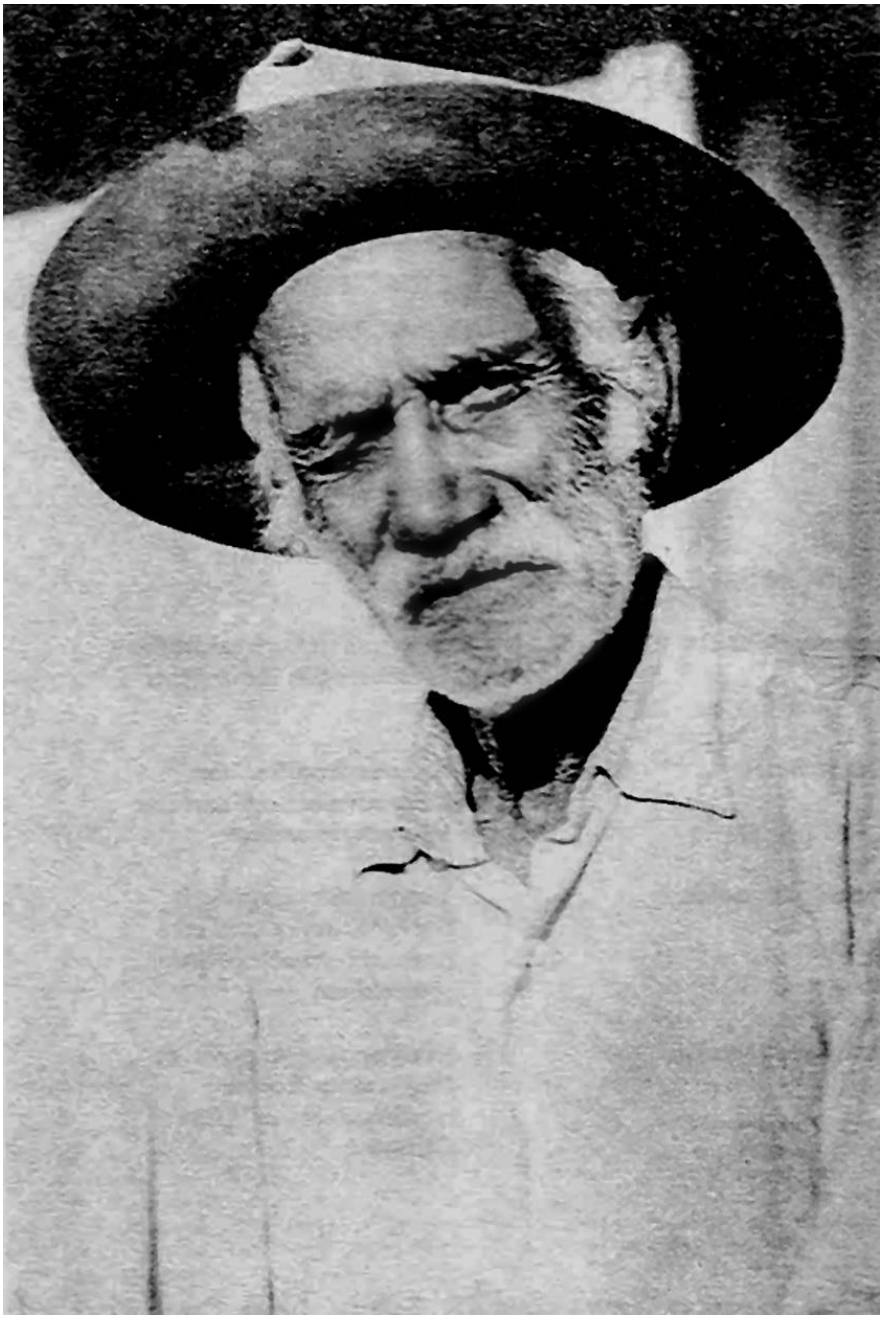
# Published research papers and diaries relating to Aboriginal people in the Milparinka and Tibooburra areas.



George Dutton

Compiled by the Milparinka Heritage and Tourism Association 2023

Content:

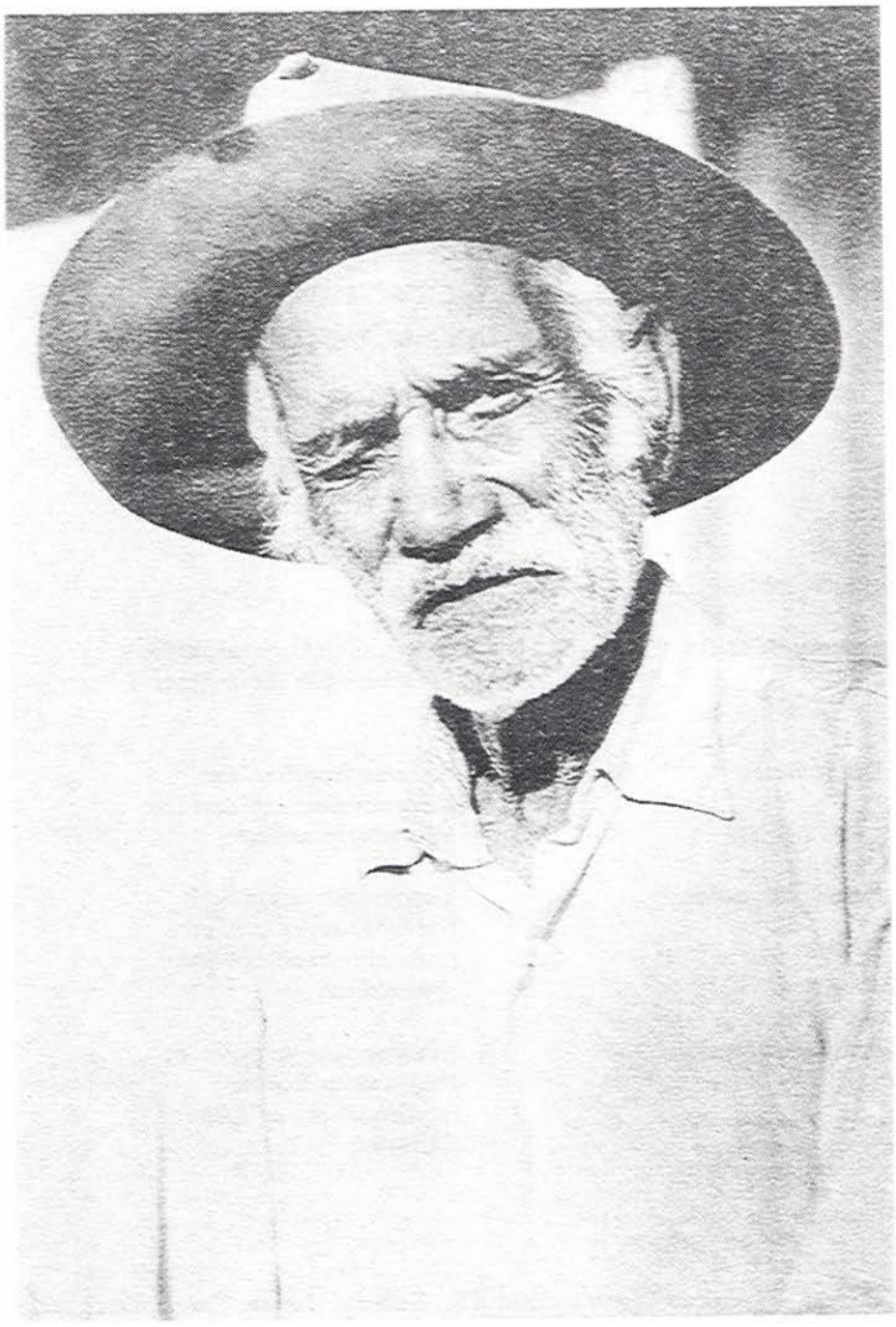
A B O R IG IN A L H IS T O R Y 1978 George Dutton

CORNER TALK- AN ANNALES INFLUENCED NARRATIVE FROM THE CORNER COUNTRY OF NSW

Sarah Martin

THE ABORIGINAL LANDSCAPE OF OLIVE DOWNS CMP

Background Report Prepared by Sarah Martin



George Dutton, 1964.
Photograph by Jeremy Beckett.

# GEORGE DUTTON'S COUNTRY: PORTRAIT OF AN ABORIGINAL DROVER*

Jeremy Beckett

I first met George Dutton in the winter of 1957. I had come to the little town of Wilcannia, on the Darling River, in the course of a study of part-Aborigines in the far west of New South Wales. My assignment was to investigate their place in 'outback' Australian society. I had not intended to search for remnants of the indigenous culture; indeed, my advisers had led me to believe there would be none. But I found that there were a dozen old men and a few women who had been initiated, and I was soon devoting a part of my time to working with those who were ready and articulate enough to tell me something about the 'dark people's rules'. It was frustrating, time-consuming work, and I might not have attempted it had it not given me an occasion for being amongst Aborigines who were suspicious and more or less uncomprehending of my interest in their present-day affairs. I found, moreover, that it provided the basis for a closer relationship than I could achieve with any of the younger generation.

I had already heard of George Dutton when I was working on the Lachlan. When I came to Wilcannia everyone agreed that he was the man to see: 'He knew forty lingos!' They directed me to the outskirts of town where a score or so of scrap iron humpies stood scattered in the salt bush and mallee scrub. Some youths in cowboy hats and high-heeled boots led me past the wrecked cars, over the broken glass and rusty tins, to a rough single-room shanty, just big enough for the two beds in which he, his small son and two daughters slept. Dutton was sitting outside playing cards, a tall emaciated half caste of about seventy, his long, sallow face sunken with the loss of his teeth, under his broad brimmed stockman's hat. I stated my business, but he was unresponsive, saying he might come and see me tomorrow.

*This is a much revised and expanded version of an earlier piece (Beckett 1958). I carried out the initial research as a Goldsmiths Company Travelling Scholar. Later visits were funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. I would like to acknowledge a particular debt to Professor Russell Ward who, at the beginning of the project, showed me the manuscript of his *Australian Legend* (1962). Without it I should have had little understanding of outback history, or the Aborigines' marginal situation in the rural working class. I must also thank Dr Luise Hercus for comments on this piece and for allowing me to use some of her material. Last but not least, I must thank Myles Lalor, whose letters kept me in touch with George Dutton while I was overseas, and who spent many evenings talking over our old friend's career.

I felt I had been fobbed off, but he came. He explained that he wasn't going to talk in front of the young people because they only made fun of the old ways. He dictated a few myths and then drifted away to a poker school. Rather to my surprise, he didn't ask me for any money or even seem to expect payment. But I had to pursue him to get more. It took some time to convince him that I wanted more than the few folk tales that had proved enough to satisfy the tourists he had met before. Perhaps also it took time for him to marshal the knowledge that had lain so long untapped. I kept off ritual, having found other old men very reticent on the subject. At last one day, when we were drinking in the hotel, I asked him whether he had been 'through the rules', which was the way Aborigines in these parts described initiation. He answered non-commitally, as I feared he would. But when we stopped by the lavatory on the way out he showed me that he had been circumcised. He then gave me a detailed account of the young men's initiation, though it was some time before he would discuss the higher rites.

As time went on, the character of our work changed. I was still eager to learn what I could about tribes that had gone undescribed, but I was becoming interested in the man himself and ready to let him take his own course. The culture was dead, but its exponent was alive and accessible. Much of his talk was about the country which he knew both in its mythological associations and as a drover. I had to send for large-scale maps to follow the tracks that the dream-time heroes – the *muras* – and he had followed. In the arid back country, both Aboriginal and stockman must be able to recognize landmarks which to others seem nondescript, and they travel slowly enough for each feature to make its impression on them. I have heard drovers in bars rehearsing each step of a route, remembering what had happened here and there along the way, as though they were Aborigines 'singing the country'. The country provided the link between George Dutton's life as a stockman in white society and his life as an initiated man in black society. For him at least it seems to have mediated the conflict between the two worlds.

George's country was not Wilcannia but the 'Corner', the arid country to the north-west where the three States meet. He had not been there for some years and we were soon seized with the idea that he should 'show me the country'. He also had the notion that we should find opals at the end of some *mura* track, since the old people used to say that opal was *mura's* blood. Unfortunately I had no car. We managed to get a lift as far as Tibooburra the following January, but that was as far as we could go. Even so, the trip was worthwhile. We saw a few of the places that had been no more than names till then. And though many old timers were dead, while others had left in the general drift from the region, there were still a few of George's generation with whom I could hear him reminisce and talk myself. It was not until several years later that the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies provided me with a

land-rover to go up to Cooper's Creek. George was in his eighties by then and frail. I was half-joking when I asked him if he was coming. 'By Jesus Christ, I'm coming!' And he persuaded his youngest son to join us. Despite his enthusiasm, he found the heat and the journey gruelling. With his failing sight he could barely recognize the drought-ravaged country he had not seen for forty years. At Innamincka Station there was not one Aboriginal where once there had been hundreds.

After 1958 I was caught up in other work and able to make only brief and infrequent visits to the far west, in 1961, 1964, 1965 and finally, in 1967. One by one the old people died, and each time I left him wondering whether I would see him again; but each time I came back he was there, thinner, coughing more and seeing less, but mentally alert as ever. His friend, Myles Lalor, who had droved through the same country and who took down many of his letters, predicted in 1964 that we wouldn't have the old man with us much longer; later he said, 'He's nearly died a dozen times but he won't give up'. George never lost his zest for the old stories, especially when he was recording them on tape. He was by now a seasoned informant, working with N.W.G. Macintosh, Stephen Wurm and Luise Hercus.[1] In 1968 I sent Harry Allen, a prehistorian, to see him, but this time it was too late. He was too ill, though he dictated a short letter: 'Me and Harry can't do much here now. I can't get around to help him along, but I'll send him a word when I get strong...'. He died in November of the same year, the last initiated man in the far west.

I found the same restlessness and love of travel among other Aborigines of George's generation, though none had travelled so widely as he. This does not, of course, support the notorious 'walkabout' myth. They had not grown up as hunter-gatherers, and I doubt whether they were much more peripatetic than white pastoral workers, whom Anthony Trollope had earlier called the 'nomad tribe'.[2] Though the white settlers exploited the country in ways unlike their Aboriginal predecessors, they nevertheless reproduced the conditions for nomadism, at least among the proletariat. The prevalence of seasonal and contract work, the need to drive stock across vast distances, the monotony of life on remote stations and the shortage of women, were all conducive to moving on. And the way of life acquired for some at least a certain glamour. There are Australian folk songs that are little more than lists of places where shearers have shorn or drovers have travelled.[3] These conditions survive today only in the remotest areas, but they were still active when Dutton was a young man. Aborigines, in addition, had to cope with periodic official harassment, forcing them to move on or take flight.

More than others, Dutton responded to the combined pressures of white and Aboriginal society in his zest for travel. And in his old age it

1 McCarthy and Macintosh 1962; Hercus 1970.
2 Ward 1962:9.
3 Ward 1962:177-179.

mattered more to him than it did to others. Once when he was arguing with another man who had misremembered my name, he clinched the matter by saying, 'Dammit, I've *travelled* with the bloke!'.

When George Dutton was born the traditional order still held; but it was breaking up by the time he reached maturity, and the memory of it died with him. Yet he was not a tribal Aboriginal. His parents' generation had already made the adaptation to pastoral settlement, grafting the institutions that they valued onto station life. They had, in Elkin's words, '... woven station activity and certain European goods into their social and economic organization and into their psychology without upsetting the fundamentals of their social behaviour or belief'.[4]

This adaptation appears differently according to whether it is viewed from the settlers' perspective or that of the Aborigines. Elkin sees the Aborigines as pursuing a strategy of 'Intelligent Parasitism'.[5] The term has unfortunate overtones – doubtless unintended – and the notion credits them with more freedom of choice than they necessarily had. They were indeed able to use European resources to underwrite Aboriginal activities, but only because the arrangement suited the settlers.

In terms of the wider system we have what may be called internal colonialism, a regime that preserves traditional institutions in order to maintain a supply of cheap labour.[6] The pastoral industry, in New South Wales as elsewhere, could not have survived recurrent droughts, recessions and labour shortages without Aboriginal help. Many stations supported permanent communities so as to be assured of a supply of cheap but skilled labour that could be taken on and laid off at will. Aboriginal women, for their part, provided domestic labour and sexual release for the solitary males who made up the white work force. Thus the pastoralists had nothing to gain and something to lose by disrupting their peons' ties to community and country, or teaching them the virtues of monogamy and thrift. Cultural difference obscured and legitimized exploitation; but at the same time it assured Aborigines of an area of autonomy.

When the *modus vivendi* broke down Dutton's people moved into the phase which Elkin has called 'Pauperism'.[7] This refers to an indigence that is as much cultural as economic, a net loss of material and mental things, and a life that is wholly mundane. Also lost are the occasions for self-determination. Until they can reconstruct their identity Aborigines

[4] Elkin 1954:324.
[5] Elkin 1951.
[6] I have applied Wolpe's model of internal colonialism to the northern Australian pearling industry and suggested its applicability to the cattle industry (Beckett 1977). In work as yet unpublished Heather Goodall, a graduate student in history at Sydney University, has shown its value in explaining the situation of New South Wales Aborigines into the 1930s.
[7] Elkin 1951.

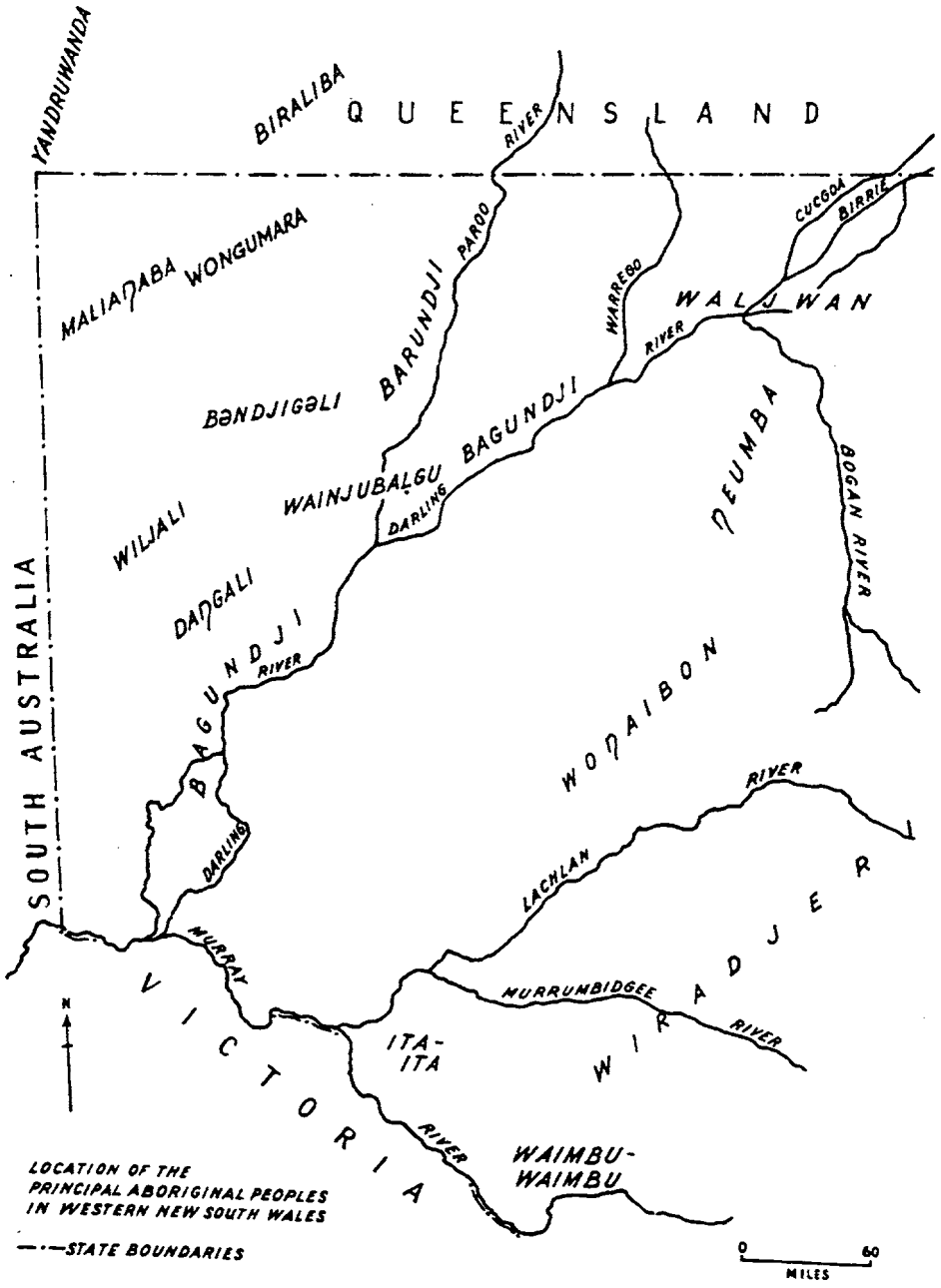
are distinguished from other Australians by external factors: the colour bar and the uninvited attentions of welfare and protection agencies.

The transition is poorly documented and little understood. Ultimately the determining factors are to be found in the white sector, and there are many instances of direct suppression of custom, even of language. But sometimes the agents of destruction have been the Aborigines themselves, responding to diffuse and indirect pressures from within the community, as well as from without.[8] Often, as in the far west, the decimation and dispersal of Aboriginal population have been crucial.[9] But the dispersal must be understood in terms of changes in the rural economy of the far west, which were themselves reproduced in other parts of Australia. I refer to the subdivision of the large pastoral properties and the decline in the proportion of wage labourers to self-employed small-holders. In those parts of northern Australia where population has been neither decimated nor dispersed, and indigenous institutions have not been suppressed, the transition may not take place.

Although many anthropologists have worked among Aborigines at the first stage of integration, few have described them in these terms. Ronald and Catherine Berndt have given some impression of it in the early pages of their South Australian study[10] and Mervyn Meggitt has stressed the settlement environment of his *Desert People*.[11] However, W.E.H. Stanner has given it the most direct and vivid treatment in his biography of a Port Keats Aboriginal, Durmugam.[12] In the far west of New South Wales the phase had ended at or before 1920 and there was no question of my observing it, but it was the setting for the early years of Dutton and his generation. By the time they were born Europeans had already settled the land, which may explain why none of them could give me a coherent account of local organization. Theirs was a world of sheep stations, wayside hotels and rare, dusty townships, but also of regulated marriage, bush camps and secret rituals.

During these times Aborigines had the freedom and occasion to travel further afield than their forebears. This increased mobility brought into contact tribes that had hitherto been separate. There were more cups from which to drink even if the contents were somewhat adulterated. The white sector likewise offered new experiences and opportunities, as well as restrictions. Some Aborigines made more of their opportunities than others. The half caste was perhaps better able to penetrate the white sector and, in this part of Australia at least, suffered no disabilities in the Aboriginal community.

[8] See, for example, Berndt 1962; Stanner 1960.
[9] Elkin 1951:170.
[10] Berndt and Berndt 1951.
[11] Meggitt 1962.
[12] Stanner 1960.




Map 1

Distribution of language groups, western New South Wales.

