which, in retrospect, holds the greatest appeal for me - as I hope it may do for you - I have given it priority, although the build-up was, of necessity, spasmodic as the pocket needed replenishing very often.

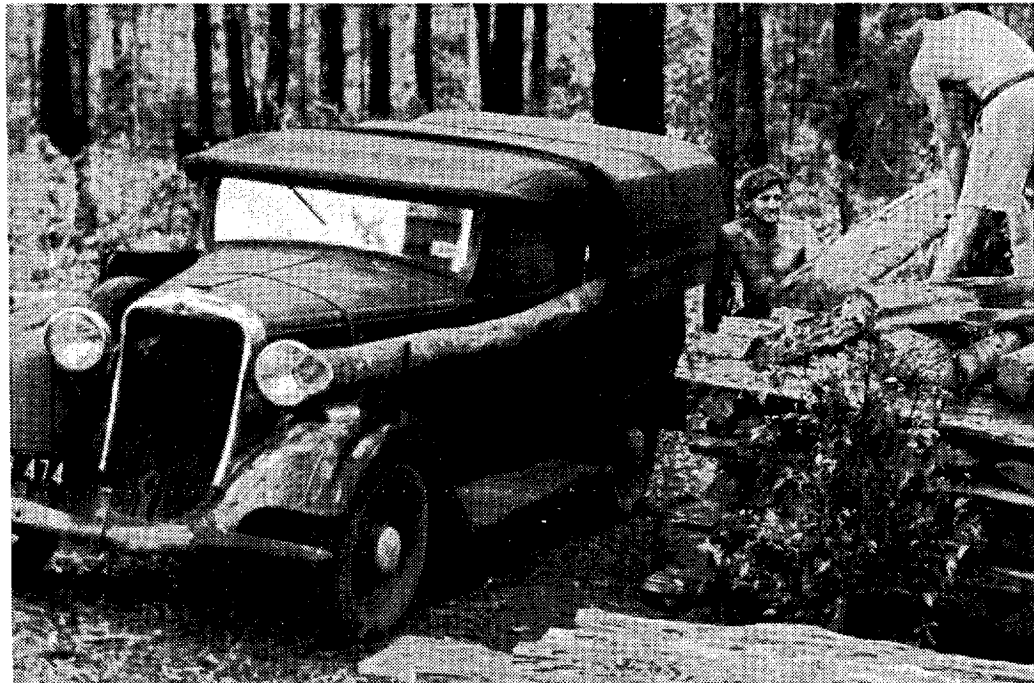
Friends who were interested in my venture insisted that I should have a cat as the spearhead of animal company. I named my first Dummer companion 'Willy' - a memory flashback to 1923 when Dick Yockney and I were on the start of our trans-north Australia crossing to Broome and when, in our broke period, we had had to earn money to buy benzine. At one homestead there was a funny old girl with a child. She amused her son by wagging a finger at him and singing out 'Willy Winkies a kee ol' man!' So Willy it was. My first Dummer companion made his home in the garage and at first I got food and milk for him. But he soon went bush for his tucker and then always came back to the yard for a drink and petting at sundown. Thus, when I went away there was no anxiety about his meals. But some years later, on return from a short absence, I found no Willy. Obviously he had tackled a prey too savage for him. Saludos, my dear Willy.

The introduction of goats solved the milk problem and here I relate an anecdote which certainly back-fired on me. The surplus milk was sold to a family across the highway. All went well except the time when, having less than the stipulated quantity, tank water was added, without a thought for the mosquito midges. Alas, my customer spotted them in the milk and so knew of my misdeed. I admitted my fault, took half price for the adulterated milk and never did that again. Biddy became my milkmaid and was on most friendly terms with Hazel, the milking nanny, whose teats she pulled at a regular site just outside the stable. The drill was for the milkmaid to sit on a box so placed that there was room for Hazel to walk and position herself between it and the wall of the stable. Only the goat knows why, but one day Hazel positioned herself the wrong way round but before action started she awoke to her grave error, backed out, ran around the milkmaid sitting on the box and repositioned herself facing the usual way. Who says goats are not intelligent?

The main income was derived from the sale of fencing posts and firewood. For the former, the sawmill used to send in its felling team who cut the trunks as needed which left us plenty of small stuff to split for firewood for our own use. For sale-firewood I used a portable petrol-driven circular saw. Clearing the land, which was done to a regular plan, afforded the necessary acres for crops, fruit trees and improved pasture paddocks for horses. Once a stockyard was built I was ready for my great love - horses. I bought Bess, a registered trotting mare, Belle, a general purpose worker and Mac-the-Hack. I rode Bess to a registered stallion near Wyong for service and sold the resultant foal quite well.



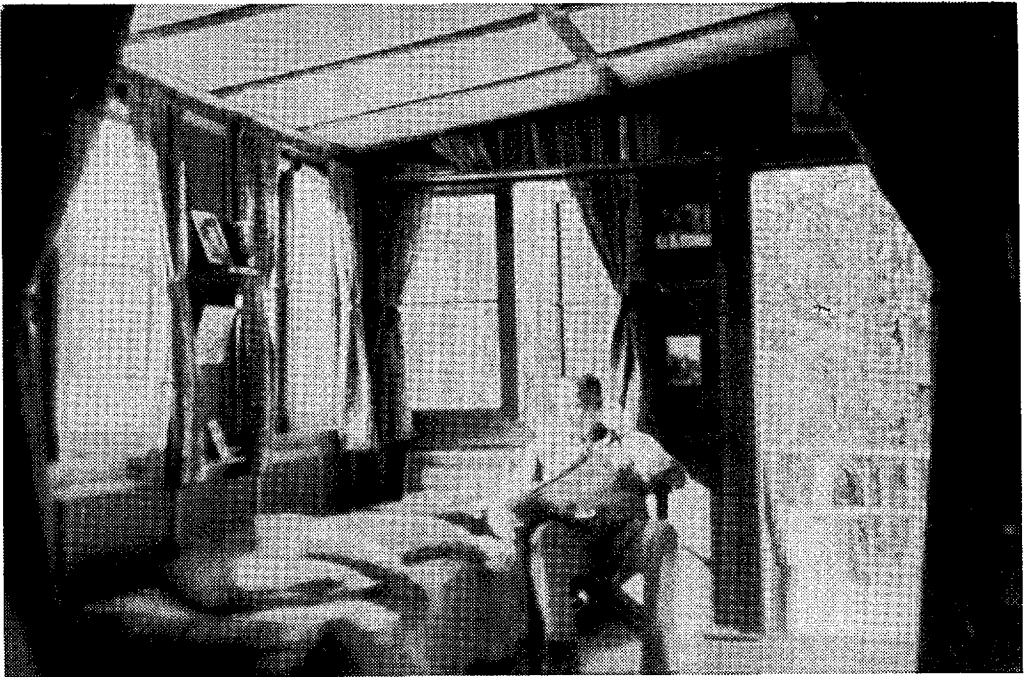
'Dummer', Terrigal, NSW 1950



The Dodge utility used to carry small loads of wood and fence posts at 'Dummer', Terrigal



Michael's sister, Frances, at  
'Dummer', Terrigal



Interior of 'Dummer', Terrigal, NSW  
with Michael Terry

In terms of the fruit planting plan, bananas were really successful. Advised to leave sheltering trees for wind protection, they were planted on the 'three sucker system', a full-grown one heavy with fruit, a half-grown to follow on when the bearer had been cut down and the smallest of the three to come along to complete the system.

