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MURWANGI:

A History of the Attempts to Establish
a Pastoral Industry in North East Arnhem Land
1883 to 1983

by

Frank van der Heide

Submitted to the University of New England for the
Master of Letters Degree

March 1985



To
my father and mother
Roelof and Frederica

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The discovery of Northern Australia has been attributed to the Chinese¹, the Portuguese², the Dutch³ and the Macassans⁴, with only the latter group maintaining continuous ties with the Aboriginal people after the initial contact. The Macassans were an Asiatic people coming from the Southern end of the Indonesian island known as the Celebes. They came annually to Australia, especially to Arnhemland to gather a sea slug called trepang, which they cooked and dried before sailing to Timor or Macassar and subsequently trading the trepang to Chinese merchants [see Map 1]. From December to May, their wooden hulled praus would carry a thousand or more men to work the coasts off Arnhemland, to trade with the Aborigines and to live alongside the Aborigines, providing one of the few instances where Aboriginal people have had "long and continuous experience coping with outsiders before the coming of the British".⁵

The British came in early 1803 with Matthew Flinders, making his remarkable marine survey of the Australian coast, landed many times on the east coast of Arnhemland. He was completely unimpressed and noted that the natives were accomplished thieves and dangerously hostile. However, before his rotting vessel forced

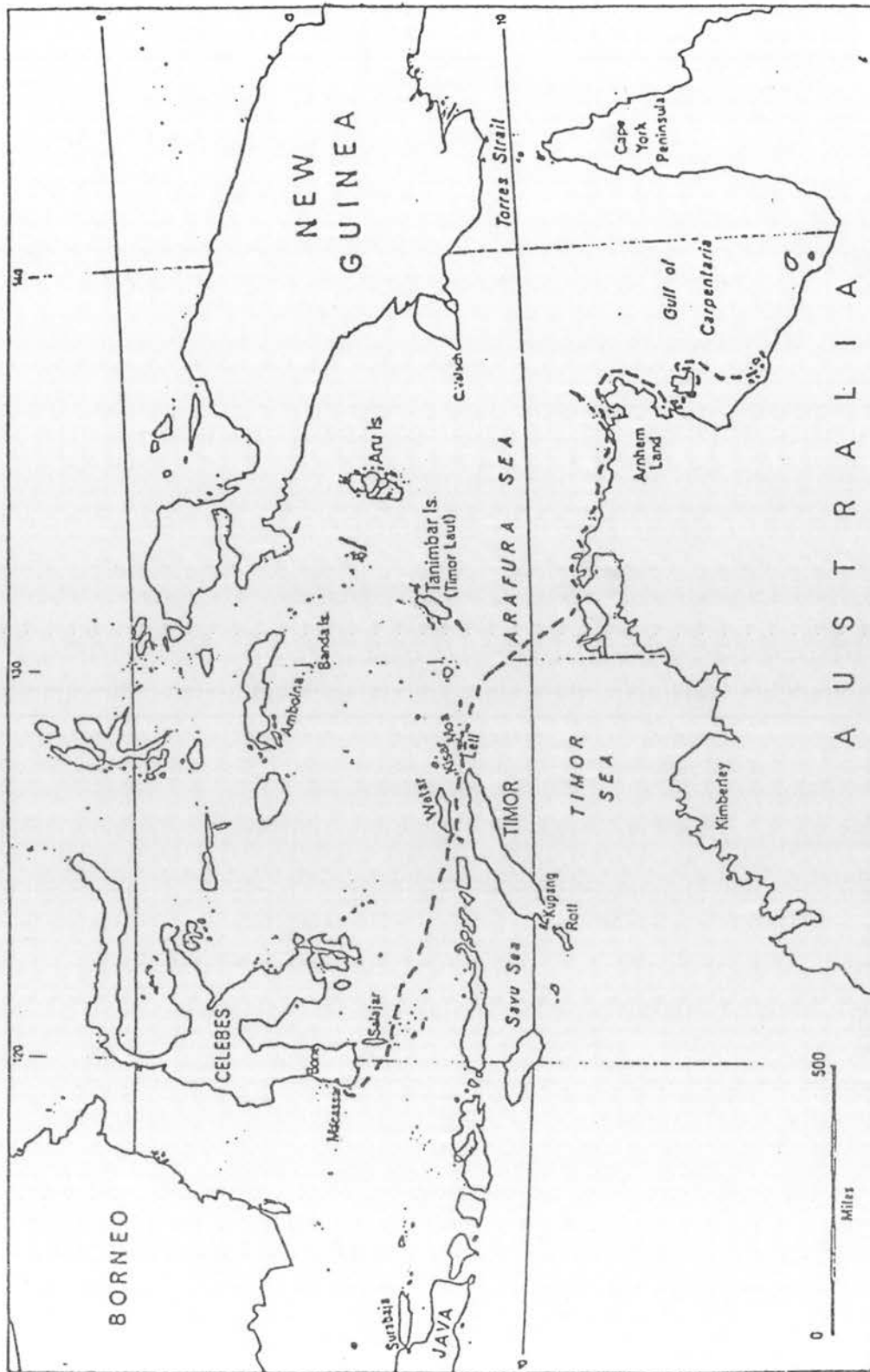
¹ Mulvaney, D.J., Prehistory of Australia, Thames and Hudson, London 1969.

² McIntyre, K.G., The Secret Discovery of Australia, Souvenir Press, Menindie, 1977.

³ Powell, A., Far Country, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1982.

⁴ Macknight, C., The Voyage to Marege, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1976.

⁵ Powell, A., op.cit., p.37.



MAP 1: From Macassar to Arnhem Land
 Source: Macknight, C.C., The Farthest Coast, Melbourne University Press, pp. 38 & 180, 185

him to discontinue his survey, he sighted a Macassan camp in Arnhem Bay, talked with the commander, Pobasso, about his home, the number of men, their type of work and their destination.

... The chief of the six prows was a short elderly man, named Pobasso; he said there were upon the coast, in different divisions, sixty prows and Salloo was the Commander-in-Chief.... According to Pobasso, from whom my information was principally obtained, sixty prows belonging to the Rajah of Bondi, and carrying one thousand men, had left Macassar with the north-west monsoon, two months before.... The object of their expedition was a certain marine animal, called trepang. Of this, they gave me two dried specimens; and it proved to be the beche-der-mer, or sea cucumber which we had first seen on the reefs of the East Coast.... They sometimes had skirmishes with the native inhabitants of the coast; Pobasso himself had been formerly speared in the knee, and a man had been slightly wounded since their arrival in this road; they cautioned us much to be beware of the natives.

The British again visited the Arnhemland area in 1819 when Captain Phillip P. King, on the second of his four voyages finished navigation work begun by Flinders, charted the northern coastline. Officially, King was the last European to visit this area for nearly fifty years. The abortive attempts at a permanent settlement on Australia's northern coast at Melville Island (1824-29), Raffles Bay (1827-29), Port Essington (1838-49), were all well to the West, while the great land expedition of Ludwig Leichhardt (1844-45), A.C. Gregory (1855-56) and J.M. Stuart were to the South as well as to the West.

On May 26, 1863, South Australia was given control of the territory north lying between the 129th and the 138th degrees of

⁶ Flinders, Matthew, *Voyage to Terra Australis*, Volume 2, quoted in Warner, W. Lloyd, *A Black Civilization*. Peter Smith, Massachusetts, 1969.

east longitude. The South Australian Premier, Henry Ayers hoped to adapt a modified version of E.G. Wakefield's "systematic colonisation" whereby the revenue from land sales would pay the cost of government, rather than immigration.⁷ So, in March 1864, 250,000 acres of land, its locations entirely unknown, went on sale in London and Adelaide. Eventually, the land was sold, briskly in Adelaide, but far slower in London. However, with no land surveyed a site for the land, as well as for the capital, urgently needed to be chosen and surveyed.

Mr B.T. Finniss, who had been South Australia's first Government Resident of South Australia's Northern Territory was charged with the selection of a capital, and its survey. Within months, his expedition collapsed in near mutiny and Finniss was replaced by the veteran explorer John McKinlay in 1866. He fared little better. On January 11, 1867, the whole party left the north west, and the fourth settlement attempt, at Escape Cliffs, joined its predecessors. With 250,000 acres of land sold, the South Australian government was liable for repayment to the purchasers, possibly with interest. The government was forced to try again. The area chosen to be examined was Arnhemland.

The task was entrusted to Captain Francis Cadell, a Scot, with great experience in naval architecture and steam engines, who was the first captain to navigate the Murray River. He proved to South Australia the possibilities of using river traffic on the Murray for intercolonial trade⁸, established his own stores depots

⁷ Powell, A., op.cit., p.77.

and boats⁹ and became for a time, the most successful pioneer navigator of the river. Eventually, he went bankrupt¹⁰, had his father petition the government for employment and on February 22, 1867, he was engaged by the South Australian government to

select as soon as possible a favourable site for the survey of 300,000 acres of good land within a reasonable distance of a secure harbour, easily navigable, and conveniently situated as a port of call, with a healthy site for a capital, and in close proximity to fresh water and timber.¹¹

He set off almost immediately and between May and August, he explored the shores and some inland areas of northern Arnhemland, spending two months in the Liverpool River Region.¹² He decided the Liverpool River region was exactly what the government required and also noted that "pastorally speaking, for the present it is a cattle country, feed most luxuriant".¹³ As well, Cadell obtained valuable information on the Northern Rivers and discovered and named many places including the mouth of the Goyder River, the Blyth and Tomkinson Rivers, and the Cadell

⁸ Lewis, J. 'Presidential Address' in Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch, Volume 18, Session 1916-17, p.62.

⁹ Lind, L., 'Murray River King', in The Sun, Sydney, March 29, 1984, p.43.

¹⁰ Donovan, P.F., A Land Full of Possibilities, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1981, p.64.

¹¹ Lewis, J. op.cit., p.64.

¹² Bauer, F.H., Historical Geography of White Settlement in Part of Northern Australia, Part 2: The Katherine-Darwin Region, C.S.I.R.O., Division of Land Research and Regional Survey, Division Report No. 64/1, Canberra, 1964, p.59.

¹³ ibid.

Straits. He returned to Adelaide on February 13, 1868, gave in his report which was promptly shelved and never acted upon.

Out of desperation, disappointment and criticism, the Government convinced the Surveyor General, for whatever fee he decided, to choose a capital site and survey it. George Goyder's party arrived at Port Darwin on February 6, 1869, and by the sixteenth, actual surveys were taking place on the site named Palmerston.¹⁴ Within six months the surveying had been completed. Goyder was a hard taskmaster, working his men during February from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.¹⁵ In his reports on the country, and the rapid progress of the survey, Goyder was full of high praise. The harbour was regarded as splendid, indeed, "suitable to vessels of the largest tonnage", and, the nearby land was "mostly of good rich soil".

Goyder's success and dispatches helped the confidence of the government in their venture, and raised the optimism of the people of South Australia in their new territory.

Once again, a successful venture had been proclaimed in the region where so many had, and so many would, attempt to successfully manage the natural resources. Many factors plagued the early attempts by white men to settle Northern Australia and three stand out above all others: the factor of distance, the factor of seasonal climate, and the factor of ignorance of the

¹⁴ ibid., p.65.

¹⁵ ibid.

region.¹⁶ Initially, "the lack of knowledge of the northern region was bolstered by unfounded optimism, gross exaggeration, poor judgement, unfortunate coincidence and a refusal to learn by experience".¹⁷ Later, however, the very persons who should have known far better were among the most guilty in compounding the above features and the pastoral industry provides the best example of the inept understanding of these factors.

The occupation of land for pastoral purposes came slowly after the annexation of May 1863. Certainly government policies and regulations made it difficult, and in some cases prevented the purchase of land. The Northern Territory Land Act of 1863 had provided for the sale of 500,000 acres in two parts. The first 250,000 acres being sold at 7/6d. an acre and the second 250,000 was costed at 12/- an acre, but allowed no other land to be sold until these half a million acres had been disposed of.¹⁸ The town and country blocks were treated similarly. For the pastoralist, regulations for stocking pastoral leases were extremely rigorous requiring an application to be lodged in Adelaide, with the applicant not knowing if the choice was even available. The lease had to be stocked within one year of the application being made and an affidavit signed swearing that all requirements had been complied with. As well, many who had bought in London and Adelaide from the first issue of land now wanted their purchase

¹⁶ Bauer, R.H., 'Significant Factors in the White Settlement of Northern Australia' in Australian Geographical Studies, Volume 1, No.1, April 1963, p.39.

¹⁷ ibid., p.45.

¹⁸ Donovan, P.F., op.cit., p.118.

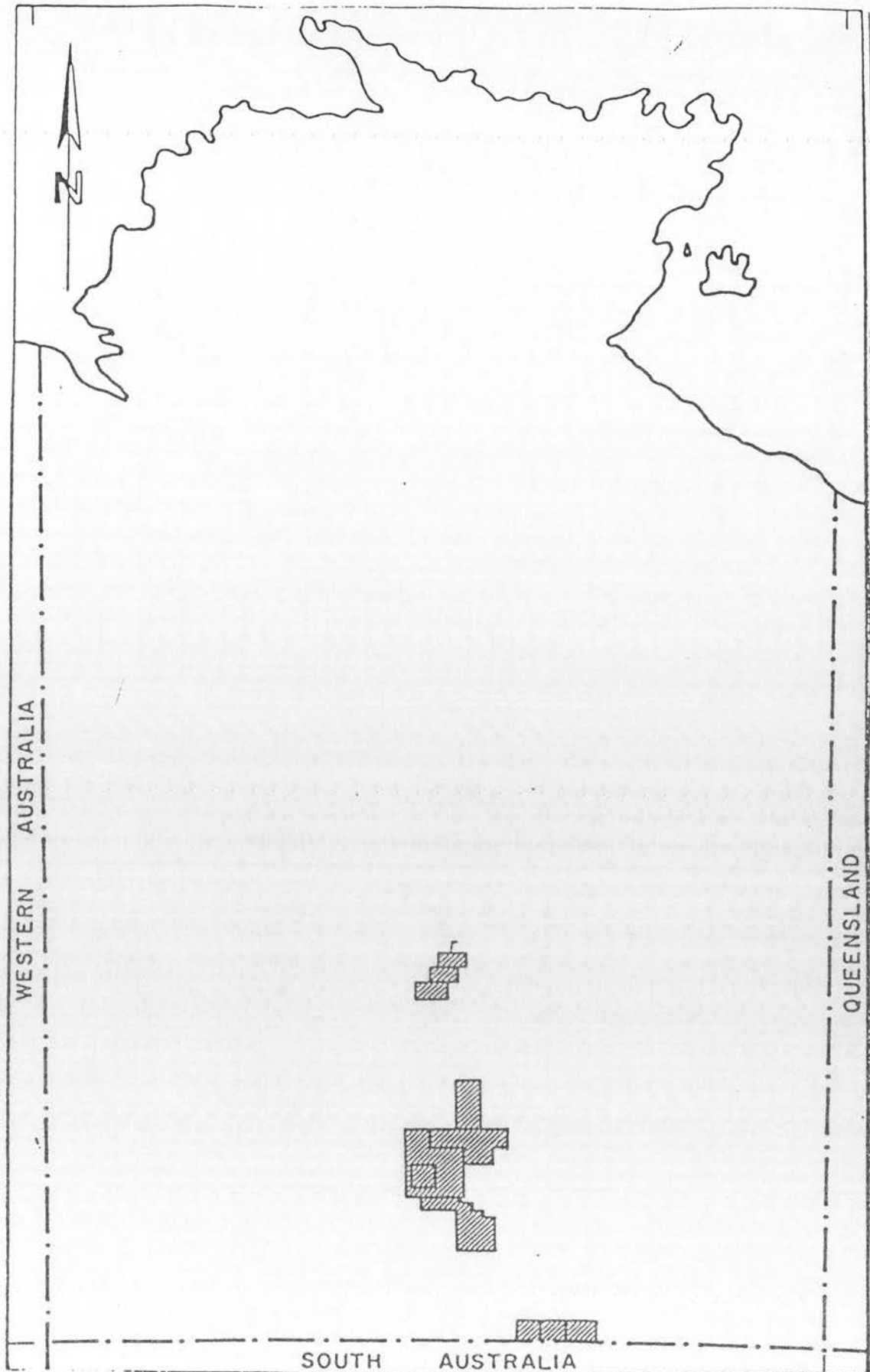
money refunded because of the delays in selecting and surveying a capital site. Amendment to the original Act occurred in 1868 and 1869 offering larger blocks to these original purchasers, but few accepted preferring their money back.

In November 1872, the Northern Territory Land Bill superceded the Act of 1863, throwing open the previously unsurveyed land of the Northern Territory to all comers, an offer not put into effect until January 4, 1875. Also, the stocking regulation had been eased in 1875 and three years was the new stocking period. Despite this, most regions remained remote or unexplored. There was a lack of markets and the future of the Territory was quite uncertain, given its record to date. There was certainly no rush for the newly opened land [see Map 2].

This all changed dramatically in 1877, when a pastoral boom took place. The Queensland pastoral industry which had fallen on hard times in the 1860's and early 1870's had revived and the best country in that colony had been taken and settlers were actively looking at the Northern Territory. As well, Northern Territory rents were lower, and the size of pastoral holdings had been increased from 300 to 400 square miles held under one lease. Indeed, this year was the peak of an Australian investment boom which had begun in 1871.¹⁹ The Government Resident reported in December 1877:

Almost the whole Territory has been taken up for pastoral purposes and although it was not possible entirely to prevent speculation still by far the larger quantity has

¹⁹ ibid., p.129.



MAP 2: Northern Territory Pastoral Leases and Licenses, 1876

Source: Bauer, F.H. Historical Geography of White Settlement in Part of Northern Australia, Canberra 1964. p.108.

been taken up by bona fide capitalists who mean to stock.²⁰

In truth, almost 200,000 square miles of the Territory's 523,620 square miles had been applied for²¹, and by 1880 only 2965 square miles were held on lease.²² Unfortunately, the pastoral spree was, for the most part, purely speculative for which capitalists in the Eastern colonies were responsible.²³ They hoped to sell it to genuine pioneers and if they were unsuccessful in selling after the first year, they would simply forfeit the land.²⁴

The demand for pastoral land, which had waned after 1877, developed into a fantastic rush in 1880 [see Map 3]. Large numbers of stock were arriving in the Territory after Nat Buchanan blazed a trail across the Barkley Tableland and the Giles Brothers brought stock up from South Australia. Land rents were further reduced to 6d. per square mile for the first 7 years of a 25 year lease as before, but only 2/6d per square mile for the years thereafter instead of 10/-. The Territory was heavily publicised to attract people and capital²⁵ and a trans continental railway was rumoured. Finally there was an active local market

²⁰ Duncan, R., The Northern Territory Pastoral Industry 1863-1910, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1967, p.35.

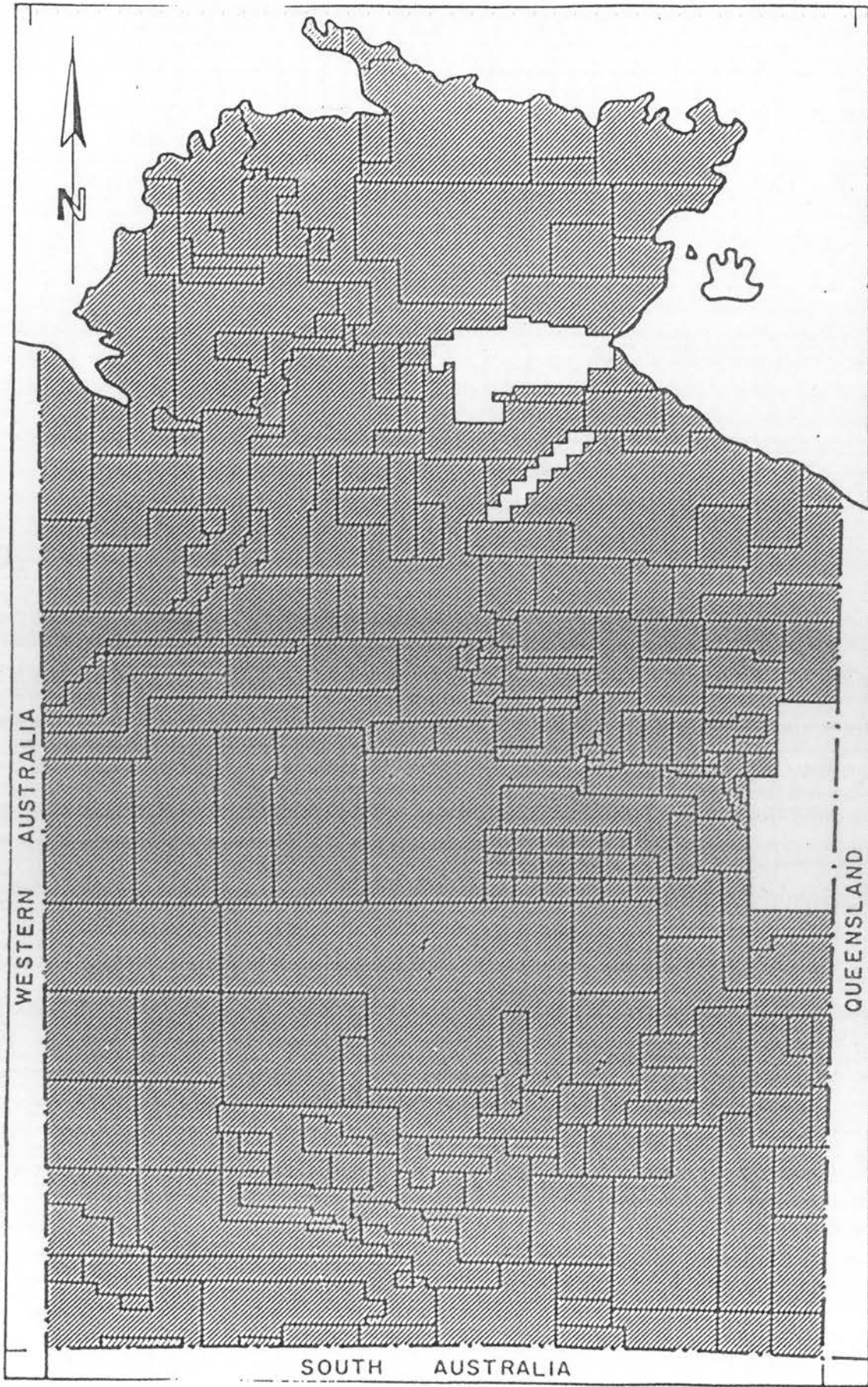
²¹ ibid.

²² Bauer, F.H. Historical Georgraphy etc., op.cit., p.111.

²³ Donovan, P.F., op.cit., p.129 and Duncan, R., op.cit., pp.39-45.

²⁴ Costello, M.M.J., Life of John Costello, Dymocks, Sydney, 1930, p.91.

²⁵ Duncan, R., op.cit., p.42.