The names and location of the tribes of the far west are a matter of some confusion. Dutton's own account (Map 1) does not coincide exactly with that obtained by Tindale from field and documentary sources, and there seems to be no way of resolving the differences at this date. However, the general picture is clear enough. The tribes to the east of the Darling were linguistically and culturally homogeneous and may be classified together under the heading of Wiradjeri.[13] They do not concern us here except to note that they differed from the people of the Darling and the country to the north and west, who may be classified as Bagundju. According to Dutton, Bandjigali, Danggali, Bulali, Wiljali, Wiljagali, Wainjubalgu, Barundji and Bagundji proper all spoke variants of the one language. They also employed the same kinship terminology which Elkin recorded under the name Wiljakali.[14]

The people of the 'Corner' — Maliangaba, Wadigali, Gungadidji and Wonggumara, differed again. They are mentioned only in passing by earlier writers and Maliangaba is the only group about which I could obtain much information.[15] Though their languages were not like Bagundji, their kinship terminology and social organization were similar. But like the peoples of south-western Queensland and north-eastern South Australia, they practised circumcision and a form of the *wiljaru* rite. Elkin has classified them with these northern and western neighbours as part of the Lakes Group,[16] but since some of the northern members of the Bagundji group also practised a variant of the *wiljaru* without cicatrizations (*jama* — i.e. 'clean' — *wiljaru*) one should be wary of setting up boundaries. Mythical *mura* tracks run from the Paroo to Lake Frome in South Australia, and from White Cliffs to Bulloo Downs in Queensland. Aborigines around Tibooburra travelled over into South Australia as far as Parachilna for red ochre and exchanged grinding stones with people on the Cooper. Dutton and other informants made little mention of contacts with the Darling River people, but this may have been due to the disrupting and decimating effects of white contact upon the latter, already advanced by the time they were born.

Hardy[17] has documented the settlement of the far west in detail. Europeans began to establish pastoral runs along the Darling early in the 1860s. By the end of the decade the banks of the river had been taken up and newcomers were pressing into the arid areas to the north and west. By 1880 almost all the country to the State borders had been carved up into vast pastoral properties. Wilcannia was a flourishing town of substantial stone buildings, its prosperity based on its situation as a port for the river traffic which linked the region with the coastal cities.

[13] Capell 1956:42.
[14] Elkin 1939:43.
[15] Beckett 1968.
[16] Elkin 1931:53.
[17] Hardy 1969.

But the backcountry stations were so far from such centres that they were obliged to be self-supporting for long periods. Stations that had become established and prosperous employed scores of workers, maintaining their own workshops, smithies and store. C.E.W. Bean, who explored the region before the first World War, described such stations as more like villages.[18]

During the 1880s, discoveries of gold in the Tibooburra area and of opals at White Cliffs created a brief mining boom bringing hundreds of prospectors, Chinese as well as European, into the area. The boom was short lived and towns such as Tibooburra, Milparinka and White Cliffs soon dwindled into tiny centres, serving the vast pastoral hinterland. Only Broken Hill proved to have the deposits to support a large scale permanent mining industry. With its more or less static population of around thirty thousand it has been the region's only city, though one which has offered few openings to Aborigines.

Here as elsewhere, settlement resulted in some violent clashes between white and black. Dutton had heard of several (see below p. 25) and Hardy has found documentation for many more.[19] The settlers did not go out of their way to publicize such things, but Bean's account of events along the Darling is indicative: 'It did not matter who was shot. Every blackfellow that was killed was considered a pest. He would get you as soon as he possibly could ... . The law at this time could hang a man for killing a blackfellow. But there was nobody to enforce the law if the squatters did not take it into their own hands'.[20]

In the long run white settlement was incompatible with the Aborigines' hunting and gathering economy. Intensive grazing, interference with water supplies, and the shooting of game undermined the old mode of existence. But the Aborigines had become dependent upon European goods before they lost their access to wild foods. Their eagerness for such things as flour, tea, tobacco and sugar was as intense here as elsewhere, and as potent a source of friction as the conflict over land. In other parts of Australia the economy had no place for Aborigines, but the pastoral industry of the far west could make use of them. By December 1882 the newly-appointed Protector of the Aborigines could report that 'The males are employed by the squatters in the district, bringing in the horses and general knockabout work for which they receive food, clothes and tobacco'.[21] Aborigines camped near the homesteads, providing a pool of cheap labour which could be tapped as the need arose, and expert knowledge of the country. Aboriginal women worked in the homestead kitchens and became the concubines and casual sexual partners of white men. An old white stockman told me

[18] Bean 1945:73-76.
[19] Hardy 1976:117-122.
[20] Bean 1911:259-261.
[21] Protector of the Aborigines 1883.

that 'All the jackaroos had two or three gins in those days, and if you looked cross-eyed at them you were sacked on the spot'. One can scarcely assess the extent of miscegenation at this date. Half castes were a sizeable minority in the Aboriginal population by 1915 (see Appendix 1). Persons with some European ancestry outnumber 'fullbloods' by approximately ten to one in the present population, but often both parents are of mixed descent, and miscegenation seems to have occurred less frequently over the last twenty-five years.

It seems unlikely that the 'station blacks' would have commanded much status or respect in the eyes of white people,[22] but from their ranks there emerged a new generation – mainly half caste – who were not tied to the one station, but formed part of the region's itinerant proletariat.[23] They had been reared by their black mothers and ignored by their white fathers; in most cases they had been initiated, but they had acquired the manners and style of the white stockman. This is not to suggest that they became indistinguishable from their white work mates or that they were accepted on terms of equality. It seems unlikely that they could escape the pervasive Australian prejudice against 'mongrelization', but it may be that with enough 'cheek' they could achieve acceptance in the egalitarian setting of the roadside hotel and the stockman's camp. In Tom Collins' *Such is Life*, a novel set in the western New South Wales of the 1880s, the half caste is a sturdy fellow, as capable as any of treating his employer with cool insolence.[24] Neither employers nor workers confined Aborigines to any particular class of occupation. In 1911, Bean wrote:

> ... the Australian worker of his own accord regularly recognizes his obligation to the blacks, drawing a firm distinction between him and other dark-skinned people. Shearers who will not work beside a Hindoo or American negro, will work readily with an Australian black or a New Zealand Maori.[25]

The New South Wales *Rural Workers Accommodation Act* of 1926, section 16 (I)(g), required separate accommodation for Asiatics and Pacific Islanders, but not for Aborigines. The old practice of serving Aborigines their meals 'on the woodheap' instead of in the men's huts had gone by the time Dutton began working, though it persisted up in Queensland.[26]

By the 1880s, white population had increased and black population had declined to the point where Aborigines were no longer a numerical threat. There is no way of estimating the Aboriginal population before

[22] See Ward 1962:186; Hardy 1976:183.
[23] Hardy 1976:199-200.
[24] Collins 1944:10.
[25] Bean 1911:264; also Ward 1962:122.
[26] Myles Lalor tells me that at least one station persisted with the 'woodheap' practice into the 1950s.

contact, but the first police enumeration for the Protector in 1882 reported a mere 561, including twenty-eight half castes, from the Darling to the Queensland and South Australian borders (see Appendix 1). Even allowing for some omissions, notably in the Paroo area, the figure could scarcely have exceeded seven hundred, which was less than the population of Wilcannia alone. It seems safe to conclude that bullets and disease had already accounted for many, and the decline continued as Appendix 1 shows. But for the moment the survivors were still able to hold ceremonies and marry according to the old rules. It was into this world that George Dutton was born.

Dutton was born on Yancannia Station some time during the 1880s. Yancannia, situated about fifty miles north of White Cliffs, was one of the first stations to be established in this part of the country. Aborigines had attacked it a number of times in earlier years[27] but now all was quiet. His father, after whom he was named, was a white stockman, his mother Aboriginal.

> I don't know much about my father. I just seen him. They reckoned he was a good feller. He left me money, but I never got it. People wanted me to fight for it, but I never bothered. He was run over by a dray up in Queensland. My stepfather was living with my mother all the time. He reared me. Him and my father used to work together, they were great mates. Of course, a lot used to sell their women. My mother died when I was about seven. My old step-father and I, we travelled up into Queensland, two or three times to Cobham Lake, down this way [i.e. Wilcannia], through Wonominta. We travelled for the pleasure of it. The Gaiters [a white family] wanted me to go to school in Tibooburra. I was about ten then. My old father would have left me behind, but I didn't like it and cleared off after a week.

This was all the education Dutton ever had. Looking back, he considered this action decisive: 'I might have been doing all right for myself now, but I'd never have known about the dark people's stories'.

This was his education during the next few years as he travelled about the country with his step-father who taught him all he knew. The old man was a Maliangaba. George's mother had been a Wonggumara, but he himself was Bandjigali, because he was born in Bandjigali country. Tribal boundaries did not restrict their travels 'for pleasure', but Tibooburra, Milparinka and Yancannia were the main centres. The station was his father's place of work and the two townships were in his father's tribal country. It was here, when he was about sixteen, that he went through the *milia* circumcision ceremony.

> They were chasing me for a year before they got me. I was keeping away from them, working down at Connulpie. Someone came and said:

[27] Hardy 1969:141.

"Your father wants to see you. He's in Milparinka". When I came there they were holding a big meeting in a barn. I ran outside. "Don't try those bloody capers on me", I said. They told me not to worry. My father said, "Let's go down to Mt Brown". We set off, but there was a big mob following behind us. "What's happening?", I said. "They're going to put me through". "No", he said, "Don't worry, it isn't for you. You'll be *dalara*, you'll have to go back to Yancannia for that".[28] We camped and the other mob came up and joined us. The next morning they started a game of *gudjara* [played with throwing sticks] and every now and then someone would make a grab at me, but I was too bloody quick. "Don't try these capers on me", I said. There was another young feller, about sixteen, they were going to put through with me. I said to him, "Let's get away". We sneaked off early the next morning, but they followed us. "Where are you going?", they said. "Rabbiting", we said – of course we weren't. "You better come back, your father's sick", they said. We came back. My father was lying down and the doctor, the old clever man, was sucking things out of him. It was only a trick, he wasn't sick really. "I'd like you to go through while I'm alive", he said. Then my *malandji* [a male cross cousin who serves as the guardian during the ceremony] said, "You ought to go through the rules. I've been through". So I agreed. But they kept us there two months till a mob came down from Queensland.

I have published Dutton's account of the *milia* elsewhere[29] and I shall not repeat it here. As he described it, it was a solemn affair but revealed no mysteries. There was no attempt to terrorize the neophytes and the operation was painless.

When the two boys were released from their seclusion and had gone through the final rites, they set off for Queensland with some Wonggumara and Gungadidji friends. Years later the old man showed me the spot where they had been surprised by a station owner, eating one of his sheep.

I travelled from Cobham Lake right up through Milparinka, Tibooburra, Nerialco. We stopped off at the stations on the way. We were going up to Conbar where they were going to put a Bundamara boy through. It was like showing you how to circumcise so you can get your own back. They compel you to go. When we got up there they had him caught and everything. That night they had the singsong. They speeded things up. We sang the *milia* all night and put the feller through. We came home then, stopping round Nockatunga for a few

[28] Dutton's stepfather meant that he would be put through the Bandjigali initiation which, like that of the Darling River Aborigines, involved tooth avulsion and hair depilation. Dutton subsequently participated in these rites as an initiated man and recorded the songs for me.

[29] Beckett 1968.

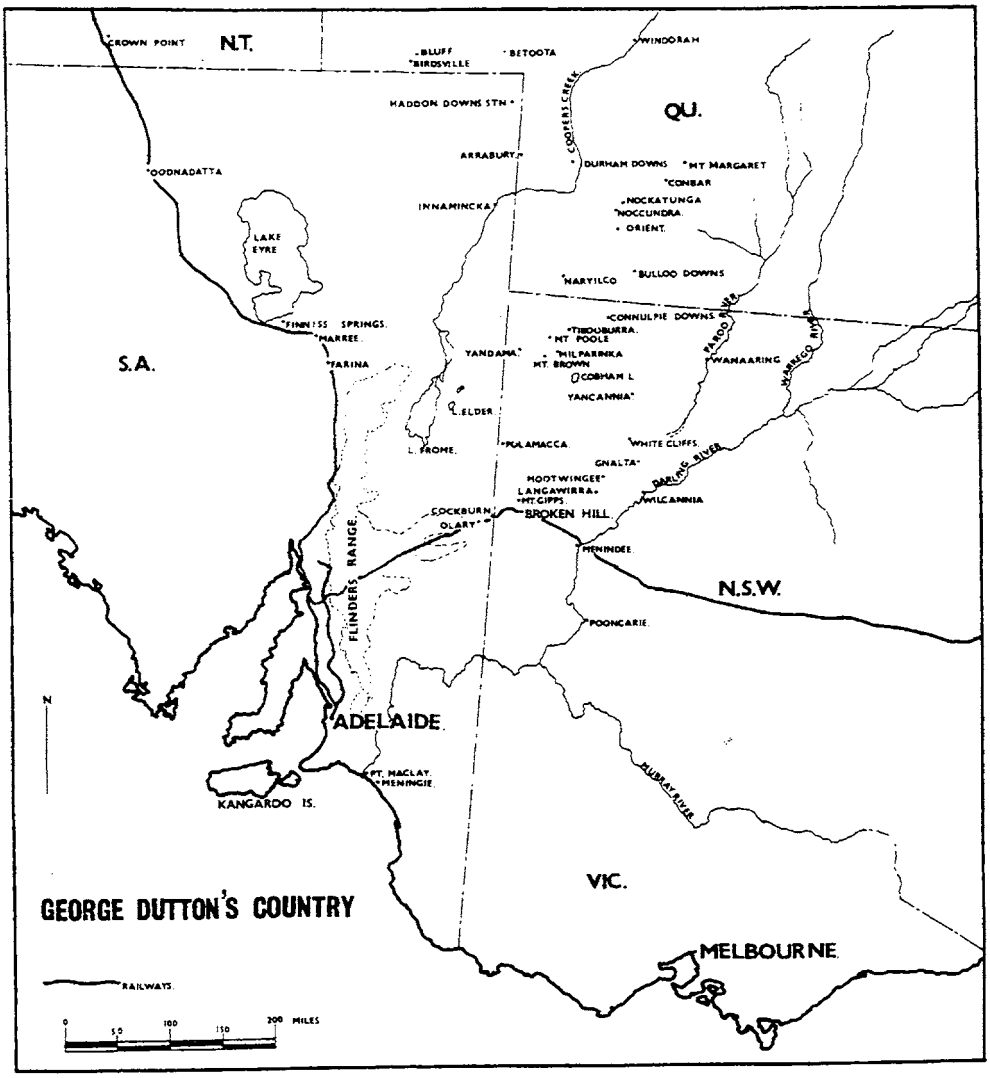
weeks.[30] They had a big corroboree there. Then my mate got a job there. They asked me to take two hundred head of goats from Noccundra to Windorah... .

In these last few sentences we have foreshadowed the pattern of George Dutton's career for the next twenty-five years. He went through the *milia* around the turn of the century and from then until the 1920s he roamed far and wide, droving and participating in the ceremonies of the various tribes he encountered. Early in our acquaintance he insisted on my taking down a list of the places he had gone, the names of his employers and the work he had done. He dictated without a pause and had evidently worked it all out at some time. His account is interesting to follow with the assistance of Map 2.

I was working on Cobham Lake one time. I started from Cobham Lake in 1902 and went right off to Windorah. I got a job off Mr Hackett to go to Balkarara Station.[31] We picked up a thousand head of bullock there and took 'em off to the Bluff [near Birdsville]. Then I left Mr Hackett. I took a job at Haddon with Mr Frew but he sold the place so I had to shift over to Arrabury Station and worked there with Mr Lindsay for twelve months, breaking in horses. I went to Farina with a mob of horses, with McLean the drover. I left him and went with Jim Sidi the Afghan, carting copper from Nunamudner[31] mine with twenty-five head of camels. After I was finished there I came back to Nockadoo[31] Station. I worked there twelve months. Then I left there and went over to Durham Downs Station, to put the horse paddock up. After I'd finished there I went to Orient Station to work for Mr Eastern. I left there and I came back to a place they call Nerialco Station to work with Mr A.C. McDonald as a stockman. After I was finished there I took a team of bullock on, working for the same station. Then I went down with fifty head of horses to Meningie in South Australia, other side of Adelaide. I left A.C. McDonald down there. I worked for the Council there for about three months. Then Mr McDonald wanted me to come back to Grasmere Station [N.S.W.]. I caught the boat at Meningie and came across to Adelaide. I caught the train there to go up to Broken Hill and took the mail to Carungoo Tank where the boss met me. I handled fifty head of horses for the sale and twenty head of riding hacks. I went to Nerialco Station and took five hundred head of cattle from there to Maree with a feller called Billy Hillston. I stayed at Finniss Springs for about eleven months. Then I got a job with eight hundred bullocks from Crown Point [N.T.]. We brought them to Yandama Station [N.S.W.]. Then we picked up a mob there to take to Cockburn and we came

[30] Nockatunga Station seems to have had the largest concentration of Aborigines in southwestern Queensland at that time.

[31] I have been unable to locate these places on the map and it is possible that my spelling is incorrect.




Map 2

George Dutton's country.

back to Yandama Station. I done five mile of fencing with another dark chap. I went from there to Mount Pool Station. I done six mile of fencing there with another dark bloke, friend of mine. Then I went to Eurithinna scrub cutting. Then I went up to Bransbury Station. I got a job off the owner, Mr Charlie Austin. We had two bullock teams, me and a feller named Ted Baldwin, and we came across to Yandama Station. We picked up eleven ton of wool there and took it to Broken Hill. When we were finished we went across to Langawira Station in New South Wales and picked up eleven ton of wool there and took it to Broken Hill. Mr Austin sold the teams in Broken Hill and took me across to Olary Down in South Australia, to pick up sixty head of poor cattle. I took them out for Mr Austin to Mootwingie Station – Mr McFadden owned it. From there I went to Polamacca Station. I stopped there two days, then carried my swag up to Tibooburra. I got a job on Yancannia Station. Then I went from there with a fellow named Tom Larkin to Lake Elder [S.A.] with two thousand sheep. I left there and I went back to Tibooburra and stayed there prospecting for gold. It was 1914 and I enlisted there to go to the war – me and a dark fellow named Albert Hebsworth. We couldn't pass[32] so we went back to Nerialco and got a job there again with Mr McDonald. We both stopped there for twelve months. Then we parted and I went down to Finniss Springs. I did some dogging down there for about twelve months... .

For some reason, related perhaps to his marriage, he did not leave New South Wales after 1925, working still as a drover but mostly within a 150 mile radius of Wilcannia, which presently became his home. Apart from his one visit to the coast at Adelaide, George Dutton's country could be roughly bounded by the Flinders Range in the west, the Channel Country in the north, and the Paroo in the east, with the southern boundary running through Wilcannia and Broken Hill. This is all more or less desert country in which the oases are rare stations and even rarer townships, like Birdsville, Farina, Maree and Windorah. Broken Hill is the metropolis, but for stockmen a place of transit. Many of the stations named were Kidman property at some time, though Dutton never encountered him.[33] For much of the time he was working the droving routes, sometimes called the 'Y', which linked the relatively lush but isolated Channel Country with the rail heads at Maree and Broken Hill.

It would seem that Dutton had no lack of employers, and his white contemporaries remembered him as a 'smart man', which is to say,

[32] It seems that the Australian Army rejected Aboriginal volunteers during the early years of the first World War, though they accepted at least a few part-Aborigines later on. There is a story among older Aborigines that the army adopted this policy after the Kaiser had sneered at them for using black troops.

[33] See Idriess 1936; Hardy 1976:195. Several of my own informants encountered Kidman and spoke well of his treatment of Aboriginal workers. According to one, he believed that Aborigines brought good luck.

skilled in his handling of horses and stock. He was 'flash' too, with his clothes made to measure for him in Broken Hill and long necked spurs. He worked with Aborigines, Afghans and whites. A.C. McDonald gave him a state school boy to 'train up' for a while. He claimed to have had a short spell as a head stockman somewhere, and when a white worker refused to take orders from him the boss backed him up. He addressed the station owners as 'Mister', but this seems to have been the general practice at that time[34] and it didn't stop him from answering them back:

> A.C. McDonald was a good old fellow, but I had a barney with him once. I'd just unyoked the bullocks for the night when he came and asked me why I was camping there. "I'm the bullock driver", I said. "Don't give me any of that talk", he said. I told him to go and get fucked and left him the next day, but we made it up later. He left Albert Hebsworth and me two blood horses, but we missed out, someone burned the letter.

It does not seem that Dutton made any lasting friendships among his white work mates. But during the years that I knew him, I never saw him more at ease than when he was among his old droving associates. Late in the evening when he had become a little drunk, he prefaced a contradictory remark with, 'Well, I'm only a poor old blackfeller, but...', to be reassured with, 'You're white enough for us, George'. But there were whites who would 'call your colour' in the hope of starting a fight. George recalled several such incidents, though he said he had never been directly involved. He said that on some Queensland stations they tried to give him his meals 'on the woodheap' with the local blacks: 'I told them if I wasn't good enough to eat inside I wasn't good enough to work on the place'. Initially he told me that he had gained his point, but years later implied that he had walked out.

Dutton's travels, though usually prompted and directed by his participation in the pastoral industry, had a dual character. The routes he followed as a drover were often those travelled by the *muras*, who had created the waterholes at which he watered his stock. The stations where he worked often had Aboriginal camps where he heard new languages and saw new ceremonies. 'I saw corroborees at Innamincka, Durham Downs, Cobham Lake. I started learning then. Only after I came back I started to learn our own stories'. In 1965 Luise Hercus met a Point McLeay man who remembered George Dutton, and said that he was a 'special mate' of Albert Karloan. Ronald and Catherine Berndt later used Albert Karloan as their principal informant, writing down the same myth[34] that Dutton had heard years before and remembered ever after.[35] But it was his time in the northern Flinders Ranges that seems to have been the high point of his career:

[34] Berndt and Berndt 1964:203.
[35] Hercus 1970.

> When I went down to New Well [on Stuart's Creek Station, near Finniss Springs] among the Arabanna mob, they asked me if I was a *wiljaru*. "No", I said. "Have you been through the first rule?" "Yes". I told them my father and all my people were *wiljarus* and I had to go through then. They offered me a wife, wanted me to marry bad, but I didn't want to. I didn't want to marry from a strange country. Too far away. Too far for me to take her back to her own country to see her relations.

Although he used to say, 'Where I put my hat down, that's home', Dutton, like most of the Aborigines I know, could not consider living away from his own people permanently. Perhaps, also, he felt uneasy among strange tribes. He told me grim tales of *kadaitcha* men in these parts and claimed to have seen a man killed for revealing *wiljaru* secrets. He was amazed and disgusted to see Arabanna eating fat cut from the chest of a corpse, as part of a funerary rite. And when I asked him about subincision he just laughed and said, 'Bugger that game!' But he stayed long enough to master the language and to learn several of the song cycles, which he could remember more than half a century later.