It was gratifying when people brought visitors to look over what had been created in the once-wild place. Roden Cutler and his wife visited (before he was knighted and became Governor of New South Wales). I well recall how this warrior of notable bravery was so apprehensive of driving across my gully-bridge that on approaching it he and his wife got out of their car and walked the final 90 m to the house. We joked at my dismay about their arrival on foot and I then persuaded him to sample my bridge building and, after walking back to his car, I sat beside him to assure him of my confidence in my handiwork whilst he drove to journey's end.

Christmas was the Big Day. Once I counted 17 cars in the yard in the early afternoon and the party did not break up until the early hours of Boxing Day. So my circle of friends grew, banishing any sense of loneliness. Besides, the Perfect Body was a frequent visitor from Sydney when I was alone. In great hunger we once went to bed for two whole days except for the morning and evening sessions when the wretched squawking hens demanded to be fed.

Thinking back over my expedition years, those strenuous years of continual movement and great effort, I realise how they imposed too-long periods of denial. But these were, I am glad to say, cancelled out by the excitement of the chase. Nevertheless, home life, school tuition and my own nature have never allowed me to be casual about overnight bed and I cannot recall having betrayed this imposed standard concerning those who favoured me. So my lovelies smiled upon me and went their way until I married disastrously at 41, when I so keenly hoped to leave my name behind me. One who came into the picture later on certainly went out with fireworks. During our time together my whole place became pleasurably strewn with all manner of feminine things, mostly perfumes and such-like in their pressure-pack sprays. Then came a rift and things went wrong, accompanied by the storm of her departure. So this wretched male, wishing to tidy the place up and thinking it prudent to return all such abandoned trophies to their owner, armed himself with a whole package of them and reluctantly went to a final meeting. In the firelight of the lounge things became rather tense, very tense, and in a grand manner the offending package was seized from me and hurled into the fire, there to be consumed to the proverbial ashes. But not so. For thereupon those wretched pressure-packs exploded here, there and everywhere and amid the resultant barrage which almost rocked the room I reckon I was lucky to dodge the shrapnel.

And a final anecdote. In 1950 a Queensland friend wrote me a letter that I shall always keep. I quote: 'A friend of mine in Brisbane says that a baby

Aboriginal named Michael Terry after yourself lives on Go-Go Station in the Kimberlies. He is now about 22 years of age. The lady of my acquaintance who saw him about three years ago tells me that you are remembered with admiration and affection amongst the Old Timers she met.' Thus, my namesake would, by now, be about 50 years old, which is indeed aged for a blackfellow. Should you ever have toured near Go-Go Station and located him you would have found him to be a full-black. 'Nuff said,' as they would respond north of Capricorn.

And an expedition note: before I engaged any man for a Walkabout I made it quite clear that there would be no 'gin burgling' in my camp. Not that I was worried about the morals, but solely for the safety of the whole outfit. Not infrequently a jealous husband has 'got hot longa belly' and speared the object of his fury. To keep my outfit safe the penalty of any infringement of that rule would have been a camel and a waterbag at sunup - and to hell off camp.

The chain of improvements to the Dummer property went steadily ahead to the time when I could finally sit back and survey my completed plans for the untamed bushland bought 14 years previously. Being then half way through my sixtieth year and as the timber work with axe and crosscut saw, the main source of income, was heavy, it seemed wiser to sell. This was a sad decision, though sensible healthwise, as the place meant so much to this pioneer. So I put my bush child in the hands of an agent, who unexpectedly soon got a buyer. They paid well, half cash, half mortgage, for my slice of Australia. After some time, however, my solicitor was informed that the buyer could not complete the deal and his advice was to put Dummer up for auction with the object that, should the best offer be less than that which I was owed, return of ownership would follow legally. I went to the auction praying that no bid would produce my entitlement but the amount was exceeded. So I came away sorrowing that my love place would never be mine again, even if cheery in pocket.

## CHAPTER 11

# Walkabout and Flyabout

His anchor being on deck again, 'Terry of Terrigal' (a good friend for some years had thus named me, which I liked) got itchy feet. The impulse was to go places for material and photographs, freelance writing being the next stage. Over the ensuing years there were profitable journeys to Tasmania, the Snowy Mountains and the Warrumbungle Range and in May 1961 I was on a mining quest which led to Thomas Reservoir in the Cleland Hills, Northern Territory, and it was this quest which guided me to what is considered to be my major contribution to Australian archaeology.

Thomas Reservoir is not a man-made catchment but a huge natural rock water-storage which can hold up to 9 million litres, a misleading whitefellow name for an outsize rock hole known to the blacks as Ullilla, meaning flat stone. In 1889 Tietkens found the Cleland Hills, traversing only their southern flank. In 1902, Murray and Maurice, travelling north from Adelaide found Thomas Reservoir. Some years later Finlayson, the Adelaide anthropologist, was there, followed subsequently by a few survey teams, and in 1932 my camel expedition camped at the Reservoir as we had a job to do repairing camel saddles. On that occasion, apart from recording that the rock storage was only about one-third full, neither I nor my companions noted anything strange in our surroundings.

Then came a curious chain of events. Thirty years later, in May 1961, I was again in the Cleland Hills on the mining quest already mentioned. On our last morning at Thomas Reservoir rockhole I was having an early wash, basin balanced on a boulder, and when looking down at my feet I discerned what could have been a carving on a rock. With the early sun just at the right angle to attract the eye, I certainly could see several extraordinary rock carvings. On a boulder at my feet there was one, pecked in, which I could see represented a huge head. Looked at from one angle it wore a sort of crown whilst from another it seemed to show a beard. Imagination stirred, I looked about and saw a further carving, high up on the cliff face which seemed to represent a horizontal human figure about 3 m long and nearby were symbols cut into the rock.

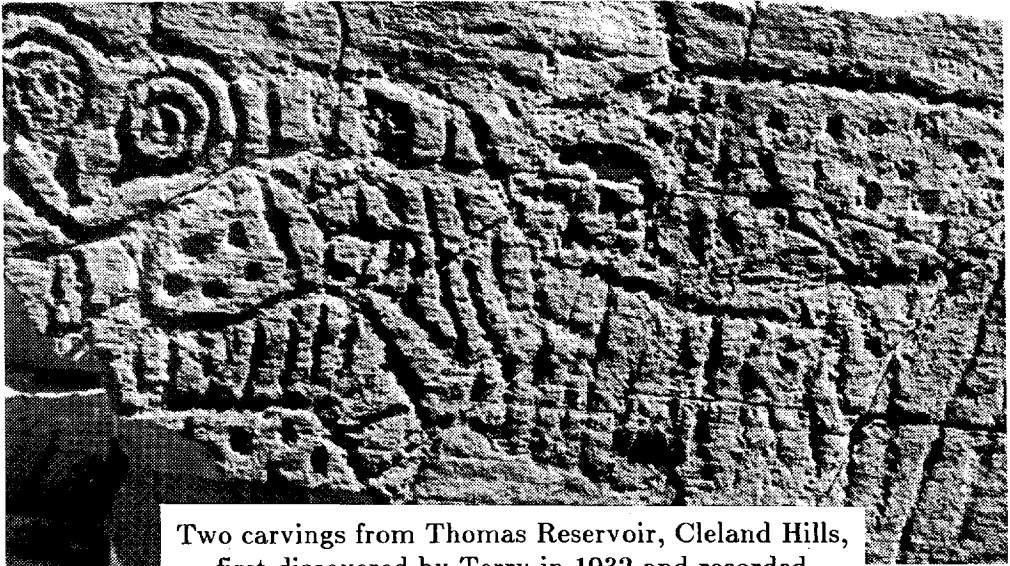
Photographs of the carvings taken that morning did not come out well, chiefly because I was unable to get close enough to that tantalising horizontal figure up on the cliff face. And there the find had to rest, for our quest was primarily concerned with minerals and it was unethical to use up company time or funds on archaeology. Nevertheless, being greatly puzzled by this discovery - this possible whiff from Australia's past which had come my way - for seven years I talked about it with specialists hoping to be taken seriously and to have the carvings properly studied by them.

