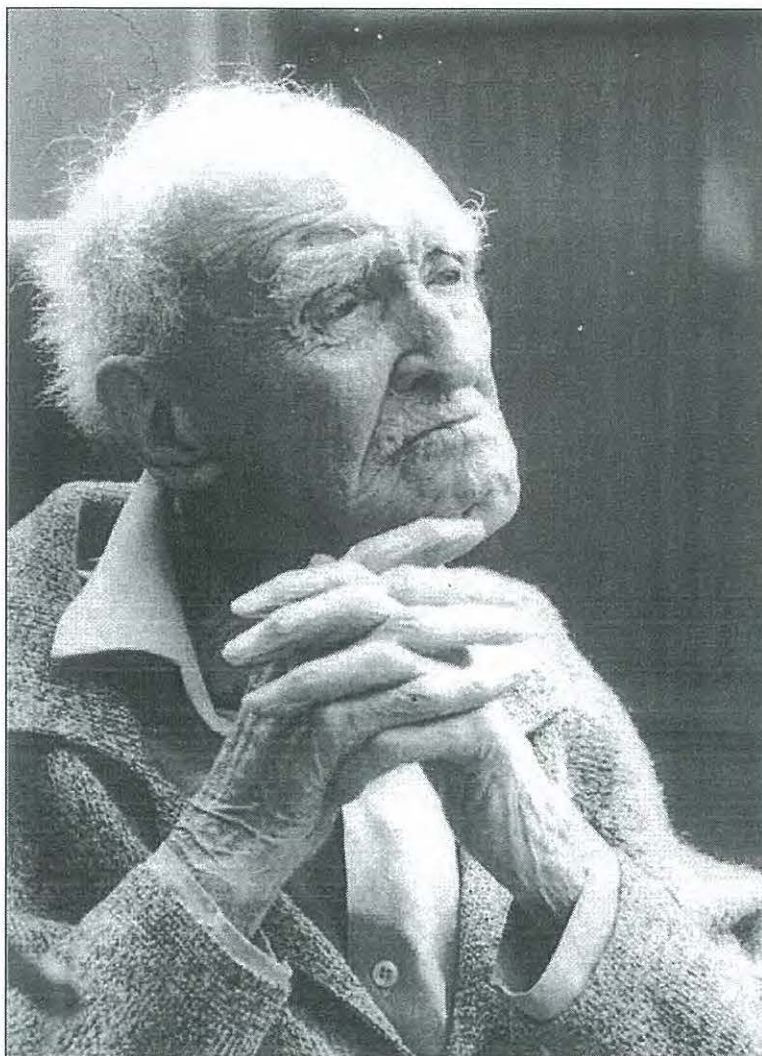

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'DOCTOR DO-GOOD'?

CHARLES DUGUID AND ABORIGINAL POLITICS, 1930s-1970s

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December 2004

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
History Program, Research School of Social Sciences
Australian National University

This thesis contains no material which has previously been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and, to the best of my knowledge, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive script that appears to be the initials 'J. S.' followed by a long, horizontal flourish.

ABSTRACT

Charles Duguid helped to establish Ernabella mission in 1937, widely regarded as one of the least oppressive and most culturally sensitive missions ever established in Australia. Following his death in 1986, aged 102, Duguid was buried there at the request of the Pitjantjatjara people. By them he is remembered as 'the man who came in the very beginning', and 'the greatest fighter for Aboriginal welfare Australia has ever known—even the world', yet surprisingly little is known of his activism.

This thesis examines Duguid's involvement in Aboriginal politics from the 1930s-1970s in South Australia and the Northern Territory. It is a social, political and intellectual history that offers local, regional and national perspectives on the administration of Aborigines over four decades. Using Duguid's ideas and activism as a lens, it explores the changing role of white people in Aboriginal politics: from missions to self-administering Aboriginal communities, from inviolable reserves to detribalisation, from segregation to assimilation, from white advocacy to 'black-power'. It pays attention to Duguid's relationships with Aboriginal people—the men, women and children whom Duguid considered his 'friends' as well as those who were critical of him—and documents his disagreements with high profile white Australians such as John Flynn and A.P. Elkin and his support for others including Mary Bennett and Paul Hasluck.