When he was back amongst his own people he found he was a senior man. 'Two or three of my mob saw me lying down with the marks on my back. "He's a *wiljaru*!" They were pleased then and asked me to come out with them. Then they started singing the song in our way and I started singing the way I was taught'. This was about 1905, when ceremonial activity was drawing to an end in New South Wales with the decline and dispersal of population. The survivors, whether they had been through the *milia* or *dalara*, whether they were *wiljarus* or *jama wiljarus*, joined together. Which form they followed depended on who was running it. Whether as an innovation or by tradition, if a boy from one tribe was put through the rule of another tribe, the latter must reciprocate at a later date. Dutton thought that the last *dalara* ceremony had occurred about 1902 and the last *milia* in New South Wales around 1914. But there were still new cermonies to see up in Queensland and over in South Australia, and he pursued them long after his other countrymen had given up. Speaking of one he remarked:

> Yes, well, poor old bugger, he didn't know anything. He was my countryman too, you know, but he knew bloody nothing, though he was a *jama*. Now look, I'm the only man in New South Wales – and old Hebsworth that died up there in Bourke – we're two bloody half castes, but we been through more bloody *muras* than any other man. We went through the *milia*, through the *waradjeri* with the Jandruwanda mob; then he went through the *maragandi* – that was up on Bulloo Downs – and I went through the *wiljaru*. He beat me by one, and I beat him by one. It's like that song, "I've been everywhere...".

Dutton saw his last ceremony, the *dulbiri mura*[36] at Yandama Station in 1925. By 1930 he was the only surviving ritual leader in New South Wales. About this time the Queensland Government removed the Nockatunga Aborigines to a settlement further east, thus depriving the region of one of its main centres. Everywhere the numbers were declining. He knew that somewhere to the west the life was still going, but too far from home where he now had a wife and children. He was married twice:

> The first one I was just living with her. I met her at Nerialco. She was a fullblood, had three kids. I went with her about ten years. Reared the three boys – there's one living now up in Queensland. I came down to Gnalta to see my auntie [his mother's sister] : I always had to look after her and give her money. When I got back she had a kid. I said, "Fuck it, the father can have her". The grandmother was mad after me so I said all right. The man came back, but he said it was all right, he'd had enough. I went up to Nockatunga with this woman. Then I started taking cattle down to Maree. When I came back me and her had an argument – she was a terrible jealous woman, didn't even want me to talk to other men. So I left her and went off to Maree. She took another bloke then. My second wife was a half caste girl, born on Yandama Station. I'd just come back from South Australia in 1925 to see her father – I knew him, he'd come from Yancannia. Her father and uncle wanted me to marry her. She was booked up for me. I didn't want to, but the old feller said, "You better stop with us and help us out".

He stayed with this wife, having three sons and three daughters.

When George Dutton married for the second time the country was different from what it had been in his youth. Both the Aboriginal life and the pastoral economy had changed. The most dramatic change was the disappearance of the Aboriginal population. The decline between the first New South Wales police enumeration of 1882 and the last of 1915 (Appendix 1) is dramatic and, if anything, understates its extent. Dutton knew it well enough: 'At Polamacca in 1901 there was a big mob of blackfellers, two hundred men without the women and kids. When I went back in 1910 there were only two boys left and graves all round'. The 'Spanish Flu' epidemic of 1919 accounted for more lives. When we looked about the old Tibooburra camping ground, now occupied by one old couple, he recalled the two hundred who had lived there in his youth. When old Frank Miller, a Wonggumara, sang a *mura*, George wept to hear the names of so many who were dead.[37] But the final dispersal was effected not by natural causes, but by white people.

[36] Beckett 1968:458.

[37] Personal names were taken from those of sites along a *mura* track. A name thus brought to mind a place, a mythical event and a human being, living or remembered.

The sub-division of pastoral properties, already begun before the Great War, intensified after it in the soldier settlement programme. The small, family-sized blocks needed few if any permanent workers, and with the hazards of drought and fluctuating prices had neither the need nor the means to support an Aboriginal camp. Yandama Station supported a small community into the 1930s, but in the west, as elsewhere,[38] the 'station blacks' were becoming fringe dwellers or clients of the Aborigines Protection Board.[39] Hitherto the Board had left the Aborigines of the far west to the care of the station owners and the police, but it now began to extend the policy of bringing them onto settlements. As the depression set in, Aborigines who had supported themselves all their lives had to go onto the settlements because the agencies distributing unemployment relief considered them the Board's responsibility.

Economic hardships also brought about a deterioration in relations between white and black. In Tibooburra, where the two were about equal in number, tension became apparent in late 1934. A Mr Allan Angell wrote to the local M.L.A. asking whether it was compulsory to admit Aborigines to a registered hall, and to admit Aboriginal children to public school where they would be 'intermixed in classes of white children'.[40] The enquiry was referred to the Department of Education and the Aborigines Protection Board. The Department replied that Aboriginal children were required to attend school, but added that 'Their attendance at public school with white children is allowed by the department unless objection to their presence is lodged by the parents of the white children'.[41]

Early in 1935 Mrs J. Angell submitted a petition, with seventeen other signatures, requesting the removal of Aboriginal children on the ground that they were physically unfit to sit with white children in a small classroom, being subject to many diseases that whites did not have.[42] In May the minister approved the removal of all children of Aboriginal descent.[43] But evidently Mr Angell had not intended that Aboriginal children of white appearance, from decent and respectable homes, should be excluded.[44] Several part-Aborigines who had been among the signatories were dismayed to find their children shut out along with the rest. A meeting of parents then requested the minister

[38] Hausfeld 1963.
[39] Hardy 1976:176,186,194-195.
[40] The correspondence is to be found in the Tibooburra Public School File in the archives of the N.S.W. Department of Education. I am indebted to Mr Jim Fletcher for bringing these to my attention. Mr Angell's letter was dated 19/12/1934. For a less informed account of the affair see Hardy 1976:219-221.
[41] Tibooburra File, item dated 6/2/1935.
[42] Ibid. 16/3/35.
[43] Ibid. 3/5/1935.
[44] Ibid. 28/5/1935.

to readmit all children until the Protection Board could provide alternative facilities.[45]

The Protection Board took no action until 1937, when Mrs Angell submitted a second petition, with nine other signatories, requesting either separate facilities for Aborigines or their removal to the Menindie settlement.[46] In April 1938 the Board responded to this clamour by sending a truck and forcibly removing the Tibooburra Aborigines three hundred miles east to the Brewarrina government settlement.[47] Dutton and his family were among those deported. His account of the place tallies closely with that of its longterm resident, Jimmy Barker.[48] The labour market was already saturated and employers preferred the workers they knew to strangers, who consequently had to live on the meagre Board rations. To a man like Dutton the situation was intolerable: 'I told the manager, "This is no good to me". "You can't go", he said. "I'm going to", I said, and we loaded up the turn-out straight away'. When he saw Tibooburra again George sought out the man who had led the agitation to have the Aborigines removed. 'I called him out of the pub. "You're the bloody bastard that had all the people turned out of their homes", I said. But he said he didn't have nothing to do with it'.

The Duttons were not the only ones to leave the settlements. Once economic conditions improved, many of those who had earlier lived independently moved off, if only because so great a concentration of Aborigines in one place ensured a high level of unemployment. However, Wilcannia now became the focus, both for the Darling River people who had been on the Menindie settlement, and for the people from the Paroo and the 'Corner' who had been on the Brewarrina settlement. Few returned to Tibooburra or the other townships of the 'Corner', which were all sadly reduced in population.

Wilcannia itself had fallen below one third of its three thousand peak. With the laying of the Sydney – Broken Hill railway through Menindie and the termination of the river traffic, it dwindled into a small service centre for the surrounding stations. Its own Aborigines had vanished long before, but it now, within a few years, found itself with an immigrant population of some two hundred, no longer on the decline but increasing rapidly. The government, having failed to draw the Aborigines to its new model settlement near Lake Cargellico, built a number of cottages, but sited them across the river at the insistence of the white population. The Aborigines soon tired of the black soil that turned to mud as soon as it rained and the periodic floods which cut them off from

[45] Ibid. 31/5/1935.
[46] Ibid., item undated.
[47] Ibid. 29/4/1938. The Tibooburra deportation was not an isolated case. The Pooncaira Aborigines were deported to the Menindie settlement about the same time and under similar circumstances (Pooncaira Public School File, Department of Education).
[48] Mathews 1976:154-160,212-216.

supplies. Many preferred to squat on the drier ground of the town's outskirts, even if it meant living in scrap iron humpies and doing without a water supply or sanitary service. It was here that I found Dutton in 1957.

Wilcannia at that time still depended on the pastoral industry, and most of the inhabitants were directly engaged in it. No one was obviously wealthy; the majority were working class. The main division in town followed racial lines. The Aborigines were pastoral workers too, mostly unskilled and in such casual contract work as fencing and mustering. A few were drovers, but motor transportation had deprived the drovers of much of their work in this part of the country. Although young Aborigines affected the dress of the mounted stockman, few had much to do with horses. The land rover had replaced the horse, and there was no scope for 'smart' horsemen. I found it hard to assess work opportunities. What was clear was that many Aborigines, particularly adolescents, were not working for a considerable amount of the time. During the late 1960s, when the far west was gripped by drought and the adolescent population had increased, there was no doubt about the lack of work. Subsequently unemployment has exceeded 70 per cent.

Black and white bought their food at the same stores. Their children attended the same schools. The Greek cafe was open to everyone. But Aborigines always sat down the front in the cinema. There was a separate lavatory for Aboriginal children in the State school and there was segregation in the hospital. A few young Aborigines played in the football team, but they could not join the team for a beer after the match because the law then forbade the supply of liquor to Aborigines. It was effective to the extent that it kept them out of the bars, but it did not prevent the back-door supply of cheap wine in large quantities. The police were never able to catch the suppliers, but they kept busy rounding up Aborigines for being drunk or in possession of liquor. I have described elsewhere the endless running battle between Aborigines who were determined to drink and the law whose reprisals set off renewed defiance.[49] It was a part of a general pattern of police harassment. The police in addition to their normal duties had to act on behalf of the Aborigines Welfare Board, issuing rations to the indigent, reporting on cases of child neglect, enforcing school attendance, dunning defaulting husbands and fathers for maintenance, pursuing vagrants and so on. I could not see the police records, but there was no question that the Aborigines were their most regular customers. As often happens, constant interaction had produced a sardonic familiarity between the two, but it was the kind of familiarity which allowed the police to enter Aboriginal homes unceremoniously or sit with their truck headlights shining on a group talking, for as long as they cared.

[49] Beckett 1964.

From 1943 it was possible for Aborigines to obtain a Certificate of Exemption from the disabilities normally imposed on them by the New South Wales *Aborigines Protection Act.*[50] The Certificate was commonly known as a 'dog licence', but a number of men and women had obtained one. Most of them, like Dutton, were old people who could not otherwise become eligible for a Commonwealth age pension. Since it was winter, we spent quite a lot of our time yarning round the fire in the hotel bar. The townspeople were not particularly friendly, but there was a motley collection of transients who would sometimes join the circle.

Later the government repealed the liquor prohibition in the Act, but the situation did not change much. As George said in one of his letters, 'It's open slather in the bar for the dark people and they are no better off as there seems to be more in gaol now than before'. After several riotous months the hotels established their own colour bar and George wrote: 'The pubs are closed on us again but we can buy as much wine and beer by the gallon and dozen at the store. It makes one think doesn't it'. In the end only one hotel served Aborigines and the publican issued and revoked his own exemption certificates. For the few who had once been assured of their rights the situation had deteriorated. George, thinner, bearded and ragged, may have seemed less presentable than in earlier years. He told me with bitterness how the owner of one of the other hotels had refused even to allow him to warm himself at the fire.

Had life continued as it was when he was young, Dutton would have been a man of some standing. Among his own people he would have been a senior man and a ritual leader. Among whites he would have been an 'old timer', or what is known in Australian country towns as 'an old identity'. In the event he was neither. He had tried to set himself up as 'King of the Darling', but such honorifics – hollow at the best of times – meant nothing to the younger generation, white or black. The Aborigines knew he could speak a lot of languages, but even if they could understand some of the languages themselves they were more embarrassed than pleased to hear them spoken in public. His stories of strange tribes and customs had no appeal. He tried to teach his sons, and one young man he had taken droving complained that George had kept him awake

[50] At that time Aborigines (as defined by the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909-1943*) could not legally purchase or possess alcohol, and under a 1936 amendment the Board had acquired power to remove campers to a reserve or managed station. The Aborigines' Welfare Board's 1952 *Annual Report* noted that Aborigines living off reserves were now eligible for Commonwealth unemployment and sickness benefits and age, invalid and widow's pensions, but these rights were not extended to reserve and station residents for some years. Exemption from the provisions of the Act, a policy change stemming from the adoption of an assimilation goal in 1940, was granted on an individual basis, ostensibly as a recognition of attainment of a suitable manner of life, but certificates could be withdrawn by the Board. In the far west exemptions were often granted to avoid the inconvenience of supplying Board rations to individuals dispersed in towns.

all night with his stories, but he could make no impression on them. Children fell into uncontrollable giggles when he sang the old songs. I would have expected him to take consolation among the few survivors of his own generation, but he did not. He dismissed them, sometimes unjustly, as know-nothings. He resented any time I spent with them and would ask, sardonically, whether I had picked up anything good. Often, too, he would dismiss them as *myalls* – timorous, unsophisticated blackfellers, unable to stand up to white people. Possibly, having at last found white people who would actively seek him out and provide an appreciative audience, he feared rivals. He relished the status of expert, frequently rounding off a recording with a remark like, 'Now if there's anyone who knows more stories than me, he's a good man'.

Many Aborigines have the notion that anthropologists exploit their old people, extracting their lore for a few packets of tobacco and selling it to the newspapers for large sums. The notion is exaggerated, if it is not quite false. I gave George something when I could, more by way of a gift than as payment. He never asked for money except once when he was in trouble, and somehow a gift seemed a more appropriate expression of appreciation for his 'helping' me. Yet there were times when I wondered whether I was exploiting our friendship. I was reassured when, fairly late in our acquaintance, he told me how a white man, seeing us in the bar together, had suggested he was taking me for a few quid by spinning tall stories. 'You know', he said, 'they don't understand what we're doing'. He had a mission to get his knowledge recorded. When he was dictating something he considered important, the sense of urgency and authority was unmistakable.

What Dutton considered important were certain rituals and myths. They were always connected in some way with the country. He had no interest in yarns about rainbow serpents and hairy men which the other old people told. There was no strain of speculation or mysticism. His delivery was matter-of-fact and his approach dogmatic. (An example of Dutton's narrative style appears in Appendix 2). All the same, he did not lack feeling for sacred places. He adamantly refused to camp overnight at Mootwingie and prevented his son and me from finding the rock engravings there. Discussing his nominal conversion to Catholicism, Dutton said he 'squared it' with certain myths, but he attempted no syncretism. He was unimpressed by the attempts of his cousin, Walter Newton, to integrate the whole corpus of myths and restate them in terms of a battle between good and evil.[51] Of Catholic beliefs he remarked: 'Of course, a man can't be sure; it's only what you hear'. In one letter he wrote to tell me of the rumour that the people of another settlement had 'turned

[51] See Beckett 1958. Newton's was one of the few attempts I have seen at syncretism. However, it does not get very far before encountering the problem of the geographical particularism of Aboriginal myth, and its absence in Christian myth.

Christians':

> There is one bloke got bit by a snake down there. Well the first thing he done was pull out his Bible and started to read. At that the snake started to cough and the bite did not affect the man. Then there was an old lady looking after a child and didn't have any milk to give the child so she looked around and there upon the table stood a tin of milk... . Well old pal, if they don't hit the Lunatic Asylum shortly I don't know nothing. I don't think the God done anything for me.

He seemed to have no such scepticism about 'the dark people's stories'.

Whatever the old ways meant to him, Dutton clearly had an acute sense of cultural deprivation in the modern setting. Around 1927, when the old order was dying, he had been baptised into the Roman Catholic church, perhaps as a substitute. 'I like their way. Hymns were like the *mura* and the *guluwiru* was like God. I squared it up with the story of Crow and Eaglehawk...'.[52] Despite his scepticism, he liked attending Mass. But he never went near the church in Wilcannia. He objected to the way the priest 'wanted to boss the dark people around'. Referring to the priest's attempt to check drunkenness, he tartly remarked that the man drank himself. In search of cultural variety he turned to the 'Ghans' and Chinese and, as they disappeared, the Greeks. He had found his way to the Greek Club in Broken Hill and loved to hear strange languages and customs discussed. But in Wilcannia he found life empty and featureless. His own people lived without order or meaning. Discussing the old ways, one night, he said:

> The dark people take no interest in it, don't want to learn. And a lot of the dark people round this part of the country, Jerry, between you and I, they don't know what they are. They don't know whether they're *gilbara* or *magwara* [the moieties], you understand what I mean? That's how they come to marry into one another, but they don't know. All they know is how to read a comic. [At this point his son interjected, "Can you read a comic?", but the old man brushed aside this jibe.] And furthermore, they don't know anything about it, they can't tell you. They go down to the picture show and have a look at the picture. Tomorrow you ask them what did they see? They couldn't tell you the story, what it was or anything, nothing.

One of his contemporaries had put it even more succinctly: 'They know nothing and they don't talk about anything'.

The reader may find a certain irony in an Aboriginal turning to white people to preserve the culture which his own people were rejecting. He knew well enough what the early settlers had done and the effects of white contact. Discussing a massacre near Wilcannia, he said: '... those poor fellers didn't know anything. They fired into 'em. They tried to get away but they couldn't. Just for nothing. Raped the bloody women,

[52] Hercus 1970.

one thing and another, rode 'em and shot 'em as well. All for nothing'. He had heard of similar shootings round Tibooburra and Cobham Lake. I asked him if the settlers had used poisoned flour. 'Oh yes, round Coongee Lake, there's bloody thousands died there. Paddy-paddy water hole... . There might have been a bit of bloody spearing, and they had to defend their bloody selves, but no need for 'em to go on that far. They only had to shoot one or two and scare 'em. But they shot the whole bloody camp'.

In these last few sentences is evidence of the accommodation which had already set in when Dutton was born, not a sullen accommodation to superior force, but a recognition that the settlers 'had to defend themselves...'. At another time he remarked:

> It's not so bad that the whitefeller came, but it spoiled the people. It made 'em ashamed to talk their own lingo, and marry wrong. They don't learn from the old people; can't talk their own lingo. Some of them can't even ask for a bit of bread or meat. They were better off in the old days, camped on their own, working on stations. They always had a bit of money. They knew who their aunties and cousins were. Now they got educated they think they're better than other people. They're always telling lies.

Even in this, he laid part of the blame on his own people: 'There was too much boning and poisoning'. And explaining the disappearance of *clever men*, he said 'The grog settled it'. Dutton, then, was not harking back to some golden age of tribalism which he never experienced, but to the time of the big pastoral holdings, a period of accommodation to white settlement in which his people still retained their own social order and cultural resources. Now the Aborigines had abandoned their identity only to find themselves in the position of delinquents and outcasts in Australian society. In 1914, when he volunteered for the army, there seemed to be a place for men like himself. In 1957 he said: 'These darkies have got no right to go fighting for the whites that stole their country. Now they won't let 'em into the hotel. They've got to gulp down plonk in the piss house'.

His view of life may have been soured by the sickness and family troubles that increasingly beset him. His wife had gone insane. His eldest son died suddenly, following an encounter with the police, and the old man spent all his savings bringing the body back to Wilcannia. It was the only time he asked me for money. Cataract was destroying his sight and he suffered from chronic bronchitis that several times turned to pneumonia. In the last years infirmity confined him to the settlement, where the only visitors were the police, no friends of the Dutton family.

Strangely, in the last year of his life he was able to re-establish contact with some of his old friends in South Australia. Luise Hercus, while working in Marree and Port Augusta, recorded a number of messages for

him, recording his reply when she visited Wilcannia. She played him a Southern Aranda man singing the Urumbula (native cat) cycle, which George had learned at New Well. Between verses, the singer said, 'Tom Bagot singing now. The Urumbula. You remember, George?' George replied, 'Well Tom, it's a long time since I left New Well, and the time we had the Wandji-wandji corroboree, you remember that? You was a smart man and I was a smart man... . I hear a lot of them went out to it, a lot of the people. That's one of my songs now, Tom, but I am getting very short-winded now'.

He also heard the voice of Andrew Davis, the Banggala-Gugada man who had been his sponsor in the *wiljaru*. Davis, with Tom Bagot, sang part of the Wandji-wandji cycle. 'That's the Wandji-wandji. George Dutton knows it. I put him through it. He knows. You get a big hiding in that corroboree, you have a rough time in that corroboree...'. George replied: 'Well Tom, I'm really glad you and Andrew Davis singing that Wandji-wandji corroboree and I am very glad to hear yous. I can't sing a song for you just now, but I'm very sorry to hear that Tom Marsh [a southern Aranda] went off. Well, some day we might meet again — course I'm crippled now, old fellows. Well, I'll say goodbye to you once more, Tom, Andrew'.[50]

The European settlement of the far west brought about the cultural as well as material dispossession of the Aborigines. Dutton, however, grew up in a period of temporary respite, with his people continuing to regulate marriage, initiate young men and perform rituals, under conditions of cultural dualism. The settlers were now secure in their possession of the land, but still dependent on a reserve of cheap black labour. The stations of the 'Corner' region were big enough to support small Aboriginal communities, which served as the knots of the social and ceremonial network. The missionaries and school teachers who were suppressing traditional activities elsewhere had not yet reached the far west, and the pastoralists did not care. If anything they stood to gain, for the cultural difference facilitated the economic exploitation of black men and the sexual exploitation of black women. However, cultural difference did not mean an insurmountable social barrier. Some Aborigines, particularly half castes, were able to enter the ranks of the drovers and shearers and become 'smart men'. Nor did this require a drastic change in their identity, for in the fluid conditions of the frontier, work was the primary mode of identification, and the society made few other demands.

Dutton travelled both as a drover and as an Aboriginal. The country provided the unifying ground for this dual life, but the two perceptions of it were distinct and unassimilable. For the Aboriginal the land was an artefact that had taken final form through the deeds of mythical heroes: songs and ceremonies celebrated their deeds and gave renewed particular-

ity to places. The European's purpose was to change the country, which he saw as virgin: it was an economic resource, to be measured and bounded, but as yet outside the sphere of human action and meaning. His equipment for giving particularity to place was of the most rudimentary kind; often he took a native name that meant little or nothing to him.

This dissociation[53] of the two worlds gave Aborigines a defence in their accommodation to conquest. While accepting as they must the white man's law, they could also plead their continuing need for blackfellow law. Maddock has explained such two-law thinking among Northern Territory Aborigines as assertion of 'human equality and cultural value and of the need to remain in touch with one's past if one is to remain truly human'.[54]

By the time Dutton reached maturity, the dual order was disintegrating. As Aboriginal life failed he tried to extend his foothold in the European sector, only to find that this too was changing. The depressed townships of the 'Corner', that had now become the centres of Aboriginal life, placed demands that many – the Duttons among them – could not meet. Officialdom moved in, and they began their descent into economic and social marginality, their only defence a self-destructive defiance.

