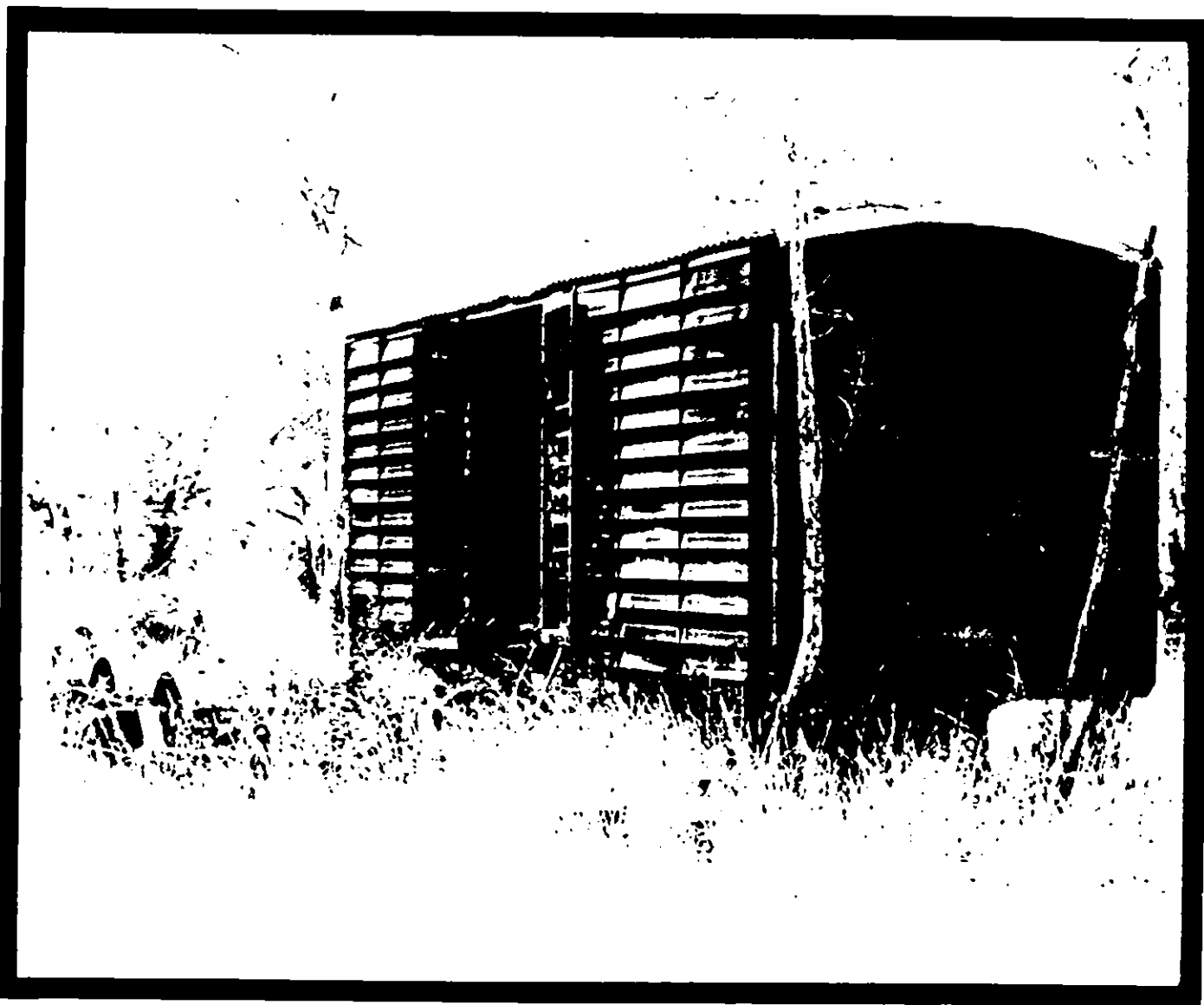


Jane Gleeson
and
Michael Richards

**Mataranka and the Daly,
Two Studies in the History
of Settlement in the
Northern Territory**



Australian National University North Australia Research Unit
Monograph
Darwin 1985

**Mataranka and the Daly,
Two Studies in the History
of Settlement in the
Northern Territory**

Jane Gleeson and Michaela Richards

Australian National University
North Australia Research Unit
Monograph
Darwin 1985

First published in Australia 1985

Printed in Australia by the Australian National University

© Australian National University North Australia Research Unit

This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Inquiries should be directed to the publisher, North Australian Research Unit, Casuarina NT 5792, Australia

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-publication entry

Gleeson, Jane.

Mataranka and the Daly, two studies in the history of settlement in the Northern Territory.

Bibliography.

ISBN 0 86784 748 4.

[1]. Aborigines, Australian - Northern Territory - Mataranka - Treatment. [2]. Aborigines, Australian - Northern Territory - Daly River Region - Treatment. 3. Land settlement - Northern Territory - Daly River Region. 4. Land settlement - Northern Territory - Mataranka. I. Richards, Michaela. II. Australian National University. North Australia Research Unit. III. Title. (Series: Monograph (Australian National University. North Australia Research Unit)).

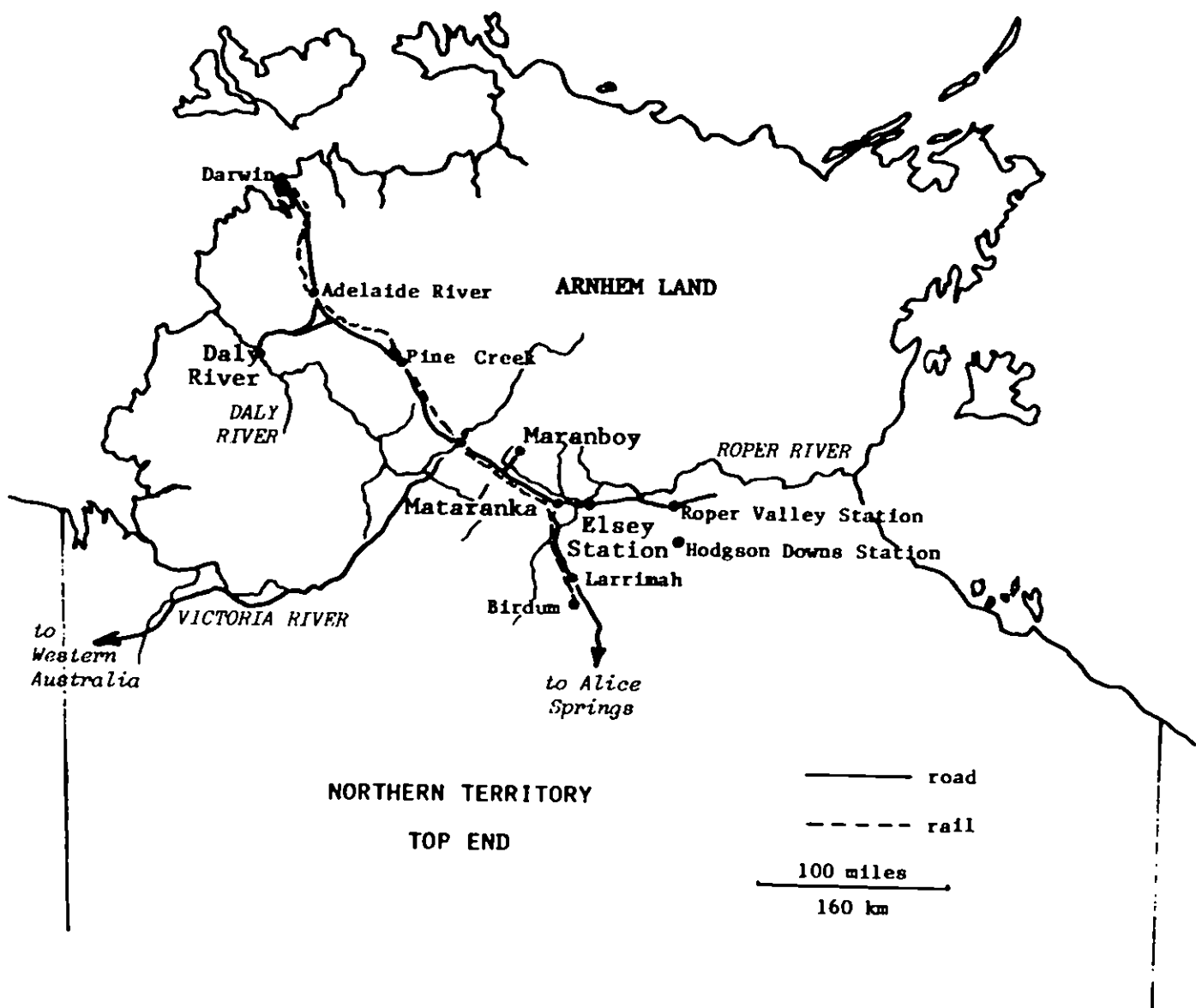
994.29'5

CONTENTS

List of Plates	iv
Map	v
Preface and Acknowledgements	vi
 Blocks, Runs and Claims: Interaction in Three Settlements in the Upper Roper River District, 1911-1942 by Jane Gleeson	
Introduction	1
The Town District	2
The Pastoral Industry	12
The Tinfield	19
Comparisons	27
References	31
 An Australian Frontier...' Aborigines and Settlers at the Daly River 1912-1940 by Michaela Richards	
Introduction	35
The Agricultural Experiment: 1912-1921	40
'...A Rotted Frontier...' Aborigines and Settlers: 1921-1940	48
Aboriginal Society and Change at the Daly River	58
Conclusion	63
References	65

LIST OF PLATES

Mataranka homestead, now a tourist resort	3
Remains of railway workers' houses	4
Disused Railway Car, thought to be Leper Van	9
Mounted Constable Ted Heathcock taking Aborigines to Darwin from Arnhem Land	10
Homestead, Hodgson Downs	18
Hole at Maranboy after tin mining	20
Home of Battery Manager, L Stutterd, Maranboy	25
Remains of Treatment Plant, Maranboy	26
The Daly River, 96 km upstream	35
Sugar Cane at Thomas and Roberts Farm	36
The Experimental Farm Homestead	40
Tractor, thought to be the one used at the Experimental Farm	42
Maize Crop, Daly Demonstration Farm	47
Parry and Hill's Peanut Crop 1924	50



PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jane Gleeson and Michaela Richards have made an important contribution to the history of the regions of the upper Daly and upper Roper Rivers in the Northern Territory in the period 1911 when the Commonwealth took over administration to the Second World War. After that War much was changed; before it change was slow and development, the ideal of administrators, was halting at best and often a failure. These two studies tell the story. And they tell it in moderate terms which give context and balance to some of the more romantic pioneer stories. There are no heroes and heroines here, just ordinary people, black and white, official and non-official, going about their lives with doggedness, hope and pessimism.

Interest in each story is focussed as much on administration as on people and broadly speaking it is a sorry story of ministerial and bureaucratic incompetence, shortsightedness and inability to come to grips with the environment and the people.

The two studies have been revised from theses written by Jane Gleeson and Michaela Richards as honours students in the Department of History, the Faculties ANU, in 1982 and 1983. They were recipients of student grants from NARU for field work for their theses.

The help of a number of people must be acknowledged in bringing the theses to publication: Dr Rolf Gerritsen, Dr Campbell Macknight, Mr Graeme Neate, Dr Alan Powell, and the staff of the Australian Archives; Janet Sincock and Raelene Cummings typed the final text.

**BLOCKS, RUNS AND CLAIMS:
INTERACTION IN THREE SETTLEMENTS
IN THE UPPER ROPER RIVER DISTRICT, 1911-1942**

Jane Gleeson

Introduction

Many Australians are familiar with the Mataranka region through Jeannie Gunn's We of the Never-Never, written about Elsey Station in 1902. Gunn's story of adventurous pioneering days in the pastoral industry and her own happy association with the Elsey, is one telling of courage, vitality and humour in the face of hardship and isolation in the harsh outback (Gunn, 1982). This study will present an alternative view drawn from the thirty years from 1911 when the Commonwealth took over control of the administration of the Northern Territory.

In earlier years, competition for land and its resources divided society into two main camps - the invaders and the invaded. The basic social division was generally into two culturally distinct groups: Europeans and Aborigines. Interaction between them was predominantly confrontationist. In the first decade of this century, elements of each side began to perceive possibilities for exploitation of the other, based on exchange of goods for labour and sex. Competition for land continued to divide society along racial and cultural lines, but new social and economic relationships developed which gave rise to interest groups. In the period after 1911, it is still necessary to define social groups along cultural lines, but such analysis must take place within a broader economic framework. The year 1911 is roughly the time at which it becomes both possible and necessary to do so.

The bases for interaction were fundamentally altered after 1942, when the reverberations of World War II brought army camps, urban and non-local Aborigines, and a bureaucracy into the upper Roper region. The consequent turnover in population, changes in social and economic relationships, and later, post-war reconstruction, began a new phase in the history of the region.

Within the region between 1911 and 1942, there were three foci of interaction. The township of Mataranka, the brain-child of Administrator J A Gilruth, was forecast in 1912 as the new inland capital. The Administration hoped that Mataranka would become a centre for an agricultural and pastoral hinterland worked by 'desirable' white settlers and their wives. Government-initiated experimental farming was intended to demonstrate the attractiveness of the area to prospective settlers. The inability of the farms to show positive results in the first few years, the slow construction of the north-south railway linking the site to Darwin, continuing low cattle prices and the depression of the 1930s combined to produce a town which functioned only as a minor supply depot and stopping place for travellers. The town's residents were not the European family groups envisaged by Gilruth, but a conglomeration of Government railway workers, Chinese storekeepers, Aboriginal employees and assisted peanut growers affiliated with the Unemployed Workers' Union in Darwin. On the outskirts of the town, a local tribal grouping of Mangarai Aborigines camped for several months of the year (Tindale, 1974 for the spelling of tribal Aboriginal names). Few records remain which deal directly with the interaction of Aboriginal and settler society but, in economic terms, a partial reconstruction is possible.

Surrounding the town site and to the east along the Roper River was the pastoral industry, the second focus of activity for this study. Elsey Station, the first cattle enterprise in the area, was originally stocked in 1882, and during the period 1911-1942 much of available pastoral land along the Roper was both taken up and subsequently abandoned. Because the pastoral holdings were large and understocked some Aboriginal groups could maintain a hunter-gatherer economy and other aspects of traditional society. The holdings also facilitated the emergence of Aboriginal groups which, exploiting the pastoralists' need for labour, shifted their economic operations from hunter gatherer to wage (or, in most cases, rations) employment. The stations in the early years consisted of two culturally

separate power structures, one Aboriginal and one European. They were linked by mutual economic dependence. In time, new groups arose which owed loyalties to both power structures, and to a limited extent began to constitute power bases on their own.

On an inter-station level, isolation felt by white station workers in the early days contributed to a spirit of togetherness and hospitality well described by Jeannie Gunn in We of the Never-Never. As land was taken up and communications networks developed, tensions became evident between station managers and feuding was as common as cooperation.

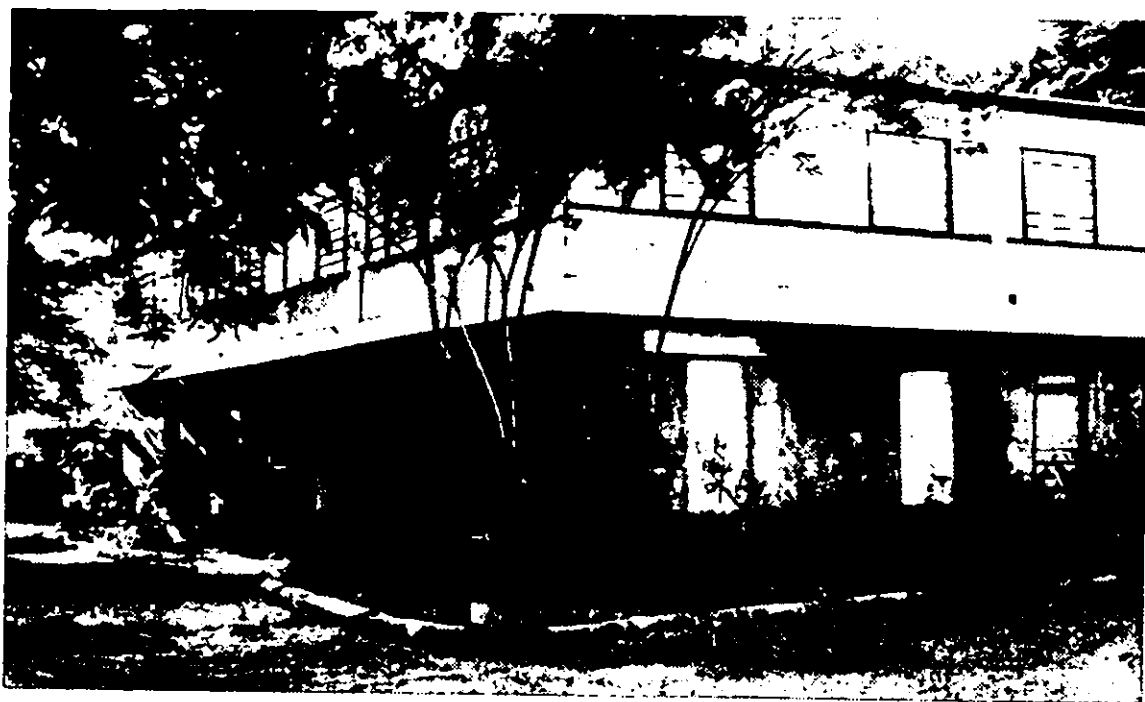
The third setting for interaction in the region provides a further contrasting social and economic organisation. A tinfield at Maranboy, some 27 miles north-west of Mataranka and situated within the Djauan tribal area, drew in 1914 a population of white male small-claim holders, Aboriginal labour of both sexes, and workers and management of a Government-operated battery. A police station, a general store and an Australian Inland Mission hospital served the needs of the miners, while a transient but relatively large Aboriginal population visited from the north-east for trading purposes. Friction developed between different groups of Aborigines, between miners and management, and between non-employed Aborigines and some Europeans. Aboriginal employees lived and worked side by side with the white miners, and their living arrangements facilitated for both groups a degree of separation from their cultural backgrounds. Successive pieces of legislation categorising Aborigines as a group in racial terms were enacted to restrict their movement on the tinfield. Aborigines had little power to combat such legislation, but as active and indispensable participants in the mining economy, some of them in time gained bargaining power to take industrial action against it.

Group formation in the period was influenced most by the contact of distinct cultures and the nature of settlement. Groups in the places under focus, the township, the mining area and the pastoral stations, exhibited differing degrees of cohesion, consciousness of self interest and intractability, brought about by variation in the range of possibilities or usefulness of interaction perceived by the participants in the action.

The Town District

In his tours through the Northern Territory during his term of office as Administrator from 1912 to 1919, Dr J A Gilruth, was struck by the potential for development of the land at the head of the Roper River. He noted the richness of the soil, the clarity of the water, and central location. Gilruth shared the Federal Government's high hopes for the development of the Territory, and believed that the area at the head of the river offered good prospects for successful small scale agricultural and pastoral enterprises. He also thought that a site which he named Mataranka, located on the Overland Telegraph Line, and adjacent to first-class pastoral country east along the Roper River, would be excellent for an inland capital city. In time, it was hoped, Mataranka would replace Darwin (Report of the Administrator, 1912, 12-13).

History has shown that Gilruth's plans did not materialise. Until World War II brought army camps and Aboriginal labour compounds into the area, Mataranka remained only a very small country town. That it existed at all was due to Government faith in the prospects for permanence of settlement. The process of settlement can be seen as an interaction between Government activity, climate and settlers. The combined effect was to produce a township whose inhabitants expected growth but did not get it. The town functioned mainly as a stopping off place for travellers and as a supply depot for pastoralists along the Roper River.



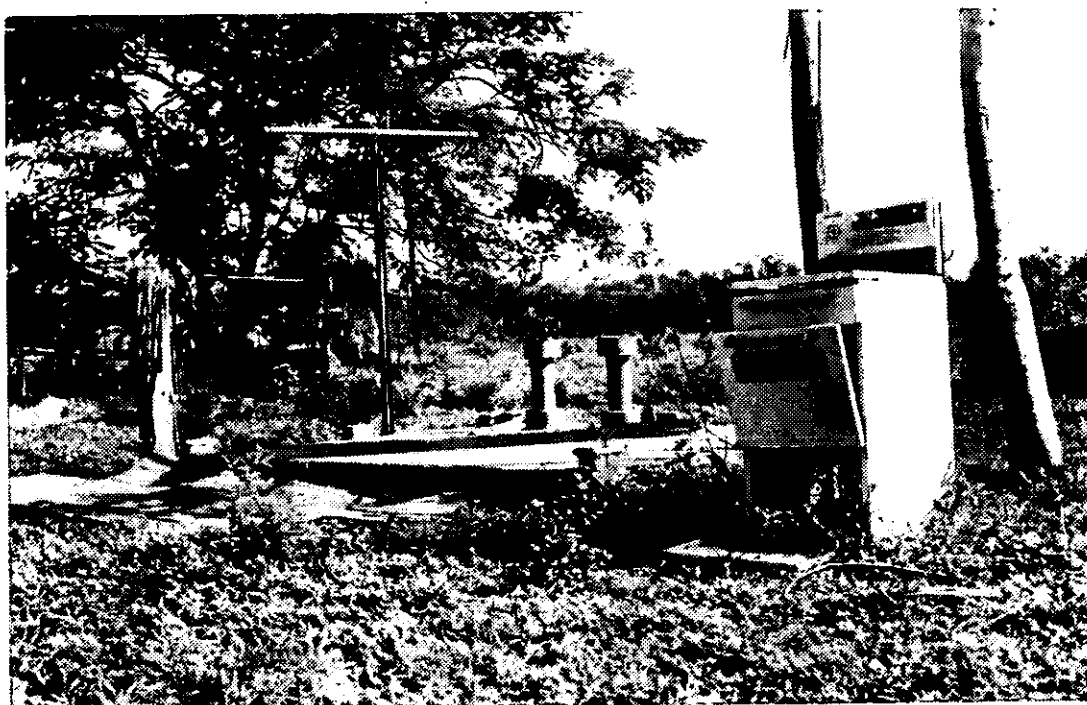
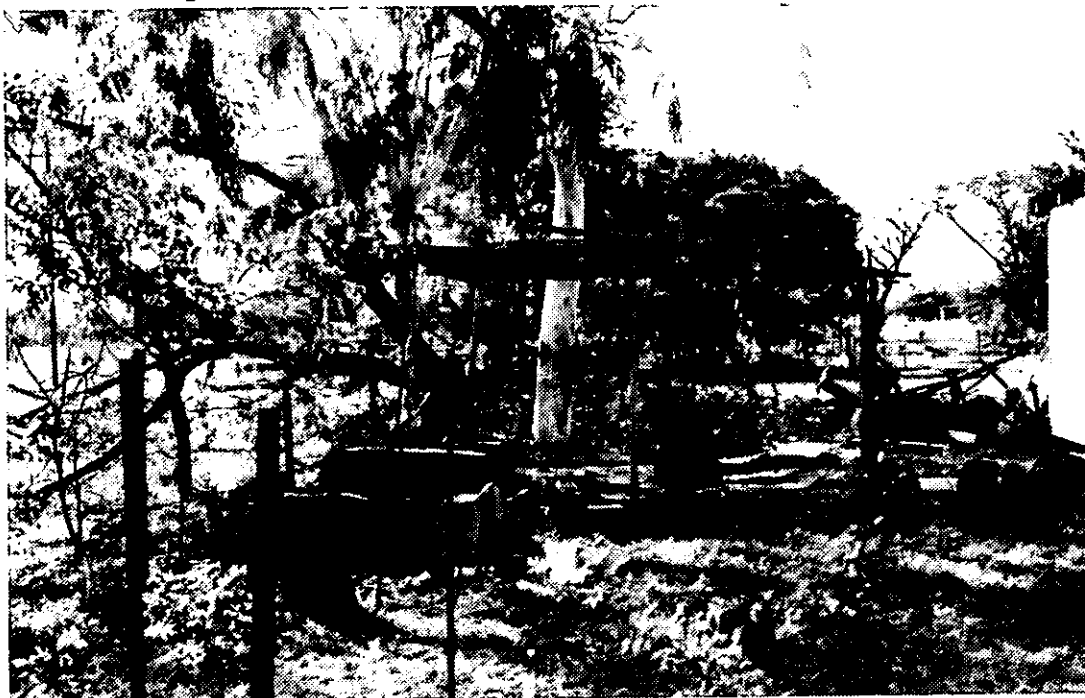
Mataranka homestead, now a tourist resort, 1983 photo.