MAP 3: Northern Territory Pastoral Leases, 1881

Source: Bauer, F.H. op.cit., p.112.

for meat, given the gold and other mineral discoveries, and the possibilities for export to the Indies and the Far East were being discussed.²⁶

TABLE 1

Pastoral land applied for, and held under Application and Lease, 1880-82

Date	Area applied for	Held under lease	Held under application	Total
31/3/80	300,000	2965	107,022	409,987
28/9/80	not reported[NR]	63,744	NR	NR
29/6/81	NR	NR	NR	224,244
4/8/82	NR	135,560	345,632	490,192 ²⁷

Again, many applications were purely speculative with large areas of unexplored and completely unsuitable land being claimed unseen by the applicants. The Government Resident, Price, again reported that "a very large proportion of it is in the hands of squatters who mean stocking".²⁸

On this occasion he was far more accurate and by the end of 1885, 270,024 square miles had been leased under 79 leasees and 183,883 square miles had been declared stocked [see Map 4]. In this period of general economic activity and prosperity, much of

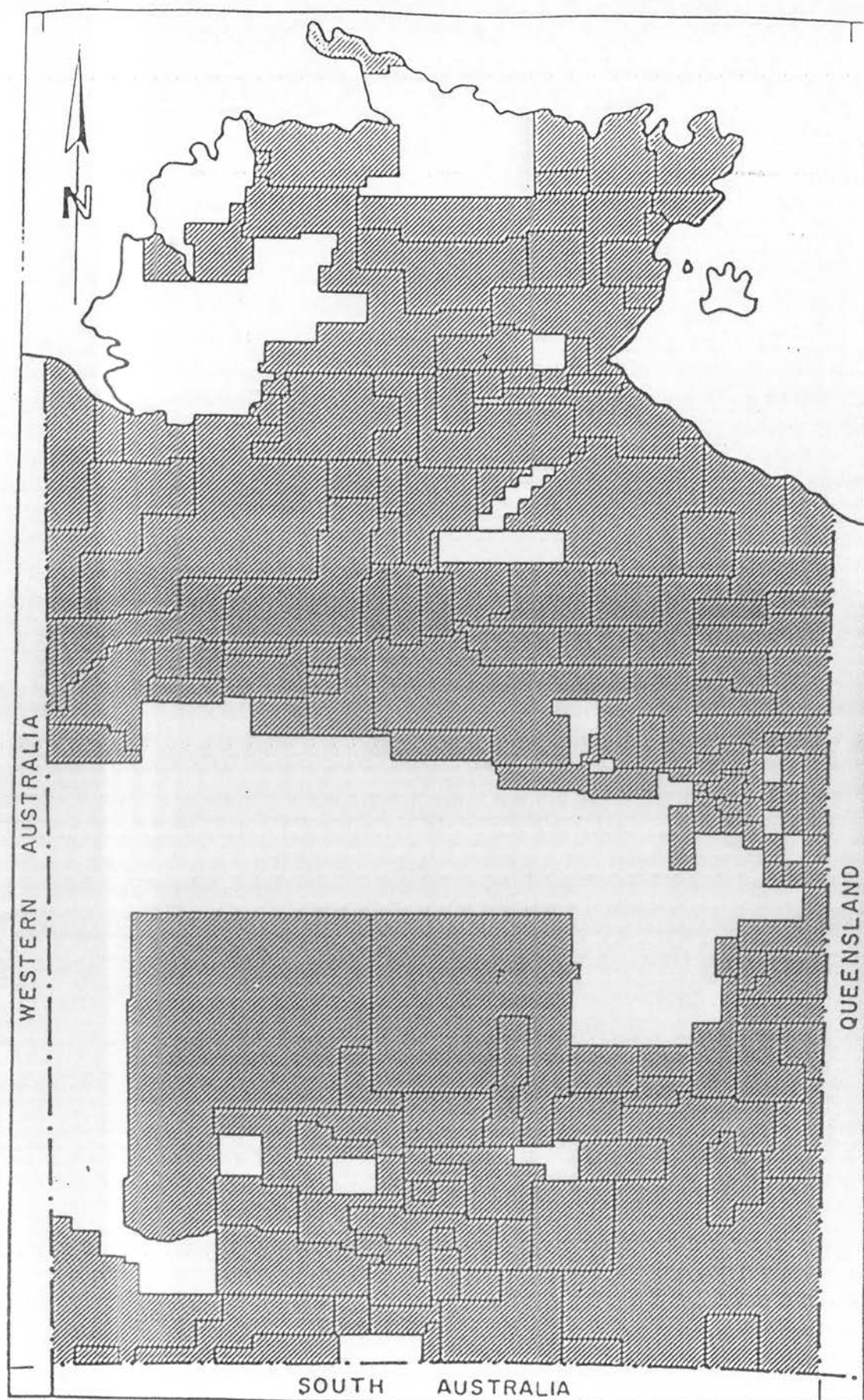
²⁶ Bauer, F.H. Historical Geography etc., op.cit., p.112.

²⁷ ibid., p.111.

²⁸ ibid., p.113

the Northern half of the Territory was settled, as an extension of the Queensland pastoral industry.²⁹

²⁹ South Australian Parliamentary Papers [S.A.P.P.], No. 54 of October 1885, Quarterly Report on the Northern Territory.



MAP 4: Northern Territory Pastoral Leases and Claims, 1885

Source: Bauer, F.H. op.cit., p.116

A STORY¹ TOLD BY MALANGI²

My mother and father told me this story about things which happened a long time ago, well before I was born. White men came from the cities into our land to start up their towns. When white men came to Murwangi, stock paddocks came into existence for horses and cattle and a big station was built. They started to work the cattle there, and the aboriginal landowners and people of all the tribes in the district saw what was going on.

One day, a gate was not properly closed and the cattle began to wander into the bush. They were spread everywhere. On the other side of the Arafura, cattle spread north as far as Warraljura and as far as Gatji. When the Aborigines saw the cattle, they decided it was their meat:

"Let's eat buliki, let's steal and kill."

"Yes!"

It came to pass that the Aborigines were now killing cattle and eating them.

Meanwhile, back at the cattle station, the boss of the station sent out his men to check the stock and they discovered there weren't many in the yards, so they were told to look for the missing cattle. They set off and found recent fire places, with ant beds

¹ This story was collected by the author on May 24, 1983 at Yathalamara, Malangi's mother country.

² Malangi is a member of the Manharngu tribe, a sub grouping of the Djinang group. He is probably in his late fifties. He is an outstanding painter whose most recognisable story was used on the reverse side of Australia's dollar note.

among the ashes and nearby they discovered bones of cattle. They determined that the Aborigines were killing and eating their cattle so they hurried to the station to tell the boss what had been happening to the missing cattle. So the white people reacted and the slaughter of the Aborigines began.

Over the plains, mangroves and jungles, stockmen headed for a place called Mirki where all the Wulaki tribe were camped. The Aborigines saw them coming while they were still far off so they ran into the jungle and climbed to the top of the trees, bunched up there, like flying foxes.

The stockmen, both black and white, surrounded the jungle and as they closed in, started shooting the Aborigines down from the trees. They slaughtered everyone, except for one man who had climbed very high, as high as he could get and he witnessed the whole massacre. He saw the stockmen return to their horses and gallop away. He remained in the tree until nightfall when he climbed down and ran away.

After that the stockmen crossed over the Glyde River to Banambarr and slaughtered people there before moving on to Dhamala, Garanydjirr, Bambilbirri, the plains and jungles. They killed people everywhere and there was a shooting at Warralnura where some Macassan trepangers were camped.

It was at this place that Aborigines had speared and chased these Macassan's ancestors. The Macassans had come and settled there

for a while and told the Aborigines that together they would build a new home, but the Macassans had been forced to leave.

At Djakilibirri, the Aborigines were being killed and some white men were speared. Sometimes, the white and Aboriginal stockmen would raid a camp shooting the males and taking away the Aboriginal women. It happened once that an Aboriginal from Djakilibirri speared a white man for taking an Aboriginal woman and was sent to prison for it. Usually, the stockmen would kill the Aborigines, cut off their ears and the tits of the women. This is a short story my mother and father used to tell us.

CHAPTER 1

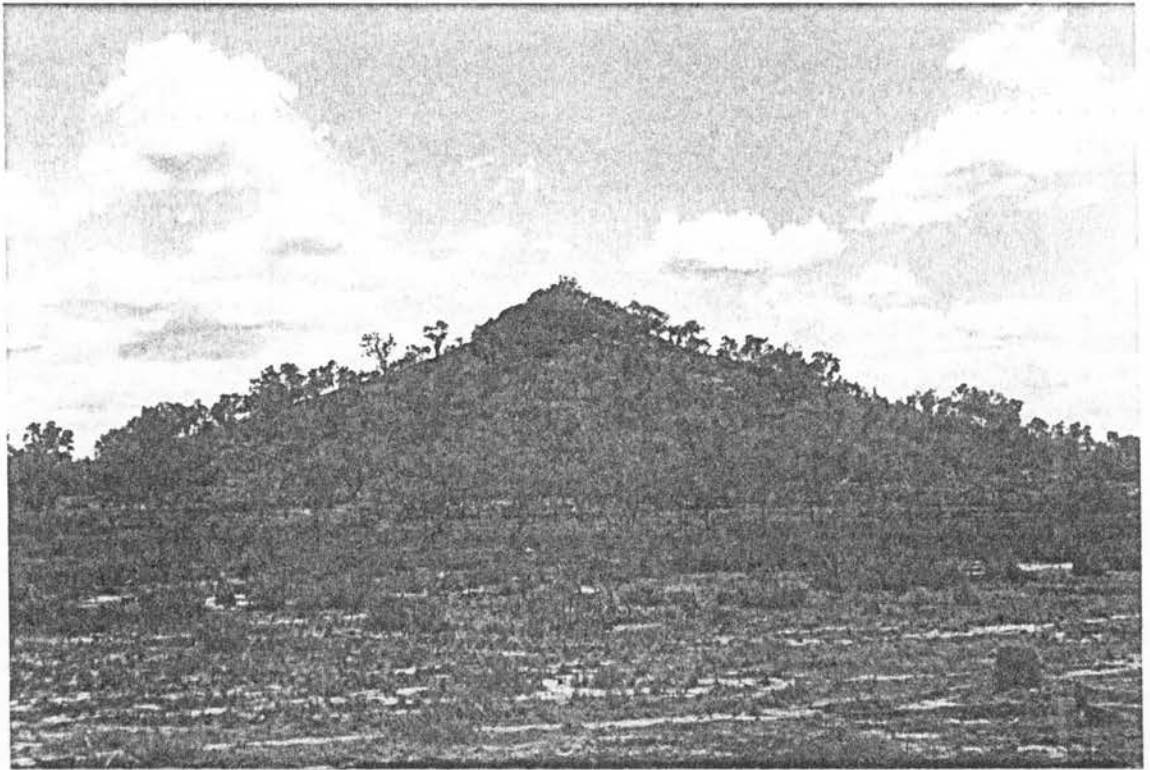
FLORIDA STATION

By the 29th of July, Lindsay had to throw away a good deal of rotten food and on the 25th of August his party was attacked by Aborigines who used spears with shafts made of telegraph wire⁶, and they lost three horses. The party travelled to the East Coast at Blue Mud Bay, their animals and themselves losing condition and suffering from lack of food and water. From the 21st to the 25th of September, Lindsay followed a river he believed to be the Goyder, and on the 26th of September, with some of his party sick and all suffering from lack of water, Lindsay managed to climb a conical hill which gave him an extensive view of the area from which he saw a narrow strip of water about 8 miles to the North North East. In thanks he named the hill Mount Delight, descended to the waiting party, and rode off in the direction of the water. He found an extensive

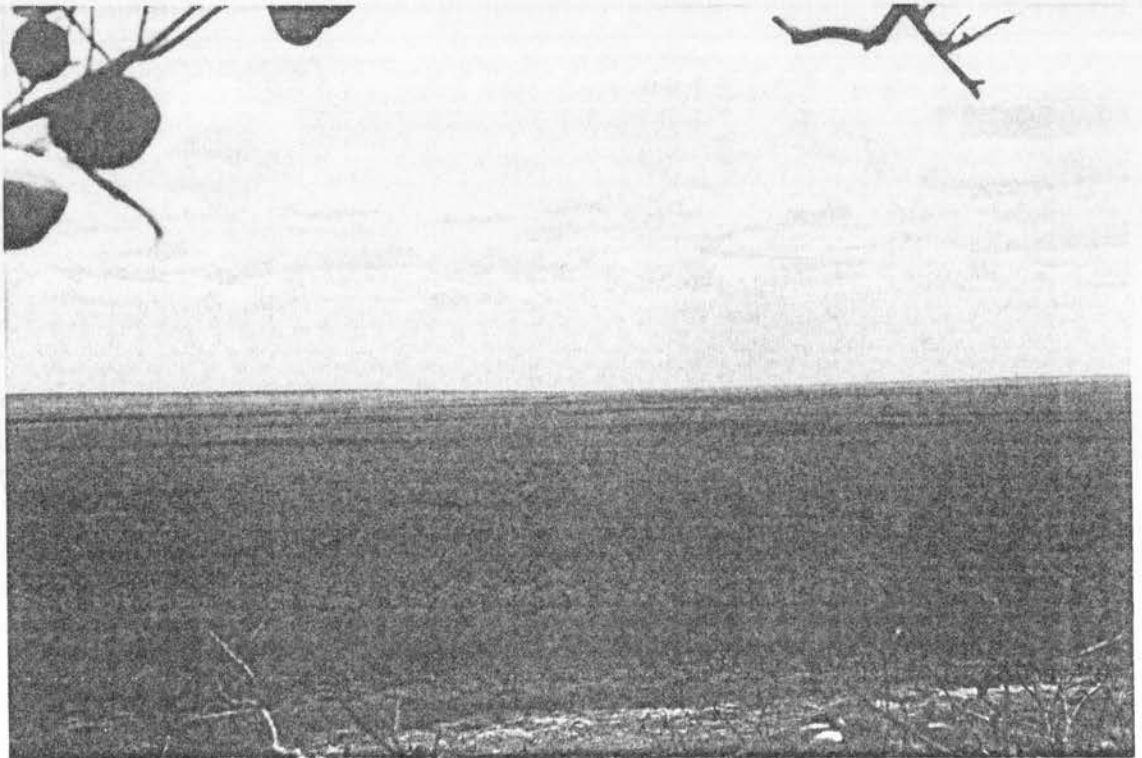
...lagoon, 200 yards wide, swarming with wildfowl, full of fish, fringed with the most luxuriant tropical vegetation I have ever seen in the Northern Territory; jungles, Leichhardt pines ... splendid soil and grasses - really a magnificent agricultural country.

The party remained at the lagoon for the rest of the day and all of the next, resting and regaining their strength. On arrival there, they had encountered a large group of Aborigines with up to one hundred men and fifty or sixty women, who ran to the opposite side of the lagoon, "gesticulating and yelling in a most frantic manner".⁸

⁶ S.A.P.P. No. 239 of 1884, op.cit., p.6.
⁷ ibid., p.13.
⁸ ibid.



PICTURE 1



PICTURE 2

When the Aborigines tried to come near their camp, the party fired rockets into the air. On the morning of the 28th, Lindsay and his party moved off, riding through "magnificent plains" which contained "excellent feed" and "young green grass"⁹ until they came to the coast at Castlereagh Bay, which at the river's mouth, Lindsay named Glyde's Inlet. On September 30th, Lindsay encountered some friendly Aborigines with whom he swapped tobacco for wild honey.¹⁰ One Aborigine, an old man, repeatedly used the word "Muckaninnie" which caused Lindsay to name the extensive area through which they had recently travelled, the Muckaninnie Plains [see Appendix 1].

On October 1st, the party began its journey homeward. Aborigines followed them and attacked them on the 4th between Darby Creek and Yarunga Creek.¹¹ By October 26th, the party had only 7lbs of flour and had been out of meat for two days, so they began killing their horses for food.¹² When they finally arrived near Katherine on November 1st, the party were all alive, but had only 12 horses left.

In the summary to his report, David Lindsay spoke very well of the Roper River, where auction blocks were offered for leasing soon after¹³, and of the Glyde's Inlet/Castlereagh Bay/Goyder

⁹ ibid.

¹⁰ ibid., p.14.

¹¹ ibid., p.15.

¹² ibid., p.19.

¹³ Duncan, R., op.cit., p.43.

River area which he described as "really magnificent, either for grazing or agriculture.... These magnificent plains extend forty miles to the sea coast".¹⁴ The river which ran through these plains was described as a "fine stream ... navigable for forty miles right through this magnificent country".¹⁵ He believed it was "destined at some future date to carry a large agricultural population, and will be the most important outlet for Eastern Arnhem Land".¹⁶

Lindsay thought for a while that the river was a new one, but eventually decided from the maps of Captain Cadell and his own, that it must be the Goyder as shown on the charts, a confusion which still exists on some maps today, and which caused its own set of problems for the pastoralists, their supply ships and navigator [see Map 8]. Of the Aborigines of the area, Lindsay said that they were "numerous and inclined to be hostile".¹⁷

The Report Lindsay wrote for the South Australian Government was not printed until February 8th, 1884, but as soon as he arrived at the Katherine on November 2nd, 1883, he wired the Government Resident, J.L. Parsons, a long report which appeared in the Northern Territory Times and Gazette on December 1st, 1883. The Castlereagh Bay/Glyde Inlet/Goyder River area was singled out with the adjective "magnificent": "Here we discovered magnificent

¹⁴ S.A.P.P. No. 239, op.cit., pp.20-21.

¹⁵ ibid., p.21.

¹⁶ ibid., p.13.

¹⁷ ibid., p.21.

pastoral and agricultural country and good sugar lands".¹⁸ His conclusion for his trip was that, "with the exception of a few patches, the whole country is excellent for grazing purposes".¹⁹ Within a month a pastoralist had begun to purchase the pastoral leases for this area, what was to become Florida Station.

John Arthur Macartney was born in Scotland on April 5, 1834 and arrived in Melbourne in January 1848. He spent several years working for lawyers and judges before prospecting for gold, at which he failed, but became well off by carting foodstuffs and hay for other miners and the government.²⁰ In 1849, his father, the Dean of Melbourne²¹, bought him a station on the Ovens River and by 1857 Macartney had entered into a partnership, which lasted for 27 years, with Edward Graves Mayne and headed off to Moreton Bay.²² From there, in January 1858, he travelled on to Rockhampton, where there were only three people and two buildings.²³ Macartney immediately set out to inspect local

¹⁸ N.T.T.G., Vol. IIII, No. 529, December 1st, 1883.

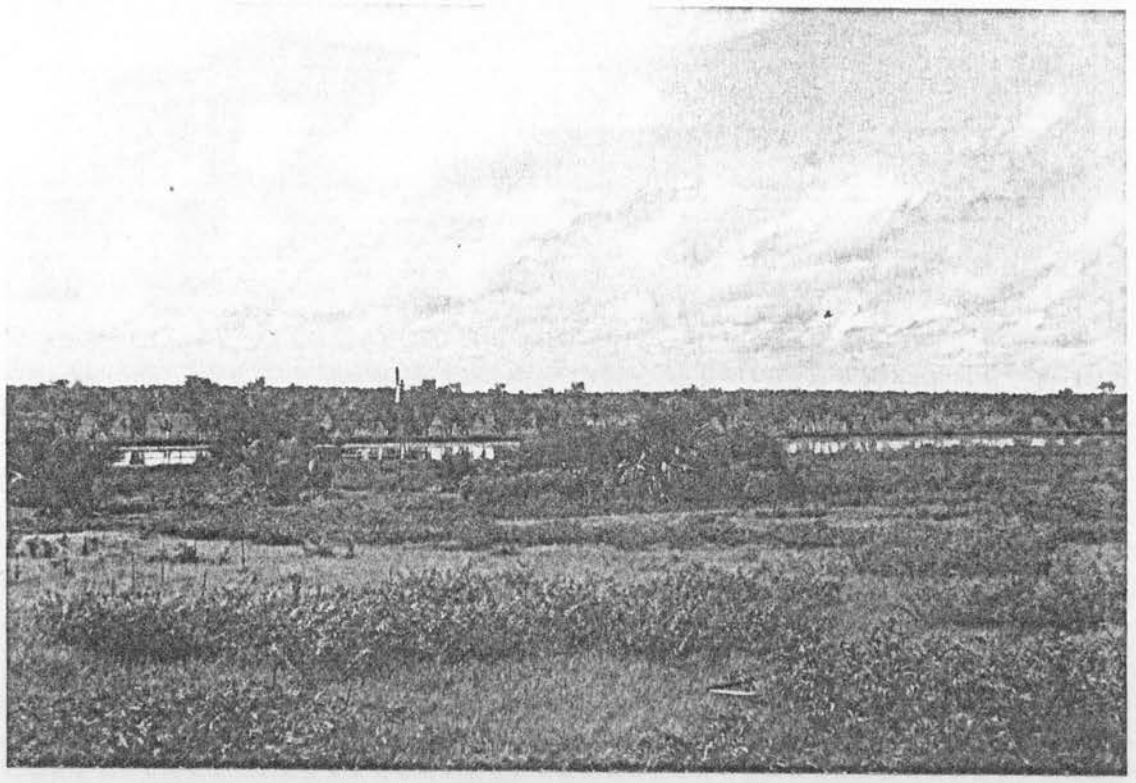
¹⁹ ibid.

²⁰ Macartney, J.A., 'Reminiscences of the Early Days' in The Daily Record, Rockhampton, June 3 & 4, 1909, pp.8-9.

²¹ Macartney, J.A., 'Rockhampton Fifty Years Ago' in The Capricornian, June 12, 1909, p.1.

²² Macartney, J.A. in The Daily Record, op.cit., p.10.

²³ Macartney, J.A. in The Capricornian, op.cit., p.2.



PICTURE 3



PICTURE 4

stations, happening to meet, on his first venture, the Fraser Brothers, who were out to avenge the murder by natives of their mother, sisters and brothers.²⁴ Quite quickly, he bought a sheep property called 'Waverley', and about 3000 ewes at between 7/- and 10/- each²⁵, but had difficulty in employing shepherds even though he offered as much as £4 a week. A goldstrike at nearby Carroona made it difficult to obtain any labour or any carriages.

During December 1858 Macartney took up the Glenmore Station and by the middle of the following year, was actively squatting on an area near the Isaacs and Mackenzie Rivers, Theresa Creek and Emerald Downs.²⁶ He bought land in Rockhampton, one block for £16, which some time after, he sold for £550.²⁷ His squatting interests, to say the least, flourished, as under the N.S.W. laws, a man could take up as much land as he chose without going near it or stocking it.²⁸ He also bought and sold properties, cattle and sheep [see Table 2].

Macartney, as a pioneer, explorer, being made a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and pastoralist often found "blacks very troublesome"²⁹, and in 1859 he took part in a successful hunt to avenge the murder of a shepherd called John Tarrant.³⁰ He

²⁴ Macartney, J.A. in The Daily Record., op.cit., p.13.

²⁵ ibid., p.15.

²⁶ ibid., pp.17-18.

²⁷ ibid., p.18.

²⁸ ibid.

²⁹ Macartney, J.A. in The Capricornia, op.cit., p.6.

boasted that he had only been attacked once in all his years in Australia. This occurred while he was at Florida Station near Glyde's Inlet, in the Northern Territory.³¹

The land Macartney took up and named Florida Station was the area near Mt Delight with which David Lindsay was so impressed. It is highly probable that Macartney had heard of Lindsay's Report and took up the Florida leases on its account, although he was not always pleased with it:

Mr Lindsay is extremely annoyed at Mr Macartney's statements in reference to his [Mr Lindsay's] report upon the country and states that he is quite prepared to prove the correctness of his reports when ever called upon to do so and will, if paid for his time, point out the position of the ranges described by him and prove the positions given to be perfectly correct.³²

It is difficult to exactly pinpoint the dates when Macartney first took up a pastoral lease in the North East Arnhemland. The Lands Office records published a map dated 26/7/84 with Adelaide lease numbers on the land blocks but the problem is, that at about this time all blocks were being given Palmerston lot numbers and these were the numbers gazetted by the Northern Territory Times and Gazette. As well, since the leases had been previously granted for this area and subsequently forfeited Macartney's leases' term began from the actual lease commencement date, not his date of purchase. Therefore, the lease would be gazetted

³⁰ Macartney, J.A. in The Daily Record., op.cit., p.20.

³¹ Macartney, J.A. in The Capricornian, op.cit., p.6.

³² N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.627, October 17th, 1885.

earlier than the first blocks he actually acquired, as their initial commencement date was earlier.

For example, leases 793-4-5-6- picked up at auction on 20/12/1883 appear on the Northern Territory Times for their first rent payments on December 20, 1884. Yet, leases purchased later appear for rent payments on September 6, 1884.