Under these conditions, cultural dualism meant nothing. But with the arrival of anthropologists Dutton once again could proclaim its validity. He was not primarily interested in serving as informant: strings of seemingly unconnected questions exasperated him. He had his own message and his own way of communicating it. In showing us the country he was telling us who he was, and what his rightful place was in it.

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[53] Stanner noted the same dissociation in Durmugam (1960:96).
[54] Maddock 1977:27.

## *APPENDIX 1*

*Location of Aboriginal population in far western New South Wales, 1882 and 1915 (number of half castes shown in brackets).*

| *Location* | *1882* | *1915* |
|---|---|---|
| Milparinka | 152 (2) | 33 (7) |
| Mt Gipps Station [near Broken Hill] | 61 (3) | – |
| Tibooburra | 187 (21) | 17 (10) |
| Pooncaira | 52 (2) | 26 (4) |
| Menindie | – | 21 (7) |
| Wilcannia | 109 (–) | 5 (–) |
| Torrowangie Station | – | 16 (8) |
| Cal Lal | – | 11 (11) |
| Broken Hill | – | 5 (3) |
| Wanaaring | – | 32 (9) |
| White Cliffs | – | 13 (–) |
| | 561 (28) | 179 (59) |

Sources: Police enumeration, by police sub-districts and stations, in the second report of the Protector of the Aborigines, to 31 December 1882, and in the Aborigines' Protection Board's *Annual Report* for 1915. No enumeration was reported for the Paroo region in 1882, although it seems likely that there were Aborigines living there. If this assumption is correct, the population decline is greater than the totals indicate.

## *APPENDIX 2*

*The bronze-wing pigeon, told by George Dutton*

One time when the old pigeon came down – the *madi* they call him, but he was a man then – he came down all the way from the Bulloo right away down to Mt Brown. He camped there and he come over to Mt Pool. There was a big mob of people camped there, all mixed. Then a kid said: "Who is that skinny looking man?" (He was talking Wonggu-

mara.) He turned round and he said: "I'm only just travelling". An old feller said to him, "Come closer, make your camp". Anyway, he had a feed – they give him the tucker. "Good!" he said. (He was talking Gungadidji now.) He turned in that night. He took the water bag down. Then he said to the water: "Come this way, water". So all the water came in from three water holes into the bag and the bunyip too. He started off that night. When he got to Good Friday: "I think I will camp here". Then he went on to Tibooburra: "I think I'll camp here". Then he went on from there to Ngurnu. When the Mt Pool fellers got up next morning – no water. "Hey, get up! No water here. Come on, we'll follow that bloke". So they set to work and followed him. "Oh, bugger him!" Anyway, away he went. He went from Ngurnu to Jalbangu. He went from Jalbangu to Woodburn. Then he went from there to Tickalara. Then he went from there to Little Dingara. Then he went from there to Draja [Bransbury Station]. Then he went from there to Warali. Then he went from there to Graham's Creek. Then to Paddy-paddy, then just this side of the *Wipa* hole. He camped in the creek and made his camp there. He hung his water bag up. The snake started to move: he bust the bag. Then the old Bronze Wing away he goes and banks the water up so the water won't get away. Then the water washed the bank away. He tried to bank it up with a boom. "Ah, bugger it, let it go". It all ran into Paddy-paddy. He called it the *gugu* then. Then he went on to Madawara (*gidgee*) Creek. He went on from there to what they call *Wipa* hole. He left all his feathers at Widhu [Hook Creek]. Then he went up from Hook Creek to Walbinja and this is where he died. He's standing up as a stone, but the gold is away to one side.

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SLIDE 1,

# CORNER TALK- AN ANNALES INFLUENCED NARRATIVE FROM THE CORNER COUNTRY OF NSW

Sarah Martin

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Olive Downs is a remote Corner Country historic pastoral complex located approximately 65 km north of Tibooburra on Sturt National Park, in the extreme North-West Corner of NSW. It includes a homestead, outbuildings, and other associated built environment embedded in a cultural landscape of significance to Aboriginal people. The focal landscape feature for the indigenous and non-indigenous occupation of Olive Downs is the ephemeral Warri Warri Creek which emanates from the Mt King Ranges and runs north across the Strezlecki Desert to the Wilson River near its junction with Cooper Creek. SLIDE 2 This paper is a reinterpretation of the "Aboriginal history" background documentation for the Olive Downs Conservation Management Plan. Using principles of the Annales school the disciplines of archaeology, anthropology and history have been combined to outline the short term events, medium term structures, and tentatively examine long term structures (Bintliff 1991:6). The short term events or narrative which formed the basis of the CMP background report is briefly summarized here followed by examination of longer term structural elements of the history of the area. The aim is to provide a text or reflective interpretation giving contemporary meaning to the archaeology (Leroi-Gourhan quoted in Peebles 1991:112). Furthermore this conference provided the impetus to explain something of the non-indigenous history through understanding the Aboriginal history, definitely outside the original brief.

## 2. SHORT TERM EVENTS – A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE HISTORY OF OLIVE DOWNS AND THE CORNER COUNTRY

### 2.1 FIRST CONTACT: STURT'S 1844-5 EXPEDITION

The first contact between European and Aboriginal people in the Olive Downs area occurred when the Sturt Expedition arrived in 1844-5. They stayed at Depot Glen for six months, then Fort Grey just west of Olive Downs for four months before they finally escaped back to the Darling at Menindee. They took control of the best surface water in the whole of the Corner Country;

> our total consumption could not have been less than 1000 to 1100 gallons a day for the horses and bullocks drank a fearful quantity (Sturt 1849 [2001]:131).

The Corner Country people received approval from Sturt's party, being on the whole fit and healthy, friendly and outgoing. The good health of the locals contrasted with the deteriorating health of Sturt's scurvy ridden party ;

> These natives were in good condition, the men, though small, were well proportioned, as were the women; the children were healthy and robust. (Brock 1844-6[1988]:111). They

> are apparently very civil nice sort of folks- rather well made men. They were curious and full of surprise (ibid:170).

Sturt's first trip north from Depot Glen brought his small party to the Olive Downs area and appears to have followed Warri Warri Creek for some distance where he describes;
SLIDE 3

> seven or eight huts, very different in shape and substance from any we had seen. They were made of strong boughs fixed in a circle in the ground, so as to meet in a common centre; on these there was,… a thick seam of grass and leaves, and over this again a compact coating of clay. (ibid:165).

Figure 1. Painting from Sturt's sketch of a group of huts found on his first journey north of Mt King in the Olive Downs area. National Library of Australia.

## 2.2 CONTACT IN THE 1860'S-1870's : LATER EXPLORERS AND FIRST PASTORALISTS

The several parties of Burke's expedition and various rescuers travelled to the east of Tibooburra in 1860-1, travelling about 40 km to the east of what was to become Olive Downs. Becker sketched a family group at Torowotto Swamp watching the camels drinking at the waterhole in February 1861 (Tipping 1979:177) This beautiful picture titled "Arrival of the party at Duroadoo" is a very rare picture of early contact in the Corner Country.

SLIDE 4
Figure 2: Arrival in 1861 of Wright's party at Torowotto, south-east of Tibooburra . Sketch by Ludwig Becker of local people watching the camels drink (in Tipping 1979).

Pastoral interests began to move in to the far north west area soon after the Burke and Wills fiasco, but at first they confined themselves to the very best water sources such as Yancannia, Cobham Lake and then Depot Glen. The first pastoralists mapped out their original station boundaries by always including the best waterholes:

"The wild aborigines were a help - by following their tracks, as they knew of any existing water away from the river…" (Brougham c. 1920.:14).

No actual descriptions of the annexation of Olive Downs by pastoralists has been found so far, but by1867 areas over the border in Queensland on the Bulloo and Wilson rivers also had stations. At this stage the Corner Country including Olive Downs may have become a refuge. The situation is described by two missionaries May 1867, as they travelled down the Bulloo Creek;

> There are only eight blacks here 6 adults and 2 boys. No other blacks it appears are allowed to come about the station. The stockman informs us there are a good number of blacks about 30 miles down the creek, [close to Caryapundy Swamp, about 40 km east of Olive Downs] but he says that he thinks we could not get near them they are so frightened of white people as so many of their fellow men have been shot by the settlers and the

> black troopers who visit this part of the country periodically in charge of a Mr Gilmore …The poor blacks are not even allowed to camp on their most favourite waterholes but are obliged to retire from their own country and give place to the settlers and they all seem to agree that cattle and the blacks will nor cannot live on the same country, so the poor blacks must give way (Shaw 1867).

## 2.3 THE EARLY PASTORAL PERIOD TO 1880's to 1901

Stock routes came into existence before Olive Downs was a station, as stock from the Cooper, Wilson and Bulloo creeks had to be taken to market. The old roads and stock routes tended to follow the existing well watered *mura* tracks. Gerritson hints at this when he says the "pastoral pioneers of the Corner dug wells ….often beside known soakages" (Gerritsen 1981:60) and "On the road north from the Granites [Tibooburra], beside the well on Warriwarri Creek, Edward Olive built the Olive Downs Hotel in 1885"(ibid:32 ).

A range of government records including Police Records, Census records and Aborigines Protection Board records give clues about the history of Aboriginal people in the early pastoral period of the far north-west. TheWilcannia Police sent 12 blankets to Mootwingee, and 8 blankets to Mt Arrowsmith in 1883 and again in 1884 (Wilcannia Police Duty Book 9/6014). The 1886-88 Board for the Protection of Aboriginal People Returns indicates that there were 133 people in the Milparinka District. The 1891 Census lists 6 Aboriginal people at Olive Downs, 2 at Wori Wori [Warri Warri], 6 at Yalpunga, and 10 at neighbouring Wompah homestead, and others spread out over the Corner Country. Tibooburra "Blacks Camp" had 9 males and 7 females. SLIDE The APB minutes between 1890 and 1901 indicate that in the Corner only the fringe camps at Milperinka and Tibooburra, received rations SLIDE.

**TABLE 2 CENSUS 1891 AO CITY MICROFILM REELS 2534, 2533**
**FAR NORTH-WEST : DISTRICT MILPERINKA**

| District/ subdistrict | place | Householder | Aboriginal Male | Aboriginal Female | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MILPERINKA | Mt Stuart | WO Thomson | 5 | 1 | |
| | " | " | 2 | 2 | |
| | Yalpunga | Jacky | 1 | 1 | total |
| | " | Sandy | 1 | 3 | total |
| | Onepar ? Run | Frank | 2 | 2 | total |
| | Olive Downs | Bandycoot | 4 | 2 | total |
| | Connulpie Downs | J.Jackson | 3 | 2 | 1 non-Ab in household |
| | Onepar | Nallaalie (sp) | 4 | 2 | total |
| | Wori wori | Hugh Bill | 0 | 1 | |
| | Olive Downs | | 1 | 0 | |
| | Fromes Creek | | 1 | 0 | |
| | Yandama | | 1 | 0 | |
| | Yandama | Tilcha Polly | 2 | 2 | total |
| | Boulka | Jimmy | 7 | 8 | total |
| | Quinyambie | Old Tiga | 2 | 1 | total |
| | Tibooburra | Blacks Camp | 9 | 7 | |
| | Milparinka | P.Murphy | 1 | 1 | total |
| | Mt Browne | S.Neale | 2 | 2 | Plus 2 non-Ab |
| | Mt Browne | Billy | 2 | 0 | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cobham | G.Barrow | 2 | 0 | |
| | One Tree | Will Wheatley | 2 | 0 | total |
| | Yantara Aboriginal Camp | Emily | 5 | 7 | total |
| | Yancannia Aboriginal Camp | Davey Campbell | 12 | 7 | total |
| | Yancannia Aboriginal Camp | Nellie | 1 | 3 | total |
| | Yancannia Artesian Bore | | 1 | | total |

N.B word “total” in notes means all people in household were Aboriginal

**TABLE 3 : CENSUS 1901 FAR NORTH-WEST**
**NSW AO CITY MICROFICHE 2/8452**

| District/ subdistrict | Place | Householder | Total Number | | Aboriginal People | | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | M | F | M | F | |
| Milparinka | Mt Poole | Duffield | 16 | 1 | 2 | 1 | |
| | Yandama | Davies | 18 | 2 | 3 | 2 | |
| | Mt Browne | | | | 1 | | |
| | Packsaddle | Colman | 11 | | 1 | | |
| | Nundora | Hughes | 5 | | 1 | | |
| | Quinyambie | G. McDiarmid | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| | " | M.O'Keif | 3 | | | | |
| | " | Aborigines | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | |
| Tibooburra | Tibooburra Station | G. Smith | 3 | 3 | 1 | | |
| | Tibooburra | J. Richards | 3 | 7 | 1 | 1 | |
| | Tibooburra | 'Tommy' | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | |
| | Onepah | 'Aboriginal' | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4M 8F crossed out |
| | Cobham | Robinson ? | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | |
| | Milparinka township | Rich. Gilby | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | |
| | Mil Goldfield | Aborigines | 51 | 19 | 51 | 19 | |
| | Yancannia | Aborigines | 4 | 7 | 4 | 7 | |
| | Salisbury | J.Welsh | 18 | 2 | | 2 | |
| | " | " | 16 | 4 | 2 | 0 | |
| | Bootra | J.Harrison | 13 | 2 | 2 | 1 | |

**TABLE 4 : MENTIONS OF FAR NORTH WEST NSW IN APB MINUTES SEPTEMBER 1890- JUNE1901**

| Date | Place | Rations | Clothing | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20/11/1890 | Tibooburra | | 10 adults | Police recommendation |
| 17/12/1891 | Milperinka district | | 22 | 11 M & 11F |
| 28/1/1892<br>18/2/ .1892 | Milperinka | | | Medical attendance for girl "Minnie" |
| 10/11/1892<br>2/11/1893<br>22/11/1894<br>7/11/1895<br>21/10/1897<br>17/11/1898<br>23/11/1899 | Milperinka District | | 24<br>"<br>"<br>"<br>"<br>"<br>" | Police rec. – approved for "24 old and infirm"<br><br><br><br><br><br>12 men & 12 women |
| 27/1/1898 | Mt Stewart | 4 people | | Police Tibooburra rec |
| 28/2/1898 | Tibooburra | rations | | approved |
| 14/4/1898 | Milperinka | | 14.8.0 | |
| 19/5/1898 | Tibooburra | 2.14.0 | | |
| 14/7/1898 | Tibooburra | 8.15.0 | | |
| 20/10/1898 | Tibooburra | 7.9.6 | | Meat rations |
| 19/1/1899 | Tibooburra | 8.4.0 | | |
| 20/4/1899 | Tibooburra | 7.9.6 | | |
| 27/7/1899 | Tibooburra | 7.9.6 | | |
| 20/10/1899 | Tibooburra | 6.14.4 | | |
| 23/11/1899 | Milparinka | | 14.8.0 | 12 men & 12 women |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18/1/1900 | Tibooburra | 7.11.8 | | |
| 19/4/1900 | Tibooburra | 6.14.4 | | |
| 19/7/1900 | Tibooburra | 6.14.4 | | |
| 8.11.1900 | Milperinka | | 24 people | Ages from 40 to 55 |
| 31/1/1901 | Tibooburra | 8.3.6 | | |
| 2/5/1901 | Tibooburra | 7.3.0 | | |
| 23/4/1901 | Milperinka | | | Police rec. rations for 90 people unable to obtain employment -approved |

## 2.4,. OLIVE DOWNS 1901 TO 1938

The 1901 census SLIDE indicates that Corner people were not spread out over as many stations compared to 1891. Noticeably different is the very large group of people clustered at the Milperinka Gold fields (51 males and 19 females). A total of 24 "old and infirm" in the Milperinka District had been receiving clothing but not rations from the APB consistently throughout 1892 to 1901 (Table 4). However in the 23/4/1901 APB Minutes the Milperinka Police recommend rations for 90 people unable to obtain work (Table 4) SLIDE stating that people were unable to find work on the stations because of the effects of the 1901 drought.

The Birth Deaths and Marriages Register, church and government records and oral history now begins to pick up a more detailed history. At Olive Downs Ruby Bates was born on in about 1900, the daughter of Rosie Jones and Harry Bates, Ruby married George McDermott at Tibooburra in 1921, George was born at Wompah next door to Olive Downs in about 1894 (MC). Ruby later married Donald Johnson and some of their children were born at Olive Downs, including Steve Johnson in about 1924 (interview at Bourke in 1990) indicating that the family was living at Olive Downs in the 1920's/1930's. Una Ebsworth, the daughter of Albert Ebsworth and Rosie Jones, was born on Naryilco in about 1908-10 (Tindale 1938 & Una's MC), suggesting that the family was shuttling between the adjacent stations of Olive Downs and Naryilco. George Riley and his first wife Ruby Quayle and young children lived on Olive Downs and neighbouring Mt Wood where he worked as a stockman they were married in 1916 (MC) SLIDE and before Ruby died in 1920 (Willy Riley 2/2004). Alf Barlow also worked on Olive Downs during the 1920's or earlier; "Pop Barlow used to talk about Olive Downs, he was up there, he was a stockman; and he was up Naryilco and Innamincka way (Dorri Hunter Interview 2/2004).

Two Aboriginal women are buried at Yalpungah cemetery just outside the Olive Downs boundary, both these women are the matriarchs of large families still closely connected to the Tibooburra area and who worked and lived at Olive Downs over a long period. Tarella or Trella died at Yalpungah on the 14th of May 1907 and the undertaker Thomas Hartnett was the father of her children Elizabeth and Harry or Fred Hartnett (Tindale 1938 & Thomas' DC). Elizabeth was born about 1901 at Yalpungah is listed as Lizzie Hartnett in a 1909 Tibooburra school photo, in a beautiful white dress. She married Jack (John Patrick) Monaghan at Tibooburra 26th January 1920 and they had a large family mostly born at Tibooburra from 1920 to the mid to late 1930's. Harry (Fred) Hartnett was born in 1907 (CI) at Wompah on the Border just to the east of Yalpungah and Olive Downs. Harry married Una Ebsworth who was born at Naryilco in about 1907 (MC). They married at Tibooburra in 1929 and they had at 5 children all born in the Tibooburra area in the late 1920s to mid 1930's. The other woman who died at Yalpungah around the same time as Tarella was Judy Quayle (Quail), the mother of the three Quayle brothers from Momba Station near White Cliffs, John, William and James. Judy died 10th January 1908 (DC) and was also buried by Tarella's husband Thomas Hartnett.

## 2.5 THE TIBOOBURRA CAMP

Aboriginal people lived on a reserve on the southern outskirts of town, and in the town itself. There was a separate burial ground where people were buried in the traditional style with a large earth mound covered in branches and logs. Throughout the early 1900's Tibooburra increasingly acted as a dormitory supplying labour to all the surrounding stations. In the 1920's and 1930's the Tibooburra Aboriginal population was replenished as more people arrived from north of the border as well as people moving in from stations to the south. Often part of the family would stay in town while others worked out on the stations. The Reserve was regazetted in 1937 with an area of 100 acres. As the depression hit hard the Aboriginal population of Tibooburra increased from 30 in 1928 to 148 in 1937 (Goodall 1996:213). A large group of people who identified as Wangkumara settled into Tibooburra either on an occasional or permanent basis, including the extended Ebsworth family and various relations. Some members of the Pantyikali Baakantji and Malyangapa families including the Bates, Quayle, Barlow, Gibson-Teetalpa, Morris and Dutton families used Tibooburra as a base, while others gravitated towards White Cliffs (see Martin 2003 for more detail on the history of these families). The Hartnetts and Monaghans were also based in and around Tibooburra. In 1911 Albert Bates (snr) and John Quail (snr) are both listed as "small holders" of the Tibooburra District, that is contractors, business men or town folk who owned horses but didn't pay Pastures Protection Board Rates (Gerritsen 1981:139).