The first consideration of Gilruth's administration was to attract good settlers to the Territory. It was felt that some demonstration had to be made to the rest of Australia that the far north was capable of supporting rural industries. In 1912, experimental farms were set up at Batchelor and Daly River. The area around Bitter Springs was held under lease by W Lawrie and Partners, a Darwin firm of butchers, and formed part of the Elsey run. (Bitter Springs was the name given to a series of thermal springs at the head of the Roper River, and in 1916 was renamed Mataranka Springs, because Gilruth felt that the former name was not conducive to attracting settlers.) Gilruth wrote in his 1912 Report that he had discussed with Lawrie the importance of experimental farming in the Bitter Springs area, and that Lawrie had offered to surrender 770 square miles of Elsey lease for the purpose (Report of the Administrator, 1912, 9).

Mataranka Horse and Sheep Experimental Station was subsequently set up in 1913. Gilruth hoped that, once the land had proved its worth, Mataranka Station lands could become available for fairly close settlement. Wool from the sheep would be sent to external markets, and horses bred on the station would supply the requirements of numerous pastoralists along the Roper River. The brumbies on the station were rounded up and 2,000 ewes and 50 Wanganella rams were ordered from Avon Downs, some 800 miles away on the Barkly Tableland. Almost as an afterthought, 70 head of cattle were purchased from Daly Waters in 1914.

It took eight months for the sheep to arrive, because the dryness of the land between Avon Downs and Mataranka Station meant that the sheep had periods of waiting for rain which would fill intervening waterholes. When they did arrive, in April 1914, their numbers had been reduced to 1,771 ewes and 43 rams. In the following year the total number dropped to 1,750, but in 1916 further delivery lifted their number to 2,600 (CRS A3 18/693). The Administrator wrote optimistically in 1916 that the sheep were 'in very good condition' and expressed his faith in the manager, V L Watson. There had been, however, a few problems with the sheep. Fencing was slow, as European labour was difficult to attract, and the sheep runs were not yet dogproof. The wet season had contributed to blowfly strike and mortality of lambs, as the fleeces were continuously saturated with water. The ewes,

in protest at the wet weather, had stopped lactating, and at the end of 1915, floods of 'unprecedented magnitude' rose eight to ten feet in the homestead buildings (CRS A3 18/193).



Remains of railway workers' houses, 1983 photo.

Similar tales are told of other experimental farms. The Government was faced with a problem to which experimental farming seemed the logical answer. As they saw it, their job was to populate the north with successful white settlers in the hope that further white settlers would be attracted to the area. The Administration's determination to keep the station at Mataranka operating, despite major setbacks, might have been because of 'culpable ignorance' of environmental conditions, as F H Bauer believes (1964, 206), but it also stemmed from realisation that without

industries which could bring investment into the Territory, there was little likelihood of sustained white settlement and development.

It is only in these terms that reports on the progress of the stock at Mataranka Station can be interpreted. The experiment was patently not a success. Against unsatisfactory lambing and calving, a further 1,000 sheep were delivered in 1916; 360 breeding cattle arrived in 1917, followed by another 160 in 1918 (CRS A3 18/693). By December 1919, drought and fires had reduced the number of sheep from 3,100 to 1,700, cattle had increased to 700 (a natural increase of 110, which was considered to be low), and the number of horses had remained constant at about 140 (CRS A3 19/4350). Where the figures show failure, the reports of the station's progress show optimism and enthusiasm. The reverses experienced were seen simply as initial setbacks. Every year Gilruth reported that the stock were 'very healthy', that the quality of the wool was improving and that the project was successful.

In 1919, H M Trower, Director of Lands, took over from Gilruth as inspector of Mataranka Station. In his report of 12 June 1919, which was not available to the public, Trower acknowledged the sorry state of Mataranka Station:

The losses sustained on this Station and unsatisfactory conditions are due solely to the parsimonious way in which the Station has been worked (CRS A3 19/4350).

He noted that not enough paddocks had been fenced, sheep and horses were sharing the same land, and each sheep had an insufficient grazing area of two and a quarter acres. The manager was overworked and the 'hut' in which he lived was

hardly a fit structure to house Aborigines, and would not be tolerated on a privately owned station.

In a letter bearing the same date as his report, Trower wrote to a prospective settler, saying that Mataranka Station

obtain(s) very good results from the sheep, the wool realising satisfactory prices and being reported as excellent by Dalgety and Co., Brisbane, to whom we forward our wool for sale. Cattle and horses do excellently on this station and on Elsey Station adjoining (CRS F5 S183).

This was obviously not the whole story. The discrepancy reflects the Administration's belief that Mataranka Station had to be recognised as a success or no further white settlement would follow. The experiment was not going to be allowed to fail, and in blaming the Federal Government's 'parsimony' for the poor showing, Trower absolved both the Administration and the climatic conditions:

The importance of the development of Mataranka on proper lines cannot be overestimated, especially in view of the settling of Crown Lands round about it....
If money is not found for the development of Mataranka, it will retrograde and do more harm than good to the Territory (CRS A3 19/4350).

H E Carey, Director in 1919, agreed with Trower's assessment of the situation at Mataranka, and in July of that year went even further, regarding the experiment as successfully completed. Carey echoed the opinion of J E Palmer, manager of Mataranka Station, that the experiment had proved that sheep would thrive on such country. In a do-or-die attempt, Carey recommended further expenditure on the station of 3,200 pounds in 1919-1920, 1,000 pounds in 1920-1921, and 500 pounds in 1921-

1922. If the money could not be found, the Station should be offered for lease, even though the possibility existed that there would be no takers. The cattle could be sold, but the sheep would have to be slaughtered.

Treasury in Melbourne refused funding and in 1920, after a bout of pleuropneumonia in the cattle, and the death of 1,000 sheep through drought, the sheep were sold and removed to Vanderlin Island. The cattle and horses remained at the station but no breeding improvements were made in the herds. In 1923 the Inspector of Stock, F A C Bishop, reported that the results from Mataranka Station were very unsatisfactory (Report of the Administrator, 1923, 21). In 1926 tenders were called for the disposal of remaining stock, but none were received (Report of the Administrator, 1926, 25).

The closer settlement envisaged by Gilruth for the Mataranka area did not eventuate, largely because of the failure of the experimental venture. However, Government policy for development continued to reflect a commitment to an understanding that the station had realised success. A 1916 investigation by a Parliamentary Committee on Public Works, in regard to the proposed extension of the Pine Creek-Katherine River railway, considered three directions that the railway could take from Katherine. A A Hunt, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, H V Francis, Assistant Engineer of Commonwealth Railways, T E Day, Chief Surveyor for the Northern Territory, and of course, J A Gilruth, all gave evidence to the effect that the neighbourhood at the head of the Roper River offered admirable opportunities for small stock settlement, and that, as soon as it became generally known that the railway would pass through Bitter Springs, there would be considerable endeavour to lease land in that vicinity (CCP, 16-66). Gilruth was in favour of insisting that employees on railway construction bring their wives and families with them, take up holdings and thus form the beginnings of a permanent settlement. Arguing for the Mataranka route, Gilruth commented:

....as the country is developed, Darwin will become more and more unsuitable as the capital on account of its situation; a more central administration point will become necessary. This in addition to the fact that residence in the tropics should be as far from the seaboard as possible especially for women and children.

....I am convinced that the neighbourhood of the Roper River source Mataranka, offers the very best site available in the Territory for an inland city, because of its altitude, distance from the sea, central situation, good soil, and beautiful river.

...in considering a route for a transcontinental railway, it would seem obvious that the probability of some such central city becoming a necessity in the future should be considered (CPP, 1916, 66).

It was thought crucial to attract white women and children. Chief Surveyor Day commented, 'No country can be a white man's country without white women' (CPP, 1916, 54). The investigating committee concluded that, of the three proposed routes, Mataranka provided the best potential for developing the country to the south, which would not be practicable in the absence of a railway (CPP, 1916, 10).

Political and economic factors made construction slow. The railway crossed the Katherine River in 1926, took two more years to cover 63 miles to Mataranka, opening on 1 July 1928, and then another year to reach Birdum, 51 miles further on. There, the railway stopped, and the connection with the more populated centres of the south was never made. The railway finally closed in 1976 (see Stiles, 1977 for an account of the railway).

The period 1916 to 1919 was the time in which prospects for a future town looked rosiest. The experimental farm was publicly regarded as a success. Railway construction seemed imminent. The Government constituted a cohesive and powerful interest group whose explicit aims were white settlement and development. Servicemen returning from World War I were considering taking up blocks for agricultural and pastoral purposes and shared the same aims for the land as the Government. Those inhabitants of the region who did not share the Government's aims, the Aborigines, had come to accept their dispossession as a social as well as a physical fact, since they no longer used violence against intruders.

The Government had power legally to dispossess Aborigines. It also had the power to choose which white settlers it wanted on the land. The Director of Lands received many inquiries from returned servicemen after 1918 (CRS F5 C74) and there was competition for 37 small blocks opened for lease along the Roper in 1919. Although the Government was committed to bringing new settlers, there were times when, in competition for a block, those with established capital won out over less wealthy newcomers. On one block of 150 square miles, preference was given to the Thonemann company which already owned about 5,000 square miles, rather than to a returned serviceman (CRS F5 B233). There was also a tendency to refuse applications from people who did not seem to be of 'good character' an assessment which sometimes was made on the basis of how much capital the applicant commanded (CRS F5 E225).

Applications for blocks dropped off in 1920, and the Government lost its power to pick and choose settlers. Of five pastoral leases on 42 year terms totalling 998 square miles thrown open to the north of Mataranka and east of Maranboy in that year, only one block was taken. This block adjoined Beswick Station, and was taken by M J Madrill, the lessee of that station. A slump in the pastoral industry in 1921 ended expansion, and markets did not recover until after World War II (Powell, 1982, 153). In the 1920s, many of the small holders abandoned their leases.

In 1928, just before the Depression, and at the worst possible time for the establishment of a new town, railway construction limped into Mataranka and a township was declared. The first settlers were railway construction employees. Optimistically, 60 town blocks were offered for auction, but at the sale on 15 June 1928, only 22 blocks received bids. Nearly all buyers were small business people settling in Mataranka with the intention of serving a thriving township which would grow in importance as the railway proceeded south to more populated centres. Nine blocks were bought by Chinese storekeepers, one by a European storekeeper, six by a boarding house keeper, one by a baker, two by the manager of Mataranka Station, Edwin Lowe, two by a labourer, and one by a person whose profession was not recorded (CRS F5 A192). In spite of the expectations of the settlers, Mataranka was dependent for its future on the pastoral hinterland of the Roper and the general prosperity of the cattle industry.

In the township, the census of 1929 gives population figures of 119 Europeans, nine Asians, four 'others' and 20 'part-Aborigines' (Report on the Administration of the Territory of North Australia, 1929, 17). The 'full-blood' Aboriginal population was not recorded, but it is likely that at least an equal number of Aborigines inhabited, for several months of the year, a camp situated about half a mile from town. Oral evidence suggests that relations between the two settlements were comfortable, Aborigines coming to the town once a month for rations but otherwise keeping pretty much to themselves (Mary Peterson, Katherine and Pam Agostini, Darwin, interviewed, February, 1983).

Most European households employed one or two Aboriginal domestic workers in the 1930s at a rate of 3 shillings per week plus rations. Aborigines Don and Ida (Aboriginal names unknown) were employed by Mary Peterson, the wife of a railway ganger, performing chores such as washing,

sweeping, chopping wood, yard cleaning, caring for the goats and poultry, and child care. They lived in a shed at the back of the house, which had its own bathroom. They worked for three or four hours every day, and spent their evenings at the Aboriginal camp. Both were semi-literate, having been raised at the CMS mission station at Roper Bar, begun in 1908. Mrs Peterson described her employees as very loyal, and considered that they were accorded the respect given to any adult. A measure of racial tolerance is apparent in this account.

It seems to be confirmed by the fact that the local Aboriginal camp was not a source of concern to the Mataranka police. There are no recorded incidents of arrests or confrontation between police and members of the Aboriginal camp in the local Police Journal of 1932-1933. Although this is the only Police Journal available, it covers a period in which an influx of single men from Darwin came to Mataranka to take up peanut farming, and any conflict is likely to have occurred at this time. Townspeople were not invited to the Aborigines' camp. Ida, Mary Peterson's employee, told Mary's children that the camp was 'too dirty'.

The absence of recorded incidents of violence does not necessarily point to cultural harmony. That working Aborigines lived what Mrs Peterson called 'a double life', keeping work life and camp life separate, and that non-employed Aborigines came to the town only for rations, suggests that Aborigines chose to deal with white settlement by accepting its presence and limited usefulness, and then ignoring it. So long as this was the case, the whites had no reason to interfere.

Not all Aborigines, however, were left alone. Government policy on medical treatment for Aborigines legally defined a group who were doubly victimised, first by contracting introduced diseases and second by the social consequences of having the diseases. Aborigines suspected of suffering from venereal diseases, granuloma, yaws and particularly leprosy, were sought by the local policeman and detained at the police station until a doctor could be brought in for a formal diagnosis. Mataranka was centrally located as a holding depot for Aborigines diagnosed as having leprosy, since it connected the Roper River with the railway. If the disease could not be treated locally, Aborigines were forcibly detained at Mataranka until a train could take them to the hospital in Darwin. An Aborigine diagnosed as having leprosy was taken to the leprosarium at Darwin, a place from which few people ever returned.

For Aborigines, European medical attention, particularly for leprosy, was a punishment. Most Aborigines considered the social consequences - removal to Darwin - to be worse than the disease, and sought to avoid capture by disappearing into the bush. Further, European medicine apparently did not cure the disease, since those who went to Darwin rarely returned. The refusal of Aborigines to submit to treatment was a challenge to the European assumption that 'doctor knows best'. Aborigines owed no cultural allegiance to European medicine, and underlying the conflict was an attempt by one culture to impose its values on another. The consequence of Aboriginal rejection was that those with leprosy were treated as criminals.

The extent to which treatment for Aborigines resembled a police hunt for criminals is well illustrated by an extract from the Mataranka Police Journal, 1932:

Wednesday 16 November

Dr McCann and M C [Mounted Constable] per car to Maryfield station where the Dr treated two Abo children suspected for yaws. Mr D Booth reported that an alleged lepor [sic] suspect had left the station some few weeks previously for Daly Waters. Dr McCann and M C to Rodericks Bore and camped.

192
miles

Thursday 17

11 miles per car, 20 miles horse
Dr McCann and M C Johnson per car from Rodericks Bore to Daly Waters, raided native camp in search of lepor but ascertained he had left for a waterhole some distance away. The M C was given permission to take a few telegraph horses for the purpose of locating Abo lepor. The M C to Dumana Waterhole and took Abo Jack (Coonamingie) as a suspected lepor....

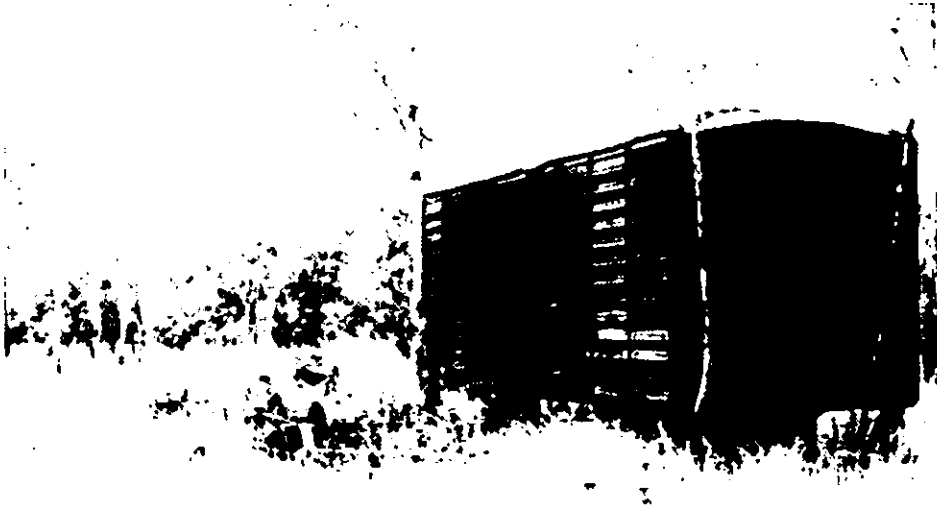
Friday 18

M C Johnson with Abo Jack (lepor) left Dumana with horses at 12.30 am and arrived Daly Waters 5.45 am where Dr McCann examined Abo Jack and instructed M C to keep him in charge as he was a suspected lepor....

Sunday 20

M C Johnson with horse searched black's camps and found 2 sick children instructed their mother to remain Daly Waters until arrival of Doctor....(Mataranka Police Journal, 1932).

The mother and children subsequently waited until Thursday 24 November for treatment, and 'Coonamingie' was locked up until Saturday 26 November (nine days) at Daly Waters, after which he was transported to Darwin.



Disused Railway Car, thought to be Leper Van used to transport lepers to Darwin 1938, 1983 photo.

It was not until 1938 that Mataranka police requested a building to house lepers and leper suspects pending their transportation to Darwin. Until then, the Constable wrote,

The method of holding lepers there has been to chain them to trees with the protection of a Bough Shelter (CRS Fl 39/593).

During the two years ending December 1938, 24 lepers and suspects passed through Mataranka, spending periods of from one to 20 days there. Once there were seven at a time. In 1933, the numbers were higher, and it was not unusual for the police station to hold 12 at a time (Mataranka Police Journal, 5 June 1933). Sergeant Wood of the Katherine Police

Station in 1938 complained of the refusal of the local hospital authorities to have leper suspects at the hospital, with the result that they too were chained to a tree outside the Katherine Police Station, even during the wet season (CRS F1 39/593).



Mounted Constable Ted Heathcock taking Aborigines to Darwin from Arnhem Land, ca. 1938, photo Fishcock, Mataranka.

Aborigines dealt with leprosy in their own way. Influences other than the desire of the patient were often at work. Douglas Lockwood has written that if the leper was female, it was the husband who decided her fate and he generally offered strong resistance:

he is not only being deprived of a wife, but also of the insurance policy he has against his years of decrepitude, the woman who by fair means or foul will provide him with tobacco. Her departure for quarantine means that he will be without comfort (Lockwood, 1962, 164).

Similarly, H E Thonemann of Elsey Station wrote of a unanimous tribal decision to hide a female leper suspect in the 1940s (Thonemann, 1949, 168). Lockwood records Waipuldanya's belief that in the 1960s there were more Aboriginal lepers hiding in the bush along the Roper than there were at the Leprosarium at Darwin (Lockwood, 1962, 164). Even the most well-intentioned of Europeans reported Aboriginal leper suspects to the police, and since Europeans did not tend to contract the disease themselves, the social effect was the reinforcement of cultural separatism and hostility.

In 1930, the Government began a peanut growing scheme at Katherine and Mataranka which was designed to solve the twin problems of unemployment in

Darwin and underpopulation by Europeans south of Darwin. The Peanut Growers' Scheme began after unemployed men picketed Government offices in Darwin and attempted to lock up all the representatives of Government until unemployment relief work schemes were set up. Fifty unemployed men camped on the verandah of the Government offices 'adopting' according to Blakely, Minister for Home Affairs, 'aggravating and disturbing measures, making it impossible for any work to be performed' (A1 34/5886, April 1930). On 5 May, the Government responded by offering unemployed unencumbered men 30 shillings per week to take up small blocks at Katherine and Mataranka for the growing of peanuts. The growers were to be paid until the first harvest. Despite ignorance of peanut farming, many unemployed men accepted the offer with enthusiasm. By July, 52 men had availed themselves of the scheme and 47 farms had been allotted.

The plan was ill-considered, and formulated under pressure from the unemployed men. Independent peanut growers in the previous season had had more crop failures than successes. F A Olsen and J Holt, both Mataranka peanut farmers in 1929, requested assistance under the 1930 scheme because of previously failed crops. Two other growers at Mataranka, E R West and J Brown, had planted larger areas and were having more success.

Each of the new blocks was of five acres, and growers were lent tools by the Government. In September, Mataranka had eight occupied blocks, and on the Waterhouse River there were ten more. The Northern Territory Times reported in late July that a visit to Mataranka revealed all men tackling the problems of clearing and water supply with 'right good will', and that they were full of optimism (CRS A1 34/5886). Initially, the Government did not supply water tanks, and the Report on the Government Assisted Peanut Farms in October noted that without the help of the Chinese storekeeper at Mataranka who carted water to the farms on a lorry, the scheme would have failed.

In spite of the enthusiasm, the crops did fail. In 1931, many of the growers deserted their holdings. Where these had failed, many more unemployed men were willing to try. In August 1931, 30 unemployed men were camped at Mataranka in the hope that the Government would reallocate deserted blocks. By this stage the Government had been informed by Queensland peanut growers that the market was already overstocked and precarious. None of the blocks was reallocated, and the scheme was discontinued in 1932. The debts incurred by payments to growers had to be written off. Even those larger blocks held by independent growers did not fare well. West and Brown, successful in 1930, were destitute in 1932 and unable to pay their Aboriginal employees. Most peanut farmers in the district, for the purposes of the Aboriginals Ordinance, were considered to be working in country districts, which meant that they did not have to pay Aboriginal employees if it could be demonstrated that they were feeding the dependants of the employees.

The peanut growing scheme represented the last attempt by the Government to fill the upper Roper district with white settlers. Gilruth's vision of an inland capital had faded and the Government's attitude towards settlement had changed. Mataranka became simply a place which would help solve the problems of the north. During the peanut farming period Mataranka had been seen as a desirable place for European settlement which would help offload the unemployment problems of Darwin. By 1936, Mataranka came to be seen by C E Cook, Chief Medical Officer and Chief Protector, as a place where Aborigines could form an agricultural settlement. Cook wanted the site of the Aboriginal compound in Darwin to build a new hospital, and therefore proposed to make Mataranka Station an Aboriginal Reserve. He planned for Aborigines to be brought from Darwin to Mataranka and trained in stockwork and agriculture with 'the ultimate object of the placing of a peasant class of Aborigines on small holdings in the area', in spite of the fact that 'agriculture has to date failed in this area'. Aside from providing employment for adult Aborigines, the reserve was in

fact to be a dumping ground for those Aborigines who were causing problems to the whites in Darwin. It would house aged and infirm Aborigines, provide disciplinary facilities for criminals, and treatment for opium addicts and alcoholics (CRS A1 38/31941).

Opposition to the plan from Darwin Aborigines was disregarded. The Government did not consider the suitability of the land for farming, the cultural problems inherent in transplanting Aborigines from one tribal area to another, or the unlikelihood that Aborigines would ever become 'a peasant class on small holdings'. The culture of the Aborigines was simply disregarded. The plan demonstrates the power of the Government as an interest group to override opposing interests by defining them as problems to be dealt with.

In 1937 a new site was found in Darwin for the Aboriginal compound, and the plan for Mataranka was dropped. Subsequently the Superintendent of Police visited Mataranka Station in 1938, and reported that the site was unsuitable for an Aboriginal reserve. It was bad grazing country, in appalling condition, and the Roper River was dangerous for stock (CRS A1 38/31941). His remarks are a direct contradiction of the Government's assessment in 1912.

The single most significant factor determining the nature of settlement at Mataranka was Government policy. The Government set up the experimental station, built the railway, publicised in glowing terms the future potential for settlers, assisted peanut growers and legislated for the 'protection' of Aborigines. Though it was the single most influential interest group, it was an external one and in interaction at the local level its plans foundered. The town attracted no wealthy settlers, and those who could not make a living did not stay. Measured in terms of the Government's aims, the settlement was a failure. In terms of the survival of the prior culture, it was probably just as well.

The Pastoral Industry

I am living hard and working hard and just about full of things, but I will carry on while I can.

I am not going to let the place go to ruin as long as I can hang on to it there must come good times some day.

John Guild, lessee of Veldt Station, to the Lands Department, 1933 and 1935 (CRS F630 PL165N).

Guild's words convey an essential difference in expectation and commitment between the people of the township settlement at Mataranka and those in the pastoral industry along the Roper River. Pastoralists shared the conviction that, even if individuals failed in attempts to settle the land with cattle, the industry itself was permanent. Against the formidable odds of bad markets, cattle diseases, adverse climatic conditions, isolation, labour problems and hostile Aborigines, pastoralists remained on the land. By 1911, after 30 years of pastoral settlement, Aborigines resident on their land came to understand the permanence of this form of settlement and sought to exploit it rather than drive it away. Faced with an absence of European labour to work their stations, pastoralists had the same idea about Aborigines. In the process of forming social relations, emergent social groups are discernible but often not sharply defined. Cultural groupings were complicated by economic groupings and often members of one group held an interest in a conflicting group.

There was little variation in the pattern of social relations from station to station. The stations were like small kingdoms, with the lessees or their managers controlling not only the land but also, implicitly,

the other residents and workers. Relations between the stations, amenable in the early days, became bitter as the pastoralists struggled against each other for use of the land.