TABLE 2

BRISBANE, August, 1909

The following are the names of runs or stations that have been owned, either wholly or in partnership in Victoria, Queensland, and the Northern Territory of South Australia, by Mr J.A. Macartney:-

VICTORIA

1. Wondillygong - Ovens and Buckland Rivers
2. Warronley - Ovens River

QUEENSLAND

- | | | |
|------|--|-------------------|
| 1. | Waverley - Broad Sound, Port Curtis District | 1858 to 1896 |
| 2. | Glenmore - Fitzroy River, Port Curtis District | 1858 to 1860 |
| 3.) | Yatton and Clive - Leichhardt District, for | |
|) | 1 year | 1861 to 1862 |
| 4.) | Annandale - Isaacs River, Leichhardt | |
| 5.) | District | 1882 to 1896 |
| 6. | Carroora - Mackenzie River, Leichhardt Dist. | 1858 to 1861 or 2 |
| 7. | Columbia - Mackenzie River, Leichhardt Dist. | 1858 to 1861 or 2 |
| 8. | Country on Teresa Creek, Leichhardt Dist. | 1859 to 1862 |
| 10.) | Wolfgang and Huntley - Peak Downs, Leichhardt | |
| 11.) | District (sold to Gordon Sanderson) | 1859 to 1862 |
| 12. | Talagai - Peak Downs, Leichhardt District | 1880 to 1884 or 5 |
| 13. | Diamantina Lakes - Gregory North District | |
| | (sold to Sidney Kidman) | 1876 to 1909 |
| 14. | Manuka - Gregory North Dist. (sold to | |
| | Menzies, Nicol and Anderson) | 1876 to 1878 |
| 15. | Bladensburgh - Gregory North District | 1877 to 1896 |
| 16. | Tamworth - Burke District | 1877 to 1883 |
| 17.) | Landsborough Downs and Stamfordham - Gregory | |
| 18.) | North District | 1878 to 1882 |
| 19. | Hidden Valley - Burdekin R., Kennedy South | |
| | District | 1882 to 1896 |
| 20. | Yarrowmere - Lake Buchanan, Kennedy South | |
| | District | 1881 to 1896 |
| 21. | Amphitheatre - (now known as Llanrheidol) | |
| | Gregory North District | 1875 to 1878 |

Table 2 cont'd

22.	Escott - Nicholson and Gregory Rivers, Gulf of Carpentaria, Burke District	1882 to 1896
23.	St Helens)	
24.	Jolimount) - on the coast between Mackay	1861 to 1863
25.	Bloomsbury) and Bowen	

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

1.	Florida - 10,000 sq. miles on the Arafura Sea)
2.	The Pastures - 1,000 sq mls on Strangways River)
3.	Maude Creek - on the Katherine River) 1884 to
4.	Auvergue - 8,000 sq. mls on the Victoria and Baines Rivers) 1896)

1. At the present time he owns about 220 square miles of country on the sea coast and Baffle Creek between Bundaberg and Gladstone, and
2. Some grazing farms known as Newstead, near Ilfrucombe, on the Central Railway Line, twenty miles from Longreach.

Source: Macartney, J.A., in The Daily Record,
Rockhampton, June 1909, p.28

However, John Arthur Macartney probably bought his first pastoral leases for North East Arnhemland at auction on 20/12/1883. They were four blocks, numbers 793, 794, 795 and 796, totalling 1575 square miles at a rental of three shillings per square mile, a total of £235.5.0 per year. The leases commenced on the 1/1/1884 and were not declared stocked until 9/3/1888. Strangely, the rent should have been 6d. for the first seven years, and 2/6 for the 25 years of the lease and they should have been stocked within three years. Macartney did receive permission for the relaxation of stocking conditions for him under M.E.N.T. 773/82.³³

Early in 1884, he acquired 5096 square miles, leases 113 to 1121, 1123 to 1126, and 1130 to 1132, at the normal rental rate, totalling

³³ Australian Archives, Northern Territory Division, Lands Office Records.

£127.8.0³⁴, and 1900 square miles under leases 1077 to 1083 at a rental of £47.10.0 per year.³⁵ Leases 828, 829 and 830, land of 992 square miles at a total rental of £24.16.0, were transferred to Macartney in 1884.³⁶ In partnership with his old friend Edward Graves Mayne, Macartney leased three blocks below the Roper River, leases 538, 539, 540, 983 square miles, at 6/6 per square mile, with annual rents totalling £230.4.0³⁷ His final Northern Territory acquisition was the Augverne Station on the Victoria River, in 1887 or 1888, a total of 25 leases covering just over 3020 square miles, at 2/6 per square mile a year, and rental of £277.10.0.³⁸ [See Table 3 and Map 5].

It is arguable whether Macartney's investments in the Top End were purely speculative or whether he hoped to begin a long term profitable business venture. The low rentals, size of pasture and lax stocking conditions, allowed for great tracts of land to be leased, and a great variety of areas to be chosen from. As well, when Macartney decided to let a lease go, he did not, or was not able to, transfer or sell it, as all his leases were eventually cancelled for non-payment of rentals after he pulled out.

The first report of activity concerned with Macartney's Florida Station in Arnhemland, occurred on the last day of February,

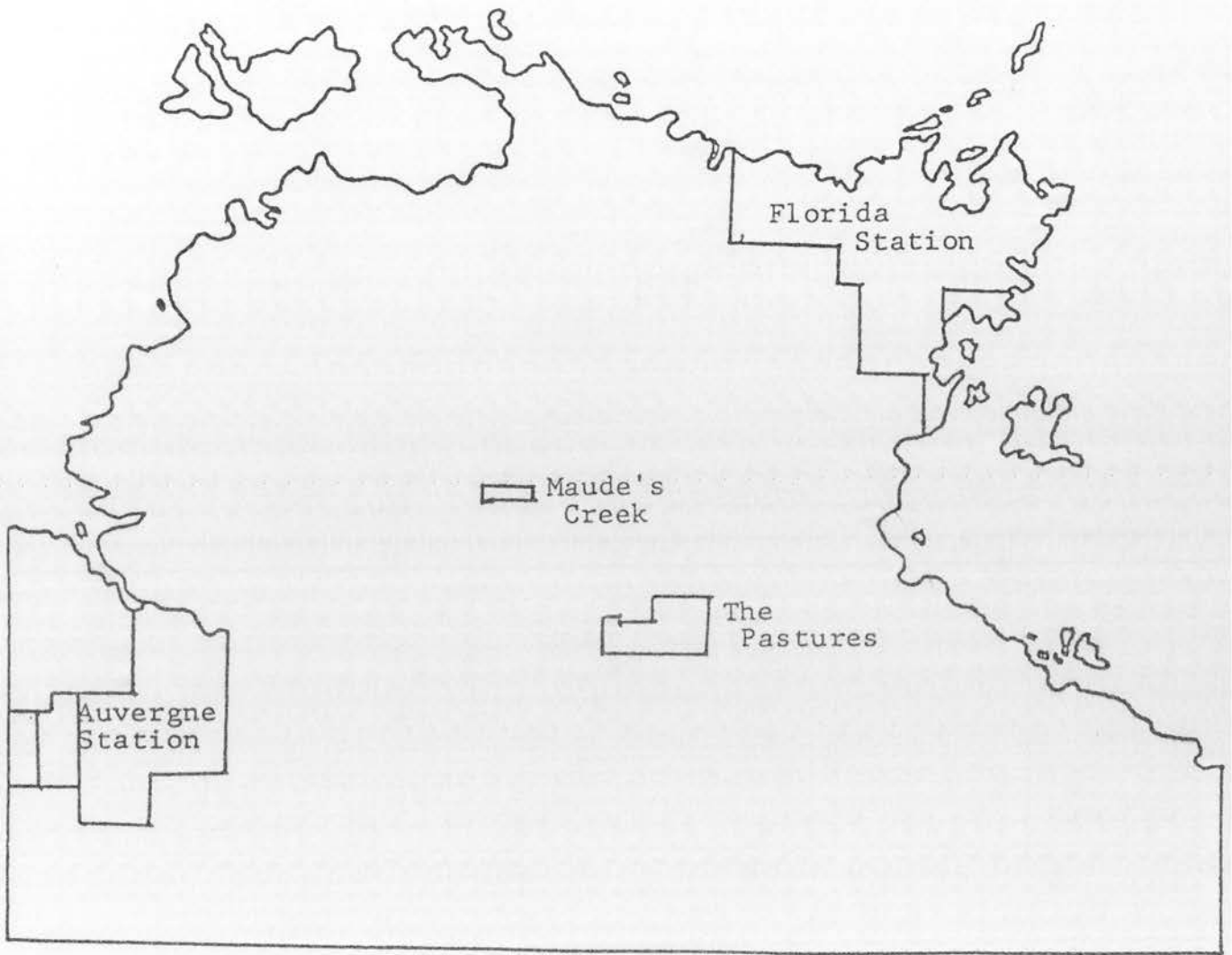
³⁴ N.T.T.G., Vol. xi, No.569, September 6th, 1884.

³⁵ N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.584, December 20th, 1884.

³⁶ Australian Archives, Northern Territory Division, Lands Office Records.

³⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol. xi, No. 594, February 28th, 1885.

³⁸ Australian Archives, Northern Territory Division, Lands Office Records.



MAP 5: Pastoral Land Held by John Arthur Macartney in the Northern Territory

TABLE 3

AND ARTHUR MCCKENRY
PATENT, LEASES AND RIGHTS DMC

NUMBER OF LEASE	LOCATION	ACRE IN 58 ACRES	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897
1077 (ea) (3)46 (3)42)	NORTH COAST	1900	OCTOBER 17, 0	OCTOBER 41, 10, 0	OCTOBER 49, 15, 0	NO RECORDS	OCTOBER 236, 5, 0	OCTOBER 182, 10, 0 (title lease dropped)	RECORDS MISSING							
1113 (ea) 1132	NORTH OF MOPEN RIVER	5086	OCTOBER 127, 8, 0	OCTOBER 127, 8, 0	OCTOBER 127, 8, 0	OCTOBER 127, 8, 0	OCTOBER 127, 8, 0									
793 (ea) 796	NORTH OF MOPEN RIVER	1515	(Sold at auction) 20/12/1883)	JANUARY 235, 5, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0	JANUARY 236, 3, 0
628 (ea) 810	NORTH OF MOPEN RIVER	992		JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0	JANUARY 26, 16, 0
538 (ea) 540	BELOW MOPEN RIVER	960		APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0	APRIL 226, 4, 0
1303	NEAR KATHERINE	97		OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0	OCTOBER 24, 5, 0
345 (ea) 348	NORTH OF MOPEN RIVER	540				OCTOBER 6, 10, 0	OCTOBER 42, 10, 0	OCTOBER 42, 10, 0 (lease No. 1413)	RECORDS MISSING	JULY 98, 15, 0	NO RECORDS	JULY 98, 15, 0	JULY 98, 15, 0	JULY 98, 15, 0	JULY 98, 15, 0	JULY 98, 15, 0
Verdeally 222, 221 223, 224	AMPCONE STATION	3020					JULY 227, 10, 0	OCTOBER 83, 0, 0 (lease No. 1413)	RECORDS MISSING	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0
723, 724	WEST OF VICTORIA RIVER	830					JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0 (lease No. 1413)	RECORDS MISSING	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0	JULY 21, 5, 0
4333	WEST OF VICTORIA RIVER	110								JANUARY 2, 15, 0	JANUARY 2, 15, 0	JANUARY 2, 15, 0	JANUARY 2, 15, 0	JANUARY 2, 15, 0	JANUARY 2, 15, 0	JANUARY 2, 15, 0
1440 and 1441	AMPCONE STATION	300														
TOTALS:			1444	1443	1446	1447	1448	1449	1450	1451	1452	1453	1454	1455	1456	1457
AREA (square miles)			4996	10543	12962	11272	16597	6717	2623	1750	260	487	987	890	890	650
RENTALS DMC			£132, 13, 0	£461, 3, 0	£721, 4, 0	£731, 19, 0	£2398, 0, 0	£92, 10, 0	£93, 10, 0	£132, 15, 0	£24, 0, 0	£83, 9, 0	£98, 9, 0	£88, 13, 0	£88, 13, 0	£88, 13, 0

1885, when the ketch 'Good Intent' having come from Normanton in Queensland, was seized by the sub-collector of customs, Mr Alfred Searcy.³⁹ The boat, its fourteen tons of cargo⁴⁰, and the landing at the Roper River, were confiscated for attempted smuggling; the owner of the boat was charged, as were Messrs Macartney, Mayne and Costello, who owned the goods. Subsequently, the ketch was forfeited and the goods sold, the owners of both the boat and the goods fined. Macartney was furious⁴¹, and asked that his fine be refunded, an application which was quickly refused. The incident caused a great deal of comment in the newspaper from the editor, readers and those charged.⁴² The paper itself came out strongly in favour of Macartney and demanded the setting up of police protection of the Roper and Macarthur Rivers as well as adequate mail services to those areas.⁴³

The 'Good Intent' was, according to Macartney, carrying flour, tea, sugar, salt, rice, clothing, tools, firearms, ammunitions, and

³⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol. xi, No. 594, February 28th, 1885, and for a full account Searcy, A., In Northern Seas, W.K. Thomas and Co., Adelaide, 1905, p.25.

⁴⁰ N.T.T.G., Vol. xi, No. 595, March 7th, 1885.

⁴¹ N.T.T.G., Vol. xi, No. 632, November 21st, 1885.

⁴² N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.594, February 28th, 1885.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.595, March 7th, 1885.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.632, November 21st, 1885.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.633, November 28th, 1885.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.634, December 5th, 1885.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.635, December 12th, 1885.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.638, January 2nd, 1886.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.646, February 27th, 1886.

⁴³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.632, November 21st, 1885.

galvanised iron for Macartney, Mayne, and Costello's stations⁴⁴, although Searcy believed it was running tobacco and spirits to make money from the drovers bringing cattle from Queensland.⁴⁵ In August 1884, Macartney had 8000 cattle on two stations near Bourketown and the strongest 3000 were selected to be sent to Florida.⁴⁶ The drovers were to go to the Roper and collect the "seized" stores and head for the proposed station.

While that case raged, Florida Station was founded in August 1885⁴⁷ and gradually built and stocked, but attempts to send stores from Port Darwin ended in failure when the captains could not find Macartney's station. The government steamer "Palmerston", purchased in early 1884, under the command of Captain Carrington, had been sent in July 1885 to explore and survey all the rivers from the Goyder to the Alligator, from their mouths to the head of navigation and to collect as much information regarding the soil, the coast and the natives.⁴⁸ The steamer had first sailed to the Roper River where Carrington met Macartney who had about 4000 head of cattle in the neighbourhood⁴⁹, which were to be moved to Florida. Macartney, hearing of the survey, asked the captain to take a ton of stores around to the Goyder River.

⁴⁴ ibid.

⁴⁵ Searcy, A., op.cit., p.25.

⁴⁶ N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.632, November 21st, 1885.

⁴⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.747, February 25th, 1888.

⁴⁸ S.A.P.P., No.55 of June 30th, 1884, Quarterly Report on the Northern Territory, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁹ S.A.P.P. No. 53 of December 1885, Half Yearly Report on the Northern Territory, p.5.

This Carrington agreed to do, loading on around 30 cwt, and sailing on July 6th, 1885.⁵⁰

Captain Carrington, following the charts made by Cadell and Lindsay, found many mistakes and inaccuracies. Carrington sailed up the Goyder and was not met by any of Macartney's station people, nor were any of their tracks visible.⁵¹ In fact, he had to take the stores away with him.⁵² He believed that the Goyder, so named by Lindsay, was not the Goyder marked on the map.⁵³ This river's proper course was not known until a flying missionary Rev. Keith Langford-Smith mapped it in 1931.⁵⁴ Carrington explored Lindsay's Glyde Inlet to about thirty miles of its mouth, giving only a brief description of the plains area. At both the Goyder and Glyde Inlet, Carrington had considerable trouble with the Aborigines, being speared in the arm at the first place, and being nearly surrounded by a group of armed Aborigines at the second place.⁵⁵ The Aborigines, he felt, were numerous and very hostile. Carrington had clearly found that the charts in use were mistaken for the Goyder areas as well as many of the rivers and streams to the west.⁵⁶

50 ibid.

51 Australian Archives. Ref: CRS A.1640 Item 85/1151 "Report on Coast from Roper River to Castlereagh Bay by Capt. Carrington", p.6.

52 ibid., p.7.

53 S.A.P.P., No. 53 of December 1885, op.cit., p.8.

54 Pike, G., Frontier Territory, Imperial Printers, Darwin, 1972, p.51.

55 N.T.T.G., Vol. xi, No.630, November 7th, 1885.

56 S.A.P.P., No. 53 of December 1885, op.cit., pp.9-11.

On August 27, the Collector of Revenues for the North Coast, Mr E.O. Robinson, met Captain Carrington, at Robinson's camps in the Bowen Straits. Robinson had been engaged to take tons of stations stores⁵⁷ and several Chinese to Macartney's station: "...Captain Carrington informed me that he had left the Goyder some three weeks and searched every creek and inlet near and could find no trace of Macartney, natives hostile...".⁵⁸ Carrington drew him a rough sketch of where he had been and searched. Robinson arrived at the Goyder several days later, found Carrington's camp, recognising the rubbish and boulli tins, hid Macartney's bananas, pineapples, apples and orange plants amongst the cypress pines and went up river, but found no trace of Macartney's party.⁵⁹ Indeed, on his trip up the river and through the tributaries, Robinson commented that "... the country is totally different to that described by Mr Macartney".⁶⁰ On September 12, Robinson withdrew from the coast returning the majority of the stores to Port Darwin. On Robinson's report, permission was urgently sought from Adelaide to send a launch to Arnhemland to search for Macartney.⁶¹ Before things were fully

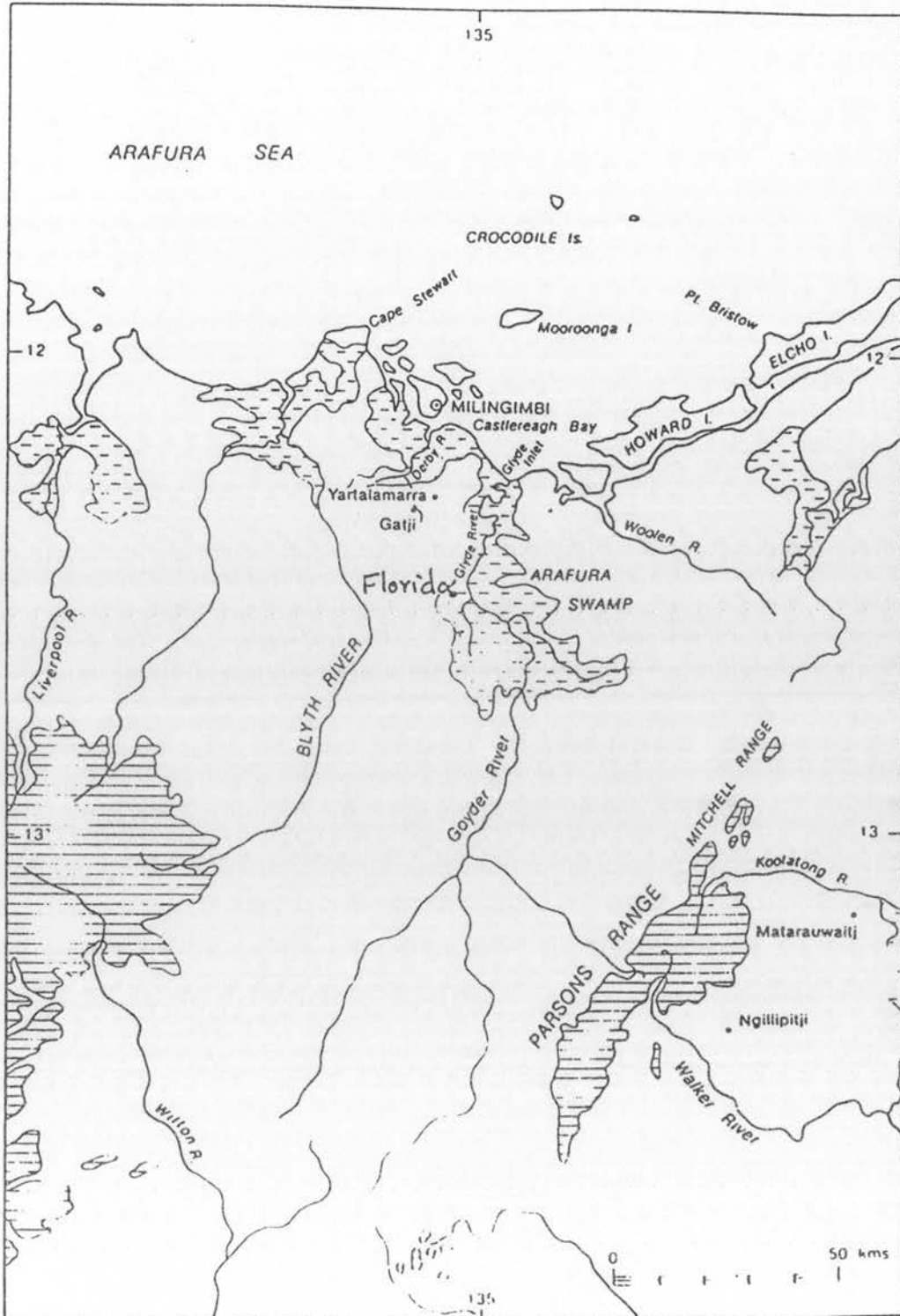
⁵⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.620, August 29th, 1885.

⁵⁸ Australian Archives. Ref: CRS A1640 Item 85/1151, "A Letter by Mr E.O. Robinson, 24th September 1885", p.1.

⁵⁹ ibid., pp.4-5.

⁶⁰ ibid., p.6.

⁶¹ Berndt, R.M. and C.H., Arnhemland - Its History and Its People, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1954, p.97.



MAP 6: Florida Station and Environs

Source: Thomson, D., Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land, Currey O'Neil, South Yarra, 1983. p.84

organised, Macartney arrived at the Roper River, because his men at the Florida Station were short of food.⁶²

It was decided that, obviously, the Goyder River was impractical but Glyde's inlet would have the necessary facilities for the landing of stores for Florida Station. In mid November 1885, Macartney himself, sailed from Darwin on the "Victoria" with a full cargo of Station stores⁶³ and a week later the "Elizabeth" had been chartered to take stores to the station. The trip of the "Victoria" was reported in detail in the newspaper⁶⁴, giving explicit sailing instructions for this area to all boat owners who might travel there. The trip up river through Glyde's Inlet left the boat only eight miles short of the station. Some of the passengers "visited the homestead and spoke very highly of the country, and the conditions of the stock; the cattle being very quiet and contented".⁶⁵

Also Captain Carrington had spoken to Macartney about his land at about this time, and then later "evinced an amount of satisfaction that warrants me in saying that for stock the country cannot be surpassed...".⁶⁶

⁶² S.A.P.P., No. 53 of December 1885, op.cit., p.1.

⁶³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.632, November 21st, 1885.

⁶⁴ N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.634, December 5th, 1885.

⁶⁵ ibid.

⁶⁶ Carrington, Capt., 'The Rivers of the Northern Territory of South Australia' in Proceedings of Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australia Branch, Vol.11, Second Session, 1886-7, p.71.

By the end of 1885 Macartney was running 6000 head of cattle on Florida Station and he reported good grazing country.⁶⁷ The Aborigines had attacked Macartney's camp in number and the manager of the station, Jenkins, told Alfred Searcy when he visited, the attitude towards the Aborigines:

"We don't allow them on our side of the stream, and if any venture across we simply fire and ask no questions".
 "Poor beggars!" I said.
 "Oh, yes," replied the manager, "that's what we all say. But, hang it all, when one carries his life in say, his left hand, it's only fair that he should be allowed to carry his revolver in his right....".⁶⁸

Mrs Dominic Daly wrote a similar description:

At Florida Station, on the Gulf of Carpentaria, a very wise precaution is taken with regard to natives; they are obliged to disarm before they come into close quarters; as a result,⁶⁹ none of the white men on the station have been injured.

Macartney himself was attacked by Aborigines on Florida, the only time he was ever attacked by them:

It was when I was out exploring the country that I had the encounter with the blacks. I had two white men and a black boy with me. One night - it was a beautiful, moonlit night - between nine and ten o'clock, the blacks came upon us; we fired at them, and they decamped. They returned just at dawn in greater numbers and prevented me from making any attempt to move until ten o'clock in the morning. My companions and I were kept walking around with firearms all that time, protecting our horses. Eventually, however they drew off. I may add that afterwards they were very troublesome to my men at

⁶⁷ S.A.P.P., No. 53 of December 1885, op.cit., p.3.

⁶⁸ Searcy, A., By Flood and Field, G. Bell and Sons Ltd, London, 1912, p.186.

⁶⁹ Daly, Mrs Dominic D., Digging, Squatting and Pioneering Life in the Northern Territory of South Australia, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, Fleet Street, 1887, pp.295-6.

the station, and several times attacked⁷⁰ them; in fact, they had to build a stockade for protection.

In May of 1886 Macartney's travelling manager John Watson reported that 2000 head of cattle and about 400 horses were being moved from Yarramere near Lake Buchanan in the Kennedy District of North Queensland to Maude Creek near Katherine⁷¹, where Macartney had recently leased 97 square miles. Grass and water were said to be extremely scarce at this and others of Macartney's stations⁷² and the stock began arriving in late August 1886.⁷³ The Government Resident reported a month later that Macartney had been moving some stock from Florida to country on the Victoria River, his Auvergne Station.⁷⁴

Certainly the cattle movements did not indicate that Macartney was pulling out of Florida for glowing accounts still reached Darwin:

The cattle are looking fat, and grass and water are abundant.... The country from Castlereagh Bay to Lake Ellen is described as looking green as leek...".⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Macartney, J.A. in The Capricornian, op.cit., p.7, and Winchcombe, F.E., As It Strikes Me, Gordon and Gotch, Sydney, 1916, pp.69-70.