SLIDES

SOME FAMILIES ASSOCIATED WITH TIBOOBURRA IN THE 1901-1938 PERIOD

| family | Father | mother | children | group |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Polly | Albert Ebsworth, Sam Burgamar, Tommy Burgamar (Bugmy) | Wangkumara |
| Ebsworth | Albert | Rosie Jones | Una, Albie, Arnold, Lorna, Ngaka (Cecil), Martin, Lena, Alma, Jean | Wangkumara |
| Jones/Hines/Dutton/ Clayton | | Charlotte | Rosie Jones<br>Jack Hines<br>Queenie Hines<br>May Hines<br>Willy Dutton | Wangkumara/Paakantyi (Willy Dutton) |
| Bates | Harry | Rosie Jones | Ruby Bates | Paakantyi/Wangkumara |
| McDermott | George | Ruby Bates | Edith | Wangkumara |
| Johnson | Fred | | Donald | Flinders |
| Johnson | Donald | Ruby Bates | Steve Lenny, Ronnie, Gladys, Amy, and Roy | Flinders /Wangkumara/ Paakantyi |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hines | Jack | Madelaine Gibbs | Ray, Jean, Georgina | Wangkumara |
| Booth | Frank | Queenie Hines | children | Wangkumara |
| Clayton | Scottie | | | |
| | | | | Sams uncle |
| Hartnett | Thomas # | Tarella | Elizabeth, Fred | White & Paakantyi? |
| Hartnett | Fred | Una Ebsworth | Rita, Cyril, Cliff, John, Shirley Agatha | ?/Wangkumara |
| Monaghan | John (Jack) | Elizabeth Hartnett | Alma Jean, Pat (Paddy) Mick, Tom, Colin, Maggie, Dorrie, Kate, Clarrie, Fred, Brian | ? |
| Quayle | | Judy | John | Paakantyi? |
| Quayle | John | Hannah Hamilton (Williams) | Ruby, May, Marjorie, Jack, Lawrence, Eileen, Monica, Frank, Edith | Paakantyi? & Malyangapa |
| Riley | George | Ruby Quayle | Ada, Hazel, Ida, Mary | ? Koa &Malyangapa |
| Williams | John | Elsie Podmore | Lawrence | Malyangapa |
| Williams | Gilbert Thintyu | Leta | Allen | Malyangapa |
| Hunt | | May | Rachel | Malyangapa/Paakantyi |
| Bates | Albert | Rosie Stapleton | Alfred, Alice, Ethel, Gilbert, Albie, William, James, Elsie, Maudie | Paakantyi & Malyangapa |
| Bates | Jim (not related) | | | ? |
| Bates | Peter (?) | | | ? |
| Gilby | Richard# | Alice Stapleton | | White & Malyangapa |
| Morris | Henry # | Grace Knight | Henry Wally ++ | White & Paakantyi |
| Morris | William# | Lucella Quimby | Ivy, Pearl | White &Paakantyi |
| Dutton | George | Alice Bates | Jim, Evelyn, Lorraine, George, Norma, Charlie | Paakantyi & Malyangapa |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Harding | Norman | Lucy | ? | Wangkumara |
| Barlow | Jimmy | Jennie | Alf | Malyangapa & Wangkumara |
| Gibson | Taylor | Tottie Teetalpa | Hilda, Ethel | Paakantyi |
| Crow | Rupert | Hilda Gibson | Henry, Alfie | Paakantyi |
| Nappa Merrie | Jimmy | Barryoolah Alice | ? | Wangkumara? & Wangkumara |
| Whyman | Walter | | ? | ? |
| Moore | | | | |
| Kerwin | Benny | Nellie Parker | Lennie, | Yandawantra |

## TABLE 6 TIBOOBURRA CATHOLIC CHURCH BAPTISMS 1927-1937

| surname | name | Age/birth | father | mother | date | "Godparent" |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |
| Johnson | Ronald | c. 1930 | Donald | Ruby Ebsworth | 12/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Johnson | Leonard | 14/6/1927 | Donald | Ruby Ebsworth | 12/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Johnson | Hazel | 9/9/1931 | Donald | Ruby Ebsworth | 12/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Kennedy | Sylvia May | 17/8/1930 | Charles | Florence Boswell | 12/11/1930 | T. Dalwood |
| Hunt | Rachel | 5/11/1931 | William | May Quayle | 12/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Quayle | Keith Francis | 19/3/1931 | Laurie | Ethel Bates | 12/11/1931 | Myrtle Riley |
| Bates | Gilbert | c. 21 yrs | Albert | Rose | 14/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Bates | Albert | c. 18 yrs | Albert | Rose | 14/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Bates | William | c. 16 yrs | Albert | Rose | 14/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Bates | Elsie | c. 11 yrs | Albert | Rose | 14/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Bates | Maud | c. 8 yrs | Albert | Rose | 14/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Bates | Myrtle | c. 4 yrs | Albert | Rose | 14/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Dutton | James | c. 4 yrs | George | Alice | 14/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Dutton | Eileen | c. 2 yrs | George | Alice | 14/11/1931 | T. Dalwood |
| Dutton | Mary | 26/7/1932 | George | Alice | 04/11/1932 | Thos.Dalwood |
| Coon | Kathleen M. | 26/7/1932 | William | Diana Lynette | 8/7/1933 | Ivy Morris |
| Riley | Cecil James | 28/3/1932 | George | Marjorie Quayel | 17/6/1932 | MonicaQuayle |
| Hartnett | Henry | c. 27 yrs | Tom Hartnett | Terella | 12/7/1933 | T.McManus |
| Monaghan | Elizabeth | c.33 yrs | Tom Hartnett | Terella | 12/7/1933 | T. McManus |
| Harding | Norman P. | c. 43 yrs | Harry Harding | Fanny | 12/7/1933 | T. McManus |
| Ebbsworth | Albert | c. 23 yrs ? | | Polly | 12/7/1933 | T. McManus |
| Ebbsworth | Rose | c. 48 yrs | Joe Jones | Charlotte | 12/7/1933 | T. McManus |
| Johnson | Ruby | c. 29 yrs | Albert Ebbsworth | Rose Jones | 12/7/1933 | T. McManus |
| Dutton | George | c. 45 yrs | George Dutton | | 15/7/1933 | T. McManus |
| Dutton | Alice | c. 27 yrs | | Bates | 15/7/1933 | T. McManus |
| Morris | Lucy | c. 33 yrs | William Quimby | | 15/7/1933 | T. McManus |
| Coon | Diana | c. 22 yrs | Jim Lynette | | 15/7/1933 | T. McManus |
| Johnson | Amy | 25/3/1934 | Donald | RubyEbbsworth | 7/7/1934 | E. Monaghan |
| Hunt | Willaim E. | 9/7/1934 | William Hunt | May Quayle | 13/7/1934 | LauraEbbsworth |
| Morris | Mary Eliz. | 3/9/1921 | Thomas Morris | Grace Knight | 6/7/1935 | LauraEbbsworth |
| Morris | Edith Marie | 31/12/1928 | Thomas Morris | Grace Knight | 6/7/1935 | LauraEbbsworth |
| Morris | Doreen Iris | 2/31932 | Thomas Morris | Grace Knight | 6/7/1935 | LauraEbbsworth |
| Hines | Raymond | 1/8/1925 | Jack Hines | Madeline Gibbs | 6/7/1935 | LauraEbbsworth |
| Hines | Jean | 2/31928 | Jack Hines | Madeline Gibbs | 6/7/1935 | LauraEbbsworth |
| Hines | Georgina | 2/9/1930 | Jack Hines | Madeline Gibbs | 6/7/1935 | LauraEbbsworth |
| Kerwin | Leonard | c. 10 yrs | Bennie Kerwin | Ivy Parker | 6/7/1935 | Ivy Morris |
| Kerwin | Edna | c. 9 yrs | Bennie Kerwin | Ivy Parker | 6/7/1935 | Ivy Morris |
| Hartnett | Phillip John | 23/7/1934 | Fred Hartnett | Una Ebbsworth | 6/7/1935 | LauraEbbsworth |
| Dutton | Evelyn | 15/11/1934 | George Dutton | Alice Bates | 6/7/1935 | Ivy Morris |
| Ebbsworth | Mary Hope | 19/10/1935 | Albert Ebbsworth | Rosie | 8/12/1935 | LauraEbbsworth |
| Hartnett | Shirley A. | 25/8/1936 | Fred Hartnett | Una Ebbsworth | 22/9/1936 | Edith Johnson |
| Johnson | Roy Bray P. | 3/7/1936 | Donald Johnson | Ruby Ebbsworth | 22/9/1936 | Pat. Clarke |
| Monaghan | Maureen | 13/12/1935 | | Jean Monaghan | 22/9/1936 | Ruby Johnson |
| Moore | Henry W. | c. 2 yrs | Albert Moore | Molly | 22/9/1936 | Pat. Clarke |
| Dutton | George | 7/6/1937 | George Dutton | Alice Bates | 6/9/1937 | Edie Johnson |
| Bates | Hector J. | 11/1/1937 | | Elsie Bates | 6/9/1937 | Maud Bates |
| Ebbsworth | Vincent | 2/8/1937 | | Laura Ebbsworth | 6/9/1937 | Lena Ebbsworth |
| Morris | Thelma Joyce Joan | 27/7/1937 | Tom H. Morris | Grace Knight | 6/9/1937 | Edith Morris |

**TABLE 7: SOME BIRTH AND DEATH RECORDS FOR TIBOOBURRA (BIRTHS UP TO 1918, DEATHS UP TO 1945, RECORDS NOTED AS CI (COMPUTER INDEX) IS ONLY GENERAL LOCATION, MAY BE ON A STATION)**

| Name | place | Date | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nappa Merrie Jimmy | Tibooburra | 5/5/1942 | DC |
| Jimmy Thomson | T | 1914 | CI DC |
| Margery Riley | T | c.1901-2 | Birth (MC) |
| Eileen Quayle | T | c.1915 | Birth (DC) |
| Alf Barlow | T | c.1888 | Birth (DC) |
| Eileen Dutton | Yandama | c.1929 | Birth (DC) |
| Ruby Quayle | | | |
| Ada Eilieen Gilby | T | c. 1910 | Birth (MC) |
| Alma Jean Monaghan | T | 1919 | Birth (MC) |
| Lily Dutton | T | 1914 | DC |
| Kathleen Quayle | T | 1913 | DC |
| Cecilia Quayle | T | 1914 | DC |
| Mona Ebsworth | T | 1914 | DC (Born Naryilco) |
| Ada Riley | T | 1916 | CI born T |
| Ida C. Riley | T | 1918 | CI born T |
| Una Ebsworth | T | 1910 | Birth registered Tibooburra 1929 |
| Yungie Mulla Kitty | T | 1913 | CI died T |
| Jimmy Panga | T | 1913 | CI died T |
| Towie | T | 1913 | CI DC |
| Duke (King) | T | 1916 | CI DC |
| Nellie Lamb | T | 1917 | CI DC |
| Gilbert Bates | T | 1910 | BC |
| Jimmy Barlow | T | 1928 | DC |
| Jennie Barlow | Yandama | 1920 | DC |
| Lily Dutton | Tibooburra | 1914 | DC |
| Geordie | T | 1931 | DC |
| Taylor Gibson | T | 1931 | DC |
| Albert Bates | T | 1931 | DC |
| Goondaburra Frank | T | 1934 | DC |
| King Billy | T | 1911 | DC |
| Womba | T | 1912 | DC |
| Nellie Quimby | T | 1933 | DC |
| Tommy Thomson | T | 1915 | DC |
| Teddy | T | 1907 | DC |
| Tibooburra Frank | Broken Hill | 1920 | DC (from Tib) |
| Dick Willow | T | 1935 | DC |
| Rupert Crowe | T | 1934 | BC |
| Butter Fred | T | 1911 | CI DC |
| Billy | T | 1912 | CI DC |
| Sit Down Jimmy | T | 1929 | CI DC |
| Peter Bates | T | 1915 | DC |
| Edna May Womby | T | 1914 | DC |

## 2.6. “WE WAS ALL TRUCKED OUT” TO BREWARRINA MISSION

In April 1938 the Aboriginal people of Tibooburra were suddenly forcibly removed at gunpoint to Brewarrina Mission 560 km to the east, “we was all trucked out’ (Elsie Bates Interview).

This was a result of the "concentrate" and "control" policy of the APB and the 1936 "Dog Act" (Goodall19??). Only some families with a legally married white father and Aboriginal mother including the Morris, Monaghan and Gilby families, and those who the Aborigines Protection Board couldn't contact on distant stations remained in the district. This story is too important to summarise.The Tindale photos SLIDE(Table ) record the Ebsworths, Johnson, Claytons, Hines, Hartnett, Bates and Dutton families at Brewarrina (Flick et al 1994).

TABLE 8 : TINDALE'S PHOTOS OF TIBOOBURRA PEOPLE AT BREWARRINA, 1938

| |
|---|
| Rosie Bates |
| Albert Bates jnr |
| Ivy Bates nee Quimby |
| Alice Dutton nee Bates |
| Elsie Bates (Parm Coombes) |
| Maude Bates |
| Myrtle Bates |
| George Dutton |
| Eileen Dutton |
| Donald Johnson |
| Ruby Johnson |
| Edith Johnson |
| Steve Johnson |
| Leonard Johnson |
| Gladys Johnson |
| Scott Clayton |
| Albert Ebsworth snr |
| Rose Ebsworth |
| Martin Ebsworth |
| Lorna Ebsworth (Dixon) |
| Alma Ebsworth |
| Jean Ebsworth |
| Lena Ebsworth |
| Harry (Fred) Hartnett |
| Una Hartnett nee Ebsworth |
| Rita Hartnett |
| Madeline Hynes |
| Ray Hynes |
| Jean Hynes |
| Georgina Hynes |
| Charlotte Hynes (Clayton) |

2.7. AFTER 1938

After 1938 the Aboriginal community of the Tibooburra area was dominated by the families left behind including the Monaghan, Morris and Gilby families. Soon other families moved to Tibooburra from adjacent areas of South Australia and Queensland, including the Yawarawarka

Hector and Bob Harrison, their sister Mabel Harrison and her husband Snider Brown (who originally came from Hermmansberg?), the Diyari Landers family and King Miller. A number of people who were moved to Brewarrina did come back to the Tibooburra area, including Alf, and Martin Ebsworth, Albie and Ivy Bates, George McDermott and Norman Harding. Olive Downs continued to be home for families with the closest ties, including the Monaghans, Ebsworths, Norman Harding and George McDermott, and the Brown/Harrison family, until the 1970's and the National Parks era.

SLIDE

TIBOOBURRA AFTER THE MOVE TO BREWARRINA MISSION

PRE 1938 FAMILIES

| family | father | mother | children | general affiliation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monaghan | Jack | Lizzie Hartnett | Tom, Kath | White & Paakantyi? |
| Monaghan | Tom | Lil Landers | Raylene, Neville | |
| Beer | Jack | Kath Monaghan | | |
| Morris | Henry | Gracie Knight | Henry, Wally | White & Paakantyi |
| Morris | William | Lucella Quimby | Ivy Quimby, Pearl | White & Paakantyi |
| Gilby | Richard | Alice Stapleton | | White &Malyangapa |
| McDermott | George | | | Wangkumara |
| Harding | Norman | Lucy | | Wangkumara |
| Ebsworth | Martin | Gladys | Barbara, | Wangkumara & Paakantyi |
| Ebsworth | Alf | | | |
| Ebsworth | Ngaka | | | Wangkumara & Paakantyi |
| Ebsworth | Albie | | | Wangkumara |
| Nappamerrie | Jimmy | Barryoolah Alice | | Wangkumara |
| Bates | Albie | Ivy Quimby | Alice, Johnny, Peggy, Albert, Thelma | Malyangapa/Paakantyi & Paakantyi |
| Bates | Gilbert | Emily Clark | Adrian | Malyangapa/Paakantyi & Paakantyi |
| Miller | King | Alice | | Wangkumara-Punthamara |
| | | | | |

NEW FAMILIES

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Harrison | Hector | | | Yawarawarka |
| Harrison | Bob | | | Yawarawarka |
| Brown | Snider | Mabel Harrison | Mary, Betty, Fay, Rene, Gloria, Lorraine, Colleen. | ? & Yawarawarka |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Fred, Snider, Harold | |
| Landers | Jack | ? | Nellie, Sylvie, Lindy, Lil, Edward, Rene, | Diyari |
| Edge | Alec | Nellie Edge | | Antekerepina & Diyari |

TABLE 9 : CATHOLIC PARISH BOOK ABORIGINAL FAMILIES IN TIBOOBURRA 1961

| Parents | Children |
|---|---|
| Alma Monaghan & husband Don Roach | Dawn |
| | Tommy |
| | Trevor |
| | Robert |
| | Patricia |
| | |
| Norman Harding | |
| | |
| Tom Monaghan | Raylene |
| & wife Lil Lander | Neville |
| | |
| Arnold Ebsworth & wife Daisy | Judith |
| | Lorraine |
| | Martin |
| | Margaret |
| | Helen |
| Mick Monaghan & wife Alma (Anne) | Elizabeth Anne |
| | Joseph |
| | Christine |
| | Valerie |
| | Eunice |

## 3. MEDIUM TERM STRUCTURES

### 3.1 SURVIVAL IN A MARGINAL ENVIRONMENT

The Olive Downs CMP states that the area was marginal for "pastoralism and for European occupation" and assumes that was not marginal for Aboriginal occupation (Freeman & Associates 2004). However, Tibooburra has a low and extremely variable rainfall coupled with long periods of extreme heat and low humidity. Map 2 SLIDE shows that Olive Downs is on the edge of the most variable rainfall pattern in Australia. This map is made from annual averages and masks the variability shown in the climate averages for the Tibooburra Post

Office. Mean annual rainfall is 227mm, median is 200 mm, decile 9 is 397 mm, decile 1 is 90mm, and there is a tendency for very large falls in the summer months, up to 385 mm for January or 178 mm in one day. However, extended periods without rain occur, years can go by with almost no rain (Bureau of Meteorology website). In addition the Corner Country depends entirely on local rainfall, no long distance floods or mounds springs. The biggest problem is the unpredictable and variable rainfall and extended drought periods. Conversely, the biggest bonus is the large summer rainfall events which deliver a temporary garden of Eden, and the elevation and rocky landscape features which tend to channel and trap rainfall. So this can be a marginal environment in anyone's terms. How did people survive in the traditional economy?

- The first strategy for survival in the Corner Country was the reliance on a variety of seeds and roots;

Their principal food appeared to be seeds of… box tree, and grass seeds, which they pound into cakes and bake, together with different kinds of roots" (Sturt 1849 [2001] :193).

Sturt, Brock and Browne have numerous descriptions of the constant use of seed foods:

These natives were busy in preparing food from a seed which grows on a low grass….in great abundance. They have a large flat stone, on which they pour the seed from their hand, and with a round stone smash it as it falls – it forms an oily kind of food not very unlike linseed would be if it was so bruised. These natives were in good condition … healthy and robust (Brock 1844-6[1988]:111) ... here it was quite like a harvest field. The seed which supplies the native with nutritious food grows here in the season in great quantities. In every hollow we found the remains of the native's labor in the shape of straw, from which they had beaten out the seed (ibid: 133).

Beckler described how two men from Burke and Will's party stranded at Torowoto Swamp east of Tibooburra survived on nardoo seeds that they collected every day:

> We crushed them between two stones that we had finally found and ground them to a crude flour which we made into a dough with some water. In the native's manner we made it into little cakes which we threw on the glowing coals and left for a few minutes. (Beckler 1860-1[1993]: 75)

A variety of locally common Acacias provide seeds for food;

> [in the] acacia scrub…the natives had lately been engaged in collecting the seed. The boughs of the trees were all broken down, and here were numerous places where they had thrashed out the seed, and heaped up the pods. These poor people must indeed be driven to extremity if forced to subsist on such food, as its taste is so disagreeable (Sturt 1849 [2001]:147).

Browne describes the cooking of roots on a creek to the east of Mt Poole;

> The woman had collected a quantity of roots – a kind of Vetch. These they cooked in this way. They dug a hole in the ground and made a good fire in it. In about an hour they covered up the fire with earth out of the hole. On this they laid a quantity of grass and over this the roots, the quantity belonging to each individual being separated by a thin layer of grass. They put grass over the roots and then poured about 3 gallons of water over the whole and covered all up with sand. The roots were thus cooked by steam and in about an hour were well done. I tasted them and found them very good and full of starch. They must be very nutritious (Browne in Finnis 1996:42).

It is also apparent that the type of seeds used varied as the season progressed or deteriorated. Grass and Portulacca seed were popular, but nardoo and probably box tree seed were a last resort. George Dutton told Hercus (1982:269-270);

> *Papa* is grass seed and *pila* is pigweed. Grind them with stone, grind this flour.
> *Ngartu* is nardoo, a different stone is used for grind that. They beat this nardoo with a stone, with a small stone they beat it …. Nardoo doesn't matter much. Hard this nardoo.

- The second strategy was the continual expansion and contraction depending on the availability of water (retreat and expand)

After rain they could rely on water on claypans, swamps and wells and expand out onto the sandplains and dune fields away from the waterholes and soaks closer to the ranges;

> People were liberated from their reliance on seeds only after rain; as long as the waters last, for they can now traverse these wastes anywhere, and jeboas, wallaby, dipu and other game are in abundance. They no doubt this part of the year live principally on flesh. When from the want of water, they are tied to one or more localities, seed must constitute their principal food. (Brock 1844-6 [1988]:194).

- A third strategy was to take advantage of the random storms that could be tracked from the jump-ups and ranges (follow the rain).

Many shallow basins were scooped out randomly on claypans, in the hope that a storm would fall in that area, in addition to the carefully located deep wells; "Every here and there, as we travelled along, we passed some holes scooped out by the natives to catch rain" (Sturt 1849 [2001]:253)

- The fourth strategy was to abandon country if the rains failed for too long (escape routes).

Sturt and Harris Browne met a Paakantyi family group ("They speak the same language as the Darling natives"), living on a creek approximately 68 km south-east of Depot Glen, in an area which is certainly Malyangapa. They stated that there was no water on the plain towards Paakantyi country of Yantara and Torowoto and had left that area due to lack of water (Browne 1845:41). An example of what happens when it was left it too late to move occurred on the Darling River during an extreme drought in the 1850's. A group arrived from "a very long way west" of Menindee, twenty-six young men looking like skeletons and apparently the only survivors of the group that had started for the river after their water had dried up. "The river

blacks understood only a few words of their language, but seeing their condition took pity on them and placed them at a part of the river where plenty of flags and other aquatic plants having bulbous roots grew" (Morey n.d.).

## 3.2 SOCIAL STRUCTURES -ROOM TO MOVE

The linguistic, anthropological and ethno-historical evidence indicate that there were four major named groups and three major language groups in the Corner Country. Broadly the four main named groups and three major language groups are;

- Wangkumara; in contemporary usage this large language group with its various sub-groups including Kungardutyi or Karenggapa is located to the north of Tibooburra including Olive Downs, belongs to the Karnic language group which spans much of the Lake Eyre basin (Hercus 2003).
- 

- Baakantji; in contemporary usage the large Baakantji language group is located to the south-east of Tibooburra, with the dialect group of Pantyikali-Wanyiwalku coming closest to Tibooburra( Hercus 1982:6-7, 1998, 2003).

- Malyangapa: is located to the south and south-west of Tibooburra (Hercus 2003)

- Wadikali; is located to the west and south-west of Tibooburra, Wadikali spoke a similar language to Malyangapa (Hercus 2003)

SLIDE

| Group | Language Group | Subgroups in Tibooburra area |
|---|---|---|
| Wangkumara | Karnic | Kungardutyi / Karenggapa |
| Paakantyi | Paakantyi | Pantyikali/ Wanyiwalku |
| Malyangapa | Yarli | Malyangapa |
| Wadikali | Yarli | Wadikali |
| | | |

The crucial aspect of the Corner Country is that different elements of culture were shared across various combinations of groups, some cutting across the language boundaries and major group boundaries, others confined to one or two groups. Some of the most accurate information recorded from knowledgeable informants suggests that Malyangapa, Wadikali, Pantyikali-Wanyiwalku and Wangkumara shared some ceremonies, *mura* tracks, and intermarried or "mixed". This sense of shared aspects of culture among the four major groups of the area comes through strongly from various records, for example;

George Dutton – discussing the Brothers site near Tibooburra said "You call those stones Panga-thili and they belong to Malyangapa and Wangkumara mixed but they come from Yandruwantha country" (Hercus notes).

Barney Coffin talking about the Kurlimuku song cycle and ceremony adds; "That is Kurlimuku, that is New South Wales. Four nations sings the same song. Malyangapa, Wadikali, and Kungardutyi and Wanyiwalku, that is four nations" (Hercus 2003. 8).

Hercus transcribed The Two Ngatyi story told by George Dutton to Jeremy Beckett (1957-8). In this story the two Rainbow Serpents or Ngatyi change language as they progress into different countries, and she concludes that the country between Yantara Lake and Torowotto Swamp had "a dual occupation of Pantyikali and Malyangapa" (Hercus 2003:31).

Beckett's long association with the Corner Country people indicates that both his "informants and the mythology stressed language or dialect changes as the feature distinguishing one tribe from another" (Beckett 1967:456). However, language was only one way of identifying people;

> There is no evidence that all Baakantji ever came together in one place; on the other hand, it seems that the Pantyikali people had significant relations with the Malyangapa and other neighbours, at least in the years immediately after contact, but most likely also before. This does not mean that language was not important as a way of differentiating people in certain situations – even minor dialect differences could be given social significance —but it was only one of a number of ways in which Aboriginal people structured their world. Other kinds of social grouping, relating to country, kinship, ritual and mythology, cut across language groupings. … [Dutton] also indicated boundaries in his telling of mythological travelling stories, noting that at a particular place the ancestor or *mura* started speaking a different language. Thus language and country appear to be linked, so that to speak of one is to imply the other (Beckett 2003:11-13).

All the people belonging to the Corner Country had a similar social organization which included a matrilineal moiety system with matrilineal social totemic clans or "meats" (Elkin 1930:205 1/2/6), although different terminology was used by the different language groups;

> All the Baakantji speakers used much the same kinship terminology and were organised into matrilineal totemic clans and moieties. The social organisation of the Malyangapa, Wadikali and probably Wongkumara, was different only in minor details. There seems to have been frequent inter-marriage between them [all](Beckett 2003:13).