The history of the pastoral industry prior to 1911 had been one of violent competition for the land against Roper River and Arnhem Land Aborigines, a competition which the pastoral industry did not always win. Merlan (1978) records the 'pacification' of Aborigines in the Elsey and Hodgson Downs area and Bauer describes the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company, which held Elsey, Hodgson and a large area of Arnhem Land between 1903 and 1908:

It is commonly said that the blacks 'hunted the cattle out'. This was probably one of the few authenticated instances in which the Aborigines were systematically hunted. For a time the company employed 2 gangs of 10 to 14 blacks headed by a white man or half caste to hunt and shoot the wild blacks on sight (1964, 157).

Aborigines played a major role in the ultimate failure of the Company's venture. Violence was not new to Roper River Aborigines. Thonemann, writing from oral Aboriginal evidence, recorded that conflict regularly took place between tribal groups before the arrival of Europeans. The Mangarai, inhabiting the Elsey area, are said to have engaged in warfare with Alawa, who occupied the Hodgson Downs area, with Mara, eastern neighbours of Alawa, and with Jangman, south of Mangarai territory. At the time of European arrival in the 1870s, relations between these tribes were relatively settled, although intermarriage was rare and great care had to be taken when visiting neighbouring tribal country (Thonemann, 1949, Ch.5).

The pattern of European pastoral settlement had been to take up large tracts of land along the river to ensure permanent water for stock. In 1911 holdings included Elsey Station, Hodgson Downs, Roper Valley Station and the Roper River Mission Station. In the upper Roper area, Mataranka Station was set up in 1914, Beswick Station in 1915 or 1916 and Veldt Station in 1927.

Violent competition for land dominated Aboriginal/European relations before 1900, and sporadic violence continued until World War II, when the presence of army camps brought about a new economic relationship and reduced the power of pastoralists over Aborigines. In the intervening period, possibilities for mutual exploitation blurred the hitherto distinct cultural divisions in Roper society. By 1911, it was usual for stations to have Aboriginal camps attached to them, and some Aborigines, by virtue of their employment in the industry, identified common interest with the pastoralists against other pastoralists. It was not simply a matter of changing sides in a continuing battle; rather, it represented a drastic alteration in the nature of the battle. The presence of Aborigines on cattle stations is the point at which it is possible to speak of cross cultural economic relations.

In the early years of pastoral settlement, Europeans utilised white labour, as it was the only labour available. White labour was expensive and scarce, and pastoralists tended also to import trained Aboriginal stockworkers from other areas. Such workers had no local tribal affiliations and were therefore considered to be reliable. Two Queensland Aboriginal workers were employed by Duncan Campbell, head stockman of Elsey Station, in 1882 (Merlan, 1978, 79). When Aboriginal camps were set up on the stations in the 1890s, station managers began to recruit and train young men (and sometimes women) for stockwork. Camping on the stations solved problems for both sides. Aborigines did not have to hunt so often for food, since the station occasionally provided beef, flour, sugar, tea and tobacco. Pastoralists had cheap labour, and some means of social

control, since while they were on the stations Aborigines were generally not disturbing or killing the cattle. Stockwork was seasonal, and workers were allowed several months off each year during which time they could engage in traditional ceremonial activities. To this extent, the pastoral industry and maintenance of Aboriginal society were compatible.

A description of a bangtail muster in 1914 at Elsey Station by H E Thonemann gives some idea of the nature of stockwork and the numbers who could be involved in it. A mustering camp consisted of one or two Europeans and ten Aborigines. A mustering plant had about 50 men, or four or five camps. In each camp, one of the Aborigines did the cooking, others on horses held the mustered cattle until they had been bangtailed, and the rest mustered. (A bangtail muster is an exact muster in which the tails of cattle are cut square for an accurate count.) The musterers collected the cattle, branded the calves, and let them go. When one area was finished, the camps shifted to a new area and started again. At night, the Aborigines rode slowly round and round the mob. They were ordered to sing softly as they rode, performing a dual function - reassuring the cattle and proving to the boss that they were awake (Thonemann, 1949, 46-7).

Other work performed by the men on Elsey Station included the rounding up and breaking in of horses, fencing, running messages and fetching supplies. Women milked and shepherded the goats, worked in the garden, cooked, and performed household chores. Employees were expected to conform to European ways. Under Mrs Giles, wife of the Elsey manager from 1928 to 1949, domestic workers wore uniforms while in the homestead (Thonemann, 1949, Ch. 6-13). In Giles' time as manager, Aborigines sawed the timber and helped build the homesteads at Elsey and Hodgson Downs. Some stockworkers were taught to do minor repairs to cars. 'Half-caste' apprentices were taught to do up and repair saddles. Giles regarded all his Aboriginal stockworkers as good horsemen (CRS F1 46/820 (Pt 1)). Such tasks were representative of work performed on all stations by Aborigines. Where there were no white women on the stations, Aboriginal women were also often sexual partners for the Europeans. Although few records exist of sexual relations, it is likely that Roper River stations were the same as elsewhere. George Conway, a drover who founded several stations along the river, reputedly lived with an Aboriginal woman called Rooney for forty years (Lockwood, 1964, 156). In 1919 a policeman, an Aboriginal Protector, allegedly had what was termed a 'harem' on the Roper River, and was the father of four 'part-Aboriginal' children by different mothers. Several charges against the policeman, including 'serious ill usage of certain native women' were dismissed because the Judge claimed that all 15 Aboriginal witnesses were liars (McGrath, 1978, 14). In 1932 a Board of Inquiry was called to investigate allegations made by Aborigines that one of the missionaries at the CMS mission at Roper Bar was engaging in sexual activities with the Aboriginal women there (CRS F1 38/534 and Ingoldsby, 1977).

As the pastoral industry became entrenched, Aboriginal workers and pastoralists became mutually dependent. The cattle industry increasingly became dependent on Aboriginal labour. Initially, Aborigines worked on the stations for rations to supplement an already viable lifestyle. In time, the able-bodied hunters were spending their time in stockwork and some of the female gatherers were domestically employed, so the Aboriginal camp as a whole came to regard the rations supplied by the station as necessary and not just supplementary. Further, in supporting the cattle industry, Aborigines supported a system of land use which impoverished the land for hunting and gathering. Cattle upset the ecological balance, devouring the grasses, hardening the ground with their hooves and taking over the waterholes from wild game.

While this process of dependence and exploitation was taking shape two systems of power operated on the stations. On the one hand, there was the white 'boss', his wife, if there was one, and seasonal white workers. On

the other, there was the power structure of traditional Aboriginal society. Caught between these two structures were the Aboriginal workers, who owed allegiance to both sides.

Power amongst the Aborigines was accorded through gender, heredity, and ownership of land and ceremonies. Initially no status was gained through the type of work performed for Europeans; stockworkers, no matter what their status in European eyes, were still the 'young men' in the traditional hierarchy. This situation obtained in Jeannie Gunn's time at Elsey Station (1902). The camp as described by Gunn was a completely functioning social and economic unit. Gunn perceived a hierarchy in which the 'wise old men of the tribe' wielded power through ownership of the land and possession of stories and ceremonies through which the land was used and understood. Ebimel Woolloomool, perceived as the 'king', performed sundry tasks for the 'missus', including gardening - low status European chores - yet lost no power as an old man of the tribe.

The movement of Aborigines towards employment in the pastoral industry altered their economic base, and power began to accrue in the hands of the workers. Traditional mechanisms of power began to lose some of their relevance and new mechanisms took shape. The women who worked in the homestead could win favour with the 'missus' and secure clothes, tobacco, sugar, tea and information, all valued items in the Aboriginal camp. However, it was the stockworkers who occupied the key position between the white and black hierarchies, and they came to be accorded power and status on both sides because of what they could offer to each. They had access to better clothes, boots, hats, tobacco, food and sometimes alcohol, that lower status occupations did not draw. Trusted employees were allowed the use of guns. In exchange for work, stations supplied rations for the dependants of workers, and so non-employed Aborigines at all levels in the old power structure became partially dependent on the stockworkers for their food.

The housing situation of stockworkers was illustrative of their position. The Northern Territory Pastoral Leases Investigation Committee Report of 1935 shows the existence of houses near the homesteads for the Aboriginal workers. Various described as the 'mens' hut', 'blacks' house', or 'man's room', these buildings provided the stockworkers with a means of asserting superiority over those at the 'blacks' camp'. It also removed them from its influence (CRS F658 19).

The change in economic base was not achieved without antagonism. Since the expropriation of Aboriginal land, pastoralists were the dominant power holders. Access to white culture, language and skills gave the edge to those who had it, over those who possessed only traditional skills and stories which were becoming, through the shrinkage of Aboriginal land power, increasingly unusable. Rolf Gerritsen's analysis of power in Aboriginal village communities today, dealing with Bamyili, Beswick and Ngukurr in the Roper river area, suggests that positions of dominance are acquired by those who have a combination of ceremonial control or ownership, land power, and mununga, 'whiteman power' (1981, 6-7). Although the power of the stockworkers has long since altered, particularly since equal wages and legislation giving inalienable freehold title over land to Aborigines, the process whereby prestige devolved on those with mununga began in the pastoral industry.

Although stockworkers gained status in both power structures, employers treated their workers as expendable. Under the provisions of the Aboriginals' Ordinance 1918-33, the Chief Protector controlled the financial affairs of all 'full-blood' Aborigines, single 'part-Aboriginal' females and male 'part-Aborigines' up to the age of 21. If after that age the latter could demonstrate capability of managing their own affairs, they were permitted to do so. Employers were supposed to pay a licensing fee to the Government of 10 shillings. The minimum wage for Aborigines was 5

shillings per week, of which 2 shillings per week were to be paid monthly into a trust account in the name of an authorised protector. In country areas, the employer was relieved of his obligation to pay if he was feeding the employees' dependants. Stockworkers in the 1930s were supposed to receive 24 shillings per week when droving, and 16 shillings when travelling with plant (CRS Fl 38/17).

In practice, payment was erratic, and employers made full use of the provision which stated that in country areas rations could be used in lieu of payment. Rates of pay did not increase during the period, the system was inadequately policed and often wages were not paid at all. In the 1930s, when cattle markets were poor and stations were unable even to pay the rent on their lands, registered as well as unregistered employees went unpaid. Trust fund account records for 1938 reveal a debt of 263 pounds outstanding to Aboriginal drovers, much of it outstanding since 1931. Much of the debt was subsequently written off (CRS Fl 38/17).

White stockworkers, though they were not more highly skilled, received better pay and conditions; Aborigines were cheap purely because they were Aboriginal. In some respects they were like slaves, since they were treated as if they were the possession of the station owners. Aborigines unwittingly contributed to this, staying on stations because of their allegiance to the land. If a station was sold, Aborigines were implicitly sold with it (CRS Fl 46/820). Labelled as 'boys', 'stockboys', or 'housegirls', the assumption was that Aborigines were not quite adult and should not be allowed the powers of independent decision making.

Legally, Aborigines were within their rights to leave a station at any time. In practice they could only do so when the labour pool was sufficiently large to cope with the absence of some of its members. The response of pastoralists in the years of World War II to attempts by station workers to find employment in army camps, where pay and conditions were better, illustrates the ownership principle which was at work throughout the period. In one incident, Giles of Elsey Station demanded the return of Elsey stockmen and other workers who reported to Larrimah Army camp asking for employment. The Aborigines refused to return. Giles refused an offer to visit the settlement to talk with the Aborigines, demanding their forced return, which was subsequently complied with. Giles' attitude was typical, and complaints of the same kind were numerous. Underlying their attitude was the fear that the army was treating Aborigines in a way that it would be 'impossible for station owners to treat them after the war is over' (CRS Fl 44/333). In other words, Aborigines would not be so readily exploitable. Because of this legal right to leave stations, Aborigines cannot strictly speaking be called slaves. However, neither could they be regarded as employees in the European sense of the term. Aboriginal employees constituted a group who, embracing a European economic system, were held back from full participation in it by the fact of their race.

Not all Aborigines exercised the option of station existence. Those who did, by virtue of their numbers, eased the pressure of population on the land for those who retained traditional patterns of land use. Throughout the period, all of the stations were understocked. Elsey Station in 1922 carried about 2 head to the square mile, and the owner believed it could carry four times that number (CPP, 1922, 62). Moreover, large areas on the runs were considered unsuitable for cattle, and were therefore available for Aborigines to use (RS F630 PL104N 158N). Roper Valley Station, covering 1,249 square miles, was abandoned for a period in the 1930s. With no records of stock, which were neglected and unbranded, the possibility existed for cattle killing without fear of reprisal. The proclamation of the Arnhem Land Reserve in 1931 gave Aborigines north of the Roper security of tenure, although Aborigines may not have been aware of this.

In the 1930s pastoralists began to complain of 'native drift' from Arnhem Land. Madrill of Beswick Station wrote in 1936:

stock are awfull poor and weak and what makes it worse the blacks are at Liberty to walk all through the cattle and Burn everywhere. All my country has been burnt right out including 3 stock yards, I expect to lose about 500 head of Breeders this year if we don't get rain this month as now I have to shift them for feed (CRS F630 PL158N).

Madrill was told by Chief Surveyor Shepherd that Aborigines were legally entitled to free right of range and hunting over leased areas, as they had done before the leases were taken out. V C Hall, of the Maranboy police, supported Madrill's claim:

The presence of wandering bands of Aborigines on a Pastoral lease is directly subversive of the whole purpose of the Lease; it is an axiom so well known in the bush that 'cattle and blacks will not mix', as to be scarcely necessary to mention it. The unrestricted presence of aboriginals on a Pastoral Lease is entirely disastrous to the purpose of the pioneer cattleman.

It is not as though the aboriginals in general, or of this sector of the Territory have 'no place to go'. They are amply provided with reserves even from the point of view of the most ardent moralist. There is the 32,000 Sq. miles of the big Reserve adjacent, as well other smaller reserves, and all the unoccupied Crown Lands for them to range over (CRS F630 PL158N).

It is likely that the Aborigines were using Beswick Station as a travelling route connecting Arnhem Land areas with the tinfield at Maranboy. In 1937, Mounted Constable Hall called for 'increased vigilance on the part of the out-back Police' because of the access of Aborigines from Arnhem Land to the Maranboy community (CRS F1 48/10). Because the white pastoral population was sparsely settled, there was little possibility for whites to control the movements of Aborigines in the bush or on the peripheries of white settlement. Complaints such as Madrill's indicate the extent to which Aborigines who retained the traditional economic base were able to ignore the presence of pastoralists, and simply supplement their lifestyles with visits to European settlements such as Maranboy.

Jeannie Gunn in We of the Never-Never characterises relations between white pastoralists as very close, brought about by isolation and need. If this 'mateship' spirit ever really existed, it gave way in subsequent years to rivalry and feuding between stations. Although competition for land had been between pastoralists and Aborigines in the first 30 years of pastoral settlement, later pastoralists began to compete among themselves for the use of land and its resources. At first the resentment was directed towards cattle stealers and illegal musters who owned no land. Shadforth, Manager of Elsey Station 1916-1920, complained to the Director of Lands in 1919 about

people that have no country, and yet go about mustering on Crown Lands, and coming on to stations when the hands are mustering on the opposite side of that run (CRS F4 S175).

The size of the runs and the absence of adequate boundaries made the stealing of cleanskins (unbranded cattle) relatively easy, and the practice continued throughout the period. Madrill of Beswick Station, given a 25 per cent reduction in rent in 1937, demanded

something better than that we want more proction [sic] for our stock there is some people making a better living stealing stock and paying no rent and the blacks walk all through our stock (CRS F630 PL158N).

In the 1920s cattlemen began to have grievances against each other, over boundaries, roads, grazing rights and water rights. F Thonemann wrote in 1927 that he was 'having difficulty with neighbours trespassing on Elsey and Hodgson with the excuse that they are on roads opened by themselves'. He wrote that Roper Valley Station had three roads to Hodgson Downs, and five through Elsey Station, giving 'undesirable people great opportunities for wrongdoing'. Drovers were supposed to drive stock through designated stock routes. There was no such stock route from Roper Valley in any direction, and according to Thonemann, Rogers of Roper Valley took the view that he could therefore take any route he liked, and still be complying with the regulations (CRS F5 R243).

Other disputes in 1919, involving Beswick Station and a Maranboy butcher, John Shuter, over grazing rights, resulted in a declaration of common land by the Government in the Maranboy district (CRS F5 M192). There was sometimes little basis for accusations made against other cattlemen, and such incidents illustrate the high level of tension in relations between cattlemen. In 1933 Harold Giles of Elsey complained to the Mataranka police that he 'believed' that Edwin Lowe of Mataranka Station had travelled a plant of horses through Elsey Station 'without sufficient notice'. When the matter was investigated, Lowe told police that he had sent written notice of his intentions, but that the letter could not have arrived in time (Mataranka Police Journal, 1933). Giles also reported that he suspected that Lowe's stockboys were illegally carrying firearms, a complaint probably more designed to incriminate Lowe than the Aboriginal stockworkers.



Homestead, Hodgson Downs, 1935 photo.

In disputes between stations, Aboriginal workers owed allegiance to the station for which they worked. In a feud between Mataranka and Beswick Stations in the late 1930s and 1940s, Mark O'Connor of Mataranka Station reported that a part-Aboriginal called Campfire of Beswick Station had been illegally mustering his cattle, and that another, Teddy Little, had

attempted to get into O'Connor's tent 'to give him a bashing' (CRS Fl 46/820 Pt. 1).

A contributing factor in disputes between cattlemen was the refusal of police to be involved. It was the policy of the Police Branch not to prosecute in matters of cattle stealing by whites, since, in the words of the police Commissioner, 'neighbouring pastoralists would only be making a convenience of the police to settle their private differences' (CRS Fl 46/820 Pt. 1). Pastoralists were told that they must settle disputes amicably or take civil action. Disputes tended to develop into full-scale feuds before civil action was taken as a last resort.

One such feud concerned the damming of Red Lily Lagoon, on Elsey Station, which, according to successive lessees of Roper Valley Station, reduced the amount of water flowing down the Roper into that station. For many years it had been an Aboriginal custom partially to dam the lagoon with small sticks for the purpose of conserving fish and attracting ducks during the later part of the dry season. Lessees of Elsey Station continued the practice because it enabled cattle to drink from the lagoon on hard ground. If the lagoon was not dammed, losses of cattle were sustained through bogging and crocodiles (CRS Fl 46/406). George Conway, who formed Roper Valley Station in 1910, wrote that the dam did not become a problem until Frank Earl, manager of Elsey Station from 1920 till 1926, raised the level of the dam (CRS F5 R248).

The first formal complaint was made by J W Rogers of Roper Valley in 1926, and Rogers continued to register annual complaints after Harold Giles was appointed manager of Elsey in 1927. In 1934, Roper Valley was sold to a partnership of T Allison Holt and Roy Chisholm who, after extensive and numerous reports on the dam by police, surveyors, engineers, and even the army, took the issue to court in 1946. The case was won by Roper Valley on a legal technicality, but throughout the long struggle between the stations, each side attempted to engage the support of other cattlemen in the area. George Conway sided with Holt and Chisholm and Frank Earl, against whom the original complaint was made, did likewise. Mary Peterson of Mataranka said that Elsey and Roper Valley were 'always fighting over anything', and that 'Mannion [the Mataranka policeman in the 1930s] had much bigger problems with cattle stations than with Aborigines' (Peterson, interview).

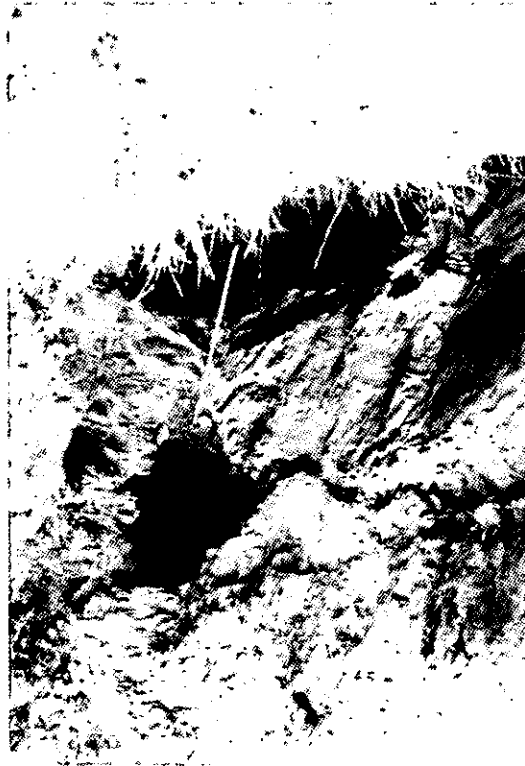
There are no records pointing to good relations between pastoralists though presumably they existed. Available evidence points always to conflict. Analysis of conflict situations show the demarcation points between interest groups, and in this instance the interests of workers on stations were subordinated to the interests of the station owners and managers against each other.

The Tinfield

In the beginning of 1914, when the sheep which Gilruth hoped would attract settlers were straggling the last miles to Mataranka Station, a new and unsolicited settlement was forming nearby at Maranboy. Profitable quantities of tin were discovered in 1913 by Sharber and Richardson in the valleys of the Maranboy and Beswick Creeks and their tributaries, and by July 1914 there were 80 independent claim holders on the new field (CRS A3 14/5519). Though this could hardly be termed a 'rush' on standards set by the Victorian gold-fields, for the Northern Territory it was a settlement of some significance. In spite of his commitment to settlement of a pastoral and agricultural kind, even Gilruth was pleased, and following recommendations made by the Director of Mines, H I Jensen, construction began in 1914 on a ten head battery with concentrators to crush the tin ore. The bureaucracy in Melbourne saw fit to criticise the Administration for proceeding with the battery with undue haste, without proper mining

investigation to discover whether there would be enough tin to justify its construction. Such an investigation was subsequently carried out by geologist G J Gray in 1914, and he reported the tinfield to be a viable economic proposition (CRS A3 17/1402). Because of isolation and freight costs, the Northern Territory's mining record had previously been poor, but the discovery of tin coincided with high prices brought by World War I (Bauer, 1964, 240).

Jensen thought that the field would last for a long time. In 1914 he estimated the extent of tin bearing country to be eight miles long and four miles wide, and likely to be extended (CRS A3 14/5519). Much of the tin was outcropping on the surface, making it possible for small scale operators without finance to work the shoots. Production was highest in the first few years, reaching a value of 15,660 pounds in 1917. Thereafter, prices and production began to drop off, reaching a low in the depression year of 1932 with a value of 168 pounds (NTAC 1975/6).



Hole at Maranboy after tin mining,
1983 photo.

The Government confined its assistance to the miners to the building of the battery and paying the wages of staff. The battery began operations in January 1916. Without financial assistance to buy machinery for digging deeply, miners pegged extensively along the shallow profitable lines, scooping the top off the accessible ore and leaving much of the tin below the surface untouched. This practice, called gouging, was done by hand and it remained the only technique available to most miners throughout the period. Mining was therefore inefficient, and very little developmental work was done. A company formed in 1927, Maranboy Mining Co., erected its own treatment plant, but undertook little development and ceased operations when the price of tin declined in the early thirties. The only real development took place in 1948. Harold 'Tiger' Brennan sank a shaft 160

feet deep and averaged 1.8 per cent tin concentrate (CRS P1 45/290. By comparison, the rich surface shoots in 1916 recovered an average of 4.97 per cent tin concentrate: NTAC 1975/6). The annual tonnage treated was always relatively small. The Director of Mines in 1951 described the history of the field as 'particularly black and dismal', remarking that the production of 30,000 tons of ore during 35 years of mining was discouraging (CRS P1 45/290).

The battery was built and managed by Louis Stutterd until 1946. Powered by boiler and steam engine, operations were limited to four months of the year in the wet season, owing to lack of water. The miners worked in the dry season, while the battery was idle; in the wet season, when the battery was working, the holes gouged by the miners filled with water and became unworkable. In the absence of pumping facilities, the holes were worked to a depth of about 50 feet and then abandoned.

The population of white miners actually working on the field probably never much exceeded the 1914 figure of 80 given by Jensen. Atlee Hunt, Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, set the 1915 figure at 120 to 150 miners, but a large number of these had been granted exemptions pending battery completion, and were working on railway construction or in Darwin (CPP, 1916, 16). The Report to the Administrator in 1915, gave the average number of miners at 30, with an additional 16 labourers, two carters, and one officer. The women in the population were not counted until 1918 and the Aborigines not until 1927. In 1918, there were 47 European men and six European women (Report of the Administrator, 1918, 17) and probably only 30 or so of these were miners. Two of the women were nurses, brought with the Australian Inland Mission hospital which was set up in 1916 when a malaria epidemic at the field killed many people. One of the women was Ethel Stutterd, the battery manager's wife and the other three were wives of miners. The 1925 figures were given as 25 miners, three teamsters and four battery hands (Report of the Administrator, 1925, 27).