⁷¹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.655, May 1st, 1886.

⁷² ibid.

⁷³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.672, August 28th, 1886.

⁷⁴ S.A.P.P., No. 54 of June 1886, Half Yearly Report on the Northern Territory, p.2.

⁷⁵ N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.676, September 25th, 1886.

and

...the cattle are looking in splendid order, and grass and water are plentiful.... A splendid garden has been established and abundance of all descriptions of vegetables including English potatoes, is now obtained at the station. Add to this a plentiful supply of fresh milk and butter and it is apparent that 'Florida'⁷⁶ is not the least comfortable station in the Territory.

Almost exactly a year later on October 31st, 1887, Macartney returned to Florida with Mr Hugh Herbert Percy, a Queenslander, who wrote at length to the Government Resident on December 19th, 1887 giving a description of the station and its possibilities.⁷⁷ The report was included in the Government Resident's yearly report, attracting a great deal of notice, yet being "uninterested testimony".⁷⁸ The report is drooling in it's praise of the area, the "beautiful rich soils carrying beautiful grass ... fit to grow anything"⁷⁹, and the area's potential for diversification especially in breeding, cattle export and sugar, rice and pineapple. The manager of the station, John Randell, and Percy believed that they could obtain two crushings of sugar per year compared to Queensland's one every eighteen months, and that they could grow full pineapples in five months compared to Queensland's eighteen months to two years.⁸⁰ A story even got around that "if you bury

⁷⁶ N.T.T.G., Vol.xiii, No.680, October 23rd, 1886.

⁷⁷ S.A.P.P., No. 53 of 1887, Government Resident's Report on Northern Territory for the Year 1887, pp.2-3.

⁷⁸ N.T.T.G.,. Vol.iii, No.737, December 17th, 1887.

⁷⁹ S.A.P.P., No. 53 of 1887, op.cit., p.3.

⁸⁰ N.T.T.G., Vol.iii, No.737, December 17, 1887.

a man on the Goyder, the soil's so good he'll come up a week before Resurrection Day".⁸¹

Macartney himself spoke of his station in the same terms:

I made a charming homestead there. I had very nice stores, built of cedar; a very fine house built of cypress pine; and splendid yards and garden. Chinamen kept the garden, and, by the way they cut the timber for the buildings and did the improvements for me.⁸²

On January 15, 1888, Mr W. Darcy Uhr travelled out to Florida on a timber hunting expedition. He stayed until the ninth of February examining the property and reporting in as glowing terms as Percy had done, of the cattle and agricultural potential of the site.⁸³ He also found some marvellous areas of cypress pine near the Blyth River:

I estimate that within a radius of one mile, from five to six hundred pines can be cut running from one to three feet in diameter.... There is good permanent water close to the pines, with⁸⁴ excellent feed for stock, and a fine site for a sawmill.

⁸¹ Hill, E., The Territory, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1977, p.414.

⁸² Macartney, J.A. in The Capricornian, op.cit., p.7.

⁸³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xiv, No.747, February 25th, 1888.

⁸⁴ N.T.T.G., Vol.xiv, No.747, February 25th, 1888 and Vol.xiv, No.748, March 3rd, 1888.

The last days of his stay at Florida were spent hunting for equipment and boats stolen by the Aborigines after they had beaten in the heads of two Malays, Ali and Salem, who had accompanied Uhr on his trip. Attempts to ambush the natives failed, the only source of revenge being the destruction of a native campsite.⁸⁵ Alfred Searcy, who was on the 'S.S. Active' when it picked up Darcy Uhr, received a sample of the cypress pine from Mr Randell which was "sound wood straight in the grain and remarkably free from knots". However, due to the ferocity of the Aborigines, no timber industry was seriously contemplated.⁸⁶

Quite remarkably, while these glowing reports were being written, published by the newspaper, and inserted in the Government Resident's report there was great mortality among the cattle at Florida Station.⁸⁷ Even before Macartney had returned from Florida, December 3rd, the cattle which had been in such 'magnificent' condition were gradually wasting away because of a mysterious complaint. Many of the beasts had been opened, no poison was found and the disease was reported as definitely not 'redwater',⁸⁸ though the symptoms were quite similar.

'Redwater', a wasting disease, first appears in the report of the Government Resident in 1886⁸⁹, as one of two factors which could

⁸⁵ N.T.T.G., Vol.xiv, No.748, March 3rd, 1888.

⁸⁶ Searcy, A., In Australian Tropics, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd, London, 1907, p.185.

⁸⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xiii, No.732, November 12th, 1887.

⁸⁸ ibid.

⁸⁹ S.A.P.P., No. 53 of December 1886, Half Yearly Report on the

hinder satisfactory results in the pastoral industry, the other was the destruction of cattle by Aborigines. 'Redwater' was described as the 'bete noir'⁹⁰ of drovers from Queensland, though the cause of the many cattle dying on the trip from Queensland to the Northern Territory and later in the Northern Territory, was attributed to some poisonous plants. The Stock Inspector's report⁹¹ cited the main area of redwater as being around the Roper River, where the grasses were poor and the area extremely dry. He also stated that ticks had been troublesome and were spreading rapidly. In the Government Resident's Report of 1887, the locale of redwater was defined, and the disease was stated as not causing the anxiety of last year.⁹² As well, "ticks were not as troublesome".⁹³ The stock inspector failed to make the connection and it was not until the end of 1894 that scientists were proving conclusively that 'redwater' was caused by ticks.⁹⁴ Meanwhile 'redwater', caused by a change of climate, or different pastures, or poison plants or bad water or burnt out pastureland was being blamed for huge cattle losses suffered over many years.⁹⁵

Northern Territory to December 31st, 1886, p.2.

90 ibid., p.3.

91 ibid., p.3.

92 S.A.P.P., No. 53 of 1887, op.cit., p.4.

93 ibid., p.4.

94 N.T.T.G., Vol.xx, No.1104, December 28th, 1894.

95 S.A.P.P., No.28 of 1888, Government Resident's Report on Northern Territory for the year 1888, pp.1-4, and Bauer, F.H., Historical Geography etc., op.cit., pp.116-118.

The second threat to the future of the pastoral industry was seen as the Aborigines. All outrages by the Aborigines against Europeans and Chinese were fully reported in the newspaper, and sometimes the Government Resident's Report:⁹⁶

In the inside country, where the pastoralists are forming stations, the tribes are hostile and treacherous and murderous ... they resent the intrusion of the white men into their country, and whenever they can, they lay in ambush and fling a spear. The intelligence which is constantly coming in is of cattle spearing, sullen animosity, and wherever safe opportunity occurs, white men are murdered and eaten.⁹⁷

This report goes on to advance a series of possible solutions including:

- (a) inducing the inland tribes to emigrate to Melville Island;
- (b) setting up a reserve on each tribe's land;
- (c) that tribes on a reserve which wish to move, must do so on a date and route to be fixed;

96

- N.T.T.G., Vol.i, No.17, February 27th, 1874.
- N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.573, October 4th, 1884.
- N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.637, December 26th, 1885.
- N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.653, April 17th, 1886.
- N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.654, April 24th, 1886.
- N.T.T.G., Vol.xi, No.689, August 7th, 1886.
- N.T.T.G., Vol.xiv, No.746, February 18th, 1888.
- S.A.P.P., No.53 of June 1884. Quarterly Report on Northern Territory June 5th, 1884, p.2.
- S.A.P.P., No.53B of November 1884, Quarterly Report on Northern Territory November 11th, 1884, p.2.
- S.A.P.P., No.53 of December 1884, Quarterly Report on Northern Territory December 31st, 1884, p.10.
- S.A.P.P., No.53 of December 1885, Half-Yearly Report on Northern Territory to December 31st, 1885, p.3 and p.25.
- S.A.P.P., No.53 of December 1886, Half-Yearly Report on Northern Territory to December 31st, 1886, pp.7-8.

97

- S.A.P.P., No.53 of 1887, Government Resident's Report on Northern Territory for the Year 1887, p.17.

- (d) that normally the carrying of firearms by blacks would be prohibited; and
- (e) that an Act⁹⁸ should be passed concerning their Government.

Nothing was done about the Aborigines and cattle problem, and by the 1894 report, 'redwater' was only a minor consideration in comparison to the deprivations committed by the natives.⁹⁹

Neither the Aboriginal hostility, or 'redwater' led to a great falling off of the amount of land leased or the area of land declared stocked. Indeed, in 1889, the local markets in beef for the first time, was entirely supplied by the Territory.¹⁰⁰ Mr J.A. Macartney sold 128 'fats' from his Auvergne Station on the Victoria River, whose "condition and general appearance spoke volumes for the country which this gentleman owns".¹⁰¹ Florida Station, as described by its manager, Mr John Waters was doing extremely well. The Government Resident had written to the principal stockowners in the Territory and at Macartney's station there was an "abundance of nice grass, the cattle and horses thrive well", and "the whole run consists of rich flats and poor ridges, and is a very good breeding station". There were 1,700 branded cattle on the five thousand square miles still held and Watson believed it was capable of carrying 25,000 head. The improvements to the

⁹⁸ ibid.

⁹⁹ S.A.P.P., No.24 of 1894, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for the Year 1894, p.12.

¹⁰⁰ S.A.P.P., No.28 of 1889, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for the Year 1889, p.2.

¹⁰¹ ibid.

station were far in advance of the present requirements.¹⁰² Indeed, Nicholas Waters, the Inspector of Stock reported that the 1890 season was the best on record for station holders and that Florida and other stations had stock which was "healthy and in first class condition".¹⁰³

In 1890 a new Lands Act was passed and the pastoral provisions were further liberalised in regard to tenure which was increased to forty two years, and 6d. per square mile for the first seven years, 1/- for the next seven years, and 2/- for the third seven years at the end of which rentals were deduced by property evaluation. The stocking provisions were eased to one head of cattle per square mile for the first three years and two head inside seven years. Finally, the Government reserved resumption rights with compensation for improvements but on expiry of the lease, all improvements became the property of the Crown without compensation.¹⁰⁴ The first effect of the new Act was a substantial drop in the area of land forfeited and land declared stocked. A large number of pastoralists immediately threw in their old leases and secured the same lands at a lower rental, e.g. 5051 square miles of William Forrest's used to cost £721.15.0 per year but now was £127.2.0.¹⁰⁵ Many pastoralists in that

¹⁰² S.A.P.P., No.28 of 1890, Government Resident's Report on Northern Territory for the Year 1890, p.4.

¹⁰³ ibid., p.28.

¹⁰⁴ S.A.P.P., No. 181 of 1891, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for the Year 1891, p.1, and Bauer, F.H., Historical Geography etc., op.cit., p.152.

¹⁰⁵ S.A.P.P., No.158 of 1892, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for the Year 1892, p.1.

year, and subsequent years, began to rationalise their approaches to land ownership and hold their best land under lease and began relinquishing their poorer leases. In effect, these pastoralists held the same amount of land as no application came in for the poorer land where there was usually no permanent water.¹⁰⁶ This is the practice Macartney seemed to be following, especially on his Western leases.

The Government Resident's Reports for 1893, carries on two lines a report that Florida Station had been abandoned during the early part of the previous year.¹⁰⁷ The newspaper fortunately carried a fuller account.¹⁰⁸ In mid-April, John Watson was reportedly heading out to Florida to remove the stock buildings and general station plant, a task which took until December when the stock was reported heading to Macartney's Auvergne Station after the Station buildings had been pulled down and all the valuable plant and sundries had been shipped out on the steamer 'Adelaide'.¹⁰⁹

By late January 1893, Watson and a stockman named McKay were both rumoured murdered near Florida Station as they were mustering and bringing on the stragglers from the main body of the stock.¹¹⁰ Strangely, the paper reported that the truth of the

¹⁰⁶ S.A.P.P., No.181 of 1891, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for the Year 1891, p.1, and Bauer, F.H. Historical Geography etc., op.cit., pp.152-154.

¹⁰⁷ S.A.P.P., No.53 of 1893, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for the Year 1893, p.12.

¹⁰⁸ N.T.T.G., Vol.xvi, No.963, April 15th, 1892.

¹⁰⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xix, No.998, December 16th, 1892.

¹¹⁰ N.T.T.G., Vol.xix, No.1004, January 27th, 1893.

rumour was strengthened by the fact that "a man who died of thirst at Burnett Station and the man who was speared by blacks at Florida Station were brothers".¹¹¹ However, a week and a half later the paper was pleased to hear "that the niggers have not suppressed the plucky John".¹¹²

Though official reports give no stated reasons why Florida was abandoned, by implication, the reason must be the hostility of the Aborigines. Yet Macartney gave redwater as his reason for leaving the area.

...Some disease got into my herd on this country, which was 200 miles from the nearest settlement, on the Roper River, and I had to abandon it.¹¹³

He denies however, that the hostility of the Aborigines forced him out.

The blacks were always prowling about disturbing the cattle, and making it unsafe for the hands to venture away from the homestead without a weapon. They did not, however, kill very many of my cattle.¹¹⁴

Gidgee Symes, who worked at Florida Station in the 1880's, had told "it was great cattle fattening country, but that wild blacks had forced abandonment of the holding".¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ ibid.

¹¹² N.T.T.G., Vol.xix, No.1006, February 10th, 1893.

¹¹³ Macartney, J.A. in The Capricornian, op.cit., pp.6-7.

¹¹⁴ ibid., p.7.

¹¹⁵ Willey, K., Eaters of the Lotus, Jacaranda, 1964, p.153.

Territory folklore however favours the hostility of the Aborigines as the major reason for Florida being abandoned. Gordon Buchanan, son of the pioneer, drover and explorer Nat Buchanan wrote that "... hostile blacks and sour unsuitable country wiped out most of the cattle and scattered the remainder fair and wide...".¹¹⁶

Ernestine Hill writes:

Alone among the Australian blacks, the Arnhem Landers throughout a century have refused the white mans rum and tobacco, defied the laws of his making, and, with a fierce patriotism, preserved their race intact. Tribes apart, feared and hated by the semi-civilised natives of mission and settlement farther south, they keep their country still....¹¹⁷

In her sprawling saga of Australia's Tropic north, "The Territory", Hill describes the life of the station hands at Florida as:

...hell's delight. Terror stalked the mangroves, in constant slaughter of the Malays, and blacks all around. The white man lived one day at a time, never without their nine-inch colts. There was a French chef in the kitchen Louis Fayne, making vol-au-vent of liver and lights and bouillabaisse of barramundi.... Florida was deserted in a hurry within two years, the white men 'borderline and over', and most of it's cattle killed by blacks.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Buchanan, G., Packhorse and Waterhole, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1933, p.100.

¹¹⁷ Hill, E., The Great Australian Loneliness, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1963, p.217.

¹¹⁸ Hill, E., The Territory, op.cit., p.176.

Grenville Pike's knockabout story of the Territory "Frontier Territory", describes the Station's demise:

Chinese gardeners were speared, cattle were speared by the hundred, and the majority went wild. Many were taken by¹¹⁹ crocodiles which swarmed in the rivers and swamps.

Bill Harney's description is less intense.

All this area, for thousands of square miles, had been taken up as a cattle property, and looking over the big lagoons and swamp plains around, with the smoke of the aborigines rising above the trees in the distance, had told him a little of the hardships they were encountering within this area. Markets were too distant and nomadic¹²⁰ aboriginal hunters of cattle were making herds restless.

Malcolm Douglas' book "Across the Top", which he also made as a film, continues the idea that "because of strenuous opposition from the Aborigines the station was abandoned after a few years."¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Pike, G., Frontier Territory, Imperial Printers, Darwin, p.51.

¹²⁰ Harney, W.E., Life Among the Aborigines, Rigby, Adelaide, 1980, pp.139-140.

¹²¹ Douglas, M., Across the Top, Rigby, Adelaide, 1976, p.44.

A STORY¹ TOLD BY JACKY MACE²

The balanda lived at Murwangi down near the "Dog", (a sacred hill of the Ganalbingu Clan. It's real name is Djalkulnura) near a billabong. They were running cattle, and doing well.

Pretty soon, word got around about the cattle to Yolngu in various areas, because the Yolngu who were working for Billy Farrar and reckoned it was the best meat they'd ever tasted.

Rumour spread as far as Banambarrnura, Mulana, Dhamala, Yathalamara, Burgumara (near the Manbirri crossing), Dununura and towards Gatji.

So, Yolngu at Gatji decided to get some of this meat. They arrived at Murwangi, speared a cow, ate it and decided that the meat was definitely good. And so, on it went, with Yolngu spearing many cattle and eating them.

Finally, stockmen at Murwangi realised their numbers of cattle were down, and so went looking for the "strays". They found that the fences were intact; but later on, found remains of many cattle. They reported this to Billy Farrar, who decided that the

¹ This story was collected by the author on May 17, 1983 at Gatji.

² Jacky Mace is a member of the Wulaki tribe. He is an older man who has spent a great deal of time living in Maningrida.

obvious solution was to kill these Yolngu who were stealing Murwangi cattle.

So, next morning, the stockmen set out, and did find and shoot the Yolngu thieves. Those Yolngu who managed to escape, spread the news that the stockmen were killing Yolngu for cattle stealing. So, the Yolngu who were left, fought back, but were no match for the stockmen; as well as two balanda with them.

At Banambarrnura, these men went again in search of Yolngu. While there, they tried to shoot a guy from Yathalamara. (But he dived in the water and imitated a comorant so they didn't get him).

Next day, they went to Mulana and killed Yolngu there. From there, they went back to Murwangi.

Next morning they started at Nangalala and ended up at Mukm.

At Mukm, they found a little boy. His mother had been shot in the leg and had left her son under some bush grapes while she went for help. She didn't realise that she also left a trail of blood. (She got to the jungle and to Gidimirr, at the pond there, she hid among the tall grass.)

Anyway, the stockmen asked Billy Farrar what to do about the boy. "Shall we kill him?" "No, leave him". So, they left him;

also gave him biscuits, food, matches and tobacco. "This is for you to give to your mother when she picks you up".

After that, they went through Manigurrmili and killed people at Dununura and then went to Gatji. From there, they went to Mirki where they shot down Yolngu from trees like flying foxes.

After that, they went back to Murwangi.

CHAPTER 2

ARAFURA STATION

The second attempt to set up a pastoral station in North Eastern Arnhemland occurred officially in 1903 when an English company, the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Company leased almost 19,250 square miles on the North East Coast, the same land Macartney held as Florida Station, but now known as Arafura Station. Another link with Macartney was that at his property Auvergne, on the Victoria River, a neighbour was Joseph Bradshaw, of the then 4,800 square miles run Bradshaw's Run, an instigator and the first manager of Arafura Station. Joseph Bradshaw variously described as a "man with the vision of a Cecil Rhodes, but not the luck"¹, "as one of the North's greatest 'nation builders'"², and as a "colourful figure who strode the Territory stage in the rough pioneering days"³, had been a sailor and first mate under sail with the British India Line before obtaining his Master's ticket in steam.⁴ He believed that the Territory was best colonised and serviced by sea⁵ and to prove his point in the twenty five or so years around the Territory, he owned or operated a ketch the "Gemini" sometimes called the "Twins", a steamer, "Red Gauntlet", a steam yacht the "White Star", and a ketch, the "Defender". Certainly his approach was one of the bolder attempts to enhance the North of Australia.

¹ Wiley, K., op.cit., p.37.

² Makin, J., The Big Run, Rigby, Adelaide, 1970, p.93.

³ Pike, G., op.cit., p.78.

⁴ Stewart, A., The Green Eyes Are Buffaloes, Landsdowne, Melbourne, 1969, p.162.

⁵ Hill, E., The Territory, op.cit., p.244.

In early 1891, Bradshaw took up three million acres in Western Australia between Wyndham and Derby near the Prince Regent River⁶, and upon inspecting the country he regarded portions of it as "magnificent country for pastoral pursuits".⁷ His intention was to run sheep on this property and because of the problems with livestock in the Northern Territory, and a tax on bringing sheep into Western Australia, he hoped to obtain these in the west.⁸ By May 1892, the sheep were reported as doing "remarkably well"⁹ and Bradshaw was advertising in the Northern Territory for breeding cattle¹⁰, largely because there was no tax on these entering Western Australia. Not being afraid to express his opinion, Bradshaw was soon calling for the ports of both Northern Territory and Western Australia to be free ports and also that his Western Australian sheep should be able to be shipped to these ports as they were disease free.¹¹

Receiving no satisfaction, Bradshaw brought 3,000 head of cattle to the Prince Regent area by ship in late 1893.¹² However, in early 1894, he decided to abandon that area still complaining

⁶ N.T.T.G., Vol.xvi, No.903, February 20th, 1891.

⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xvi, No.915, May 15th, 1891.

⁸ N.T.T.G., Vol.xvi, No.937, October 16th, 1891.

⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xvi, No.969, May 27th, 1892.

¹⁰ ibid.

¹¹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xvi, No.987, September 30th, 1892.

¹² N.T.T.G., Vol.xix, No.1045, November 10th, 1893.

bitterly about the stock tax, and purchased a property of 4,800 square miles in the Victoria River District, on which he intended to run more sheep.¹³

Sheep breeding had been tried in the Victoria River area on an experimental basis by Messrs Goldsbrough, Mort and Company, who ran the famous station Victoria River Downs, and they proved that both the climate and pastures were well suited to sheep breeding and wool growing.¹⁴ Yet they abandoned the project. Their reasons being the expenses involved in sheep herding and in the protection of shepherds and stock from the Aborigines.¹⁵ By coincidence, good fortune, or good management, Bradshaw was able to purchase the sheep from the defunct experiment, 3,858 sheep and marked lambs and 700 lambs, on January 19th, 1894, for his new property.¹⁶ The sheep were reported in July as doing splendidly¹⁷ and in the next year, as doing well, despite there being fewer lambs than expected, the reason being their shift to Bradshaw's Run during the lambing season.¹⁸

¹³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xx, No.1057, February 2nd, 1894.

¹⁴ S.A.P.P., No.53 of 1893, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for the Year 1893, p.3.

¹⁵ ibid.

¹⁶ ibid.

¹⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xx, No.1079, July 6th, 1894.

¹⁸ S.A.P.P., No.24 of 1894, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for the Year 1894, p.3.

An interesting character who worked for Bradshaw in Western Australia, on the Victoria River and later managed the Eley Station, was Anneas Gunn, husband of the famed author of "We of the Never Never". He moved a lot of the sheep from the Victoria River and he outlined the station's policy towards the Aborigines: "It has been the principle of this station to keep blacks at a respectable distance morning, noon and night, and the system has so far worked well".¹⁹

On the Western Australian property there was only one report of trouble with the Aborigines²⁰, but in mid 1894, Bradshaw was having a great deal of difficulty. Two white men, John Mulligan, and G. Ligar, and three Queensland natives were carting rations to the Victoria River area when the three Aboriginal lads went to an Aboriginal camp to stay the night as was their custom. For some unknown reason, the Aborigines either enticed or joined the locals in an attack on the two white men.

One of the spears (a murderous weapon made of the blade of a stolen sheep shears) struck Mulligan in the thigh, whilst Ligar was wounded in the back with a stone headed spear which penetrated the lung, and also with a glass headed spear, entering the right²¹ side of the face and penetrating to the left cheek bone.

They were repeatedly attacked for three days, the natives being continually repulsed by firearms, despite the fact that one of the Queensland boys used a rifle. Finally, they managed to get to

¹⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xix, No.1045, November 10th, 1893.

²⁰ N.T.T.G., Vol.xvi, No.950, January 15th, 1892.

²¹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xx, No.1075, June 15th, 1894.