In examining the personal, professional and organisational relationships that made Duguid's public advocacy possible, this thesis demonstrates the existence of a strong, if disorganised, network of committed activists, missionaries, anthropologists, public servants and others working to 'save' and/or 'uplift' the Aborigines during the middle third of the twentieth century. As well as locating Duguid's activism within a broader context of humanitarian activity, this study's biographical approach provides new insights into matters of continuing importance to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians today: Aborigines' rights to land, the removal of Aboriginal children, the impact of assimilation policies, and the shifting meanings and significance of Aboriginal culture and identity in Australia.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAL	Australian Aborigines' League
AAUN	Australian Association for the United Nations
ABM	Australian Board of Missions
AFA	Aborigines' Friends' Association
AGPC	Australian Guided Projectiles Committee
AIM	Australian Inland Mission
AP	Anangu Pitjantjatjara
APB	Aborigines Protection Board
APL	Aborigines Protection League
APNR	Association for the Protection of Native Races
ASS	Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society
CAR	Council for Aboriginal Rights
FCAA	Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement
FCAATSI	Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders
NAANR	National Association for the Advancement of the Native Races
NAWU	North Australian Workers Union
NMC	National Missionary Council of Australia
SA AAL	Aborigines Advancement League of South Australia
UAM	United Aborigines Mission
VAAL	Victorian Aborigines Advancement League
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union

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PREFACE

Set into the pavement on North Terrace, Adelaide, are more than a hundred plaques commemorating important South Australians; Dr Charles Duguid is one of these. The eldest of seven children, Duguid was born in the small fishing town of Saltcoats, Ayrshire, Scotland on 6 April 1884. Inspired by his maternal grandfather, Dr Robert Snodgrass Kinnier, Duguid decided on a career in medicine at an early age. He graduated from the University of Glasgow with a degree in Arts (his father's idea) and Medicine in 1909. The recipient of several University medals and awards, Duguid began his professional life at the Western Infirmary, Glasgow, where he worked as a lecturer and assistant to the distinguished pioneer surgeon Sir William Macewen. Exhausted from his years of study, and anxious for adventure, Duguid signed on as ship's surgeon aboard the Orient liner *Omrah* for a return voyage to Australia in 1911. On the outward leg he met and became engaged to an Australian woman, Irene Isabella Young. Duguid returned to Australia in 1912, married Irene and worked in country Victoria for two years before settling in Adelaide. During the first world war, he served in Egypt as a medical officer in the Australian Army, and afterwards bought a property at Magill on the outskirts of Adelaide. He established a successful surgical practice and lived happily with his wife and their son Charlie until 1927 when Irene died suddenly and unexpectedly from a ruptured artery in the brain. The tragedy of Irene's death prompted Duguid to consider leaving Australia. But for his thirteen year old son's reluctance, he may have gone, never to have become involved in the struggle for justice for Aborigines, or lead the life recorded in this thesis.¹

This thesis is not a biography. It is concerned with Dr Charles Duguid's involvement in Aboriginal politics—broadly defined as campaigns on behalf of Aboriginal people—a cause he took up at the age of fifty. The first half of Duguid's life necessarily informed and shaped the remainder—for example, Duguid attributed his involvement in Aboriginal causes to his upbringing: 'I was reared in a radical home and I have fought for the underdog all my life'.² However, this study commences in the years following Irene's death. In those years—the second half of his long life—Duguid married his second wife, Phyllis Evelyn Lade, and together they fought to secure an honourable place for Aborigines within the Australian nation.

¹ Charles Duguid, *Doctor and the Aborigines*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1972.

² Duguid to J.S. Collings, Minister for the Interior, 1 December 1942, Duguid Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 5068, Series 1.

Way back in 1884,
The angels up in Heaven
(Scotch, so they don't have to rhyme)
Said, 'This couple need a son
We'll send a red-haired one along'
Saw little of its famous child
Where need is greatest help is sent
To Australia's waiting shores he went
Long years he strived to make men see
The way to help the Aborigine
With Open House and friend to all
He never fails who on him call
The years have blessed him many joys
Wife, children's children, even red haired boys
No Dying Race in any way
Is Doctor's cause and clan today

[Phyllis Duguid, 6 April 1964]³

³ This poem was probably written by Phyllis Duguid on the occasion of Charles Duguid's eightieth birthday. Although it is unsigned, it is in her style and it was her habit to write poems for special occasions. Duguid Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 5068, Series 1.