The Corner Country groups have a complex kinship system that was recorded in detail for Paakantyi in 1930 (Elkin 1938:43), and for Malyangapa (Beckett 1967:457). The terms often differ amongst the groups but the structure of their kinship systems are similar. Elkin (1938: 42-44, Elkin 1940:373) points out the kinship system is not only used;
in arranging marriages, but also provides patterns of behaviour for all life's situations, the patterns being represented or codified by the various types of relationship.....a certain relationship demands that the two persons concerned perform certain duties, or make certain gifts, often mutual; and it may also prescribe that certain things might not be done" (Elkin 1938:69).

The kinship system certainly influenced the composition of families found working on stations or the placement of houses in town camps well into the second half of the 20th Century. In his 1964 study Beckett indicates;

> there is little diffidence in asking for help and great reluctance to refuse. However, requests are generally addressed to kin and relatedness is implicitly or explicitly regarded as a charter.... An Aboriginal family, then, ....must live near some kinsfolk with whom it can engage in sharing relations." (Beckett 1988:129).

It is clear that the four groups co-operated rather than excluded each other and the similarity in social organisation made it easy to translate from one group to another. Malyangapa & Paakantyi have an unusually high overlap of vocabulary (Hercus 1982) which may result from the mutual need of Malyangapa & Paakantyi to move into the best country during a drought and follow the rain. Even the names of the groups suggest this, Pantyikali means creek country and Malyangapa means lake water –each using different language but same way of naming, both depending on local rainwater runoff. This is also evidenced by the story of George Dutton's initiation around 1900 where he thought he would undergo the Paakantyi style ceremony at Yancannia but is tricked by his step-father into undergoing the Milia type ceremony belonging to the Malyangapa and Wangkumara at Mt Browne (Beckett 1978:13). It was this co-operation that allowed the Corner Country people the freedom to follow the rain and move out of drought stricken country when necessary.

This social structure continued into the 1920's and 1930's. Table+++ shows that the Tibooburra camp and station camps were dominated by the groups outlined in the previous section, Wangkumara, Malyangapa and Paakantji (Wadikali beding largely absorbed by the others by this stage). Table ??? also shows that these groups continued to intermarry, live and work together as extended families. Around the turn of the 20th century George Dutton's story indicates that these groups still shared ceremonies, *mura* tracks, and travelled extensively in each others country (Beckett 1978). Kinship and moiety systems were still in place when Elkin interviewed two Paakantyi/Malyangapa men in 1928 (Elkin >>>>)., and people's moiety and kin identities were translated into the language of the speaker regardless of the actual group identity of the person being described. It is clear that the four groups of the Corner Country had an easy and complete co-existence.

### 3.3 CEREMONY AND MYTHOLOGY –KEEPING THE ROUTES OPEN

The Olive Downs homestead complex, it is located on an important *mura* track or pathway of the ancestral people. Olive Downs homestead is on the old road from Tibooburra to Naryilco and Coopers Creek, and this followed the original *mura* pathway up Twelve Mile Creek over the divide onto Warri Warri Creek and down this to the Wilson and Cooper. We know this from Lorna Dixon's account of the family travelling from Tibooburra via Naryilco to ceremonies on the Cooper (Mathews 1985:97). George Dutton's description of the route taken by the *milia* ancestor also follows this route;

> The *milia* set out from *guruwalbu,* near Mt Brown … He went from Cobham Lake to Milparinka, through Yalpungah, Olive Downs, Naryalco, Yanco, Dingara and Bransby … (Beckett 1967:461).

In this story the *milia* covers the country of the 4 groups which performed the *milia* circumcision ceremony, the Malyangapa, Wadikali, Wangkumara and subgroup Kungardutyi (ibid):460). After his *Milia* was completed George Dutton and his stepfather travelled the Olive Downs route to Naryilco;

> I travelled from Cobham Lake right up through Milparinka, Tibooburra, Nerialco. We stopped off at stations on the way (Beckett 1978:13).

Other *mura* that came from the Cooper to Tibooburra via Warri Warri Creek and involved Olive Downs include the ancestral Water-snake story, the Kurlimuku, The Grindstone Man story, The Two Young Men story, and the Durupa people coming to ask for rain stone (Hercus Ms H n.d.). Other important *mura* tracks linked the Bulloo with the Tibooburra area, including the Yalpungah track to the east of Olive Downs (Beckett 1978). These *mura* tracks were travelled for ceremonial and social purposes, but were also escape routes for periods of extended drought in the Corner Country, forming a "chain of connection" between the basins such as the Cooper, Bulloo, Paroo -Darling and the marginal corner country.

In the historic period people continued to follow *mura* tracks. It is no coincidence that the old roads and stock routes follow these stories, as elsewhere in Australia white people were shown or otherwise took advantage of the existing well watered *mura* tracks. Aboriginal drovers and station workers continued to use these tracks for their work and when travelling around the country. After his *Milia* was completed George Dutton and his stepfather travelled the Olive Downs route to Naryilco; "I travelled from Cobham Lake right up through Milparinka, Tibooburra, Nerialco. We stopped off at stations on the way" (Beckett 1978:13). Later Dutton became a drover and continued to travel the *mura* tracks;

> Dutton's travels… had a dual character. The routes he followed as a drover were often those travelled by the *muras*, who had created the waterholes at which he watered his stock (Beckett 1978:17).

Albert Ebsworth was also able to combine his work with ceremonial life, his daughter Lorna said; "Dad was a good drover and the whites liked his station work too. He could always get a job, and took time off if he wanted to camp somewhere or visit the Cooper. …Dad often went off on his own and we knew it was for some sacred or secret Aboriginal gathering" (Mathews 1985:91).
The depression years resulted in a larger fringe camp at Tibooburra. This was similar to the enforced retreat around dwindling waters in drought and it resulted in the right people clustered together and rations to stage various cultural events. May Hunt nee Quayle describes Tibooburra in 1931:

> There were a lot of Aborigines in town, people who had lost their jobs on stations and were as unhappy at accepting handouts as May herself. …everyone seemed bewildered by this terrible scarcity of work… A couple of times they saw corroborees performed there with a lot of noise and laughter….[there was] talk of an initiation ceremony that was banned by the police, who threatened to run the organizers out of town (Hardy 1979:11-14).

Cecil Ebsworth (Hercus Ms H n.d.:11) states "during the depression … That is the last time the big mob was together as far as I know …. No more *mura* after that. (Hercus Tape 899 1985????)

## 3.4 KIDMAN AND KINSHIP

In 1869 Syd Kidman started his working life at 14 sharing a blanket and a dog with Billy on the cold winter nights at what was to become Sturts Meadows between Broken Hill and Tibooburra. Syd and Billy were shepherding for Mr & Mrs Raine who "just squatted down in a dugout in the Barrier area" (Bowen 1987:24). Billy would have been either Wilykali Paakantyi or Malyangapa and became Syd's first Aboriginal tutor (ibid:25). This began a life of mutual dependence for Kidman and many of the Corner Country people which only ended on Kidman's death in 1935. Bowen states when word of his death "reached his stations … particularly in south-western Queensland, there were calls of "aiyeee" …. And [the Aboriginal people] retreated from the around the homesteads … to wail and mourn" (Bowen 1987:401). The wailing and mourning was for one of their own, Kidman was clearly a part of the kinship system. Evelyn Crawford describes how Kidman was regarded as having similar roles as a father, such as naming, or mentor of the father's moiety who would look after a boy or young man in his initiation, traveling, learning stages;

> Charles Zooch was one of the kids that Syd Kidman… took from Naryilco Station [next to Olive Downs]…and sent to a college in Adelaide where the squatters sons went. He gave him the name Charles Zooch … When Kidman's 'boys' left school they worked on his stations until they married but they were always free to do what they wanted. Kidman never made them feel that he owned them because he'd educated them … When they'd hear that Kidman was comin' to the town or station, little kids would throw out their chests and put on their best smiles thinkin', "We goin' with Kidman". The parents trusted him because he was a good man, a man of his word, and really looked after the kids. In their minds he wasn't anything like the Aboriginal Protection Board. (Crawford 1993:48)

Not only did Kidman fit in to the existing kinship system and ways of traveling and caring for country, in the droving and moving stock and staff from station to station or along stock routes he provided a means of expanding their world in a culturally appropriate way, akin to traveling young men undertook with their mentors or older men traveling to ceremonies etc. Alice Bugmy whose father Tommy was from the Corner Country and married a Paakantyi woman from the southern Darling River made the comment "Dick Smith & Durham Down Willy, two Wangkumara brothers, Alf Barlow [Wangkumara/Malyangapa] and my old father "all linked up with George Dutton [Pantyikali Paakantyi] at Yandama - they were working for Kidman - came down on Kidman's properties – they came through" [into Paakantyi country] (Martin interview Alice Bugmy 1992).This indicates Kidman's properties provided a new type of safe route or "*mura* track" for people to travel along. George Dutton's extensive travels also follow this pattern, he used droving as a means of travelling to ceremonies and learning new language and songs (Beckett 1978).

Kidman first learnt about the stock routes which followed major *mura* tracks as he and brother supplied the mining boom of Silverton then Broken Hill with stock from the Corner (Bowen

1987:69). This system also used the best drovers, the Aboriginal people from the corner and Cooper. Not only did they know the routes, but were familiar with the system of moving along these with the rains. Kidman then progressed to the "chain of supply" idea, that is having enough station side by side to be able to take stock to where the feed was and to market from the Cooper system down to Broken Hill. He envisaged "a chain of stations on the three rivers that were linked to a droving route, rail transport and markets" (Bowen1987:77).

Thus the links thru *mura* tracks or stock routes idea expanded to include the follow the rain type strategy. During the extreme1926-1930 drought "The benefit of the chain was that Kidman could generally avoid eaten out [stockroutes] and stage stock to market along good patches of feed on his own places … Drought, once again, would have broken individual landholders" (Bowen 1987:376).

Although Kidman had his eye mainly on the Cooper system the Corner Country just fell into his hands as droughts like the 1901 one broke the landowners, only one pioneering family on the NSW side still retains its original lease. Between 1908 and 1934 Kidman owned most of the Corner including Olive Downs and these stations linked to the Cooper, Bulloo and Paroo-Darling–show map –the downside being he acquired stations had been ravaged by drought and overstocking. A report written by journalist on trip with Kidman in 1928 indicates Kidman allowed these stations to recover;

> Wonnaminta .. shore 80,000 sheep at one time but bad droughts had reduced the numbers considerably… It is said that overstocking killed this part of the country which used to grow a lot of spear and other grasses. When the present company took it over in 1919, they spelled it for five years. The feed in a good season is now better than it ever was" (Bowen 1987:358).

Changes in legislation led to redistribution of most of his NSW holdings from 1934 onwards despite Kidman trying to stop this;

> He hated to see it [the land ] eaten bare. Stock were always moved around his big chain of stations to avoid it. That's why he disagreed with the Western Lands Commission that wanted to subdivide the west Darling holdings into little lots. He couldn't see little lots surviving" (quote from C. Kempe in Bowen 1987:435).

As predicted the little lots didn't' survive in the Corner, and eventually Sturt National Park became the new order, beginning with the purchase of the non-viable block Mt King and eventually five other properties which were purchased on the open market or expired leases just not renewed (Gerritson 1981:126).

### 3.5 BREWARRINA

The Tibooburra exodus is often described as being only Wangkumarra people, but Wangkumara, Paakantyi and Malyangapa were taken to Brewarrina. However, the Wangkumara and the other two groups tended to have different response to the situation.

A child's view of the arrival of the Tibooburra people comes from Evelyn Crawford,

> "we could hear people cryin', cryin' really loud like Aboriginal people goin' to a funeral …this cryin' made you come. It just went right through you, and pulled you.
> There were three trucks …. The back packed, jam-packed with black people, all cryin'. The Manager went round the back of the truck …. Yelled , "shut-up". They slowed down to a little whimper
> …they herded them Wankamurrahs over to the school … 77 -all we could see was the whites of their eyes… packed in the school (Crawford 1993:76).

Evelyn tried to talk to the children but they were too frightened (ibid: 78) and her parents told her to stay away so they were not too afraid to come out. They cooked at night under cover (ibid:79), afraid of being poisoned or killed. Soon Una Harnett's baby died of dehydration, then the mother died - four more of the Ebsworth family died within a couple of months. When their houses were built they took the ones furtherest away from existing people and the manager put a big fence with barbed wire all round the houses (ibid:79 check).

The reaction of the Wangkumara was of people completely alienated, unable to communicate, in a "strange" land, who felt they had no permission to be there, and also felt they had to have permission to leave. After four years the new manager said they could leave and they all left but many did not have the means and perhaps the will to return to Tibooburra, stopping at Bourke and Wanaaring. At Brewarrina and later Bourke there was a tendency for Wangkumara, Paakantyi and Malyangapa to marry, they still kept the old corner country connections. However, Wangkumara and Malyangapa did not marry into the other people at Brewarrina such as the Ngemba, although some Paakantyi did.

Interestingly, the Tibooburra families with a Paakantyi connection mostly left the Mission soon after arrival, without permission. George Dutton had been working on a station outside Tibooburra when he heard that his family had been forced onto the trucks and taken to Brewarrina. He was so furious that he left without the 75 pounds owing to him. When interviewed by Tindale in July 1938 George's comments confirm the hopelessness and intimidation felt by everyone;

> Object to the idea of being brought from Tibooburra. Want to go back and will soon go back. Nothing here for a man to do..
> The treatment we get here is no good. We can better in Tibooburra. Much more meat there, better conditions. We should be treated for bad eyes in our own country; not taken away to a strange country.
> No work here for us. On the Paroo I can get work.
> We [were] told that if we did not move to Brewarrina they would take our children away from us. That's the only reason why we came (Tindale Harvard Expedition quoted in Goodall 1996:216).

George refused to live under the conditions presented at Brewarrina and told the manager "this is no good to me". "You can't go", the manager said, "I'm going to" said George and loaded up "the turn-out" straight away (Beckett 1978:21). The Paakantyi connection offered a bridge through Paakantyi country and kinship links back to Tibooburra, or Wanaaring, Yancannia,

White Cliffs and eventually Wilcannia where they joined Darling River Paakantyi (Martin 2003).
The Tibooburra people survived the depression intact as a social entity even though times were tough. The Dog Act and the forced removal was far worse than anything the depression could offer because it damaged their connections – to people and land and robbed them of their old people. After this the few people that returned to the Tibooburra area tended to split into nuclear families, not the large extended families of before. Some families simply re-established themselves elsewhere including Bourke, Wanaaring, Whites Cliffs and Wilcannia as extended conglomerates with a circle of kin (Martin 2003). Such families did not return to live at Tibooburra, as Elsie Bates states;

> We were in Bre not very long – in 1942 went to Wanaaring for a while, then Wilcannia…Went up there to Tibooburra for a look sometimes – never went back though (Martin Interview 2000).

## 3.6 . NEW ARRIVALS IN THE CORNER COUNTRY

The failure of the Aboriginal Protection Board 1930's policy of removing people from their traditional country and "concentrating" them at large reserves is illustrated at Olive Downs, where the 1938 removal of many of the Tibooburra Aboriginal people was followed by the influx of other Aboriginal people to fill their place in the Olive Downs workforce, and the return of some of the people removed.
The new arrivals in the Corner Country were largely from the Cooper system, belonging to the same language group and often having a relationship with the people who had been moved out. They belonged to the groups immediately adjacent to the Wangkumara, including the Yawarawarka and Diyari. Only Snider Brown was from a distant country, but he was married to Mabel Harrison a Yawarawarka woman from Innamincka. So the people who moved in belonged to the same language group as the Wangkumara (Hercus 2003), had a similar social organization to the 4 Corner Country groups, and had been part of the cluster of groups that joined together for ceremonies at Innamincka ((Mathews 1985:96-97). In this sense little had changed.

However, from the 1940's onwards Aboriginal people were more closely associated with the built environment of Olive Downs. In some cases this relates to the fact that these people did not belong to this country and did not feel the same kind of association to it as the Wangkumara, Malyangapa and Paakantyi. For example respected Yawarawarka elder Hector Harrison always refused to talk about the Corner Country, saying simply "its not my country" despite the fact he lived there for about 50 years. This can also be seen in the detailed oral history recorded with Fay Brown and Lil Monaghan nee Lander where they felt attachment to the built environment and gardens at Olive Downs, rather than the landscape;

> All this was a great big garden, trees, lawn – was a big swimming pool, lemon tree, fruit trees. The swimming pool is behind the mulga stake fence – people used to come over and have lunch and swim – there was lawn [between pool & fence] – it was beautiful! (Lil Monaghan 2004)

> My Dad worked there at Olive Downs, Binerah Well was an outstation and my Dad was an overseer [there]… it had an old cane shed and old cemented home - it was a home to us. Lovely old place there. I grew up there when I was a little girl. I was born in Tibooburra and went back out there when I was a baby, we all did. Lovely old house, an old kitchen, and cement, and wood stove and that and it had two rooms. And it had a big bough shed before the other unit was built on it -that used to be our bedroom – the bough shed. Used to eat out there in summer time – lovely and cool. Cane grass shed, it was timber that held it up but they had the mesh and then they got the cane grass from Frome Creek …
> …. everything was pulled down [by NPWS] and I cried because Binerah Well was home to me, it was my home. That's how I felt. You know being a little girl out there and running around playing and that and there's nothing there (Fay Brown 2004).

Fay and Lil also clearly had strong ties with white people on Olive Downs, and incorporated them into their family. For example. Lil made the hard decisions at the homestead, and laid down the rules for the sake of the kids. The manager's daughters still write to Lil from distant places 43 years after she left Olive Downs.

## 3.7 LANDSCAPE AND LOCATION – ARCHAEOLOGY AND SHARED HISTORY

The Olive Downs Homestead complex is situated on and is enclosed by landforms that have been occupied and utilized by Aboriginal people from pre-contact times through to the declaration of the National Park. Olive Downs demonstrates continuity of Aboriginal occupation for many thousands of years and a shared history since about 1880. Location of pre-contact and pastoral elements reflect the same pattern of landscape utilization.
The pre-contact cultural landscape is illustrated by;

- Warri Warri Creek *mura* track linking the Tibooburra area to Cooper Creek

- Warri Warri Creek water sources in the form of soakages and possibly temporary waterholes, and good quality stone for flaking in the form of river cobbles of fine silcrete and porcellanite as well a coarser cobbles for seed grinding

. (SLIDE Map of OD SITES)

- The creek flats display a continuous scatter of artefacts. (SLIDE Map of artefact density) A dense occupation area to the south of the ground tank SLIDE relates to a water source, possibly between it and the single men's quarters where sandstone outcrops in the creek bank suggesting that either rock bottomed waterholes and/or soak behind rock bars were present before the post –European changes to the landscape. This dense occupation suggests that it was a refuge area during dry times and that people would spread out into other areas after rain, particularly to the northern wide valley and dune systems. In fitting with Dan Witter's description of the archaeology of Sturt National Park, the Olive Downs site is a major microblade making area, but lacks the backed blades, pirri points and tulas that are found in great numbers in the dune systems and the Miller's Tank to the north near the border (Witter 1992). It is probable that

supplies of blade blanks were taken out to the dune fields where people camped for extended periods after rain. The creek flats provided food such as grass, portulacca and acacia seeds, roots, vegetables and animal foods,

- The surrounding ridges "squeezed" the creek in the Olive Downs area, thus providing the right conditions to trap water. The ridges also provided medium quality grey silcrete and white quartzite which have been utilized. They probably also provided lookout areas to watch for thunderstorm as well as movements of people and animals, which explains the artefacts on top of the west ridge. The unusual production of leilira blades on top of the east ridge suggests that the area had a special significance and that the blades were carried down Warri Warri creek to be traded for other goods along the Cooper system and further away. The substantial age of the weathered leilira blades and cores contrasts with the other known leilira quarries in the Tibooburra area such as Nocabrinna and Mt Wood.

The Olive Downs area continued to be occupied by Aboriginal people after contact as they quickly adapted to the pastoral industry in order to survive. Surviving elements that demonstrate the continuity of occupation into the post –contact period and the transformation of Aboriginal culture as people adapted to the pastoral industry include;

- the *Mura* track of Warri Warri Creek continued to be used by Aboriginal people travelling their country and transformed into the droving route used by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal drovers, and roads used by travellers

- the main water sources created by the *mura* became the focus of pastoral activity as the original waterhole and soakages were utilised and then expanded to include a well, then bore and ground tank

- The historic campsite SLIDE material recorded on the dense occupation area to the south of the single men's quarters illustrates the early pastoral period people continued to live in the same locations according to their traditional laws and customs. The elements such as fencer's punches, steel heel cap, horseshoes worn from stony country and bottles are evidence of the early ringers and fencers.

Cecil Ebsworth, the son of Ngaka (Cecil) Ebsworth, was able to recall information from Georgina Hines on the location of these campsites;

> there was old camps back behind the huts, Auntie Georgina Hines said this was where Uncle George McDermott lived, there's a bend in the creek south from the hut; follow the creek around the bend, you know they didn't camp too close to the station in those days. Norman Harding and Lucy, and Dad camped on the creek, I remember Dad talking about Warri Warri Creek, families camped there, Frank Booth and Queenie [Hines] might have lived at the Olive Downs camp with their family. Uncle George [McDermott] was a dogger on Olive Downs, Norman

Harding, he might have been a ringer. My Uncles Arnold, Martin, Albert and maybe Alf all worked at Olive Downs (C. Ebsworth 2/2004).

- From the 1940's onwards Aboriginal people lived in, or built and maintained the existing built environment of Olive Downs, including windmills, the Old and New Shearers Quarters, the Shearing Shed, the existing house, the Single men's Quarters and various other buildings as well as fences and ground tanks. In the 1940's SLIDE Tom Monaghan and his boss built the well and windmill at the house. In the 1950's Tom and Lil Monaghan lived in the shearers quarters and the little hut to the west of the woolshed, "Lil's Hut" SLIDE. Around 1960 they ended up living in the house where Lil was the cook and used the existing AGA stove. SLIDEIn the 1950's Kath Beer nee Monaghan and her husband Jack Beer lived in the house where Kath was the cook and Jack the handyman. During the 1950's George McDermott and Snider Brown lived in the single men's quarters and ate in the "Men's Kitchen" at the house. In 1959-1960 Rene Kemp nee Lander lived in the house as a general help for Mrs Kerr. During the 1950's Snider Brown was the overseer of the outstation Binerah Wells, later living in the single men's quarters.

Olive Downs illustrates the theme of shared history and this close interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal was enhanced by the isolation and general lack of intrusion from authorities. The interaction is illustrated the full participation of Aboriginal people in the pastoral industry. Aboriginal men fulfilled an enormous range of jobs at Olive Downs including installing and maintaining windmills, sinking and cleaning ground tanks, fencing contractors, shearing contractors, horsebreakers, doggers and stockmen or "ringers". The station provided a place for Aboriginal people to work and live and be on an equal footing with the (small) mainstream community. Aboriginal women worked as cooks and house domestics, but also worked alongside the men in a range of jobs from windmill maintenance to stock work. Interaction is illustrated by social life, children visiting and playing together, sharing of meals, sharing of social venues such as the Olive Downs race day, and intermarriage and raising families together. For example Fay Brown and her sister Rene playing with the Managers daughters;

> Joan and I, the eldest girl, we mainly used to fight with Meg and …Rene if she was there. But it used to be lovely going there though… we used to look forward to mail day – looked forward to playing with the kids…. We was invited in to have our lunch, the home was opened up for us. Joan was the eldest, Meg she's the second eldest, and then the youngest one was Tess…They used to come down to Binerah too with their Dad and if Mr Kerr used to have to go right down around the boundary they'd stay back at Binerah Well with us and way he'd go (Fay Brown 2004).