A rise in the price of tin in 1926-27 led to increased numbers of miners in the late 1920s, and the 1929 figures were 45 miners, 17 European female adults and seven children under 12 (Report on the Administration 1929, 13). No further figures for whites are available until 1943, but as the production of tin never again reached its former levels, the population probably decreased. In 1943 there were nine miners left, with two carters and two battery hands (CRS P1 43/85).

There were never any Chinese miners at Maranboy. In 1913, before the first miners arrived, the Government declared an area of 30 square miles around Maranboy (formerly spelt Marranboy) to be a new gold-field under Section 8 of the Northern Territory Mining Act of 1903. The expressed purpose of the legislation was to prevent Asiatic holders of a miners' right from mining on that field (CRS P141 445/15). No gold was ever found on the tinfield, but the legislation, along with a decline in the Chinese population generally in the Territory, effectively kept such 'undesirables' out.

The largest population group at Maranboy, and one which has received the least attention in records of the period, was the Aborigines. No figures were given until 1927, when the estimated number was 270, about four times the European population. In 1929 the recorded figure was 272, and in 1930 it was 250 (Report on the Administration 1927, 11; 1929, 9; 1930, 7). The tinfield was situated within the Djauan tribal territory, and from 1913 onwards each miner employed two or more Aborigines and provided rations for their dependants.

The employed Aborigines were the pivot around which the whole settlement operated. They worked not only for the miners, but also for the miners' wives, the prospectors, the police and the hospital, and some women

as well gave sexual favours to the miners, billabongers, and visiting railway workers. (A billabonger was a prospector who received government assistance but simply disappeared into the bush and camped at a billabong while rations lasted, without attempting any prospecting CRS F144 928). V C Hall, the policeman at Maranboy in the 1930s, later wrote that 'the Aborigine' was 'the Territory's most vital economic asset', 'in every sense of the word the key person, irrespective of sex' (1968, 15).

Hall's words emphasise a racial categorisation at the expense of complex economic and cultural interaction. Aborigines were not all a 'vital economic asset'. Djauan Aborigines provided a core of employed workers, but Maranboy was an Aboriginal trading centre, and people from other tribes visited the area to trade in bamboo for spears. Aborigines from Rembarung tribal territory, bordering Djauan on the north-east, also began to be employed at the field in the 1930s (Brinke, 1979, 178). Besides employed Aborigines, there were dependants, Aborigines living on the fringe of mining settlement, traders and visitors, and others who lived a partial or total tribal life. Hall himself indirectly drew attention to the presence of different groups of Aborigines when he wrote to the Superintendent of Police in 1937 of his concern about Arnhem Land traffic into Maranboy. He called for 'increased vigilance on the part of the out-back Police', since the 'so-called Reserve' was in reality 'a refuge':

....this Station abuts on that vast human zoo known as the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve, from which Aborigines have free access [sic] down here into this community.

At any time a settler may be speared, or a crime be committed calling for quick and fast mounted work to give the police a sporting chance to get on tracks and clean up the affair by 'first intention', thus perhaps avoiding a long and expensive search (CRS F1 48/10).

Violence between Aborigines, and between Aborigines and whites, was common particularly in the early years when the population was transient. Fay Shepherd, daughter of Louis and Ethel Stutterd, recalled that 'Police spent a lot of their time chasing murderers' (Shepherd, interview). Numerous deaths of Aborigines 'under suspicious circumstances' are recorded in Police Journals, and there were probably more that were not recorded. In the seven months preceding July 1916, five deaths were recorded at the field: one Aborigine was murdered, one miner was murdered (Stutterd presumed the offence had been committed by Aborigines) and three other whites whose manner of death was not recorded (Katherine Police Journal, 1915-1919). Also common were fierce arguments between Aboriginal men and women, in which the latter were sometimes speared or hit on the head with stones. Shepherd believed that 'the lubras were punished very severely if they didn't keep on the straight and narrow'. More common than murder were charges against Aborigines of stealing or drinking, and Stutterd, empowered to deal with minor offences, regularly heard cases against Aborigines. One Aborigine, Jacky, was sentenced to two months' gaol in 1916 for larceny. He subsequently escaped while being transported to Pine Creek, and returned to Maranboy. Here he was recaptured and charged with escaping from legal custody, for which he was sentenced to a further four months in prison. The general practice for Aboriginal offenders was to send them to prison; for white offenders, a fine was usually levied instead (Katherine Police Journal, 1915-1919).

The stealers and raiders amongst Aborigines were generally those who were not employed. Their settlement history at Maranboy is marked by constant efforts by the authorities to control their movements. In 1923 Harold Giles, the Maranboy policeman (who later became manager of Elsey Station) applied for an area of ground to be set aside and declared a camping place for Aborigines. The reason given was that nonemployed

Aborigines camped wherever they like, outside Dan Dillon's store, and caused trouble with Aborigines employed by locals:

At times the bush blacks come in in big mobs and loaf about these camps and there does not seem to be any way of preventing them (CRS F1 23/294).

Giles proposed an area of 12 chains by five chains (six acres) which was subsequently declared a reserve in April 1923. The attempt at curtailment had no effect, for in the following year Mounted Constable White of Maranboy requested that a prohibited area for Aborigines be made, because

the Blacks at the present time, camp all over the field, and when the miners are absent at work, the Blacks sneak to their camps and steal anything they can lay their hands on, and it is very difficult to catch them.

It took only 11 days before an area of 4,000 acres was declared prohibited to Aborigines, covering most of the field. Aborigines appear to have ignored the declaration. Mounted Constable Cheyne reported in 1926 that Aborigines were present all over the prohibited area (CRS A1 28/9474).

Few charges were levied against the Tin Boys - those actually employed by the miners - and such cases were dealt with sympathetically. Mitemore, employed by Stutterd, was convicted without penalty in 1940 of unlawfully drinking intoxicating liquor. William Moore (part-Aboriginal) charged in 1940 with the same offence, was fined 5 pounds. Both were dealt with 'leniently' the latter because he was a self-employed partner with a European in a tin mine, and was 'a good worker' (CRS F3 20/2/5).

The Tin Boys worked hard at the mines, and gained the respect of their employers. Efforts at 'native control' were not generally directed at them, and an attempt in 1943 by the Native Affairs Branch to remove Aboriginal women to a compound met with a belligerent response from miners, and forceful opposition from Stutterd and the Director of Mines, W A Hughes. Employment of female Aborigines by single European men was illegal, but because the women were regarded as indispensable the authorities at Maranboy had previously turned a blind eye to the practice. The few European women on the field threatened to leave if the Aboriginal women were removed, as without them there would be nobody to do the 'drudge work'. Abbott, the Administrator, overrode the advice of the Director of Mines and in May 1943 the Aboriginal women were taken away.

The result was cohesive action on the part of the Tin Boys. Stutterd wrote that 'all working Aborigines have cleared out and production has practically ceased'. Sixteen miners petitioned the Government, writing that the workers were experienced Base Metal Miners, were happy and contented in their work, but refused to work unless their wives and families were with them. The combined efforts of Aborigines, miners and management were unsuccessful, and the directive was maintained. Tin production slowed even further, and to keep the services of the Tin Boys the miners had to send a truck to the compound every morning (a distance of seven miles) to collect the workers, and bring them home every evening (CRS F1 43/85).

The conflict arose because Abbott had failed to recognise the significance of Aboriginal workers in the mining economy. Protectors had been unimpressed with relations between miners and Aboriginal women since the mine first opened. As early as 1914 a complaint was made that 'miners have in the last year brought Venereal Disease to every lubra in the Maranboy district' (CRS A3 16/608). A report in the 1925 called the miners 'a very undesirable crowd', 'mostly squatting down with the Gins' while the Aboriginal men did a bit of gouging' (CRS A3 25/2247). Periodically there

was trouble at the field when railway workers visited, supplying methylated spirits in exchange for sex. At these times the camp was 'in a uproar' (CRS F1 43/85). It was a report in 1943 of 'contact' between Aborigines and employees of the Main Roads Board and the introduction of methylated spirits which precipitated the removal of women to the compound by the Native Affairs Branch.

The incident of the removal of Aboriginal women is the only recorded event in which miners and management were of the same mind. Generally the relations between the two were strained. The Director of Mines in 1945 referred to Stutterd's 'regime', and to his inability to deal sympathetically with the miners throughout his term as Battery Manager (CRS F1 44/167). Stutterd was explicitly condescending towards the miners. Giving evidence to the Public Works Committee on railway construction in 1916, he spoke of the 'undesirable types of claim holder' who were slow and inefficient:

This may be due largely to a process of elimination whereby the better class of labour is able to remain in congenial surroundings, leaving the unfit to satisfy outside requirements (CPP, 1916, 67).

In 1918 the miners petitioned the Government, expressing 'considerable dissatisfaction' regarding the actions and attitudes of the Battery Manager. In reporting the matter, Chief Warden Playford expressed the hope that the 'ventilation of grievances' would lead to more harmony (Report of the Administrator, 1918, 6).

It was an optimistic expectation. In 1921, industrial action, supported by the Australian Workers Union, took place over rates of pay and conditions for the supply of firewood to the battery. The action resulted in severe financial losses to the miners, since for much of that wet season the battery was inoperative. Stutterd attributed the action to 'the antics of a few arrogant red-raggers working under the guise of unionism'. The miners supported the unionists (Stutterd wrote that the 'unionists managed to bluff them') and Stutterd was unable to get the miners to supply firewood in the absence of an authorised union contractor. Stutterd wrote in his report to the Administrator:

Apparently the mill is run for the sole benefit of the members of the A.W.U., and I am here simply to pay the men, and do what little I am allowed to safeguard the interests of the Government (Report of the Administrator, 1921, 17).

Infrequent visits to the field by authorities in Darwin always met with deputations of miners demanding better conditions. Often the nature of the requests were such that they could have been dealt with by the Battery Manager, without recourse to further Government intervention. In 1927, 45 miners held a meeting and elected a committee of Messrs Grady, Allmich, Fotinos, Dooley and Scott to meet with Norman Bell, Warden and Government Assayer. Their demands included basic pumping equipment to get water out of the mines after the wet season, so that work could proceed; preference for local miners for casual employment at the Battery; cessation of favouritism by the Battery Manager towards a new company, Maranboy Mining Co.; improved roads; advances to carters from unprocessed ore; and a visit by a Government geologist. Bell reported the meeting to the Administrator, who supplied a portable pumping plant and organised the payment of carters and the improvement of roads (CRS F20 No. 71).

R W Coxon, Director of Mines in 1951, commented on the history of Government policy on the mine as being in 'a spirit of laissez faire'. It interested itself only in tin production and not in the people involved or in the methods of mining. Coxon believed that the Government's attitude was to keep the battery going and the miners quiet. Nothing else mattered

(CRS F1 45/290). Miners and working Aborigines protected each other's interests. Nor were the police uniformly opposed to lawbreaking. Mounted Constable Cheyne, Maranboy policeman in 1926, reported on a sly-grog traffic allegedly run by storekeeper Dan Dillon and Dan Lynch. Grog was being sold to Aborigines at 5 shillings a nip, and miners were protecting Aborigines against the police. It emerged that Cheyne was running a mine as a sideline to his official job, in his wife's name, and that he had no intention of catching anyone involved in the grog-traffic (CRS A1 28/9474).

The position of the policeman was a difficult one. His patrol area amounted to hundreds of miles, and he was called upon to perform numerous functions which were by definition sometimes in conflict - Stock Inspector, Registrar, Inspector of Roads and Waters, Protector, Mining Field Warden, and general overseer of all forms of administration including medical work (Hall, 1968, 15). Police quarters at Maranboy were poor, in 1934 having an ant-bed floor and no running water (CRS F1 48/10).



Home of Battery Manager, L Stutterd, Maranboy, ca. 1938, from the Jones Collection.

The Battery Manager's home was the only building which could properly be described as a house. Described by Fay Shepherd as 'like an enormous meat safe', the house had a cement floor and was mosquito proof. Inner walls were constructed from tightly stretched unbleached calico. The local store was a paper-bark shanty. Some of the miners had paper-bark houses with galvanised iron roofs, others had mud houses made from clay and ant-bed. Aboriginal workers lived with the miners or at the Aboriginal camp about a mile from the Battery Manager's house.

Stutterd's family probably ate better than anyone else at Maranboy. Stores were imported annually from Brisbane. The only shortages were fresh fruit and vegetables. Whatever the family ate, their Aboriginal employees ate, including plenty of meat, but the workers' favourite foods were porridge and rice, and bread and golden syrup or jam.

Many of the miners subsisted on bread and jam, not being able to afford the beef sold by station-owners. George Fisher ate galah and kangaroo. He recalled to Douglas Lockwood

If you ever want tough tucker try a brolga. But if you want to use it for its intended purpose then resole your shoes with a piece of breast meat (1964, 159).



Remains of Treatment Plant, Maranboy, 1927, 1983 photo.

Refrigerators were unknown, and miners did not buy foods that needed to be kept cool, concentrating instead on flour, sugar and tea. Some miners had goods hauled in by wagon train, others relied on the local store, which gave extended credit. Miners shared their food and tobacco with Aboriginal employees, often instead of pay. Aboriginal women breastfed their children until they were two or three years old. After that, it was 'straight onto corned beef' (Shepherd, interview).

The Stutterd daughters rarely left the house. Their mother would not allow them out alone, and they never saw the Aboriginal camp and rarely went near the mines. By contrast, the miners often formed close relationships with Aborigines, who replaced the families the miners did not have. One such was Paul Allmich, who 'adopted' an Aboriginal boy, Eric, soon after his arrival in 1926. Eric subsequently married and had eight children, all of whom lived at Allmich's camp (Lockwood, 1964, 161-2).

Miners tended to associate with each other and with Aborigines, steering clear of 'civilised' life. Fay Shepherd recalled that in spite of sickness the miners did not want even the hospital -

most of them of course would be bushmen who couldn't bear being washed every day and having to have showers and all that sort of thing and be clean and having women around....Some of them didn't even want the hospital. They felt the place was becoming far too civilised when you had women round the place. The less women there were the better they liked it. It was a man's world.

By contrast, the Stutterd females clung to the trappings of 'civilisation'. They read 'American Lady's Home Journals' for 'weeks on end', and did a lot of needlework - doilies, tablecentres, tablecloths and pillowcases for their glory boxes. Meanwhile they dressed for the bush, wearing very loose dresses with only side and shoulder seams, no sleeves and bare feet.

The most numerous group of people, the visiting Aborigines and those living at the Aboriginal camp, were to some extent outside the framework of European class relations, and had their own economic and political structure. They came to trade with each other and to raid mining camps, which they did with some success, since miners' camps were generally situated on the claims and were some distance apart.

The second most numerous group comprised working Aborigines, defined as a group by their position in relation to the mining economy. Power in Aboriginal society generally came with age (for males), but young men could become independent of the Aboriginal power structure through employment, and were the ones who had most to gain by a transfer to a wages economy. Since no Aboriginal camp depended on their employment for the supply of rations, as was the case in the pastoral industry, there was a degree of cultural separation over time. This is identified in the tendency of some Aboriginal workers and their families to live with the miners rather than at the Aboriginal camp and in later years at least, to remain with the miners during the wet season when the mines were not operating (CRS F1 43/85). Aboriginal employees were not implicitly 'owned' by white miners as they were in the pastoral industry, and there was the possibility for upward social mobility in the mining economy. At least one Aboriginal worker, William Moore, eventually became a self-employed miner.

Miners were the third group, all small-scale operators without much money. In the early years this population was transient, but as the price of tin declined, there remained a core of 30 or so permanent residents. Members of this group also tried their hands at carting, gardening, and one miner ran the local store (Lockwood, 1964, 161; CRS F915, Joe Israelson; CRS F912, Dan Dillon). As a group the miners actively sought better mining conditions from the Government, but did not encourage development of a kind that would lead to the 'civilising' of their lifestyle, particularly through the presence of white women. They were dependent on their Aboriginal workers, and paid them occasionally and poorly, but because their claims were of only ten acres, they lacked the power of extensive land ownership held by whites in the cattle industry. There was little possibility for the subordination of Aboriginal workers into the sort of hierarchy that existed on the stations. There is evidence that some long-term close relationships were formed between white miners and their employees.

The Government battery existed to serve the miners, but in practice the relationship between Stutterd and the miners was similar to that obtaining between management and workers of a company, in which workers had to agitate against management for better conditions. The management, concentrated in one man, regarded miners' claims as necessarily antagonistic to the Government's interests. Miners organised union activity and, bypassing the management, sought arbitration from the Administration in Darwin.

Comparisons

The similarities in the three forms of settlement are general, relating to the conditions of racial and cultural contact between Europeans and Aborigines. The main assumption governing white settlement was that since there was no evidence of agriculture, buildings, or industry, the land was there for the taking. Whites believed their culture to be superior, and asserted this economically, first by dispossessing the former owners and then by undervaluing the labour of Aboriginal employees.

Aborigines also perceived the possibilities for exploitation and manipulation of the new settlers. In spite of the imposition of white control over the land, Aborigines had a choice about what they would take from the white culture and economy. To some extent they were able in all

three areas to call the tune in labour relations. Aborigines worked only on the condition that the employer supplied food and tobacco to dependants. They reserved the right to leave employment for months at a time to fulfil ceremonial obligations and renew their cultural and economic acquaintance with the land and people. In the pastoral and mining industries, work slowed during the wet season, and workers were able to arrange for time off. Where Aborigines were domestically employed all year round, employers had either to train new staff or do without.

However, these general conditions were complicated by the differences in the forms of settlement, and the particular economic interest involved in each. Firstly, the nature of settlement determined the degree to which each settlement was regarded as permanent, which in turn had an effect on the developing social relations. This was particularly significant at Mataranka. On the one hand, the Federal Government and Administration in Darwin promoted the idea that Mataranka was to become an expanding centre more permanent than Darwin, through a determination to send a railway south to populated areas, through Gilruth's idea of an 'inland capital', and through experimental farming and other enterprises. It encouraged settlers to 'get in on the ground floor' of the new town. The buying up of numerous business blocks when the town was declared in 1928 testifies to the belief among new residents that they were about to serve a thriving township. On the other hand, the failure of the experimental station, the uncertain future of the railway and the absence of cattle markets for the pastoral industry surrounding the town made the settlement not only impermanent, but unlikely ever to function as a proper town. Instead of prosperous settlers, there were impoverished unskilled peanut farmers in the Mataranka region, settlers who were unable to contribute to any notion of permanence or prosperity.

Besides the short-lived peanut industry, there were only the railway and the pastoral industry to keep the town going. These brought visitors but no permanent residents. The settlement contracted over time rather than expanded, and since it did not constitute an industry dependent on Aboriginal labour, there was little reason to interfere with the Aboriginal camp outside the town. Aboriginal and European settlement remained economically separate, and employed Aborigines who participated in both tended to preserve the separation. Aside from the employment of Aborigines, the two settlements were largely irrelevant to each other.

The Government, as the most powerful interest group in the formation of the town, also interfered with Aborigines. It legislated for rates of pay, and, under the guise of 'protection', punished the sick. Through the presence of the town, the railway and the peanut farms, the Government directly eroded Aboriginal power based on use and content of land.

The pastoral industry made the greatest inroads into Aboriginal land power. It was based on the conviction of its European participants that it was permanent. In the pastoral industry, the conviction that it was permanent, added to the fact that pastoralists took over land on which Aborigines traditionally ranged, meant that a system of social relations had to be worked out whereby Aborigines and pastoralists could inhabit the same land.

In setting up camps on stations, Aborigines were able to remain on the land without direct persecution. Life on stations was better than 'dispersal'. Aborigines had recourse to European material goods, and were periodically given a beast which previously they would have had to steal, incurring 'recriminations'. In exchange, pastoralists demanded practically free labour, and a guarantee that Aborigines would not disturb cattle.

There were antagonisms inherent in this manipulative exchange which led to changes in Aboriginal society. Firstly, the cattle impoverished the land for hunting and gathering, eating the grasses, hardening the ground

and drinking at the waterholes which sustained wild game. In supporting this form of land use by their acceptance of the conditions by which they remained on the stations and by their labour, Aborigines contributed to the erosion of their traditional economic base. The effects of this only became evident gradually. Through their loss of land power, Aborigines lost the ability to maintain a social organisation in which land power was crucial. Their very presence on the stations was in the long-term an implicit acceptance that the cattlemen had gained the power to define the situation.

Secondly, the change from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to dependence and employment, bringing about a change in the economic basis of Aboriginal society, affected the traditional power structure. Without land power, some of the traditional mechanisms through which power was accorded lost their relevance. Access to the European power structure began to be useful. Because nonemployed Aborigines on stations were dependent for rations on the continued employment of workers, the latter held both economic and mununga power. Stockworkers did not, however, have power accruing from possession of ceremonies and ritual organisation, which remained in the hands of the elders. Both groups lacked land power, which was held by the pastoralists.

Those Aborigines who exercised their option of retaining a pre-contact existence held on to a circumscribed form of land power, by ignoring the European presence. They burnt the land as formerly, and disturbed the cattle as they moved through the runs. Nothing is known about their relations with station Aborigines, but it is likely that in the off-season in the pastoral industry interaction took place.

Land ownership was crucial in the relations between pastoralists and Aboriginal employees. Pastoralists were the dominant power holders on the stations, exercising paternalistic control over both employed and nonemployed Aborigines. Their legal title to the land gave them a de facto 'ownership' of Aborigines on it. Although there was some degree of social mobility for Aborigines within this framework, such as the position of the stockworker which was accorded prestige in both the Aboriginal and white cultures, employed Aborigines could not aspire to ownership of a pastoral property. They could not move out of their subordinate position.

Interaction between pastoralists, following the expansion and entrenchment of the cattle industry, was based on competition for land and resources. At first, complaints of 'cattle duffing' were particularly directed against illegal musterers owning no land. Later, pastoralists vied with each other over cattle, boundaries, water rights and grazing rights. One result was that a pastoralist and his workers tended to function as a unit and to treat other stations, if not as enemies, not quite as friends.

The nature of industry at Maranboy attracted a population which, particularly in the early years, was transient. White miners had control over very small areas of land, and, unlike pastoralists, had no means of control over large numbers of Aborigines. Miners were dependent on, and supported, only workers and their direct dependants. The power relationship between miners and their Aboriginal workers was based only on employer authority and the undervaluing of Aboriginal labour. Miners had no land power through which they could implicitly 'own' their workers. Where miners lived and worked alongside their Aboriginal employees the social and economic distance between them was much less than the distance between pastoralists and station Aborigines.

In the pastoral industry employed Aborigines contributed to the support of nonemployed Aborigines through their labour, but the Aboriginal camp at production. The Tin Boys, having acquired skills as base metal miners, were economically independent of wider Aboriginal society and had some

chance of eventual self-employment. All employed Aboriginal men had women with them, who also worked, but the movement and activities of Aboriginal women were largely controlled by their husbands. It is not known whether these were the women who provided sexual services to the whites, or whether the women were drawn from the visiting population or from the Aboriginal camp, or both. There was no significant enhancement of the position of Aboriginal women as a result of sexual interaction with whites.

The nonemployed Aboriginal population, living in camp on the fringe of white settlement, was host to the visiting Aboriginal population who came to trade. This group, while retaining its economic and cultural ties with the land, exploited the widely spaced nature of white settlement by stealing and raiding, and made little attempt to separate itself in the way that the Aboriginal camp at Mataranka did. Its population was more transient than at Mataranka, and since Maranboy was adjacent to the Arnhem Land Reserve, there was considerably more freedom of movement.

Interaction between miners and management was generally antagonistic but the employment of Aborigines complicated the class relations between management and miners. Both had an interest in keeping Aborigines working since without them neither the mines nor the battery could operate. The unified stop-work action by male Aborigines in 1943 focussed this dependence, having the temporary effect of uniting management and miners against the Native Affairs Branch. Finally, the nature of settlement itself gave rise to different forms of social relations. The two specific industries of mining at Maranboy and the cattle industry depended on Aboriginal labour and the essential difference between the two forms of settlement was control over land; pastoralists exerted greater control over their workers than did the miners. Where there was no specific industry, as at Mataranka, there was little dependence on Aboriginal labour and no large-scale white control of land. As a result, mechanisms for control of Aborigines were held only by the Government.

The three forms of settlement in this small region are covered for only a short span of years, but the variety of interaction is great, the interaction of two cultures, of external and local interests, of cultures within particular industries and of class relations. It is a different history, more complex than the narratives of adventurous pioneers facing hardship with humour and courage which are the staple of much popular history of the North.