It was not until 1967 that I was greeted with the glad news that my endeavours and perseverance to have the carvings investigated were rewarded. Principally through the support of Professor MacIntosh, Department of Anatomy, Sydney University, and by joint funding from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, and the South Australian Museum, Adelaide, an expedition was mounted for me to lead a party under Robert Edwards, Curator of Anthropology at the South Australian Museum, to the Cleland Hills site which lay 564 km west of Alice Springs. So in September of that year, 'in a mood of suspended disbelief' as Robert Edwards afterwards told me, our four-man expedition set out to assess the significance of my find.

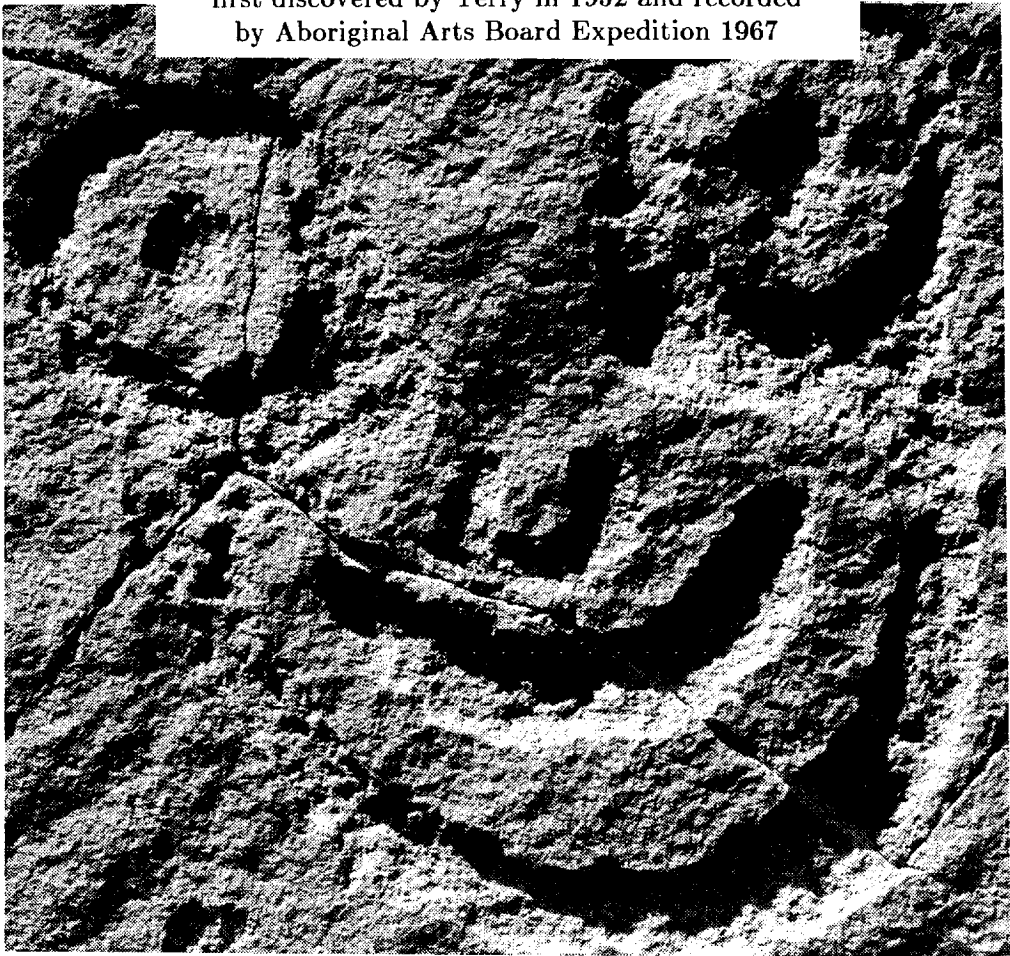
Our first stop, 240 km or so, was at Areyonga, a government settlement for several hundred Aborigines of the Ptjantjatjara tribe, and the last area of civilisation before the Cleland Hills. Heading out along an oil exploration road we were soon amongst continuous sandhills and thence it was ahead through miles of trackless country and seas of drifting red sand dunes. And as we camped out on those chilly nights I could almost read the thoughts of the others of the team, wondering whether I could in fact lead them to our desired goal and, indeed, once there, would those carvings right in the middle of Australia's 'dead centre' warrant the effort of relocating them and justify all that I claimed for them? But I knew my landmarks and after our last camp, some 4 km from the Cleland Hills, there lay my surest sign - a lone ghostgum blazed with an M, cut by the two prospectors, Murray and Maurice, 66 years before. Next day, pressing ahead on foot and eager to relocate my find, I was able to shout in triumph to the others as I pointed to the huge stone block fallen from the cliff, with its carving clearly visible - that heart-shaped face with the moon-eyes was staring up at me again. And scanning the rock face I could show, for the others now to behold, where lay the array of carvings I had discovered those many years ago. Even so, I held my breath. Was all the effort of the expedition, of getting the team there, to be justified, for the verdict had yet to come. It seemed an eternity before Edwards turned to me and said, 'Yes, you are completely vindicated. These carvings are thousands of years old and quite different from known Aboriginal art.' My relief can be imagined.

During the ensuing ten days after our arrival at Thomas Reservoir Robert Edwards and his team, men well versed in their specialised craft,



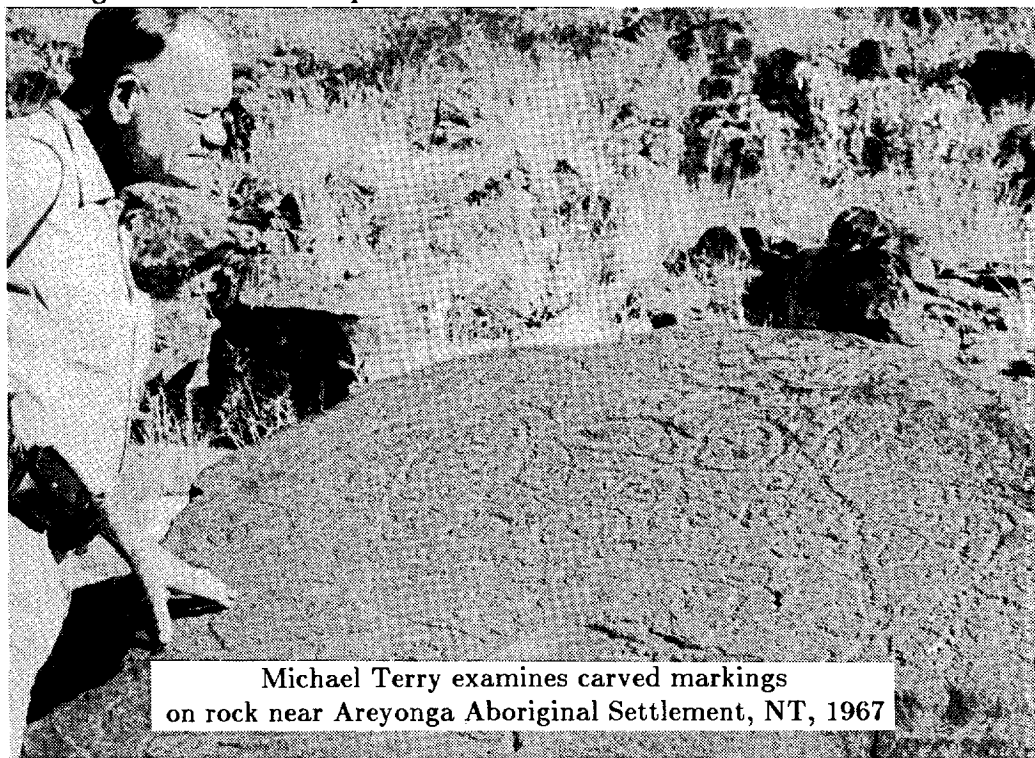


Two carvings from Thomas Reservoir, Cleland Hills,  
first discovered by Terry in 1932 and recorded  
by Aboriginal Arts Board Expedition 1967