TABLE 10: SOME ABORIGINAL PEOPLE (AND PARTNERS #) WORKING AT OLIVE DOWNS AFTER 1938

| Names | Time Period | Place | Work |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tom Monaghan & wife Lil nee Lander | 1940's –1970's | Olive Downs | Stockman<br>Fencing Contractor<br>Windmill & tank contractor |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Shearer<br>Cook (Lil) |
| Tom Monaghan's brothers | 1940's –1970's | Olive Downs | Fencing contactors |
| Rene Lander (Kemp) | 1959-60 | Olive Downs HS | Domestic work in homestead |
| Snider Brown & Mabel nee Harrison | 1947 – 1950's | Binerah Well | Overseer |
| Snider Brown | 1950's –1960's | Olive Downs | stockman |
| Snider Brown | 1960's-1970's? | Olive Downs | Dog Fence |
| Bob Harrison | 1950's | Olive Downs | Ringer, jockey for Olive Downs horses |
| Hector Harrison | 1950-1970's | Olive Downs | ringer |
| Martin Ebsworth & wife Gladys Mallyer | 1950's? 1960's? | Olive Downs | ringer |
| Albie Ebsworth | 1950's –1960's | Olive Downs | ringer |
| Arnold Ebsworth | 1950's -1970's | Olive Downs | fencer |
| Ngaka Ebsworth | 1950's-1960's | Wanaaring to Corner including Olive Downs | Dogger for Pastoral Board |
| Johnny Nicholls# & wife Fay Brown | 1970's | Binerah Well | Overseer |
| Jack Beer# & wife Kath Monaghan | 1950's –1960's | Olive Downs | Stockman, fencer, shearer, handyman (Jack)<br>Cook (Kate) |
| George McDermott | Early 1900's –late 1950's | Olive Downs | Dogger, ringer, horsebreaker |
| Harold Brown | Early 1980's | Sturt National Park | Field officer NPWS |

Tom Monaghan and his family and others he employed such as Fred Brown installed and maintained windmills were tank sinkers and cleaners, fencing contractors, shearing contractors, and stockmen. These were skilled men and "contractors", that is they were their own bosses. George McDermott was a stockmen, horsebreaker and dogger. The Ebsworths were skilled drovers, horsemen and women and stockmen and women. The Quayles and Rileys had their own tank sinking equipment and were skilled mechanics, drovers and horsemen. Snider Brown was the overseer at Binerah Well when it was an outstation of Olive Downs, and later lived in the single men's quarters, and finally worked on the dog fence before his retirement. Bob Harrison was the Olive Downs jockey and he and Hector were ringers.Many drovers in the far north west of NSW and western Qld were Aboriginal (see Wharton 1994). Aboriginal drovers from the area include the Morris family, Quayle and Riley family, George Dutton, and the Ebsworth family. Drovers taking the Tibooburra to Naryilco route passed through Olive Downs.

Another aspect of interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal is the and the "borrowing" of knowledge about landscape, water sources, ecology and climate from Aboriginal people, which was a feature in the success of the Kidman enterprise. Overlapping of thinking about country, such as using *Mura* pathways for droving, following the rain, the need for grazing or firing to keep grass "sweet" are examples of this. Ground tanks are an expansion of the idea of random basins on claypans waiting for the unpredictable thunderstorms.

Since the acquisition of Sturt National Park in the early 1970's only one Aboriginal person has been employed on this vast area of land, Harold Brown worked as a Field officer for a short time in the early 1980's. The anger at the final policy driven detachment of Aboriginal people from much of the Corner comes through in this interview;

> National Parks - they ruined the whole Corner. A lot of people worked on Olive Downs and Mt Woods, Binerah Downs...there was always somebody working out there, and Fort Grey. They took all the work away from the Corner…There're idiots, ruined good country. But the country's no good, it hasn't been grazed! The grass and that is all rotten and rank, and gone dead. You have a look, you can drive through there and you'll find that all the bloody kangaroos are gone out of there onto the country where the sheep are. Because the sheep are eating the grass off and soon as the new grass comes up the kangaroos are there to nip it off. They wonder why the Aboriginals used to fire the country – it'd sing out for the fire stick. But they knew how to go about doing it. These idiots up here they wouldn't know to do it (J.Beer in Martin 2004).

## 4. LONG TERM STRUCTURES OR WORLD VIEW

There is evidence that the middle term structures outlined were in place for a long time. The placement of the three language groups, language structure, vocabulary and grammar shows a long term system in place in the major riverine areas of the Cooper, Bullo and Paroo-Darling and overlapping into the Corner (Hercus 1982, 1998, 2003). *Mura* tracks provide a route into and out of the Corner Country to the less marginal areas and they acted as social and geographical links. They enabled Aboriginal drovers and stockmen to maintain these links in the historic period and continue to be traveled today by Aboriginal people. Kinship networks of vital importance and strengthened by mythological and ceremonial business, enveloped all corner country people in a system, but each also had relations with neighbours.The traditional system is designed around the Corner being a sometimes marginal environment and depending on social connection to surrounding basins.

The archaeology at Olive Downs and the general area provides more evidence that the traditional structure has existed for some time; such as evidence of seed grinding, retreat areas such as the dense occupation area, making microblades to take out into the dune fields after rain, and the Leilira blades which suggest movement to the Cooper along Warri Warri Creek. However, the weathered and partly buried Leilira blade workshop may provide evidence of change over a longer time frame. The blades were moved far into Queensland along *mura* routes, in this case the Warri Warri creek route to the Cooper. It appears that this was aborted a long time ago while the Noccabrina and Mt Wood quarries appear to be more recent. It is suggested that the Warri Warri creek route was supplanted by the Bulloo River route. The obvious explanation for this, given the aridity of most of Warri Warri creek today, is that there

was a slight shift of the monsoonal weather to the north necessitating a change to the better watered Bullo route to export the blades. This suggests that the medium term structures outlined previously had the capacity to shift geographically over the long term. It also suggests that a date for the Olive Downs leilira blade quarry might give a time frame for the structural history presented here.

The non- indigenous occupation of the historic period to present can be also be interpreted from this long term perspective; the fluctuating fortunes or misfortunes of the pastoral era is linked to the non-viablility of individual pastoral stations compared to the successful Kidman era using and transforming traditional structures such as kinship, *mura* tracks, follow the rain, chain of connection. Following this through to the present time, is Sturt National Park able to survive droughts, even though it is made up of six former stations? Can this size sustain itself if there is another shift in climate, for example a slight shift of summer monsoonal weather to the north, or does it need to belong to a larger chain of connection? What is the long term structure ?

The history of the Corner Country presented here suggests that National Parks land in far western NSW should to form a chain of connection with the surrounding basins such as the Cooper, Bulloo and Paroo-Darling, and with the more reliable climates to the east and south. This is occurring to some extent with increased Federal funding for land purchase, but the concept needs to be large scale and ignore state boundaries and be able to shift with climate patterns. There is evidence of a re-emergence of the Kidman type style in Western NSW where some pastoral families are buying up stations to run as a linked family enterprise. The idea here is not just getting larger, but forming a social and geographical chain of connection. The stations no longer have to be side by side as the owners can use trucks to move stock, and can be spread out to take advantage of unpredictable rainfalls and floods on river systems. Unless National Parks want to truck kangaroos, emus and tourists around like sheep they need to consider the Kidman system, based on the traditional co-operative social structure - and the key principles of seed food, expand – retreat, follow the rain, escape routes and a chain of connection. This is the structure that is stable in the long term.

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1.3 CULTURAL/NATURAL OVERVIEW

- Pre-contact Aboriginal heritage overview,

# THE ABORIGINAL LANDSCAPE OF OLIVE DOWNS

CMP Background Report Prepared by Sarah Martin

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Evidence of the pre-contact Aboriginal culture of the Tibooburra area comes from several sources including oral history, language, ethno-history, anthropology and archaeological evidence. This report concentrates on the archaeological evidence and evidence of cultural landscapes, and should be read in conjunction with the report "Aboriginal History of the Olive Downs Area" which concentrates on the other forms of evidence (Martin 2004). Although contact with Europeans brought immediate and devastating changes to the Aboriginal people and their culture, elements of the pre-contact culture and social organization remain. It is therefore an artificial division between pre-contact and post-contact culture and the concept of continuity from pre-contact to the present should be emphasised. The situation was one of transformation of culture and adaptation to the new circumstances, while maintaining significant elements that were present in the pre-contact situation. Even material remains relating to the traditional culture such as ground ovens and stone and wooden artefacts may belong to the post-contact period, and European materials such as iron and glass were incorporated into an essentially traditional tool kit that continued to be used for many years after occupation. For example huts built and used throughout most of the 1900's illustrate how traditional elements and European materials were blended to form structures suited to the current conditions.

## 2. SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS WORK

The archaeology of the Tibooburra area has been the focus of a number of archaeological surveys and research projects. The survey of the Moomba Pipeline which cuts through the Grey Ranges about 20 km south of Olive Downs homestead was undertaken by Buchan in 1975. This survey was probably the first indication of the archaeological significance of the Tibooburra area. Although archaeological work in the Tibooburra has only covered a small amount of the total area, it has concentrated on different aspects and has been carried out on different scales.

The highly significant stone arrangements on the eastern edge of the Bulloo Overflow have been the focus of research (Black 1943, Rowlands and Rowlands 1966, 1967, 1969, 1970) and more recently joint management between NPWS and the traditional owners. The Mt Wood and Nockabrinna blade quarries are unique and have been studied by Holdaway et al. 1998 & 2000. and Witter 1992, and are mentioned in work on trade routes and ceremonial pathways. In 1980-81 Witter undertook a sample survey across Sturt National Park with transects north-west, south and south-east of Olive Downs homestead, and in other areas of the Park. From this Witter was able to define the types

of stone artefact technology used in the Tibooburra area (Witter 1992). In 1994 Dallas et al. undertook a survey of the proposed powerlines across Sturt NP. More recently the Mt Wood area was the focus of a research project supervised by Simon Holdaway from University of Auckland, Patricia Fanning from Macquarie University, and Dan Witter from NPWS. Holdaway and his team undertook fine scale work on the distribution and characteristics of stone artefacts and heat retainer hearths found at various sites mainly in the Mt Wood area (Holdaway et al. 1998, 2000).

Landscape features and Mura tracks of the Tiboourra area, as well as ceremonial sites with natural and arranged features have also been a focus of recording and management (Creamer 1974, Beckett ///). Another aspect of the cultural heritage of the Tibooburra that has been examined is the role of trade and trade routes and the ceremony associated with this (McBryde 2000).

## 3. THE AIHMS REGISTER

A number of archaeological sites have been recorded in the Olive Downs, Binerah Well and Binerah Downs sections of Sturt National Park. The archaeological survey along the natural gas pipeline route was the first major survey in the region (Buchan 1974, 1975). The pipeline cuts NW to SE across the park about 20 m south of Olive Downs homestead. The sites recorded along this pipeline form a sample of what is expected in the Olive Downs area. Silcrete Quarries are very common along the Grey Ranges, and a section of pipeline 7 km long has 7 silcrete quarries recorded adjacent to it. This gives a density of 1 quarry per km through the Grey Range. A campsite is recorded on Twelve Mile Creek and two on its tributary Ganya Creek, and a series of campsites are recorded along the pipeline between Binerah Well and Binerah Downs, approximately 8 sites per 13 km. Other sites recorded in the Binerah Well to Binerah Downs area off the pipeline include a natural waterhole, a stone arrangement and two silcrete quarries in the McDonalds Peak area.

In 1988/9 an ANZES expedition recorded a series of sites in the Olive Downs area. Two campsites with artefacts were recorded in the Olive Downs homestead complex area, one on the creek immediately south of the homestead, and one about 400 metres west of the house ground tank (these grid references are not very accurate). A series of campsites were also recorded near the head of small creeks on the escarpment east of the homestead (3 sites) and the Connia Creek escarpment to the south of Olive Downs (3 sites). They also recorded a silcrete quarry on the edge of the Grey Range 9 km north-east of the homestead.

## 4. WITTER'S 1980/81 SURVEY

In 1980 and 1981 Dan Witter undertook a series of sample surveys across Sturt National Park to provide data for his thesis on the regional variation of stone tool technology across NSW. Witter surveyed three regions, Tibooburra, Cobar Pediplain and Boorowra in the southern highlands of NSW and compared the artefact morphology of the three

areas. His results showed that the main determinants of artefact morphology are material type, logistics of access and transport, and the reduction strategy or method of flaking (Witter 1992).

A major sample using both transects and a quadrat was recorded in the dune system of the Millers Tank area 9 km NW of Olive Downs homestead. A large transect was undertaken in the Grey Ranges 15 km south of the homestead, and a smaller transect 20 km south east of the homestead on the 12 Mile Plain. The results of these samples and samples taken in other areas of the Park including around the Granites and Mt Wood, and on Pindera Downs station were synthesised into the following (Witter 1992);

i. Riparian Sites – sites of variable density and vulnerable to erosion, artefacts usually found wherever there was an exposure, dominated by silcrete except for the Thompsons Creek sample which was associated with quartz gibber. Most waste flakes were broad platformed. No microblade base camps found in riparian Land System but may be affected by exposure

ii. Plains Sites - lower densities of tools and less diversity of stone industries, reflect small camps, small size and low densities of debitage, no microblade sites (environment too homogeneous)

iii. Ranges Sites - quarry sites found as discontinuous debris along ridges, and camp sites showed regular concentrations along tributary bottoms, hearths rare, but workshops recorded. Silcrete was the main material except in the Tibooburra granite area where quartz dominated. Broad platformed debitage or pieces without platforms, microblade and pirri well represented, debitage usually under 50 pieces due to lower densities. At Tib 110 the entire small ridge was a quarry with thousands of flakes, gleaming white from distance due to removal of weathered skin of silcrete. Sites with backed blades and pirri points also tend to occur in the ranges land System.

iv. Dunes Sites – practically every exposure produced debris, in some cases abundance.. sites mainly defined by exposure – may be more of less continuous…blow out/claypan in swales.. hearths and grinding not prominent.. hearths stone or fired clay… workshops and large microblade sites – usually not close to raw material except in few cases where gibber of silcrete cobbles are found nearby. Nearly all silcrete artefacts, a few sites where focal platform debitage was common, but usually broad platform or without a platform. Resulting from regular occupation throughout swales which hold water after rains, and swamps that hold water for longer.

The Nockabrinna Quarry is based on a highly silicified and massive white silcrete was reserved for production of specialized stone industries – tula flakes had been removed from special tula cores, and blanks for pirri points detached from large conical prismatic cores right at the outcrop. This was a major re-tooling place visited before travelling out

of the silcrete ranges in the Tibooburra area, especially to great expanses where stone is absent, such a place was visited to produce tula flakes & pirri blanks. It was also used to produce the long leilira blades which ranged in size from 150mm to 300 mm in length and made on immense prismatic cores. No leilira blades or a modification of one was found on any of the camp sites during the survey, the nearest use appears to be in NW Qld some 1500km away. It is suggested they were being produced as part of an exchange system and that they had an element of prestige.

Conspicuous sites also included the Mt Wood, Millers Tank and Taldry dunes complex, large areas with abundant artefacts, microblade workshops, numerous backed blades and pirri points, also tend to feature hearths workshops, grinding gear and a high proportion of focal platform debitage. Witter suggests they are central base camps where there was long term occupation, perhaps with satellite camps associated elsewhere.

Microblade base camps tend to be found where there is a fine-grained mosaic of vegetative cover associated with a water source, sand hills and ranges. Non-microblade/pirri sites are extensively distributed throughout Tibooburra area, especially Riparian Land System where they from massive occupations. Witter suggests these are long term camps and after falls of rain it was possible to disperse throughout plains, dunes or ranges.

Tibooburra area is dominated by debitage which had broad platforms or no platforms at all. Silcrete is the dominant material, there is a huge supply of silcrete resulting in large cores and broad platformed debitage. Quartz a minor material, and usually treated same as silcrete, ie no specialized quartz technology. Large implements are common, and the area has a charactisitc Pirri Industry and Tula Industry. Large to medium flake tools are a major component, these are more portable to carry across extensive dune areas than large cores.

## 5. THE WNSWAP PROGRAM

The Western New South Wales Archaeological Project (WNSWAP) was conceived as a collaboration between NSW NPWS (Dan Witter) and La Trobe (Simon Holdaway) and Macquarie Universities (Patricia Fanning). Field work on Sturt National Park was carried out in 1995 –1998 by project leaders, students, NPWS staff, and representatives from the Tibooburra Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Wangkumara Tribal Council. Work focused on the archaeology of the Mt Wood area (Holdaway et al. 2000). However, other areas were also investigated and this resulted in team members briefly staying at Olive Downs and Aboriginal Elder Georgina Hines pointing out to Cecil Ebsworth the general location of the historic period campsite to the south of the single men's quarters (see Aboriginal History section).

The WNSWAP project focused on the distribution of stone artefacts across exposed surfaces using the detailed location and description of the individual artefacts to enable the study of assemblage composition across space. To do this all stone artefacts greater than 20mm in maximum dimension were recorded by locating each artefact in three-

dimensional space and analyzing it in place. The distribution of the artefacts was then compared to the small scale landform features they are located on using a GIS (Holdaway et al 1998:1). The depositional or erosional history of the land-surfaces on which the artefacts were resting were mapped and analysed in terms of their effect on artefact visibility and taphonomy (ibid:4). The effect of water movement on the distribution of artefacts was examined and was the subject of a separate thesis (Pigdon1997). It was found that water movement did not affect the overall horizontal integrity of artefact distribution on the Lag Surface landform, although it did affect the distribution of artefacts in channels, rills and gullies (Holdway :8 -9). The analysis demonstrated a significant spatial pattern in terms of assemblage variability across lag surfaces. For example in the southern portion of TIB 13 general core reduction and artefact manufacture of tools without heavy retouch occurs, while in the north adzes and scrapers and adzes possibly used for wood work were more frequent, together with production of backed blades (ibid:15).
A chronology of the areas being studied was attempted by the radiocarbon dating of heat retainer hearths or ovens which had a clear spatial association with the artefacts. Hearths from 2 areas along Stud Creek and another area near the Mt Wood homestead were partially excavated, and 28 had sufficient charcoal for conventional radiocarbon dating. The 28 dates fall into two distinct phases of hearth construction separated by a period with no datable hearths. Phase 1 returned dates of between about 220 BP to 820 BP, and phase 2 between about 1170 BP to 1630 BP. Taking into account the error margins, there is a gap of between about 200 to 400 years in the middle (Holdaway et al 2000). It is suggested that this gap may result from a local environmental factor, for example short term abandonment following over utilization of resources such as wood for fires, or certain food resources (Reeves 1997).

A small number of artefacts were removed (and later returned) from the areas being studied for another related study aimed at determining the integrity of the distribution of stone artefact scatters (Greenwood 1997). In this study artefacts were refitted and the spatial distribution of pieces removed from the core plotted to determine how far they had moved from the flaking floor or workshop. The analysis involved comparing the size of the artefacts produced at different stages of the reduction of the block with their location in space. This was undertaken to determine if small artefacts had been washed downslope relative to large artefacts thus affecting the distribution of the assemblage. It was found that the process of erosion had not differentially moved small artefacts down slope relative to larger artefacts (Greenwood 1997 & Holdaway et al. 2000:22).

A related PhD research project (Trudy Doelman) has focused on identifying the sources of stone used in the area for manufacturing stone tools. The Thompson's Creek to 12 Mile Creek Gorge was surveyed and revealed sources of high quality silcrete, quartz, quartzite and hornfels. As expected silcrete occurs along the Tertiary capping of the Mt Wood range or within stream catchments exposed through erosion. The hornfels occurs only on the edges of the Tibooburra granite outcrop. Within the survey area quartz and quartzite are found as nodules on the gibber plain (Holdaway et al. 2000:17).

## 6. THE OLIVE DOWNS HOMESTEAD CURTILAGE

6.1 “Traditional use of the Olive Downs Area

i. The Landforms

The Olive Downs Homestead area is located at the junction of what Dan Witter defined as Ranges, Riparian and Plains Landsystems (Witter 1992). Dunes systems are found about 8 km to the North-west. It is therefore in a location where all the landsystems of the region can be reached easily.

Warri Warri Creek and its tributaries flow north-east then north out of the Mt King section of the Grey Ranges. In the homestead area two minor ridges squeeze the creek and possibly form rock bars across the creek. This pattern is similar to other areas where waterholes and soaks were the focus of long term Aboriginal campsites. The Warri Warri Creek has changed from its pre-pastoral state and it is difficult to interpret now what it was like. The creek has the typical post European infill and multiple drainage lines resulting from post European land degradation. The situation on Warri Warri Creek is the same as the creek investigated by geomorphologist Patricia Fanning and the WNSWAP team in the Mt Wood area. They excavated a backhoe trench which;

> exposed a sequence of alluvial valley fill back to the late Pleistocene/Holocene transition or earlier…. At around 1630 BP the valley floor contained a vegetated floodplain… water was probably held for considerable periods of time after floods in clay lined waterholes along the main drainage tract … and may have been maintained by seepage along bedrock bars which intersect the drainage tract at intervals along its course. The Stud Creek 1,2 &3 study sites exhibiting concentrations of artefacts and hearths, are each located just upstream of a bedrock bar …
> ….Sheep grazing then so altered the hydro-geomorphic balance that topsoils were stripped from hillslopes and deposited on the valley floors as Post European Material. Incision of drainage lines and headward retreat of knickpoints has initiated further stripping of the valley floors, exposing former alluvial subsoils, together with the remains of former hearths. This is the degraded surface upon which the artefact scatters have come to rest (Holdaway et al. 2000:17).

The two places where the creek cuts into the ridges where possibly temporary waterholes and are marked as such on Map 1. The possible waterhole to the south of the single men’s quarters or “huts” is the most interesting as sandstone bedrock is exposed in the section of the creek bank, suggesting that a rock bottomed waterhole may have existed in this location, or a soak formed behind a bar of this rock running across the creek. Soaks may have existed at several locations along the creek, but are usually best at creek junctions and where rock bars run across forming an underground “dam”. These rock bars are usually not visible, but the presence of soaks may be indicated by animal activity in the area (eg. Kangaroos digging for water), or by a high concentration of Aboriginal artefacts.

The ridges on either side of the creek in the homestead area are low but have a silcrete cap and also some outcrop of quartzite boulders. The slopes are covered in silcrete bedrock and boulders and in some places quartzite occurs as irregularly shaped boulders with iron coating. The creek bed has a deposit of river cobbles. As discussed below the silcrete outcrop, quartzite outcrop, colluvial material and creek bed cobbles all provided material for stone tools.