References

- Bauer, F H, 1964. Historical Geography of White Settlement in Part of Northern Australia, Part 2, The Katherine - Darwin Region, CSIRO Division of Land Research and Regional Survey, Divisional Report No 64/1.
- Brinke, J, 1979. Demography and Settlement Geography of the Rembranga Tribe, Anthropologie, 17 2-3.
- CPP, 1916. Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Report together with Minutes of Evidence in Regard to the Proposed Extension of the Pine Creek - Katherine River Railway Southwards so far as Bitter (Mataranka) Springs, Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 4.
- CPP, 1922. Sectional Committee of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Report (a) Northern Territory Railway Extension from Mataranka to Daly Waters; (b) Extension of the Port Augusta - Oodnadatta Railway from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs, Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 4.
- CRS A1. General Correspondance Files, 1903-1938, Australian Archives, Canberra.
- CRS A3. Correspondence Files, 1912-1925, Australian Archives, Canberra.
- CRS F1. Correspondence Files 1915-1978, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F3. Correspondence Files, 1933-1949, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F5. Correspondence Files, 1915-1929, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F630. Correspondence Files, PL series, 1925- , Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F658. Pastoral Leases Investigation Committee 1933-1935, Reports, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F912. Register of Business Licences 1907-1940, Register of Business Permits, 1940-1943, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F915. Register of Garden Rents, 1910-1947, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- Duncan, R, 1967. The Northern Territory Pastoral Industry 1863-1910, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Gerritsen, R, 1981. Thoughts on Camelot: From Herodians and Zealots to the Contemporary Politics of Remote Aboriginal Settlement in the Northern Territory, paper presented to the 23rd Annual Conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association, August.
- Gunn, Mrs Aeneas, 1982. We of the Never-Never, and The Little Black Princess, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Ingoldsby, J, 1977. 'Labourers Together With God' CMS Missionaries in Northern Australia, 1908-1934, BA thesis, Australian National University.
- Katherine Police Journal, 1916-1919, Australian Archives, Darwin, CRS F297.
- Lockwood, D, 1962. I the Aboriginal, Rigby, Adelaide.

- Lockwood, D, 1964. Up the Track, Rigby, Adelaide.
- McGrath, A, 1978. Aboriginal Women Workers in the NT, 1911-1939, Hecate, 4, 2, July.
- Mataranka Police Journal, 1932-1934, Australian Archives, Darwin, CRS F293.
- Merlan, F, 1978. 'Making People Quiet' in the Pastoral North: Reminiscences of Elsey Station, Aboriginal History, 2, 1-2.
- NTAC, 1975-76. Miscellaneous File, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- Powell, A, 1982. Far Country: A Short History of the Northern Territory, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Shepherd, Fay (nee Stutterd). Interview by Rhonda Jamieson, NT Government Oral History Transcript, Darwin.
- Stevens F S, 1974. Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry, Australian National University Press, Canberra.
- Stiles, P B, 1977. The North Australia Railway: Its History and the Effect of its Closure, BA thesis, Australian National University.
- Report of the Administrator, Northern Territory of Australia, for the years 1912-1926.
- Report on the Administration of the Territory of North Australia, for years 1927-1931.
- Richards, M, 1982. An Australian Frontier, BA thesis, Australian National University.
- Richards, M, 1982. Aborigines in the Victoria River Region: 1883-1928, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Newsletter, March.
- Rose, F C G, 1953. The Pastoral Industry in the Northern Territory during the Period of Commonwealth Administration 1911-1953, Historical Studies, November.
- Thonemann, H E, 1949. Tell the White Man, Collins, Sydney.
- Tindale, N B, 1974. Aboriginal Tribes of Australia, University of California Press, Los Angeles.

**'AN AUSTRALIAN FRONTIER...'
ABORIGINES AND SETTLERS AT THE DALY RIVER
1912 - 1940**

Michaela Richards

Introduction:

'The Establishment of a Frontier...' The Daly River 1881-1911

The Daly River flows northwestwards for 225 kilometres from its origin at the junction of the Katherine and Flora Rivers in the northwest of the Northern Territory, to Anson Bay on the Timor Sea. Although a handful of Europeans visited Anson Bay in the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, the first exploration of surrounding country did not take place until 1861, under J McDouall Stuart. Four years later, B T Finnis 'officially discovered' its estuary and named it after the Governor of South Australia, Sir Dominic Daly. In the following year, 1866, J McKinlay recommended Anson Bay as the site for the chief settlement in the Northern Territory, after investigating the Daly for the South Australian Government (Sharp 1968, 329; Bauer 1964, 27; South Australian Parliamentary Papers 21, 1862; 82, 1866; 83, 1866). His recommendation received a cool reception in Adelaide. However, his glowing account anticipated the tenor of many following reports which together created a picture of the Daly as an agricultural paradise.



The Daly River, 96 km upstream.

The Daly was first surveyed in 1877, but non-Aboriginal settlement did not follow for some years (Conigrave 1936, 226). There is some dispute as to who established it. Two enterprises, each claimed to constitute first settlement, emerge indistinctly from surviving records. The first was a small scale agricultural enterprise, initiated by two Europeans, Edwards and Reece, and worked by an African and a group of Chinese. The second was a 90-acre vegetable farm established by Chinese gardeners on Peron Island (Hill 1970, 155; Pye 1976, 6). Neither venture is detailed adequately nor substantiated in reliable sources. It seems they were of such small scale and duration they were unlikely to have provoked perceptible change in local Aboriginal life or have furthered the incorporation of the Daly into the European world.

The various enterprises of the 1880s at the Daly are more likely to satisfy such criteria. From 1881, non-Aboriginal settlement at a point between 60 and 80 miles upstream was virtually continuous. Its character and size varied substantially throughout the decade but it clearly constituted the first concerted attempt to incorporate the Daly into

European life. The ramifications of this settlement for Aboriginal society were enormous.

Owston's Sugar Plantation, established on behalf of the Melbourne-based Palmerston Sugar Company in 1881, was the first of many European enterprises at the Daly (Bauer 1964, 101). In January, 1879, W Owston responded to generous offers of support for large scale sugar growers from the South Australian Government. He proceeded to the Territory, selected 20,000 acres on the Daly and signed an agreement with the Government late in 1879 (Donovan 1981, 135). Legislative delay and opposition to the generosity of his grant meant that it was not until 1881 that a sugar plantation of a reduced area of 10,000 acres was finally established. With the assistance of 17 Chinese and one European labourer, Owston had planted 20 acres of cane as a nursery by mid-1882. By May 1883 he had abandoned the plantation, having completed nothing more (Bauer 1964, 101; Donovan 1981, 137).



Sugar Cane at Thomas and Roberts Farm.

In 1884, the Government Resident commented that 'if operations had been continued with enterprise, there would now be a successful plantation where now there is a crop of burnt cane and a few abandoned huts'. However, there is some evidence that Owston was not advantageously placed - his land was subject to inundation and had only restricted levee soils (CRS Fl, 36/1000). Agricultural enterprise was followed quickly by pastoral and mining enterprise. In 1882, the Fisher and Lyons Cattle Station was established on the Daly and ran over 4,000 cattle between 1883 and 1886 (Duncan 1976, 146). In the same year the local mining industry received a great boost with the discovery of copper near Mt Hayward. Bands of prospectors had traversed the area for years, but this discovery led to settlement. At least five miners, together with Aboriginal assistants from the Wilwonga tribe to the north-east, settled in the vicinity to exploit this promising find.

Owston's abandoned plantation was resumed in 1885 by the shortlived Daly River Plantation Company with negligible result. Small scale agriculture continued during the eighties in conjunction with the copper mine. In 1886, the South Australian Government reserved ten square miles stretching from the south bank westwards towards Hermit Hill, for a Jesuit Mission to the local Aborigines. The Jesuits' first two attempts at

settlement were made within this reserve, the third and most successful, New Uniya, was situated on the north-east bank on an additional 300 acres granted them in 1891 (O'Kelly 1967, 50).

The Jesuits remained on the river for thirteen years and their records offer the most thorough picture available of Aboriginal society at the Daly in the late nineteenth century. In 1892, one of the missionaries, Rev. D Mackillop wrote, 'The Daly River tribes best known to us are the Cherites, the Ponga-Pongas, the Mulluk Mulluks and the Magngelli' (Mackillop 1892-3, 254). Tribes they identified later, the Kamor and Yunggor, were possibly as yet indistinguishable to the Missionaries because of their linguistic similarity with the Mulluk Mulluk and Madngele.

The area was apparently densely populated before non-Aboriginal settlement. Stanner estimated that between 50 and 70 Aborigines inhabited every ten to fifteen square miles. The estimates made by missionaries in the 1880s reflected this density but the accuracy of their estimates as a reflection of pre-contact population was already vitiated. Raids on local tribes which followed the murder of four miners at the copper mine in 1884 and the movements of the Mission settlement which provoked corresponding movement by Aborigines were two of the many factors which had already disrupted pre-contact population density by the 1880s. Still, in 1884, the Ponga Pongas were estimated at 300 and the Madngele at 70. In 1896, Jesuits estimated the total Aboriginal population of the area was around 500 and in 1899 guessed that within ten hours travel of New Uniya there were around 400 people (O'Kelly 1967, 46, 60, 69; SAPP 65, 1896, 5).

The Jesuits contacted and employed many Aborigines from a wide area between 1886 and 1899. They encouraged the Mulluk Mulluk in particular to settle and cultivate land around the Mission in family groups. They also became the focus for much casual labour on the larger plantation, the apprenticeship of young adults, of food and tobacco supplies in addition to religious instruction and wider educative activity. The largest number of Aborigines thus associated with the Mission at any one time was 200 in 1897.

A variety of crops were grown at New Uniya on approximately 60 acres - vegetables, tropical fruit and tobacco grew well. However, isolation and severe vicissitudes of climate and production never enabled Missioners to live above subsistence level. Their conspicuous lack of success with local Aborigines, their continuing struggle with poverty, increasing decimation of surrounding tribes and changes in the national Jesuit administration, combined to force the abandonment of the Mission in the wake of severe flooding in 1899 (most of this section is based on O'Kelly 1967).

Throughout the Mission years, other non-Aboriginal settlement vacillated. Mining enterprise flourished between 1886 and 1890, but dwindled soon after and was abandoned altogether in 1894. Chinese gardens which had supplied the mining settlement were left without custom and none remained in 1894. Fisher's and Lyons' pastoral holding and other small holdings were all abandoned by 1890. In 1899 mining activity was recommenced by Chinese tributors who remained until 1904, when the Government erected a reverberatory furnace and commenced smelting operations at the mine. In 1908, these operations were abandoned but a handful of Chinese with their local Aboriginal assistants worked the mine until 1913.

Meanwhile, a Mr Neimann settled at the abandoned New Uniya site in 1903 and engaged Aboriginal assistants in a variety of enterprises; trapping animals, mining silver and cultivating fodder crops (Brown 1906, 38-39). In 1910, W Roberts and D Thomas established a tobacco plantation. With Aboriginal assistance they cleared and cultivated 25 acres in less than two years. They were used as an object lesson by Government officials in 'what could be done for Aborigines in agriculture', who, in this case, lived abundantly off the plantation's produce (CRS A1, 12/10964). However,

Roberts' and Thomas' enterprise was more significant in what it symbolized to Government officials than in what it actually achieved. Although cereal, fruit and vegetable crops did well, their major hope, tobacco, was never commercially successful.

By the end of South Australian Administration of the Northern Territory in 1910, a number of diverse attempts had been made by Europeans and Chinese to settle the Daly. For short periods after 1881, the non-Aboriginal population of the area reached 50 or more. Despite the difficulties these ventures encountered, the Daly continued to enjoy an almost mythological status as an undeveloped frontier with tremendous potential still untapped. The agricultural achievements of the Jesuits and the contemporary success of Thomas and Roberts were instrumental in perpetuating such mythology. Previous failures were explained by 'lack of enterprise', or in the case of the Mission by 'non-success with the natives' (CPP 39, 1911).

The incoming administration was particularly susceptible to this mythology. By 1910 a considerable volume of scientific opinion had been gathered on the agricultural potential of the Daly and much of it challenged the popular notion of the Daly as an agricultural paradise. However, the incoming administration believed scientific work had never been properly completed and thus could not be held as definitive. So on assuming control of the Territory, the Commonwealth also assumed a great deal of its folklore and looked to the agricultural promise of the Daly as one of their brightest hopes.

Although by 1911 little remained of the efforts of settlement which had proceeded under the South Australian Administration, their effect on Aboriginal society in the area was clearly discernible. Aborigines by this time had acquired a taste for European goods, particularly tobacco, through their association with each of these enterprises, usually as employees. Although the Mission was the first recorded employer of local Aborigines, Stanner was convinced small numbers were employed by Owston and by pastoralists before 1886.

The Mission was certainly the first to employ significant numbers of Aborigines. The unique economic content of their missionary work, in fact, the key to their impact on local tribes. The Jesuits sought to familiarise Aborigines with the economic basis of European society, through settled agriculture, in order to equip them or at least dispose them more favourably toward European Christian concepts (Berndt 1952, 84). Stanner estimated the Mission suspended the normal economic life of 50 Aborigines each year, although this may have been more. O'Kelly records that the number of Aboriginal workers rose at times to 120, excluding those tending family lots. The interdependence of individuals within Aboriginal economic systems suggests that the disruption Mission activity provoked might have been even more extensive than these figures suggest.

There is little evidence of Aboriginal employment in mining before the twentieth century, but after 1904 Aborigines were consistently employed at the copper mine by Europeans and Chinese. As many as 24 Aborigines were employed there in 1906. It was from this period Stanner claims employment was widespread over many tribes. Neimann and Roberts and Thomas employed Aborigines also; officials reported eight employees at Thomas' and Roberts' farm in 1911. Other reports suggest they fed more than they employed, referring to a 'score of natives' being supported by the farm's produce (SAPP 45, 1907; CRS A1, 12/10964).

Each of these enterprises operated with little remuneration. Owston, the Mission, pastoralists, miners and farmers were all absorbed in a struggle for survival which they usually lost. Aboriginal labour was repaid with food, tobacco and less often with alcohol, opium, clothes and other material goods. Thus, the desirability of Aboriginal labour for

these settlers lay chiefly in its economy - aside from the fact that it was usually the only available. Yet Aboriginal employment could not proceed quickly enough for Aborigines themselves - by 1911 their demand for employment was pronounced. Visiting Government officials remarked with regard to projected agricultural settlement

The Aborigines...are exceedingly numerous and from among them any amount of good and willing labour will be at all times available...they are longing to take part in such a scheme (CRS A1, 12/10964).

Thus, Aboriginal employment served the interests of all concerned. Settlers depended on Aboriginal labour and Aborigines depended on settlers, usually in employment, for access to European food and goods. Employment thus seems to have constituted a somewhat uneasy and inconstant resolution to the conflict such interdependence and the competition for each others' resources necessarily involved.

The eagerness for employment among Aborigines was not confined to the traditional inhabitants of the area or even their immediate neighbours. Thomas and Roberts employed 'Berinkens' from the country between the Daly and the Fitzmaurice River. Elements of other 'foreign' tribes, 'Moyills' and 'Wagerman' were also present at the Daly, in semi-permanent camps around billabongs or on the river-banks. The movement of 'foreign' tribes towards settlement was evident long before 1911. In fact it was the Wilwonga tribe, originally from the northeast, which was the first to be associated with the Daly in written records. Brought to the area in 1882 by miners, the Wilwonga were believed responsible for these miners' deaths in the notorious Coppermine Murders of 1884. Outraged humanitarians claimed the unofficially sanctioned raids on the Wilwonga which followed, had wiped them out. However in 1886, the Jesuits, arriving at the Daly, mistook the Wilwonga for the traditional owners of the territory and in 1894 large numbers were still in evidence (Markus 1974, 19; Dahl 1936, 50-59).

Mackillop's map indicates that the tribes he observed at the Mission in 1892 had come as far as 60 miles. O'Kelly and Stanner both report that large numbers of visiting Aborigines camped around the Mission, in Mulluk Mulluk territory, in the hope of receiving trade goods. Stanner quotes reliable informants who reported that members of the Madngele, Kamor, Yunggor, Ponga Ponga, Djerait, Wogait, Kungerakan, Wagaman and Maranungo tribes visited the Mission. Although the Jesuits' approach was essentially tribal, concentrating on traditional inhabitants, the Mulluk Mulluk and Madngele, visiting Ponga Pongas, Maranungo and Djerait tribesmen were employed at the Mission. The 'Berinkens' and 'Moyills' camped and employed at the Daly in 1911, were thus only the most recent representatives of a longstanding phenomenon.

Such migration was not a wholly progressive or permanent affair. Visitors were often only representative bands from larger tribes, seeking or settling pre-existing trade obligations, who may have been distracted into employment during their visits. Alternatively they may have acquired a taste for European goods as a result of trade with local tribes and have been seeking to satisfy these new tastes at settlement. Although considerable, this 'foreign' population especially, was in continual flux to and from settlement, so that what now appears as a progressive process may have been in reversal at any time (Stanner 1933, 56; Stanner 1938, 15).

Although some conflict erupted between local and foreign groups over the resources of the Mission in the late nineteenth century, and there is evidence of tribal solidarity amongst those at the settlement in 1911, little conflict appears to have accompanied the newest influx of 'Berinkens' and 'Moyills' (CRS A1, 12/10964). This may have been the

result of a loss of effective power to resist, or a new resignation amongst local tribes, amongst which depopulation and disruption of social organization had proceeded in the wake of the violence, disease and employment of the contact situation. Such disruption was pronounced by 1911. As early as 1897, the Jesuits had noted that there were no longer any Djerait boys of school age left to teach. Medical officers visiting the Daly in 1911 reported a poor standard of health, low fertility and opium addiction amongst Aboriginal women and a consequent absence of children in camps (CRS A1, 12/10964).

However, if this disruption had forced local tribes to retreat from confrontation momentarily, it did not continue to do so. Inter-tribal conflict was to re-emerge some years later in the midst of long-standing depopulation and disruption. In the meantime, however, migration, conflict, depopulation and disruption in Aboriginal society were among the few abiding evidences of the otherwise unremarkable efforts of non-Aborigines at the Daly River until 1911.

The Agricultural Experiment: 1912-1921

The Commonwealth Administration which assumed control of the Northern Territory on the 1st January, 1911, possessed a courageous, perhaps even impetuous vision of a closely settled, prosperous Northern Territory of the future. Towards this end, the incoming government quickly commissioned W S Campbell, ex-Director of Agriculture in New South Wales, to investigate and report on the agricultural potential of the Territory and recommend sites suitable for Experimental Farms. Campbell completed his investigation during the dry season of 1911 and his optimistic report was warmly received in Darwin and Melbourne. Among his recommendations were that 2,560 acres on the Daly River be reserved for an Experimental Farm and that surrounding land be opened for selection by private settlers (CPP 39, 1911).



The Experimental Farm Homestead, 1913.

Many of Campbell's recommendations, including these were quickly accepted by the government. However, before they could be implemented the government felt the 'jumble of legislation' inherited from their predecessors had to be replaced by a more systematic program. The result

of their efforts was the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1912 which included liberal provisions for the agricultural settler - perpetual lease, in the first 5,000 cases with no rent payable for the first 21 years or the life of the settler, whichever was the longer. The Advance to Settlers Ordinance of 1913 complemented these generous provisions, by providing for advances of up to eight hundred pounds per settler for improvements and equipment (CPP 5, 1912; CPP 13, 1913).

Thus, the legislative stage was set. Twenty-six blocks at the Daly were thrown open for selection during 1912. 329 applications were received in January and February 1913 and 18 settlers were selected on 1st April. In the meantime, the Experimental Farm (often referred to as the Demonstration Farm) had been established during the dry season of 1912. A manager, J T Ramsay, was appointed on 1st February and arrived in Darwin in early March. He left almost immediately to commence operations at the Daly, but a series of transport delays prevented Ramsay and his assistants commencing work until late August (CPP 20, 1915; CRS F666).

The most comprehensive account of the fortunes of settlement at the Daly appears in the Northern Territory Annual Reports. These reports provide a sound basis for an investigation of its progress. Not surprisingly the Administrator was unable to report much progress at the Experimental Farm by the end of 1912. Only preliminary work, of which there was plenty in such heavily vegetated country, had been completed. However, by late November, Ramsay had resigned. Although the Director of Agriculture attributed this to Ramsay's 'constitutional inability to withstand heat' and the difficulty encountered in establishing the Farm, the vituperative criticism of its operation which reached the government through an 'intending contractor' by September, may have exacerbated Ramsay's 'loss of heart and interest' (CPP 4, 1912; CRS A3, NT12/4541).

The Administrator welcomed his successor, J E Palmer, with considerable optimism. Although probably as much a reflection of relief at being rid of Ramsay (who was less than satisfactory), as a belief in Palmer's ability, this optimism was largely fulfilled over the two years which followed Palmer's appointment on 25th November, 1912. An encouraging report of Palmer's first six months was appended to the lacklustre 1912 report and served to give the impression that now it was established under sound management, the Farm would flourish.

By the end of 1913, just over a year after its establishment, 202 acres of heavy forest and jungle had been cleared and 76 acres ploughed. The acreage actually under cultivation remained unspecified, but some success was reported with maize, fruit and vegetables. Some misfortune had been experienced with pests, native grasses, acidic soil and transport-damaged seedlings, though these problems were not felt to be insurmountable. More seriously, farm labour was proving difficult to secure, unreliable and of indifferent quality. Thirty-five 'shiftless bush workers' had come and gone at the Daly Farm during 1913. Others were from urban backgrounds and inexperienced - Palmer likened the Farm to 'a kindergarten rather than a properly manned establishment' (CPP13, 1913: 13,21).

Yet, the outlook of the manager and the government remained optimistic. In April 1914, operations were being 'vigorously carried on'; 49 acres were planted with maize, rice and wheat, gratifying results were received from last year's maize. The Farm's staff had been reduced to four early in 1914, in order to give incoming settlers whatever work they could perform. This arrangement promised to help the settlers, financially and technically, and provide the Farm with a more reliable if not more experienced labour pool from which to draw (CPP 240, 1915: 35).

Only eight of the eighteen settlers accepted for the Daly River blocks were in occupation by the deadline of 12 December, 1913 and by February a

fatal accident reduced their number to seven. Their first wet season at the Daly had been marred by heavy flooding and two settlers suffered considerable damage to their holdings. Davis had built dangerously close to a creek despite warnings, and was forced from his home in January by two feet of water. Borella was a victim of bad surveying work and was plagued by surface water over his entire holding, for which an alternative site was soon provided. Although such adverse conditions no doubt hindered settlers' efforts, there is no evidence that agriculture had yet been attempted. Settlers were busily engaged clearing, fencing and building during 1913 and performed this work well. However, in February, 1914, the Administrator reported after a visit to the Daly, that the settlers were 'extremely dubious as to the best means of turning their holdings to profit' (CRS A3, NT 14/1138). Together with his claim that settlers continued to live off government advances, this suggests that agricultural activity was yet at a low ebb.



Tractor, thought to be the one used at the Experimental Farm.

During 1914 three more of the original allottees, three settlers who had formed the Daly River Farming Company and a returned soldier, James Parry, settled at the Daly, bringing the total to 14 settlers. The next growing season, over the set of 1914-15, at last brought encouraging reports from private settlement. By June, 1915, fodder (maize, rice and amercane), peanuts and fruit from settlers' holdings had been sent to Darwin and found ready sale at good prices. By the time this news reached official ears, however, it was virtually two years since settlers had been allotted blocks. Before the 1914-15 growing season, settlement was reportedly 'very low' because of their slow start (CPP 240, 1915). The dichotomy of wet and dry season was unfamiliar to many of these settlers from the south. However, it meant agriculture was virtually impossible during the middle of the year for them. Although it was two years before any success was noticed, it should be remembered the opportunities for success had yet been limited to two short growing seasons.

Although this season had produced the settlers' greatest achievement, it also witnessed, in the government's estimation, their first unequivocal failure. Fifty cows for each settler and small scale dairying facilities in the area had been promised from the very beginning of their occupation to tide them over financially until they could turn their holdings to profit.

If this was the program, it was already flawed. Owing to delayed funds and the outbreak of war, cows purchased for the settlers in Queensland did not arrive until September, 1914, six weeks late and in extremely low condition from poor treatment before and during shipment.

A week later the strongest of the herd were escorted to the Daly by the settlers with the assistance of a drover, and the weaker were sent to Oenpelli Station. The fate of these two herds were thereafter constantly compared. The comparatively high mortality suffered by the first herd on their journey to the Daly and for their first six months on settlers' holdings, prompted the Administrator to withdraw a great number to Oenpelli, where the weaker herd had flourished. Only 417 of the original 500 now survived and most of the deaths had occurred under the supervision of Daly River settlers. Eighty head remained at the Experimental Farm but only 30 were now shared amongst settlers. The Director of Lands concluded of the affair:

...there was not that energy displayed which the government had a right to expect...In future the suitability of the settler...for such work will be a very major consideration before an advance of dairy stock is recommended. Until this year...this was an unknown quantity (CPP 240, 1915, 32).