Rock carving, face and torso,  
at Thomas Reservoir, Cleland Hills, NT,  
Aboriginal Arts Board Expedition 1967



Michael Terry examines carved markings  
on rock near Areyonga Aboriginal Settlement, NT, 1967

became more and more excited with their discoveries until finally they had photographed and recorded 387 separate rock carvings where I had originally noted three. These included 16 actual faces with their expressions of sadness, humour and surprise and further search even revealed more carvings within 600 m of the cliffs around the Reservoir; a series of pecked-in and abraded basic designs showing concentric circles, animal tracks and abstract symbols. It is, however, the parade of human faces in what I venture to call 'my gallery' which makes the discovery so exciting and inexplicable. What people carved them and when? The workmanship is superior to that of the Aborigines and of a different character. Only one tool of probable antiquity was found, a large trimmed hardstone flake partly buried between rock outcrops and near one of the engraved faces. It is of a type known as 'horse shoe' and the working edge is still sharp and capable of further use. According to Edwards, 'these staring faces were certainly weathering in their mother stone long before the Pharaohs raised the Sphinx at Giza. Their unique character, their great antiquity make these sites a part of the Australian Heritage'.

Yet the mystery of those Cleland Hills carvings still remains to be solved.

\* \* \*

In mid-1964 I found myself one day in the Sydney headquarters of QANTAS talking to Sir Hudson Fysh - 'Huddy', my long time friend who had now become Chairman of that airline. Meant only to be a chat about things Australian, it was soon switched to other horizons when he said, 'Look, I'd like you to see the head of our Tourist and Publicity department.' Thus, later, I met John Ulm, son of the famous Charles Ulm of aviation fame, and the outcome was that a totally unexpected commission was landed in my lap, an assignment to get out and about, flying QANTAS and raid a number of Pacific islands, among them Norfolk Island, New Caledonia, Fiji and also New Zealand, to collect publicity pieces and above all photographs in order to fill QANTAS aircraft with passengers. The job spread itself over several years and as it was not full-time I was able to combine it with further Australian walkabouts in relation to my growing interest in the pre-history of this continent.

My first QANTAS flyabout took me to Norfolk Island, the second oldest British settlement in the southern hemisphere. The grim history of this island as a penal settlement has been told many a time, but the island has also a happier claim to history. I was fortunate enough to be there when the annual celebration of Bounty Day came around which commemorates the arrival in 1856 of the 194 descendants of the mutineers of the BOUNTY who, at the behest of Queen Victoria, were transferred from Pitcairn to Norfolk Island.

And in memory of their arrival, 8 June is yearly celebrated as Bounty Day, of special significance to all those who can claim to have Pitcairn blood in their veins.

Fiji offered a special interest for me personally. I can recall Nadi airport and the time of my return to Sydney where I overheard two departing Australians making their comments. Number One stated that the Fijians were most friendly people, 'the climate's fine and the scenery very special'. Number Two thought differently: 'Think so? I find that the roads are poor and the food isn't up to what I had expected. Besides, there hasn't been enough to do. No fun and games'. I silently agreed with Number One, and felt like telling Number Two that his final comment hardly fitted my case for the Perfect Body, who had been previously at Terrigal with me, had also been holidaying in Fiji just at the time I was there.

And to my final port of call, New Zealand, the Land of the Long White Cloud, which I farewelled as the last stopover on my Pacific Flyabout aboard a Trans Tasman flight bound for Sydney, almost a lone first class passenger. The steward, having no one else to comfort, plied me with Scotch so much so that I floated down the gangway at Mascot and thence almost into the arms of my QANTAS sponsor, John Ulm, to let him know that the islands' programme was completed. My grin must have widened even more when I heard him saying how satisfied they were with the job I had done for them. Subsequently he offered me a free ride, Sydney to Cape Town, on their inaugural flight under VIP conditions. But thinking it over I declined, reluctantly enough, as there would have been no chance to hunt up a story or more to compensate him. He then capped the lot with, 'Well, from now on we will fly you first class free to any port of call in the world covered by QANTAS'.

Regretfully, illness stepped in and I never had the chance to take up this generous offer.



Sir Hudson Fysh, KBE  
(Photograph courtesy of Qantas)

## CHAPTER 12

# Peering Back and the Last Camp

From the knowledge I have gained of the inland of Australia, amplified by reports from other wanderers, the more the conviction has grown that here lies a great challenge awaiting the archaeologist. I want now to record some of my investigations into items of archaeological interest which have been found within Australia. The result is in no way a treatise, but rather a walkabout, listing discoveries as I gained knowledge of them.

Towards Christmas 1963 I was in Cairns, which lies some 1449 km north of Brisbane. The project was to obtain material and photographs of curious things in that area. Imagine, therefore, my surprise when asked: 'Have you heard about our coin?' Such a question had of course to be followed up so that after some checking, the train took me via the Barron Falls to Kuranda on the way up to the Atherton Tableland. Here I met Joe Gilmore who the next day volunteered to drive me out to MacKenzie's Pocket, 2 km or so north of Barron Falls, as he knew exactly where, in 1910, Andrew Henderson, when digging post-holes for a fence, had unearthed from a depth of some half a metre an unusual piece of bronze, coin size. The site was an old Aboriginal walking track and deep in the rain forest, a combination which had secured the soil from washaway and preserved its resting place. Andy, not interested in the metal morsel, put it away in a drawer in his house where it lay forgotten until shortly before he died in 1962, when he had given it to Joe Gilmore's son who showed it to his father, an ex-AIF major who had served in the Middle East. Having recognised the Horned Zeus on one face of the coin and a falcon riding a thunderbolt on the reverse, he sent it to the Numismatic Society in Brisbane for identification. Their finding: that it was minted some 2,200 years previously during the reign of Ptolemy IV, ruler of Egypt (21).

The whole piece being obviously genuine, I decided to launch a research campaign and to collect information as precise as possible concerning this and other discoveries from Australia's past - discoveries which intrigue us by their antiquity and impose the task of evaluating their significance in regard to the prehistory of this continent.

In August 1969 I was alerted by John St Clair Steel about his discovery of a most strange rock carving lying some 8 km east of Warialda, 240 km west

of Grafton, NSW. Although it had evidently been known to local people for a number of years, it was John Steel who took an interest in it and he tried, without success, to get local archaeologists interested in his find. Being only an amateur myself in such matters, yet more than excited by what he wrote me, I journeyed to meet him and to take measurements and photographs of the carved boulder which lay beside a small stream, facing north. Thereon a low-relief carving of a great face, 40 cm wide and 45 cm from forehead to chin, had been cut into the sandstone rock. The nose protruded at least 5 cm from the rock-face and the eye sockets, 9 cm across, were deep. Above the right eyebrow were four deep curved lines and above the left eye were three similar lines. Total, seven. Above the left eye what could have been a third eye had been incised. On the upper part of the forehead was a clearly carved emblem measuring some 15 cm vertically. From either side of its central upright were branching upcurving lines which, including the central upright, made a count of seven. An Aboriginal carving of antiquity? As far as I know, any investigation which has been made affirms that this is very doubtful.