John Arthur Macartney's Auvergne Station for help. Troopers soon arrived and a party of eighteen Europeans hunted the Aborigines, only capturing a few old women, but recovering most of the stolen goods. In early July, Bradshaw and a party heading for Darwin, were attacked and one of his Aboriginal boys was killed, while Bradshaw himself narrowly escaped. As for the Aborigines, they were "securely ambushed in the rank dense grass".²²

Joseph Bradshaw's enterprise continued to thrive and expand. In July, 1894, fifty bales of his wool was brought to Darwin, intended to be sent South²³, and in mid 1895 he began his first venture into the cattle industry of the Northern Territory with the purchase of 900 head of cattle and some horses from the abandoned Willeroo Station²⁴, at an extremely low price.²⁵ The station remained quiet, with little interference from the Aborigines, the stock were thriving and the possibilities for horses and horse breeding were described as exceedingly good.²⁶ As seems so often the case disaster struck by December when ninety percent of the last lambing was lost and many grown sheep were reported dead, owing to poisonous plants.²⁷ Fortunately for Bradshaw it was only a temporary setback. By mid 1896, his cattle had settled

²² N.T.T.G., Vol.xx, No.1079, July 6th, 1894.

²³ N.T.T.G. Vol.xx, No.1082, July 20th, 1894.

²⁴ N.T.T.G. Vol.xx, No.1139, August 30th, 1895.

²⁵ N.T.T.G. Vol.xx, No.1138, August 23rd, 1895.

²⁶ N.T.T.G. Vol.xx, No.1144, October 4th, 1895.

²⁷ N.T.T.G. Vol.xx, No.1153, December 6, 1895.

down and were increasing, his sheep looked well, his horses were in good condition and he hoped to be breeding racing horses for future racing seasons.²⁸

In 1896, there was an extraordinary boom in the amount of land applied for, 110,875 square miles. The South Australian Government's Act No. 649 of 1896 had suddenly changed the face of land acquisition. The Act enabled any lessee to obtain a grant of a mineral concession or concessions over land held.²⁹ Of the few conditions associated with the Act, the major bond was to spend £1000 per year in paying actual wages to prospectors or in permanent development work on each block.³⁰ Of the huge amount of land applied for, 81,793 square miles were covered under that article of the Act and a staggering limit of five blocks of 1,000 square miles each was allowed per person.³¹ [See Map 7]. The Government Resident noted the whole affair with great regret and denied it as being indicative of any substantial progress in the pastoral industry.³² Indeed, there was a decrease of 9,000 square miles in the area declared stocked and within three years most of the speculative land applied for, had never seen stock and was forfeited.³³

²⁸ N.T.T.G. Vol.xxii, No.1172, April 17th, 1896.

²⁹ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1896, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for 1896, p.1.

³⁰ ibid.

³¹ Bauer, F.H. Historical Geography etc., op.cit., p.154.

³² S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1896, op.cit., p.1.

³³ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1897, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for 1897, p.9, and S.A.P.P. No.45 of 1898, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory, 1898,

One of the first concessions to be taken up under the Act, belonged to the Anglo-French Goldfields of Australasia Ltd,³⁴ who had a party of men prospecting near the Alligator Rivers but by the end of 1896 their lease had been discontinued.³⁵ In June of that year a 20,000 square mile lease had been applied for under the special mineral rights in the name of Joseph Bradshaw. In this transaction, he was working on behalf of an English firm. The newspaper commented:

A few more such applications and there will be no waste lands left. Then the handful of plungers who have them all might³⁶ amalgamate interests and claim the whole blessed country.

The land was along the Gulf coast to Blue Mud Bay, the former Florida property. The paper added a month later:

According to report money doesn't count with them; [The English Company] ... they are in fact prepared to bleed freely for the mutual good of themselves and this fair young country of ours. We shall see, and by their works reckon up the possible³⁷ chances the country has in common with the capitalists.

A similar area north of the Roper was forfeited during 1898, 21,000 square miles.³⁸

p.1.

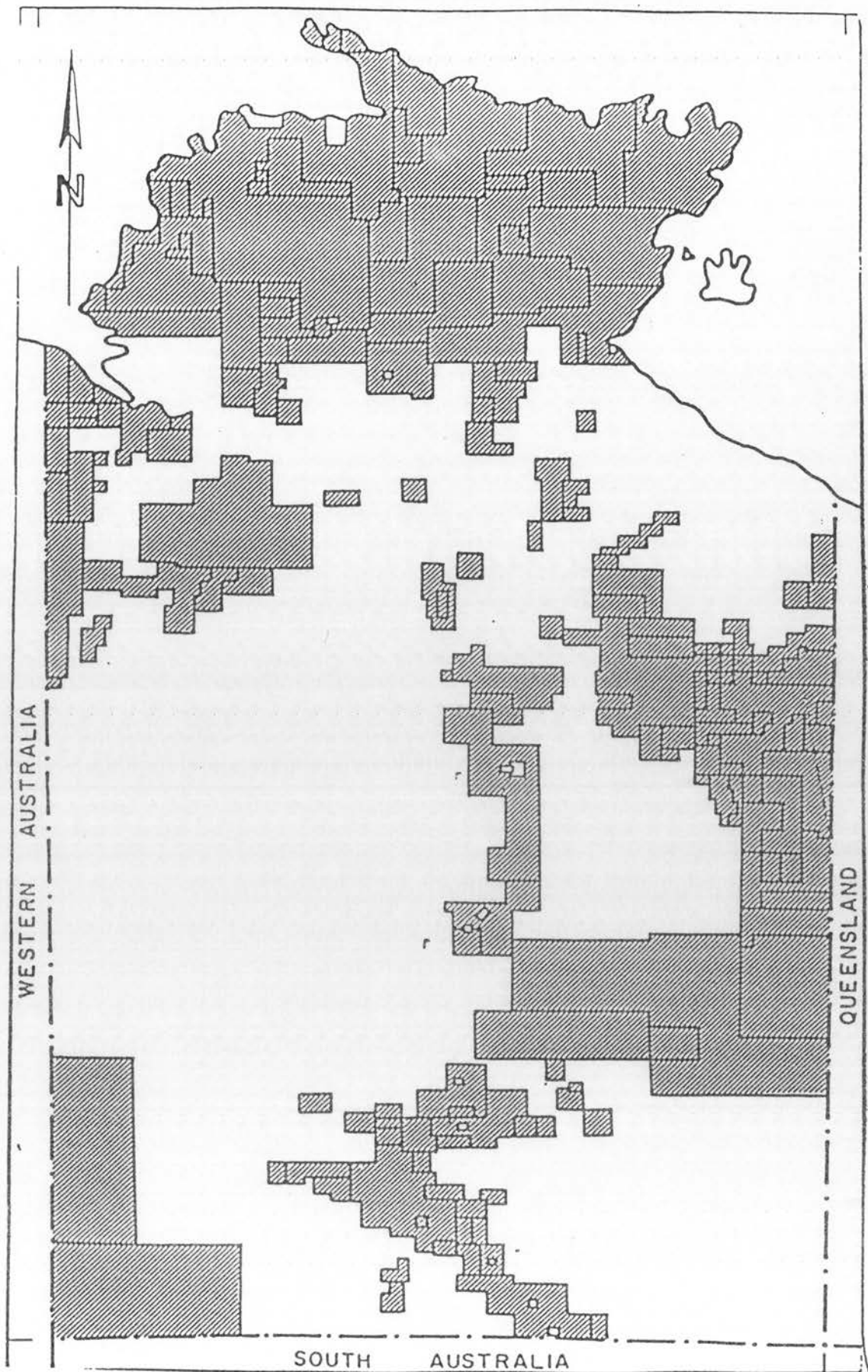
³⁴ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1896, op.cit., p.3.

³⁵ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1897, op.cit., p.3.

³⁶ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1182, June 26th, 1896.

³⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1185, July 17th, 1896.

³⁸ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1898, Government Resident's Report for the Northern Territory, 1898, p.6.



MAP 7: Northern Territory Pastoral Leases and Claims, 1896

Source: Bauer, F.H. *op.cit.*, p.156

Obviously on a commission from this company and just as obviously looking to his own financial advancement Bradshaw also quickly had a large slice of his Victoria River lease put under the special mineral rights conditions.³⁹ A Mr Aikman and his party went to that property to spend two or three months prospecting for different minerals including coal, which was believed could be found in large quantities. During the expedition Aikman believed he had found ozocerite, a wax-like fossil paraffin used for candles and insulation. Years later, a gentleman from Melbourne, Dent Oswald, travelled to England on behalf of a syndicate set up to develop these ozocerite deposits.⁴⁰ As Bradshaw stated:

The necessities of the ever growing demand call for the opening up of new fields, and if the deposits of the mineral in the Victoria River district prove as extensive as is hoped, the possibilities are simply enormous.⁴¹

That is as far as the venture ever proceeded.

Within a few years of settling in the Territory, Bradshaw had become a successful pastoralist, horse breeder, and entrepreneur, and he most certainly continued in that vein.

He proceeded to import rams from the Southern colonies⁴², send his wool clip south, and decided to bring Arabian sheep to his property, finding the merino sheep less suitable and less

³⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1196, October 9th, 1896.

⁴⁰ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1496, July 11th, 1902.

⁴¹ ibid.

⁴² N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1196, October 2nd, 1896.

profitable.⁴³ With the Arabian sheep he had to overcome a complete ban on the importation of these sheep from any foreign countries.⁴⁴ In the middle of 1898 he and his brother Fred were still hoping to bring Algerian sheep onto their property.⁴⁵

In 1898 Bradshaw agreed to formulate a plan to export frozen meat and to set up an experimental meat canning and extract works at his station.⁴⁶ He also brought well bred horses from Melbourne, which were to be devoted to stud duties on his land.⁴⁷ In 1899 Bradshaw sent men to the Daly River in an attempt to open up copper lodes.⁴⁸ He advertised his ability to do silver and gold electroplating.⁴⁹ By 1901 influential townspeople were urging him to contest the forthcoming election to represent the Territory in the South Australian Parliament.⁵⁰

In 1900, a report was handed to the South Australian Parliament titled, "Justice in the Northern Territory".⁵¹ The report was in regard to the administration of Aborigines, and stemmed from a statement by the Government Resident Charles J. Dashwood, saying:

⁴³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1235, July 30th, 1897.

⁴⁴ ibid.

⁴⁵ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1280, June 10th, 1898.

⁴⁶ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1324, April 14th, 1898.

⁴⁷ ibid.

⁴⁸ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1315, February 10th, 1899.

⁴⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1516, November 21st, 1902.

⁵⁰ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1432, April 19th, 1901.

⁵¹ S.A.P.P., No.60, of 1900, Justice in the Northern Territory, June 19th, 1900.

"it was a notorious fact that blackfellows were shot down like crows in the Northern Territory, and that no action was taken".⁵²

The onus was on Dashwood to prove his assertion and he relied in part on information supplied to him by the late John Watson, the former manager of Florida, Auvergne and Victoria River Downs Stations.⁵³ The practice, Dashwood asserted, on stations where cattle were speared by blacks was to go out and shoot the natives left and right whether they had committed the offence or not. He also gave many examples of these sorts of killings by white people which were usually couched in quite euphemistic terms:

The whites look well to their Winchesters and revolvers and usually proceed on the principle of being on the safe side.⁵⁴

The station owners went out and met the very tribe who had done the damage, and caught them red-handed with portions of meat with them. They gave them a lesson - 'dispersed' them I think is the term used in official reports.⁵⁵

One result of this expedition has been to convince me of the superiority of the Martini-Henry rifle, both for accuracy of aim and quickness of action.⁵⁶

... the natives have very much quietened in that district, and have given very little trouble since that day.⁵⁷

The report goes on to point out two great problems dealing with the administration of justice. Firstly, there would not be "the slightest chance of getting a commital against the three Europeans

52 ibid., p.1.

53 ibid.

54 ibid.

55 ibid.

56 ibid.

57 ibid., p.3.

implicated on the evidence of a single native"⁵⁸, and secondly, "what chance would there be in successfully prosecuting those who on the back blocks shoot the natives for spearing their cattle or for other reasons".⁵⁹ However, things continued in this way: No firm action from the government, and certainly plenty of action from the pastoralists.⁶⁰

The year 1899 witnessed a mini pastoral land boom and again a major reason, was the liberalising of terms upon which pastoral land could be held under the New Northern Territory Land Act. It enabled existing lease holders to surrender existing leases to obtain fresh leases under more favourable terms for a term of 42 years and made provision for payment to former lessees by new tenants for all improvements.⁶¹ The increase in land applied for, 146,466 square miles, was almost wholly made up of two applications.⁶² One was from a London based group, the Lands Development Syndicate Ltd, for 119,860 square miles north of Alice Springs, and the other was from Joseph Bradshaw for 19,250 square miles, north of the Roper River, an area containing the old Florida Station. The later application was said to be on behalf of a syndicate in Melbourne, though a newspaper article⁶³ and the

⁵⁸ ibid., p.4.

⁵⁹ ibid., p.3.

⁶⁰ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1457, October 11th, 1901.

⁶¹ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1899, Government Resident's Report for the Northern Territory, 1899, p.1.

⁶² ibid., p.6.

⁶³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1423, February 15th, 1901.

Lands Office map⁶⁴ carries his name only as the lease holder [see Map 8].

TABLE 4

Northern Territory Pastoral Land Applied for, Forfeited,
Leased and held under Permit, 1890-1909

Year	Applied for (sq mile)	Forfeited (sq mile)	Held under Lease (sq mile)	Declared stocked (sq mile)	Rental	Held under Permit (sq mile)
1890	10,965	17,405	198,128	153,142	18,907	-
1891	16,759	49,598	160,289	114,876	15,536	-
1892	13,040	15,300	145,000	74,305	11,623	-
1893	16,340	20,656	141,999	80,048	9,000	-
1894	9,034	40,500	111,000	61,000	8,066	-
1895	19,318	32,512	98,000	39,000	6,980	-
1896	110,875	13,107	195,000	30,000	9,957	-
1897	6,660	22,777	180,000	27,500	7,800	-
1898	7,006	46,443	140,563	28,000	7,595	-
1899	153,472	24,145	271,994	28,692	11,327	-
1900	11,755	Nil	283,777	28,692	7,946	-
1901	14,603	133,344	168,549	28,820	8,000	-
1902	7,902	584	172,579	91,144	7,474	4,337
1903	7,808	22,010	147,473	111,997	7,945	11,277
1904	NR	126	147,347	112,729	8,274	15,414
1905	NR	12,411	139,949	112,729	7,088	21,464
1906	NR	6,733	138,769	112,729	8,714	29,355
1907	NR	4,411	135,822	111,182	7,532	32,306
1908	NR	12,258	129,628	NR	8,330	33,848
1909	NR	23,444	108,244	NR	8,896	45,379

Source: Bauer, F.H. op.cit., p.153

No attempt was made to stock either lease⁶⁵, and during 1901, the Lands Development Syndicate Limited forfeited its lease.⁶⁶ The

⁶⁴ ibid.

⁶⁵ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1900, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory, 1900, p.1 and p.7.

⁶⁶ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1901, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory, 1901, p.1 and p.8.

pastoral industry as a whole was quite stagnant at this time with 168,549 square miles of land held under lease, but only 28,820 square miles actually declared stocked.⁶⁷ [See Table 5]. Bradshaw did not go out to the Goyder River area and a mining exploration expedition arrived at the old Florida Station in early 1901 and found very little trace of it remaining.⁶⁸ In fact, Bradshaw had transferred his lease over this area to H.H. Drysdale on the twentieth of March, 1900.⁶⁹ Mr Drysdale soon after was in London, where he was instrumental in forming the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Company Ltd (E. & A. Co.) on the sixteenth of March, 1903.⁷⁰ The land on the North East Coast of the Northern Territory was purchased by the company from Drysdale for £250,000 fully paid ordinary shares in the company and £30,000 in cash. The Company, which was registered in South Australia on the fourth of February, 1903, was formed for the purpose of supplying frozen and chilled meat to various depots already built, or to be built, throughout the East, in such places as Singapore and Manilla, as well as South Africa and Great Britain.⁷¹

⁶⁷ ibid., p.1.

⁶⁸ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1436, May 17th, 1901.

⁶⁹ Records of the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Co. Ltd, State Archives, South Australia, C.R.G. 119/3/1903/16, Prospectus, p.3.

⁷⁰ ibid.

⁷¹ ibid., pp.2-3.

TABLE 4

JACKSON BARRAGE/COASTERS AND AMERICAN FISH STORAGE SUPPLY CO. LBS.
ANNUAL TAKES AND MONTH DATE

MONTH OF	LOCATION	AREA IN Sq. MILES	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	
			DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE
1913	VICTORIA RIVER	480	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6	December 4 1937.6
1911		337				October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6	October 17 1937.6
1917	VICTORIA RIVER	3000																					
1915 to 1921	MORRIS BAY COAST	19150	Manufactured by R.T. Coyle in 1915 Incorporated into 1921 Incorporated into 1921 under C2221																				
2015	VICTORIA RIVER	4800	Formerly known 1915 and 19 211 (Have commenced 1/7/1981)																				
2219	MORRIS BAY COAST	19150																					
1948		48																					
1949		270																					
1950		240																					
1954		315																					
1955		306																					
1956		320																					
1960		300																					
1964	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
1966	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
1968	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
1969	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
1971	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
1972	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
1973	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
1974	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
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2004	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
2005	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
2006	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
2007	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
2008	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
2009	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					
2010	WOLONGONG STATION	150																					

TOTALS:

AREA (square miles)	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970
4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0	4130.0

The Company's prospectus contains glowing reports of the land, "a very large area of some of the best pastoral country in Australia", the grasses were described as "of the finest fattening description" and "a number of the best cattle slaughtered in Port Darwin come from Florida Station, a part of this property".⁷² They hoped to stock 20,000 head of cattle there immediately, and ultimately increase it to 40,000, while sending 1000 to 2000 head of live cattle per month to southern ports. When freezing works had been built, the company estimated there would be no difficulty in slaughtering up to 5000 head a month; including of course, the cattle from other stations.⁷³ The estimated profit from this venture was thought to be at least £160,000 per year at current prices.⁷⁴ [See Table 4 and Maps 8 and 9].

The company's capital was hoped to be £500,000, over half of which was paid to Drysdale, and the rest raised by the issue of 250,000 cumulative preference shares at £1 each. These shares gave a cumulative dividend of 7% per annum and were entitled to share one third of the profits. The capital raised would buy cattle, £80,000; pay for the construction of refrigerating plant and building, wharves, and other permanent works, £140,000; and pay Drysdale his £30,000.⁷⁵ Interestingly, the whole project had actually begun in the September of 1902 when the Eastern and African Storage Syndicate was formed with a capital of £75,000.

⁷² ibid., p.3.

⁷³ ibid., p.2.

⁷⁴ ibid., p.3.

⁷⁵ ibid., p.4.

134° 135° 136° 137°

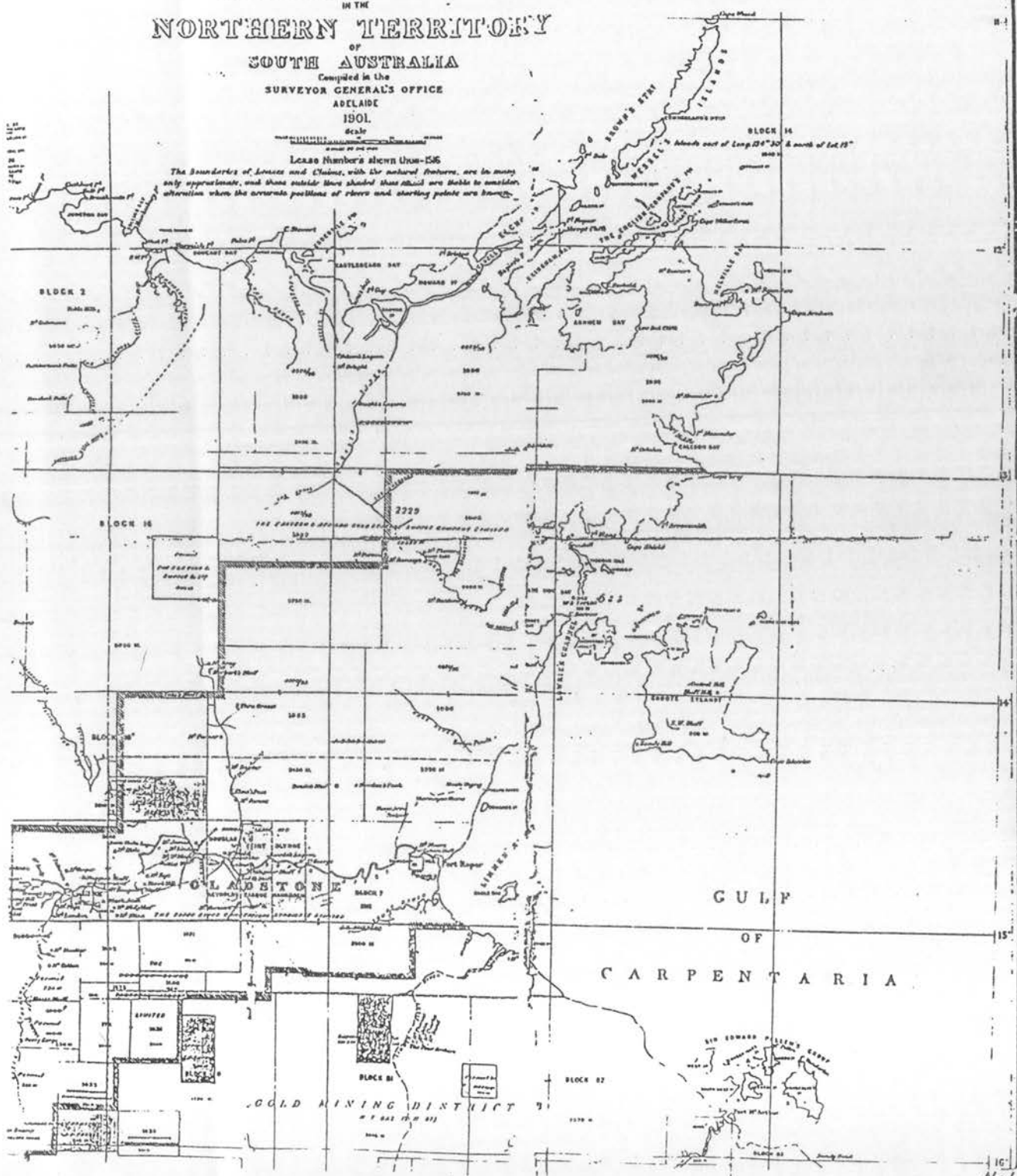
PLAN showing PASTORAL LEASES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Compiled in the
SURVEYOR GENERAL'S OFFICE
ADELAIDE
1901.

Scale
1 inch = 10 miles

Lease Numbers shown thus—536

The boundaries of Leases and Claims, with the natural features, are in many
only approximations, and those outside these shaded lines should be liable to consider-
alteration when the accurate positions of rivers and starting points are known.



It had undertaken to sell the E. & A. Co. the 20,000 head of cattle and deliver them to the company's stockyards. This company was incorporated ostensibly to begin operations so there would be no delay when the larger company was successfully floated.⁷⁶

The E. & A. Co. had a London Board of Directors including, of course, Drysdale, Sir John Cockburn, a former Premier of South Australia, two men already in meat export companies, a former Sydney/Melbourne merchant, and a director of a Scottish Assurance Company.⁷⁷ Drysdale had also not forgotten his friends and allowed six individuals and the E. & A. Co. to participate in his interests.⁷⁸ One of these individuals was Joseph Bradshaw of Port Darwin, who had a share of sixteen ninety-sixths, a total of 30,000 ordinary shares, and who was named manager of the company in South Australia.⁷⁹

On the thirty-first of March, 1903, 65,015 shares had been taken up, the largest being 26,761 shares by the Hon. Cyril Russell of the Stock Exchange in London and the smallest being one each by five shareholders in Adelaide, who were the persons who formed the company for South Australian registration.⁸⁰ All the other shares were held in Great Britain and by March 31, 1905, 149,800

⁷⁶ ibid., p.2.

⁷⁷ ibid., p.1.

⁷⁸ ibid., p.4.

⁷⁹ ibid., p.1.

⁸⁰ Records of the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Co. Ltd, op.cit. Summary of capital and shares 31/3/1903.

shares had been sold there.⁸¹ Simply on these figures, many of the company's initial aims could never have been achieved even if full payment for each share was immediate. The Directors had decided that preference shares were payable at 2/6 on application, 2/6 on allotment, 5s. two months later, and the balance in payment of 2/6 at intervals not less than two months. Therefore, by the thirty-first of March, 1905, each share holder needed to only pay 12/6, giving the total capital of the company as £90,434.12.6. Yet the venture went ahead at all speed.