The inference was, of course, that the inadequacy of the settlers was now a thoroughly known quantity - government comment on the episode left little doubt as to where the blame was felt to lie.

In the same year, 1915, some anxiety was expressed over the settlers' financial affairs. As early as February, 1914, it was observed confidentially that settlers were anxious to borrow as much as possible from the government but did not appear to accept 'in altogether the right spirit' that they were only borrowing this money. Now such observations were published in the Annual Report. The Advances to Settlers Board reported difficulty dispelling the notion that the eight hundred pounds proscribed in the Ordinance was automatically and unconditionally the right of each settler, who generally perceived the Board as a bank upon which they could draw (CRS A3, NT14/1138).

In the meantime, the Experimental Farm had fared little better. During the wet of 1913-14, flooding had damaged 50 acres of prepared land and retarded cropping for some weeks. Still, by the end of 1914, 80 acres were prepared for cultivation and 30 acres were sown with cereal crops. However, Palmer's 'regretted resignation' was received towards the end of 1914 and the government experienced considerable difficulty securing a suitable successor. By the time Harcourt Boys was appointed in April, administrative disruption had virtually suspended activity at the Farm. By June though, Harcourt Boys reported an additional 27 acres sown with corn and rice and good yields from these and other crops sown before Palmer's departure.

Probably the most fundamental problems now facing the Farm were the new economic strictures placed on the Manager. Early in 1914, Managers of all the Experimental Farms in the Territory were advised that operations must henceforth 'pay their way'. This directive appears to have originated in Melbourne with little consultation with the Darwin Administration. The enterprise necessary to implement it was concentrated at the Batchelor Farm. Consequently, the Daly Farm was neglected and fell far short of the new goals.

All these difficulties with private settlement and the Experimental Farm were documented in the report for the eighteen months ending in June, 1915. Although the first indication of success amongst private settlers and evidence of the continuing operation of the Farm despite its difficulties were included, its tone was generally disappointed and

cynical. The Administrator, Gilruth, explained the limited progress of private settlers by the fact that it was precisely those allottees with capital and experience who had failed to occupy their selections and that settlement was handicapped by a marked absence of both among its present personnel. He now maintained that operations at the Farm had never been satisfactory, attributing this to isolation and all its attendant problems - labour shortage and transport and communication difficulties - management problems and the unwise proximity of the Batchelor and Daly River Experimental Farms which had been established before Gilruth was in a position to alter this. All these difficulties, together with the notorious 'dairy failure' and climatic vicissitudes had combined to discredit the Daly River settlement in official circles by mid-1915 (the preceding narrative is based largely on CPP 240, 1915).

Private settlement had now dropped away - Borella and the Daly River Farming Company had abandoned their holdings by mid-1915. The next Annual Report was published in 1917 and reported that only six agricultural leases remained in operation at the Daly. No specific results of the 'encouraging' work they had completed were forthcoming, but those remaining were apparently determined to make a success of their holdings. By now the management of the Farm had passed to J Roney and considerable progress had been made - 193 acres were now prepared for cultivation and most of it had been sown with largely favourable results (CPP 240, 1915, 35; CPP 31, 1918, 34-36).

Gilruth's report however disclosed his decision to abandon operations at the Daly River Experimental Farm. In the final analysis, it was not the performance of the Farm which appears to have provoked such a decision. The most recent results were the best yet received and Gilruth acknowledged much of its achievement. However, for over a year most of the work had been performed by Aborigines and the Farm now resembled an Aboriginal Station. As such it was not fulfilling its intended purpose - the closer settlement of the Territory by Europeans - and perhaps this strengthened government disapproval. More important was Gilruth's stated reason. He explained, 'In the absence of any indication of rapid agricultural settlement, two Government Experimental Farms are not required in the Territory'. It was the Daly River Farm which was to be abandoned. In making this statement Gilruth shifted the responsibility of the acknowledged failure of the government scheme - its fatal flaw was the absence of success amongst private settlement which the Experimental Farm had been designed to encourage and service (CPP 31, 1918, 10).

More contentious was the manner in which Gilruth and his officials held settlers themselves responsible for the absence of rapid agricultural settlement. 'Lack of experience and capital' was a government orthodoxy which Gilruth again employed as an explanation, along with another description of their misguided approach to advances. Some officials went further, attributing the failure of settlement to the faulty character of indolent, shiftless or idle settlers. A senior official from Melbourne furnished a scathing report on the settlers late in 1915,

They...were not possessed of the...temperament, which would fit them to meet and overcome the difficulties inseparable from pioneering farming...A feeling seems to exist among them that it is the duty of the Government...to pay them wages for the favour they confer on the country by living in it (NT, 1916, p.18).

In 1921, the remnant who remained were described as an 'ineffective and shiftless lot of men' by another government official. Some even dismissed the handicap of isolation and absence of markets on the progress of settlements, in their avowed eagerness to demonstrate the fault lay with 'the individual, not the country' (CRS A3, NT21/4543).

Gilruth's stand seems comparatively mild. Yet even though he reported these other difficulties, he relegated them to the background by excusing himself from reports made by a temperate latitude expert and from government decisions made prior to his assumption of office, instead emphasising the incapacity of the settlement's personnel. Of course, these partial and highly questionable conclusions ignored the manner in which government policy and actions had disadvantaged settlement from the first.

Supplementary oral and secondary sources offer to enhance our understanding. Firstly they illumine a number of features absent from government reports and add to the 'causes' of failure documented in government reports. More important, they offer an alternative hierarchy of causes for the failure of government plans at the Daly; although they can add only marginally to the content of the explanation offered in government reports, their emphasis, or the order of their hierarchy of causes, offers to transform such an explanation.

One example of the manner in which oral accounts do add to the content of government reports on the Daly, involves the difficulties settlers had with Aborigines who ate their unharvested crops, milked their cows and goats and stole and killed their livestock (Widdup 1982). Further, government characterisations of indolent and dependent settlers can be qualified from the same oral sources which relate that settlers sold agricultural produce and their own butter and bread to local miners (Salzgeber 1982).

Tassie Graham's account of his parents' farming activity at the Daly is a particularly good example of the manner in which such accounts offer an alternative understanding of the same environmental causes documented, but not investigated, in government reports. Graham recounted that all the settlers grew peanuts, rice, corn and a variety of fruit and vegetables and explained of the settler,

There was no kidding about it growing (agricultural produce), but he couldn't sell it. There was no market and the only way you could bring it in...was by dray or buggy...you had to travel 70 miles before you put it on the rail to bring it from Brocks Creek to Darwin...none of them ever tried to take it by road because it was too silly for words you see. And if you missed the train it was another week...(Graham 1981, 4-5).

Graham's account suggests in a persuasive fashion the powerful barriers to further agricultural development which isolation from the marketplace posed for Daly River settlers. Although isolation was mentioned as a problem in government reports, it was rarely emphasised. However, Graham's account emphasises and investigates it and moreover, implicates original government decisions regarding the design of settlement and their subsequent neglect, in the failure of settlement. Gilruth's answer to such an indictment, would, of course, have maintained the incapacity of personnel was a more significant barrier to progress and that, isolated or not, settlers were inadequate to the pioneering enterprise. The final significance of each factor is indeterminable, as they all clearly combined to undermine settlement.

However, there were three important flaws in the government's emphasis on the incapacities of settlers in their analysis. Firstly, assuming officials correctly observed the hopelessness or indolence of settlers, their understanding demonstrated considerable superficiality. Although perhaps perceptible at the Daly in 1915, officials were hasty in concluding such characteristics were intrinsic to settlers' characters. They failed to consider the quite tenable possibility that settlers' hopelessness and inertia may have been the predictable response of inexperienced farmers to the magnitude and difficulty of their task, a symptom of their bewilderment or resignation, rather than laziness.

Secondly, while lack of experience and capital amongst settlers may well have handicapped their progress, government officials who cited this as fundamental, were mistaken if they believed this absolved the government. Even if the incapacity of settlers could reasonably explain the absence of progress, the cause of this incapacity, never portrayed in government reports as more than an unfortunate accident, when investigated, can be traced to the design of the scheme itself.

The conditions of lease were extremely liberal - if conditions had been more lenient, the government would have been giving land away. It is hardly surprising that persons without financial resources were disproportionately attracted to such a scheme. Such an ambitious and generous scheme would have almost certainly aroused the suspicions of settlers with financial resources - they had more to lose when the 'hitch' which such schemes inevitably included, became evident. Likewise those with agricultural experience were undoubtedly more conversant with the difficulties likely to plague such a scheme in that latitude, and thus suitably wary of its promises. Of those allottees who bothered to visit their blocks before refusing them, it would certainly have been those with farming experience who recognised bad surveying or the potential for flooding on various blocks. Thus the government's responsibility in the 'lack of experience and capital' they cited as the cause of 'failure' was fundamental, as they were the 'architects' of a scheme which would make this an inevitable feature of settlement.

Gilruth would still perhaps excuse himself from decisions made prior to his assumption of office, but he could not excuse himself from the third flaw in the government's analysis. Government explanations of failure was based on the premise of an integrated scheme, in which the government had provided an Experimental Farm, dairy cattle and substantial advances, but which had been betrayed by unsuitable personnel. However, the assumption that the government had fulfilled its obligations to settlers was mistaken. Dairy cattle, promised for the beginning of settlement, even without delay, were a year late. Promised dairying facilities were never provided and the half-dead cattle presented to settlers hardly fulfilled original undertakings.

A more important barrier to progress was the government's apparent misunderstanding of the role of the Experimental Farm at settlement. Most evident in the economic policy imposed on the Farm which after 1913 had to pay its way, this misunderstanding prevented the Farm from supporting private settlement at all. Staff were unable to render much free assistance to settlers and although their numbers were reduced so settlers could be employed, thus overcoming both their lack of experience and capital, the Farm was never able to do this as it had to be run commercially and settlers did not make satisfactory farm hands. Although economic restrictions were not altogether Gilruth's work, an investigation of their effect implicates government policy further in the failure of private settlement.

Virtually every source on agricultural settlement at the Daly after 1912 reflects a preoccupation with 'the blame' for failure of the scheme. No doubt this is a reflection of the polemic which raged at the time between the government and its critics, reflected in government reports and other sources (see: NT Times November 15, 1919). Of course, the only adequate explanation for the failure of government plans will lie in a thorough investigation of each alleged cause and their interaction, an investigation which though never value free, may dispense with a polemic inherited from original debate.

Yet, this polemic is very important, not for the accuracy of its argument but for the obvious political purposes it served. In order to avoid the discredit which would follow an acknowledgement of mistakes, the government made a powerful case for the failure of settlement which,

although based on flawed assumptions, was difficult for politically powerless settlers to refute. Final and conclusive evidence of the subordination of politically unpopular explanations of the failure of settlement, appears in the government file in the 1921 Annual Report. Although Gilruth's successor, Staniforth Smith, published a marginally more sympathetic account of the failure of settlers in 1922, more significant was his draft report, large sections of which were never published, but which appear on file, with heavy lines drawn through them and which are worth quoting in full,

The unfortunate settlers were liable to be flooded out during the wet season and were unable to grow anything during the dry period...

and later

The agricultural settlers have lost their all in an undertaking which bore the seeds of failure from its initiation; the fault has not been theirs. They have lost years of labour and have lived on very meagre rations (CRS A3 NT 21/2640).

Operations continued for a year at the Experimental Farm after Gilruth's announcement. He then proposed that it be turned into a pastoral venture worked principally by 'natives'. In the absence of funding for this, the Farm was reserved as an Aboriginal Station in 1920 and J R B O'Sullivan was appointed to supervise it in January, 1921 (CRS A1 32/3119). C Dargie was the sole original settler remaining after 1917; two others, Parry and Zackharow, had remained since 1914. Three more settlers had very recently settled at the Daly and together these six settlers 'hung on' for the next three years producing very little because of the difficulty in bringing produce to Darwin (CPP 44, 1922, 11).



MAZ. COT. DRY REGISTRATION FARM. PLANTED FIVE
WEEKS AFTER THE DRY REGISTRATION FARM.
PHOTO TAKEN BY AUGUST 1, 1919. Page 21

Late in 1921, the government finally proposed a scheme for the disbandment of settlement, which they had now sought for some time. The

Administrator and some officials visited the settlement and addressed a meeting of the settlers, explaining that no more financial or transportation assistance would be given by the government, offering them free passage to any port in Australia, two months' sustenance on arrival and cancellation of their debts, if they would agree to abandon their leases. Each of the settlers refused this offer claiming 'they were on the River to stay'. The officials could hardly contain their surprise, but employed a familiar explanation. With the exception of Zackharrow, they claimed, the remaining settlers were an 'ineffective and shiftless lot' whose idle natures were satisfied here. Survival was possible with little effort due to the abundance of the area, the assistance of Aborigines and the 'illicit companionship of the native women' (CRS A3, NT 21/4543).

The government had little option but to give settlers another chance. Although it did not achieve its intended purpose, this episode marked a turning point in the relationship between government and settlers. Henceforth settlers could not depend on government support to the extent they had previously done; the settlers' debts were written off, the Advances to Settlers Board was replaced by the Primary Producers' Board and settlement entered a new phase in which settlers were more isolated than ever before (CPP 14, 1922 and CPP 1, 1924).

'...A Rotted Frontier...'

Aborigines and Settlers: 1921-1940

The river seemed to me a barbarous frontier, more, a rotted frontier, with a smell of old failure, vice and decadence (W E H Stanner, 1959).

The Agricultural Experiment initiated at the Daly River in 1912, bequeathed to the River a small nucleus of settlement which refused to be abolished in the sweeping manner in which it had been established. The settlers' decision to remain on their holdings despite the virtual suspension of agricultural activity since 1918, certainly appears curious. But it should be remembered that two of them were comparative newcomers. It may be that they still held out some hope of eventual success. Although the official explanation already quoted was clearly designed to discredit these settlers, it is possible that for the three original settlers, after eight years, the Daly now represented a familiar and comfortable environment.

Some of them were already well into middle age and with little else to go to may have perceived another move as an unwelcome interruption to their lives. Many of the settlers had acquired Aboriginal 'mistresses' which may also have added to the Daly's attractions, if only for its convenience. Additionally, given their lack of capital which government officials had frequently noted it is unlikely that they would receive a similar opportunity to own land or to enjoy as much control over the day-to-day of their own lives anywhere else. Life at the Daly was not altogether unpleasant, especially when compared with its alternatives - perhaps settlers' decisions to remain were not as curious as they first seem.

As well, it seems settlers commanded a substantial Aboriginal labour force to 'perform unpleasant tasks'. Since 1912, Aboriginal labour had been extensively utilised, entrenching it within Aboriginal experience and providing a basis from which further settlement could proceed. From the outset, settlers relied on Aboriginal labour in the establishment of their farms. The protector of Aborigines stationed at the Daly in 1913, reported that 'giving settlers every assistance in procuring Aboriginal labour' was one of his two major tasks. The eagerness of Aboriginal labour suggests that the time consuming nature of this task was a reflection of its volume rather than its difficulty. Tassie Graham recalled the bark hut his family lived in for their first year at the Daly, which had been erected by

'natives' with bark they had stripped off paperbark trees. He also remembered his mother used Aboriginal domestic help and other informants recalled the assistance rendered by Aborigines who tended settlers' livestock and supplied settlers with game and fish in exchange for tobacco (Graham 1981, 1, 22).

From the opening of the Police Station in 1915, the Constable employed at least one Aboriginal tracker permanently and up to 20 Aborigines at a time on behalf of the Advances to Settlers Board to perform stockwork, carting, building and clearing work (CRS P278, 13 March 1916, 27 September 1916, 24 October 1917). Little record remains of the agricultural work Aborigines performed for settlers or on the Experimental Farm. However, since Aborigines reportedly performed most of the work on the Experimental Farm after 1916, the very good results received in 1917 must have represented Aboriginal work and a substantial achievement. The employment of Aboriginal labourers was not consistent with government policy, especially for the Experimental Farm. However, as an official expressed it,

...their services are practically indispensable. In a country where white labour is generally unreliable and expensive, the presence of these docile, cheap, cheerful, loyal people alone makes life tolerable...their services are of the highest value (NT 1916, 50).

Contact between Aborigines and settlers during the years of government sponsorship appear to have been comparatively peaceful. In 1915 there had yet been no complaints of ill-treatment of Aborigines to the protector. Of course, this does not mean that there was none, but the Police Journal between 1915 and 1918 corroborates this report. It may be that the contact situation the Agricultural Experiment conceived was significantly different from that which it superseded. Firstly its personnel were less familiar with Aborigines and with bush life than the miners, gardeners and pastoralists of previous years. Perhaps they were more intimidated by their surroundings and Aborigines and were thus less likely to interfere with them in any way.

More significant were the economic conditions which framed contact. The unprecedented volume of food crops grown, large numbers of livestock and generous financial assistance from the government, appeared to diffuse the economic tension which had previously dominated relations between Aborigines and settlers, who until 1912, were embroiled in a competition for each others' resources. Survival was no longer an issue for settlers, who could depend on government rations in case of unforeseen difficulty and Aborigines had unprecedented access to European food and goods, employed as they were in labour intensive farming and trade, or simply by stealing food or livestock.

It is difficult to demonstrate the relative abundance of these years in comparison to earliest settlement. So few records survive, the most that can be said with certainty is that their struggle for survival was less precarious. However, a comparison of government assistance between 1912 and 1921 and later years tells the story. In 1921, the remaining settlers owed the government varying amounts between two hundred and nine and five hundred and fifty two pounds for advances made. However, in 1933, the Primary Producers Board had only advanced sums between three and forty four pounds and in 1940 only slightly higher sums between twenty one and one hundred and thirty one pounds. The exception was A Ridsdale who received three hundred and forty eight pounds for an irrigation plant in 1937. Although only a small and limited example, the disparity in government advances in each period certainly sets the Agricultural Experiment apart in terms of its resources (see CRS A3, NT 21/4543, CRS F114, PPB 54/1 and PPB 250).

This relative abundance may also have encouraged the entrenchment of Aboriginal employment at settlement after 1912; with more work and more resources, conditions were ideal. Surviving records appear to support this suggestion. In 1913 medical officers mapped camps of Mulluk Mulluk, 'Marranungu', 'Mouyal' and 'Brinkins' in the vicinity of settlement. In the same year the Aboriginal Protector spoke of large groups of 'Mullock Mullock', 'Maranunga' and 'Berinka' Aborigines around the settlement (CPP 13, 1913). Eight years later, O'Sullivan reported groups of Mulluk Mulluk, Brinkens, Maranungas and 'Wagerman' in the area (CRS A3 NT 22/5020). No records actually distinguished the tribal identity of those Aborigines employed between 1912 and 1921. The Policeman consistently recorded visits to Brinken, Mulluk Mulluk and Maranunga camps around and on holdings and together with their recorded presences at the settlement eight years apart, this suggests Aboriginal labour was drawn predominantly from these tribes.

The consistency with which the Policeman recorded contact with Mulluk Mulluk, Brinkens and Maranungas around the settlement, and that camps could now be predicted at Horseshoe Billabong, Fish Billabong, the Coppermine and Brown's Creek, suggests also that the pre-contact mobility of Aborigines was beginning to slow to the annual or bi-annual walkabout periods which Stanner described in the thirties. Their former mobility was a function of primary economic concerns, and it seems tenable that a change in these concerns, with employment, perhaps would impose another discipline on Aboriginal life - geographical stability.



Parry and Hill's Peanut Crop 1924.

Of course this is overstated. The Police Journal also reflected considerable flux in various tribal populations within camps which were stable, especially amongst groups from considerable distances (CRS F278, 15 January 1916, 4 June 1919). The seasonal nature of employment guaranteed this was so. Yet it seems between 1912 and 1921, the Daly River settlement was established as a focus for Aboriginal attention from a wide area and that a pattern of employment which was elaborated later, was already well defined.

The last hope the Administration held for the Daly River settlement and for which it had advanced large amounts of cotton seed in 1922, was a dismal failure. Twenty acres were sown, three-quarters of Zackharrow's twelve acres were destroyed by floodwaters, other settlers' crops sustained

flood damage and produced poor yields. Thereafter the government appears to have pursued a policy of neglect. They were apparently content to leave the remnant of settlement to its inevitable demise. Debts were cancelled, the Advances to Settlers Board was replaced by the Primary Producers Board in 1923, whose self-proclaimed policy was 'to be very conservative in its assistance' (CPP 1, 1925, 24; CPP 71, 1924).

In the same year as the cotton failure, J Parry exported 200 bags of peanuts to Perth which returned two hundred and fifty six pounds after expenses. In 1923, he produced four and a half tons of peanuts and other settlers produced another ton. However, settlement dropped away. By 1924, C Dargie, J Felstead and E Zackharow had abandoned hope of success and left. Wilkinson followed them temporarily the following year, which left Parry and Hill to battle the environment and financial difficulties, doggedly planting and harvesting peanuts.

The following three growing seasons were poor; rainfall was low and badly distributed. However, peanuts grown at the Daly returned average to heavy yields. Over the 1926-27 wet, the Territory suffered thirty per cent less than average rainfall. However from the Daly, Parry reported normal precipitation and heavy yields of peanuts. Production figures for the Territory now appeared together in Annual Reports, so it is difficult to estimate what proportion of the Territory's peanut crop was produced at the Daly. Together though, the limited but significant success of growers at Katherine, Adelaide and Daly Rivers throughout the twenties, meant that by 1927 peanuts were the Territory's major crop. Consistent success in adverse conditions encouraged the enormous interest in Northern Territory peanuts which precipitated the peanut boom of 1928, and the consistent efforts of Parry and Hill marked the Daly as an obvious choice for many new growers (NT 1927, 13).

By 1927, J Wilkinson had returned to the Daly, and C Dargie (Jnr) had resumed his father's holding. Parry and Hill took another block upstream and H Tregonning took up an adjacent block to begin peanut growing. In the optimism which surrounded the 1928 boom, it was estimated there would be 70 growers in the Territory by the end of 1929. At the Daly, 11 new leases were taken up over the next year which brought the total to 15, although the number of partnerships among them suggest the actual number of settlers might have been more (CPP 50, 1939; CRS F66). Immediately, however, climatic and economic difficulties began to plague the operations of these hopefuls. Badly distributed rainfall, resultant flood and drought, fluctuating prices and competition from Queensland peanut growers defeated their efforts. It was 1934 before any success with peanuts was again recorded.

In the meantime, the Primary Producers Board had been reconstituted under the Encouragement of Primary Production Ordinance 1931, reassuming its former functions from the North Australia Commission. The Board pursued a policy of restricting initial assistance to 'essential requirements' and restraining the settlers' extravagances. The Ordinance included the direction that a settler requiring an advance must possess a third of the capital required for the improvements he sought (CPP 124, 1933; 208, 1934). A Ministerial direction of August, 1931 tightened conditions even further and together these Board policies precluded a majority of settlers from anything but the most meagre assistance. Moreover the repayment of assistance which was conferred was strictly policed - the Board's common strategy was to hold liens over the settlers' crops.

Year after year during the thirties the Board reported no new advances and their files are full of sometimes hostile, mostly pleading, letters from benighted settlers at the Daly - sent, it seems, with little result. The Board answered its critics by explaining that additional aid would only serve to delay settlers' eventual success through mountainous debt. However, the very marginal returns settlers received during the thirties, meant that even in repaying the small assistance they received (the

repayment of which was so strictly policed) their returns were considerably depleted. So, while they suffered severely the paucity of government assistance, their limited dependence was enough to bestow the disadvantages of debt which the Board believed they were protecting settlers against (CPP 208, 1934: 4).

Settlers were thus forced to farm without adequate implements, technology and seed and were sometimes unable to continue at all, for want of rations to reward the Aborigines they relied on for hard labour. The Primary Producers Board found much to criticise in their work and characters. On the rare occasions growers bothered to grade their nuts, the result was poor and disadvantaged them in the marketplace against expertly graded Queensland nuts. As well, the Board remonstrated with settlers over their exclusive concentration on peanuts, warning that they were reduced to an unnecessary level of poverty when conditions were unfavourable for peanuts and urging them to diversify. Board reports and correspondence were full of direct and indirect references to the apathy and incapacity of settlers who rarely showed interest in Board proposals and often exhibited ignorance in handling their holdings (CPP 124, 1933). Although their comments were hardly fair, it is interesting to note in them and the settlers' hostile response, the same polarisation between settlers and government that had previously existed.