Past the woolshed the Warri Warri Creek runs through a wide open valley and heads north towards Warri Gate, Naryilco and the Wilson River. The Olive Downs homestead area is a significant landscape as a mosaic of different environments occur in close proximity, the Ranges, the creek and creek flats, and the wide valley which is heavily vegetated with mulga and other seed bearing acacias. It is an example of the type of mosaic which Dan Witter found to have concentrations of artefacts (Witter 1992).

### ii. The Archaeological Survey

A sample survey designed to give an overview of the archaeology of the area was based on sample points across the area and basic recording of the archaeological material. This project did not allow for a comprehensive archaeological survey or detailed artefact analysis. This survey therefore cannot be used for REF's or other development related reports, as it is a sample survey only. The artefact scatters shown on Map 1 are more or less continuous along the creek flats, and the quarries are semi-continuous along the ridges.

A series of sample points were examined any archaeological material present recorded. Recording included a GPS reading, a density count on artefact scatters, a basic description of the archaeological material and photographs. Density counts were made using a rigid metre square and a minimum of 10 random counts. All landforms were sampled including the creek flats, colluvial slopes, and the west and east ridges. The survey covered the area from the woolshed and shearers quarters west and south to the large open site to the south of the single men's quarters and ground tank. Areas that were badly disturbed or covered in recent silt or sand where not sampled.

### iii. Density of artefacts on open sites

All areas sampled had evidence of Aboriginal occupation, which is not surprising given the landscape elements present. Map 2 shows the density counts on open artefact scatters. The high concentration of artefacts near and to the south of the single men's quarters indicates that this was a major focus of activity. The highest densities, averaging 21/m2, are found on the mulga flat on the eastern side of the creek and about 300 metres to the south of the quarters. This concentration is approximately 200 metres long and up to 100 metres wide, with density rapidly falling off to the south but only gradually tapering off to the north. It extends across to the western side of the creek with average density of 9/m2, and in the area around the quarters density averages 4.3-5.5/m2. Density then declines to 1.9/m2 around the dog kennels, and on the large flat on the western side is the same at 1.8/m2.

A very low density of artefacts is found around the house (this may be due to disturbance), on top of the western ridge, and on the slope of the eastern ridge (.01 to .1/m2). Density increases again just to the west of the woolshed, with density of up to 6/m2 near the main creek on the western side of the minor creek. This increase is largely due to a large workshop area where in-situ quartzite boulders and smaller pieces have been flaked. Between the main creek and the shearers quarters density ranges from .5 to 1.4/m2, with the highest between the woolshed and quarters. Much of this area has been heavily disturbed by sheep yards, drains, roads, etc.

The density counts indicate that occupation was widely spread across the survey area but heavily concentrated on the mulga flats beside the creek to the south of the ground tank. This is immediately to the south of the area which was predicted to have a waterhole and /or soak.

iv. Artefact Assemblages

Artefact assemblages vary across the survey area, and there is more variety within the most heavily concentrated area of activity to the south of the "huts" and ground tank. The assemblages of the area consist of;

- Blade cores, blades, blade tools and debitage resulting from a microblade industry. Material used for this is very fine silcrete and porcellanite sourced from water worn cobbles probably picked out of the creek bed, and usually minor amounts of quartzite sourced from boulders located on the side of ridges and ridge aprons.
- Core and flake tool industry characterized by large, broad platformed flakes, flake tools and debitage. Medium quality grey silcrete material from the silcrete capped ridges is used for this industry, as well as some local quartzite.
- Seed grinding equipment consisting of mortar and pestles made from silcrete river cobbles
- Leilira Blade industry on eastern ridge near the Telstra tower consisting of sparse, weathered, huge blades, flakes and cores of grey silcrete. A flake recorded as 150mm long, a broken blade was 140mm long, another broken blade was 160mm long and retouched along edge. A core was measured as 210 mm long and half buried in the soil (Photo). These artefacts are about 5 times the size as those found on the creek flats below. See under quarries below.

Workshops with cores and debitage are found all along the creek flats, but concentrated to the south of the ground tank. Tools consist of nosed flake tools and blade tools, notched blade tools, blades with serrated edges, blades with scalar retouch, and a few small adze like tools with heavy step retouch. Despite the good quality material and microblade technology there is little evidence of production of backed blades or pirri points. There is no evidence of tula production with the exception of one possible tula core found near the woolshed. This fits in with Witter's description of other sites on Sturt

NP where backed blade, pirri and tula industries are largely confined to the dunes system. Sites with dense concentrations of artefacts are found in the ranges and riparian systems near water and stone sources, but generally lack the specialized tools found in the dune systems. It is possible that the Olive Downs area provided blades and blade cores that were then transported out into the dune systems for further reduction and use.

A low density artefact scatter on top of the western ridge consists of cores and flakes of grey silcrete. This is a typical position for a lookout where men would sit and work and watch for animals, the weather and for signs of other people.

Photo 1 Microblades

Photo 2 blade core

Photo 3 Blade core with cobble cortex

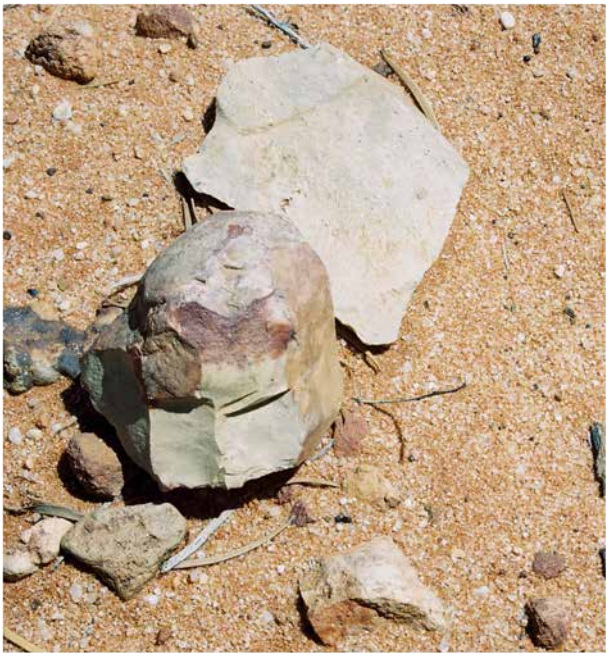


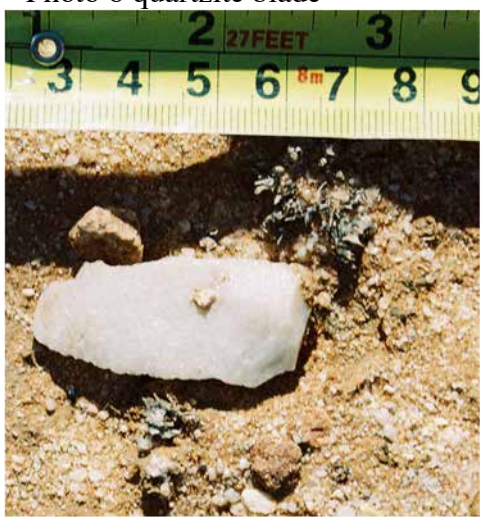
Photo 4 Porcellanite flake tool

Photo 5 :  blade tool with retouch on lower end

Photo 6 : view of main concentration of artefacts

Photo 7 quartzite blade core

Photo 8 quartzite blade




v. Quarries

The silcrete capping of both the west and west ridges has been quarried. The quarries marked on Map 1 are only sample areas, there is discontinuous quarrying of silcrete along the ridges concentrated on the actual bedrock outcrop, but also large boulders on the slopes. This silcrete has medium sized grains and is grey in colour. It is of medium quality but because of the outstanding material available in the Tibooburra area it has not been heavily quarried. Evidence of quarrying includes Hertzian cones on bedrock anvils where large pieces of rock have been thrown onto flattish outcrop in order to smash them up into smaller pieces, trimming debris resulting from removal of outside weathered material and shaping of blocks into pieces suitable for flaking.

Areas of unusual irregular iron-covered white quartzite boulders also occur on slopes of ridges and in areas of colluvial wash. These boulders have also been quarried, the irregular shape allowing direct removal of flakes from the in-situ boulders in some cases. Smaller pieces have been removed and shaped as cores including some blade cores (photo 7). An area of quartzite quarrying was recorded on the western ridge.

Photo 9 : Grey silcrete bedrock anvil showing Hertzian cone in centre, west ridge

Photo 10: Grey silcrete quarry west ridge, trimming debris

The area near the Telstra Tower and back to the north of this is very unusual. The silcrete has been used to produce huge blades called leilira blades which are not seen in the artefact scatters below. Other sites where these blades are produced include the Mt Wood quarry and the Nockabrinna Quarry, both to the east of Tibooburra, but in both these sites the silcrete is of much better quality and it has been very heavily quarried. Leilira blades were not used in the Tibooburra area but traded north in exchange networks where they had very special significance, as did the quarries they came from.
At Olive Downs the leilira blades and cores are few and very weathered, unlike the other 2 quarries mentioned. The fact that these important trade items were made on the east ridge suggests that it was a place of significance, and that blades were traded north from here along the Warri Warri creek to the Cooper Creek and north. The apparent great age of the blades and cores indicates that the production of leilira blades and their trade to the north ceased at some time in the distant past. Perhaps they were replaced as trade items of ceremonial and spiritual significance by the more delicate and practical long thin blades found in the sites below on the creek flats.

Photo 11: Large leilira type broken blade and flake, near Telstra tower

Photo 12 : enormous grey silcrete leilira blade core, partly buried, east ridge

vi. Stone Arrangement

A stone arrangement was recorded on the junction between the western ridge and the western mulga flat with artefacts. It is not possible to say what the origin of this stone arrangement is, and its proximity to the homestead makes it more difficult to interpret. It is located just below the rocky slope of the ridge on stone free ground. It consists of a wall of silcrete and quartzite boulders in an oblong shape, The lower wall may have washed out, or it may have been a U shape. There appears to be a cluster of rocks at the lower end of side walls. The top end appears to have a smaller enclosure. The rocks are large and partly buried with soil which has washed downslope. The arrangement is 2.15 metres in length and 1.47 metres in width. The smaller enclosure at the top is 1.10 metres wide and .50 metres long (measured the same direction as the big enclosure).

It possible that this is a historic grave, either European or Aboriginal. Traditional graves in the area are covered in large pieces of wood such as mulga, but stone may also be placed on the grave (for example the Tibooburra Aboriginal cemetery graves). This grave may be too old to have any wood left, or never had any wood on it.
The size of the arrangement and location about 300 metres from the house suggest that it is a historic grave. It could be a small stone arrangement with a ceremonial purpose, but there is no other evidence of stone arrangements in the areas sampled, and it is oblong rather than circular.

John Jackson from NPWS was aware of another historic European grave several km from the house along the same road with it posts around it. He was told about this by Tom Monaghan, and he thought it was a well sinker who was killed when wood fell on him in a well. John had not noticed this arrangement before and had not been told about a grave

in this area. The evidence seems to point to an early historic grave of either European or Aboriginal person, with the scales tipping towards Aboriginal because of the traditional use of stones on graves.

The area immediately adjacent to the grave had some very small fragments of burnt bone which were too small to identify but possibly human. Small fragments of mineralized animal bone were also noted, too small to identify, but possibly bird or reptile, fragments of green glass and white crockery, as well as stone artefacts mostly from the nearby quartzite quarry.

Photo 13 : stone arrangement, possibly an historic grave

Photo 14 : close up of stone arrangement wall

## 6.2 “Post contact” Campsites

### i. George McDermott’s Camp

Cecil Ebsworth, the son of Ngaka (Cecil) Ebsworth, was able to provide some very important information on the location of the Aboriginal camp site at Olive Downs. When he was working with archaeologist Dan Witter in the 1980’s they took Auntie Georgina Hines to Olive Downs and stayed in the single men’s quarters or “huts”;

> there was old camps back behind the huts, Auntie Georgina Hines said this was where Uncle George McDermott lived, there’s a bend in the creek south from the hut; follow the creek around the bend, you know they didn’t camp too close to the station in those days. Norman Harding and Lucy, and Dad camped on the creek, I remember Dad talking about Warri Warri Creek, families camped there, Frank Booth and Queenie [Hines] might have lived at the Olive Downs camp with their family.
> Uncle George [McDermott] was a dogger on Olive Downs, Norman Harding, he might have been a ringer. My Uncles Arnold, Martin, Albert and maybe Alf all worked at Olive Downs (Interview 2/2004).

On following the creek around the bend to the south from the single men’s quarters, we found a mulga flat beside the creek. This area is the major open site described above. It is hidden from the other buildings by the low ridge, and just south of the part of the creek which it is suggested may have been a waterhole or soak. There are the remains of several scattered “camps” or small concentrations of historic artefacts probably dating to the period around the 1920’s to 1940’s.

Camp 1- includes a whiskey bottle, beer bottles, horse shoe worn and flicked up at front indicating the horse travelled over stony country, boot heel iron”shoe”, a charcoal rich hearth

Photo 15; camp with historic artefacts

Camp 2 - whiskey bottle, castor oil bottle, hot sauce bottle, medicine ? bottle, hand made bullock shoes, horse shoes, two fencer's punches, large bolt, small car parts, sawn off trunk of a non-native tree (pepper tree?),

Photo 16 : camp with historic artefacts

Photo 17 : camp with historic artefacts including fencers punch

Photo 17; Camp 3 - beer bottles, can opener

There is a number of explanations for these camps, and we cannot say for sure who camped here at this stage. However, it is suggested that these are remains of the camps described by Georgina Hines as;

- the location fits the description given by Georgina,
- the location is the same as the traditional camping ground which probably relates to proximity to a natural waterhole and/or soak
- the sparse nature of the camps suggests an Aboriginal rather than European camp (given that they are not ephemeral one day or one week camps out in the bush, but related to people living near the station homestead).

### ii. Tom and Lil Monaghan's hut -"Lil's Hut"

Lil Monaghan showed us the location of the little one roomed hut that she and her husband Tom lived in from about 1953-1960. A concrete slab is still there, as well as the remains of a number of other buildings that must have been pulled down by this time. They lived in the little hut and a tent, and then had a caravan pulled up next to the hut. At times when there was no shearing on they would live at the Shearers Quarters. The little hut was made of tin with an open fireplace, the concrete floor still remains. This is part of a complex of building remains and domestic refuse dumps. Lil lived here with her husband Tom from about 1953 to 1960, and the latter part with baby Raylene. She does not remember any other buildings next to the hut, they must have all been pulled down at this stage.

Photo 18 : Lil Monaghan and Badger Bates standing next to concrete slab of Lil's Hut, stone footing of older building to left foreground

There is a well defined domestic dump area, as well as scattered material. Some of this may relate to Tom and Lil's time, but much of it is older. Refuse in the dumps includes tobacco tins including many WD & HO Wills brand, camp oven fragments, boot heel iron "shoe", leather rivets, shoe eyelets, fork, bullock shoes, horse shoes, broken pickle jars, hot sauce bottles, wedge for splitting timber, one shearers comb (does not look very old), 2 blade old timers knife, hobble chain, a range of broken bottles including an old blue square medicine? bottle, purple bottles, green bottles and black bottles with heavy base, earthernware, crockery (some not so old may be from Lil's time but some older blue patterned plate), as well as burnt bullock and sheep bone. An area of wire and mulga wood chips is the remains of Tom and Lil's wood heap (using old fence posts).

Photo 19 : domestic dump near Lil's Hut

Photo 20 Scattered dump material near Lil's Hut

## 6.2 EXISTING BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Oral history collected for the Aboriginal history section and for this section indicates that the existing built environment has to be considered as significant to Aboriginal history.

Oral history collected from Fay Nicholls nee Brown indicated that the homestead and garden was a place she and her sisters visited regularly on mail days and played with the Kerr girls. They ate in the house which she described as being just like "the Prime Minsters" and the garden with its fruit trees was a favourite place for all. The Store was where they obtained everything they needed out at Binerah Well. The race days were held in front of the house, probably the flat in front of the troughs and dog kennel, the garage was kitted out as a bar. The woolshed was turned into a dance hall.

Jack Beer and his wife Kath Monaghan were "the married couple" and lived at the house in the 1950's. Kath was the cook and Jack the handy man, they stayed in the bedroom off the "mens' dining room and Kitchen.

For this project Lil Monaghan travelled with Badger Bates from NPWS and the author to Olive Downs and was able to point out areas of significance to her family. Lil and her husband Tom Monaghan first lived at the shearers quarters and the little one room hut about 150 metres west of the woolshed. Lil and Tom then moved up to the homestead in about 1960-61, and lived in the same room off the kitchen of the house as Kath and Jack had lived in. Lil cooked for the men and Tom did various kinds of work.

At this time Snider Brown and George McDermott were both living at the Single Men's Quarters. They stayed in the quarters, showered there, but walked up to the house for their meals. Lil, Tom and the "men" all ate in the dining room (with the open fireplace). between the kitchen and Tom and Lil's bedroom The Kerrs ate in the other dining room past the toilet and laundry (which was the pantry at that stage).

Lil was also very interested in the windmills at Olive Downs as her husband Tom was a windmill contractor on Olive Downs and other stations. Tom was trained by an old man whose name Lil could not remember, and they put down the windmill at the well near the house, probably in the 1940's (well before Tom and Lil were married in 1953). Lil regards this as "Toms windmill" (Photo). Tom also maintained the windmill on the tank up the creek from the house. Tom also maintained the windmills at the tanks along the road back to Tibooburra including Mt King Bore, and also made and maintained tanks (including Stubberfield Tank). Tom and Lil had their caravan at tanks and bores including the two just mentioned when Tom was working on them. Lil was very pleased to see the house was in good repair but was upset about the garden "I feel sad to see it like that, it was a lovely big lawn, and fruit trees".

Lil made the following comments about the house complex;
Meat house; "it looks a bit shabby but looks the same"
Clothes line; "many a time I pushed the what's a name[trolley] out here!" [unchanged]
Kitchen : "this is where I used to cook, that's the stove I used to use" [the AGA]
Laundry; "this was the pantry" [laundry was outside near back gate]

Swimming pool ; there was a big swimming pool… people used to come over and have lunch and swim -there was lawn around the pool [mulga fence & pool unchanged]
Room off kitchen with open fireplace "that's the dinning room where the men ate"
On North side near rainwater tank "there was an office and schoolroom - its pulled down now"
Rain gauge- "in the same place"
Gum tree in NE corner "that tree was there"
Windmill and well was there but not the bore
Generator room etc - "that's new"
She did not remember the blacksmiths place (must have been pulled down in 1950's)
Store – "it was the old house before they built the new one" (NB can see store and adjoining house in front of new house in the black and white photo)
Tom and Lil moved into Tibooburra just before the second child Neville was born, about 1961. Tom continued to work on Olive Downs and other stations until he retired, maintaining windmills, tank sinking and cleaning out, fencing, mustering sheep and shearing.

Lil pointed out several times that although the trees had all died in the garden, the natural vegetation had recovered in many places. As we turned off the Naryilco Road to go into Olive Downs Lil saw the young mulga etc and said "its scrubby here now. All that was clear – like a desert". At Lil's hut she said "the trees have grown up (mulga and dead finish) – you could see straight through – you could see a car coming around the bend". At the house she commented on the waterbush growing near the water tank.

Photo 21: Lil standing in front of the house

Photo 22: Lil standing at the clothes line and pointing to Tom's Windmill

Photo 23: Bottom view of grinding mortars used as door stops in the house, painted white

Photo 24: Top view of same mortars, one with painted face

Photo 25: Tom's Windmill

## 7. CONCLUSION.

The Olive Downs area consists of landforms that have been occupied by Aboriginal people from pre-contact times through to the declaration of the National Park. Evidence was presented in the Aboriginal history section that Warri Warri Creek was part of a Mura track extending from the Tibooburra area to Cooper Creek. Warri Warri Creek in the Olive Downs curtilage area was also significant because it provided water in the form of soakages and possibly temporary waterholes, and good quality stone in the form of river cobbles of fine silcrete and porcellanite. The creek flats provided food such as grass, portulacca and acacia seeds, roots, vegetables and animal foods, The ridges "squeezed" the creek in the Olive Downs area, thus providing the right conditions to trap water. The ridges also provided medium quality grey silcrete and white quartzite which have been utilized. They probably also provided lookout areas which explains the artefacts on top of the west ridge. The unusual production of leilira blades on top of the east ridge suggests that the area had a special significance and that the blades were carried down Warri Warri creek to be traded for other goods along the Cooper system and further away. The apparent great age of the leilira blades and cores contrasts with the other known leilira quarries in the Tibooburra area.

It thus appears that the creek, creek flats and ridges in the area are significant landforms from a cultural viewpoint, and that all three should be included in the curtilage area. All three are part of the cultural landscape of the Olive Downs area. The curtilage should also extend south to the focus of occupation to the south of the ground tank. This dense occupation area relates to a water source, possibly between it and the single men's quarters where sandstone outcrops in the creek bank suggesting that either rock bottomed waterholes and/or soak behind rock bars were present before the post –European changes to the landscape. This dense occupation suggests that it was a refuge area during dry times and that people would spread out from it after rain, particularly to the northern wide valley and dune systems. In fitting with Dan Witter's description of the archaeology of Sturt National Park, the Olive Downs site is a major microblade making area, but lacks the backed blades, pirri points and tulas that are found in great numbers in the dune systems and the Miller's Tank to the north near the border. (Witter 1992).

The Olive Downs area continued to be occupied by Aboriginal people after contact as they quickly adapted to the pastoral industry in order to survive. In the early pastoral period people continued to live in traditional camps and live according to their traditional laws and customs. The description given by Georgina Hines indicates that early last century the people camped in the same area that was the focus of pre-contact occupation. The recording of small individual historic camps in this area suggests that these are the camps or at least some of the camps from this era. This unbroken occupation allowed the continued close association with country, kin and ceremony described in the work of Beckett and Wharton.

From the 1940's onwards Aboriginal people were more closely associated with the built environment of Olive Downs. In the 1940's Tom Monaghan and his boss built the well

and windmill at the house. In the 1950's Tom and Lil Monaghan lived in the shearers quarters and the little hut to the west of the woolshed, "Lil's Hut". Around 1960 they ended up living in the house where Lil was the cook. In the 1950's Kath Beer nee Monaghan and her husband Jack Beer lived in the house where Kath was the cook and Jack the handyman. During the 1950's George McDermott and Snider Brown lived in the single men's quarters and ate in the "Men's Kitchen" at the house. IN 1959-1960 Rene Kemp nee Lander lived in the house as a general help for Mrs Kerr.

Aboriginal people fulfilled an enormous range of jobs at Olive Downs and would have been coming and going on a regular basis. Tom Monaghan and his family and others he employed such as Fred Brown installed and maintained windmills were tank sinkers and cleaners, fencing contractors, shearing contractors, and stockmen. These were skilled men and "contractors", that is they were their own bosses. George McDermott was a stockmen, horsebreaker and dogger. The Ebsworths were skilled horsemen and women and stockmen and women. The Quayles and Rileys had their own tank sinking equipment and were skilled mechanics and horsemen. Snider Brown was the overseer at Binerah Well when it was an outstation of Olive Downs, and later lived in the single men's quarters.

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