A steam yacht, "White Star", of 87 gross tonnage, was purchased in Brisbane and brought to Port Darwin.⁸² The stock from Eisey and Hodgson Downs Station was procured and a party of drovers led by Mr Gordon Dunbar, was contracted to take the 10,000 head of cattle and horses to the E. & A. Co. land, known as Arafura Station.⁸³ Bradshaw and a party of men sailed to Glyde's Inlet, on the White Star in early June, locating an area for a depot, built a hut, left a quantity of stores for the drovers expected in early August, and blazed a trail into the camp. Two men were to be left behind with the stores while a third man, William Melrose, while in the area, was lost from the main party, when he wandered off on a track.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Records of the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply co. Ltd, op.cit. Summary of capital and shares 31/3/1905.

⁸² N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1546, June 26th, 1903.

⁸³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1545, June 19th, 1903.

⁸⁴ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1551, July 31st, 1903.

On his return, Bradshw complained of the poor Admiralty charts of the coast, and the problem of the rivers but he was extremely enthusiastic about the country, "as consisting of magnificent grassed plains interspersed with park-like clumps of timber of various kinds" and he considered "it well adapted for pastoral pursuits".⁸⁵ Pastoral pursuits were not the only exploits which interested Bradshaw, or presumably the company. During an interview with a representative of the Sydney Daily Telegraph, Bradshaw spoke at length about the mineral wealth of Arafura Station. Bradshaw described the area as having, "without a doubt some of the largest lodes of goldbearing stone in the world", and he expected it to "yield an ounce to the tone". He also knew tin existed in large quantities and felt it only needed "the introduction of a little capital to turn the districts alluded to into the richest tin-producing places, I think, in the world".⁸⁶

During the initial stages of setting up the new station, things went quite badly for the Company. Henry Drysdale died unexpectedly in Melbourne.⁸⁷ Gordon Dunbar died near Roper River while droving the second mob of cattle up to Arafura from Hodgson Downs.⁸⁸ David Sweeney, another drover, died of fever while bringing cattle along the same route.⁸⁹ Melrose had turned up, being brought back to the hut by some Aborigines but only a

⁸⁵ ibid.

⁸⁶ Quoted in South Australian Register, Vol.LVIII, No.17,650, June 9th, 1903.

⁸⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1546, June 26th, 1903.

⁸⁸ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1555, August 28th, 1903.

⁸⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1561, October 9th, 1903.

short while later, Melrose and the two men left behind at Arafura Station, were attacked by Aborigines, all being bashed on the head by nullah-nullahs, but managing to grab their rifles to make the Aborigines retreat.⁹⁰ However, towards the end of 1903 Bradshaw reported that no cattle spearing had taken place⁹¹ and early in 1904, despite soft ground, heavy rains and mosquitoes, the stock were said to be looking contented and well, and the calves and folds numerous.⁹² There had also been good progress on the erection of buildings at the head station, and a promising garden had been started.⁹³

Visitors flocked to the Station during 1904. In June, Mr John Drysdale, the Managing Director of the E. & A. Co., and a Mr W. Winlaw, M.I.C.E., an expert in freezing works went out to inspect and report as to the feasibility of setting up a meat freezing works.⁹⁴ Both were extremely pleased with the company's location and prospects and in an interview with the Brisbane Telegraph, Drysdale stated that a large freezing works was contemplated at an early date probably on the Goyder River. He went on to discuss two other projects the company might enter into: one was the prospecting for minerals; and the other was the idea of sub-letting some of the company's land for the cultivation of crops and the Company had decided to accept bonafide settlers.

⁹⁰ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1558, September 18, 1903.

⁹¹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxii, No.1567, November 20th, 1903.

⁹² N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxi, No.1584, March 18th, 1904.

⁹³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxi, No.1594, May 27th, 1904.

⁹⁴ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxi, No.1595, June 3rd, 1903.

They envisaged that the outcome of their scheme would be a very large population settling on the estate of the company. He felt farmers could grow all tropical plants including cotton, sugar, tobacco, arrowroot, maize, flax of all sorts and even cereals, and he would send seed to the north from Melbourne for an experimental endeavour.⁹⁵ To that point the E. & A. Co. applied for a lease for all of the islands off the north coast, a total of 1870 square miles; it being Permit 18, and reapplied for in 1905.

During 1902, following a government bill for the building of a transcontinental railway being passed, all unoccupied land was withdrawn from leasing tenure. For pastoralists to now obtain land a system of annual permits was brought in with a rental of 1/- per square mile, double the former cost. Excluding Permit 18, taken up on 25/6/03, the E. & A. Co. took up four other pastoral permits in 1905, totalling 1990 square miles.⁹⁶ In November the "White Star" carried the initial gang of planters to clear and prepare small areas in different localities and plant them each with a variety of seed.⁹⁷

Both of the above reports of these projects ended with a plea for Asian labour. John Drysdale felt that the greatest drawback to development in the Northern Territory was the present labour legislation. "It is impossible to develop such a country without

⁹⁵ Quoted in N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxi, No.1614, October 14th, 1904.

⁹⁶ Bauer, F.H., Historical Geography etc., op.cit., p.155 and S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1902, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory, 1902, pp.1-2.

⁹⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxi, No.1617, November 4th, 1904.

coloured labour".⁹⁸ Joseph Bradshaw, in describing the islands off the coast "arrived at the conclusion that the unrestricted employment of every eight or ten Asiatics should mean advanced employment at good wages for at least one European".⁹⁹

During August, Messrs Terry and McCaw, in company with a Major Peters sailed for Arafura¹⁰⁰, returning in early September. Major Peters was soon on his way to Hong Kong en route to England, having given no indication of the purpose of his trip. It is quite possible the company may have invited him to inspect the station with a view to selling beef to the British forces in South Africa.¹⁰¹ The station, by that time, had received a further 3000 head of cattle because of the company's purchase of Woolagarong Station.¹⁰²

The final visitors for the year to Arafura were Mr J. Bottomley, a cotton expert, and Mr Finlayson, a representative of the Hong Kong Timber Syndicate.¹⁰³ Of the latter's intentions and findings nothing is written, but Mr Bottomley amply gives his opinion of different areas of the Arafura Station. Their first step was to visit the planters who had been at their task for nearly a month. It was reported that the planters were making good progress and

⁹⁸ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxi, No.1614, October 14th, 1904.

⁹⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxi, No.1617, November 4th, 1904.

¹⁰⁰ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxi, No.1606, August 9th, 1904.

¹⁰¹ Records of the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Company Limited, op.cit., Prospectus, p.2.

¹⁰² N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxi, No.1597, June 17th, 1904.

¹⁰³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1623, December 16th, 1904.

that the soil looked infinitely better after it had been turned. Bottomley stayed in the primitive buildings at Arafura hosted by the manager of the station, John Warrington Rogers and his wife, and toured the area around the homestead. He found most of the soil too rich for cotton and only small areas suitable for upland, Virginian or Egyptian cotton. After he had left the homestead, he inspected some of the Crocodile Islands off Glyde's Inlet, which were being worked by Chinamen, and found some of the richest cotton producing soil he had ever seen.¹⁰⁴ He was yet another of the many who ended his report with a now familiar homily:

I am quite satisfied from what I have seen, and under the capable management of Captain Bradshaw this important portion of the Northern Territory will be able to produce cotton probably¹⁰⁵ unequalled by any other part of the Commonwealth.

Quite incredibly, the Government Resident's Report for 1904 reveals quite the opposite of the rosy progressive picture, the reports coming out of Arafura describe:

In my report for 1903, I referred briefly to the stocking operations which were being carried on by the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Company Ltd. I confess I was apprehensive that, in as much as the company were placing their stock on the same country which years before had been abandoned by that well known pastoralist Mr Macartney, owing to its unsuitability to cattle, the same results would follow, and I expressed my doubts to the wisdom of the proceeding in all the circumstances. He, however, informed me that the cattle were doing remarkably well, though there had been some trouble with the natives. The information would appear to have been scarcely accurate for I regret to say the attempts to stock this country have been unsuccessful. The losses of stock from various causes have been very heavy, and I have

104 ibid.

105 ibid.

little doubt that unless the company possesses country better adapted for stock than that on which they have established the station, to which the present herd can be moved, the enterprise¹⁰⁶ which has been costly indeed - must result in failure.

In the same report, the Inspector of Stock writes:

The stock on Eley, Hodgson Downs and Wollogorang Stations were removed to Arafura where I understand they are not doing as well as expected, on account of a considerable portion of the country being unfitted for stock, depredations by blacks, ticks, leeches, etc., and as the stock are scattered over the country between Roper River and the North Coast (over 200 miles) it is most difficult to¹⁰⁷ protect them, although the manager is very energetic.

Joseph Bradshaw had left for England in January 1905.¹⁰⁸ The first word of mouth report of stock leaving occurred in February 1905 and was as a consequence of the report made by "Major Peters and his expert" who were at Arafura the previous August.¹⁰⁹ The stock were to be moved from that area after the wet season and the Roper River correspondent cuttingly referred to the area as "Bradshaw's paradise and everyone else's Hell".¹¹⁰ By April the newspaper was reporting that Mr Rogers, the manager of the station, was establishing a new head station¹¹¹, which was Hodgson Downs Station.

¹⁰⁶ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1904, Government Resident's Report for 1904, p.2.

¹⁰⁷ ibid., p.27

¹⁰⁸ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1628, January 20th, 1905.

¹⁰⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1631, February 10th, 1905.

¹¹⁰ ibid.

¹¹¹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1642, April 28th, 1905.

The emphasis in reports from Arafura during 1905 are in reference to Aboriginal outrages. In January 'wild blacks' attacked some Chinamen engaged in cotton planting about fifteen miles from the station.¹¹² Besides spearing one man in the leg and the chest, the Aborigines stole tools, stores, two rifles and a dinghy, before being driven off by several rifle shots.¹¹³ During March, a group of sixty to seventy wild natives were said to have attacked four men who were camped out while mustering cattle about thirty miles from the head station. The natives' leader was said to have carried and brutally used an old station axe, clubbing two men, wounding them seriously, and finally being driven off by the revolver shots of a third drover.¹¹⁴

In September, the natives on the Goyder were described as:

... a particularly bad lot. If accounts coming to hand from time to time be only half true, they would seem to have proved a perfect scourge to the cattle placed upon that country and on at least three different occasions they have made¹¹⁵ murderous attacks upon the Arafura Company's employees.

While Captain Bradshaw was in England the papers were not averse to lampooning him. A letter from a correspondent in the Victoria River eloquently describes the virtues of that area and states:

¹¹² N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1629, January 27th, 1905.

¹¹³ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1630, February 2nd, 1905.

¹¹⁴ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1634, March 3rd, 1905.

¹¹⁵ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1660, September 1st, 1905.

If J.B. had had the sense to take up country anything like this, the unfortunate English shareholders in the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Company would have stood a better show of getting return for their money than I am afraid is now¹¹⁶ the case - if all the stories I hear are only half true.

Near the end of the year, an anonymous letter, sending up the Arafura Company, printed in the Northern Territory Times and Gazette from the South Australian Register, is full of sarcasm and pique at the much lauded wealth of the Northern Territory describing it as a

...land of blasted hopes, despair and ruination in pastoral, agricultural and mineral pursuits.... Think for a moment of the millions that has been invested there ... and all absolutely lost. How is this in the face of the reports of dozens of experts that this is a land of the best promise, where soil has only to be tickled for it to yield ten, ay a hundredfold; that millions of acres await the stock owner; and that it is only necessary to erect a mining plant to win untold wealth out of mother earth ... the unfortunate public, as well as private individuals, have been grossly misled by the specious and many times lying reports of boomsters, wild cat promoters and faddists.¹¹⁷

Joseph Bradshaw returned from England in mid December loudly expressing the opinion that any amount of English capital was available for the completion of the Pine Creek to Oodnadatta Railway, provided cheap imported labour was used and that the capitalist would be exempt from certain forms of taxation.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1654, July 21st, 1905.

¹¹⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1669, November 3rd, 1905.

¹¹⁸ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1675, December 15th, 1905.

This said, he headed South. A few days later his brother Fred and a party of men from Bradshaw's Run were murdered by Aborigines¹¹⁹ but Joseph was not able to return until February.

As with the demise of Florida Station there is little written of the similar fate of the Arafura Station. By the end of 1905

... the process of removing the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company Limited stock from the Glyde and Goyder Rivers has been proceeding for some time but at a slow rate - owing chiefly, I understand, to absence of water on the route. I have asked for information regarding the past operations and future intentions and prospects of the company. The manager, however, is unable to give me this without the consent of the managing agents in Australia, to whom he referred my request.¹²⁰

By the end of 1906, the "Arafura Company sent 3,300 head of all classes of cattle to the Queensland market ... I understand that the balance of the Arafura cattle are to be started for Queensland during the present year".¹²¹ Indeed, Bishop Gilbert White, on July 21, 1907, while examining the Roper for a possible mission sight, met the drovers "on their way to remove the last of the cattle from the Arafura Station".¹²²

¹¹⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1676, December 22nd, 1905.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1677, December 29, 1905.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1678, January 5th, 1906.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1680, January 19th, 1906.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1683, February 9th, 1906.
N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxii, No.1694, April 27th, 1906.

¹²⁰ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1905, Government Resident's Report for 1905, p.10.

¹²¹ ibid., p.18.

¹²² White, Rev. G., Thirty Years in Tropical Australia, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1918, p.153.

At this time it also looked as if Bradshaw was going to bale out of the Northern Territory altogether. In a Melbourne Newspaper, he placed an advertisement¹²³ inviting applicants to invest in a proposed no liability company to be formed to purchase a station property in the Northern Territory. The station was Crown Pastoral Lease 2215 of 6,800 square miles; his own property Bradshaw's Run. It ran 400 to 6000 cattle and 200 horses and Bradshaw was willing to accept payment for stock, station plant and the like in paid up shares of an approved company. The last part of the advertisement clearly reveals his desire to sell.

During mid 1907, the E. & A. Co. was trying to sell its oil launch which it had used for patrolling the swamps, creeks, and rivers of the Arafura property. The auction could only raise a highest bid of £100, at which the launch was "brought in".¹²⁴ At Arafura Station, the mustering and removing of all stock, number unknown, was being attempted and during the year, 3400 of the company's cattle had been sent to Queensland for sale.¹²⁵ In May 1909 Elsey and Hodgson Downs Stations were auctioned, and bought by Mr William Lawrie of Port Darwin¹²⁶, who also acquired the right to all stock bearing the Arafura Company's brand. Wollogorong Station and its cattle had been privately sold to another buyer.¹²⁷

¹²³ Quoted in N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxiii, No.1719, October 19th, 1906.

¹²⁴ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxiii, No.1754, June 21st, 1907.

¹²⁵ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1907, Government Resident's Report of 1907, p.26.

¹²⁶ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxv, No.1853, May 14th, 1909.

¹²⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxv, No.1855, May 28th, 1909.

The Government Resident's Report of 1909 outlines the dismal figures for the Arafura Station:

One lease comprising 19,250 miles was held by the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Company Limited for a term of 42 years at an annual rental of £962.10s. The lease, which dated from October first 1903 was cancelled for non payment of rent on January first of last year. Only £2,609.2s.5d. of the annual rent, which amounted to £5,775, has been received, leaving an outstanding balance of £3,165.17s.7d. This area has been subdivided into six blocks and gazetted open to application under permit for pastoral purposes at 1s. per mile.¹²⁸

During its term the E. & A. Co. boasted of its success, potential and future prospects; it loudly lamented the attacks by the Aborigines; and as much as it could, hid its failure. All these points are similar to the attitudes expressed by J.A. Macartney, but Macartney was extremely open about his attitude to the Aborigines and what the policies of the station were. The policy of the E. & A. Co. was hidden and it turned out to be engaged in what was "the most systematic extermination of Aborigines carried out on the Roper and in the Company's Arnhem Land holdings".¹²⁹

In November 1957, Dr F.H. Bauer interviewed George Conway, a former drover, station owner and manager at Mataranka, near Katherine. George Conway told Bauer he had been hired during 1905 to 1906 to lead a hunting party to kill Aborigines and he mentioned that they had killed dozens.¹³⁰ The company had two

¹²⁸ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1909, Government Resident's Report of 1909, p.14.

¹²⁹ Merlan, F. "'Making People Quiet' in the Pastoral North: Reminiscences of Elsey Station" in Aboriginal History, Australian National University, Canberra, Vol.2, 1978, p.87.

¹³⁰ ibid., p.87.

gangs of ten to fourteen Aborigines, headed by a white man or a half caste Aborigine, to hunt and shoot any wild blacks on sight.¹³¹ The killings seem to have been mostly carried out on Arafura Station, but they also occurred on Elsey and Hodgson Downs Stations.¹³² Around Elsey, it's generally accepted that the white man made the Aboriginal stockmen do what they did, rather than for any inter-tribal grievances or animosity.¹³³ At Murwangi, the same is true and there are stories of retributions by Aborigines against these stockmen after the white men were driven out. George Conway told a different story to Keith Willey:

In 1909 he took part in a punitive expedition against Arnhemland tribesmen who had murdered five miners and eaten their horses.... There were two policemen, two other white men, thirteen natives and myself in the team.... We were armed with rifles and revolvers and rode three hundred miles from the Roper across Arnhemland to Caledon Bay and back. The blacks attacked us every night. We had to shoot hundreds of them. Some of their camps contained two or three thousand people. We didn't shoot for the love of it, but because we had to kill or be killed.... They were rugged times all right.¹³⁴

Little, if any, was written or said by the company, the manager or the stockmen as to why the Arafura Station was abandoned. For the E. & A. Co., certainly, lack of capital was a great scourge, the frozen meat works were never built and few wharves, plants or improvements were started. Many of the hoped for 20,000 head of cattle arrived, but few were sent to market, except

¹³¹ Bauer, F.H., Historical Geography etc., op.cit., p.157.

¹³² Merlan, F., op.cit., p.87.

¹³³ ibid., pp.87-88.

¹³⁴ Willey, K., op.cit., p.103.

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when the company was collapsing. The company had been told of rich succulent grass which turned out to be unpalatable. The company which pushed strongly for imported Asian labour, could never gather together enough stockmen and the cattle wandered and spread out over the unfenced 19,250 square miles, becoming an open invitation to the Aborigines. The station was extremely remote, and markets too far away, supplies were difficult to obtain and men who did venture there often refused to say.¹³⁵

The company must have known how futile the venture was going to be. Bradshaw had long experience of the Territory, had been a neighbour of J.A. Macartney, who had owned this very land. A director, Sir John Cockburn, was a former Minister of the Territory and must have also known these factors and especially of Macartney's experiences. This is where stupidity meets larceny. The people who purchased shares were totally disappointed as no dividend was ever paid by the company.¹³⁶

As with Florida Station local folklore soon adapted its own reasons for the collapse:

Diaster, swift and sure, struck this second endeavour. Owing to malaria among the men, and attacks on the herds by the natives, the cattle could not be held; and as is their invariable custom, made off east and south east. They were cornered, and speared on the coast, or escaped by the way they came, to the Roper and Hodgson Rivers ... Joe Bradshaw was one of the promoters of this ill-fated and ill advised company; and his experience should have

¹³⁵ Bauer, F.H., Historical Geography etc., op.cit., p.157.

¹³⁶ From London Stock Exchange, Defunct Book, 1905-1910.

been a warning. But it is one of the curses of the Territory that individuals and governments frequently ignore the lessons of the past.¹³⁷

Bradshaw put up a fine homestead, boats on the lily lagoons, thoroughbred horses and dairy cows in the paperbark shade. Luger-loads of Chinamen came from Darwin to plough the fallow flats of the Goyder and Maroonga Island for Sea Island and Egyptian cotton, sugar, maize and rice. White Star, sixty tons, came up from Melbourne, her white coated stewards serving port Essington oysters, turtle egg custards, baked fish, quail, duck and rib roast of Arafura beef. Arafura was a pageant while it lasted...¹³⁸ By the time it ended it was left with half of its Chinamen slaughtered and eleven thousand out of twenty thousand cattle bogged or speared. A year later still,¹³⁹ not a vestige of that shining new homestead remained.

137 Buchanan, G., op.cit., p.100.

138 Hill, E., The Territory, op.cit., p.218.

139 ibid., p.385.



PICTURE 5



PICTURE 6

A STORY¹ TOLD BY MILPURRURRU²

When Billy Farrar was staying at Murwangi, the Aborigines cut the barbwire, stole the cattle and speared them. At Warralnura, the Aborigines would steal knives, flour, sugar and axes from the stockmen. So, a message was sent by the stockmen at Warralnura, to the head station at Murwangi, that the Aborigines were killing the cattle, stealing food, knives and axes, and asking what they should do about the situation. "They are killing cattle" - "Here, they are stealing food and knives - what shall we do?" (At that time, another balanda (white) lot were at Warralnura). So, the Yolngu (Aboriginal) boss and other stockmen went to Warralnura on horses. It turned out that the Yolngu there were stealing horses and cattle; also using 'bakal' (stonehead spear) and 'nipirri' (hooked spear). The Yolngu were also stealing iron posts and making shovel-nosed spears out of them.

When Billy Farrar found out, he said to send out the message: get ready and be at Dhamala.

And so Billy Farrar ordered the balanda from Warralnura to start shooting down Yolngu from Dhamala, along the plains to Murwangi. Billy Farrar travelled north from Murwangi along the plains on

¹ This story was collected by the author on March 15, 1983.

² Milpurrurru is a member of the Ganalbingu tribe. He is regarded as one of the greatest Aboriginal painters and is aged in his mid forties.

the west side of the Glyde River, killing YoIngu. He killed many of our people (YoIngu). Only a few managed to escape, either into mangroves or the jungle.

When YoIngu used to steal, Farrar killed them. At that time at Murwangi, there were these men: Billy Farrar, Manyinirrnirrl Mundi (Mandy) Dandy. Dandy is buried at Murwangi on a hill. Another two balanda are buried there near an ironwood tree. Our people speared these men. Others were speared near the jungle.

After the balanda killed our men, they took our women.

CHAPTER 3

BILLY FARRAR

As the preceding story describes, a character named Billy Farrar at one time came to the old Arafura Station area, traditionally called Murwangi. In stories relating to the white man's attempts to establish a pastoral station there his name immediately occurred. Sometimes, he is directly related to the violence done to the Aborigines and at other times, he passively moves through the stories. Many of the atrocities wrecked on the Aborigines, have stated Billy Farrar as committing them, yet many of these killings are far more reminiscent of the policies of the E. & A. Co. employees. It is possible Billy Farrar would have killed Aborigines while he was in the Murwangi district and at least once his life was directly threatened and he retaliated. However, the question remains whether he was capable either individually or numerically to systematically murder the Aborigines in that area, murders so clearly remembered.

Billy Farrar was the son of John S. Farrar, a man with a long history as a stockman, station manager, and station owner in the Territory. John Farrar was born in Yorkshire England, the son of an officer in a cavalry regiment and he originally came to the territory from Queensland as a stockman for the pioneer, pastoralist and explorer, John Costello.¹ The latter was one of the first to bring cattle overland into the Northern Territory, and he quickly took up several huge tracts of land, such as Valley of the Springs near the Roper River, and Lake Nash, almost on the Tropic of Capricorn, near the Queensland border. It was from the Valley of the Springs Station in 1896 that John Farrar received his

¹ N.T.T.G., Vol. xli, No.2353, December 14th, 1918.

first cattle when Costello disposed of that station.² In 1899, Farrar had moved this stock, temporarily, to country about sixty miles south of Hodgson Downs³, and in 1901, he sent 230 bullocks to be sold on the local market.⁴ He acquired his station "Nutwood Downs", 306 square miles of property, east of Daly Waters on the first of January, 1902.⁵ He was confident of the future possibilities of the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory based on his long experience of the country.

Certainly for John Farrar, things worked out well enough for him to send about two hundred head of cattle to the butchery at Darwin reasonably regularly, and by 1910 he is described as "probably the oldest and best known pastoral pioneer in the Northern Territory".⁶ One of his sons and his daughter-in-law, travelled to the South Seas on their honeymoon. His son Robert had to be taken south quickly, because of a serious eye infection and the whole family left Darwin for a few months.

In 1912, Billy shot himself in the leg while out mustering cattle, the bullet lodging among the bones of the ankle.⁷ This injury

² S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1896, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory for 1896, p.14.

³ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1899, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory, 1899, p.25.

⁴ S.A.P.P., No.45 of 1901, Government Resident's Report on the Northern Territory, p.30.

⁵ Australian Archives, Northern Territory Division, Crown Lands Register.

⁶ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxv, No.1912, July 1st, 1910.