In 1934, the Administrator announced a 'definite albeit slight improvement' in agriculture - 390 tons of peanuts had been produced in the Territory over the 1933-34 wet season. Over a third of the acreage had been planted at the Daly. The following year prices and productivity exceeded all expectations - 423 tons at 4 d. per pound. However, the success of the peanut industry subsided the following year. Production stabilised at 267, 263, 244 and 221 tons annually until 1939 when it dropped away to 25 tons. Prices were low, but the major difficulty settlers now faced was an inability to sell their produce. Each year after 1936 large amounts of peanuts had to be held over for sale the following year. The sluggish market was held responsible for the exodus of settlers to employment in Darwin. The numbers of settlers at the Daly after 1936 fluctuated between seven and eight, farming approximately 360 acres in all (CPP 138, 1935; 237, 1936; 58, 1938; 24, 1941).

A number of Daly River settlers diversified their activities during the mid to late thirties. Most notable were Ridsdale's efforts with tobacco and the exceptionally generous assistance he received for this purpose. Other settlers grew vegetables which flourished and found markets. However, a decade after its boom the peanut industry was in decline - the Administrator referred to the 'virtual collapse' of the industry. Records of the fluctuating personnel at the Daly during the thirties are incomplete. In 1930 C Howland died, in 1931 J Hill died and in 1932 J Wilkinson transferred his holding to G Skelton and G Taylor who were still there in 1940. In 1937 and 1938 a number left their holdings - J Tee, I Kari, N Leinonen and H Tregonning among them. James Parry died in 1938 leaving his farm to his sons. C Dargie (Jnr), Ridsdale, T B Knowles (and son), J Pan Quee and 'Charlie Joe' were the only settlers remaining in 1940 (CRS F627, AL 113(1); CRS F114, PAB 207).

For almost two decades after 1921, the agricultural successes at the Daly had been limited to Parry's small scale achievements in the twenties and two seasons in the mid-thirties. The most striking characteristic of settlement during these years was its consistent impoverishment. Any fluctuation in settlers' fortunes was usually towards deepening impoverishment rather than improvement. The pervasive climatic difficulties, pests, poor soil, isolation and its attendant problems, were among the environmental difficulties which contributed to settlers' impoverishment. Inconstancy among Aboriginal workers was an occasional problem too. Limited government assistance, together with an often uncompromising supervision of its repayment, meant that settlers had little financial room to move.

Any limited success was quickly depleted by the liens the government held over their crops and settlers customarily had hardly repaid their debts before another adverse season plunged them into debt again. The Primary Producers Board was marginally more generous with the successes of the mid-thirties and diversification of crops. However, the polarisation evident in the early thirties continued - the Board was occasionally hopeful but usually cynical as to the potential of the Daly River Peanut growers (CPP 124, 1933; 13, 1940; CP 767[2]).

Stanner described the settlers in 1932 as 'rough uneducated men with bush backgrounds, whose equipment, methods and lifestyle was so starkly simple, the year might as well have been 1832'. He qualified this remark by observing that by virtue of their bush backgrounds settlers were 'inured to hardship and poverty' (Stanner 1979, 78). It seems likely though that Stanner may have been under-estimating the psycho-social effects of a traumatic cycle of raised hopes and bitter disappointment, of reliance on erratic climatic conditions for success or failure, and of wearing years of impoverishment, all of which were part of the settlers' experience (Stanner 1979, 78).

In 1925, James Wilkinson was driven by his complete impoverishment to break and enter the Daly River Farm Store, and steal a 50 pound bag of flour, for which he later served a two-year prison sentence. It was suggested later in his defence that his lonely life at the Daly may have affected his mentality - it seems his impoverishment had also provoked extreme behaviour. Later another settler committed suicide - it seems from other settlers' statements, out of anxiety over the state of his holding and the uncertainty of his position (CRS F277, 28 July 1925; CRS A1, 30/2267).

More commonplace was the feuding their impoverishment provoked. The alleged enticement of the more dependable labourers away from one settler to another, rivalry for the services of more experienced labourers, Mulluk Mulluks and Maranungas, stealing of each others' livestock or damage incurred by one settler's livestock on another's holding, all provoked disquiet (Anderson 1982; CRS F114, PPB 207). Clearly their economic marginality disrupted social interaction between settlers to such an extent that Stanner's belief that they were inured to poverty might appear rather superficial.

The impoverishment of settlement shaped European and Aboriginal relations even more conclusively. It is in portraying the Aboriginal experience at the River, however, that European sources fail most clearly, with the sole exception of the work of the anthropologist W E H Stanner. The historical limitations of Stanner's accounts are obvious - he only speaks of the thirties with any certainty from his fieldwork, and any reconstruction exclusively based on his accounts will be similarly confined and so other sources are essential. However, Stanner's work is unique in its depth, especially with regard to Aborigines. It is therefore indispensable as a basis for an understanding of the 'contact' situation.

Stanner visited the Daly in 1932 and 1934-5. Even between visits, his assessment altered noticeably, perhaps as a reflection of changing circumstances on the River as much as any change in his own opinions or perspective.

There is little doubt that between 1920 and 1940 Aboriginal and European relations were conceived by all concerned in economic terms - relationships were most often centred on employment, but a variety of their other associations embodied primary economic concerns. Stanner reported that all the settlers utilised Aboriginal labour consistently throughout the thirties in a variety of agricultural and domestic tasks (Stanner 1933, 69; 1938, 17). These observations were corroborated by reports of the protector and other officials. The policeman occasionally observed and

reported Aborigines at work and often referred to the issue of Aboriginal licences and to visiting Aboriginal camps on settlers' holdings - a sure sign of their employment (CRS F278, 6 October 1921, 16 June 1926).

Of course that any agriculture proceeded at all is conclusive evidence of Aboriginal employment. Without any substantial mechanisation settlers were forced to rely on hand labour. Poverty and isolation meant that Aboriginal hand labour was their only choice. Stanner observed that Aboriginal labour was a condition of their very existence, integral to their economy and the only factor which kept settlers from bankruptcy.

The proportions of this Aboriginal labour force are uncertain, virtually irretrievable for the twenties and always fluctuating. However, after 1931, the annual Aboriginal census included employment figures, the fluctuations in which appear to have mirrored the fortunes of settlers - rising from a low point of 96 in the last of three disastrous seasons in 1933, to a highpoint of 250 after the agricultural success of the mid-thirties. Stanner's estimates of the Aboriginal labour force vary considerably even when he was referring to the same year. His numerous estimates ranged from 80 to 300. He referred inconsistently to permanent or seasonal workers, to Aborigines associated with farms (not necessarily employed) and total employment. After his first visit he reported that a substantial number of Aborigines around settlement were unemployed and elsewhere that 'nearly all' were employed (Stanner 1933, 62; 1933a, 378). His inconsistencies are often traceable to his different terms or periods of reference, although a number remain unresolved. However Stanner's accounts corroborate other sources to portray a healthy supply of Aboriginal labour at the Daly between 1920 and 1940.

Employment proceeded largely on seasonal lines, corresponding with the settlers' peanut growing activity. With the exception of a handful of permanent workers, Aborigines were employed for between four and seven months annually, between November and May - ploughing at the onset of the wet, planting in the early wet, cultivating, harvesting in the early dry and then stripping, cleaning and sorting the crop until May or June. Aborigines lived for the duration of their employment in camps on settlers' farms. The primitive shanties erected for labourers near settlers' dwellings were used infrequently by Aborigines who preferred to sleep in the open nearby, or in camps on the riverbank between 100 and 200 yards away (Stanner 1933, 46, 62).

In employment Aborigines lived on rations of white bread or damper, tea, sugar, and rice which were supplied by employers in the form of three meals a day. Together with a tobacco ration and an end of season gift of clothing, tobacco or trade goods, these rations constituted their payment. Occasionally their monotonous diet was supplemented when settlers hired a 'shooting boy' to bring in local game. More often the 'bush foods' which labourers obtained themselves or were supplied with by non-workers - friends, relatives and 'hangers-on' living in camp - added variety to their diet (Stanner 1938, 21-22).

Generally, Aborigines worked eight hours daily for five and a half days a week. Overnight, and at weekends they 'pleased themselves', joining non-workers in the bush, hunting and relaxing. Many sources refer to these 'weekend retreats'. Mulluk Mulluk informants recently recalled working on farms as young children and hunting at weekends at Brown's Creek, Charlie Creek, Kilfoyle and on the south bank of the Daly. However they do not necessarily conclude, as Stanner did, that this constituted reversion to a lifestyle 'closely constant with tradition'. Even if such activity resumed its traditional appearance (and there is some likelihood it did not), their context and timing represented modifications of pre-contact patterns imposed by demands of employment (Stanner 1933, 63).

The 'off-season' though was a different matter. While farms were idle between June and November, few Aborigines were retained in employment. Stanner observed that Aborigines eagerly anticipated this off-season, corresponding as it did with the ceremonial season, as a time in which they could resume and reaffirm their own economic and social life. Yet the off-season conferred considerable deprivation, especially towards its close at the end of the dry, when bush foods were scarce and previous working season's rewards were exhausted. This deprivation provoked much petty thieving during Stanner's first visit though by 1934 Aborigines were visiting settlers for retainers of food and tobacco during the off-season (Stanner 1933, 64-65; Stanner 1938, 53).

Labour was organised along tribally separate lines in semi-permanent associations between certain Aborigines or groups and employers. The Mulluk Mulluk, remnants of the Madngele and Maranungo tribes and scattered individuals from extinct local tribes who had virtually fused by the thirties into a single Mulluk Mulluk group, tended to work for farmers on the north-east bank. The Nangiomeri, Wagaman and Maramanidji were focussed on Ridsdale's farm and others near the Crossing, while the Moil and Maringar (misnamed 'Brinkens') worked at Parry's and other farms on the south-west bank (Stanner 1938, 53). The Police Journal and oral testimonies directly and indirectly corroborate the tribal segregation of labour, which when infringed by settlers provoked considerable disruption.

Enmities between particular Aborigines or groups and settlers were also evident to Stanner. No single enmity appears ever to have assumed inter-tribal proportions against any one settler; though enmities sometimes led to defections by aggrieved Aborigines from farms, and subsequent refusals to return. Although evident during both field trips and consistently interpreted by Stanner as springing from conflict of the master and servant variety, in 1932 these defections were apparently only symptomatic of much wider economic conflict.

During his first field trip, Stanner observed a very cynical attitude to employment amongst Aborigines. Most Aboriginal labourers regarded their chances of payment as slight and characterised settlers as untrustworthy and mean as they had consistently disregarded their obligations to their employees. Stanner explained later that for Aborigines, the end of season gift and not daily rations was perceived as their true reward (Stanner 1933, 55). Of course in times of scarcity it was this gift which was first neglected by hard-up settlers.

Aboriginal disquiet on this score culminated in 1932. Stanner reported that settlers had suffered three desperately bad years and were finding it impossible to reward Aboriginal employees adequately. Aborigines reacted with hostility. A spate of thefts, threats and acts of violence between settlers and Aborigines were amongst the manifestations of this conflict evident to Stanner. The most dramatic evidence of the intensity of conflict were the murders of James Watt in September 1931 and William Tetlow in November 1932. Although neither were farmers, both were working nearby and were killed by Aborigines who Stanner believed felt bilked of due payment for the sexual services of their women (Stanner 1933, 45, 53; CRS F278, 27 July 1931).

On later visits to the Daly, Stanner did not encounter the same intense hostility as he had observed in 1932. In fact, in a paper he wrote in 1959, Stanner explicitly stated that his early days at the river were without doubt, the most troubled (Stanner 1979, 84). There was certainly an ongoing but less pronounced conflict perceptible to Stanner on later visits. However, he tended to characterise this conflict as a fairly predictable tension between employer and employee; a relationship which at the Daly, just happened to be organised exclusively along racial lines.

If Stanner was correct and conflict between settlers and Aborigines did subside in the mid-thirties, it would certainly be possible to explain this in economic terms. In 1932 when Stanner first visited the Daly, settlers were having difficulty even gathering the resources to continue their operations. We have seen the conflict which Stanner believed was precipitated by this economic scarcity and mal-distribution. By the time Stanner visited the River again in 1935 the settlers had experienced some success. While their essential position remained fairly stable, it is certain that they commanded greater economic resources than previously and at least possible that they rewarded their Aboriginal employees more adequately. If so, relations would have been significantly improved.

It is clear that in attempting to understand the conflict of the thirties, the exclusively economic nature of the association between the protagonists must be reconsidered. It appears that the changing patterns and intensity of inter-racial conflict turned upon the economic fortunes of those who inhabited the area, and that the fortunes of all groups and individuals were indissolubly linked.

It is not simply a racial dynamic nor simply one of economic power which emerges from the tension between Aborigines and settlers at the Daly in the thirties. Rather it is a situation in which both were so close as to be virtually indistinguishable. Employers at the Daly were non-Aboriginal people, employees were Aboriginal people. Economic power and racial identity corresponded almost perfectly.

This correlation is not unique - rather the reverse. However, at the Daly the economic structure of human relationships was rather more complex than any conventional model of employee and employer relationships might allow. Leaving the issue of racial identity aside for one moment, the relationship of employer and employee at the Daly in the thirties was not one in which a single group held absolute power over another.

Certainly the settlers retained most of the 'European' economic power, and the Aborigines were forced to 'sell their labour' in order to secure 'European' economic return. This is the conventional model of economic relations within which we can attempt to understand the hostility engendered amongst (Aboriginal) employees who 'sold their labour' in the early thirties for little or no return.

However the situation was more complicated than that. The settlers were not the conventional 'owners of the means of production'. Their independence and power was seriously challenged by their utter impoverishment and their physical isolation. These fundamental constraints compelled them to rely on government funding and a limited and specific labour force for survival. They were thus rendered far less powerful than a 'conventional' employer might be with ownership of capital and recourse to a large and competitive labour market.

Thus, at the Daly during the thirties a situation had arisen whereby employers and employees were interdependent and where employers' power was significantly constrained as a result. Mutual dependence between Aborigines and settlers had been a feature of earlier attempts to settle the Daly. The extent to which 'dependence' upon European goods had deepened amongst the local Aboriginal community after 1921 was unprecedented and irreversible (Stanner 1979, 75). The process through which this dependence had become entrenched will be explored presently. In the context of the conflict-ridden thirties, this interdependence and in particular, the impotence of employers, makes the hostility they expressed towards employee demands and disquiet much more intelligible. It was not just violence settlers had to fear from Aboriginal workers - more seriously perhaps, they had to contend with the possibility of the withdrawal of the labour force on which they depended. While the settlers' fear and hostility towards employee disquiet might appear first as a brand

of racial fear and prejudice, it would be unwise to dismiss the importance of their economic dependence in their hostile and sometimes desperate response to Aboriginal disquiet.

At one point, Stanner observed that Aboriginal hostility towards their negligent employers was never pronounced enough to provoke an exodus from employment (Stanner 1933, 39). Perhaps then, employers did not have any cause to fear the withdrawal of Aboriginal labour. This does not mean that they did not fear such an exodus, even if they perceived that it was not likely.

More important, it is possible to challenge Stanner's observation of the unlikelihood of exodus. Stanner was denying the bitterness of the conflict which he observed and emphasised in other reports when he made the remark reported above. It would have been more consistent with the rest of his description of social relations on the River, in particular, with his model of 'dependence', to have interpreted the reluctance of Aborigines to abandon employment in another way. Much of Stanner's work suggests that the dependence of Aborigines on European goods was so pronounced that virtually any extent of disaffection or even hostility would necessarily be subordinated to a more profound desire for European goods. It appears that Stanner's claim that they remained in employment because they were not angry enough about their treatment, was based on the assumption that they were somehow still 'free actors' in this situation and within this market.

This is surprising, when one considers Stanner's clear portrayal of the entrenched dependence which had developed amongst Aborigines during the thirties. While still unsatisfactory or even infuriating, employment remained the sole means by which access to European goods could be secured or even hoped for in times of such severe economic adversity. To abandon employment would have closed far too many doors than Aborigines who relied on these goods could seriously allow to be closed. To claim that hostility towards employers' maltreatment was simply not pronounced enough for Aborigines to leave their employ, is like saying that millions of unskilled blue-collar workers have continued to labour in the most appalling jobs because their discomfort and alienation have never been pronounced enough to motivate them to leave.

There is another aspect of the experience of Aboriginal labourers at the Daly in the thirties which should be considered here. It offers a further challenge to Stanner's attempt to downplay the extent of disquiet amongst Aboriginal workers although it is based on observations Stanner made on another occasion. In one of his reports of his time at the Daly, Stanner explained that it was the absence of reciprocity which grieved Aborigines in the absence of payment by their employers. He explained further that reciprocity was a traditional Aboriginal principle within which the notion of payment for services had been understood by Aboriginal workers. He inferred that the disquiet he observed amongst Aboriginal workers in 1932 was provoked by the settlers' disregard for a traditional Aboriginal principle as much as by the deprivation they suffered as a result of non-payment (Stanner 1933, 54).

If Stanner was correct in observing that a traditional Aboriginal principle had not only been maintained but rejuvenated, bestowed with meaning in a new social context, that is, employment, it is possible that Aboriginal disquiet was even more intense and more deeply felt than Stanner allowed on some occasions. If, until this time, the dependence of Aboriginal labourers on European goods had been satisfied through a mechanism which was understood on the basis of an indigenous principle rather than any introduced notion of 'wage labour' the likely extent of Aboriginal distress when this mechanism was no longer intelligible would have been even more profound.

It is clear that the conflict which developed between Aborigines and settlers at the Daly River after 1921 which was expressed quite violently on occasions, had extremely complex origins. A conventional employer and employee conflict was complicated and magnified by a number of specific problems. Among these were the fear and ignorance commonly displayed in situations of inter-racial contact and conflict. These were exacerbated by the mutual dependence between the protagonists which compelled them to constantly associate. In addition, the Aboriginal population of the area was encountering an unprecedented challenge to the value system which framed their existence.

The nature and extent of this challenge will be explored more fully below. However in the context of Aboriginal employment on European farms, it is enough to say that a traditional Aboriginal principle which had sustained some meaning and vitality in this context was being consistently infringed during the thirties. Given that the question of Aboriginal value systems was current and sensitive at the Daly, the continuing infringement of one particular aspect of this value system can only have aggravated this question and contributed further to the ill-will manifest between inhabitants of the area in the twenties and thirties.

Aboriginal Society and Change at the Daly River

From the beginning of non-Aboriginal settlement at the Daly River, its attraction to Aborigines was pronounced. This attraction appears to have stemmed largely from the fact that settlement was, for the Aboriginal population, a rich source of the European goods they prized so highly for consumption and, less often, trade. By 1911, Aboriginal demand for European goods was at least partly satisfied through their widespread employment on Europeans' farms. This employment amongst Aborigines became more and more common for local Aborigines after 1912 until, in the thirties, Stanner observed that it was the major channel through which what he described as Aboriginal dependence on European goods was fulfilled (Stanner 1979, 79).

This 'dependence' appears to have been an explosive element in the conflict which developed between Aborigines and settlers at the Daly in the thirties; conflict which loomed large in the preceding section. Stanner's explanation of the phenomenon he labelled dependence was innovative for his time, at once perceptive and sensitive. His understanding of dependence allowed no room for the many negative connotations of hopelessness and helplessness which the term dependence might have suggested to his contemporaries. Instead, Stanner maintained that what lay behind the persistent demand for employment and European goods which he observed amongst Aborigines was a 'sound calculus of cost and gain'. In his experience, the nomadic hunting and gathering lifestyle of Aborigines involved considerable hardship and fluctuation, even in an area as abundant as the Daly. In Stanner's view this offered persuasive reasons for the obvious preference of local Aborigines for 'a belly regularly, if only partly, filled' as a result of employment on European farms. Stanner saw the quest for employment as a lifestyle preference; and as an eminently sensible choice to depend upon the rewards of employment for survival, because such a means of subsistence required considerably reduced effort (Stanner 1979, 75).

While Stanner's explanation of the relationship he encountered between Aborigines and settlers at the Daly was provocative and insightful, it was seriously flawed in a number of ways. Probably its most severe handicap was its ahistorical approach to the phenomenon of dependence. Stanner did not sufficiently recognise the historicity of the dependence he observed. Rather, in describing dependence upon European goods as a preference and as a conscious choice of lifestyle amongst local Aborigines, he imbued the process with a self-consciousness and immediacy which it did not, in all

likelihood, possess. The process of developing dependence and diminishing choice which much of Stanner's narrative (along with other sources) suggests was obliterated by the explanation of dependence he chose to adopt in 'Durmugam'.

It is not, however, a simple task to prove that the dependence of Aborigines on European goods developed over time at the Daly River, rather than occurring quickly or simply as a straightforward and conscious choice. Indeed it is extremely difficult to predict anything with certainty regarding Aboriginal experience at the Daly between 1920 and 1940. Sources are scarce and ambiguous. However, if the evidence of official European records and Stanner's observations are taken together, it is almost certain that the proportion of Aboriginal people engaged in employment increased during this period. Furthermore, these sources suggest and describe in a persuasive fashion the manner in which this increasing employment encouraged the development of dependence over time (Stanner 1933, 62; See also Annual Reports for the period, listed under CPP in Bibliography).

Employment on European farms confirmed and increased Aboriginal dependence on European goods in a number of ways. Primary amongst these was the increasingly obvious fact that long periods in agricultural employment left Aboriginal workers with a diminished capacity and incentive to pursue former methods of subsistence. A forty-eight hour week, for up to seven months of the year, deprived Aborigines of the opportunity and motivation for hunting and gathering which ordinarily would have sharpened their skills and supplemented their knowledge of its techniques and of local resources. Furthermore, the disruption which employment brought to former lifestyles seriously impaired the technical knowledge and skill and the exchange systems which sustained the material culture upon which the hunter-gatherer lifestyle depended (Stanner 1933, 62-64). The migration of an increasingly sedentary Aboriginal population to the area, together with the local agricultural development, depleted the food resources of the area significantly and made hunting and gathering an even more difficult enterprise (Stanner 1933, 64).

Other aspects of dependence possessed a self-perpetuating, even self-expanding character. The consumption of European goods, for example, was to some extent habit forming. Tobacco was nothing less than an addiction amongst Aborigines - alcohol and opium, though less commonly consumed, had analogous effects. Stanner also described a growing taste for European foods which dissuaded Aborigines from the increasingly demanding task of hunting and gathering. It is also conceivable that simply through habitual employment and habitual consumption of European goods, the incentives and rationale which underlay former pursuits receded within Aboriginal consciousness (CRS A1, 31/2923; Stanner 1938, Ch 6, 14, 23).

Of course, habits are by their very nature, processes. For local Aboriginal people, habits of consumption and dependence could only have formed, intensified and spread over time. Similarly, loss of technical knowledge and skills and diminishing incentive for hunting and gathering, were described for the most part by Stanner as processes proceeding as a concomitant of the increased employment of Aborigines in the thirties. Habits of consumption and processes of dependence accumulated over time, just as traditional knowledge and skill were rendered increasingly irrelevant and dispensable. The fact that it was these historical processes which constituted the major forces operating to entrench Aboriginal dependence, demonstrates the essentially historical nature of dependence itself.

A recognition of the historical development of dependence allows the preferences and choices of local Aborigines for particular lifestyles to be understood in a more subtle and varied manner. It is true that choice was a concomitant of dependence at the Daly, but it seems not quite as Stanner suggested. In 'Dumurgam', Stanner explained dependence as a choice of

lifestyle. Much of his other work, and many historical sources, however, suggests that dependence and choice did not operate in tandem but in inverse proportions.

For example, Stanner's description of the extent of dependence at the Daly in the thirties suggests that it was so compulsive to Aborigines, for a variety of reasons, that their choice was entirely unexercised. By this time, the level of skill, knowledge and 'native' resources were such that local Aboriginal people had no alternative but to depend on European goods for survival. Stanner's claim that Aborigines preferred such a lifestyle in some objective sense, on the basis of 'a sound calculus of cost and gain' would be humorous, if it were not so tragic. To have the opportunity to exercise choice, implies the existence of at least one alternative. At the Daly during the 1920s, the only alternative to dependence on European goods was almost certain slow starvation. Hardly an alternative - and surely one which renders the notion of choice entirely inappropriate.

While Stanner's notion of choice is perhaps unworkable in the context of the thirties, it may be a useful analytical tool for earlier periods of settlement at the Daly. The acceleration of employment and associated development of dependence occurred over a period of some fifty years at the Daly - its historicity has already been emphasised. However, this model must be emphasised once more as it suggests the likelihood that choice was an important aspect of Aboriginal experience in earlier periods of settlement. While employment was yet in its earliest stages and was limited and sporadic, while additions to various European goods were less pronounced and while indigenous skills, knowledge and techniques were yet sharp, it seems quite likely that local Aborigines could have exercised a much more valid sort of choice between different lifestyles - certainly each represented viable alternatives.