A few yards from the carved boulder were two rock exposures, slightly separated. Each possessed deep narrow incised channels running adjacent to each other. These converged towards the north. Having sighted the possible junction point, we stamped around on the undisturbed ground. But no indication of a hideaway. Hidden anything? Oh for a metal detector...

In 1970 Peter Muir, a pen friend for years, wrote from Laverton, Western Australia, about most unusual rock inscriptions he had found 886 km north of Perth and some 443 km east of Carnarvon. His work with the Pastoral Protection Board entailed watching dingo tracks which would indicate where these native dogs were worrying sheep. In the course of his far-afield wanderings he had been to Pingandy Station near Mount Vernon on the Ashburton River. On the smooth mudstone beside a creek south of the homestead he had found curious markings which looked like some form of script. In January 1971 I was there with Peter Muir and a camera. Apart from those on the mudstone face we also found further characters, symbols if you like, chipped into a boulder further up the same creek. Back in Sydney, and feeling that I had been to a most unusual find, as with Thomas Reservoir, I plagued the erudite for an on-site examination.

Again, as with my initial experience with the Cleland Hills discovery, there was nothing doing. In the meantime I had sent details and photographs to Professor Roma, Ancient Linguistics, Ottawa University, whom I had kept informed about my delvings into Australia's unwritten history. He replied that, from examination of the photographs, he concluded that the inscriptions could be in a Bengali variety of Sanskrit used in Java until 500 years ago. He planned to visit Pingandy once the project was backed by a Foundation, for he knew of no other Sanskrit recorded in Australia and especially so far inland. Seeking his finances did not take long, nor did his planned itinerary to come to

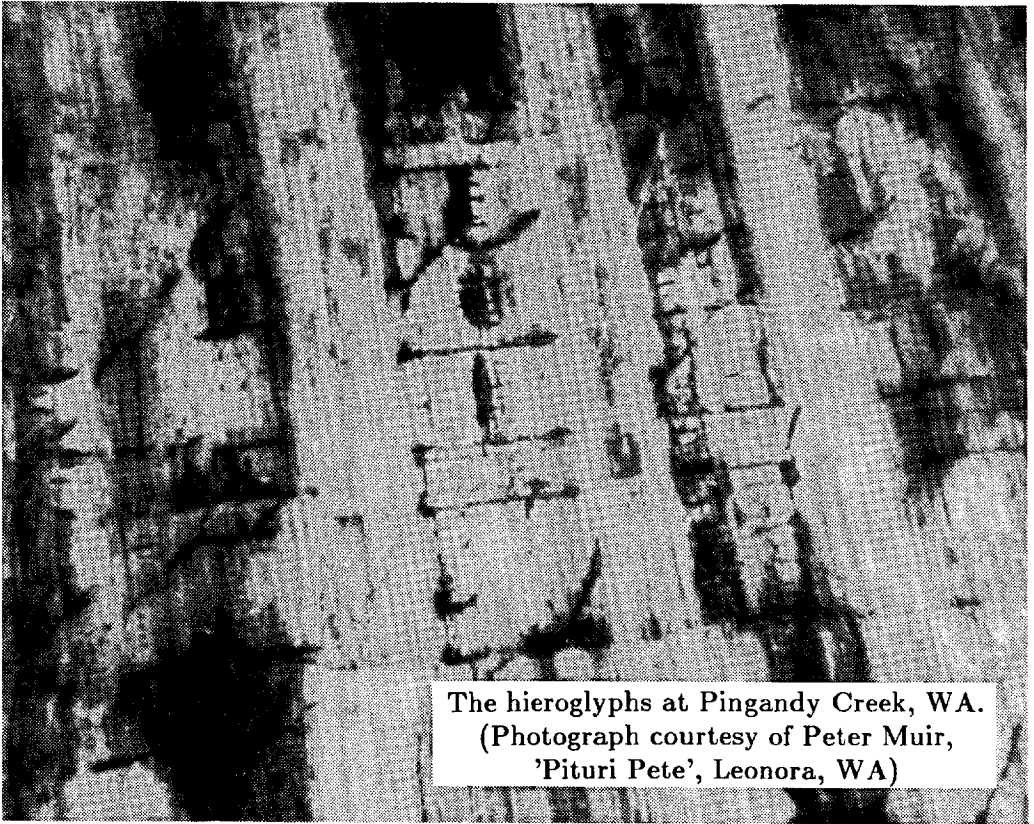


Ptolemy IV Bronze coin  
unearthed Cairns, Qld, 1910



Rock carving at Warialda, NSW.  
(Photograph courtesy of  
John S. Steele, Glen Innes, NSW)





The hieroglyphs at Pingandy Creek, WA.  
(Photograph courtesy of Peter Muir,  
'Pituri Pete', Leonora, WA)



An Aboriginal Stonehenge  
Photographs by courtesy of Len Beadell

Australia, where I would be ready to meet him at Mascot Airport. Thence we would travel to the site. Imagine, therefore, my chagrin when a cable from his wife told me that Professor Roma had died at Christmas 1979, just on the eve of starting his journey.

However I went ahead, and following a lead which Professor Roma had mentioned to me, in January 1979 I was in touch with the National Decipherment Centre in Arlington, Massachusetts, USA and I give an extract from a letter received from Dr Bruce Fell of that institution in February 1979 wherein he expressed the opinion from the nature of the markings shown in the photographs that they were natural geological phenomena.

It is true that many of the marks quite accurately duplicate various alphabetic signs of different alphabets and make no interconnected text; but most of the marks can be seen to be continuous natural phenomena and I am bound to believe that all of them are natural. Some fossils, such as Alcamenia hiero glyphica simulate writing to a remarkable degree... However, there are many other reasons for expecting that ancient inscriptions do await discovery in northern Australia and every reason to think that early Egyptian, Libyan, Hindu and Chinese sailors may have landed in Australia.

So it would seem that until an expert examination is made of the Pingandy site to determine the origin of the 'script' one way or the other, these exciting and as yet unexplained markings continue to rest in the wilds of Australia.

Still within Western Australia and now heading east, let us pause at Ooldea on the Transcontinental Railway 282 km east of the border. A track running thence north west reaches Maralinga in 48 km beside the Ooldea Range, the last place on the map thereabouts. If you like then to scale 137 km NE by E of it, you will fingerpoint with reasonable accuracy the so-called Aboriginal Stonehenge, which was discovered by Len Beadell in 1953. In the hey-day of the Woomera Rocket Range his job was to bulldoze reasonably straight 'gun barrel' tracks from point to point below the anticipated sky-track of test rockets.

In uninhabited desert he fluked a real mystery of the inland and here let Len himself tell what lay before his eyes when, ahead of his team, he drove his Landrover up a rock-strewn steep bank out of a claypan and..

The moment my vehicle topped the rise to level out again I saw it, spread right across my path extending for at least sixty yards on either side. It was almost like a picket fence with posts six feet apart made from slivers of shale. Tingling with excitement I switched off and leapt out of the cabin. Being in so isolated an area it was

obviously an ancient Aboriginal ceremonial ground built by these primitive, stone-age nomads in some distant dreamtime...The area was about a hundred and twenty feet long, the main line bearing a few degrees west of north. The individual slivers of grey, water-impervious shale were protruding three feet above the surface of the plateau and judging by the one or two which were leaning or fallen, they seemed to be embedded about a foot or so beneath. Each was comparable in section to its neighbour, measuring four by Three inches, very rectangular and with a perfectly straight axis. There were about sixty of them about two yards apart (22).