⁷ N.T.T.G., Vol.xxxvii, No.2025, August 23rd, 1912.

was to plague him all his life and his foot eventually shrivelled, as if he had polio, and he never regained full use of it.⁸ In about 1916, John Farrar gave up his station and moved to Maryborough in Queensland where he died in 1918 at the age of eighty.⁹ Of his three sons, only Billy was in the Territory, but another son returned to take up Ban Ban Station.

On July second, 1919, Billy Farrar applied for, and was granted 600 square miles of grazing land. He paid £31-rental, paid until June sixth, 1921, a rent of 6d. per square mile per year. The land he obtained, just south of the Roper River, had previously been leased and stocked by John Warrington Rogers, the former manager of Arafura Station, from August twenty seven, 1914. On January first, 1920, Billy Farrar changed his lease, dropping one hundred square miles from his leased land, so he now controlled an area of five hundred square miles. In October, 1925, he went into partnership with Andrew Ray. The station he had was known as Mainarou Spring.¹⁰

The major reason suggested for Billy Farrar going to the old station area at Murwangi, was that he was looking for cattle; the cattle which the E. & A. Co. couldn't or didn't muster. The rumour that they had brought 20,000 head to the station was generally accepted, but the important belief was that only about

⁸ Interview with Bert Nixon, conducted by the author at Katherine, N.T. on 11/7/83.

⁹ N.T.T.G., Vol. xli, No.2353, December 14th, 1918.

¹⁰ Australian Archives, Crown Lands Records.

7,000 head had ever been taken away. Mainarou was the closest occupied pastoral lease to the old station property and it is quite plausible to assume that Billy Farrar went there to look for any stray, unwanted cattle or horses.

When Bert Nixon knew Billy Farrar in about '31, Billy had hundreds of horses, an amount of stock which would have taken many years to establish. It is impossible to gauge how long Billy Farrar spent at Murwangi or how many times he ventured north from Mainorou. Undoubtedly, he co-existed reasonably well with the Aborigines, and he married an Aboriginal girl, Judy, from around Murwangi at Bert Nixon's house, near Katherine.¹¹ Judy, who now lives at Mountain Valley, still wears the gold wedding ring from that day. From the variety of stories concerning Billy Farrar, it seems he treated the Aborigines fairly, a point emphasised by the fact that he was able to live among them for so long, until 1939 or 1940. Also, Bert Nixon had many of the Aborigines from Mainorou pass through his place and there was never a word about those sorts of deeds perpetrated by Billy Farrar. Certainly, the Aborigines of this area wouldn't have let any man live if he had murdered or taken part in multiple murders of their people.

In the late 1930's Bert Nixon¹² had a group of Aborigines on his property from Bulman, and a man named Albert had a mark on his shoulder. When asked what it was, he replied that it was Billy

¹¹ Interview with Bert Nixon, op.cit.

¹² ibid.

Farrar's brand. Years later, Bert Nixon asked Billy Farrar how he had got that brand onto the man's shoulder, and Billy acknowledged that Albert was one of the men who had tried to murder him.

Evidently, while Billy Farrar was away from Mainarou homestead mustering cattle, some of the Aborigines who lived in the area took over his house, slept in his bed and decided to kill him when he returned. They expected him to come a certain way, but one of the Aborigines, friendly with Billy, slipped away and let him know of the impending attack. Billy was mustering with George Conway (one of the men hired to shoot Aborigines by the E. & A. Co.) and they both returned to the homestead via the garden and trapped the Aborigines in the house. Some of the Aborigines ended up in the river, the younger ones were tied up and belted and one at least was branded with TOH.¹³

At the time Billy Farrar was at Mainarou, an interesting botanical expedition passed through his station and on to the Murwangi district. The party, led by Captain (later Sir) G.H. Wilkins, was collecting specimens of the rarer tropical fauna for the British Museum. When they reached the Goyder River, (still wrongly named) they followed along its sandy banks and came quite close to a group of natives without being noticed:

... At the first sight of our horses the men dashed for their spears and stood at bay,¹⁴ while the women and the children fled through the bush.

¹³

N.T.T.G., Vol.xli, No.2344, October 12th, 1918.

A similar incident occurred some days later when the party came upon a 'corroborree'.¹⁵ Eventually the party arrived at the old Arafura homestead and found only a few coils of barbed wire, the yards and the corner posts of the houses. After inspecting the remains they travelled on a mile or so and

... as our leading horse broke through the belt of trees a wild screaming arose from a group of natives and they fled indiscriminately along the reed bordered edge of the water.¹⁶

The Aborigines of that area had very little contact with Europeans after these times. The missionary societies had come to the Roper area in 1901 and to Millingimbi in 1916, but they rarely ventured inland. So the choice was one the Aborigines had, as to whether or not to make contact with the Europeans. The Japanese had taken up the trepang trade and in September 1932, five of their trepangers were killed by the Aborigines of Caledon Bay. In mid 1933, Constable Stewart McColl, a member of a police party investigating the Japanese deaths, was killed by an Aboriginal spear while, it is generally rumoured but never written, raping an Aboriginal woman. The Administrator advised that a strong police party be sent against the Caledon Bay Aborigines to avenge this murder, but intervention by the press and an anthropologist, Donald Thomson, stopped any idea of a punitive expedition. Thomson agreed to go to the area and sort out the matter, if

¹⁴ Wilkins, Capt. Sir G.H., Undiscovered Australia, Ernest Benn Limited, 1928, p.158.

¹⁵ ibid., pp.159-60.

¹⁶ ibid., pp.161-2.

possible. He spent several years in the Caledon Bay area as well as travelling extensively through Arnhemland. Out of his work there came one of the great books of Australian anthropology, "The Economic Structure and Ceremonial Exchange Cycle in Arnhem Land". In 1942 Thomson organised a group of Aborigines into a military unit in case of Japanese attack on Australia's north coast.¹⁷ Other European persons through that area were police patrols¹⁸ and government patrols from the Welfare Branch¹⁹, as the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was then known.

At a meeting of the North Australian cattlemen in Katherine in 1964, its president, Jim Martin suggested that a pastoral survey be made of Arnhem Land since markets and abattoirs were now available within easy distance of that area and transportation methods had progressed enormously. He was particularly interested in the Goyder River and had quoted part of Mr D'Arcy Uhr's glowing account of his visit to Florida Station in 1888. Martin had known a man, Gidgee Symes, who had worked at Florida and Symes had praised it as great cattle fattening country, but the wild Aborigines had forced the abandonment of the station. Martin went on to say:

There are no natives at all in that area now. If it is so good - and those old fellows have got a habit of being right - it should be opened up instead of lying waste.

¹⁷ Thomson, D., Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land, Currey O'Neil, South Yarra, 1983, pp.113-139.

¹⁸ Kyle-Little, Syd., Whispering Wind, Hutchinson, London, 1957.

¹⁹ "Report on Patrol to Old Arafura Homestead Site Central Arnhem Land", September to October, 1964 in Murwangi File.

The new meatworks (at Katherine) have provided a market which is quite accessible to the Goyder River, given roads. The government should make a pastoral survey of the entire area or, failing that, throw it open so that cattlemen can go and have a look at it for themselves.²⁰

A STORY¹ TOLD BY DJARDI

When I left school, I worked at Roper Valley and Minarou. I was about twelve then. I couldn't make up my mind what to do: I wanted to be a teacher. I also wanted to be a doctor. But, I also watched the stockmen who were riding horses and chasing cattle. I said to myself, "I will train to be a stockman, so I will learn about cattle and horses". When my second term began, I ran away from school for two weeks and the teacher was looking for me. After three weeks, I got a job at Mountain Valley outstation. When I started, it was really rough and hard, just like in school. I used to get beatings from the other stockmen to give me more experience to work with cattle. I worked until I grew up, learning all the time about cattle. It took me thirty years; thirty years is a long time just doing cattle work. I know cattle work more than any other job.

In 1970, I decided to go back to my own families and work for my own people. During that time, stockmen from Murwangi came to get horses from Mountain Valley. I followed them back. When we got back, they gave me a job. Murwangi was then managed by the council. Malcolm (Armstrong) was 'the boss', working under the council.

¹ This story was collected by the author on June 7, 1983 at Ramingining.

Around 1973, one of the old people passed away. Then, the council asked Aboriginal Affairs for funds. They gave us \$30,000 to start Murwangi Pastoral Company. Only ten people were allowed to be employed.

I became head stockman in 1970, because of my previous experience. So, Peter Binyanbil, Johnny Kelly, Bertie (Ashley) and I worked together as stockmen. We worked until the A.D.C. (Aboriginal Development Commission) took over.

In 1975, I went to Milingimbi, to do some mustering there for three weeks. We brought 173 head of cattle from there, to Murwangi. Some died, as it was rough pulling them across on a raft to Dhabila.

When we got to Murwangi, we did a lot of work: fencing yard-building etc. Then I went to Katherine, then Queensland, to get more ideas about raising cattle. I also worked cattle on contract with my boss. I was there for three months. When I got back, the pastoral work at Murwangi had stopped.

At that time, Malcolm Armstrong was at Kormilda College, in Darwin. When he came back to Ramingining, the Murwangi project started again.

From then on, we did a lot of work, getting horses from Minarou and Mountain Valley. We did about twelve trips. On the fifth trip we brought back 350 head of cattle, brahmin, bred from Mountain Valley.

When we got back to Murwangi, there were new calves, amongst them about fifty young bulls. Everything was settled. Then, Malcolm said that Yolngu should run the place. I took over. Then problems started; things got tangled up.

I tried my best. I tried and tried and tried from 1981 to 1982. We killed the cattle for beef and sold it to Nangalala, (local meat) and also to Galiwinku (Elcho Island).

The problems about running Murwangi continued: I couldn't cope with them. So, halfway through, I didn't want to go any further. I didn't want to make myself a 'big man', to own everything, and so I just stopped, got my stuff, and tried to get a job somewhere else.

I talked to the community (Ramingining) and asked for help in finding a new job. So, now I'm working in the shop.

I still feel like going back to Murwangi to start that project again, but I get stuck. I've got no vehicle, and no people to help me. If the project turns out okay to me and the community, then I would use my skills to teach the children about cattle and

horses. I would teach them to become stockmen. When I'd get old and then die, then my children would be able to teach their children about the cattle and horses.

I'm quite happy about my job in the shop now, and I'm learning a new trade. But I would still like to start that project again (Murwangi Pastoral Company).

One of the big problems with starting the cattle business again, is money. No money, no vehicle, no knives: no money to build fences, yards and to fix the horses up. Talk is going around to start up Murwangi Pastoral Business again in the very near future. It is hoped that there will be only Yolngu stockmen and a Yolngu manager, because the last balanda manager had problems with Yolngu stockmen (and land owners) mainly about the use of the Murwangi Pastoral Company vehicle for private use.

That's my story.



CHAPTER 4

THE MURWANGI PASTORAL COMPANY

In the second half of 1915, the Reverend James Watson made several trips through the Northern Territory's Top End on behalf of the Mission Board of the Methodist Overseas Missions. His reports led to a decision that the Methodist Church would undertake to enter the Northern Territory and set up a mission station on South Goulbourn Island. This occurred on the twenty third of June, 1916, under the direction of James Watson. The missionary activities were not simply limited to this island, as the Methodists had been granted a very wide protectorate including the Crocodile Island, off the Arnhemland coast near Castlereagh Bay. In November 1916, reports reached Darwin that two Malays had been murdered on Rapuma Island, one of the Crocodile Islands. Watson was asked to go to the scene of the murders and forward a report.^{* 1} He wrote,

... when I saw the great mobs of blacks, a great desire to see another station farther east took possession of me for here were the very² people we want to influence, unspoiled and uncontaminated.

* From January 1981 to December 1983 I lived in Ramingining, the nearest community centre to Murwangi. After witnessing the folding of the company and the ransacking of the Station's plant and tools I acquired possession of that portion of the company's files which were still readable. A majority of the references for this chapter come from the remaining minutes, annual reports, and some letters and memos, hereafter referred to as the "Murwangi File".

1 Lowe, B., "Methodist Overseas Mission, North Australia, The Story of Commencement" in Murwangi File, unpublished material.

2 ibid., p.6.

He finished his report, being

... thankful to God for turning our feet, as a society, towards Arnhem's land, for here surely is the field for labour amongst the aboriginals of the Northern Territory. With the figures indicating retrenchment, it is not for me to press our claim for a lugger or extension eastwards; we shall try to make as much trepang as possible this year and maybe, when the³ war cloud has passed, our hearts desire may be granted.

Indeed this occurred, with Millingimbi Mission being established in 1923, and for the first twenty years of its operation being quite limited in its financial resources. The missionaries salaries were, in 1952, \$252 per year, and an airfare home every second year. The Aboriginal workers at the mission were paid in kind from the mission garden or from rations from the mission store.⁴ In about 1941, the government began to pay Child Endowment, Old Age Pensions and Widows' Pensions to the people of Milingimbi, and with these funds controlled by the Mission, they received clothing, blankets, food, shelter and hospital services. But, it was only after the Second World War, that bartering labour for food supplies was changed to labour for cash and some rations.⁵ In 1951, the top weekly wage was 2/6 plus rations and in 1956 9 shillings per week plus rations.⁶ However, the government decided to provide greater financial aid to the missions in 1958,

³ ibid., p.6.

⁴ Turnball, S., Economic Development of Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory, Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, 1980, p.153.

⁵ ibid., p.154.

⁶ ibid., p.153.

and subsequently on the mission a large increase in the training of Aborigines was offered, especially in the growing of food and livestock.⁷

The mission was under constant pressure from the early '50's onwards to expand its store, yet the mission was attempting to somehow maintain traditional hunting and gathering of food supplies of the people under its care. The demand for western goods increased, however, and the Aborigines were sometimes prepared to go to Darwin, 480 km away, to obtain them⁸, so the mission expanded its store and lessened the ration component of its wage structure when, by 1969, wages were paid in cash.

Further pressure was placed on the Millingimbi Mission after the war as the island had only a limited water supply and the population was increasing. The Macassans had built a well on the island which was used by the people and the mission, for water, and especially for the irrigation of the gardens. During World War Two, the Air Force pumped the well heavily and it turned salty.⁹ The increasing population, due to the natural growth among the island's inhabitants, as well as the arrival of Aborigines from the mainland, a growth of about 5.5% per year, demanded more water, which in turn became more brackish, even when modern bores were drilled. [See Table 6].

7 ibid., p.154.

8 ibid., p.155.

9 ibid., p.154.

TABLE 6
MONTHLY AND YEARLY RAINFALL TOTALS AT MILINGIMBI

YEAR	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APR.	MAY	JUN.	JUL.	AUG.	SEP.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	TOTAL
1925	586	1022	703	1879	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	102	4308
1926	1850	755	1532	120	97	-	-	-	-	-	144	548	5046
1927	1004	724	631	311	100	-	-	-	-	41	199	328	3338
1928	332	658	2754	478	86	24	-	-	-	-	175	62	4569
1929	599	1307	699	198	17	-	-	-	-	-	289	1096	4205
1930	541	2299	1557	181	-	-	-	1	7	108	141	601	5436
1931	1441	94	2829	219	128	28	7	-	-	-	193	647	5586
1932	1807	730	939	181	55	18	-	-	-	-	360	620	4710
1933	520	823	1124	208	-	62	-	2	-	45	173	663	3620
1934	985	923	1459	121	27	-	2	-	-	36	24	447	4024
1935	1858	355	2076	81	112	102	-	-	-	4	200	96	4884
1936	412	826	740	326	103	175	-	-	-	5	148	443	3178
1937	988	767	1236	414	1	1	-	-	-	27	11	618	4063
1938	1368	1362	75	155	243	2	-	-	-	25	526	303	4059
1939	1430	1532	1078	369	157	80	-	-	-	51	23	239	4959
1940	2118	745	984	435	73	2	3	-	-	24	243	268	4985
1941	1562	1047	682	339	81	32	-	1	-	-	75	235	4054
1942	776	670	215	412	123	-	-	-	4	26	282	1182	3690
1943	448	1090	572	416	-	-	-	-	?	?	118	513	3158
1944	628	876	1601	717	10	80	-	-	3	-	75	1126	5716
1945	1037	1857	1646	180	68	28	24	-	-	26	-	2388	7254
1946	1765	1201	174	3	-	-	11	-	-	-	17	546	3717
1947	87	1230	705	244	-	6	-	1	3	2	37	174	2489
1948	382	1112	352	2134	48	-	-	-	-	-	190	737	4955
1949	421	614	430	329	22	-	-	-	-	27	23	1948	3314
1950	2138	1051	529	193	14	-	-	-	94	-	-	1229	5248
1951	269	1034	247	-	-	-	-	27	-	33	-	155	1785
1952	776	239	232	215	-	-	45	-	-	-	179	38	1724
1953	691	717	523	1095	-	-	-	-	-	-	155	800	3981
1954	765	456	559	791	60	-	-	-	-	456	139	1024	4250
1955	310	1489	799	262	393	56	8	-	-	32	717	82	4148
1956	702	1124	1149	480	142	-	-	2	-	2	311	971	4883
1957	852	778	1969	2270	70	4	2	-	6	-	214	962	7127
1958	740	849	794	669	119	130	-	6	-	40	99	755	4201
1959	584	335	565	2369	93	-	-	-	40	-	94	504	4584
1960	1218	741	747	164	119	-	-	-	-	-	105	450	3590
1961	2069	240	859	125	116	-	1	-	-	-	200	308	3918
1962	1624	1090	278	89	70	-	2	-	-	36	524	28	3994
1963	735	820	844	1661	29	23	-	-	-	11	30	474	4607
1964	1570	381	1870	1675	560	2	-	-	-	90	443	1570	8071
1965	981	1709	2051	47	378	60	-	-	-	1	79	1845	7151
1966	1234	1076	442	49	5	-	-	39	-	-	22	480	3327
1967	1231	1601	945	?	?	-	-	-	-	-	66	180	4023
1968	1091	1215	586	196	485	3	33	-	-	-	4	753	4266
1969	1563	2032	1019	101	54	-	-	-	-	198	-	1099	6076
1970	476	717	345	151	14	-	-	-	-	94	666	941	3404

Source: Milingimbi Mission Records in Murwangi File.

The mission's hospital school and store facilities attracted Aborigines from the mainland and brought about a congregation of diverse tribal groups. The solution to the problem lay in one of two directions. The first was the construction of a large desalination plant on the island, in conjunction with building of catchment dams and reservoirs. The second was to provide community facilities and services on the mainland which would be equal to those on Milingimbi which would especially attract the tribal groups from that area who had moved to Milingimbi, to return.

In 1961, the Methodist Overseas Mission District Synod delegated a pastoralist, Malcolm Buik, to extensively explore for a new site for the overflow population of Milingimbi, and to assess the agricultural and pastoral potential of the whole area.¹¹ During his expeditions from July 1961 to well into 1962, Buik travelled over an area of several hundred square miles and recommended three sites be tested for their water capacity. He found eight other points which held a large capacity of surface water. Four soil samples were sent to Darwin for analysis. One from the heavy black clay soil around old Arafura homestead floodplains revealed that rice and para grass could be easily grown if some drainage and check banks were constructed. As well, with irrigation and fertilizer, grain sorghum, maize and vegetables would grow, again providing that a good drainage system was employed. Another sample, a brown loam soil, was reported as

¹¹ Nowland, K., "Submission for Capital Assistance - Milingimbi Mainland Development" in Murwangi File.

being suitable for Townsville lucerne buffalo grass and all types of vegetables, providing nitrogen and phosphates were added to the soil and proper irrigation was installed. Good millable timber, cypress pine, was found and a road route to the old Station from a landing on the lower Glyde River was proposed.¹²

Buik's report was enthusiastic for both the growing of crops and the raising of cattle. He described the Arafura area as having excellent potential given irrigation and he recommended the fencing of 195 square miles to ensure cattle control. He urged that more test bores be drilled and that the practice of sending soil samples to Darwin for analysis be continued. He also promoted the site of Nangalala as the best of the possible settlement sites because it was near a large creek system, had reasonable red soil, was accessible by land from a landing point on the Glyde River, and it had a reasonable outlook.¹³

The first report was submitted to the Synod in 1961 and it was immediately decided to act upon its recommendations.¹⁴ In September 1961, 80 young cattle were transported to the lower Glyde River Landing and 73 reached the old Arafura Station, and soon a 600 yard airstrip was cleared. It was also decided to establish port facilities on the Glyde River close to Nangalala, at

¹² Buick, M., "Report on Exploratory Work in Mainland Area Adjacent to Milingimbi, 1961-1962" in Murwangi File, pp.1-7.

¹³ ibid., pp.6-7.

¹⁴ Nowland, K., op.cit., p.1.

what became known as the "White Star Landing". Money was made available to build a wharf, utility shed for storage and temporary accommodation, and for fencing to begin.

The Nangalala area became the place finally chosen and by 1970, four houses and an airstrip had been built there. Also the cattle raising was centered at this site and stock yards, an abattoir and refrigeration building, a power house and machinery workshop were in use. The mustering and branding of cattle was taking place and slaughtered meat was taken to Milingimbi in a large ice box to sell to the Aboriginal population.¹⁵

Milingimbi still laboured under its severe water shortage and the below average rainfall of the 1970 wet season posed the problem of potential chemical and bacterial fouling of the water. As well, the original estimate of 600 people living there had actually increased to approximately 750 on mission figures and 852 on government figures. At the same time, the Water Resources Branch had recommended that the number of people on the island be reduced to 350 people.¹⁷ Submissions for a new community development at Ramingining - four miles from Nangalala had been given to Mr W.C. Wentworth, the Federal Minister in charge of Aboriginal Welfare, in June, 1969¹⁸, and in light of the urgency of the current situation, the submissions were repeated. As well,

15 ibid.

17 ibid.

18 ibid., p.2.

the missionaries on Milingimbi were not subsidised and the mission found that it could not continue to finance the proposed mainland development.¹⁹

Interestingly, in light of the previous attempts to set up a pastoral industry, the application for the Milingimbi Mainland Development, submitted by Ken Nowland, the Milingimbi Mission Superintendent, was based on the prospect of the area's pastoral potential. He estimated the economic prosperity of the area:

Approximate area of land considered for use by the people from the area:	2000 square miles
Useable at 500 acres per square mile:	100,000 acres
Easy carrying capacity of 20 acres per beast	50,000 beasts
A quarter of stock breeders:	12,500 beasts
60% gain through breeding:	7,500 turned over yearly
Beasts averaging 500 lb carcass weight and abattoir price of 20¢ per lb Gross Annual Return:	\$750,000 ²⁰

The markets for the beef would be local consumption, Milingimbi, nearby missions, Nhulunbuy, with the possibility of opening a butcher's shop there, the Katherine and Darwin meatworks, and overseas markets. Transportation would be by road to Nhulunbuy

¹⁹ Nowland, K., "Submission for Capital Assistance to Alleviate Water Shortage at Milingimbi" in Murwangi File, 25/8/72, p.3.

²⁰ Nowland, K., "Submission for Capital Assistance: Milingimbi Mainland Development", op.cit., pp.2-3.

and Darwin, or, if a barge landing could be built on the Glyde River, slaughtered and dressed meat could be sent to Darwin, Nhulunbuy, or elsewhere in refrigerated containers or sent out live.

To do all this, Nowland proposed to set up the Murwangi Pastoral Association Incorporated, based on the desire of Aborigines who originally came from that area to return to live and work on their land. A draft constitution had been sent to the Methodist Church of Australasia Synod for approval, upon which the association would apply to the government for registration and for capital grants. The Association would also seek a loan for the purchase of horses, cattle, and equipment and the large initial costs of setting up a cattle station:

The objectives and purposes of the Association²¹ were:

1. To train Aborigines resident at Milingimbi and the mainland adjacent in all respects of the pastoral industry.
2. For the Methodist Church of Australasia to assist with this training only until such time as it is felt that there were sufficient numbers of Aborigines qualified to take full control of all aspects of the Association.
3. That the Association may eventually develop to the stage where it can pass from the status of an Incorporated Association into that of an Aboriginal Company, in the name of the Aborigines concerned, and become economically viable to the extent that they will be self-supporting.

²¹ ibid., p.21.

The Synod duly gave it's approval, the Administrator of the Northern Territory was approached for the granting of a pastoral lease in Arnhemland, and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, H.C. Wentworth, was sent an application by the Association for capital funding. The total area applied for was 2,765 square miles from the Arafura Sea in the North, to the headwaters of the Goyder River in the south and embracing the catchment of the Goyder and Blyth Rivers. The run would be completed in two stages, with the first of 200 square miles based around the old Arafura homestead and the second being two areas, one of 62 square miles on the edge of the Arafura swamp, and the other 160 square miles south at the headwater of the Goyder River.