However, a curious paradox emerges from within this line of reasoning. It seems that the use of the term choice must be qualified in this context also, because while viable alternatives existed there was simply no need for Aborigines to choose between lifestyles. There is no evidence that Aborigines pursued either traditional or European lifestyles exclusively in the early days of non-Aboriginal settlement. Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest that the shifting and various activities of those years, which, with hindsight, and strictly speaking might have belonged to different, exclusive lifestyles, were considered by Aborigines as anything but a single lifestyle which simply utilized the best of available local resources. Aborigines visiting earliest non-Aboriginal settlements and expressing their acquisitive motives were likely to have been driven by curiosity rather than any deeply felt desire for these goods (Stanner 1933, 60; 1979, 81-2). The self-consciousness which the term choice of lifestyle implies does not describe the reality of Aboriginal experience of early settlement.

Such choices between lifestyles would only have become necessary when the pursuit of an aspect of one interfered with an activity associated with another lifestyle. The most obvious example of this phenomenon at the Daly would have been the manner in which on-going employment on European farms vetoed the hunting and gathering activities of Aborigines engaged in this way. The irony of course is that the choice of which activity to pursue and which activity to sacrifice was already vitiated by the process of dependence which, though not yet at its fullest development, had been set in train as soon as Aborigines had contact with the first outsiders, their activities and their goods in the late nineteenth century.

The sacrifice of one lifestyle for another appears to have become necessary only after 1920, when economic scarcity and the compulsive nature of the consumption of European lifestyle began to confirm the dependence of Aboriginal people. As already suggested though, it was pre-determined

sacrifice - subject not to choice but to a much larger dynamic, dependence. The intimate but largely antithetical relationship which emerges between dependence and choice leads us to the ultimate dilemma of Aboriginal experience at the Daly.

One important function of Stanner's analysis of Aboriginal dependence and employment is to demonstrate to a Eurocentric audience the enormous change and disruption non-Aboriginal settlement brought to the area. Probably the most extensive change settlement provoked within Aboriginal society, was the migration of surrounding and later 'foreign' tribes to the Daly River.

Stanner reported that the Daly became a rallying ground for remnants of tribes whose traditional territory lay at or near settlement. He also noted a much more extraordinary phenomenon, a continuous drift of 'bush natives' to the Daly River. According to Stanner, the motive of this migration was the 'unrest and covetousness' which had emerged in these distant tribes by the late twenties as the result of the spread of European goods and the tales of wonder which had accompanied them as far as their homelands (Stanner 1933, 383; Stanner 1979, 81-82).

This migration was, of course, a gradual and fluctuating process. It was perceptible from very earliest times. In fact, Stanner reported that internationalism was an important feature of pre-contact society. Internationalism was not, of course, sufficient explanation for the migration which accelerated throughout the first decades of the twentieth century. More Aboriginal people came from further afield for longer periods, until in 1935, Stanner observed that the influx to settlement was complete. It had by then, he believed, with few exceptions, emptied the country between the Daly and Fitzmaurice Rivers of its original inhabitants (Stanner 1938, 11).

This migration heralded a period of severe inter-tribal hostility at the Daly; hostility which erupted into violence frequently during the thirties. The chronic hostility of the period was apparent on every scale. It erupted into physical violence between individuals, groups, tribes and coalitions of tribes. As well, conflict between Aborigines at the Daly appeared to have figured prominently in the rejuvenation of certain religious practices and within the sorcery of the time (CRS F278, 26 December 1927; Stanner 1933, 383; 1979, 76-82).

The most important distinction which appears to have been made within the transformed Aboriginal society of the thirties was not that between single tribes but between the coalition of local tribes and the coalition of 'foreign' tribes which were now living at the Daly - indigenes and invaders. Predictably enough these conflicts centred upon what was, by now, an intense competition for local resources between these two coalitions.

The inter-tribal warfare in the area which gained national media coverage during the thirties was the most obvious manifestation of this conflict (CRS A1, 35/6681; SMH 17 July 1935 and 25 July 1935). The growth of certain cults and the practices of sorcery in the area (which came to be associated with a number of deaths and considerable trauma in local tribes) were closely identified by their participants with the conflicts of the period. Furthermore, their form and meaning were highly symbolic of inter-tribal conflict, problems of subsistence and rejuvenation of society (CRS F3, 20/103; Stanner 1979, 84).

This evidence and the extraordinary attempts of local tribes to regroup and resist the invasion of foreign tribes suggests that while important principles of Aboriginal society were transgressed and abandoned in the course of the thirties, other principles and values were retained, some being rejuvenated in a new social context to enable Aborigines to understand and deal with their changed circumstances.

Overall, between 1920 and 1940, it seems that decay and disruption of some aspects of Aboriginal life proceeded simultaneously with resistance, rejuvenation and innovation in other areas of Aboriginal existence.

However, the 'irregularity' of Aboriginal experience would seem to challenge some of the conventional historiography which has tended to dominate European interpretations of Aboriginal society and its fate with contact. We must include some of Stanner's work within this category. This is not to dismiss the enormous value of his work in the area, but simply to make the point that he, like many others displayed a tendency in his writings to classify the changes occurring within Aboriginal society, particularly after contact, in very strict terms. Stanner used phrases like resistance, vitality, change and decay to describe the changes he observed. His observations regarding the extent of each varied considerably. At times, he appeared preoccupied with the resistance of Aboriginal tradition and the maintenance of former structures (Stanner 1938, Ch 4, 44-45; Ch 6, 22). Elsewhere he spoke of the breakdown of certain aspects of Aboriginal life, the development of dependence and the decay and degeneration of Aboriginal society (Stanner 1933, 49, 57-59).

These observations, various though they were, were often quite accurate. Given the diversity already described within Aboriginal society at the Daly, quite contradictory observations of life in the area were to be expected and likely to be accurate. But their accuracy per se is not what is important. It was the conclusions Stanner made on the basis of these diverse observations and the way he used and associated the terms noted above that led him into an unfortunate historiographical trap.

If Stanner's many works on the Daly River are taken as a whole, it appears that on most occasions in his analysis of events, Stanner interpreted resistance to change and continuation of traditional forms in Aboriginal society as evidence of the vitality of that society. In contrast even the words he chose to describe most of the changes he observed within Aboriginal society, for example, degeneration and decay demonstrate the correlation he often made between change and breakdown of Aboriginal society (Stanner 1933a, 49, 57-59). In the course of his narratives, Stanner reported both resistance and change, continuity and discontinuity, vitality and decay within Aboriginal society at the Daly. When he came, in his analysis, to emphasise one side of these dichotomies to the exclusion of the other, that is to make exclusive correlations between change, discontinuity and decay, he effectively denied the reality of what his narratives recorded - that is, the immense diversity of Aboriginal life and the unevenness of Aboriginal society at the Daly during the thirties.

In addition, to emphasize change and decay to the exclusion of resistance, continuity and vitality, ignored the obvious fact that any change which occurred within Aboriginal society at the Daly usually occurred in ways and forms patterned entirely under the influence of 'traditional' principles and practices. For example, the coalitions of tribes which formed at the Daly during the twenties and thirties were formed amongst language groups, that is, tribes that were close before contact. The spread of European goods and the demand this provoked amongst foreign tribes which eventually led them to migrate to settlements proceeded entirely along trade routes established long before contact. Religious practices and cults which were rejuvenated during the twenties and thirties also spread along these long-established routes (Stanner 1933a, 387-388; 1933c, 172; Stanner 1938, Ch 6, 22-23).

The very vigour of old forms and practices in new circumstances, their rejuvenation and transmission during the thirties, is itself additional evidence of the vitality of Aboriginal society at the Daly. In a sense these phenomenon represented much more than the resistance of tradition - they were a reaction to contemporary circumstances which, though grounded in

traditional experience, was evidence of an attempt to deal with change and with new experiences. This reaction reveals a much more far-reaching vitality within Aboriginal society at the Daly than that which Stanner associated with resistance to change.

This point raises the other major problem Stanner's analytical categories involved - the 'conventional historical trap' referred to earlier. The sort of analysis just described, which Stanner often utilized, contained at least implicitly, a model of Aboriginal society which was essentially ahistorical.

The association Stanner often made between resistance to change and vitality of Aboriginal society was clearly one which assumed not only that traditional society was the only viable Aboriginal society, but that this society was entirely static. How else could Stanner correlate the changes he observed so exclusively with degeneration and decay and ignore the vitality which the ability to adapt and innovate in altered circumstances had evidenced amongst local Aborigines?

This assumption of a fixed and static pre-contact society conformed to the contemporary understanding of Aboriginal society. Within works which employed the then popular social-Darwinist model, the point of contact with European society was customarily invoked as a watershed in the history of Aboriginal society. In fact, it was often regarded as a sort of cut-off point for an Aboriginal society which was bound to recede before the advance of the superior European civilization - in a process of natural selection as it were.

Stanner's customary association between changing Aboriginal society and decaying Aboriginal society exhibited this same preoccupation with the point of contact. This is frustrating of course for his audience, who elsewhere in his work read that dependence, for example, demonstrated the exercise of choice and considerable initiative amongst Aboriginal people who were better and more regularly fed as a result. In this context, Stanner's reader is led to believe that Aboriginal society was not set upon a course of inevitable destruction as a result of contact but that it was simply undergoing change. While this change might have been in some of its aspects a desirable change and in others an undesirable one - it was by no means novel, simply of unprecedented form and extent.

The obvious continuities which existed in the midst of discontinuities within the natural and supernatural realms of Aboriginal life at the Daly throughout the twentieth century, must certainly discredit the relevance of an exclusive distinction between pre- and post-contact society. Although many of Stanner's analytical works employ this distinction quite rigidly, the Aboriginal experience can and should be understood in a much more subtle manner. If such rigidity is abandoned, the important continuities in Aboriginal life can be considered more completely and changes can be understood as proceeding in various directions; at times reflecting decaying institutions and structures and at other times reflecting considerable vitality within Aboriginal life.

Conclusion

The most striking feature of the history of the Daly River between 1912-1940, is the diversity of human experience it includes. Yet many accounts of the settlement during this period do not reflect this diversity. Instead, these largely Eurocentric descriptions read like grim tales of high hopes disappointed and refer to unfortunate and misguided enterprises, in which government and settlers alike were victims of their own and others' misconceptions.

Polarisation between the government and settlers; the economic marginality of settlement which resulted in part from the government's new

caution after 1921, but also from persistent problems with the environment, climate, isolation and wider economic depression, were, from a European perspective, continuous features of settlement until 1940. This uniformity has led to characterisations of the Daly as a backwater and of the period between 1920 and 1940 especially as one of stagnation.

This characterisation is unsatisfactory. Firstly, from an Aboriginal perspective, it is clear that the period between 1912 and 1940 was one of unprecedented social change at the Daly. For different tribes such change took different forms of course - for some, unwelcome encroachments on their traditional territory, for others, migration from traditional homelands; for all, compelling new sights and tastes, widened horizons, disease, disruption, bewilderment, trauma and yet some considerable continuity with their past and vitality of Aboriginal life.

Since then there have been further changes. In 1955, the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Mission was established at the Daly and has since become a major residential centre for members of the Marithiel and Moil tribes (Palmer and Sutton 1981, 12). In the mid-seventies this was offset somewhat by the establishment of Peppimenarti homeland centre or outstation, south west of the Daly, on the Moyle River - worked since principally as a pastoral venture. In recent years, other groups of Aborigines, some from Darwin itself, have begun to re-establish themselves in outstations in the area. As the Moil and Marithiel came to focus around the Mission, the Mulluk Mulluk coalition withdrew further from settlement after 1940, to Woolianna on Horseshoe Billabong, remaining aloof from the activity of the Mission and to some extent from employment (Palmer and Sutton 1981, 12; Pye 1976, 35-40). Since 1981, they have waited on the result of a hearing of the Daly River (Malak Malak) Land Claim, the outcome of which is still (1984) unknown.

To characterise the past history of the Daly as a sad story of hopes disappointed and enterprises misguided is also unsatisfactory even in its own European terms. Vast enterprises have often been wiped from historical consciousness by their eventual failure or non-achievement. This is as true of the history of the Daly since World War II as it is of the period before the war.

The war did little to change the face of settlement at the Daly River. If anything, it provoked more change for local Aborigines than Europeans, encouraging increased mobility to Army Native Settlements at Adelaide River and Mataranka. Peanut growing enjoyed a minor resurgence in the early forties and remained the major activity there for the following decades. The labour force was drawn entirely from the Aborigines in the area. Although in the forties settlers were impoverished, in the fifties Stanner noticed increased comfort, though never prosperity, among farmers and settlers alike (Stanner 1979, 90; Carrell and Carrell 1955, 87). Early in 1967, a group of American investors bought the Tipperary Pastoral holding, which surrounded the agricultural blocks at the Daly, for a cropping venture of unprecedented scale in North Australia. A variety of factors, which included some misunderstanding of the peculiarities of the environment in the Top End, meant that Tipperary Land Company was sold in November, 1973 having failed to fulfil its ambitious aims. Like earlier ventures, it is remembered now only as yet another of the failures on the Daly (Mollah 1980, 164-167). This tendency to somehow forget the achievement of vast and ambitious enterprises is commonplace within the history of North Australia. Venture after venture has either been ignored by commentators in their conscious or unconscious search for positive history or has been related in the simplistic, and often misguided, terms which Governments and other interests customarily used to explain their embarrassing failures. The predominant Eurocentric characterisation of the history of the Daly River must thus be recognised as an extremely limited and ethnocentric one, in which, with the exception of W E H Stanner's work, the experience of a majority of its inhabitants remains obscure.

References

- Anderson, T, 1982. Interview (conducted by author), Darwin, 20 February 1982.
- Basedow, H, 1907. 'Anthropological notes on the Western Coastal Tribes of the Northern Territory of South Australia', in Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, 31.
- Basedow, H, 1914-15. 'Physical geography and geology of the Western Rivers District, Northern Territory of Australia', in Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society Australasia, South Australian Branch, 61.
- Basedow, H, 1932. The possibilities of the Northern Territory of Australia, with special reference to Development and Migration, Empire Parliamentary Association, London.
- Bauer, F H, 1964. Historical geography of white settlement in part of Northern Australia: Part 2, the Katherine-Darwin region. CSIRO, Canberra.
- Berndt, R M, 1952. 'Surviving influence of Mission contact on the Daly River, Northern Territory of Australia' in Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire 8, no.2/3.
- Berndt, R M, 1965. 'Law and order in Aboriginal Australia' in R M and C H Berndt (eds) Aboriginal Man in Australia, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Birk, D, 1976. The Malak Malak Language, Daly River (Western Arnhem Land) Pacific Linguistics, Canberra.
- Breini, A and Holmes, M J, 1915. Medical report on data collected during a journey through some districts of the NT, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- Brown, H Y L, 1906. Reports (geological and general) resulting from the expeditions made by the Government Geologist and staff during 1905, Government Printer, Adelaide.
- Carrell, D B and V, 1955. Dust for the Dancers, Ure Smith, Sydney.
- Conigrave, C P, 1936. North Australia, Jonathon Cape, London.
- CPP 39, 1911. Reports regarding the suitability of certain lands for purposes of Agriculture and for the establishment of experimental farms (completed by) W S Campbell, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 54, 1911. Report of the Acting Administrator for the year 1911, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 4, 1912. Report of the Administrator for the year 1913, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 13, 1913. Report of the Administrator for the year 1913, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 240, 1915. Report of the Administrator for the year 1914-1915, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 31, 1917-1918. Report of the Administrator for the years 1915-1916 and 1916-1917, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 129, 1918. Report of the Administrator for the year ending 30th June, 1918, Government Printer, Melbourne.

- CPP 119, 1921. Report of the Acting Administrator for the year ended 30th June, 1920, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 44, 1922. Report of the Administrator for the year ended 30th June, 1921, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 14, 1922. Report of the Administrator for the year ended 30th June, 1922, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 1, 1924. Report of Administrator for the year ended 30th June, 1923, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 1, 1925. Report of Administrator for the year ended 30th June, 1924, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- CPP 50, 1930. Report on the Administration of North Australia for the year ended the 30th June, 1929, Government Printer, Canberra.
- CPP 124, 1933. Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the year ended 30th June, 1932, Government Printer, Canberra.
- CPP 208, 1934. Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the year ended 30th June, 1933, Government Printer, Canberra.
- CPP 138, 1935. Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the year ended 30th June, 1934, Government Printer, Canberra.
- CPP 237, 1936. Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory for the year ended 30th June, 1935, Government Printer, Canberra.
- CPP 4, 1937. Report of the Board of Inquiry appointed to inquire into the Land and Land Industries of the Northern Territory of Australia, Government Printer, Canberra.
- CPP 150, 1939. Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory for year 1937-38, Government Printer, Canberra.
- CPP 13, 1940. Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory for year 1938-39, Government Printer, Canberra.
- CPP 24, 1941. Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for year 1939-40, Government Printer, Canberra.
- CP 764(2), Report on the Northern Territory by J A Carrodus, Australian Archives, Canberra.
- CP 780/2, 'History and Development of the Northern Territory', Australian Archives, Canberra.
- CP 780/3, 'The Australian Story', Australian Archives, Canberra.
- CRS A1, Correspondence files, annual single number series, 1903-1938, Items: 12/2937 - 38/31785, Australian Archives, Canberra.
- CRS A3, Correspondence files, NT (Northern Territory) series, 1912-1925, Items: NT 12/4541-NT 25/1067, Australian Archives, Canberra.
- CRS A555, Copies of Memoranda, Territories Branch, 1923-1928, Item: 'Northern Territory and North Australia, 1926-1928', Australian Archives, Canberra.
- CRS A1640, Correspondence dockets, NT series, 1860-1910, Items: 84/651 - 90/696, Australian Archives, Canberra.

- CRS A2124, Folder of unregistered files and papers relating to the Northern Territory, 1920-1950, Australian Archives, Canberra.
- CRS F1, Correspondence files, annual single number series, 1915-1978, Items: 36/100 - 52/738, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F3, Administrator, Native Affairs, Correspondence files, 1933-1949, Items: 20/2/13 - 20/103, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F5, Lands and Survey, Correspondence files, alphabetical single number series, 1915-1929, Items: D42-W60, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F66, Lease Register, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F114, Primary Producers Board, Correspondence files, PPB series, 1921-1957, Items: PPB 54/1-PPB345, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F141, Mines Branch. Correspondence files, single number series, 1912-1914, Item: 'History of Mining in the Northern Territory', Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F267, Lands Branch. Correspondence files, AL (Agricultural Leases) series, 1913, Items: 108, 113 (1), Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F277, Outward Letter Book, Daly River Police Station, 1926-1931, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F278, Police Journals, Daly River, 1906-1934, 4 vols, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- CRS F666, Applications for Agricultural Leases, Australian Archives, Darwin.
- Dahl, K, 1895. 'Treatment after circumcision in the Hermit Hill tribe, Daly River, Northern Territory'. Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, 19.
- Dahl, K, 1926. In Savage Australia: an account of a hunting and collecting expedition to Arnhem Land and Dampier Land, Phillip Allan, London.
- Daly, H W, 1887. Digging, squatting and pioneering life in the Northern Territory of South Australia, Samson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, London.
- Davidson, B R, 1965. The Northern Myth, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Docker, E G, 1964. Simply Human Beings, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane.
- Donovan, P F, 1981. A Land Full of Possibilities: A History of South Australia's Northern Territory, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.
- Duncan, R, 1967. The Northern Territory Pastoral Industry, 1863-1910, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.
- Flynn, F, 1963. Northern Gateway, F P Leonard, Sydney.
- Graham, T A, 1981. Interview (conducted by E. Monahan) Transcript, Northern Territory Oral History Project, Darwin.
- Hamey, W E, 1957. Life among the Aborigines, Robert Hale, London.
- Healey, T E A, 1936. And Far from Home, Michael Joseph, London.

- Hiatt, L R, 1962. 'Local organization amongst the Australian Aborigines'. Oceania, 32.
- Hill, E, 1956. The Great Australian Loneliness, Robertson and Mullens, Melbourne.
- Hill, E, 1970. The Territory, Ure Smith, Sydney.
- Kristen, A, 1899. 'Aboriginal Language', Manuscript, Written at Koorringa, SA, Xerox copy available at AIAS Library, Canberra.
- Litchfield, J S, 1930. Far north memories, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Lockwood, D, 1968. The Front Door: Darwin, 1869-1969, Rigby, Adelaide.
- Mackillop, D, 1892-3. Anthropological notes on the Aboriginal tribes of the Daly River. Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia, 17.
- Markus, A, 1974. From the barrel of a gun: The oppression of the Aborigines, 1860-1900, Victorian Historical Association, Melbourne.
- Mollah, W S, 1980. 'The Tipperary Story; an attempt at large scale grain sorghum development in the Northern Territory' in F H Bauer, ed. Two North Australian Cropping Studies, North Australian Research Bulletin, no.7, Darwin.
- NT, 1916. Northern Territory of Australia, Memorandum by the Secretary, Department of External Affairs, (Mr Atlee Hunt, C M G), Government Printer, Melbourne.
- NT, 1927. Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the period 1st July, 1926 to 28th February, 1927, and on the Administration of the Territory of North Australia from 1st March, 1927 to 30th June, 1927, Government Printer, Melbourne.
- O'Kelly, G J, 1967. The Jesuit Mission Stations in the Northern Territory, 1882-1899. BA(Hons) thesis, Monash University, Melbourne.
- Palmer, A B and Sutton, P, 1980. Daly River (Malak Malak) Land Claim, Northern Land Council, Darwin.
- Parer, J J, 1922. The Northern Territory: Its History and Great Possibilities, Melbourne.
- Polishuk, N and Lockwood, D, 1961. Life on the Daly River, Rigby, Adelaide.
- Price, Sir A G, 1930. The History and Problems of the Northern Territory, Australia, Macrossan Lectures, A E Acott, Adelaide.
- Pye, J, 1976. The Daly River Story: a river unconquered, J R Coleman, Darwin.
- Ray, S H, 1909. 'The Ngolok-Wanggar language, Daly River, North Australia'. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 39.
- Roberts, S H, 1924. History of Australian Land Settlement 1788-1920, Macmillan, Melbourne.
- Salzgeber, A, 1982. Interview (conducted by author) Daly River, NT, 13 February 1982.

- SAPP 21, 1862. J M Stuart's Explorations, 1861-1862, (Diary...), Government Printer, Adelaide.
- SAPP 82, 1866. J McKinlay's Northern Territory Explorations, 1866- (Journal...), Government Printer, Adelaide.
- SAPP 83, 1866. Despatches from the Northern Territory, Government Printer, Adelaide.
- SAPP 65, 1896. Report on Agricultural and Other Lands, Government Printer, Adelaide.
- SAPP 45, 1907. Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory, 1906, Government Printer, Adelaide.
- Searcy, A, 1905. In northern seas, W K Thomas, Adelaide.
- Searcy, A, 1909. In Australian tropics, George Robertson, London.
- Sharp, A, 1968. The Voyages of Abel Janzoon Tasman, Oxford, Clarendon.
- Stanner, W E H, 1932. Unpublished field notes, Daly River, AIAS Library, Canberra.
- Stanner, W E H, 1933. 'Culture contact at the Daly River', Draft MA Thesis, Unpublished Manuscript, Sydney, microfilm at AIAS Library, Canberra.
- Stanner, W E H, 1933a. 'The Daly River tribes; a report of fieldwork in North Australia', part 1, in Oceania, 3.
- Stanner, W E H, 1933b. 'The Daly River tribes; a report of fieldwork in North Australia', part 2, in Oceania, 4.
- Stanner, W E H, 1933c. 'Ceremonial economics of the Mulluk Mulluk and Madngella tribes of the Daly River, north Australia: a preliminary paper' in Oceania, 4.
- Stanner, W E H, 1936. 'Murinbata kinship and totemism', in Oceania, 7.
- Stanner, W E H, 1938. 'Economic change in North Australian Tribes; PhD Thesis, University of London, microfilm at AIAS Library, Canberra.
- Stanner, W E H, 1965. 'Aboriginal territorial organization: estate range, domain and regime', in Oceania, 36.
- Stanner, W E H, 1966. An Aboriginal religion, Sydney, Oceania.
- Stanner, W E H, 1979. 'Durmuḡam: a Nangiomeri' in Stanner, W E H, White Man got no dreaming: Essays 1938-1973, ANU Press, Canberra.
- Tryon, D T, 1974. Daly family languages, Australia, Canberra, Pacific Linguistics.
- Tryon, D T, 1981. 'Statement on the Daly River (Malak Malak) Land Claim', Australian National University.
- Widdup, M, 1982. Interview (conducted by author) Darwin, 18 February 1982.

ISBN 0 86784 748 4