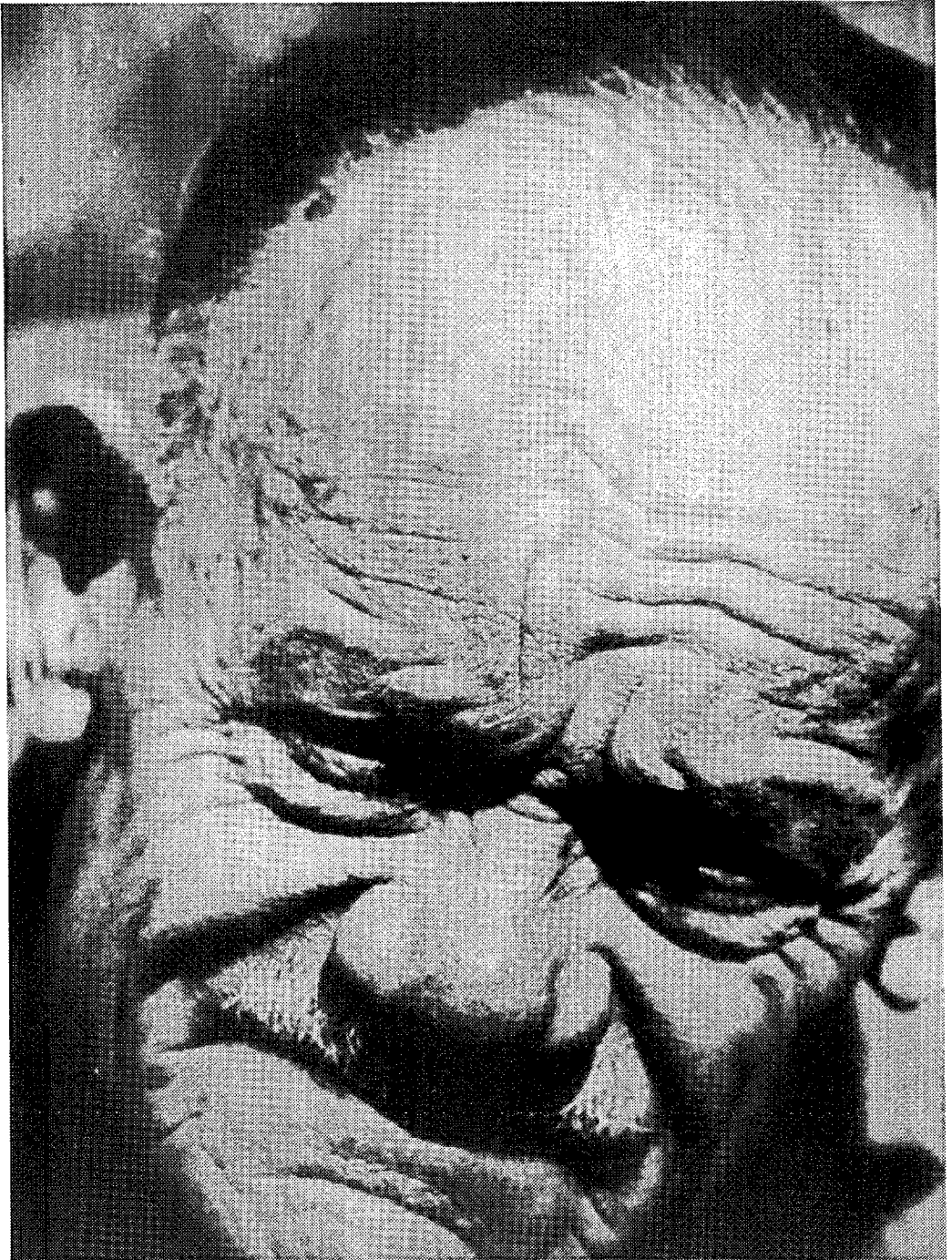
When I first met the term by which the place is known, 'the Aboriginal stonehenge' it seemed a misleading name to me because those I call blacks, and you Aborigines, do not work stone, having neither the inclination, the tools nor the skill. Then I learnt that on closer survey of the site water-eroded limestone slabs were found to be still lying about and even protruding from the watercourse; thus my doubts were eased as to how the slabs were obtained by the originators of this strange (and, as far as I know, unexplained) potent site. I know that geologists have visited the place but whether Len has succeeded in getting academic interest in his find is as yet unrecorded. Nevertheless, I wish him the best of luck.

### **The Last Camp**

In the early 1970s I still had plans in mind which would entail further desert walkabouts; to examine and photograph additional cliff carvings and to assay a nickel deposit I had found in 1930. But ill health put a stop to such plans and I just had to cancel them. So from my retirement lookout in Sydney I surveyed the scene, for at 75 I felt I still had some useful years ahead of me. One job on hand was to complete my seventh book which was eventually published in 1974 (23).

Over the past twenty years I had been closely associated with Deryck Giblin who was the Founder of the Path Finder Association of New South Wales, of which I had become an associate member and acted as committeeman. During my service with the Royal Naval Air Service in World War One I had never been airborne and therefore I could not be a full member of the Association.

And now for Deryck himself. In 1941 he enlisted in the RAAF and then served with the RAF Bomber Command in England during which time he flew on fifty-three missions, five of them as Master Bomber. Later he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. It was, however, prior to commencing full operations and whilst on his final training flight that disaster struck, for the



Michael Terry in his later years  
(from the Terry Collection,  
National Library, Canberra)

tailplane of the aircraft in which he and three others were flying malfunctioned, causing the plane to spin violently to ground. All were casualties, three of them fatal. But despite multiple injuries, Deryck was still breathing and was unconscious in hospital for two whole days. Today, by the looks of him and his antics, I would never have dreamt that he had been so far down the road of no return, until I persuaded him to open up memories.

In 1944 he volunteered for the RAF Path Finder Force and when returning from a raid on Cologne and with his aircraft approaching the runway at night, it suddenly caught fire. The safe minimum height for exit by parachute is one thousand feet but he and four of the crew bailed out at four hundred feet and landed in a ploughed field with a sickening impact. Deryck, badly injured, somehow managed to get his parachute partly folded but was then dragged some five hundred metres until a solid hedge braked him to a stop. This impact made his parachute reopen fully, so much so that a very belligerent farmer took him for a German airman. Luckily, the upshot was that our Australian was able to dodge the impending assault and, having established his identity, was driven to base by his would-be assailant. Deryck still treasures the parachute ripcord from that jump as it 'turned him into a caterpillar' - a designation reserved for the élite who have saved their lives by parachute - referring to pre-nylon days when parachutes were made of silk. The climax of his 53 missions came nearly at the end of hostilities when on 25 April 1945 he flew in the last bombing raid of World War Two, its target being Hitler's headquarters at Berchtesgaden, his Eagles Nest perched on the lonely peak 500 m high in the Bavarian Alps.

Returned to Australia, some seven years after termination of the war, Deryck founded the Path Finder Association of NSW and has served as President of that Association for some thirteen years. Although over the past few years I have had to curtail my activities with the Path Finders, my attachment will ever remain strong to that fine group.