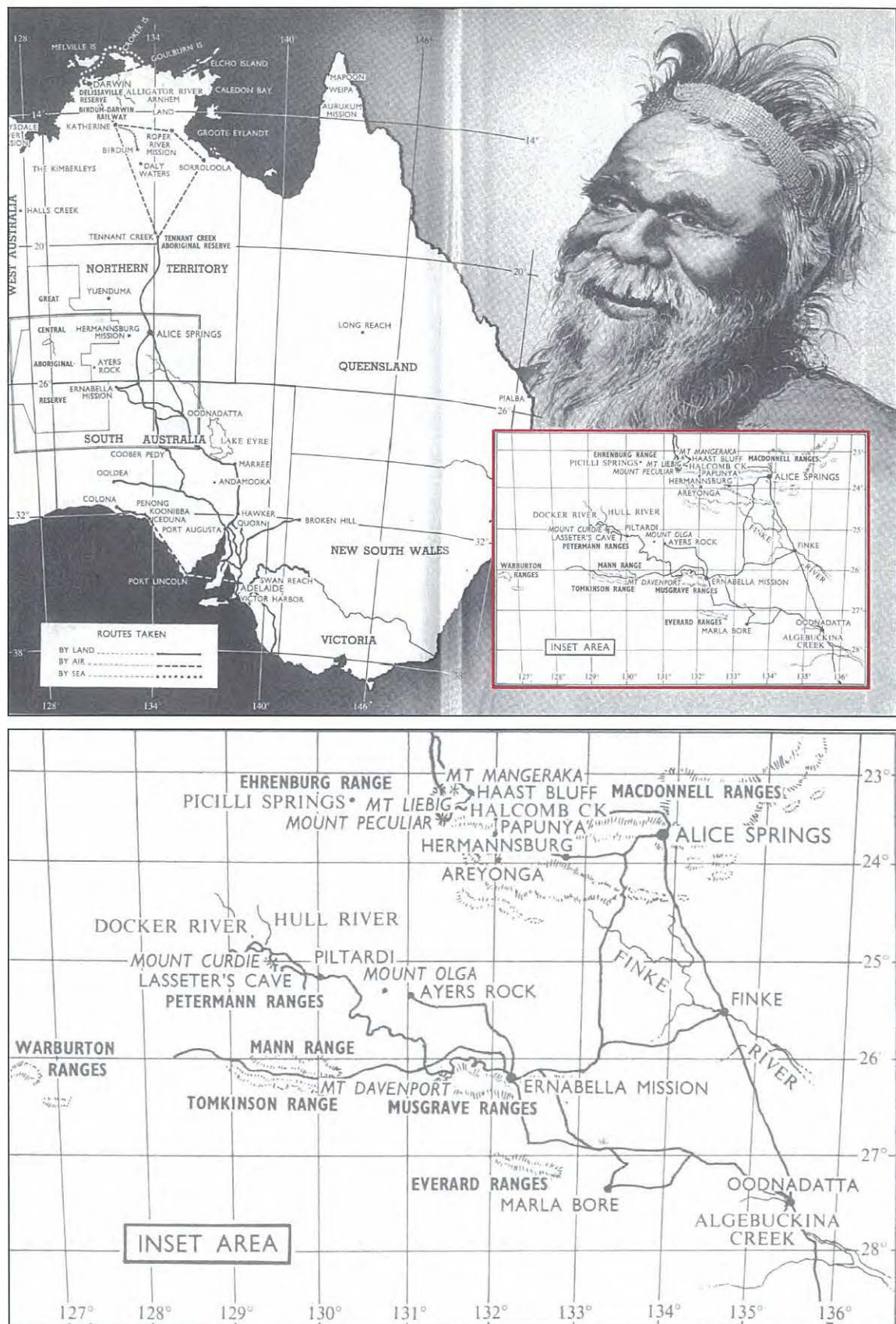


PLATE 2. This is Charles Duguid's Australia. The top map shows the routes he took on his journeys through Central and North Australia, and the places that were important to him. The bottom map (insert area) shows the location of Ernabella mission and surrounding mountain ranges.

Source: Charles Duguid, *No Dying Race*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1963, inside back cover.