When the whole scheme was working, the three runs would have about 27,000 head with a turnover of at least 5,000 head per year.²² The Association asked for just over \$600,000 over a 10 year period after which the project would be viable. On application in March 1972 to the Land Board for the pastoral lease, the mission indicated it would be prepared to transfer all its assets in regard to the cattle station to the Murwangi Pastoral Company Pty Ltd.²³ On March 28, 1973, the Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs asked the Australian Agricultural Consulting and Management Company Pty Ltd (A.A.C.M.) to undertake a study into the Murwangi Pastoral Co. Pty Ltd, to

²² Nowland, K., "Murwangi Pastoral Project" in Murwangi File, p.9.

²³ "A.A.C.M. Report on Murwangi Pastoral Company Pty Ltd Cattle Project, October 1973" in Murwangi File, p.11.

examine the project area, and to discuss the proposals with the mission authorities.²⁴ On Tuesday, August 14, officers of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs arrived on Milingimbi for discussion with Mr Ken Nowland before crossing over to the mainland, where they met two lay missionaries, Malcolm Armstrong, the cattle advisor, and Allan Baker, the business manager, and began a three day land and aerial survey of the project area, and meetings with Aboriginal groups.²⁵ The A.A.C.M. report recommended that the mission receive \$18,900 in compensation for the cattle and assets transferred and that a start be made on the cattle station by a group of ten Aboriginal stockmen with the assistance of Malcolm Armstrong.²⁶ It was further recommended that a grant of \$605,000 be made available over a three year period to enable the company to set up its basic commercial on-going cattle enterprise, and to purchase 1,500 head of breeding cattle.²⁷

The Company held its first meeting of Directors at Milingimbi on October 19, 1973, and elected its directors, Mararru, Ngulmarmarr, Rarrtji, Banbuma, Menydjun and Djatjamirril, its accountant J. van der Wal and Associates of Darwin, its auditors²⁸, William Bishop, Bowes and Craig of Darwin, and appointed Malcolm

²⁴ ibid., p.1.

²⁵ ibid., p.2.

²⁶ ibid., p.27.

²⁷ ibid.

²⁸ "Minutes of the Murwangi Pastoral Company Pty Ltd, 19-8-1973" in Murwangi File.

Armstrong as controller of the company's bank accounts. However, by February 1984, Malcolm Armstrong had left the company and a new supervisor had to be found. The company continued to operate, but some of its long lasting problems began to surface.

The chairman told a meeting that members of the workforce had lost some time in not being on the job and in wasting time on the job. He said that the vehicles had been wrongly used very often. They had been used for hunting and just running around in. This had caused many hard words in the community ... and if the government heard of this, they would not give any more help to the Murwangi Company. He was of the opinion that the whole work force should be²⁹ stood down until a supervisor had been appointed.

Some men were laid off the next day which was fortuitous, as the government grant of \$30,000 for starting up, had already been spent and funds would not be available for at least two months.³⁰

There were problems with obtaining breeding stock as there was a ban on breeding stock entering the Northern Territory from Queensland, and Mountain Valley Station looked to be the only source.³¹

Further breaking in problems occurred when the Department of Aboriginal Affairs demanded that a consultancy firm be employed by the company to assist in the running of the company, and its

²⁹ "Minutes of the Murwangi Pastoral Company Pty Ltd, 11-3-1974" in Murwangi File.

³⁰ "Minutes of the Murwangi Pastoral Company Pty Ltd. 26-4-74" in Murwangi File.

³¹ ibid.

first consultant, Dr Letts, resigned. The Trivers Company was approached but it had extremely strict rules and regulations in its approach and practice to Aboriginal companies, their major assumption being that Aboriginal people could not contribute to the direction, and decision making themselves.³² During April 1975, the Australian Agricultural Consulting and Management Company Pty Ltd, (A.A.C.M.) was appointed general manager and the directors moved that the Murwangi Pastoral Company Pty Ltd, commence operations as from Monday, May 5, 1975.

Malcolm Armstrong had returned and was employed by A.A.C.M. as manager of the project. He was paid a salary of \$4,500 per year, free accommodation and rations and airfare south once per year. Also he was totally directed by A.A.C.M. and they would purchase all stocks and stores³³, a policy which caused much trouble quite quickly when A.A.C.M.'s controlling officer, Bill Atkins, became increasingly dictatorial.³⁴ Atkin spoke to the directors in September on whether the people were really interested in a cattle station or just an outstation. He stated that a lot of money had already been paid out but little work had been done, and that all the vehicles had broken down.³⁵ As well, he urged the

³² "Minutes of the Murwangi Pastoral Company Pty Ltd, 17-8-74 in Murwangi File.

³³ "Letter by A.A.C.M. to Malcolm Armstrong, 13-5-1975" in Murwangi File.

³⁴ See especially:
 "Letter from J. van der Wal to Stephen Marraru, 7-5-75".
 "Letter from A.A.C.M. to Malcolm Armstrong, 26-5-75", and
 "Letter from A.A.C.M. to Malcolm Armstrong, 15-9-75", all in Murwangi File.

community to back Malcolm Armstrong in the difficult decisions he had to make in relation to the workers, and the meeting gave Malcolm Armstrong the power to hire and fire.³⁶

As the dry season of 1975 progressed, it became obvious that permanent quarters urgently needed to be built at Murwangi. The men worked at the station by day and in the evening either camped or went back to Ramingining or Nangalala and possibly returned again the next morning. However, unless the families of the men could be brought out to Murwangi, it was thought that the whole venture would collapse through non-participation. Also Malcolm had been urging his company to give him permanent housing at the station since May.³⁷

By early 1976, a manager's house had been erected and the stockmen's quarters was well on the way to being completed. Fence lines had been completed for four paddocks, the airstrip had been cleared and some cattle had been branded and moved to Murwangi. Despite the progress, the original concept of a big station as Nowland had proposed was becoming less likely. The Community Advisor at Ramingining, Richard Trudgen, stated the case:

35 "Minutes of the Murwangi Pastoral Company Pty Ltd, 3-9-75" in Murwangi File.

36 ibid.

37 "Letter from Malcolm Armstrong to A.A.C.M., 10-10-75 in Murwangi File.

The present programme is too big and fast for the Aboriginal people, particularly the older ones, to understand ... the programme has to slow down so that the Aboriginals can be brought into the decision-making and more on-site work could be delegated to family groups who actually own the land in the tribal sense.³⁸

Meanwhile, A.A.C.M. did not:

... in any way recommend the programme (of the community advisor) if there³⁹ is going to be any attempt to attain commercial viability.

Malcolm Armstrong was also developing his own attitudes to the project and felt that,

... in the self-determination situation, it seems that people will have to suffer before they will start to take the responsibility of looking after things for themselves.⁴⁰

and

... the whole project has to be looked into seriously. I will not undertake⁴¹ to continue with it on its present level of development.

He seemed to have his greatest doubts about the project in July,

It would seem that it is almost impossible to get the men to take any responsibility for the work; without me being there, anarchy sets in.... There is no money for wages at the abattoir (at Nangalala), which is now being used as a washroom and shower for the best part of fifty people.... It would seem that little is being accomplished in the area of social development, the attitudes of the men have not

³⁸ A.A.C.M. Report, "Explanatory Notes on a Tentative Projection for a Nominal Development Programme 1975-1987" dated 24-4-76 in Murwangi File

³⁹ ibid.

⁴⁰ Armstrong, M., "Dairy for the Year 1976" in Murwangi File, entry 9-3-76.

⁴¹ ibid., entry 14-3-76.

changed much from when I first came here five years ago.... I think there is a need for some sort of a way in which we can encourage people to take responsibility, the results of work must be their thing, they must be able to see if their pay is small; it is their fault. If trucks are wrecked, then it is their fault and if work is not done they must feel the results somehow.⁴²

and August,

... With the community problems the way they are, alcohol abuse, without dissipation, petrol sniffing, drug abuse, we've got them all, it would seem impossible to get anyone to talk with any sense about the future of Murwangi. The problems of tribal pressure, marriages that are not quite right, drunkenness amongst older men who should be showing leadership, makes the people we are talking to, preoccupied with other things and talking about Murwangi is relatively unimportant.⁴³

Up to October 31, 1976, total grants of \$371,418 had been spent on the project⁴⁴ and the company had about 350 head of cattle⁴⁵, but needed many more if it were to survive and prosper economically. The Uniting Church still owned the abattoirs at Nangalala, and their future, including their use by the Murwangi Pastoral Company, was unclear. The Company did not yet have title to the land and there were numerous arguments between A.A.C.M. and the company's accountants, as well as the Department of Aboriginal

⁴² ibid., entry 30-7-76.

⁴³ ibid., 27-8-76.

⁴⁴ "A.A.C.M. Financial Report, 1977" in Murwangi File.

⁴⁵ "Minutes of the Murwangi Pastoral Company Pty Ltd, 12-8-76" in Murwangi File.

Affairs, involving itself in a bureaucratic row with the company over the timing and the number of votes cast at the Annual General Meeting.⁴⁶

Problems managed to abound however, and Malcolm Armstrong wrote interestingly that,

... there is no need to work for money if there is enough money to provide the needs of the people from Child Endowment and pensions.... Somehow, in the growth of things the Mission and those involved with the development of the people have failed to get the message across, that work is an honourable thing⁴⁷ and is necessary for the fulfillment of the real person.

While Malcolm Armstrong was concerned with issues other than simply raising cattle and making a profit, A.A.C.M. was more interested in determining the boundaries of control over the project, in building up the cattle numbers and in attempting to forage out the local decisions concerning Aboriginal land rights.⁴⁸ They were not averse either, to chastising their resident manager for not working at these specific proposals.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ "Minutes of the Murwangi Pastoral Company Pty Ltd, 27-2-76" in Murwangi File.

⁴⁷ "Draft letter from Malcolm Armstrong to A.A.C.M. April, '77" in Murwangi File.

⁴⁸ "A.A.C.M. Annual Report for Year Ending October 31, 1976" in Murwangi File.

⁴⁹ "Letter from A.A.C.M. to Malcolm Armstrong, 1-6-77" in Murwangi File.

During October and November of 1977, the whole project was reviewed by the Northern Territory Government which saw problems relating to,

... complex issues of market opportunities, herd size of economic viability, local land rights, power and authority issues. It recommended that the project aim to establish a small cattle station viable⁵⁰ in social and technical but not necessarily economic terms.

Within six months, A.A.C.M. stated its intention to terminate its role as consultants for the company.⁵¹ Malcolm Armstrong became the General Manager and in A.A.C.M.'s final report he was eloquently praised for his contributions to the project and his role in its future stability. If this was so, few of the original aims had yet been achieved.

By the end of the 1977/78 financial year, \$441,414⁵² had been spent on the project. The herd had increased to 747 branded cattle and 56 branded horses. Meat sales had increased to the communities of Nangalala and Ramingining and by 1979 sales extended to Milingimbi and to Elcho Island on an irregular basis.

50 "Review of Murwangi Pastoral Co. Project, Department of the N.T., 5-10-77", p.2, in Murwangi File.

51 "Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Murwangi Pastoral Co. Pty Ltd, 10-4-78" in Murwangi File.

52 "A.A.C.M. Annual Report for eight month financial period ending June 30, 1978" in Murwangi File.

The malaise however, had almost fully set in by October 1980, when only three men were working at the station.⁵³ The company's vehicles were being used for all forms of joy-riding, there was so much government money available in the form of unemployment benefits, pensions and child endowment, that few people needed to work for wages, and the project was being propped up by one European. Malcolm Armstrong felt that the gradual removal of his influence over a year might be able to save the venture and he proposed a scheme quite similar to that hoped for in the first place. He pushed for on station bookkeeping, concentration on mustering, fencing and general maintenance, family unit management of one tribal group, rather than a board of directors elected from a wide range of groups, quarterly visits from the Aboriginal Development Corporation; minimal level budgets and the local people having maximum autonomy.⁵⁴

This plan was never realised. In October, 1982, Malcolm Armstrong left Murwangi and within two months the Murwangi Pastoral Company ceased to operate. During the next year, the whole station was scrupulously looted by visiting white contractors to the Ramingining area, by some residents of Ramingining who felt that the plant and tools of the company needed to be used rather than be left to idly lay around the station, and by government employees working in Ramingining.

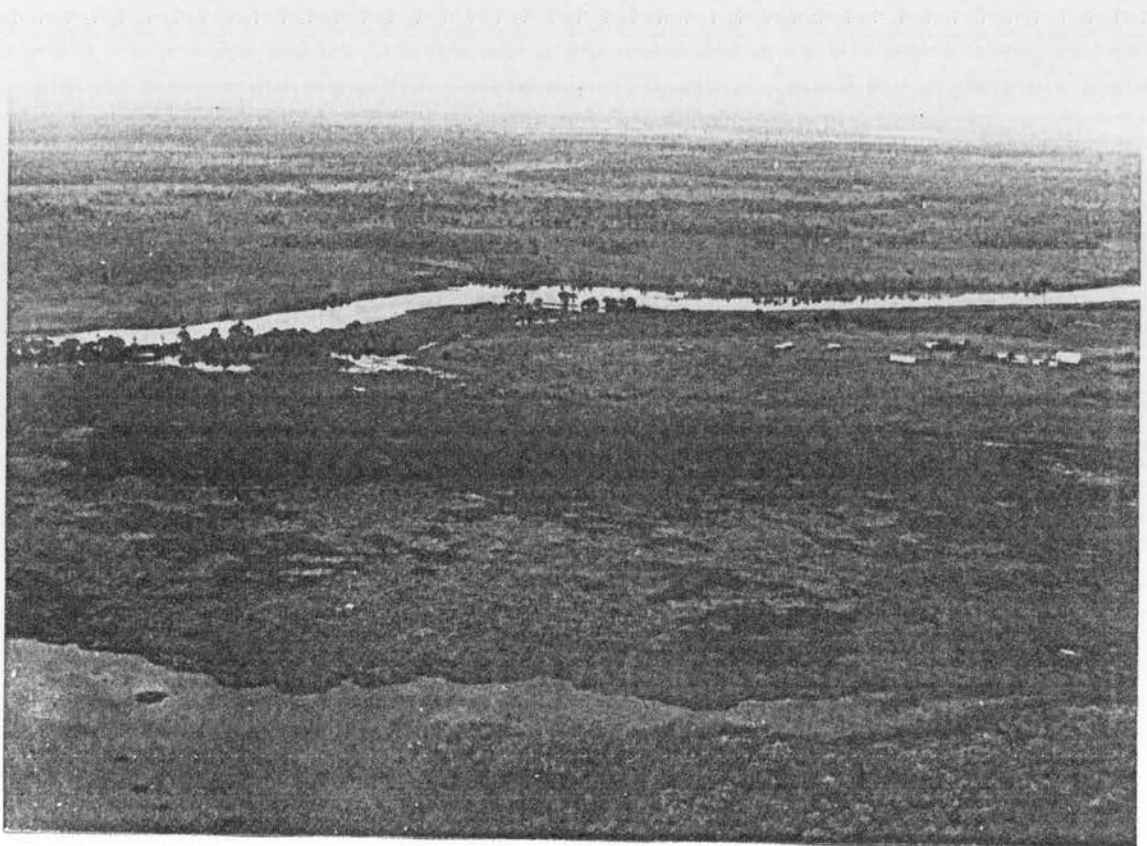
53 "Report on Murwangi Pastoral Co. Pty Ltd, 13-10-80" in Murwangi File.

54 ibid.

The final large piece of plant, the power generator, was removed by the government on October 14, 1983. Only, the now wild, cattle remain to inhabit one of the most beautiful, yet fruitless, pieces of country in Australia.



PICTURE 7



PICTURE 8

To this point this dissertation has examined how three distinctly different attempts to set up a pastoral industry in North East Arnhem Land had failed in light of three factors: the factor of distance; the factor of seasonal climate; and the factor of ignorance of the region. Each of these three ventures encountered problems with probable markets, loss of condition of the cattle and horses moved to and from the area, the difficulty of obtaining and then keeping station staff, the huge areas leased and the subsequent attempts to contain the cattle in that area, and the distance to and from Darwin. The stations never adjusted to 'nature's will', always trying to modify and control it, rather than to simply learn to live with the various factors which determine climate. The total inaccessibility during the wet season, the changing nutritive value of the grasses and soil available for the stock in wet and dry seasons, the dry season burning, traditional among the Aboriginal people of the area, and moving the cattle to best cope with the extremes of heat, humidity, water and drought provided insurmountable difficulties.

For these three stations the factor of ignorance of the region was the worst feature. At the most simplistic level, to buy leases for ten to twenty thousand square miles of land unseen and then bank of reaping a huge profit from it, was total madness. Macartney may have been able to offer some excuses with an initial lack of knowledge, and urged by Lindsay's report on the area, but he soon became aware of the gross exaggerations, the poor judgements of mapmakers and explorers alike, yet he refused to learn by

experience for a long time. The Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Company is arguably the best example of a pastoral fiasco ever to emerge in the Northern Territory, compounding all the features outlined above tenfold, while having one of the Territory's most able men at its helm. The Murwangi Pastoral Company project may have been smaller in actual size but its conception was huge, boasting a hoped for profit of \$750,000 per year. This station's plans seem to have been widely researched and discussed, and the former failures noted. Yet leaving aside the more complex Aboriginal social factors dealing with involvement, its primary aim was unforgivable, even in conception, given past experiences.

A further aspect of this factor which has permeated this dissertation has been the attitude of the Aborigines towards the attempts to set up pastoral activities in North East Arnhem Land. The stories incorporated in the above text clearly outline the Aboriginal reaction to European incursions and their attempts to save themselves from being killed. Even during the time of the Murwangi project the 'white boss' was seen as an outsider and was often resented for giving orders or withholding privileges the Aboriginal stockmen felt were their due. During Florida and Arafura Stations, to eat the cattle was simply seen as the Aboriginal peoples due, a logical extension of the hunting and gathering practices of so many years prior to this time.

If many cattle roamed an area inhabited by Aborigines at the time more than likely most of them would be killed. However the cattle weren't killed simply for the sake of being killed. Traditional Aboriginal people of the area kill and cook and eat any, and as much food, as comes their way not out of greed, but one never knows when the next meal is going to come. It is quite possible that later in the Arafura period the Aboriginal people realised that the killing of cattle struck a sore blow at the pastoralists and could be used as a way of driving them off their land. It is also just as probable that the Aboriginal people would have realised that the more cattle they killed increased the likelihood and ferocity of retributions by the Europeans. Indeed, the Europeans literally did to the Aborigines what the Aborigines were doing to the cattle. For them little difference to the value of life existed.

The clash of these two economic systems was totally irreconcilable. The much hoped for profit making object of the European system, i.e. the cattle, was being eaten away by the objectives of the Aboriginal economic system, i.e. subsistence. In this regard the Aboriginal people had to keep on killing the beef no matter what enormous fatalities befell their people. The pastoralists desire to make money through raising cattle was an extremely difficult proposition in light of this. The logical extension for the Europeans was to eliminate those factors working against profit making. Since no economic retribution was possible the only avenue for the pastoralists was to completely isolate the Aborigines

from the pastoralists means of production. Macartney tried to do this by not allowing the Aborigines into certain areas he could control, but he had ten thousand square miles, and the men at Arafura Station tried to eliminate their opposition by war.

The most important aspect in the regulation of Aboriginal society is the kinship organisation: the duties and behaviours one person has to another in any given situation. In North East Arnhem Land if a man is invited to eat of the spoils of a hunting expedition he then has certain reciprocal obligations to fulfil, obligations of a social sense, rather than economic, laid down by the kinship structures into which everyone is born. During the early 1980's cattle were still being killed by individuals not employed by the Murwangi Pastoral Company, though obviously far less than during earlier times. Current economic factors such as only receiving a small income from government pensions, loss of money gambling at cards, or the closure of the local store were more likely to inspire a man to go and shoot cattle, as beef could usually be bought. However, if poorer economic conditions remained a man could fulfil his obligations to family, kin, and to his position in the kinship framework by killing cattle.

Several thousand head of cattle roam the station site today, their only enemies being the odd rifle shot, the dingoes and the crocodiles. In the not too distant future few cattle will run on the property as the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry

will bring in shooters to clear the land of all the cattle because of their potential to become totally disease ridden. The Murwangi Cattle Project will then have finally and completely collapsed.

Many of the Aboriginal people would like to try to run the project again, their way. Whether any government would once more be prepared to finance such a venture is doubtful, though Aboriginal pressure groups could, in all probability, muster a great deal of support. No attempt, however, could be based on European economic formulas as these have already failed three times. A future project would need to be based on Aboriginal economic structures, to be run by the Aborigines for the Aborigines. Who would finance such a project?

APPENDIX A

THE ORIGIN OF THE
MUCKANINNE PLAINS

David Lindsay and his party spent the 26th and 27th of September near the site of what was to be the Florida and Murwangi homestead, regaining their strength and very cautiously watching the Aborigines on the other side of the lagoon. On the morning of the 28th, they headed north and the Aborigines rushed to where Lindsay had camped causing him to surmise that that area "was evidently their headquarters".¹ The party passed through "magnificent country", "magnificent plains", "excellent feed", and "young green grass", and camped on the edge of the plain near a jungle spring.² On the 29th, they again travelled north, passed a fine freshwater lagoon swarming with wild fowl, and then reached the bottom of Castlereagh Bay, which Lindsay named Glyde's Inlet³, and were helped by some natives to catch geese.

The 30th was a Sunday and at 7 a.m., the party could hear natives calling out as they came through the bush towards the camp. Two men who had helped them catch geese on the previous day, came forward and Lindsay tried to speak to them in English and Malay but they did not understand him:

... After a short time one of the two, an old man with a splendid open honest-looking face, went away and returned with another native, bringing some honey, for which we gave them two sticks of tobacco; the old man looked at it, smelled it, hugged it to his breast and looked extremely pleased; I taught him to say "Whitefellow very good". These natives appear very friendly, coming openly and without arms; a great word with them, and one they are always rising, the

¹ S.A.P.P., No.239, "Mr D. Lindsay's Explorations through Arnheim's Land", 1883-4, p.13.

² ibid.

³ ibid., p.14.

meaning of which I could not ascertain, was "Muckaninne". To perpetuate this word, so that the next white men may know it, I will call these plains "Muckaninne Plains".⁴

Obviously, Lindsay felt himself to be somewhat of a linguist and on other expeditions he always copied down the native tongue.⁵ That day the group rested and on October first, headed homeward.

On the 28th, they camped at the jungle spring known as Mandjinura, an area which is used to several tribes such as the Ganalbiynu, Madhalpi, Gurrukuk, Bundibi, Dabi and Djadiwidji. The country was not for the exclusive use of just one of these tribes and other groups such as the Ranybarrnga tribe also roamed this land. Indeed, the Ranybarrnga tribe have been said to have once inhabited the countryside at Mandjinura, and as far as Dhamala and Gatji.⁶

The next morning Lindsay passed a shallow fresh water lagoon known as Gayarramirr where he and his party helped in catching some geese and on the 30th, the two men came to him saying the word "Muckaninne". No tribe, previously mentioned, in that area, has a word anything like "Muckaninne", except the Ranybarrnga who have the word "Baki" - pronounced Barky, which means

⁴ ibid.

⁵ ibid., and Australian Archives, Ref: CRS A1640, Item 81/232, "Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration 1868-1874, Correspondence Dockets N.T. Series 1860-1911, David Lindsay's Report, 11-11-1880".

⁶ Personal communication from Brian Yambal, an assistant teacher and resident of the Milingimbi/Ramingining area.

'tobacco' and the word "nanni" which means 'this is'. That would make the word "Baki-nanni", not "Muckaninne", but if this word is said quickly it could easily have turned to the sound "Muckaninne".

"Baki-nanni" can have two meanings, firstly, "this is tobacco", and secondly, "have you any tobacco?". That is why the "old man looked at it [the tobacco], smelled it, hugged it to his breast and looked extremely pleased".⁷

In the Menzies Library at the Australian National University there is a thesis by Graham Richard McKay on Rembarnga, entitled: 'Rembarnga - A Language of Central Arnhem Land'. An attempt to check if the words 'Baki' or 'nanni' was in this thesis was made, but there is no vocabulary list and the thesis is so linguistically bound as to be impenetrable and unreadable to an outsider of the field.

⁷ S.A.P.P., No.239, op.cit., p.14.

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