And now we go our differing ways. Naturally, I have no idea of yours and I admit of no definite plans about mine, except that, if life be kind, it may take me back to search out my old campfires in 'my' desert again, the finest environment I have ever travelled. Yet, might it not be a disappointment? - now that so many have encroached upon it in recent years with motels, radio, motorways and planned tracks which it seems city folk cannot do without. One will have to break through this sound barrier to reach again the dignity of silence; to those trackless sandhills with their challenge, the risks of finding (or not finding) water, and the exhilaration of augmenting rations with native fruits and meats. And, above all, the deep satisfaction of sighting new features of the land, plotting their contours and geographical positions, even allotting them names - even perhaps, making a payable mineral find for extra rewards.

And here I pause whilst the present fades and memory gives a length of vision wherein I do return to the desert; a desert where after years of drought,

nature can be seen at her most cruel. The mulga trees, like the blasted woods of the battlefield stand naked to the eye. Dried and withered to a dirty grey, this stunted desert timber remains in the silence of death. Even the small bushes have curled up in death. As if arching their hands above their heads in supplication for rain, these smaller sufferers have drawn their withered and blackened stems together so that the former aspect of green is now a cluster of blackened stalks. At the close of day over this scene of desolation spread the hues of the sinking sun, which in the almost incredibly clear atmosphere paint a sheen of colours whose effect is to ease and soften; yellow to orange, orange to blue, blue to the velvet blackness of night with the twinkle of stars studding the sky, leaving the desert to darkness and to me.

A space of time and vision clears again for now, after abundant rains, how wet the country, how changed the scene. We ride our camels towards a rift in the ranges where in every pool and every creek water shines and the camels can drink their fill and feed on luscious herbage by the hour. Surrounded by high cliffs, the rock-holes are filled by little waterfalls which pour their merriment into the placid water from the rocks above. From where I stand to absorb the sight the overflow continues to run along a small creek, linking pools large and small. Strong in their green foliage the trees are heavy with blossom. Parrots whisk through the branches and birds sing from the green depths whilst I splash in the water, as happy with life as they.

These fine things were mine 40 years ago. May they also await you.

Michael  
Terry

## COMPILER'S NOTE: PLACE NAMES.

According to records, I believe that many topographical sites were mapped and named by Michael Terry during his explorations.

Mr Vernon O'Brien of the Northern Territory Place Names Committee has supplied the following list of names which were bestowed by Michael Terry on various natural features. Mr O'Brien notes that the list is not complete.

Feature Name	Sheet	Origin or comment
Blackwood Bluff (H45)	Granites	Named after R O Blackwood, Melbourne for his support.
Boomerang Waterhole	Lander	Named by Terry and in current series.
Corkscrew Hill	Granites	Reefs all twisted up - not shown on current plans but named by E North with Terry.
Chuttler Rockhole	Lake Amadeus	On Terry's plan and in text - no origin given.
Debavay Hills	Mt Solitaire	Origin after A Debavay in appreciation for his friendship.
Fotheringham Hill (H66)	Mt Peake	Named after M A Fotheringham of Adelaide - not shown on map sheet.
Green Swamp Well	Granites	Shown on Terry's plan but not on current series.
Grimwade, Mount (H44)	Granites	Named after Sir Russell Grimwade of Melbourne.
Hamer Hills	Granites	Named after M B Hamer of Adelaide

Feature Name	Sheet	Origin or comment
Hordern Mount (H43)	Granites	Named after A Hordern of Sydney.
Inningarra Range	Granites	Named after the Aboriginal name advised by A J Tomson
Jardaiyarda	Mt Theo	Aboriginal name recorded by Terry - not shown on map series.
Jellebra Rockhole	Tanami	Recorded by Terry - origin not stated.
Johnson(s) Hill (H47)	Granites	Named after A W Johnson for his assistance in the formation of the expedition.
Keyser Hill (H71)	Mt Theo	After J H Keyser of Broome, member of the expedition.
Killi Killi (H39)	Tanami	Named by E North.
Ligertwood Cliffs	Highland Rocks	Shown Terry's plan and it is believed he named it after Sir George Ligertwood of Adelaide.
Mathews Knoll (H70)	Napperby	After C B Mathews of Port Pirie.
Macfarlane Peak (H54)	Granites	Named after Mrs Gordon Macfarlane for her assistance to the expedition.
Murdock Cliffs (H49)	Granites	Named after Keith Murdock of Melbourne.
Newland Cave	Mt Theo	Probably variant for Cave Hole west of Chilla Well. Named by Terry on his plan.
North Hill	Mt Peake	After E North of Hall's Creek.



Feature Name	Sheet	Origin or comment
Officer Hill	Granites	After Ernest Officer of the expedition.
Oscar Mount (H50)	Granites	After Oscar Thompson of London.
Owl Rocks (H41)	Mt Solitaire	Large owls disturbed.
Pargree Rockhole	Tanami	Aboriginal name ex Terry.
Parker's Cone	Mt Solitaire	After Critchley Parker of Melbourne.
Pursell, Mount (H67)	Mt Theo	After A B Pursell of Sydney
Red Hill	Granites	Colour of hill - applied by Terry.
Saxby, Mount	Mt Theo	After J Saxby of Alice Springs.
Sheppard Knoll	Mt Theo	After Hal Sheppard of Melbourne, see variant Aboriginal name on series.
Sowden Hill	Mt Theo	On Terry's plan - variant Lone Rock needs investigation.
Studholme Hills	Mt Peake	After Miss F N Studholme, Hindhead, England for her encouragement
Tippenbah	Mt Peake	On Terry's plan, but origin not stated.
Titmus Hill (H42)	Mt Solitaire	After C J Titmus of Sydney.
Tomahawk Waterhole	Lander River	Descriptive term by Terry - could be now Curlew Waterhole.
Turner's Dome	Mt Theo	After W J Turner of Sydney member of the expedition.
Wangabuddie	Mt Peake	On Terry's plan, but no origin given.

Feature Name	Sheet	Origin or comment
Watt's Rise (H40)	Tanami	After E J & E Watt of Melbourne.
William's Pass		Named by Terry after a member of the expedition.
Wood's Hills		Named after the pilot of the aircraft when the hills seen.

The place names examination of Terry's expeditions is not complete as documents of his travels need further examination when available in the Territory. The Australian Archives have been unable to quote the series referred to by Terry in 'Hidden Wealth and Hiding People' (page 336) as names accepted by the Federal Lands and Survey Branch of the Department of Works in Canberra in 1932. However at least 40 names are listed and will in due course be examined with other variants and added to the relevant map series if they have not been recorded on today's map series.

V T O'Brien  
Chairman, N.T. Place Names Committee.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Air Vice-Marshal Allan Perry-Keene CB OBE.

Allan and I were both Geordies, born Tyneside. He served with the RFC in World War I and transferred to the RAF in 1918, and served in Iraq from 1927 to 1929, in India from 1935 to 1941 and later in Burma. He was Director of Ground Training Air Ministry London from 1943 to 1945. Later he served in India and subsequently was appointed AOC Admin Air HQ India and Air Commander, Royal Pakistan Air Force. Upon retirement he made his home in Hampshire, England.

2. N. A. Nekrasov was a well-known Russian poet. The poem was written in 1855, at the time of the Crimean War. In his critical articles, Nekrasov devoted a great deal of space to comments on, and detailed citations from, eyewitness accounts of the siege of Sevastopol. The postcard was produced in Odessa and was evidently one of several different kinds which soldiers could choose. The main subject of his poetry was 'the sufferings of the people', to use his own phrase. It included poems about the fine qualities of Russian women, especially about the hard-working and suffering peasant women of Russia.

3. Captain Thunderbolt.

Fred Ward, to give him his true name, was buried at Uralla on the New England Highway in May 1870, having been shot by police. In 1921 I photographed 'Thunderbolt's Rock', a lonely obstacle half way across the unformed road about six km before Uralla. Concentrating on New England, he used to lurk there and await an unsuspecting coach. Earlier the outlaw had mated with a half caste Aboriginal called Sunday by whom he had three children. She was a most devoted and loyal mate.

4. Sir Wilmot Hudson Fysh KBE DFC

1895 Born Launceston, Tasmania.  
 1914 World War I, Volunteered and served Gallipoli.  
 1917 Transferred to Australian Flying Corps.  
 1919 In February of that year gained his Wings. Awarded Distinguished Flying Cross.  
 1920 Founded the Queensland and Northern

Territory Aerial Services Limited: QANTAS.

1953 Knighted for services to Australian civil aviation.

1974 Died.

5. Paul J McGuinness DFC DCM

1896 Born Framlington, Victoria.

World War I, Enlisted 8th Light Horse Regiment and saw action at Gallipoli. Awarded DCM.

Transferred to Australian Flying Corps. Gained wings and became fighter pilot. Won DFC.

1922 2 November - flew the first stretch of QANTAS regular route.

1939 World War II - re-enlisted in RAAF in administrative capacity.

1952 Died.

6. See Across Unknown Australia pp20-21; I had first thought of crossing the continent whilst still in NSW, but on horseback, not by motor vehicle. The story of the expedition by motor vehicle from Winton is told in the volume above.

7. Richard Yockney, who had been living at Castle Hill, NSW, died in 1984.

8. Arthur Watkin Wynne

1893 Born.

1910 Began Newspaper career.

1928 Manager, MELBOURNE HERALD Features.

1935 Founded the Australian Associated Press.

1943 Studied Press Communications by personal contact in Australia, Canada, USA and UK.

1955 Retired, went farming.

1956 Commissioner, Overseas Telecommunications (Australia).

1962 Age retirement from OTC.

1968 Died.

9. At the time it seemed that I was the youngest ever to become a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society until it was verified that Sir Francis Younghusband beat me by four days!

10. Sir Norman Brearley CBE, DSO, MC, AFC, FRAES

1890 Born Geelong, Victoria.

World War I pilot, Royal Flying Corps and RAF.

Shot down and badly wounded while patrolling the Western Front.

1919 After hospitalisation in London returned to WA.

World War II Group Captain RAAF.

1971 Knighted for services to aviation.

11. Through a Land of Promise, Herbert Jenkins, London 1927.
12. Hidden Wealth and Hiding People, Putnam, London 1930.
13. For details of this Epic of the Inland I am indebted to Margaret Nicker (Mrs Rex Hall) and Jane Nicker (Mrs Ted Hayes, Undoolya station). Also to Dick Kimber, who, like Margaret, lives in The Alice. He was my interviewer and reporter about a family whom historians have so far neglected. His notes are in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.
14. Stan O'Grady was Government Assayer on the Arltunga Goldfield in 1905. He died in Adelaide in 1963.
15. Lester Joseph Brain AFC FRGSA FAIM
  - 1903 Born at Forbes, NSW.
  - 1923 Air Force Cadet. Transferred to RAAF Reserve.
  - 1924 Joined QANTAS as airmail pilot. Later became Operations Manager.
  - 1929 Awarded AFC for search and rescue flights in Central and North Australia.
  - 1934 Piloted first plane Brisbane/Singapore section of the Australia/Britain airmail service founded by QANTAS and Imperial Airways.
  - 1941 Flew Catalina flying Boats for RAAF, USA/Sydney.
  - 1944 Wing Commander RAAF Reserve.
  - 1946 General Manager, TAA, Melbourne.
  - 1955 Managing Director deHavilland Aircraft, Bankstown, NSW.
  - 1960 Aircraft Consultant, East-West Airlines, NSW.
16. Sand and Sun, Michael Joseph, London 1937.
17. Made of emu feathers and worn to disguise footmarks during special ceremonies and on lawless occasions.

18. The Log Books, records and maps of my Central and Western Australia expeditions have been presented to the South Australian Museum Board. In their acceptance the Museum Director wrote to me that such records 'contain data which will always be of interest to those studying exploration of the Western Desert and the history of the first contacts with the Aborigines'.
19. Dr Grenfell Price, the geographer, concluded that it lay on a general line of tectonic weakness extending throughout the continent on a north-south line. See also, Bindibu Country, Donald F. Thomson, Nelson, 1967. Mr A T Wells, Bureau of Mineral Resources, describes the geological setting of Hidden Basin as a topographic depression, and an area of internal drainage that is underlain by thin Quaternary lacustrine and alluvial sand, silt, clay and evaporites. The formation of extensive areas of internal drainage, including the Hidden Basin, was probably largely controlled by a long period of pre-Cainozoic erosion of the folded Proterozoic (about 900 million years old) sedimentary rocks that underlie the area. A pattern of drainage depressions was subsequently developed on this peneplain. The drainage pattern and localisation of the larger depressions such as the Hidden Basin is probably controlled both by broad folding of the peneplain and by erosion of the more friable sediments from the areas of folded rocks. The precise age of the broad folding is not known.
20. Unicorn Press, London 1934.
21. On this coin the name of the Pharaoh is shown in Greek letters and not in Egyptian hieroglyphs of the same period. Egypt, after occupation by Alexander the Great, became part of the Macedonian (Greek) Empire and was taken over after his death by Ptolemy, one of his generals who was also of Greek origin. The falcon on the coin represents HORUS, the Falcon God, symbol of Life and Health.
22. Beating About the Bush, Rigby, Adelaide 1976. Len Beadell, by kind permission of the author.
23. The War of the Warramullas, Rigby, Adelaide 1974.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MICHAEL TERRY'S WRITINGS

Compiled by Paul France

### 1. Monographs

Across Unknown Australia. London, Herbert Jenkins, 1925, 312pp, illustrations and map. - reprinted 1926. Identical to the above, except for imprint 'Reprinted February 1926' on verso of title page.

(NOTE: This is the only one of Terry's books which ever went into more than one printing. It should also be noted that although the title shown here is as in the title-page, the front cover also bears the sub- title 'A Thrilling Account of Exploration in the Northern Territory of Australia')

Through a Land of Promise. With Gun, Car and Camera in the Heart of Northern Australia. London, Herbert Jenkins, 1927. 336pp, map, illustrations.

Hidden Wealth and Hiding People. London, Putnam, n.d. (1930\*), 350pp, illustrations, maps.

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\*Various dates have been suggested for the 2 un-dated books Hidden Wealth... and Untold Miles... The dates I have given may be taken as definitive as they are as supplied by Michael Terry, in a document in his hand - a copy of which is in my possession.

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**NOTE:** I have no doubt that there are more journal articles by Terry than those I have listed here - I would, therefore be most grateful for any additions to this listing.

Paul France,  
Alice Springs

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**M**ichael Terrigal was born in northern and central New South Wales in 1899. Terrigal fought as a sergeant in World War I in a British armoured car brigade in a little known action in Russia. Gassed, he was evacuated out and came to Western Australia in 1919 where, on a cattle station near Carnarvon, he discovered his love for the outback. After a spell as a car salesman in Sydney and as a pioneer truckie in northern NSW, he drove a 10-year-old T-model Ford from Winton, Queensland to Broome, WA, much of it across trackless country. The story of this journey brought him fame in Britain and further expeditions followed, testing vehicles in the desert and, in the thirties, exploring for minerals in Central Australia. On one trip he discovered the mysterious Cleland Hills carvings. He chronicled the building of part of the Stuart Highway in World War II and throughout published accounts of his journeys. His autobiography, written in retirement at Terrigal and in Sydney, was compiled after his death by his sister, Charlotte Barnard.

